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Martina Tonet

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MARTINA TONET<sup>1</sup>

## **Race, Power, Indigenous Resistance and the Struggle for the Establishment of Intercultural Education<sup>2</sup>**

This article explores the controversial aspect of resistance in the Peruvian Andes. Resistance does not necessarily mean subversion of a dominant unjust social order. On the contrary, it can paradoxically endorse it. The case of the Peruvian Andes provides an illustrative example of how resistance in a post-colonial society can play this role. The purpose of this paper is to reflect on the meaning of resistance in contexts imbued with racial prejudice towards the indigenous Other. By illustrating how resistance has implied the reinstatement of an unjust and fundamentally racist social order, it induces researchers to review the understanding of indigenous bottom-up forms of opposition. Not all forms of indigenous resistance unanimously mean that subversion of an unjust and oppressive domination is taking place. Case in point the example of indigenous mobilising in the Peruvian Andes will illustrate this oxymoron. In order to exemplify my argument I take into account various forms of indigenous resistance enacted throughout history. This includes opposition that indigenous peoples have practiced against the consolidation of an intercultural education.

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<sup>1</sup> School of Arts and Humanities, Division of Literature and Languages, Spanish and Latin American Studies (University of Stirling) and Latin American Studies (Newcastle University).

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### Resistance and indigenous ethnicity in the Peruvian Andes

Since the colonial era, indigenous bottom-up resistance has been enacted. Throughout the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries ayllus across the Andes revolted against the Spanish crown.<sup>3</sup> These resulted in the Túpac Amaru II Great Rebellion (1780-81), which was led by a mestizo and descendant of the Inca dynasty José Gabriel Condorcanqui, better known under the name of Túpac Amaru II and by other members of Inca descent such as Garcilaso Chimpucollo and Felipe Huamán Poma de Ayala (see O'Phelan, 1995). Throughout the construction of the Peruvian republic (1879-1895), local networks of 'ethnic authorities' (i.e. kurakas) continued to mobilise communities to partake in Indian litigation and protest against the expropriation of Indian lands and other injustices (Larson, 2004: 622). These uprisings were not merely resisting domination. They were also asserting a distinctive indigenous ethnicity, which at the turn of the twentieth-century was openly defended in the Rumi Maqui (Hand of Stone) Rebellion (1915-1916). The mentioning of this specific rebellion is important because it was the only time in Peruvian history where indigenous people mobilised to promote a transformative discourse celebrating the Indianness of highland peasants (Jacobsen, 1993: 340). The rebellion encouraged communities across the Andes to further organise in pursuit of their own interpretations of the Peruvian 'New Nation'. In 1921, migrants from Andean communities founded the Comité Pro-Derecho Indígena - Tawantinsuyu in Lima, while local branches spread in the provinces and districts of the sierra. The Tawantinsuyu movement imagined an alternative nation defined by Indianness and inclusive of Indians who were presented as Peruvians while striving for their civil rights and for the country's progress (De la Cadena, 2000: 102-103). Nonetheless, the Tawantinsuyu's ideological aspirations for the construction of a modern nation that might comprise indigenous ethnicity in terms of a progressive Indian identity, were violently suppressed. In 1927, President Leguía abolished the Tawantinsuyu. Additionally, by endowing the indigenismo movement with authority over the 'Indian problem', the Peruvian president silenced ethnicity as a

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<sup>3</sup> See Glave (1999) and O'Phelan (2012).

means of gaining political legitimation among indigenous peoples. Since then, indigenous resistance in the Peruvian Andes has become controversial.

The following sections exemplify how in this Latin American region forms of resistance have not necessarily implied 'agency' that 'withstands colonisation by others' (cf. McLennan, 2005: 309-310). Resistance has paradoxically meant consolidating an unjust and fundamentally racist social order founded in disavowal of anything related to indigenous identity. While in the 1920s indigenous ethnicity was silenced from above, in due course of history it has been indigenous peoples who partook in the further suppression of ethnicity as a means of political empowerment. This does not mean that indigenous ethnicity has not been employed to generate revenue and/or enhance the living of some indigenous peoples. As Zorn (2004) points out, the selling of the distinctive ethnic Taquilean dress has reinforced local identity, becoming a positive sign Indianness that reinstates pride among the islanders (Zorn, 2004: 12-14). However, while the commodification of indigenous ethnicity has enabled some disadvantaged communities to assert their indigenous cultural distinctiveness, indigenous ethnicity has yet to mobilise an indigenous political movement that would counterpart dominant racist discourses. I argue that this is in part due to the type of resistance indigenous peoples have enacted in this Latin American region.

### **Agrarian Reform (1969) and the Rejection of a Multicultural education**

Indigenous resistance during the Agrarian Reform was abundant. Indigenous peoples across the Andes mobilised to challenge the oppressive and unjust hacienda system. The latter kept Indians in a disadvantaged and marginal social condition as mere labour force. The major accomplishment that indigenous communities achieved during the Agrarian Reform was the retrieval of their lands from landowners. The alphabetisation in Spanish of indigenous masses of the 1940s and 1950s<sup>4</sup> facilitated this process. In the 1960s indigenous peoples who were educated

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<sup>4</sup> On the repercussions of Hispanicisation of indigenous peoples see Tonet (2015: 117-124).

in Spanish literacy forced the political elite to promote agrarian reform, the industrialisation of the country, and the nationalisation of products that were in the hands of foreign companies (Oliart, 2011: 34). Spanish literacy enabled indigenous peoples to defend themselves from the abuses of those in power as it facilitated the recuperation of their lands from the hacendados.<sup>5</sup> In elevating the masses, Spanish literacy brought transformations for the most disadvantaged social strata.

Nonetheless, while indigenous forms of resistance shook an unjust social order they also secured the continuation of a racist legacy, which continued denying indigenous ethnicity as a means of political empowerment. Beyond the agrarian reform, an increasing number of individuals in the Peruvian Andes began endorsing a racist ideology by refuting the development of an education inclusive of cultural and language diversity. In 1972 the Peruvian president Juan Velasco Alvarado (1968-1975) instituted the General Educational Law (Ley General de Educación, Decreto: Ley No. 19326).<sup>6</sup> Velasco's Educational Reform endorsed three major initiatives. Firstly, it extended control over educational policies to all Peruvians, specifically targeting indigenous communities. By representing an ideal educational system, the Reform was prepared to acknowledge and promote dialogue among different cultures within the Peruvian Nation (Oliart, 2011: 89). The purpose of this was to enable teachers and community members to determine together a new education founded in cross-cultural dialogue (Bizot, 1975: 38). Secondly, the 1972 National Bilingual Education Policy (Política Nacional de Educación Bilingüe - PNEB), promoted bilingual education in all highland, lowland and coastal regions where languages other than Spanish were spoken.<sup>7</sup> This was a significant move given that the teaching in native languages had been prohibited since Túpac Amaru's II rebellions in the 1780s. Thirdly, in 1975, the Peruvian State proclaimed the indigenous Quechua for the first time in Latin American history to be an official language co-equal with Spanish in the Law N 21115/21156 (May 27th)

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5 See Montoya (1990: 98) and De la Piedra (2003: 45-46).

6 See Howard (2007: 25-26) and Hornberger (1988: 24).

7 See García (2005: 21), Hornberger (1987: 208) and Howard (2007: 25-26).

(Hornberger, 1987: 208). However, Velasco's changes to the educational system were not welcomed.

Teachers largely rejected Velasco's Reform. In challenging their educational upbringing, the Educational Reform questioned what teachers had learned in school regarding Peruvian society and its problems prior to the Agrarian Reform. This included embracing an ideology that valued the cultural and linguistic richness of the Peruvian Nation. The 'principles of the reform' incited teachers to acquire an anti-imperialistic view and to promote a nationalistic and anti-oligarchic position (Oliart, 2011: 47-48). Teachers were not prepared to change their ideology or teaching techniques. Teachers did not wish to associate themselves to indigenous culture and language. By the 1990s, twenty thousand teachers abandoned indigenous communities where they used to teach. Teachers viewed staying in rural communities as a place of perdition where they would become someone who would no longer be accepted by urban society and who would be rejected by schools in the provincial centres (Ibid., 2011: 53). This highlights how resistance in the Peruvian Andes within a specific historical period (i.e. during the Agrarian Reform) challenged a dominant social order and generated a space for the endorsement of an unjust racist legacy. The latter consisted of a prejudiced education founded in disavowal of indigenous ethnicity. The Hispanicisation process of the masses in the Peruvian Andes went hand in hand with the official rejection of indigenous ethnicity as a political means of self-identification among indigenous peoples. Furthermore, it encouraged opposition to a multicultural and democratic education inclusive of cultural and language diversity. The following section explores further this point.

### **Indigenous vs. peasant identity: the rejection of Intercultural Bilingual Education (IBE)**

Indigenous peoples in the Peruvian Andes have prioritised a peasant identity over their ethnic one. After the Agrarian Reform, in 1979 the Peruvian Constitution began classifying Andean communities as *Comunidades Campesinas* (Peasant

Communities).<sup>8</sup> Indigenous peoples in the Peruvian Andes continued affirming their peasant identity when in 1989 the 76th International Labour Conference in Geneva (the ILO convention #169) provided indigenous and tribal peoples from around the world equal status to other nationalities in terms of fundamental rights.<sup>9</sup> By comparison with indigenous activism in neighbouring Andean regions of Bolivia and Ecuador, Peruvian Aymaras and Quechuas have been relatively unresponsive to social movements organised under the banner of indigenous cultural rights (De la Cadena, 2007: 12). While indigenous communities in Latin American countries have claimed ethnicity for political empowerment,<sup>10</sup> indigenous peoples in the Peruvian Andes continued asserting their peasant identity. Throughout the twentieth-century indigenous peoples in the Peruvian Andean highlands have used the connotation *campesino* to self-identify in the pursuit of their autonomous political agendas (Laats, 2000: 2). The politicisation of a peasant identity over indigenous ethnicity has gone hand in hand with peasant opposition against the establishment of a multicultural education inclusive of indigenous cultural heritage.

Multicultural education has been endorsed through International Bilingual Education (IBE) programmes. The latter have had the objective of subverting a racist education in society. IBE has been a matter associated with human rights and fundamental freedoms, including the promotion of a more equal society, respectful of cultural and linguistic diversity (UNESCO, 2001: 61-64; UNESCO, 2006: 13). In 1989, the International Labour Convention (ILO) 169 urged Latin American governments to recognise the rights of 'Indigenous and Tribal Peoples in Independent Countries' in terms of their ethnic and cultural identity. In response to international pressures the Peruvian government of Alberto Fujimori (1990-2000) institutionalised the IBE agenda by establishing the National Policy of Intercultural Bilingual Education (BIE) in 1991 (Howard, 2007: 25-26). In 1993,

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<sup>8</sup> See Constitución para la República del Perú (1979), Ley General de Comunidades Campesinas y Nativas (1993) - Ley 24656, Ley de Comunidades Campesinas Deslinde y Titulación de Territorios Comunes (1993) - Ley 24657.

<sup>9</sup> See Application of Convention No. 169 by Domestic and International Courts in Latin America.

<sup>10</sup> See, among others, Brysk (2000) and Nash (2001).

the State reformed the Peruvian Constitution under the international banner of human rights.<sup>11</sup> For the first time in the history of the Peruvian republic, Peruvian Law formally recognised the multicultural nature of the nation inclusive of native peoples.<sup>12</sup> However, in Peru the reforms of the 1990s did not include the participation of indigenous leaders in the formation and execution of IBE projects (Oliart, 2011: 89).

In Peru, the educational implementations were the outcome of agreements established between Fujimori and the educational reform that the World Bank introduced in Latin America in 1994. In Colombia, Chile, Brazil, Bolivia and Argentina the educational reform formed part of the political agenda of the new governments. In Peru it was a theme imposed from outside (Ibid., 2011: 69-70). By contrast with Ecuador and Bolivia, the IBE in Peru has not been in the hands of indigenous peoples nor has it been a product of negotiations and agreements established between the State and indigenous organisations (Zavala, 2007: 35). Exceptions have existed in the Peruvian Amazon with IBE programmes such as AIDSESEP (1980) and FORMABIAP (1988).<sup>13</sup> Nonetheless, this has not been the case in the Peruvian Andes.

Indigenous peoples largely opposed IBE (García, 2005). During my fieldwork in 2008 the opposition of IBE among indigenous peoples in the Peruvian Andean regions was still in place. Resistance was endorsed quietly. During a visit to the community of Paccha in the Ayacucho region, I asked, with the help of a Quechua interpreter, whether the present twenty community members, men and women, were supportive of IBE. Only one Quechua speaking woman voiced her supportive views of IBE. The rest of the public remained in silence. During those minutes of muteness I remember wondering 'where are the voices of indigenous peoples, those

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<sup>11</sup> See Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

<sup>12</sup> See Yrigoyen Fajardo (2002: 157) and Howard (2011).

<sup>13</sup> The indigenous communities of the Amazonian regions have participated in determining how to implement IBE programmes in the communities (Zavala, 2007: 221; García, 2005). Some communities run these organisations themselves. For studies on Intercultural Bilingual Education in the Peruvian Amazonian regions see also the ethnography by Aikman (2003) and Burga Cabrera (2005).



voices supportive of an education inclusive of their distinctive language, culture and identity?’ (fieldwork data: 14. 11. 08). Nobody stood up in support of the woman or engaged in any form of conversation regarding the topic in question. The silent resistance not only subdued the pro-IBE voice of the Quechua speaking woman. It was also quietly preventing the establishment of an IBE curriculum in the local school. The school in Paccha was not implementing IBE programmes.

Teachers enacted an equally quiet resistance. I came across schools that were officially implementing an IBE curriculum. Yet teachers who did not agree with the IBE agenda simply did not teach IBE programmes. This was the case of the school in the remote Ccoñamuro community in the region of Cusco. During my visit the headmaster explained to me that out of nine teachers only two were committed to apply IBE programmes (fieldwork data: 18. 08. 08). Similarly, when I visited the school in Paucarcolla-Collana on the outskirts of Puno, teachers showed no motivation in endorsing an IBE curriculum (fieldwork data: Puno, 09. 09. 08). Only one teacher out of six used Quechua in class. The rest of them did not see the point. As one of them argued, children no longer speak nor do they understand Quechua. Yet, only one hour earlier, I had attended a class in fourth grade where the teacher who was endorsing a bilingual programme spoke with his pupils in Quechua and they replied in this language. Before this interview, with the help of an interpreter, I spoke with a Quechua speaking woman who was herding sheep on a field not far away from the local school. She said she would like her children to learn Quechua at school. She was disappointed with the fact that when she spoke to her children in Quechua they responded in Spanish.

Where does this leave us with the question of resistance in the Peruvian Andes?

### **Conclusions: resistance and the consolidation of a racist education**

Thus far, I have discussed how resistance does not necessarily imply subversion of an unjust dominant social order. On the contrary, it can paradoxically reinstate it by endorsing a racist education. Education is here understood in the broader sense as the very process of living. Living produces knowledge and it influences human consciousness and growth in terms of behaviour and thinking. It also constantly

unfolds and reconstructs experiences (Dewey, 1916: 6, 76). Durkheim (1956) defined education as a 'social organism', which maintains conformity and homogeneity in society by shaping the ideal man and collective consciousness (Durkheim, 1956: 70, 123). In this respect, education has played a crucial role in the reproduction of culture and of the social system (Bourdieu and Passeron, 2000 [1977]: 6) not necessarily by means of imposition or repression. Education has secured a given social order by allowing individual's attitudes and actions to endorse cultural production and assert identity formation.<sup>14</sup> In the case of the Peruvian Andes, the spread of Spanish literacy has enabled a growing number of individuals to consolidate a racist education. By securing the disavowal of indigenous ethnicity and preventing the establishment of IBE, this education has prevented the formation of a more democratic society inclusive of indigenous peoples. In this region, indigenous identity is tolerated only when it serves as revenue and when it enables Peruvian elites and/or middle-upper class individuals to assert their indigeneity -a phenomenon better known as *incanismo* (Tonet, 2015: 71-116). When it is time to include indigenous ethnicity into education and/or use it as a means for political empowerment, then it is denied and rejected.

Ultimately, bottom-up indigenous forms of resistance are constantly enacted. However, the questions we should be asking ourselves are: to what extent is resistance really subversive in contexts ruled by racism and social injustice? Can we distinguish resistance as an independent force unrelated to oppressive and unjust powers? I think if resistance in post-colonial societies was an autonomous and self-governing power, we would most likely not be researching the struggles indigenous peoples continue to endure across the globe. If anything, the case in the Peruvian Andes induces us to review the way we understand and analyse subversion in post-colonial settings.

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<sup>14</sup> See Willis (1977: 120-122), Luykx (1999: xxxix-xl), and Oliart (2011: 184).



Picture of a Quechua speaking woman herding sheep that I interviewed in Paucarcolla-Collana district (Puno). The woman was supportive of the use of Quechua in school. She was disappointed with the fact that the younger generation was prioritising the use of Spanish over Quechua. Photo by Martina Tonet.

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