

# Adaptive Strategies and Indigenous Resistance to Protestantism in Ecuador

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During the last ten years I have been working on the process of conversion to Protestantism of the indigenous people in Chimborazo province, Ecuador. Protestant evangelization in Ecuador started in the early twentieth century, but it is only in the last thirty years that the process of conversion of the indigenous people has become a large-scale one. During the first sixty years of evangelical activity North American missionaries from the Evangelical Missionary Union baptized only four natives in Chimborazo province. This period was marked by strenuous resistance and rejection of the new religion. Accounts given by missionaries of the period describe the disasters and difficulties that the first evangelizing mission suffered. It was only the conviction that lost souls had to be saved that helped them overcome adversities and later achieve amazing results.

Among the entry strategies most frequently employed were building free schools and hospitals, translating the Bible into dialects of Quechua and setting up a radio transmitter. Around the mid 1960s a real evangelical flowering took place: in 1970 there were 7,000 baptisms recorded, with a 100 per cent average annual growth over 1969 and 1970. At present 28,553 people have been baptized in a community numbering 100,000, believers which represents 27 per cent of the province's population. Various factors may explain the rapid rise in the number of conversions; however, I will restrict myself to examining some of the indigenous people's adaptive strategies when confronted with Protestantism as possible reasons for this increase. These strategies are linked to the idea of constructing a new identity for oneself, with a different life plan: in other words, seeking appropriate answers to an individual and social crisis.

According to Jean-Pierre Bastian: 'The religious dimension can assist both in constructing an organized space, in the midst of the general lawlessness that prevails in these impoverished areas, and in widening the ground for struggle.'<sup>1</sup> Thus we shall analyse the following adaptive strategies: renewing community bonds, reinterpreting the evangelical religion and denying the past through discourse. In the second part of the article I shall present a strategy of resistance to Protestantism developed by an indigenous community.<sup>2</sup>

## Reconciliation and order

In the beginning the spread of Protestantism was accompanied by a period of religious violence and conflicts between communities, between Catholic and evangelical groups, which went as far as murder and division (including legal separation) of indigenous communities.<sup>3</sup>

*Todo empezó hablando la palabra de Dios calladito, despacito, uno que otro nomás, no públicamente, si sabían hubieran matado. Donde que veían con Biblia en seguida mandaban a palos, piedras, decían que éramos parte de diablo, que en la emisora hablaban los diablos y no personas.*

(It all began speaking God's word softly, slowly, just one to another, not out loud; if they knew they would have killed us. Wherever they saw someone with a Bible, straightaway they attacked with sticks, stones, saying we were on the devil's side, on the radio there were devils talking not people.)

Crop failures and lack of rain were blamed on the new converts; as a punishment their animals were taken away and their plots vandalized. Also it was very dangerous for them to go along local paths, because they were subject to physical and verbal assault. For their part the Protestants defended themselves by recourse to law, citing provisions on freedom of worship and instigating the arrest of some of their former friends. If we add to this the critical political and economic climate at that time, we can understand the chaos that ensued, the division and disintegration of families and communities.

From 1964 far-reaching changes were made to the Ecuadorean agrarian structure. Agrarian Reform was introduced, which started breaking up the *hacienda* system and local power relations. Consequently the mass migration to the towns gathered pace because of the splitting up of the land and the resulting increase in population density; this led the indigenous people into processes that turned them from peasants into a semi-proletariat (pedlars).

Given this history, we can see that one of the most urgent reasons for accepting the Gospel was the need to rebuild the community bonds that had been destroyed, to find improved stability and a new principle to explain the cosmos, world order and authority. Convert families put pressure on their members so that they could be reunited in the same faith: they spoke of the superiority and effectiveness of the Christian God; they explained the advantages of the new Protestant habits and ethic, which forbade alcohol, fighting and the ill-treatment of wives, and fostered by contrast the habit of thrift and the new modes of consumption. Indeed, these families adopted a religion whose values and behaviours were more in tune with modernization: migration to the town, development and the seduction of progress.

Thus the evangelical population of Chimborazo increased and changes occurred in identities that were a response to modern times; changes that were more 'advanced' and above all free from the economic and symbolic subjection to *mestizos* (mixed-race Indian/Europeans) and whites. The religion was handed over to the indigenous community: the churches (600 of them) were run by Indian pastors and services were held in Quechua. This accords with what Jean-Pierre Bastian says: 'Ethnic groups do not have a fixed identity, nor are they monolithic communities. Over five centuries they have always existed in a context of constant exchange with the wider society and their identity has been a shifting one, marked by continual reconstruction and evolution.'<sup>4</sup>

The advantages of religious conversion as a mechanism for achieving reconciliation and balance in the rural indigenous community were proved in the town, where being a Protestant meant an opportunity to call on an extensive network of support and assistance among Christian migrants. Hundreds of Quechua evangelical churches were established in the different towns in Ecuador, Colombia and Venezuela, normally linked to the Church peculiar to each indigenous community. Thus the Church started to perform a

social function, insofar as it offered psychological security: a feeling of belonging, support, protection, work opportunities and information about the urban situation.

### Syncretism, combination, adaptation

A second form of indigenous adaptation to Protestantism occurred through religious reinterpretation. Bastian defines rural Protestantism as one that integrates, cohabits with and impregnates magical religious practices. He thinks that fostering continuity with the local culture is foreign Protestantism's only chance of taking root in rural areas.

This was possible in Chimborazo because of the indigenous leaders' autonomy vis-à-vis the missionaries from the Evangelical Missionary Union. After the first (fruitless) years spent attempting to disseminate their faith, the American missionaries changed their evangelization strategy and handed over the running of the churches, the Bible college and the radio to the local people themselves, retreating into apparently secondary roles (giving classes at Bible college, producing radio programmes, showing films, etc.). This led to a certain stability and reconciliation between ancient indigenous beliefs and practices and the Protestant religion. We should note that the sense of community, the enchantment of storytelling and the force of oral tradition, for example, were retained in the 'services', the lectures, the evangelizing crusades and the programmes.

The telling of Bible stories provided new explanations of the origin of human beings and the universe, captivating the audience in the same way as the friendly atmosphere and the warm behaviour at meetings.

*Varias cosas no sabíamos como se han hecho, como, por ejemplo, las lagunas, pero ya viendo en la Biblia se conoce como se ha hecho todo.*

(We did not know how different things were made, such as the lakes, for instance, but now looking in the Bible, we know how everything was made.)

Many people were converted by simply listening to radio messages and Christian music; this was also true of the first religious leaders, who had remained illiterate and so had only an oral acquaintance with the Bible. Also, biblical themes to do with paradise and redemption had their equivalent in ancient myths and beliefs about mountains and 'enchantments'.<sup>5</sup> Dreams are still seen as a channel of communication with the sacred, now called the Holy Ghost or the one God. His messages are still used to banish doubts, resolve conflicts or find lost objects. Indeed, the pastors used to insist that God communicated with 'true' believers through dreams.

Even if symbols and ceremonies (of birth, baptism, marriage and death) have changed, the essential elements of gathering together, solidarity and reconciliation which used to be associated with them have been preserved in their entirety. Certain formal alterations have demonstrated the permanence of the Andean religious world: in funeral rites the gifts and offerings to the dead have continued, but the traditional funeral objects (food, drink, clothes, money) have been replaced by radios, Bibles and watches, which are placed in the coffin. The idea that the deceased 'should not in the other world go without what they had here' is still current. The same thing has happened with religious experience, despite the change in the objects invoked: people still pray for animals to multiply, the soil to be fertile and families to be healthy, and to give thanks for the gift of life. In fact

the power of the traditional gods ceased and so their images were buried or handed over to guardians, and in a few rare cases destroyed or burnt.<sup>6</sup>

I have given a few examples of religious interpretation that is surprising in that it combines Christian ideas and indigenous beliefs in several ways. Currently cultural appropriation by Protestantism is reaching its most developed form in Pentecostalism.<sup>7</sup> In the case of Brazil, Andrea Damacena evokes a 'magical-modernizing' rationality when there is a relationship of both rupture and continuity between tradition and modernity.<sup>8</sup> Finally we should include among the adaptive strategies the role of religious discourse in exorcising the 'Catholic' past.

### **Challenging the past**

Once the Christian God was acknowledged as the true God and the traditional gods as false, indigenous people publicly renounced the old traditions and beliefs. The evangelical message classified all Catholics as sinners; according to this message their past life, customs, traditions, festivals and social relations were full of error, vice and evil. Protestant baptism was presented as the sole chance of escaping a deadly fate: however, it was first necessary to recognize the error and repent. Repentance consisted of acknowledging that they were sinners and 'receiving the Lord into their lives'. The instant they 'received the Lord' a process of regeneration was triggered that resulted in new reborn individuals. Henceforth they were considered 'believers' or evangelicals.

Thus Catholicism was thought of as a religion belonging to the backward past, a phase it was necessary to come through. All the traditional beliefs and rites were viewed as superstitions, produced by the ignorance in which the Indians had been left. The Evangelical Church explained that ritual expenses such as the celebration of religious feast-days and the organization of pilgrimages were simply ways of throwing money away at the expense of their health and nutrition and their children's schooling and forcing the indigenous people to sell the small amount of land they owned. So the power of the 'wooden saints', made by humans, was denied: they were not living beings who ate, punished or rewarded, as was believed in the past.

As a result of this disillusion, religious intermediaries such as priests, landowners and *mestizos* were seen as the only people to have benefited from the old beliefs and rites; as Indian memory recalled it, the bosses received *camaris* (gifts) in exchange for drinking sessions, where *chicha* and other alcoholic beverages were consumed. Thus the fiestas had left in the communal memory an image only of punch-ups, drunkenness, ill-treatment, pagan dances and songs. And the priests did not practise the Gospel, they lied, they charged every time they celebrated a rite and they kept people in ignorance while they smoked and danced, etc.; *mestizos* in the villages lived off the Indians by selling alcohol in the bars and hiring out costumes and other decorations for festivals, as well as collecting fines and fees for the use of town squares where the indigenous rites were held.

Even if this was a caricature of the past, it was the most common view and the most effective one to devalue the Catholic past, disparage traditional power relations and reinforce a new identity. Then displays of power were held to prove the weakness of the old ruling gods; they were subjected to provocation, in the form of insults, jokes and taunts, intended perhaps to stifle the fear and respect they still inspired.

In spite of this persistent rejection of the Catholic past and the glorification of the evangelical present, traditional religious festivals still had a fatal attraction for the new converts, who nostalgically watched the pagan rites as if spellbound. In response pastors organized 'spiritual' festivals on the same dates, inviting famous preachers and putting on football championships that offered attractive prizes.<sup>9</sup>

In order to discredit the religious past a type of discourse was used that set out the material and spiritual benefits of Protestantism. It contained features of modernity such as a western logic and market strategy designed to assess previous religious experience and create a new expression of faith, in other words economic arguments were integrated with the sacred. In this sense health, work, money, home and prosperity were 'on our side', as were love, joy, harmony and peace. Ritual spending was 'rationalized': offerings to the church and the pastor (tithes) were measured and weighed, and quotas were set for 'spiritual' festivals, etc. Following a modern logic, the 'waste' of the past was now impossible. With all this in mind, we might think that the indigenous Catholic universe has already disappeared or is in the process doing so. However, it must be emphasized that there are still many Catholics and they are keeping alive a syncretic system of Catholic and indigenous belief.

Next I shall present a case study of resistance to the penetration of the evangelical churches in the south of Chimborazo province, in Alausí district. I shall show that this resistance can be also explained by many factors, some of which will be explored.

### **Pachamama Grande, a case study of resistance**

Pachamama<sup>10</sup> is one of the highest communities in Chimborazo province. It is situated at an altitude of 4000 m., in Alausí district and Tixán parish in the south of the province. The population comprises 117 families, 600 inhabitants in total.

Traditionally this community has mediated and arbitrated in conflicts between villages in the south of Chimborazo (Alausí and Chunchi districts). Communities, both indigenous (Catholic or evangelical) and *mestizo*, come to Pachamama to explain their problems, together with the parties involved (who are kept locked up until the problem is resolved). The villagers and the local leaders listen to the issues, consider them, ask questions, investigate, arbitrate, calm the parties to the dispute and finally announce their verdict, which may include punishment of the culprits. In the village there are two wells, in which culprits are punished by ducking in cold water at dawn. Other punishments include beating with the *foete* or nettles, or being tied to a stake. The most common problems are related to disputes over land, robberies, matrimonial difficulties or witchcraft. When the offence is proved, the culprits have to pay compensation to the family that has been harmed.<sup>11</sup>

Pachamama's reputation for resolving conflicts gives the opposing parties a feeling of fear and respect. We need to investigate more thoroughly this dimension of mediation/cancellation that the Pachamama community has and find out why it took on this function.<sup>12</sup> For now let us continue to look at the possible reasons for its resistance to Protestantism.

Even in an isolated position, in an area that is difficult to reach and on the southern edge of the province, Pachamama still manages to preserve the impact of the religious feast and the magic of its traditions. During carnival (the Lent festival) we were able to

witness the full splendour of the celebration. What is thought to belong to a 'distant' past of pagan festivals is still alive in Pachamama.

During carnival the men dressed up as women (*warmitukushka*) and together with the *pendoneros* (banner-bearers) paraded through the whole village house by house, dancing on the cultivated plots and around each house, where they were welcomed with presents of drink and food. The festival featured various characters: Taita Carlitos (literally Little father Charles = St Charles), Santa Isabel (the Sangay volcano), bears, mad cows and all kinds of games.<sup>13</sup> The festival began with a mass on the Sunday before Ash Wednesday and ended on the first Friday of Lent.<sup>14</sup>

*En estos tiempos, en estos años como en diferentes comunidades les dejamos abandonados a los santitos; entonces creo que nos castigan y nosotros estamos dejando esas ideas, esas experiencias de nuestros mayores y estamos pensando en criar más y entender otras cosas y dejar la raza de nuestros padres y madres a cambio de otras cosas. Entonces eso nos cae sobre nosotros mismos. Ahora seguimos pasando la fiesta, hay priostes pero ya no es como nuestros antepasados.*

(Nowadays, in the last few years, in the different communities we have been abandoning the saints; so I think they are punishing us and we are abandoning those ideas and experiences of our elders and we are trying to produce more and understand other things and exchanging our fathers' and mothers' traditions for other things. So this is coming back on us. Now we are still holding festivals, we have ceremonial leaders but it is no longer the way it used to be for our ancestors.)

Despite the festive hubbub, the villagers complain that festivals are not what they were: they no longer have the resources to welcome guests and divinities with appropriate warmth. Faith has declined, migrants' 'hearts' have changed and (evangelical) neighbours have forgotten the saints. All in all, the world has been turned upside down.

But let us turn now to the religious situation of 'Catholicism', threatened as it is with change from within and from outside the community.

### **Ritual societies**

Conversion to Catholicism during the colonial period meant not only the substitution of Christian saints and virgins for Andean gods, but also a complex process of symbolic and ritual transfer. Cults of nature and the saints were amalgamated, leading to a real cultural appropriation of Christian divinities. We can see right up to the present day how rites were dedicated to different divinities: saints, virgins, mountains, lakes, etc. support a whole system of social relations, creating occasions for exchanging favours, strengthening community relationships and acknowledging religious, political and family authority. The social and religious dimensions of feast-days overlapped: duty, responsibility, respect and solidarity acquired a sacred character within a rigid calendar in which people, sequences, functions and roles all had their place. The purpose of the rites was to reinforce the basic principles and values of indigenous society, such as prestige, reciprocity and redistribution.

These very detailed rituals were always present at every moment of indigenous people's lives. In order to invoke the generosity and protection of the gods they had to perform ceremonies, and also to ward off evil. Each ritual was accompanied by prayers and

offerings: for the fertility of animals and the soil offerings of ewes' wool, seed, horsehair, flowers and candles were made to all the gods without distinction.

Despite the religious syncretism that lasted five centuries, the pagan/Christian dichotomy was still there. The pagan character of each place was determined by the power of the divinities of nature: mountains, lakes, ravines, etc. These sites were usually in deserted areas, places frequented only by shepherds, where ordinary people did not often go. When they did approach, they had to do so at an appropriate time and protect themselves with amulets. The violation of religious and social taboos resulted in the hill or lake 'taking over' the person. In the Pachamama area these people were said to be 'under a spell'. Individuals affected enter an altered state of consciousness and can transgress taboos relating to space and time. They have a gift that allows them to see apparitions and they can perform metamorphoses and other supernatural acts. In some cases their behaviour changes too: they neglect their home and problems arise with their partner causing jealousy and suspicion that affect family unity. People say that these individuals are 'infatuated' with the mountain or lake in question. Spells also explain why people disappear or are changed into stones.

In the case of mountains they can 'catch' people, that is, cause them harm, such as illness or even death. This happens when they have got drunk and fallen asleep in open country or when young people have used the place to copulate. The illness consists of the person's body 'drying up' or being 'sucked out from within' until death occurs. The hills are gendered, they can be *urcu huarmi* or *urcu runa* ('female hill' or 'male hill'). Also they can be pictured wearing a woman's dress or a man's poncho.

In Pachamama the 'non-pagan' nature of the community has been shown by the consistent practice of 'Christian' rituals.

*En los cerros botados donde no llega gente, donde no se ven cristianos, ahí cuidan los cerros (a los animales). Ellos mismo mandan a otro cerro, por aquí donde hay gente, no, donde que pasan la misa no hay esa costumbre, donde que se bautiza la casa no, estamos avanzando un poquito.*

(In the isolated hills where no one goes, where there are no Christians to be seen, there the hills take care [of the animals]. They even send [them] to another hill, where there are people. Where they go to mass this custom does not exist, where the house is baptized; we are progressing a bit.)

## The Protestant threat

This complex legacy, composed of social observances and rules, rituals and beliefs intended to damp down the eruption of the volcano or the anger of the saints, or to beg that they will forgive and forget the poverty of the offerings, and to give thanks for the greatest gift (life), is still vigorously defended. While the customs handed down by the ancestors have declined significantly elsewhere, in Pachamama people are proud of their past and point to tradition as the source of their strength and the motivating force for building the future.

Maybe the proximity of the *páramo* (an inhospitable mountain area above 3000 m.), geographical isolation, the low level of migration and responsibility for administering the indigenous form of justice have been factors that have delayed the need to confront the

modern world outside. By that I mean that the need to evolve strategies for dealing with wider society (strategies involving changes in religious beliefs and practices) is not yet pressing.

The challenge to modernity that the ritual system represents has turned out to be quite weak in the case of some communities who have accepted Protestantism and abandoned the old beliefs and indigenous customs. A regretful informant said this:

*Nosotros santiguamos, cantamos, tenemos los santos, es sagrado entrar a la iglesia. Ellos para dar a luz una mujer tienen el hospital, nuestra historia es tener una madre o a su vez una suegra o un suegro para que coja al niño, ellos ya no hacen eso, es el propio padre el que coge al niño, eso me parece muy malo y también para bautizar nosotros tenemos que gastar la plata, coger compadre, sea el hermano o hermana que amarque al niño, pero que sea particular, ellos no hacen eso, el mismo padre y madre tienen que amarrar para bautizar, por no gastar será.*

(We cross ourselves, sing, worship the saints, it is holy to enter the church. They have the hospital for a mother to give birth; our tradition is for a mother, or in her place a mother-in-law or father-in-law, to hold the baby, but they don't do that, it's the father himself who holds the baby, and I think that's wrong. And for the christening we have to spend money, get a godparent, whether it's a brother or a sister, to hold the baby, but it must be a friend. They don't do that, the father and mother themselves have to hold it to have it christened, probably so as not to spend money.)

Another factor that explains the strength of the Pachamama community in the face of Protestant harassment has been the support of one of the province's most combative priests.<sup>15</sup> The former priest of Tixán, Pedro Torres, a supporter of Liberation Theology, carried out intensive political and social work in the parish, 'consciousness-raising' among the indigenous leaders, supporting their struggle and promoting a campaign to raise the status of cultural and ethnic values. The community so appreciated the priest's character and work that they tried to offer to 'buy' him from the Riobamba diocese to stop him leaving the country.<sup>16</sup>

*Los padres de ahora son distintos, mucho mejor, más capaces, entienden, saben pues y le dan ideas a la gente que no sabe leer ni escribir, entonces a base de eso mantenemos nuestro pensamiento mismo, en nuestro corazón mismo lo que dijo y que es lo que debemos hacer.*

(Today's priests are different, much better, more competent; they understand, they know and give ideas to those who can't read or write, so because of this we keep to our thinking, deep in our hearts we keep what he said and what we have to do.)

During the 1970s the Riobamba diocese was an example of a church committed to the process (economical, political and religious) of liberating the poor. The existence of the sacred Andean universe was accepted and it was recognized that the indigenous people were versed in theological thinking. The most eminent representative of this line was the bishop Monsignor Leonidas Proaño. However, in the mid 1980s, as a result of a new direction taken by the ecclesiastical hierarchy and because of internal conflicts, the Riobamba diocese retreated into a conservative ideology, and abandoned its support for reforming theories and the most socially committed priests.

In the face of the Protestant challenge, the fragmentation of Catholic ideology has precluded a common defensive strategy and has left each priest to face the threat alone.



Because of this history, and despite their evangelical neighbours' predictions of disaster, the dissemination of Protestantism has not met with success.

*La lluvia, las buenas cosechas no pueden ser únicamente para los evangélicos sino para todos; caso contrario los evangélicos tendrían más granos y animales que nosotros. Si viene aguitas es para todos, si da productos es para todos, en eso yo he pensado bastante y no he dejado convencer porque en eso me mantengo y debo mantenerme siempre.*

(Rain, good harvests can't be only for Protestants but for everyone; otherwise they'd have more seed and animals than us. If rain falls it's for everyone, if there's produce it's for everyone; I've thought quite a bit about this and haven't been convinced, because that's my opinion and must be for ever.)

The attraction of Protestantism is thought to lie in its ethics and morality, understood as behaviour appropriate to dealing with a new phase – general economic and social change.

*Por el trago, por lo que se toma, entonces cuando se toma, por más que no se quiera, se suelta la boca, se alza la mano, eso protegen ellos. Ellos por ahorrar dinero se convierten, porque nosotros cuando hacemos devotos, priostes, gastamos plata, nos regalamos, o sea damos al santo como una ofrenda, ellos no regalan, ellos tienen en el propio hogar todo.*

(Because of drinking alcohol, because of what you swill down, then when you drink, even though you may not want to, your mouth opens, your hand goes up, they protect themselves against that. They convert in order to save money, because when we have feast-days and ceremonies we spend money, we give gifts and offerings to the saint, they don't give presents, they keep everything at home.)

In the end Pachamama demonstrates the fear aroused by changes and adjustments in ideas, identity, aspirations and aims, all of which are directly linked to religious conversion. These changes imply denial of the past, the power and protection of the gods and even religious experience as such.<sup>17</sup> Unlike the communities described earlier, in Pachamama there is no question of adapting to change but rather resisting it and constructing a defence against it. What the men and women say reflects the danger threatening their social reproduction; they do not want to lose an identity that has distinguished them from the landowners and the village *mestizos*. The two worlds have remained irreconcilable because they are forever separated by a way of thinking, feeling, loving and worshipping. Each culture, in its language and other day-to-day activities, has created differences through its confrontation with the other – so it is impossible to imagine becoming like whites by adopting their customs and beliefs.

Faced with this possibility, an informant called Rosendo wonders:

*?Cómo podemos aumentar, cómo podemos participar y cómo podemos buscar el pan para nuestros hijos, con qué cabeza, con qué palabra, a dónde vamos a ir? Entonces tenemos que mantenernos firmes.*

(How can we increase, how can we be involved and how can we get bread for our children, with what ideas, with what words, where are we going? So we have to stand firm.)

All the same, Rosendo senses that this will be a hard battle to win. It is a fight against new and powerful forces (gods), such as the written word (education, economic resources), where the indigenous people do not have any control.

*Aquí todavía no hay ni un evangélico y si acaso se hacen no es tanto la gente que no sabe leer ni escribir sino la gente que ve los papeles, ve las Biblias, entonces comprenden y siguen esta experiencia. Con eso se pierde todo: ahí rechazamos completamente todo, rechazamos a San Carlos, a San Pedro, lo dejamos como haber muerto. Es lo mismo que tener un hijo, tener un santo, me da de comer, me da de vestir, de todo y si le boto o le quemo puede venir más tormento, más castigo, entonces pensando en eso no dejamos.*

(Here there's not a single Protestant yet and if they come it won't be so much those who can't read and write but those who see the papers, the Bibles, who then understand and go along with that experience. That is how everything will be lost: then we'll be rejecting absolutely everything, rejecting San Carlos, San Pedro, abandoning them as if they were dead. Having a saint is the same as having a son, he gives me food, he gives me clothes, everything, and if I throw him away or burn him more torment, more punishment may come, so with this in mind we're not abandoning them.

It is significant that when he talked about the Protestant challenge in the region, Rosendo referred to the legend of Jesus Christ and the Jews that his parents recounted to him. This is a summary:

*Los judíos le siguen por donde sea a nuestro señor Jesucristo, entonces él hace toda clase de trampa a los judíos; les bota espejos y asoma lagunas, hasta eso les vence un poquito más; les bota una peñilla y asoma un monte, una peña, un cerro y los judíos ya no pudieron pasar; hasta eso se aleja un poquito más nuestro señor Jesucristo. Entonces llega a una manada de borregos; se hizo borrego pero los judíos cogieron al borrego más grande que era Jesús y lo vencieron.*

(The Jews follow our lord Jesus Christ everywhere, so he plays all sorts of tricks; he throws down mirrors<sup>18</sup> and lakes appear, so he gets ahead a bit; he throws down a comb and a forest appears, a rock and a mountain appears and now the Jews could not pass; and so our lord Jesus Christ draws away from them a bit further. Then he gets to a herd of lambs;<sup>19</sup> he turned into a lamb but the Jews caught the biggest lamb which was Jesus, and they won.)

In a way this is what seems to be happening in Pachamama: gaining time, playing tricks on something that will happen in the end. Rosendo knows this will take an individualized form:

*Porque la gente evangélica no va a decir a todos vamos y todos hagamos eso, no, es uno por uno como hacen.*

(Because the Protestants aren't going to tell everyone 'come on, let's all do this', no, it's one by one, that's how they operate.)

The indigenous people feel they have no defences against this strategy.

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(translated from the French by Jean Burrell)

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## Notes

1. See J.-P. Bastian (1997), *La mutación religiosa en América Latina* (Mexico City, Fondo de Cultura Económica), p. 93.
2. There is a fuller exposition and interpretation of the indigenous conversion to Protestantism in my thesis to be presented for the doctorate in ethnology in November 2000 at the Ecole de Hautes Etudes en Sciences Sociales (EHESS in Paris, France).
3. The term 'evangelical' is synonymous with Protestant; it is the most common term, as is the Quechua equivalent *huaukiku/paniku* (brother/sister) which is used among Protestant brothers. The Quechua word means more 'our brother' with two important restrictions: *huauke* = 'brother of a man' (a woman's brother is *tura*), *-iku* (instead of *-nchis*) is an exclusive form (us without you). This is therefore a restrictive term of fraternity. (N. d. T.)
4. See J.-P. Bastian, *op. cit.*, p. 101.
5. In the Andean imaginary the Christian paradise is compared to an 'Eden' that exists deep within certain mountains and lakes. Some myths present these places as having fertile soil and animals, plentiful crops, gold and jewels, etc. In the case of Chimborazo (6310 m.), the highest mountain in Ecuador, the treasure is defended by fierce black dogs who allow only wild animals to pass, or certain 'chosen ones', that is, individuals 'under the spell' of the mountain.  
In the case of the redemption offered by Protestant churches, the category 'chosen' extends more widely: anyone may be saved provided they practice the religion faithfully.
6. According to Firth, the falseness of traditional gods may indicate erroneous prophecies but error may not imply death (passing over, destruction, extinction).
7. We can apply to Chimborazo what Bastian says about the Mam of Guatemala, who are in contact with Pentecostalism '... whose doctrinal flexibility and malleability make recasting the symbolic universe even easier than Presbyterianism does', *op. cit.*, p. 119.
8. See Andrea Damacena (1999), *Mediações socio-antropológicas na estratégia de comunicação da Igreja Universal del Reino de Deus*. Sao Paulo: Ceris.
9. Football matches between the different evangelical churches bring a kind of prestige, which is related to the oppositions and rivalries between two halves of the same community: *hanan* – *urin* (upper – lower).
10. The name Pachamama (earth/universe – mother) belongs to one of the most important female divinities in the Inca pantheon (N. d. T.).

11. It would be extremely interesting to study indigenous methods of dispensing justice. The sociologist Andrés Guerrero recently began a study of the punishment inflicted on two 'witches' in the Calguasí community, Quito, Ecuador (FLACSO).
12. In May 1999 I went back to Pachamama Grande to find that its role as arbitrator had declined, perhaps because of the weakening of local political organization (Inca Atahualpa) and the increase in the number of evangelical families in the area.
13. Sangay is a continuously active volcano (5230 m): its constant eruptions can be seen from a number of villages in the south of Chimborazo province. It is personified by Santa (or grandmother) Isabel, who is a white-haired (snow-capped) old woman who cooks and controls atmospheric phenomena such as rain, frost, lightning and thunder. A woman described her in the following words: 'The old woman uses a condor for a horse and has very white hair. In the past we used to say the *urco* (mountain) is crying, the old woman is crying, and that if we send verses up the rain will stop.' The fire is associated with cooking and the noise of the eruptions with lightning and thunder.
14. The festival has undergone changes that have taken place since the disappearance of the *hacienda* system. It used to start with the communities greeting the *hacienda* landlord and offering a *camari* (gift), consisting of a white cock decorated with coloured ribbons, eggs, guinea pigs, potatoes, cuts of lamb that each *huasipungera* family (who had been granted a plot of land) gave to the *hacienda*. The landlord for his part gave the peasants *chicha*, drink and food, and offered blessings and advice. Nowadays the chairman of the *cabildo* (a political and administrative body) receives the greeting, while the white cock adorned with ribbons is offered to San Carlitos, in the guise of the saint's 'founder' or owner.
15. Father Pedro Torres, a proponent of Liberation Theology, has been a controversial figure in the province. Landowners, as well as the army and the administration, opposed his religious and political work in Tixán parish. The priest supported local indigenous organizations, advising them on loans and buying land, representing them to the authorities, etc. As a result of pressure brought to bear on the Riobamba diocese to get him to leave his parish, the priest was sent to Brazil while the situation calmed down. Two years later he went back to his province, where he was required to go to a different parish.
16. The offer was made at what had been announced as a 'farewell ceremony'. The guests were invited (the bishop, the vicar general, the indigenous vicar) so they could be offered 14,000,000 sucres for the priest.
17. According to Touraine (1993) the idea of modernity is not associated only with rationalization, but is much more complex. Modernity also means increasing differentiation between different areas of social life: politics, economics, religion and art. See *Crítica de la modernidad* (Madrid, Ediciones Temas de Hoy), p. 23.
18. Here we have a well-known motif from European fairytales (from Russia to North Africa): three magic objects turn into as many obstacles. However the context is completely different: in the tales the Hero does not save himself (that would be unworthy), but the daughter of a bad female power (witch, vampire, etc.), whom he has carried off to make her 'good'. It should be noted that of the three objects the mirror and the comb at least are stereotypically feminine (theft of 'female magic' in prehistory?). In the Andes Christ assumes the features of a 'shaman' (real or symbolic feminization; cf. above men in women's clothes, recognition of the child by the maternal line) (N. d. T.)
19. The motif of disguise (which is normally threefold) also appears in fairytales. But here the couple that is supposed to turn into another couple (for instance shepherd + herd) has completely disappeared. The term *borrego* (1–2 year old lamb) creates a problem for the translator, because it stands out as different from *cordero* (lamb under a year old), a more familiar term in the Christian context (translator's note).