

Indigenous Agency, Governance and Identity

What is a Ladino? Changing labels of Identity in Guatemala

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“I am not a ladino, I am a mestizo...I speak Spanish, but my skin is brown, I eat tortillas, my culture and my race are mixed...Ladinos live in Guatemala city and drive fancy cars and make their living off the backs of poor people... Ladinos estan Ladrones [Ladinos are thieves]”

A young Guatemalan man told me this when I asked him about racial classification systems in his country. Another man told me that ‘Ladino is an unacceptable term to use when talking to Ladinos’. A graduate class of (Ladino?) lawyers used the word to describe residents of certain parts of the country, but clearly felt uncomfortable with the term. What does this kind of contestation mean? How does it relate to continuing social divisions in Guatemala? This paper is drawn from experiences on a 3-month internship based in Guatemala city.

Beyond local autonomy: Ecuador's indigenous movement and its origins as a political force

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Ecuador's indigenous movement dramatically emerged in 1990 through a series of national protests, economic blockades, and strikes as an important political force and presented a series of counter hegemonic demands that challenged the neoliberal political and economic regime. It has been argued elsewhere that to understand the emergence of the indigenous movement in Ecuador, as well as indigenous movements in other Latin American countries, we have to look at the capacity, opportunity, and motive to describe the occurrence of mobilization. The motivation for indigenous movements in Latin America was provided by the shift in the economic and political regimes from corporatism to neoliberalism and the challenge to the local autonomy of indigenous communities this shift created. Despite providing a strong explanation for the emergence of indigenous movements, this analysis falls short in its ability to explain how the indigenous movement in Ecuador has moved beyond a defence of local autonomy to challenge the hegemonic values of neoliberalism. This paper seeks to explore the origins of an Ecuadorian indigenous identity as a political force by using Gramscian notions of civil society and hegemony and the concept of “cultural politics”. Particular attention is given to how the formation of the indigenous movement has influenced its demands upon the Ecuadorian state, principally the demand for the reconfiguration of Ecuador as a plurinational state.

The Crisis of Indian Leadership: Authority after the Great Rebellion of the Peruvian Andes

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From 1780 to 1782, rebellion threatened the existence of colonial authority in Peru and Upper Peru. As the colonial authorities regained their military advantage, aided by the execution of the rebellion's ostensive leader, José Gabriel Tupac Amaru, in 1781, colonial officials turned their attention to regulating Indian behavior in the post-rebellion Andes. Antonio Areche, the highest authority in the viceroyalty of Peru from 1777 to 1783, spear-headed a campaign of repression against Indian culture, language, dress, and governance. As a result, in the early 1780s, Indian caciques, or chiefs, seemed in danger of losing their significance and influence in Peru.

Relying on my 2008 research in the colonial archives of Lima, Peru, I will discuss the ways in which Indian leaders and groups in the decades following the rebellion dealt with the new regulations against their traditional rights and practices. I contend that caciques did not suffer the loss of power intended by Areche; indeed, caciques successfully defended their privileges through the colonial courts. Three main factors contributed to the retention of traditional Indian roles: the heterogeneous and conflicted colonial government, the contributions of the caciques to economic and political stability, and the ability of the caciques to negotiate the dynamic colonial system. For example, caciques preserved their roles by exploiting the belief of a dominant sector of Lima's ruling class that the colonial government was a special protector of Indian well-being. Throughout my paper, I will demonstrate that the Indian caciques solidified their special importance within the colonial system in this vital era before independence.

New forms of invisibility: Aboriginal peoples in the Southern Cone

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While a considerable amount of research is or has been conducted on the development of indigenous politics throughout Latin America in the last three decades, the majority of these studies take as their points of reference national contexts in which the impact of indigenous movements has been determinant in the course of national politics. This paper seeks to contribute to the debate focusing on the struggles of the mapuche peoples who live in a different context for the emergence of indigenous politics (Southern Cone). While the "politics of invisibility" of aboriginal people succeeded the genocide of the late 19th-century, this paper argues that with the irruption and consolidation of the neoliberal state in the Southern Cone a new type of invisibility is emerging despite the formal recognition of "multiculturalism" in legal texts. The paradox introduced here is that while there has been an increasing articulation of policies focusing on ethnic diversity and multiculturalism throughout the region, some specific demands of aboriginal peoples encounter resistance by local governments and international financial institutions. To articulate this argument, the

first part of this paper presents conceptual tools that intend to give account of both the neoliberalization of the state and its impact on the relationship between state and society through a description of different modes of articulating citizenship. The second part focuses on the interaction between (neoliberal) state and aboriginal communities, with a particular focus on the articulation of mapuche struggles for the control of territory on both sides of the Andes that now divide Chile and Argentina.