

Moritz Heck: Plurinational afrobolivianity: afro-indigenous articulations and interethnic relations in the Yungas of Bolivia. Bielefeld: Transcript 2020. xx + 324 pp., 20 photos, maps

While Afrobolivians are a special case in some respects, in others they share in the general developments that have been observed among most Afro-Latin Americans. In the 1980s, they proclaimed the *Saya* folklore dance as their cultural heritage and turned it into a political issue (183–191). A king was later crowned, a genealogical reference to an African dynasty being (re)constructed in order to accord him legitimacy (197–199). Afrobolivian organisations also filed a lawsuit against the performance of the *tundi*, another folklore dance, on the basis of the Anti-Racism Act of 2010: during the parades held in connection with the Bolivian carnival and patronage festivals, which are becoming increasingly important, urban residents appeared in blackface, portraying the former slaves in the most humiliating ways (236). These three independent events are all an expression of the general effort of Afrobolivians to make their culture socially and politically visible and to achieve legal recognition as part of the plurinational state of Bolivia.

Moritz Heck's study gives these and similarly extraordinary developments a thorough examination and positions them in the ongoing discussion about Afro-Latin Americans. This is done by means of a comprehensive consideration of the existing literature, detailed field observations and an excellent analysis of local conditions that adopt regional and national processes but may also generate conflict. Of course, "Plurinational afrobolivianity: afro-indigenous articulations and interethnic relations in the Yungas of Bolivia" is not an easy title to decipher. It becomes understandable after reading the study, when the complex relationships in which

the author sees the Afrobolivians involved are revealed.

'Afrobolivianity' emerged in Bolivia at a time when the central Andean state was giving itself a plurinational self-image. Yet comparatively few people of African descent live in the country, which is dominated by Indian and mestizo communities. By 'afro-indigenous articulations', Heck indicates that he sees blackness as closely linked to being indigenous. Instead of the old controversy about fixed identities versus invented traditions, he orients himself to James Clifford's concept of 'indigeneity', which the latter references as a process-like emergence (29–31). Heck too concentrates on actions, performances and translations that combine and transform elements from past and present. 'Interethnic relations' emerge with neighbouring Aymara Indians in the transitional valleys of the Yungas between the Andes and the Amazon, although the Yungas are generally considered to be 'the' Afrobolivian region.

The study derives from a dissertation submitted to the Institute for Social Anthropology at the University of Cologne in 2019. It is based on initial short visits in 2010 and 2012, followed by two field trips carried out over several months in 2014, 2015 and 2017. The Introduction (19–41) offers a considerable range of current concepts and theoretical approaches to which the author refers in the course of his study. This is entirely conceived as a multi-sited ethnography so that emerging empirical questions and ethnographic findings may be discussed. The work is also transdisciplinary in that it deals with themes not just in anthropology but also in political science and the sociology of law.

The study describes a circle in its structure and texture, starting and ending in the village of Cala Cala in the northern Yungas. In Chapter 1, 'Encountering afrobolivianity' (43–59), Cala Cala is first introduced as the centre of Heck's field research, and it immediately reveals its Afrobolivian complexi-

ties: the municipality is made up of a dozen or so AfroBolivian households and more than ten times as many Aymara households. Both groups grow coca, coffee and citrus fruits and although they intermarry on occasion, they also maintain existing linguistic and cultural ethnic boundaries. The following chapters then go a long way back through the earlier and more recent histories of the region and the country to discuss the urban-rural divide and internal migration by AfroBolivians, racial discrimination and culture, the multicultural turn in state politics and the rise of AfroBolivian organisations. Chapter 10, "Plurinational afrobolivianity on the ground and built identity politics" (273–293), then returns full circle to Cala Cala. At the suggestion of the state administration, the village organised the construction of a cultural centre with public funding which later came to be called the Interpretation Centre for AfroBolivian Culture (to those behind the venture, the term 'museum' was too reminiscent of an archaeological collection). Heck's ethnographic description of the centre's opening ceremony reveals far-reaching contradictions: instead of confirming the expectations of incomes being earned from ethnotourism, which interested the villagers the most, the speech opening the centre made by the invited state official articulated a detached state identity that manipulated and alienated AfroBolivian concepts of ethnicity and just served up old stereotypes. The coarse brushing away of existing differences between the villages should also be mentioned, which the villagers noted again and again, showing their irritation.

Chapter 2, "The afrobolivian presence in Bolivia, then and now" (61–79), shows that historians still have a lot to do, as the history of the arrival of African slaves in the Yungas has not yet been written. Climate-determinist arguments that Africans cannot stand the cold of the Andean highlands and therefore ended up in the Yungas continue to circulate. Since the days of independence, AfroBolivians have

been identified with coca cultivation and have also developed a regional self-image as Yungeños. It also became clear that although the Bolivian Revolution of 1952, and especially the land reform in the Yungas, unified AfroBolivians and Aymara as peasants in the spirit of the ideal of a homogeneous, mestizo nation state, it could not abolish ethnic differences and racist animosity. Politically, a unified identity as peasants was forced upon them by the unions. Heck explains knowledgeably and in detail the recent history, which ushered in a multicultural turn in government policy, including constitutional reforms.

Chapters 3 to 6 deal intensively with all aspects of the ethno-racial construction of the self-perceptions and perceptions of others concerning the AfroBolivians of the Yungas. Chapter 3, "We are los Afros de Cala Cala" (81–106), explores the emic notions of belonging to Cala Cala. Family relationships, local and supra-local networks and local history all play important roles in ideas of community and collective identification as AfroBolivians. The social point of reference is the extended family, which is relevant even for migrants to Bolivia's big cities. Chapter 4, "Cala Cala beyond 'lo Afro'" (107–129), describes aspects of communal and collective identification with Cala Cala that follow criteria other than ethno-racial ones. At their centre is the idea of an ethical community with mutual obligations that includes the Aymara, largely coincides with the coca-farming community and is linked by economic, religious and political responsibilities. Chapter 5, "The changing meanings of ethnoracial identifications in Cala Cala" (131–151), refers to the ever-changing ethno-racial identifications in the village. Heck believes that the category 'AfroBoliviano', which was legally codified a few years ago, is responsible for reconfiguring the existing relationships between the groups, thus creating new ethnic stereotypes and re-interpretations of local history. However, the former status quo in which the legally codi-

fied ethnicisation of Afrobolivians mentioned above intervened might itself be a relatively recent phenomenon. It could correspond to an effort to enforce a levelling of differences in the course of the Bolivian Revolution of 1952, a process one might suggest was aimed at eliminating ethnic differences and promoting social homogeneity. Chapter 6, "What it means to be Afro" (153–181), makes clear in great detail yet again that phenotypical attributes based on ancestry and 'race' play just as important a role in the individual belonging to a group as 'culture' and traditions.

Ideas of indigenusness and mestizoism (understood as a racial and cultural mix) are deeply anchored in the Yungas, but at the moment they clash with transnationally circulating ideas about Afro-Latin Americans. According to Chapter 7, "We are culture, not color" (183–214), it is not the villagers, but rather the technocrats and the young migrants in the cities, with their enthusiasm for music and dance, who are seeking to reconstruct Afrobolivianity as a culture in its own right. The aforementioned politicisation of the Saya folklore dance and the crowning of an Afrobolivian king are presented here. Heck cannot fill in the knowledge gaps completely: the origins of the Saya (with rhythm, dance and musical instruments), like those of the former king, remain hidden. Heck traces both phenomena back to the time before the Bolivian Revolution, when the Saya was danced and a king was consulted as a local advisor and mediator.

The next two chapters form the actual core of the work. Chapter 8, "El movimiento Afroboliviano" (215–243), reconstructs the history of the Afrobolivian movement in great detail. The Saya folk dance accompanied the emergence and strengthening of this movement and even gave it its name: the Afrobolivian Saya Cultural Movement (Movimiento Cultural Saya Afroboliviana [MOCUSABOL]). It begins with previous efforts to revive the dance in the Yungas, which was at risk of

disappearing a generation ago. The critique of successful folklore groups that appropriate the Saya and incorporate it into conventional Andean music performances has encouraged young Afrobolivians to perform it themselves at numerous dance events in the major cities, bringing to an end the 'invisibility' that Afro-Latin Americans everywhere have bemoaned. The cultural movement was politicised by at times competing individual leaders who founded organisations and forged national political alliances within the plurinational state apparatus. The tourism industry and development organisations also played an important role here. In Chapter 9, "Rights, recognition and new forms of organization" (245–271), Heck shows that the adjudication of claims, such as legal recognition of the rights of a disadvantaged minority, might bring about new undesirable developments and inequalities. In the case of the Afrobolivians, this might trigger dynamics and mechanisms that benefit certain political groups or neglect other local communities within the same minority. Since the government and international development organisations needed a contact entity for their projects that not only spoke 'on behalf of' the Afrobolivians in the sense of an NGO, but represented them directly, the National Council of Afrobolivians (Consejo Nacional Afroboliviano [CONAFRO]) was established, and all projects were channelled through it. Local differences between the villages were ignored and supposedly authentic localities privileged.

The closed circle from Cala Cala back to Cala Cala that the study draws also reveals those whom the author identifies as the real Afrobolivians, namely the farmers of the Yungas who may have an Aymara grandmother, but also have children in a city university; who are used to living with Indian neighbours, but maintain ethnic boundaries; who are not fundamentally but only occasionally different from the residents of other villages in the area; and who want to improve their own com-

munity's living conditions. This complexity shows that the critique of ethnicisation in social and cultural studies because it supposedly essentialises identity and retraditionalises or reinvents culture retrospectively does not really stand a chance in highly connected Latin America.

The criticism is all the more questionable, as it rarely presents alternatives. It reminds me of old Marxist positions that claimed a 'false consciousness' when the exploited did not care what their objective class was. Except perhaps in Brazil, simple anti-racism alone has never mobilised an Afro-Latin American minority to political action: it is always connected to ethnic claims. Heck's work offers a good explanation for this phenomenon: in Latin American reality, it is difficult to distinguish between categorisations of people according to phenotype or culture, the two being closely interwoven. Heck discusses this question in detail (131–139). It becomes clear that, while the separation of 'race' and 'culture' makes sense for a theoretical analysis à la Peter Wade (168–170), it is not an issue for the populations concerned. Heck combines both aspects: the ethnic and the phenotypic. There is evidence that ethnicisation has taken hold among many Afro-Latin Americans all over the continent. In the case of the Afrobolivians, Heck aptly questions the conditions of its origin and its emergence, not its essence. The question of how a folklore dance in Bolivia became a political issue has the potential to occupy anthropology for quite a while.

Moritz Heck excellently describes the status of the relevant academic discussion and current political developments in his study of Afrobolivians. The work has been published in an English that is pleasant to read. It reproduces the original Spanish quotations (unfortunately without dates) and includes a list of abbreviations and a glossary of terms in Spanish and Aymara. In European cultural anthropology, this should increase the visibil-

ity of this population group, which thus far it has rather neglected.

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Hilde Link: *Indisches Drama. Eine Ethnologin erzählt*. Berlin: Dietrich Reimer 2020. 240 S.

„Indisches Drama“ handelt von der Erforschung einer bestimmten Form des sakralen Tanztheaters, des Terukkuttu, im südindischen Tamil Nadu. Drama findet dort für Hilde Link lange nicht nur auf der Bühne statt. Auf äußerst unterhaltsame und häufig tragikomische Weise erzählt die Ethnologin autoethnographisch von Widersprüchlichkeiten indischen Alltagslebens und wie sie sich als deutsche Forscherin mit ihrer Familie darin zurechtfindet. Feinsinnig gelingt es ihr, ihre persönliche Konfrontation mit eigenen sowie sozialen Problemen indischer Dörfer und Städte der Region zu beschreiben. Damit kann sie das Interesse der Lesenden über die ethnologische Forschungsgemeinschaft hinaus beanspruchen. Links 240 Seiten lesen sich spannend wie ein Urlaubsroman, dabei enthalten sie einerseits sensible Einführungen in das Kastensystem und andere grundlegende Werte und Bräuche indischen Zusammenlebens, in klassische Texte des Hinduismus sowie Gender- und Ritualfragen, andererseits bespricht Links Buch ethische, soziale, kulturelle und sogar religiöse Konflikte der Feldforschungspraxis.

Die Erzählung ist besteht aus 43 Abschnitten, die sich jeweils wie Kurzgeschichten lesen und eher lose über das zu Beginn eingeführte Forschungsthema des Tanztheaters in Tamil Nadu sowie die begrenzte Dauer des Feldforschungsaufenthaltes verbunden sind. In