History and Geography of the Province of Napo
GEOGRAPHIC LOCATION
POLITICAL DIVISIONS
THE PROVINCE OF NAPO
GEOGRAPHIC LOCATION

BORDERS
North: Sucumbios and Orellana
South: Tungurahua and Pastaza
East: Orellana
West: Pichincha, Cotopaxi and Tungurahua
Napo before the Spanish Conquest

The first inhabitants of the province of Napo came from the Amazon River area. Smaller groups must have come from the highland region. The different groups all strongly identified themselves with the jungle which inspired their cultures, religion, customs and traditions. The most important group was the Quijos who inhabited the present-day cantons of Quijos, Chaco, Tena and Archidona. People would later confuse the Quijos with an ethnicity that lived between the foothills of the Andes and the coast and so the Quijos got called Yumbos. Later on in history, the missionaries called them Alamas and today they are known as Quichuas. The Incas reached Quijos territory and inter-tribal relations were consolidated with marital unions, for example Hacho, a cacique (leader) from Latacunga, was brother-in-law to one of the Quijos caciques. The highland people's demand for gold, cinnamon, furs and exotic animals made the Amazon region famous for its richness. Soon the highland people began to make war with the Amazon dwellers and peaceful relations turned to conquest.
The Spanish “Discovery” of the Amazon Region

In 1539, Captain Gonzalo Díaz de Pineda organised the first expedition to Quijos. He reached the valley of Cosanga. The indigenous killed many Spanish soldiers. Discouraged, he returned to Quito.

In 1541, Gonzalo Pizarro took a large expedition of men to the Amazon region. He camped in the village of Moti. There he meet with Francisco de Orellana who had arrived from Guayaquil. The Spanish were by now sick and barefoot and food supplies were low. They built a brig. Sick soldiers were sent into Orellana's care. They had to navigate down the River Coca to find food and then return to the encampment. Orellana and his men travelled for several days. On 12th February 1542 they became the first Spaniards to travel down the longest river in the world: the Amazon. Quito was given the rights to this unique “discovery”.

The indigenous people called this river the Conoris, the Portuguese called it Marañón, but the name Amazon stuck. It was invented by Friar Gaspar de Carvajal in homage to the warrior women who inhabited the area.

Pizarro and the men who had stayed along the banks of the River Coca returned to Quito. They arrived sick, half naked and emancipated. History would remember them as “cinnamon hunters” or “caneleros”. This is how Napo and the Amazon region came to be part of Quito's territory.
The Foundation of Spanish Cities

On 14th May 1559, Gil Ramírez Dávalos founded the city of Baeza de la Nueva Andalucía with the approval of the local indigenous people. Andrés Contero entered Quijos to govern in the name of Melchor Vásquez de Ávila. On 10th March 1563, he founded the town of Ávila on the banks of the Suno and on 14th August 1563 he founded Alcalá del Río Dorado, possibly in Cofán territory. Under the orders of Vásquez de Ávila, Bartolomé Marín founded the city of Archidona towards the end of 1563.
The Quijos Uprising

The Spanish in the recently-founded cities exploited the native people, even turning them into slaves. The Quijos people worked on the land, went panning for gold, carried loads to Quito and wove on looms. Those who refused to work were mutilated: they were tortured and put in animal traps to be fed to the dogs.

Wise men and caciques got together to expel the Spanish from Quijos territory. They sent emissaries to all the surrounding towns to make them promise to fight. Guami led the uprising and on 29th November 1578, they burnt the city of Ávila. Archidona was also set alight in an uprising led by Beto. Both towns were sacked and destroyed. All the Spanish inhabitants died.

After this, the Quijos chose Jumandy as their great warrior. Jumandy advanced towards Baeza with a great number of men. The Spanish had been warned in advance and so had fortified the city. After numerous battles, Jumandy had to withdraw. The Spanish pursued him for four months.

The leaders of the uprising were captured. The Royal Court of Justice in Quito condemned Guami, Beto and Jumandy to death. They were strangled in San Blas Square in Quito. Those wise men and caciques were heroes who began the fight for freedom against the Spanish in Ecuador and the whole of the Americas.
In 1661, Father Vásquez de Velasco, president of the Royal Court of Justice in Quito, temporarily put the parish of Archidona into Father Lucas de la Cueva's care. The Jesuits used Archidona as a headquarters for their evangelism. From Archidona, the missionaries went down the River Napo until they reached the Amazon River. On the banks of these rivers they founded villages, thus showing Quito's presence in the Amazon region.

In the area now known as Napo, relations between missionaries and other Spanish people were fraught, since both groups wanted to control the indigenous for their own purposes. In 1749, plagues of small pox and measles meant death and desolation. The few indigenous people who survived went further into the jungle.

Charles III of Spain expelled the Jesuits from his kingdom. The last missionaries left the Amazon region in 1769.
In 1808, the first Bishop of Mainas, Friar Hipólito Sánchez Rangel, arranged the imprisonment and dismissal of Governor Calvo Sotelo in order to counteract the deplorable situation that the indigenous people lived in, since Sotelo was responsible for these problems.

The viceroy then restored the governor to his position. This provoked an uprising of the indigenous groups of Jeveros, la Laguna and Quijos against the oppressive regime and looking towards independence.

The towns and villages in Napo brought the revolution forward to 10th August 1809. The governor of Quijos at that time was Juan Miguel Melo and after a massacre on 2nd August in which 1,810 people died, he began an uprising in Archidona, committing himself to the patriots in the capital. Royalist troops had to arrive to quash the rebellion. Only many months later, on 20th September 1812, was the new governor of Quijos, Fernández Álvarez, able to inform his superiors of the Napo rebels' defeat and the recuperation of Archidona.
In the 18th century, contributions were introduced as another way of exploiting indigenous people. In Quijos, it began around 1818. Contributions were made twice a year. On Sundays, when the indigenous people went to church, the governor or one of his delegates would give each indigenous person a package with certain objects like mirrors, small knives and crosses. Payment consisted of a certain quantity of fibre or powdered gold. These objects never had any practical use.

Public functionaries and priests also exploited native people with “camaricos” or a system of forced giving. On special occasions like weddings, baptisms or parties, gifts had to be given.
Birth of the Republic:
The Return of the Jesuits

In 1835, a political charter eliminated the system of departments and introduced that of provinces. In 1861, the Orient province was created and its capital was Archidona.

García Moreno allowed the Jesuits back into Ecuador. They reached Napo on 15th April 1869. They re-established their headquarters in Archidona, and from there they travelled to other towns in Napo and the Amazon region.

The Jesuits were allowed to exercise political and administrative power. They could appoint mayors and governors, accept resignations, fill vacancies and control the movement of merchants and adventurers to missions. In those days, adventurers and merchants sold trinkets and exploited indigenous people, getting them into debt and using them to carry things, spreading hate and resentment towards the Jesuits. These excesses were so great that the Home Secretary dismissed the governor of the Orient and closed businesses that exploited others.
Indigenous people, along with merchants, started an uprising on 30th August 1892 in Loreto. Men armed with knives, machetes, spears and guns attacked the town at 5pm. They captured two priests, the political chief and various lay brothers and took them to Chontacocha, part of the River Suno. They kept them tied up until 4th September when two soldiers set them free. Loreto was sacked.

On 31st August, merchants, supported by eighty indigenous men, headed for Archidona to get rid of the Jesuits. Their final destination was Tena. The rebels disbanded to spread the world that fifty soldiers from Quito under Ramón Borja were on their way.

In 1896, Alejandro Sandoval was named governor of the Orient. His first act was to forbid any help from the missionaries. He tried to force citizens to abandon their religion and had some success. In September of the same year, a government decree ordered the Jesuits to leave via Brazil.
Rubber and the Early 20th Century

With the arrival of the 20th century, the state began to show a weak but steady amount of concern for Napo. They established “tamberías” or highway-inns to maintain the pathways for horses and help travellers cross dangerous rivers. The government managed colonial agricultural land. First fur and then rubber was exploited and this attracted lots of citizens to Nueva Rocafuerte, from where they could trade with Peru and Brazil. When this activity ended, many rubber workers became farmers and established farms along the banks of the River Napo.

Eloy Alfaro initiated the construction of a pathway for horses from Pifo to Baeza via Papallacta. This pathway attracted mule drivers and this meant transport and communication between the highlands and the Amazon region.

In 1900, the 'Special Law Relating to the Orient' was passed, which meant that the government would pay more attention to the area. In 1911, the Orient province was re-established. Treatment of native people improved in legal terms, although abuses continued in practice. Some indigenous families began to depend on haciendas, becoming their bosses’ personal property. The hacienada owners invented a debt system whereby guns, machetes, salt, ammunition, gunpowder, clothes, trinkets were given in exchange for indefinite work, since the indigenous people were never able to pay off their debts. If the parents didn’t manage to pay off their debt before they died, it got passed on to their children. Certain haciendas became famous for their books full of debts and invoices.

In sight of the tobacconists and the sale of aguardiente (firewater liquor), the state legalised alcohol.
On 25th November 1920, the provinces of Napo-Pastaza and Santiago Zamora were created.

Josephine priests in 1922 and nuns in 1924 arrived to work in Napo and infused its hundreds of citizens with vitality. The missionaries preached the gospel and also focused on health and education. In 1928 the missionaries established themselves in Dos Ríos, near Tena. They aimed to free indigenous people from alcoholism and debt systems.

In 1959, Napo and Pastaza divided into separate provinces. In 1969 the political divisions of Napo were restructured and the cantons of Putumayo and Orellana were created as well as other parishes. The canton of Napo changed its name to Tena. The road from Baeza to Lago Agrio was built. Petrol exploitation encouraged some citizens of Napo to move to one of the many villages and communities that were created to support oil exploits. These small places then grew into towns and cities, forcing the creation of the province of Sucumbíos (which had been part of the province of Napo) in 1989. Finally, in 1998, the province of Orellana (which had also been part of Napo) was created.
Biological and Climatic Diversity

The province's geographical diversity—its hills and mountains, its valleys and lagoons—allow for its incredible diversity. It is one of the most biodiverse places on the planet.
The Terrain’s Altitude
Water Basins

Total surface area: 12,518.78km²
Population: 79,139

Napo has three natural water basins which form clearly-defined valleys where most of the population live.

The Quijos valley
The Misahuallí valley
The Napo valley
National Parks, Nature Reserves and Protected Forests

- Reserva Ecológica Cayambe - Coca
- Reserva Ecológica Antisana
- Parque Nacional Cotopaxi
- Parque Nacional Llanganates
- Bosque Protector La Cascada
- Parque Nacional Sumaco
- Parque Nacional Napo - Galeras
- Cuenca Coloso
- Selva Viva
- Venecia
1. Quito – Papallacta
2. Orellana – Narupa
3. Nueva Loja – El Chaco
4. Puyo - Arosemena Tola
5. Cayambe – Oyacachi

In construction: Salcedo - Tena
Multiculturalism

1. Kichwas from Napo
2. Papallactas
3. Oyacachis
4. Quichas from Chimborazo
5. Huaoranis
6. White and mixed-race
   Ecuadorians born in Napo
7. White and mixed-race
   Ecuadorians born in other provinces
8. Foreigners
Political Divisions

**The canton of Tena**: Tena (urban area) and the rural parishes of Ahuano, Chontapunta, Pano, Puerto Misahualli, Talag and Puerto Napo.

**The canton of Archidona**: Archidona (urban area) and the rural parishes of Cotundo and San Pablo.

**The canton of El Chaco**: El Chaco (urban area) and the rural parishes of Gonzalo Díaz de Pineda (El Bombón), Linareas, Oyacachi, Santa Rosa and Sardinas. The canton of Quijos: Baeza (urban area) and the rural parishes of Cosanga, Cuyuja, Papallacta, San Francisco de Borja (Virgilio Dávala) and Sumaco.

**The canton of Arosemena Tola**: Arosemena Tola.
Total surface area: 3,894.8km²
Population: 46,338

BORDERS:
North- the canton of Archidona and province of Orellana
South- the provinces of Tungurahua and Pastaza and the canton of Arosemena Tola
West- the province of Orellana
East- the provinces of Tungurahua and Cotopaxi
From east to west, the canton rises steadily from its border with Orellana, which lies at around 300 metres above sea level, to the Llanganates mountain range which includes El Quilindaña and Cerro Hermoso. In and around Tena there are minor elevations such as Pasourco, Pullurco, Chiuta, Tamburo and Itaurco. The Galeras mountain range is found in Napo at the source of the River Pusuno just where Napo borders the canton of Loreto in the province of Orellana.
The River Napo is the main source of water. This river, known at the time of the Conquest as the River Santa Ana or as the Cinnamon River, starts where the Jatunyacu River joins with the River Anzu. The Jatunyacu River in turn is the amalgamation of the Rivers Antisana, Vallevicioso, Chalupas and Verderyacu. The Rivers Moracay, Talag, Ilocullin, Copalyacu and Guiña also flow into the Jatunyacu. The Rivers Piocullin, Shichuyacu, Shandia and Piatúa flow into the River Anzu. The River Bueno, a tributary of the River Suno, separates Napo from the canton of Loreto. The River Tena- which gives the city its name- and the River Pano flow into the River Misahualli. The Rivers Guagrayacu, Tazayacu, Lopi, Colosno, Pashingi, Shili and many others flow into the River Tena. The Rivers Pumayacu and Ishingayacu flow into the River Pano.

In the eastern mountain range of the Andes, the Yanacocha, Tambo Grande, Conga, Chaupirrumi, Zapala, Yanacocha de San Antoinio and El Soledad lagoons are found.
During the time of the Spanish Conquest, this area was part of the Quijos administration. Towards the beginning of the republican era, it belonged to the province of Pichincha as part of the canton of Quijos. In 1861, the Orient province was created and the area began to have its own local administration such as the canton of Napo, a name which was maintained until 30th April 1969 when it was renamed the canton of Tena.
Thank you!