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Towards Indigenous Cosmopolitanism

Vers un cosmopolitisme bolivien

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Abstract: This research paper aims to examine the contemporary politicization of Bolivia's indigenous identified peoples through the lens of indigenous cosmopolitanism (Goodale 2006). By applying this hybrid theory of cosmopolitanism we can better understand the possibility of plurinational forms of governance and citizenship in the country. Using Mark Goodale's theory we can begin to piece together indigenous cosmopolitanism in its capacity to combine indigeneity with other more global forms of inclusion. Indigenous civil society has envisioned a new type of sociopolitical citizenship, a new framework of belonging in which marginalized indigenous groups are brought together with other members of "the race". To understand the way in which this indigenous cosmopolitanism has affected Bolivian politics and society this paper will look to examine the current party in power, Movimiento al Socialismo (MAS), the Bolivian Constitution of 2009 and the El Alto region's Wayna Rap Movement.

Résumé: Cet article vise à examiner la politisation actuelle des peuples identifiés comme indigènes en Bolivie à travers le prisme du cosmopolitisme indigène (Goodale 2006). Par l'application de cette théorie hybride du cosmopolitisme, nous pouvons mieux comprendre la possibilité de formes plurinationales de gouvernance et de citoyenneté dans le pays. En utilisant la théorie de Mark Goodale, nous pouvons commencer à reconstituer le cosmopolitisme indigène dans sa capacité à combiner indigénéité avec d'autres formes plus globales d'inclusion. La société civile indigène a envisagé un nouveau type de citoyenneté sociopolitique, un nouveau cadre d'appartenance dans lequel les groupes marginalisés indigènes sont réunis avec les autres membres de «la race». Afin de comprendre la manière dont ce cosmopolitisme indigène a affecté la politique et la société boliviennes, ce article examinera l'actuel parti au pouvoir, Movimiento al Socialismo (MAS), la Constitution bolivienne de 2009 et le mouvement rap Wayna de la région d'El Alto.

This research paper aims to examine the contemporary politicization of Bolivia's indigenous identified peoples through the lens of indigenous cosmopolitanism.[1] In applying this hybrid theory of cosmopolitanism we can better understand the possibility of plurinational forms of governance and citizenship in the country. The scope of this examination will be limited beginning with the year 2000 to the present with the catalyst social movement known as the Water War Revolt in the city of Cochabamba. Using Mark Goodale's theory of indigenous cosmopolitanism, this paper looks to frame cosmopolitanism in a new light and firmly within national borders. Linking this theory with the events that have unfolded in Bolivia we can begin to understand the political space indigenous peoples are forging for themselves and the way in which their inclusion in politics is subsequently changing ideas of citizenship, representational democracy, and constitutional rights.

This topic of research is important to the field of international studies as indigenous peoples are making great strides in their struggle for inclusion in both national politics as well as the international arena. Contributions to concepts such as democracy and citizenship made by indigenous identified peoples, particularly in countries with an indigenous popular majority, offer new and sometimes radical ideas. Exploring the ways in which these mobilizations have contributed to the possibility of a true and uniquely representational Bolivian democracy can have implications for other nations. The way in which new reforms and Constitutional amendments will affect not only the symbolic nature of democracy, but also its day-to-day power, requires much more research. It is clear that exploring these new trends within the context of

[1] Mark Goodale, "Reclaiming Modernity: Indigenous Cosmopolitanism and the Coming of the Second Revolution in Bolivia," *American Ethnologist* 33, 4 (2006): 634-649.

indigenous cosmopolitanism will contribute greatly to knowledge in the multidisciplinary field of international studies. Before engaging in the current literature surrounding this topic the conceptual boundaries of this research should be clearly defined.

Understanding Bolivian Indigeneity

First, in order to understand the Bolivian political climate and to grasp the ideas propagated by indigenous cosmopolitanism, it is imperative to understand indigeneity in Bolivia and the way it is politically articulated. It is estimated that approximately 60% (some sources list figures as high as 65%) of the country's 9.2 million people identify as indigenous or as pueblos originarios, the original people.[2] The Quechua and Aymara peoples are the two predominant population groups in the highlands while the lowlands are comprised of mostly mestizo groups.[3] Timo Schaefer, in his comparative analysis of the social movements in Bolivia and Ecuador quotes anthropologist Xavier Albo who sees politics as always having been a central component of indigenous community life in Latin America even prior to the advent of mass politics in the 1930s. As quoted in Schaefer, he maintains that:

> In such a context identity is determined, to be sure, by communal bonds of belonging, by a shared language, shared traditions, shared cultural and behavioural norms. But it is determined also by a shared process of deliberate initiative through which the community decides on how to organise the joint process of economic, social and cultural (re)production.[4]

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[2] Susan Healey, "Ethno-Ecological Identity and the Restructuring of Political Power in Bolivia," *Latin American Perspectives* 0094-582 (2009): 83.; John L. Hammond, "Indigenous Community Justice in the Bolivian Constitution of 2009," *Human Rights Quarterly* 33 (2011): 650.

[3] Anita Breuer. "The Problematic Relation between Direct Democracy and Accountability in Latin America: Evidence from the Bolivian Case," *Bulletin of Latin American Research* 27, 1 (2008): 13.

[4] Timo Schaefer. "Engaging Modernity: The Political Making of Indigenous Movements in Bolivia and Ecuador, 1900-2008," *Third World Quarterly 30, 2 (*2009): 401.

Schaefer also presents the view of Deborah Yashar who sees the contemporary politicization of indigenista groups as a response to the state's intrusion on communal autonomies, particularly the implementation of neoliberal policies, which is seen as a direct challenge to the reproduction of indigeneity.[5] Whichever view one ascribes to it is clear that the preservation of cultural distinctiveness, indigenous histories, traditions and languages has always been at the forefront of indigenous demands in Bolivia. However, in recent years, it appears that indigenous groups are defining themselves through their collective vision of an inclusive and equitable nation rather than the cultural differences between native groupings.[6]

All the authors examined clearly map out the recent history of indigenous social movements in Bolivia, with particular emphasis on the Water War revolt as a catalyst movement which resulted in a call for a new Popular Assembly.[7] In the late 1990's the Bolivian government of Hugo Banzer Suarez went forward with a scheme to sell the concessions to provide water in the city of Cochabamba to the U.S. based multinational Bechtel Corporation. As prices for water began to rise dramatically following the signing of this contract an immense response and loud social unrest soon followed. During protests and demonstrations one Bolivian youth was murdered and dozens were injured at the hands of the national army. Now referred to as the Water War Revolt, this

[5] Ibid., 399.
[6] Ibid., 411.
[7] Robert Albro, "The Culture of Democracy and Bolivia's Indigenous Movements," *Critique of Anthropology* 26 (2006): 388; Willem Assies, "Bolivia: A Gasified Democracy," *Revista Europea de Estudios Latinoamericanos y del Caribe/European Review of Latin American and Caribbean Studies* 76 (2004): 27; Jeffrey Webber, "Bolivia in the Era of Evo Morales,": 249.; Healey, "Ethno-Ecological," 83.

massive uprising forced the Banzer government to cancel its contract with Bechtel in April of 2000 and set the stage for the Popular Assembly.[8]

There is an overwhelming consensus surrounding how instrumental these public assemblies were, which were organized by indigenous leaders, as well as worker, trade and agrarian union communities.[9] These movements are also seen as holding real political power as they are identified as the leading force which successfully overthrew both President Gonzalo Sanchez de Lozada and his predecessor Carlos Mesa as well as setting the stage for the electoral victory of President Evo Morales, the leader of the Movimento al Socialismo (MAS: Movement Towards Socialism) in 2005.[10] Melissa MacLean even goes so far as to assert that these "extra-institutional" mechanisms have prevailed over institutional ones when determining the outcome of the political system.[11]

Thomas Biolsi, as cited in Goodale, believes that these new spaces of indigenous mobilization are shifting the terms by which these groups engage with the nation-state. Through his analysis of the different categories of legal and political spaces indigenous peoples have begun creating for themselves, he maintains that:

> [Indigenous peoples] assert new forms of self-identity and belonging that call into question dominant understandings of citizenship, nationalism, the legal categories of residency and domicile, and the foundations of civil and political rights.[12]

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[8] Goodale, "Reclaiming Modernity," 637.

[9] Albro, "The Culture of Democracy," 388; Healey, "Ethno-Ecological Identity," 85.

[10] Ibid., 84; Webber, "Era of Evo Morales," 249; Albro, "The Culture of Democracy," 387; Assies, "Gasified Democracy," 25; Schaefer, "Engaging modernity," 397.

[11] Melissa MacLean, "Decentralization, Mobilization and Democracy in Mature Neoliberalism: The Bolivian Case," *Dissertation Abstracts International, A: The Humanities and Social Sciences* vol. 66, issue 10 (2006): 3791.

[12] Goodale, "Reclaiming Modernity," 639.

Biolsi develops this by presenting the idea of multiplicity, that is, indigenous peoples are present physically in both traditionally native spaces as well as in modern institutions. They defy traditional expectations of more restrictive categories of identity and have forged new forms of subjectivity by excelling in things such as the arts and sciences while still remaining indigenous.[13] Although this is a rather simplified overview of the current state of indigenous affairs in Bolivia, it should provide some context for the emerging indigenous cosmopolitan consciousness which has impacted Bolivian society.

Indigenous Cosmopolitanism

The international relations theory of cosmopolitanism asserts the equality of all human beings across all levels of socio-economic-political spheres of citizenry. Cosmopolitans generally have broad conceptions of morality in which personal autonomy and freedoms outweigh conceptions of nation-state autonomy. Cosmopolitans advocate for global governance and the idea of a global citizenship. They call for equal protection of the environment and advocate against the negative side effects of technological development. The theory of cosmopolitanism shares some aspects of universalism, for example, the globally acceptable notion of human dignity that must be protected in international law.[14]

However this paper will present a very specific and even seemingly contradictory hybrid theory of cosmopolitanism; indigenous cosmopolitanism. Mark Goodale maintains a new form of indigenous cosmopolitanism is emergent, specifically focusing

[13] Ibid.

[14] John Baylisand Steve Smith, *The Globalization of World Politics: An Introduction to International Relations* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001), 53.

on Bolivia, that combines indigeneity with other more global forms of inclusion. Indigenous civil society is forging a new category of socio-political citizenship, a new framework of inclusion, in which marginalized indigenous groups are brought together with other urban indigenous groups all over the world; collectively this all-encompassing indigenous community is referred to as "the race".[15] This sense of global belonging reflects the resolve to harness culture for political purposes and is a rejection of the expectations of both modernity and traditional forms of indigeneity. Indigenous cosmopolitanism projects a contradictory framework of inclusion, as national identity often is for indigenous peoples. It is described as both translocal and transnational *and* non-global and non-universal.[16] This is to say that indigenous peoples envision a world of cosmos that are variable and relative. They do not envision a world in which they have the same rights and obligations as everyone else, indigenous or not. An indigenous cosmopolitan, contrary to the traditional international relations cosmopolitan, would not justify their views based on a moral principle nor within a moral framework. Rather, indigenousness is being redefined because it is part of the broader political struggle and it is used as a discursive weapon against elites in the country.[17]

Manifestations of Indigenous Cosmopolitanism in Bolivia

To understand the way in which this indigenous cosmopolitanism has affected Bolivian politics and society this paper will look to examine the current party in power,

[15] Goodale, "Reclaiming Modernity," 635.
[16] Ibid.
[17] Ibid., 641.

Movimiento al Socialismo (MAS), the Bolivian Constitution of 2009 and the El Alto region's Wayna Rap Movement.

MAS, which began as a leftist political movement and has now transformed into the leading political party, brings indigenous people together. These people align themselves with non-Native others in a political imagination not limited to indigenous peoples' issues or to solidarities bound to the nation-state.[18] MAS has begun reconstituting indigeneity as being located within a modest and regional space which draws on both neo-Marxism and neoliberalism. Its statement of ideological principles of 2005 reaffirm a desire to create a post-revolutionary Bolivia that is founded on human rights, participatory democracy, respect for difference and liberty.[19] Its statement of ideological principles as described in Goodale's work is seen as a mosaic of references to:

> the cosmology of Western culture, the Industrial Revolution, Homo Faber, the folly of the U.S.-led coca leaf eradication campaign, globalization, neocolonialism, the principle of a living planet expressed by Pachamama, a letter written to George Washington by an "indigenous leader of the redskins," the philosophy of the Ayllu, structural adjustment, and the vaguely utopian writings of the Club of Rome.[20]

These radical expressions of indigenous cosmopolitanism are articulated within a unitary cosmopolitan framework but also brings together multiple cosmopolitanisms and even regional and national frames of references.[21] Their ideological principles and promises of participatory democracy are now being put to the test in the context of national politics and policies since the electoral victory of MAS's leader Evo Morales in

[18] Robin Maria Delugan, "Indigeneity across Borders: Hemispheric Migrations and Cosmopolitan Encounters," *American Ethnologist* 37,1 (2010): 84.
[19] Goodale, "Reclaiming Modernity," 635.
[20] Ibid.
[21] Ibid.

2005. Waltraud Queiser Morales looks at Evo Morales's government as being truly representative of all of Bolivia with many of his ministers being university-educated radicals and leaders of the country's indigenous, labour and peasant movements. She also points to the inclusion of women and Indian identified peoples in the Cabinet as being truly representational.[22]

Since their advent to power MAS has begun to redefine democracy in the country based on the idea of plurinationalism which can be seen as an indigenous cosmopolitan ideal. This conception of plurinational democracy, as it is yet to be solidified in legal or territorial orders, is rather difficult to define. It can be understood as a decentralization process which engages citizen involvement in municipal governance, politically recognizes grassroots organizations, and attempts to articulate local ideas of personhood with regional and national ideas about citizenship.[23] Bret Gustafson tries to explain the ideological goal of this type of governance describing that it aims to highlight the "mosaic" of pluralities where indigenous rights are represented among and across multiple institutions and scales of the state.[24] The Bolivian Constitution enacted by MAS in 2009 can be seen as endorsing the extensive rights for indigenous peoples encapsulated in a plurinational state as well as recognizing its power to legitimize indigenous community justice. [25] Quickly glancing at the Preamble of the Constitution these intentions are clear and explicit:

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[22] Waltraud Queiser Morales, "Responding to Bolivian Democracy: Avoiding the Mistakes of Early U.S. Cuban Policy," *Military Review* 86, 4 (2006): 32.
[23] Bret Gustafson, "Manipulating Cartographies: Plurinationalism, Autonomy, and Indigenous Resurgence in Bolivia," *Anthropological Quarterly* 82, 4 (2009): 985-988; MacLean, "Decentralization," ii.
[24] Gustafson, "Manipulating Cartographies," 1009.
[25] Ibid., 987; Hammond, "Indigenous Community Justice," 649.

> We leave in the past the colonial, republican, and neoliberal State.
> We take up the historical challenge of collectively constructing the
> Unitary Social State of Plurinational Communitarian Law [….]
> free, independent, sovereign, democratic,
> intercultural, decentralized, and with autonomies.[26]

The ideological goals of MAS ascribe to many components of indigenous cosmopolitan consciousness that is prevalent in the country. While connections are being made in more recent articles, particularly those published after 2006, there remains a lot to be seen. The way in which new reforms and Constitutional amendments will affect not only the symbolic nature of democracy, but also its day-to-day power, requires much more research.

Although the politics of indigenous cosmopolitanism are the focus of this paper, it is also important to examine some of the cultural and social effects of this theory. Mark Goodale writes about the El Alto region's Wayna Rap Movement as the cultural variation on this theory. This movement is made up of urbanized campesino adolescents who speak Quechua, Aymara, Spanish and idiosyncratic Hispano-Amerindian hybrids. The youth are reclaiming possibilities of modernity as well as situating themselves in more global forms of inclusion through rap music.[27] Most of the El Alto rappers migrated to the city in the mid-1980s as the result of neoliberal austerity programs which caused devastating unemployment. Their response to this social and economic disruption was to use rap and hip hop music as a mode of cultural production.[28] The El Alto rappers are seen as negotiating between politics and culture

[26] Preamble and Article 1, constitution of Bolivia (2008) as cited in Gustafson 986.

[27] Goodale, "Reclaiming Modernity," 634.

[28] Ibid., 643.

expressed in a sophisticated awareness of their own power as cultural innovators. They wear baggy clothing like artists they see in North American media and create a hip hop dialect which draws from native languages and English exclamations.[29]

Goodale describes this indigenous cosmos as, "one that finds moral value and indeed empowerment within the marginalization of disaffected urban youth culture across the Americas (and beyond)".[30] He connects this new form of hip hop music to indigenous cosmopolitanism through three processes. The first process begins with the projections set forth by this music which bring the moral together with the political. The second process anchors these projections in emerging understandings of indigeneity, one that resists restrictive traditional categories of inclusion. Lastly this movement envisions new universes of meaning meant to be radical and potentially transformative.[31] This movement, along with the changing political climate and changing ideas of citizenship, is allowing Bolivia's indigenous peoples to demand and ensure a new status-quo in the country. This status-quo is far beyond the one that Bolivia, and the world, has historically offered them. In order to fully realize this process of political, social and cultural change in the country, the very idea of the state itself must be reconsidered. As presented above, the very idea of Bolivia *is* presently being reconsidered.

[29] Ibid., 643.
[30] Ibid., 644.
[31] Ibid.

Debates among Scholars

There are largely two areas of contestation among scholars who have written recently on the topic. The first being whether Bolivia is, or will become, a viable democracy under their constitution reforms and this plurinational model. Second, whether the concept of decentralization and municipal governance will result in future regional conflict and foster sentiments of separatism or if it will ensure Bolivia's viability as a single country.

Robert Albro (2006) tackles the question of democratic viability and maps out the scholarly debate throughout his article. He looks at how scholars (whose books and works are largely available only in Spanish) have engaged in the intellectual debate surrounding Bolivian democracy. He notes that the "routine inability" of Bolivian Presidents to finish out the terms of their office has sparked this debate on the status and the meaning of democracy for the region's popular indigenous majority.[32] He often refers to the Bolivian case as a "democratic project", however, his conceptions of the issue are not the most recent and do not reflect the events since Evo Morales came into power.[33] William Assies also addresses this debate and names scholars such as Whitehead (2001) and O'Donnell (2003) who have tried to set measures to assess the viability of democracy.[34] He asserts that a "representational deficit" is existent in the political arena and highlights that the indigenous mobilizations could potentially pose a threat to democratic stability.[35] Again these assertions are limited to the pre-Moales

[32] Albro, "The Culture of Democracy," 388.
[33] Ibid., 389.
[34] Assies, "Gasified Democracy," 26.
[35] Ibid., 31.

regime and therefore do not take into account the 2008 constitutional reforms which impact the question of democracy.

Tim Schaefer and Bret Gustafson who have been published more recently consequently take a very different perspective. Schaefer maintains that although indigenous groups throughout their mobilizations have clearly lacked political identities their present demands are no longer rejections of the state but rather attempts to transform them. He therefore does not see the politicization of indigenous peoples as a threat to democracy in Bolivia.[36] While the question of democracy is a hot topic for scholars researching Bolivian social movements and politics, all the academics mentioned above seem to end their articles with a question mark. They maintain that much is yet to be seen before any clear assessments can be made of the democratic viability of this model.[37]

The debate surrounding regional autonomy and its implications is not as contested in the literature as the one concerned with democracy. In particular Melissa Jane MacLean, Bret Gustafson, and Jeffery Webber discuss this issue and the varying perspectives in scholarship. Webber offers references to Latin American and Masista scholars who identify regional conflict as the main reason for divisions and cultural tensions in the country.[38] He presents the arguments of Franz Xavier Barrios Suvelza who sees danger in over-politicization by transferring political power to municipal and regional governments.[39] Gary Molina is also cited as conceptualizing this call for

[36] Schaefer, "Engaging Modernity," 411; Assies, "Gasified Democracy," 38; Morales, "Responding to Bolivian Democracy," 32; Gustafson, "Manipulating Cartographies," 1011.

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[38] Webber, "Era of Evo Morales," 250.

[39] Ibid., 251.

decentralization as a “worrying trend” and believes the main focus should be on the building up of institutional apparatuses of the state while keeping intact the status quo of socio-economic foundations.[40] Bret Gustafson purports that the situation is complex for indigenous peoples however he sees departmental autonomy as seeking to harden boundaries instead of eliminating them.[41] MacLean instead presents a more optimistic picture of this kind of governance based on field research carried out in the months following the Water War of 2000. She also sees this situation as being very complex and asserts that the relationship between decentralization and democratization is shaped by specific and varying political conditions. However, within the context of inequality she sees this decentralization as an intention to increase legitimacy of the state by improving representation and incorporation.[42]

Conclusion

Mark Goodale’s theory of indigenous cosmopolitanism can allow us to imagine a state, citizenship, and potentially a world, where ideas of governance, participatory democracy and respect for a plurality of national identities are evolving. By examining the contemporary social movements in Bolivia and the way in which they have changed peasant and indigenous political and social engagement, one can begin to piece together this radical hybrid of cosmopolitanism. As outlined in this paper, this new consciousness in the country can be seen as having a transformative power over national politics. As these emerging ideas of governance and identity continue to evolve

[40] Ibid., 252.
[41] Gustafson, “Manipulating Cartographies,” 1010.
[42] MacLean, “Decentralization,” ii.

and grow in Bolivia there remains a lot to be seen. One thing is certain however, Indigenous identified peoples in Bolivia, by projecting new conceptions of indigeneity and through their demands of a respectful government built on participatory democracy and plurinationalism, are now being heard. Their politics can sometimes be radical, however their integration into the state, which does away with restrictive categories of inclusion, might be the answer to many of the social, economic and political problems in the country.