

## **Cadastral Politics: Property Wars and the Optical Infrastructures of State in Highland Ecuador**

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My concern in this paper is to understand how particular objects and sets of bureaucratic practices are deployed as ‘outreach devices’ for the incorporation of seemingly recalcitrant regions and populations into the administrative orbit of state. I want to think about these vanguard technologies of statecraft as central to the pedagogical work of political legitimation, material embodiments of the state’s claim upon the right to govern and the terms by which recognition and subjection are to be properly conferred upon it. The devices of state I am most interested in are those explicitly performative technologies of rule that traffic in the mystical genre of ‘state realism’ (*this is of state because it says so and demands to be regarded as such*). Our challenge, as ethnographers and historians, will be to see through the reifying magic of state transported in its instruments to map out the rich textures of political signification that unfold around them, trace the counter-claims to rule they invoke, and document the sorts of silences, subversions, and outright contestations they may provoke among the governed.

I am specifically interested here in the use of land tax assessments, land mapping technologies, and property registries—together composing the administrative complexes know as cadasters—for the purposes identified above. Like systems of law and justice more generally, systems of taxation and property jurisdiction are often taken to be fundamental and defining features of the modern state. Cadastral systems, in part or in whole, have been deployed since the 16<sup>th</sup> century as first order devices in new states’ attempts to colonize a population or to draw them in to the governmental reach of a new sort of state system—as their use in Roman imperial expansion, the transition to capitalism throughout Western Europe, and the conquest of the Americas suggests (Kain and Baignet 1992). And they became particularly important in the last decades of the twentieth century in advancing neoliberal economic and political agendas across the Global South, for reasons attending to their link to state decentralization agendas, the liberal property fetish, the high-modern technocratic wizardry they promote, and the securitization of informal sectors. In each case, “The value of the cadastral map to the state,” argues James Scott (1998: 45), “lies in its abstraction and universality”. Cadasters bring lands and people off the grid of state into view, render them politically *legible*, and standardize their variations under rational calculations of value. They are key instances of what Scott calls “state simplifications” of reality for the purpose of administering it.

But they also transform land into property and turn land ownership into a taxable condition.<sup>1</sup> And it is around the deployment of new taxation, land registration, and property mapping schemas that some of the most aggressive and explicitly anti-state uprisings have occurred throughout the world in the last two hundred years. In the 1980s, Alain de Janvry foresaw this conflict as a problem that all land reform and regulation agendas in Latin America would have to face in the decades ahead: “Subjectively,” he argued, “the state needs to legitimize its imposition on taxpayers while heeding the possibility of ‘tax revolts’. Legitimacy and fiscal [concerns] of the state are here closely interrelated” (de Janvry 1981: 197).<sup>2</sup> For if, as David Nugent (forthcoming), Philip Abrams (1988 [1977]), and Michael Taussig (1997) have argued, so much of the state’s power rests on the manipulation of secrecy—the ability to convey an impression that some transcendental power and realm of knowledge lies unseeable behind its ‘mask’—then dramatic changes in tax structure and land titling seem particularly ripe moments for conflict precisely because, for certain populations, they throw the terms of their political regulation up for view (as a certain kind of property holder, with a fiscal value, as defined by a certain kind of state) and demand validation of that in the form of payment. Rather than solidifying the state’s claim to transcendental authority, this exposure has the potential to produce a space of great vulnerability in the overall structure of political and economic domination advanced by it.

It is exactly this vulnerability surrounding the production of state legitimacy that inspired a set of struggles to occur around a seemingly progressive cadastral renovation experiment tried out in 2002 in the Ecuadorian canton of Cayambe. While ostensibly advanced to update the archaic land administration system used in the canton, correct erroneous land value assessments, and modernize the municipal government’s taxation structure, it became impossible for the expanding state bureaucracy to disentangle its cadastral mission from the race and class-based systems of domination (themselves based on land ownership and administration) that had passed for state in the canton for centuries. It is such locally sedimented histories of political rule that most emphatically threaten to disrupt the state-extensification and ‘decentralized’ development rubric under which cadastral projects are currently being advanced across the hemisphere today. I review the global emergence of this rubric below before discussing its recent impact on the transformation of state systems in highland Ecuador.

## **WEAK CADASTER AS WEAK STATE**

The spectacular acts of the twentieth century were played out on a stage whose hidden machinery was made of the parts and pieces of pre-Colombian colonial and republican corporatism, state mercantilism, privilege, wealth transfer, and political law. The way property rights were allocated, the nature of the

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<sup>1</sup> Cadastral maps are distinguished from other state-produced maps by taxation-function, their chief purpose. Kain and Baigent (1992: 336) claim that “in the Old World, more land was surveyed and mapped by the state for setting and recording land taxes than for any other single purpose”.

<sup>2</sup> [refer here to the 1898 Hut Tax Rebellion in Sierra Leone (Crooks 1903, Denzer 1971), the *alcabala* & *contribución ordinaria* in Ecuador, etc etc as prime examples of the breaking down of this basic political relationship of rural life.]

relationship between power and the individual, the role played by the law—all were traditions that proved resilient to change (Álvaro Vargas Llosa 2006: 34-35).

Cayambe's cadastral renovation project was part of a global effort among international agencies in the late 20<sup>th</sup> century to expand and "regularize" property rights among the rural poor, formalize the growing informal sector, and institute the rule of law in seemingly lawless lands. This marked a crucial transition in rural policy, signaling a shift away from previous decades' focus on land to that of property, from reforming the material bases of rural inequality to restructuring the political landscape on which it is based. A key text in this shift for Latin American societies was Peruvian economist Hernan De Soto's 1989 "bestseller," *The Other Path: The Invisible Revolution in Latin America*, in which he portrays the "informals" (his word) living in shantytowns around Lima as not trying to work around the official system of state regulation but rather, longing, in great frustration, for legal recognition; informality is but a consequence of an outdated and cumbersome legal system failing to adapt to the changing conditions of life under national instability. "People," he claims, "are capable of violating a system which does not accept them, not so that they can live in anarchy but so that they can build a different system which accepts a minimum of essential rights" (De Soto 1989: 55). Property forms the cornerstone of these rights. Unable to have their homes and lands titled and recognized by the state, squatters impose their own codes of seizure and ownership upon them (such as the "expectative property right" (23) and "invasion contract" (22)), and form para-legal associations to ensure the rule of law by other means—such as the lynching of thieves.<sup>3</sup> The "invisible revolution," is thus the violation of the law in order to dramatize a yearning for it.

In this entry of property rights into development discourses, poverty and marginality come to be conceptualized as conditions of absolute lack, not relative effects of wealth and rights-hoarding;<sup>4</sup> their solution, in turn, is not redistributive, as in giving the rural poor more land, but incorporative, as in giving them more formal rights to what little they may have. This is one key effect of the shift from land to property as the basis of contemporary rural development initiatives.<sup>5</sup> Such thinking was clearly stated when, at the 1998 Summit of the Americas meetings in Santiago, Chile, the presidents of all thirty-four member states moved to add "property registration" as a new priority in their "issue basket" on "The Eradication of Poverty and Discrimination" in the hemisphere—the founding charter of neoliberal property discourses in

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<sup>3</sup> See my "Histories in Red: Ways of Seeing Lynching in Ecuador" (Krupa 2009) for a critique of this perspective.

<sup>4</sup> See my "Neoliberal Reckoning: Transition Violence and the Making of Post-Neoliberal Ecuador" (Krupa forthcoming b) for an analysis of the discursive shift in the construction of the rural poor as absolute, not relative, surplus populations and the way this set up the labor relations of neoliberal capitalism not as the cause of poverty and dispossession, but as their only possible solution.

<sup>5</sup> This is in many ways reminiscent of the problems Roseberry (1993) identified with land reform initiatives during the cold war. The agrarian question was, he suggests, "a political question that was given a primarily economic answer" (Roseberry 1993: 336); in other words, the problem of subduing a potentially revolutionary peasantry was addressed by projects of land redistribution and enabled by studies of rather adaptive rural class processes. Today, however, problem has in many ways been reversed—economic questions (of poverty, informal livelihoods, the effects of flexible accumulation strategies, and so on) are given primarily political answers (via rights, titles, state recognition, etc.).

Latin America. A summary of this charter, prepared by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), states that “the lack of formalized property rights and limited access to property are barriers for the poor to economic opportunity, governance, and sociopolitical participation” and work against the broader goals of the Summit to promote “*justice, human rights, gender equality, financial market strengthening and economic integration and poverty alleviation*” in the Americas (USAID 2000a, emphasis in original).<sup>6</sup>

But the shift of focus from land to property implies something greater still, since while land can still be thought of in some ways as a thing, an object, or workable matter, property, as anthropologists have long insisted, must always be thought of as a *relationship* (Lowie 1928, Malinowski 1935, Gluckman 1943 and 1965, Bloch 1975, Nugent 1993, Nadasty 2002, Verdery and Humphrey 2004). As Jack Goody (1962: 287) famously asserted, “A man without social relationships is a man without property”. Chris Hann (1998: 5) has added that the “word ‘property’ is best seen as directing attention to a vast field of cultural as well as social relations, to the symbolic as well as the material contexts in which things are recognized and personal as well as collective identities are made”. To put it flatly, what the poor get, through development initiatives that make them into property owners, is not a new thing (land, for instance), but a new set of cultural and social relationships. Since the difference between land and property is nothing more than its legal recognition, the primary relationship gifted is that with the state—with land now simply the material object mediating that relationship. The claim that certain groups of people “lack property rights” in Latin America, or hold them only informally, is thus an evaluation not of the nature of bonds between people and things but of the political character of a region or a population; it is to mark people and places with the stain of living at the margins of bureaucratic governance, as located somewhere beyond the rule of law. Property, in turn, is cast as an effect, or condition, of life under a proper liberal state. We might, in this way, twist Goody’s maxim to read *a man without property is a man without a state*. The work of expanding property rights, the banner under which cadastral renovation initiatives emerged in the late 20<sup>th</sup> century, has to be seen as primarily a mandate for state expansionism, of expanding the regulatory potency and administrative reach of the state into areas currently thought to be off its grid.

Investments into property registration systems, as a result, have been primarily directed toward expanding the technological and bureaucratic apparatuses of rural governance. They entail developing what McLaughlin and McKenna (1998:1) describe as a “property infrastructure,” a complex of “institutional, legal, and technical components” (Barnes 2002: 5) that generates a high degree of technical knowledge about land and its ownership and which can be used to regulate all future land transactions. Modern cadasters are the hallmark of this infrastructure,

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<sup>6</sup> “This topic,” we are told, “incorporates more than public administration of land titles. Improving systems of property registration is a *means of recognizing rights formally*, resolving conflicts, increasing transparency, increasing participation in governance and property markets, improving the security of investments, improving contracts enforcement and motivating investment in environmental conservation” (USAID 2000a, emphasis added).

highly technical devices based on a combination of Global Positioning Systems (GPS), satellite photos, surface surveys, and multi-scalar mapping programs that require a sizable team of experts to manage. The majority of funds directed to ‘strengthening real property rights’ are put toward developing these technologies. In the year 2000 alone, the World Bank, for instance, gave \$31 million to Guatemala, \$48 million to Panama, \$40 million to the Dominican Republic, \$47 million to Peru, and \$17 million to Ecuador for developing new cadastral systems, funds which, in most cases, were matched by similar quantities from the IADB, the United Nations Development Program (UNDP), CARE, and other international donors. The Organization of American States (OAS) calculates that by 2004 it had invested 2.7 billion dollars in such projects (OAS).<sup>7</sup>

### **DECENTRALIZATION AND DEMOCRATIZATION THROUGH CADASTRAL RENOVATION**

In their sweeping review of cadastral initiatives around the world, Barnes, Stanfield, and Barthel (2000: 35) note that while, in Latin America, “the legal system and registration practices have evolved from [their] colonial beginnings,” they remain blocked by a grave problem characteristic of Latin American states in general: the greatest “problem that has plagued many Latin American countries,” they claim, “is the overcentralization of government institutions, including the property registry” (Barnes et. al *ibid*). Recent cadastral renovation projects have been designed not only to overcome this obstacle, but to serve as influential devices in advancing state decentralization initiatives throughout the hemisphere. These projects target local, municipal or regional, scales of state, not national ones, and in many ways help build them up into real, consequential entities with new governmental capacities and technologies they did not formerly possess. The *Action Plan* produced out of the Summit meetings in 1998 made this explicit, stating that it would work with global funding agencies, “especially the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB) and the World Bank,” to help states “streamline and decentralize” their property registration systems via “state of the art technologies for property georeferencing, computer-generated mapping and computerized records storage” (source). To see state decentralization as implying a *reduction* of the state is thus to adopt a highly centrist view of state; seen from the location state power is supposedly decentralized *to* reminds us that it is also a project of expansion and, overall, re-territorialization.

These state-building exercises are routinely cast in the idiom of social development and draw upon classic liberal notions of property and rights as inherently egalitarian, universal, and

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<sup>7</sup> Property’s entry into the generic lexicon of development also expanded the global expertization of knowledge and skill. Following the 1998 Summit of the Americas, all multilateral organizations formed separate bodies and sideline organizations devoted specifically to the administration of property projects. USAID, for instance, formed the Inter-Summit Property Systems Initiative in 1998 and the Inter-American Alliance for Real Property Rights (IAARPR) in 2004, developed the “Landnet Americas” system to coordinate its actions with other bodies (such as the Land Tenure Center at the University of Wisconsin-Madison and the Lincoln Institute of Land Policy in Cambridge), and disseminated the *Blueprint for Strengthening Real Property Rights* to guide individual states and donor organizations through the analysis and reconstruction of property systems.

democratic relations—if unmoored from their historical abuse under concentrated forms of government in Latin America. De Soto (1989: 248) phrases this in the idiom of governmental *proximity*: “if informality results from a lack of communication between government and the governed, things should improve if more decisions are made at the local level, where governments are closer to the people”. Similarly, the IAARPR’s *Blueprint* opens with a statement entitled “Building Equity through Property Rights,” by which it means “the rule of law applies equally to the property of all persons without regard to gender, social stature or ethnicity”.

This democratization principle is further reinforced by the universal taxation goal that cadastral systems are meant to achieve, with taxes now able to be calculated according to scientific principles of land value—assumedly taxing owners of large and highly valued lands more than smallholders with poor land. But it is also through taxes accrued to the local state that cadastral renovations and their costly technologies are meant to support decentralization agendas and make municipal or regional states viable and stable units of government. Taxes collected from previously untaxed or under-taxed landholders are meant to provide local states with the funds needed to undertake the other tasks offloaded to them under decentralization schemas—building roads, collecting garbage, managing health and education, and so on. Cadasters have thus come to form an integral part in the ongoing cycle of state building in rural areas.

And yet, as my work in Cayambe suggests below, the democratic principles of universal taxation and the recognition of local state legitimacy that paying them implies may be highly contentious issues in the areas where cadastral renovation projects are most likely to be advanced. As I have discussed elsewhere, the very notion of state absence only ameliorated by bureaucratic ‘decentralization,’ or of a population or region existing at the ‘margins of the state,’ assumes a highly centralist, rigidly orthodox, and uncritically national-territorial understanding of what the state is, something completely misrepresentative of the ways that political power has been exercised in the rural Andes and in much of the Global South. The most consequential oversight in the case of Cayambe is the racial geography overlaying the region’s political relations and the ways that land itself, its ownership and use, has served to solidify enduring state-like relations between the region’s landowning elites, on the one hand, and its indigenous *campesinos* (peasants) on the other. The former have for centuries acted as what I have called ‘proxy,’ or privatized, states in the lives of surrounding indigenous communities, at times acting in concert with official national-state agendas, at others competing openly with them (Krupa 2010). Once we scratch below the surface of official discourses projecting a blank political slate, or notions of state weakness, onto regions like Cayambe, we can see that the key problem any aggressive act of local state-building may face is the ability for an abstract, disinterested and universal political signifier such as State to break free of the ways such claims to political legitimacy have been historically appropriated by local power blocs seeking to advance their own agendas. Taxation, map-making, land registration, and value-calculation will all, as such, have to pass through many

levels of historical reckoning, and may dredge up struggles over that reckoning, in their attempts to be passed. Such is the story of Cayambe.

### **CAYAMBE'S CADASTRAL COMPLEX**

The decision to decentralize cadastres and property registers means that the system operates with particularly weak entities, as are most of the rural municipalities, but it facilitates taking a modern approach to the establishment and maintenance of cadastres.

*(IDB Ecuador: Rural Land Regularization Program 19xx C 1.4)*

Cayambe's political situation in the first years of the 21<sup>st</sup> century seemed poised to completely overturn the structure of racial domination that had under-girded its political landscape for centuries. A Pachakutik-led government was elected to power in 2000, bringing rural indigenous politicians and members of their communities into the halls of state to serve as the mayor's cabinet, to head key departments in the regional administration, and to serve as the bulk of the political workforce in the daily running of the municipal state. Since its cantonization in 1883, Cayambe's municipal government had served as the seat of mestizo power in the region, attending disproportionately to its urban mestizo population and to protecting large landowners' interests in the countryside. This assumption of local political power by the indigenous sector was, however, offset by the enduring structure of white control over the economy. Economic power at the start of the 21<sup>st</sup> century was still held by the old Spanish-descending families and a new capitalist class of export-oriented entrepreneurs, both of whom had turned most of their productive land over to flower growing in the late 1980s—employing large numbers of people from the surrounding indigenous communities since then.

This complicated bifurcation of the region's economic and political power was embodied in its mayor, Diego Bonifaz, then on the Pachakutik ticket, but descending from the largest landowning family in Cayambe's history and linked through kin and business deals to some of the most powerful rose growing operations in the canton. In his campaign for the 2000 elections, Bonifaz promised if elected to secure international funding for a total overhaul of the canton's land mapping and taxation system. He presented this as evidence of his allegiance to the rural, indigenous sector and as a way of making the rich, for the first time in history, finally pay what they owed. Updated land value assessments and appropriate taxes would allow millions of dollars to be channeled from—specifically—the flower growers, through the municipal state, to rural development projects in the communities. This was the agenda with which Cayambe's cadastral renovations began under Bonifaz's leadership in 2001.

Funding for this project came from a number of international sources financing cadastral renovation across the country. The World Bank and the IDB contributed \$17 million and \$15.2 million respectively (supplemented by local contributions of \$1.68 million) to a national project called the "Rural Land Regularization and Administration Program" (code EC-0191) which

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aimed to “reduce and simplify the role of the State in land administration, speed up decentralization of the cadastre to municipalities and provide a better information platform for fiscal sustainability and resource management at the local level” (IDB 2001: 6). It was also to dovetail with other IDB projects, such as their Decentralization Support Program (code EC-0204, \$4.8 million) and their Municipal Development II Program (code EC-0139, \$40 million), and work through the MOSTA, or “Modernization of the State”, framework—the umbrella ‘plan’ that has encompassed the Special Law of State Decentralization and Social Participation since first written into the constitution in 1997.<sup>8</sup> The municipal government of Cayambe was, on its own, awarded an additional \$1.6 million from the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) under the “Sustainable Development in Cayambe” project (ECU\_00\_017), which was to provide support from June 2000 to December 2005.<sup>9</sup>

The connection between state decentralization and land taxes was, at the time, legally binding. Article 9 (letter K) of Ecuador’s 1997 State Decentralization law passed to municipal governments the administration of rural land cadastral systems and the collection of tax revenues from within their cantonal boundaries, a transfer publicly authorized in 1998 by the National Directorate of Surveys and Cadastres (Dirección Nacional de Avalúos y Catastros, hereafter DINAC). At the time, this was a rather empty offering that came with no instruction on how to conduct a survey or collect taxes. In many cases, land information and data systems had not been updated since the reform period of the 1960s and 1970s. A US AID commission reporting on land tenure in 1970 said the following:

Very little cadastral information of any sort is available in Ecuador. Municipal authorities maintain lists of landowners with self-assessed valuations. In a few instances, the actual area of the land is known. These lists, somewhat erroneously called *Catastros de Predios Rurales* [Rural Land Cadasters], are used by the officials of each canton as a basis for collecting property taxes and are of little value for agricultural planning. (Agency for International Development 1970: 21).

A USAID-funded attempt to improve this situation was tried out in 1989 under Rodrigo Borja’s presidency,<sup>10</sup> notably with the opposite goal of strengthening the centralization of DINAC, but its trial phase ended up “focusing almost exclusively on the legalization of land tenure, playing

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<sup>8</sup> Ley Especial de Descentralización del Estado y de Participación Social (Special Law of State Decentralization and Social Participation): Ley 27, Registro Oficial 169, 8-XX-97. Suplemento del Registro Oficial 265 27-XX-98 (Reforma a la Constitución, Título XI). Ley 2000-1, Suplemento del Registro Oficial 20, 18-II-2000. Decreto Oficial 1616, Registro Oficial 365, July 2001.

<sup>9</sup> The five year period of this project is significant since, under Ecuadorian law, cadastres must be updated every five years. This implicitly fused “sustainable [municipal] development” with property regulation and marked the year 2000 as foundational for the regenerative cycles of both.

<sup>10</sup> The project was called the National Program for Rural Cadasters and Titling (CATIR). Its stated goal was “to revise, establish, and reinforce institutional mechanisms to provide secure and legal land tenure in rural Ecuador” (USAID *Land Titling Project, Ecuador* 1989, quoted in Moreno 1992: 119). Phase I of this project was designed to test the project in two cantons, Salcedo in the central highlands, and Alfredo Baquerizo Moreno (or “Jujan”) in the low coastal area south of Guayaquil.

down the cadastral component” and was thus never completed (Lambert et. al 1990, quoted in Moreno 1992: 129). What this meant was that, a decade later, explanations of the cadastral process would have to start from scratch.

### **HEARING THE STATE: THE PUBLIC PRESENTATIONS**

Cayambe’s municipal government sought to generate public compliance with its cadastral renovation project through a series of outreach ventures—discursive maneuvers seeking to dispel a number of anxieties among different sectors of the population about what the new land value assessments and resulting taxation structure would mean for them. Different audiences were approached in different phases and asked to hear different things in the cadastral mission. The first phase of this targeted the urban sector and flower growers via a series of extra-ordinary council sessions, open to the public, to approve the technical study that would be used as a basis for calculating new land values and new land taxes. The study, prepared by Quito-based engineer Milton Jaramillo (2001), continues the common practice of calculating land taxes as a percentage of land value, but proposes a method of calculating value based on more than simply existing market price for the land (or amount paid on the previous sale). His model, becoming orthodox for municipalities across Ecuador, is drawn from both the cadastral system standardized for DINAC under the Borja administration in the late 1980s and a globally standardized format that is alternatively referred to as the “International” and “American” System of Classification. This approach calculates land value by investigating both the productive characteristics of the land itself, called land quality or “class,” and the external features such as infrastructure and proximity to urban centers, called “influence,” that affect the ability of producers to exploit the land effectively. Jaramillo identified seven classes of land and three domains of influence in Cayambe, each of which is described in his report with precise determinants of soil texture, drainage, fertility, amounts of rain received, temperature, frost potential, potential diseases, access to irrigation, road access, and so on, all of which are meant to allow a calculation of land’s productivity and, thus, its “value”.

This determination of land value was to be cross-referenced with actual land prices which was almost impossible to obtain “from the Floricultural Business sector” and “in the sectors corresponding to [indigenous] communities, the information given was very restricted, given the distrust that the agriculturalists have” of the state (Jaramillo 2001: 8-9). Reasons for distrust may be many, but among flower growers, I suspect, it relates to the fact that the entire industry runs on bank credit which is based upon grossly exaggerated auto-declarations of land value (as collateral) which could be dramatically reduced or cut off if proven by such officially binding calculations as the state’s cadastral study. The lack of such data has become integral to the growth of export capitalism in the highlands.

Overall, Jaramillo’s study was intended to fulfill two functions. As a legal document commissioned by Cayambe’s municipal government, its purpose was largely performative. It had to show the new tax plan to be grounded in a properly scientific knowledge base to accord with

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national juridical requirements for transferring taxation to the municipality<sup>11</sup> and, equally significant, to dispel anticipated accusations from local property holders that the cadastre may be guided by partisan political motives. Jaramillo's study speaks to this function in the abstract principles of measurement he employs and in the nationally and internationally approved cadastral codes he references. It provides a formula that can be used by anyone to more or less identify their tax bracket and support for the claim that this amount would be valid for land elsewhere in the country and possibly anywhere in the world. The second function was to translate these abstractions into Cayambe's reality, to map these principles on to the canton's rural formation and advance a schema for how different kinds of land will be taxed. Once compiled, the massive 'scientific' report seemed, despite its multiplicity of classes and influences, simply to reify older Andean notions of vertical distinction (low lands, where flower plantations are, are good, and high lands, where Indians are, are bad) and confirm that flower growers were going to have to pay a lot of taxes, while indigenous *comuneros* (community members) were going to have to pay very little.

Flower growers took this reading of the study as a call to arms. They sent representatives from the national growers' association, EXPOFLORES, to a municipal meeting on July 30, 2001, to petition a discount, based upon recognizing their "*contribution* to the development of the canton".<sup>12</sup> The minutes from the meeting state that "at 5:20 pm, the Council received as a General Commission the president of Expoflores, Engineer Jorge Peña, who manifested the need to recognize that the floriculture industry has contributed to the development of the canton. Further, he stated that they are willing to pay the cadastre and to contribute to the progress of the canton, but they are asking for a reduction in the percentage value of the tables established in the study." The indigenous council responded by agreeing to discuss a discount, but took the opportunity to remind Peña that any progress the flower industry has brought to Cayambe has also been "accompanied by social consequences". The minutes indicate that "Councilwoman Juliana Ulcuango [from the indigenous community of Cochapamba] requested that the agro-industrial businessmen give security to their workers, due to the high incidence of firings; further, she stated that they have to give higher consideration to women and construct day-care centers for the children of the women who work in the plantations. She also asked for their collaboration in maintaining the roadways and that they receive all types of workers, not simply youth." Building on Ulcuango's opening, councilman Matias Imbago, from the community of Carrera "solicited that the agro-industrialists collaborate in the protection of the environment".

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<sup>11</sup> The first and second lines of the national Official Registry (22 November 2001, Number 459) legalizing this process state: "Considering: That the Municipality according to its facilities has realized studies for revalorizing rural properties; That the land market dynamics for the rural sector have been subjected to a study based in universally accepted methods and techniques, in agreement with the existing medium and reality;"

<sup>12</sup> This parallels the appeals of Creoles to the king against generalized taxation in colonial Quito. Their argument, as Hurtado (1980: 35) has outlined, was that "the king could not enact taxes from his American subjects without taking into account the services rendered by their forefathers in conquering these lands at their own expense".

This meeting shows a fascinating moment of reversal in the traditional structure of political authority of highland Ecuador. Indians not only sit in the location of state, behind the long council table draped with flags of the municipality and country, elevated from the masses, where landowner, flower grower, and business group president Jorge Peña is forced to speak from. Indians also receive Peña as a solicitor of a *favorcito* and offer him a token ‘gift’ (40% reduction in land taxes) for his good behavior plus reprimands for his bad behaviors, much like hacendados would ‘gift’ a sack of hacienda grains (*socorros*) every year to their *hausipungueros*, yet use forms of “conflict resolution which escaped state intervention,” in order to reproduce the overall surplus transfer in the opposite direction (Guerrero 1990: 32).<sup>13</sup> In forging this ‘pact’ of imbalanced reciprocity, Ulcuango’s message is clear: plantation owners may now own the land and control the labor pool of former haciendas and may go on ‘playing’ the state by building roads and so on, but the seat of local power is shifting to a legitimate ‘official’ state that can be controlled by *Indios* who may in fact seek retribution for injustices past and present.

What we witness in this meeting is the cadastre, the device that made this shift of state matter, and all its universalizing principles of property and rights being slowly folded in to local structures of race and class. This folding would continue to the point that it became impossible to discuss the cadastre itself outside the terms of race and class struggle, a position that was solidified in the municipality’s second public outreach venture, made during the Pachakutik cantonal assembly in February, 2002.

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Although the 2002 cantonal Pachakutik Assembly was intended to be a general evaluation of the party’s performance during their first year in office, indigenous *comuneros* arrived as ambassadors of their home communities charged with a single task: to make sure they weren’t going to be charged any more taxes by a Pachakutik government, *their* government, than they had been charged by previous administrations. The entire meeting, as a result, was devoted to discussing the cadastral project, its modes of calculating land values and taxes, and how this all fit into Pachakutik’s agenda. National and regional party coordinators introduced the cadastre as an example of new modes of local power that Pachakutik members should support. National economic crises, they explained, were in no small way related to the fact that the country’s elites channeled their profits into non-national sources and evaded taxation since the dawn of the Republic. It was the poor who built the nation with not just sweat and labor but also as the country’s only tax payers. Rural property taxes now gave the opportunity to correct these imbalances.

To draw support from indigenous landowners, the municipal government would have to endorse this class-specific discourse of the national directorate as their original motive for proposing

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<sup>13</sup>Haciendas, Guerrero (1990: 32) suggests, were governed by a distinct mode of “justice managed by the *patrones* and the ‘servants’ of the hacienda ... who used their own codes [of law,] organized around unequal reciprocity,” to administer worker grievances free of state control (see Krupa 2010).

cadastral renovation in the first place. The weight of this task was borne primarily by mayor Bonifaz, who first tried to articulate it to a politicized explanation of Jaramillo's mode of calculating differential land values. When Jaramillo's survey of the 129 flower growers' lands in the canton was completed, Bonifaz declared, they realized that 80% of the projected tax revenues for the canton could be derived from these businessmen alone—"in which I myself am included," he added. Flower growers were sent payment requests for their 2001 taxes, while every other land owner (meaning *comuneros*) was simply sent a report that indicated their land's determined "value" but left tax charges open for future negotiation. The technical, "International," standards for measuring land value were important, he noted, to overcome the ways the flower growers had manipulated their land values in the past:

The National Financing Corporation, by way of the Inter-American Development Bank, loaned a good quantity of money to more than 50% of the [flower] enterprises in this canton, guaranteed by reference to the value of land which on average they valued at \$25,000 [per hectare]. We are charging taxes at a rate of 14.7% of land values. And so, clearly, when they need money from the government, land is valued at one price and when they have to pay taxes it is worth another. And denouncing this, I'd like to say, has cost me the loss of some good friends.

To *comuneros*, however, the standards of measurable equivalence that this project relied upon seemed impossible to fit upon the radically distinct types of land in the canton and thus threw the whole schema of tax calculations up for speculation. Speaker after speaker insisted on the different productive potentials of valley land and high altitude land, flat land and hilly land, irrigated land and dry soil, land devoted to pasture and land devoted to crops. This reflection on the poor quality of their land often led *comuneros* to remind municipal authorities that *they*, and not just their land, were to be distinguished from flower growers because their land was put toward subsistence production as opposed to the former's goal of market profits.

Bonifaz contested these readings of the cadastre by reminding attendees that "compañeros, [loud] we constructed the cadastre [louder] in order to issue charges [shouting, emphasizing each word] TO THE FLOWER GROWERS! [slightly softer] And please raise your hand if anyone here has received a bill from me saying that you have to pay the cadastre." He assured people that all the concerns they expressed—taking account of the different kinds of land, for example—are already built into how they have designed the system, "because *our* cadastres, for the poor, are rational".

The dual system of taxation and class antagonism backing the cadaster had now been made public. This was the message *comuneros* were to take back to their communities to garner support for paying a still-undefined amount of taxes for their lands in coming years. Virgilia Hernández, of the national Pachakutik Coordination reminded those in attendance that the threats to the Municipal government were real enough and for supporters to be on constant watch. "It's obvious," she insisted, "that the flower growers are going to react to this. The flower growers

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have a lot of power, not just economic power but more, since many of our *compañeros* work in the flower plantations, and so the reach of influence exercised by the growers is very strong.” Hernandez was right. A reaction from Pachakutik’s opponents was imminent.

### **HATRED OF STATE: THE ATTACK**

Two days after the Pachakutik meetings, a riot broke out in the city of Cayambe that destroyed the municipal government building and nearly succeeded in ousting Bonifaz and his cabinet from office. Thousands of people, mostly mestizos from the city itself, carried out the attack, but subsequent investigations revealed that it was likely designed and even financed by a coalition of flower growers and the urban families who had shared control of the municipal state for centuries. The incident was motivated by fears surrounding the cadastre. The impending tax increases undoubtedly played a large role in motivating flower growers to back a municipal coup. But the main actors, poor and middle class urban mestizos, would not have been personally affected by the taxes, since the cadastre was explicitly a *rural* cadastre and taxes were applied exclusively to rural, productive, lands, which urban mestizos in Cayambe generally do not own. For them, at issue was what the cadastre and the new taxation policies said about the changing nature of state power in the region which, with rural Indians in control of the state and issuing tax demands from propertied classes, must have appeared as a complete inversion of Cayambe’s long-established political order.

Such mestizo anxieties were made explicit well before finding expression in violence. The riot began simply as an orchestrated march outside the municipal offices where the cabinet was in its regular Monday afternoon session. Protesters carried signs and had hung hand-written posters in the park and on the church doors. The messages on the signs invoked longstanding socio-spatial divisions of the highlands’ political and economic structure, between urban municipalities claiming political legitimacy by an administrative link to the central state and a separate rural structure of political dominion ruled by ruthless, corrupt, and pre-modern hacendados. The main rhetorical strategy of the signs was to expose Bonifaz as a hacendado at heart, doubly insidious for its claim that he is both out of place (and time) as the state representative in a post-hacienda Cayambe and, as an elected leader of Pachakutik, exploiting his indigenous base for his own personal gain. They read:

**Go back to your hacienda, *Gamonal*. There you can act badly!**

**Get out Bonifaz and all of your kind!**

**Bonifaz, avoid a confrontation with the Pueblo. Go back to your house [manor].**

**Reject the activities and weak practices of the *gamonal* mayor against Cayambeños. Where is the money coming from? From the Pockets of the Pueblo! For the salaries of *pipones* [fat cats]!**

The term “gamonal” is illustrative of the accusation that urban Cayambeños were launching against Bonifaz. Peter Gose (1994: 19-20), drawing on work by Deborah Poole, describes *gamonalismo* as “a fusion of economic and political power in the person of a small resident landowner (*gamonal*), whose intimate familiarity with ‘Indian’ culture on the one hand, and systematic violation of it on the other, upheld a servile agrarian social order characterized by low levels of technical innovation and productive investment. It is only through the ‘mixed’ identity attributed to the *gamonal* by this racist folk model that we can understand his wildly oscillating behavior towards the ‘Indian’ ... in which he switches from a sympathetic and sincere participation in agrarian ritual at one moment to an intimidating destruction of commoner livelihood in the next.” While stripped ostentatiously from its historical context, the accusation of *gamonalismo* cuts to the heart of how race and politics intersect in twenty-first century Cayambe. Bonifaz displays a kind of ‘mixed’ racial identity that is a deviant form of mestizaje, a racial schizophrenia that is more opportunistic than harmonious, here put to work in local politics. Accusing Bonifaz of *gamonalismo* accuses him of a double illegitimacy. On the one hand, it claims that he has used the familiarity with indigenous culture and politics he culled violently by appropriating their labor, as a hacendado, to convince them of his merit in representing indigenous demands as the local head of the Pachakutik party. Here he is being exposed as not Indian enough to occupy the position he holds, a *chaupi* (half, fake)-Indio, reverse *cholo*, culling the favors of a *patrón*. On the other hand, as the head of state power for Cayambe, he is being racialized as Indian enough to be suspect in a position of power that is racially codified as non-Indian. He is out of place and the demands placed upon him by his conflicting identity lead him to impose a platform for the entire canton that ultimately only aims to stabilize his rural, indigenous subjects, the base of his power.

These accusations each admit their own form of fear felt by urban Cayambeños. On the one hand, they expose a fear of being administered under a hacienda-like structure, the very system that generations of urban living allowed them to escape, and being absorbed into its attendant forms of political relation (patron-client systems), economic patterns (surplus transfer), political subjectivity (subjects, not citizens), and racial identity (Indian) that set hacienda enclosures apart from the public domain of statecraft for centuries. On the other hand, a government of Indians sparks the equally palpable fear of revenge. This fear is concretized at such policy junctures as the tax reforms precisely because they suggest the potential for a reversal of the historic pattern of resource transfer, from country to city, Indian to mestizo/ white, that gave a material basis to racial domination in the past.

Stretching back to colonial tribute structures, taxes are what non-Indians and particularly landowning classes put into policy and Indians pay. Indeed, handing over a surplus to the state appears throughout history as one of the central codes *defining* Indian identity (Guerrero 2003). Most of Ecuador’s tax riots have, in fact, been led by urban mestizos against colonial and Republican states that attempted to generalize taxation to all citizens under liberal and pre-liberal systems of fiscal administration, such as occurred in the 1592-3 “Revolution of the Alcabalas,”

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the 1765 “Revolution of the Barrios” in Quito , the 1788 riots in Riobamba, and against Flores’ Bolivarian attempt to impose a “*contribución ordinaria*” (general contribution/ universal tax) in the 1840s (Van Aken 1981, Minchom 1994: 61, 222-34, Lavallé 1997). This latter attempt, as Galo Ramón (2007: 168) has argued, “quickly became known as a tax upon whites of the towns” (i.e. mestizos). In Cayambe, this interpretation led to the murder of Adolfo Klinger in 1843, then owner of Bonifaz’s Guachalá, at the hands of a mestizo crowd who suspected him of supporting the tax and using it as a pretext for taking Cayambe under his control (see Krupa forthcoming). Those accused of the murder protested their sentence in court on the grounds that they were simply expressing a “public right... to liberate the patria from a degrading and prejudicial [that is to say ‘universal’] tax” (court records quoted in Ramón 2007: 171).

For centuries, a critical question for mestizos has been one of finding overt ways to maintain their distinction from Indians, a division which tribute codified in the colonial period (and into the first decades of Independence, owing to these very protests). Mestizos of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, as Guerrero notes (2003: 282), “considered that if they paid the personal contribution, as the indigenous populations had been doing, they would likewise become indigenes for the republic. Consequently, they rebelled against a paradoxical equalization of a colonial stamp that would change their identity and degrade them from citizens to the status of Indian”. They developed a deep suspicion of the state’s motive for what seemed to be a blatant status degradation, claiming that the government was attempting “in an underhanded way and via the pretext of a ‘universal tax’ (*contribución general*), to impose on them a levy that—by analogy with the colonial *tributo de indios*, or Indian tribute—they qualified in their pamphlets as a *tributo de blancos*, or white tribute” (Guerrero *ibid*: 280).

A similar set of anxieties, I argue, animated the Cayambe riots of 2002. Property taxes meant to cull a “*contribución*” from only a small elite minority were taken as a threat upon urban society as a whole. Set within the symbolic economy of political exchange, the absurd act of Indians taxing whites threatened to throw the entire canton under a bizarre inversion of hacienda society. Acting within the laws of constitution and state policy once again count little next to local conditions of legitimate power and their prescription that Indians (and their gamonales) are to be subjects of rule, not its agents.

## **UNDERSTANDING THE STATE: THE CONSULTAS**

Shortly after the urban riots, the municipal government started sending out “commissions” composed of state officials and technocrats from the growing cadastral bureaucracy to every indigenous community in the region. The stated aim of these “*consultas*” (consultations) was to explain the cadastral principles to comuneros and to decide with them the ways their lands would be assessed, valued, and taxed. But if we understand the work of hegemony as involving the construction of coalitions around more palatable projects than alternative offers, then the *consultas* were surely hegemonic processes, ones designed to marshal indigenous support for the municipal state.

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These meetings played out in fairly patterned ways. Communities would welcome the commission by putting forward an upper amount of taxes they would be willing to pay, something decided upon in advance. The community of Cochpamba, for instance, decided to propose paying forty cents per hectare but be willing to negotiate up to one dollar—an amount comuneros deemed respectful since forty cents was calculated as double what they had paid the previous year. Municipal representatives (none of the indigenous council—smartly—ever showed up at these) and their expert consultants would then unfurl satellite photos, maps, and graphs to explain that taxes could only be determined under the new “International”/ “American” system (“like every civilized country in the world”) by selecting the “class” of land quality to which their properties belonged, *then* determining their market value, and *then* calculating taxes owed. Thus would begin an excruciating process of negotiation, not because comuneros couldn’t understand the formulas, but because they understood too well that, in non-intensive farming, land that is productive one day may not be the next; that a simple frost or dry spell can wipe out an entire harvest; that agricultural practices aren’t comparable in different communities because some areas might get a little bit more water from their irrigation systems or squeak out two harvests a year or depend more on wages from flower plantations than agriculture or thus have more money to invest in production or pay taxes. None of these interventions ever made any impact on state representatives who remained firmly committed to their formulas.

In every case, officials were forced to retreat from the economics of the cadastre to its politics: comuneros were reminded (again) that the real point of the project was to tax the flower growers, from whom a now-estimated 90% of the tax “contributions” were to come (meaning flower growers were going to pay, on average \$3,500 annually, versus an average of \$9 or \$10 for comuneros). As if trained in reading E.P. Thompson’s (1978) ‘field of force’ model of hegemony through a discursive lens, municipal representatives seemed eager to pull magnets from their pockets and invite comuneros, as if iron filings, to gravitate to one of the only two positions open to them in a binary field of cadastral politics. One was either with the state or with the flower growers. However, the political point of taxes, this 10%, was greater still. As councilman Iván Cordoba explained to about 200 indigenous men, women, and children in Cochapamba,

it would be very easy for us, as the municipal government, to say ‘look compañeros, don’t pay, it’s alright’... but here comes the other part to this, compañeros. This is the point that we can’t consider those who don’t pay [aren’t charged] taxes to be second-class citizens, since logically, for us to be citizens, we have to comply with various requisites—one of which is to pay taxes.

Cordoba is here advancing an argument that resonates well with that made by Hernan de Soto about the imagined universal community of rights and with that advanced by later property advocates about the ability of formal juridical structures to eliminate the terms of discrimination and the barriers to political participation. The response to Cordoba, from an older indigenous man in the crowd, poked quite brilliantly into the rather elitist readings of history and absurd faith in abstractions upon which such statements depend, saying, essentially, ‘don’t tell *us* about

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the political role of taxes—*we have always paid taxes*’: “we, since the beginning, since, in this case, we bought the land from the haciendas, we came forward to pay our taxes. Sure, it was a small amount, but *we have always had to pay taxes.*” Another man continued: “We have to make them [the municipality] understand that we, since we bought the land 30 or 40 years ago, have paid. The flower growers, on the other hand, have never paid up to the current era”.

This addition—*we have always, since owning the land, paid taxes*—to the party platform—*they never have paid taxes*—is of great significance. It confirms a history of following state policy and a legacy of having achieved active citizenship. Here the relationship to landed property is the key means through which citizenship is realized. Coming to own land for the first time during the agrarian reforms acts as a kind of historical starting point for citizenship, the point when the transformation from subject (under hacienda administration) to citizen (under state administration) occurred. As the above discussion of tribute and tax riots confirmed, Indians have in fact always paid taxes, and almost exclusively so. Paying taxes specifically for land, as owners of property and not racial identity, is thus an absolutely critical renewal of citizenship, a performance that verifies that the historical transformation from subject to citizen, tribute-payer to tax-payer, indeed occurred. The never-stated though logical continuation of this point is that elites such as the flower growers are rather deviant sorts of citizens who, despite their obsessive rhetorical appeals to “*haciendo patria*” (or building a proper homeland, nation) through flower growing, are entirely marginal to the major conditions of membership in the patria (Krupa 2010). The weight of this point is strengthened further when we remember that flower growers consider the task of making a proper patria in rural Ecuador to be the production of new kinds of rural Ecuadorians, bringing *Indians* into normative channels of citizenship (of which labor is the key pedagogical act). The social politics of taxation flip these elite terms of propertied political citizenship on their head. What they did not do, in this case, however, was offer security to the municipal state in its efforts to establish a reliable coalition of defense from among the ranks of the region’s indigenous comuneros. A final performance of support was still necessary.

### **THE RESPALDO: INDÍGENAS APOYAN IMPUESTOS**

The two preceding sections documented two distinct ways in which different groups of Cayambeños responded to the new cadastral project and engaged the newly decentralized state’s imposition of higher rural property taxes. The first response, that of urban mestizos, the old political elite, and capital, was a violent attempt to de-legitimize and destabilize the new municipal regime. The second response, by rural indigenous comuneros and their elected leaders, was a more peaceful, though not unheated, attempt to use negotiation, proposals, and consensus to impose their own conditions of tax calculation and due process upon the state. Both responses drew on different historically-tested political praxes that had proven effective for conflict resolution in the past. Neither was effective in this case. Neither group in any meaningful way approved (or necessarily understood) the new cadastral method, and both groups (those who own rural land, anyway) will end up paying more to the state than they have any desire to pay. Even comuneros who, as the preceding section showed, had, willingly or not, seen their own

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institutions, leaders, and political forms drawn increasingly closer into the very bureaucracy of the state, grumbled continuously about the taxes and questioned the broader underlying political motives behind it. And this is perhaps the most important point (and may be the reason the tax increases could be passed at all under such circumstances): once raised, the tax issue in both cases became the slowly fading center-point for much larger political concerns, both about the role of the municipal state in quotidian life and the significance of Pachakutik's run in office. But the radically different ways that these concerns were expressed—centralized public confrontation versus more dispersed private frustration—allowed the municipality to position the different camps, publicly, into absolute terms of supporters and antagonists. Its only chance for success, with the taxes and perhaps its entire term office, depended upon accentuating that divide. Land taxes were to be staged in grand terms as Cayambe's epic confrontation between indigenous and mestizo society.

In mid-February, 2002, a massive “respaldo,” or show of support, for the municipal government was orchestrated in Cayambe's central park. Hundreds or perhaps thousands of people, depending on the source,<sup>14</sup> gathered in the park or marched around the plaza or listened to speeches, or made speeches themselves, or handed out leaflets, or spoke to radio journalists in support of the mayor and his council. This was, in many ways, a symbolic returning of the main public space of the plaza, still strewn with wreckage from the attack, to its legitimate authorities, its political purification from the violence of protest. But it was also an exercise in demographics, a populist-style head count of supporters, and a strategy of mass intimidation directed at the opposition. Looking into the crowd, it became apparent that mayor Bonifaz had drawn his line in the sand across Cayambe's racial frontier. The popular mass was made up almost entirely of indigenous comuneros.

In this regard, Bonifaz certainly knew which fear to play into. By summoning to the city of Cayambe as many rural comuneros as would come to his defense, he was invoking the historic threat of a mestizo town occupied by a *motín de indios*, or Indian riot, an ancient fear in small rural urban centers like Cayambe and constantly reproduced in the indigenous occupations of roads and government buildings since CONAIE's first national uprising in 1990 (Prieto). And yet, the general sentiment among “supporters” in attendance was a mix of tentativeness, suspicion, and pragmatism. People generally felt that their attendance was in some way important to their chances of having their irrigation canals replaced, or getting a road built, or having some other promised public works project ever completed. Others personalized the event, seeing it as a kind of favor done for Bonifaz, though not everyone felt that it was their battle to fight. Others expressed resentment at feeling obliged—*because they were indigenous*—to attend. And though this event would yield the most focused public accusation by the municipal government of

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<sup>14</sup> Different sources published radically different calculations of people, “supporters,” in attendance. These get bigger the further our sources move from Cayambe. Local radio station Radio Mensaje reported 500 people. The regional newspaper *Diario Del Norte* (February 23, 2002: 10) claimed there were 1,500 people. Of the two national papers that covered the event, *El Universo* (16 February, 2002: 16A) said there were 2,000 and *La Hora* (February 17, 2002: A18) estimated 4,000.

“corruption” among flower growers, many “supporters” in the crowd were dressed in plantation uniforms, having come to the *respaldo* after their work in flower plantations ended.

At the event, Bonifaz took the stage after a series of community leaders sheepishly spoke words of thanks to him for various public works projects performed. He cut right to a discussion of the cadastre, the taxes, the Pachakutik platform, and its international support:

Ever since the election campaign we have said that here the rich never pay taxes. And that we want a cadastral survey and an inventory. This isn't just our goal, but also that of The United Nations Development Program, the UNDP, and with a contribution from them we have inventoried the canton. [light applause]. Then, the Association of Municipalities, by way of a convention and a survey, we appraised the lands, in a manner with which we could cover a rural cadastre. What isn't fair is that 127 flower enterprises contribute less than the market women, who are present here today, to the development of Cayambe. [BIG APPLAUSE]. This situation can't continue. And if we did a rural cadastral survey, it was to charge the agro-industrial enterprises, and they have tried to protest this, which, as we have made clear, is trying to reach their hands into the pockets of you all. You must know that all the cadastre that the communities pay will be reinvested into public works in the same community, and that your leaders will oversee this. What we couldn't tolerate is that very large enterprises, that in other parts of the world pay taxes, here contributed nothing.

Despite this rather radical assertion of the cadaster's democratic potential, the press in attendance focused its attention instead on the audience, who seemed to present a confusing scene of Indians protesting *in favor* of a state and advocating paying more money to it. Absurd headlines surfaced, missing all the complications of the event, like that of national newspaper *El Universo* (Saturday 16/02/02: A16) which instead told the country that “*Indigenous People Support Taxes*” (*Indígenas respaldan impuestos*).

The press' focus on the strangeness of an indigenous-state alliance around taxes missed something of their precedent in how indigenous people were drawn into the state-like behavior of hacienda owners in previous periods. Specifically, what this reciprocal political pact between a state that grants services and a faction of the citizen body that can be marshalled as a display of force bumps up dangerously close against is a much older patron-client caudillo-style of politics. Clientelism of this sort was for centuries the only officially recognized mode of indigenous participation in national or local politics, and it was all too often put to the service of a hacendado seeking to ratify his hold on the state. In exchange for the security of their huasipungo, one of the residual duties of huasipungueros was to be on call for their lords should their presence as a mass be demanded to settle some political score or other. Under the hacienda system, indigenous people formed what might be called a reserve army of *political* labor for the hacendado; they suffered the consequences when things went badly, but rarely accrued any benefits when things went well, returning, instead, to the daily tolls on their huasipungo and on

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the land of the hacendado. And with this return to their plot, the reciprocal cycle was complete, the political services offered—a *respaldo of sorts*—was a performance necessary for a huasipunguero to reproduce his hold on land.

One of the more nationally-known examples of this style of political practice comes, in fact, from Diego Bonifaz’s great uncle, Neptalí. Neptalí Bonifaz was the first Bonifaz to own the hacienda Guachalá (the manor of which is now in Diego’s hands, the rest having been sold off to flower growers), which he inherited from his mother Josefina Ascázubi upon her death in 1924. Neptalí Bonifaz spent more of his time in Europe and other parts of South America than in Ecuador, where he developed a progressive and modernizing streak uncommon for hacienda owners of his time, but did manage to become a co-founder and president of the state’s Central Bank in 1927. More impressive still, he was elected president of the Republic in 1931, in what has been called “the first free elections of our history” (Bonifaz 1995: 28). His presidential victory represented a brief and unexpected lapse in the domination of coastal liberals who, in their attempts to re-take the state, made a fierce enemy of Bonifaz. As a result, immediately after Bonifaz’s electoral victory, he was accused of being a Peruvian citizen and thus not legitimate for presidency in Ecuador. He was stripped of his title by Congress before taking office, an act which provoked a bloody fight in the streets of Quito between Bonifaz’s supporters and detractors, known as the Four Day War. Many of the more than two thousand deaths in those four days were suffered by indigenous people from Cayambe, particularly the huasipungueros of Guachalá. Yves Saint-Geours (1994: 185) provides a nicely synthetic account of Bonifaz’s rise and fall from power and its significance:

Neptalí Bonifaz, shrewd financier and large landowner who lived most of his life outside the country, was elected president in 1931... [But he wasn’t allowed to take up his post] Thus, to put his rights to work, he called upon “his” Indians [*indios*] and marched to the capital. This recourse to method... is the work of apparently contradictory attitudes: modernization of action, opening of the market and to ideas coming from outside but using antique proven techniques of social and political mobilization. And to a certain extent, this is the panorama of the central-northern highlands at the start of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

Clientelism, in other words, was an entrenched ‘last resort’ option for settling the political scores of great men, even when its archaic philosophical underpinnings contradicted the modernizing principles of political economy they advocated. Given how Neptalí Bonifaz’s great nephew Diego found “recourse” in a similar “method” over seventy years later, could we conclude that, in spite of the great political and economic transformations that characterize the era, the “decentralizing” states of the northern highlands entered the 21<sup>st</sup> century with any less of a contradiction?

## **CONCLUSIONS: THE SPACES OF DESIRE**

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In this paper I have sought to trace the lines of influence emanating from a rather opaque orthodoxy among global development planners of the social and political value of “property rights” to their fusion in Latin America with dominant projects of state decentralization to the more grounded projects of cadastral reconstruction in the rural Andes. In approaching these projects as local state-formation initiatives, I have attempted to examine the social life of some currently powerful abstractions (property, formality, taxation, etc.) through the lens of the more historically-grounded principles that they come to inhabit (such as race, clientelism, gamonalismo, citizenship) when put to work in a real-world scenarios like that of early 21<sup>st</sup> century Cayambe. This leads me to three conclusions.

The first is to reassert that the complicated political and economic histories of places and peoples framed in dominant geo-governmental optics as sitting at the so-called “margins of the state”—those locations of interventionist desire—may, in fact, be completely overrun with power blocs, as Begoña Aretxaga (2003: 398) insisted, “acting as the state and producing the same powerful effects”. Cadastres and other technologies of state-building may not, as such, enter into a blank slate of statelessness, spaces longing for incorporation and “formalization,” but rather must compete to legitimate one mode of statecraft over others and turn their so-framed ‘outreach devices’ of state realism into evidence of that legitimacy—battles which, as the case of Cayambe shows, may be hard won.

The second concerns the ways we understand state centrality itself. The case examined suggests that, on the one hand, we need to interrogate the ways that the magic of the state, its veneer of transcendental objectivity, rests fundamentally on its claim to centralization (at whatever scale), to being the organic and legitimate center around which political life must be structured and the only possible framework through which the political is thought. Disrupting this magic takes writing from an off-centered analytic position. And yet this case also shows, on the other hand, the ways that subaltern populations may invoke the myth of the political center, the framework of ‘state’ as signifying legitimate political domination, as their own in the effort to off-center the historic claims that dominant groups have made about their natural right to rule—be these framed, in Cayambe’s case, in racial (white/ mestizo), geographic (urban, territorial), lineage (familial), or class (propertied, productivist) terms.<sup>15</sup> Here it is the idea of state, its claim to universality and generality, what Bourdieu (1999) termed its “unmotivated” or “disinterested” idiom, that can be marshaled in a struggle to expose previous claims to state, such as those advanced by Cayambe’s flower growers or hacendados, as *particularistic* and interested masks covering up class, racial, or other structures of rule.

I haven’t fully fleshed out the third concluding point yet—and it may go absolutely nowhere. But I want to return to thinking about the ways that rural subjects and their political subjectivities are being interpolated as productive sites for intervention in the sort of ‘development’ model offered to Andean countries today—how, in de Soto’s terms, informality is but a longing for formality, a

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<sup>15</sup> See as well Greene’s contribution to this volume and Clark 2007 for related arguments.

“lack” expressing a latent desire for inclusion in the structures of official governance, which ‘development’ is meant to be the bridge towards. I want to think about this space of desire as a certain kind of model of state subjection posited as a kind of essence lying at the core of the subject despite her knowing it. Another way of saying this is to ask about how contemporary modes of state formation find their core sites of political productivity in its most off-centered locations and subjects. To return to Ecuador, I am thinking of the message given to the comuneros of Cochapamba, that (as quoted above) “logically, for us to be citizens, we have to comply with various requisites—one of which is to pay taxes”. This language, which equates the *practice* of citizenship with the paying of taxes is, I noted, resonant with the equity principles of current property discourses and explicitly built into the official rhetoric of agencies promoting cadastral renovation. The IADB (n.d.) document outlining their support for the Cayambe project, for instance, claims that the primary goal of the cadastre is to:

consolidate the Municipality of Cayambe as an entity promoting sustainable local human development that contributes to social equity and the betterment of the conditions of life of the population, acting as an impulse for the responsible democratic participation of the citizens.

I want to note especially the ethical doubling attached in both statements to taxation, as a device of democratic citizenship at the individual level and social equity at the collective one, something only possible [legitimate] if passed through the seemingly transcendental signifier of state. That to want social equity is to want state recognition. That equity has no bearing, cannot be thought, outside subjection to the state. That non-equity is really just marginality or distance (via de Soto’s ‘proximity’ model) from the liberal democratic state—not a condition of inclusion in it, a necessary condition of being absolutely central (as wage labor) to neoliberal capitalism, etc.

It is this sort of construction that I read into Achille Mbembe’s (2001: 90) discussion of the core “political significance of taxation” since “the dawn of modern times” as that which forges a “reciprocal obligation between sovereign and subject”. This is always “justified,” Mbembe goes on to say, “on the one hand, by the need to ensure public prosperity and the common good,” but, “on the other... by [a] concern to keep subjects obedient. It is in this latter sense,” he argues, “that taxation is the very mark of subjection”. As Janet Roitman (2005) has added from her work in the Chad basin, however, attempts to install an “economic regulatory authority” over an always-already politicized landscape is likely to provoke not only great “fiscal disobedience,” but also intense conflict around the very terms of fiscal subjection—legitimate wealth, price, and currency are her examples—, terms which bear in them the marks of previous struggles around the economic regulation of *specific* populations. In other words, what Mbembe describes as the “arbitrariness” of tribute relations may linger on or be recomposed within the universalism of taxation, its supposed opposite.

I am wanting to think about what happens as debates about certain socio-historical “truths” and political openings get folded into such economic categories of subjection and the ways they are rendered intelligible—or not—to the people whom they are meant to conjure up. Decoding this process may be less about trying to ‘see like a state’ than in entering that more Fanonian optical dialectic relationship where *one sees oneself as seen by the state*, through its categories as a certain kind of political actor, and asking about how certain modes of practical engagement with local inequalities are opened and closed as a result. ~ What happens as market values and land taxes get constructed here as the unlikely heroes of class struggle and racial retribution against agro-industrialists, what are the consequences of streamlining such goals through such juridical devices and categories of the state. What forms of struggle are rendered impossible or off-centered as a result? [land, not property, battles—expropriations?; struggles over relations, not conditions, i.e. against capitalist labor itself, not citizenship, and so on].

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