June 1933. Thirty-two year old Clarence Jones, from Chicago, Illinois, is riding a train from Guayaquil to Quito, Ecuador. He carries his trombone. This is no regular train ride. The Ecuadorian government has decided to celebrate the 25th anniversary of the inaugural run of the Trans-Andean rail by loading a celebratory railcar with fanfare and musical entertainment. The culminating moment of the tour occurs at the apex of La Nariz del Diablo (Devil’s Nose) peak, a switchback ascent that represented the rather exceptional challenges of engineering involved in Ecuador’s railroad construction. As the train pulls into the small town, Jones receives the signal to play the Ecuadorian national anthem. He leans the horn into a microphone that is connected to a small radio transmitter; the transmitter broadcasts a rather weak signal to a speaker mounted on the boxcar. The technology was, Jones admitted, amateurish—“technically, it was a toy”—but it nevertheless provided a symbolic commemoration: rail and radio, were uniting the nation of Ecuador.1

Since independence from Gran Colombia in 1830, Ecuadorian elites lamented that their country, while relatively small, was fractured by natural phenomena that made national unity difficult.2 They often divided the country into three regions: a tropical coastline, a towering Andean mountain range and a dense Amazon jungle, known as the Oriente region. The treacherous terrain that separated each region made efforts to coordinate inter-regional trade, support a national network of government, or even instate regular communication, an unrelenting challenge. During the 19th century, Andean routes proved so treacherous that they were impassable for large parts of the year. The path connecting Guayaquil and Quito took weeks to travel.3 Information moved slowly: without a telegraph cable to connect Quito to Guayaquil until 1889, news could only travel as fast as those who carried it.4

This troubling topography divided Ecuador in other profound ways. It enabled deep political divisions among the elite. In the highlands, hacienda owners, the Catholic Church, and a small business sector maintained a conservative clerical system of governance. On the coast, an
active port, burgeoning cacao industry, a thriving wealthy elite, and a diverse labor class created political culture that centered around liberal economic policies. At times, these two sides of Ecuadorian political culture seemed irreconcilable. To the east of the highlands, in the Amazon (or Oriente), elites held relatively little control or knowledge of terrain. Although the government maintained contact with a few missionary posts, colonial towns and haciendas in the region, it was, for the most part, dominated by disparate indigenous communities who resisted elite and missionary attempts to subjugate them within the national tributary and labor system. On maps, “Ecuador” claimed a massive section of Amazon territory; however, such claims were only based on the authority granted the nation by post-colonial maps and treaties. Actual control—in the form of colonists, state knowledge, or a labor and tax system—were largely undeveloped. The idea of nation remained the subject of state fantasies and aspirations.

Despite their conflicting political visions, conservative and liberal elites shared a common goal of using the offices of the state to overcome Ecuador’s decisive issue: its extreme geographic divides. In an effort to begin to “civilize” the Oriente, the conservative president, Gabriel Garcia Moreno, had advocated the return of Jesuit missionaries (who had been banished in 1767) before his ascendency to the presidency. These efforts gradually saw the parceling of several sites in the Oriente region to Catholic missionary orders. Missionaries became an important part of state formation. They not only created inroads, but also established towns, haciendas, and small trading sites. In the rest of the country, Garcia Moreno also sought to use Catholicism to develop a binding national culture, reinforcing the power of his clerical allies and integrating Church and state control. In 1895, the Liberal Revolution, which began with the assassination of García Moreno and later saw the rise of the radical liberal president, Eloy Alfaro, continued many of these projects, while at the same time uprooting the hegemony of Catholic elites. Yet, even while the liberals dismantled many of the conservatives’ Catholic policies, they also appeared to recognize the value of the missions in the Oriente. Rather than dismantle the presence of the Church there, the liberals destabilized its exclusive power, opening territory in the Oriente to Protestants and other groups.

The new technology of the railroad fit perfectly within these elites’ plans to unite Ecuador. In the 19th century, new technology appeared as though it might finally allow elites to overcome their topographical barriers to trade, government and cultural unity. García Moreno
bolstered efforts to create roads and communication and in 1861, began the effort to create what
many heralded as the ultimate effort to geographically unite the country—the modern railroad
that would travel from the port, Guayaquil, and scale the Andes to reach Quito. Following their
ascendancy to power, liberal leaders, and, in particular, Eloy Alfaro, also made the railroad a
central priority, calling it, an “obra redentora”—a project that would lead a divided Ecuador to
its economic, political and spiritual salvation.

It was, however, a costly venture that strapped the country with significant debt to the
U.S. company tasked with building it. By the time Jones boarded the rails to play his trombone,
then, the railway had already emerged as a problematic symbol: on the one hand, it signaled
“modernity” and the power of the state to overcome the nation’s geographical divisions to unite
the country. On the other hand, it served as an important marker of the state’s reliance on
outsiders to construct that unity. This final tension had begun to emerge within a noticeable
pattern of Ecuadorian governance that transcended party lines—the railway, like the efforts to
lay claim to the Oriente, illustrated a problematic state reliance on foreign transnational groups
with outside motives.

Jones, his trombone and his small transistor radio—in this light—fit seamlessly into a
longer history of complicated contracts between the Ecuadorian state and foreigners. As the
train pulled into La Nariz del Diablo, government representatives invited townspeople and
passersby to see the train, the old signal of modernity, bring with it a more novel technology of
cultural connection: the radio. If one did not notice the meager power of Jones’ transmitter, the
two technologies offered an illustrative parallel. The union of the railroad and radio celebrated
government-led “progress”; Jones’ presence, however, in a more subtle way, also signaled the
state’s ongoing and troubled reliance on foreign technology--and foreigners--to overcome the
divisions created by the Andean landscape. For the Ecuadorian state, perhaps, these twin
technologies connected people separated by vast distances and heights—while the train
connected peoples, markets and goods, the radio potentially carried with it the power of political
media, a direct connection between small highland towns and the capital city. Together, they
appeared to consolidate the national map, overcoming topography to put the urban center into
quick contact with the disparate towns.

Jones was also interested in connecting peoples separated by vast distances. For him, as
for many Protestant evangelical Christians of his day, the relatively new technology of mass consumer radio appeared to be uniquely suited to their primary mission: the spread of Christianity. Convinced that the radio was a gift from God, designed to evoke the power to spread the word of the Bible to the far corners of the earth, Jones established the first global evangelical shortwave radio station. Jones narrates his choice of location—Ecuador—as a arriving to him as a message from God. But, in practical terms, this decision was born out of a standing network of evangelical missionaries, and an amenable Ecuadorian government, which, as we will see, agreed to the presence of Jones and his colleagues for its own geopolitical reasons.

This paper first examines how evangelical movements changed over the course of Jones’ early years, informing his vision of the world and, at the same time, uniquely reflecting changes in U.S. capitalism at the beginning of the 20th century. It illustrates how Jones’ particular brand of Evangelical Protestantism not only imagined radio as a tool of millennial salvation but also reflected a new movement that saw the principles of U.S. consumer culture, and its use of technology, as compatible with a missionary project with global proportions.

The chapter then narrates Jones’ arrival in Ecuador. The collaborations between Jones, the Ecuadorian state and the U.S. government, are made possible because they are all motivated by the power of new media—the radio---to reach disparate peoples and convert them into political and religious subjects. Their projects sometimes conflict, but more often, they overlap and shape the ways in which everyday people—in Ecuador and in the United States—imagine and interact with the world. Here, projects that are often imagined to be opposing ventures—Ecuadorian nationalism, U.S. empire, and U.S. fundamentalism, are revealed to be inextricable processes that not only interact, but complement one another.

**Jones, missionary Chicago and the geography of millennial salvation**

As it was for many missionaries, Clarence Jones knew little about Ecuador when he arrived in 1931 and he was largely unaware of the complicated history that permitted him to begin his mission there. Jones was born in Chicago, Illinois in 1900, at a moment in time in which Chicago was blossoming as the United States’ “second city.” Clarence Jones was born
into an evangelical family—his father, George, was a janitor by day and, on the weekends, he was an active member in the Salvation Army, a non-denominational evangelical group moved swiftly into U.S. cities following its rise in London in the 1880s. George’s own path traced that of the Salvation Army—he was born in England but immigrated to the United States with his family at the age of 12; his father moved the family to Northern Michigan where he became a coal miner. George’s parents gave him the option of taking up local labor or joining the Salvation Army movement. He bypassed the perilous work in the mines and joined the movement, studying the Bible and moving to Chicago to become an itinerant preacher and organizer.

For many in the Chicago area, the Salvation Army of the 1880s, along with several other non-denominational evangelical churches, represented a new and appealing—if also controversial—offshoot of traditional Protestant values. As a non-denominational evangelist movement, Army followers professed that the individual was capable of having a direct relationship with God and that, upon doing so, he should work towards the salvation of others. The Army’s rapid expansion across the United States spoke to major issues of its era. In addition to its individualist and community-based style of worship, it echoed a sense of injustice made apparent during the Gilded Age, and, along with other institutions like the Young Men Christian’s Association and the Christian Missionary Alliance, gained ground by merging ideas of social activism with a missionary purpose.  

The Army also became known for their engaging revivals that often made use of spectacle—in the form of parades and music—to draw in followers, and for their sustained commitment to evangelize among the downtrodden in urban areas. The noise and choice of venues for Salvation Army meetings (often connected to the inner city, and largely in popular outdoor locals or in taverns) signaled a new type of Christianity that spoke directly to contemporary anxieties about inequality, poverty, vice, and the approaching advance of mass-consumer culture. George, for example, led brass bands in parades through the center of town, past saloons and brothels, where he and the other Salvationists would preach temperance to an often hostile crowd. Clarence’s mother, also a follower, earned her wages by going out in the evening and selling copies of the War Cry, the Salvation Army newspaper, in city saloons.  

The Salvation Army’s methods of urban intervention upheld Christianity as a method of
saving oneself from the perils of the modern city: in the process of being aided, they believed, wayward urbanites at saloons, brothels, or “on the street” would be driven away from modern vices and towards a middle-class life that had a “virtuous” relationship with consumer culture. Jones was born into this culture and his own narrations of his life reflect the sense of conviction—and moderation—that this upbringing inflected upon him. He describes attending Salvation Army events with his family, and taking up trombone in the Army band, but he regarded himself as a rather unenthusiastic soldier, more interested in playing music than preaching. At 18, he expressed some desires to “see the world” but his Christian upbringing limited his personal experience with rebellion, and also instilled a sense of righteousness: he describes his own awakening as impactful because it stripped away his sense of personal virtue, particular as compared to those that the Army traditionally targeted for preaching. Jones says that, “the Lord really convicted me of sin and spoke to me of being a self-righteous sinner as bad as any bum on West Madison Street.”

Jones fully took up the fundamentalist cause when he encountered the itinerant preacher Paul Rader at the Moody Tabernacle. Moody’s evangelical movement preceded the rise of the Salvation Army and shared many of its basic precepts, but differentiated on some fundamental issues. Most important to Jones, Moody’s church, like most fundamentalists of the era, preached dispensationalist pre-millennialism. In essence, while the Salvation Army promoted a gradual advancement of society through Christianity, pre-millennialism emphasized that the global spread of Christianity would hasten the Second Coming.

Moody gained prominence in the Chicago area religious scene in the 1870s, just following the civil war by using an aggressive preaching style and developing a vast network in the world of capitalist industry. Moody spoke to contemporary changes taking place in the Gilded Age. He took a “realist” stance to religion and often rode a horse-drawn carriage straight into the most infamous neighborhoods to preach. He proved himself committed to not just converting poor youth, but remodeling them with a new set of values. Eager to make use of emerging advertising culture, his early sermons he would spread photographic evidence of the change he affected in Chicago youth—“before” and “after” photos showed once young, disorderly boys changed into washed and well-dressed middle class gentlemen. His followers contended that the modern vices visible in 1890s Chicago—drinking, prostitution, poverty,
gambling, and radical political ideas like anarchism and communism—constituted a veritable urban crisis. These, they proposed, were the result of moral depravity that had taken over in the modern age—and were likewise the result of diverse “foreign” ideas that had overtaken urban life. The solution, they contended, was not found in protest of the capitalist system, as some of the rising anarchist and union movements seemed to contend. To the contrary, they argued, the solution was found in salvation, a concept compatible with capitalism, which pushed followers to reject vices and engage in moral consumer moderation, imbued with traditional values.

Christianity, in this sense was seen as a method of uplift—capable of changing lives and bestowing the downtrodden with middle class values, and middle class lives. He viewed the logic of advertising and capitalism as fundamentally complementary to the spreading of Christianity and its values. As such, Moody developed a close relationship with powerful capitalists of his day, and also likened himself to a businessman whose primary business was selling religion. The mission received funding from prominent business leaders who saw in Moody’s Protestantism a moral blending of capitalist and Christian values. By the time Moody died, in 1899, he had created a powerful evangelist movement that would serve as one of the bedrock communities of contemporary evangelical fundamentalism.

By the time Jones drew closer to the Moody Bible Institute in 1917, a new generation of evangelists had taken the helm, further developing and adopting the church and putting its tenets in dialogue with new issues. Engagement with 20th century society required the network of preachers to re-center the Moody Bible Institute on conservative consumer-capitalist culture while further directing teachings toward a dispensationalist pre-millennialism movement. Jones stumbled into Moody’s Church Tabernacle in 1917 at the invitation of a family friend who asked him to play trombone in the band. Jones recalled being drawn into the Church because its new itinerant preacher, Paul Rader requested that the band play non-religious songs—a strategy that melded secular culture with evangelical teachings to draw in non-believers.

The genealogy of Jones’ new church is also suggestive of the extent to which U.S. evangelical Christianity had, by 1910s, developed into a national—and international—network. Before arriving at Moody’s Tabernacle, Rader had received his education in a third major non-denominational church—the Christian Missionary Alliance. Like Moody, Rader’s evangelical message emphasized the value of U.S. business culture, but taking after Simpson, he stressed a
global vision for Christianity. In his speeches before thousands of Chicago-area followers, Rader emphasized that Jesus had promised to return and save Christians when the gospel reached all corners of the world. He cited Matthew: “this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come,” and preached that the Bible required Christians to bring their religion to people of “all tongues [and] nations.” Like Moody, Rader’s message was suited to his time—a historical moment in which the United States was not only propelling to action in World War I, but in which its consumer and corporate culture—including Hollywood movies, which were regarded as immoral projections of U.S. culture—was in the process of globalization. At the Tabernacle, thus, Jones encountered a new geopolitical framework for fundamentalist religion that motivated followers to extend Christian beliefs abroad. The Moody Bible Institute provided Jones—who had dropped out of high school—with an education while Paul Rader’s mission grounded him in outreach and global evangelization.

In the early 1920s, Rader saw the potential in new media for missionary work; at a time when there were still few receivers in Chicago homes, Rader began preaching on the radio. Jones accompanied him, playing secular and spiritual songs, in the hopes that music might keep non-believers listening. In little time, Rader and Jones began to see radio as a “gift from God.” Rader professed that radio was uniquely suited to the evangelical project: the radio replicated his evocative and emotive sermon and allowed him to integrate musical entertainment to draw in non-believers. Moreover, its geographical reach held the potential of reaching listeners resistant to attending church meetings, or dispersed over a vast landscape of territory—a fact of significant importance for a movement growing in the expanses of the Midwest plains. He told Jones, "this is the way to reach people in the saloons, taverns and the hotels, the bawdy houses, in their homes, anyplace we can get them to listen." As Rader’s success grew, his revivals drew in thousands from the Chicago area.

In 1922, Rader was elected president of the Christian and Missionary Alliance, and Jones, by extension, became well connected to a powerful network of evangelicals. When Jones spoke openly of his intention to imitate Rader’s success with radio on an international scale, Walter Turnbull, an elder leader of the Christian and Missionary Alliance, directed Jones to think geopolitically. Encouraging Jones’ idea to create a missionary radio station, he drew a mental map of existing missionary strongholds and coaxed Jones to consider various sites: a radio
station in the U.S. territory of the Philippines where he could potentially broadcast to all of Asia; a station in Palestine that would not only be symbolic of millennial coming, but could focus on Muslim conversion; or a site in Latin America, he said, could create important competition with the Catholic Church, and build a network among scattered missionaries there. As many of his biographers have noted, Jones decided to “go south with radio,” a conviction he said was primarily spiritual, but in fact, spoke to the geography of U.S. empire and, specifically, evangelical networks that had built around that empire.  

Despite his privileged connections, Jones was rather unprepared and ignorant of the world into which he entered. He travelled among networks of stationed missionaries in Panama, Puerto Rico, Costa Rica and Venezuela in 1928, and was surprised to find resistance. The majority Catholic countries, he later recalled, “wouldn't give us permission, or even think of Protestant missionaries coming on the air with Gospel broadcasting.” When he returned to Chicago, he decided to finish high school and return to college, apparently driven by a sense of ignorance when confronted by the far more educated Latin American elite that he had met abroad. While studying, he came into contact with a young missionary, Reuben Larson, who had returned to the area on missionary furlough—a period during which missionaries returned to their home country to revisit their churches, spend time in their home communities, tour evangelical organizations and raise money for their ongoing missions. Larson, who had recently made enormous headway with the Ecuadorian government through his Oriente mission, pitched Ecuador as an ideal site for Jones’ radio operation. Jones would soon discover that U.S. evangelical missionaries had fostered considerably deep roots in Ecuador—their presence, in fact, neatly followed the growing relevance of U.S. economic influence.  

Evangelical Missions and the United States in Ecuador  

While Dwight Moody was extolling Christianity as a moral anchor for U.S. capitalist modernity, Ecuador was undergoing its own religious and capitalist transformation. As mentioned earlier, for much of the 19th century, conservative president García Moreno had sought to consolidate the Catholic hold over Ecuadorian politics, impeding the immigration of non-Catholics to the country, placing the Church in charge of education, and preventing the
publication of printed material considered blasphemous to the faith. The Liberal Revolution of 1895 reverted these regulations, and in an effort to upend the Conservative hold over elite Ecuadorian politics, Alfaro, the new President, welcomed non-Catholic foreigners into the country and exiled foreign Catholic clergy.

Alfaro’s movement heralded a new era of Ecuadorian politics, but at the same time, signaled a more gradual integration of Ecuador into a rapidly advancing U.S.-driven economy. For much of the 19th century, Ecuador had little diplomatic relationship with the United States and major traders in the United States, in turn, had little relationship, or knowledge, of Ecuador. Guayaquil merchants found better markets in its immediate neighbors and in Spain than in the United States; Ecuadorian tastes for imports were likewise more focused on European markets. But, by the end of the U.S. civil war and the final decades of the 19th century, U.S. industry production and its imperial ambitions had changed significantly. As its western frontier closed and industrialization boomed, U.S. capitalists became anxious to access global trade markets; the Spanish American War and following decades of imperialist expansion further encouraged efforts that entangled the spread of U.S. “civilization” with commercial expansion. Both likewise reflected the rise of missionary culture. In Ecuador, meanwhile, as the 1890s progressed, merchants and developers began to look North for investment. In 1893, Ecuador sent a delegation to the Chicago Columbian Exposition to put Ecuadorian culture and natural resources on display and coax foreign investment. The platform also underlined the growing importance of Ecuadorian cacao in the country’s export market. Over the following years, a new telegraph line brought with it new sources of information, bringing Ecuador’s reading public into closer contact with U.S. news and reports. In 1897, Eloy Alfaro commissioned the U.S. capitalist Archer Harman and a team of investors to build the Quito-Guayaquil railroad, which was finally completed in 1908.

As noted in the introduction, for the Ecuadorian liberal elite, these represented important advances in state formation but also highlighted the perils of economic imperialism. Too, many noted that costly ventures like the railroad’s completion had still done little to address a central geopolitical question. By the first decades of the 20th century, an indebted and militarily weak Ecuador was in conflict with its neighbors on almost every international front. State representatives negotiated a border treaty with Brazil in 1904 and with Colombia in 1916. With
its southern neighbor, Peru, however, the differences in territorial claims were so large and so contested that compromise became impossible. Both states circulated vastly different maps of territory: at stake was more than half of Ecuador’s claimed national territory. The dispute centered on three territories. Tumbes and Jaen sat on the southern border of Ecuador. Tumbes, to the west, was mostly desert. Its four rivers created important connections to the ocean, land suitable for tobacco, and had a tendency to move over time—a characteristic that only fueled conflict. Several of the larger towns in the area fought for Peruvian independence in the 19th century. The third and most contentious region was the Oriente, which included more than 100,000 square miles of rubber and potentially petroleum-rich Amazonian jungle. Because colonial documents were largely inconclusive, either state often looked to justify their possession of territory by providing evidence of state control.

When the liberal’s president Eloy Alfaro opened Ecuador to the presence of Protestants in the late 19th century, then, it appeared as a moment of particular fortune for evangelical Christians, but it was also a deliberate strategy to encourage colonization of the Oriente, while at the same time, countering the power of Catholic missions. At the close of the 19th century, traditional Protestant sects had already developed a vast missionary network, but evangelical Christians, like Jones, had just begun to take up the banner of millennial evangelism abroad. The first evangelical missionaries arrived in Guayaquil in the late 19th century, and true to form, they aimed to encourage commercial trade with U.S. businesses. They were met with hostility, however. Catholic congregations correctly identified their presence as an organized plan to dilute their social control.

Reuben Larson, Jones’ contact in 1928, built out from the Protestant missions in Guayaquil to make deeper inroads with the Ecuadorian state. He and his wife petitioned the Liberal government to receive a land grant to settle in the Oriente. They received an assignment: the mission would employ the labor of local indigenous groups to create several important government roads and posts in the Tena region—useful outposts that would advance Ecuadorian control in contested territory. For the missionaries, the task of road-building presented an important opportunity to fund their mission, build a relationship with the Ecuadorian state, and to contact indigenous communities in the region—their potential converts. The missionaries would employ the traditional exploitative concertaje system, an abusive system of debt peonage in
which elites granted small loans by selling inexpensive items at elevated prices to indigenous laborers. The loans created a debt account and, as one government official summarized, initiated a system of power opened to “all classes of abuse.”

In national politics, liberals focused on the *concertaje* as an issue with which to critique the conservative elite’s claims to moral authority. However, as several scholars have noted, such critiques often fell short of real reform, ultimately doing little to obstruct the informal continuation of the practice, particularly in areas where elite power went unchecked. Although by the 1920s, the liberal Ayora administration began to legislate against the use of the *concertaje* in the Oriente, efforts were often stifled by the reality that the groups most likely to commit the offense were also the state’s most significant representatives in the area. Protestant missionaries like the Larsons became known for using the *concertaje* as a method of establishing contact, but the Larsons allegedly paid laborers in currency and allowed workers to pay their debts back with either labor or money. The practice was strategic: ostensibly, the laborers would be lured away from Catholicism and view the U.S. missions as benefactors. Reflecting the paternalistic tone that would become characteristic of his writing, Jones reflected years later that the Larsons’ strategy was controversial, but that he was “grateful” for their “different way of getting the Gospel to the Red man.”

The U.S. evangelicals were careful to develop their reputation as trusted representatives of the Ecuadorian state. When the indigenous laborers working under the evangelical missionaries completed a pathway between villages and a connection to Quito, the missionaries would return some funds that they did not use in order to further gain the government’s favor. In turn, the government awarded them land and legal rights to monopolize the trade of salt in a large region of the jungle—further means for the Evangelicals to both advance commercial control and generate contact with native peoples. The government also requested that the mission at Dos Ríos would double as a guest home for government surveyors.

These entanglements between the Ecuadorian government and the Oriente missions reflected state efforts at modernization and, by the 1940s, became more explicitly tied to Ecuadorian territorial claims and conflicts with Peru. By 1940, the Minister of Foreign Relations and Director of Borders, Julio Tobar Donoso, connected missionary work to Ecuador’s international conflicts. In a letter for appropriations, he implored that the state should provide
national economic support for missionaries in recognition for their “activities to re-establish regions for the civilization of Ecuadorian sovereign territory.” The next year, he outlined that the state needed the foreign missions because the nation held a poor and weak position in the border war. “With little population or public funds we are poor, our position in the international order is almost unperceivable and insignificant and our military has little force,” Tobar Donoso said, rather frankly. “Peru can occupy our lands by just placing four soldiers or colonies. We simply cannot because we do not have [soldiers or colonies].” Placing missionaries on the grade was a matter of urgency: “The least we can do is colonize our provinces with a human element that provide guarantees for the eastern lands, to finally defend them from invasion at least by demonstrating eminent domain, not with four soldiers walking in the jungle but with agricultural farms and civilized peoples.”

At first glance, perhaps, it would appear that Jones’ pursuit of a Quito radio station involved little opportunity for the kind of frontier “civilizing” work that the state was looking to generate. However, the evangelical missionaries were astute enough to pitch radio as a geopolitical project. In their formal letter to request the government’s support, the missionaries stated plainly that their desire was to “install this station primarily for Gospel purposes.” They advised, however, that the “modern broadcasting station” and the missionary projects that surrounded the station’s operation would have ample benefits for the state’s ongoing pursuits of modernization, communication and national territorial control. The missionaries promised the government regular airtime for their own broadcasting and stated that they would work with Ecuadorian nationals to create educational programs that could foster national identity and create a common culture among listeners.

In their written appeal, the evangelicals’ promises became more generous: the radio, they said, would “open up vast sections of Ecuador’s interior to world news and happenings” and their educational programs would teach “the poor classes” in villages and “inaccessible” areas to speak, read, and write in Spanish while also learning Ecuadorian history. In order to substantiate their claims, they told the government that they would be dedicated to not only creating the first powerful radio hub, but would also begin a program to place radio receivers throughout the country and provide affordable radios for popular purchase in the cities. Their mission, they said, would bring Ecuador “into the march of world progress which other South American
in contrast to the costly project of building a railway, the only price that the government would pay for radio, the missionaries said, would be the guarantee of their presence: “the permission to experiment and operate and the economic protection necessary for the fullest development of the project for the good of Ecuador.” By the document’s close, the missionaries fashioned an elaborate package: they would provide all of the technology and funds to build a radio station in Quito, would sell receivers at a low price to spread radio listening among highland villages, and would donate airtime and cooperation to the government of Ecuador, including the Congress, the Executive Offices and the Ministry of the Interior. President Ayora granted Heralding Christ Jesus’ Blessing (HCJB) a twenty-five year license in 1930. The station became known as “La Voz de los Andes.”

Missionary Radio in Ecuador

HCJB, “La Voz de los Andes” melded two separate geopolitical strategies: the global strategy of millenarianism and Ecuadorian defense interests. To fund his project, Jones went back home and embarked on a furlough tour across the Midwest church circuit, showing a film that he made of the Oriente mission and asking for economic support in the form of small donations. The film would provide one of the first cinematic visualizations for the missionary imagination. It broadcasted the missionaries as civilizing agents, and projected images of an “uncivilized” world that dramatized the global spread of Christianity: the film, he said, included “incredible” shots of the rich vegetation, “a witch doctor in action; Indians trading; a marriage fiesta and a canoe shooting the rapid.”

The very presentation of the film also underlined his intentions to use the new technologies of media to advance the global mission: just as film of “native” Ecuador allowed local church communities to imagine themselves as part of a global missionary projects, the technology of radio, he said, likewise would “speed up the missionary message,” and hasten the Second Coming. He asked local church attendees for donations to set up a 5,000 watt short wave station and he disclosed his plan to distribute, sell and give away low-priced efficient radio receivers “to the natives” who would be told they were receiving, “voice boxes of God.”

Jones’ grassroots fundraising emphasized an the international connection between local
Midwestern U.S. church-goers and the global millennial project. One announcement published in the Defender, a local newsletter for Christian followers, put pressure on members to donate: “If one's income is 40.00 a week,” the announcement reminded its patrons, “the first four dollars belong to the Lord before the grocery bill is paid, and before the payment on the home is taken care of.” In a later venture, Jones told audiences that for 30 dollars he would have the donors’ name emblazoned on one of the radios placed in highland Ecuador towns. Although, in the middle of the Depression, Jones failed to raise all the money he set out to collect, he succeeded in generating a substantial grassroots network. He had advertised his mission and invited the evangelical Midwest to “save” the people of the Ecuadorian highlands, and hasten the rapture.

When examined side-by-side, the furlough tour and the petition to the Ecuadorian government illustrated that, before the station was even set up, radio offered disparate parties separate, but seemingly compatible, geopolitical projects. When they told the government that they would broadcast presidential addresses, news and congressional announcements, “throughout the country, so all may hear readily and instantly what occurs at the Capitol,” the geography of radio appeared as a one-way integration of the state over the fractured national territorial space. To missionaries, Jones presented the radio station as an opportunity for individuals to participate in a larger geopolitical plan of global salvation. Radio, he reminded them, was a technology that hastened their aim of propelling the gospel to all corners of the earth. In this, and in their claims of geographical reach—of “opening up vast sections of Ecuador” the radio project fit into the framework of a traditional missionary-state alliance.

On the ground, new motives and actors came into play. Jones’ memoir, Radio: The New Missionary, cites his pioneer railroad trip as an important moment for the “arrival” of radio in Ecuador. However, while the radio was an extremely novel technology, particularly in the countryside, Jones’ railroad performance actually fit into an existing culture of radio listening that had already begun to develop. Indeed, the evangelicals were only the latest radio operators to recognize the potential for radio in Ecuadorian public culture. In 1928, the Ayora administration commemorated this nascent radio presence by crafting the first state regulations for radio communication in the country, organizing an office of radio inspection within the Department of Public Works, requiring operators to acquire official licenses, and establishing a 250-watt transmitter for government use. Yet, despite a brewing interest in radio, commercial
and government broadcasting struggled to take off. In 1930, radio ownership remained rather uncommon: imported radios were, as in many places, still a luxury only affordable to the elite.

However, popular interest began to secure that, despite the inhibiting costs of owning a radio, a radio culture would emerge. In 1930, Quito saw the beginning of radio as public culture when the station, Ecuador Radio, was able to pick up a signal from Argentina of a live boxing event: the Argentine Gogliardo Purcaro was boxing the black Ecuadorian, Kid Lombardo, from the coastal town of Esmeraldas, in Buenos Aires. The fight lasted twelve rounds and eventually, brought victory to the Ecuadorian lightweight. By its close, the plaza was filled with listeners. In Quito, the broadcast marked the advent of a new geography of radio, characterized by the sonic connection between global events and city plaza center. As so few people had radios at home, emerging radio stations set up speakers in the windows of their plaza-lined offices and began to broadcast far off events to a crowd that gathered below. Radio Bolivar began to operate in 1936 outside the Teatro Bolivar in Guayaquil. In 1940, Radio Quito began transmitting sports events outside of the headquarters of *El Comercio*. By the close of the 1930s, radio was permanently altering the confines of Ecuadorian cultural space and geographic imagination. Plazas, bars and the streets became sites where a publicly placed radio could draw a crowd, and create a public discussion. Listening to the radio in the plaza evolved from a spectacle in 1930 to common practice and everyday culture by 1940.

Over the course of the 1930s, HCJB’s evangelical strategy built upon the idea of radio as a public social culture, but it looked to develop a vaster network of listeners, beyond the urban center. Using funds raised in the United States, the missionaries build and sold low-cost radios in the cities, and in 1931, the station began broadcasting regularly in Quechua, in order to reach non-Spanish speakers. In 1936, they received a government permit to create a travelling radio station. In a format that echoed Moody’s horse-drawn carriages and the Salvation Army’s street bands, the missionaries began using a 1935 International Harvester coupe equipped with a portable transmitter, generator and loudspeaker, to travel to rural towns, visit public squares and broadcast from the streets of highland villages on the route out of Quito to the Larsons’ Tena station. The missionaries reported drawing substantial crowds in each town.

While visiting, the missionaries also identified sympathetic villagers or town leaders to whom they strategically gifted small, homemade fixed-tune Reed & Reed radio receivers.
fixed-tune radios were rudimentary boxes that used recycled parts, and, most importantly, had no tuning dial. As a result, these radios prevented listeners from changing the station. Using funds raised in the United States, missionaries provided the radios free of charge to town leaders, and emphasized that they should be put in public places or central gathering spots. They also offered to sell additional receivers at a reduced price. The missionaries set up one condition for the “gift”: the community would allow them to return to the town later to conduct repairs, or replace it if it was damaged. This repair clause would also allow the missionaries to “fix” the radio in the case that a listener figured out how to change the station. Anecdotal evidence suggests that this was, in fact, a relatively quick and common procedure that became the pastime of young villagers who would work to liberate the radio. Jones recalled the tactic thus: “You might have a whole village that would listen to it, but you have the right to come in and repair it […] and while you were there you could have an evangelical service. The “gifted” radios thus created an important local foothold for the missionaries, extending the power of radio into public spheres far beyond the public spaces in Quito.

Transnational collaboration

In a few short years, this network of fixed-tune radios would be just the beginning of a collaborative radio project that brought together the geopolitical aims of the U.S. missionaries, the Ecuadorian State, and the U.S. government. In 1940, the missionaries received a corporate donation that they had been longing for: a more powerful transmitter that permitted them to regularly transmit several broadcasts: a long range (fm) station for Quito, programming for the surrounding highlands, a regional transmission that could be reached on shortwave around the continent, and an international transmission that could be heard in the United States and Europe. The U.S. government’s Office of the Coordinator of Inter-American Affairs (CIAA), a wartime office run by Nelson Rockefeller that produced pro-Allied and pro-U.S. mass media for Latin American audiences, took notice. In 1940, through CIAA coordination, HCJB become an important node in NBC’s “Cadena de las Américas” network, reproducing U.S. programs received on short wave signals to local and regional long wave channels. The arrangement brought in new, important funds that the station used to build a recording center. In 1942, this relationship was further strengthened when Jones was elected as the Chairman of the Ecuador
Organizing Committee of the CIAA. The post made Jones responsible for distributing CIAA programs among local stations and also allowed him direct access to the CIAA offices—a connection that often became useful when the station needed replacement parts, sought out additional income for propaganda programs, or aimed to overpower rival Catholic stations.

By 1941, HCJB found itself at the forefront of both U.S. and Ecuadorian propaganda dissemination. Initially, the station filled its airtime hours with original programs that imitated U.S. government messaging, interspersed with evangelical preaching. However, as U.S. propaganda further developed, the station became an important hub in a broader regional network, airing radio theater programs and Pan American music developed in Washington and New York. Meanwhile, at the same time, HCJB retained its alliance with the Ecuadorian State. As I have detailed in my dissertation, in 1940 and 1941, amid a devastating border war with Peru, HCJB became a major producer of both nationalist music and government press releases, directed at the United States, in English, and at the Ecuadorian people, in Spanish and Quechua. The radio station became an outlet for Ecuadorian propaganda and news releases that dramatized Peruvian invasions as an “Axis-influenced” incursion in a peaceful nation, seeking to incite support abroad. In 1941, the station fueled Ecuadorian nationalist pride when it disseminated, in Ecuador and in the United States, a nationalist map of Ecuadorian territory. That same year, President Arroyo del Río issued a decree that forbade foreigners from owning stations, and required broadcasters to begin and end each broadcast with the announcement that they were broadcasting from Ecuador, “an Amazonic country.” The law also demanded that radio announcers pass a test on the history of Ecuador’s geography and historical claims. HCJB was granted an exception—the station was actively proving itself to be an important outlet for the Ecuadorian state’s efforts to not only project its nationalist messages to its own people, but also generate sympathy of Ecuador’s position vis a vis her neighbors, in the United States.

Bolstering this image, HCJB also began to produce a popular (and controversial) national music: the pasillo. Only a few years after setting up his station, Jones hired Marco T. Hidrobo, a musician from Cotocachi who was a skilled writer and performer of Ecuador’s pasillo and yaraví music. Hidrobo’s work at HCJB made it an important recording studio for the nationalist ballads. Jones, of course, had long understood that playing secular music was an important way to draw in non-believers. In the pasillo, however, he also found a way to position his station as a
nationalist ally, much as the Larsons had done in the Oriente: *pasillo* music often referenced Ecuador’s geographic and cultural heritage, recalling a history of place and a sense of territorial loss. The *pasillo* further engendered HCJB to nationalist audiences as the songs were often rejected by other stations, who regarded the style as too closely associated with local drinking culture. For Jones, who was raised in the Chicago Salvation Army, the thought of gaining access to local tavern audiences was another benefit.

Producing *pasillo music* also became a method of gaining status as a benefactor of “national culture”—a paternalistic role that deployed the missionary’s access to recording technology as way to heighten their role in nationalist cultural construction. By 1943, when HCJB celebrated its tenth year anniversary, several speakers referenced the station’s paradoxical position. Miguel Cucalón, the Minister of Communication heralded HCJB’s role in promoting Ecuadorian geopolitics during the border war, by “spreading our propaganda and making us known in remote places—these things signify patriotism.” HCJB news reporter Francisco Cruz drew attention to their production and dissemination of nationalist maps. HCJB, he said, “has become intimately linked to our national aspirations, a loyal and a powerful arm in the defense of our territorial rights, as it proved when it distributed 15,000 maps that demonstrated our legal right to our territory in our nation and abroad.”

Hidrobo also spoke: he connected the rise of national music to the 1941 border war and noted HCJB’s rather unforeseen role in Ecuadorian national production. The station, he said, engendered nationalist pride by promoting national music well before the pasillo became a celebrated part of national culture. It was, he noted, “a paradox”: the missionaries were “more committed to the cultivation of our art than many Ecuadorians are.” Hidrobo recalled the iconography of Ecuadorian nationalist geographical claims, and, invoking the name of the Incan king who nationalists noted ruled the extensive territorial kingdom of Quito, Hidrobo added that the nation needed outlets like the radio station, “to channel its artistic movement so that it might honor our heritage, our race, our blood, which is the blood of ATAHUALPA.”

Yet, this exaltation of nationalist culture at HCJB, should also be understood as a part of the duality of the evangelicals’ position in Ecuador. Earlier that day, Jones wrote to the CIAA, encouraging the U.S. stations to play Ecuadorian pasillos on U.S. and Latin American radio and sending them several songs, including Hidrobo’s “Canto de Mi Tierra” (Song of My Land) to
incorporate into propaganda programming. The irony, that Hidrobo’s nationalist music should be re-used as a part of a transnational propaganda campaign was only further underlined when Jones suggested that the songwriter should not be paid. He told the OCIAA he did “not wish to establish a precedent,” and thus, had provided no compensation to the musicians or the composers. He encouraged the OCIAA to mail some “recognition…most musicians here are proverbially as poor as a church mouse.”66 He suggested a book on U.S. music in Spanish.

Months later, an unprecedented populist movement heralded the rise of the populist politician José María Velasco Ibarra, who vowed to repudiate Ecuador’s territorial losses and contest foreign imperialism and U.S. domination. Yet, HCJB stayed put. In the post-war period the station remained a prominent house for the production of pasillo, and, beginning in 1944, it was the only station live-streaming Congressional hearings around the country. Jones’ station welcomed Velasco Ibarra and the new president took to the airwaves to address both Ecuador, and the broader international public. On the eve of the station’s twelfth year in broadcast, in 1946, Jones was invited to lunch at the new leader’s palace in a show of gratitude for his public broadcasting services.67 Jones, meanwhile, was looking farther East than the Oriente. As World War II gave way to the Cold War, he and other fundamentalists geared up for a broader challenge—to get his, and the U.S. message—behind the imminent Iron Curtain.

The story of HCJB in Ecuador sheds light on the ways in which imperial and nationalist visions converged, but it also invites us to re-examine the ways that the mass media technologies of the 20th century changed the ways states, and transnational groups, surfaced as geopolitical tools.

2 For more on the importance of regionalism and geographic division to early nation, see Peter V. N. Henderson. *Gabriel García Moreno and Conservative State Formation in the Andes.* (University of Texas Press: 2008), 31. For more on divisions and economy, see Clark, (1998).
3 Ibid, 8-31.
4 Ibid.
5 Ibid.


8 A Kim Clark’s work has offered an excellent account of this discourse of national unity and the struggles to build the railway. Clark, (1998).


10 Clark (1998).


13 Ibid.


16 For evangelical narrations of this history see: Frank S. Cook. *Seeds in the Wind: the Story of the Voice of the Andes, Radio Station HCJB, Ecuador.* (Miami: World Missionary Fellowship, 1961); Lois Neely. *Come Up to This Mountain: the Miracle of Clarence W. Jones and HCJB.* (Wheaton: Tyndale House Publishes, 1980);

17 Paul Rader. Audio Archives. Available: [BGCA].

18 “Questions Answered by Dr. C. W. Jones,” 17. [BGCA].

19 “Questions Answered by Dr. C. W. Jones,” 19. [BGCA].

20 Jones, (1946), 18-19.

21 Ibid.

22 “Questions Answered by Dr. C. W. Jones,” 21. [BGCA].

23 Ibid, 48.

24 Dwight Moody, coincidentally, organized a mass evangelical revival at the same event.


27 Goffin.


29 Margaret Joan Larson Carlson. Interview with Esther Braly. (November 2, 1983). Collection 263. [BGCA].


31 “Questions Answered by Dr. C. W. Jones,” 21. [BGCA].

32 Larson Carlson. (November 2, 1983), [BGCA].

33 Ibid.


36 Ibid.

37 Clarence W. Jones to His Excellency Dr. P. Egnez B. Consul General for Ecuador; For Señor Aguero and the People of Ecuador. 12 April 1930. Jones, Papers. Box 5. [BGCA].

38 Ibid.

39 Ibid.

40 Ibid.

41 Ibid.


43 Clarence Jones to Katherine Jones. 28 September 1930. Jones, Papers. Box 5. [BGCA].

44 "La Voz de los Andes Inaugural Souvenir: Special Edition Featuring the Completion of the New HCJB 10,000 Watt Transmitter on Shortwave." February 1940. Jones, Papers. Box 7. [BGCA].

Jones To Egnez. (12 April 1930). Jones, Papers. Box 5. [BGCA].

“This was a boxcar, unique, containing the strangest paraphernalia and equipment ever seen in Ecuador.” Jones, (1946), 12-13.


In the same year, *El Telégrafo* newspaper began regular broadcasts; in 1938 the railroad office inaugurated the Radio Nariz del Diablo, also located in Quito, but named after the switchback location that united Quito and Guayaquil where Jones marked the 25th anniversary five years before. Ibid, 18.

San Félix, 17. San Félix says popular recollections place the crowd number at 5000.


Ibid.

“Questions answered by Dr C. W. Jones ” 37. [BGCA].


“Questions answered by Dr C. W. Jones.” 37. [BGCA]

Ibid.

Jones to Vanderford. 1 July 1942. RG 229, [NA CP].


Ibid, 5-6.

Ibid, 12.


Invitation. Jones Papers. Box 7. [BGCA]