FOLKLORIZACION AND AFRO-ECUADORIAN MUSIC IN ESMERALDAS: DISCOURSES OF VERgüENZA AND PROJECTS OF REVALORIZACIÓN

BY

PETER JUDKINS WELLINGTON

THESIS

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Adviser:

Professor Thomas Turino
ABSTRACT

This thesis is a study of the folklorization process in the northwestern coastal region of Esmeraldas, Ecuador in relation to music of the marimba and other styles performed by people of African descent. In order to contextualize contemporary folkloric groups in Esmeraldas City, I look at the ways socio-political histories, migration, urban development, and nationalism are all involved in transformations of musical performance practices. Around the middle of the 20th century, large projects involving infrastructural development sought to take advantage of the region’s attractive climate for tourism and plentiful natural resources, especially oil. With this came new migration from the highlands and a change in the social landscape that exacerbated economic and social class differences. Most pertinent to this thesis, such socio-economic class differences were manifested in performances of Afro-Esmeraldeño music. The marimba and its accompanying instruments became associated with the lower class, causing some people to disassociate themselves with the music in order to gain more upward mobility.

Today there is a concern for continued sentiments that associate Afro-Esmeraldeño music with the lower class. Older folkloric musicians speak of vergüenza (shame) among the youth and frame their performances within in a discourse of revalorización (revalorization) that seeks to instill a sense of value for the music within the youth. There are various implicit and explicit ways in which revalorización is carried out, so one goal of this thesis is to allow the reader see connections between them. Though several folkloric groups are discussed throughout the thesis, there is discussion of three in particular in the last chapter that provides the bulk of the ethnographic research carried out for this project. Videos are available for the reader here: http://www.youtube.com/user/Judahdiah/videos?view=0, and throughout the thesis; they are used to demonstrate how these folkloric groups perform identity both explicitly and implicitly.
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CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION

This thesis looks at Afro-Ecuadorian music in the northwestern coastal province of Esmeraldas, Ecuador. Bordering Colombia to the North, Esmeraldas province currently has a population of over 500,000, the majority of which is of African descent. I carried out the ethnographic research for this paper mainly in Esmeraldas City, the province’s capital and metropolitan center of over 150,000 residents. However, I also travelled to surrounding Ecuadorian cities and provinces such as San Lorenzo, Manabí, and Quito for presentations of Esmeraldeño groups.

Throughout this paper I will address musical folklorization in Esmeraldas in relation to socio-political histories, migration, urban development, and nationalism. Nested within Ecuadorian nationalism are regionalist projects, and in the case of Esmeraldas these projects intend to utilize Afro-Esmeraldeño music and the marimba as an emblem of African heritage within a nation explicitly defined as “multi-ethnic” and “pluricultural” by the Ecuadorian constitution. Regarding the way music is performed, the centerpiece of folklorization is a reconceptualization among performers who begin to reflect on their music-making and modify their presentation in a way that adapts to modernist values generated by the aforementioned social factors. For example, in Esmeraldas participatory marimba performances during weekend nights were banned in the city during the mid-20th century, so in order to continue, musicians began performing in the streets for tourists, which eventually led to the emergence of folkloric marimba schools.
Today in Esmeraldas City, older musicians have developed a discourse that contests a sense of vergüenza (shame) that is associated with Afro-Esmeraldeño cultural practices. The middle of the 20th century serves as a point of departure for vergüenza because of large migration patterns from the highlands that introduced and exacerbated socioeconomic classes. This period also marks a point of departure for the folklorization process in Esmeraldas, which, through the reconceptualization of musical performance, is also intertwined with vergüenza and the contestation of it. Concerned about the continuation of vergüenza among Esmeraldeño youth, folkloric musicians in Esmeraldas promote a sense of revalorización (revalorization), which, through an instilling of value on cultural practices, attempts to contest vergüenza. Therefore, through the performance and teaching of traditional Esmeraldeño music, Esmeraldeño musicians are able to contest a looming sense of shame by retaining control of cultural practices and promoting them in order to reinforce their significance as salient markers of being Esmeraldeño, Afro-Esmeraldeño, Afro-Ecuadorian, Ecuadorian, even Afro-Latino.

During a research trip to Esmeraldas just before New Year’s 2011, I brought with me recording equipment for ethnomusicological research toward my master’s thesis in ethnomusicology. I had anticipated making typical field recordings for future analysis, but instead became involved helping the group Bambuco shoot three promotional videos. Inspired by the insights offered by this process, I contacted another group I had met the previous summer, Filomena Curoso Escobar, and described to them this project. Intrigued by the idea, they invited me over, and we filmed similar videos. It became clear that the different ways these groups presented themselves on camera could serve as a useful site for studies in the ethnography of performance. To round off my study, I included in my research a third group, Raíces del Pacífico, with which I spent much time at rehearsals, performances and interviews. After telling
them about what I had done with the previous two groups, I was told they had already done a similar project for themselves. Their video, consisting of interviews and rehearsals, is in a documentary style, while the ones that I filmed are short, one-song presentations.

Using these groups as my point of departure, I will delineate how musical values are reflected in these music videos. I will also chronicle the process of making these videos and explain how each fits simultaneously into similar and different historical, cultural, and political contexts. I will use interviews, videos, and histories of these three groups to explain how the process of folklorization is closely related to nationalist sentiments which not only shift the practice of performance, but also the way group and audience members change how they conceptualize the music.

Though the music and dance of these three Afro-Ecuadorian groups derives from a shared history, their performances signify different identities and social positions. Explaining how each group orients itself in terms of musical style and performance presentation will help to show where the musical values of each group stand. Filomena Curoso Escobar is one of the few groups in Esmeraldas that performs only arrullos, a type of music performed with drums, shakers, and vocals. The performance of arrullos is most closely associated with religious contexts, and in everyday discussion the genre is considered “traditional” today in Esmeraldas.¹

Bambuco is a group that performs both traditional music, of which they released a CD in 2003, and traditional music fused with música popular, i.e. music that is more generally known throughout Latin America. In the latter category, they incorporate instruments such as electric

¹ Jonathan Ritter has used the term “traditional” (Ritter 1998: 55) to refer to a specific time period in Esmeraldas (1920-1950), whereas I am more inclined to use the term to refer to those groups and performances that use only those instruments that are considered traditional by Esmeraldeños, namely the marimba, bombo (bass drum played with one stick on the head and one on the wood), cununo (conga-like hand drum), and guasá (cylindrical shaker).
bass, trumpets and trombones, bongós and congas, as well as different styles and rhythms associated with genres such as salsa and reggaetón.

*Raices del Pacífico* is the third group that I will examine and shows a different orientation to the way they present themselves. Instrumentally, the group incorporates traditional instruments, and at times a saxophone. The use of the saxophone is only supplementary to the group’s presentations however, and does not serve the purpose of identifying the group with *música popular*. Instead the incorporation of saxophone is more an index of Colombian music, along with the incorporation of *platillos* (small handheld crash cymbals). As I will explain below, the shared border of Esmeraldas and Colombia has helped sustain shared musical and other cultural practices for many centuries. Also, members of *Raices del Pacífico* carry out interviews with locals about different cultural practices and incorporate what they learn, such as creating a dance inspired by the process of making *guarapo*, a sugar cane based alcoholic beverage. That is, those members of this group inform their compositions and performances through their own ethnographic research.

I will contextualize these Esmeraldas–based ensembles within the history of Esmeraldas and the contemporary process of folklorization in the following two chapters. Therefore, before going into depth with my analysis of groups, I will use the next two chapters to emphasize the significance of the complex interconnected facets of folklorization and its history in the region. The complicated identity politics involved in Esmeraldas since the arrival of Africans to the Pacific coast is discussed in the next chapter, but here it is worth noting their relationships with local indigenous groups varied from friendly to hostile, and they retained a significant amount of autonomy from colonial control up until the late 19th and early 20th centuries. It was during this time that a nascent urbanization began to affect the structural and social landscapes through
infrastructural developments and local lowland and distant highland migration to Esmeraldas City and to the city of San Lorenzo to the north. For musicians, new places and incentives began to present themselves through various forms of tourist and governmental patronage at both regional and national levels. The three groups mentioned above, among others, will serve to demonstrate the history of the *folklorization* process and the ways in which it is manifested in musical performance today.

**Literature Review**

Several topics that have emerged in published literature about Esmeraldas will be addressed throughout this thesis. Marginalization of Afro-Esmeraldeños has been a problem in the region with regard to the literature from the first half of the 20\(^{th}\) century. Marginalization has also been manifested in socioeconomic class distinctions that began over a century ago, and these distinctions will be analyzed throughout the thesis. Connections between Esmeraldas and the Ecuadorian capital, Quito, have contributed to marginalization in several complicated ways, namely through the introduction and exacerbation of new socioeconomic classes, and here I will address the previous literature that has discussed these connections. Identity politics have also been central to a great deal of the discussion about Esmeraldas in terms of gender, race, ethnicity, and other class groupings, all of which will be important to understanding how individuals both implicitly and explicitly negotiate their identities in performance.

Acknowledgement of Esmeraldas as a region worthy of study did not come with the first publications about it. A well-established ethnomusicologist/composer by the name of Segundo Luis Moreno carried out his fieldwork on “autochthonous music” of Ecuador in the first half of the 20th century. Though going into detailed descriptions of many musical traditions of the
country, he decided that the music of African descent from Esmeraldas was not worthy of study, even after using the word “primitive” freely to describe different musical styles of many indigenous groups throughout the country (Moreno 1949). Moreno’s work illustrates that even when one group or their musical style (here, the indigenous) can be regarded as inferior, music of African descent was considered of a lower class or quality still. Ecuadorian authors are not the only early writers to have discussed the music from the Pacific coastal region. Russian author, composer, and conductor Nicolas Slominsky states, “the Negro element, so strong in the music of the West Indies and Brazil, is here [in Ecuador] negligible” (Slominsky 1945: 198). This thesis will illustrate the ways performers have managed different forms of marginalization throughout the history of the region. With these publications there was early evidence of marginalization within scholarship, but face-to-face marginalization was also occurring in the first half of the 20th century because of population growth and the introduction of new social classes.

Norman E. Whitten, Jr. is an American anthropologist who began to conduct fieldwork in 1961 among the Afro-Esmeraldeño community and continues to publish literature not only about Esmeraldas, but Ecuador in general. His research resulted in the first substantial anthropological history of the province of Esmeraldas and has also informed a great deal of the research for this paper. After establishing contact in the area, the bulk of his fieldwork pertaining to Esmeraldas continued on-and-off throughout the 1960s. His first book, *Class, Kinship, and Power in and Ecuadorian Town: The Negroes of San Lorenzo*, published in 1965, is based on his fieldwork in San Lorenzo, a city in the northern sector of the Esmeraldas province. His book explores the structure of the city as an Ecuadorian town, which must adapt to highland *mestizo* and *criollo*
hegemons. Whitten’s focus was on the individuals from the city who needed to negotiate the construction of their identity in an industrializing town.

Whitten’s work is especially important to this thesis in regards to his observations during marimba performances, which demonstrate that such performances came to be associated with the lower class, and therefore not something that a person desiring upward mobility should participate in. He writes, “A man who wishes to maintain a high status in the middle class should not be seen working with his hands, drinking in saloons, or attending a marimba dance” (emphasis added; Whitten 1965; 109). However, Whitten’s work is less focused on the musical aspects of the society and more focused on kinship, socioeconomic mobility, and political order. Using Whitten’s research about this initial marginalization of Afro-Esmeraldeños via marimba performance, my research examines the contemporary manifestations of these negative sentiments around the marimba in the discourse of elders who use the term vergüenza to describe their perceptions of the youth’s attitude towards their musical heritage.

Connected to the negative attitudes about Afro-Esmeraldeño music mentioned above, Whitten also referred to this problem in his second book, Black Frontiersmen: a South American Case. In discussion about the migration of serranos (highlanders) into the area, Whitten writes that “[the serranos] would refer to themselves as ‘los pobres,’ ‘the poor.’ But they have other characterizations for the black frontiersmen. They use such nouns as sucio, vago, tonto, incivilizado, bruto, infrahumano, feo (dirty, lazy, stupid, without national culture, subhuman, ugly – in terms of racial features) to depict black aggregates, but not specific individuals” (Whitten 1974: 192). In an essay about marimba music, Whitten, accompanied by his colleague Aurelio Fuentes, also mentions this opinion that outsiders have about the instrument. They write, “the mestizo ridiculed marimba dancing as a primitive curiosity and those upwardly mobile
negroes emulating the mestizos became ashamed of the marimba music” (Whitten and Fuentes 1966: 179). These examples show the roots of negative sentiments about Afro-Esmeraldeño music; the word *vergüenza* (shame) was a topic of conversation in several of my interviews with local musicians whom expressed concern about today’s youth and their interest in the marimba. In part, this thesis will discuss current discourses concerning *vergüenza* as a follow up to some of the earlier work carried out by Whitten.

*Black Frontiersmen* also has more in depth descriptions of the different forms of music and its various contexts. According to Whitten, there are two categories of ritualistic behavior that are associated with the Afro-Ecuadorians of this region: the sacred and the secular. In the secular rituals, e.g. the *cantina* context, saloon context, and *currulao*, Whitten argues that the reinforcement of personal networks are acted out in each one of these contexts and that men dominate in the control, organization, and performance of these musical situations. In the sacred rituals, women play a more prominent role in the arrangement, organization, and performance of the music, whether it is for the death of a child, an adult, or the propitiation of a saint. The way that social behavior is reenacted differs through each of these contexts, but all deal with the interaction between male assertiveness and female authority (see: Whitten 1974b). I will explore how these sorts of gender relations are played out today by examining the videos referred to earlier.

One of the main topics of Whitten’s *Black Frontiersmen* is the notion of adaptive mobility, a topic on which he has other publications as well (see: Whitten 1969; 1974a). Similar to Whitten’s first book, his point here was that Esmeraldeños of the lower class needed to adapt tactics of socioeconomic negotiations and reciprocal contracting with exchange patterns of people from a higher socioeconomic status, who at times controlled the economic structures of
Esmeraldas from the country’s capital, Quito (see: Whitten 1969). This is a topic that will be later discussed in more contemporary contexts where different types of governmental support can both help and hinder marimba performance.

Jonathan Ritter has also conducted fieldwork in Esmeraldas, mainly in the early 1990s, and serves as useful follow up to Normal Whitten. In Ritter’s master’s thesis, he points out that one of the reasons that Esmeraldas is so unique and interesting to study is because of its history as a palenque, or escaped slave community, which was foundational in the establishment of Esmeraldas’s semi-autonomy from the Ecuadorian state up until the turn of the 20th century. This autonomy lasted because of difficulties in travel due to the thick rainforest as well as defensive efforts by Esmeraldeños toward attempts of highlander invasion. Continued resistance to several colonialist conquests seeking to appropriate the Pacific region and its resources allowed Esmeraldas to continue as a palenque for several hundreds of years. Ritter points out, “slavery’s importance on the history of Esmeraldas is largely defined by its absence” (Ritter 1998: 48), which facilitated the formulation of a society that was mostly autonomous from Spanish control and therefore separated from slavery.

Only a few decades after Ecuador’s abolition of slavery in 1851, lumber industries were introduced to the region, marking some of the first significant national and international economic establishments. Naturally, they drew on the local lower-class Esmeraldeños for a labor force and also brought in lower-class highland indigenous people. Such industries carried on into the 20th century and by the year 1950, the completion of a highway created a concrete and permanent connection from Esmeraldas to Quito and solidified the loss the region’s autonomy. Understanding the history of Esmeraldas is important in order to contextualize the
present situation, but these aspects of urbanization in the middle of the 20th century have important weight in the folklorization process.

Definitions of race and ethnicity in Esmeraldas vary depending on the sources referenced. Whitten discusses the complexities of racial discourse in a country where there has been so much mixture of different people and varied ideas and agendas regarding social definition. For example, the term *zambo* was used as a unifying term for Esmeraldeños who were resisting Spanish authority in the 16th and 17th centuries. *Zambo* described those individuals who formed a community that was created through the racial mixture of people with African heritage and people of indigenous ancestry. However, this term is not commonly used anymore, and a person who may have been categorized as *zambo* may currently be defined as *negro*, literally “black,” or *moreno*, a more polite term for people with African features. Whitten describes a disturbing use of the term *mulato* in highland mestizo journalism, which refers to a person who may refer to himself as *negro*, but is referred to in highly circulating publications as *mulato*, which reinforces the ideology of black inferiority (see: Whitten 1998: 85). Depending on the social class and upward mobility of the individual, their racial classification may change, which shows that “blackness represents more than just skin color to those who seek a regional and human dignity through deployment of the concept” (Whitten 1998: 85).

More recently, Ritter has also published two articles that address race and ethnicity in relation to Afro-Esmeraldeño music. In his essay titled “Articulating Blackness in Afro-Ecuadorian Marimba Performance,” he makes the point that even though Afro-Ecuadorian performers present their identity on stages that are intended as spaces of regional Esmeraldeño and/or Afro-Ecuadorian control, they do so within a setting controlled by upper-class, usually highland, power structures. He writes, “The black, ethnic project expressed by the marimba may
advocate disengagement [from the Ecuadorian state], but it frequently erects its opposition in an environment controlled by the very forces it resists” (Ritter 2003: 147). In a more recent essay, Ritter reinforces the establishment of hegemonic power through not only performance on a stage controlled by the upper class, but also through “popular hybrids [that] may in fact echo neo-colonial practices of exploitation and a politics of exclusion and exoticism” (Ritter 2012: 9). He explains that several non-Afro-Ecuadorian performers such as Carmen González and the band “La Grupa” have achieved international success with their versions of Esmeraldeño songs. These arguably neo-colonialist practices naturally seem problematic when foreign listeners that are not privy to Ecuadorian identity politics hear non-Afro-Ecuadorians singing and playing Afro-Ecuadorian music.

To Ritter’s discussion, I would add that these groups were not the only ones who performed on international stages during the same time period, but that there were in fact Afro-Ecuadorians performing Afro-Ecuadorian music at various non-Ecuadorian venues. A Salsa group named Los Chigualeros has come to be known as the “salsa ambassadors of Ecuador,” and in the past the group was exclusively made up of Afro-Ecuadorians.² Apart from their original Salsa pieces, Los Chigualeros also performed Esmeraldeño songs on Esmeraldeño instruments throughout Europe, the US, and Latin America since the 1990s. Similarly, the groups Tierra Caliente and Bambuco, both to be discussed in more detail later, are comprised of Afro-Esmeraldeños and have performed throughout Latin America, the US, and Europe.

Where Ritter’s research examines the neo-colonial aspect of appropriating music of subjugated peoples, my research shows how Esmeraldeños think about their subjugated position

² The director of Los Chigualeros even admits that they were a times “a little racist.” There has been a full-length documentary made about Los Chigualeros by a German producer named Alex Shenker.
via their own musical projects. In order to counter dominant ideologies that are materialized in discourses of vergüenza, Esmeraldeño musicians conduct musical projects of revalorización.

**Folklorization and the Black Pacific**

The nature of the Esmeraldeño region has been, since Afro-Esmeraldeños were marooned off the coast in the mid-16th century, a combination of different peoples and their cultural practices. Afro-Ecuadorians have had to adapt to different social situations in relation to the indigenous populations and several highland colonialist endeavors since their arrival to the country, something common throughout what Heidi Feldman defines as the “Black Pacific.”

She writes, “the Black Pacific negotiates ambiguous relationships with local criollo and indigenous culture with the Black Atlantic itself” (Feldman 2006: 7). Feldman coined “Black Pacific” to draw attention to the oft-overlooked peoples of African descent in countries like Colombia, Ecuador, Peru, Bolivia, and Chile. Her main focus is to explain how people of African descent understand and create their identities in regards to relationships with indigenous peoples, people of the upper-class, and the black Atlantic as a conceptual substitute for Africa. In regard to the substitution of the Atlantic for Africa she writes, “because less African cultural heritage has been preserved continuously in the black Pacific (or at least so it appears), the cultures of the black Atlantic seem very “African” to some residents of the black Pacific” (Feldman 2005: 207). Though some of the musical styles in Esmeraldas are influenced by other African diasporic musical styles from the Atlantic, such as marimba fusions with Salsa or Reggaetón, several stay outside of this conceptual geography, such as the traditional music of the marimba and arrullos.

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3 Feldman draws from Paul Gilroy’s *Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness* (1993), which deals with the African diaspora in those places in or connected to the Atlantic ocean, as a point of departure for her term, “Black Pacific.”
Feldman’s black Pacific is rooted in the hermeneutics of folkloric performances and the different historical instances that led to contemporary productions of diasporic styles. The process of folklorization will be a central theme in this paper. By focusing not only on how the music itself is transformed, but also the different ways that performers’ conceptualizations of the music may change because of historical and political processes. As hegemony is established by outsiders’ control in processes of urbanization and its effects on infrastructural and social landscapes, folklorization begins to materialize as musicians figure out how to develop new ways of negotiating the sound of their performances, how and where they teach their music, what they want their music to signify, and how they create such signifying performances. As I will show below, this process involves various power struggles in relation to who controls the performance and teaching spaces as well as those who control the funding that provides groups with a means to partake in such musical projects. Richard Adams’s explanation of social power proves useful in this case. He writes, “Power over an individual is a psychological facet of social relationships in the sense that it may be said to have its physical locus within the nervous system of the actors: it is social in that it exists by virtue of the complementarity of social concern of each actor with respect to the other” (Adams 1975: 21). Usage of the term “power” throughout this paper is in reference to this definition, unless otherwise specified.

The “folk” have been at the center of romantic nationalist movements since the late 18th century with the onset of Johann Herder’s project to find a German “national soul.” His model still continues to be used today around the world, and Esmeraldas, Ecuador is no exception. Herder’s main argument is

“that humanity was something man could achieve only as a member of a nation and that nations could arrive at humanity only if they remained true to their national characters, or souls…Through the free use of their imaginations and through reliance upon their emotions – instead of their reason – they [the “folk”]
allowed the creative force of the folk character to work through them and thus become the producers of truly national poetry – poetry which bore the stamp of both the physical and cultural environment in which it had been created” (Wilson 1973: 823-826).

The current mayor of Esmeraldas, Ernesto Estupiñan Quintero, has used the marimba as an emblem since his first campaign in 2000 and continues to do so, carrying a similar sort of sentiment established by Herder. In an interview in January 2011 Estupiñan said to me, “we believe that our process of changing Esmeraldas must principally be seen in the revalorization of culture and its expressions in order to be able to have identity” (Estupiñan Quintero 2011; p.c.). Though there is an implication of establishing a new value to forms of cultural expression when he uses the word “revalorización,” through my interviews I have come to understand this term as referring to preservationist and revivalist sentiments, i.e. romantic nationalist folklorization processes. Having said that, one of my main points is that this revalorización does in fact establish new values for the music and dance that is performed, even when that may not be the goal of the performers or politicians.

Folklorization is an extensive topic of study, especially in the field of ethnomusicology and for this paper I have explicitly drawn from Feldman, Rios, Turino, Goldstein, and Hagedorn. Folklorization is commonly connected to nationalist projects that seek to highlight a unique cultural practice that can serve as an emblem to represent the country in some way. This paper will present such nationalist projects but also look at the ways “folk” began to transform their music in order to adapt to newly introduced hegemons. Esmeraldas is a good case study for understanding the folklorization process because historical circumstances allow us to see where and when certain hegemonic forces began to impose ideas that affected discourse about the marimba from existing solely as a means for social interaction to a more presentational context, separating performers from the audience. The processes in Esmeraldas line up with and are also
unique in relation to other studies on folklorization. One of the main trends in studies about folklorization is to consider how “folk” musics not only become emblematic of a nation, but also how sponsorship provided by governmental institutions plays a significant role in the process. This study shows the dialectic relationship between folkloric musicians’ creative control and the desire of regionalist projects to present a type of “folk” that represents “unique culture.”

Heidi Feldman, in her study of the black Pacific, has commented on the folklorization process within the black Peruvian music revival. She writes, “Peruvian governments and elites have sought, at various times, to domesticate alternative voices within the nation by reconfiguring their traditions as folklore” (Feldman 2006: 129). This process began in the early 20th century in Peru with the indigenismo movement during the presidency of Augusto Leguía. Under Leguía, the goal of creating a national identity was centered on the creation of a new musical style that represented the saga of the country’s most venerated empire: the Inca. Writing about this transformation that began in the first half of the 20th century, Thomas Turino writes, “urban academic composers in Lima, Cusco, Puno, and other Peruvian cities created interpretations of Andean musical genres and themes in what was basically a European idiom…The estudiantinas, and the dance troupes they accompanied, were but one example of how indigenismo inspired the creation of local-indigenous and criollo elements and sensibilities” (Turino 1993: 125-126). More concerned with creating a national emblem, this folklorization process differs from another that occurred in the middle of the century, which had a greater emphasis on regionalism than nationalism.

Later in the century, following the military revolution led by Juan Velasco in 1968, Peruvian policies on individual agriculture, language, and cultural expressions changed in favor of the lower classes. Feldman writes, “locally produced music and cultural arts were embraced
as national folkloric treasures that should be preserved, researched, and performed. Velasco imposed quotas increasing the diffusion of Peruvian music (and decreasing popular U.S. and European music) on radio stations” (Feldman 2006: 127). Also, because of land taxes and agricultural sanctions enforced by the government, many indigenous highland Peruvians became unable to afford living costs. Therefore, large-scale migration began to occur from the highlands to Lima in the mid-20th century. Due to the social and cultural diversity of Peru, regional associations began to emerge as Lima grew. In order to create a greater sense of community, members of the regional associations would come together and play the music they grew up hearing as a means to create an experience of their highland home while living in the urban center of Lima.

These two time periods show how folklorization is manifested in different ways depending on time and place. In the first half of the 20th century, Leguía led the folklorization process by exerting direct control through the appropriation indigenous musical practices. In the mid-20th century, Velasco controlled the money and radio airwaves allotted to folkloric groups. These groups then had the means and motivation to organize performances, and in a sense do a great deal of the work in creating a nationalist emblem for Velasco. Though these examples are different from Esmeraldas, as each case study will most likely be, they show how people in power can explicitly and implicitly impose their ideas about what the music can be used for and how it can be used, something that is key in the process of folklorization.

Similarly, during the Bolivian Revolutionary Nationalist Movement (MNR) period of the mid-20th century, mestizo and criollo musicians were encouraged by festival sponsors to incorporate and adapt indigenous melodies or rhythms in order to help in the creation of a “genuine national culture” (quoted in Rios 2010: 285). Fernando Rios points out, “non-
indigenous artists who altered indigenous music into a form more pleasing to mainstream city
tastes – and thus better-suited for radio broadcasts and the concert stage – could earn praise from
MNR agencies for improving the original traditions. The Department of folklore not only lauded
this type of transformation…they also facilitated it” (Rios 2010: 285). Between the
governmental institutions and the mestizo and criollo musicians, there was a mutual partnership:
the sense of a Bolivian national identity could be promoted, and the musicians were given more
radio airplay and festival exposure.

In the Oruro Carnival of Bolivia, similar outside forces have reshaped the presentation
and conceptualization of musical performance. In search of a national identity, the Bolivian
government decreed in 1968 that “folkloric music” (essentially using Herder’s definition) was
now property of the state. Because the carnival of Oruro became recognized as representative of
the Bolivian nation, other communities realized that they could gain more economic support
from the state if they could appear to be “authentic” examples of a Bolivian national identity. In
his discussion about the topic, David Goldstein writes, “in their dealings with the
municipality…people of Villa Pagador strategically employ a national folkloric identity when
making demands for improved infrastructure and city services, representing themselves to the
authorities as ‘children of Oruro’ or ‘orureños in Cochabamba,’ implying their mastery of
national culture” (Goldstein 1998: 128). Whether or not the folklorization process has a positive
or negative effect on people is not at the center of this discussion. Instead, what should be noted
here is that the process of folklorization is what causes “folklore” or “culture” to become
valuable.

One last example of folkloric music and its relationship to nationalism is that of
this example last because Hagedorn argues that her case study is different from others on folklorization because hers is about the religious music and dance of Santería, which had already been folklorized in the first half of the 20th century before it was “folklorized” (Hagedorn 2001). Hagedorn writes, “[t]he folklorization of Afro-Cuban religious traditions describes a historicized process in which an inward-directed, noncommodified religious tradition becomes outward-directed, commodified, staged, and secularized” (Hagedorn 2001: 9). Here, Hagedorn is discussing several changes that occur when any style of performance moves from a participatory setting to a presentational one. This shift is common in folklorization and helps explain the specifics of performance practice that change in manifestations of the folklorization process, specifics that will be a central topic in Chapter 4.

Though there are different historical contexts in relation to how Santería became emblematic of Cuba, there are still parallels with the aforementioned case studies. The specific points of shifting contexts and nationalism – points that I argue are central to the folklorization process – are resonant in Hagedorn’s work. In discussion about groups sponsored by the government she writes, “[t]hese folkloric troupes, which perform the songs and dances of African-based Cuban religions, represent another step in the centuries-long decontextualization of Afro-Cuban religious belief, and in a sense they have paved the way for the government-sponsored religious tourism that occurs today” (Hagedorn 2001: 11). Like Hagedorn, in this thesis I will be looking at folkloric groups and their performances, but I will be more focused on their re-contextualization of long-standing cultural practices.

Lastly, it is worth pointing out that the goal of this thesis is not simply to describe an occurrence of folklorization because it is a continual process. What makes folklorization a distinct phenomenon within the constant shifting found in all cultural practices, is that it involves
the perpetuation of some sort of musical practice to stand as emblematic in some way to a group of people. In this thesis I will look at various styles of Afro-Esmeraldeño music and how the marimba has come to be emblematic of the region. In Peru the *indigenismo* movement involved the appropriation of indigenous practices to stand for the nation. Later in the century, different musical styles became indicative of specific regional associations within the diverse social landscape of Lima. In Bolivia, indigenous groups sponsored by the government altered the sound of their music to conform to a larger audience’s listening preferences and contribute to making a ‘genuine national culture.’

In order to explain Esmeraldeño folklorization, this thesis will largely follow a chronological order. The second chapter gives a historical overview of Esmeraldas and then deals with the early stages of the folklorization process. By understanding the relationships between people of African descent, indigenous peoples, and *criollos* (people of European descent) throughout the history of the region, changes in conceptualization about music will be better historically contextualized. Chapter three explains how processes of homogenization and folklorization have affected the way some musicians frame their understandings of their music. This will relate to *vergüenza* (shame), *revalorización* (revalorization), and cultural regionalism; the latter two are closely related and at times function in direct opposition to *vergüenza*. The fourth chapter focuses on the three groups and their videos that I introduced at the beginning of this chapter. By explaining the background of each group and then analyzing the videos, the different sections will show distinct manifestations of the folklorization process.

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4 These videos can be seen at [http://www.youtube.com/judahdiah](http://www.youtube.com/judahdiah).
Chapter 2

FOLKLRIZATION IN ESMERALDAS

Introduction

Drawing from various folkloric groups in Esmeraldas, this chapter aims to show how historical events begin shaping the folklorization process. As this project is about Afro-Esmeraldeño music and the black Pacific, this chapter will begin with the historical moment when Africans arrived to the region in 1553, something that continues to be a significant moment in contemporary popular social histories. Though the date of the marimba’s introduction to the region is still unknown, and it most likely did not arrive with the first Africans to the region, this history is important to understand the development of relations between people of African descent, indigenous peoples, and criollos (people of Spanish descent). The relationships between Africans and indigenous peoples remained prominent in regards to social life until the turn of the 20th century, when criollos and mestizos (people with mixed indigenous and criollo heritage and cultural practices) began to migrate in significant numbers to the region.

At the turn of the 20th century important shifts in the social landscape complexified relationships among people of African descent and indigenous peoples because of a highland migration that introduced mestizo, criollo, and indigenous peoples from the highlands to Esmeraldas. One of the main changes this made on the region was the introduction of class-

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5 Alonso de Illescas, the ladino (Hispanicized African) who arrived with the first group of Africans to the region was known to play guitar, but in the resources that discuss his story, there is no mention of marimba.
based stratification. The introduction of these classes influenced a reflexivity amongst Esmeraldeños that had not existed before. I will draw from Anthony Giddens’s discussion of reflexivity as fundamental to modernity (see: Giddens 1990: 38) in order to show that the introduction of the “folk” concept, though framed as traditional and therefore old, marks a shift in ideologies related to contemporary forms of cultural expression.

After giving a historical overview of the Afro-Esmeraldeño population, I will provide specific examples that demonstrate how the folklorization process involves a reconceptualization of marimba performance. Factors of this reconceptualization include industrialization, the introduction of new social classes, and population increase. New contexts and concepts about the marimba influenced a reflexivity that inspired some individuals to remain involved with the marimba even though the new social classes in the region viewed it as an inferior practice; other individuals chose to reject the marimba. These two sides were associated with different socioeconomic class-groupings. Those who rejected the marimba did so in order to have greater upward mobility. Those individuals who continued working with the marimba remained in the lower class and began to seek funding from elite and governmental sponsors who capitalized on a burgeoning tourism industry, which is a point that marks some of the first manifestations of the folklorization process.

In Esmeraldas, the most salient foundations for the folklorization process include contemporary social histories related to the arrival of Africans to the region, migration to and population increase of the city that had remained significantly autonomous from Spanish authority until the turn of the 20th century, how tourism facilitated a move to perform marimba on the streets, and the emergence of state-funded musical projects. My research in the region presents the ways that Esmeraldeños today are still discursively connected to the history of the
region, the ways that musicians adapted performances to the growing urban center especially in relation to the increase of tourism, and how some groups found funding to continue practicing their music in a place where an imposing disdain for the marimba was emergent. Through performance, folkloric groups in 20th century Esmeraldas retained and promoted a sense of connection to their heritage both explicitly and implicitly, and were able to take advantage of the transforming social and infrastructural landscape through musical performance for their own benefit.

**Historical Overview of Esmeraldas**

Since the beginning of Spanish domination in Quito around the mid-16th century, Esmeraldas has been a target of upper class Spanish and *criollo* highlanders for its abundant natural resources and its connection to the coast. While the Spanish were gaining control of Quito, in 1553 a boat carrying 27 African slaves from the coast of Guinea and one *ladino* (Hispanicized person of African descent) shipwrecked off the coast of Esmeraldas. This *ladino*, Alonso de Illescas, became a leading figure in the region because of his ability to communicate with highland criollos by way of his fluency in the Spanish language as well as his first-hand knowledge of Spanish lifeways. There were in fact a few formal transactions between Illescas and Spanish authorities, which Illescas used to reemphasize his role as leader of the marooned African community. Illescas was officially recognized as governor of the region in 1577, which he called the “Zambo Republic.” The term Zambo serves a significant purpose as it refers to

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6 The bulk of this historical background comes mainly from the internalization of three sources. Charles Beatty wrote a PhD dissertation in 2002 about Esmeraldas from 1563-1621 titled “Rebels and Conquerors.” Second is Philip Hauser who contributed to a book about Urbanization in Latin America, with his focus on Esmeraldas. Lastly, following Hauser, I use Whitten for his extensive ethnographic research through the region for nearly a decade in the 1960s.
those individuals of mixed African and indigenous heritage. Africans actively pursued intermarriage among the indigenous groups during this period so as to increase their group’s populace. Due to the alliances between the marooned Africans and the local indigenous communities, Charles Beatty argues that it is possible that people of African descent were more likely to have been socialized in indigenous lifeways than African (see Beatty 2002: 24).

Beatty points out that the formal acknowledgement of Illescas’s legitimacy may have been a way for the absent highlanders to establish some sort of preliminary control of the region. He writes, “[Spanish authorities] chose not to recognize the maroons as caciques over the Amerindians…Their final aim was to use [Illescas] as the conduit to local Amerindians and utilize them for the difficult work of establishing the settlement, farming, building a port at San Mateo, toiling in the placer mines, and transporting goods between Esmeraldas and Quito” (Beatty 2002: 46-47). However, because the Zambo Republic became so dominant, Illescas and his followers proved to remain in control of the region despite repeated attempts by the highlanders to establish hegemony. Beatty writes that Illescas was able to use “his appointment to expand his power over other groups in Esmeraldas…turning Spanish power on its head and solidifying alliances through his newly acquired title” (Beatty 2002: 55). Still celebrated around the country in festivals, painted on city walls, and on the sides of buses, Illescas functions today as an emblem of black liberation and history.

Though local Esmeralteño social history emphasizes these historical events as central to the prominent African heritage of the region, many Esmeralteños also have roots tied to Colombia, specifically in regard to the slaves escaping the mines of Barbacoas Valley in the 17th and 18th centuries. In fact, by the 18th century, it is likely that the majority of African descendants in Esmeraldas came from Barbacoas Valley and other points to its north (Beatty
From 1563-1822, state borders between Colombia and Ecuador were non-existent as the Audencia de Quito covered the land that today includes Ecuador as well as parts of Colombia, Venezuela, and Brazil. However, the separation of the two countries today plays a role in the negotiation of identity amongst Esmeraldeños who regularly acknowledge the historical significance of Colombia. Also, due to political unrest in some of the regions of Colombia, there is a significant number of first and second generation Colombians in Ecuador and a notable amount in Esmeraldas. In fact, Esmeraldeños have noted to me on more than one occasion that Esmeraldas is basically an extension of Colombia.

Another small addition of African descendants to the region was through their inclusion in the liberation armies of Simon Bolívar during the first part of the 19th century. To a lesser extent, people of African descent from Central America and Jamaica were transported to Ecuador to construct a railroad from Quito to Guayaquil at the turn of the 20th century. Though small in numbers, Jamaican descendants are still visible in the community, one of whom will be discussed in chapter 4 from the group Filomena Curoso Escobar.

**Urbanization in Esmeraldas**

Because the term “urbanization” can oversimplify a complex process, here I will elaborate on certain aspects of it that affected Esmeraldas and how musicians and dancers reacted to its various facets. In the context of this paper, I use urbanization in reference to industrialization, infrastructural development, population growth, migration and the introduction of new social classes. Folklorization is interconnected in these aspects of urbanization because new performance spaces and contexts begin to emerge in response to new hegemonic forces that accompany urbanization.
In the end of the 19th century, Ecuador was in significant debt to Spain, and state authorities sanctioned the establishment of foreign exporters of goods. The British Land Company in the mid- to-late 19th century exported lumber products, which was superseded by a German company called “Casa Tagua,” a very lucrative business that lasted through WWII because of the high demand for lumber products during wartime. With the end of the war however, came the end of the boom period – a bust that lasted until the start of the banana boom in the late 1940s, which continued into the 1960s (Ecuador was the world’s larger exporter of bananas in 1960). This sort of “boom-bust economy” has been characteristic of the region since urbanization began, as initially explained by Hauser (1961) and later re-emphasized by Whitten (1965). The port in Esmeraldas enabled the export of resources such as lumber and bananas directly from the coast, so that new industries were not initially in dire need of a direct connection between the coast and the highlands.

The banana boom was especially significant in the urbanization of Esmeraldas because it allowed for the creation of permanent connections between Esmeraldas and Quito. It was not until 1950 that a highway was finished and the two cities were connected. With this new highway came the regularization of commercial and tourist travel and migration to Esmeraldas. Similarly in 1957 a railroad connecting Quito to San Lorenzo (just north of Esmeraldas City) was completed so that the process of urbanization in both towns could continue at a much more rapid rate. Because of the lumber boom, banana boom, and the construction of new transportation systems, the population of the region began to increase so that by 1951 there were upwards of fifteen thousand residents in Esmeraldas (Hauser 1961).^7

^7 Today the population of Esmeraldas City alone is approaching two hundred thousand, whereas the entire province is well over half a million (INEC 2010)
Because of the increased numbers of workers taking up residence in the Esmeraldas province during the first half and into the middle of the 20th century, investors began building hotels, cafés, and bars; medical centers were constructed; even an airstrip was laid down for wealthy travelers and business people. The social landscape inevitably underwent drastic changes with the introduction of powerful upper-class investors who controlled the payments to lower- and middle-class workers. There was also a social division between the workers, some of whom traveled from the highlands for work and some who were local Esmeraldeños taking advantage of present economic opportunities. Whitten points out that in San Lorenzo the locals were considered equals with the incoming mestizo workers in terms of class, whereas indigenous people were viewed as inferior by both mestizo immigrants and locals (Whitten 1965: 31); presumably this was also the case in Esmeraldas City.

The social relationships introduced via migrant labor and new upper class highlander authority figures began to take a toll on Afro-Esmeraldeño cultural practices. Such hegemonic forces had enough influence that certain Esmeraldeños striving for upward economic mobility realized that they would be at a disadvantage if they frequented marimba dances (see Whitten 1965: 109, 1966: 179). There were also more aggressive actions taken against marimba performance during the mid-20th century, when new highland authorities enforced laws that prohibited Afro-Esmeraldeños from performing their own music in the city of Esmeraldas (Ritter 1998: 71).

Though it was not yet documented as occurring in the city of Esmeraldas in the mid-20th century, to the north in San Lorenzo where Norman Whitten carried out his fieldwork, projects that provided funding for marimba performances were already emerging in the 1960s. He writes, “to restore interest in the marimba dance the Casa de la Cultura Ecuatoriana announced in
March of 1963 a folk music festival to be held in Esmeraldas in August of the same year” (Whitten 1966: 169). In San Lorenzo, city ordinance enforcers required payment by any group who wished to hold social gatherings that would involve music. Describing the procedure a woman needed to go through during this time, Whitten writes

>the routine is almost always the same: she arrives at the “jefe’s” home after dark. He tells her to return during office hours, that saloons make their request during the day. She explains to him that this is not a saloon dance, it is a baile de respeto, a ritual dance, or a dance involving respect relationships. If he is from the local area he says “give me ten sucres.” If he is an outsider he laughs and argues, until the woman offers ten sucres. Unless under pressure from a new outside saloon owner (who may think that he must compete with the casa de la marimba, as he does with other saloons) the official accepts the money and issues a certificate to allow the currulao to take place (Whitten 1974: 111).

Not only is this an example of how new forms of socio-economic class relations began to penetrate traditional Esmeraldeño musical practices, but it also shows how outsiders equated different venues and musical contexts. Here the saloon context (see Whitten 1968; 1974), which is capitalistic in nature and involves its own specific social habits, comes to be equated by the authorities with the baile de respeto, where much different forms of social interaction take place⁸. While the marimba was being allotted performance spaces by the Casa de la Cultura in San Lorenzo, people from Esmeraldas City were traveling north to San Lorenzo to participate in marimba performances.

The effects that the new social relationships described above had on the performance of traditional esmeraldeño music correlate with and are also causal to the folklorization process. The point at which any music begins this process is when individuals involved in its original performance practices are able to step out of the discourse that informs and shapes its contextual and conceptual production, such as the stigmatization of the marimba as lower class and its

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⁸ The following section will provide an illustration of such social interactions associated with the baile de respeto.
prohibition in Esmeraldas city mentioned above. Once outside the original (here participatory) discourse, the music and dance can come to be understood as an objective\(^9\) part of social reality and therefore actively reshaped and transformed. This is the point of folklorization when musical practices become realized and compartmentalized as parts of “culture,” as opposed to previous conceptualizations that would not involve such a systematic deconstruction.

The introduction of new social relationships and the social power involved with them, such as those mentioned above, play a key role in the various forms of recontextualization, reconceptualization, and compartmentalization because it leads individuals to reflect on their own practices in ways that were previously non-existent. According to Anthony Giddens, this sort of self-reflection is one of the central pieces of modernity so that when new concepts are introduced, reflexivity is affected. He writes, “the reflexivity of modern social life consists in the fact that social practices are constantly examined and reformed in the light of incoming information about those very practices, thus constitutively altering their character” (Giddens 1990: 38). This helps drive home the point that the “folk,” is a modern conception even though images of the folk are tied to conceptions of what is really “old.”

**From Currulao to Marimba Callejera**

Before explaining the performance patterns of the *marimba callejera* (street marimba), I will present a short explanation, drawing mainly from Whitten, of the traditional context for marimba dances known as *Currulao*. Typically performed on Saturdays, *bailes de marimba* (marimba dances) were held in a house familiar to people in the community and people in smaller surrounding communities. These houses were called *casas de la marimba* (marimba

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\(^9\) This shift to an understanding of music as an object is paralleled in a shift from participatory to presentational musics, which will be discussed in Chapter 4.
houses) and were common within a community that consisted of at least two hundred people. All the instruments would stay in these houses; marimbas and bombos would hang from the ceiling attached by ropes. People would gradually show up throughout the day and have their hand at an instrument of choice, which served as an ad hoc audition process, where the most impressive would be chosen by the owner of the house to play during the night’s performance.

The marimbero would typically begin the performance by establishing the tune, tempo, and rhythm to which the rest of the ensemble would follow, first bombo then cununo. During this period of the performance, the women casually danced while the men sat to the side drinking aguardiente (sugar cane alcohol). Once the glosador (male lead singer) entered and the respondadoras (female chorus singers) followed also playing their guasás, the Currulao was understood to have officially begun. The glosador, who controlled the duration of the performance, was well versed in the repertory and also known to be quick-witted during parts of the performance that called for improvisation.

The dance performed at the Currulao was known as the baile de respeto (dance of respect) and involved the depiction of embrace between male and female partners; actual touching was only for other contexts (see Whitten 1974: 115-119). In this way the Currulao can be considered to have been quite conservative, and interactions between men and women only implied the possibility of an affine relationship, which may have been pursued later in a different context.

Due to increasing class-based negative sentiments towards the marimba, Saturday night marimba dances eventually ceased by the 1960s, which led to the formation of new styles of marimba performance. Governmental agencies’ involvement in musical performance, such as demanding permits for musical gatherings and the outright prohibition of Currulao in
Esmeraldas city, left no designated area for Esmeraldeños to continue marimba performances in their original setting. Increasing travel among highlanders to Esmeraldas by way of the new highway helped to reshape marimba performances to entertain tourists. Esmeraldeños took advantage of tourist opportunities and would hold marimba dances in the street for the new visitors.

Santiago Mosquera, one the most highly respected marimberos in Esmeraldas, told me in an interview about the marimba callejera (street marimba). Beginning in the early 1960s, he remembers his elders performing music and dance in the street and passing around a cap for spectators to insert money. He said that in the streets,

“They did marimba dances. There was a saloon called Mi Parcita where the marimba-dancing veterans could be found, but marimba was typically danced at home during times of fiesta. Yet the marimba callejera already in the years ’63, ’64, was already mastered and led by Colático Solís. And together with Remberto Escobar my uncle by marriage, they went out to dance with Doña Eufemia, may she rest in peace. They met in two pairs. There were two women and two men that danced, and not very old…30 years old or so. We did the same as their dance from watching…we were soaked in it. Those people got together a lot, the group was called Verde Palmera and they were together for the years ’63, ’64, ’65.

Why did you do it in the street?

Because there was nowhere to present. They passed around a hat. It was called marimba callejera because you performed and you put out the hat, and the people gave you money. Tourism helped a lot. We also took care in doing this because it looked ugly to go around asking for money” (Mosquera 2011: p.c.).

According to Mosquera, this form of marimba continued for 6-8 years. In agreement with my other interlocutor, Hugo Quiñonez, Mosquera says that the types of folkloric presentations that are so prolific today were “born” in the city as the marimba callejera. Other than the fact that in this context dancing occurred in pairs, for the most part marimba callejera differed from the baile de respeto, especially in terms of context and conceptualization, i.e. it marks the first transition from participatory to presentational marimba performance.
With the continuing aforementioned facets of urbanization came a new grassroots tourism industry that provided a new performance space for marimberos. The example of marimba callejera is significant because it demonstrates the flexibility of performers and their ability to adapt to their surroundings. Also, marimba callejera allowed for the continuation of musical practices that were being directly hindered by the growing middle and upper classes. In this way, the marimba callejera served as a stepping-stone toward the emergence of folkloric marimba groups.

The Emergence of Folkloric Groups and New Marimba Sponsors

The introduction of industry, infrastructural development, population increase, social diversification, and tourism all contributed to a shift in the conceptualization of the marimba in Esmeraldas and its associated performance practices. Because of the obligatory permits for performances, banning performance of the instrument altogether, and social associations of the instrument with the lower class, some individuals realized they needed to adapt their performance practice to the changing social, political, and infrastructural landscape. In this section I will show how some of the earliest folkloric groups in Esmeraldas contested those socio-political forces that marginalized the marimba by creating marimba schools to form groups that would travel and share their music and dance on a national and international level.

Folkloric groups began to emerge during the late 60s and early 70s and had several goals other than just earning money, such as preserving the marimba as a cultural emblem and elevating the music as an art to gain more respect and appreciation from both Esmeraldeños and non-Esmeraldeños. Jonathon Ritter writes that for some groups, “education and revitalization are at the top of their agenda. On the other extreme, [some] groups…in Esmeraldas focus
entirely on performance and the development of a professional music and dance ensemble” (Ritter 1998: 104). As Ritter was conducting his fieldwork in the 1990s, I would also note that this sort of drive for education and revitalization within marimba groups was also typical during the 1970s and 80s.

Petita Palma, who has come to be arguably the most well known person associated with the marimba in the city of Esmeraldas, leads one of the longest-standing groups in the city, *Tierra Caliente*. The formation of her group in 1969 was initially supported by the Tourism Commission and, from my research, marks the first time a governmental institution funded a single group of marimberos. Petita made it clear that her goal was to “preserve the true folklore of the province” (Zuñiga 2008: 90), an aim that interested those within the tourist industry – when performance artists “preserve folklore” they usually do it in a way that calls for some sort of audience.
Figure 1: Petita Palma performing with her group, Tierra Caliente in Manta, 2010. Just before this performance she received a plaque for her dedication and work with Afro-Ecuadorian music.

With the funding that Petita received from the Tourism Commission, she obtained a space where she could rehearse and have a marimba school. The building where this new marimba school started still stands today, and Petita’s family still lives there. Mostly now a workshop where Petita’s son, Alberto Castillo, makes marimbas, cununos, and bombos, the house used to be the space where Tierra Caliente would rehearse. In its initial stages, the group served as a school where Petita would teach music, song, and dance to people of all ages. These students would, ideally, grow up in the group so that elder participants would be able to perform with Tierra Caliente when they had shows in the city or abroad. Petita’s school was not the only one in the city however, and other musicians in the area began to create similar spaces to teach
marimba, and casas de la marimba began to take a new shape. Commenting on this period of the folklorization process, Jonathan Ritter writes,

“classes and rehearsals created a new context for marimba performance within the black community. Age replaced gender as the operative relationship; elders taught youths the steps and notes to a tradition that had been off limits to themselves as children. Folklorización, or “folklorization,” re-created an internal Afro-Ecuadorian cultural space for continued marimba performance” (Ritter 1998: 102).

Another one of the main leaders in this movement was Santiago Mosquera, whose group Jolgorio was formed around the same time as Tierra Caliente and also functioned as a school and folkloric group. Like Tierra Caliente, Jolgorio has also traveled nationally and internationally, and the houses of both Mosquera and Palma are decorated with plaques and awards for competitions, presentations, and the preservation of Esmeraldeño culture (The walls of Mosquera’s apartment are barely even visible due to all the framed awards!).

Such awards were given to these musicians because of their highly professional and presentational performances as well as their extensive work interviewing people in the surrounding regions. Since her establishment as a marimbera and folklorist, Petita has traveled throughout the province conducting interviews, meeting other musicians, and observing groups in both well-known and little known areas. With her experience and knowledge as well as her partnership with the Tourism Commission, Petita became one of the province’s most respected and ubiquitous musicians, and in the eyes of tourists her group became understood as an authentic representation of Afro-Esmeraldeño music. I choose to use the word authentic here only to point out that within the folklorization process, understandings of “authentic” representations are important to audience members of locally derived musical presentations, i.e. the way “non-folk” view “folk.” Whether performing on beaches or on stages, Tierra Caliente became and continues to be today one of the most widely recognized groups from the province.
Though highlander authorities demanded permits for performances or even banned marimba altogether, and even though Whitten predicted the marimba would die out (See Whitten 1966: 179-181), by the 1980s it was clear that the marimba was not going to disappear. Similar to projects sponsored by the Casa de la Cultura Ecuatoriana in San Lorenzo starting in 1963 and Petita’s funded projects to preserve and diffuse Afro-Esmeraldeño music, Ecuador’s Banco Central also began supporting the music of Esmeraldas towards the end of the century. Though my research has left me without citable evidence as to exactly why Banco Central began a project involving Afro-Esmeraldeño music during this time, it is most likely linked to the industrial growth, migration, and tourism in Esmeraldas that continued throughout the second half of the 20th century. For example, in 1974 the construction of a trans-Ecuadorian oil pipeline ended at a newly built refinery in Esmeraldas, which, other than causing severe pollution, provided jobs for Esmeraldeños and migrants and also contributed to the city’s infrastructural development. With goals to promote and contribute to the stability of Ecuador’s economy, Banco Central saw multiple economic reasons to invest in Esmeraldas: the oil refinery would contribute to the nation’s manual labor and exporting economies, which would lead to more migration, population increase, infrastructural development, and the burgeoning tourism industry on the coast, where highlanders would come during vacations to experience the region’s warm weather and beaches.

Contracted as a teacher, Alberto Castillo10 describes his experience with the Banco Central as follows:

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10 As the son of Petita Palma, Alberto is one of the most sought after marimberos in the region for performances, instruction, and construction of marimbas. Today, Alberto mainly teaches at the Esmeraldas Conservatory in the center of the city and also in the tourist town of Atacames at an orphanage set up for Colombian refugee children.
“at one point Banco Central’s cultural workshops became interested in contracting me to give marimba classes. Because they also saw that this part of the culture could be lost because of the elder [musicians who] were getting ready to go, and some had already left [passed away]. So they saw the necessity and contracted me and I worked from 1986 until 1993 in the Banco Central’s cultural workshops where we produced a whole litter of young marimba players” (Castillo 2011; p.c.).

Another one of the city’s most sought after percussionists, Alfredo Caicedo, was a student at the Banco Central and today teaches at the Esmeraldas Conservatory. Commenting on his participation at the Banco Central workshops, Alfredo recalls:

“I began to discover the marimba when a music workshop from the Banco Central opened. There I began to learn about the bombo and cununo. And from there I had opportunities with groups and so there I went taking advantage of my situation with the music of the marimba” (Caicedo 2010: p.c.).

Being introduced to marimba music at the Banco Central workshops, which were being taught by Alberto, Alfredo serves as just one example of how emerging musicians in the second half of the 20th century developed their skills via new instructional facilities. An important shift that new institutions such as Banco Central and the Esmeraldas Conservatory facilitate involves the centralization of teachers and the diffusion of their own styles among their many students.

Commenting on the influence that state institutions can have on musical practices and ideologies, Norman Whitten writes,

“the increased exposure of the San Lorenzeños to national culture and customs, and to the drive for a national folklore seems to be leading to a redefinition of some aspects of their own folk music; this is especially evident in the marimba dance. Seeing themselves through the eyes of the nationally oriented highlanders, who propagate their ideas of what the marimba should be, the San Lorenzeños tend to alter their music according to the newer image.

This temptation is strong even in some rural areas to make the marimba “fit” better with the way of dancing and music of the highlanders. Many negroes look at their own folk music as out of style and try to make it more adaptable to what they think highlanders will appreciate. They are aided in this by highland tourists and Ecuadorian amateur folklorists operating under the guise of
resuscitation. Serious marimberos and dancers refuse to play for the run-of-the-mill tourist, and refuse to deal with other Negroes trying to “promote” marimba music. The children and the young men and women are definitely oriented away from their own folk music” (Whitten 1966: 180-181).

Whitten makes several good points here, alluding to similar processes I have discussed in regards to folklorization, however his emphasis on Esmeraldeño musicians attempting to acculturate their music to highlander aesthetics in a way that leads them “away from their own folk music” implies a preservationist sentiment. It is more useful to see music as another facet of social life, which is constantly in flux as individuals adapt to changing environments, so that people are not moving “away from their folk music,” but “their folk music” is just as malleable as other facets of social life. Because music is malleable, musicians in Esmeraldas are able to adapt their performance styles and accompanying discourses in order to contest such imposing ideologies as the one mentioned above. These sorts of sentiments are also a part of the discourse around vergüenza, and folkloric marimba groups today frame their performances in a way that molds other styles of performance to fit theirs, which is key to revalorización – they are not adjusting their music to fit non-Esmeraldeño music, but instead they are adjusting non-Esmeraldeño performance practices to fit their own.

**Folkloric Marimba Today**

Today in Esmeraldas City at any given marimba performance it is common to see groups that incorporate various non-traditional Esmeraldeño instruments such as trumpets, trombones, or electric bass, groups that use manipulated studio recordings of marimba to support hip-hop or reggaetón lyrical verses, or groups that stick to the more traditional ensemble. Dance is also an integral component for many (though, not all) groups in the city and may act out scenes depicting slavery or resistance to it as well as staged performances of dances that incorporate
traditional dance choreography and non-Esmeraldeño choreographies learned from visitors.\textsuperscript{11} Groups vary in size, but in a traditional ensemble there are normally five or six performers on marimba, cununo, bombo, guasá, as well as various vocalists singing in call and response.

Generally, Esmeraldeño marimba music involves a syncopated two against three rhythmic feel, which my interlocutors at the Esmeraldas conservatory count in groups of six. The bombo and cununos’ (usually one or two of each) accents fall mostly on the same beats where rim clicks on the bombo and slap tones on the cununo emphasize the first and fourth beats. The bass tones on the bombo and open tones on the cununos emphasize the third and fifth beats, with even more emphasis on the latter. Because the open tones and bass tones are typically more audible, orienting oneself to the first beat, which is where listeners typically clap along, can be difficult for an unaccustomed ear. These basic sound characteristics can be attributed to this style of music throughout the region as well as recordings made over fifty years ago (for such a recording, see: Whitten 1967).

\begin{figure}[h]
\centering
\includegraphics[width=\textwidth]{bombo_rhythm.png}
\caption{The bombo play the foundational Bambuco rhythm, here the rim clicks are notated above the tones played on the head of the drum, the first of which is a muffled tone and the second a more prominent open tone.}
\end{figure}

Looking more closely at specific case studies, however, there are some notable attributes of today’s marimba performance that diverge from previous performance practices in Esmeraldas. Alberto serves as a good case because he grew up around marimba music and dance in the city and, other than eventually becoming an expert marimbero, he now also builds

\textsuperscript{11} During my first visit, a young woman working with the Peace Corps was very fond of Esmeraldeño music and dance, and having studied dance as an undergrad, she became very involved at the conservatory both learning Esmeraldeño dance and sharing her knowledge with the Esmeraldeño dancers.
and sells marimbas, bombos, and cununos. The type of marimba he constructs is itself a physical manifestation of the interrelations between musical styles within the folklorization process. Using Western tuning, Alberto constructs both diatonic marimbas and chromatic marimbas. He uses a wood from the region called *Chonta* and tunes slabs of it about the size of a thick twelve-inch ruler by hacking away at their backside with a machete. Double-checking their intonation with an electric tuner, Alberto then places the keys on top of a stand and attaches bamboo resonators with one side open underneath the keys.

![Figure 3: Marimba, Bombo, and Cununo constructed by Alberto Castillo.](image)

The diatonic marimbas that Alberto constructs are intended for use in traditional Esmeraldeño music. Using Western tuning to create a traditional instrument may seem like a contradiction, but it may be more useful to see Alberto’s marimbas as being directly affected by his cultural background, i.e. growing up in a city and being surrounded by all sorts of cosmopolitan musical styles. Similarly, different marimberos who construct the instruments use different techniques depending on where they learned how to construct them or what they intend
to use them for. Alberto, seeing opportunities to expand the marimba’s use into different genres, began constructing chromatic marimbas so they could be used in various popular styles.

It is typical in traditional Afro-Esmeraldeño songs performed on the marimba to alternate between two chords that are inverted in a way that minimizes arm movement between chords. For example, the piece *Caramba Cruzada*, as taught to me by Alberto, involves alternating between an A minor chord where the movement involves playing the C octave together and then moving the hands inwards to play the remaining A and E notes. The following chord is an E minor played in the same manner, but in second inversion, so that the B octave is played, followed by the remaining G and E notes in between that B octave to complete the chord. The fact that I can explain these marimba techniques is testament to Alberto’s influence within the folklorization process – not only his construction of piano-influenced marimba, but also in his lessons, where he explicitly informs students to play “La Menor” (A minor), for example.

![Figure 4: The basic tiple (upper register melody) part for marimba in the piece “Caramba Cruzada”](image)

Another important factor that perpetuates the folklorization process is the production and reproduction of recordings. One interesting example of this involves a recording of Petita Palma’s group, *Tierra Caliente*, playing the tune “Andarele,” which was made by Jonathan Ritter. Hearing this recording as an accompaniment to countless live elementary school dance-group performances, Ritter later realized that the reproduction of his recording points to a lack of locally available commercial recordings of Esmeraldeño music. During my first visit, I was able to find one full length studio album of *Bambuco* because I became acquainted with members of
the group, however I found another CD at a small tourist shop that contained various recordings of different groups, including Bambuco, that were simply burned onto blank CDs. Typically it is more common to find Esmeraldeños who are interested in this music to have pirated copies that cost fifty cents instead of studio copies that cost ten dollars, which illustrates two points about recorded music in Esmeraldas today. First, piracy limits the potential for Esmeraldeño musicians to make a decent living from the recordings that they make – as does the music’s low visibility on international music markets; and second, the problem of piracy is facilitated by a lack of legal statutes around intellectual property, so that recordings can be duplicated and used in different contexts without owners’ consent.

Related to the appropriation of intellectual property, in the introductory chapter I explained that when Carmen González released her record Korál y Esmeralda in 1998, Afro-Esmeraldeño music became internationally available yet remained more or less absent at the local level. Ritter points out how this exemplifies the way local Esmeraldeño music can be appropriated and represented by a non-Esmeraldeños and diffused internationally without having much impact in Esmeraldas (Ritter 2012). Interestingly, in Bambuco’s version of the tune Andarele that I filmed in January 2011, the lyrics used are taken directly from Carmen González’s version. This sort of re-appropriation could be interpreted as an empowering gesture where Afro-Esmeraldeños are taking back what is rightfully theirs, or it could be interpreted as theft of intellectual property; a list of similar explanations could continue, but what is important here is that even though recordings make a tangible material object, cultural expression remains flexible because of the human actors that are involved. This is why, even when so many efforts are made to create one thing, such as the marimba, as an emblem, the existence of that emblem is always part of a continuing folklorization process.
Conclusion

The points that can be taken from these various transformations in the performance of marimba music since the turn of the 20th century are threefold. Because of the rapid rate of urbanization in Esmeraldas, new people were moving into the city and the social landscape began to expand. Racist ideologies were implicit and at times explicit within the discourses of both the highland migrants and the locals (see Whitten and Quiroga: 1998). This not only affected interactions between socioeconomic groups, but individuals seeking upward economic mobility became convinced that indices of blackness, such as the marimba, were detrimental to their economic improvement. However, the growing necessity for financial gain in the city showed individuals that certain economic interactions were necessary, and a new tourist market began to emerge. Taking advantage of the new outsiders’ capital, marimberos performed in the streets and by doing so, the folklorization process began a contextual transformation. The newly imposed ideologies in relation to the marimba led to a new self-reflexivity that shifted Esmeraldeños’ attitudes towards their own cultural expression. That reflexivity seems to have been a precursor to one associated with tourism, however the two are undeniably intertwined; some chose to continue to perform music on the marimba while others decided that it was in their best interest to avoid it.

For those individuals who decided to continue working with the marimba, they did so in various new contexts that exploited the new opportunities to earn money through performance. After the onset of street performances for tourists came the introduction of marimba schools that saw funding from non-Esmeraldeño sponsors. As I have shown, this is the step of the folklorization process where a reflexivity that was influenced by various outside forces takes on tangible manifestations. In the next chapter I will show how the reflexivity originally imposed
by outsiders still continues today in some cases and how musicians in Esmeraldas negotiate their performance goals.
CHAPTER 3
VERGÜENZA, REVALORIZACIÓN, AND CULTURAL NATIONALISM

Introduction

Having sketched the history of folklorization in Esmeraldas, I will now explain how the process continues today in regard to current ideologies and practices around the marimba. Socially, urbanization in Esmeraldas involved a population increase that introduced new migrant groups of various economic class backgrounds, and those of the higher class were able to convince some Esmeraldeños that the local music should be avoided if they desired upward economic mobility. Echoes of class-based negative sentiments about Afro-Esmeraldeño music continue today in discourse about young people’s attitude toward the marimba. My interlocutors repeatedly used the term vergüenza (shame, embarrassment) when describing a lack of interest in the marimba among Esmeraldeño youth, and at times Esmeraldeños in general. Because I cannot speak for all Esmeraldeños on this subject, I would point out that whether or not vergüenza is shared among all Esmeraldeños, it does serve as a point of departure for many of the folkloric musicians in the city whose goals center around a revalorización (revalorization) of Afro-Esmeraldeño music. Therefore, the central focus of this chapter will be explaining the way individuals frame musical presentations and projects, at times in direct opposition to past and present negative attitudes about Afro-Esmeraldeños and their music.

In response to lingering feelings of vergüenza in Esmeraldas, certain individuals, and not only musicians, carry out projects that promote Afro-Esmeraldeño cultural expression. The mayor of the city, Ernesto Estupiñan Quintero, has carried out cultural revalorización projects since his first campaign. His regionalist efforts reflect a cultural nationalism, which “is 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” (Turino 2003: 175). Because Estupiñan is using expressive practices in order to create a regionalist emblem, it may be useful to think of this case as a type of cultural *regionalism*. Though, in Ecuador, regionalist projects are supported by the state and therefore become nested within larger nationalist projects. Turino’s definition of *cultural nationalism* serves well to help explain *cultural regionalism* in Esmeraldas, but it is important to note that this *cultural regionalism* is fueled by cultural nationalist projects that support the development of culturally distinct regions so as to fit the image of the new (constitutionally defined in 1998 and again in 2008), “multi-ethnic” and “pluricultural” nation. So, in this chapter I will explain how and why *vergüenza* is still a part of some people’s discourse about marimba music and how certain individuals work to dissolve this attitude via *revalorización* in a way that reflects regionalist sentiments. Secondly, I will explain the interrelationships between cultural regionalism and nationalism and how these various facets are involved in the continuing folklorization process in Esmeraldas today.

**La Vergüenza**

Though it would be unfair to say that all the youth in the region are ashamed of music associated with their heritage, there is at least a discourse among my interlocutors around *vergüenza* in discussion of the youth (and at times Esmeraldas in general) and individuals’ attitudes toward the marimba. Historically, one of the key points of departure for *vergüenza* in the region is tied to marimba music becoming an index of the lower class, which influenced individuals desiring upward economic mobility to dissociate themselves from the instrument.
(See Chapter 2). Also, the variety and ubiquity of popular music in the city’s soundscape provides citizens with many listening choices, which makes several of my interlocutors nervous because it leads people away from “their” music, i.e. traditional Esmeraldeño music. Lastly, when discussing Petronio Álvarez, a Colombian festival of music from the Pacific, my interlocutors who have attended explained to me the huge amount of excitement around the marimba at that festival, and that such excitement is sadly lacking in Esmeraldas. Here my goal is to show how some ideologies of vergüenza continue today and its relationship with new musical styles and practices in and around the city. I would also like to note that though examples of vergüenza still exist in certain contexts, I do not mean to imply that everyone in the city is ashamed of this music; this is only a means to explain some of the effects that migration, population increase, and social class separation have on the folklorization process in terms of musical performance and individuals’ conceptualizations of it.

Director of the group Bambuco (to be discussed in chapter 4), Hugo Quiñonez expressed to me his impression of the lasting affects of vergüenza among the youth today. In this interview he described to me a discrimination towards black Esmeraldeños that references their music making as well as other stereotypical attributes:

Really, what happened during that time only involved smaller groups – Petita Palma, Jolgorio, Cuero, Son y Tambór, and other groups that were from smaller neighborhoods – and there was discrimination such as “black people can dance on this floor without shoes?” “Yes without shoes they can do it, but the rest cannot.” And when that same black Esmeraldeño had a respectable level of education and economic status, they still discriminated our form of speaking, walking, or our facial expressions. This has all contributed to the fact that in Esmeraldas our own people do not value that which is ours, in my understanding. Another impression I have is that our people, the musicians, the cultivators, so many older people that are now passing away, and now with the new generation I think that we have also supported the improvement of things, mainly the diffusion of music. (Quiñonez 2010: p.c.).

Here Hugo addresses the main issue with the inception of vergüenza so long ago: even though the initial lower-class association with the marimba led individuals to steer away from it, the
basis of that connection was founded on racist ideologies. Even though some Esmeraldeños began to disassociate themselves from such “African” practices, non-Esmeraldeño upper-class individuals would still find a way to “Africanize” Esmeraldeños through their style of speech or body language. Whether or not this had an effect on people’s socioeconomic status, these aspects distinguished Esmeraldeños and therefore could be used to ostracize them.

In addition to directing Bamboco, Hugo also teaches young people how to play the marimba and its accompanying instruments with his wife Kati, who teaches dance. He frames projects like this in direct opposition to such problems as the discrimination originally created by outsiders. Whitten has commented on how the presence of highlanders induced some of the transformations in Esmeraldeños’ approach to their music-making. The introduction of highland tourism caused Esmeraldeños to see their music as “out of style” (Whitten 1966: 180) and therefore in need of a change. For musicians like Hugo, working to end the stigma among the youth and others is part of their task as folkloric musicians. When Hugo sees an improvement in attitudes towards the music, his approach to performing is reinforced and becomes not only a way to spread appreciation of the music but also a way to present Afro-Esmeraldeños in a light that transcends previous stereotypes.

As individuals seeking upward mobility in the mid-20th century came to disfavor the marimba, it is likely that their children were taught to carry the same negative associations. In this way, a sense of vergüenza associated with the marimba could be passed down generationally, which is possibly one of the reasons that some youth today are not interested in traditional Afro-Esmeraldeño music. In a conversation with my two interlocutors Marjorie and Jorge, Marjorie explained to me the ways in which vergüenza is passed down generationally:

“part of the problem is that parents do not inculcate young people with the values needed to respect that which is ours (lo nuestro, see below)...Many times you have arrived (referring to the author), we are practicing and there are so many
children outside the house watching without the desire to enter, but if you say ‘do you want to enter?’ they say, ‘no, it makes me embarrassed (vergüenza). My mother doesn’t want me to, my father doesn’t want me to.’ Because before, in the past, they saw the marimba as if it were something obscene, and they would say that women involved with the marimba were, excuse my words, prostitutes and that the men were drunks” (González y González 2010: p.c.).

Referencing the past, Marjorie and Jorge demonstrate their understanding of how the discourse of vergüenza has been passed down through generations and remained such a deep-seated habit of thought that even children feel uncomfortable participating. There is a clear connection between this statement’s reference to the past and the marimba’s negative associations, but more importantly this quote demonstrates continued feelings of vergüenza in Esmeraldas today. The inaccurate association of the marimba with prostitution is clearly misinformed, as the earlier context for marimba performance was one of a respectful dance; Whitten has shown that where prostitution did occur was in a different setting, which he describes as the “Saloon Context” (See Whitten 1974, Chapter 4).

A correlation between urban Esmeraldas and vergüenza is reflected through a sense of nostalgia that some folkloric musicians have when discussing differences between urban musical practices and rural musical practices. In another interview, Hugo said to me,

“but if you go to the rural community, Papa Roncón from Borbón, he carries the marimba at the level of the community. Young people come, children come, when there is an arrullo, when there is a party, they all gather in his house. At his house there is music for everyone to dance to. Here, no. We move away from the community aspect of the music. We are absent from them and we want the music to only be ours” (Quiñonez 2010: p.c.).

This sort of discourse represents a nostalgic longing for the experiences of the “folk,” i.e. people outside of heavily urbanized areas, who are more connected to the music on a “communal” level. It also shows that as population growth increases in an urban center, so does the number of social groups; as these groups expand, certain cultural practices may become compartmentalized from other groups and serve as identity signs for that group. Thirdly, this example points towards a vergüenza in relation to the lack of sustainable musical projects within the city that are able to draw the attention of the youth and therefore create a greater sense of unification among
participants. Contemporary contestation to vergüenza is manifested in all of the different folkloric music projects that occur in the city, whether they are annual dance presentations in elementary schools, after school dance classes, or folkloric groups. These sorts of projects all contribute to revalorización.

Revalorización

Though many of the goals in the revalorización projects are ideologically preservationist, they do in fact re-value the music in the process. Whether musicians are seeking to revalue something that is “dead,” preserve something that is disappearing, or create something new using “traditional” music, revalorización is an inevitable and central part of the folklorization process. For example, in Esmeraldas, ambivalence towards different forms of música popular (popular music) simultaneously shows goals of preservation and goals of progression. Some traditional musicians see the prevalence of música popular as inimical to the growth and preservation of the music that they make. In a discussion about this topic, Marjorie and Jorge said,

“they take folklore as if it were the last thing they should worry about. That is to say, it makes them very embarrassed – they prefer to dance Reggaetón and I believe that Reggaetón for us, those that are involved in culture, for us it is vulgar to dance and the lyrics, the music, all the obscene words that it brings – that is what the youth likes. But they don’t like to get involved with that which is folklore. It calls little of their attention” (González and González 2010: p.c.)

Though musicians and dancers stress the importance of lo nuestro (that which is ours), i.e. cultural expressions that are unique to the region, they will still incorporate rhythms from certain genres, such as Reggaetón, that are not associated with the traditional music. Generalized conceptions of “the youth” among my interlocutors typically lament the popularity of cosmopolitan musical styles that may draw young people away from lo nuestro. The prevalence of vergüenza among certain young individuals leads many musicians to see a need for the preservation and especially revalorización of their music. On the other hand, though some may reject Reggaetón music, it is still a very prevalent aspect of the city’s soundscape, and incorporating some aspects of it creates a sense of familiarity for individuals who are getting
involved with Afro-Esmeraldeño music for the first time. The fusions that occur between traditional styles and *música popular* demonstrate the ambivalences that musicians have to deal with in an urban center.

One of Marjorie and Jorge’s goals with their group, *Raíces del Pacífico* (discussed in more detail in chapter 4), is to lower the number of youths who have a sense of *vergüenza* towards Afro-Esmeraldeño music. Their group provides a space where willing youths are able to participate and learn, as well as hold performances in prestigious settings. While the school teaches students how to perform and why they should value such cultural practices, performances show the young people involved that their musical heritage is appreciated and desired among the cosmopolitans living in the city. Similarly, performances serve in the *revalorización* process in an attempt to rid the negative deep-seated habits of thought and practice that some individuals have towards Afro-Esmeraldeño music.

Because musicians involved in *revalorización* strive to (re-)instill interest in Afro-Esmeraldeño music into the youth, teachers need to find creative ways that are interesting to young people. At the Esmeraldas conservatory in the middle of the city students are exposed to traditional marimba music, classical and popular music played on the marimba, as well as western classical music played on traditional Western string instruments. Performing different styles of music on the marimba, such as classical music, elevates Afro-Esmeraldeño music in the eyes of many musicians from the city. One of my friends, Jefri Arroyo, explained to me the importance of this sort of musical adaptation. He said, “for me in the future I would really like to see our music played in a symphony. And to see, for example, the children that we teach performing in such a group. Because in that way we are carrying our marimba to a very high space, so that we can make the world understand and Ecuador understand that here there is wood (referring to the marimba)” (Arroyo 2010: p.c.).

In a space such as the conservatory, *revalorización* occurs in relation both the preservationist and the developmentalist discourses. Students begin by focusing on one instrument such as the bombo or cununo and eventually play in small groups of traditional
ensembles. By the end of the year, students of traditional instruments and western instruments come together to play arrangements of traditional music, popular music, and classical music. Different styles performed in presentations show how certain manifestations of the folklorization process are framed in terms of *revalorización*; traditional songs performed in a traditional ensemble signify preservationist projects while performances of classical or popular music signify developmentalist projects.

The main point to take away from the discussion about *revalorización* is that as a process it can occur at both intentional and unintentional levels. By performing the marimba alongside Western classical instruments, the instrument and its music is explicitly and intentionally “elevated.” On the other hand, while folkloric groups aim to carry out *revalorización* via preservationist projects that explain the importance of musical heritage (an explanation that would not have been necessary before folklorization), such projects are done in unique contexts that differ from original marimba contexts, such as the *casas de la marimba*. This is not to say that such projects are inauthentic representations of Afro-Esmeraldeño music, but instead it shows the complexities involved as individuals try to negotiate their identities via musical practices that have a shared history but varied contemporary manifestations.

**Cultural Nationalism**

With new Ecuadorian state mandates at the turn of the 21st century the Esmeraldeño Municipality, among other regional municipalities in Ecuador, began receiving funding to develop and preserve local cultural practices. Because this funding is limited, it is usually the groups that have connections to the municipality (family members or friends) who are allotted money – and this money is still very limited. Previously I have shown how the identity politics involved in folkloric groups are at the individual or regional level, whereas in this section I will show how larger nationalist projects are involved. Since the turn of the 21st century, a connection between blackness and otherness with Esmeraldas has been highlighted through
various constitutional articles and municipal projects carried out by local governmental figures.

The 2008 constitution states in article 60,

“The indigenous, Afroecuadorian, and montubian ancestral people will be able to constitute territorial limitations for the preservation of their culture. The law will regulate their conformation. The communes that have collective property of the land will be recognized, as an ancestral form of territorial organization” (2008: Ecuadorian Constitution).

So even though Esmeraldas is acknowledged by the Ecuadorian state as an ancestral land whose inhabitants have collective rights to their territory, the state still holds a significant amount of power by officially recognizing ancestral lands. Jonathan Ritter points out that this sort of relationship to the state still marginalizes communities such as the Afro-Ecuadorians. He writes, “Black culture has frequently been marginalized and discredited as primitive and foreign, or more recently, held at arm’s length via a multiculturalist turn in which it is regarded more positively, but still as separate from ‘Ecuadorian culture’ per se” (Ritter 2012: 9). As contemporary forms of marginalization are still implicit within state legislatures such as the aforementioned constitutional article, Afro-Ecuadorians have to work within the separatist framework in order to simultaneously represent themselves as a separate region and as part of a larger nation. Music of the “folk” is therefore emphasized in order to create an emblem that is ideologically representative of the region as a cohesive whole.

Since his inauguration as mayor in 2000, Ernesto Estupiñan Quintero has used the marimba to create an Esmerladeño emblem. By including the marimba in his election campaigns and continuously promoting it throughout his terms in office, Estupiñan actively emphasized the marimba as a sign of blackness, Esmeraldeñoness, and even infrastructural development. Since 2000, Estupiñan Quintero has directed the creation of numerous parks which foreground the marimba as an emblem: marimba mosaics can be seen in sidewalks in and around the central
park, actual marimbas are available for anyone to play in parque infantil, and plaza cívica holds marimba presentations throughout the year.

Figure 5. Courtesy www.municipioesmeraldas.gob.ec. Caption: “This is how Esmeraldas spreads joy: the change continues.” Three marimbas remain in parquet infantile, available for anyone who has mallets. One problem that arises is that very few people have mallets to play on these marimbas, so children will find anything, such as sticks or rocks, and bang on the marimba, leaving them damaged.

These various parks were virtually non-existent in the 1990s, so with their recent construction paired with visual representations of and actual presence of marimbas, connections can be made between “development” and “culture.” The construction of these parks is intended to provide a space for performances during various festivals throughout the year so that tourists traveling to the region have something to attend during annual vacations. The Esmeraldas municipality is quite explicit with its economic intentions in regards to cultural and infrastructural development. This can be seen in figure 2 below, taken directly from the municipality’s website.
Similar to Barack Obama’s 2008 presidential campaign, Estupiñan’s motto is “el cambio continúa” (the change continues), and as he said to me in an interview, “I am convinced that in order to speak of changes in a community there is one very important aspect – culture” (Estupiñan Quintero 2011: p.c.). He went on to say that one of his initial goals as mayor of Esmeraldas was to “bring forward a process of revalorización of Esmeraldeño culture that had been lost from the point of visibility” (ibid). As I have shown in the previous chapter and contrary to the mayor’s previous statement, the marimba never really lost visibility in Esmeraldas. Rather, new settings and contexts were created around the instrument so that eventually certain processes such as revalorización came to be understood as necessary.

One of Estupiñan’s points was that even though the marimba is performed in various cities throughout the country and internationally as well, it should not be understood as an emblem of Ecuadorian identity. Instead, the mayor emphasizes Esmeraldeño identity as separate from Ecuadorian identity, which draws upon the state-constituted nationalistic
ideologies of multi-ethnicism and pluriculturalism, i.e. highlighting regional characteristics is in itself a nationalist task. Discussing how the marimba is different from the majority of the other musical traditions in Ecuador, I asked the mayor if he would still say that it is representative of Ecuador. He replied,

No. We do not say that the marimba identifies Ecuador, given that Ecuador is a multi-ethnic and pluricultural country. What we do say is that the marimba and its expressions identify the community of African descendants. That is indisputable. There is no other musical instrument nor is there another music or dance that identifies the Afros. From there I would include that we are part of something universal – we sing through other instruments, musical expressions, and dance styles that are not ours, but if it is a group African descendants and we give them those instruments and those musical expressions or dances they do not represent nor identify Ecuador. On the other hand the marimba does. It is a question of putting a marimba as a thing that automatically says that is from Esmeraldas. When they say that is from Esmeraldas, they are saying that is from black Esmeraldeños and Esmeraldeñas, or Ecuadorians. Here is Ecuador there are some ethnic groups that are not from Esmeraldas. For example in Valle de Chota – there is a particularity. The Afro descendants of Valle de Chota assimilate indigenous culture in some of their expressions, however their dance and music does include some expressions that are African descended and very different from indigenous practices. But it is our duty to point out that the African descendants that live in Valle de Chota assimilated into a high level of indigenous culture.

By using music and race, Estupiñan Quintero argues that Esmeraldas is the most ethnically black province of the country. Because the marimba has African origins, music in Ecuador that incorporates it is more “authentically” African, as opposed to the music of the Valle de Chota, which holds the second largest black population in the country and is known for its musical genre, the bomba, whose African influences are more sonically than visually perceivable, at least in terms of instrumentation. Though the argument of “authentic African identity” could be deconstructed, such a notion shows how the intentions of the mayor lie in the creation of an emblem that is unique and can stand out when put on a national stage.
When I asked this same question to my other interlocutors, all of them said that marimba music could be representative of Ecuador. This discrepancy is a marker of the differences between political goals and personal musical goals; the mayor sees the instrument as a way to establish an Esmeraldeño identity within a multi-ethnic discourse, while the musicians see the instrument as an opportunity to earn a living and a personal identity marker. Having traveled to many different regions and even outside the country, for marimba musicians this instrument signifies Esmeraldeño, Ecuadorian, and even Afro-Latino identity as well as a more general African-descended one.

Another way the mayor is implementing the marimba as an Esmeraldeño identity marker is by sponsoring a conservatory in the city. This is not only a way to teach the youth about the importance of the marimba and give them a place to learn how to play it, but it also gives some musicians the opportunity to earn a monthly salary teaching their trade. The conservatory also plays a large part in the revalorización portion of the folklorization process. Estupiñan Quintero appointed Augustín Ramón, a highlander with formal classical training at the university level, as director of the conservatory. So, while students come to learn traditional songs on the marimba, they can also be enrolled in classes on western tonal theory that are taught with voice and recorder. Explaining to me the goal of the conservatory, Ramón said,

“one of the objectives is to develop the musical practicum of the traditional instruments of Esmeraldas. These are the marimba, an emblematic instrument, the percussion that is very variable, very large, very rich, the dance, and the literature…but in regards to the traditional instruments we have reached a new space in Esmeraldas. On the marimba is interpreted pieces from different places, from a different era, including pieces, for example, parts of Mozart’s 40th symphony, Latin American pieces, and of course traditional Esmeraldeño pieces” (Ramón 2010: p.c.).
The two important points to take away from this quote are that the marimba is understood as emblematic of Esmeraldas and also that it is becoming associated with more cosmopolitan styles of music. By supporting the traditional songs of the marimba and interpreting non-traditional music, the revalorización of the instrument lies on two levels. On one there is an explicit elevation of the instrument through its incorporation into performances of Western and Latino cosmopolitan music that ties it to a sense of development, as noted here with Ramón and above in discussion with Jefri Arroyo. On another level, the locally distinct Afro-Esmeraldeño music is permitted to share the stage with classical and cosmopolitan music, implying that all should be equally valued.

Cultural nationalism in Ecuador seems to be fueling a regionalism in Esmeraldas (and probably other provinces in the country) as facilitated by state declarations that the country is “multi-ethnic” and “pluricultural.” The same sorts of processes are seen on the national level that are seen on the regional one, but now the regional processes can be considered a subset of larger nationalist projects. Because the marimba’s origins in Ecuador are tied to Esmeraldas and it is much less visible outside of the region unless Esmeraldeños are performing it, it proves to be emblematic of the city, the province, the people, and even the municipality. Also, by incorporating the marimba into different styles of music that are more familiar on an international level, the marimba comes to be more easily incorporated into nationalist projects that seek emblems which are unique, but flexible. As Turino points out, “If one thinks of the two or three popular music complexes from the United States that serve as nationalist emblems in a similar way-country and western, jazz, and rock 'n' roll-they too are all the product of long histories of interracial, interregional, and, to some extent, interclass interchanges within an urban milieu” (Turino 2003: 191). Though the marimba is discursively associated with Afro-
Esmeraldeño identity, relations with indigenous communities are still understood to be a significant characteristic to the history of the region. Also, there are emerging marimba groups based outside of Esmeraldas, such as in Guayaquil to the south and Quito to the east; class-based relations in respect to the marimba have been discussed in previous chapters and relate directly to this use of an emblem across socioeconomic groups.

**Conclusion**

In terms of *vergüenza*, I would like to reiterate that even though it is hard to gauge how many Esmeraldeños actually feel ashamed about music from the region, the discourse around *vergüenza* among my interlocutors is the important aspect to note in terms of the folklorization process. Because there is at least a sense of existing sentiments related to *vergüenza*, folkloric musicians have seen a need to carry out projects that attempt to eliminate such feelings and re-instill an appreciation in the cultural practices of their heritage through *revalorización*. This chapter has shown that *revalorización* is one of the central features of the folklorization process and that it has several different manifestations. Projects that are actively against *vergüenza* have fueled some of the *revalorización* projects in direct opposition to a previous hegemony that aimed to degrade forms of cultural expression such as the marimba. Though the concept *vergüenza* may not be applicable to other research projects involved with the folklorization process, *revalorización* as a part of reconceptualization within folklorization would likely be a helpful point of comparison among many cases.

There are generally two approaches to the implementation of *revalorización*: one that is bottom-up and one that is top-down. In the bottom-up instance older generations see a loss of interest amongst the youth. They see this as a problem that they can and are willing to attempt to
fix it through face-to-face interactions within their community. Bottom-up examples of *revalorización* have been demonstrated by projects carried out by Marjorie, Jorge, and Hugo, musicians who work directly with the youth. Teaching young people how to play, playing with them, and telling them about the importance of the marimba simultaneously revives, preserves, and re-valorizes the music in different ways – all different aspects of *revalorización*.

From the top-down, there are people in power with the financial ability to project a musical instrument as an emblem that can be used for the unification of a region or nation, or any number of people. Mayor Estupiñan, not without some controversies, has facilitated financial support in various projects that promote the marimba and given marimba players new performance opportunities. Though the mayor has worked hard to make the marimba an emblem of the region, my interlocutors have expressed that his use of the music is exploitative and serves the purpose to gain political followers rather than actually create sustainable programs that support this form of cultural expression. Hugo said to me in an interview that the mayor uses marimba performances “as a political platform. He puts some blacks up on stage to dance and play music interpreted with the marimba, then he gets up and says, ‘I am the mayor. I am the one doing this. Vote for me’” (Quiñonez 2010: p.c.). Many leaders have used this tactic since the inception of the idea of the “folk,” established by Johann Herder ca. 250 years ago, and it has had varying success. It should also be noted that these two approaches are in dialogue and may affect one another depending on the success of a given approach in any instance.

Also, I should mention that even though certain actors in the past sought to make the marimba signify something new, *revalorización* doesn’t emerge until actual musicians become involved in the implementation of new concepts about the music. In the first half of the 20th century, musicians were essentially forced to avoid the marimba if they wanted equal
opportunity in their career choices. This historical moment where individuals began to reflect upon their practices in a new way is one of the initial phases of the folklorization process; revalorización is the part of the process that eventually leads to musical performances.

As a point of comparison, I should note that many of the political and class connections with music that I have discussed in this chapter have parallels in several case studies in ethnomusicology. Firstly, the desire among musicians to “elevate” their music is typical within cosmopolitan centers and interrelated with the discourse of modernity. In an article about steel pan music in Trinidad and Tobago William Aho writes,

“as the steel bands began to engage in sponsored musical competitions with audiences including middle-class people, they sought to maintain and increase the latter’s interest and support by striving for a smoother, more refined sound, a wider range of notes, and a broader repertoire. They were also motivated by their own inner desire to stretch their talents and the potential of their instruments by taking on more challenging musical scores and showing themselves, their fellow countrymen, and the world what could be achieved with talent, hard work, and an instrument of humble origins” (Aho 1987: 50)

Here, we can see a dialectical relationship between middle-class listeners’ desire to hear what fits into their aesthetic of “sophisticated” music and the musician’s desire to challenge themselves musically. Jefri Arroyo’s comment about bringing marimba music to a “very high space” recalls the same sort of sentiment.

Similarly, in Bulgaria during the mid-20th century, state-sponsored folkloric groups began to form in significant numbers. On top of mixing together instruments that would have normally been played by solo musicians in rural areas, Bulgarian folkloric groups also incorporated Western string instruments. Referencing the complications that this creates among folkloric musicians, Donna Buchanan writes, “most of the new folk orchestras lacked personnel experienced in performing on the Western instruments from which the new instruments were designed. Folk orchestras therefore opted to audition instrumentalists trained at the State
Conservatory on classical viola, violoncello, and double bass” (Buchanan 1995: 389). Similar to the construction of the chromatic marimba and conservatory training in Esmeraldas, the value of virtuosity will typically increase within the folklorization process.

The relationships between musicians and government officials are typical within the folklorization process, involving complex power dynamics. Those who allot money to folkloric groups give themselves a certain amount of power, while the folkloric groups will still retain some amount of creative control over their production. By comparison, during the Vargas regime of the 1930s in Brazil, the formation of Samba Schools served as an opportunity for groups to perform and also a means to create imagery for “national culture.” By offering financial support for groups to perform in the prestigious Carnival celebration, Vargas essentially gave himself the power to shape the music and dance in a way that lined up with his nationalist goals. Alison Raphael writes that Vargas offered “legitimacy and modest subsidies in return for their adherence to certain regulations,” including and “acceptable” name and organizing their performance “around an important event or figure in Brazilian history” (Raphael 1990: 77). In order to be accepted into the Carnival parade, groups had to pass a judging process and “schools began to orient their presentations to meet the criteria of the judges…[the Samba Schools] felt that the judges more versed in cultural matters should decide the issue” (Raphael 1990: 79).

The formations of musical emblems that these three non-Ecuadorian examples demonstrate are just a few among many other cases that could be elaborated upon here for the reader (see also, for example: Buchanan 2005; Goldstein 1998; Hagedorn 2001; Lau 2007; Manuel 1995; Moore 1997; Rios 2010; Scruggs 1999; Turino 2003). It is common around the world for governments to draw upon unique cultural expression when attempting to create a unified nation within the imagination of individuals. The mayor of Esmeraldas put this
sentiment best when he said, “in order to speak of changes in a community, there is one very important aspect – culture” (Estupiñan 2011: p.c.).
CHAPTER 4

PERFORMING ESMERALDEÑO IDENTITY: THREE GROUPS FROM ESMERALDAS

Introduction

Given the opportunities to work with three different groups extensively in Esmeraldas, I was able to learn about their goals through interviews, observations, and performance. With two of the groups, *Bambuco* and *Filomena Curoso Escobar*, I filmed three videos each, which can be seen online at YouTube.¹² The third group, *Raices Del Pacífico*, gave me a video that they had already created themselves for educational and promotional purposes, and can be found at the same locations online. Each group’s presentation on video provides unique vantage points into different manifestations of the folklorization process. Also, being that I was present at the making of two of the groups’ videos, I will be able provide first-hand experiences about how and why the videos were made the way they were.

The various processes and aspects of folklorization that I have discussed in the previous chapters will now serve as a means for the reader to connect the ideas to more concrete examples. Keeping in mind what has been discussed so far in terms of folklorization, I will not only focus on the presentational aspects of each group, but also how the aforementioned historical shifts in conceptualization affect their performance frame. One of the landmark attributes of a folkloric group is that it carries out presentations on stage, something that is characteristic of the three groups to be discussed here. So, in order to differentiate between groups that share similar roots, it is important to look at other characteristics of the music and its

¹² To view the videos on YouTube, go to [www.youtube.com/judahdiah](http://www.youtube.com/judahdiah).
presentation such as intonation, instrumentation, musical form, use of performance space, division of power amongst members, and goals and aspirations of the group.

The point of this chapter is to provide information about three different folkloric groups in Esmeraldas in order to demonstrate how each performs its identity in ways that may already be implicit in other contexts. In her article, “Mediating Culture: Indigenous Media, Ethnographic Film, and the Production of Identity,” about Aboriginal Australians’ mediation of identity through film, Faye Ginsburg explains the way groups may cater to unaccustomed audiences by “performing what is implicit in other kinds of productions that might follow more conventional lines” (2002: 229). In order to apply this idea to the present study, I will look at the ways each group may perform specific dances, wear certain costumes, or sing particular songs in order to more clearly assert their identities to new audiences.

In the following sections, I will provide some background information on each group to show where it stands within the folklorization process. I am not arguing that each group is representative of a specific point along a hypothetical folklorization timeline, but instead how the fundamental bases of the process, i.e. socio-political histories, migration, urban development, nationalism, regionalism, all contribute to their performance practices. Another point of this chapter to is to show how different forms of mediation, here video, are part of the continuing folklorization process. I will use the information that I have about these groups and their videos to analyze intonation, instrumentation, musical style and use of performance space.

In order to better evaluate both the use of performance space and sound recordings, I will be using Thomas Turino’s four-fields model of ethnomusicological analysis with a focus on the characteristics of presentational and participatory musics. In Turino’s discussion of these two fields, one of the points that will be emphasized here is “cosmopolitans’ gradual shift in thinking
of music making as a social activity to music as an object” (Turino 2008b: 24). This sort of shift is typical of the folklorization process and these videos show different manifestations of it.

**Grupo Bambuco**

*Background*

Of the three groups I worked with, Bambuco is probably the most diverse in its sound, a point that I make not as a value judgment, but simply because their two albums are representative of two different styles. Describing Bambuco, Hugo, director of the group, says it “is an association for the development of Afro-Ecuadorean culture” (Quiñonez 2010: p.c.). Here his use of the term “development” is not framed within a discourse of improvement in the music itself, but more along the lines of a desire for greater visibility and representation of Esmeraldeños on a national and international level. As Hugo is constantly involved in programs that provide learning opportunities for youth, sharing musical opportunities with elder musicians, and traveling abroad on cultural exchange programs, he is more concerned with sharing Esmeraldeño cultural expression than setting out to improve it.

What sets Bambuco apart from the other groups presented in this chapter is its emphasis on the fusion of traditional Esmeraldeño music with other contemporary styles. Founded in 1999, the group released an album one year later with the title “Al Ritmo de Mi Tierra” (The Rhythm of My Land). This album, which utilizes synthesized horns and effects as well as auxiliary percussion, is referred to as fusion not only because of the musical additions made in the studio, but also because of the incorporation of rhythms from other various Latin musical styles. Conga and bongó patterns from Merengue, Salsa, and Cumbia are commonly heard in arrangements from this album and in live performances as well. The use of these various Pan-Latino rhythms is common throughout Esmeraldas and points to a cosmopolitan identity among many of the musicians in the city.
Bambuco’s second album, “Yo Soy El Hombre” (I Am the Man), was recorded in 2003 and represents traditional marimba music, i.e. that which only contains marimba, bombo, cununo, guasá, and voices. Also, this album was recorded with a renowned singer from the region named Segundo Nazareno, or “Don Naza.” Being that Don Naza is very elderly, the main purpose of the album was, and still is, to raise money so that he can afford the living expenses called for later in life. Apart from the two originally composed pieces, the album contains six traditional pieces that are commonly performed throughout the region by any number of groups. By combining both original and traditional material, the album signifies the preservation of Afro-Ecuadorian music, but not a static existence of it.

Of the three groups, Bambuco is also the most internationally-traveled, a characteristic that was augmented by their 2003 album. The album gave Bambuco enough credibility to earn an invitation to perform and compete in the annual festival of Petronio Álvarez in 2002 in Cali, Colombia. The Petronio Álvarez festival continues into the present and grows with each year, boasting over 20,000 attendees. When Bambuco attended, they were able to choose among several different categories, and ended up competing in the traditional category, winning first place among over fifty other groups, all of which were Colombian. Other than Colombia, the group has been able to travel to other American countries such as Mexico and the US, as well as several countries in Europe.

Being that Bambuco is very well accustomed to performing on stage in front of large audiences, the music is tightly composed and arranged. Though their performances contain rhythms that are familiar and used for dancing, the arrangements may have abrupt stops, change rhythm or tempo, and have solo sections. These characteristics are all common of presentational music, which, because of a clear artist-audience separation, demands such contrast in order to
sustain the audience’s attention (see: Turino 2008b: chapter 2). When performing, they commonly utilize a fusion ensemble, which includes trumpet and trombone, electric bass, and sometimes electric guitar in addition to the traditional instruments. Using this type of ensemble, they returned to Petronio Álvarez in 2009 and earned second place in the “libre” (free) category.

Analysis of Videos

Working with Bambuco, and especially Hugo Quiñonez, was what inspired the creation of these videos, and hence this chapter. As I had already been friends with several of the group members since my first visit in the summer of 2009, I was welcome in the rehearsals and the group members became accustomed to my presence, which included audio recording and photography. Equipped with my new quasi-professional camera in January of 2011, I continued to take photographs as well as videos of the group during their rehearsals. Because of the high quality of the videos and the group’s aspirations for international success, suggestions to shoot a well-rehearsed music video quickly arose. As I only had about three weeks in the area during this particular visit, Hugo realized there was a need to have a meeting and inform the rest of the group members about the project at hand. Trickling in about 30 minutes after the designated meeting time, in proper Esmeraldeño fashion, Hugo explained to everyone the importance of the creation of this video, as it would facilitate opportunities for performances both inside and outside of the country.

Though each video contains a different song, there are some general features about all of them that make Bambuco’s performances unique from the rest. First, the group assembled for rehearsals in order to decide which songs to play and how they would be musically arranged. Because the group has had success with their arranged fusion pieces and several of the members
also perform in salsa orchestras, they decided to incorporate trumpet and trombone. Another point that marks this group as unique is the inclusion of a female Cuban singer who was working as a visiting instructor of classical voice at the conservatory. Her refined vocal technique is pronounced in her performance of the tune *Andarele*\(^{13}\) as well as in the arrangement of the vocal harmonies during the call and response sections of the songs. The addition of electric guitar to the group, and here I would argue that its integrity is negligible to the overall sound, marks a cosmopolitan identity, in addition to the horns and the notable vocal methods. Finally, their use of performance space also marks the presentational nature of the group. After making a deal with the owner of a well-known tourist venue on Las Palmas beach, the group was able to set up on a large stage for their video shoot. In the video, it is clear that the group members are arranged as if playing for an audience, which demonstrates Bambuco’s presentational intentions.

![Bambuco rehearsing at the Esmeraldas Conservatory.](image)

*Figure 7: Bambuco rehearsing at the Esmeraldas Conservatory.*

*Andarele* was the first video that we shot, and is one of the most popular traditional pieces performed throughout the Esmeraldas, Ecuador, and even into Colombia. Salsa groups,

\(^{13}\) View the video for *Andarele* at [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4nemVudiX1c](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4nemVudiX1c)
Andean folkloric groups, rock groups, and groups of other various ensemble types regularly perform their own versions of the song, probably because it is easily likeable with its catchy melody and simple vocal response. By selecting this piece, Bambuco demonstrated their desire to reach as wide an audience as possible.

In terms of virtuosity and intonation, the version of Andarele performed by Bambuco in this video is especially telling of the group’s values as musicians and performers. Performed in a major tonality, the main melody of the song played on the marimba consists of two chordal arpeggiation. The variations and solos in the performance draw upon a C7 chord and an F chord, which, along with the melody, also imply the C mixolydian mode.

![Marimba Music](image)

**Figure 8: Principle melody for Andarele.**

Also, different rhythms that sound throughout the piece show the varying musical backgrounds and interests of the group. The fast-paced introduction includes a reggaetón rhythm performed on the bombo and snare drum, while the conga drums accompany by playing the rhythm typically used for merengue music. After this, the tempo decreases and a short trumpet solo is highlighted before the call and response singing begins, again pointing to the characteristic qualities of presentational music (Turino 2008b: 51-52).

At some points in Bambuco’s videos, dancers are visible in the frame and demonstrate the basic steps of Andarele and the 6/8 rhythm commonly associated with the Currulao. The videos show some of the similarities between these two different styles. Both dances involve a
small, conservative amount of flirtation between the dancers, which shows how some aspects of the baile de respéto continue today. Also the swinging of the handkerchief in the right hand of the male dancer and the movement of the skirt by the female dancer are both typical movements found in both styles of dance. The main movements that set the two styles apart are the dance steps, because Andarele is a duple meter piece and the others are triple meter. In Andarele, the third beat is played on the head of the bombo and is the strongest beat of the measure, so the dance step orient[s] towards this moment. At this point, the dancers dip their bodies and then takes three quick steps along with the quarter notes of the measure, alternating these movements, first beginning with the right foot, then the left (for a clear demonstration of this, see the video for Andarele at the 2:06 marker). The dances that accompany the 6/8 rhythm contain the same dip on the strong beat of the bombo, but because this rhythm is in triple meter, the movements are smoother (for a clear demonstration of this, see the video for Mucho Cuidado con Me Folklor at the 4:10 marker).

Another video we recorded, Mucho Cuidado con Mi Folklór, is an original composition and can be seen at: [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iGB1uamx9x4](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iGB1uamx9x4). Translated as “be very careful with my folklore,” the song comments on urbanization, folklorization, and revalorización. The nostalgia depicted in the first two verses is typical of many different styles of folk music where the rural is contrasted with the urban. Michael Quintero has pointed out that rural indices have been common within marimba music in urban centers in Colombia (Quintero 2009: 164), and is likewise common throughout the world amongst folklorized and urbanized musics.
**Lyrical Excerpt from Bambuco’s “Mucho Cuidado con Mi Folklór”**

The explicit statement depicted in the title of the song reflects the reconceptualization aspect of the folklorization process where music can become more of an object, and in this case an object to be protected. In this way the folklorization process relates to the transition from participatory music to presentational music where lyrical topics and performance styles come to reflect cosmopolitan values.

**Filomena Curoso Escobar**

*Background*

I first met the members of Filomena Curoso Escobar (FCE) at the opening of a new bridge in Esmeraldas. Reminiscent of the railroad completion that connected San Lorenzo to the highlands and the highway’s connection of Esmeraldas to Quito, the president of Ecuador, Rafael Correa, and several other government officials gave speeches at the bridge opening, lauding the economic and infrastructural development of the city and province. I would estimate
that about four thousand people arrived hours before the speeches began in order to see performances by musicians from all over the province. At this event I noted around fifteen different groups scattered about the area waiting for their turn to perform, an opportunity which was only given to five. Realizing there was going be no chance to perform on stage, several of the remaining groups began performing in the street amongst the crowds and some performed afterwards as people were leaving – this is how I met the group Filomena Curoso Escobar.

Figure 9: Grupo Filomena Curoso Escobar performing for the opening of the new bridge in Esmeraldas

Sitting next to the stage with looks of despondency on their faces, I asked the group members why they didn’t get a chance to play. As they were explaining that they were unable to perform because of the event’s disorganization, people started encouraging them to play right there. With enough support, the singers started up a performance and drew in an audience that participated by singing along with the vocal response parts, dancing, clapping, or simply watching. After playing through several tunes, they suggested that we join them back at the house of Gertrudis, FCE’s director, to continue on with the festivities. So Hugo, another friend, and I jumped in the back of their pickup truck and we all drove back to Gertrudis’s house.
The course of the night at Gertrudis’s house demonstrates FCE’s reputation in their neighborhood and the participatory nature of the music they perform. Gertrudis’s neighborhood is typical of Esmeraldas: narrow, half-paved streets lined with small one or two story houses that have little to no space between properties. When we arrived at Gertrudis’s house, the neighbors were blasting salsa music into the street that was loud enough to be heard throughout the neighborhood. However, when the members of FCE began to set up their instruments, the neighbors turned off their stereo so that the group was able to play. Such cooperation with the neighbors seems to be a normal occurrence as everyone greeted each other at this point, exchanging friendly conversation.

By nightfall all the instruments were set up and the group began playing tune after tune and continued for several hours, with short breaks to eat, drink, and chat. The participatory nature of the music drew in several onlookers (myself included) to partake in the dance and music making. Attributes of the music they played fall into the standard criteria of participatory styles found in many places around the world. Each tune began with a lead singer (here, usually Gertrudis or another female singer) establishing the tune and tempo, who was then followed by the rest of the group as each individual found where his or her own part lined up with the vocalist’s rhythm. As the vocalist led the song in call and response style, the rest of us were encouraged to sing the response part. The other vocalists in the group also held guasa shakers, each playing different rhythms and therefore adding to the overall rhythmic and timbral density of the music. The two cununo players would each play variations on the same basic patterns, which overlapped with each other as well as the two bombo players. Though there were several different overlapping rhythmic layers, an underlying groove that remained steady continued throughout the performance of each song.
FCE typically sticks to performing *arrullos*, which are commonly referred to as the “most traditional” Afro-Esmeraldeño style in the region. In terms of sound features, *arrullos* typically adhere to the description above and contain open forms, intensive variation, a constant rhythmic groove, interlocking parts, and the dense textures. All of these sound attributes are characteristic of participatory music making (See Turino 2008: 59), however, FCE usually performs in a presentational setting where there is an artist-audience separation. FCE understands that their music comes out of a participatory tradition, but they also understand how people value such forms of cultural expression in an urban center today. For example, Gertrudis said, “We used to perform, or my father or his father, this culture voluntarily. It is not like now, where if you move from one place to another it’s paid” (Escobar 2011: p.c.). FCE is a good example to show how the process of folklorization can mainly involve a reconceptualization of musical performance. The group members knows they can make money from their performances, but they also know that they do not necessarily need to substantially alter the sound of their music to fit in a presentational setting.

As director of the group, Gertrudis’s obligations are more structured around being an intermediary and getting opportunities to do presentations rather than stringently managing musical arrangement. Using the house of her late mother (former director of FCE), Gertrudis also provides an open rehearsal space, which is where the videos were filmed. Gertrudis is the owner of the house, she is well-known around Esmeraldas since she has been performing her whole life, and her mother was a well-known singer as well (Gertrudis said to me, “I’m not famous, but people know me anywhere I go”). Because of these social characteristics, Gertrudis has a small amount of social power during significant group decisions. However, members of the group generally contribute an equal amount to musical performances and rehearsals.
In all the videos of FCE and of all the songs I have seen them play, the lead vocalist was always female, which has always been the case of Arrullo performances, at least since Whitten’s fieldwork in the 1960s. Whitten explains that women organized the performances of arrullos by providing a space, deciding what time the performances would begin, and choosing which male musicians would play drums for the events. Women also held the right to remove anyone who did not pay enough respect to the saints; men were only in charge of supplying alcohol (see Whitten: 1974). In fact, during my visits with this group, the men were the ones that supplied the alcohol, called aguardiente, which is a strong liquor made from sugar cane that is typical throughout the region. So, on top of the music they perform, social practices of the group also demonstrate their identity as a “traditional” group.

All the members of FCE are well beyond middle-aged and many of their comments in discussions reflected a nostalgia for the way music used to be performed, i.e. before the emergence of folkloric groups that are so popular today. The members of the group are, in a certain way, strategically nostalgic and understand how reconceptualization plays a part in both audience perception and artist performance. Continuing from her discussion about money above, Gertrudis said, “Nowadays we perform for money, but in the past they performed because it was tradition, because they enjoyed it, and where you heard arrullos being performed, you didn’t see anybody charging the saints for their presence…Now we are here, where value should be given to something that we have come to know as art. Before this music wasn’t seen as art, but now it is” (Escobar 2011: p.c.). Because the members of FCE understand that their music has been reconceptualized as art, they are able to perform it in a presentational setting while continuing
with many of the musical characteristics that can be heard in recordings from over fifty years ago.\footnote{If the reader would like to hear an example for comparison, I would recommend listening to “Ethnic Folkways Library FE 4376: Afro-Hispanic Music from Colombia and Ecuador. Recorded, edited, and with notes by Norman E. Whitten.”}

**Analysis of the Videos**

Unlike Bambuco, with Filomena Curoso Escobar the process of filming these videos took place in Gertrudis’s house, where the group normally rehearses. As the group members gradually showed up we all sat together and discussed their lives as musicians and their thoughts about Esmeraldeño music today. As I described above, these conversations demonstrated that the group understands that the music they perform is now valued in a different way than it was in the past. However, FCE doesn’t adhere to demands of listeners who may want to see presentational styled performances; most of the musicians of the group have been playing music their whole lives and don’t feel the need to change anything. Recording FCE was also quite different from Bambuco because all the members were very relaxed and unconcerned about minor details of their performance in the video – they were comfortable with their parts and left the rest up to me. It was clear from our first meeting and before even beginning to film that the participatory characteristics of FCE’s music making would be central to their performance, even if it was for a promotional video that would be presented on the Internet.

When first watching the videos for FCE, it is clear from the apparel of the musicians that they have adopted some of the practices of presentational performance. As I mentioned above, the group does seek out paid performance opportunities, but in terms of sound, their music still

\footnote{Follow this link to see all the videos referred to in this chapter: \url{http://www.youtube.com/user/Judahdiah/videos}}
has many participatory attributes. For example, the performance of *Aguas* (Waters)\(^\text{16}\) begins with Gertrudis singing the lead part and the other members begin as they find their place. Listening to the guasás alone, the rhythmic complexity and density comes across as an important point of the music. This piece is in the 6/8 feel I have previously discussed and the guasás highlight certain aspects of it. Gertrudis’s guasá part includes three evenly spaced quarter notes that line up with the main open strokes played on the bombos and cununos on beats 3 and 5. To Gertrudis’s left, the woman is also highlighting beat 5, but she is playing three dotted eighth notes, evenly spaced. The other two singers are playing the same pattern on their guasás, which highlights the bombo part that is played on the side of the drum and the slaps played on the cununos. This creates a quick rhythmic idea that can be counted as such: 1 2 3 4 5 6 (the bold numbers being played by the guasás). As these different guasá patterns are played simultaneously, the rhythmic overlapping and timbre of the shakers create a great deal of rhythmic and timbral density.

After filming the second video, I had to recharge the battery for my camera, and just as it was finished, the power went out in our section of the city. In any case, the group still wanted to film one more video, which can be seen at [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=J4LVIYI7LHQ](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=J4LVIYI7LHQ). This piece, “San Antonio” is just as well known as Andarele in Ecuador and also ubiquitous in Colombia. The San Antonio video reflects the same goals as Bambuco’s selection of Andarele in that FCE knew how popular it was. So, performing San Antonio would hopefully facilitate their video to reach as wide an audience as possible. In fact, since I uploaded the videos, FCE’s version of “San Antonio” has been the most popular of all, now at nearly four thousand views—Bambuco’s version of “Andarele” is the second most popular, approaching three thousand views.

\(^{16}\) See the video for *Aguas* at [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iR7cuYGXXn0](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iR7cuYGXXn0)
One of the reasons that “San Antonio” is the most popular is likely because as a song it is more well-known generally throughout Colombia, Ecuador, and elsewhere, whereas “Andarele” is more commonly referred to as an Esmeraldeño song. Also, the statistics that YouTube provides show viewers’ whereabouts when they watch each video, and for FCE’s version of “San Antonio,” the majority of the viewers are from Colombia. The connection between Esmeraldas and Colombia has been very important in the course of the region’s social history, and the popularity of this Esmeraldeño video in Colombia shows how the importance of this history is still manifested today.

In their performance of “San Antonio,” the group chose to include a doll to represent an angelito, or recently deceased infant, which is the focus of a chigualo, or wake ceremony for an angelito. Though the subject matter of a chigualo is the death of a child, it is celebratory because it is believed that the child has passed-away early enough so as to have not committed any sins, and therefore ascends directly to heaven. Within the folklorization process it can be understood that by using such a significant prop in the video, FCE is not necessarily attempting to preserve cultural practices of their heritage, but are instead empowering themselves as cultural mediators.

On this topic, Terence Turner writes,

“the real issues are not the preservation of ‘culture’…but the empowerment of social actors…to produce their own cultural meditations…In the process, cultural forms, together with the capacity and motivation of social actors to produce them, are reinforced, rearticulated, and transformed in various ways through the use of new techniques or representation and new social forms of utilizing and circulating them” (Turner 2002: 80)

Also, in reference to Ginsburg, the use of the doll is an example of performing what is already implicit, i.e. people are more inclined to interpret FCE as an “authentic traditional” group if they are performing unique traditions from the region. On top of that, the lighting situation in the video for “San Antonio” serves to be quite an interesting rearticulation as the original
performance setting for *chigualos* was during the evening. As an index of a “real” *chigualo*, the dark lighting may authenticate this performance as being a “true” representation, however such a conclusion would require further interviewing.

**Raices del Pacífico**

*Background*

I was first invited to attend one of Raices del Pacífico’s (RDP) rehearsals by a friend from the conservatory who was going with the goal to learn how to dance *el Currulao*. The rehearsal space for RDP was a short bus ride from the center of the city and located on a small dirt road neighboring several other small concrete houses. Upon arrival, Marjorie and Jorge had my friend and me learning the dances right away, but once the rest of the group arrived I went and sat by the instruments where I felt more comfortable. Other than Marjorie and Jorge, who are in their late 20s, the age of the dancers in the group range from their early teens to early twenties. Of the rehearsals I attended there were different individuals showing up on certain days, but those that were consistently there numbered about ten.

One of the nights that I attended a rehearsal helped me get to know the group a little bit better as being made up of young individuals from a cosmopolitan urban center. As is typical of Esmeraldas, in the middle of the rehearsal the power went out in our section of the city, and because all the dances for RDP are carefully choreographed, rehearsing in the dark was unproductive. However, as everyone was already there and not ready to leave, the bombo player quickly began to play a reggaetón beat. This caused a minor uproar of excitement and through the very small amount of light I could see several people had begun dancing in place. Adding to this, a few of the dancers began free-styling verses over the beat, which added to the excitement.
As reggaetón is extremely popular throughout the city, this was not a surprising turn of events, but instead a reflection of the kind of soundscape these young people have been raised in.

The two directors of Raices del Pacífico, Marjorie and Jorge, take an active role in the revalorización aspect of folklorization. Since my involvement with the group over a year ago, they have grown and now have more than fifty students, many of which are under the age of ten.

As I discussed in chapter three, Marjorie and Jorge are goal-oriented with this group and see it as an opportunity to instill a greater amount of interest in Afro-Esmeraldeño music and dance among the youth. The majority of the young people involved in this group are learning dance while most of the musicians are adults. It is safe to say that dancing is more central to RDP’s performance and rehearsals than it was in both Bambuco and Filomena Curoso Escobar; in all the rehearsals I attended for RDP, in fact, the dancers were the main focus, and musicians were expected to already know their parts or be able to learn them on the spot.

Because RDP functions as a music and dance school for young people, it is very explicit with certain objectives, which are stated in their twelve-page résumé. Specifically, they write that their objectives are “1) to revalorize and maintain the cultural tradition of our people, 2) to develop the identity and personality of children and adolescents, 3) to reduce the large proportion of delinquency by giving children an opportunity to spend their free time in cultural activities, and 4) to stretch and interchange the art with all of the regions” (Agrupación de Arte y Cultura Afro Ecuatoriana Raíces del Pacífico: n.d.). Other than points 1-3, which have been discussed in relation to revalorización previously, the fourth objective serves to differentiate this group from the others and also gives insight into the group’s name, “Races of the Pacific.” Marjorie and Jorje have already traveled to Colombia and aspire to travel to other South American countries.
such as Peru and Chile in order to learn more about the legacy of Africans in South America and the music and dance that their descendants perform today.

The close connections between Esmeraldas and Colombia are apparent in this group not only because of the social history or the travelling that certain members have done, but also because many of the members are actually of Colombian origin, notably the musical director of the group, Gower Torres. Speaking of the relationships between Colombian and Esmeraldeño musicians, he said,

“throughout history, Esmeraldas and Colombia have been brothers. Many of the Esmeraldeños that live here today are of Colombian descent. So it is safe to say that there is a great deal of similarity. There are many good marimberos from Esmeraldas, and some have even gained a good deal of recognition through competitions the Petronio Álvarez festival in Cali, Colombia. This made me realize that there are Esmeraldeño musicians that play at a very professional level” (Gower Torres 2011: p.c.)

Being a Colombian, the relationship between Colombia and Esmeraldas is very important, and for Esmeraldeño musicians, Colombian recognition is also a marker of musical success. The relationship between Colombia and Esmeraldas was a normal topic of conversation among my interlocutors. The majority of them would comment on the long shared history between the two countries, and several explained that they themselves have Colombian ancestry. Another reason that Colombia-Ecuador relations are still significant today is because over the past decade there has been a huge influx of Colombians into Ecuador. In fact, Ecuador has more refugees than any other Latin American country, 98% of which are Colombian (UNHCR 2011). Though I do not have the exact numbers of Colombians in Esmeraldas, projects such as RDP – which is not the only Colombian influenced group in Esmeraldas – people’s general acknowledgement of the Colombian presence allow me to safely say that Colombia-Esmeraldas relations are still a part of people’s everyday lives in the city.
Analysis of the Videos

Because this video\(^\text{17}\) is so much different than those of the previous two groups and because I had no part in the creation of it, its analysis should serve to represent this group as another token of the folklorization process. It presents interviews with various members explaining the purpose and aspirations of the group, which I have described above; it has short clips of dancers in order to display their style of presentation both in corporal organization and attire; and it informs the viewer about the group’s various accomplishments through assorted interviews and a narrative voice. The purpose of the video is to promote these various aspects of the group in order to legitimate others’ decision to hire them for a performance or send their children to be students.

RDP has close connections to the Esmeraldas Municipality because Gower and his brother, both musical coordinators for RDP, perform with the municipality’s band. When looking at the interviews I have carried out with members of the group (see chapter 3), the interviews from the video, and my interview with the mayor of Esmeraldas, there is a correlation in the goals of all three sources. For example, there is an interview in the video with Kathiya Ubidia, the director of the Department of Culture for the Esmeraldas Municipality, who says that RDP “identifies with our purpose. We have a sustained project with them, working closely with the directors of the group, and from there we have advanced little by little our involvement with the entire group” (Raíces Del Pacífico promotional video). It is most likely that Ubidia, other members of the municipality, and RDP directors share ideas. Being director of a specific department within the municipality, Ubidia works closely with the mayor, so the *revalorización*

\(^{17}\) Watch RDP’s video at [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vr_yPaV4VrQ](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vr_yPaV4VrQ)
discourse that came through in my interviews with Marjorie and Jorge comes as no surprise. In fact, at the end of the video, the first credit is a thank you to mayor Estupinan himself.

Another point about RDP that the video demonstrates is the importance that the group places on dance in comparison to the other two groups. In comparison with the two dancers in Bambuco’s videos, RDP’s performances normally involve more than ten dancers. The costumes seen in RDP’s video (other than those of Mapalé, which I will discuss below) are typical throughout Esmeraldas and Colombia. Typically the men wear white pants with a button-down collared shirt that may have palm trees or various traditional Pacific instruments on them, and the women wear long dresses that match the men’s shirts. RDP regularly performs Esmeraldeño dances such as Andarele and various Currulaos, such as caramba or torbellino, but what makes this group a good comparative study is their use of dances from Colombia.

First, the Abozao from the Chocó region of the Colombian Pacific coast shows some of the similarities between Esmeraldeño Currulao and Colombian dance and music. The Abozao, like the Currulao, employs a 6/8 meter that has accents on beats 3 and 5, but is played at a tempo that is faster than most Currulao pieces. What sets it apart from Esmeraldeño music is the melody, which is typically played on clarinet, but in the case of RDP, it is played on an alto saxophone by Gower Torres. Also, the use of platillos (small, handheld crash cymbals) is very prominent in this dance and helps to drive the rhythm by playing on 1 and 4, keeping a steady rhythmic groove. Though the dance steps are different, the interaction between dance partners is reminiscent to the Currulao in the mild flirtation that occurs. The handkerchief motions of the men and dress-movements of the women are also closely related to those of Currulao.

In order to see some of this dance, go to the 4:06 marker in the RDP video at http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vr_yPaV4VrQ
Another dance that sets RDP apart from the other groups is Mapalé, which is commonly referred to among many musicians, dancers, and audience members as the “most African” of Pacific dances. Mapalé is understood to be of Afro-Colombian origin, but today it is very prominent in Esmeraldas and would likely be seen at any large performance in the city involving more than one group. RDP’s mission to expand their repertoire and the prominence of Mapalé in Esmeraldas demonstrate the continuing relationship between Colombians and Esmeraldeños.

Though its history has not been researched extensively, sonic and visual connections to Africa abound in performances of Mapalé both implicitly and explicitly. Firstly, the repeating 12/8 pattern that is emphasized on the head and side of the bombo¹⁹ relates to the many 12/8 bell patterns common to West Africa. Secondly, one of the recurring dance movements involves the chest and shoulder thrusting seen in much of the dance styles throughout sub-Saharan Africa. Thirdly, when Raices del Pacífico performs Mapalé, their faces are painted with what resemble feline attributes and their costumes are designed with cheetah patterns.

¹⁹ The reader should see the Raíces del Pacífico video at the 8:06 marker to see and hear an example of this.
As a common index of Africa through various forms of mass media, one can only assume that the use of cheetah imagery serves to index Africa in this performance context as well. The most explicit connection is during the introduction to RDP’s performance of Mapalé, when one of the members shouts out a poem written by the group:

¡África!
Tierra de mitos, leyendas, y tradiciones
Al sonar de los tambores
Se siente un fuerte pisar
Son los pasos de los negros
Que empezaron a danzar

Africa!
Land of myths, legends, and traditions
The sound of the drums
Feeling a strong tread
They are the movements of the blacks
That began to dance
Though this part of the presentation is not shown in the video, it is important to note because of its explicit link to African ancestry. Here there is a clear linkage to Ginsburg’s discussion about performing what may be implicit in other contexts: lyrically expressing the connection between their performance of Mapalé and Africa point to current manifestations of Afro-centrism in folkloric performance.

Conclusion

The point of this chapter was to bring together the various facets of the folklorization process via three regularly performing groups from Esmeraldas. The facets of folklorization that I have highlighted throughout this thesis include socio-political histories, migration, urban development, nationalism, and reconceptualization. Some of these are more clearly manifested in certain groups and less so in others – the point is that they all have played a part in the history of folklorization. Also, this chapter has shown the contemporary ways that Afro-Esmeraldeño music is mediated, adding to the continuing and complex process of folklorization.

By incorporating several different cosmopolitan styles of music into their performances, Bambuco demonstrated the complexity involved with creative musical production in a socially diverse urban center. A good example of the reconceptualization involved with the shift from participatory to presentational music is clear in Bambuco’s piece “Mucho Cuidado,” where protecting the music is now a part of the performance Afro-Esmeraldeño cultural expression. The group adds excitement to its performance by highlighting solo sections and adding abrupt changes in the rhythm – such changes are typical of presentational music and very common (though, not always) within the folklorization process. A last point to reiterate is how Bambuco’s appropriation of Carmen Gonzalez’s lyrics in the performance on Andarele shows
how folklorization is a continuing process that involves individuals’ adaptation to the various facets of their existing social world and the resources it has to offer.

Though Filomena Curoso Escobar does perform within presentational settings, the group does not see the need to conform their music to a more presentational style. Because members of the group understand that “traditional,” “folk,” and even “art” are all discursive terms, they are able to get gigs that cater to audiences that want to see and support “traditional folk-art.” One of the audiences that wants to support this “folk-art” is the government that is determined to facilitate the creation of a “multi-ethnic” and “pluricultural” nation. Though they didn’t get to perform onstage, FCE’s invitation to the bridge opening demonstrates how government officials attempt to enforce a sense of Esmeraldeño identity by placing two previously unrelated things (music, bridge) side by side. This way, supporters of such infrastructural development may come to appreciate Afro-Esmeraldeño cultural expression, or, on the other hand, supporters of Afro-Esmeraldeño expression may come to appreciate the new opportunities that such infrastructural development may provide.

Raices del Pacífico as a group of individuals shows the social diversity in the city of Esmeraldas and the relationship that continues between the region and its northern neighbor, Colombia. The movement of individuals from Colombia to Esmeraldas shows how migration continues today as a facet of the folklorization process, albeit different from the highland migration that occurred in the first half of the 20th century. The importance of Esmeraldas and the entire Pacific coast as being a part of the African diaspora is also of main concern among group members of RDP, as manifested especially in their performances of Mapalé.

Raices del Pacífico is especially interesting in discussion of Heidi Feldman’s black Pacific because the directors of the group are trying to create a performance ensemble that
represents the various regions that are mentioned by Feldman, e.g. Colombia, Peru, Chile. Feldman argues that within the black Pacific, “less African cultural heritage has been preserved continuously” (Feldman 2005: 207), but as I have shown there was a continuous influx African descended Colombians into Esmeraldas; even the continued migration of today contributes to the musical practices in the region, as demonstrated by Raices del Pacífico. Another aspect of Feldman’s black Pacific involves musicians looking to the black Atlantic to find resources for building cultural emblems that can serve to signify an African identity. There is a strong prevalence of musical styles from the Atlantic such as Salsa or Reggaetón, but their adoption into folkloric groups I have discussed seems to be less about signifying an African identity than they are about signifying a Pan-Latino one, if not just incorporating sounds that are part of the Esmeraldeño soundscape in general.

I would also like to reiterate the focus of this chapter on the new ways that folkloric music can be mediated and how this mediation also relates to folklorization. With the previous discussion about the way groups in Esmeraldas have focused on revalorizing the music and dance of the region, this chapter showed three examples of how groups implicitly and explicitly articulate their goals. In relation to the reflexivity aspect of the folklorization process, a clear conceptual shift in values is pronounced through the very production of these videos, which marks music as an object rather than only an activity. Similarly, there is a shift in performance style that focuses on both visual aspects and sonic diversity; however, as seen with Filomena Curoso Escobar, conceptual shifts can be just as significant as musical shifts.

Lastly, each of these groups demonstrates how notions of vergüenza and revalorización are connected to folkloric performance and ideology. Grupo Bambuco demands that their listeners “be very careful with their folklore.” On the other hand, their song, “Mucho Cuidado
Con Mi Folklor,” also incorporates various non-Esmeraldeño musical styles. These two aspects of the group’s performance practices point to preservationist goals while simultaneously adapting their music to various pan-Latino and cosmopolitan aesthetics. Filomena Curoso Escobar expresses a sense of nostalgia for pre-folklorization performance styles while acknowledging that discourses such as *revalorización* place their music in a space of “artistic” and “cultural” expression. In my interviews with members of Raices del Pacifico, there was expressed concern for an impending sense of *vergüenza* among Esmeraldeño youth. In order to contest this, the group explicitly states in their résumé that they aim to “revalorize cultural traditions” and provide youths with an opportunity to develop a personality and identity. The examples here and those in previous chapters show how processes of identity in musical performance integrate various social groups and contest a looming sense of shame that is discursively connected to socio-political histories, migration, urban development, and nationalism. On a more general level, this case study is an example of how music is a means for performers and listeners to express and experience identity.


