

## Chapter 6

# **Creative pragmatism: competency and aesthetics in Bolivian indigenous music video (VCD) production**

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Although several of the case studies in this book feature indigenous people based in countries with strong economies, it is important to stress that a disproportionate number of the world's indigenous people live in poverty.<sup>1</sup> Given this tendency, a particularly notable aspect of the so-called 'digital revolution' is the way it has provided low income consumers and creators with access to cheap audio-visual technologies. Massive reductions in prices alongside exponential growth in unlicensed copying (so-called 'media piracy'), has given rise to an abundance of new media consumers and producers among the world's poorer populations, especially in parts of the global south. In such regions, the Internet is often available in larger towns and cities, but primarily accessed in public Internet cafés.<sup>2</sup> In these rapidly transforming technological environments, the number of home computers has risen exponentially, but most remain offline. Meanwhile, in smaller towns and rural areas, television reception is often poor; thus, where electricity is available, audio visual entertainment often takes the form of videos.

Arguably, the most ubiquitous form of digital hardware in low income homes of the global south<sup>3</sup> - especially over the first decade of the twenty-first century – has been the VCD (Video Compact Disc) player.<sup>4</sup> Such machines are usually found alongside a stack of (mostly 'pirated') VCD discs of films and music videos. The VCD format, which is almost unknown in the global north and a kind of low-tech' version of the DVD, enables video to be copied onto CD discs and played, on low cost players, through a television.<sup>5</sup> Originally launched in China, this technology rapidly spread to other areas of the global south, escalating both the creation of massive new markets for audio-visual entertainment among low income groups and rampant 'media piracy'.<sup>6</sup> It also motivated indigenous musicians – often with negligible technical training and support, or financial resources – to grasp the entrepreneurial opportunities offered by this cheap audio visual technology to create music videos for these new low income local and regional markets. Here, might be identified a distinction between more outwardly orientated

indigenous media for a global stage or international indigenous community<sup>7</sup>—as featured in certain chapters of this book—and media created with more local or regional audiences in mind; the primary focus here.

In this chapter I examine the VCD music video production processes of Gregorio Mamani Villacorta (1960-2011), an *originario* (indigenous) musician and cultural activist who grew up and lived well into adulthood in the rural community of Tomaykuri in northern Potosí, highland Bolivia. Alongside my long term familiarity with the rural music of this region,<sup>8</sup> I draw on eleven months of ethnographic research based in the city of Sucre (September 2007 - July 2008), where Mamani lived with his family and created a home studio. This provided me with the opportunity to participate, as a technologically unskilled assistant, in the production of three *originario* VCD music videos. Mamani's productions proved hugely popular among the low income indigenous rural and urban migrant consumers for whom they were intended. However, for outside viewers, accustomed to the high technical expectations of mainstream television and film, they might appear 'amateurish'. Indeed, I heard Mamani's - and other similar *originario* music videos – disparaged by Bolivian middle class media professionals for their low standards of production and technical inadequacies. But, how should we understand such comments? How much should production values and notions of technical competency be viewed as normative, enabling them to be judged objectively? Alternatively, to what degree do such judgments reflect convention and the viewer-listener's aesthetic values, which are necessarily subjective and culturally contingent? What is the relationship between production techniques and aesthetics, and to what extent are these interdependent or separable?

In this chapter I attempt to navigate some of the complex terrain between notions of technical competency and aesthetics. Firstly I explore these issues in the context of the rich scholarship on indigenous film and video production, which I then relate to the relatively understudied but locally and regionally influential genre of *originario* [indigenous] music video. This focus on production competencies and aesthetics is then briefly placed into wider debates about 'low-tech' aesthetics' and amateur/professional distinctions in media production. The second half of the chapter is ethnographic in approach and dedicated to the *originario* music video production work of Gregorio Mamani. It examines his working practices and aesthetic priorities in the light of negative evaluations from Bolivian media professionals, arguing ultimately that such practices and priorities might usefully be understood in terms of, what I

term, ‘creative pragmatism’. This expression, which stresses local realities and praxis, I will suggest, benefits from avoiding the dangers of, on the one hand, essentializing or romanticizing indigenous media aesthetics and, on the other, of devaluing so-called ‘professional’ media practices.

### **Bolivian Indigeneities**

Bolivia is regularly presented as among the poorest, most economically informal, and most indigenous countries of South America. It made international news in late 2005 with the election of its first indigenous president, Evo Morales, who was re-elected in both 2009 and 2014. Together with the creation of a new constitution, ratified by a national referendum in 2009, the official name for the country was changed to the ‘Plurinational State of Bolivia’, largely in recognition of its diversity of indigenous peoples. Discourses of indigeneity have been fundamental to Bolivian politics over the past decade, yet while lowland groups are happy to refer to themselves as *indigena* (‘indigenous’), highland groups have tended to distance themselves from this term, preferring the label *originario* (‘originary’). While from the global perspective of this volume *originario* is essentially interchangeable with ‘indigenous’, out of respect for this preference—and given my focus on highland Bolivia—I use the term *originario* in this chapter.

While physiognomy suggests a notably indigenous aspect to the majority highland population, formal identification of indigeneity is steeped in historical complexity, and measures such as blood quantum are irrelevant to the Andean context. In the colonial Andes, indigenous (‘Indian’) and non-indigenous people were separated into distinct populations and parishes, with *originario* status and usufruct land rights dependent upon the payment of tax and labor—what Platt has called the ‘tributary pact’.<sup>9</sup> The burden of tribute, among other factors, led many indigenous people to move away from the land into *mestizo* status and occupations, thereby avoiding taxation. Such migration and changes in fiscal status was usually accompanied by cultural—even if not racial—mixing (*mestizaje*); the incorporation of aspects of the hegemonic European-derived or *criollo* culture. Thus, whilst *originario* status was associated with indigenous claims to land, *mestizaje* often became connected with perceptions of superior cultural status linked to exogenous knowledge and power. The tribute system was abolished long ago and rural-urban migration has escalated for many other reasons. Arguably, however, vestiges

of the historical rights connected with *originario* status re-surfaced with the rise of indigenous politics in the 1990s<sup>10</sup> and of social movements opposing global capitalism in the early 2000s that swept Evo Morales to power.<sup>11</sup>

The fluid nature of indigenous identity in Bolivia has been especially notable in the two most recent national censuses. While for the 2001 census 62% of the population (over 15 years of age) self-identified as ‘indigenous’,<sup>12</sup> in 2012 only 48% self-identified as such. For the case of 2001, most of those registered were urban dwellers—20% not speaking an indigenous language—and no option was included for identifying oneself as *mestizo*.<sup>13</sup> Similar urban predominance in registration probably applied for 2012, when again—controversially—no *mestizo* option was included. Andrew Canessa suggests the high numbers self-identifying as indigenous in 2001 was not really about an intimate attachment to the land or genealogical descent from pre-conquest populations, but more to do with claims to difference, rights, and possibly “moral authority in the face of encroaching globalisation”.<sup>14</sup> In 2012, with six years of an indigenous president, a pro-indigenous government, and a relatively buoyant economy (aided by the nationalisation of the country’s rich natural gas reserves) —alongside cynicism about indigenous privileges—it would seem that fewer people felt the need to assert indigeneity. This suggests a tension between a kind of fluctuating urban indigeneity, often linked to rights and perceptions of exclusion, and a more rural indigeneity which may include the maintenance of close connections with the land, indigenous languages and distinctive cultural traditions. This distinction is played out in some of the *originario* music videos I helped Gregorio Mamani produce. Two of these featured music, dance and festive dress associated with rural feasts from his region of origin, where video of the artists was interspersed with footage from actual feasts: respectively Carnival (February/March) and *tinku* fighting from the Feast of the Holy Cross (May). These kinds of productions of rural music are referred to by vendors as *cultura* (‘culture’) and aim to represent indigenous rural traditions and practices. However, a more fluctuating indigeneity was evident in the case of *huayño*: popular Spanish or Quechua language dance songs, accompanied by the charango and Spanish guitar, associated with the *cholo* (or *mestizo*) town dwellers of the Northern Potosí region of Bolivia.<sup>15</sup> It was performing *huayño* that Gregorio first made a name for himself as an artist, but compared to most other leading exponents of the genre he was exceptional in being brought up in a rural peasant community. This led certain artists to refer to him pejoratively as *indio* (‘Indian’), in turn distancing

themselves from indigenous heritage as connected with shame. However, with the 2006 presidency of Evo Morales, many of these same *huayño* artists began to embrace *originario* identity and to group themselves into organizations such as the ‘Cultural Association of Indigenous and Originario Artists of Bolivia’ (ASCARIOBOL)—partly in opposition to more cosmopolitan middle class musicians who tour internationally. Thus, in certain respects the discourse of indigeneity acquired political capital —whilst still potentially marginalising rural indigenous people<sup>16</sup>—and certain genres, such as *huayño*, came to be presented and perceived as more indigenous.

### **Indigenous Media Making: Aesthetics and Audiences**

Although the indigenous music video (VCD) has attracted relatively little critical attention to date, a useful counterpoint to its study is provided by the rich vein of scholarship on indigenous film and video making dating back to the 1970s. This latter work has stressed the political agency and empowerment offered to indigenous people by producing their own media, as a form of ‘cultural activism’<sup>17</sup> and as a means of ‘decolonizing the mind’, and of countering discrimination and misrepresentation.<sup>18</sup> It has also, for the most part, focused on projects facilitated or funded by outsiders, such as anthropologists and NGOs, that provide equipment, training and technical support. Often evident in such anthropologically-motivated work has been the expectation that distinctive aesthetics or styles of media production will result when indigenous people have access to the means to create their own films or videos. Allied to this is sometimes a concern to avoid imposing standardized Euro-American media practices and techniques. Accordingly, levels technical training may be intentionally limited. For example, in the case of the Amazonian Kayapo (who have been involved in videomaking since 1985), Terence Turner observes that he and his collaborators “sought to limit training both in camera work and editing to the essential minimum to allow the maximum room for Kayapo camerapersons to develop their own culturally and individually specific styles.”<sup>19</sup> For some commentators, such as James Weiner,<sup>20</sup> the acquisition of even basic filming and editing skills inevitably entails entry into the language, culture and values of ‘Western’ audiovisual media. Media anthropologists, by contrast, tend to stress how indigenous people adapt media technologies to their own social-cultural environments and political exigencies.<sup>21</sup> For example, Pace and Shepard have identified some of the aesthetic choices made by Kayapo videographers and editors.<sup>22</sup> Lines of dancers are filmed using long pan medium distance shots that feature all

participants, whereas panoramic shots (in which body ornaments would become indistinct) or close-ups (that ‘amputate’ body parts or show body ornaments out of context) are largely avoided. Complete sequences (which outsiders might find long and repetitive) are preferred over synopsis, and narration, commentary and subtitles are rarely employed. And, in the case of a soccer game video, as much footage is dedicated to the audience as to the game itself; a filming style—Pace and Shepherd suggest—that pulls the viewer into the scene as a participant, rather than remaining an outsider observing an exotic spectacle.

These characteristics are perhaps hardly surprising for a community-based video, whose primary audience is the community itself and where it is likely to be important that each participant - and his/her body ornaments - is included and easily recognizable. Similarly, commentary and subtitles may be deemed unnecessary when, as in home movies elsewhere, the subject matter and participants are already familiar to most viewers. Indeed, we might even characterize this kind of video as ‘participatory style media’ to distinguish it from ‘presentational style media’ – adapting Thomas Turino’s useful distinction between participatory and presentational styles of music performance.<sup>23</sup> This helps us appreciate how—in the kind of Kayapo video described above—greater priority is afforded to social inclusion and group participation than to technical competency and cultural mediation for outside audiences. When Turner observes that the Kayapo are just as happy to watch an unedited ‘home movie’ as one of the beautifully edited works being created by certain Kayapo video makers,<sup>24</sup> it should be remembered that we all enjoy watching inexpertly produced home movies or other forms of low tech’ media when we, our family, or friends are featured as participants; in short, when we experience a sense of close connection or empathy with the subject matter. However, we quickly lose interest if such media is not directly related or relevant to us, or if its content is not captivating for other reasons (such as extraordinary feats or phenomena). In short, many aspects of Kayapo video aesthetics discussed above might be attributed to a participatory media style, rather than indigeneity per-se.<sup>25</sup> However, much indigenous video is more outwardly orientated and presentational in approach, screened not only for home communities but also at international film festivals. Indeed, according to Juan Salazar, indigenous media “occupies an intermediate and hybrid space between global mass media and local interpersonal uses of communication technologies.”<sup>26</sup>

Certain indigenous video makers, including member of Bolivia's CEFREC-CAIB, incorporate a range of stock codes from Hollywood and dominant industry techniques and formats. Yet, rather than seeing this adoption of dominant film language as running counter to Bolivia's decolonization project (as presumably Weiner would have it),<sup>27</sup> Freya Schiwy interprets this as *Indianizing Film* (the title of her book).<sup>28</sup> Here, she invokes the revolutionary Aymara politician Felipe Quispe, who called upon indigenous Andeans to reject the discourse of *mestizaje* —i.e. the project of the 1952 national revolution, to unify Bolivians as mixed race citizens—and instead to “indianise the white man.”<sup>29</sup> This, she observes, reflects “a long Andean tradition of integrating what is foreign into traditional cultural and economic forms”<sup>30</sup>—what Brooke Larson has called “adaptive vitality.”<sup>31</sup> This leads us to wonder whether, beyond subject matter, it might be possible to recognize aesthetically distinctive aspects of Andean indigenous film and video. Are there culturally characteristic ways of seeing or hearing? This is hazardous territory, where it would be easy to fall into generalization and essentialisms, as highlighted by Steven Leuthold for the case of Native American documentary film.<sup>32</sup> While identifying the aesthetic importance of the themes of nature and religion/spirituality in such film, he is careful to stress the dangers of generalizing an indigenous aesthetic sensibility:

There is no one set of formal characteristics that comprises an Indian way of seeing. The problem with searching for such a key to unlock the secrets of a group's outlook is that it tends to lead to a minimization of the variation within the group. .... There is not enough formal consistency in visual style or narrative structures to clearly define a single indigenous documentary genre based on formal considerations alone.<sup>33</sup>

Might it thus be more productive to focus, with an ethnographic eye, on the ways that—in given contexts of such media making—the diverse actors creatively and pragmatically explore the affordances of the technology?

### **Indigenous video projects and *originario* music videos**

Many notable contrasts are evident when comparing the indigenous video projects discussed above and *originario* music videos. These include, for example, aesthetics, cultural value, economics, circulation, politics, representation and technical competencies. Firstly, most indigenous video projects are community-based and facilitated by outsiders, whereas music video tends to be commercially motivated and produced by entrepreneurial individuals. Similarly, whereas community-based video projects usually actively downplay individual

authorship, ‘star’ filmmakers, and financial motivation,<sup>34</sup> a primary function of the music video genre (inherited from its Anglo-American ancestry) is precisely to showcase and promote the ‘star’.<sup>35</sup> Indeed, Gregorio Mamani explicitly presented his motivation for creating the music videos on which we worked together as a means to increase his ‘fame’. Having recently resigned from a position in the Culture Department of the Prefecture, he was concerned to return himself to the public eye as an ‘artist’, to rebuild his audience, and to attract bookings for live performances. In short, the associations of music video with individualism and commercial motivations fit uneasily with stereotypical constructions of indigenous people.

Secondly, a striking disparity is evident in the relative cultural value attached to these genres and their respective modes and levels of circulation. On the one hand, productions from indigenous video projects are mainly distributed outside commercial venues<sup>36</sup> and often treated as socially or aesthetically valuable, as well as politically significant—in terms of indigenous rights. They tend to be screened either for local communities or in international settings, such as film festivals, where the context – often involving an introduction by the filmmaker(s) – implicitly constructs such productions as works of ‘art’. Audiences for these international screenings tend to be small and to be characterized by political commitment and discriminating tastes. This already limited circulation is sometimes further reduced by certain filmmakers’ concern to restrict distribution in order to prevent media ‘piracy’.<sup>37</sup> On the other hand, Bolivian *originario* music videos are often widely circulated, fall into the category of entertainment, and suffer double disdain. The popular genres they feature, such as *huayño*, are commonly dismissed by the Bolivian middle classes as ‘trash’ (*basura*), whilst music video – as a medium – is often denied artistic value, an inheritance from its Anglo-American roots.<sup>38</sup> In striking contrast with the limited circulation of much indigenous film, *originario* music videos sometimes achieve immense popularity and massive circulation, which is often greatly amplified and extended by media piracy.<sup>39</sup> For example, the hit video of the child star *Vichito Mamani* (Gregorio’s son David)—filmed when he was around eight years old — gained a vast audience, through piracy, not only throughout Bolivia but also in Peru and Argentina. Despite Gregorio’s outspoken opposition to ‘piracy’, this enabled the family to make an international tour through which the necessary capital was raised to set up a home studio – albeit a very modest one with cheap second-hand equipment. What I wish to stress here is the ubiquity and potency of *originario* music videos, as popular, widely circulating and influential representations and constructions of



indigeneity. Indeed, the agency and visibility such videos afford to indigenous people might be seen as implicitly political. This raises key questions concerning the video makers production processes, priorities and values.

Finally, it is important to consider technical and aesthetic differences between indigenous video and *originario* music videos. As already noted, indigenous video projects are often facilitated by outsiders, who typically provide equipment and varying levels of technical support and/or training. However unintentional, it is almost inevitable that the mode of facilitation will shape indigenous video making values and priorities in particular ways. For example, I have suggested that styles of camerawork, editing, and representation in Kayapo videos may, in part, reflect the conflict avoidance strategies employed by Turner and his team. Even if the resulting styles or aesthetics are not immediately accessible to outside or international audiences, the technical quality of such videos – in my experience at least – is generally high, suggesting expert support or training. However, the technical quality of *originario* music video and the competency of producers appear considerably less consistent, especially when production has taken place in a low budget home studio, such as that of Gregorio Mamani. But do limitations in technical resources and knowledge inevitably mean poor quality productions, or should we approach such videos—as has Tony Langlois for locally-produced Moroccan music videos—in terms of a “‘low-tech’ aesthetic”<sup>40</sup>

### **Amateurs, Professionals and Imperfect Media**

The advent of digital technology means that low cost domestic audio and video recording and editing equipment is now available that can approach—and sometimes surpass—the media quality of professional equipment of the 1980s. This has led to the emergence of countless digital home studios around the world,<sup>41</sup> which are utilized with varying levels of technical competency. The professional quality of work accomplished in some home-based studios makes a ‘professional’ versus ‘home/amateur’ studio binary problematic.<sup>42</sup> However, might certain generalized contrasts in working practices be identified between established professional studios and inexpensive digital home studios? In his discussion of (primarily audio) home studios in the Solomon Islands, Denis Crowdy muses on this question.<sup>43</sup> Also, relevantly for this chapter, he relates issues of “access” to technology to “quality standards, and by association, aesthetics.” He asks:

Is it not the case that professionals produce consistent quality through skills and knowledge garnered through experience and criticism from peers? Then again, institutions and associations also relatively easily bind professionals, and the overall aura of professionalism is one of conservatism. One might argue that as production and recording are increasingly creative processes, radical and experimental expressions are more likely to be found in the broader base offered by widening access to the means of production.<sup>44</sup>

This raises interesting questions regarding what access to digital technology might mean as regards creative practice. In a study of discourses relating to amateur film and video making, Buckingham, Pini & Willett note how popular books, manuals and magazines often highlight the sense of empowerment and innovation offered by these technologies.<sup>45</sup> The amateur video maker is presented as “a free agent, able to record, edit and exhibit what they like ... able to use technology in more creative and potentially challenging ways that might ultimately revolutionise ‘big’ media.”<sup>46</sup> However, another discursive strand critiques such talk of empowerment as ‘empty rhetoric’, arguing that “amateur video has failed, or more precisely not been allowed, to live up to its radical potential.”<sup>47</sup> It remains conservative and stuck in the ‘home mode’,<sup>48</sup> featuring family moments, some of which, for example, find their way into mainstream media as ‘video bloopers’. Buckingham, Pini & Willett conclude by arguing against any simple binary opposition between amateur and professional film/video making, noting that ‘technology is not in and of itself a force of empowerment (e.g. due to its simplicity and accessibility). They also suggest that we should not understand the ‘home mode’ as inevitably naive and conservative - either aesthetically or ideologically.<sup>49</sup> In similar vein Patricia Lange observes:

Scholars often assert that ‘amateur’ videos lack aesthetics, creativity, or knowledge of dominant entertainment standards. By lacking ‘an aesthetic’ they often mean, the right kind of aesthetic as determined by certain cultural groups or individuals. Judgements about quality are often problematic not only because they are based on Hollywood standards, but because they are based on idiosyncratic interpretations or *stereotypes* of both professional and amateur idioms.<sup>50</sup>

Evident from such discussion is that the intimacy of the ‘home mode’ can sometimes be powerfully affecting, despite—or even because of—its low tech’ aspect. For example, the film

*Tren de Sobras* (José Luis Guerín 1997) incorporates reconstructed domestic movie footage as an expressive and nostalgic device, where the imperfect technical quality is integral to its effect.<sup>51</sup> This film also responds to an aesthetic for found footage, paralleled in music where low-fi effects or resources from older technologies are sometimes employed in new recordings.<sup>52</sup> Nonetheless, the efficacy of such effects relies on familiarity with more recent and higher quality media (not always available to low income Bolivians). Access to cheaper audio-visual technology has also given rise to a host of low budget movies, partially bridging the professional-amateur divide. These often set themselves apart from—or challenge—the excesses and obsession with technical perfection of high budget cinema and build on a more spontaneous ‘fly on the wall’ or ‘reality television’ aesthetic. For example, *The Blair Witch Project* (Sánchez and Myrick 1999), which cost US\$22,000 to make, takes the form of a mock documentary, while *Monsters* (Edwards 2010), costing an estimated £15,000, was made driving around Mexico and adopts a journalistic style, using local people as actors.<sup>53</sup> The low tech’ quality and documentary style of these immensely successful and innovative films may be seen to enhance their sense of spontaneity and, perhaps, verisimilitude. Yet, in these cases imperfection appears to have been more a function of entrepreneurship and shoestring budgets, than a political statement. By contrast—and decades earlier—Cuban filmmaker/theorist Julio García Espinosa’s manifesto ‘For an Imperfect Cinema’ is explicitly political and revolutionary in its rejection of the aesthetics and technical perfection of mainstream cinema.<sup>54</sup>

These various examples suggest that applying professional/amateur distinctions or dismissing *originario* music videos for their low-tech’ production quality is often analytically unhelpful, as well as risking generalization and stereotypes. However, to ascribe a “low-tech’ aesthetic” to such videos is also perilous, as well as politically naive. As I have argued, low-tech’ media can be highly effective, aesthetically potent, and politically charged in certain contexts, but to impute a “low-tech’ aesthetic” to *originario* producers and audiences, would imply they had a high-tech’ option. As I stressed in the introduction, for many people to have access to digital technology is in itself a breakthrough. A more fruitful way forward, I suggest, is to combine close up ethnographic study of production, circulation and reception with a focus on ‘technological affordances’. This latter approach, developed by Ian Hutchby building on James Gibson’s 1979 theory of ecological perception, turns our attention to how people orientate themselves to the possibilities for action offered by particular technologies.<sup>55</sup> It also helps us

overcome social and technological determinism by highlighting both (a) opportunities for and (b) constraints on interpretation and action when people interact through, around or with particular technologies. I bring these ideas together in the concept of *creative pragmatism*, which—while arguably necessary for all media makers—is fundamental when economic resources, technology and training are limited. With these points in mind, we now turn to the *originario* music video production work of Gregorio Mamani.

### **The Home Studio of Gregorio Mamani**

Gregorio's home studio consisted of two small rooms. One contained his two second-hand computers and a simple mixing desk and functioned as the control room; the other was a tiny audio recording studio, with egg boxes on the walls for sound absorption and a single microphone. Other parts of the family's domestic space were invaded during certain parts of the production process. For example, the tiny concrete yard (*patio*) was used for filming in the dry season and the main living room—which also served a Gregorio and Cinthia's bedroom—became a film studio, with high power lights, during the rains.<sup>56</sup> A bedroom would also be used when screen printing recorded VCD discs with Gregorio's CEMBOL logo—a strategy to combat piracy—and the printed discs laid out on a bed to dry.

Gregorio prided himself on his capacity to complete every aspect of the music video production and distribution process himself – with the one exception of the color printing of the paper cover sheets (*lamina*) for the display boxes by a commercial printer. To appreciate the work involved, and minimal resulting profits, it is worth briefly outlining the numerous aspects of this process. Firstly, based on his own lyrics and compositions or arrangements, Gregorio worked on the performance, recording and editing the music in his home studio. He used multi-tracking to record most of the parts himself, bringing in his wife or other singers for tracks featuring female voices, and the occasional additional instrumentalist for special effect. Secondly, after finalizing the music, in the form of a 10-12 track album of 3-5 minute tracks (which was usually also released as an audio cassette), he would commence filming the video. For the most part this would feature miming and dancing to the audio recording played on a portable CD player, for which dancers and other assistance would need to be found. Using one of his two cheap second-hand video camcorders, the filming would take place on location or at home, often using Chroma-Key ('green screen') which enabled him to superimpose video

images over existing footage or still photographs.<sup>57</sup> As Gregorio was frequently featured as the ‘star’, he regularly called upon assistance to work the video camera (typically from his son David or me), often providing close instructions for the shots required. Thirdly, for the editing (using Pinnacle software), Gregorio would select clips from our filming sessions and combine these with footage and photos from many other sources, including television clips and animation films, to create a sense of visual variety. This would be edited over and synchronized with the music tracks, often adding special effects, stock transitions, and screen text.

Fourthly, the finalized VCD would be copied on to CD discs, initially using two computers, but later employing a burner tower that could copy 10 discs in three minutes. Also, in order to brand the VCD discs as original productions, each disc would then be screen printed with the CEMBOL logo, a messy and labor intensive process involving several family members. Meanwhile, arrangements would be made for the color paper covers (*lamina*) for the display boxes to be printed, the artwork created by Gregorio using PowerPoint software. Finally, Gregorio and his wife would embark on a three or four day distribution expeditions to visit poorer market districts of major cities and towns where the new VCD would be sold to local vendors. They would travel in different directions, often taking overnight buses and covering huge distances. This distribution campaign would take place over a single weekend, in order to quickly saturate key regional markets for the VCD before it could be copied and circulated by media ‘pirates’.<sup>58</sup> Alongside the immense amounts of time and energy invested into each VCD production, considerable financial outlay was necessary. It is also doubtful, for example in the case of the *Zura zura* VCD, whether this economic investment was fully recouped from sales (let alone any compensation for the time and energy). As Gregorio explained to me on several occasions, paid live engagements—even though these were few and far between—were a far superior source of income than the work of VCD production. He regularly blamed this situation on the effects of media piracy, reminiscing about a former time when he was well remunerated and looked after by the Cochabamba-based label *Borda*, with whom he recorded numerous audio cassettes.

### **Production Values and Collective Happenings**

Even though Gregorio’s work was very popular and he clearly had a good feel for what his low-income rural and urban migrant audience wanted, I heard a number of critiques of

*originario* music videos from media professionals. One such perspective came from Laureano Rojas, who in addition to owning a Cochabamba-based television station and printer, was the founder and director of *Lauro y Cia*, formerly one of Bolivia's three major record labels.<sup>59</sup> However, the combined challenges of digital developments and media piracy, led *Lauro* to cease record production in around 2003.<sup>60</sup> Hardly surprisingly, given that this role has been fundamental to his career, Rojas highlighted the detrimental consequences on quality of home studio music video production undertaken without an experienced producer:

At the moment technology increases every day ... so they make their own studio in their house and so on. ... But we need someone who has the experience to say whether this is the feeling of the people or, wherever possible, to say what else might be missing. Because if this is not done things turn out very mechanical without feeling, without being a music that is felt to be true to life, true to the soul, therefore it doesn't live.<sup>61</sup>

It is notable that rather than alluding to technical aspects, Rojas focuses on the producer's role in communicating organic and emotional qualities of the music – making it come alive. As a highly experienced producer, he clearly had a strong sense about what would appeal to a mass and largely middle class audience. Indeed, his vast catalogue of *Lauro* recordings since the 1960s—an immensely successful entrepreneurial venture—was fundamental to the construction of a national folklore. In this process of adapting and adding value to oft-disdained indigenous regional expressions, Rojas needed to ensure that the resulting sounds (and, when video appeared, images) appealed to the tastes of his audience and reflected professional production values. In his view, such production values were absent from many *originario* music videos, as he explained to me:

The images that they are putting out ... are in effect natural. In the natural position of each artist or each group which appears. ... This is not something well prepared, well written, for which scripts have been made, for which the necessary story-lines about what is to appear when have been made. ... It is not a complete work. It is a kind of collective happening, as most filming simply takes place in the moment, it is done simply to demonstrate what the customs are at particular times.<sup>62</sup>

Rojas' criticism of the "natural" aspect of the performers in *originario* music videos suggests a requirement for some kind of artifice or act, juxtaposing interestingly with his

previous insistence on the need for a producer to ensure authenticity; that the production is “true to life, true to the soul”. Here he seems to be highlighting the need for presentational skills, where musicians actively perform to the camera, rather than ignoring its presence as if taking a ‘fly on the wall’ approach to filming. Similarly, Gregorio had strong opinions about the need for musicians to develop the ability to perform to camera, and was critical of those artists who appeared stilted, visibly uncomfortable, or who just ignored the camera. In the light of Rojas’ comments, it should be stressed that music video, as a genre, is not usually structured according to a clearly definable story line or narrative. Instead, the sense of narrative or flow is provided by the music and visual discontinuities, such as sudden changes in clothing, and disjunctive edits are seen to enrich the visual diversity rather than threaten the believability of the narrative – as would be the case with a feature film.<sup>63</sup> Nonetheless, the presence of some form of script, to help the planning of particular shots during the production process, would seem beneficial in certain contexts (as I will discuss in more detail below).

It is to Rojas’ characterization of location filming for *originario* music videos as ‘a kind of collective happening’ to which I now wish to turn. I participated in a considerable number of filming expeditions in the roles of chauffeur, part-time cameraman, general helper, and occasional ‘exotic’ dancer. The provision of transport, using the 4x4 vehicle I acquired for the year, was especially appreciated by Gregorio as it provided flexibility and saved him paying for taxis. These excursions involved travelling to visually interesting locations, usually in the countryside (or a park), and filming video sequences of dancing and mimed singing to the audio recordings of the songs for the video, played back on a portable CD player. A frequent challenge for Gregorio prior to such expeditions was finding enthusiastic and ‘attractive’ girls who could dance well, owned an array of suitably colorful *pollera* skirts and tops, and who were prepared to spend a day location filming for a low fee. I will focus here on a day of location filming undertaken on Tuesday January 15, 2008, at the height of the rainy season, an expedition which, like almost every other, was surrounded by a series of complications. While some of these could be attributed to a lack of planning and informal attitudes, many also reflected factors beyond our control and the challenges of working to a minimal budget with cheap equipment. It should also be stressed that the decision to undertake this trip at all reflected a desire to maintain production standards. We had filmed the video for these songs several months earlier at Chataquila (30km

from Sucre), but Gregorio's dissatisfaction with the girls' infrequent smiles, lack of expression and poor dancing led him to discard most of this footage.

For our trip on January 15, he worked with a different group of girls and at his house on the evening prior to filming they rehearsed the dance steps and discussed what they would wear. Gregorio had planned to film very nearby at *Siete Cascadas* (Seven Waterfalls), but as it rained heavily overnight, making the dirt track road muddy and impassable, he decided to relocate to the suspension bridge over the Pilkomayo river, a beautiful, but much more distant site on the main tarmac road between Sucre and Potosi. I arrived at Gregorio's house before 8am and following various last minute errands, including collecting the three female dancers, we got on route at around 10.30am. However, at the roadblock near the village of Yotala (14 km from Sucre), I was required to return to the city to purchase a new tax disc. Gregorio decided to get started with filming and have an early lunch there while I was gone. When I returned, just over an hour later, the group had eaten lunch and consumed several jugs of *chicha* (maize beer). Gregorio explained to me that they had abandoned filming as the girls' dancing was too self-conscious and stilted. Now fuelled with *chicha*, and supplied with two further bottles and one of *Singani* (grape spirit) for the journey, the party was now very merry. We continued the journey to the Pilcomayo suspension bridge, singing along to the songs for the video, as they boomed out from the vehicle's CD player.

Arriving at the bridge at 1.15pm, we set up cameras. Gregorio arranged that his sixteen year old son (David) would film the dancers from nearby on the bridge while, with a different camera, I made a long shot, zooming out from the dancers to reveal their location on this spectacular bridge over the Pilcomayo river. However, after a few short sequences, filming had to be abandoned due to torrential rain. This was so heavy that it dislodged several boulders and washed open deep gullies into the narrow and precipitous dirt track access road to the bridge, making the cliff-edge drive back to the main road very hazardous (the rest of the party choosing to walk while I drove alone). As we set off along the main road back to Sucre, dejected silence overcame us at having to abandon filming. But fifteen minutes later the sun came out and Gregorio suggested we stop to film beside the road. Following these various ups and downs, the three female dancers were now very relaxed and merry as they performed to camera. In particular, Clementina Jancko—an artist in her own right who had also made her own music video—was full of imaginative suggestions for shots, in turn fuelling Gregorio's enthusiasm and



creativity. These spontaneous ideas included exploiting various features of the landscape, placing dancers in the background of various shots, and dragging me in (for the first time) for comic effect, as an exotic and incongruous dancer. We stopped several more times to film on the journey, exploiting the beauty of the early evening light, and arriving back in Sucre at nightfall with a considerable amount of footage, much of which found its way onto the final music video. Everybody was in high spirits and we rounded off the day by going out to celebrate with a few more drinks. However, I should stress that this was the only occasion – among my many location filming expeditions with Gregorio – that alcohol featured.<sup>64</sup> The day was most certainly a ‘collective happening’ where filming took place ‘in the moment’, but does this necessarily mean that the quality or value were somehow diminished, or that the results were not ‘true to life’?

One of the songs for which much of the video was shot during this filming expedition was *Elenita* (‘Helen’).<sup>65</sup> This was a classic audio recording from the late 1980s that Gregorio decided to re-release as a music video on his compilation *Exitos de ayer y hoy*, the second and least explicitly indigenous VCD on which we worked together. The video opens with shots taken on a track beside the Sucre-Potosí road, zooming away from the dancers to highlight the landscape – but cut away just before the road comes into view. It then features the improvised coordination of the three girls dancing in matching burgundy skirts and tops, before a star transition – presenting Gregorio as the ‘charango idol’ (in screen text) - leads into the first verse, located in the patio of Gregorio’s house, where he and Sandra are superimposed - using green screen - in front of a group of revellers (which includes Gregorio). Screen text in Quechua presents Sandra as ‘my lover Elenita’ and with the end of the verse a picture frame transition transports us back to the track beside the Sucre-Potosí road for the instrumental. A further picture transition leads to Clementina dancing alone on the road, before a love heart transition takes us to dancers in a maize field (from another filming expedition). For the second verse (in Spanish) we return to the track beside the Sucre-Potosí road, where - with partial miming of the words from Gregorio - the camera focuses on the dancers heads while - to general amusement - Clementina cavorts with ‘Chinito’ (Juan Medina), pushing him to the ground. A transition, showing a magnet pulling a picture frame, leads into the instrumental and more partially-coordinated dancing and a further transition featuring a North American-style mail box. The third verse is introduced by a heart shaped transition and Gregorio and Sandra are shown using a nostalgia-invoking black and white effect – the screen text ‘my lover Elenita’ appearing once

again. For the final instrumental Gregorio and Sandra are shown getting up from a park bench (filmed in Sucre) and walking off hand in hand, before getting into a taxi together. The video imagery acts out a romance between Gregorio and Sandra (as Elenita), albeit highly incongruously given their thirty year discrepancy in age. The words of the song are divided between two verses; the first, in the indigenous language Quechua, draws on well-known couplets from a rural dry-season songs, and the second, in Spanish, comically twists the romance though allusions to marrying the girl's sister.

|   |   |
|---|---|
| (Quechua)   | (Quechua)                                 |
| <i>Jank'a saranichu, yuraq saranichu, (Elenita)</i>   | Toasted maize? White maize? (Elenita)     |
| <i>Allinchá nuqaqa ni kasaranichu, (Elenita)</i>      | I'm fine, not getting married,            |
| <i>Kasarayman chayqa, khuyayaymanchari, (Elenita)</i> | If I were to marry, perhaps I'd be sad,   |
| <i>Agustu wayrapis apawanmanchari, (Elenita)</i>      | I might be carried off in the August wind |
| (Spanish)   | (Spanish)                                 |
| <i>Para que mi voy a casarme con otra(Elenita)</i>    | Why would I marry anyone else? (Elenita)  |
| <i>Antes puedo casar con tu hermanita (Elenita)</i>   | Before that I could marry your sister     |
| <i>Díganle tu padre, díganle tu madre (Elenita)</i>   | Tell your father, tell your mother        |
| <i>Antes puedo casarme con tu hermanita (Elenita)</i> | Before that I could marry your sister     |



*Elenita* (Gregorio Mamani)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GCYOU0QwEVY>

### **Spontaneous Filming and Spontaneous Editing**

A further critique of *originario* music video production quality, and specifically related to Gregorio's work, was voiced to me in an interview with Dario Arclénega, an experienced television producer and radio presenter. However, these comments undoubtedly relate to Gregorio's pre-2007 productions, which date from before he acquired the equipment and skills to undertake his own video editing.

But there's a little problem, people are not trained or prepared, they don't know much. All they do is film spontaneously and edit spontaneously. There are no, let's say, 'technical resources' for editing. People are not trained how to make a good quality edition. So, for example, they don't use a tripod, they don't employ

adequate lighting; they don't make use of the different angles, right? [They don't] make the shots they need to have.

Well, what they do is grab [the camera], go off to the countryside, film the singing and that's it. *Hey presto*, just like that, they put it on DVD. So there's not any workmanship in the editing of their productions which is a bit more "professional" - if it's worth saying in quotation marks.<sup>66</sup>

Areclénega's comments raise important and pertinent questions about training, production values and conventions and are interesting in the light of the expedition to film at the Pilcomayo suspension bridge. We certainly 'grabbed' the cameras and went off to the countryside to film the singing, as he describes. As many of the plans fell through, there was also a great deal of spontaneity about the day. However, Gregorio was particularly concerned to avoid shaky video footage and usually instructed anyone filming for him to use the tripod. (I was an exception as I found it difficult to track movements effectively using a tripod and much preferred hand-held filming).<sup>67</sup> Similarly, the selection of particular camera angles is also very much to do with convention. Gregorio often had strong ideas about this, particularly when it came to, for example, over-the-shoulder shots when performing to a large crowd (serving to highlight his star status), zooming out, shots from below, or moving between close-ups of the singer (*'master'*) and group dance sections within a song. In the light of Areclénega's comment about failing to get 'the shots they need to have', I was sometimes surprised by the systematic nature of Gregorio's working practices. Prior to setting out for location filming he often noted down the shots he needed on a piece of paper. For example, the below selection (from a much longer list) was prepared for one of our filming expeditions for the third music video on which we worked together, entitled *30,000 Chanchos* ('30,000 Pigs'), which was more explicitly indigenous in character – featuring the music associated with *tinku* fighting.

Image = fights with stones

Image = Head [covered in] pure blood

Image = man on the ground spews pure blood

Image = Gregorio kicks Chino in the behind, and Chino falls in the river

Image = dress like llamas

Image = when fighting between brothers, Chabela takes scissors and cuts off clothing

The first three images from this list appear in track 4, the song *A La Mar* ('To the Sea'),<sup>68</sup> which with comic brutality warns vendors and buyers about the fatal consequences of pirating Gregorio's music videos. The message is very clear: as a 'noble savage' he will reap justice with his own hands.<sup>69</sup> The video highlights Gregorio's *originario* identity and background as a formidable Macha warrior participating in the ritual fighting (*tinku*) of the harvest-time Feast of the Holy Cross (May) in the town of Macha.<sup>70</sup> It intersperses footage of actual *tinku* fighting, filmed by Gregorio during the feast in Macha, with specially staged sequences from location filming. In the final sequence of the video, most of which I filmed, we see:

- (1) Gregorio throwing a large stone directly at the camera (3m30s). This evokes the stone fighting which quite often results in fatalities during the Macha *tinku*;
  - (2) the vanquished opponent laying on the ground — his face splattered with blood (3m34s);
  - (3) a close up of a globule of blood on the ground, as if spewed by the defeated opponent (3m43s).
- (Bulls' blood was collected from a slaughter house for this scene, transported in a plastic bag).



*A La Mar* (Gregorio Mamani) [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TpcgAhUt1\\_U](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TpcgAhUt1_U)

This same systematic approach was also applied by Gregorio to his video editing. In his notebook he jotted down a list of the various transitions that he had researched and wished to use for a particular production. On another page, he recorded various 'video effects' with which he wished to experiment, noting down the name and the way he planned to use the particular effect. For example, to create 'a dream sequence' he jotted down: 'RTFX Vol 1 - Radiance of a dream = brighten an image and for brilliance.'

### **Knowledge and Learning: Technological Competency and Consistency**

As regards training, Gregorio was entirely self-taught. Nonetheless, having worked as a recording artist since the late 1980s he held strong ideas about audio production values, evidently picked up from the producer with whom he had worked very closely. I was also impressed with his competence in multi-track audio recording techniques and editing. For his pre-2007 videos he sometimes undertook some of the filming himself, but always employed a 'professional' to edit the video for him. Nonetheless, it is clear that he carefully oversaw the editing process, directing the creative decisions of the video editor to a considerable degree, but also – though

viewing the footage - realizing how to improve his own camera technique. The first music video on which we worked together, *Zura zura* featuring rural Carnival music,<sup>71</sup> was also the first for which Gregorio independently undertook the video editing. He encountered many technical problems during the editing process, often calling upon his fifteen year old son, David, for advice. Although, David had not received any formal training either, like many other young people, he approached using computers fearlessly and intuitively, and was able to help solve many problems. As Gregorio's knowledge, competency and confidence grew he became less reliant on David and more adventurous in exploring the opportunities afforded by the technology. By the third and final video on which we worked together, Gregorio was much more in command of the editing process; he was able to work much faster and was rarely detained by technical snags. Indeed, the difference in technical quality between this and his first video is striking.

Gregorio's gradual mastery and fascination with particular aspects of the technology can be charted through the three main music video productions in which I participated. A key technical innovation for the first video was the introduction of chroma key (so called 'green screen') — an effect which involves superimposing video images over other video or still shots— which I had not previously seen used in Bolivian *originario* music videos. This innovation enabled him to reduce the number of location filming expeditions and to complete much of the filming at home in front of a large blue sheet-like screen.<sup>72</sup> However, chroma key video editing often created problems with colour bleeds (for example when the performer wore white hat) that took considerable efforts to overcome. For the second video, Gregorio became fascinated by the stock transitions provided by the Pinnacle video editing software. Many readers might find such transitions kitsch and incongruous, where North American imagery—such as a post-box or 'Happy Christmas' greeting card—flash across the screen, but Gregorio's audience clearly found them novel and quirky. However, the stock transitions, which had featured so prominently in the second video, were entirely absent from his third. Here Gregorio introduced a range of special effects to highlight action, for example speeding up sequences for comic effect or introducing curious voice distortion effects over the song. He was also commissioned to produce videos for other artists, but it is notable how lacking in imagination and humorous touches such work sometimes appears compared to his own productions. How much, we might wonder, was this because he was less invested in the projects of other artists and how much

because the medium provided fewer challenges and novelties for him, leading him to become more conventional? This takes us back to Crowdy's query as to whether to expect, on the one hand, technical consistency but greater conservatism from professional studios, but on the other, more radical and experimental approaches, with less technical consistency, from home studios.<sup>73</sup> For his own productions, Gregorio sometimes invested huge amounts of time, creative energy and technical precision into certain scenes, but in others made minimal effort to catch the imagination or correct technical faults, such as poor lip synching. His videos seem to lurch unpredictably between lacklustre conservatism and radical experimentation, bursting with—sometimes outrageous—humor. This inconsistent technical quality highlights Gregorio's idiosyncratic approach and the difficulty of generalizing about his productions. It also makes it difficult to rebuff accusations about a 'lack of professionalism' - if defined in terms of consistency in quality.<sup>74</sup>

Despite such inconsistency, compared to many other Bolivian *originario* music videos, Gregorio's VCDs are often remarkable for their energy, humor, and sense of life. Indeed, we often discussed the dull, repetitive and conventional quality of many *originario* music videos. In this context, it is notable that the vast majority of such work is filmed and produced by urban middle-class *mestizo* professionals. Such producers—whose social group would be unlikely to purchase or consume these videos—usually approach *originario* people and their culture with a complex mixture of romanticism, paternalism, protectiveness, respect and disdain. In turn, their video editing tends to stress indigenous authenticity, with any hints of modernity carefully erased; with indigenous people implicitly contained within the permitted spaces and marginalised social positions constructed for them – what Silvia Rivera, and later Charles Hale, have called the *indio permitido* or 'authorized indian'.<sup>75</sup> As a music entrepreneur from a rural *originario* background, Gregorio was in many respects exceptional and a pioneer.<sup>76</sup> His videos often confronted the image of the *indio permitido*, serving instead as a platform for self-promotion, to publically play out personal quarrels, and to present himself as a revolutionary leader fighting against injustice. His productions of *originario* music often juxtapose urban and rural images, or incorporate aspects of modernity (for example, when—to great comic effect—he appears with long hair and sunglasses parodying a Euro-American rock star). For the *mestizo* producers to whom I spoke, such juxtapositions—or, for example, an indigenous person wearing jeans—were seen as entirely unacceptable. This highlights Gregorio's insider *originario*

perspective with its shared cultural references, which stress entertainment and contemporary indigenous experience, where tradition and modernity jostle on a daily basis. Even if outsiders – such as Bolivian middle-class urban *mestizos* – find it hard to look beyond the technical deficiencies of Gregorio’s productions, they were undoubtedly popular among the local *originario* audience for whom they were intended. For example, according to Gregorio, the third and final music video on which we worked together (*30,000 Chanchos* - ‘30,000 Pigs’) had sold around 6,000 copies by the time I returned to the UK, around six weeks after its release. This number is highly impressive when we consider that, according to other larger-scale producers, *originario* music videos rarely sell over 1,000 copies.

### **Conclusions: Creative Pragmatism**

My intention in this chapter has not been to defend Gregorio Mamani’s *originario* music videos from the charges of lacking ‘professional’ production quality, voiced by Bolivian media professionals. Gregorio was only too aware of the technical limitations of his productions, and had HD and other technical resources or training been available to him he would surely have been the first to exploit them. Rather my aim has been to contextualize his work and examine how it relates (a) to the constraints within which he worked and (b) to his *originario* identity and background. Clearly, any artist, musician or producer faces constraints or challenges which may, on the one hand, be seen to limit the quality or potential of the work and, on the other, to focus and motivate creativity and innovation, sometimes in the form of solutions or alternatives. I want to characterize this latter process as *creative pragmatism*. Let us briefly examine some of the key challenges he faced as an *originario* musician-producer and their implications for quality. His first and most obvious challenge was economic, where low-income necessitated relying on cheap and unreliable, second-hand equipment and essentially working without a production budget. Even paying equivalent to a few pounds for a taxi to travel to the countryside for a location shoot, or providing a modest meal and remuneration for participating dancers, was a major consideration. Also, the need to reduce the price of his VCD productions to compete with ‘pirate’ prices meant that profits were usually extremely meagre,<sup>77</sup> making it impossible to invest in better quality equipment or other aspects of production.

Secondly, technical knowledge of video editing represented a major challenge, leading Gregorio initially to rely on the support of his fifteen year old son. Nonetheless, through my

eleven months of research I witnessed his gradual, but very significant, increase in technical knowledge and competency; a largely independent process of trial and error, alongside a strikingly systematic outlook and passion for experimentation. A third challenge was personnel; finding competent collaborators to help with audio recording and filming, and to sing and appear in the video. Gregorio's limited economic means to provide adequate wages or forms of reciprocity, often led him to complete the vast majority of production tasks alone – such as multi-tracking all the instrumental parts himself.<sup>78</sup> A final challenge was temporal; managing multiple projects simultaneously, and ensuring they were completed in time for specific seasonal release dates. For example, his Carnival music video needed to appear around one month before the feast of Carnival and could only enjoy a very short sales window. Thus, although Gregorio could afford to dedicate more time on his productions than may often be the case for larger scale commercial studios, he was nonetheless subject to significant temporal constraints in order to market his productions and recoup some investment. This, in turn, meant that that he sometimes cut corners and that production quality suffered.

As this case study highlights, it is necessary to stress that technologies are adapted to specific social, cultural, economic and political contexts of production and reception. Within these contexts, and their diverse constraints and challenges, different types of responses and solutions are likely to surface—what I have called *creative pragmatism*—and in turn to give rise to particular aesthetic priorities or even vocabularies. Thus, rather than searching for some kind of 'indigenous' way of seeing or hearing, and thereby falling into generalizations and essentialisms, I suggest that we explore the frictions, interactions, priorities and creative pragmatics that surround these kinds of engagements with technology and its particular affordances. Such approaches may not reveal the 'pure' indigenous aesthetic 'essences' that certain outsiders might desire. However, they are likely to tell us things about indigenous experience today and to give insights into how influential constructions of indigenous people are being produced and consumed by indigenous people themselves.

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<sup>1</sup> Gillette Hall and Harry Patrinos, *Indigenous Peoples, Poverty, and Development*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012).

<sup>2</sup> Although ‘Internet café’ or ‘cybercafé’ is the common term, these kinds of Internet access points do not usually serve food and drink. They consist of banks of computers which customers rent at an hourly rate.

<sup>3</sup> I use the highly unsatisfactory terms ‘global north’ and ‘global south’ with considerable reluctance. See Jean-Philippe Thérien, "Beyond the North-South Divide: The Two Tales of World Poverty," *Third World Quarterly* 20, no. 4 (1999). Nonetheless, compared to similarly problematic terms, such as ‘developed/emerging economies’, the geographical aspect of these terms has been relevant to the circulation of VCD technology.

<sup>4</sup> This has been increasingly replaced by machines which can also play DVD, MP4, MP3 and other formats.

<sup>5</sup> Elsewhere I discuss the shift from ‘analogue’ audio cassette to ‘digital’ VCD among low-income rural and urban indigenous people in Bolivia, bypassing the digital audio CD which was largely the preserve of the middle classes. Henry Stobart, "Rampant Reproduction and Digital Democracy: Shifting Landscapes of Music Production and 'Piracy' in Bolivia," *Ethnomusicology Forum* 19, no. 1 (2010).

<sup>6</sup> Shujen Wang, *Framing Piracy: Globalization and Film Distribution in Greater China* (Lanham, ML: Rowman and Littlefield, 2003); Stobart, "Rampant Reproduction and Digital Democracy: Shifting Landscapes of Music Production and 'Piracy' in Bolivia."; Joe Karaganis, *Media Piracy in Emerging Economies* (New York: Social Science Research Council, 2011).

<sup>7</sup> Pamela Wilson and Michelle Stewart, "Indigeneity and Indigenous Media on the Global Stage," in *Global Indigenous Media: Cultures, Poetics and Politics*, ed. Pamela Wilson and Michelle Stewart (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2008).

<sup>8</sup> Henry Stobart, *Music and the Poetics of Production in the Bolivian Andes* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2006).

<sup>9</sup> Tristan Platt, *Estado Boliviano Y Ayllu Andino: Tierra Y Tributo En El Norte De Potosí* (Lima, Peru: Instituto de Estudios Peruanos, 1982); Brooke Larson, *Trials of Nation Making: Liberalism, Race, and Ethnicity in the Andes, 1810-1910* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 40-41.

<sup>10</sup> Jeff Himpele, *Circuits of Culture: Media, Politics and Indigenous Identity in the Andes* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 2008).

<sup>11</sup> John Crabtree and Laurence Whitehead, eds., *Unresolved Tensions: Bolivia Past and Present* (Pittsburgh, PA: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2008).

<sup>12</sup> UMPA) INE (Instituto Nacional de Estadísticas de Bolivia, "Bolivia: Características Sociodemográficas De La Población," (La Paz: INE, 2003), 157.

<sup>13</sup> Carlos Toranzo Roca, "Let the Mestizos Stand up and Be Counted," in *Unresolved Tensions: Bolivia Past and Present*, ed. J. Crabtree and L. Whitehead (Pittsburgh, PA: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2008).

<sup>14</sup> Andrew Canessa, "Who Is Indigenous? Self-Identification, Indigeneity, and Claims to Justice in Contemporary Bolivia," *Urban Anthropology and Studies of Cultural Systems and World Economic Development* 36, no. 3 (2007).

<sup>15</sup> Nonetheless, most professional *huayño* artists make their homes in the poorer migrant neighbourhoods of cities such as Cochabamba, Sucre and Potosí.

<sup>16</sup> Andrew Canessa, "Todos somos indígenas: Towards a New Language of National Political Identity," *Bulletin of Latin American Research* 25, no. 2 (2006), 260.

<sup>17</sup> Faye Ginsburg, Lila Abu-Lughod, and Brian Larkin, "Introduction," in *Media Worlds: Anthropology on New Terrain* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2002).

<sup>18</sup> Freya Schiwy, "Decolonizing the Frame: Indigenous Video in the Andes," *Framework* 44, no. 1 (2003): 117.

<sup>19</sup> Terence Turner, "Representation, Politics, and Cultural Imagination in Indigenous Video: General Points and Kayapó Examples," in *Media Worlds: Anthropology on New Terrain*, ed. Faye Ginsburg, Lila Abu-Lughod, and Brian Larkin (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2002), 79.

<sup>20</sup> James Weiner, "Televisualist Anthropology: Representation, Aesthetics, Politics," *Current Anthropology* 38, no. 2 (1997): 205.

<sup>21</sup> Freya Schiwy, *Indianizing Film: Decolonization, the Andes, and the Question of Technology* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2009). This is suggestive of Ali Jihad Racy's distinction between 'ideosyncratic' and 'adaptational' forms of transmission for the case of musical instrument technologies. Ali Jihad Racy, "A Dialectical Perspective on Musical Instruments: The East-Mediterranean Mijwiz," *Ethnomusicology* 38, no. 1 (1994). Weiner's position resembles Racy's 'ideosyncratic explanation', where the instrument is adopted as a

cultural ‘package’; arguably exemplified by Japan’s adoption of the piano and violin, alongside their respective techniques, pedagogy, repertoire and aesthetics. For counter-examples of cross-fertilization see Judith Ann Herd, "Western Influenced ‘Classical’ Music in Japan," in *The Ashgate Research Companion to Japanese Music*, ed. A. Tokita and D. W. Hughes (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2008). By contrast, ‘adaptational explanations’ stress how musical instruments, transform “in response to different ecological and aesthetic realities” (1994:37), debatably evidenced by the way that in the Andes the European guitar, harp, recorder and saxophone have given rise to a multiplicity of distinctive regional musical expressions, meanings and aesthetics. See Stobart, *Music and the Poetics of Production in the Bolivian Andes*; Raúl R. Romero, *Debating the Past: Music, Memory, and Identity in the Andes* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001). Importantly, Racy emphasizes that these processes are “basically inseparable and intertwined” (1994:37), and reflect extremes on a continuum. However, they do help us place audio video technologies into broader historical trajectories.

<sup>22</sup> Richard Pace and Glenn Shepard, "Miss Kayapó: Filming through Mebengokre Cameras," *Anthropology News* April(2012), <http://www.anthropology-news.org/index.php/2012/04/02/through-kayapo-cameras/>; also citing Turner, "Representation, Politics, and Cultural Imagination in Indigenous Video: General Points and Kayapó Examples."

<sup>23</sup> Thomas Turino, *Music as Social Life: The Politics of Participation* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2008).

<sup>24</sup> Terence Turner, "Defiant Images: The Kayapo Appropriation of Video," *Anthropology Today* 8, no. 6 (1992): 8.

<sup>25</sup> It is not hard to imagine how, in the context of such videos, excessive focus on particular individuals - to the exclusion of others - can provoke social tensions. Similarly, while the role of

film-maker is afforded high prestige within Kayapo communities – with ambitious young men sometimes using it as a path to chieftainship – it may also provoke intense jealousies and conflict (Turner 1992:7). This was clearly a complex issue for Turner and his collaborators to negotiate; in turn, this raises questions about how conflict avoidance strategies adopted by facilitators might impact on the styles of media produced. Although the Kayapo are very media savvy in their engagements with the Brazilian state and international press (Turner 2002:84), the videos discussed above are notable for their largely internal consumption. They circulate among Kayapo communities as an expression of pride and inter-village rivalry, and require filmmakers to be acutely sensitive to local demands and criticisms.

<sup>26</sup> Juan Francisco Salazar, "Imperfect Media: The Poetics of Indigenous Media in Chile" (University of Western Sydney, 2004), 75.

<sup>27</sup> Weiner, "Televisualist Anthropology: Representation, Aesthetics, Politics."

<sup>28</sup> Schiwy, *Indianizing Film: Decolonization, the Andes, and the Question of Technology*.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, 12-13.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, 13.

<sup>31</sup> Brooke Larson, "Andean Communities, Political Cultures, and Markets: The Changing Contours of a Field," in *Ethnicity, Markets, and Migration in the Andes: At the Crossroads of History and Anthropology*, ed. B. Larson, O. Harris, and E. Tandeter (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1995), 12.

<sup>32</sup> Steven Leuthold, *Indigenous Aesthetics: Native Art, Media, and Identity* (Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 1998), 183.

<sup>33</sup> "An Indigenous Aesthetic? Two Noted Videographers: George Burdeau and Victor Masayesva," *Wicazo Sa Review* 10, no. 1 (1994): 49.

<sup>34</sup> Gabriela Zamorano Villarreal, "The Politics of Distribution: Building Audiences for Bolivian Indigenous Films," in *Recasting Commodity and Spectacle in the Indigenous Americas* (Senate House, University of London, 2012).

<sup>35</sup> Carol Vernallis, *Experiencing Music Video: Aesthetics and Cultural Context* (New York, NY: Columbia University Press, 2004), 47.

<sup>36</sup> Schiwy, *Indianizing Film: Decolonization, the Andes, and the Question of Technology*, 27.

<sup>37</sup> Zamorano Villarreal, "The Politics of Distribution: Building Audiences for Bolivian Indigenous Films."

<sup>38</sup> Roger Beebe and Jason Middleton, eds., *Medium Cool: Music Videos from Soundies to Cellphones* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2007); Diane Railton and Paul Watson, *Music Video and the Politics of Representation* (Edinburgh: University of Edinburgh Press, 2011).

<sup>39</sup> Stobart, "Rampant Reproduction and Digital Democracy: Shifting Landscapes of Music Production and 'Piracy' in Bolivia."; Henry Stobart, "'Justice with My Own Hands': The Serious Play of Piracy in Bolivian Indigenous Music Videos," in *Postcolonial Piracy: Media Distribution and Cultural Production in the Global South*, ed. L. Eckstein and A. Schwarz (London: Bloomsbury, 2014).

<sup>40</sup> Tony Langlois, "Pirates of the Mediterranean: Moroccan Music Video and Technology," *Music, Sound, and the Moving Image* 3, no. 1 (2009): 82.

<sup>41</sup> Paul Theberge, *Any Sound You Can Imagine: Making Music/Consuming Technology* (Hanover, N.H.; London: Wesleyan University Press & University Press of New England, 1997).

<sup>42</sup> Notions of amateur and professional are also highly blurred for case for music more generally.

<sup>43</sup> Denis Crowdy, "Studios at Home in the Solomon Islands," *The World of Music* 49, no. 1 (2007).

<sup>44</sup> Ibid.: 144.

<sup>45</sup> David Buckingham, Maria Pini, and Rebekah Willett, "'Take Back the Tube!': The Discursive Construction of Amateur Film and Video Making.," *Journal of Media Practice* 8, no. 2 (2007).

<sup>46</sup> Ibid.: 186.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid.: 186-88.

<sup>48</sup> Richard Chalfen, *Snapshot Versions of Life* (Bowling Green, Ohio: Bowling Green State University Popular Press, 1987).

<sup>49</sup> Buckingham, Pini, and Willett, "'Take Back the Tube!': The Discursive Construction of Amateur Film and Video Making.," 198-99.

<sup>50</sup> Patricia Lange, "Video-Mediated Nostalgia and the Aesthetics of Technical Competencies," *Visual Communication* 10, no. 1 (2011): 40.

<sup>51</sup> Éfren Cuevas Álvarez, "En Las Fronteras Del Cine Aficionado: Tren De Sombras Y El Proyecto De La Bruja De Blair," *Comunicación y Sociedad* 14, no. 2 (2001). "...tropes of amateur video making such as shaking cameras appear in professional productions, reworked as symbolic tokens of authenticity" Lange, "Video-Mediated Nostalgia and the Aesthetics of Technical Competencies," 40.

<sup>52</sup> Timothy D. Taylor, *Strange Sounds: Music, Technology & Culture* (New York; London: Routledge, 2001), 96; Crowdy, "Studios at Home in the Solomon Islands," 151.

<sup>53</sup> Will Buckingham, "'25 Low Budget Films'," *Raindance: write-produce-direct film*(2009), <http://www.raindance.co.uk/site/index.php?aid=3790>.

<sup>54</sup> Julio Garcia Espinosa, "For an Imperfect Cinema," *Jump Cut* 20(1979/2005 [1969]).

<sup>55</sup> Ian Hutchby, "Technologies, Texts and Affordances," *Sociology* 35, no. 2 (2001).

<sup>56</sup> Henry Stobart, "Constructing Community in the Digital Home Studio: Carnival, Creativity and Indigenous Music Video Production in the Bolivian Andes," *Popular Music* 30, no. 2 (2011).

<sup>57</sup> In reality, Gregorio used a blue cloth screen as a backdrop for Chroma-Key filming, rather than the 'green screen' of popular discourse.

<sup>58</sup> Stobart, "Rampant Reproduction and Digital Democracy: Shifting Landscapes of Music Production and 'Piracy' in Bolivia."

<sup>59</sup> Laureano Rojas Alcocer and unnamed authors, *35 Años De Folklore Marcando La Soberanía Patria: Historia De 29 Festivales Lauro Records* (Cochabamba, Bolivia: Talleres Gráfico Lauro & Cia, 1994).

<sup>60</sup> Stobart, "Rampant Reproduction and Digital Democracy: Shifting Landscapes of Music Production and 'Piracy' in Bolivia." However, although not under the *Lauro* label, the studios were still sometimes hired out to make recordings.

<sup>61</sup> Lauriano Rojas, interview, 24.1.2008

<sup>62</sup> Lauriano Rojas, Interview, 24.1.2008

<sup>63</sup> Vernallis, *Experiencing Music Video: Aesthetics and Cultural Context*.

<sup>64</sup> Usually, as Gregorio had suffered severe health and alcohol problems – which he self-critiqued in several music videos – he carefully avoided drinking. Mestizo producers of *originario* music video, such as GC Records of Cochabamba, informed me that they often provided their performers with alcohol to relax them before recording or filming. I mention alcohol consumption with some hesitancy here, as it is important to challenge stereotypes of indigenous drinking. See Byron Dueck, *Musical Intimacies and Indigenous Imaginaries: Aboriginal Music and Dance in Public Performance* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013), 9-10. It would, however, be a mistake to pretend that alcohol is not a critical ingredient of



indigenous Andean festive contexts when most music making takes place. See Henry Stobart, "Sensational Sacrifices: Feasting the Senses in the Bolivian Andes," in *Music, Sensation and Sensuality*, ed. L. Austern (New York and London: Routledge, 2002), 107. It should also be stressed that alcohol often poses a special problem for professional musicians—and not just indigenous ones— who perform at festive contexts.

<sup>65</sup> <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GCYOU0QwEVY>

<sup>66</sup> Dario Arclénega, interview 3.3.2008

<sup>67</sup> My ability to hold the camera still for hand held filming was especially appreciated by Gregorio who sometimes joking referred to me as *Enrique pedestal* ('Tripod Henry'). It should also be stressed that hand-held filming is common as an effect in high-budget music videos elsewhere, such as Madonna's 'Cherish' (Vernallis 2004:212)

<sup>68</sup> [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TpcgAhUt1\\_U](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TpcgAhUt1_U)

<sup>69</sup> For further discussion of this song in the context of Gregorio's anti-piracy strategies, see Stobart, "'Justice with My Own Hands': The Serious Play of Piracy in Bolivian Indigenous Music Videos."

<sup>70</sup> *Music and the Poetics of Production in the Bolivian Andes*, 133-65.

<sup>71</sup> "Constructing Community in the Digital Home Studio: Carnival, Creativity and Indigenous Music Video Production in the Bolivian Andes."

<sup>72</sup> Although commonly referred to as 'green screen', this effect also works when filmed against a blue screen.

<sup>73</sup> Crowdy, "Studios at Home in the Solomon Islands," 177.

<sup>74</sup> *Ibid.*: 144.

<sup>75</sup> Charles Hale, "Rethinking Indigenous Politics in the Era of the Indio Permitido," *NACLA Report on the Americas* 38, no. 2 (2004).

<sup>76</sup> During my research, Gregorio was the only *originario* artist from a rural background to own a home studio and to produce his own music videos that I encountered.

<sup>77</sup> Stobart, "'Justice with My Own Hands': The Serious Play of Piracy in Bolivian Indigenous Music Videos."

<sup>78</sup> "Constructing Community in the Digital Home Studio: Carnival, Creativity and Indigenous Music Video Production in the Bolivian Andes."