National Sounds:  
Sharing Culture and Constructing Identity in Peru

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Abstract

This paper investigates the relationship between the sharing of cultural traditions and formation of identity in Peru. Using musical performance as a lens, I explore the relationship between elite, criollo culture and the traditions of rural indigenous and mestizo populations. My analysis answers two questions: 1) What explains the increasing acceptance and promotion of indigenous and mestizo cultures by the criollo upper class, given a history of apathy and exclusion?; and 2) How has the incorporation of rural mestizo and indigenous musical performance traditions into elite culture affected the adopted traditions? I address these questions by examining intellectual and state-run nationalist projects that have occurred in Peru. I argue that, while the trend towards cultural acceptance was based on new, progressive ideologies, it was mainly a product of the socio-political elite’s strategy to redefine and consolidate national identity in terms of an imagined, universal linkage to a common past. Consequently, rural indigenous and mestizo musical traditions have been permanently altered as regional groups situate themselves within national contexts while simultaneously seeking to retain their local identities.

Introduction

“Indian peasants live in such a primitive way that communication is practically impossible. It is only when they move to the cities that they have the opportunity to mingle with the other Peru. The price they must pay for integration is high—renunciation of their culture, their language, their beliefs, their traditions, and customs, and the adoption of a culture of their ancient masters. After one generation, they become mestizos. They are no longer Indians”

– Mario Vargas Llosa, 1990 (De la Cadena 2000: 1).

Vargas Llosa’s statement can be said to represent a prevailing thought process with respect to the role of the Indian subject within the rest of society. Labeled as the outsider, the “other”, and in many cases, inferior vis-à-vis dominant culture, indigenous populations have been forcibly subjected to modernism’s relentless insistence for change.
The modernizing thrust of western civilization has created a profound effect on the ways in which cultural differences are addressed. Vargas Llosa’s assertion paints a rather stark picture of the situation facing Peru’s marginalized populations while the boldness of his claim invites further analysis. Through my research, I have sought to better understand Vargas Llosa’s comment and the concerns he brings to light.

This paper discusses the point of interaction between one Peru and the other. The historically divided nature of Peruvian society has created a considerable amount of conflict as individuals, states, and ethnic groups attempt to negotiate a sense of cultural identity. I will situate the social and political trends that have persisted throughout the course of the twentieth century within the context of musical performance so as to gain a better understanding of how societies in conflict have adapted to new cultural situations. Through my analysis of Peru I will address two key questions that have shaped my research: What explains the increasing acceptance and promotion of indigenous and mestizo cultures by the criollo upper class, given a history of apathy and exclusion? How has the incorporation and stylization of mestizo and indigenous musical performance traditions by elite culture affected the adopted traditions?

The answers to these questions, I have found, lie first within nationalist discourse. Using the case of Peru throughout the twentieth century, I will address how nationalist projects instituted by the social and political elite served to mark a change in ideology with regards to indigenous populations and their status as national subjects. I will discuss both political projects of cultural nationalism by the Leguía government in the 1920s as well as social projects of the intellectual elite, namely, indigenismo to explain this transition among mainstream society. Within these movements, conceptions of race and
class played integral roles in their formation and the scope of their effects. Also, it is important to note that movements promoting national unity were not independent from other factors such as the economic benefits of incorporating indigenous musical styles into cosmopolitan spheres. The search for new national and international markets made the stylization of rural traditions a lucrative capitalistic venture as well (Bilby 1999: 259).

The second section of this paper addresses the effects of elite sponsored movements towards integration of indigenous traditions. As rural peasant communities increasingly came into contact with and were used (in a symbolic, nationalistic way) by dominant society, problems of authenticity and cultural identity began to emerge. While in some instances communities have been able to retain a great majority of their cultural traditions, there has been a great deal of invention and re-invention of what is original and authentic. The past is often reconstructed to fit within the context of the present, which presents numerous philosophical dilemmas in the consciousness of the subject. To support this section, I will refer a case that exemplifies the effects of Indian symbolization and the resultant sharing of musical traditions: the charango tradition.

I argue that the trend towards indigenous cultural acceptance, while based in the ideologies of indigenismo, was a product of the social and political elite’s strategy to redefine national identity in terms of an imagined, universal linkage to a common, Incan past. Rather than a quest for true cultural integration, the nationalist projects of the elite sought to use Indian culture as a symbol for the Peruvian nation. Consequently, indigenous and mestizo musical traditions have been permanently altered as regional groups situate themselves within national contexts while simultaneously seeking to retain their local identities.
Before continuing, it is important to address the inherent problems that present themselves when analyzing cultural interaction. Specifically, the groups involved are often generalized to fit within different academic frames. Thomas Turino emphasizes the problem faced by scholars who work within the realm of the “cross-cultural.” He states that very often, culture is treated as a homogenous unit that can then be compared, for analytical purposes, to another cultural unit. What is ignored, are the inherent intricacies within each “unit” (1993: 8). While my analysis does not ignore the convoluted nature of culture as a concept, my paper is focused on tracing broader, macro level cultural trends that have been influenced by the interaction between groups of distinct origins. Very often, as will be seen in the present analysis, it is the desire of cultural groups to consolidate their identity even though reality shows a much more convoluted, heterogeneous cultural status that would be difficult to refer to in terms of a unified identity.

Historical Context

In order to understand the present, it is necessary to comprehend the past. Before the arrival of European conquistadors, the Inca Empire had successfully conquered a large territory, called Tawantisuyu, stretching from the modern states of northern Chile and Argentina to southern Colombia. Tawantisuyu translates to “the four united districts,” however, the region was very much a heterogeneous mix of nations subject to Inca control. Instead of a national, Inca identity, Tawantisuyu consisted of separate, localized communities, or ayllus. While Aymara and Quechua were the predominantly spoken languages by the Inca elite, the existence of ethnic identities based on these
languages were largely non-existent during pre-colonial times as these local communities prevailed (Albó 2004: 18). Perhaps the Incas could have created a pan-regional identity had their empire lasted longer, however, the arrival of the Spanish conquistadores in the 1530s eliminated that possibility (Ibid.).

The Spanish system of economic and social organization resulted in the relocation of ayllu communities and the loss of local ethnic identities. The influx of Spanish colonizers served to unite previously isolated indigenous groups as there arose a desire for cultural distinction on the part of the native populations. As early as the eighteenth century, ethnic identities began to form based on larger geographic regions as well as common Aymara and Quechua languages (Albó 2004: 18). It is important to consider, however, that while it may be simple to place indigenous populations within homogeneously defined categories such as “Aymara” and “Quechua,” there exists a wide array of diversity within these groups. The diverse array of ethnic, regional, and national identities that come to characterize the Andean region is a vital component to consider, especially within the discourse of musical performance.

The defeat of the Incas by the Spanish conquistadors in many ways served to do nothing but change the components of the hierarchical structure under which local communities operated. Indigenous groups were able to form regional ties during Spanish rule because there were no artificial boundaries that limited them. The viceroyalty of Peru encompassed an area similar in size to Tawantisuyu which prevented much geographical division. However, the establishment of encomiendas (land tenure systems that granted powerful Spanish colonizers tracts of land including the labor of the people
living on them) likely proved divisive as indigenous communities were turned into exploitable labor forces.

Indigenous regional identity was disrupted during the independence movements of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. Along with the newly formed republics of Peru, Bolivia, and Ecuador came new delineations of geographic boundaries. The criollo elite (descendent directly from Spanish colonizers) paid little mind to the pre-established indigenous regional communities and ethnic identities during the formation of new nation states. Various inter-state wars such as the War of the Pacific and the Chaco War further redefined state boundaries and divided indigenous groups as the ruling oligarchies largely viewed native populations in terms of labor and resources rather than cultural nations. By confining themselves to the more isolated, rural highland regions, indigenous populations managed to resist total division and retained their communal culture and traditions. According to one Aymara intellectual, the indigenous community could almost be considered a “mini-state” (Albó 2004: 21). As will be discussed in further detail, the separateness of indigenous communities with respect to the central apparatuses of the state began to deteriorate as increased urban migration and national consolidation and integration policies took effect starting in the 1920s.

While indigenous groups managed to retain communal identities during the formation of the new republics, the role of the indigenous subject in society remained subordinate. Definitions of the criollo dominated nation-state were based on European conceptions of the nation which emphasized sufficient territory and population size, economic viability, and common political principles (Turino 2003:169). Notably absent in the European national model is the concept of ethnic and cultural identification which
served as a foundation for indigenous communal identities. The difference between these two modes of thinking resulted in the exclusion of indigenous populations from the European nation. It was more important for the elite class to conform to the elite identities of surrounding criollo dominated states than to be culturally distinct from each other (Turino 2003: 179). Also, rather than incorporate the large indigenous population into the nation, the elite classes sought to distinguish themselves from their Indian counterparts based on conceptions of criollo cultural superiority.

Musically, dominant culture represented itself using European styles to create a relatively homogeneous, western identity. A prime example of the Europeanized criollo culture was the creation of national anthems among the new republics that all followed western musical conventions while refraining from any reference to the rural indigenous populations. This practice can be easily traced to the exclusionist ideologies stemming from colonialism that created stark contrasts between the colonizers and the colonized (Crain 1990: 43).

Along with social and economic exclusion of the indigenous and mestizo classes, the criollo dominated society of early Andean nation-states firmly clung to European cultural traditions. In urban centers such as Lima, musical performances entirely consisted of music from western traditions. It was seen as completely unacceptable to perform cultural acts attributed to the rural indigenous and mestizo populations (Turino 1988: 131). Any inclusion of the Indian was conducted in a paternalistic fashion similar to the evangelical practices of the Church. According to the criollo elite, Western culture, as the only legitimate culture, was to be disseminated and shared in a way that eliminated indigenous traditions (Ibid.).
Indigenismo at the Turn of the Century

As the colonial oligarchies began to fade, though by no means disappear entirely, the onset of the twentieth century brought key changes in ideology with respect to indigenous culture. The exclusionary practices of the past were replaced with culturally unifying, policies of inclusion (Turino 2003: 181). This new perception of the Indian peasant was by no means universal, but rather, resulted from the indigenismo movement of the social elite. Indigenismo sought to redefine the relationship between local and national culture. Because of contrasting interests, conflict arose over what exactly it meant to be “Peruvian.” This section traces the development of the indigenismo movement and how social forces set the stage for the populist national movement of president Leguía.

One of the primary intellectuals who can be credited in the formation of the indigenista movement was Luis Valcárcel. As an artist and intellectual from Cuzco, Valcárcel represented a racially purist ideology. Representing a rather extreme point of view, Valcárcel took a confrontational stance against European culture as well as the process of mestizaje that had prevailed since colonial times. He derided the process of cultural and racial hybridism as degenerative (de la Cadena 2000: 24). Rather than referring to the biological component of mestizaje, Valcárcel disparaged any Indian who, by migrating to urban centers of criollo hegemony, forfeited any components of rural, indigenous identity. By lauding the rural indigenous peasant as descendent from a mythical Inca past, Valcárcel advocated for a national ethnic identity based on racial purity. Due to this radically new perspective that counteracted prevailing criollo thoughts
based on indigenous inferiority, many pro-Indian activists began adopting indigenista ideologies.

The primary aim of Valcárcel and the early indigenistas was to highlight the historic, Inca past in relation to current indigenous cultural identities (Mendoza 2008: 9). By taking this approach, the historically marginalized indigenous population could be elevated in status as much more respect was given to the historic Inca civilization than the contemporary Indian. The conflictual nature of Valcárcel’s movement eventually rendered it ineffective as the socio-cultural reality of Peru was not purely Indian and could not be made as such. The legacy of Valcárcel’s indigenismo became the image of the Inca rooted in Peruvian consciousness as a symbol of an idyllic, majestic past that was distinct to the Peruvian nation. Populist leaders such as Augusto Leguía in the 1920s adopted this unifying idea to further their quest for national consolidation.

The second wave of indigenismo, aptly named neo-indigenismo, opposed Valcárcel’s exclusivist, anti-mestizo ideology. José Uriel García, who published a book in 1930 titled The New Indian, advocated an approach that celebrated the mestizo as the result of Spanish and indigenous miscegenation. For García, so-called “Andean” culture was not a contemporary version of the Inca past, rather, a direct result from cultural fusion between Indians and the Spanish colonizers (Mendoza 2008: 65-66). García sought to move away from the racially divisive ideologies of both the radical indigenistas advocating Indian purity and the criollo upper class who exercised their racial superiority over all non-whites. Instead of relying on bloodlines, and other objective racial indicators, García stated that the neo-Indian was any person whose soul was rooted in the land (de la
Cadena 2000: 143). By advocating an identity based on “spirit” over race and blood, neo-indigenistas like García were able to include the diverse array of Peru’s mestizo populations (2000: 144).

García’s indigenismo, while ideologically distinct from Valcárcel’s, also regarded Cuzco as the center for Peruvian culture. It is no surprise that neo-indigenismo was also referred to as *cuzqueñismo*. Ángel Escalante, a congressman in Lima, reflected the movement’s emphasis on Cuzco as the focus of Peruvian identity by stating that,

“…Cuzco is the heart of the continent, the admirable coffer of the American tradition, the holy altar of the race, the secular temple where the Eucharist of Americanism alone can be consumed…Cuzco is the soul itself of nationhood and cuzqueñismo is the fullest and most typical crystallization of the national ideology” (Mendoza 2008: 11).

This perception that Cuzco was the center for Peruvian culture was supported by the diverse array of artistic output that was produced from the region. Instead of being associated with an Inca past, contemporary cultural practices were internalized and labeled as distinctly cuzqueño. Eventually, the larger scale nationalist applications of cuzqueño indigenismo began to be disseminated throughout Peru with Cuzco remaining the center of Peruvian culture. Later, Cuzco’s central position would lead to the immense amount of tourism it experiences today.

This movement towards expanding what it meant to be or identify with the Indian greatly influenced cultural expression, namely what is referred to as “folklore.” The neo-indigenistas defined folklore as “associated with songs, stories, customs, rituals and
proverbs which shaped the collective spirit of a particular people” (de la Cadena 2000: 145). The promotion of folklore was a major component of neo-indigenismo because it maintained historic traditions while attempting to redefine Peruvian culture as more broadly encompassing rural indigenous populations, urban mestizos and all those in between. The broad definition of folklore, emphasizing spiritual connection enabled intellectuals as well as the formally uneducated, rural populations who practiced folkloric traditions to identify along similar lines. Traditional culture could now be embraced by all and promoted on a national level for the purposes of consolidating Peruvian identity.

Zoila Mendoza, in her book, *Creating Our Own: Folklore, Performance, and Identity in Cuzco, Peru*, provides an explanation of the process of “folklorization” which characterized the new indigenista movement. She states that public forms of expression, once adopted as representative of a particular region or nation, become folklore and are essential in the promotion of cultural and ethnic identities (2008: 6). For Mendoza, the creation of national and regional identity based on folkloric cultural forms was a result of the complex and fluid interaction between intellectuals and artists of all social classes (2008: 7). Instead of the commonly proposed top-down process by which the elite stylized and manipulated folkloric forms of the lower class in efforts to create a new national cultural art, Mendoza asserts that this process was influenced by the artists and intellectuals. Mendoza also claims that calls for regional and national identity consolidation on the part of the indigenismo movement were largely a result of this culturally encompassing project.

This is important within the realm of my analysis because, folkloric traditions,
while rooted in the indigenous past, also became a part of mestizo identity and thus incorporated aspects of western, Spanish performance. An example of the hybrid nature of folklore will be explored with the examination of the charango tradition.

*Cultural Nationalism and Populism*

After having discussed the formation of the *indigenismo* movement, this section aims to situate indigenista developments within the context of populist political leaders and their nationalistic programs. While there is often a great deal of contention between cuzqueño indigenistas and the politically motivated policies of the state, these two interpretations of how the Indian should be perceived are integral to my analysis. Framed within nationalist literature as well as the scholarship on the subject, I will discuss the ramifications of the indigenista-influenced regime of the populist Augusto Leguía in Lima and how they contributed to the construction of a Peruvian nation.

First, I will establish a lens from which to view populist movements such as Leguía’s. Thomas Turino has written extensively on rural highland music in Peru and the social and political ramifications of cosmopolitanized indigenous and *mestizo* musical traditions. Largely framed within nationalist discourse, Turino explains the relationship between the criollo elite and indigenous and *mestizo* culture. In Peru, Turino emphasizes the role of elite-run nationalist projects in Lima in the creation of folkloric musical styles derived from rural indigenous and mestizo traditions. This presents a unique perspective compared to Mendoza’s work in Cuzco that emphasized grassroots mobilization by local intellectuals that formed a unified movement across racial and class boundaries.
Turino brings up the very relevant concept of cultural nationalism to describe the need for a consolidated national identity in the post-colonial nation-states of Latin America. Cultural nationalism is defined as the

“semiotic work of using expressive practices and forms to fashion the concrete emblems that stand for and create the ‘nation’, that distinguish one nation from the other, and most importantly, that serve as the basis for socializing citizens to inculcate national sentiment” (175).

As a subset of cultural nationalism, Turino focuses on musical nationalism which he defines as “music used to create, sustain, or change an identity unit that conceives of itself as a nation in relation to having its own state, as well as for state or nationalist party purposes in relation to creating, sustaining, or transforming national sentiment” (175).

I will focus on the specific reformist nature of musical nationalism. Turino describes this type of musical nationalism as the fusion of local, non-cosmopolitan instruments, sounds, and genres within the aesthetics of dominant, cosmopolitan culture (175). Nationalist projects that seek this type of reformist stance focus on the formation of a new national culture based on the “best of local culture combined with the best of ‘modern’ (read dominant/ cosmopolitan) culture” (176). This reformist type of nationalism will be highlighted through the examination of the charango tradition,

On June 24, 1921, Peruvian president Augusto Leguía declared an official holiday recognizing the indigenous peoples of Peru. Dia del Indio, as it was called, celebrated the highland indigenous cultures of the Peruvian Sierra in a way that idealized the Indian subject. On the same day in 1927, Leguía sponsored a folkloric music contest during the Fiesta de San Juan in Lima. Usually based around Western, Spanish-cariolto musical genres, the festival’s inclusion of indigenous highland music was unprecedented. Still
present in Lima was the belief that had persisted well into the twentieth century that regarded the performance of highland musical genres as “shameful” (Turino 1988: 131). At this point in history, it had been established that the only acceptable culture was that of the elite criollos who dictated and shaped Limeño society.

The participants in the contest were mostly urban elites who performed stylized versions of regional, highland musical genres in a way that appealed to an urban, middle to upper-class audience. Lauded as a representation of a collective history, the music of the Indian was made to become a symbol for Peruvian national identity. This served Leguía’s political strategy, which was to consolidate feelings of nationhood across all strata of society. Along with Leguía’s state-sponsored nation-building policies, the Peruvian intellectual elite had begun the indigenismo movement that sought to change the perception of indigenous cultures within society.

The extent to which the Limeño political elite promoted the indigenista ideologies of Valcárcel or García’s neo-indigenismo can be debated, however, it is clear that the political elite sought to use whatever indigenista currents existed to further their own conceptions of the Peruvian nation. The incorporation of rural indigenous and mestizo groups into mainstream society, as I argue, served as symbolic indicators of national consolidation instead of an actual desire for the elite to encourage indigenous culture.

This section will review two important theories that can be applied to nationalism in Peru while explaining how both the social elite and the Peruvian government used indigenous musical traditions to further their nationalist agendas. Since Lima has been a focal point for nationalist politics and has increasingly seen a large influx of rural migrants, I will center on the capital region.
When discussing the topic of nationalism it is imperative to consider the foundational work by Benedict Anderson titled, *Imagined Communities*. According to Anderson, the feelings of belonging to a specific group are constructed by imaginary feelings of connectedness with other individuals of the community. The nation, according to Anderson, is imagined in the sense that it is impossible for an individual to feel intimately connected to every other member of a social or ethnic group (Anderson 1991: 6). Instead, the individual bases his or her national identity on associations rather than personal interactions with other national subjects. This imagined nation is limited, not necessarily by state borders, but by the fact that even large nations have boundaries where the constructed bond ceases to exist (7). Within the confines of the nation, however, there exists an imagined connection that surpasses “inequality and exploitation” and forges “deep, horizontal comradeship” among members of the community (7).

Using this definition of the nation, it is possible to understand the ramifications of the Leguía policies of the 1920s. By lauding indigenous cultural traditions as symbols of the Peruvian nation, Leguía attempted to forge an imaginary bond between Lima and the rural highland regions. This connection had to be constructed because of the divergent developmental paths that shaped each region. Whereas Lima is considered the center for the intellectual, criollo elite, the southern highland regions are associated with the poor peasantry and indigenous populations (mainly Quechuan and Aymaran). Economic, social, class, and cultural disparities between the two regions makes it difficult for individuals to identify as belonging to the same nation. For this reason, the imagined community functions as an artificial linkage between disparate regions and groups. Anderson’s assertion that the imagined community supercedes inequality applies in this
sense because, through the fusing of cultural traditions, it is possible for indigenous and criollo populations to feel a common bond.

In his book, *Music in the Andes*, Thomas Turino describes the nationalist underpinnings of Leguía’s policies and the intellectual movement towards *indigenismo*. In line with Anderson’s imagined communities, Turino states that the usage of indigenous music was an effort to “symbolically identify” with a glorified Incan past in order to differentiate the Peruvian nation from other countries (2008: 101). Thus, incorporation of indigenous traditions into high culture served to enhance domestic perceptions of nationalism while also providing a point of distinction between what it meant to be Peruvian versus identifying with another nation. Also, it becomes increasingly apparent that the nationalist movement was not necessarily an effort to change negative stereotypes and perceptions of the rural Indian, but rather to situate the indigenous subject within an idealized, imaginary past in order to satisfy contemporary nationalist needs. The absence of the indigenous voice in the primary stages of *indigenismo* is important to consider when one studies the interaction between Limeño elites and poor indigenous peasants.

After having explained the motivations behind Leguía and dominant culture’s nationalist project is necessary to explain how the adoption of indigenous aesthetics influenced the musical traditions of popular culture as well as those of the indigenous peoples themselves. The act of creating national symbols from indigenous traditions requires a method of construction that defines the cultural practice as it relates to the national history. Eric Hobsbawn, in his work titled, *The Invention of Tradition*, provides his own explanation of this process by observing that traditions that are “claimed to be
old are often quite recent in origin and sometimes invented” (1983: 1). This is to say that, as cultures progress and evolve, their traditions do not remain constant but rather are dynamically associated with their historical trajectory. He coins the term “invented traditions” to explain how cultural groups attempt to reify changing cultural practices by rooting them in a suitable historical past (1983: 1). Traditions that normally would be deemed inauthentic are adapted in such a way that fit within the ongoing cultural narrative.

In Leguía’s Peru, the invention of traditions served his nationalistic goals. As mentioned before, the main performers during the state-sponsored folkloric contests of the 1920s were of the upper class. Through performing a cosmopolitanized version of indigenous highland music, the dominant class invented a cultural tradition distinct from the original. As an example of the invention of indigenous traditions by Limeño elites, one can draw upon the results of the first folkloric music contest in 1927. The winner of the contest was a trio of upper class intellectuals who played a piece using a piano and two quenas (indigenous flutes) (Turino 2008: 100). The piano has no historical presence in highland musical traditions and is a product of Western musical practices. The trio of indigenistas invented a new way of interpreting an existing tradition so as to cater to their aesthetically conscious criollo judges and audience members. Through listening to this performance, the audience member associates this music with his or her own historical past even though it is inherently modern. To the national subject, it does not matter whether or not the music being performed is of recent conception or a reproduction of an ancient tradition, if it “sounds” indigenous, it must be.
Another more famous example of newly invented versions of indigenous musical sounds was the composition, *El Condor Pasa* by Daniel Robles in 1913. This piece served as the basis for much of the *indigenista* ideologies and politics that followed it. Robles, of the intellectual criollo elite, composed this piece as a reaction to growing need among the middle and upper class for an encompassing national identity (Turino 1988: 132). The text of the piece is based on the struggle of a Peruvian miner against his “Yankee imperialist boss” (1988: 132). The struggles depicted in the text serve to represent the developing nation’s fight against imperial powers of the West. By imitating rural highland genres within a criollo aesthetic, Robles’ piece serves to unify Peruvian national identity.

In her article, “The Social Construction of National Identity in Highland Ecuador”, Mary Crain provides her own paraphrasing of Hobsbawm’s thesis in the Ecuadorian context which can also be applied to the Peru. She states that invented traditions are, “rooted in the popular, in the music and dance traditions of the Indian peasant, in the new urban context they become partially disconnected from locally derived meanings that reproduce a sense of community and are reinscribed to fulfill new national meanings” (Crain 1990: 50-51). These new meanings serve as a conduit for the re-construction of the history of the nation from indigenous intolerance to a promoter of an egalitarian, pluri-ethnic society (1990: 51). By incorporating the indigenous subject into the mainstream, the nation’s elite are exploiting a cultural symbol for the purpose of national unification. Through inventing indigenous traditions to fit within western aesthetics the traditional nature of various highland musical genres is transformed into artistic products for popular consumption (Turino 2003: 185).
Regardless of the idealistic inventions of historical traditions, the usage of the indigenous subject for nationalistic programs usually involves homogenizing the vastly diverse array of indigenous cultures in the Andes. This, naturally, conflicts with indigenous peoples’ conceptions of their own identities as connected with their own distinct nations and cultural traditions. In order to combat criollo and state-run initiatives for indigenous integration into the national identity construct, indigenous peoples must re-invent their own cultural traditions (Crain 1990: 52). This involves a similar strategy as the state and intellectual elite where by indigenous groups situate their own cultural symbols and traditions in a suitable past by inventing new traditions that are influenced by contemporary, often Western, traditions. The addition of guitars and violins as well as European wind instruments to existing genres is a clear example of reinventing indigenous traditions.

The changing indigenous traditions can be seen as a product of Leguía’s legacy and the broader indigenista nationalist ideologies. Beginning in the 1940s, increased urban migration of rural indigenous and mestizo populations changed the dynamic of folkloric performances in Lima. The influx of rural populations created a blended country style that fused cosmopolitan aesthetics with highland genres (Turino 1988: 127). This was different than strict imitations of indigenous traditions by the elite class during the beginnings of the indigenista movement. Rural indigenous and mestizo musicians began giving more performances in contexts previously dominated by the upper class. However, the re-invention of traditions remained. In order for rural musicians to be accepted by their criollo audience, they were forced to modify their aesthetic to fit within Western traditions. The ideal result from the perspective of the dominant class was to
create a new national culture by combining the best of local traditions with the best of modern, cosmopolitan culture (Turino 2003: 176). The concept of a new national culture can be seen as a new invented tradition that is the product of combining two previously separate groups. Each group concedes a part of their traditions while incorporating aspects of the other’s traditions to invent something new yet familiar. It is this familiarity that enables the construction of a perceived historical continuity, which is essential in fostering national unity from a populist perspective.

The Charango Tradition

It is impossible to discuss shared musical traditions in Peru (or in any central Andean country) without referring to the case of the charango. The charango, an instrument with five, double-coursed strings similar in size and appearance to the mandolin, has a unique history with respect to the Andean region. In pre-colonial times, music in the Andes was confined to aerófonos (wind instruments) such as the siku (pan-pipe) and quena (flute) as well as percussion. The existence of the charango is purely the result of the instruments such as the guitar and lute that arrived with the Spanish colonizers. Along with the process of mestizaje between the Spanish and indigenous populations, the creation of the charango can be considered in similar terms as a hybrid instrument. As indigenous groups began to be exposed to stringed instruments, the charango emerged as a combination of European string instrument technology and indigenous aesthetical preferences. The small size as well as the predominantly metal strings created a higher tambour favored by indigenous musicians. So, while the origins
of the charango lie within Spanish string traditions, it is presently attributed as a distinctly indigenous instrument.

Much like the historically marginalized status of indigenous culture in general, the charango, upon its adoption as a distinctly indigenous instrument, has been associated in a negative sense with the *bajo pueblo* (low-class people) (Turino 1984: 256). While European classical musical instruments and traditions were being performed in urban *criollo* centers such as Lima, the charango was confined to the ritualistic performance traditions of the rural peasant populations. The mere act of playing the instrument in Lima or other *criollo* dominated areas would lower the perceived social class of the musician.

Today, however, the charango has been given a considerably higher level of respect. In any Andean university, a student of music can be formally taught how to play the charango in the same way as the classical guitar. Alejandro Cámara, a charango virtuoso from Bolivia, exemplifies this changing perception by stating that he would like to see the instrument reach the technical and artistic capacity of the classical guitar (Baumann 2004). This new treatment of an indigenous instrument is prevalent not only in Bolivia but also in Peru and throughout the Andean region. In this section, I will place this shift in perception within the context of nationalism and *indigenismo* as was described earlier. In many ways the treatment of the charango by various sectors of society was analogous to the social and political movements of Indian symbolism and the mainstreaming of indigenous musical styles. Also, the case of the charango demonstrates that the racially divisive nature of Peruvian society had permeated the realm of musical performance as well.
Since the charango is considered a hybrid instrument, it fits perfectly within the neo-indigenista paradigm of the mestizo as representative of national identity. Humberto Vidal Unda, founder of the radio program *La Hora del Charango*, used the instrument as a symbol for cuzqueño and Peruvian identity. When talking about why he chose the charango title for his program, Unda states, “...the charango was preferred because it is humbler and perhaps more cholo [mestizo]. To feel the immense flow of emotions this small instrument can produce one must have been born on Peruvian soil, have fed on its sap, and [have] felt its needs and problems” (Mendoza 2008: 93). Unda, through using the charango as an example of highland traditions, disseminated the distinctly Peruvian sounds to sectors of society that had previously ridiculed such primitive traditions. By broadening the reach of charango music, neo-indigenistas such as Unda removed the limits on what was cuzqueño to encompass that which could be considered Peruvian (Mendoza 2008: 94).

The performance of the charango took on a similarly inclusive nature as it spread from the rural sectors of Peru to the capital of Lima. However, the charango’s arrival to a new cultural context dominated by western traditions dramatically affected the ways in which it was performed. While originally idealized as the symbol for cuzqueñismo and the humble roots of rural indigenous and mestizo populations, its presence in the criollo dominated urban center of Lima changed the way it was approached as an instrument.

The mestizo charango performance traditions in Lima represent a paradox experienced by many musicians seen as products of the ideologies of indigenismo. While mestizo *charanguistas* (charango players) in Lima strived for an embodiment of the Indian past, in many instances, historically imbedded racist ideologies prevailed among
the musicians themselves. This conflict of ideology, according to Turino, results from
the status of the mestizo as occupying the space between the socially dominant and the

In their efforts to fit within the criollo cultural hegemony of the capital, mestizo charanguistas changed their aesthetic in a way that distinguished themselves from the so-called “boring, artless strumming style” of the campesino (Turino 1984: 258). The rural campesino (read indigenous) style conformed to the aesthetic preferences of the Indian as mentioned above. The melody consisted of a single line confined to a single string that was strummed while leaving the other strings open as drones. The mestizo musicians created their own style of playing the charango that, according to them was more artistic. Called t’ipi (Quechua for “pinch”), the mestizo style consisted of plucking out melodies in a more intricate fashion. Criollo aesthetics that dictated what sounded or did not sound pleasing are clearly evident in this style that emphasized artistic performance rather than indigenous ritual. According to one charanguista, the difference in criollo perception of the charango changed dramatically according to the style in which the instrument was played: “When one only plays in the [campesino] strummed style, they [criollos] think that it is music of low-class people…but when one plays t’ipi it is a thing that causes great excitement!” (Turino 1984: 260).

The mestizo charanguistas, however, did not succumb completely to dominant criollo aesthetics. Descending from neo-indigenismo, the mestizo artist remained intent on constructing a distinct identity with respect to dominant culture. This desire resulted in the fusion of campesino and t’ipi styles that varied depending on the performance context. Stage performances typically used the more artistic plucking style as a way to
present the charango as a legitimate instrument to a western criollo audience in order to garner respect (Turino 1984: 261). When playing for more intimate gatherings such as family parties and dances, the strummed style often took precedence as rhythm was more important than technical virtuosity when the audience was actively participating (ibid.).

The influence of criollo culture on mestizo performance aesthetics was a major point of contention among cuzqueño indigenistas. *La Hora del Charango* denounced what it deemed an “invasion” of European culture into the highland, Andean realm (Mendoza 2008: 106). The forces of criollo cultural diffusion were powerful as developments in mass media enabled criollo music to reach a wider audience both nationally and internationally (2008: 106). During the late 1930s, criollo culture of Lima began asserting itself as Peruvian while the efforts based in Cuzco to construct identity based on mestizaje were being relegated to the status of a vernacular, second-class nationality (2008: 107). Humberto Videl Unda, through his radio show, sought to redefine mestizo identity in accordance with neo-indigenismo, using the charango as the centerpiece for an Andean and Peruvian identity. By rejecting criollo dominance, mestizo artists sought to put their modes of cultural expression at the forefront of the national conscience. Even though these efforts usually meant succumbing (to an extent) to criollo aesthetics, the strategy of creating *lo nuestro* (our own) generally served to promote the accomplishment of neo-indigenista goals.

*Finding Authenticity in Musical Performance*

In an increasingly interconnected world, it is difficult at times to encounter authenticity within one’s own culture. As James Clifford states in his book, *The
*Predicament of Culture*, we are always to varying degrees “‘inauthentic’: caught between cultures, implicated in others” (1988: 11). In efforts to sustain pure, authentic conceptions of particular, historic traditions, the cultural subject is often forced to combat dominating forces that seek to undermine its existence (12). Such conflicts between tradition and modernity have been defining issues of contemporary society and can be traced back to the venturesome colonial exploits of European empires.

Here, I will elaborate on Clifford’s assertions with respect to folkloric representations of identity. As will be seen, the realm of folklore is wrought with conflict over what is an authentic representation of popular tradition. Through performing folklore it is difficult to avoid inventing traditions since the act of performance as presentational art is already outside the realm of rural indigenous and mestizo culture. This reflects the ideological conundrum that has presented itself to indigenous and mestizo subjects who are seeing permanent changes to their emblematic, historically rooted traditions. As rural indigenous and mestizo musicians attempt to situate themselves into a new national context, local elements of their traditions are many times altered as a result of cultural integration. The aforementioned struggles of the mestizo charanguistas in establishing their own authentic identity was a clear example of Clifford’s predicament.

In Cuzco, aptly named the “folkloric capital,” the conflict between nationally conceived notions of identity and authenticity are increasingly evident. Because of capitalist interests in Andean music and cultural symbols, Cuzco is a tourist center for all things Andean. The reason for Cuzco’s attraction of foreign tourists lies within the fact that Andean culture is associated with the mysterious and distant indigenous world of
non-Western others (Bigeno 2007: 247). While the mythic connotations attributed to cultures perceived to be foreign and exotic are prevalent within all societies, the nationalist projects of the Peruvian elite highlighted the mythical Inca past for its attractiveness internationally.

Cuzco’s folkloric dances are in many ways meant to offer glimpses of cuzqueño culture for tourists. The push and pull nature of tourism (one that simultaneously supports a region economically while hindering cultural authenticity) has created a fair amount of conflict between elite intellectuals and commoners. As was noted earlier, the neo-indigenista movement of the cuzqueño elite was supportive of the idea of representative folklore that was to be disseminated on a large scale.

In the realm of musical performance, representations of cuzqueño folklore can be divided into two distinct groups. Community, grassroots troupes call themselves comparsas while intellectual groups are considered conjuntos folklóricos (folklore groups). Each group self-identifies as mestizo, however, with different ramifications. Intellectuals identify as non-indigenous mestizos as a way to distinguish their social position in relationship to uneducated campesino populations. Fitting within the indigenista framework, both groups conceive of folklore as an imitation of indigenous culture. However, the Comparsas, through performing their cultural dances, embody their racial identities as mestizos while folklore groups are imitating an “authentic dance” far removed from their own self-identification (De la Cadena 2000: 274). Instead of situating their performances within a distant past, comparsas see their dances as a reflection of their present social condition as well as their authentic customs (ibid.).
The ways in which each group treats the act of performance is also determined by how they conceive of authenticity. While comparsa performances emphasize audience engagement, mestizo intellectual performances are presentational with a clear audience-performer distinction. As a part of intellectual movements such as indigenismo, folkloric groups take on the role of what I will call “cultural disseminators.” Through authentic representations of historical indigenous traditions performed on a stage in front of a cosmopolitan audience, the role of the conjunto is to provide a glimpse into the historic Indian past. Comparsas on the other hand embody this historical authenticity due to the fact that they identify with the traditions they perform. Their aim is not to disseminate their culture for a tourist audience to absorb, but rather, to perform rituals and dances that they have internalized as their own. It is easier to understand, then, the conflict that arises between these two groups, as they have drastically different goals and motivations for their cultural expression.

Conclusion

In this paper, I have outlined the reasons for various social and political nationalist projects in Peru as well as the resulting effects on society. By using Turino’s concepts of cultural and musical nationalism, I have explained how nations can be constructed based on symbolic points of reference. Also, within the context of identity construction, I have drawn on the works of authors such as Hobsbawm and Mendoza who describe how historic pasts are internalized, reinvented, and created as one’s own. This paper has used these ideas to convey the complexity of the issue. While there can be conclusions made about the past, it is important to see this paper as setting the stage for
how we can interpret the present. Today there remain symbolic identifications with nations both on the part of the national subject as well as the international observer. Legacies of indigenismo are by no means confined to their points in history but are continuing and evolving with time.

As I have discussed, Peru’s entrance into an increasingly globalized society forced the state to consolidate its own distinct identity. The indigenous past proved to be a prime point of reference. Through movements emphasizing the Inca past as well as the contemporary mestizo assertions of Peruvianness, the intellectual elite sought to promote an encompassing rural, peasant national identity. Increased scholarly output that called for recognition and celebration of Indian culture was subsequently used by populist political movements such as Leguía’s to further their own agendas. Populism’s version of the Indian was often very distinct from that of the cuzqueño or indigenista version. Whereas figures such as José Uriel García emphasized a national identity could be internalized as one’s own, populist leaders’ symbolic rhetoric often imposed a consolidated identity that was not as universally applicable. The state’s policies of indigenous inclusion, issued in a top-down manner simplified the diversity of Peru’s indigenous populations into the mold of a mythic Inca past that could be celebrated without posing a threat to dominant society.

Artistic representations of the Peruvian nation, through folklorization, brought regional traditions to the national stage. Upon their removal from localized contexts, folkloric traditions were dictated by the cultural situations in which they operated. Centers of criollo culture produced more westernized folklore while cities like Cuzco retained much of what was deemed authentic by campesino performance standards. As
rural to urban migration as well as the increased dissemination of musical styles permeated the cultural landscape, historic traditions became points of invention. Even staunch indigenistas who advocated identification with the Indian past were forced to operate cross-culturally. What was considered “Indian” varied depending on its context. Stylizations soon became traditions and each push for a specific national identity was met with an opposing thrust in the other direction. Grassroots efforts were often mitigated by the powerful populist structure of the state while at the same time, rural mestizo traditions such as those of the charango were brought successfully to the national stage (albeit with slight reinventions). As many scholars have observed, conflicting strategies among various sectors of society has ultimately failed to create a universal Peruvian identity.

As a result of movements towards inclusion of rural indigenous and mestizo cultural traditions there emerged conflicts over how to express one’s culture or whether or not it was permissible to perform an idealized version of that which was not one’s own. Performances of highland music balanced Western aesthetic with highland indigenous genres in a way that invented new cultural traditions that could be deemed authentically Peruvian. The effect that integration had on indigenous culture was dramatic in the sense that there ceased to be an authentic past to go back to, forcing the re-invention of indigenous musical traditions in the contemporary context (Clifford 1988: 12). It is necessary, then, to question the role of dominant culture in the shaping of the traditions of subordinate classes. Is the re-invention of traditions desirable? Is it to be considered a natural evolutionary process undergone by all cultures? How does the dominated subject react to the alteration of timeless cultural practices? At least in the case of Peru, what constitutes “national culture” is a product of a fluid, ever-changing
process that depends on the interaction of individuals and groups from different backgrounds and traditions.

Perhaps then, Vargas Llosa’s statement at the opening of this piece, though presented in a cynical light, can be understood to reflect these ongoing cultural processes. As rural, indigenous populations became integrated within different national contexts through mestizaje, it remained possible to retain a sense of cultural identity even though traditions were not necessarily preserved in a literal sense. The question of finding an authentic point of origin from which to model one’s cultural traditions was replaced with the question of discovering authenticity in the present. The establishment of cultural ownership proved to be the key in remaining distinct while still having a place within the Peruvian nation.
Bibliography


Cultural Identity

Common habits, characteristics, and ideas may be clear markers of a shared cultural identity, but it is also determined by difference: We feel we belong to a group, and a group defines itself by noticing and highlighting differences with other groups and cultures. HABITS - they make up a component of our identity. IDEAS - come and go, fluid, but important. Job, religions, etc. - these are markers! They make clear to us the difference between our markers and someone else’s (in a different culture/group, for ex.)

Constructing Cultural Identity. For example, there is frequently a dominant cultural practice: (culture A may be dominant in architecture, and B in technology). Church in Karelia, Russia. Photo: Arthus-Bertrand. Knowledge of a foreign language doesn’t automatically make a person a representative of another culture â€“ modern languages have a completely different role. Another thing is Dutch, which unlike English I do not know so well but the culture and the national identity of the Dutch is clear and understandable to me, as much as it is possible at this point. Why so? The reason is that I have lived in the Netherlands for four years in a row (and in total there are six or seven years since my first arrival). While living in the country I spoke with the Dutch, heard the language, saw emotions, habits â€“ in general, I did really live and see what the Dutch society is, where most of the people know English but that did not stop the country from keeping its cu... Our cultural identity is derived from our sense of belonging to a particular cultural or ethnic group. How is the cultural identity of a society defined? A society’s cultural identity is defined by the beliefs, practices, morals, and culture of a people. Also adding to the cultural identity is how the culture as a whole relates to the subcultures of which it is inevitably composed. How has the AFL shaped Australia’s cultural identity? Cultural identity. Who founded cultural identity? To preserve their cultural traditions, to retain the identity in a multicultural society and to pass on cultural practices to new generations so that they would be aware. Disadvantages of cultural diffusion? Loss of a person’s own cultural identity/language/traditions.