

THE INTERSECTING IDENTITY POLITICS OF THE ECUADORIAN EVANGELICAL INDIANS

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I. INTRODUCTION

Is there a certain hierarchic order between ethnic and religious identification among ethnically defined peoples with specific religious beliefs? Is this imaginable hierarchy persistent, or does it change according to differing social and political contexts? In this study these questions will be problematized through the examination of Evangelical Indigenous peoples in the Ecuadorian highlands in the midst of mobilization strategies and the politization of ethnic and religious identities.

All over the world the dialectical relationship between social cleavages and political party systems has been debated for several decades (e.g. Lipset and Rokkan 1967). However, in Latin America, the connection between class cleavages and political party identification has not been that clear as in Western Europe. Traditionally, the dominant Latin American parties have been characterized by populism, personalism, clientelism, corporatism and class heterogeneity (*catch-all* parties). However, since the 1990s, scholars have paid more attention to the deepening connection between social cleavages and political parties, with the politization of ethnicity and the formation of ethnically defined political parties (Yashar 2005; Van Cott 2005, 2008).

This tendency indicates the initiation of a process toward a more multi-faceted cleavage structure behind the political party systems. However, many scholars have separated the social identities of ethnicity and class and not analyzed them as being integrated into one and the same political movement. With the recent and ongoing politicization of religious beliefs, particularly with the increasing presence of Evangelical movements in Ecuador and elsewhere, these relations are further complicated. At first glance, one may assume that a political party exclusively constructed for Evangelical Indians would appeal to these identity-based groups. However, such a clear-cut relationship is far more complex, as this study will show.

Identity-politics in Ecuador and elsewhere embraces processes that depend on historical structures and particularities in political and organizational culture as well as transformations of the mere identities and geographical spaces over time.

The aim of this interdisciplinary study is to examine the Ecuadorian Evangelical Indigenous movement with a particular focus on the tensions between ethnicity and religion in political mobilization and alliance-building processes. The aspect of class will similarly be considered to a certain extent, since the study deals with traditionally excluded and impoverished citizen groups, particularly in rural areas. As the introductory questions of the article indicated, a central concern is to examine whether there is an identitarian hierarchy among Evangelical Indigenous peoples, and whether this order is constant. A hypothetical point of departure of the present study is that in political contexts, the ethnic identity seems to weigh heavier than that of religion, whereas in the private sphere religious identification may be generally superior.¹

The geographical scope is the Chimborazo province in the central Ecuadorian highlands, particularly drawing on experiences observed in the municipalities of Colta, Guamote and the provincial capital Riobamba.² With regard to the justification of the geographical focus, Chimborazo has been a traditional stronghold of both the Catholic Church and later of Evangelical churches, which makes the province exceptional and has triggered the formation of different political movements. Being at the same time among the most Indigenous of the Ecuadorian provinces – in terms of self-identification³ – makes Chimborazo a most suitable case since the three contrasting, albeit socially integrated identities – religion, ethnicity and class – can be discerned there among the Indigenous population. Since the 1990s the Indigenous political organizations have triumphed in sub-national elections in Chimborazo (i.e. in the mentioned municipalities) and elsewhere, and rapidly being established as local political authorities. In some cases, these authorities have had an exclusively Indigenous-Evangelical profile, as in the case of Colta.

As for the protagonist actors of the Evangelical Indigenous movement, two central organizations are focused upon: the social movement FEINE (*Federación Ecuatoriana de Indígenas Evangélicos*)⁴ and its political-electoral vehicle *Amauta Jatari*.⁵ In addition, it is considered essential to problematize the processes and organizational and representative challenges of FEINE and Amauta in their complex relationships to the broader Indigenous movement – particularly the social movement CONAIE (Confederation of Indigenous Nationalities in Ecuador)⁶ and its political-electoral organization *Pachakutik* – and likewise

competing political-electoral movements that recently have counted with important support from Evangelical Indians in Chimborazo.

II. THEORETICAL AND METHODOLOGICAL APPROACHES

An underlying purpose of this initial study is similarly to build an interdisciplinary framework for research on Indigenous movements and sub-national political processes dealing with tensions between ethnicity, religion and class. Issues of ethnicity are related to other kinds of societal identities. In this work, an integrated theoretical approach will be used to carry through the analysis of identity politics in the context of the tensions between ethnicity and religion, and to a certain degree class, among Ecuadorian Evangelical Indigenous actors. It is essential to examine whether (and how) complexly integrated social identities function together (or clash) in political mobilizations and alliance-building. Therefore, the question is whether there is certain hierarchy between ethnic and religious identification within the internal reasoning of the Evangelical Indigenous actors in political contexts. If so, may this be helpful for the understanding of the political evolution of the Evangelical Indigenous movement in Ecuador?

To approach these multifaceted scenarios, ideas from the theoretical and methodological frameworks of *intersectionality* – originally emerging from women's studies – on the relationships between socio-cultural identities and categories, will be integrated into a sociological/political scientific analytical framework. In political, social and cultural analysis, the intersectionality approach can be used to problematize, as well as to better comprehend the complex mixture of identities that influence collective and individual behavior in society (Hill Collins 2000; McCall 2005; Mohanty 2007). Methodological practices from gender studies will thus be adapted to the political intersectional contexts of ethnicity and religion. What ethnicity and women studies have in common as academic disciplines is that both are rooted in oppositional social movements (Mohanty 2007:224).⁷ In one influential book on the Black Feminist movement in the U.S., Patricia Hill Collins argues that:

Oppression describes any unjust situation where, systematically and over a long period of time, one group denies another group access to the resources of society. Race, class, gender, sexuality, nation, age, and ethnicity among others, constitute major forms of oppression (2000:4).

The consciousness-building among actors around two or more of these social identity bases might strengthen the social group in question. Onwards, the complex conglomerates of identities among Evangelical

Indigenous actors in Chimborazo will be explored and it will be shown how the social identification is expressed and reflected in political contexts.

The study likewise draws on theories of political opportunity structures (POS), as for the fundamental perspectives of power structures and collective action of social and political organizations (Tarrow 1994; Kriesi 1995). Sidney Tarrow (1994:85) defines the concept as “consistent – but not necessarily formal or permanent – dimensions of the political environment that provide incentives for people to undertake collective action by affecting their expectations for success or failure.” The POS approach is useful for the analysis of ethnically defined political movements (Yashar 2005; Van Cott 2005, 2008; Lalander 2010) and is a good example of the potential interdisciplinary encounters between e.g. sociology, political science, anthropology, history, religion, gender studies and legal studies. Regarding political mobilization and alliance strategies, it is important to mention that the prime analytical focus is not the alliances as such, but rather the forces related to social identity behind the alliances (religion, ethnicity and class). Are some of these social identity forces more easily combined in political mobilization?

The perceptions and interpretations of the concerned political actors are crucial to consider. During field-work periods in Ecuador between 2004 and 2012, semi-structured interviews have been carried out with Evangelical Indigenous politicians, priests and activists of the social and political movements addressed in the study, although also non-Indigenous political actors and academics have been consulted. Participatory observation at meetings of the principal organizations has likewise been realized. The academic value of the study is likely to add to new elucidations of the logics behind political mobilization and alliance-building of the Ecuadorian Evangelical Indigenous organizations with other actors at different political-territorial levels. The insights derived from this study may also be valuable beyond Ecuador and Latin America, particularly the theoretical framing and methodological approach.

As for the geographic-thematic focus and available academic material, some pioneer work has been undertaken by anthropologist Blanca Muratorio (1980) as she examines Protestantism in the context of altering social relations of production and changing ethnic and national identification, particularly the case of Colta. The classical comparative work on the growth of Protestantism in Latin America by anthropologist David Stoll (1990) should be mentioned. As for more recent approaches, anthropologist Susana Andrade (2004) offers important contributions with regard to the background development and the birth of the Evangelical Indigenous movement, mainly in Chimborazo province, but likewise at the

national level. She provides a social and cultural scope to the analysis, and only superficially touches upon the political dimensions. In two articles by Andrade (2005a and b), the 'political awakening' of the Evangelical Indians in Chimborazo is indeed covered, but they mainly concentrate on cultural anthropological aspects (such as religious values) in the social and political transformation.

A great deal has been written on other (non-religious) dimensions of the Indigenous movement, mainly at the national level and accordingly with conclusions relevant for the relationship at the national, but not necessarily the local level. The increasing gap between the Indigenous people at the local level and their national political representatives has been emphasized as one (if not *the*) most urgent challenge of the Ecuadorian Indigenous movement (Maldonado Ruiz 2006; Lalander 2010). Generally, there has been a lack of research on the organizational complexity and political processes at the local and provincial levels in Ecuador. Political scientist Donna Lee Van Cott (2008) indeed focuses on more recent developments, but with a different scope, the good government/deliberative democracy perspective and ten cases of Indigenous administration at the local level in Ecuador and Bolivia. She offers a concise and valuable analysis of the development of Indigenous leadership in Guamote and Colta until 2005. Social scientist and theologian Julian Guamán (2006) has written a valuable book on the Indigenous Evangelical Federation, the FEINE.⁸ One important article on the political dimensions of the Evangelical Indigenous movement at the *national level* is offered by political scientist José Antonio Lucero (2006), a topic also covered in the mentioned contributions by Van Cott and Guamán.

As for the outline of the text, after the thematic, theoretical and methodological contextualization presented above, a brief justification of the historical context is offered, with the development of Ecuadorian Evangelicalism and its relationship to the Indigenous peoples, mainly in Chimborazo. The Ecuadorian Indigenous movement is subsequently presented, with a particular focus on the central actors and the socio-political evolution since the 1980s. Thereafter the Evangelical Indigenous organization towards political participation is summarized, with particular emphasis on the FEINE federation and its electoral movement *Amauta*. Before rounding off with some pertinent conclusions, the article reflects analytically on the political challenges of the organized Evangelical Indians in times of the administration of current Ecuadorian President Rafael Correa.

III. BACKGROUND: RADICALIZATION AND 'INDIANIZATION' OF THE CHURCHES IN ECUADOR

The Evangelical churches have a long history in Ecuador. In 1892, a first Evangelical group was established in Guayaquil.⁹ Already in the early twentieth century there were some efforts to deepen Protestantism in the country, although the more massive Evangelical wave came in the 1970s and 1980s. The first contacts between Protestant missionaries and the Indigenous population took place gradually during the period 1896-1960, that is, between the first establishment of the Gospel Missionary Union in the country and the first years of the presence of the *Instituto Lingüístico de Verano* (Linguistic Summer Institute) since 1953, associated with the Wycliffe Bible Translators (Guamán, 2006:29-30). The UME (*Unión Misionera Evangélica*/Gospel Missionary Union), historically one of the dominating Evangelical missions in Ecuador, had been present in Chimborazo since 1902, although conversion towards Evangelicalism took place from 1952 onwards, among other places in Colta.¹⁰ The UME launched a series of programs and projects over the years, in fields such as radio stations, health clinics, education (also bilingual), Bible studies, music, etc. (Guamán, 2006:58-59).¹¹

Liberal pluralist scholars (e.g. Lipset 1994:5-7) have argued that Protestant countries have tended to be more likely to promote democratization than societies strongly influenced by the Catholic Church. However, in the Ecuadorian case, as elsewhere in Latin America, it is important to highlight the role played by radical (socially engaged) Catholic priests in processes of democratization and the struggle for the Indigenous peoples and their civic rights. Since the 1950s, Chimborazo presents a tradition of radical Catholic priests defending the rights of the Indigenous population. The best known among these 'theologians of Liberation'¹² is the former Bishop of Chimborazo, Monsignor Leonidas Proaño, popularly called 'the Bishop of the Indians', who played an important role in the organization of the modern Indigenous movement (Stoll 1990:276-278; Andrade 2004:125-133). Already in the early 1970s, Monsignor Proaño had helped the highland Indians with the constitution of the regional Indigenous Confederation of the Sierra: ECUARUNARI.¹³ Also the more organized Indigenous Movement of Chimborazo was developed around Proaño. As Andrade summarizes:

In 1982, the Indigenous Movement of Chimborazo (MICH) was born, with ten communities affiliated, albeit with complications. The promoter was Monsignor Proaño, who grabbed the inquietude on behalf of four Indians to create an organization... The creation of the movement was not the product of organizational maturity of the Indigenous group, but rather the result of a

reflexive need to find an organized body to lead *'the liberation of the poorest'*. To a certain degree the figure that should be responsible and direct the ideas and concepts of the religious intellectuals was enforced. The difference in reflection between theologians and Indigenous was abysmal. However, there were exchanges; the first ones 'sensitized' and the second "conscientized" (2004:140).

Chimborazo province and its capital Riobamba had been traditionally conservative, dominated by right-wing forces and the Catholic Church. But, since the 1970s social and economic structures have changed and similarly the relationships between local elites and the poor (mainly rural Indigenous) masses. With the agrarian reforms of the 1960s and the 1970s, accompanied by peasant Indigenous protest activities and the radicalization of the Catholic Church, the land tenure system with large haciendas was gradually dissolved. The Agrarian Reforms of 1964 and 1973 marked the end of the traditional control of land in Ecuador. The 1973 reform gave Indigenous peoples access to land previously owned by the haciendas (Guamán 2006:35; Lembke 2006). Historically, the landowners had been non-Indigenous families, frequently with connections to either the capital, Quito, or the Guayaquil based economic elite of the coast. The Catholic Church had also been an important landowner until the reforms.

For Susana Andrade, Evangelical growth in Ecuador from the 1960s onwards, was triggered by socio-economic changes; not only land reform, but also the internal restructuring of the previously dominant Catholic Church and new strategic evangelization approaches of the missionaries. Chimborazo became the center of this transformation and a "prototype for the spreading of Evangelism" (Andrade 2005b:84).¹⁴

An Evangelical Indigenous association of provincial coverage was created in Chimborazo on November 9, 1966: the *Asociación Indígena Evangélica de Chimborazo/AIECH*.¹⁵ Its purpose was three-fold: development of the Evangelical faith, support of the evangelizing mission, and strengthening the "moral, cultural, economic, hygienic and professional level" of the Indigenous population in the province (Guamán 2006:53). The base-level entities of AIECH were the churches in the communities.

Throughout the 1970s the Indigenous Evangelization expanded at the provincial level, not only in Chimborazo, but also in other provinces, mainly in the highlands, with the constitution of provincial Indigenous Evangelical federations.¹⁶ In 1977, these associations formed the National Federation of Evangelical Associations/FENAE (*Federación Nacional de Asociaciones Evangélicas*), which was the embryo that would be transformed into the Ecuadorian Evangelical Indigenous Federation/FEINE in 1979. The FEINE achieved legal recognition in 1980 and its legal status includes AIECH and six other provincial associations. FEINE's aims were

both religiously and socially rooted, i.e. to strengthen the Evangelical Indigenous movement as a collective force (Guamán 2006:65). It is important to emphasize that FEINE, as also previously the AIECH, has represented all tendencies and variants of Evangelical-protestant churches, i.e. presenting a pluralist representative structure.

With the words of José Antonio Lucero (2006), FEINE succeeded in ‘indianizing’ Protestant Evangelicalism. The nature of the Evangelical churches in Chimborazo was gradually transformed. A ‘nativization’ of religious beliefs took place, as well as of Evangelical institutions and hierarchies (Andrade 2005a and b). Efforts were also made since the mid-1980s to eliminate or at least reduce connections with U.S. dominated churches in the region, such as World Vision (Stoll 1990:293-298).

The more immense Evangelical expansion occurred between 1960 and 1990; with more consolidated strategies of evangelization, a massive wave of conversion and the establishment of new Evangelical churches. From the late 1980s, Pentecostalism is gaining territory as religious preference among Ecuadorian Indians (Guamán 2006:31). Within the broader conglomerate of Evangelical-protestant churches, Pentecostalism has expanded most among the Indigenous peoples. Andrade draws an appealing conclusion regarding the increasing preferences for Pentecostal churches among Indigenous Ecuadorians:

Through the process of Pentecostalization, a more ‘irrational’ and emotional religious experience has returned, which has created internal conflicts and a hybridity of religious elements. This can partly be explained by 40 years of evangelization of the *Gospel Missionary Union (Unión Misionera Evangélica)*, which encouraged a ‘civilized’ and ‘modern’ behavior that excluded strong emotions and mystical experiences, related to the Catholic past. Spirituality, control of sentiments, the ethics of self-denial and the rationality of faith of the Protestant-Evangelical model is disturbed. This rupture gave space to Pentecostalism, as a religious expression that was more compatible with the Andean ethos of magic, dreams, the power of nature, the supernatural, and personal religious experience (2005b:108-109).¹⁷

It is essential for the understanding of the transformation of the Evangelical churches in Ecuador to emphasize the traditional separation between the ‘things of God’ and the ‘things of the world’. The Kichwa concept *jucha* comprises all ‘worldly things’ that were prohibited and considered as dirty and sinful, for instance: vanity, watch television, dance, party, drink, smoke, and to participate in politics, which were to be compared to the searching of God’s kingdom, following Susana Andrade. As one Evangelical priest argued, politics is associated with vices, lies and corruption: “As you enter politics, you enter the world, and you start drinking” (Andrade 2005a:50).

IV. THE ECUADORIAN INDIGENOUS MOVEMENT

Before getting deeper into the analysis of the identity-politics of the Evangelical Indians, it is necessary to briefly summarize the panorama of the broader Indigenous movement. In terms of grassroots activism, the Ecuadorian Indigenous movement is the strongest in the continent (Yashar 2005). In addition to the previously mentioned CONAIE confederation as the dominating voice of Indigenous grievances, the national peasant federation FENOCIN (*Federación Nacional de Organizaciones Campesinas Indígenas y Negras*) should be mentioned,¹⁸ historical rival of CONAIE as for peasant Indigenous representation. The third Ecuadorian Indigenous confederation is that of the Evangelicals, the FEINE.

Both the CONAIE and the FENOCIN have merged ethnic and class identities in their discourse, mobilization and alliance-building, although in CONAIE the ethnic profile is superior whereas the FENOCIN is a more class-intensive organization. The FEINE has thus added the religious distinctiveness, albeit still maintaining the other two identitarian categories. Amidst recent Indigenous political mobilization in Latin America, it is similarly imperative to emphasize that frequently the shared cultural identification as 'Indigenous' in practice has been a weak political resource, even though the ethnically defined identity may be central in the discourse of the Indigenous movement. This is due, following anthropologist Rudi Colloredo-Mansfeld, to the cultural, social and economic diversities within the broader movement (2007:88-89; see also Lalander 2010:52). The organizations thus need to merge different identitarian elements in mobilization and alliance-building, most frequently ethnicity and class.

From the political institutionalization of the CONAIE in the mid-1980s, through the municipal electoral triumphs from 1996 onwards, and the Indigenous contribution to the constitutional process of 1997-98, the Ecuadorian Indigenous population has become increasingly conspicuous. The Indigenous movement – concentrated in the CONAIE – has not only been a decisive political actor on issues concerning bilingual education, rural development and models of participatory democracy, but has also contributed to the relatively peaceful overthrow of two national governments, the ones presided by Abdalá Bucarám in 1997 and Jamil Mahuad in 2000. Throughout the 1990s, the Evangelical Indigenous actors participated in protest mobilizations of the Indigenous movement, often in collaboration with the dominant CONAIE, and since 1996 with the political movement Pachakutik. In 1994, the FEINE as well as the FENOCIN joined the CONAIE in the National Agrarian Coordinator against the capitalist agrarian policies of the time, which culminated in an Indigenous uprising

that paralyzed the country for several days (Zamosc 2007:10).¹⁹ In the uprising (*levantamiento*) of January 2001, the three main Indigenous confederations – CONAIE, FENOCIN and FEINE – unified to protest against the economic program of the national government.

In the presidential election of 2002, the Indigenous movement allied with lieutenant colonel and former coup leader Lucio Gutiérrez and achieved inclusion in the national government, including two ministerial posts for CONAIE-Pachakutik representatives. The alliance lasted only six months, however, and the Indigenous movement withdrew from the government and joined the political opposition. Since the transitory Gutiérrez alliance, the Indigenous movement has experienced a crisis of legitimacy and credibility, manifested most of all in deepening grassroots dissatisfaction with the national leadership of CONAIE and Pachakutik. Gutiérrez used his connections with FEINE and its electoral movement Amauta to further debilitate the position of the hitherto dominant CONAIE-Pachakutik organizations (Zamosc 2007; Becker 2008; Lalander 2010).

For Luís Maldonado, one of the leading intellectual authorities of the Indigenous movement, one crucial event that decisively weakened CONAIE took place after the official withdrawal of Pachakutik-CONAIE from the government alliance, when CONAIE's ex-president, Antonio Vargas, was appointed Social Welfare Minister in the cabinet of Gutiérrez, supported by the FEINE and a few CONAIE organizations (Maldonado Ruíz 2006:131; Zamosc 2007:14-15). During interviews, when touching upon the issue of the crisis of the Indigenous movement, many Indigenous informants argued that the organizations *per se* were not to blame; rather, they spontaneously blamed certain leaders of Pachakutik and the CONAIE, whom they classified as traitors or opportunists (Carlosama, interview, Ibarra, June 27, 2007).

V. EVANGELICAL INDIGENOUS POLITICS: FEINE AND AMAUTA

We may say that the organizational evolution of the Evangelical Indians is associated with the processes of cultural revitalization and the emergence of the Indigenous movement, and conditioned by the political, social and economic changes in the country. However, it should be stressed that this organizational process was started by their own genuine initiatives, without any external support, although once constituted, they sought external cooperation and relationships (Guamán 2006:88).

In the 1990s, the FEINE entered national politics. As mentioned, in the principal manifestations of Indigenous resistance – the *levantamientos* (uprisings) and marches of 1990, 1992 and 1994 – the Evangelical Federation joined forces with the broader Indigenous movement,

spearheaded by CONAIE. During these years, the ethnic profile of the organization at the national level gradually and partially overshadowed that of religion. At the same time, the FEINE established contacts with progressive international Evangelical churches, such as the North American Christian Reformed World Relief Committee (CRWRC), the Mennonites and others, which provided economic support for the federation, as also World Vision had done previously (Guamán 2006: 71-72).

The causes and motivation behind the socio-political organization of the Evangelical Indians can be summarized in six thematic demands:

1. Rupture of the ethnic domination.
2. The rights of liberty of conscience and struggle against repression, discrimination and exclusion for being Indigenous and Evangelicals.
3. Access to land during reform processes (for families, temples and graveyards).
4. Development of social initiatives to combat poverty and ethnically defined exclusion.
5. Control of the sacred; to make Indigenous peoples (and not foreign actors) regulate the Evangelical doctrines, cults and management.
6. Articulation of the Evangelical social movement to be able to formulate claims and proposals to the state and society (Guaman 2006:90).

The articulation between the respective identitarian elements is apparent in this declaration, with the integration of the religiously defined claims in those concerned with class and ethnicity. The first is evidently exclusively ethnically defined, whereas the second adds the religious discrimination. The third includes all three elements, whereas the fourth embraces ethnicity and class. The fifth claim clearly combines the religious and ethnic identities, while the sixth comprises the three elements.

As for the Evangelical Indigenous visibility at different political levels, already by the late 1980s they had one seat in the national Congress (through the Chimborazo slate of *Izquierda Democrática* (Democratic Left party, ID) and several positions in municipal councils in Chimborazo (in Colta and Guamote). In 1988, an Evangelical Indian was elected mayor of the municipality of Colta, the first Indigenous mayor ever in Ecuador (Van Cott 2008:162-163). In Guamote, the ID triumphed with an Indigenous candidate – Mariano Curicama – for the mayoralty in 1992. In 1996, he was re-elected on the slate of the Indigenous party Pachakutik that had been created the previous year. The ex-mayor of Colta, Indigenous Evangelical Pedro Curichumbi reflects on the politization of the movement:

We have entered the religious power, through Protestantism, through Evangelism, with different tendencies, with rites and ceremonies. We have entered the world of knowledge through school and universities, but we believe that we should form an academic community, of philosophers, people really capable of thinking and additionally to produce knowledge. We have entered a

bit in the so-called economic power, through informal business and a more systematic commerce by some brothers in Santiago de Quito and elsewhere, who have founded companies and managed to move in a competitive world. Now we think that we should work in politics, because the political power controls the State. And politics permit decision-making and decides how the national richness should be distributed... To sow the concept of politics as something good was hard. We have had to sing, compose songs, hymns, poetry, thoughts, versicles, and we have carried out acts and ceremonies in relation to politics. Today I can endorse that people love politics, there is a love towards politics. So many seminars, so many workshops, to teach them that politics is a science, an art (interviewed in Andrade 2005a:54-55).

Clearly inspired by the formation of Pachakutik in 1995, the Evangelical Indians and the FEINE in 1996 prepared the framework for its proper electoral vehicle: *Amauta Jatari*. The political commission of the FEINE established the idea in 1997, but only three years later the political movement is registered in the electoral council, to be able to compete in the elections of 2000. The pressure from Evangelical activists and leaders in Chimborazo was decisive in this process. Amauta triumphed immediately in the municipal elections of Colta. An increasing number of Evangelical priests began to take active part in local politics, as the ex-mayor of Colta remembers:

The priests show up sometimes at the mayoralty, to pray, and I have to leave all my duties to attend them. The CONPOSIIECH²⁰ has not left me alone at any time and I am very grateful for this. If it wasn't for them, I would never have been able to sow the concept of politics in Chimborazo (Curichumbi interviewed in Andrade 2005a:57).

José Manuel Criollo, theologian, Evangelical pastor and provincial leader of the FEINE in the Northern highland province of Imbabura, recalls the process that culminated in the formation of the Amauta. When questioned about how the internal debate evolved within the churches before this important step of entering electoral politics, and against the background of separation between the divine issues and more worldly superficial and material things, he responded the following with regard to the argumentation:

Well, I personally thought, and FEINE as well, that it was necessary to participate in politics, and not give away our votes, as in other provinces. Particularly in Chimborazo, Cotopaxi, Tungurahua and Imbabura, since we have some churches we should be able to compete electorally. We argued that we ought to open the road for our young people to participate, those that at that moment were studying. But, one day they will be professionals, and we –as a collective movement- should be part of that opening for their participation. We argued that if we do not participate in the political area, our children would join other political projects (interview, Otavalo, July 5, 2007).

In the year 2002 the movement is recognized at the national level as *Movimiento Independiente Amauta Jatari*. However, in 2002, the Amauta obtained less than one per cent of the votes in the first round of the presidential election (Aigaje Pinango 2010:147). According to Guamán, the electoral fiasco was due to a lack of grassroots support for the national leaders of FEINE and Amauta. The candidates had been selected from above, by a small clique of national leaders. Many Evangelical Indians likewise argued that the FEINE should concentrate on ecclesiastical issues, and that social and political challenges were better handled by the other Indigenous organizations. Another important element can be traced to the factionalism of the Evangelical Indigenous electorate, and the skepticism towards some caudillo-like Evangelical leaders trying to capitalize on the Indigenous vote for personal gains (Guamán 2006:87). Following this argumentative logic, confusion regarding the political representativity of Evangelical Indians characterized these intersecting scenarios, and generally the CONAIE-Pachakutik were viewed as ‘more legitimate’ defenders of ethnically defined interests. Julián Guamán concludes the following, regarding FEINE’s complicated relationship with the broader Indigenous movement:

Definitively, the FEINE is an organization of ethnic-religious origin, which recently has developed a social and political role. In the first place, its articulation aims at providing responses to the exclusion of Evangelical Indigenous peoples, and to demand Indigenous recognition, space and representation in society and the State. In this way, the FEINE has established itself as a sector and therefore evolved into a mobilizing and demobilizing force within the Ecuadorian Indigenous movement (2006:93).

It is important to emphasize that Evangelical Indigenous politicians, from Chimborazo and elsewhere, have reached important positions through other political movements, particularly the Pachakutik and the PAIS (*Patria Altiva I Soberana*) movement. In the case of Indigenous Evangelical participation in Pachakutik, this would suggest that the ethnic identification is superior to that of religion in political contexts. As for additional confusion among the Evangelical grassroots, Antonio Vargas, the presidential candidate of FEINE-Amauta in 2002, came from the CONAIE (former president of the confederation), i.e. the organization responsible for previously excluding FEINE from important Indigenous public institutions (Guamán 2006:88).

As for the more ethnic profile of the FEINE (and Amauta), at least in its political discourse, Andrade agrees and concludes that religious allusions in fact constituted an obstacle, and therefore a consciously more

ethnicity and class driven discourse seemed to function better. As illustrated in the words of former FEINE President Marco Murillo:

We will not keep permitting that Indigenous peoples are treated as they have been... We want to change those old political practices into policies of the State. It is time to start governing with the participation of all people. It is time to move the country forward, to have a participatory democracy. It is time to leave our discrepancies behind and to close ranks behind this big ideal of a life project without exclusions, with tolerance, principles of justice, peace and equity, to construct a society of peace (interviewed in Andrade 2005a:59).

For his part, ex-mayor Curichumbi of Colta contemplated in an interview in 2009:

Our political organization Movimiento Amauta, initially Jatari, then Amauta Yuyai, was created in the cradle, in the core of the Evangelical Confederation of Chimborazo, the AIECH, the Evangelical Association. From that moment we planted this new seed to take root in fertile soil and to produce fruits within the systems, processes, results, impacts; to generate benefits to society. In this sense, the protagonist role that our organization, the Confederation, and FEINE played, is stimulating, to lead a local government (interviewed in 2009, in Aigaje Pinango 2010:79).

In retrospect, Guamán suggests that the shortcomings of Amauta are to be found in its lack of a clear programmatic political project or ideological-philosophical platform. Besides, Amauta has hitherto lacked sufficiently skilled technical and political human resources (Guamán 2006: 88; see also Aigaje Pinango 2010). Looking back, Guamán critically reflects:

From the beginning, the Movement Amauta Yuyai was captured by a group of persons... Three persons have controlled the movement at the national level... and some other people of Pichincha.²¹ At the more provincial level, and particularly in Chimborazo, the movement is in the hands of a family. Other names are rather a kind of satellites, as for instance all current mayors, satellites in the sense that they respond to the decisions that the group I mentioned may take (interviewed in 2009, in Aigaje Pinango 2010:79).

Even if the FEINE at times has joined the CONAIE in national manifestations, the relationship between the two has generally been hostile. The conflictive liaison also includes the image of Evangelical Indians as 'more modern and progressive persons', who had freed themselves from both Catholic domination and the economic and ideological control of non-Indigenous sectors. As 'new persons', evangelically transformed into 'God's children', social and ethnic stratification lines were dissolved (Andrade 2005a:52), from the more individual and religious Evangelical

viewpoint. CONAIE denounced this evangelization of the Indigenous peoples as a betrayal, and Evangelicals were labeled as not trustworthy or serving double interests (Ibid.). New patterns of discrimination, also among the Indigenous people, have emerged as a consequence of the formation of competing political organizations and the sectorization of the religious beliefs of Indigenous actors. By comparison, the Pachakutik has been viewed as a broader intercultural political movement, whereas the Amauta has defined its representative scope within the limits of ethnicity and religion.

The identitarian clashes between the organizations are historically rooted. Whereas the CONAIE leans on a historical collective identity as oppressed and struggling Indigenous peoples, the FEINE and Amauta face the challenge of also politicizing religious identification, something that in itself has been problematic, and even considered as un-natural and sinful (*jucha*). Lucero provides an illustrative example of the intersecting identitarian challenges of Indigenous actors in political scenarios, namely by asking what the 'Indigenous authenticity' is based on. Who is more likely to represent the ethnically defined group? He contrasts the 'unlikely' case of Evangelical Indians in Ecuador (FEINE) with the 'more authentic' Bolivian highland CONAMAQ²² federation of Quechas and Aymaras, being a more 'traditional Indigenous movement' around issues of ethnic identity, rights and territory. Lucero concludes that the FEINE needed to adjust its profile and discourse, partly 'borrowing' from the program of the CONAIE to better appeal to the Evangelical Indigenous population (Lucero 2006), that according to the hypothetical point of departure of this study, felt confused by the politicization of the Evangelical organization in a territory where the CONAIE had been the main spokesman of ethnic rights.

VI. INDIGENOUS EVANGELICAL POLITICS IN TIMES OF RAFAEL CORREA

The analytical focus on the local level can also be linked to – and contrasted with – alliance-building between the actors in question at the provincial and national levels. The victories of Leftist Rafael Correa and his PAIS movement in the presidential elections of 2006 and 2009 have dramatically affected the mobilizational perspectives of the Indigenous organizations. The main banner of President Correa's political project has been the *Revolución Ciudadana* (Citizen Revolution) which comprises the idea of a 'desectorization' of society, i.e. a policy aimed at abolishing social stratification along ethnic, gender, religious and class lines. Paradoxically, in the new Constitution of 2008, the first article declares Ecuador to be an intercultural and pluri-national state, that is, a recognition of Indigenous grievances, which clashes with the vision of

‘desectorization’. Correa’s Citizen Revolution is nevertheless double-edged. On the one hand, desectorization proposes the elimination of inter-ethnic and inter-religious boundaries and, on the other, Correa is concerned with legitimacy in terms of ethnic representation in the PAIS. In times of the Correa government, CONAIE, FEINE and FENOCIN have staged joint manifestations against the government, since 2009-2010 in defense of natural resources and the environment (Lalander 2010:130).

In the anti-government march in defense of natural resources and the dignity of the Indigenous peoples – *Marcha Plurinacional por el Agua, por la Vida y la Dignidad de los Pueblos*²³ – organized by the CONAIE-Pachakutik and other movements in March 2012, the FEINE joined this mobilization and formulated a manifesto directed at Correa:

The government of President Rafael Correa Delgado has acted for five years, with a degree of stability and approval not seen since 1996. Initially it emerged as a leftist project, but over time this horizon was lost and politics that went directly against the Indigenous and social movements were established, that is leaving behind those that promoted and supported his candidacy (FEINE 2012).

It is noteworthy that in this official Manifesto of the Evangelical Indigenous Peoples of Ecuador, religion is not even mentioned, confirming the hypothesis regarding the inferior position of this identitarian element in political contexts. Of course, in this particular protest scenario, the central claims were directly related to ethno-cultural identities and traditions and the defense of land and natural resources, but still it constitutes an example of the difficulty of using the religious identity in socio-political disputes.

It should be emphasized that, historically speaking, the FEINE-Amauta has been rather inconsistent with regard to national political alliance-building, and has allied with the centre-left RED (*Red Ética y Democracia*), the neoliberal PRE (*Partido Roldosista Ecuatoriano*), the conservative, nationalist PSP (*Partido Sociedad Patriótica*) of ex-President Lucio Gutiérrez and the right-wing Social-Christian Party PSC (*Partido Social Cristiano*), but at times also with Pachakutik and/or the PAIS movement of President Rafael Correa. The provincial case of Chimborazo is most illustrative and attention-calling in this respect, being a stronghold of both Pachakutik, Amauta and more recently the PSP and the PAIS movements. All four of these principal political parties (or political movements as they prefer to label themselves) are relatively new political actors, Pachakutik being the oldest (formed in 1995), Amauta (1998), PSP (2002) and PAIS (2006). It is significant to stress that also within Pachakutik there is an important number of Evangelical Indigenous actors (as also in the PAIS and the PSP). As argued, Amauta has experienced difficulties in convincing the grassroots of the political project of the

organization and the processes of leadership representation in the organization have been questioned by Evangelical Indigenous citizens. Some of these critical voices have chosen to sympathize with the Pachakutik instead, or since 2006, with the PAIS, the PSP or other organizations.

Among the politically engaged Indigenous activists of a religiously defined identity, there are differing perceptions of the representativity of CONAIE-Pachakutik and Amauta, respectively. At the national level, Gerónimo Yantalema, Evangelical Indian from Chimborazo, represents Pachakutik in the National Assembly and identifies himself with CONAIE. The tensions between ethnicity and religion in electoral politics are also present beyond Chimborazo. In Otavalo, Imbabura province, Pachakutik in alliance with Amauta were in charge of the municipal government between 2000 and 2004. In retrospective, Pastor José Manuel Criollo (interview, Otavalo, July 2, 2007) criticizes what he labels the monopolization of the Indigenous struggle by the Pachakutik and the CONAIE, permitting playroom in this process only to certain persons and sectors. Evangelical intellectual Luis Enrique Cachiguango Cotacachi, likewise former municipal councilor in Otavalo representing Amauta, suggests that Pachakutik traditionally has represented the non-Evangelical Indians (interview, Otavalo, July 9, 2007). On the other hand, Luis Ernesto Campo Otavalo, Indigenous Mormon and lawyer who militates within the Pachakutik, believes that the religious self-identification is not that important within the political Indigenous movement (interview, Otavalo, June 2, 2007).

Returning to Chimborazo, there are important national dimensions in sub-national electoral politics. Matters have been further complicated by a strong electoral loyalty between a high number of Indigenous citizens and ex-President Lucio Gutiérrez of the PSP party, who in the recent presidential elections of 2009 was more popular than Rafael Correa in Chimborazo. A 'Lucio effect' is therefore also important to take into consideration in the analysis of differing voting behavior at the different political-territorial levels among Indigenous citizens. This contrasts with the strong support behind the re-elected Indigenous Prefect of Chimborazo, Mariano Curicama, who was endorsed by the Pachakutik in alliance with Correa's PAIS movement (part of a 'Correa effect'). The alliance Pachakutik-PAIS also triumphed in Riobamba, although with a non-Indigenous politician.²⁴ Curicama, who was the second Ecuadorian Indigenous mayor ever (in Guamote), reflects on the provincial political

transformation concerning ethnic and religious identification and his own popular support as authority:

Well, here we have two movements; that of Pachakutik, which is not only for the Catholic, not only for the Indigenous, it is for Indigenous, Catholic, and mestizos; and then we have the movement exclusively for the Evangelicals: Amauta. But the Evangelical [Indigenous] people have observed that the Indigenous of Pachakutik have performed well administratively, the majority of Evangelical brothers who belong to the Amauta has given me their support. Therefore they even lost their mayoralty, because they do not agree with one of their companions who lost the mayoralty of Colta, the most significant and important of all. And the one that was in charge [the former Evangelical mayor] was a good leader, very competent and a professional. So, this is the way it is, there are two movements, but the Evangelicals also support me, because in Pachakutik there are Evangelicals, Catholics, Indigenous and mestizos (interview, Riobamba, July 2, 2009).

Following Curicama, the Evangelical religious profile of the Amauta was perceived as a limitation in political scenarios, whereas the broader intercultural movement Pachakutik has functioned better in the field of electoral mobilization. At the provincial level of Chimborazo and in Riobamba, politicians also need to consider grievances from the non-Indigenous (and non-Evangelical) social sectors, which can be contrasted with the smaller and practically exclusively Indigenous municipalities of Colta and Guamote. However, it should be mentioned that since the 2009 elections, Evangelical Indians (of the Amauta) are strongly represented in the parish councils (*juntas parroquiales*) of Cacha, Flores, Púngala, Licto and San Juan in Riobamba.

In Colta, with its Evangelical Indigenous majority, *Amauta Yuyay* lost the mayoralty to Pachakutik in 2009, as already mentioned above by Curicama. On the other hand, Amauta secured the government of Guamote, that until the 1990s had been religiously more Catholic. These changing circumstances since the 1990s have not been sufficiently studied, in particular the aspects concerning changing relationships and strategies among Evangelical Indigenous actors at the local and provincial levels. This shifting pattern, with Protestantism gaining territory also in Guamote and other previously more Catholic municipalities with large Indigenous populations, is important to analyze more closely in future studies, particularly in the context of the Correa effect and the 'desectorization' of society. Rounding off, despite its categorical oppositional positioning in the protest mobilization of March 2012, before the forthcoming presidential elections of February 2013, the FEINE has finally decided to support Rafael Correa and the PAIS alliance.

VII. FINAL REMARKS AND CONCLUSIONS

In this article the politicization of ethnicity and religion has been problematized in the context of Evangelical Indigenous groups in Chimborazo. The novel theoretic-methodological approach, integrating sociological and political scientific tradition with ideas of women's studies on intersectionality will constitute a contribution to the scholarly debates on ethnically and religiously defined political movements beyond the case of Ecuador. The results will likewise contribute to the debates on the dialectical relationship between social cleavages and political parties. The methodological approach is expected to be useful for research on Indigenous movements and issues of tension between ethnicity, religion and class in political contexts.

As has been argued, the politization of both ethnicity and the religious identity constitutes a sensitive and complicated challenge for the involved actors. Through the review of the historical process of Evangelical growth among the Indigenous peoples of Chimborazo, we may achieve a better understanding of these challenges. Elements related to class and ethnicity were central during the second wave of Evangelization, i.e. the concern of missionaries and radical Catholic priests regarding the social conditions of the Indigenous population. Onwards, this accelerated the process of involvement in politics on behalf of Indigenous Evangelical priests and churches.

On the basis of the material examined in the present text, it is possible to conclude that within the Ecuadorian Indigenous movement the Evangelical Indigenous organizations have consisted both as a force (faction) within the national political panorama, but at the same time rivalries between the confederations have characterized the relationships as well as changing constellations of alliances with non-Indigenous political actors over time. The central actors of the FEINE-Amauta also experienced that Evangelicalism – albeit together with the ethnic profile – did not function that well as a political project and discourse.

The study indicates that generally the ethnic identification is superior to the religious one in socio-political contexts. Therefore, in this intersectionally defined dilemma, the FEINE-Amauta 'borrowed' the (relatively more successful) ethnicity-intensive approach from the CONAIE-Pachakutik. Still, they had difficulties convincing the grassroots of the legitimacy of its representation in the political arena. Evangelical Indians have tended more recently to support other movements, mainly the Pachakutik, but also the PAIS movement and the PSP, which adds confirmation to the hypothesis regarding ethnic identity as superior to that of religion in political contexts. Even so, among Evangelical Indigenous

individuals and collectives that in the private sphere are completely devoted to Evangelism, many argue that the Evangelical movement should concentrate more on spiritual issues. This is also the legacy of the previous *jucha* argument, to separate the things of God from the more worldly things, although at the same time Evangelical Indians in Ecuador have advanced a great deal towards a more general acceptance of religious leaders getting involved in politics.

Based on the observations of the electoral experience of the Amauta in Ecuador, the politicization partly became a failure, albeit with a few local strongholds, mainly in Chimborazo. The fusion of ethnicity and religion seems to be less natural than that between ethnicity and class. Consequently, the relative failure of Amauta in electoral politics also strengthens the argument of ethnicity being superior to religious identification in political contexts. Of course, as has been discussed, the rather elitist structure of the Evangelical organizations has added to the poor electoral outcomes with regard to grassroots perceptions of ethnically defined political representation.

NOTES

¹ In future studies I will go deeper into the reasoning of Evangelical Indigenous people regarding the more private sphere. Regarding the descriptive usage of terminology and conceptualization around what is labeled Evangelicalism and Protestantism (or Evangelical Protestantism) in this study, it should be emphasized that I will not thoroughly sort out or define exact tendencies and/or relevant particular churches in these processes; rather a broad definition of Evangelicalism is applied. Three wide-ranging categories can be identified within the broader usage of the epithet Protestantism/ Evangelicalism: 'Classical', 'Evangelical' and 'Pentecostal' Protestantism respectively, and within each one of these a number of tendencies and distinct churches. For an historical overview of the establishment of Evangelical denominations, agencies, NGOs and influential missions in Ecuador, see Guamán (2006:26-32; 2011). In the present study, I will thus not go deeper into the particularities and/or characteristics of each tendency.

² Colta has 45,000 inhabitants and Guamote 35,000, with the Indigenous majority living in rural areas. Riobamba has around 200,000 inhabitants and presents a mainly urban character and ethnically more divided scenario. In this article, a few analytical reflections on the theme beyond Chimborazo will however be briefly included, i.e. Evangelical Indigenous experiences at the national level and in the Imbabura province of the Northern Sierra.

³ As for ethnic identification, the Indigenous population of Chimborazo is almost exclusively *Kichwa*.

⁴ Later the significance of the FEINE abbreviation was changed to *Consejo de Pueblos y Organizaciones Indígenas Evangélicos del Ecuador* (Ecuadorian Council of Indigenous Evangelical Peoples and Organizations).

⁵ Amauta Jatari is Kichwa and signifies 'the wise one arises'. From 2003 the organization changed its name to *Amauta Yuyay* (wise thought). Onwards I will at times refer to the political movement simply as *Amauta*.

⁶ *Confederación de Nacionalidades Indígenas del Ecuador*. An estimated 80 per cent of the local level Indigenous organizations are affiliated to CONAIE (Van Cott 2005:107). Between the mid-1980s and 2002, the Ecuadorian Indigenous movement, spearheaded by CONAIE, held a dominant position as the nation's main leftist political oppositional force (Lalander 2010).

⁷ The Evangelical Indians have been rejected, segregated, discriminated against and excluded from the angles of class, ethnicity and religion, for being poor, Indigenous, and Evangelical. For Evangelical Indigenous women, the gender-based exclusion and discrimination should be added (Guamán 2006:92).

⁸ Guamán is both an Indigenous Evangelical actor (from Guamote, Chimborazo) and a critical academic analyst in the field in question. In a personal communication with Guamán (2010), he agrees that practically all research conducted hitherto on the Evangelical Indians of Chimborazo has been from the anthropological standpoints.

⁹ Previously, in the Constitution of 1873, change of religion had been subject to the death penalty (Guamán 2006).

¹⁰ Colta has been referred to as the heartland of the Evangelical Indigenous movement.

¹¹ Whereas Catholicism was imposed on the Indigenous peoples, in recent decades the ethnically defined groups view the competition between churches as a possibility to decide by themselves. Of course, Indigenous believers had every so often felt reluctance or even fear towards North American missionaries.

¹² It is important to remember that the Theology of Liberation was not exclusively a process that took place within the Catholic Church; also an increasing number of Protestant pastors were devoted to these ideas and consequently this contributed to changing attitudes towards the Indigenous peoples on the part of foreign missionaries.

¹³ ECUARUNARI (*Ecuador Runacunapac Riccharimui*) was founded in 1972 and the name signifies 'Awakening of the Ecuadorian Indians'. ECUARUNARI was a key actor in the creation of CONAIE in 1986 and is the strongest regional force within the confederation.

¹⁴ In 1989 the first Bible in Kichwa was available and in 1996 the first 100 years of Evangelical presence in Ecuador were marked by a celebration.

¹⁵ Later on, the AIECH was converted into the Confederation of Peoples, Communities and Churches (*Confederación de Pueblos, Comunidades e Iglesias*, CONPOCIECH). On AIECH and the broader Indigenous Movement in Chimborazo, see also Illicachi Guñay (2006: chapter 3).

¹⁶ At the rural grassroots level, in the 1980s the boundaries between Catholic and Evangelical could sometimes be a question of life or death; and converted families could be blamed, for instance, for bad harvest (Andrade 1999).

¹⁷ It is interesting to observe that traditional Indigenous religious beliefs and cultural practices have been smoothly merged into the practices of the Evangelical (as well as Catholic) churches (observations and interviews in Ecuador during fieldwork), evident most of all during festivities.

¹⁸ Historically, FENOCIN has changed its ideological and political character. It was formed as a Catholic union: the *Federación de Organizaciones Campesinas* (FENOC). In the 1980s, the Federation officially recognized the Indigenous demands within the organization (FENOC-I) and in the 1990s it received its current name, FENOCIN, with the N added for the inclusion also of Afro-Ecuadorians. Already in 1968, however, FENOC proclaimed itself socialist and since then has identified with the Ecuadorian Socialist Party (*Partido Socialista del Ecuador*, PSE).

¹⁹ One of the Indigenous negotiators who eventually sat down to negotiate with President Sixto Durán Ballén was in fact an Evangelical Indigenous leader of Chimborazo (Guamán, interview, Quito, March 23, 2012).

²⁰ Confederación de Pueblos, Organizaciones e Iglesias Indígenas Evangélicas de Chimborazo.

²¹ The central highland province of Pichincha comprises Quito and surrounding areas.

²² *Consejo Nacional de Ayllus y Markas del Qullasuyu*.

²³ Plurinational March for Water, Life and the Dignity of the Peoples.

²⁴ This alliance has been firmly criticized by important segments of Pachakutik and CONAIE at the grassroots level in Chimborazo, and also by the national leadership of the Indigenous movement. As they argue, the alliance was made without having been approved by the organizations. Curicama himself defends the alliance as a kind of personal favor of gratitude and an act of recognition of President Correa (Curicama, interview, Riobamba, July 2, 2009).

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