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Earth Politics: Religion, Decolonization, And Bolivia's Indigenous Intellectuals (Narrating Native Histories)



Synopsis

Earth Politics focuses on the lives of four indigenous activist-intellectuals in Bolivia, key leaders in the Alcaldes Mayores Particulares (AMP), a movement established to claim rights for indigenous education and reclaim indigenous lands from hacienda owners. The AMP leaders invented a discourse of decolonization, rooted in part in native religion, and used it to counter structures of internal colonialism, including the existing racial systems. Waskar Ari calls their social movement, practices, and discourse earth politics, both because the AMP emphasized the idea of the earth and the place of Indians on it, and because of the political meaning that the AMP gave to the worship of the Aymara gods. Depicting the social worlds and life work of the activists, Ari traverses Bolivia's political and social landscape from the 1920s into the early 1970s. He reveals the AMP's extensive geographic reach, genuine grassroots quality, and vibrant regional diversity. Ari had access to the private archives of indigenous families, and he collected oral histories, speaking with men and women who knew the AMP leaders. The resulting examination of Bolivian indigenous activism is one of unparalleled nuance and depth.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

"In this fascinating study, the historian Waskar Ari explores the influence of religious beliefs and the evolving concept of 'Indian Law' to understand how indigenous intellectuals in Bolivia constructed a politics that valued heterogeneity and autonomy over accommodation or assimilation.

Earth Politics is essential reading for anyone interested in race, ethnicity, and political struggles in Latin America." (Barbara Weinstein, coeditor of *The Making of the Middle Class: Toward a Transnational History*) "Waskar Ari is a well-known Bolivian historian and activist, one who speaks Aymara and has deep roots in rural indigenous Bolivia. He has built deep relationships of trust and responsibility through his long-standing work with indigenous community leaders. Using a startlingly original set of archival and oral materials, he has produced an important book that opens up an entirely unknown episode in the history of Bolivian and, more generally, Latin American indigenous movements." (Brooke Larson, author of *Trials of Nation Making: Liberalism, Race, and Ethnicity in the Andes, 1810-1910*) "A good summary of the Bolivian AMP for all Latin American social science researchers. . . . Highly recommended. All levels and libraries." (D. L. Browman *Choice*) "This is really a treasure, a lens into the lives, visions, and political practices of the forebears of the contemporary movement that is changing Bolivia." (Nancy Postero & Devin Beaulieu *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute*) "This book is recommended for readers interested in indigenous history, Andean religious practices, or for use in courses on law, politics, or race in Latin America." (*Colonial Latin American Historical Review* 2014-07-01) "Ari's work is a valuable contribution to our understanding of the longer histories of indigenous revitalization in Bolivia.... [S]tudents of Latin America should read it closely to gain a fuller understanding of both the complexities of indigenous political projects and the stubborn durability of the colonial foundations of the Latin American state." (Bret Gustafson *The Historian* 2016-12-12)

Waskar Ari is Assistant Professor of History and Ethnic Studies/Latin American Studies at the University of Nebraska, Lincoln.

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