

Plurinational Afrobolivianity

Afro-Indigenous Articulations and Interethnic Relations in the Yungas of Bolivia

In Bolivia's plurinational conjuncture, novel political articulations, legal reform, and processes of collective identification converge in unprecedented efforts to 're-found' the country and transform its society. This ethnography explores the experiences of Afrodescendants in plurinational Bolivia and offers a fresh perspective on the social and political transformations shaping the country as a whole. Moritz Heck analyzes AfroBolivian social and cultural practices at the intersections of local communities, politics, and the law, shedding light on novel articulations of AfroBolivianity and evolving processes of collective identification. This study also contributes to broader anthropological debates on blackness and indigeneity in Latin America by pointing out their conceptual entanglements and continuous interactions in political and social practice.

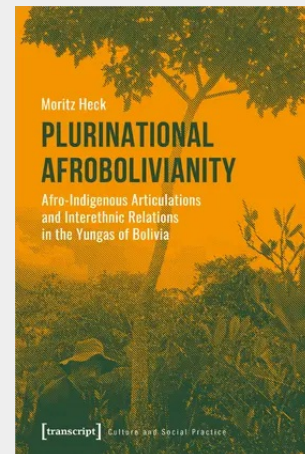
1. Why did you choose this topic? Studies addressing the history, culture and politics of Afrodescendants in Bolivia are relatively scarce. A decidedly AfroBolivian perspective is largely absent from scholarly debates on Bolivia - in anthropology, as well as in related disciplines like history, sociology and political sciences. At the same time, the transdisciplinary study of the African Diaspora in the Andes has not specifically addressed the Bolivian case. Investigating the AfroBolivian perspective thus offered an interesting opportunity to contribute new insights to a variety of fields.

2. What new perspectives does your book offer? My book complements the study of Bolivia's social and political history with a hitherto underrepresented AfroBolivian perspective and enriches analyses of recent key developments in the realms of politics and legal reform by transcending the focus on indigenous people. This is important for the study of ethnoracial boundaries and for questions concerning the discursive and performative construction of indigeneity, as well as the mobilization of collective identities. More generally, my findings may also contribute a new perspective to broader debates on Latin America's multiculturalisms.

3. What makes your topic relevant for current research debates? My book contributes to current research debates on Bolivia's plurinational reform project, widely known as ›el proceso de cambio‹, by discussing topics such as Afrodescendant and indigenous politics, legal reform and social transformation, as well as the mobilization and legal representation of collective identities. I furthermore discuss the relationship between race and ethnicity in Bolivia and critically interrogate the entanglements between blackness and indigeneity, all of which are concepts that are of great importance in Latin America.

4. Choose one person you would like to discuss your book with! Most importantly, I would like to discuss my book with the many people involved in the research process. My approach to ethnographic research is firmly grounded in the belief that the dialogue with research participants has to be extended beyond the process of ›data collection‹. Moreover, I am looking forward to discussing my findings with anyone interested in Bolivia, the global African Diaspora and/or broader conceptual issues of blackness and indigeneity.

5. Your book summary in one sentence: My book ethnographically explores the practices, experiences and aspirations of AfroBolivians against the backdrop of the social, legal and political transformations in plurinational Bolivia.



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