

Vivir Bien: Tracing the Ethos of Plural Progress in Bolivia



Kirra Klein | krk341@nyu.edu

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Abstract

In thirteen years, Bolivia went from the poorest country in South America to providing a model for inclusive sustainable development and post-colonial nation-building. Today, the world is suffering increasing political polarity, climate change, and an enduring global socioeconomic divide, stemming from imperialism. I looked to Bolivia to find an alternate mode of development that challenged the anthropocentric approach to power and took a non-prescriptive, cooperative approach to building a path forward. I explored three revolutions, examining their motivating ideologies and their relative successes. I studied primary historical and philosophical texts, and I undertook fieldwork in Bolivia, conducting surveys and interviews with individuals across identities and ideologies. The Andean collectivist tradition guided Bolivia through three iterative revolutions. For each, it cultivated a shared (1) motivation for rebellion, (2) rhetoric, (3) body of cultural commonality, and (4) notion of effective development. The most successful of these revolutions was the 2000-2005 political movement which combined Andean collectivism with the country's national-popular tradition. The post-revolutionary government found success in extending the Andean ethos, developing a sustainable national project by unifying diverse peoples on a common path: an incremental, adaptive, and collaborative revolution guided by *vivir bien*.

Keywords

Vivir Bien; Plurinational Collectivism; Bolivia; Tiwanaku; Pachamama; Pachakuti; Wiphala; Katarismo; Indianismo; Cholaje; Evo Morales

Introduction

My purpose in writing my thesis was to learn from Bolivia's 2000-2005 political movement, its post-revolutionary government, and driving ideologies, which provide lessons for achieving progressive, resilient social revolution and legislative reform, especially in multicultural or post-colonial political cultures. In analyzing greater Bolivian development within its political-cultural context, I found continuity of a pro-indigenous, sovereign, collectivist ethos throughout the country's revolutionary history. It is a kind of Andean holistic plurinational collectivism, often referred to as *vivir bien*.¹ The term "plurinational" refers to Bolivia's thirty-six indigenous nations, (which were not officially recognized until 2009); and each of these nations has a distinct linguistic, cultural, and theological tradition. In my thesis, I argue that *vivir bien* guided Bolivia through three iterative revolutions. This ideology shaped Bolivia's revolutionary and post-revolutionary frameworks by cultivating a shared (1) motivation for rebellion, (2) rhetoric, (3) body of cultural commonality, and (4) notion of effective development.

Within Bolivian culture, *vivir bien* is usually coupled with its supposed society of origin: the Tiwanaku Empire. The Empire's documented history was produced through ideological biases. Additionally, as Andean culture has evolved, ancient philosophy and theology have been continuously updated and re-invented; thus, their content and meaning are subject to subjective interpretation. My thesis is concerned with the *vivir bien* tradition insomuch as it has shaped Bolivia's post-colonial development. Therefore, in the following excerpt, I focus on the dominant

¹ Spanish for "living well"

Tiwanaku narrative held among many highland² and central³ Bolivians of Aymara and Quechua descent. Andean holistic plurinational collectivism, or *vivir bien*, has motivated centuries of indigenous activism, including the 2000-2005 political movement, and inspired the action, rhetoric, and ideology (which includes the Tiwanaku narrative) of the *Movimiento al socialismo*⁴ (MAS), the major post-revolutionary party.

In the 1st century CE, scattered Andean peoples began to coalesce into kingdoms comprised of semi-autonomous tribes. The largest of these kingdoms were the Aymara and the Quechua. By about 550 CE, they had merged into a sprawling, pluralist civilization: the Tiwanaku Empire. For over three hundred years, the empire expanded outward from the Lake Titicaca Basin through incorporation, rather than monopolization, of culture. It did so by organizing existing societies around mutually beneficial projects, like building trade routes and large monuments for multi-cultural religious festivals. Evidence suggests that the Tiwanaku state did not exert authoritarian control over local activities in its territory, aside from a few notable exceptions. Tiwanaku's soft power⁵ is unmistakable in the widespread practice of their cultural aesthetics and philosophies throughout the Andes. Most annexed societies preserved their identities, beliefs, and customs to a large degree.⁶ Yet, due to previous cultural consolidation and exchange, many Andean societies

² Bolivian highlands: the high-altitude, western and south-western portions of the country, which include the sub-Andean national capital of La Paz and the Andean *altiplano* [plateau]. The latter is home to La Paz's indigenous sister city, El Alto, as well as historical mining regions, the Tiwanaku archeological site, and Lake Titicaca.

³ The other two major topographical regions are the valleys (central and northern) and the lowlands (eastern and south-eastern). The former are tropical, and they include the city of Cochabamba, in which the 2000 Water War (first portion of the 2000-2005 political movement) began, the Chapare (the major coca-growing region and birthplace of former President Evo Morales), as well as a portion of the Amazon Rainforest. The latter are a mix of savanna and tropical swamplands. Historically, the lowlands were sparsely populated, but the discovery of oil and natural gas led to the development of a relatively new city, Santa Cruz de la Sierra.

⁴ Movement Toward Socialism

⁵ The ability to shape preferences of other political entities through appeal and attraction. Soft power is non-coercive: it attracts and co-opts through shared culture, political values, and foreign policies.

⁶ Paul S. Goldstein, "Multiethnicity, Pluralism, and Migration in the South Central Andes: An Alternate Path to State Expansion," *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences* 112, no. 30 (July 20, 2015): 1-8, <https://doi.org/10.1073/pnas.1500487112>.

shared a similar basic ontology. They practiced panentheistic polytheism, meaning that they had a monistic existential theology,⁷ and that gods and goddesses were representations of forces of nature—aspects of an absolute principle that manifests immanently in the material world, yet also extends beyond it.⁸ In short, they shared a holistic and integrated understanding of nature, humanity, the universe, and the divine, while acknowledging the plurality of the different forces within the whole. This shared ideology inspired a collective, yet plural notion of identity among many Andean peoples, which was formalized through the Tiwanaku Empire.

Unity through diversity, by way of common spiritual and social-ecological values, has since served as the framework for the process of creating a Bolivian plurinational state.⁹ Many Andean peoples developed a holistic plurinational collectivist identity through their absorption into the Tiwanaku Empire. The civilization collapsed in the tenth century and, in the twelfth century, the Inca Empire conquered approximately the same territory. For three hundred years, the Inca had a theocratic absolute monarchy that imposed the sovereignty of state religion and political culture, which were made up of selected Andean traditions. Yet, there is little evidence that the Inca religion was politically enforced, and it is believed that local worship persisted throughout the empire. Thus, Andean peoples developed a triple-identity of sorts: a consolidated plurinational identity, different national identities, and a consolidated existential identity. They shared this multi-faceted identity with their environment and deities. In the fifteenth century, Spanish colonization further consolidated Andean identity with racialism—the concept of race—and the notion of indigeneity. Unlike Tiwanaku or even Incan citizenship, indigeneity erased the plurality within collective Andean identity. Plus, the official establishment of an indigenous racial identity

⁷ Meaning they attributed oneness, or wholeness, to existence.

⁸ Goldstein, “Multiethnicity, Pluralism, and Migration,” 1-8.

⁹ Ibid.

legally erased the different Andean nations. Furthermore, the Christian colonial state forbade the practice of indigenous spiritual traditions, and it imposed the Abrahamic dualist distinction between the material world and God. On legal and cultural levels, it aimed to erase Andean peoples' monistic existential identity too.

I use the terms "indigenous" and "pro-indigenous" to refer to the members of Bolivia's thirty-six pre-Columbian nations and their pan-national political stance for social inclusion and sovereignty. Even though indigeneity is a colonial invention, it has served a purpose for indigenous peoples as a sociocultural identity that includes non-Andean groups and exists in opposition to the colonizers. Pro-indigenous belief is central to post-colonial Bolivian political culture because of the country's exceptionally large indigenous population. Fifty-five percent of Bolivians identify as fully Amerindian indigenous, which makes Bolivia the most demographically indigenous country in South America. Only fifteen percent of the population describe themselves as creole,¹⁰ while thirty percent describe themselves as multi-ethnic *mestizo*.¹¹ Many *mestizos* identify with particular indigenous ethnic groups or nations.¹² Of indigenous and *mestizo* Bolivians, thirty percent are Quechua, twenty-five percent are Aymara, and the rest belong to the thirty-four smaller lowlands indigenous groups.¹³

Operating with holistic ethics and plurinationalism has shaped Andeans' political worldviews. The scope of the influence of Andean collectivist culture associated with the Tiwanaku and *vivir bien* is virtually impossible to measure. It manifests in nearly all political life, down to the most basic component of citizenship. *Vivir bien* has been the motivation and the

¹⁰ Latin American (or Latinx) of European (usually Spanish) descent.

¹¹ Generally, *mestizos* are bi-racial, of indigenous and European descent.

¹² "Bolivia Population 2019," World Population Review, accessed January 18, 2019, <http://worldpopulationreview.com/countries/bolivia-population/>.

¹³ Forrest Hylton, Sinclair Thomson, and Adolfo Gilly, *Revolutionary Horizons: Past and Present in Bolivian Politics* (London: Verso, 2007).

blueprint for successive indigenous insurgencies over the centuries. It is also the paradigmatic framework with which extraordinary civilizations achieved order and longevity. To better contextualize my excerpt, I will follow up by tracing the events of the country's three major upheavals and the legacies relevant to *vivir bien*. In doing so, I will underscore the ideology's influence, as well as explore how it has operated in mainstream Bolivian culture and combined with other popular belief systems.

For the purpose of my analysis, I call these uprisings the First, Second, and Third Bolivian Revolutions; though historians refer to them as the Bolivian War of Independence, the 1952 Bolivian National Revolution, and the 2000-2005 political movement (consisting of the Bolivian Water Wars of 2000 and the 2003 Bolivian Gas Conflict). All three were catalyzed by pro-indigenous, Andean collectivist¹⁴ insurgencies. However, in the First and Second Revolutions, their momentums were co-opted by non-indigenous sovereignty movements with European philosophies. Creole and *mestizo* revolutionaries conspired first with the existing regimes to stamp out the indigenous uprisings, then overthrew said regimes to implement their own national projects. During the Second Bolivian Revolution, the revolutionaries in question—the Revolutionary Nationalist Party (MNR)—worked to include indigenous persons in post-colonial nation-building. Yet, they still worked to contain *indigeneity* in Bolivian political culture. It was the Third Revolution that resulted in the election of the nation's first indigenous president, the formation of its first autonomous indigenous legislative body, and the country's re-founding as the Plurinational State of Bolivia. Plus, the insurrection itself was effective while being relatively non-violent, and the MAS-led government created a model for more ecologically-conscious and inclusive sustainable development in low-income and post-colonial countries. It is my analysis

¹⁴ For the purpose of this essay, I am using “Andean collectivist” as a descriptor for movements and cultures that honor *vivir bien*.

that the Third Bolivian Revolution was successful because of its two-pronged nature, combining the country's traditions of national-popular and pro-indigenous, Andean collectivist insurgency. Additionally, I conclude that the MAS government aspires to plurinational, revolutionary democratic socialism, which it understands within the *vivir bien* paradigm. It is motivated by its radical revolutionary ideology, but finds stability through policies for gradual transformation, in line with Andean cosmological political philosophy. Among the people I interviewed in Bolivia regarding the then-current situation, a large number sympathized with a revolutionary process that they identified with *vivir bien*; however, they had different criticisms of the MAS leadership. I examined the major trade-offs that were made and equilibriums struck between liberal democracy, national coherence and sovereignty, and Andean holistic plurinational collectivist ideals.

During the colonial-era, Andean pluralist, collectivist philosophy became the primary source of shared meaning, identity, and purpose for pro-indigenous sovereignty movements. During and after the Second Bolivian Revolution, the ethos became associated with the Tiwanaku Empire, which developed into a symbol of shared struggle, cultural heritage, and ambition in the face of European imperialism.

Excerpt: “The First Bolivian Revolution”

The Tiwanaku are a major part of the creation myth of modern Bolivia. The archeological site of the empire's capital city, also called Tiwanaku, has been the subject of wonder and cherishing since indigenous inclusion was accepted into Bolivian nationalist discourse in the twentieth century. Yet, the theology associated with the empire is not Tiwanaku specific. It is, instead, an amalgamation of Andean traditions that had already been practiced by sophisticated societies for centuries before the Tiwanaku Empire. In fact, while the Tiwanaku consolidated a

multitude of prominent Andean customs, many traditions' imagined importance in Tiwanaku culture are exaggerated or simply unsupported. Nevertheless, the symbolic role Tiwanaku culture plays for indigenous Bolivians and the MAS government is invaluable: it serves as a rallying point in time and space, uniting the nation around a sense of shared struggle, identity, belief, hope and deliverance, through the project of building a collectivist, sovereign plurinational state.

I sourced the definitions of key philosophical and theological terms from the Museo Tiwanaku (recently renovated by MAS), the museum's on-site historians, the 2009 Plurinational State constitution, and Ismael Saavedra. Saavedra is an indigenous philosopher, activist, and documentary filmmaker who worked alongside Evo Morales when the future-president was a coca-growers' union leader, through his time as a junior congressman, and during the 2000 Water War.¹⁵ These definitions, and the dominant Tiwanaku narrative as a whole, conflict with some historians' notions of Tiwanaku culture. Still, they are essential to understanding Bolivian political philosophy and contemporary Bolivia's national story.

The misguided perception of the Tiwanaku Empire, as being the mechanism by which Andean cultures and philosophies consolidated and achieved political legitimacy, was first popularized by the *Handbook of South American Indians*, a series of academic ethnographic studies published by the Smithsonian Institute from 1940 to 1947. The *Handbook* was "a magnum opus of neo-evolutionary anthropology that squarely [placed] Tiwanaku as a key milestone in the development and advancement of Andean civilization."¹⁶ However, the Smithsonian's findings were over a dozen millennia off and based on cultural evolutionist prejudice. Cultural evolutionism was common in early archeology; it conceptualizes human development as the successive

¹⁵ Ismael Saavedra, interview by author, La Paz, Bolivia, May 30, 2018.

¹⁶ Arthur Posnansky, *Tiwanaku, the Cradle of American Man*, translated by James F. Sheaver, 4 vols. (New York: J. J. Augustin, 1957).

replacement of civilizations by those that are more complex, expansive, and socially and technologically sophisticated.¹⁷ The *Handbook* was primarily sourced in the findings of cultural evolutionist archeologist Arthur Posnansky who conducted much of the early excavation of Tiwanaku, and was the first anthropologist to theorize about the civilization's culture. While many of his conclusions on the history and purpose of Tiwanaku are still accepted today, the archeologist wrongly identified the site as dating back to 15,000 BCE, about 9,700 years earlier than the world's oldest known city.¹⁸ Posnansky thus assumed that the empire was the origin point of civilization in the Americas.¹⁹

Present-day anthropologists, like David Kojan and Dante Angelo, see cultural evolutionism as serving to legitimize European colonialism in its fixation on formidable imperialist civilizations such as the Tiwanaku and the Inca in the Andes. The archaeologists who first uncovered the empire's capital saw it as a testament to human progress. However, this assumption narrowed the qualification for progress to "rapid cultural advancement associated with monumentality and social stratification, at the expense of [those] seen as culturally primitive, historically stagnated, and closely tied to the natural world."²⁰ Kojan and Angelo argue that, just as the Inca had appropriated the symbol of Tiwanaku as the birthplace of their own creator deity, white anthropologists imagined it as a forerunner to imperial Spain.²¹ From this perspective, Europe is not an invader, but an heir to a history of development and domination in a "culturally precocious region."²²

¹⁷ David Kojan and Dante Angelo, "Dominant Narratives, Social Violence and the Practice of Bolivian Archaeology," *Journal of Social Archaeology* 5, no. 3 (2005): 383-408, <https://doi.org/10.1177/1469605305057585>.

¹⁸ The Sumerian civilization's oldest city, Eridu, dates back to 5,300 BCE.

¹⁹ Posnansky, *Tiwanaku*.

²⁰ Kojan and Angelo, "Dominant Narratives," 383-408.

²¹ *Ibid.*

²² Charles Stanish, "The Origin of State Societies in South America," *Annual Review of Anthropology* 30, no. 1 (October 2001): 41-64, <https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev.anthro.30.1.41>.

The exaggerated importance cultural evolutionists placed on the Tiwanaku shaped later archeological study in Bolivia, and it also served as a premise for Bolivian nationalism.²³ Throughout the twentieth century, Andean excavation and analysis were performed within the context of the development of the Tiwanaku state. Thus, art, technology, and culture developed by the smaller societies that pre-dated, surrounded, and followed the empire were wrongly attributed to it, which obfuscated the prominent plurinational, communitarian history of development in the Andes. Additionally, Aymara historian Carlos Mamani argues that MNR²⁴ mainstreamed the notion of Tiwanaku as the catalyst of Andean development within Bolivian society. The predominantly-*mestizo* party used the site as “a local symbol to reinforce the notion of a national patrimony.”²⁵ Tiwanaku was the perfect emblem for MNR’s program of post-colonial nation-building, given its proximity to Bolivia’s capital, its antiquity and monumental scale, and its associations with multiethnic pluralism and many commonly-held Andean beliefs.²⁶ It served as an embodiment of MNR’s national narrative of indigenous heritage, which extended symbolic Andean ancestry to the country’s entire population in an effort to build a sense of common Bolivian citizenship. Mamani asserts that transforming indigeneity into a national past is a “project of homogeneity [that] essentially places the majority Indian population of Bolivia as a kind of historical remnant from a remote past that is no longer theirs.”²⁷ This project implicitly excludes indigenous peoples from serious, modern politics (as MNR did) and disregards their plurinational diversity, as well as any expression beyond nationalist homogeneity. Instead, it seeks multiracial

²³ Kojan and Angelo, "Dominant Narratives," 383-408.

²⁴ Movimiento Nacionalista Revolucionario (Revolutionary Nationalist Movement): the national-popular party that led the 1952 Bolivian National Revolution.

²⁵ Carlos Mamani, "History and Prehistory in Bolivia: What About the Indians?" in *Contemporary Archaeology in Theory: A Reader*, edited by Robert W. Preucel and Ian Hodder, 632-45 (Hoboken: Wiley-Blackwell, 1996).

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ Kojan and Angelo. "Dominant Narratives," 383-408.

harmony on the basis of an imaginary heritage mostly constructed from nationalist and cultural evolutionist ideology.

Today, archeologists and anthropologists concur that Tiwanaku's influence is overblown and that it is difficult to decipher what the exact beliefs of the Tiwanaku were. Though the Tiwanaku had sophisticated organizational systems, as well as technological and artistic skills, they had no written language. Thus, historians have drawn up a verifiable history of the culture based on surviving artifacts, which are mostly buildings, tools, and pottery. The way they were able to determine the reach of Tiwanaku culture was by tracing the spread of objects and artistic style to surrounding polities. Earlier researchers—cultural evolutionists—presumed this spread was the radius of an empire; today, we understand that it is mainly a sign of cultural exchange.²⁸ While the Tiwanaku Empire was a cultural behemoth in the early centuries CE, it functioned more as an organizational body between federated Andean states than a unitary state. It organized grand festivals and ceremonies, so historians assume that the peoples within the radius of the empire's influence shared some beliefs. However, anthropologists still know little about the religious traditions, ceremonies, and underlying cosmology of these societies—the only evidence we have is comparative iconography and folklore. These, however, are unreliable, since the iconography of most prehistoric Andean societies is inspired by their shared environment, and myths undergo a process of constant re-invention as they are told across generations and circumstances.²⁹

After MAS came to power, Tiwanaku retained its patrimonial status, symbolizing shared cultural heritage, but of the Plurinational State. The cultural evolutionist approach to Tiwanaku was replaced with an Andean collectivist one, emphasizing plurinationalism and sovereignty.

²⁸ Charles Stanish, *Ancient Titicaca: The Evolution of Complex Society in Southern Peru and Northern Bolivia* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003), 165–203.

²⁹ Marc Bermann, *Lukurmata: Household Archaeology in Prehispanic Bolivia* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994), 97–102.

Nonetheless, lowlands indigenous groups can feel excluded from the Tiwanaku narrative, as the self-purported descendants and precursors of the Tiwanaku are members of the Andean Aymara and Quechua nations. Still, many Bolivians—indigenous and *mestizo* alike—resonate with the idea of plural heritage. The Plurinational State doesn't strive toward outdoing preceding regimes in complexity and dominance, nor toward homogenized nationhood. Instead, it finds inspiration in Tiwanaku as a federation of culturally diverse nations with the overarching, shared goal of *vivir bien*.

Vivir bien rests on a monistic conception of the universe, called *pacha* in Aymara. *Pacha* is often mistranslated as “Earth,” but it actually references all existence, in heaven and on Earth—past, present, and future. *Pacha* thus expresses the inherent oneness of all things throughout space and time.³⁰ Spanish conquistadors re-interpreted Andean deities in their evangelizing mission, attributing to them the Christian role of creators of the world and humanity. However, indigenous peoples understand Andean deities as “forces or energies that drive the fecundity and reproduction of all existence,” for *pacha* is infinite, integrated, and whole, not the product of a conscious act of creation by an external agent.³¹ As *pacha* is the source of life and its constant regeneration, *Pachamama*, a holistic incarnation of Mother Earth, is the mother of everything and everyone.³² In addition to giving life, mothers also nurture and provide for their dependents; *Pachamama*, “a distinctly feminine entity,” does the same.³³ Legal theorist and Inter-American Court of Human Rights judge Raúl Zaffroni specifies that she is not a destructive and commanding masculine entity that “separates” itself from her creations; thus, she rejects the “paternal and possessive” traits

³⁰ Ismael Saavedra, interview by author, La Paz, Bolivia, May 30, 2018.

³¹ National Institute of Archeology, “On Andean Theology,” Museum at Tiwanaku, Tiwanaku, Bolivia.

³² E.R. Zaffaroni, “La Pachamama y el Humano,” in *La Naturaleza con Derechos: De la Filosofía a la Política*, edited by Alberto Acosta and Esperanza Martínez (Quito: Ediciones Abya-Yala, 2011), 25-137.

³³ Paola Villavicencio Calzadilla and Louis J. Kotzé, “Living in Harmony with Nature? A Critical Appraisal of the Rights of Mother Earth in Bolivia,” *Transnational Environmental Law* 7, no. 3 (November 2018): 397-424, <https://doi.org/10.1017/S2047102518000201>.

attributed to “masculine anthropocentrism.”³⁴ Andean collectivists understand *Pacha* (and Earth, as its microcosm) as “a dynamic living system comprising an indivisible community of all living systems and organisms, which are interrelated, interdependent, and complementary, and which share a common destiny.”³⁵

Pacha serves as cosmological basis for *vivir bien*, or *sumaj kamaña* in Aymara. According to the Plurinational State’s Law of Mother Earth, *vivir bien* is “living in complementarity, in harmony and in balance with [the *Pachamama*] and societies, in equality and solidarity and eliminating the inequalities and mechanisms of control and dominion.”³⁶ Thus, the holism of *pacha* is extended to non-hierarchical human-ecological and plurinational coexistence. Within this framework, harmony can be achieved through listening to the transitions and the changes in cycles of life, and finding a symbiosis with them. In an economic sense, for example, this could be striving toward a “steady state,”³⁷ an economy that operates within the regenerative and assimilative powers of the Earth’s systems, with a strong communitarian system of social protection.³⁸ For ancient Andeans, aspects of *vivir bien* Andeans included honoring animal sacrifices through zero waste and living in accordance with (not in spite of) seasonal cycles, as well as taking a non-violent and inclusive approach to cross-cultural relations.³⁹ Extraordinary myths of the Tiwanaku's symbiosis with their environment, supported by supposed architectural clues, provide a national

³⁴ Zaffaroni, “La Pachamama,” 25-137.

³⁵ Calzadilla and Kotzé, “Living in Harmony with Nature?” 397-424.

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ William E. Rees, “Toward a Sustainable World Economy,” paper presented at the Institute for New Economic Thinking Annual Conference, Bretton Woods, NH, April 8-11, 2011, https://www.ineteconomics.org/uploads/papers/BWpaper_REES_040811.pdf.

³⁸ Calzadilla and Kotzé, “Living in Harmony with Nature?” 397-424.

³⁹ National Institute of Archeology, Historical Tour of Tiwanaku Archeological Site, Tiwanaku, Bolivia, May 29, 2018.

narrative of Andean peoples' constant striving toward *vivir bien*.⁴⁰ Regardless of their veracity, the principle they illustrate has fundamentally shaped the development of Bolivian political culture, as it is applicable to most major national issues, such as natural resource stewardship, plurinational politics, and cultural decolonization.

The Aymara concepts of *pachakuti* and *wiphala* are critical to understanding Andean political development, as they offer a cosmological framework for transformation and equilibrium. *Kuti* is total upheaval and change. *Wiphala*—a concept, as well as the name of the flag of the Plurinational State—refers to multitudinous forces, entities, or identities existing at once and striving toward harmony. *Pachakuti* is seen as a kind of zeitgeist, “an upheaval of time and space that allows for a new era to burst forth.”⁴¹ The notion of *pachakuti*, used to describe contemporary Bolivian development, is one that draws upon *wiphala*, emphasizing harmony within the plural forces within a revolution or a nation within the transforming whole of *pacha*. Ismael Saavedra describes an alternation between *pachakuti* and *wiphala* as a struggle for balance: the driving force of change, progress, and development through time reckons with the mediating force of oneness through plurality. This incremental, harmonious transformation is often called the *proceso de cambio*, or process of change. While the changes that make up the *proceso de cambio* can be massive or minute, it is always iterative: after each leap forward, the *pacha* must resettle back into harmony before continuing. In addition to the *pacha*'s *proceso de cambio*, Andean collectivism applies this cosmological process to transformation in human belief—political, economic, social, or cultural—and in the ecosphere.⁴² The *proceso de cambio* is, thus, continuous; but each

⁴⁰ At Tiwanaku, an on-site historian gave me a little-known book, *Codigo 0.4666*, by archeologists Willy Cortez, Ruth Piza, Jasón Figueredo, and Poly Ángela Cortez. This book is part of a tradition that seeks to characterize the Tiwanaku Empire as outperforming other pre-Columbian civilizations by attributing indeterminate significance to aspects of its creations.

⁴¹ Ismael Saavedra, interview by author, La Paz, Bolivia, May 30, 2018.

⁴² *Ibid.*

increment of its evolution is an ontological upheaval from which a new human-ecological reality bursts forth.

Andean civilizations' unified and harmonious conceptions of life and development provided the ontological framework for their socio-political traditions. Generally, their understanding of the self and the good was the collective self and the collective good of all beings. Anthropologist Sian Lazar explains how collectivism is still prevalent in contemporary indigenous life. Lazar describes El Alto, La Paz's sister-city, as an “indigenous city” in which “everyday practices and experiences of citizenship structure [El Alto residents'] relationship with the state in both ordinary and extraordinary times.”⁴³ The anthropologist describes “Western” or “Eurocentric” conceptions of citizenship as being based on social contract and an infinite struggle of rectifying one’s citizenship and individualism. By contrast, Lazar describes indigenous citizenship as a multidimensional social network in which individuals actively construct, experience, and re-affirm the “collective self” through cooperative practices that bridge one’s territorial and functional memberships. Group activities, like farming, craft-making, and trading, forge a cohesive social organism made up of interdependent parts, each providing a life-sustaining function for all. Extravagant religious and agricultural festivals, as well as the quotidian use of town squares as forums for actual and figurative sharing between community members, constantly re-affirm this shared spiritual and personal identity. Additionally, political leaders practice collective citizenship through the Andean principle of *mandar obedeciendo*, or to rule by obeying. In essence, a ruler derives their power from their constituents, and that power is only legitimate as long as it is curbed, checked, and shaped through adhering to popular demands. Continual assertion of collective self and citizenship has maintained Andean indigenous society for over a millennium.

⁴³ Sian Lazar, *El Alto, Rebel City: Self and Citizenship in Andean Bolivia* (Durham: Duke University Press Books, 2008).

Here, citizenship is not the collection of rights and protections the individual derives from the state. Instead, it is membership in a diverse communitarian system, a particular limb of a being evolving through a *proceso de cambio*.

Andean collective citizenship also shaped the subsequent Incan systems of social organization. Historian Peter Bakewell explains that “the basic unit of society, apart from the family, was the *ayllu*, which seems fundamentally to have been a clan, a group of people descended from some common ancestor.”⁴⁴ The *ayllu* tradition dates to pre-Tiwanaku Aymara kingdoms. It is a collection of families that practice communal land and resource ownership: “The clan owned collectively ... all land outside the village. Its members enjoyed equal rights to game, wood, and pasturage on the communal forest and meadow, and they tilled in common a portion of the agricultural land for the support of the chief, the cult and the aged.”⁴⁵ There was a degree of personal property in dedicated sections of this communal land where each family had a home, clothing, and personal goods. Yet, the *ayllu*, as a symbiotic community, thrived through every individual contributing to the well-being of the whole: “People were expected to lend their labor to cultivate neighbors’ land, and expected that neighbors would help them in due course. All capable people collaborated to support the incapable—orphans, widows, the sick—with food and housing.”⁴⁶ Outside of the communalist *ayllu*, the Inca had a federalist system and an absolute monarchy. The empire had localized barter systems and a larger command-based economy without markets or money. Exchange was based on reciprocity between individuals and among individuals, groups, and Inca rulers. The Incan central government, led by the *sapa* (king), enforced the labor

⁴⁴ Peter Bakewell, *A History of Latin America: Empires and Sequels, 1450-1930* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1997).

⁴⁵ George Peter Murdock, "The Organization of Inca Society," *The Scientific Monthly* 38 (March 1934): 232.

⁴⁶ Bakewell, *History of Latin America*.

system, *mit'a*.⁴⁷ Capable Inca citizens fulfilled labor obligations in exchange for land, goods, and food, including celebratory feasts. The system “[operated] through production quotas, statistical controls, reserve stocks of goods held against emergencies, the rationing of final products, and severe penalties of violations of regulations.”⁴⁸ Thus, the Inca gave a political form to *vivir bien* by appropriating *ayllu* communalism and incorporating it into a bureaucratic political and economic framework—and this framework collectivized the productive capacity of the Inca to meet the needs of each citizen, regardless of ability.

For over a millennium, indigenous Andeans organized without the concept of individual property or individualism in general. Instead, they based their political, economic, and social systems on their collective notions of self, citizenship, and existence. They derived these from their holistic conception of nature, humanity, and the universe (*pacha*), and its potential for harmony through *wiphala*. Andean collectivists do not see a contradiction between collectivism and liberty. Marxist political philosopher José Carlos Mariátegui argues, “If the spirit of liberty was revealed to the [pre-Columbian Andean], it was undoubtedly in a formula, or rather in an emotion, unlike the liberal, Jacobin, and individualist formula of liberty.”⁴⁹ A nation’s understanding of liberty is linked with its notion of citizenship. Within European liberal culture, liberty is an individualized goal, to maintain one’s individual rights despite living in a composite society. For *vivir bien*, liberty is a collective goal, to honor the rights of every social and ecological entity within a given polity and beyond, to the *pacha*. Thus, interdependence is not a hindrance to citizenship; instead, it is its integral fabric.

⁴⁷ Sally Falk Moore, *Power and Property in Inca Peru* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1958).

⁴⁸ Ralph H. Blodgett, Louis Baudin, and Katherine Woods, "Review of 'A Socialist Empire: The Incas of Peru'," *Southern Economic Journal* 28, no. 3 (1962): 311-12, <https://doi.org/10.2307/1055460>.

⁴⁹ Falk Moore, *Power and Property in Inca Peru*.

The Incan Empire collapsed in 1533 when Spanish colonizers executed its last *sapa*, Atahualpa. From the sixteenth to the nineteenth centuries, the Spanish Empire reshaped Latin American society and ecology. The Spanish established colonies, displaced indigenous peoples, and extracted natural resources in Central and South America. To operate its massive mining initiatives, Spain used the indigenous population as a slave labor force. The Spanish thus erased indigenous nations to form a cohesive Empire. Within the Spanish colonies, Europeans and indigenous peoples were socioeconomically and spatially stratified. Colonizers controlled indigenous subjects' access to land, resources, and goods; the material difference in quality of life within the colonies reinforced socio-economic inequality.

During the colonial era, the pro-indigenous movement arose in opposition to the subjugation and exploitation of indigenous peoples and the *Pachamama*. It sought to replace racialism with *vivir bien* and plurinationalism. The pro-indigenous ethos inspired insurgency movements in which individuals and groups of Andean descent sought to reclaim sovereignty over their bodies and space.

Two of the most prominent figures in colonial indigenous insurgency are eighteenth-century Aymara revolutionaries, Túpac Katari and Bartolina Sisa. In March of 1781, Katari led a group of 40,000 Andeans to march on and successfully occupy La Paz, pushing Spanish forces from the city. The insurgency achieved internal peace under a court established by Katari and Sisa, his wife and a commander of the siege. After the Spanish captured Katari in April, Sisa led the occupation.⁵⁰ It endured until October, when a military alliance of Spanish and creole forces descended on the city from Lima and Buenos Aires,⁵¹ killing over 20,000 people.⁵²

⁵⁰ Hylton, Thomson, and Gilly, *Revolutionary Horizons*.

⁵¹ Diego Abad de Santillán, *Historia Argentina* (Buenos Aires: Tipográfica Editora Argentina, 1965).

⁵² Hylton, Thomson, and Gilly, *Revolutionary Horizons*.

While the occupation saw success for only six months, it was the most successful indigenous challenge to Spanish rule to that date. The insurgents proved the possibility of a post-colonial plurinational pro-indigenous society. *Vivir bien* united different existing ethnic groups to form a cohesive indigenous resistance. Nearby indigenous communities were able to act collectively, using a method of insurgency inspired by shared principles: communal organization providing material and surveillance support to insurgents using coordinated disruption and occupation. Plus, shared linguistic traditions and historic roads enabled clandestine communication, and nonviolent occupation of space appealed to Andean collectivist notions of life and citizenship. The siege inspired revolutionary independence movements across the continent and throughout history. Most clearly, it provided lessons for the 1809 Chuquisaca and La Paz autonomy movements (which catalyzed the Bolivian War for Independence), other Latin American Wars for Independence, and, eventually, the 1952 Bolivian National Revolution and the 2000-2005 political movement.⁵³

Bolivians understand the tradition of indigenous insurgency as a cumulative, collective struggle for sovereignty by those with shared plurinational identity and heritage. Túpac Katari was named after Túpac Amaru II and Tomás Katari. The former led a pro-indigenous Inca revival movement against the Spanish Bourbon reforms. The latter was an Aymara who led an uprising in Upper Peru (now Bolivia) against the Spanish, explicitly stating a claim of indigenous rights. Elisa Vega Sillo, the Director of the Depatriarchalization Unit of the Bolivian Vice Ministry of Decolonization in 2015, explains: “For us, you could say Túpac Katari is like our grandmother, our mother. And it is the same with many of our past leaders—they are part of our process of

⁵³ Lazar, *El Alto, Rebel City*.

struggle.”⁵⁴ The idea of a process of iteratively successful struggle is akin to the *proceso de cambio* and its alternations between *pachakuti* and *wiphala*, and it is a facet of collective Bolivian citizenship. Vega attributes a maternal role to Katari because he, as an individual and as an idea, gave life to this struggle and continues to sustain it.

In August of 1781, Túpac Katari tried once again to lay siege to La Paz. Tragically, the siege was unsuccessful and Katari was tortured and violently executed by the Spanish. The indigenous revolutionary’s last words were: “I will return, and I will be millions.”⁵⁵

Tracing the Ethos

I demarcate the First Bolivian Revolution from the 1780s, during which Aymara and Quechua leaders led radical pro-indigenous uprisings, to 1825, when Bolivia achieved independence. The indigenous insurrections catalyzed the movement for independence, but sadly, indigenous peoples still suffered oppression in the new Republic of Bolivia. These uprisings were preeminent, less because of their immediate impact, and more because they provided the practical and symbolic indigenous insurgent frameworks for similar movements during the Second and Third Bolivian Revolutions. Practically, the insurgent tactics took advantage of the population’s indigenous majority, reliable methods of peasant⁵⁶ community arrangement, and creole ignorance of indigenous language, territory, and organization. They aimed at peaceful, long-term occupation of major cities. For months, occupying insurgents were able to fend off the Spanish thanks to their

⁵⁴ Elisa Vega Sillo, "Decolonizing Bolivia’s History of Indigenous Resistance", interview by Benjamin Dangl, *TeleSUR* (February 17, 2015), <https://www.telesurenglish.net/opinion/Decolonizing-Bolivias-History-of-Indigenous-Resistance-20150217-0042.html>.

⁵⁵ Hylton, Thomson, and Gilly, *Revolutionary Horizons*.

⁵⁶ Rural Andean and central Bolivian indigenous peasants are called *campesinos*. They have strong systems of social organization because of the lack of rural government and the fact that they have maintained Andean organizational traditions.

highly organized and secret external support system. Insurgents outside the city supplied necessities; they also reported and blocked possible openings for imperial forces.⁵⁷

Indigenous peoples were able to overpower the Spanish, even with their advanced military technology, while adhering to their *vivir bien* ethos. Symbolically, the pluri-ethnic insurgents found solidarity through *marka*⁵⁸ and *wiphala*, and they also expressed their belonging to the Bolivian whole—and resultant right to space—through occupation.⁵⁹ Additionally, they honored *vivir bien* through occupying as peacefully as possible. Indigenous Andeans have a “natural abhorrence” for violence and loss of life in any capacity, which stems from their holistic conception of life, as well as, perhaps, from the community’s collective trauma from colonial violence.⁶⁰ Thus, these insurgencies tapped into that source of shared meaning, identity, and purpose. In doing so, they created a lasting historical link between *vivir bien* and the history of Andean anti-colonialist indigenous resistance and resilience.⁶¹

The period after the First Bolivian Revolution saw the rise of two groups that vied to lead the Second Revolution. These were the Nationalist Revolutionary Movement (MNR), the *mestizo*, national-popular party that would lead the 1952 Bolivian National Revolution, and the pro-indigenous *Cacique-Apoderado* movement for land sovereignty. I classify the Second Bolivian Revolution as beginning in 1945, when the federal government extended formal recognition to *Cacique-Apoderado*, and ending in 1964, when the post-revolutionary government was ousted by a conservative junta.

⁵⁷ Hylton, Thomson, and Gilly, *Revolutionary Horizons*.

⁵⁸ Aymara community structure is multi-tiered: its first tier is the family; its second tier is *ayllu*, an association of several families; and its third tier is *marka*, a union of several *ayllu*.

⁵⁹ Hylton, Thomson, and Gilly, *Revolutionary Horizons*.

⁶⁰ Kathryn Ledebur, interview by author, Cochabamba, Bolivia, May 24, 2018.

⁶¹ Hylton, Thomson, and Gilly, *Revolutionary Horizons*.

After Bolivia achieved independence, it fell into a neo-feudal system, under which life for indigenous persons remained unchanged. In response, indigenous peasants formed the *Cacique-Apoderado* movement, which, from the end of the nineteenth century to the mid-twentieth century, employed pro-indigenous insurgent tactics against estate-holders. After World War I, global politics took a nationalist turn; in Bolivia, it was exacerbated by the 1937 Chaco War, in which the country lost thousands of acres of oil-rich land to Paraguay. The war transformed the Bolivian government from a federation of neo-feudal estates to a unitary state led by a nationalist military dictatorship. Then, in 1941, *mestizo* middle-class intellectuals belonging to *el generación del Chaco*⁶² formed MNR.⁶³

During the 1940s, MNR co-opted momentum built by *Cacique-Apoderado* and the Trotskyist Revolutionary Workers' Party and shaped the Second Bolivian Revolution into a national-popular uprising. In 1945, the military-dictatorial regime met the *Cacique-Apoderado* movement's demands by organizing the National Indigenous Congress. Its leader-elect was Luis Ramos Quevedo, a former trade union leader who appealed to *vivir bien* and the pro-indigenous tradition by characterizing Bolivian territory as "belonging to the Indians" and demanded it be "returned to the Community."⁶⁴ Before the Congress could assemble, however, Quevedo had been imprisoned as an "agitator." Afterwards, the military dictatorship coordinated with MNR to design a poverty-reduction agenda without the Congress and ignored indigenous issues. The agenda had scant success regulating estate holders; poverty and racism persisted. The institutional failure ended up strengthening resistance, and a popular uprising overthrew the dictatorship, sending Bolivia into political uncertainty. The period from 1946 to 1952, known as the *Sexenio*, saw a

⁶² The generation prone to nationalism whose introduction to national politics was the Chaco War.

⁶³ Hylton, Thomson, and Gilly, *Revolutionary Horizons*.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*

series of Trotskyist and national-popular uprisings, including a dozen coup attempts by MNR. Disagreements among the revolutionary parties created space for MNR to rise to power in a final pro-democratic insurgency, which ended on April 11, 1952. Until 1964, MNR held steady power, re-founded Bolivia as a liberal democracy, and enacted a series of radical reforms, like universal suffrage and public education, agrarian land reform, and liberal nationalization of tin mines.⁶⁵ Again, the party worked to meet indigenous persons' material needs, while ignoring indigenous issues. The MNR cemented its place as the leading party for the working class, including Bolivia's indigenous population, even though the way in which it alienated other parties made for a lack of organic support, which ultimately rendered it weak when faced with a conservative military junta in 1964.⁶⁶

MNR's brand of Bolivian nationalism rested on *indigenismo* and *cholaje*⁶⁷, which suppressed authentic, plurinational indigenous identity. In 1952, the official MNR newspaper, *El Nación*, announced: "Our revolution is not social but national."⁶⁸ To the party, Bolivia's fundamental problem was achieving post-colonial sovereignty and establishing a stable and cohesive nation-state. To MNR, social issues impacting indigenous persons stemmed from this national problem and would be solved through national-popular revolution. MNR answered the question of how to reconcile indigenous existence with a cohesive national project (known in Bolivia as the "Indian problem") through *indigenismo*, a non-indigenous, paternalist quest for greater social and political inclusion of indigenous peoples.⁶⁹ The party's *indigenista* solution

⁶⁵ MNR paid tin barons in full for the mines and did not extend nationalization to other industries.

⁶⁶ Hylton, Thomson, and Gilly, *Revolutionary Horizons*.

⁶⁷ According to Mario Županović, *cholaje* is a mixed-race community descended from the union of creole whites and indigenous populations, dating back to the early 20th century. See fn. 71.

⁶⁸ Hylton, Thomson, and Gilly, *Revolutionary Horizons*.

⁶⁹ Karen Engle, *The Elusive Promise of Indigenous Development: Rights, Culture, Strategy* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2010).

comprised of post-colonial economism⁷⁰ and a *cholaje* national hybrid ideal. *Cholaje* is derived from *mestizaje*, the twentieth-century ideal of a multiracial community produced through increasing the *mestizo* population.⁷¹ As sociologist Mario Županović explains: “in *mestizaje*, the emblem of the new hybrid society was the *mestizo* (half creole, half indigenous), in *cholaje* the symbol of the new social and political paradigm was the *cholo* (half *mestizo*, half indigenous).”⁷² MNR’s *indigenista* method of combatting colonial white supremacy was to establish *cholaje* as Bolivian nationalism, incorporating indigenous peoples through intermarriage, rather than cultural inclusion.⁷³ The party used Tiwanaku as a patrimonial symbol for this homogenized, hybrid national ideal.

MNR’s failure to fully include indigenous peoples and actualize *marka* or post-revolutionary stability inspired new pro-indigenous and inclusive leftist philosophies. These ultimately shaped the Third Bolivian Revolution and helped bring about an Andean collectivist plurinational state. The two major pro-indigenous ideologies to emerge from this period are *indianismo* and *katarismo*. These call explicitly upon *vivir bien* and the history of pro-indigenous sovereignty movements to provide a revolutionary framework that could be combined with the national-popular tradition.

Indianismo was developed and popularized by Aymara political philosopher Fausto Reinaga. In 1941, Reinaga published his first book, *Mitayos y Yanaconas*, a Marxist interpretation of the Inca, and he began working alongside MNR. Over the course of the Second Bolivian

⁷⁰ Economism is a Marxist term, described by Vladimir Lenin as “[limiting] the tasks of the working class to an economic struggle for higher wages and better working conditions, etc., asserting that the political struggle [is] the business of the liberal bourgeoisie.”⁷⁰ I describe MNR’s economism as “post-colonial,” because of the indigenous character of the overwhelming majority of Bolivia’s working class.

⁷¹ Mario Županović, "Deconstructing Cholaje in Peruvian and Bolivian Cinema," *CASCA- Casopis Za Društvene Nauke, Kulturu I Umetnost*, no. 5 (January 2016), https://www.academia.edu/31125317/Deconstructing_cholaje_in_Peruvian_and_Bolivian_Cinema.

⁷² Ibid.

⁷³ Ibid.

Revolution, he aligned himself instead with the Bolivian Communist Party. By 1960, he had been ostracized from both parties, and after a series of hardships that culminated in a visit to the Incan capital, Machu Picchu, Reinaga adapted his intellectual views: “In my works from 1940 to 1960 I sought the assimilation of the Indian through White-*Mestizo cholaje*. And in those that I published from 1964 to 1970 I sought the liberation of the Indian, prior destruction of White-*Mestizo cholaje*... I propose the Indian revolution.”⁷⁴ Reinaga believed that the First and Second Bolivian Revolutions had proven unsuccessful because non-indigenous movements relying on inappropriate Western traditions had co-opted pro-indigenous insurgent movements. After both revolutions, most of the country’s population was left alienated from the post-revolutionary government, and the state ruled on the basis of misperception. Reinaga was one of the first proponents of what Ismael Saavedra calls “auto-decolonization,” the reclamation of autonomy through taking it upon oneself to undo mental colonization⁷⁵ by examining one’s objective essence.⁷⁶ Reinaga argued that only by expelling “strange” ideological influences, like Christianity and Marxism, could one be emancipated. The philosopher proposed that the idea of needing a European solution to post-colonial issues and the so-called Indian problem was a product of Eurocentric education, referring to his own post-university interest in Marxism, and mental colonization, having reinforced indigenous dependence on the colonizer. Post-revolution, Reinaga argued that Bolivia already had a model for pro-indigenous governance through *vivir bien*, *marka*, and *wiphala*. Bolivia’s indigenous peoples could use their own traditions to dismantle neo-colonialism by way of a *pachakuti*, another upheaval in the *proceso de cambio*.⁷⁷ While Reinaga

⁷⁴ Fausto Reinaga, *La Revolución India* (La Paz: Ediciones PIB (Partido Indio De Bolivia), 1969).

⁷⁵ A term popularized by Martinique-born political philosopher Frantz Fanon, meaning internalized racial and cultural white supremacy caused by colonial socio-economic stratification.

⁷⁶ Ismael Saavedra, interview by author, La Paz, Bolivia, May 30, 2018.

⁷⁷ Reinaga, *La Revolución India*.

never gained real political power, certain indigenous activists kept the flame of *indianismo* alive and aided the resurgence of Reinaga's philosophy in the early 2000s. As one *Los Angeles Times* journalist put it in 2005, Reinaga's 1969 magnum opus, *The Indian Revolution*, "[became] to this generation of activists what 'The Autobiography of Malcolm X' was to a generation of African Americans."⁷⁸

If *indianismo* is responsible for mainstreaming Andean collectivism, *katarismo* provided the framework for the Third Bolivian Revolution's two-pronged nature, uniting the country's pro-indigenous and national-popular traditions around post-colonial sovereignty. Named after Túpac Katari, *katarismo* is characterized by two ideas. The first is that the colonial legacy continued in Latin American republics even after they achieved independence;⁷⁹ the social aspects of colonialism were maintained through the socio-economic exclusion and cultural repression of indigenous peoples, which perpetuated white supremacy and a paternalistic dynamic between creoles and the indigenous population; the economic facets of colonialism persisted through foreign economic interference, extractivism,⁸⁰ and capitalism. The second *katarista* principle is that indigenous peoples make up the largest demographic in Bolivia and, thus, the country's political majority. Hence, a democratic government should reflect this in terms of representation and its agenda.⁸¹ For *katarismo*, indigenous Bolivians suffer two kinds of oppression: of class, which the national-popular Second Bolivian Revolution tried to combat; and ethnic, the driving

⁷⁸ Mark Goodale, "The Legibility of Fausto Reinaga," *The Paris Review* (December 17, 2018), <https://www.theparisreview.org/blog/2018/12/17/the-legibility-of-fausto-reinaga/>.

⁷⁹ Javier C. Sanjinés, *Mestizaje Upside-Down: Aesthetic Politics in Modern Bolivia* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2004).

⁸⁰ An extractivist economy is one in which capital gains come almost exclusively from extracting natural resources. In colonial and post-colonial countries, this is part of the "extract and export" model, which leaves developing countries dependent on the systemic transfer of natural capital from the Global South to the Global North. This causes ecological-economic dysfunction and hinders developing countries from diversifying their domestic economies.

⁸¹ Sanjinés, *Mestizaje Upside-Down*.

force behind the indigenous insurgent beginnings of the First and Second Bolivian Revolutions. *Katarismo* differentiates itself from *indianismo* inasmuch as it sees “peasant class consciousness and Aymara and Quechua ethnic consciousness [as] complementary rather than contradictory.”⁸² Instead of totally dismissing MNR as an *indigenista mestizo* nationalist party, *kataristas* emphasize the value in viewing Bolivia’s socio-economic inequality as such: social *and* economic.

The most influential leftist philosopher to come out of this period was René Zavaleta Mercado, who developed a “self-consciously ‘Bolivian’ unorthodox Marxist perspective” that reckons with the seeming incompatibility of nationalism and diversity, and its revolutionary implications.⁸³ While Zavaleta does not explicitly refer to Andean collectivist traditions, many of his beliefs are remarkably in line with them. Because of this, his philosophies melded well with *indianismo* and *katarismo* during the Third Bolivian Revolution. The philosopher understands the 1952 Bolivian National Revolution as an uprising with “dual power,” a convergence of the bourgeois and proletariat’s desires for democracy. However, he argues that MNR’s “national bourgeoisie,” with its *indigenista* and anti-Trotskyist methods, made “the peoples...look at their liberation as...nothing more than a replacement dispute between the lineages of their masters.”⁸⁴ To replace MNR’s *cholaje* ideal, Zavaleta created one of the first accurate pictures of Bolivian political, social, and economic life in his description of the *sociedad abigarrada*, or the “motley society,” which follows the logic of plurinationalism. The motley society comprises the ethnic and ideological differences between Bolivia’s populations, who, together, make up the “multitude.” Zavaleta examines how having a motley society causes the simultaneous, yet isolated existence of

⁸² Hylton, Thomson, and Gilly. *Revolutionary Horizons*.

⁸³ Miguel Centellas, “Government and Politics: Bolivia,” in *Handbook of Latin American Studies*, vol. 69, edited by Katherine McCann and Tracy North (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2016), 277-88, <https://doi.org/10.13140/2.1.2421.1520>.

⁸⁴ René Mercado Zavaleta, *Las Masas En Noviembre* (La Paz: Librería Editorial "Juventud", 1983).

myriad social worlds and movements in one space: a state of “being in diversity,” which can be understood as a kind of *wiphala*. Additionally, he describes “motley social formation” as inclusive development through an intersubjective dynamic between actors within the multitude. Furthermore, the philosopher describes democracy as the “self-determination of the masses,” whose end goal, instead of a Marxist “dictatorship of the proletariat,” is “the hegemony of diversity,” a kind of Bolivian national *marka* governed by *wiphala*.⁸⁵

The Third Bolivian Revolution began with the 2000 Water War and the 2003 Gas War (both were propelled by indigenous insurgent movements for natural resource sovereignty), and ended with the 2005 inauguration of Bolivia’s first indigenous president, Evo Morales. In 1971, Bolivia had suffered a ring-wing military coup, backed by the United States and Bolivia’s authoritarian neighbors. It set the country on a course of shaky democracy and increasing neoliberalism, disenfranchising indigenous peoples and labor unions.⁸⁶ The Water War was triggered by a U.S. multinational corporation’s acquisition of Cochabamba’s water and its subsequent price gouging. It was facilitated by the Washington Consensus, a neoliberal reform package forced on countries receiving foreign aid from the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the World Bank, or the United States. Then, in 2003, a series of uprisings overthrew neoliberal President Gonzalo Sánchez de Lozada, who many indigenous Bolivians understood as a symbol of neo-imperialism.⁸⁷

The Third Bolivian Revolution stuck to the Andean collectivist beginnings of the Water War and developed into a two-pronged movement that was non-violent, iterative, and inclusive to

⁸⁵ René Mercado Zavaleta, *Lo Nacional-Popular En Bolivia* (La Paz: Muela Del Diablo, 2002).

⁸⁶ Phil Gunson, “Obituary: Hugo Banzer,” *The Guardian* (May 6, 2002), <https://www.theguardian.com/news/2002/may/06/guardianobituaries.bolivia>.

⁸⁷ Hylton, Thomson, and Gilly, *Revolutionary Horizons*.

all working-class Bolivians. Given that the commercial exploitation of nature violates the rights of the *Pachamama*, the first motivation for insurgents was to honor *vivir bien* by halting profiteering off of Cochabamba's water and, more generally, of "extract and export" economics.⁸⁸ As the Water War escalated, this motivation brought indigenous groups together under a wider *indianista* project: to finally reclaim sovereignty of their land, selves, and future and to bring about a *marka* in the form of a plurinational state.⁸⁹ Additionally, "export and extract" spoke to the Bolivian working class' dual ethnic and economic struggle and the continuance of the colonial legacy into the twenty-first century, both of which could have been stopped or mitigated by more indigenous and peasant representation in government. The Water War (and the subsequent Gas War) proved every *katarista* argument and united a diverse coalition into a two-pronged movement against neo-imperialism, a Zavaletan motley social revolution. The coalition brought together dozens of different indigenous groups, peasant organizations, and labor unions into dialogue as a multitude, each with its own set of accumulated social prejudices. Being in diversity, or in finding *wiphala*, the multitude was able to operate as a self-determining network, sticking to its shared and individualized principles while remaining dynamic to respond to changing circumstances.⁹⁰

Inspired by now-mainstream *indianismo*, demonstrators used a mix of tactics from the First and Second Bolivian Revolutions. Like in the First, indigenous community assemblies coordinated insurgents, who operated in secret and used existing communication and organizational structures, including ancient trails and rare dialects. They divided themselves into occupiers and supporters,

⁸⁸ Referring to the extraction and exporting of natural resources. According to ecological economists Philip Lawn and Matthew Clarke, "extract and export" strategy leads to over-specialization, export revenue dependence, and a standards-lowering form of competition. These result in decreased freedom in trading and greater exploitation of workers and the environment. In Bolivia, indigenous peoples see "extract and export" as a colonial legacy, while the working class understands that it keeps the economy in arrested development.

⁸⁹ Hylton, Thomson, and Gilly, *Revolutionary Horizons*.

⁹⁰ Ismael Saavedra, interview by author, La Paz, Bolivia, May 30, 2018; Hylton, Thomson, and Gilly, *Revolutionary Horizons*.

and peacefully laid siege to Bolivia's major cities. Like in the Second, labor unions and peasant organizations coordinated to shut down the basic functioning of the economy, blocking highways and arranging general strikes. Thus, the revolutionaries combined their pro-indigenous and national-popular traditions to stage an insurrection larger, stronger, more dynamic, and more diverse than ever before.⁹¹

The revolution evolved through a *proceso de cambio*. On October 17, 2003, 800,000 demonstrators occupied La Paz, leaving a radius of two blocks around the presidential palace to avoid violence, and demanded the Agenda's adoption.⁹² After Lozada fled his palace to the United States, Vice President Carlos Mesa took office and pledged himself to the Agenda. Appealing to *mandar obedeciendo*, he promised: "If I don't follow through, you can kick me out."⁹³ After his administration proposed a referendum that watered down the Agenda, insurgents did just that. And on December 18, 2005, Bolivia elected Evo Morales, an Aymara who had grown up in destitute poverty in the Chapare, a coca-growers' union leader who had organized workers and indigenous communities during the revolution. He pledged to eliminate neo-imperialist influences and lead Bolivia toward *vivir bien*.

The post-revolutionary government maintained the Andean collectivist ethos, which inspired avant-garde models for sustainable development and inclusive post-colonial nation-building. These brought unprecedented prosperity, as well as due criticism. Like the revolution, Bolivia's development materialized as a *proceso de cambio*. From 2006 to 2008, MAS re-nationalized hydrocarbons, via the Chaco War Decree, which allowed the state to expand welfare and enact agrarian reform. The expansion funded universities, indigenous communities, and

⁹¹ Hylton, Thomson, and Gilly, *Revolutionary Horizons*.

⁹² *Ibid.*

⁹³ *Ibid.*

pensions, while creating a public healthcare program for women's reproductive health and the elderly. The agrarian reform re-distributed 77,000 square miles of land—an area the size of Nebraska and accounting for one fifth of the country's arable territory—to peasant associations over the next five years. Plus, it legalized coca, ending the War on Drugs.

In 2009, the country was re-founded through popular referendum as the Plurinational State of Bolivia, with a constitution designed by MAS and a coalition of indigenous and peasant representatives. The constitution formalized the Plurinational State as a federation of thirty-six indigenous nations, a *marka* in which each nation's language, cultural symbols, holidays, and religion held official status.⁹⁴ Plus, it re-designed the legislative and judicial branches, while adding a new fourth branch: the Plurinational Legislative Assembly, which included representatives elected by department,⁹⁵ by district, and by indigenous assemblies, reflecting Bolivia's motley society and realizing *wiphala*. To increase democratic control, Bolivia's Supreme Court became the first in the world to have its justices be elected by popular vote, and the Plurinational Electoral Organ, a co-equal, nonpartisan election-monitoring and anti-corruption branch, was formed. Furthermore, to adhere to *vivir bien* and maintain sovereignty, the constitution declared Bolivia officially pacifist.⁹⁶

Furthermore, the constitution required a new, integrated, iterative, and harmonious form of development, oriented toward *vivir bien* and respecting the *proceso de cambio*. This shaped MAS' landmark National Plan for Development. First, the Plurinational Assembly established Laws of Mother Earth, which extended formal rights to the *Pachamama* and defined integral development through *vivir bien* as achieving a “dynamic balance” between “plural and diverse” human activities

⁹⁴ "Bolivia (Plurinational State of)'s Constitution of 2009," Constitute Project, accessed January 15, 2019, last modified February 4, 2020. https://www.constituteproject.org/constitution/Bolivia_2009.pdf.

⁹⁵ Regional government

⁹⁶ "Bolivia (Plurinational State of)'s Constitution of 2009."

and the “cycles and processes inherent in Mother Earth.”⁹⁷ Second, the Plan realized *marka* by building dozens of schools, community centers, and museums in disenfranchised rural indigenous communities and tailored their programs to the language, culture, and history of their respective nations. Third, the plan took a gradual, iterative approach to economic development, taking advantage of existing infrastructure and radiating outward from cities.⁹⁸ The policy expanded welfare, achieving universal healthcare in less than a decade. Prior to the revolution, Bolivia had been the poorest country in South America. From 2005 to 2015, poverty decreased by about one fifth, from 59.6% of the population to 38.6%,⁹⁹ and life expectancy rose from 63.54 years to 68.74.¹⁰⁰ The Plan achieved a balance of nationalized “collective property”¹⁰¹ and Keynesian capitalism, regulating monopolies and allowing small business growth. Plus, it transitioned Bolivia to an import-replacement economy, diversifying domestic industry and importing only what couldn’t be produced domestically. The ensuing growth empowered the country to be the first in the world to pay off all of its debt to the World Bank and the IMF.¹⁰² One of the major reasons for the National Plan’s success was that it was a federal framework, transformed as it was implemented in increasingly local contexts and reworked in cooperation with stakeholders.

While Bolivia has seen incredible success since 2005, MAS was subject to popular criticisms regarding its inclusion of *all* indigenous peoples, sacrifices it has made in its iterative development approach, and its political ethics. For example, many lowlands indigenous peoples felt alienated by MAS’ Andean collectivist rhetoric, since it is rooted in Aymara and Quechua

⁹⁷ Calzadilla and Kotzé, "Living in Harmony with Nature?" 397-424.

⁹⁸ "Bolivia (Plurinational State of)'s Constitution of 2009."

⁹⁹ "Poverty Rate in Bolivia 2015, Statistic," Statista, accessed January 16, 2019, <https://www.statista.com/statistics/788965/poverty-rate-bolivia/>.

¹⁰⁰ "Bolivia - Life Expectancy at Birth, Total (years)," The World Bank, accessed January 16, 2019, <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SP.DYN.LE00.IN?locations=BO>.

¹⁰¹ Natural resources and infrastructure.

¹⁰² "Bolivia's President Declares 'Total Independence' from World Bank and IMF," *American Herald Tribune* (July 23, 2017), <https://ahtribune.com/economy/1803-bolivia-morales-world-bank-imf.html>.

culture. This was exacerbated by the National Plan's expansion-from-cities approach, as the rural lowlands received aid last. Inequality of access to the fruits of development was made worse by seeming hypocrisies in making sacrifices in terms of ecological welfare and economic sovereignty. Lastly, Bolivia faced increasing problems in balancing democracy with development. It suffered from a MAS hegemony and increasing paranoia. Plus, MAS' adoption of the pro-indigenous and national-popular traditions made it difficult to effectively organize against the party. While a *proceso de cambio* always has trade-offs, these problems led to a lack of consensus over whether Bolivia had fully achieved *marka* and *vivir bien*.

Through a *proceso de cambio*, the *vivir bien* tradition gradually guided Bolivia through three iteratively successful uprisings. It provided the motivation for change, the language to express it, a common culture to unite a motley Bolivia, and a framework for sustainable development. Despite the Plurinational State's shortcomings, it has proved, alongside the Third Bolivian Revolution, to be the most successful achievements of Andean collectivist principles. They realized *marka* through motley social development and showed unprecedented commitment to the *proceso de cambio* that is *vivir bien*.

On January 21st, 2005, Evo Morales was inaugurated at Tiwanaku, surrounded by thousands of supporters from *altiplano* indigenous communities and donning an eleventh-century Aymara tunic. In line with *katarismo*, the president-elect promised to dispose of the "colonial and neoliberal model" and signaled a *pachakuti*: "We are in a time of change...The time has come to change the evil history of the looting of our natural resources, of discrimination, humiliation, hatred, and contempt." He pledged to *mandar obedeciendo*, instructing his constituents: "Control me. If I can't advance, push me, brothers and sisters. Correct me constantly, because I may err." Then, Morales addressed the crowd, referring to *vivir bien* in *indianista* form. He described the

election as “a democratic revolution, a cultural revolution...with votes, not bullets,” thereby shifting the victory back onto the people, “[and] as Túpac Katari said, ‘I will return and I will be millions.’”¹⁰³

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¹⁰³ Hylton, Thomson, and Gilly, *Revolutionary Horizons*, 127.