

# REPRESENTING “REAL INDIANS”

## The Challenges of Indigenous Authenticity and Strategic Constructivism in Ecuador and Bolivia\*

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*Abstract: Asking who “really” speaks and acts for indigenous people is an increasingly important political question in Latin America. This article explores how an “unlikely” Evangelical Protestant Indian organization (FEINE, the Ecuadorian Evangelical Indigenous Federation) and a seemingly more “authentic” Bolivian indigenous federation of communities claiming pre-Columbian authority structures (CONAMAQ, the National Council of Markas and Ayllus of Qollasuyo) have grown in representational strength, or the ability to convince others that they speak for specific constituencies. Through this historically and ethnographically based comparative political study, I argue that indigenous representation is produced across scales, both from “below” (as communities and leaders organize and mobilize) as well as from “above” (as elites and opportunity structures favor some groups over others). FEINE and CONAMAQ present mirror images of the ways in which indigenous people negotiate local-global networks and discourses: FEINE Indianized Protestant Evangelicalism while CONAMAQ transnationalized local ayllu authority structures. This multi-scale analysis suggests that how Indians are spoken about transnationally shapes who gets to speak for Indians locally.*

In a reunion of sorts, on June 1, 2004, Ecuadorian president Lucio Gutiérrez officially welcomed Antonio Vargas to his cabinet as the new minister of social welfare. Vargas, an indigenous Quichua leader from the Amazon, had been the president of the powerful Confederation of

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Indigenous Nationalities of Ecuador (CONAIE), and for a few dramatic hours on January 21, 2000, joined then colonel Lucio Gutiérrez and others in a rebellion (or coup, depending on one's perspective) that spilled no blood but removed neoliberal president Jamil Mahuad from office. While the Junta of National Salvation that followed lasted only a few hours, the events of January 21 changed the lives of these two men in contrasting ways. Gutiérrez, with CONAIE support, converted his rebellion into an electoral campaign that led to his victory in the 2002 elections. Vargas lost the support of CONAIE and made an ill-fated decision to run for president on the ticket of an Evangelical Christian indigenous party, Amauta Jatari, and obtained less than 1 percent of the vote. By June 2004, however, things had changed: Gutiérrez had broken his alliance with CONAIE and Vargas, again with Evangelical support, was in the ministerial cabinet.<sup>1</sup>

During the swearing-in ceremony, Vargas looked out at the audience, which included indigenous leaders from Amazonian and Evangelical indigenous organizations and declared, "Some say that Antonio Vargas has no grass-roots support; here are the grass roots, Mr. President." He went on to call the presidents of CONAIE and ECUARUNARI (CONAIE's highland affiliate) "false leaders" (BBC Worldwide Monitoring 2004). CONAIE and ECUARUNARI leaders responded with protests against the president and denunciations of the Evangelical federation and its partners as "ghost organizations" that didn't represent the movement (Cholango 2004).

This specific conflict highlights a more general problem. How do we begin to separate "real" representatives from the "ghosts" in social movements? While representation is always contested in politics, empirically some actors do become "more" representative and authentic than others. This is especially clear for indigenous movements in Bolivia and Ecuador, where powerful yet divided movements have brought down presidents and altered political landscapes. Understanding how actors negotiate representativity is important not only to scholars who seek to understand the shifting currents of social movements in Latin America (and elsewhere) but also to the social actors that seek to navigate them.

Recent writings have done much to explain the political resurgence of indigeneity in Latin America generally, and in Bolivia and Ecuador specifically.<sup>2</sup> While this literature reveals important lesson about the

1. Since this article was accepted for publication, even more has changed as popular protests have forced presidents in both Ecuador and Bolivia from office. See Epilogue below.

2. See, for example, Albó (1991, 1994), Andolina (1999), Gustafson (2002), León (1992, 1994), Lucero (2002), Pallares (1999), Van Cott (2000), Yashar (2005), and Zamosc (1994).

opportunities and identities that have enabled indigenous politics, it sheds less light on internal movement dynamics: why do some actors become more important than others? Rather than focus on the high profile leaders or organizations, this article looks to the margins of indigenous civil society and asks how two contrasting organizations moved toward the center. Comparing an unlikely Ecuadorian Evangelical Indian organization (FEINE, the Ecuadorian Evangelical Indigenous Federation) and a seemingly more authentic Bolivian indigenous federation of communities claiming pre-Columbian authority structures (CONAMAQ, the National Council of Markas and Ayllus of Qollasuyo)<sup>3</sup> provides insights into the transnational discursive and material resources that are necessary in becoming representative indigenous movement actors. These cases demonstrate that cultural questions about authenticity are tightly intertwined with political ones about representation.

As local, national, and international resources have become available for "indigenous" projects, representativity (*representatividad*), the belief that an organization truly speaks and acts for a particular constituency, becomes simultaneously a selection criteria for supporters as well as a terrain of contestation for leaders. This article illustrates how "representativity" is produced, politically and culturally, through local and transnational interactions. To be clear, this is not a question of deciding who is "really" more Indian, but rather focusing on the practices and discourses that situate some subjects as more culturally authentic and more politically consequential than others (Jackson 1995; Warren and Jackson 2002).

Accordingly, the argument presented here is not, strictly speaking, an exercise in causal theorizing as understood by positive political science, but rather an example of what Wendt (1999) has termed constitutive theorizing. *Causal* theories seek to identify the mechanisms that lead from X to Y, where X and Y exist independently, where X temporally precedes Y, and where without X, Y would not have occurred. *Constitutive* theories illuminate how units like X and Y came to be in the first place, and how they are constructed internally and/or externally. Representation, in this constructivist view, operates both from "below" (as communities and leaders organize and mobilize) as well as from "above" (as elites and transnational opportunity structures shape subjects and their political fortunes). The cases of FEINE and CONAMAQ present mirror images of the ways in which local-global networks and discourses shape indigenous political subjectivity: FEINE Indianized

3. As will be discussed in more detail below, *ayllus* and *markas* are Andean authority structures, not necessarily territorially contiguous but linked by kinship ties and communal modes of production. Qollasuyo refers to the Aymara/Quechua name for the territory now known as Bolivia.

Protestant Evangelicalism while CONAMAQ transnationalized communal authority structures.

#### REPRESENTING: OBJECTIVE, SUBJECTIVE, AND INTER-SUBJECTIVE APPROACHES

One might reasonably argue that objective indicators like membership numbers determine which actors are most representative. After all, the organizations with the most members may well be the ones with the greatest capacity to mobilize. Part of the power of social movement organizations depends on their ability to mobilize people into large displays of “worthiness, unity, numbers, and commitment” (Tilly 1993–94). In Ecuador and Bolivia, among the more contentious societies in the Americas, the power of what are considered old actors like labor unions to enact these displays has declined while the capacity of “new” indigenous organizations has grown (León 1994; Albó 1994). While it is often useful to elaborate quantitative measures of the protest, for many reasons there is little safety in numbers when it comes to conceptualizing the representational strength of indigenous actors. Membership in indigenous federations is often collective (i.e., entire communities and not individuals are “members”) and overlapping (e.g., an indigenous church and an indigenous union in the same community may belong to different federations), making estimates of particular indigenous constituencies very difficult. Additionally, during protests, different indigenous organizations call on their members to protest. Determining which protesters belong to specific organizations is often a difficult, if not impossible task.

There is a related difficulty with electoral politics. Even as indigenous people have formed parties and had increasing success in elections, often it is methodologically difficult to connect indigenous victories with indigenous voters (as national indigenous candidates have sometimes won greater support in non-indigenous zones, or run with a variety of parties). Additionally, indigenous actors may have little success in elections, but still be “representative,” as elections are but one of many arenas for the politics of representation. Popular support and the recognition of state and international actors can carry representational weight, even in the absence of electoral strength. The lesson that emerges from the difficulties in finding objective measures is a familiar one to students of new social movements: “for all those engaged in symbolic politics, resources, status and style may matter more than numbers” (Clemens 1993, 766).

A second view of representation, then, depends on more subjective determinations of resources, status, and style. Especially important in identity-based movements is the matter of “authenticity.” Authenticity can often trump numbers in the eyes of important national and international audiences before which the political performances of social movements take place. In Bolivia, for instance, CIDOB (the Confederation of

Bolivian Indigenous Peoples), the organization often named in interviews as the leading indigenous organization by non-governmental, state, and international actors, is not located in the Andean region of the country, where the majority of indigenous people live, but in the sparsely populated eastern lowlands where approximately 2 percent of Bolivia's indigenous population lives.<sup>4</sup>

Indeed, for all the "Andean" republics, the often lightly populated lowland Amazonian regions are frequently considered to be the sites where the "real" natives are found (Brysk 2000; Smith 1985). Andean peoples have often adopted the language and strategies of the Western left thus making them, in the eyes of some, seem less "pure" and "authentic" than their Amazonian counterparts. A proper indigenous representative, in this view, should not be Westernized, but rather as close to what Westerners perceive to be his or her own culture as possible. Anthropologist Napoleon Chagnon articulates one version of this view: "To the extent that natives become fluent in a dominant language, they become less fluent in their own" (Chagnon, personal communication). This is a troubling view analytically and politically as it confines native people to limited cultural and political worlds whose boundaries are set by outside observers.

It makes more sense to view authenticity not as a characteristic possessed by one group or another, but rather as a product of the interactions of authenticators—actors who arbitrate, validate, and legitimate competing claims for authenticity (Warren and Jackson 2002). Thus, while there is no way of objectively measuring the authenticity of actors, one can understand where particular organizations fit within existing ideas about what kind of actors are more and less genuine. A representative Indian must conform in some visible ways to social expectations about what Indians look and sound like. However, this is best understood *intersubjectively*, as indigenous actors shape those expectations in dialogue with other actors in international and national civil societies.

Accordingly, representation can be better understood by asking questions that take into account what Beverley (1999) has termed the "double senses" of representation: speaking about and speaking for a subject. Culturally, what are the discourses in civil and political society that code (speak about) certain indigenous actors as more "authentic" than others? Politically, which actors have been more visible in the public sphere (speaking for) through mobilizing protests, negotiating with states, and securing resources from international civil society? Framed by these questions,

4. This article is based on interviews, participant observation, and archival research conducted in Ecuador and Bolivia over four trips between 1997 and 2004 that lasted a total of sixteen months.

representation becomes about both community dynamics (from below) and (trans)national opportunities and networks (from above).

#### REPRESENTATION FROM BELOW: THE LOCAL POLITICS OF *EVANGÉLICOS* AND *AYLLUS*

Evangelical and indigenous social movements are rarely part of the same discussion.<sup>5</sup> In modern Latin American contexts, Protestant missionaries are often cast in the role of North American imperialists that destroy indigenous cultures and religions (Stoll 1990; Andrade 2004). During the historic *levantamiento* of 1990, CONAIE, the main Ecuadorian indigenous confederation, demanded the expulsion of the Protestant Summer Institute of Linguistics which according to CONAIE was part of a long “chain of oppression” that had subjugated indigenous people for centuries. In the comparison with Catholic liberation theology, Protestantism often fares rather poorly. A liberation theologian from the province of Chimborazo—a stronghold of both Protestant and Catholic churches—conceded that *evangélicos*<sup>6</sup> had brought some help to the rural poor, but “they give people no sense of liberation, they give them dependence on capitalism, they are servants of the system” (Agustin Bravo, Interview, 1997).

Until recently, the prevailing perception of FEINE was as a “servant of the system.” The leaders of FEINE in the early 1990s often sought to distinguish their law-abiding organization from other unruly indigenous organizations like CONAIE. If the world was divided between civilization and barbarism, former FEINE president Alfonso Guacho had no doubt where his organization stood: “Our ancestors were very disciplined, ordered. CONAIE is going in the other direction. . . . They are instructors of yelling. Our organization is peaceful, it respects the government” (Walsh 1994, 157). Not only did it respect the government, but Guacho’s FEINE emphatically disagreed with CONAIE’s view of a multi-national state. “They maintain that we are different groups, with different customs and worldviews. FEINE says we are all Ecuadorians” (*ibid.*, 156).

Yet, both of these broad characterizations (agents of imperialism versus obedient citizens) belie a more complicated history of indigenous Evangelical organizing. Like most highland indigenous organizations, the first indigenous Evangelical organization in Ecuador (AIECH, Asociación de Indígenas Evangélicos de Chimborazo), emerged during the period of agrarian reform in the mid-1960s. A history of abuse on the part of *hacendados* and the traditional Catholic clergy made Evangelicalism seem

5. For interesting recent exceptions, see Andrade (2004), Canessa (2000), the essays in Cleary and Steigenga (2004), and Jarrín (2004).

6. *Evangélico* in Ecuador is a rather broad category that often includes various non-Catholic Christian churches including Pentecostal, Baptist, Mormon, and Jehovah’s Witness.



like a promising option for many former *huasipunguero* hacienda workers. Moreover, AIECH constituted part of the post-agrarian period of rural institution building. With new rules of the game, there was a need for new organizations that could claim the social rights conferred by state reforms. AIECH was formed out of a political need to obtain land, but in the process of claiming that land, it also acquired radio facilities, organized archives; initiated water, health and agricultural programs; held training seminars; and coordinated pastoral activities (Muratorio 1989, 113; Bamat 1986; Andrade 2004).

Additionally, the translation of the Bible into Quichua in the 1950s and the start of Quichua radio broadcast in the 1960s made the conversion to Protestantism a viable avenue to defend an *indigenous* cultural identity. As Blanca Muratorio's (1980, 1989) ethnographic work illustrates, if it "destroyed" some traditional activities that depended on alcohol consumption, Protestantism also reconstituted new spaces for cultural (re)production. Politically, the regional indigenous Evangelical organization emerged "as a representative of indigenous people before the state" (Muratorio 1989, 113–114). AIECH proved vital during this time of shifting power relations in the highlands. Moreover, whatever its North American connections, Protestantism, like other external forces, entered a particular historical situation and was interpreted and appropriated in such unforeseen ways that it can no longer be considered "a mere importation from the north" (Muratorio 1989, 114). Rather, like all social movements, indigenous Evangelicalism is an uneasy balance between accommodation and resistance (Roseberry 1994, 119–120). How that balance is maintained (or not) depends on political, cultural, and economic contexts.

#### AYLLUS: "PRE-COLUMBIAN" AUTHENTICITY IN POST-REVOLUTIONARY TIMES?

While the history of religious organizing in the Andes is a long one, the story of the ayllus is even longer. Ayllus were the basic units of the archipelago-like communities that stretch over multiple ecological zones and existed well before Europeans arrived in the Americas over five hundred years ago. Many ayllus and markas (a larger communal unit made up of several ayllus) maintained their organizational forms throughout the republican period, sometimes making explicit pacts with government officials (Murra 1984; Platt 1982; Rivera 1992).

During the modernizing campaign that followed the social revolution of 1952, ayllu governance faced its biggest threat as the state sought to impose a uniform union (*sindicato*) model throughout the countryside. As Albó (1991) has put it, the state tried to "re-baptize Indians as peasants," moving from ayllus to unions. A dramatic example of this occurred in the marka of Machaqa (which today occupies most of what

is the province of Ingavi), which was “fragmented . . . into 72 rural unions” (Choque n.d., 8). Consequently, ayllu practices often had to exist subterraneously within union structures (Ticona 1996b).

And this “re-baptizing” didn’t only come from the state. Even as independent organizing efforts emerged from indigenous-campesino actors like the CSUTCB (Unified Confederation of Rural Workers of Bolivia), union models were privileged over ayllus. The “unionizing” of the *altiplano* was uneven. Ayllu structures in Bolivia were not displaced by hacienda or state organizational models to the extent that they were in Ecuador.<sup>7</sup> Moreover, while many ayllus did convert to union models, in several cases they continued to operate like ayllus (Rojas, Ticona, and Albó 1995, 126).

As we will see in greater detail below, in the late 1980s and early 1990s, there emerged a movement to strengthen existing ayllu structures and to reconstitute these structures in places where ayllu traditions may have been displaced. Thereafter, the task was to federate them in regional and, later, into a national organization, CONAMAQ. The story of this movement, like that of the Evangelicals, is at once a local, national, and global one.

#### REPRESENTATION FROM ABOVE: NATIONAL, TRANSNATIONAL, AND ELITE INTERACTIONS

##### *National Indigenous Movement Contexts*

The question of who speaks for Indians has been answered strongly in Ecuador where one organization, the Confederation of Ecuadorian Indigenous Nationalities (CONAIE) has been most active in civil and political society, eclipsing other organizations. In Bolivia, indigenous movements are more fragmented and representation more contested. The three main national organizations operate in distinct geographical and ecological zones of the country: the labor-union-style Unified Confederation of Rural Workers of Bolivia (CSUTCB) in the highlands, the coca grower federation in the tropics and valleys,<sup>8</sup> and the ethnic Confederation of Indigenous People of Bolivia (CIDOB) in the lowlands.

Throughout the 1990s, CONAIE in Ecuador and CIDOB in Bolivia had the most success politically, due in part to their abilities to combine

7. It is rare to hear anyone speak of ayllus in Ecuador in the sense of communal government. For a recent discussion of the political legacies of ayllus in Ecuador see Korovkin (2001); on the diverging histories of haciendas in Ecuador and Bolivia see Ramón (1993, 56–61).

8. *Cocalero* leader and now President, Evo Morales leads a political party, MAS (Movement toward Socialism). The lines between the bases of MAS and *cocalero* federations are blurry, but in this article MAS will be mentioned only within the electoral context.



ethnic (and not class) discourses with tactics that stressed contestation and negotiation. As often happens in social movement environments, other organizations appropriated the lessons that leading organizations provided in the competition for visibility, resources, and loyalty (Tarrow 1994). In Ecuador, CONAIE remains the main organization, though the class-based FENOCIN (Federation of Peasant, Indigenous, and Black Organizations) and the Evangelical FEINE have also come to be recognized as important national organizations. Recently, in Bolivia, the CSUTCB and *cocaleros* have made greater efforts to "Indianize" their agenda and discourse, partly in response to the success of CIDOB, but also to the emergence of new highland "ethnic" groups like CONAMAQ.

FEINE and CONAMAQ are significant as they went from being politically invisible to being part of the movement mainstream. In tracing the growing strength (and occasional stumbles) of Evangelical (FEINE) and ayllu (CONAMAQ) federations, it is important to examine the strategies and political learning of leaders of each organization. The action of indigenous elites, however, must be placed in the context of the contrasting challenges each organization faces.

FEINE is an organization that has deep social roots in local parishes and communities and boasts a large number of followers. Yet, in terms of the discursive resource of authenticity and the organizational connection to social movement politics, it lags behind the main indigenous confederation. CONAMAQ has the opposite problem: the indigenous authenticity and legitimacy of the ayllu is unquestioned by important transnational brokers, yet empirically the unevenness of actually existing ayllus (some are more constituted than others) and the creation of national-level representation are significant challenges. In the case of FEINE, leaders must show that they are capable of becoming authentically Indian; for CONAMAQ, leaders must show that an authentic Andean local form can also be reconstituted as a viable national political actor.

### *Indianizing Protestantism: FEINE's Strategic Constructivism*

The spiritual message of salvation offered by Protestantism and the everyday brutality of Andean poverty create an interesting set of theological and political challenges. Few have appreciated those challenges better than the current president of FEINE, Marco Murillo. Still in his thirties, Murillo is a young leader who, like many of the new generation of indigenous leaders, is university educated and has spent a large part of his life in the city. Having come of age politically in post-levantamiento Ecuador, and having seen the meteoric rise of CONAIE, Murillo has a different vision of the role of FEINE than the organization's previous president, Guacho. Guacho saw FEINE's membership as the obedient subjects of Romans 13 ("Let every person be subject to the governing

authorities”), not like the rebellious “indios” of CONAIE. While Murillo still harbors the traditional distrust of CONAIE (“they want hegemony not consensus”) and questions its representativity, Murillo does not criticize it for leading protests and getting involved in politics.<sup>9</sup> In line with Blanca Muratorio’s (1989) research, Murillo insists that FEINE has never been an apolitical organization or reactionary. “The idea of forming a national organization,” he suggests, “is in itself political; it was about mobilizing masses.” He continues:

An organization is created out of certain needs, but these needs change as the society changes. When FEINE was created, its mission was focused on defending the Gospel, but it didn’t forget social work. And as we grew—especially in [the largest highland province] Chimborazo—we knew that we would have to enter politics. . . . Everything changes, we change too. (Murillo, Interview, 1999)

Murillo concedes that FEINE has, in the past, maintained a certain stance against getting involved in protests. However, that hardly means it can or even should keep that stance, especially given changes in society and a worsening economic and political situation. In making a case for a more politicized FEINE, Murillo makes an important cultural move. While indigenous groups and other “subalterns” have often been noted to deploy what Gayatri Spivak famously dubbed “strategic essentialism” (claiming a timeless identity in order to advance certain political ends), Murillo employs its opposite, what might be called strategic constructivism. Emphasizing context, time, and place, he saw no reason why an organization should not update its repertoire. “If Jesus Christ came back today, you think he would be on a donkey? He would be on a plane, use the Internet, have satellite TV. He would use all the channels.” FEINE had not used all the channels, and it paid a price in the struggle for representation.

As argued above, in nonelectoral settings of representation, there is no safety in numbers. Murillo estimates that FEINE represents 5,000 churches and approximately 2.5 million indigenous Evangelicals, located mostly in the central sierra, where Protestantism has increased “65 percent in the last five years” (FEINE 1999 and 2001). However, a World Bank–funded survey of organizational strength found a striking lack of indigenous identification with FEINE in the central sierra, noting that “the undefined state of FEINE or its lack of cohesion converts its bases into ‘hidden organizations’” (PRODEPINE 1998, 65, n. 23). Additionally, despite having a large social base, in term of public relations, Murillo noted in 1999,

We are at zero. We want to win public opinion, credibility; this is fundamental in the modern situation, [it is] one of the big things I have learned from CONAIE.

9. Unless otherwise indicated, quotes from Murillo draw from an interview with the author (Murillo, Interview, April 7, 1999).

In the last protest, they controlled the media, and confronted government. Technocrats are afraid of rocks, and not rocks from the streets but from press conferences. They say [to us, FEINE] "You can be three million, but you don't protest, don't do anything, why should I listen to you?"

FEINE also finds itself operating in a new multicultural constitutional context wherein the incentives to adopt some of the terms of CONAIE's political projects have increased.<sup>10</sup> This is particularly evident in the case of *nationalities*, a term that CONAIE has skillfully injected into the national vocabulary (Karakras 1995; Lucero 2003). Unlike his predecessor, Murillo explains that "we are not against [indigenous nationalities], we are them." While the organization is more comfortable with the term *pueblo*, a term recognized internationally and less tied to CONAIE, it now describes itself as "an organization that includes the self-recognized nationalities and indigenous pueblos of the Evangelical sector" (FEINE 1999, 7).<sup>11</sup> In turn, FEINE has even altered its own self-recognition by changing its name from the Ecuadorian Federation of Indigenous Evangelicals to the Ecuadorian Council of Indigenous Evangelical Pueblos and Organizations, (though for legal reasons, it keeps the FEINE acronym).

These kinds of changes illustrate the compelling view of indigenous identities that Jean Jackson (1995) and others: "Indianness" is formed dialogically by a plurality of actors who engage in a conversation over what indigenous identity is and what its political projects should be about. With some luck, visiting social scientists sometimes have the opportunity to participate directly in those conversations. I was invited to participate in some FEINE meetings after I had offered to help FEINE place English and Spanish versions of their new political program on the Internet.<sup>12</sup> As is often the case in indigenous organizations, sympathetic non-indigenous advisors and technicians often participate in these meetings. In one meeting in April 1999, two FEINE leaders, two non-indigenous advisors, an indigenous Pastor, and I began to discuss the emerging FEINE political program.<sup>13</sup>

10. The collective rights of indigenous people are guaranteed by the government in twenty-four separate articles, product of a constituent assembly that included a host of political actors, the most important indigenous voice being CONAIE.

11. "Self-recognized nationality" (*nacionalidades autodenominadas*) is the cautious phrasing found in the Ecuadorian constitution itself. As elites were still very nervous about officially abandoning the idea of a single Ecuadorian nationality, the compromise they struck with CONAIE was to acknowledge that this was the term that indigenous people had chosen for themselves. Here FEINE adopts the same language to locate itself within the new multicultural legal order.

12. Marc Becker has done perhaps more than anyone to create spaces for indigenous voices on the Web. For a sample of his collaboration with indigenous organizations see <http://www.yachana.org>.

13. Following the standard practice of participant-observation research, names in the ethnographic sections of this paper have either been withheld or changed. Where permission was given to use names, such as in formal interviews, I have used real names.

It was perhaps not surprising to find that FEINE's platform was being elaborated with CONAIE's program quite literally in the background, on a chalkboard. One of the first things we discussed was a term often found in indigenous political discourse: *cosmovision*. Given the term's lack of precision, it was not surprising to hear one *indigenous* leader ask the *non-indigenous* adviser, "What exactly is understood by *indigenous cosmovisions*"? Hector, the mestizo adviser—an Evangelical who had also worked at the state ministry for indigenous development, CODENPE, and was well versed in the new multicultural language of collective rights and development—responded that the term basically was a way to "talk about the totality of relations, customs, and practices particular to each pueblo." The group accepted the answer, though one member responded that a Pastor had once told him that *cosmovision* was a belief in the holiness of "the sun, mountains, spirits, etc."—not something for Evangelicals. Upon reflection, he felt the definition of *cosmovision* that the mestizo adviser gave was a useful one, and moreover, something that Evangelical Indians could have too. In the context of this discussion it is helpful to see a brief part of FEINE's current political statement:

FEINE has moved ahead in changing its organizational structure by creating the Ecuadorian Council of Indigenous Evangelical Pueblos and Organizations, a maximum representative organization and one that demonstrates its mandate to indigenous pueblos and society. All this is accompanied by a new vision that gives way to a new discourse that breaks . . . with the monolithic tendency of Evangelical and ethnic fundamentalisms, and allows recognition, respect, and tolerance of difference. . . . It proposes the construction of a society of justice and solidarity based in the relationships between God, man, and nature, respecting Christian principles and indigenous *cosmovision*. (FEINE 2001)

Though FEINE has borrowed some elements from CONAIE, it has not signed on to all parts of CONAIE's project. This became clear in our meeting as Hector, the non-indigenous adviser, who spoke more than anyone else did, outlined the transformation of CONAIE's political project. An emerging consensus in CONAIE held that the indigenous movement should move from representation by organization toward representation by "nationality and pueblo."

FEINE and other non-CONAIE organizations have argued (successfully) against the way that these new units have been institutionalized in the new state Council for Indigenous and Afro-Ecuadorian Development, CODENPE.<sup>14</sup> By shifting the units of representation—from organization to nationality and pueblo—the distribution of state resources

14. In late 2000, FEINE and FENOCIN challenged the constitutionality of CODENPE in the courts. The Constitutional Tribunal held that representation based exclusively on nationality was unconstitutional. For more on the politics of representation and CODENPE see Jarrín Cuvi (2004), Lucero (2003) and Blanco y Negro (2004).

potentially would have changed dramatically. FEINE was particularly worried about the province of Chimborazo, home to the greatest number of indigenous people and to more indigenous Evangelicals than any other province. Through executive decree, all the indigenous people of Chimborazo were grouped under the label of a single "Puruhua Pueblo," while the Northern Sierra, despite having a smaller indigenous population, had three distinct "pueblos." With this new vocabulary came a new arithmetic: since the number of pueblos and nationalities was translated into votes on the Executive Council of CODENPE, the heavily Evangelical and indigenous central sierra (Chimborazo) had one vote (demographically underrepresented) while the Northern Sierra gets three votes (overrepresented). CONAIE, critics argued, used this new language of representation to marginalize other organizations like FEINE.

FEINE responded to this challenge. Adopting some of CONAIE's ideas and rejecting others, FEINE changed its relationship to state and international actors. Although FEINE had previously had no trouble approaching state officials as "respectful citizens," today it participates in dialogues with the government, often after indigenous protests and as part of a broader indigenous project. FEINE has also sought to modify its already strong transnational connections. Historically, international Evangelical churches and organizations have injected important financial resources into the infrastructure of Ecuadorian indigenous Protestantism. World Vision, an Evangelical development organization, invested approximately \$5 million in the 1980s, most of it in the province of Chimborazo (Brysk 2004; Jarrín 2004). Though FEINE maintains contacts with international Evangelical actors, it also has new contacts with the World Bank, participates in a greater number of international conferences, and is sponsoring its own transnational spaces like the First Latin American Meeting of Indigenous Evangelical Pueblos, held in September 2000. FEINE has also taken to the streets, participating alongside CONAIE in the 1998 protests against price increases, the 1999 protests against the government's freezing of bank accounts, supported the 2000 CONAIE-led protests that removed Jamil Mahuad from office, and even more recently protest against their ostensible ally President Gutiérrez.

While FEINE has yet to truly challenge the hegemony of CONAIE in the public sphere, it has gained an unexpected place in protests and at the negotiating table. The internal politics within the Ecuadorian indigenous movement problematizes what has often been described as a centralized and unified structure of indigenous representation.

### *Nationalizing and Globalizing Ayllus*

If Evangelicals in Ecuador have worked hard to diminish their ties with North American Protestantism and emphasize legitimate claims to

indigenous representation, ayllus have had the opposite problem. Ayllu leaders have had to enter transnational networks to translate their “pre-Columbian” cultural capital into nationally relevant social organizations. The recent history of the ayllus is best understood in the context of international development and new legal orders of official multiculturalism.

The 1980s represent the first phase of the modern ayllu movement, which took place in precisely those regions where ayllu traditions were strongest, the departments of Oruro and Potosí. In the wake of a severe drought (1982–83) and a rapidly deteriorating national economy, there emerged a new effort in the altiplano to channel international resources to new development projects. Those projects exacerbated the conflict between ayllu and sindicato organizational forms. Some national NGOs—often linked to leftist or Katarista political parties<sup>15</sup>—saw union structures as the only viable organizational form suitable for development projects and made it a requirement for receiving development assistance. Many Aymaras, who had opted to keep traditional authorities and rejected the sindicato, found themselves in a difficult situation (Rivera and THOA 1992; Andolina 2003).

Some international funders, however, did not have an anti-ayllu bias. Most notably, the European Economic Community funded the Self-Development Campesino Program (PAC, Proyecto de Autodesarrollo Campesino), which opted to work not with unions but with ayllus. In Potosí and Oruro, “the willingness to understand and redeem the traditional organizational structure by an external agent such as PAC, at the same time stirred up cultural validation in the communities, accompanied by a growing willingness of self affirmation. Little by little . . . they began to develop common platforms of action” (Izko 1992 cited in Andolina 2003, 130). International funds thus created a new set of opportunities for reversing the “sindicalización” of certain highland regions. In the last years of the decade, provincial ayllu federations were founded in Oruro (FASOR, Federation of Ayllus South of Oruro) and Potosí (FAOINP, Federation of Indigenous Ayllus of North Potosí), followed by the establishment of a National Council of Ayllus and Markas (CONAMAQ).

However, similar to external religious actors in Ecuador, European programs cannot take full credit for driving local events. In fact, the thin knowledge that European project managers had of ayllu structures ar-

15. Katarismo is an Aymara political movement that took its name from Tupac Katari, leader of an important rebellion in 1781 against the Spanish colonial state. Contemporary Katarismo seeks to articulate peasant and indigenous identities in organizing rural sectors, a practice Kataristas like to call “seeing with both eyes.”



guably distorted pre-existing systems of authority rather than simply strengthening them. As an Aymara research team found, the European projects would begin by consulting the *jilanku* who governed a set of communities where projects were planned. However, once the project was underway, development programs ignored the ayllu territorial systems and established centers from which an agronomist, and engineer, and a surveyor could attend to the needs of several different ayllus (Rivera and THOA 1992, 189–190). As this study suggests, the European funders' most important contribution was beginning a process in which the "ayllu question" went from a local one to a national and international one.

Indeed, there were well-placed people in and outside of Bolivia who saw ayllus as options for the future, not relics of the past. Richard Chase Smith, who worked with Oxfam America on indigenous matters for many years, recalled a day in his graduate training when a young historian named Tristan Platt visited a seminar taught by renowned Andeanist scholar John Murra. Platt astonished Smith and his fellow students by detailing how ayllus were not just the sixteenth-century units Murra had researched so ably, but also viable contemporary social and political units. Years later at Oxfam, Smith was struck that Bolivian political and social actors did not seem to know what his former seminar classmates learned, that ayllus continued "to regulate the social, economic, and religious life of tens of thousands of Andean campesinos" (Smith 1992, 15). In the late 1990s, as the rural union leadership of the CSUTCB was entering a political crisis, a new federation of ayllus came into existence, with the help of Oxfam and a Bolivian research organization, the Andean Oral History Workshop (THOA, Taller de Historia Oral Andina).

The relationship between THOA and Oxfam America is emblematic of the transnational nature of the resurgence of ayllus. THOA was founded in 1983, a product of the intellectual and political activities associated with indigenous political organizing of the CSUTCB and broader Aymara nationalism. However, THOA soon grew disillusioned with the marginalization of Aymara and Quechua politics in an organization with "a union, peasant, and classist essence" (Choque n.d., 2). THOA began to dedicate an increasing amount of work to "rescuing" the ayllu from political or social erasure, both in terms of scholarly research as well as non-governmental advocacy, often with aid from Oxfam America and other international sponsors of indigenous causes.<sup>16</sup>

The 1990s signaled the beginning of a new period in THOA's institutional biography, as well as in the trajectory of the ayllu movement. This

16. Other funders included the Inter-American Foundation, Plan International, and IBIS.

new period was inaugurated by changes advanced by the administration of President Jaime Paz Zamora. Paz Zamora, in 1991, oversaw the ratification of International Labor Organization (ILO) 169 (which recognizes the existence and collective rights of indigenous people). That same year, as part of a set of economic reforms, he announced the implementation of new taxes that would have important impacts in the countryside. Many ayllus were at the center of resistance, as they often had colonial titles that seemed to exempt them from state taxes. THOA began to get requests from the ayllus to help resist this new imposition of the Bolivian state. THOA helped many ayllus begin the move from union models back to ayllu forms of governance, something that THOA and ayllu leaders felt would provide ayllus with more protection, especially in the light of the ratification of ILO 169. All this, THOA members explain, coincided with the CIDOB (the lowland ethnic federation) March of Dignity from the Amazon to the altiplano (1992) and a deepening crisis within the more class-based CSUTCB (THOA Group Interviews, November 8 and August 22, 1999).

The state reforms of the mid-1990s, especially the Law of Popular Participation (LPP, 1994) and Nation Agrarian Reform Law (INRA, 1996) contributed to the changes in incentive and opportunity structures. The first law gave legal standing (*personería jurídica*) to indigenous, peasant, and urban collectivities, thus giving ayllus the opportunity to officially register with the state as a territorial base organization (OTB). The second law changed agrarian reform laws to allow indigenous people (and only indigenous people) the right to conform what the law calls original communal lands (TCO). Given these new political, economic, and cultural benefits, many communities that previously identified as "peasant communities" (in line with the 1953 agrarian laws) now opted for "reconstituting" themselves as ayllus.

The changes in national law, however, are themselves linked to transnational actors such as DANIDA (Denmark Foreign Aid Agency), which provides much of the funding for the implementation of Popular Participation, and the World Bank supports the state land reform initiative (Javier Callua, DANIDA official, Interview, October 7, 1999). Additionally, Oxfam America, IBIS-Denmark, Plan International, and other international NGOs have begun to make more funds available for the multiple activities involved in reconstituting the ayllus and linking them in the emerging structures like federations in Oruro and Potosí. To get a better sense of how these macro changes are reaching local spaces, it is helpful to consider a meeting I attended in Pacajes, a province in the altiplano of the La Paz department in November 1999.

It took a few hours (and a few changes of typically cramped vans) to travel from La Paz to the site of the meeting, Callapa, the only pueblo in Pacajes that had not abandoned the sindicato and returned to the

structure of original authorities like Jilaqatas, Mallkus, and Mama T'allas. An Aymara-run organization, the Center for the Holistic Development of Aymara Women (CDIMA) ran the meeting in Callapa as essentially a workshop on the country's new legal reforms and the advantages of reconstitution.<sup>17</sup>

The CDIMA professionals displayed an impressive command of the new constitutional and legal framework of indigenous rights. They moved effortlessly from the main constitutional provisions (Article 1, 171) to the specific paragraphs, sections, and subsections of tax codes, international treaties, and new laws. Their explanation of the Law of Popular Participation was particularly effective. They explained that the LPP created a new division of powers on the local level: *municipio*, oversight committees, and OTBs. In this scheme, there is no more room for *sindicatos*. "Sindicatos have nothing to do in the municipal government," they explained. "Therefore, they should soon disappear." This was a bit misleading as *sindicatos* are allowed to have a role under the new law. The law does not allow, however, the same community to have legal standing as both an indigenous community and a *sindicato*. Thus, by reconstituting *ayllus*, *sindicatos* would in effect disappear.

Having erased unions on the blackboard, the presenters moved to important keywords in the new indigenous political lexicon: *land* and *territory*. The distinction between the two, Smith (1996) explains, was first elaborated by a UN Working group, then adopted by Amazonian organizations, and then by indigenous groups through the Americas. CDIMA professionals drew the clear difference between land and territory. Land, they argued, was the 30-cm layer of arable soil, the individual plots that Bolivian peasants fought for in 1952. Territory was much more—it included the sun, moon, mountains, stars, flora, and fauna—the stuff of cosmovisions. And territory could be legally protected if indigenous people legalized their *ayllu* and contacted the government to do the necessary studies. The CDIMA team emphasized that many of these changes—toward *ayllu* and territory—were not going to occur overnight, but they urged "reflection and unity."

After the seminar ended, I rode back to La Paz with one of the seminar participants, a *mallku* whom I will call Don Marcelo. He had traveled from a distant province that borders Chile and is located about 4,000 meters

17. CDIMA was founded by Alicia Caniviri, an Aymara woman who serves on the board of the international indigenous advocacy group Abya-Yala (headquartered in Oakland). The growing presence of Aymara professionals in CDIMA, THOA, and other NGOs contrasts with the neocolonial image of non-indigenous or foreign intermediaries who collect "juicy salaries" and set the terms of indigenous development. While some criticize the "Indianization" of development programs as assimilationist (Patzl 1999), this certainly marks an important change in the development landscape.

above sea level. He told me that his community really turned “back” to the ayllu when the LPP and INRA laws recognized them. “The law grabbed us, and we grabbed the law.” Since then, they have been reconstituting the ayllu with the help of “some friends.” In particular, four NGOs have been working “together” and have divided the labor among them. CADA (Center for Andean Development and Agriculture), an NGO that employed a distinguished Aymara historian, Roberto Choque, taught them *usos y costumbres* or traditional practices that were performed by the ayllu authorities. CDIMA helped with the legal questions—which was no surprise given the legal fluency the CDIMA team demonstrated. THOA helped document ayllu history and organize colonial and other titles that an ayllu or marka might have. Lastly, Fundación Dialogo, he said, “mostly helps with the paperwork (*trámites*).”

After Don Marcelo explained the NGO assistance his marka received, I asked him why they moved from sindicatos to ayllu; he said that they did it because the sindicatos were full of self-interested folks who took money. Mallkus and ayllu offered the promise of the end of corruption and “living well” again. Other traditional leaders in Callapa shared some of Don Marcelo’s sentiments. They said that the sindicatos are no longer respected, but that the mallkus are. Political parties get in the sindicatos, another said, and it becomes about clientelism, not representation. Some suggested that the very system of ayllu rotation, in which one must move up through the ranks and not remain in office, served to keep corruption at bay. Whether many of the authorities were convinced of the moral superiority of ayllu, or made an instrumental judgment about what would be better in securing resources, the pro-ayllu transnational message seemed to be working. However, building new communal alternatives is one thing, participating in national politics is quite another.

As our stop approached, I asked mallku Don Marcelo about how he saw the emergence of the new national confederation of ayllu and markas, CONAMAQ. “It is fine, he says, but we don’t see it much. And we (mallkus) don’t ever see the money.” That parting comment captures two of the main critiques made of the national organization: 1) it is a new set of elites and not representatives; 2) it is a new elite that, like the old elite, just wants to get money. Speaking of some of the leaders of the Oruro and Potosí federations before they constituted part of the CONAMAQ leadership, one critical Aymara sociologist wrote, “It is clear that the new indigenous representation makes possible the birth of a new elite that in theory is traditional, but in practice reproduces external elements not far from those of the [class-based] CSUTCB” (Ticona 1996a, 1). The construction of “new representation” is always a difficult task. It can become even more difficult when new representation faces the challenges of “old” representation and the challenges of electoral politics.

*FEINE, Elections, and Elites*

For FEINE, political salvation seemed to lie in the strategic appropriation of other organizations' tactics and discourses. In 2002, after joining in national protests, FEINE followed CONAIE's lead once again in entering national electoral politics. In a surprising move, FEINE decided to support the Amazonian indigenous leader Antonio Vargas, the former president of CONAIE, in his campaign for the upcoming presidential elections. Vargas is a controversial figure in part because of his aforementioned role in the military-indigenous rebellion and the junta of National Salvation.<sup>18</sup> Vargas alienated many within the indigenous movement and came in dead last in a crowded field of candidates. The defeat was perhaps even more pointed for Vargas given the contrast with the victory of his old ally, Gutiérrez, whom CONAIE and its electoral partner Pachakutic endorsed. For FEINE and its electoral arm, Amauta Jatari, more bad news came in poor overall results on the local level; even in Chimborazo, FEINE's stronghold, Amauta won only 5 percent of the vote. Then in December 2003, the Electoral Tribunal of Ecuador eliminated Amauta Jatari from its register for failing to present candidates in at least ten provincial races (Jarrín 2004). Electorally, the Evangelical indigenous movement was in deep trouble. FEINE, however, continued to remain visible in the growing popular protest against a Gutiérrez administration that was moving toward the political right especially in its negotiations with the International Monetary Fund and the United States.

Protests against the government did not preclude, however, new political arrangements. To return to where this article began, after President Gutiérrez had a very public falling out with CONAIE in August 2003, the political door began to open again for Antonio Vargas. In June 2004, Vargas accepted the post of minister of social welfare in a ceremony attended by the presidents of FEINE, two CONAIE subsidiaries—the coastal federation CONAICE and the Amazonian federation CONFENIAE—and a representative from the transnational Amazonian body COICA (BBC 2004). The number two post at the ministry was assigned to an Evangelical leader from FEINE. For the moment, Vargas and FEINE were in the government, while CONAIE and its highland confederation, ECUARUNARI were left out.

Many question the political wisdom of FEINE's move, one which may seem driven by short-term political goals. However, it is important to note that in moving from protests to government posts, FEINE has followed an example set by CONAIE and other indigenous organizations that often engage in pragmatic mixes of contestation and negotiation.

18. For more on the coup see Collins (2000) and Lucero (2001).

Moreover, for FEINE this kind of visibility may itself be part of the political transformation it set out for itself. In an interview in 1999, FEINE president Marco Murillo remarked half-jokingly (and somewhat prophetically): "Perhaps in four years, FEINE and Amauta [Jatari] will be in the government and CONAIE will be complaining about it."

### *Ayllus, Elite Alliances, and Elections*

In September and October 2000, Bolivia found itself in a period of nation-wide protests. The catalyst was the privatization of water in Cochabamba, but soon the protests became a generalized denunciation of neoliberal reforms and the U.S.-backed policies of coca eradication. In ongoing protests, the CSUTCB, under its own "mallku," Felipe Quispe, seemed to feed off of the growing popular frustration with then President Hugo Banzer (Gustafson 2002; Finnegan 2002). CIDOB even contemplated a march, but then, as the organization had previously done, negotiated with the government and called the mobilization off. CONAMAQ, which not coincidentally shared CIDOB's La Paz office space, also tried to share its tactics in drawing a contrast with the rock-throwing CSUTCB. CONAMAQ's leadership approached President Banzer, who was not only the president but also an aging ex-dictator with a reputation for repression during his previous rule in the 1970s. In the midst of this historically and politically charged environment, the CONAMAQ mallkus were shown in the national press, shaking hands with the (ex-dictator) president, stating that the ayllus were not like the unions, they were not made for protest, and that CONAMAQ supported President Banzer.

While they hoped that Banzer would reward them later, CONAMAQ's gamble paid off very poorly. The CSUTCB and Quispe became more popular as Banzer's credibility fell. Protests intensified, with CONAMAQ isolated and its bases wondering what its leaders had done. So were its funders. Both Oxfam and IBIS announced that they would be reevaluating their support until the next CONAMAQ congress picked new leaders (Igidio Naveda, personal communication, January 18, 2001; Naveda and Landeo 2002).

During the next congress, new leaders were selected and CONAMAQ began to show signs of learning from past mistakes. During a 2002 CONAMAQ meeting, one mallku noted that the "sin of [the previous leader of CONAMAQ] is making us pay double, because people do not tire of saying that CONAMAQ has leaned toward the government, that it has dropped to its knees, that it has dropped its pants" (Naveda and Landeo 2002). Rejecting this position, CONAMAQ's current leadership has made a special effort to gain new legitimacy in a period of political change in Bolivia. In June 2002, as Bolivians were about to go to the



polls to elect a new president, CONAMAQ took a page from the recent history of CONAIE in Ecuador and demanded a constituent assembly to reform the constitution.<sup>19</sup> Along with CIDOB, CONAMAQ led a thirty-day-long march to the capital city of La Paz to demand a participatory reform of the constitution. With the 2002 election of neoliberal Gonzalo Sánchez de Lozada (known universally as Goni), a former president who presided over the last set of multicultural and neoliberal reforms, CONAMAQ was quick to put itself in the role of vocal opposition. It declared that the new government had "defrauded and tricked" indigenous people (CONAMAQ 2002). CONAMAQ also joined the protests in October and November 2003 that forced Goni to resign from the presidency. Protests continued against Goni's successor, Carlos Mesa. However, these protests were mostly associated with the visible roles Felipe Quispe of the CSUTCB and Evo Morales, the cocalero leader, played.

Both Quispe and Morales have become even more visible as leaders of their respective political parties, the Pachakutik Indigenous Movement (MIP) and the Movement toward Socialism (MAS). Morales and MAS, though, have had the most success. Morales placed second in the 2002 presidential election, and MAS won the largest share of council seats of any party in the 2004 local elections; MIP and CONAMAQ were less successful.<sup>20</sup> It is noteworthy, though, that CONAMAQ, taking advantage of recent changes in electoral laws that allow non-political parties to participate in elections, won thirty-four local council seats. This is an important development and an indicator that CONAMAQ may have recovered some lost ground. However, the organization still finds itself following, not leading, developments in Bolivian indigenous politics.

## CONCLUSIONS

The comparison of Evangelical and ayllu indigenous movements suggests some broader lessons about the scales, strategies, and structures of indigenous politics in the Americas, and beyond. First, despite strikingly different organizational forms and histories, FEINE and CONAMAQ both negotiated the local-global linkages that have shaped indigenous movements throughout the world. They both adopted key elements of an indigenous political discourse of autonomy and difference that has become institutionalized and internationalized. In this they both succeeded, in different ways, in "internalizing the external," the alchemy classically described by Cardoso and Faletto (1978). With the help of foreign funds and changing national and international contexts,

19. On the politics of Ecuador's constituent assembly see Andolina (1999).

20. MAS won 453 council seats to lead all parties. MIP won 68 seats, while CONAMAQ won 34 (Gisselquist 2005; *La Razón* 2005).

both evangélicos and ayllus became “genuine” local indigenous actors that jumped scales to the terrain of national political life.

Second, both FEINE and CONAMAQ converged in adopting the forms and tactics of what many scholars have come to see as “the primary characteristic of Indian ethnicity”: political resistance and contestation (Field 1994, 239). FEINE and CONAMAQ leaders adopted and transformed discourses and tactics other organizations had used successfully. FEINE, through its strategic constructivism, adopted some of CONAIE’s language and politics while broadening the very category of “indigenous” to create greater space for an indigenous Evangelical presence. CONAMAQ took advantage of a hospitable national and international conjuncture in which ethnic federations like CIDOB were welcomed as alternatives to seemingly anachronistic peasant organizations.

Third, it is clear that strategic imitation and organizational isomorphism are not simple recipes for success (DiMaggio and Powell 1983). Organizations can take the appropriate form and learn the “right” lessons at the wrong times. Even the savviest political entrepreneurs cannot always predict which strategy will play well within the larger structures of authenticity constituted by rural bases, international funders, and civil society, especially during times of crisis and electoral campaigns. Yet the surprising successes and occasional setbacks of both Evangelical and ayllu indigenous political projects help clarify a central lesson of indigenous representation: how Indians are spoken about transnationally shapes who gets to speak for Indians locally.

#### EPILOGUE

Since this article was written, popular mobilizations have forced both Ecuadorian President Lucio Gutiérrez and Bolivian President Carlos Mesa from office. While these cases of what some call *golpes populares* cannot be examined here, it is worth noting that these changes have once again repositioned FEINE and CONAMAQ. FEINE is on the defensive trying to distance itself from a Gutiérrez government that grew increasingly anti-democratic (even reaching the point of closing down the Supreme Court). CONAMAQ opposition to the Mesa government and support for a new constituent assembly has kept it in the mainstream of Bolivian contention.

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