

# ‘Early’ and ‘Modern’ indigenist Practices – A Comparative Analysis of the Ecuadorian and the Mexican cases [1]

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## Abstract

*The field of indigenism has been studied from a wide range of perspectives since the 1970s. The reflections presented in the following essay are part of an attempt to contribute to these efforts from a different angle. Studies of indigenism usually focus on the official indigenist politics and on the scientific approaches that legitimate them. On the following pages I will try to go beyond these approaches in order to understand the significance of the practice which makes indigenism possible in the first place, comparison. Practices of comparison are not only the foundation of science, but of thinking. In concrete terms, the objective of the present work will be to reflect on how ‘modern’ indigenist practices in the 1940s were influenced by ‘earlier’ comparisons in the form of structured structures and structuring structures in Bourdieusian sense. For this purpose, I will analyze and contextualize the early contributions of Mexican and Ecuadorian institutional indigenists to the official journal of the InterAmerican Indian Institute named *América Indígena* and relate them with ‘earlier’ indigenist production.*

**Keywords:** Indigenism, Practices of Comparison, Cultural Anthropology, Social Anthropology

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## Introduction

*Indigenism*, understood as a political and cultural movement whose starting point may be situated at the verge of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, was triggered by the imperious necessity of rethinking, renegotiating and redefining the relations between indigenous and non-indigenous populations within the context of the consolidation of ‘modern’ national projects in post-colonial America. In disregard of the diversity of motivations, notions and actors present during the phases of formation and consolidation of the movement, indigenism is today basically associated with the work of the *Instituto Indigenista Interamericano* (I.I.I.), which was an institution created in 1940 by governmental delegates of the whole continent – excepting Canada, Haiti and Paraguay – in an attempt to coordinate and regulate the production and development of indigenist notions, ideals and policies. The ‘institutionalization’ of the movement at this level was only the first step within a series of (geo)political-administrative measures which also included the creation

of equivalent institutions on a national level, the ‘professionalization’ of indigenists and the consolidation of specific forms of international cooperation – a sort of ‘development politics’ *avant la lettre*.

The predominant conception of ‘institutional indigenism’ being the ‘real’ indigenism represents precisely a huge obstacle in the matter of studying this phenomenon in its whole dimension and complexity. Built on the premise that replacing the common top-down institutional approach with a non-structural bottom-up approach is not enough in order to overcome this limitation, the following work will remove the focus on indigenism as an ensemble of notions, ideals and policies negotiated and applied within an institutional frame, in order to place it on how indigenists reflected while developing and legitimating such notions and ideals in the very first place. This approach, which could be defined as a *second-order approach* in analogy to the Luhmanian concept of *second-order observation* – focus on how observers observe –, will concentrate therefore on the elementary social practice with which humans perceive and

interpret 'reality' in order to build their notions and ideals, namely *comparison*. The application of this perspective has two primary objectives: on the first place to demonstrate that 'modern' indigenist notions and ideals are significantly connected to 'earlier' *practices of comparison* and, in second place, to contribute with some theoretical considerations which could be useful to study this matter in the future.

Concretely, the following essay will analyze how some practices of comparison belonging to what I call 'early colonial indigenism' – the production of indigenist notions and ideals in the early colonial period – remain the core of 'modern' institutional indigenist notions and ideals during the first decade of institutional life of the I.I.I. For this purpose, I have chosen to focus on the 'modern' institutional indigenist production of two paradigmatic national cases, namely Mexican and Ecuadorian institutional indigenism, and the early colonial indigenist production of two well known 'Indian rights advocates' which I would rather call 'early colonial indigenists', namely Vasco de Quiroga (1470/78-1565) and Bartolomé de las Casas (1484-1566). [2] On the following paragraphs I will reflect about the practices of comparison present in the most important articles published by representatives of Mexico and Ecuador in the official scientific publication of the I.I.I. called *América Indígena* from 1941 until 1950, and relate those practices with the ones present in the work of Quiroga and Las Casas. The theoretical frame used in order to approach the following analysis consist of some sociological reflections developed by Pierre Bourdieu for studying the *habitus* and the *political field*.

It is important to highlight that the focus of the present work will be laid on the production of those institutional Indigenists who were able to publish their articles in *América Indígena*, which automatically leaves aside the contributions of other institutional actors and of those who weren't aligned with institutional indigenism, as it is the case for example of indigenous organizations.

### Structuring Structures - Mexico

In his book *Le sens Pratique (Sozialer Sinn)* Pierre Bourdieu argues that conditioning

related to circumstances of human existence create systems of durable and transmittable dispositions, which he identified as *habitus*. The most decisive aspect of these *systems of dispositions* isn't however their role as *structured structures* – as Bourdieu describes them –, but their capability of transforming through repetitive application into durable and transmittable *structuring structures* (98). In this new form, systems of dispositions do not only explain the consolidation of certain practices but, more importantly, their perdurability. Although Bourdieu recognizes the existence of strategically conceived actions and reactions apparently independent from this dynamic, he also let us understand, that structuring structures strongly influence the way actors order their ideas before they can think strategically. Analog to the theoretical premise that stimuli can only generate certain reactions in actors who are conditioned to perceive them, it is conceivable that institutional indigenists thought in a similar way as some of their predecessors precisely because they were strongly influenced by concrete systems of dispositions which never ceased to exist, especially due to their continuous improving adaptability to new contexts.

The first article published on the first number of *América Indígena* (1941) was written by no other than the first director of the I.I.I. and Chief of Indigenous Matters of the Mexican government, the historian and educator Luis Chávez Orozco. It is necessary to emphasize that this first article, due to its foundational character, enjoyed not only a high level of legitimacy between indigenists but also considerable authority. In fact, the 9<sup>th</sup> article of the convention which gave birth to the I.I.I. states that the director of the institute will need to have "recognized competence in indigenous matters and her/his own *comparative knowledge* about the indigenous problem" (my translation and my cursive) (InterAmerican Indian Institute 16).

In this article entitled "Chiapas de los Indios", Chávez Orozco takes a critical stance on the colonial period, especially regarding its socioeconomic aspects, and compares the contributions of the two indigenous rights advocates mentioned above: Bartolomé de Las Casas and Vasco de Quiroga. Chávez Orozco

argues that Las Casas was a demagogue whose legacy was long forgotten by Indians because it only took place in the world of ideas, while Quiroga – or “Tata Vasco el Bueno”, as he is supposedly remembered in Michoacán – was worshiped by Indians because he gave them the technical and artistic knowledge required for economic survival within the new colonial order (8). Although Chávez Orozco didn't make explicit statements in regard to his own indigenist notions and ideals, he clearly positioned himself with help of the comparison of how these two early colonial indigenists compared: while Las Casas fought for the recognition of the ‘humanity’ of Indians, Quiroga's emphasis was the social and economic transformation and assimilation of Indians. As a historian, Chávez Orozco actively adjusted national history in order to permit the perdurability of concrete structuring structures by delegitimizing ‘conflicting’ figures. Furthermore, by choosing this specific historical comparison for such an important occasion, Chávez Orozco essentially confirmed the existing connection between early colonial and institutional ‘modern’ indigenism.

Returning to Chávez Orozco's comparison of both priests, it is unquestionable that he was aware of the importance of Las Casas' contribution regarding the legal status of Indians during the colonial period and even beyond. [3] Las Casas was one of the main actors within the theological-philosophical debates which took place in the first half of the 16<sup>th</sup> century, contributing decisively to dismantling the common idea that Indians should be classified as *barbarians*. This idea, product of the Aristotelian-Aquinian theological tradition, which could be understood as an even ‘earlier’ form of indigenism, considered *barbarians* as not-humans and therefore “slaves by nature” (Pagden 16). [4] Las Casas's position in this regard didn't question the existence of barbarians and the right of western Christian kingdoms to enslave them, [5] but merely the assumption that Indians belonged to this category. The success of Las Casas and those who shared his ideas, however, created the necessity to rethink the category ‘human’ since, even as equitable royal subjects, it was ‘unthinkable’ that Indians could be considered completely equal to white

western European Christians. [6] Besides contributing to the official abolition of Indian slavery, Las Casas's merit, from a comparative perspective, was the overcoming of ‘classical’ ethnological comparisons based on *similitudes* towards ethnological comparisons capable of building complex human categories. For this purpose, Las Casas and some of his adherents helped to establish the *tertium comparationis* ‘culture’ instead of ‘nature’ as the basis for new comparisons. In this sense, Indians could be categorized as humans because they proved to be able to create institutions, laws, language and complex social structures – besides proving to be susceptible to religious conversion –, but were classified as ‘culturally inferior’ in comparison to white western European Christians, who represented the highest cultural stage. [7]

Chávez Orozco's conflict with the figure of Las Casas certainly didn't rest in his legal achievements, but in the establishment of ‘culture’ as the principal parameter of comparison. The comparison between Las Casas and Quiroga took place at a time in which cultural anthropology, as the legitimate scientific approach to study human diversity, was being displaced by social anthropology. The difference between both schools laid in the possibility of its application. In general terms, for cultural anthropology the idea of culture couldn't be hierarchical because it is essentially incomparable (*cultural relativism*). The ‘modern’ cultural anthropological approach tried to explain processes of *acculturation* mainly from a comparative historical perspective without the explicit intention of applying this knowledge for practical purposes. On the contrary, social anthropology opted for the *tertium comparationis* ‘social’. All existing *tertium comparationis*, even cultural elements, were declared primarily social. The main goal of this approach was to enable a systematization of knowledge and therefore the creation of ‘universal rules’ to be applied for practical purposes (Barth 119). Once this was accomplished it was possible to compare every society, identify ‘common problems’ and create generic strategies to deal with them. [8] Social anthropology needed to be pragmatic and focused on the present. The categorizations made by cultural anthropology, even if they did recognize the existence of a cultural hierarchy,

didn't understand 'backwardness' necessarily as a 'problem', but as an outcome of a unique constellation of factors – cultural, economic, social and even environmental – which influenced the cultural development of a certain group. Asymmetrically, social anthropology understood 'backwardness' as the consequence of identifiable social 'deficiencies' or 'problems' which needed to be overcome. 'Backwardness', in this sense, gave each group a value, introducing new normative categories like 'miserable' or 'decadent'. [9] The consolidation of the global categories 'poor' or 'underdeveloped', which occurred only one decade after the creation of the I.I.I., is certainly a further consequence of the application of this logic.

Although the cultural approach of Las Casas and the scientific approach of cultural anthropology are significantly different, Chávez Orozco's intention was to make a statement regarding the scientific-political identity of the new institute. In this sense, his article must be understood as a strategic statement. There are several aspects why the establishment of social anthropology as the leading scientific-political basis of comparison was so important: social anthropology was promoted by some of the most important universities and research institutes of the United States, very much linked to governmental institutions and the country's economic elite; its 'modern' functional-structuralist character imported from Great Britain and the possibility of employing it as a domination mechanism to administrate colonial or subordinate subjects made it a strategic project of 'national security'; the consolidation of the national projects depended completely on the solution to the so-called 'Indian problem'; etc. The master-minds of the creation of the I.I.I. – for example the US American John Collier, and the Mexicans Juan Comas and Manuel Gamio – were all sympathizers of this school. A country like Mexico, with great influence in the formation of ideas in Latin America was, with the strategic support of the United States, predestined to lead the continental efforts toward a new era of relations between Indians and Non-Indians using the most effective means. [10]

At this point is where the figure of Quiroga becomes crucial. Inspired by the work *Utopia*

from Thomas Moore (1478-1535) and the *Leyes de Indias* – especially the *Leyes de Burgos* (1512) –, Quiroga believed that in order to overcome slavery, exploitation and discrimination, it was necessary to 'convert' Indians into productive royal subjects. For this purpose, Quiroga created the so-called "Town Hospitals", which were settlements constructed following European urban patterns, where Indians should live a European life. The Indians who were carefully chosen for this matter couldn't leave the towns without permission, had to live in artificial patriarchal family units, had to learn specific skills in order to work in regular time schemes and were obligated to abandon their languages and traditions in order to speak Spanish and become exemplary Christians. Besides expressing his admiration for Quiroga's ideals, Chávez Orozco built an analogy between Quiroga and a certain Bishop Olivera, who applied a similar strategy 200 years later in the same *comparative space* (Chiapas, Mexico). Chávez Orozco's description of Vasco de Quiroga as a venerated man who was rightly sanctified by the church shows furthermore how indigenists from countries with a deep rooted Christian tradition saw themselves: as a 'modern' version of exemplary missionaries. [11]

The main similarity between Quiroga, Olivares and the social anthropological approach promoted by the first director of the I.I.I. was certainly the proper formulation of the 'Indian Problem' as a socioeconomic problem. It is not possible to 'accuse' Chávez Orozco of apparently neglecting 'culture', because he belonged to those indigenists who favored the idea of constructing 'plurinational' States in which Indians could enjoy autonomy granted due to their strong cultural identity (Giraudó 28). A possible explanation for the inconsistencies between a 'Town Hospital Model' and a 'Plurinational State Model' regarding 'culture' would be clearly the prioritization of the administrative dimension. In this sense, the importance of 'culture' as a comparative parameter wasn't inexistent, but simply limited to the scope of 'recognizing' Indian cultural units and identifying their cultural characteristics in order to develop autonomy projects under governmental *indirect administration*, which

is precisely the political function that social anthropology played, especially in regions under colonial control. This interpretation coincides with Giraudo's observation that Chávez Orozco's favor for Indian political autonomy derives from his closeness to the Marxist – Stalinist – theory of "Oppressed Nations", which precisely claims for socioeconomic equality in a federal political model based on cultural identity (28). Within this comparative context Chávez Orozco published his second article for *América Indígena* entitled "The Democratic Institutions of Mexican Indians during the Colonial Period" (my translation), in which he praises the capacity of Indians to rule their own matters in a political system which grants them a certain autonomy.

The focus on 'culture' for recognizing and identifying purposes is a constant within the Mexican contributions to *América Indígena*. Alfonso Caso, a recognized Mexican archeologist and educator, affirms in his article "Definition of Indian and the Indian" (my translation) that it is imperative to find a definition for "Indian" which could remain valid "forever", projecting this certain way of comparing to the endless future (240). The Mexican anthropologist Manuel Gamio states in his article "Considerations about the Indian Problem in America" (my translation) that more social investigations should be made in order to make the "right classifications" and avoid giving other population groups the "treatments for social improvement" (my translation) designed for Indians (18). The Mexican journalist Javier Uranga, who wrote two articles for *América Indígena*, went so far to even entitle one of his articles "Don Vasco de Quiroga, what we need to do for Indians" (my translation). Uranga agreed so much with Quiroga's practices that he transcribed all the rules of the "Town Hospitals" in his article, indirectly affirming that they should still be taken literally in the present (58).

### Abstract Notions and Ideals - Ecuador

The Mexican case presented before illustrates clearly how practices of comparison associated with 'modern' institutional indigenism are the result of the reproductivity and perdurability, but also of the active and conscious adaptation

of earlier practices of comparison. Quiroga's 'progressive' early colonial indigenism will remain valid under the eyes of those who choose to interpret 'reality' with the help of a comparative constellation constructed around social and not cultural comparative parameters. The example of the "Town Hospitals" illustrates how 'differences' can transform into 'problems' and how socioeconomic 'disparities' could be understood as 'deficiencies'. Furthermore, the administrative ambition of 'progressive' early colonial indigenism represents the core of 'modern' institutional indigenism.

In countries where 'progressive' early indigenist production was isolated and remained mostly 'unregistered' in the collective memory, the link between institutional indigenism and 'modern' practices of comparison was weak or non-existent. The Ecuadorian experience with the 'reactivation' of 'progressive' early indigenist practices of comparison, like for example through historical narratives, nation building projects or revolutions – all being decisive in the Mexican case –, was rather bleak. Because of the perpetuation of the *Hacienda* domination system and its interweaving in the social and political dimensions – including religion –, all attempts to alter the status quo were considered not only an attempt to destabilize the country, but also an attempt to destabilize the 'natural order'. The increasing influence of *Haciendas* in the history of colonial and republican Ecuador shows furthermore how the consolidation of a certain domination system correlates positively with the consolidation of a specific way of comparing, namely the one which understands Indians as naturally 'others'. [12] The perpetuation of the notion of a 'natural order' – structured structure – in which Indians are conceived as 'others' is therefore the direct consequence of the perdurability of certain de-humanizing practices of comparison – structuring structures –, like the ones Las Casas tried to delegitimize in the famous "Valladolid Debate" and throughout his whole life.

Although the majority of Ecuadorian early institutional indigenists supported the practice-oriented 'progressive' agenda of the I.I.I., the local *comparative universe* – cognitive frame – in which they were used to compare and upon

which the national power structures were built was still dominated by the aforementioned abstract comparisons. Therefore, the incompatibilities between the agenda of the I.I.I. and the Ecuadorian *indigenist field* – in allusion to Bordieu's concept of the *political field* – can't be reduced to institutional-political weaknesses like the lack of financing and political support, as Marroquín (173-178) and Becker (51, 54) suggest, but laid mainly on comparative conflicts. [13] Becker confirms this assumption when he states that the *Instituto Indigenista Ecuatoriano* (I.I.E.) "was largely limiting its activism to well-meaning liberal pronouncements" (51). As a matter of fact, on an institutional level Ecuador was one of the leading members in the early phase of institutional indigenism: the country was a founding member of the I.I.I., it created its own Indian Institute – I.I.E. – before others did (1943), the countries' government was the first south American government to ratify its adherence to the program and its institution was the first one to publish its own journal in the whole continent – although it stopped being published after only four issues – (46). However, at the same time, the I.I.E. excluded indigenous actors from the project although their main organization, the *Federación Ecuatoriana de Indios* (F.E.I.), had a very much progressive position toward indigenism and was perfectly aware of the continental developments in this matter, which can be observed in the pages of *Ñucanchil Allpa*, their own newspaper. A clear example of how strong these comparative structures were and how they kept existing even decades after the creation of the I.I.E. is the application of the agrarian reform law in the 1960s, from which not only Indians but also peasants and institutional actors with 'progressive' views were excluded (Eisenlohr 127).

The common image of 20<sup>th</sup> century pre-institutional Ecuadorian indigenism was a combination between 19<sup>th</sup> century 'romantic' indigenism – especially literary – and the ideals of the failed liberal revolution of the first decade of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The invisibility of socialist and indigenous indigenism due to political and 'natural-order' concerns was reinforced by the 'professionalization' of indigenism, in which mainly *mestizo* lawyers and sociologists with

'moderate' comparative views were allowed. The 'father' of Ecuadorian indigenism, Pío Jaramillo Alvarado, fitted well within this frame: he had a juridical and a sociological background, had occupied several governmental appointments and had academic experience. His first book titled *The Ecuadorian Indian* (my translation) (1922) is generally considered the first and the most important Ecuadorian indigenist contribution besides literary pre-institutional production. [13] Jaramillo Alvarado's pre-institutional indigenism lacked a real connection to any specific anthropological school or 'indigenist tradition'. In this regard, Jaramillo Alvarado's legacy has elements that could be found in social and in cultural anthropology as well as in Peruvian and Mexican indigenism: sometimes he argued that Indians should become participants of the market economy, sometimes he argued that Indians should return to their *Ayllus* "in order to find their values as social unity" (my translation) (Moreno Yáñez 57).

As said before, while Mexican indigenism intended to assimilate Indians into a white-mestizo national project through methods of induced acculturation following the example of Quiroga's "Town Hospitals", Ecuadorian indigenism was still very much concerned with understanding and negotiating the idea of an 'Indian nature', something which Las Casas had done five centuries before. Although Las Casas indeed spent some time actively trying to protect Indians from the *Encomienda* – an 'early' version of the *Hacienda* –, his practical interventions were mostly directed toward Spaniards. Las Casas struggled to create a common sense between the Church, the *Encomenderos* and the authorities regarding the treatment of Indians based on a reconception of their 'nature'. *Encomiendas* were only wrong if they disrespected the right of Indians to be treated as colonial subjects with the same rights as Spaniards, although from a lower cultural level. Analogically, Jaramillo Alvarado was an active defender of Indian rights, but he didn't question the legitimacy of the white-mestizo social order based on racial and cultural hierarchies naturalized by the *Hacienda* system. The stronger similarities between Jaramillo Alvarado and Las Casas's approach can be found ironically in Jaramillo Alvarado's discourse

at the *First InterAmerican Indianist Congress* in Pátzcuaro, where the I.I.I. was created and where Las Casas is buried:

It is more urgent to educate the landowner [*Hacendado*] in his responsibility as an owner in the comprehension of what the Indian means as human capital, as an instrument of production and consumption, than providing the assistance to Indians at the rural schools (my translation) (“Situación Política, Económica y Jurídica” 77).

In contrast to the recurrent participation of Mexican institutional indigenists in *América Indígena*, Jaramillo Alvarado, despite being Ecuador’s main indigenist, only published one article. Disappointingly, his article entitled “Situation of indigenism throughout the continent” (my translation) is a simple summary of reflections about the different indigenist contexts existing in America. Nevertheless, it fortunately entails at least some statements which allow us to find more consistencies between his indigenism and the abstract debates about the nature of Indians which took place in the 16<sup>th</sup> century. Regarding the indigenist context in the United States, Jaramillo Alvarado argues that the ‘real problem’ in that country weren’t Indians but ‘Blacks’. With the following commentary Jaramillo Alvarado clearly positions ‘Blacks’ in a lower racial-cultural stage as ‘Whites’ and Indians, just like Las Casas did when he suggested that more slaves should be imported from Africa in order to relieve Indians from work based on the conception that Indians could be able to reach a higher cultural level, but ‘Blacks’ couldn’t:

The North American problem with minorities is not the Indian but the fifteen million Blacks embedded in the main cities of the Union. It is possible to suppose, that if they could turn those millions into North American Indians they wouldn’t hesitate (my translation) (“Situación del Indigenismo” 128).

This dehumanization of ‘Blacks’, which constitutes one of the biggest critiques to Las Casas’s early colonial indigenism, is also present

in the work of another Ecuadorian institutional indigenist, Humberto García Ortiz. García Ortiz was one of the many lawyers-sociologists who worked with Jaramillo Alvarado in the foundation of the I.I.E., where he was appointed head of the Sociological Department. In 1942 García Ortiz wrote his only article in *América Indígena* with the title “Considerations about an Indian legislation in Ecuador” (my translation) in which he analyzed the advantages and disadvantages of creating an exclusive – paternalistic – legislation for Indians within the Ecuadorian legal system. However, real hints about his pre-indigenist notions and ideals can be found in a book published before 1940. During the research for his book “Short exposition of the results obtained in the sociological investigation of some indigenous communities in the Province of Imbabura” (my translation), García Ortiz came in contact unintentionally with some Afro-Ecuadorian communities living in the Chota basin. His sociological reflections about this experience are resumed in a subchapter titled “Chota”. In this subchapter García Ortiz argues that ‘Blacks’ can’t be the object of study of sociology but rather of a kind of ‘infrasociology’ “because sociology studies the spirit and ‘Blacks’ belong to the world of nature” (my translation) (Ayala Mora 273).

The second Ecuadorian indigenist of importance after Jaramillo Alvarado was the sociologist Victor Garcés. Garcés assisted the *First InterAmerican Indianist Congress* in 1940 together with Jaramillo Alvarado, was the second director of the I.I.E., and very much involved in the first years of institutional life of the *House of the Ecuadorian Culture* in Quito. His pre-institutional experience was largely the product of his cooperation with the *International Labor Organization* (I.L.O.), for whom he worked as a representative in Indian affairs. The categorization ‘Indian race’ and the adjectives ‘backward’ and ‘miserable’ were often used in the documents in which he worked, which suggests that his indigenism was influenced by some ‘modern’ practices of comparison. In a document from 1946 with the title “Living Conditions of the Indigenous Populations in American Countries” (my translation) he referred to all American Indians as “deadweight holding

back progress" (*Living Conditions* 1). Garcés wrote a total of four articles for *América Indígena*. His indigenism can be better appreciated in his first article titled "The sociability of Indians" (my translation), which was published in 1942. In this article the author explicitly agrees with the evolutionist Herbert Spencer in the existence of an evolutionary social scale whose highest point is the 'social stage' to which of course only 'Whites' and 'Mestizos' belong. [15] His concrete proposal was that the I.I.I. create a valid classification of human settlements on basis of their economic, cultural and social conditions. He argued that Ecuadorian Indians, especially those who he defines as "Indians in their first quality" (my translation), which could be understood as 'Indians in their natural form', don't have 'social feelings' and that their nexus with other individuals are never deep, implying that their settlements belonged to the lowest evolutionary stage ("Sociabilidad del Indio" 63-66). Sharing Garcés's racial views, the famous Ecuadorian Doctor Pablo Arturo Suárez states in his only article in *América Indígena* with the title "The Real Situation of the Indian in Ecuador" (my translation), that Indians suffer "under the degenerative force of their own race" (my translation) (62).

Probably the last Ecuadorian institutional indigenist of importance and at the same time the first Ecuadorian institutional indigenist with a real anthropological background was Gonzalo Rubio Orbe. Rubio Orbe's first book was published as late as 1947. Becker denotes that Rubio Orbe was "very influenced in his interpretations by social science trends in Mexico" (49), which describes an important consequence of the institutionalization of the *political field* and the professionalization of indigenists. This aspect was already discussed by Bourdieu when he suggested that the production of notions and ideals could be monopolized by institutions. Coinciding with Bourdieu's opinion, Blanchette interprets the role of the I.I.I. as a *clearinghouse*, namely a place where knowledge is being centrally depurated, produced and transmitted (33). Rubio Orbe published two works for the *Instituto Indigenista Interamericano*, one in the journal *América Indígena* in 1949, and one in 1965. In both texts he affirms that education is the

best way to 'incorporate' Indians to 'progress' in accordance to institutional indigenism priorities. In 1971 Rubio Orbe was elected director of the *InterAmerican Indian Institute* and went to live in Mexico. Since his appointment as director, Rubio Orbe stopped publishing articles with his own indigenists opinions – although he kept teaching and writing elsewhere – in order to use this space for supporting the achievements of institutional indigenism and commemorating the life work of some of the first institutional indigenists – especially of those with social anthropological views –, something similar to Chávez Orozco's commemoration of Quiroga's work. The idea of 'Indian nature' isn't present in the work of Rubio Orbe.

## Conclusion

The arguments presented here must be contrasted with the case of other countries and backed up by further contextual investigations. Nevertheless, the present approach has already proven to be of great use in order to achieve the main objectives of this paper, namely, to prove that indigenism as a practice doesn't have a 'before and after' because it is based on comparison. Practices of comparison are timeless in the sense that 'early comparisons' are always decisive components of future comparisons even if they claim to be 'new' or 'modern'. Thanks to the analysis of the Mexican and Ecuadorian cases, it was possible to observe how practices of comparison can acquire their own dynamic by becoming *structuring structures* and not only *structured structures*. The comparison between Mexico and Ecuador shows furthermore how the institutionalization of practices can accelerate this process considerably – as seen in the case of the later Ecuadorian indigenists. Regarding the specific case of the abstract comparison of 'human nature,' it would be very interesting to observe how this idea evolved through time – not disappearing – and how it influenced different practices and further ideas like racism and eugenics. In the specific case of Ecuador, it would be interesting to analyze how the development of a weak national indigenism enable the consolidation of the strongest indigenous movement in the continent, precisely



the contrary as in the Mexican case.

## Endnotes

[1] This article was written within the framework of the Collaborative Research Center SFB 1288 "Practices of Comparing. Changing and Ordering the World", Bielefeld University, Germany, funded by the German Research Foundation (DFG), subproject B02, *Modernity between 'Indigeneity' and 'Blackness': Inter-American practices of comparing in the fields of cultural production, social sciences, and politics*.

[2] The reflections presented in this essay are part of a wider attempt to understand indigenist practices of comparison. However, they are also motivated by two experiences gathered at different international conferences in 2018. On those events I implied that the work of the Spanish priests Bartolomé de las Casas (1484-1566) and Vasco de Quiroga (1470/78-1565) could be understood as 'indigenist', precisely because their way of thinking/comparing is still very present in 'modern' indigenist practices of comparison. This assumption provoked so much skepticism, especially between young researchers, that writing about this specific matter became itself a further objective.

[3] The efforts of the Escuela de Salamanca and Las Casas influenced Pope Paul III to expedite the document *Sublimis Deus*, in which he affirms that Indians were reasonable beings capable of being converted pacifically.

[4] The concept of *barbarian* was 'Christianized' by Pope Gregorio VI in the eleventh century, leveling it to *pagan*.

[5] Pope Nicholas V and Pope Alexander the VI had granted the kings of Portugal and Spain the rights to enslave barbarian and pagans in the conquered lands.

[6] It could be interesting to think about the possibility of classifying both moments, the 16<sup>th</sup> century debates about the 'humanity' of Indians and the formation and consolidation of the indigenist movement, as breaking points in the history of comparing humans and, therefore, thinking humanity. The results of this reflection depend on the definition of 'social change' used for the analysis and to what extent this definition allows different degrees of social change. Furthermore, it would be of interest to reflect about the capacity of abstract (Las Casas) and practice oriented (Quiroga) practices of comparison for achieving social change.

[7] Although the classical cultural approach of the Boasian school was against the application of anthropological knowledge in order to foster change within Indian communities, the employment of 'culture' as the comparing parameter doesn't necessarily imply, that 'change' was never envisioned. The most important theologian within the debates which gave Indians the right to be considered humans or 'not-barbarians', the Spanish priest José de Acosta (1539/1540-1599/1600), conceived America as a great laboratory where 'Non-Christians' could be studied in order to create knowledge useful to the expansion of Christianity (Pagden 150). The importance of 'change' within cultural anthropology increased considerably in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The creation of "Acculturation Studies" as a

'modern' field of research by the *American Anthropological Association* in 1936 is only one example (De La Cadena 205).

[8] To give something or – like in this case – someone a 'value' is itself a modern practice of comparison. For Nietzsche 'value' cannot be seen as a factor to be used in order to establish a relation between *comparatas*, because 'value' is only valid in relation to the *comparata* which is being attributed to. 'Values' can only illustrate deficiencies. In this regard Nietzsche replaces the idea of 'value' with the idea of 'sense', which isn't limited to single comparison operations, but which attempts to understand the whole universe in which the comparison is embedded. Precisely this approach legitimates the notion of 'social practices of comparison'.

[9] US American scientific associations like the *Social Science Research Council* and the *American Council of Learned Societies*, strongly linked to the US Government and private donors like Nelson Rockefeller, financed the cooperation between John Collier and Mexican anthropologists in order to create the *InterAmerican Indian Institute* (De La Cadena 205).

[10] This 'paternalistic' form of understanding indigenism later became one of the main critiques against it.

[11] The weakness of the *Hacienda* or *Encomienda Model* during the early colonial period allowed Indians to co-shape the power relations between them and the Spanish settlers. It was the consolidation of de-humanizing *practices of comparison* that allowed the progressive disarticulation of Indian Institutions and the consolidation of this model until the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and in some places even until today. More about the relation between *Haciendas*, State and indigenous Communities can be found on Olaf Kaltmeier's work, especially in his book *Kulturen der [De-] Kolonialisierung. Indigene Gemeinschaften, Hacienda und Staat in den Ecuatorianischen Anden von der Kolonialzeit bis heute* (2016).

[12] The weak connection with the 'centers' of social anthropological production – Mexico and the USA – and the *institutional* incompatibilities with the neighboring Peruvian pre-institutional socialist indigenism were further impediments.

[13] Ecuador indigenist literary production was known in all the continent and even abroad. Today the most renowned indigenist works are "Cumandá" (1879) from Juan León Mera, an example of 'romantic indigenism', and "Huaspungo" (1934) from Jorge Icaza, an example of 'social realism'.

[14] The connection between racial evolutionism, racial anthropology, eugenics and other racial sociopolitical and scientific projects may also be connected through 'systems of dispositions' to early de-humanizing practices of comparison.

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## Author's Biography

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Pablo Campos Recalde was born in Quito, Ecuador. He studied Political Economics at the Duisburg-Essen University (B.A.Sc.) and InterAmerican studies (M.A.) at the Bielefeld University. He worked between 2014 and 2016 as a Research Assistant at the Center for InterAmerican Studies at the Bielefeld University. Since 2017 he is working as a Research Associate and PhD candidate at the same university, where he is part of the project SFB 1288 "Practices of Comparing. Ordering and Changing the world". Outside of the university he has worked for different NGOs – in Ecuador and Germany – and also for the municipality of Quito, Ecuador.