INCAS PAST AND PRESENT:
Archaeology and the Indigenous Saraguros of Southern Ecuador

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ABSTRACT

Here I explore the role of Inca-ness in the current conception and expression of identity among the Saraguro people of Ecuador and the potential role of archaeology in examining, expressing, and exploiting the connections between them and their past. As an ethnic group, the Saraguros have developed through a process of ethnogenesis in which members of several disparate groups forged a new identity in the context of Inca and Spanish colonialism. In the current construction of their ethnicity, the Saraguros express a close link to the Incas in numerous ways, including belief in common descent from the Incas.

This strong connection with an Inca past has implications for the relationships between the Saraguros, archaeologists, archaeological sites, and archaeological research. Saraguros have become increasingly interested in learning about the past through archaeology, especially about the local Inca presence. Likewise, they are interested in preserving Inca sites and in their potential for stimulating tourism. In turn, archaeologists have the potential to contribute to the Saraguros' understanding of and relationship with the past. Saraguro is a case that, in line with SAA ethical principles, presents a very favorable opportunity to consult actively with local descendants and establish working relationships that can be mutually beneficial.

INTRODUCTION

Up to the present, the Saraguro region in the southern highlands of Ecuador (FIGURE 1) has been the subject of relatively few archaeological investigations. Accordingly, there has been little opportunity for contention between archaeologists and the indigenous people of the region, the Saraguros, regarding the investigation, interpretation, and presentation of the past. Yet current trends foretell an increase in the level of archaeological investigation in the area, and such issues will soon have to be addressed in some form, which makes essential an assessment of the relations between archaeologists, Saraguros, and the past. In many ways, Saraguro conceptions of their ethnic identity and origins may play the greatest role in conditioning these relations. At present, the pre-Inca ethnic affiliations of Saraguros are somewhat unclear to both Saraguros and scholars. As a result, the indigenous people only assert a chronologically shallow link with the past, emphasizing links with Inca society and culture as a focus for self-identification. This situation has direct ramifications for how they may interact with archaeology and archaeologists.

The following is a discussion of the development and nature of Saraguro ethnic identity and their links with an Inca past, and how those conceptions and the evolving social and economic circumstances allow for the goals of archaeologists and indigenous people to be complementary rather than adversarial. Much of this paper arises from interactions and observations made in the course of conducting my fieldwork, beginning in 1994, and from anthropological literature dealing with the Saraguros. Because my experiences have been limited in time and space, and because the lives and attitudes of individual Saraguros are quite varied, I make no claim that I am presenting here all of their views. Instead, I am drawing mostly from interactions with a number of community leaders and other politically active Saraguros, who are among those with the most formal education and are the most active in maintaining and expressing an indigenous ethnic identity. Without a doubt, these are the people most concerned about the investigation, interpretation, and presentation of the past. To a great extent, they will determine the future course of public expressions of indigenous identity and the nature of archaeological research in Saraguro.

THE SARAGUROS

The Saraguros have traditionally resided in the northern section of the province of Loja in the southern highlands of Ecuador, with a population of perhaps around 30,000. Their major economic focus has been on subsistence farming; in the 20th century, many Saraguros branched out into raising cattle. This has integrated them more into the cash economy, but has required an expansion of their land holdings into the

lowland rain forests to the east (Belote 1984; Tual 1979). In contrast to many other native Andean groups, the Saraguros managed to retain most of their ancestral lands, and as a result of this, as well as their success in cattle raising and other pursuits, as a group they are among the most prosperous indigenous people in Ecuador, perhaps second only to the Otavalos of the northern highlands.

As the town of Saraguro is located along the Pan-American Highway, the Saraguros are by no means isolated from the greater Ecuadorian society, and their lives and circumstances are rapidly changing with the rest of the nation. For example, many Saraguros are frequent computer and internet users, and as of 2005, cell phone service became available and was widely adopted. While a large proportion of Saraguros still make their living through agriculture and cattle raising, many are now attaining higher levels of education, including university degrees and beyond, and are branching out into new occupations such as law, education, and medicine. Along with changes in their economic well-being, the Saraguros are becoming politically active, seeking to play a greater role in issues that directly affect them. On the local stage, Saraguros have formed a number of political organizations, and the indigenous community is having a greater impact in the government of the canton of Saraguro. Saraguros are also visible on the national political stage, with a notable highlight being the election of an indigenous Saraguro, Luis Macas, to the national legislature in 1996. Recently, Macas was elected to serve another term as head of the Confederación de Nacionalidades Indígenas del Ecuador (CONAIE), the national indigenous organization. Still, in the face of all of these major changes, the Saraguros are determined to assert their independence and maintain their ethnic identity.

THE DEVELOPMENT OF SARAGURO ETHNIC IDENTITY

As with all other indigenous groups in the former realm of the Incas, the nature of Saraguro ethnic identity has undergone a long process of change from the time of the Incas to the present, subjected to an array of both internal and external pressures. The process of Saraguro ethnogenesis has been complex, entailing the development of a distinctive new, cohesive ethnic identity that arose from a collection of people of diverse origins (synthetic ethnogenesis) and the on-going definition and re-definition of Saraguro ethnic identity (transformative ethnogenesis).[1] Here, the intent is to limit the discussion to the aspects of the development of Saraguro ethnicity that are most relevant to how they conceive of and relate to the past.

[1] Synthetic and transformative processes of ethnogenesis were defined in Belote and Belote (1993). Transformative ethnogenesis among the Saraguros was examined in that work and in Belote (1984), while synthetic ethnogenesis in Saraguro has been explored by Ogburn (forthcoming).

Pre-Inca and Inca Times

The seminal event in the history of the Saraguros was the arrival of the Inca Empire in the southern highlands of Ecuador. The Inca army, under command of Topa Inca, the tenth emperor, conquered the region during the reign of his father, Pachacuti, the ninth emperor and initiator of the Inca campaigns of conquest (Cabello Balboa 1945 [1586]: 305; Cieza de León 1985 [1553]: 163; Murúa 1946 [1605]: 51; Rowe 1985: 224; Sarmiento de Gamboa 1942 [1572]: 119). According to the chronology put forth by Rowe (1946: 203), the Inca conquest of Saraguro occurred between the years 1463 and 1471. By the end of effective Inca rule in the 1530s, the area had been subject to the Inca Empire for over six decades. Though it is a short period in archaeological terms, sixty years was certainly long enough for the Incas to consolidate their control over the natives and integrate the area into the empire by imposing their own administrative, economic, and religious systems.

Most importantly, the Incas instituted resettlement projects in Saraguro, as they did in nearly every province of their empire. As a standard method of consolidating their control over newly conquered territories, the Incas forced many thousands of their subjects to relocate to provinces up to 2,000 km from their original homes, replacing them in turn with subjects from elsewhere in the empire. People permanently relocated by the state outside of the land of their ethnic origin were known in Quichua as *mitmaqkuna* (*mitmaq* in the singular). The chief aim of this policy was to pacify newly subjugated peoples by breaking them into smaller, more isolated groups, over whom control could be maintained by severely curtailing their ability to organize resistance to their conquerors. However, some resettlements were also carried out for economic, religious, or other ends, depending on the needs of the empire.

In their resettlement projects, the Incas did not simply make even exchanges between two provinces, but instead moved people in from and out to numerous areas, significantly increasing the ethnic diversity within each. As a result, a province may have contained people from a dozen or more ethnic groups, where there had formerly been perhaps three at the most. For example, the Inca placed *mitmaqkuna* from up to fifteen different ethnic groups in the region of Abancay in Perú (Espinoza Soriano 1973: 232). The proportion of people replaced in each province varied greatly, ranging between perhaps 10% to 80% of the total population (Rowe 1982: 107). In some cases, such as Ayaviri and Paria near Lake Titicaca, the entire original population may have been removed (Julien 1993: 187). In the end, these massive resettlement projects had a drastic effect on the ethnic landscape of the Andes, which is still evident today.

According to local oral traditions, the Incas subjected the Saraguro region to such resettlements, bringing in *mitmaqkuna* who were either ethnic Collas from the Lake Titicaca region of Bolivia, or inhabitants of the Cuzco area, the capital of the Inca Empire. Historical sources do not provide much information specific to the Saraguro region, so the ethnic affiliation of the inhabitants in pre-Inca times has been unclear, as has the proportion of the population removed by the Incas. Some documentary sources (e.g., Cabello Balboa 1945 [1586]; Cristóbal de Albornoz 1967 [late 16th century]) associate Saraguro with the Paltas, who are thought to have inhabited much of the central and southern sections of the province of Loja. In contrast, evidence from archaeological remains (Ogburn 2001), the distribution of toponymic elements (Belote and Belote 1994a), and historical documents (Truhan 1996) suggests the people were more closely affiliated with the Cañaris, who lived to the north of Saraguro in what are the modern provinces of Azuay and Cañar.

With the extensive mixing of populations perpetrated by the Incas, the maintenance and expression of ethnic divisions and identities ceased to be solely a local process determined by each individual group in relation to its neighbors. Instead, the dynamics were conditioned by the dominant society, whose main interest was in measures that could be used to control its subjects. The Incas saw advantages in enforcing the maintenance of distinct identities of the dozens, if not hundreds, of different ethnic groups that comprised their empire. They instituted a number of policies toward that end. For example, all subjects were required to maintain the outward markers of their group affiliation, specifically clothing and headgear, and were not allowed to assume the costume of any other ethnic group (Cobo 1979 [1653]: 206). While many Inca policies, such as the imposition of the Quichua language and the state religion, did serve to culturally unify the empire (Rowe 1982), this strategy of forced maintenance of ethnic divisions shows that the Incas were definitely not trying to create a melting pot. Instead, the Incas were pursuing a policy that helped to control the provinces; the maintenance of ethnic distinctions helped perpetuate traditional animosities between neighboring groups and fueled suspicions of *mitmaqkuna* in their new lands, thus inhibiting the formation of alliances (Rowe 1982: 111).

Therefore, whatever the ethnic make-up of the Saraguro region under the Incas, whether it included Collas, Cuzcos, Cañaris, Paltas, or others, members of each group would have maintained separate ethnic identities, most likely living in separate settlements, and serving different roles for the state.

Spanish Rule to the Present

When the Spaniards arrived in the Andes, they too found ethnic differences to be helpful to their cause. During their conquest of the Incas, the surviving traditional divisions actually helped the Spaniards, as it inhibited native groups from uniting and organizing a successful resistance, while other groups were all too ready to join the Europeans to throw off the Inca imperial yoke (Rowe 1982: 94). But once the Spaniards had consolidated their control over the former Inca realm, their attitude toward maintaining ethnic diversity changed significantly; they were no longer interested in the continuation of traditional rivalries or ethnic divisions (Rowe 1982: 94).

This shift occurred because economics came to play a larger role in indigenous identity than did political control. As under the Incas, the natives were required to serve the state by providing labor or goods. But now, local ethnic distinctions made no difference to the dominant society; they only had an interest in maintaining a general class of indigenous people based on Spanish conceptions of race; this was the class whose members were subject to forced labor and tribute because of their racial status as *indios*. Thus, with such motivations, the Spaniards to a large extent imposed the maintenance of a generic indigenous identity on the native people (Belote and Belote 1993: 3). Conditions under the Spaniards began to create "new pressures both for cultural unification and for the development of a sense of common identity" (Rowe 1982: 94), leading to the consolidation of small ethnic entities, and an overall cultural homogenization within the category of indigenous people. These processes were further encouraged by the *reducciones* of the late 16th century, in which the Spanish government forced many people to move from their scattered settlements into concentrated towns; in many cases people of diverse ethnic backgrounds were forced to live together (Murra 1946: 814).

There were many other trends that led to a more homogenized indigenous identity and the lessening of the importance of pre-Inca ethnic distinctions during the early Spanish period. For instance, many people moved outside of their home provinces to escape the heavy tribute burden imposed upon property-owning natives, while many others were shuffled around to provide labor for such economic endeavors as gold mining. On the other hand, during the chaos of the early years after the fall of Atahuallpa in 1532, many *mitmaqkuna* returned to the homelands from which the Incas had removed them, thus re-affirming their original ethnic membership, and reducing the ethnic diversity in some of the provinces. Within the context of this mixture of peoples and the external pressures to maintain only a generic indigenous identity, many

smaller ethnic groups disappeared, others survived, and still others coalesced and forged distinct new identities.

The indigenous people of the Saraguro region were certainly immersed in these processes. The town of Saraguro itself was most likely founded by the Spaniards, as there is no evidence of prehistoric settlement within the town itself (Ogburn 2001). During the Spanish period, the major obligation of the Saraguro natives was to maintain the town's *tambo*, which was an important way station for travelers passing through the southern sierra. This uncompensated labor service was required of the Saraguros up until the 1940s (Belote and Belote 1993: 9). It may be that because the dominant society from the Spanish to the republican periods was most concerned with keeping a supply of free labor to maintain the *tambo*, the Saraguros were not greatly affected by the hacienda system, which would have diverted their labor to the control of wealthy land owners (Belote and Belote 1993: 9). Thus while the Saraguros were subjected by the state to a significant burden, they were left in control of their own lands.

As was the case elsewhere in the Andes, the identification of the Saraguros as indigenous was to some extent enforced from the outside. But the native people of the Saraguro region did maintain an identity separate from their traditional neighbors, the Cañaris to the north, who managed to flourish, and the Paltas to the south, who have effectively vanished as a distinct group. However, the pressures from outside apparently led to a consolidation within the Saraguro region, among people with various ethnic affiliations, from various *mitmaqkuna* groups to whatever local people remained, and with some inter-marriage with mestizos and people of European descent, forging a single more or less homogeneous group of Saraguros (Belote and Belote 1993: 8).

In recent decades, the situation of the Saraguros has been changing significantly. Most importantly, they were freed from their uncompensated labor obligations to the state in the 1940s, and have been able to devote their efforts to expanding their own economic base. As was noted above, many Saraguros have taken up cattle raising to participate in the cash economy, while others are engaging in non-traditional careers ranging from teaching to law. The Saraguros are also benefiting from many national and international programs designated for indigenous peoples, and they are becoming more politically active, forming organizations to express their views and preserve their culture on a local level, while participating in pan-Ecuadorian indigenous organizations on the national level.

At this juncture, the changing economic and social conditions are such that external pressures (i.e., policies and attitudes of the dominant society) have much less influence on the maintenance of distinct indigenous ethnic identities. The process has

become chiefly an internal matter (Belote and Belote 1993: 5-15), and the Saraguros are now very actively seeking to maintain their identity as an indigenous ethnic group on their own terms.

SARAGURO IDENTITY AND THE PAST

With this strong desire to maintain their ethnicity, there has been a conscious effort among Saraguros in recent decades to preserve certain aspects of their culture that outwardly express their identity as Andean natives. Foremost among these are the use of the Quichua language, the prevalence of which had been waning but is now the focus of significant revival efforts (King 2001), and their distinctive traditional clothing and hairstyle (Belote 1984: 55). On another level, links with the past have become an essential element in how the Saraguros distinguish themselves as a group from all others, native and non-native. However, in Saraguro, expressing that link with the past is problematic because that past is very poorly known. As noted above, the identity of the pre-Inca natives of the region has been unclear, and the affiliation of the *mitmaqkuna* brought into the region by the Incas is likewise ambiguous. Additionally, while a majority of the forebears of the Saraguros were undoubtedly indigenous, it may never be determined what percentage represent *mitmaqkuna*, the descendants of the pre-Inca inhabitants, or *forasteros*, who were those who left their homes during Spanish rule to avoid the high tribute requirements of the landed natives.

Despite all this ambiguity, when their origins are discussed, in their oral traditions the Saraguros emphasize their descent from *mitmaqkuna*, either Collas from Lake Titicaca, or Cuzcos from the center of the Inca Empire. Unfortunately, there is a lack of known ethnohistorical documentation to either supplement or contradict the oral history, although available sources have certainly been examined for relevant information (especially by Belote 1984; Belote and Belote 1994b; Ogburn 2001). One tantalizing piece of evidence is a document reported from a Spanish archive, which states that the Saraguro *mitmaqkuna* were elite troops in the Inca army (Belote and Belote, eds., 1994: 11-12). Otherwise, very few of the earliest chronicles mention Saraguro by name, and those that do yield little data. When *mitmaqkuna* are mentioned, it is only in the larger context of the province of Loja. This dearth of description prevails despite the location of Saraguro along the main north-south Andean highland route between Quito and Cuzco. Most likely, this situation arose from the hostility of the natives of the Saraguro region toward the Spaniards and other indigenous people (Cieza de León 1984 [1553]: 250, 1994 [1554]: 174; Arias Dávila 1897 [1582]: 178); this hostility seems to have made Spaniards avoid the area for at least 15 years after the toppling of the last independent Inca ruler in the 1530s.

On the whole then, the past of the Saraguros is primarily informed through oral history, which presently does not provide much specific detail. Their knowledge of their origins is somewhat vague and does not seem to satisfy those Saraguros with whom I have discussed the issue. Even the suggestion that their *mitmaqkuna* ancestors came from Cuzco or Lake Titicaca appears to be another point of ambiguity, as if there should have been only one source group, and having two candidates means that the certainty of either is questionable to them. But when considered in the context of Inca policies of resettlement, the presence of multiple ethnic groups is actually the most likely scenario; the *mitmaqkuna* ancestors were probably from both regions, and could have come from other provinces as well.

Belief in a shared origin is a common and often essential component of ethnic identity. How then, in lieu of having a firm understanding of their *mitmaqkuna* origins, do the Saraguros express their common connection to the past, such an important aspect of their identity? Currently, I see them addressing that question by actively linking their identity directly to the Incas, a people and culture who are well-known to the outside world. While little is known of whether any ethnic Incas were ancestors of the Saraguros, ethnohistorical and archaeological data leave no doubt that the Incas were present and in control of the region. Of course, many contemporary highland Andean indigenous groups exhibit some cultural relationships to the Incas, such as the use of the Inca language, Quichua, but many of these links are remnants of former Inca domination rather than expressions of affinities for the Inca past. But for the Saraguros, the expressed associations are more explicit, and take a variety of forms.

The traditional clothing of the Saraguros (FIGURE 2) is the most visible link to the Incas; it is commonly said that they wear black as a sign of mourning for the death of the last Inca, Atahuallpa. It would be difficult to determine whether this notion actually dates back to the death of Atahuallpa in 1533, or to more recent times (and perpetuated in part through tourist guidebooks). The connection between the Saraguros' black clothing and the death of Atahuallpa was being expressed in the early 20th century, as noted by Presbítero Ignacio Landívar Argudo (1996 [1946]). Earlier, Pedro Fermín Cevallos (1986 [1886]: 270), in his late 19th century history of Ecuador, noted that the black was a sign of mourning for the Saraguros' lost independence. Though Cevallos' account does not refer directly to Atahuallpa, the sentiment of mourning was present, and leads one to wonder whether the explicit mention of Atahuallpa is a modern addition or was present in Cevallos' time as well. As a recent addition, it would show a more conscious effort to link with the Inca past, but if the belief dates farther back, then it would suggest much more of a historical connection with the Incas. One also might speculate that the wearing of black as a sign of mourning

was a European custom introduced to the Andes. In that case, this Saraguro custom could not date to the actual death of Atahuallpa because there would have been little time for indigenous people to adapt such a foreign practice within the short period between the arrival of Pizarro in 1532 and Atahuallpa's execution the next year. However, Rowe (1946: 246) describes the wearing of black during mourning as an Inca custom, so the wearing of clothes of mourning by the Saraguros could indeed have great antiquity. No matter the age of the practice, the relevant point is that the Saraguros are in the present actively associating the Incas with the traditional Saraguro style of dress, which is a source of pride and an important marker of their ethnic identity (Belote 1984: 55).

Direct Inca connections have also been made through the naming of schools in the rural communities of Saraguro and business establishments in the town itself. For example, the schools in the communities of Tambupamba and Oñacapac have been named for two of the Inca Emperors, Huayna Capac and Tupac Yupanqui, respectively, while the school in Pichic is named for Rumiñahui, a famous Inca general who resisted the Spanish conquest. Others directly incorporate the word Inca in their names, as with 'Inca Samana' in Ilincho, and 'Inca Huasi' in Ñamarín. The school in Las Lagunas is named for the Inca festival of the sun, Inti Raymi, replacing the previous name 'Benito Juárez.' In the more remote community of Ciudadela, the school was given the Quichua name "Amawta Hatari" and decorated with Inca related pictures (FIGURE 3). Of all of the possible names that could be chosen, it is striking that so many of the Saraguro schools, which are important community institutions, are explicitly linked by name to the Incas. The trend to give Inca-related names to rural schools has been going on since the 1980s; more recently Saraguros have begun to give Inca-related names to businesses within the town of Saraguro. For example, in the past few years, the Inkapirka restaurant was opened on the main plaza, and elsewhere some Saraguros have begun a tour guide business named Inka Tours.

On a personal level, some Saraguros are now giving Inca and Quichua first names to their children instead of the traditional Spanish names that have been commonly used for centuries. For example, a number of boys have been named Atahuallpa, a very assertive expression of Inca-ness. In a different vein, a friend of mine named his daughter Inti Takatina, which means "she chases the sun."

In addition, the Incas are evoked through the performance of traditional music in Saraguro, which is also being actively preserved and used in the expression, definition, and assertion of Saraguro ethnic identity (Volinsky 1996). The link with the Incas is expressed in two ways. First, one of the young groups of Saraguros involved in the revitalization of traditional music have named themselves Grupo Rumiñahui, after

the Inca general. Secondly, song lyrics of at least a few recent compositions have included the names of Incas and other references to things Inca.

Furthermore, the Saraguros are connecting themselves to an Inca past through public ceremonies. For example, there has been a revival of the celebration of Inti Raymi, the Inca festival of the sun that takes place during the June solstice. During this festival, a large number of Saraguros gather to perform re-created rituals at the Baño del Inca ('Bath of the Inca'), a basin located within a waterfall next to a cave overlooking the Pan-American Highway. Local lore holds that the Incas used to bathe in the Baño del Inca, where there is supposedly a seat carved into the bedrock from which the basin is formed. The site does exhibit evidence of modification by the Incas, and caves and waterfalls were sacred places in Inca religion, so it is likely that the Baño del Inca was actually used by the Incas for ceremonies. The revival of Inti Raymi began over a decade ago on a local level, centered in the community of Las Lagunas, and featured performances of school children dressing up in Inca costumes and the focal ceremony at the Baño del Inca. Inti Raymi is now developing into a major tourist event, with a calendar of events lasting four days, and is advertised in the city and province of Loja via posters and brochures (FIGURE 4). The events are now drawing many spectators from Loja and show the potential to draw increasing crowds in the future. Inti Raymi seems to be simultaneously putting Saraguro on the tourist map and proclaiming the Inca-ness of the Saraguros to the outside viewer.

Another ceremony, conducted in October of 1994 by one of the Saraguro political organizations, had a very explicit Inca connection, involving a procession to and ceremony at the Inca imperial site of Ciudadela. Also known as Tambo Blanco, this is the best known archaeological site in the region, as it has been visited and described for centuries (Cieza de León 1984 [1553]: 180; Uhle 1923: 11; Villavicencio 1858: 445-6). These events were held on October 11, the day before Columbus Day, referred to as the Day of Resistance, and were held to protest the more than 500 years of lost independence that began with the arrival of Columbus. At the head of the procession to Ciudadela was a flag carrier with a rainbow flag, which is the modern symbol for Andean indigenous people; notably, it was also a symbol used by the Incas. The ceremony at Ciudadela was held in the ruins of a large structure, of the type commonly known as a *kallanka*. The ceremony included a speech in Quichua, which referred to the presence of the Incas at the site in the past, and how such important leaders as Rumiñahui and Atahuallpa had gazed upon the very same stones that we saw before us.

Perhaps the most conspicuous examples of explicit links to the Inca past being expressed by the Saraguros are found in community signage and in public architecture.

For example, on a large sign painted at the northern entrance of the town of San Lucas, where it can be clearly seen by everyone passing by on the Pan-American Highway, the town name is written along with the phrase 'Inca Culture' in Spanish. This proclamation is no doubt related to the fact that the town is located near two Inca sites, Ciudadela, and Inkapirka (not to be confused with the much publicized Ingapirca to the north of the city of Cuenca), which is a ceremonial site constructed of the famous Inca style of cut-stone architecture. But neither of those Inca sites has been developed for tourism and the casual traveler would have no knowledge of them. The indigenous people of the area are planning to develop the sites and attract visitors, but at the moment, the sign does not appeared to be aimed at generating interest in the local ruins. It seems more likely that the local indigenous residents are declaring that they are the living heirs of the Inca culture that is so evident in the nearby sites. More recently, there has been a sign erected at the entrance from the Pan-American Highway to the community of Las Lagunas, emphasizing that the community is the home of the Inti Raymi festival. On one level, this sign is oriented toward outsiders who may be interested in coming to see the activities hosted during Inti Raymi. But on another level, it is almost as if the residents of Las Lagunas are declaring themselves to be the most "Inca" of all the Saraguro communities.

On a grander scale, a large new portal with Inca-style architectural elements has been erected at the central upper entrance to main plaza in the town of Saraguro (FIGURE 5). Interestingly, such a project had to be approved by and funded by the municipal government, in which the Saraguros have had little influence until recently, being historically the domain of the mestizo population that has been the predominant population in the town. Moreover, the portal does not actually contain any direct references to the indigenous population. This may suggest that the portal was erected as a symbol recognizing the indigenous people of Saraguro as an important component of local society, most appropriately represented by references to Inca culture. Alternatively, the Inca gateway could be a way of asserting or appropriating a level of Inca heritage for the entire population of the town and surrounding region, which in part could be oriented towards the development of tourism.

With these rather visible expressions of connections, the Saraguros are to an extent appropriating the past of the Incas in order to make it their own. Yet why would the Saraguros link their identity to a group with which the original relationship was one of domination and colonization? It is likely to serve several purposes. First, it is a connection with a known and venerated culture of the past, through which the Saraguros become linked with the respect and admiration now associated with the Incas. This is rather ironic in that the reign of the Incas was not at all a benevolent or

paternalistic one. All the subjects of the empire were required to labor for the state, and many of them resented the loss of their sovereignty and the punishments meted out by the Incas during their wars of imperial conquest and their suppression of rebellion. In fact, native rancor was a major reason why Francisco Pizarro was able to topple the Inca regime, as many indigenous groups were quite willing to side with the Spaniards in the hope of throwing off the yoke of oppression. But time has been kind to the memory of the Incas, and the popular conception of their empire, in the Andes and abroad, is one of a majestic, noble, and benevolent state, to which many people attach a sense of mystery. Furthermore, compared to the excesses of the Spanish regime, the Andean people were probably, on the whole, better off under Inca control. In any case, an expressed link with the Incas gives outsiders ready-made images to associate with the Saraguros, which are more easily digestible than vague references to ancestors from Cuzco or Lake Titicaca.

Additionally, an association with the Incas gives the Saraguros a solid link with the prehispanic past, which is necessary because a prehispanic origin is in effect the defining element of indigenous ethnicity. While a tie with the reign of the Incas may pre-date the arrival of the Spaniards by fewer than 100 years, and does not allow claims for long tenure on the land as may be claimed by other indigenous groups, the important aspect of the relationship is that it pre-dates the arrival of the Europeans, thus affirming the Saraguros' status as original inhabitants as compared to mestizos or whites. The chronometric shallowness of their connection to prehispanic times is of little import because there are no neighboring indigenous groups who might dispute claims to the land.

This phenomenon of indigenous Andean peoples expressly identifying with the Incas has been referred to as “Inca-ism” (in contrast, here I have used the term “Inca-ness” to describe similarities between a group and the Incas, which are not necessarily consciously expressed as linked with an Inca identity). Inca-ism is by no means a recent phenomenon, nor is it limited to the Saraguros; it has its roots in the period of Spanish rule. As John Rowe described:

> With growing resentment of Spanish oppression and the decline of old local loyalties, the Inca tradition emerged as the obvious symbol shared by the native peoples, which marked their common difference from the Spanish and represented their opposition to foreign domination. Ironically, it was Spanish policies as much as Inca ones that gave the former subjects of the realm a sense of Inca national identity and a degree of cultural unification in the native tradition that we are only just beginning to appreciate (Rowe 1982: 114).

Salomon (1987) has also discussed the roots of Inca-ism among the Cañaris of Ecuador, which he sees arising in the 16th century in reaction to Spanish practices. In the 19th and 20th centuries, the phenomenon has often been more overtly political, as in Perú, where Inca-ism has been a major element in defining the identity of indigenous people and their place in society (Molinié 2004). In recent times, Inca-ism is something of a pan-Andean phenomenon, where the rainbow flag, an Inca symbol, is used to represent and unify modern highland indigenous groups. In Ecuador, claims of Inca heritage are a major element of the indigenous political movement in the country, and many indigenous groups specifically claim descent from the Incas (Benavides 2004: 48; Salomon 1987).

Thus the Saraguro identification with Inca culture and history is in part a manifestation of a phenomenon of the late 20th and early 21st centuries, but also of a process that dates back to the Spanish period. But beyond that, the connection between the Saraguros and the Incas has roots in the policies of the Inca Empire itself. What sets the Saraguros apart is that the Saraguros acknowledge their non-local origins in linking to an Inca past, while many indigenous groups stress their local origins (i.e., "we were here before the Incas") at the same time they express their Inca heritage.

On another front, appropriating the past of other societies in the realms of art, dance, architecture, etc., for commercial purposes is becoming increasingly common. This is certainly true in the Central Andes, where archaeological tourism is a huge industry, and references to the Incas can be used in many ways to gain tourist dollars. This is not yet the case with the Saraguros, as most of their expressions of Inca-ness have served instead the ends of expressing and reinforcing identity. They have only begun to draw on Inca heritage in realms in which they could directly benefit economically, as with the Inti Raymi festival. Otherwise, tourism has a minor impact on the region, as the few travelers who come to visit stay for the short duration necessary to visit the Sunday market, and most of their business transactions, including the purchase of indigenous souvenirs, is done through mestizo-run businesses in town. But it is not the case that the Saraguros are ignoring such a market; a number of them have opened restaurants, others are actively working to establish tour guide businesses, and there is much interest in developing ecological and archaeological tourism in the region. It will be interesting to see how the Saraguros promote themselves and their businesses if such plans move forward.

Saraguro expressions of an Inca past are a major component of defining and re-defining themselves as they assert their position in the wider world. Many of these expressions, while quite visible, are nonetheless not primarily intended for projecting an image to the public; few outsiders ever pass by the schools in the rural communities,

and one would have to participate in the ceremonies to perceive their Inca connections. Thus these expressions are to a large extent internal, re-affirming the Saraguros' sense of group identity and membership. In the future, as the Saraguros further assert themselves in Ecuadorian society, connections to an Inca past may become more pronounced and aimed at the general public, but for the present the external presentation may not be as important as the internal.

SARAGUROS, ARCHAEOLOGY AND THE PAST

Within the context of the nature of Saraguro ethnic identity and how they relate to the past, we can more readily understand how the set of relations between indigenous people, archaeology, and the material remains of the past are currently manifested, and how these may be addressed in future archaeological projects.

Saraguros and Cultural Remains

Perhaps the relationship that is most conditioned by the nature of Saraguro ethnic identity is that between the Saraguros and prehistoric materials. First of all, there are no known sites that are recognized as being *mitmaqkuna* settlements from the time of the Incas. Because of this situation, there is no tangible link between the indigenous people and prehistoric cultural remains. There are no archaeological materials that, to the Saraguros, directly represent their past as *mitmaqkuna*.

Second, Saraguros value Inca remains, as components of their expressed connection with an Inca past. As mentioned above, the Saraguro region is home to some notable Inca sites, such as Inkapirka and Tambo Blanco near San Lucas, and Willkamarka (a.k.a. Paredones or Villamarca) near the town of Paquishapa. The first two sites are the most widely known in the region, and are often referred to when Inca ruins are discussed. There is also a recent move to preserve and protect these sites from looting, coming mainly from the community leaders who see value in these sites as part of their heritage. The Day of Resistance ceremony conducted at Tambo Blanco clearly illustrated the importance that Inca sites are attaining among the Saraguros.

Third, the Saraguros perceive no relation to the pre-Inca inhabitants of the region, who are known as the *gentiles*, a generic term commonly used to refer to prehispanic peoples in the Andes. As a result of this lack of kinship with the *gentiles*, the Saraguros view the pre-Inca archaeological sites and artifacts with little concern for the preservation or protection of the settlements or material remains. Many Saraguros use the lands comprising such sites for habitation, farming, and pasture, and have been actively destroying prehistoric terraces for these pursuits. Most people are aware of the locations of large sites, and certain artifacts, such as axes and mace heads, are collected

when encountered while working fields or clearing vegetation. Such artifacts are probably valued as objects of curiosity, possibly having a monetary value, but there does not seem to be any open trade in them. Also, one category of artifact, the legs of polypod ceramics, which are referred to as *gentil bishu*, are valued for medicinal purposes and are collected from sites and kept for future use (Lanclos and Ogburn 1996).

There are other situations where pre-Inca remains are willfully looted or destroyed. There are actually some local *huaqueros* (looters), who intentionally dig in *gentil* sites in search of artifacts for collection and sale, yet the pursuit is not wide-spread because most artifacts of the region are undecorated and are not sought after by outsiders. Other looting is opportunistic, spawned by the folk belief that when one sees a flame coming out of the ground at night that it is the location of some sort of treasure. Finally, graves of *gentiles* are seen as a source of an illness known as *mal aire*, and they are often dug up and the bones burned to prevent further outbreaks of the disease (Lanclos and Ogburn 1996). However, there are a few Saraguros, mainly several community leaders, who are interested in preserving the local pre-Inca remains as a valuable resource that is part of the local patrimony. Yet the effort to protect those sites is a greater task than preserving the smaller and less numerous Inca sites, and would have a larger economic impact on landowners if they were restricted in the use of lands where pre-Inca sites are located.

Archaeologists and Cultural Remains

Compared to other regions in the Andes, relatively little archaeology has been conducted in the Saraguro region, either by Ecuadorians or foreigners. In the 19th century, a number of scholars (e.g., Caldas 1912; Villavicencio 1858) passed through the region, providing only basic descriptions of sites and little more. Even Vernau and Rivet, who produced the most detailed and valuable early work on Ecuadorian archaeology, *Etnographie Ancienne de l'Equateur* (Vernau and Rivet 1912), only provide a brief description of remains in the Saraguro region, and that is primarily a summary of information synthesized from earlier sources. Scholarly archaeological work in Saraguro began with Max Uhle's (1923) investigations at the site of Tambo Blanco. Two decades later, Collier and Murra (1943) passed through the region during a larger survey project, collecting data and reporting on a few local sites and the corresponding pre-Inca ceramics.

More recently, James and Linda Belote have investigated Saraguro archaeology, even though their interest has been an off-shoot of their cultural anthropological studies. Nonetheless, they have visited a number of sites in the region (Belote and

Belote 1996) and produced a general outline of the area's prehistory (Belote 1984: 88-93). Kevin Leonard (1993) also did a limited exploration of Inca storage rooms near San Lucas. To the north of Saraguro, Mathilde Temme (1981, 1982) has been conducting work for a number of years, but mostly outside Saraguro territory. In the 1990s, a program of excavation and restoration was undertaken at a a pre-Inca site to the south of Saraguro, led by the Ecuadorian archaeologist Jaime Idrovo (1996). My own fieldwork included an investigation of the Inca occupation and the effects of their resettlement projects that was the first systematic survey in the region (Ogburn 2001). Finally, a number of other archaeologists, both foreign and Ecuadorian, have passed through the region and visited the more notable sites, without producing any reports or returning for more involved work.

However, this low level of archaeological investigation may soon give way to increased fieldwork including large-scale excavations and restorations of certain sites. Much of the pressure for undertaking archaeology may come from the Ecuadorian government itself, which, through the Instituto Nacional de Patrimonio Cultural (INPC), has in recent years been seeking sites as candidates for developing archaeological tourism. For decades, Perú has benefited from the draw of its spectacular and well-known prehispanic sites, especially such Inca settlements as Cuzco and Machu Picchu, while the archaeological attractions in Ecuador have drawn far fewer visitors. The Ecuadorian situation results simply from the fact that none of the country's prehistoric sites approach the grandeur or renown of those of Perú, and the material culture is likewise lacking in impressiveness. Unfortunately, the Inca site that would have had the most potential, the Inca center of Tomebamba, was destroyed in the Inca civil war for succession, and is now buried underneath the modern city of Cuenca. Many other Inca sites have been stripped of their cut stone for local building projects. As it stands, the only Inca site open for tourism that is comparable to sites in Perú is Ingapirca, in the province of Cañar to the north of Cuenca. With few other exceptions, there has not been a great effort to develop tourist-oriented archaeological sites in Ecuador, where tourism has been based instead on ecological, geographical, and cultural attractions.

Given the economic potential of its archaeological resources, the Ecuadorian government has a vested interest in controlling the investigation of major archaeological sites and how they are presented to the public. All archaeological materials, as part of the national patrimony, are property of the state, and the government controls the conduct of archaeological fieldwork by requiring investigators to obtain permits from the INPC. The government has veto power over any project, and therefore has the ability to push its own agenda. Furthermore, the direction of

major archaeological projects could be subject to the whims of the director of the INPC, who may have little, if any, archaeological background. As an example, on one occasion after I completed a season of fieldwork, the then-head of the INPC urged me to come back to investigate the site of Tambo Blanco. On the spot, he called a friend of his on the Fulbright Commission to lobby for Fulbright funding for my return. This was without a clear understanding of what such a project would involve or how the Saraguros would perceive it. Lastly, because its director is appointed by the nation's president, and many employees could be replaced with a change in government, the INPC is by nature subject to political machinations and the agenda of whatever party is in control of the presidency. Currently, much of the work of the INPC is focused on CRM-type projects funded by multi-national corporations operating in the country. Nonetheless, the long-term trend is likely to involve a drive toward tourist-oriented archaeological work, with Inca sites as a major focus, and Saraguro, with its location along the Pan-American Highway, may be high on the agenda.

Saraguros and Archaeologists

The Saraguros' expressed origins as *mitmaqkuna* means that the subjects of much local archaeology (the pre-Inca people) are not the ancestors of the indigenous people, and that they have little stake in how that culture is interpreted and presented by outsiders. Those who do express an interest in such research are more concerned with actually having access to reports produced in order to learn about the prehistory rather than with contesting specific points of content or interpretation.

The situation may be somewhat different regarding learning about Inca remains, because the Saraguros have more interest in them. But while their expressed connections with the Inca past may be strong, I have not heard the investigation of Inca sites explicitly equated with the study of the ancestors of the Saraguros. But because it is implicit, future investigations and representations of things Inca are likely to be closely watched and have the potential to become subjects of contention.

Given this context, the relationship of Saraguros and archaeologists is not and will not be one of outside investigator and passive native observer. A number of Saraguros, including many community leaders and others active in politics, have an active interest in the local archaeology, both as a subject inherently worthy of investigation and as a possible avenue of investigating their own past. Like other people in the area, many of these interested Saraguros have collected artifacts, but more with an interest in preserving them than to collect curiosities for keepsakes or for possible sale. Not only are they interested in the Inca Period archaeology that would have a

direct connection with their people, they are also becoming concerned with investigating and preserving the pre-Inca sites.

Beyond this interest in archaeology, many of these Saraguros have actually participated in archaeological fieldwork, from the organized excavations of Mathilde Temme, to the more informal investigations of the Belotes, to my own survey projects. As participants, they not only gained knowledge about the results of fieldwork conducted in the region, but have gained practical experience that can allow them to interpret archaeological information and assess other cultural resources. These Saraguro men and women will be the ones most involved in future archaeological investigations in the region. Perhaps because of their exposure to archaeology in the field and through formal education, and because there has been little contention with archaeologists over the right to investigate the region's past or the legitimacy of interpretations, these Saraguros have a favorable view of archaeology.

Of course, there are Saraguros who harbor different attitudes toward archaeologists, attitudes mostly centered on issues of exploitation and land ownership. For example, mainly for fear of robbery, some Saraguro land owners do not wish foreigners (or even other indigenous people) to set foot on their land for any reason. Many would rather not have people conducting fieldwork on their property, for fear of damage to valuable pasture or farmland. It does not seem to be an issue yet in Saraguro, but Ecuadorian laws regarding patrimony allow the state to appropriate land containing archaeological sites, so Saraguro landowners may understandably resist any investigations within their land holdings. Finally, archaeological projects may be suspect because many Saraguros fear commercial exploitation that does not compensate them for the resources extracted or for any damage to the environment. Many indigenous people throughout Ecuador are fully aware of and alarmed at the extraction of petroleum in the lowland rain forests, which has devastated the environment while contributing little or nothing to the people whose land is being exploited.

People with such objections to archaeological investigation, whatever their basis, may contest future fieldwork, but it is the Saraguros with an active interest in archaeology who will have a greater say in determining the course of future archaeology in the region. Members of the latter group do not conceive of archaeology as simply the pursuit of outsiders who come to exploit their past or the local cultural resources, but rather perceive it as a tool that can serve their own ends. Namely, it can be used to investigate their own past, to finally shed light on the many questions about their origins. Outside archaeologists, then, become potential sources of funding and expertise, and can provide work, experience, and information. For their part, the

Saraguros have the desire to participate for both the knowledge and the training archaeology can provide.

Future Archaeological Investigation

Under these circumstances, with little contention between indigenous people and archaeology, and a primarily favorable attitude toward participation and investigation on the part of the Saraguros, there are a number of ways that the academic goals of future archaeological projects can complement the interests of Saraguros regarding the past. Moreover, this is a case where there is a clear opportunity for archaeologists to consult actively with local groups and establish working relationships beneficial to the discipline and all involved, in line with the ethical principles of the Society for American Archaeology (Kintigh 1996: 17).

Perhaps the most important question that could be pursued archaeologically is the matter of the *mitmaqkuna* origins of the Saraguros. Specifically, could there be any evidence of whether their ancestors were actually *mitmaqkuna*, and if so, to which ethnic group(s) did they belong? What roles did they play in the Inca government, economy, and religion? Where are their settlements in the Saraguro area, and what was their material culture like? My current research addresses many of these questions, yet the results from the survey are mostly suggestive rather than definitive. Further fieldwork, especially excavations, will be needed to provide more solid answers to these questions, and must deal critically with the thorny issue of identifying ethnic groups in the archaeological record.

Secondly, investigations at the local Inca sites and survey of the Inca road system could complement the Saraguros' links to the Inca past by expanding knowledge of what the Incas did in the region. Excavations could provide information on site plans and functions, material culture, and increase understanding of local economics and government under the Incas. Inca sites, such as Inkapirka and Tambo Blanco, could also be excavated and preserved for tourism, though the ramifications of such plans should be carefully considered before implementation. Many people, including Saraguros and mestizos from inside and outside the area have expressed interest in undertaking such projects.

Finally, archaeological fieldwork can contribute to the local museum that is being constructed by the municipal government in the center of Saraguro, in part to promote tourism. Archaeology could provide specimens for display and information useful for presenting the history of the region, and in this case, artifacts from the pre-Inca culture would be as useful as would Inca or *mitmaqkuna* materials. Excavations at

the pre-Inca sites would also be of interest to those Saraguros who wish to learn about all of the region's prehistory.

Research goals that incorporate such investigations could easily be formulated by archaeologists to meet academic goals. For example, the *mitmaqkuna* question is important in the context of Andean archaeology, because the forced resettlements carried out by the Incas had a drastic effect on the ethnic landscape in all of the Inca realm, and it is essential for archaeologists to understand the issue if they wish to comprehend regional systems during the Inca Period. Investigations at provincial Inca sites can be used to address any number of issues related to imperial expansion and maintenance.

In the end, almost any problem that can be addressed in the archaeological record of Saraguro could complement the desires of its indigenous inhabitants, provided they are included in the process of investigation and have access to the results. Future projects, especially long-term or large-scale research programs, could be developed in direct consultation with the Saraguros most concerned with learning about the past, including leaders of indigenous organizations, people involved in the museum, and those with the most active personal interests in archaeology. Saraguros should be involved in as many aspects of the research as is feasible, including planning, fieldwork, laboratory work, publication, etc.. Access to formal archaeological training would also train future archaeologists to develop and carry out projects as well as help preserve local archaeological resources.

CONCLUSIONS

As in any other region where archaeologists and the descendants of their subject of study interact, the relationships between the indigenous Saraguros, archaeology, and the past are complicated. Yet, in Saraguro the nature of indigenous ethnic identity, with a strong expressed connection to the Incas, tempered by a dearth of fieldwork in the area, has not led to a state of contention about the investigation, interpretation, and presentation of the past. Instead there is a favorable environment where the goals of each side can be seen to be complementary and amenable to future work. It would be beneficial to have a similar situation throughout the Andes, but the circumstances of the Saraguro region are not likely to pertain to many other situations, and they certainly cannot be artificially created. Furthermore, the situation is likely to change as fieldwork in Saraguro increases. Instead of presenting a difficult problem of conflict between indigenous people and archaeologists, Saraguro offers the challenge of sustaining a state of favorable relations between both sides and how they deal with the past. Above all, “it is important that archaeologists incorporate the process of

consultation and cooperation" in future archaeological research, as Watkins et al. (1995: 37) urge for archaeology in general.

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ILLUSTRATIONS

Figure 1. Location of Saraguro in relation to Cuzco and other major places discussed in the text.

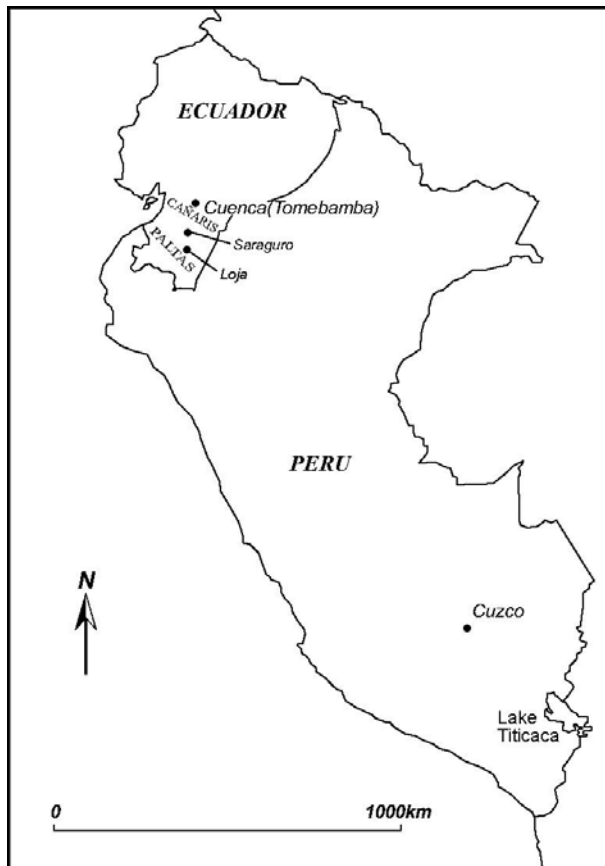

Figure 2. Indigenous woman and man wearing typical Saraguro clothing (Photo by author).

Figure 3. Amawta Hatari school in the community of Ciudadela, decorated with pictures of Incas (Photo by author).

Figure 4. Brochure advertising the Saraguro Inti Raymi festival, depicting a child dressed in traditional Saraguro clothing and an adult adorned with a combination of Inca and Saraguro elements (Loja Dirección de Turismo).

Figure 5. Newly constructed Inca-style gateway on the main plaza of Saraguro (Photo by author).