

Spectacles of Autonomy and Crisis: Or, What Bulls and Beauty Queens have to do with Regionalism in Eastern Bolivia

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RESUMEN

La caída del neoliberalismo en Bolivia abre espacios tanto para los movimientos sociales progresivos e indígenas como para los nuevos proyectos elitistas. Este artículo examina una expresión del “nuevo urbanismo” en la ciudad y región oriental de Santa Cruz donde un movimiento elitista y “cívico” propone la “autonomía” como respuesta al creciente poder indígena-popular y nacionalista. Este nuevo urbanismo se expresa mediante una gama de espectáculos culturales—desde carnaval hasta formas de violencia privada—y responde a una crisis del poder social, político y económico de la elite tradicional. El espectáculo es una táctica para la visualización del poder en el contexto de incertidumbre territorial e institucional y la pérdida, frente a la democracia popular, de espacios de control sobre el aparato estatal por parte de la elite regional. Utilizando la imagen del migrante andino o “kolla” como símbolo de la amenaza del estado central, esta táctica de visualización del poder en el caso de Santa Cruz se vuelca hacia la racialización del espacio público y de los derechos a su ocupación, y a la defensa de jerarquías, símbolos e instituciones sociales en decadencia. Como el espectáculo no resuelve las fracturas provocadas por la crisis de poder, ni silencia a los desafíos a la hegemonía cruceña, el regionalismo de elite depende también del uso selectivo de la violencia privada y pública. El artículo intenta trascender enfoques etnográficos locales para visualizar nuevas articulaciones trans-locales mediante las cuales el presente y futuro del estado boliviano es actualmente re-imaginado y disputado.

PALABRAS CLAVES: Bolivia, regionalismo, raza, territorio, movimientos sociales.

KEYWORDS: Bolivia, regionalism, race, territory, social movements.

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When they got to Monseñor Rivero Avenue, the Huasos (Hillbillies) Fraternity started demanding autonomy [and] they had the bull's balls and the pants to do it (*tenían huevos de toro y pantalones para hacerlo*).

El Deber 2005a

The queen [*la soberana*] gave the public all of her splendor, dancing and blowing kisses without pause. Undoubtedly, Maricruz Ribera is the Queen of Autonomy . . . The public acclaimed *la soberana*, especially the children who asked for her attention. The beautiful blond sent thousands of kisses to those present . . . Entire families stood on their chairs to show their affection shouting "Maricruz, my love!" "¡Long live the Queen of Autonomy!" "Strength Maricruz!"

El Deber 2005d

THE RISE OF INDIGENOUS-POPULAR POWER in Bolivia occurs in the context of territorial, institutional, and discursive instability in the nation-state order. Bolivia is in a systemic shift in the wake of three decades of corporatism and militarism (1952–1982) and its partial dismantlement through two decades of neoliberal intercultural reformism (1985–2003) now also in retreat. By 1999 elites saw their grip on power dissolving in the face of the rearticulation of progressive social movements and widespread opposition to the privatization of state resources, widening inequality, and deepening corruption and violence of elite-pacted democracy. Having sensed the erosion of power underway, by the early 2000s traditional *criollo* ("white") elites began retreating from the centralized state upon which they had long depended. Voicing demands for more decentralization and encouraged by the hope that natural resources would come under regional rather than national control, elites began to entrench themselves discursively and institutionally in the departments.¹ From there they promoted a discourse of departmental "autonomy." Regionalist projects congealed in urban-centers around which elites are constructing racialized and spatialized notions of citizen-subject rights and identity and regionalized territorial orders against the prospects of a redistributive nationalist and indigenous project, the possibilities of which became quite real with the victory of the Movement to Socialism (MAS) in 2005.

Focusing on the period of instability between the ouster of neoliberal reformer Gonzalo Sánchez de Lozada in 2003 and the election of the MAS candidate Evo Morales in 2005, this article examines the role of public spectacle in the constitution of "autonomy" claims in the eastern Bolivian city and Department of Santa Cruz. I outline the crisis of power confronting Santa Cruz's elite, the symbols deployed in defense of *cruceño* particularity, and the networks behind the regionalist movement. I then map regionalism in practice by charting connections

between a series of spectacular events ranging from Carnival to street violence. I suggest that the intensification of “autonomy” symbolism tied to elite-backed public spectacle is a response to the racial and political-economic crisis faced by elites, a crisis rooted in the structure of the regional economy and the rise of new actors (like the MAS and indigenous movements). This elite’s response to crisis is one familiar in decadent colonial and commodity-dependent economies. Facing the erosion of racial privilege and traditional social boundaries, regional elites use spectacle to visualize “power” through displays that naturalize gendered, racial, social, and spatial boundaries and conjure grandiose illusions of prosperity against the underlying precariousness of both (Stoler 1989; Apter 2005). The regionalization of political sentiment and the spatialization of “rights” to this illusory prosperity is pursued by attributing the crisis to the “Andean” national regime and to the people constructed as its local representatives—Andean migrants, MAS actors, and lowland indigenous organizations (“traitors to the region”) who contest the regionalist project. These “threats” to the region’s aspirations are deemed legitimate targets of violence. Elite-backed public spectacle has thus a festive and violent face that seeks to reinforce inequality by projecting a particular kind of ideal subject and form of public spatial occupation—i.e., citizenship—onto urban and regional space.² As hinted in the journalists’ accounts of Carnival in the epigraph, regionalism relies on territorialized embodiments of sentiment—beauty queens or “sovereigns” who represent a claim to and desire for export-quality (“white”) cosmopolitan modernity and bulls whose reproductive organs are metonyms for the virile patriarchal and agrarian masculinity of its territorial defenders. This symbolic complex unfolds through rituals and institutions replicated across sub-regional centers aimed at incorporating loyal subjects into folkloric expressions of alterity, which are dominated by the center and violently silence opposition through the control of public space.³

In this case study of Bolivia’s new urbanisms, I forgo the depth of ethnographic localism to emphasize multiscalar expressions of power, meaning, and territoriality over time and space. Amid shifting territorial and institutional arrangements of state power, social struggles and anthropological interpretations must transcend readings of “local” communities resisting hegemonic states to consider how cultural politics unfolds as contested articulations of heterogeneous, translocal “scale-making” projects (Tsing 2005). Both regionalist spectacles and the phenomenon of popular-indigenous resurgence are translocal, multiscalar struggles that are constitutive of the state in transformation. These are struggles waged not against the state from local sites, but translocal projections of present and future orders of the state itself. The material presented here seeks to capture the workings of spectacle in the visualization and spatialization of these struggles—both those of urban-centered elite regionalism and the tactics deployed to contest it.

Carnivals of Autonomy

In January 2005, Carnival in Santa Cruz heated up amid cruceño protests against “centralism” and for “autonomy.” These protests were led by the Civic Committee (*Comité Cívico* or *Comité Pro-Santa Cruz*), a body of business and professional organizations. An increase in the price of government-subsidized diesel sparked the protests, allowing the Civic Committee to speak of regional interests that united the elites (the agroindustry depends on diesel subsidies) and the “public” (whose transport costs would rise). Yet, diesel prices were a convenient pretext that set into motion a plan to display regional strength and assure that a referendum on departmental autonomy preceded the election of a national constitutional assembly.⁴ The Civic Committee staged a series of spectacles—hunger strikes, work stoppages, the naming of a “pre-autonomous” council, and the physical occupation of state institutions. The sometimes violent occupations were carried out by the Cruceño Youth Union or UJC (*Unión Juvenil Cruceñista*), a junior men’s age-grade organization and the strong arm of the Civic Committee (Sandoval et al. 2003). The events escalated over 10 days, eventually forcing the resignation of the moderate departmental governor. Then President Carlos Mesa hoped to avoid bloodshed, perhaps in complicity with the cruceño putsch, and Bolivian troops did not intervene in what was essentially a regional coup. The show culminated on January 28th with a *Cabildo* (public assembly). Two hundred thousand Cruceños gathered in the streets around a towering statue of Christ on Monseñor Rivero Avenue. Waving green and white flags of Santa Cruz, the crowds celebrated “autonomy” as a new way of imagining themselves in relation to the Bolivian nation-state.

The protests and the *Cabildo* coincided with carnival preparations and reflected the overlap between civic regionalism, elite-led street politics, and the symbolic and organizational forms of Carnival itself. Carnival is a time of raucous exuberance, music, and dance staged in the streets by upper-class men’s social clubs called *comparsas*. In the past three years, Carnival has been marked by “autonomy” themes, with icons of regional pride adding to street parties and parades. Like Carnival elsewhere, festivities are marked by transgressive occupations of public space marked by heavy alcohol consumption, sexual license and violence, transgressions now tied to elite claims to public space and “resistance” to centralized state power. This atmosphere was propitious for civic protest yet institutional synergies linked folkloric display with political tactics. The *Association of Comparsas*, a constituent member of the Civic Committee, had declared their support for autonomy. Banners proclaiming the allegiance of *comparsas* and similar social clubs called “fraternities” to the autonomist project graced city streets. Prominent cruceño male elites invariably participate in several such organizations (business groups, *fraternidades*, and *comparsas*), alternating participation in clannish private arenas of power brokerage

with public performances expressed through spectacular folkloric street display. For instance, the often thuggish UJC is also represented in a folkloric dance troupe called the *Kerembas* that participates in Carnival and other ritual events.

With tensions heightened over the occupation of public buildings, media calls for regional pride, and civic leaders on hunger strike, the *Huasos* (Hillbillies) comparsa led the last of three pre-Carnival parades described in the epigraph. Wearing straw hats to represent the rural cruceño peasant, they danced out of the plaza with bulls' testicles hanging from green and white signs. With this claim to virility in tow, they shouted: "Autonomy! Autonomy!" Dancing around their queen, the parade traced a route from the central plaza to Monseñor Rivero avenue and the Christ statue, setting the festive and political tone for the Cabildo staged there a few days later.

After the Cabildo, the comparsas danced again on the day of Carnival. The parade moved toward the center through more "popular" barrios of the southern area, where the public was imagined by journalists as expressing loving affection for "their sovereign queen" (*El Deber* 2005d). Floats displayed Cruceño rural tradition (indigenous warriors and maidens, peasant farmers, and natural exuberance) blended with carnivalesque icons of imperial power (Egyptian Pharaohs and Greek Gods). Fraternities danced around the floats as the queen of each group waved to the crowd from on high. At the fore was the *Reina del Carnaval*, Queen of Carnival. Protected by her "vassals" the "beautiful blond" was to be imagined as an object of public desire, the symbol of Santa Cruz and the "Queen of Autonomy" (*El Deber* 2005d). Cruceño men who danced around her exerted the "force of the bull" (*la fuerza del toro*) to protect the queen and demand "autonomy" (*El Deber* 2005c). Between the beauty queen and the bull, Carnival in Santa Cruz echoed the elite imaginary behind the urban-centered regionalist project, making visible claims on territory and public space and evoking a certain kind of public subject (beautiful white women and manly white-criollo men) suited for its occupation and defense.

A Regional Landscape

Although it began as a frontier town, Santa Cruz now occupies a central position in national dynamics (Urioste and Kay 2005). Relatively rich compared to the Bolivian Andes, Santa Cruz leads the country in GDP, exports, and living standards. This wealth is spatially and socially concentrated among urban middle and upper classes of the city and its immediate environs (PNUD 2004).⁵ Since the 1950s, Santa Cruz grew with state investment, foreign (U.S.) loans, oil royalties, agrarian booms, and cocaine dollars. This growth, as well as state-sponsored resettlement plans, spurred indigenous Quechua and Aymara migration from the poorer Andean regions to Santa Cruz over the past four decades, with over 25 percent of the Department's 2 million people now of Andean origin (PNUD 2004). Reactions to this influx of

“Kollas” (Andean Bolivians) were reflected in the intensification of regionalist sentiment in defense of Cruceños as “Cambas” (a once derogatory term used for indigenous peons, now a marker of regional identity) (Stearman 1985; Pruden 2003).

The Cruceño-Camba is celebrated through a matrix of symbols: regional Spanish; regional food, music and dance; costumes tied to rural agrarian life and lowland indigenous peoples; the aesthetic order of a colonial city surrounded by natural abundance and marked by symbols of colonial power like the Christ statue in the city center. Nobility and conquest are invoked in other recurring symbols such as the cross potent (Christianity), the lion (masculine courage), the castle (security), and the crown (royalty) on the Department’s coat of arms. The colors green and white from the departmental flag are ubiquitous in Santa Cruz, gracing taxis and buses, flooding civic assemblies, and marking logos for Cruceño businesses. As Cruceños learn in school, green evokes natural abundance, the rural and frontier riches of the region. White symbolizes purity (*la pureza del linaje*) and nobility (*hidalguía*), a rather transparent invocation of racial distinction inherited from Spanish colonialism. As described in the epigraph, these symbols are encapsulated in representations of the ideal Cruceño-Camba bodies, whether that of virile men or of “beautiful” women, all implicitly “white” in relation to Andean Bolivia and local indigenous peoples.

The Camba’s Other is the *Kolla* Andean Bolivian, whether Quechua or Aymara, criollo, mestizo (“mixed” race), or *cholo* (urban indigenous). With the resurgence of indigeneity as a privileged marker of territorial rights in intercultural Bolivia, elite Cruceños and Cambas increasingly speak of themselves as mestizos who share the heritage of lowland native peoples of Santa Cruz (either Guarani, Besiro [Chiquitano], or Guarayu, but not the nomadic, now destitute Ayoreo). Non-indigenous Cruceños view these peoples as “our ethnics” (*nuestras étnias*), integrating them within a distinct history of mestizaje that is culturally and racially superior to Andean mestizaje or *cholaje*. Cruceños claim to represent a modernizing pioneer of Spanish origins, just a tad mestizo and imbued with the masculinity of indigenous warriors and the erotic allure of indigenous maidens (yet not their physical appearance) (Lowrey 2006). In contrast, Cruceño regionalists argue that Andean Kollas are trapped in a culturally conservative irrational collectivism derived from pre-Colombian and Spanish religious and bureaucratic centralism (Nación Camba 2004; Fernández B. 2002; Muñoz García 2005).⁶ The idealized Cruceño Camba blends the defense of agrarian patrimony—territorial and cultural “property” including traditions, land, peasants, and Indians—with the tastes and acquisitive power of the cosmopolitan urban consumer.

Though agroindustrial wealth and power sustain the regional elite, public identity displays cast regionalists as peasant or indigenous subalterns resisting the Andean-dominated state regime. This male Camba identity is performed by men wearing straw hats, sandals, white peasant pants and shirt, sandals, and carrying a

slingshot, machete, and a water gourd. Displays of Cambas as warriors resisting Andean incursions complement this “peasant” character.⁷ The male *cruceño* claims the warrior blood of the Indian and the hardiness of the Camba peasant to defend their patrimony against usurpers. On display, the female “Camba” wears a *tipoi*, a dress said to be typical of indigenous women. She is sometimes called *kuñatai*, (Guarani, “young woman”), to appropriate the authenticity and the sexual allure of the indigenous maiden. Yet, even when dressed as Indians or peasants, Cruceños tend to emphasize their urban, cosmopolitan whiteness as an expression of their aspiration to participate in an idealized “global” middle-upper class consumer society.⁸ Commonly heard phrases like *camba neto* (pure Camba) and *cruceño de verdad* (true Cruceño) also evoke whiteness, social power, and racial purity.⁹

Cruceño regionalism opposes spatial, social, or subjective expressions of indigeneity or class that are not incorporated into folkloric niches of the dominant order. The regionalist cosmology thus seeks to absorb gendered hierarchies of class (landlord-peasant) and race (colonizer-indigene) to reposition lines of contention from within the region to its outer edges.¹⁰ This erasure of the local “conjure[s] a self-conscious translocalism” to reposition the region itself as a “local” subaltern confronting national and global scales, similar to the frontier regionalisms described by Anna Tsing in Indonesia (2005:68, 74–75).

This Cruceño-Camba identity is projected outward from the city and seeks to establish itself as territorially congruent with the Department of Santa Cruz and in alliance with bordering departments of eastern Bolivia (see Figure 1). Yet the city is surrounded by diverse, conflicted regions rather than orderly satellites. The Cruceño Valleys (*Valles Cruceños*) to the west are three provinces tied to the provincial city of Vallegrande, an area marked by deep rural poverty. The Integrated North (*Norte Integrado*) is constituted by provinces transformed by Andean settlement which provide today the stage for tensions between elite timber, soy, and cattle interests and peasant organizations. The *Chiquitanía*, named after the Chiquitano (i.e., Besiro) people is also home to Guarayu and Ayoreo. Smallholder and indigenous territorial claims confront forestry and cattle interests, an expanding soy frontier, mineral extraction, and the gas and rail corridor to Brazil. The *Chaco* of Cordillera Province to the south is the traditional territory of the Guarani, today the stage for land tensions, hydrocarbon conflicts, and its own “Chaqueño” (of the Chaco) regionalist project that contests Cruceño dominance (PNUD 2004:71).

At the hub of this regional polity lies the Plaza 24th of September in the center of Santa Cruz. The plaza is a familiar arrangement of religious and secular power distributed around a main square (cathedral, municipality, social club, police, and prefecture) (see Figure 2). Surrounding the plaza is the *casco viejo*, or old center. Beyond the old center, the city is surrounded by a series of ring roads called *anillos* (rings). Traditional Cruceño power is associated with the *casco viejo*, and prominent

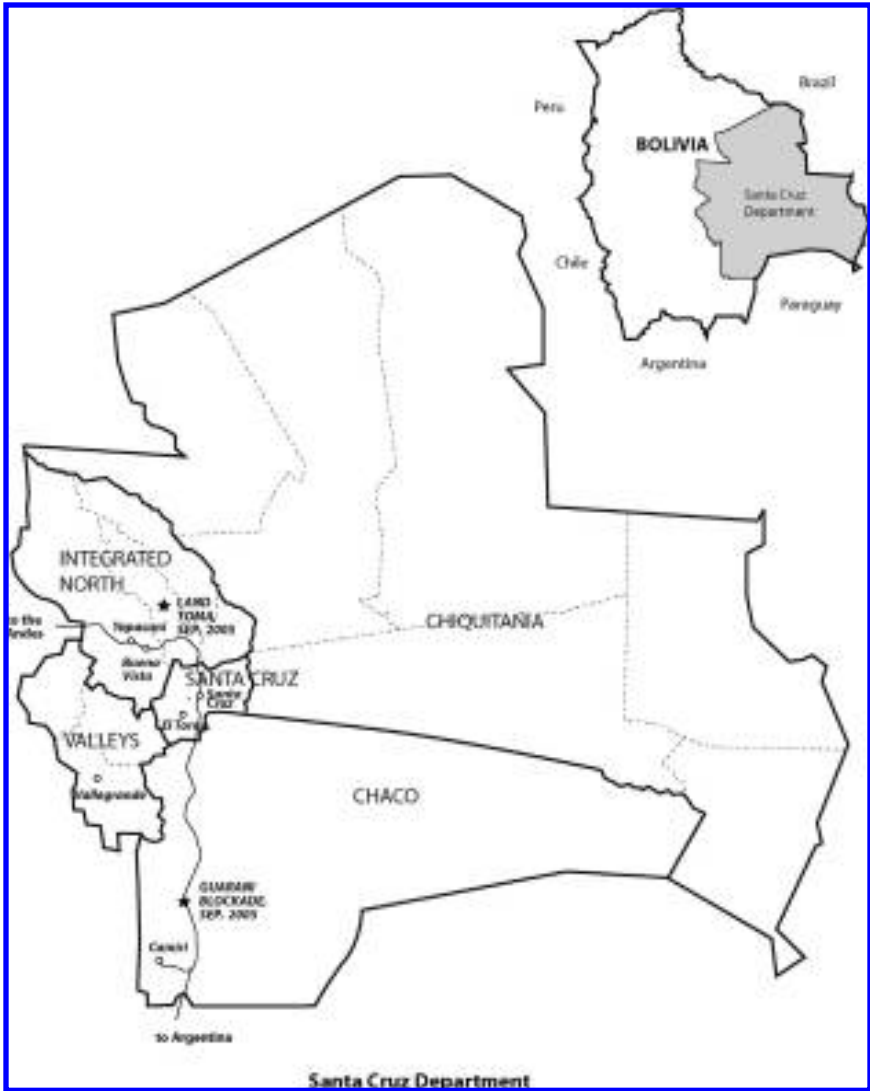


Figure 1 Santa Cruz Department.

Map by Patricia Heyda

traditional families are referred to as *cambas del primer anillo* (first-ring Cambas). As described by Stearman (1985:42–45), this center was “protected” from outsiders as Andean (and poor Camba) migrants were segregated into areas beyond outer rings. Marginal “satellite” cities on the southern and western sides of the city are marked as poor and dangerous spaces today (see Postero, in press). With urban growth, wealthy and first-ring Cambas began to move to residential areas to the



Figure 2 *Santa Cruz City.*

Map by Patricia Heyda

north, like Equipetro, near the Christ statue. Spaces like “Equipetro” and streetscapes such as “Monseñor Rivero” evoke wealth and elite leisure today. Yet the colonial plaza is celebrated as the core of Cruceño tradition and, as in the pre-Carnival parades and various instances of civic and violent spectacle, is defended and claimed by elite regionalists as the aesthetic and socio-political template for order in the region.

Centered on the ideal of power and order emanating from the plaza, Santa Cruz projects itself as a model to be emulated by peripheral regions in its orbit (e.g., Muñoz 2005). Regionalists call for the replication of the hierarchy and order of the center in the provinces through various forms: the spatial and symbolic template (the aesthetic tranquility of the plaza and associated symbols), institutions (provincial civic committees and UJC), and rituals (beauty pageants, Carnival, Day of Tradition, and civic anniversaries).¹¹ Provinces are convoked to pay homage to the center, which incorporates sub-regional symbols of music and indigeneity into departmental ritual. The center promises status, resources, and security (for provincial elite interests) in return.

Economic Dependency

The economic model underlying urban-centered regional order is one of large-scale agrarian production and natural resource extraction. Both rely on continuous frontier expansion in pursuit of new lands and resources. Both channel flows of wealth to the urban center and reproduce dependence on a handful of commodities. At the moment, soy and hydrocarbons comprise 80 percent of exports and neither generates broad-based employment nor economic diversification (PNUD 1995, 2004; Gray 2005). Most of the large export players are multinational, making of Cruceño elites the junior partners of transnational capital.¹² Cruceño agrarian elites produce for the export and national market, relying on speculative unproductive land-holding (*tierras de engorde*, fattening lands) as insurance against cyclical downturns. This agrarian pattern and its attendant dependence on transnational export sectors reinforce the opposition to both a redistributive land reform and the nationalist policies for establishing sovereignty over natural resource exploitation. The narrow-based extractive model (Gray 2005) generates royalties that fuel elite rent-seeking battles and concentrates wealth among a thin middle and upper class, following a long history of extractive resource dependency that is returning in intensified form today with Bolivia's natural gas boom.¹³ This unstable model creates the illusion of growth and wealth, yet the GDP of Santa Cruz has been flat in relation to population expansion over the past 50 years (PNUD 2004).

Building on these identity claims, the projection of regional order, and the illusion of economic prosperity, regionalist public spectacle cultivates a vision of unity despite a real and imagined sense of regional economic crisis and social instability (c.f. Apter 2005). The crisis of economic instability is compounded by an elite crisis tied to the breakdown of racial privilege and traditional structures of power.

Regionalist positions, now pervading elite-controlled civic, media, and social institutions in Santa Cruz, seek to redirect the public sentiment and discourse on the crisis against the national government and what is interpreted as the region's internal threats. The former is marked by the rise of the Movement to Socialism party (MAS, see Albro, this issue) and the latter is conveniently demonized in the "threatening" bodies of Andean migrant "invaders."

Migration and Avasallamiento

Andean Bolivian settlement in Santa Cruz since the 1950s was at times sponsored by the state and at times the result of spontaneous movement eastward of people in search of land (Stearman 1985; Soria 1996; Sandoval et al. 2003). Andeans established themselves as rural smallholders, urban merchants, and laborers during the boom of sugar (1960s), cotton (1970s), and coca-cocaine (1980s) and reshaped the social and political landscape of rural and urban Santa Cruz.

In the agrarian "Integrated North," Andean migrants established colonies that are vibrant farming and trading municipalities today. Colonists organized *sindicatos de colonizadores* (settlers' unions), replicating the union structure that shaped peasant-indigenous mobilization in the Andes. Against the Cruceño ideal of socio-spatial, aesthetic and racial order represented in the tranquility of the colonial plaza, these Andean *sindicatos* grew as alternative centers of power seen as threats to Cruceño hegemony. For example, in October 2003, Andean peasants marched into Santa Cruz from the north to oppose the crumbling regime of President Gonzalo Sánchez de Lozada. The regionalist reaction highlights the regionalist notion of social order as "principle[s] of authority:"

Even if the municipalities of Buenavista [Cruceño dominated] and Yapacani [largely Andean] are only separated by 20 kilometers, the differences between them are great. The first has appealed to its cultural patrimony to generate income and prefers to project itself as a calm (*apacible*) tourist town. One needs only to observe its imposing church, the tranquility of the plaza, the covered walkways of the traditional houses and the typical foods it offers. [. . .] in Yapacani the majority of the population and authorities are of Andean origin and their economy is principally based on commerce that extends through a large part of the town and provokes daily agitation. [. . .]

[Civic Committee vice-president] Germán Castedo [said that] Yapacani is the entryway of the west and at this moment [they] are the majority there. They have come to invade private property; that is why we asked the government to put an end to this [. . .]

REPORTER: Do you think the Andean is conflictive?

CASTEDO: The people of the west [the Andes] manage their affairs with sindicalismo, and that is due to the lack of a principle of authority and the Cruceños are not accustomed to that. We are more objective (*El Deber* 2003b, emphasis added).

Andean migration also reshaped urban Santa Cruz. Excluded by Camba resistance and poverty from the city center (as in smaller regional towns), Andeans established migrant enclaves yet have now become part of the city's fabric. Andean Cruceños—many now second and third generation—occupy multiple professions in the urban economy, though Cruceño discourse seeks to stereotype the “Kolla” as a “migrant” exclusively involved in “informal” commerce, although many Andeans labor as merchants. Like the sindicatos, urban Andean merchants organized *gremios* (guilds) to defend their interests *vis-à-vis* the municipality. *Gremios*, *gremialistas*, and the large urban markets they occupy are all coded as “Kolla” spaces in everyday talk in Santa Cruz. *Gremios* occupy a political niche in the municipality, yet like *sindicalistas*, *gremialistas* are often spoken of as a threat to the region.

The discourse of *avasallamiento*—invasion, usurpation, subjugation—characterizes talk of both the rural and urban migrant. In the city, regionalist Cruceños invoke Kollas with terms like “a flood,” “a hemorrhage,” and the *indiada*, or “Indian hordes.” The brother of a prominent politician exaggerated a moment of the recent past in one conversation saying, “by then, we had 500 thousand more Kollas on top of us.” A joke recorded in the 1970s (Stearman 1985:75) and prominent today relates that the Christ statue, with arms outstretched, is saying: “Stop! No More Kollas!” Discourses of *avasallamiento* have intensified as place of origin becomes an issue in competition for public sector employment between Cambas and “those of the interior” (i.e., Kollas). This is further magnified with rising tensions over gas royalties and their circulation through shrinking bureaucracies downsized by neoliberal restructuring (PNUD 1995:36–37). Regionalists see urban Andeans as a spatialized aesthetic threat to Cruceño order and beauty. In an article titled “Santa Cruz is Beautiful, But . . .” one wrote:

These [k]ollas who do not respect our customs, who think they can do whatever they want here, who rob us, who kill us, who convert our city into a market crushing onto the sidewalks, who close the streets without our consent to celebrate festivals that are not ours, who invade our lands. (García Paz n.d.).

In the rural areas, *avasallamiento* is imagined as an invasion of Cruceño territory by violent, racially distinct, peasant hordes. Cruceño elites cling to unequal land distribution with often legally questionable claims to ownership (Fundación Tierra

2005; Hernaiz 2002). Settler and indigenous movements demand land through legal proceedings and *tomas* (occupations), demands bolstered by the 1996 Land Reform which called for redistribution of unproductive and untitled (or ill-gotten) lands. Other land under elite control “belongs” to timber concessions and is also of suspect legality. As suggested in a cartoon published on a regionalist website (Belicoso 2004), the discourse against Andean “avasallamiento” invokes racial fear and disgust by linking it to the wider MAS expansion in the country, which is viewed as a threat against “Cruceño” resources. Toothless Andean farmers, with exaggerated aquiline noses and monstrous, enraged faces are portrayed shouting “land, land!” as they hack away at trees marked “forestry reserve.” These animal-like characters are wearing “MAS” armbands.

Civic Regionalists

To sustain the Cruceño-Camba model against what they see as the threats of, and the crisis provoked by spatial, racial, and political-economic fragmentation, civic regionalists congeal around the Civic Committee. The Civic Committee is an unelected entity dominated by business and agro-industrial elites who have a long history of resisting control of, and demanding subsidization by, the central government (Peña et al. 2002; Sandoval et al. 2003; Pruden 2003). Typical business members include the private chamber of commerce, the cattlemen, the agro-livestock chamber, the industrialists, the forestry chamber, the soy-producers chamber, and professional organizations (doctors, lawyers, architects). Other “civic” members include representatives of provincial civic committees, of carnival *comparsas*, and of social clubs or “fraternities.” The departmental labor union and the transport workers’ union are the only non-elite members. Although they are both unions, they are also tied to the region’s miniscule formal economy and are dominated by conservative leadership. In 2004, a faction of a lowland indigenous Guarani organization was invited to join the committee in a subordinate (non-voting) niche, a move that sought to weaken indigenous unity in eastern Bolivia and demonstrate the Cruceño support of “our own” indigenous Cruceños (Lowrey 2006). Civic Committee officers are chosen from within the organization, and invariably rotate between doctors, cattlemen, and agro-industrialists who are the self-proclaimed representatives of Santa Cruz’s regional interests.

A parallel entity for women, the Feminine Civic Committee, reflects the explicitly male character of the Civic Committee. New generations of men enter the Committee through the Cruceñist Youth Union (UJC), described above.¹⁴ While the UJC (Figure 3) engages in street actions, the *Comité Cívico Femenino* stages acts of public charity and seeks to establish branches in the provinces.



Figure 3 A member of the UJC (*Unión Juvenil Cruceñista*) and *Kerembas* dance troupe, September 2005. *Rojahijú* is Guarani for, “I/We Love You (Santa Cruz)” (*sic. roaiu*), a slogan that ties the city (female) to its gallant protectors (male). The back reads, “Our identity will endure if the youth struggle for their pueblo.” Note the outline of Santa Cruz department, a couple dancing a *Cruceño* musical genre, and the cross potent.

Photo by Bret Gustafson

At the extreme edge of civic regionalism is the pro-secession *Nación Camba* (Camba Nation) (Barragán 2004). The Camba Nation is a group of intellectuals led by a septuagenarian fascist, a historian, a doctor, and an architect who are editorialists, former Civic Committee leaders, and right-wing political figures. In addition to their labor rewriting *Cruceño* history in opposition to that of “Upper Peru” (i.e., Andean Bolivia), the Camba Nation’s radical position of “separatism” allows the Civic Committee leaders to cast their calls for “autonomy” as moderate political demands (Lowrey 2006). Camba Nation has outlets in *Cruceño* television and newspapers and makes itself visible through marches and manifestos, though the extent of the movement is limited.

These elite social networks outline a “civil society” marked internally by rigid boundaries of age and gender and on its borders by selective incorporation and exclusion—the latter works by containing racial, spatial, and class difference. The prototypical *cívico* is a middle-aged, non-indigenous man with intellectual inclinations; a zeal for public oratory and writing; ties to landed wealth; experiences in party politics, generally of the right; a past role in the UJC; and an association with Carnival groups and elite fraternities. These actors historically wielded control through state institutions and elite-controlled party politics. With the latter in disarray, the regional elite’s struggle to maintain power intensifies in the arena of mass spectacle and media control, through displays like those to which I now turn.

Spectacles of Prosperity and Crisis, Beauty and Violence

Although the regionalist discourse of autonomy pervades all spectacles throughout Santa Cruz's annual ritual cycle, it is particularly intensified in September, the month of Cruceñidad. Surrounding September 24th, the founding anniversary of the Department, the month is marked by folkloric festivals, homage to the flag, the selection of the Queen of Santa Cruz, and the yearly agro-industrial fair called EXPOCRUZ (*Feria Exposición de Santa Cruz*). In 2005, September was also a period of political tension over upcoming elections and the prospects of a MAS victory, peasant land seizures in the north, and regional conflicts over gas royalties. In the midst of festivity and tension, smoke darkened the skies of the city like a solar eclipse. Santa Cruz, the cosmopolitan aspirant, was suffering the effects of annual burning in its agrarian hinterlands as farmers prepared for planting.

"Autonomy!" was also in the air. After the spectacular January Cabildo, media chatter favored the autonomist Ruben Costas for the first-ever election of the departmental governor. Cars, houses, and storefronts displayed green and white flags. Green and white taxis and buses crowded the streets. Bumper stickers proclaimed "Autonomy: Yes or Yes!" and "Santa Cruz Owes Nothing to Bolivia." Newstands were filled with new tabloids promoting autonomy. One of those, called *Cash* (the English title highlights the appeal that "cosmopolitan prosperity" has there), attracted my eye with a cover story on the "Cattle Elite" at the EXPOCRUZ fair and a picture of an imposing Brahma bull (Quiroga Castro 2005). Another, named *Catarsis* ("Catharsis," an outlet for Cruceño nervous tensions perhaps?), was rife with advertising of foreign gas companies and boasted a regionalist historian as its directing editor. *Catarsis's* cover that month was the bikini-clad, German-descended Miss Santa Cruz (not to be confused with the Queen of Santa Cruz and the Queen of Carnival), beside a lead story titled "Santa Cruz is betting on a change in its history" (*Catarsis* 2005:1).

The dance festival called *Elay Puej* (a Cruceño colloquialism) started the month with the theme, *lo nuestro primero*, "first what is ours." Two thousand dancers from colleges, high schools, and dance troupes paraded on city streets as "our ethnics" (indigenous peoples) and "our traditions" (rural folklore and music). Young Cruceños danced as *faux* Guarani and Guarayo to represent "ethnics" of Santa Cruz. These imagined Indians nurtured the warrior-maiden complex: men were fierce, bare-chested, and body-painted; women wore stylized two-piece *tipois* (sexier than the "real" thing) and feathers. "Our traditions" recentered rural folklore in urban spaces with dance genres from the Department's sub-regions: *coplas* (Valleys); *chacarera* (Chaco), and *taquirari* and *chovena* (Santa Cruz). Andean dances were notably absent. Decontextualized from sub-regional spaces and ritual moments, these performances were spatially and temporally recontextualized as tokens of

Cruceño unity under the control of an urban middle-class dominated ritual calendar.¹⁵ Like the *preca* and the *Cabildo*, which were staged in spaces associated with the wealthiest groups, the *Elay Puej* dancing festival paraded from the Christ statue along the second ring to the private La Salle school at the edge of Equipetrol neighborhood.

Around the same time, an annual gathering of provincial civic committees paid homage to the departmental flag. Expressions of loyalty to Santa Cruz as the “exemplary center” of regional power (c.f. Tambiah 1976; Alonso 2004), were rewarded with medals of Cruceño merit. In 2005, distinguished hosts included the editor of *Green and White* magazine and the President of the Provincial Civic Committees, a fellow who kicked an Andean indigenous woman to the ground during a UJC attack on peasant marchers in the city’s main plaza two years earlier. The expression of regional loyalty and imagined fraternal ties is marked by the cultivation of nostalgic sentiment. The press reported that the recipient of one award wept with emotion when the ex-paramilitary founder of the *Camba Nation* gave him his medal (*El Deber* 2005e).

On the night of the 23rd, the Queen of Santa Cruz was crowned in a ceremony in a park inside the first ring. A few days before, talk shows buzzed with interviews of the candidates. Men dressed as *Camba* peasants “serenaded” the candidates with *Camba* music and offerings of *Camba* food. Papers described the women’s measurements, with height of prime importance, their hair color, skin tone, and bodily characteristics. The crowning spectacle, which was also called the “serenade,” represented the masculine courting of, and homage to, the beautiful city-region, embodied in its “sovereign” queen. The musical and allegorical extravaganza again marshaled forth “traditions” and “ethnics.” Invoking again the language of empire, nobility, and regional sovereignty, the Queen was presented as *Gabriela I* and adorned with a sash reading: “Queen of Santa Cruz and Ambassador of Autonomy” She received kisses and the crown from the mayor and Civic Committee leaders.

Elite-controlled newspaper and television also embraced the Month of Cruceñidad. On the 24th, the city’s largest paper, *El Deber*, ran a special anniversary insert. The headlines reinforced the illusion of prosperity amid the uncertainty of crisis (“The Economic Bonanza has not stopped the growth of poverty” and “A Bet on the Future”). These merged with calls for order and continuity in the extractive model (“Santa Cruz Wants Autonomy, Work, and Security” and “The future is in agriculture, forests, and oil”) (*El Deber* 2005h). Green and white borders framed pictures, stories, and ads analyzing and celebrating Santa Cruz. Opinion polls represented the *Camba* “public” as pie charts in the shape of the *Camba* straw hat (2.3% support separatism), bar graphs drawn as the outstretched arms of Christ (56% support autonomy); and photos of the January *Cabildo* (*El Deber* 2005h). The tenor of reportage recognized inequality and poverty and called for autonomy from bureaucratic centralism as the solution.

The authorities and the queen gathered again on the 24th on the reviewing stand for the civic parade through the 24th of September Plaza. There were representatives of the municipality, the prefecture, the electricity and phone cooperatives, the neighborhood watch committees, the department of sanitation, the municipal botanic gardens, the traffic light division, and so forth. To the music of a military band, marchers passed the reviewing stand where they were applauded by the “civic” and political authorities, the queen, and the Bolivian President (at that time, Eduardo Rodríguez, the third president in two years of national instability).

Civic parades usually pay visual tribute to the state, replicating its component parts and hierarchies through an aesthetics of order and allegiance (marching lines, national flags, and martial music). Yet the regionalist fervor added a subversive twist. Interspersed among the green and white flags of Santa Cruz were green and black flags of the radical Camba Nation movement. These were symbols of the secessionist stance sprinkled amid marchers of various institutions to demonstrate the infiltration of this ideology into official local and regional spaces (like the municipality and prefecture). The Camba Nation also marched as its own block. They passed the reviewing stand shouting “*Au-to-no-mía! Au-to-no-mía!*” as the master of ceremonies read over a loudspeaker: “The Camba Nation affirms that true autonomy would be that of a free state associated with Bolivia!” One marcher held up a giant 100 Cruceño bill demanding sovereign currency. A banner quoted a passage of the Charter of Human Rights of the United Nations: “All Peoples Have the Right to Self-Determination.” Another appropriated an indigenous slogan: “Territory, Identity, and Power: Bases of Camba Nationalism.” Most marching in this block were heavy-set, middle aged, light-skinned Cruceños with solemn faces. A few in the crowd also held Camba Nation flags and I heard a smattering of applause. Yet most viewers watched silently with arms crossed. Against this expression of Cruceño specificity, the viewing public was a mosaic of Bolivian faces in all hues that reflected the diversity of the population of today’s Santa Cruz. At the rear, a black banner with white letters proclaimed: “The Camba Nation is Unstoppable Because God is a Cruceño” followed by a message to “outsiders”: “The Land is Ours, Invaders Get Out!”

At the Fair

As the festivities unfolded, the EXPOCRUZ fair provided a spectacular ten-day backdrop. For the past 30 years, EXPOCRUZ has put Cruceño economic power on display, drawing exhibitors from twenty countries and almost a half a million visitors from Bolivia and beyond.¹⁶ Spread out over a 40–block space of pavilions, stands, booths, restaurants, rides, and livestock barns, the Fair is a middle-class social event as well as a site for deal-making, networking, and advertising. As one colleague described the fair: “It’s a microcosm of Santa Cruz: cattle, business, and

women.” The 30 boliviano entry fee (US\$3.70, about two days pay at minimum wage) acted as a filter against the urban poor.

The Fair was also a regionalist platform. The Cruceño industrialist Gabriel Dabdoub, the Fair’s director (and descendant of Lebanese immigrants), set the tone of the fair in his opening address. Echoing the media celebration of Cruceño economic prowess and “unstoppable” unity in the face of crisis and resistance to the national government, he invited those present to “gaze upon modernity with the eyes of peasants,” and challenged those opponents who dared to “blockade” Santa Cruz:

We [the fair’s industrialist and agro-industry organizers] have allied with the civil society of the provinces and the barrios, and together with valiant congressmen, workers, neighbors, peasants, intellectuals, and original [indigenous] peoples, led by the Civic Committee, we have planted in Bolivia the *Mojón de la Autonomía*, the landmark of autonomy.¹⁷

With the exuberance of neon, banners, music, cars, tractors, motorcycles, food, and carnival rides, one could indeed “gaze upon modernity” with the eyes of “peasants” with aspirations to consume in the global market. On the nights I went to the fair, people tried out the feel of a first-class seat at the Aerosur airlines booth. Others sampled cosmetics and hair-gels produced locally and internationally. I stopped in to gaze at photos touting corporate responsibility at the *Petrobras* pavilion, the Brazilian transnational that dominates Bolivia’s gas industry. The telephone, cable and electricity cooperatives dominated by Cruceño elites interpellated passersby with bright lights: “You are Santa Cruz!” Over at the livestock corrals I gazed at the latest advances of artificial insemination and genetic selection. Women in high-heels and men in suits admired bulls to be sold at auction for thousands of dollars. One banner over a mellow bull touted its owners as dealing in the “best genetics for the development of the country.” Over at the India pavilion, a new player in Bolivian natural resources, the stand was packed with women buying colorful clothes and scarves. The fashion craze that spring was Indian (the country, not “our ethnics”) motifs. Down the way, a person dressed as a \$US100 dollar bill handed out flyers at the Cattlemen’s Bank stand.

I stopped in at the Civic Committee booth, where Lance Armstrong-style “Autonomy” bracelets were sold. The booth offered T-shirts that read *Autonomía Sí o Sí* and coffee-cups with the cross potent and the coat of arms, reading “Departmental Autonomy Now. Pine-scented car air fresheners (green and white) shaped in the outline of Santa Cruz department and reading “Autonomy Now!” were also available. Next to the booth, a huge wooden post was erected. This was one of the *mojones* (landmarks) of autonomy, referenced in Dabdoub’s speech (Figure 4). Similar *mojones* mark land boundaries in rural regions; here the symbol was



Figure 4 Landmarks (*mojones*) of Autonomy. (Left) Civic Committee's booth (right) in the median of Monseñor Rivero Avenue, near the Christ Statue.

Photo by Bret Gustafson

transposed into a marker of ideological claims on territory by civic regionalists. Mojones like this were put up in the city near the Christ statue and at contested spaces like the public university, where regionalists see a hotbed of traitors among sociologists, leftists, and nationalists. Other mojones were erected by the UJC and Civic Committees in the provinces accompanied by local replications of the city's January Cabildo (*El Nuevo Día* 2005). The mojón planted at the fair invoked this wider attempt to visualize the linkage between a particular ideological stance (elite-led autonomy) and contested territorial space (Santa Cruz department). On the back wall of the Civic Committee's booth, a video monitor replayed non-stop scenes from the January Cabildo.

Azafatas (hostesses), Cruceña women selected for their "physical attractiveness," handed passersby brochures for wines, textiles, glasses, perfume, tourist resorts, and designer clothing at every turn. Women compete for positions as *azafatas* to break into the beauty and modeling industry, one of the outgrowths of the region's economy of ostentatious display and a key elite mechanism for marking boundaries between more and less desirable Cruceño bodies. Businesses compete for sought after models, especially those of an agency group called the *Magnificas*, the Magnificents. As with the competition for Queen of Santa Cruz, and an endless cycle of pageants year round, *El Deber* ran daily spreads on the *azafatas* detailing their

proportions, their agencies, the products promoted, and their aspirations. Logically, in the Cruceño model, the fair culminated with the selection of *El Deber's* "Azafata of the Year."

Like the beauty queens, azafatas are commodified and racialized icons of Cruceña beauty and productive power. They are cultivated and assessed like the latest technology or stock animal. In Santa Cruz, these stagings of feminine beauty and consumer desire articulate with the regionalist project and Cruceño claims to technological, even genetic, superiority. The *Cash* magazine article on the fair's cattle elite included an interview with Luis Fernando Saavedra Bruno, one of the region's wealthy latifundists and ex-head of the Private Businessman's Association. His bulls included *Mr. [sic] Gladiador*, slated to fetch a high price on the *pasarelas ganaderas*, "runways (catwalks) of cattle:"

An example of high [quality] genetics cannot be made, it is born. Just like a Magificent [fashion model], good food and exercise is not enough. These animals respond to a genetic code that year after year is improved through technology to show in the fair the best exponents of their races (Quiroga Castro 2005:31).

Unruly Subjects

After the Fair's first weekend, *El Deber* celebrated the Fair's financial success with the headline: "EXPOCRUZ moved almost US\$1,000,000 in Two Days" (*El Deber* 2005f). Sales of cars, silos, and cattle were considered "encouraging." An image of brutality had been placed just below the headline. Riot troops armed with tear-gas were pictured kicking a man in a drainage canal, his hands raised to protect his head. Tear gas floated in the air. The image was snapped the day before, as troops were sent to disperse a Guarani blockade on the highway south of Santa Cruz. While Cruceños danced as Guarani in urban ritual time and space, Guarani on the poor southern periphery were disrupting regional order, demanding a larger share of gas royalties for the country's indigenous population.

A day later the juxtaposition of regionalist fantasy amid the image of "ugly" disruptions was repeated. The frontpage photo was labeled "Festive Atmosphere in the City" (*El Deber* 2005g). A family was seen holding hands as they walked toward a market where a green and white banner read "*Viva Santa Cruz*." The family passed two indigenous Andean Quechua women sitting with their children in the grassy median. Hats, braids, and pollera skirts marked them as migrants, Kollas, *gente del interior*. In the photo, one of the children approaches the family with hand outstretched. The message that impoverished Andean masses are threatening Cruceño prosperity is hammered home in the headline for a separate story: "Another land seizure unsettles the North." Landless farmers in the north had occupied a contested

piece of land claimed by Cruceño elite. The leader read, “The *sindicalistas* are armed with sticks, machetes, and shotguns. The private landowners are going to court” (*El Deber* 2005g). The talk shows that morning interspersed broadcasts from the fair with invitations to viewers to call the station in response to the question: “Should force be used against the land invasions in the north?” Random callers were selected for prizes. Chatter on the fair and the azafatas continued as votes tallied on the screen (in favor of force). Four days later, the prefect sent troops to remove the peasants.

Civic regionalism relied on violence to remedy the disjuncture between fantasies of aesthetically pleasing order and social reality, tactics that cultivated racial fear and cast protestors as invasive radicals threatening the natural order of Cruceño superiority. Yet the road blockade and land occupation were calculated spectacles themselves. They reflected multiple nuclei of resistance that have been articulating around the MAS against Cruceño regionalism. Though based in legitimate grievances, resistance was timed to harass Cruceños during their moment of ritual intensification.¹⁸ Increased social violence in recent years also reveals the instability of the Cruceño project: the violence of criminality, the appearance of armed groups hired by landowners to attack peasants, and street brawls over municipal posts that reflect competition for public resources (PNUD 2004). Beneath the façade of prosperous and beautiful Cruceño regionalism, violence reveals structural inequalities and the instability of elite power, exposing the limits of spectacle as a projection and mirror of order.

Regionalists also staged their own spectacles of violence. Peasant and indigenous marches into Santa Cruz in recent years have been met with physical attacks by the Camba Nation and the young men’s “civic” organization, the UJC. Armed with sticks and bats, the UJC members look like fraternity boys with baseball hats and muscular poses. In the city streets they turned their violence against poor farmers to defend “Cruceño” space. In 2005, a peasant march backed by the MAS was attacked at the fourth ring north of the Christ statue, as the UJC sought to enforce the figurative boundary of “autonomy” (like the landmark erected there as well). Another protest march against autonomy from the MAS stronghold of El Torno was attacked at the fourth ring to the south (see Figures 1 and 2). These poor farmers were described as violent “outsiders” while attackers were called lawful “citizens” (*El Deber* 2005b, 2005c).

Two years earlier, during the conflicts of October 2003, MAS and lowland indigenous organizations had made their way into the city to join the national protest against the decaying MNR (National Revolutionary Movement) regime. The UJC and the Camba Nation attacked them in the plaza. It was then that a provincial civic leader (the same who hosted the 2005 homage to the flag described above) attacked and kicked an Andean woman wearing a *pollera* (a robust Andean skirt), kicking her repeatedly when she fell to the street in the main square. The civic notable also struck a Cruceña woman who intervened, reportedly shouting, “if you

are with these people, you are my enemy.” Both the Andean woman and her Cruceña defender embodied the antithesis of the posing, silent, desirable figures of Magnificents, Queens, and Azafatas. This challenge to gendered and raced codes for the legitimate occupation of public space was met with male Cruceño brutality. The vice-president of the Civic Committee justified the violence, saying “The plaza is a symbol and it had to be taken” (*El Deber* 2003a).

Interculturalism: Cruceño Style

When the whites talk about interculturalism, they are talking about folklore, when we talk about interculturalism, we are talking about power.

Guido Chumira, Guarani leader, 1999.

If some measure of the short-term success of civic regionalism is possible, it might be the election of the autonomist Ruben Costas as governor in December 2005 and the victory of the “Yes” vote for departmental autonomy in the referendum of July 2006. In its simplest terms, “autonomy” sentiment finds support among the urban population.¹⁹ The election of the MAS’s candidate, Evo Morales, as President, the recently inaugurated national Constitutional Assembly, and the nationalization of gas resources suggest that the regionalist position is on the defensive. However, the language of threat and crisis, and the racialization and spatialization of political activism have been successfully mobilized to bolster elite interests in this moment of national upheaval.²⁰

Regionalist spectacle sheds light on the outcomes of neoliberal interculturalism of the 1990s. It suggests both the retrenchment of neocolonial forms of power and attempts to refit aspects of the neoliberal project to a regional scale. Interculturalism in the neoliberal 1990s was an attempt to redirect the indigenous challenge while dismantling the state- and class-centric corporatist model. Indigenous difference was accorded legitimacy as a marker of citizenship even as neoliberalism sought to decentralize and marketize political realms that were flashpoints of rising indigenous mobilization—land, political power, education, health, natural resources—a contradictory juncture, to say the least. In contrast, as suggested in the comments of the Guarani leader cited above, indigenous and popular movements pursued interculturalism to transform economic and political structures, not to merely administer difference through new technologies of managerial governance.

Cruceño elites were challenged by both managerial and transformative interculturalism. Neoliberal decentralization decentered claims and imaginaries of local polity, identity, and authority, yet the state was institutionally and politically unable to assume the technocratic utopia of “efficient” management, let alone to address underlying structures of inequality. Meanwhile, indigenous-popular mobilizations initially fragmented by the politics of decentralization rearticulated across regional,

class, and ethnic boundaries, in large part through the expansion of the MAS in alliance with progressive NGOs. Both processes threatened regional elites, who lost their control over state coffers while being threatened from “below.”

The Cruceño rediscovery of “culture” —and their more and less overt racism— suggests that official interculturalism penetrated only superficially into elite discourse during the 1990s, even though it is now being taken up as a means to rearticulate an older model of corporatist-style elite domination with a folkloric sense of culture and history as territorialized patrimony. This is antithetical to indigenous and popular-nationalist agendas that mobilize culture as a way of talking about inequality and view history as an unfinished issue to be resolved through national, racial and economic decolonization. Cruceños voice a neoliberal-ish rhetoric of markets and “autonomy” as a trait of self-regulating individuals and a self-regulating regional space free of bureaucratic oppression. Yet the Cruceño model relies on a colonial understanding of identity as racial hierarchy, and of polity as a corporatist spatial and social order reliant on heavy-handed authority with state-like sovereignty and administrative power (over education, health care, policing, land tenure, natural resources) centralized in the hands of regional elites. This hearkens back to an earlier era in Bolivia, one during which liberal ideologues could never break free of the colonial racial lens through which they viewed their country. As described by Javier Sanjinés, indigeneity “created some pride, nostalgia, and fascination, but also repugnance for breaking racial boundaries that could not be rationalized and controlled” (2004:35). The turn to aesthetics—and away from structural transformation or technocratic decentralization—creates imaginary ideals free of colonial contradictions of power and imbues authoritarian order with “an aesthetic pleasure” that merges space and race into an “ideal of reality.” Politics is endowed with an “aura of grandeur [...] copying selectively and mimetically the beautiful and the grandiose” from both within and beyond the region, while silencing through violence that which is deemed to be threatening (Sanjinés 2004:69, 107, 180).

This mapping of civic regionalism calls for explorations in a number of directions. The examination of dissent within the Cruceño project and other modes of occupation of urban and regional space would yield alternative readings (see Hertzler 2005; Postero in press). I have tried to draw attention to a wider analytic and geographic scale of the region, a “new state space” (Brenner 2004) defined in part by the failure of neoliberalism to secure transnational access to national/natural resources and in part by new tactics for carving out governable spaces delinked from the regulatory and electoral pressures of the nation-state (Ferguson 2005). The Cruceño regional space exhibits colonial characteristics, thriving on extraction and relying on selective redistribution of ritual, resources, and violence to project order over a space with contested and fluctuating borders. Yet it is also a modern transnationalized “scale-making project” that attempts to articulate subjects, places,

sentiments, and practices at a sub-national scale in articulation with other transnational scale-making projects tied to actors ranging from multinational gas companies to Spanish Catalan and USAID advisors supporting the “autonomy” agenda.²¹ Yet, autonomy in this post-neoliberal moment confronts scale-making agendas grounded in the defense of national territory, sovereignty, and the nation-state and an unfinished history of decolonization bolstered by the power of popular nationalism. The mapping presented here outlines this scale-making project, neither wholly that of the hegemonic state operating against resistant locals nor entirely the one of neoliberal governmentality flowing out of transnational nowhere. In the aftermath of neoliberal interculturalism, these mappings are useful for moving beyond analyses focused on subaltern opposition to the “state” and “neoliberalism” and for understanding spatial rearticulations of power and struggle that are as much “for” the state as unfolding within and against it.

Acknowledgments

This article builds on periods of fieldwork with the Guarani in southeastern Bolivia between 1993 and 2006, from which I distill observations on Santa Cruz’s urban elites and their regionalist project. I thank the Assembly of Guarani People for their support, but do not purport to represent their positions herein. Event and actor analysis draws on a media database compiled between 2001 and 2006 and fieldwork carried out in Santa Cruz in 2005 with support from Washington University in St. Louis. I also thank Bolivian interlocutors Marcelo Arandía, Guido Chumira, Isabelle Combés, Hermán Fernández, Duston Larsen, Ana María Lema, Alfredo Rada, and Mónica Sahonero for insights reflected herein. David Guss, Jean Muteba Rahier, Christi Navarro and three anonymous reviewers helped to clarify my ideas. Patricia Heyda drew the maps. Images described but not included in the text can be viewed via <http://www.artsci.wustl.edu/~bdgustaf/cambas.html>.

Notes

¹Bolivia is divided into nine departments each headed by a prefect and divided into provinces and municipalities. I use “state” to refer to entities of governance at all levels. I distinguish between “regional(ist)” or “departmental” and “national(ist)” or “nation-state” to mark opposition between competing spatial and ideological frames invoked in relation to the production of political sentiment, identity discourse, and claims of authority over state functions.

²Goldstein (2004) argues that spectacles of folklore and private violence can be read as performances that enact community and seek visibility as a subaltern demand for inclusion vis-à-vis the neoliberal state. Similarly, in Santa Cruz folkloric and violent performances are deployed by elites to visualize both “region” and power yet performances are concerned with the defense of inequality rather than the pursuit of inclusion and operate on multiple scales, rather than in a community-state dyad. On regionalist spectacle, see Guss (2000:120–126, et passim).

³Santa Cruz' regional project echoes the imperial "galactic polity" described by Tambiah (1976:258–266). I do not have room to pursue the comparison here, which suggests the contested, fluctuating nature of regionalist power and its frontiers and the recourse to rituals of replication, incorporation, and violence as a means of constructing ties between an exemplary center and sub-regional nodes in its orbit (see also Alonso 2004).

⁴Against the autonomy agenda, as described above, the constitutional assembly is spearheaded by indigenous, labor, and peasant movements as a vehicle for replacing neoliberalism with a redistributive nationalist project.

⁵In 1995, 5% of the Department's population absorbed 28 percent of the income. 87 percent of the Department's production is tied to the city and its immediate agro-industrial periphery, which represent only 14 percent of the Department's territory. Amid Miami-style opulence in some neighborhoods, poverty rates in the city reach 50 percent and 80–90 percent in some rural provinces (PNUD 2004:24; Arandia, personal communication).

⁶Regionalists often cite H.C.F. Mansilla (2004) a Bolivian Liberal who revived the early 20th century writer Alcides Arguedas and his racist critique of the cholo as the epitome of Andean backwardness (see his *Pueblo Enfermo*, 1909). Mansilla uses "culture" to explain why the Andes are underdeveloped and Santa Cruz is not, redressing Arguedas' biological racism as collective psychological differences between Camba and Kolla "mentalities."

⁷For example, some carnival fraternity names mark Cambas as rural bumpkins like *Huasos* (Hillbillies); or *Ociosos* and *Holgazanes* (lazies, good for nothings). Others proudly claim rural power (Camba Patrones, Camba Landlords, or *Karayanas*, a Moxeño word for "White" or *Patrón*) or indigenous warrior-ness (*Kerembas*, from *kereimba*, Guaraní "warrior"). The Queen's float in 2005 was a giant Guaraní warrior wearing Santa Cruz' cross potent on a necklace.

⁸While wearing indigenous Guaraní motifs, Miss Bolivia 2004 (a Cruceña) declared during the Miss Universe pageant in Quito that in her region of Bolivia, people were not Indians, but white, tall, and spoke English. Scorned in Bolivia's Andean capital, La Paz, she was given a heroine's welcome by carnival fraternities and civic leaders in Santa Cruz (Economist 2004; El Deber 2004a).

⁹It is here that purity (the "white" in the Cruceño flag) is defended. As in many colonial settings, non-indigenous Cruceño men are licensed to speak of indigenous women as sexual objects. Yet these relationships are not suitable for the reproduction of social power and racial boundaries. Cruceño men talk of marrying a *vacuda* (a "cattled," i.e. woman whose family has land). Cruceña women speak of racial and social distancing from indigeneity in idioms used to discuss marriage, saying, for instance, "one cannot marry *cualquier kunumi*," "any old Indian boy" (from Guaraní, young man).

¹⁰Nationalist revolutionary projects have provoked similar responses among provincial elites elsewhere. Deborah Poole (2004) describes a similar case from Oaxaca, Mexico in the 1920s. Regional elites recast "their Indians" as racially distinct from those of the national revolutionary *mestizaje* project and incorporated signs of this distinctiveness, particularly women's dress, into the cultivation of regionalist affect and unity. Like the Cruceño project this move replicated the racism of nationalist *mestizaje* and recentered the apex of racial progress and political authority on regional elites.

¹¹For example, the Fraternity organization sponsors the Day of Tradition and a yearly ritual calendar that replicates the event "year after year in more than 35 municipalities . . . constituting a great cultural contribution to the region, since in all of these places it is performed maintaining the same format as the capital city" (FFC n.d.).

¹²Nine out of the top 10 businesses in Santa Cruz are soy or hydrocarbon related; eight are foreign-owned.

¹³Cruceño regionalism is often simplistically viewed through the lens of gas. Santa Cruz does reap the benefit of natural gas infrastructure, refining, and transport facilities. Yet over 85 percent of Bolivia's gas reserves are in the Department of Tarija, another regionalist story. Land tenure and control over other natural resources are as or more important than the gas issue.

¹⁴There is no structural counterpart for young women (like the UJC), though participation in the beauty industry is one passage into civic protagonism for women.

¹⁵Beyond issues of authenticity, the “recontextualization” of such performances entails adjustments to new priorities (suited to urban tastes and a street-based dance forms) and the affirmation of relations of political, economic, and here spatial power (see Briggs 1996).

¹⁶From the brochure distributed to visitors.

¹⁷Translated from the text, <http://www.ibce.org.bo/eventos/discurferia.htm>, accessed January 30, 2006.

¹⁸Based on conversations with Guarani colleagues participating in the blockade.

¹⁹In December of 2005, Ruben Costas, a cattleman and ex-Civic Committee President ran for departmental governor on the “Autonomy for Bolivia” ticket. He took 48 percent of the vote in Santa Cruz department, almost 50 percent in the city. An alliance tied to the MNR, also part of the civic regionalist project, took 30 percent. The MAS polled 20 percent. The MAS won a majority in two northern provinces: Ichilo and Ñuño de Chávez. During the July 2006 autonomy referendum and election of constitutional assembly representatives, the regionalist vote was dispersed among several right-wing candidates and the MAS won with 26 percent of the vote. This MAS vote might be read both as dissent against the ideological stance I describe as ‘civic regionalism’ above as well as a sign of growing MAS support in Santa Cruz. At the same moment, the demand for autonomy won with over 60 percent, illustrating the success of civic regionalists in propagating the rather simple mantra of “Autonomy!” beyond the middle- and upper-class who are its principal proponents (CNE 2006).

²⁰On neoliberal downsizing and the racialization of social conflict, see Coronil 2005:116.

²¹USAID has funded autonomy workshops in eastern Bolivia and supports pro-autonomy indigenous organizations; Transredes (a gas transport company) has financed autonomy workshops and sustains pro-autonomy media; Spanish advisors visit Santa Cruz frequently to speak on autonomy and provide an oft-cited case of autonomous development for regionalist intellectuals (compiled from press reports, 2003 to 2005).

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