











## SHORT COMMUNICATION

# A comprehensive approach to the multicultural environment and well-being from the People, Ethnicity and Culture approach in the Ecuadorian context

## Un acercamiento integral del entorno multicultural y el bienestar desde el enfoque de Pueblo, Etnia y Cultura en el contexto ecuatoriano

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### ABSTRACT

This study set out to analyze cultural ethnicity from a multicultural perspective, focusing on its role as a historical identity in the new Ecuadorian generations and its transcendence in their actions. We used a mixed methodology combining quantitative and qualitative techniques and expert opinion, in a descriptive research framework. To collect data, we used the survey technique and processed the results with IBM SPSS 25 software. This methodology was crucial to verify the basis of historical identity in the new Ecuadorian generations, standing out as a reference that incorporates the values of multiculturalism. In addition, it was identified that, as a cultural process, respect and autonomy in the expression of ethnic identity -considering its cultural, social and religious manifestations- represents a challenge for these generations. This finding emphasizes the importance of understanding and respecting the individual reality of each ethnic group in contemporary Ecuador.

**Keywords:** Culture; Identity; History; People; Interculturality; Wellbeing.

### RESUMEN

Este estudio se propuso analizar la etnia cultural desde una perspectiva multicultural, enfocándose en su rol como identidad histórica en las nuevas generaciones ecuatorianas y su trascendencia en sus acciones. Utilizamos una metodología mixta que combina técnicas cuantitativas, cualitativas y la opinión de expertos, en un marco de investigación descriptiva. Para recopilar los datos, empleamos la técnica de encuesta y procesamos los resultados con el software IBM SPSS 25. Esta metodología fue crucial para verificar las bases de la identidad histórica en las nuevas generaciones ecuatorianas, destacándose como un referente que incorpora los valores de la multiculturalidad. Además, se identificó que, como un proceso cultural, el respeto y la autonomía en la expresión de la identidad étnica -considerando sus manifestaciones culturales, sociales y religiosas- representa un desafío para estas generaciones. Este hallazgo enfatiza la importancia de entender y respetar la realidad individual de cada etnia en el Ecuador contemporáneo.

**Palabras clave:** Cultura; Identidad; Historia; Pueblo; Interculturalidad; Bienestar.

## INTRODUCTION

According to FLASCO<sup>(6)</sup> one of the major issues in Ecuador is the search for cultural identification through native languages, such as the indigenous languages of eight different linguistic families (Barbacoa, Chocó, Jívoro, Quechua, Tukano, Záparo, and two independent families Cofan (A'i), and Wao Terero). This search has led to efforts to identify and correlate ethnicities and peoples with the civilizations settled in the country, distinguishing seven major cultures, such as: the Caranquis, Yumbos, Kitus, Panzaleos, Puruháes, Cañaris, and Paltas.

"The work conducted on the recognition of ethnic self-identification, which is nothing more than the way a person perceives themselves taking into account their customs, ancestors and whether they feel part of an ethnic group, is acknowledged."<sup>(2)</sup>

"Also recognized as the process that presupposes the construction of identities, it is the right to freely and voluntarily decide membership in a nationality, people or ethnicity."<sup>(3)</sup>

The OAS<sup>(11)</sup>, in its study on the right to self-determination of Indigenous Peoples and Tribes, refers to the realization of the right to self-determination leading to different measures that take into account and harmonize the aspirations of each indigenous and tribal people within a State. The right to self-determination must be understood as the basis of the dialogue for the construction of a new relationship between these peoples and the States that can lead to specific arrangements for these peoples to determine their economic, social and cultural development, and other aspects of self-determination.

Other studies, like that of Ruiz<sup>(5)</sup>, concerning the right to cultural identity of indigenous peoples and national minorities are subject to rescue strategies for the interculturality of peoples, recognizing that the right to cultural identity is a fundamental right that so far has not been fully effective, even with all the support of organizations, declarations and international conventions.

For Meza<sup>(10)</sup>, the international standard of rights of indigenous peoples recognizes and protects differentiated indigenous culture, and consequently, recognizes indigenous identity, both in its collective and individual dimension, and establishes the state obligation to protect it.

From the perspective of Barth<sup>(1)</sup>, in anthropology, the term ethnic identity begins to be a focus of analysis thanks to those who pointed out that ethnic groups are categories of identification and membership, which are used by the members and allow organizing the interaction between individuals.

For Teropio<sup>(15)</sup>, ethnic identity, while also taking into account cultural elements, does not necessarily refer to the culture involved, nor does it print a unique behavior of cultural homogeneity; some cultural traits are used as an emblem of identity, by its members, while others are overlooked and/or denied.

For several authors like Lemoine<sup>(9)</sup>, one of the key issues in the process of recognizing the rights of indigenous peoples, both at the international and internal level, is the faculty of these peoples to self-identify, which represents a particular manifestation of a larger principle related to the right to cultural identity. This latter right, which enjoys increasing social and legal recognition, is currently widely claimed by the indigenous peoples of the world where specialists seek from their investigative approach to correlate events that transcend at the level of enterprises in communities or peoples.

Other studies frame references like that of Medranda<sup>(3)</sup>, who states that the conservation of heritage houses in Ecuador, which have become a historical-cultural symbol at a territorial level, including those that transcend liberal ideas and those typical of the early 20th century, as well as an unknown cosmopolitan air that from its context have been a reflection of civilizations and settlements in the country, so in his study focuses on housing of heritage interest as a tool for strengthening the tourist activity of Bahía de Caràquez and cultural rescue.

The objective of the study is to verify the self-identification of the populations of Ecuador through the results of the census developed by the National Census Institute of Ecuador with the purpose of identifying the cultural recognition of the different regions of the country with the aim of developing cultural identification strategies and recognition of peoples, cultures, and ethnicities with the purpose of reviving traditions.

## METHODS

The research was of a qualitative and quantitative nature. Based on the theoretical foundation, the description of the results of the 2017 population census is sought to identify the self-identification of the inhabitants in Ecuador. It is based on the analytical explanatory method in the search for an exposition from the results that contribute to the rescue of traditions of peoples, cultures, and ethnicities. The population will be that of the country where there will be a non-probabilistic stratified sampling to verify at the level of the three regions object studies (Coast, Sierra, and East). The REDATAM software will be used, which will facilitate the crossing of variables between the urban and rural areas of each of the regions.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

It is recognized that among the 4 regions that make up the Ecuadorian geography: Coast, Sierra, Galapagos, and East, whose landscapes, culture, gastronomy, beaches, mountains, jungle, flora, and fauna make up the

perfect interculturality that makes Ecuador one of the most biodiverse tourist destinations worldwide. Below, the subdivision of the country into regions is shown geographically.



Figure 1. Regional distribution of Ecuador, Source: Redatam

Statistical studies show that of 17 895 131 inhabitants surveyed in Ecuador, 71,9 % self-identify as mestizo, 7,4 % as montubio, and 7 % as indigenous, another 6,1 % as white and 4,2 % as Afro-Ecuadorian representing from this group a 96,7 % the most representative at the level of self-identification denoting that the most representative population considers itself mestizo associated with the conquerors and not the civilizations that traveled through the country, therefore the study will be carried out at the level of regions with the purpose of observing if these figures remain or vary at a representative level.

**East Region**

In Ecuador P., it comprises the provinces of Orellana, Pastaza, Napo, Sucumbíos, Morona Santiago, Zamora Chinchipe. It extends over an area of 120 000 km<sup>2</sup> of lush vegetation, typical of humid-tropical forests. Its limits are marked by the Andes Mountain Range on the western part of this region, bordering Peru and Colombia. The relief of the Amazon is formed by a series of hills that originate in the eastern Andes and descend to the Amazon plain. There are two geographical regions: the High Amazonia and the Amazonian Plain. In the first region, you can find the Napo Galeras, Cutucú and Cóndor ranges. The most important reliefs of the Amazon are located in the northern part of the region, near the Sumaco volcano, and the lowest ones towards the east of the region.

Next, the study at the level of the East region is shown in table 1 through a cross of self-identification variables at the person level and the urban or rural area where they live in order to observe how they culturally recognize themselves.

| Self-identification according to culture and customs | Urban Area | Rural Area | Total   | %      |
|--|------------|------------|---------|--------|
| 1. Indigenous  | 29 921     | 215 093    | 245 014 | 33,1 % |
| 2. Afro-Ecuadorian / Afro-descendant                 | 7 432      | 2 771      | 10 203  | 1,4 %  |
| 3. Black   | 3 052      | 1 632      | 4 684   | 0,6 %  |
| 4. Mulatto   | 5 533      | 2 724      | 8 257   | 1,1 %  |
| 5. Montubio/a  | 2 633      | 2 187      | 4 820   | 0,7 %  |
| 6. Mestizo/a   | 221 618    | 217 326    | 438 944 | 59,3 % |
| 7. White   | 15 618     | 10 142     | 25 760  | 3,5 %  |
| 8. Other   | 1 343      | 789        | 2 132   | 0,3 %  |
| Total  | 287 150    | 452 664    | 739 814 | 100 %  |

Source: Redatam

As seen within these results provided by the REDATAM12 software, there are three very representative groups where in the first place the considered mestizos predominate, representing 59,3 % of the total population of the country, followed by the indigenous people who represent 33,1 % and the whites by 3,5 %, denoting a loss of

cultural identity, since this region is characterized by nine different indigenous groups living in the Ecuadorian Amazon, including the Secoya, Siona, Cofán, Waorani, Tagaeri, Taromenani, Achuar, Shuar, Zapar, Shiwair and Kichwa peoples. They have their own lands, traditions, and ancestral languages that identify them by their cultures and customs.

It is important to recognize that these mestizo populations, the most representative ones that symbolize 77,2 %, live in the urban areas of the region, while in the case of the indigenous populations, 47,5 % live in the rural areas, indicating that they are still more rooted in their ancestral customs and cultures. UNICEF 12, in conjunction with the Ministry of Education, has been developing collaborative work for the rescue to reduce poverty and social inclusion, executed by the Coordinating Ministry of Heritage of Ecuador, with the technical support of the United Nations System and the financing of the Fund for the Achievement of the Millennium Development Goals (Spain).

Studies developed by the INE<sup>(6)</sup> indicate that indigenous peoples are going through a complex social situation characterized by a subsistence economy based on small-scale agriculture; by limited access to lands for production and accelerated erosive processes of their lands, insufficient irrigation system; lack of economic and technological resources for agricultural and artisanal production, which limit the possibilities of exchange in the activities of formal commerce on an equal opportunities basis. Their incipient living conditions due to the lack of basic services, health and education; unemployment, high rates of infant mortality; culturally and socially discriminated because of their dress, language, and different customs, to the majority social environment in the country, have subtracted possibilities of a decent life, these persistent problems are currently caused by a social political imbalance.

Table 2. Self-identification in the Sierra Region

| Self-identification according to culture and customs | Urban Area | Rural Area | Total     | %      |
|--|------------|------------|-----------|--------|
| 1. Indigenous  | 128 549    | 559 575    | 688 124   | 11,3 % |
| 2. Afro-Ecuadorian / Afro-descendant                 | 82 026     | 39 847     | 121 873   | 2,0 %  |
| 3. Black   | 12 750     | 8 871      | 21 621    | 0,4 %  |
| 4. Mulatto   | 40 188     | 18 034     | 58 222    | 1,0 %  |
| 5. Montubio/a  | 33 375     | 24 170     | 57 545    | 0,9 %  |
| 6. Mestizo/a   | 2 832 574  | 2 007 461  | 4 840 035 | 79,6 % |
| 7. White   | 203 842    | 76 005     | 279 847   | 4,6 %  |
| 8. Other   | 10 406     | 3 669      | 14 075    | 0,2 %  |
| Total  | 3 343 710  | 2 737 632  | 6 081 342 | 100 %  |

Source: Redatam

In the Sierra region, a similarity in recognition of culture and custom prevails, denoted by self-identification, where 79,6 % of the population identifies as mestizo, followed by indigenous populations representing 11,3 %, and 4,6 % identifying as white. In this region, there is a noticeable balance of mestizo populations in both urban (84,7 %) and rural (73,3 %) areas, on the contrary, 20,4 % of the indigenous population is located in rural areas and only 3,8 % in urban areas because they are more dedicated to agricultural work. Those identified as white, 6,1 % live in urban areas and 2,8 % in rural areas, usually identified as landowners.

From the IWGIA14 perspective, it is important to recognize that the indigenous inhabitants that abound in the Sierra region represent a diversity of indigenous peoples, mostly speakers of different variants of Quechua (Kichwa), these with a well-marked identity in their traditions and cultures, as well as a solid political conviction for their rights.

### Coastal Region

As its name refers to the coast, all these provinces border the country's coast, so they are identified by their beaches, characteristic and typical fauna and flora of the place. Gastronomy and sun and beach tourism are emphasized for their recognized spas where interculturality influences the behavior of the inhabitants and colonizers. In 1524, a private conquest and colonization company was organized, led by Francisco Pizarro and Diego de Almagro. Table 3 shows the self-identification of the inhabitants of the coastal region.

In this region, as in the previous ones, mestizo self-identification continues to predominate, representing 67,1 % of the total population of the region, followed by the Montubio denomination, which symbolizes 12,9 % and is where it has the highest level of representation due to the region. In third and fourth place are 7,4 % identified as white and 6,2 % as Afro-Ecuadorians, recognizing that there is a high black population in the province of Esmeraldas.

Table 3. Self-identification in the Coastal Region

| Self-identification according to culture and customs | Urban Area | Rural Area | Total     | %      |
|--|------------|------------|-----------|--------|
| 1. Indigenous  | 60 798     | 69 147     | 129 945   | 1,7 %  |
| 2. Afro-Ecuadorian / Afro-descendant                 | 372 657    | 109 446    | 482 103   | 6,2 %  |
| 3. Black   | 79 748     | 39 118     | 118 866   | 1,5 %  |
| 4. Mulatto   | 170 825    | 43 122     | 213 947   | 2,7 %  |
| 5. Montubio/a  | 398 028    | 604 549    | 1 002 577 | 12,9 % |
| 6. Mestizo/a   | 3 880 652  | 1 345 907  | 5 226 559 | 67,1 % |
| 7. White   | 499 602    | 78 021     | 577 623   | 7,4 %  |
| 8. Other   | 28 670     | 8 186      | 36 856    | 0,5 %  |
| Total  | 5 490 980  | 2 297 496  | 7 788 476 | 100 %  |

Source: Redatam

According to CCE, Ecuadorian Montubios, identified as a mestizo community of peasant origin, live in the rural areas of the country's coastal provinces. They are scattered throughout the provinces of Guayas, Los Ríos, El Oro and Manabí, and to a lesser extent in other areas, as reflected in previous statistics. They are characterized by being hardworking, deeply regionalistic, and lovers of the countryside. They have their own customs and cultural characteristics. Among the most outstanding socio-cultural features are their vocation for agricultural activities, their combative and warrior spirit, and their proven skill in taming horses.

## DISCUSSION

After analyzing several works related to Ecuadorian cultures, their history, and the context of historical development, the richness of each ethnicity without losing its identity has been reflected upon. In the article by Guerrero, titled "The Revaluation of Cultural Identity: A Retrospective Analysis of the Main Cultures of Ecuador," emphasis is placed on analyzing, from a valuing point of view, the existing relationship between nature and man, as well as the customs that, despite the years, remain current in our society, forming the ancestral traditions that dignify our origin as a Latin American people and give meaning to the cultural diversity of our country. Only in this way can it be maintained from generation to generation.

Fernandez's investigative work, titled "Society and Manabí Cultural Identity and its Transmission in Basic General Education in Manta", shares that they are not only objects of investigative interest for the historical narrative of millennial cultures, but also for the identity sense, belonging to these and the sacred component that envelops them within their society. The same is reflected in all their daily life, customs, beliefs, idiosyncrasy that makes them unique in their untamed race, which allowed them to maintain their identity without losing what they were, what they did, leaving all their historical wealth that makes them unique and non-transferable from their race.

The state also provides evidence of the care of culture. Article 36 of the Organic Law of Communication provides that the media must broadcast intercultural content for a space of 5% in their programming in order to promote cultural reservation and ancestral knowledge. This contributes to increasing the reach in the population, of the news, historical milestones and cultural activities that take place in the different cantons that make up Ecuador. This allows new generations to keep in mind that a people without history have no identity, they lose perspective of people, of being great in a small homeland, only a people who have

In Civallero's research, titled ancestral cultures in modern universes, he says that in the short term, it would be desirable not only to increase the direct participation of indigenous peoples in the "connected" world but also to include a greater diversity of ethnic groups from different areas and the creation of new spaces for participation and exchange. At the same time, official organizations with greater possibilities should provide support to indigenous communities to develop projects and disseminate their knowledge in the universe. The author envisages new scenarios to enhance the culture of the peoples, without losing their identity and being taken into account for what they are without leaving their habitat that makes them more real and giving a new vision of all they can contribute to the cultural wealth of the peoples.

Also, Regalado in the book titled: Manabí and its ancient food, frames culture as one of the activities linked to the origin of man is food and nothing better than a study of the culinary traditions that are still preserved, to understand the processes that the different cultures have gone through; and of course, to infer the activities that have been related to food; as well as contributing to one of the most important traditions of Manabí, which is its culinary activity, not to be lost over time. That is why it is necessary to revalue everything that makes up our identity, as a way to protect the memory of our ancestors. This allows culture to be shared from the transmission of integral knowledge from the economic, social axes, which are evidenced in artistic, culinary expression, giving a plus to community economy.

## CONCLUSIONS

It is of vital importance to create a new scenario where the aboriginal cultures that still exist on the planet have a space of integration where they feel comfortable without losing their autonomy and their identity from the reality of each ethnicity, respecting their cultural, social, religious expressions.

Work on the inclusion of a greater diversity of ethnic groups from different areas and the creation of new areas for participation and cultural exchange at a national and international level, making it a worthy place where culture and technology intertwine, that is, make interculturality visible from interdisciplinarity.

Another element to keep in mind is to make ancestral knowledge visible from the perspective of sharing, given a plus to the Manabí economy and economic, social, cultural and tourist development, where the peoples of different places have a space of experiences of what they have and what they are, like the signs and symbols that are present in all daily activities.

It is important to recognize that to address the issue of cultural identity, it is necessary to refer to the definitions that have been given about culture, traditional and popular culture, cultural diversity, cultural pluralism and cultural heritage where cultural conceptions are based on the values of each one of them, only in this way can they be identified and transmitted to new generations without any imposition so that there is no destruction of it.

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