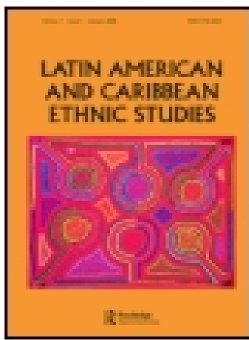

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In the past three decades, as the Peruvian state has expanded services to remote areas, its professionals have approached indigenous women in a variety of conventional and novel ways. The Catholic Church and Evangelical denominations are also present in these areas, asking women to participate in religious activities. Political parties, feminists, development activists and indigenous rights organizations have been promoting the creation of women's organizations and the emergence of female social and political leadership. Independently of their understanding and respect for the cultural particularities of the communities, all these agents have been convinced that they have to produce changes in the lives of women, and that they have something to give them. This essay explores the ways in which such discourses and practices are received by indigenous women in Andean and Amazonian communities. Special attention is paid to the ways in which ideas about rights, social change and development are appropriated and reinterpreted by women who experience everyday racism and exclusion and, at the same time, are seen as responsible for preserving their cultural traditions.

Keywords: Indigenous women; Peru; identity politics; gender equity; development policy

Introduction

The 'Peruvian anomaly' regarding the lack of an active indigenous political movement in Peru, if compared with Ecuador or Bolivia, has been widely discussed. The analyses by Peruvian anthropologists Marisol de la Cadena (2000) and Carlos Ivan Degregori (2002) are particularly useful. They show how Peruvian highland indigenous communities and their organizations have pursued important political agendas – namely, to defend their ways of living, and protect their rights to land – by engaging in a struggle to affirm their rights as Peruvian citizens, and not as 'cultural others.' Therefore, throughout the republican period, different indigenous

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movements have not politicized their identity to achieve or negotiate their demands, but rather have chosen to affirm their belonging to the Peruvian nation using the existing legal frame to assert the justice of their causes, and to avoid being stereotyped or cornered in a rigidly defined place in society.[1]

However, the transnational movement to promote indigenous rights has very active advocates, and in Peru their discourses have been articulated by some social leaders and intellectuals – particularly teachers and activists in pedagogical and environmental conflicts (see Bebbington, 2007; García, 2005).[2] Thus, with the support of pro-indigenous rights activism, there is increasing contact between leaders of a few grassroots organizations associated with the Andes and individuals identified with discourses of indigenous rights and identity. At the same time, pro-indigenous rights activism in the Peruvian Amazon dates back more than 30 years, and current and former leaders of the two main indigenous federations have been linked to the transnational indigenous movement since the creation of the Coordinadora de la Organizaciones Indígenas de la Cuenca Amazónica (COICA) in 1984. These processes have yielded a small but articulate group of activists promoting indigenous rights and anti-racist awareness.

In the particular case of women's organizations, the preparations for the Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing in 1995 represented a very important landmark (Blondet and Montero, 1994). In response to a United Nations request, Peruvian feminist organizations sent a delegation to Beijing that included indigenous women of diverse social and political backgrounds. A series of workshops were then organized with the influential participation of feminist and indigenous intellectual Tarcila Rivera. Since then, Chirapaq, the non-governmental organization (NGO) with which she is affiliated, has created a space for the dissemination and discussion of the ideas she fosters as an activist of the transnational indigenous movement. Chirapaq has also fostered the creation of a network of indigenous leaders, increasingly familiar with this indigenous rights discourse, and who have focused their work in the highlands (Ayacucho, Puno, Huancavelica, Apurimac, Cusco and Cajamarca) and the Amazon, particularly Junin and Pasco. These spaces are now linked to a transnational network, the Continental Network of Indigenous Women. In fact, their last meeting was held in Peru. Mexican anthropologist Aida Hernández Castillo (2005) has recently provided an account of the creation of this network, explaining how indigenous women from different countries are committed to the intellectual and political efforts of elaborating their own views about their situation as women within their cultures. In an illuminating piece, anthropologist Lynn Stephen (2001) reports on two meetings, held prior to the creation of the network, and explores the contradictory and challenging dimensions of identity politics in indigenous women's organizations. At these meetings, indigenous women had to balance their belonging to different cultures, different countries and heterogeneous historical and organizing contexts, with the endeavor of projecting 'sameness' to outsiders, by affirming a strategically essentialist identity as indigenous women.

In the following pages I provide an account of the complex context in which transnational politicized discourses of ethnic identity are taking shape in some women's organizations in Peru, and raise certain questions about the subjectivities

that result from the exposure to a wide array of discourses, ideologies and interpellations (Napolitano & Pratten, 2007). I am particularly interested in the 'mainstreaming' of gender equity awareness, as well as diverse notions of multiculturalism and indigenous rights fostered in the highlands and the lowlands of Peru by different social and political agents. Additionally, I look at the different exercises of translation or appropriation of speech that are at play during the introduction of – and sometimes imposition of – certain forms of organization and political cultures into local understandings and forms of politics, which usually do not concern outsiders. I would argue that the need to project the 'sameness' that Stephen (2001) refers to, has – in the context of the neoliberal reforms in Peru – also been 'produced' from the outside, particularly since the 1980s when different global development organizations have intervened creating or fostering the development of new political and social subjects.[3]

Between 1994 and 2003 I worked in Peru as a researcher and lecturer on gender, ethnicity, education and rural development. I also served as an independent consultant for a few development agencies working in rural areas. As such, I traveled extensively in the country and was able to observe and compare very different situations.[4] I was present at events where female leaders from different regions were getting together for the first time, and were invited by the organizers to identify common problems as indigenous women. I also visited other countries in the region (Bolivia, Ecuador, Guatemala), and participated in international events where I was able to hear the different interpretations that indigenous women leaders/intellectuals had of the varied discourses and agents they came across. I have witnessed the swift development of transnational connections among them, and how their agendas developed in workshops and meetings usually steered by the need to respond to situations in which new spaces were opened for them to voice their concerns in national and international fora. While conducting my research, and in my role as a consultant, I also attended meetings where policies towards indigenous peoples were being discussed among donor organizations and the state, and interviewed development agents and state officers concerned with women and indigenous populations.

Such a work experience is not unusual in South America, and it produces a particular kind of knowledge and understanding of the connections and relationships between different spaces and layers of power. While observing diverse events in different geographical, social and political spaces may look haphazard and superficial to social anthropologists or too ethnographic to political analysts, and certainly politically ambiguous to activists, this kind of experience is important. It allows us to explore a rich and meaningful set of experiences that may inform a complex understanding of the processes of circulation, dissemination and negotiation of ideas and political agendas in an ever-changing political scenario (Hale, 2004).

The role of NGOs, international aid, and multilateral agencies

The convergence of very active political and development agents in rural areas from the 1980s onwards has appealed to Peruvian indigenous women in multiple ways, providing a unique opportunity for exposure to a multiplicity of discourses and

agendas. Mariano Valderrama (1995, p. 95) shows in detail how NGOs increased six-fold between 1970 and 1992, when 900 NGOs were registered as working mostly in poor urban and rural areas. The presence of NGOs started to grow sometime before, but mostly after, the armed conflict initiated by the Shining Path (1980–1992). Together with NGOs, other actors also sought inclusion of indigenous women in social and political organizing. Political organizations and Catholic workers invested time and resources to promote the creation of women's clubs, committees, or associations, where they could spot potential leaders or future female political representatives of their communities promoting diverse development and political agendas on women's behalf. During the armed conflict, and even more during the peace process after the 1990s, Evangelical denominations developed their presence in rural areas in the highlands and indigenous villages and towns in the eastern lowlands, eagerly summoning men and women to embrace their convictions and be part of their activities to reconstruct their lives in their villages (del Pino & Theidon, 1995). Also in that decade, and following neoliberal governance guidelines, a wide range of professionals hired by the state targeted indigenous women in a variety of conventional and novel ways, in the context of the expansion of public services such as health or education, or the implementation of rural development and poverty relief programs (Oliart, 2007). Finally, after 1992 when the United Nations declared the decade of Indigenous Peoples, activists inspired by the transnational movement in favor of indigenous rights started promoting the articulation of their agenda with existing and newly-created women's organizations (Rivera, 1999).

Independently of their close understanding or interest in the cultural particularities and political interests of indigenous communities, all those agents deem their mission to be nothing short of changing the lives of indigenous women in a wide range of matters. Some aim at transforming their relationship with their bodies – promoting preventive health habits, Western notions of personal hygiene, birthing and breastfeeding techniques, contraceptive practices, changes in nutrition, and even prescriptive notions on how they should dress. Others want to improve indigenous women's income, and focus instead on women's changing role in rural household economies, and on facilitating a more advantageous participation in the market economy. Still others try to boost indigenous women's political involvement and participation in decision-making processes in their communities.

'Friends of the People': Progressive NGOs and Feminist Activism in the Andes and Amazonia

Peruvian peasant communities as political organizations have been recognized for their adaptability and resilience to favor better relationships with 'the outside' world, in order to pursue their communal strategies. The long and difficult process of recovery of communal land from *hacendados* during the second half of the 20th century was closely accompanied by the Marxist left in its different political expressions (Klaren, 1999). Some analysis has been carried out on the manipulative, authoritarian and ethnocentric approach of leftist militants' foisting their political projects upon peasant organizations (Barrig, 2001; Hinojosa, 1998; Mallon, 1998).

Some work has also been done on the strategies developed by the communities trying to cope with these political styles and still pursue their communal objectives, shedding light on the relationship between communities and their political allies, and the ability to harmonize methods and forms of organization (Renique, 2004; Yeckting, 2006). Thus for example – unlike the situation in some regions of Bolivia where the National Revolutionary Movement militants attempted to force *ayllus* to give up their traditional systems of authority to become unions – in Peru, communal organizations (or *ayllus*) adapted their structure so that they could have representatives in the national peasant federation (Confederación Campesina del Perú) without giving up their traditional structures. Without making it an explicit aim, the Confederación Campesina del Perú was in practice a multicultural space. For example, at national gatherings, Andean peasants gave their speeches in their own languages, and even performed traditional rites of propitiation to inaugurate events, although 'backstage' – it could be argued – leftist militants negotiated power quotas in the federation.

In the early 1970s Quechua and Aymara women in Southern Peru played a decisive role in their communities' struggles providing logistical support, and at times confronting police repression in the *tomas de tierras*. In some areas of the country they formed regional women's organizations named *Comité Central de Mujeres*, borrowing names for their organizations from the left, and finding recognition for them in many communal organizations, and in the Confederación Campesina del Perú, the national confederation.

During the 1980s the political work carried out by leftist militants before and during the 1970s was 'recycled' and developed by new NGOs committed to processes of empowerment of grassroots organizations, closely inspired by Paulo Freire's methodologies, and sometimes under the wing of the Catholic Church, by then committed to Liberation Theology in many areas of South America (Avila, 2000; Valderrama, 1995). Supported by progressive Western organizations, these NGOs generated a sort of professionalized activism with a clear political stance, but not necessarily affiliated with any political party. In several ways, they seem to have shared Manuel Castell's understanding of social struggle for collective rights and access to state services as political, because of the open demand for state intervention they entailed.

Over the next decade, NGOs began to work in different directions. Empowerment and grassroots development, together with training for improving their productive and managerial skills, became the focus of many NGOs (Ruiz-Bravo, 1994). Many feminist professionals and activists had access to grassroots organizations and worked with women in rural areas (Schild, 1998). At the anniversary of an NGO that has worked in a rural district of Cusco over the past 35 years, the oldest woman present said about them: 'With kindness, they have brought us out of our houses and made us understand that organizing as women we can accomplish many things.' She then immediately named a few production projects and financial activities that are now managed by women in their communities.

A clear contribution from those years in Cusco and other regions in the country has been the emergence of at least two generations of skilled female leaders who have been visible in diverse social movements. In Ayacucho, for example, Federación de

Clubes de Madres de Ayacucho – an organization of urban and rural women – played a crucial role in the struggle for peace during the worst times of the internal war. The long-term work with women has also benefited from the recently-approved quota system in the electoral law, so that female leaders have been candidates in several local, regional, and national elections (Schmidt, 2003). Throughout the development of several networks through which women have met and learned about different situations, they have received training to address different audiences, and to advocate in favor of their interests with local, regional, and national authorities.

But in some areas where feminist ideas against patriarchy were seen as Western and middle-class, activism geared to empower women within their communities became a source of conflict in the late 1980s. The most explicit and visible example of that critical stance against feminism came from Proyecto Andino de Tecnologias Campesinas (PRATEC), a group of NGOs that had integrated anthropological contributions about the particularities of Andean cosmology and its gender ideology, based on the complementary nature of the sexes. These NGOs were very critical of what they saw as Westernized, ethnocentric and individualistic discourses of development, with limited ability to understand the cultural particularities of indigenous peoples and their contributions to Peruvian society. The projects promoted by PRATEC were mostly linked to agricultural and production-related activities in rural communities, promoting the recovery of traditional technologies and crops, and critical of different attempts to 'modernize' agriculture in the Andes (Apfel-Marglin, 1998). Their ideas found strong resistance and even scorn among other activists, who by then – and even now – had an understanding of 'the Indian problem' in Peru mostly influenced by different Marxist explanations of the role of peasants in the struggle against capitalist exploitation. Additionally, dialogue was difficult because PRATEC members used to present their ideas in a particularly antagonizing style, and were perceived as having an essentialist and romanticized view of indigenous cultures, because they were generally reluctant to acknowledge that cultural transformations occurred in indigenous communities.

Craske (1999) has discussed the difficult relationship between feminists and women's movements in Latin America, due to class and cultural differences. For the particular case of Peru, Maruja Barrig (2001) has tried to explain why the Peruvian left and the feminist movement did not include the cultural particularities of indigenous peoples in the highlands in their work. She suggests this occurred because of the same historical and geographical reasons that are the basis of racism in Peru: both leftist and feminist national leaders are mostly of urban middle-class origin and from the coast, a region that has established its supremacy in the country through its exploitation of the highlands, the Amazon, and the country's indigenous inhabitants. Preceding Barrig's work, other Peruvian feminist intellectuals like Marfil Franke (1990) and Patricia Ruiz-Bravo (1990) also wrote critical analyses of the difficulties that middle-class radical feminist leaders from the coast had in understanding and incorporating the situation of indigenous women into their political agendas. Influenced by writers from the United States and Australia, Franke wrote about the 'triple oppression' that indigenous women faced as women, and as victims of both poverty and racism. In turn, Ruiz-Bravo acknowledged a failure in the work of

feminist advocates – namely, the lack of cultural awareness and analysis in feminist activism fostering rural development. Despite this omission by feminists in Lima, some feminist ideas did find their way to different regions of the country. This happened thanks to the work of female activists who did not hold clear associations with feminist organizations but shared their ideas.

Efforts to promote links between organized Andean indigenous women from Peru to the agenda of the transnational indigenous movement are rather recent, offering training for individuals who already have a trajectory as local leaders. Thus, what could be considered by some as an 'incipient' indigenous women's movement in the highlands of Peru is in fact the result of significant development of female leadership in rural areas and small towns in the past decades, promoted by several different agents, with a wide array of political agendas. Their leadership has not been grounded on any explicit feminist or pro-indigenous rights discourse, but has been closely related to specific confrontations and conflicts in which these women have been involved, inspired by their need to stand for their diverse and complex interests. They have been part of particular political processes in which they have learned to develop their own versions of a critical stance against gender and race discrimination, both within and outside their communities, and usually with a very strong allegiance to the concerns stemming from their own communities. Activists related to the transnational indigenous rights movement are now supplying the vocabulary to frame those concerns as related to the struggle to decolonize indigenous peoples. The outcomes are very diverse, and the remaining question is: what are the areas of coincidence between all these agendas, as seen by these leaders? It is a difficult endeavor.

The situation is different in the Amazon. The Asociación Interétnica de Desarrollo de la Selva Peruana (AIDESEP) and the Confederación de Nacionalidades Amazónicas del Perú (CONAP) are the two large federations grouping local and regional organizations representing most of the 56 different ethnic groups in the Peruvian rainforest.[5] AIDESEP is the larger and more visible federation of the two. It was created in 1980 with the confluence of seven regional organizations that started their work during the 1970s. AIDESEP has been very active and successful in securing legal ownership of the traditional territories for several ethnic groups. They are also responsible for one of the first indigenous-led experiences in bilingual and intercultural education in Latin America (Trapnell, 1991). Their achievements are remarkable because the territory they live in is very vast, and communication is extremely difficult and expensive. Creating and developing a cohesive identity and a shared organizational culture in those conditions has been a complex undertaking.

The three most important groups in terms of their population size are the Ashaninkas, the Awajun and the Shipibo-Conibo, and they tend to be present in leading positions in both AIDESEP and CONAP. Until the beginning of this century, political parties in general showed little interest in developing their influence among the *comunidades nativas* in the Amazon. Therefore, old and young leaders from AIDESEP and CONAP and their regional and ethnic federations have been politically 'educated' by a diversity of activists promoting ethnic identities and the defense of indigenous rights. As a result, not too long ago there was a sharp contrast between

the grasp that Amazonian leaders had of transnational indigenous discourses and that of their fellow Andean 'newcomers' to *el movimiento indígena*.

Through time, the duties of AIDESEP have grown to include an enormous array of issues, because they are seen by the communities of each regional federation as authorized intermediaries between the particular indigenous groups and the regional and national authorities.[6] Some of their concerns include the protection of achieved territorial rights, the call for international pressures to protect the rainforest, and the struggle with formal and informal extractive industries such as loggers and miners, transnational oil companies, and even drug-trafficking mafias. They also have had to assume the tasks of reporting and finding support to address serious health threats, provide access to education, and cultivate respect for their cultures, as part of their permanent agenda. To develop their work, AIDESEP has the support of a few international partners that allow the federation to afford semi-professional national leaders that visit the different regions, take care of all sorts of emergencies, and hold an office in Lima.[7] It was because of the insistence of some of their supporters that AIDESEP created an Office of Women's Affairs (*Secretaría de la Mujer*) in 2000.

Preparations for the conference in Beijing in 1995, and the existence of this new office in the federation since 2000, have sparked the creation of women's organizations in all of the regional federations, although activism around women's issues on the part of some leaders was not new. The creation of formally-constituted women's organizations has resulted in some dramatic adjustments in the lives of their leaders. To be part of these organizations implies constant travel and participation in meetings, which is a possibility for very few women. Communications are very difficult, and gatherings of the regional federations expensive, which is why designated female representatives tend to be women with some migratory experience, or are the most educated, sometimes *mestizas*, or are members of important families in the hierarchies in their groups.

As it happens in the Andes, other types of women's organizations – outside the federation delegations – are fostered by diverse state agencies, churches and NGOs. Some of these organizations require women to organize for the purpose of food distribution. A few of them also foster informal education training, providing women with some skills like sewing or painting. In some areas, male leaders have expressed concern about the fact that so many different agents are approaching women in their communities, as this erodes their own systems of authority and the legitimacy of local organizations. As a consequence, the emergence of female leaders and organizations in the rainforest has not been free of tensions with what was the almost-exclusively male leadership of the federation until recently. Even now, to have women's organizations that are separate from the federations, or an autonomous part of them, is seen by some regional leaders as problematic.

A constant problem in the rather recent history of indigenous organizations in the Amazon has been the open competition for funds. The very demanding nature of their work and the scarcity of income make indigenous organizations deeply dependent on donors and supporters. The availability of funds and support for women's organizations has increased in recent years and that, according to some female leaders, makes national and regional male leaders very uncomfortable and reluctant to include

women in decision-making processes in the federations – as some of them seem to consider that women leaders are weakening the federations creating unnecessary conflicts, and diverting resources that will end up in divisionism.

In 2000 I was an observer in two large meetings of indigenous leaders, one in Amazonas and the other in Ucayali, where the recently-elected Women's Secretary of AIDESEP, Teresita Antazu, met with Awajun and Huambisa women in one case, and Shipibo–Conibo women in the other. She introduced herself and suggested an agenda that would allow them to discuss their main concerns. Teresita is Yanesha so, after exchanging greetings in their own languages, the meetings were tape-recorded and conducted in Spanish, with translators. Back in Lima, the tapes were translated at AIDESEP. I was impressed by the charged atmosphere at both of these meetings. I do not know Awajun or Shipibo, but on reading the translated transcriptions of the speeches women gave in both meetings I could comprehend the anger and despair I had perceived in some of the broken and loud voices of women, and the expressions of deep pain or grave concern in their faces at the most dramatic moments of both meetings. Domestic violence, limited access to school for girls, or misuse of collective funds on the part of male leaders were the principal topics at those meetings.

In a recent publication, feminist lawyer and activist Susel Paredes (2005) describes three cases of struggles for women's rights involving three important organizations of indigenous women in the Peruvian Amazon. According to Paredes, the main interests expressed by her interviewees are how to stop violence against women, how to free themselves from arranged marriages, how to stop impunity for rapists in their villages, and how to be critical and vigilant of male leaders so that they better protect their peoples. The main tension these points create in the indigenous federations is the basic disagreement women have with the perceived leniency with which indigenous customary law treats violence against women. And this concern openly clashes with one of the important achievements of indigenous peoples from the rainforest in Peru: respect for their customary law. The identified clash of interests between the situation of indigenous women and the right to customary law is one of the issues discussed by the Continental Network of Indigenous Women (Hernandez, 2005; Stephen, 2001), but while there are spaces created for these negotiations within the indigenous organizations in Mexico or Ecuador, this is not the case in Peru.

There are no national or even regional indigenous organizations in the highlands as such. The organizations that are in place – two weakened Peasant Confederations, and the very vital and emerging CONACAMI (National Confederation of Communities Affected by Mining) – respond to their own logic, and the role of women's organizations within them have specific purposes, subordinated to the common goals of the organizations. Therefore, the spaces for questioning the situation of women within their own cultures remain mostly local, and dependent upon each woman's initiative.

Gender Equity and Indigenous Rights during the Neoliberal State Reform

The process by which the World Bank ended up leading certain transformations that favored gender equity and indigenous rights needs some explanation. In a very

thorough account of the World Bank's internal changes over 20 years in Washington, Mundy (2002) and de Moura (2002) explain the internal process it went through until 2000. They start with the *1980 World Development Report*, where investment in human capital was presented as key to promote poverty alleviation. With several influential changes in the presidency of the Bank, promotion of human capital led to the opening of an important space for intellectual and research capacities with the aim of becoming a center for knowledge on development. In 1989 the Plan Brady set the Bank as coordinator of other donors' efforts, integrating an agenda for governmental reform and national development, promoting adjustments to the world economy, and applying the rather rigid 'package' of the International Monetary Fund (Mundy, 2002, p. 488). In the 1990s the Bank proposed a three-pronged strategy for development and economic growth, consisting of export-led, labor-intensive growth; investment in the poor (mainly through health and education programs); and development of safety-nets and targeted programs.

From that moment on, loans to improve health and education systems became a distinctive mandate of the World Bank, entering into a contradictory terrain in which economic efficiency was not the main criteria to disburse money. This was the result of a process that went on throughout the late 1980s where a greater heterodoxy was evident within the organization, stimulated after the hiring of a new generation of so-called 'softer social scientists' who charged that World Bank policies had had negative social consequences (Mundy, 2002, p. 492). This generated a series of very tense discrepancies between 'the bankers' and 'the professionals', as insider Claudio de Moura (2002) describes.[8] Thus, the Bank became a knowledge-producing actor within the wider international development community, becoming a provider of what some considered 'high-quality' development knowledge, offering national assistance strategies that integrated social, structural, economic, and environmental and governance issues, and promoted local consultations with stakeholders, as a conduit to grant them 'ownership' over the development projects. In this very particular context, special units were created in the World Bank and the Interamerican Development Bank to deal with education, gender and development, indigenous issues, and to develop an expansive and systematic approach to each theme.[9]

Their discussions and formulation of plans and directives were in many cases a follow up to an ongoing project, or inspired by the coordination between different development agencies, so that there were uncharacteristic opportunities for dialogue about, and receptivity to, proposals and ideas produced in very different contexts. Studies and reports at the time led experts to use cross-national rates of returns of the investment in education to argue in favor of more investment on education, gender equity, and indigenous rights and governance. In this context, projects involving women were related to the development of safety networks for poverty alleviation programs and to solving the gender gap in accessing education. In a nut shell, women's education was associated with lower number of children per family, healthier children, and higher incomes for the family and the overall community (King & Hill, 1993). Blondet (2002) and Lind (2003) have described the important involvement of professional women fostering policies that favored women's rights

during the Fujimori and the Bucaram regimes. In both cases the choice of working 'against/within/for' the state engendered important legal changes in favor of women, but also some dramatic expressions of incongruence.

As an external observer of the application of several of the World Bank and Interamerican Development Bank projects in the late 1990s, I would argue that they mobilized different reactions and gave place to particular 'translations' of the doctrinaire elements in them. Different projects were carried out by a wide array of actors, each of them free to interpret the project guidelines according to their circumstances and interests. The diversity of adaptations was also facilitated by the lack of 'ideological coherence' in the political regime at the time, combining a populist presidential style, a widely corrupted middle-class bureaucracy, and neoliberal policies. All this incongruence was enhanced by the intervention of a professional transnational bureaucracy disengaged from local dynamics of power, and with an eclectic academic and political background. Similar scenarios were common in Latin America, generating very diverse situations and political outcomes while these development projects were being implemented. Of particular political importance was the creation of spaces for the discussions and interactions that allowed the identification and examination of the particularities of each country, and promoted the formulation of alternatives from a wide variety of perspectives. In some countries, and even in some areas within a single national process, these spaces have yielded very positive political outcomes, due to the local political actors' involvement in the agendas being discussed, and their intelligent use of the Bank's directives to negotiate their interests (Hale, 2002, 2005; Hornberger, 2000; Torres & Puigross, 1997).

The Fujimori regime (1990–2000) is an emblematic case of the paradoxes brought by policies advancing gender equity and respect for indigenous rights implemented without a coherent national leadership geared to achieve those goals. Corruption, human rights abuses, and a very effective intelligence work to erode any trace of independent social and political organizations coincided in Peru with international pressures to develop gender equity and ethnic inclusion as part of the neoliberal state reforms fostered under the Washington Consensus. It is already clear that none of these two 'areas of intervention' were priorities for the regime, but they were part of the negotiated agenda of donations proposed by the multilateral agencies at the time.

In 1995, at the Fourth World Conference on women in Beijing, Fujimori was one among few presidents attending the conference. There he expressed his support for all the work done in Peru to foster women's rights, and particularly committed himself to the defense of women's reproductive rights. Back in Peru he created the Ministerio de Promoción de la Mujer y el Desarrollo Humano (PROMUDEH), and two years later the Secretaría Técnica de Asuntos Indígenas was created within this ministry. This was made possible by funds from the World Bank. Other PROMUDEH programs targeting rural areas (therefore directly affecting indigenous peoples), and particularly women, were the Programa de Apoyo al Repoblamiento to help resettle returning communities that had fled their lands because of the armed conflict, the Programa Nacional de Apoyo Nutricional to channel the distribution of food in the most impoverished areas, and the most politically demanding

Cooperación Popular – a state-funded program to support local development initiatives, which openly exchanged access to resources for women's availability for public displays of support for the regime, whenever it was needed.

All of these programs created their own women's organizations that openly competed among each other for resources and women's membership, usually 'taking' them away from previously existing networks. While the electoral campaign made the regime even more aggressive in trying to achieve popular support in 2000, Crisálida T. – a community leader from Acobamba, in Huancavelica – warned other women from Apurimac and Ayacucho at a large gathering of women's organizations in Huamanga:

> We have to be aware of who wants us organized and for what reason. For example, some government programs . . . All they want is to use us for their purposes. They come to our organizations seeking our support, sometimes they cause division by offering us food, or other things, and we get invited everywhere, but that is only until we start voicing our opinions. Once we get our own voices up to express our needs, we are marginalized again.

Interventions of the Fujimori regime in the health sector provide even more dramatic examples of incongruence between the formulation of certain projects and disastrous implementation due to the lack of interest in considering the political, cultural, social and institutional environment where the projects were being implemented, in addition to the open disregard for the social hierarchies and discriminatory relations already in place between state officials and the communities (Boesten, 2007; Bowyer, 2004; Vincent, 2005). For example, the official acknowledgment of the right of women to determine the size of their families became a policy of massive forced sterilization in rural and poor areas in the country, as was first publicly denounced by feminist lawyer Giulia Tamayo (1999). Between 1995 and 1998 the Health Ministry compelled regional hospitals to achieve specific quotas of 'voluntary sterilization', not only after delivery but also as part of women's medical examinations. In many cases in the highlands and the Amazon during that period, health workers administered diverse contraceptive methods without adequately informing women what they were doing. In 2000 I heard peasant and indigenous leader Hilaria Supa (elected congresswoman in the 2006 elections) refer to this period when she attended a leadership workshop in Limatambo, Cusco. There she explained how in 1997, after the Comité Central de Mujeres from Anta had listened 'with deep pain' to the tearful testimony of 43 delegates from different communities, they decided to call the National Ombudsman to demand an investigation about how nurses were forcing indigenous women into sterilizations 'as if they were animals.'

> Without explaining things properly, they have done terrible things to us, women. Because here, nurses did not think we were people. At that point they thought we were animals. That's how they tied women's tubes, forcing us, bringing us in cars to the health centres to butcher us like sheep, sometimes over the bare floor, not even in a bed, that is a painful memory we will always keep in our hearts.[10]

During the Fujimori regime, Peru subscribed to the Indigenous and Tribal Peoples Convention (International Labor Organization Convention 169). Moreover, cultural

diversity was incorporated as a national characteristic into the constitution. This was quickly acknowledged as 'an asset' and followed by the promotion of tourism as a crucial economic activity, and a call to 'revalue' traditions and culture was made. In the relationship between the state and women's organizations, this translated into an unofficial directive to have women and children donning their traditional clothing at official events or at diverse public gatherings.[11]

Justifying this measure, I heard Soledad Cisneros, advisor of PROMUDEH minister Luisa María Cuculiza, state that indigenous peoples 'were not very appreciative of their own cultures', that they were ashamed of them, and were losing their identity, so it was the state's duty to teach them to be proud of their traditions. This approach – which is not infrequent among state officers – has no regard at all for the fact that 'shame' has been imposed (and resisted) on indigenous peoples through centuries of discrimination and humiliation so that, in order to protect themselves, different peoples have coped with the delicate issues regarding dressing codes in very elaborate and distinct ways, each decision being the result of complex reasoning and calculation (Harvey, 1989; Meentzen, 2001).

The Fujimori regime is also responsible for passing a law that established a quota for the number of female candidates that electoral lists should have in municipal and general elections (Schmidt, 2003). What happens, however, once women get to those positions? Frequently, one hears that once female council members get elected they are almost immediately assigned to deal with soup kitchens, or similar issues, but their opinion is rarely taken into account for anything else.[12] So, even though indigenous women have had access to certain positions of power, it is very difficult for them to be treated with respect, and while very important formal changes have occurred regarding the possibilities for access to power for indigenous political representatives, and for women, they are hindered by the weight and pervasiveness of old ways and power relationships. This has also been an arena of hard work for some feminist NGOs and anti-racist activists, who have denounced the widespread and unquestioned discriminatory patterns of political behavior against indigenous men and women in office, a new feature in many municipalities and also in Congress.

The inclusion of the indigenous rights agenda by the state continued during the transitional regime of Agustín Paniagua in 2000 and also during the regime of Alejandro Toledo (2001–2006). Paniagua's short nine-month term was used wisely by pro-indigenous rights activists and organizations, and important steps were taken to address long-postponed issues, such as the creation of a national commission in which all of the ministries dealing with issues affecting indigenous populations could develop coherent policies in agreement with indigenous organizations (Mentzen, 2006). The Toledo regime had a very vocal First Lady in favor of indigenous rights, although the balance of the real improvement in substantial issues during this last regime is still to be determined. Nevertheless, there were widespread press accounts during the Toledo years regarding the dubious ways of using public funds in the name of indigenous rights, manipulative behavior of government officials denounced by indigenous organizations, and the very problematic political use of spiritual Quechua symbols. As a consequence, skepticism about indigenous rights discourse has grown even more among politicians and the media in Peru.

The García Regime

Issues of gender equity or indigenous rights, along with other concerns for democratic governance, are not that salient in the multilateral agencies' agendas, or in the agendas of current president, Alan García. Crucial topics for indigenous peoples in the Andes or Amazonia were not addressed in his first presidential message to the nation, nor did he mention the multi-ethnic nature of the country. García briefly revealed his vision of the Amazon region as a source of rice and wood, and then dedicated several minutes to talk about (what was subsequently revealed to be an improvised motto) the '*sierra exportadora*,' to help 'the poor' in the highlands. The several hundreds of indigenous communities affected by mining heard the new president declare that he would accept whatever voluntary contribution the mining companies were willing to give, to compensate for the damage caused by their operations. The inaugural speech made no reference to the reparation plan for the victims of the war, most of them indigenous Peruvians, suggested by the report of the Peruvian Truth and Reconciliation Commission.

For some weeks after their election as congresswomen, news about Indigenous Quechua leaders Maria Cleofé Sumire de Conde and Hilaria Supa Huamán in the media made evident the semi-official nature of racism in Peru. First, they had to defend their right to speak in their own language and have a translator appointed for them during the Congress sessions (Montoya, 2006). This legitimate claim was blaringly opposed and even mocked by some members of Congress, and quickly ridiculed by comedians and cartoonists in the media, with no sanctions or official criticism to the initial reaction of the unsympathetic congress members, or the media. Interpreters were finally appointed, but with no clarification or apologies from the Congress for their absence in the first place. The next publicized episode involving the same congresswomen was an incident at the Iberia counter in the Jorge Chávez airport in October 2006. Both representatives had been invited to an international meeting of indigenous women in Spain. The flight was overbooked and Supa and Sumire were treated with great disrespect by an Iberia employee. She allowed other passengers who had arrived after the congresswomen into the flight, and dismissed Sumire and Supa's tickets and official credentials, also expressing her surprise that Peru should have them as representatives if they could hardly speak Spanish. The president of Congress protested to the Spanish embassy, and the airline apologized, but suggestions about Sumire and Supa not telling the truth about the episode were frequent in the media. No sanction was put in place for the employee, and CCTV footage was deleted, so no further investigation was possible to pursue the case. Thus, in spite of several pressing issues concerning indigenous peoples and the intense activity around them, it is very possible that the new regime remains indifferent to their concerns, and that the media grant only their episodic attention when 'visible' indigenous persons are the protagonists of some 'visible' events.

Conclusions

The expression activists such as Tarcila Rivera use to describe the emergence of a group of indigenous women with an articulate transnational indigenous discourse as

'*el proceso de las mujeres indígenas*.' That process has been a complex and multifaceted one that has unfolded over a series of meetings, workshops, and exchanges that have taken place since 1995 and in which they have gotten to know each other, analyze different topics, and participate in new and challenging public responsibilities. It is important to understand that the conditions under which women's organizations in the Andes and the Amazon receive and process discourses of gender equity and indigenous rights are very different, and that their particular histories are important to understand what they will end up taking from the debates that some of their leaders are listening to outside Peru, when they meet indigenous women from other countries.

In the Andes, perhaps due to the strength of communal organizations and the role of women in them, it seems easier than in the Amazon for women to embrace the view that gender ideologies in their cultures conceive of the couple as a complementary unit, and view contemporary forms of domestic violence or alcoholism in their communities as the result of colonization. On the other hand, feminist explanations about how different cultures produce the subordination of women and how women need to gain space for themselves in the organization of their societies may have a better reception in the Amazon than in the Andes. What most female leaders going through these experiences seem to share, in spite of the obvious differences between them, is a clear awareness of their cultural particularities, an appreciation of the diversity of situations they may find when meeting women from other groups in the country or abroad, and the development of a common vocabulary and historical frame to talk about their experience as the result of colonial situations. These discoveries seem to run parallel to a growing rejection of being defined and treated as 'poor' by state or development agents. Women in Peru who participate in this process now have the words in Spanish that women from other countries are using to talk about colonialism, the history of plunder and abuse, a rejection of the open or covert discrimination against their culture. They are also learning to talk in public and plural spaces about their cosmovisions, their traditional knowledge, and their beliefs.

Notes

[1] From an historical perspective, the work of Mallon (1995) and Thurner (1997) are also illustrative of this strategy.

[2] The international context as described by Brysk (2000) includes the UN declaration of the Decade of Indigenous Peoples, the project for the declaration of Indigenous Rights, and the Declaration for the Universal Declaration for Linguistic rights in Barcelona in 1996.

[3] The process skillfully sketched by Veronica Schild (1998, pp. 94–95) for the case of Chile is a good example.

[4] I refer to experiences as an observer in diverse meetings and from interviews with women from Ayacucho, Apurimac, Huancavelica, and Cusco in the highlands, and from Junin, Ucayali and Amazonas in the lowlands, between 1998 and 2003.

[5] With 759,000 square km, close to 300,000 people self-identified as indigenous, and a population density of 4.1 per square km, the Peruvian Amazon has 13 per cent of the total Amazon rainforest (second after Brazil with 67.79 per cent).

[6] Graham (2004) reports a similar case for Brazilian indigenous organizations.
[7] See http://www.oxfamamerica.org/partners/AIDESEP-COICA_partner
[8] Claudio de Moura, an officer of the Brazilian Government, NGO consultant and World Bank professional, wrote an insider's version of this complex situation.
[9] The development of policies oriented to promote indigenous rights has deserved particular attention regarding this process (Bebbington *et al.*, 2004; Calla, 2004; Hale, 2002; Laurie & Bonnett, 2002; Laurie, Andolina, & Radcliffe, 2005; Sieder, 2005).
[10] Fragment kindly translated by Nelly Paucar from Quechua into Spanish.
[11] I was informed of this 'norm' by two mestizo teachers attending meetings in both Ayacucho and Amazonas. They both had to wear traditional ethnic dress as a requirement for attending the meetings.
[12] I have also heard council women complain about one very important issue in local criollo and mestizo ways of doing politics. Many times, local political issues are dealt with among men in drinking sessions in city or town bars, from which rural women are usually excluded.

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