

Popular Devotion and Citizenship in Bolivia

Folkloric Confraternities and the Habits of Democracy at the Festival of the Virgin of Urkupiña

by Tobias Reu

DESCRIPTION:

This ethnography follows a Bolivian association of folkloric dancers whose members hone their habits of democratic organization while staging their annual pilgrimage to the shrine of the Virgin Mary. It highlights the role of cultural traditions and social practice in shaping democratic publics.

With a wealth of citizen organizations representing the interests of their constituents, Bolivians are known for their vivid engagement with government and democracy. At the same time, Bolivian civic involvement has never quite conformed to the predictions of prevailing democratic theory. This book approaches the idiosyncrasies of Bolivian democracy through an ethnographic portrayal of an association of folkloric groups that participate in one of the largest patron saint festivals in the Andes region. It describes how, in the course of staging an annual pilgrimage of several thousand dancers, the members of this association hone their habits of democratic organization, albeit in ways that resonate with specific notions of prestige associated with Andean saint worship.

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