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Bolivian Appropriation and Transformation: Ideology in the Tarijan Cueca as Popular Music

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Abstract

This paper considers Bolivian popular folkloric music as the site of a class struggle between a dominant state who seeks to create a regional identity and an indigenous population who finds its music appropriated in the creation of this identity. Popular music is often described in terms of the mass production and consumption of musical products, and folkloric music as performed by cultural custom over extended periods of time. Popular folkloric music, then, posits a conflation of the two. The Tarijan *cueca*, a genre of popular folkloric music, is traditionally performed as an interpellative community dance—the nature of its performance is modified by the state to represent its vision of the department of Tarija. I analyze the content, performance, and connections between manifestations of the *cueca* in the mid-twentieth century. I argue that state ideologies of regional pride are crafted by the performance of the *cuecas* to demonstrate specific appropriated aspects of indigeneity. I combine Althusser's notion of ideological state apparatuses with musical analysis to explain how the Tarijan *cueca* is a vehicle for dominant ideologies. Nilo Soruco Arancibia's "Moto Mendez," Atiliano Auza Leon's *Historia de la Música Boliviana,* and his *6 Danzas Bolivianas del ciclo "Runas"* for violin and piano serve as case studies in the manifestations of ideological appropriation of indigenous music to highlight the historical and musical context in which popular folkloric music is trafficked.

Men in bright red vests slip handkerchiefs from their belts as the violinist begins playing the dance, and then circle the perfectly white fabric above their heads when the vocalist joins along with the other instrumentalists. Smiling women wink as their own handkerchiefs circle from above their heads to down by their hips, and soon both join in dance as the ensemble sings of their love for the town of San Lorenzo, in the heart of the department of Tarija. The flowers tied in the women's braids and sewn into their shawls are bright, standing in contrast to the colonial buildings behind them, with crumbling walls and terraced ceilings, as they dance. The *cueca* is a dance invested in traditional courtship; the man approaches with his handkerchief and

flirts with each woman, choosing whether or not to invite her to dance with him or move to the next woman. The audience claps on beats one and four, framing the 6/8 meter of the dance.

Regional popular music is celebrated frequently across Bolivian departments, hailed unequivocally as a marker of regional identity. The valuation of such popular folkloric music occurred in the mid twentieth century; its development and establishment are demonstrative of regional ideologies tied deeply to a sense of pride in the land and culture. However, these ideologies are invested not in true manifestations of the indigenous art form, but rather in a form that is most easily digestible by the greatest amount of people and what is most revelatory of a national cohesion. These ideologies are trafficked by the state. What Althusser calls ideological state apparatuses, which "function massively and predominantly by ideology" and "'act' through the intermediary of the ruling ideology," in line with understandings that class power equaling state power allows these ideologies to exist, are useful in understanding how and why the *cueca* does not continuously live in its indigenous form and has been modified, in several manners, for a consumption more in line with a regional ideology (Althusser 1971: 244-245). I use Althusser's ideology to explain how the Tarijan *cueca* has been adapted from its presence as popular music in the mid twentieth century to modern performances. I will explore the manifestations of Nilo Soruco Arancibia's "Moto Mendez" (1960), Atiliano Auza León's *Historia de la Música Boliviana* (1985) and *6 Danzas Bolivianas del ciclo "Runas"* for violin and piano (1960) to understand the operations of ideology in the Tarijan *cueca* as popular folkloric music.

Historically, the rise of indigenous popular music occurred at the same time as national policies towards indigenous peoples changed, allowing for a rediscovery of indigenous art forms in Bolivia following the nationalist revolution in 1952. As policies such as universal suffrage

regardless of property ownership or literacy levels were implemented, indigenous people suddenly saw an increase in their presence in Bolivian society as a product of the leftist Movimiento Nacionalista Revolucionario. This propelled native Bolivians to be recognized as full citizens. As such, their customs accompanied them into their new social presence. Prominent Bolivianist scholar Gilka Wara Cespedes says that as "social class in Bolivia is related to ethnicity, indigenous expressive forms of music, dance, language, and festivities were subject to the negative value judgements of some strata of the urban classes." This is especially evident as the revolution followed the *sexenio* years of economic and political hardship marked by the conservative government's increased suppression of indigenous miners and agricultural workers (Cespedes 1993: 55). The two pieces explored here were composed in the years following the revolution. Nilo Soruco Arancibia, a Tarijan singer-songwriter, wrote and recorded "Moto Mendez" in 1960, the same year that Atiliano Auza Leon published *6 Danzas Bolivianas del ciclo "Runas"* for violin and piano. The violin piece features two *cueca*s, "El Panuelo" and "A La *Cueca*." Other than the consistent 6/8 meter, however, these *cueca*s barely resemble Arancibia's compositions, which have become the staple in Tarija's folkloric popular music.

Transformed from original collaborative, interpellative indigenous dance-songs to something digestible by mestizo audiences, the focus of the *cueca* has shifted in terms of performance and virtuosity, taking the song out of its original indigenous community and into consumption that aligns with the Tarijan state's view of a regional folkloric song; it is not the fully indigenous way of performing, but the value lies in the indigenous tune and conception which allows a wider population to make it a representation of the state. Through my analysis, I create an awareness of the now multiple dimensions to the *cueca* and explain through ideology how these came to be.

“Moto Mendez”: La Cuequita Tarijeña

The lyrics and song of “Moto Mendez” embody these ideological functions of the *cueca* in Bolivian society. According to Claro-Valdés, in the *cueca* “the poetic themes are analogous to that which is abundant in Arab poetry, where love, nature, wine, and women are that which are principally sung.”[1] The poetic influence of the colonizer, in his Arabian-Andaluzian cultural dissemination, finds itself in manifestation in the lyrics of the poem. “Moto Mendez” is abundant in natural imagery, which constitutes the main theme that San Lorenzo is a beautiful place to live (see Figure 1). Lyrics such as “town of the flowers,” “bathed in light,” and “it is a green nest” demonstrate such. The text connects love and nature (“a garden of love”), and wine and nature (“inebriated in color”). “Of the Andaluzian valley” is also explicitly stated. The audience is interpellated by the statements of “I am from this/ town” and “I sing with my soul/ the *cueca* chapaca/ Long Live San Lorenzo” that demonstrate the deep connection held between those participating in the music and the land in which they live.[2] This interpellation demonstrates a locale of conflict, where the dominant expression of control is ever-present in the text, yet the aforementioned lyrics express mestizo and indigenous values. This is especially important as *cueca*s are often sung by performers while the audience is encouraged to join in. While “Moto Mendez” was composed in 1960, the *cueca* is steeped in colonizer history that began with Arab-Andaluzian and indigenous interactions that manifest themselves in the lyrics of the *cueca*.[3]

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[1] Original text: “La temática poética análoga a la que abunda en la poesía árabe, donde se canta principalmente al amor, a la naturaleza, al vino y a la mujer” (Claro-Valdés, 1993).

All translations by author unless otherwise noted. “Moto Mendez” transcribed and notated by author from performances by the K’achas conjunto in Tarija, Bolivia and at La Casa Vieja in Tarija, Bolivia.

[2] Someone who is “*chapaca*” or “*chapaco*” is an individual from the Tarija department of Bolivia. It is often a term used to refer to both those who are mestizo or indigenous from this region, although it began as a reference to the indigenous people.

[3] It is important to note some other key assimilations from the colonizer in Tarija and *cueca*. As Tarija was colonized by those in the Sevilla area, they maintain many of the same traditions of Sevillan music in the indigenous music, such as the zapateo (foot-kicking) and clapping unique to the Tarijan *cueca*. See Claro-Valdes 1993, especially the following assertions: “The origins of the chilean or traditional *cueca* are found in the oral tradition received from the Arab-Andaluzias town that accompanied the conquistador in his transition to the New World,

Figure 1. Lyrics to "Moto Mendez." Original words by Nilo Soruco Arancibia. On the left, the musical sections of the piece. "Moto Mendez" is in ABA form, with the first A section repeated once.

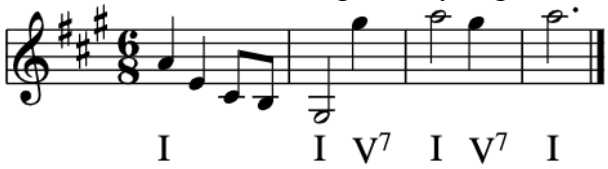
A	Soy de aquel pueblo de las flores Del valle andaluz Bañado de luz Ebrio de colores Del valle andaluz Bañado de luz Ebrio de colores.	I am from this town of flowers Of the Andalusian valley Bathed in light Inebriated in colors Of the Andalusian valley Bathed in light Inebriated in colors.
A, repeat	Viva mi valle florido Que es jardín de amor De rozas en flor Y es un verde nido Que es jardín de amor De rozas en flor Y es un verde nido	Live my flowered valley Garden of love Of roses in bloom And it is a green nest Garden of love Of roses in bloom And it is a green nest
B	Por el Moto Méndez Que nació en mi pueblo Canto con el alma la cueca chapaca Viva San Lorenzo Canto con el alma la cueca chapaca Viva San Lorenzo	For Moto Mendez Who was born in my town I sing with spirit the cueca chapaca Live San Lorenzo I sing with spirit the cueca chapaca Live San Lorenzo
A	lala lalalalala Canto con el alma la cueca chapaca Viva San Lorenzo.	lala lalalalala I sing with spirit the cueca chapaca Live San Lorenzo.

which provides, in turn, the Arab musical poetic tradition that arrived at the Iberan peninsula from the Omeya dynasty in the eighteenth century; this tradition is preserved in america through the racial and cultural mestizaje characterized with the continent, especially through the paternal route, and has arrived with notable fidelity until the current day, in geographically and culturally isolated zones."

Original text: "Los orígenes de la chilena o *cueca* tradicional se encuentran en la tradición oral recibida del pueblo árabe-andaluz que acompañó al conquistador en su paso al Nuevo Mundo, la que proviene, a su vez, de la tradición poético musical árabe llegada a la Península Ibérica a partir de la dinastía de los Omeya, en el siglo VIII; Esta tradición se preserva en América por medio del mestizaje racial y cultural que caracteriza al continente, especialmente por la vía paterna, y ha llegado con notable fidelidad hasta nuestros días, si bien en zonas geográfica y culturalmente aisladas."

Musically, “Moto Mendez” is highly accessible for both musicians and community members. The strong 6/8 meter briefly experiences hemiola at moments, such as the last four bars of the violin introduction and at the beginning of the A sections; otherwise, there is a consistent 6/8 felt in two throughout the piece. The A and B sections are musically quite similar, featuring rhythmic differences in the sung melody but otherwise identical chord changes. Arancibia uses only the tonic, dominant seventh, submediant, and supertonic chords in the piece, with a harmonic rhythm of one chord per bar throughout the piece excepting the last four bars of the violin introduction, shown in Figure 2.

Figure 2. “Moto Mendez,” bars 13—16. These are the last four bars in the violin introduction before the sung melody begins, in A Major.



These last four bars are significant as they represent a departure both from the strict 6/8 meter and from the harmonic rhythm, as the meter is felt in 3/4 and the harmonic rhythm quickens. This is the most complex aspect of “Moto Mendez,” with the purpose of introducing the first singing section of the piece with the hemiola and tension as the leading tone to tonic resolution is highlighted in the melody. Tarijan *cueca*s like “Moto Mendez” typically feature violinists, a tamborista, and an assortment of strummed instruments. A violinist introduces and leads into the rest of the piece; this is only individuality that is highlighted in the song. In terms of accessibility for the rest of the ensemble, the chords Arancibia occur within the circle of fifths progression. The strummed rhythms are consistent, varied between the three rhythms shown in Figure 3:

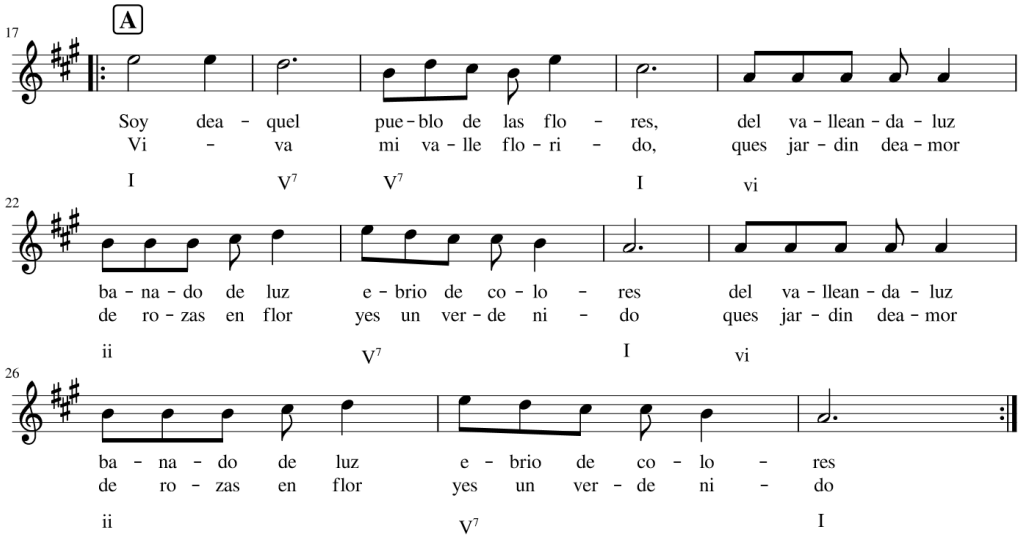
Figure 3. Rhythms played by strummed instruments in “Moto Mendez.”

These three rhythms continue to solidify the 6/8 dance meter by drawing out beats one and four where dance movements would occur. The only deviation is found in the bars preceding the violin transition into voice. Since the harmonic rhythm is the tonic chord once per bar for three bars, the strummed instruments thin the texture by playing staccato downbeats, again for the purpose of anticipating the transition to sung melodies. For the instrumentalists, the music is technically accessible regarding harmony and rhythm and serves the purpose of solidifying the dance meter.

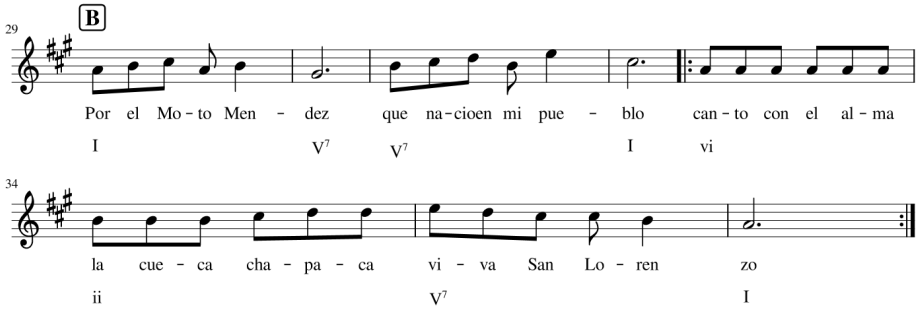
In melody and form, the sung sections are also accessible due to their repeated nature and near-scalar construction. The first A section is entirely repeated, and the melody is almost exclusively rising or descending in a scalar fashion (see Example 1). The B section directly mentions “for Moto Mendez”; the change in section and melodic rhythm serve to emphasize the titular individual entering the song (see Example 2). This may also explain these being the only four bars in the piece that do not repeat, as if to give Mendez a brief spotlight but to maintain the focus on nature and land as discussed earlier. The most repeated lines in the piece occur between repeat bars at the end of the B section and at the very end of the piece. The lyrics say “I sing with spirit/ the *cueca* chapaca/ live San Lorenzo,” not only hailing the *cueca* itself but also the *chapaco* nickname of the Tarijan people and the land.[8] This is key to understanding the regional ideology of “Moto Mendez”; the accessibility of the playing and singing of the piece and the form’s focus on ideological sections, solidified by the harmonic progression, reveal how inherent the connective aspects of the Tarijan *cueca* are. This is precisely why the *cueca* is challenged and

transformed; as they are previously "persecuted and cornered in isolated sectors for its immense capacity of national cohesion and identity" and then taken by the "powers of economic, cultural, and ideological colonization" to be altered to function as popular folkloric music.[4]

Example 1. A section of "Moto Mendez."



Example 2. B section of "Moto Mendez."



Virtuosity in "A La *Cueca*"

Auza León, an eminent Bolivian composer and musician, describes Bolivian indigenous music and classical music in his *Historia de la Música Boliviana*, where he places importance on tangible and concrete elements of tradition. He uses language that refers to indigeneity as merely

[4] Original text: "Perseguidas y arrinconadas en sectores aislados por su inmensa capacidad de cohesión e identidad nacional" and "poderes de colonización económica, cultural e ideológica" (Claro-Valdés, 1993).

"of the past," then discusses music produced through colonialism, and finally illustrates modern composers and conservatories (Auza León 1985: 209). However, when it comes to popular folkloric music, Auza León offers only an aside. He recognizes importance for its occasional affective qualities in town happiness and its ability to represent Bolivia when performed perfectly at events. He does not recognize its indigenous importance as he says it is "given to us by history" rather than by the indigenous people, and he is placing an importance in virtuosity, as otherwise this popular music is merely "scattered music" (Auza León 1985: 209). And what he does elaborate on it is a list of important musicians; this places an emphasis on individuality rather than the communal ownership of music where popular folkloric music has its roots.

For example, instruments that are originally played in a communal setting where the aforementioned group interpellation can take place are transformed when brought out of their rural homelands as they "are imbued concurrently with city values: individuality and virtuosity versus communality" (Cespedes 1993: 56). "A La *Cueca*", the fifth movement in Auza León's *6 Danas Bolivianas del ciclo "Runas,"* clearly demonstrates how individuality and virtuosity occur through the violin sonata to achieve a modern transformation of the popular folkloric music for consumption that fits regional ideologies. Auza León maintains the individuality given to the violinist in "Moto Mendez"; but, in these dances, the focus tends towards one instrumentalist. Commonality is stripped away as the focus of the music is to showcase the violinist rather than create a musical environment that can interpellate various community members.

"A La *Cueca*" differs from a traditional *cueca* in three key manners—the strength of the meter, the virtuosity of the performer, and the accessibility of the harmonic progression. These aspects are central to the *cueca*'s indigenous form, as demonstrated with "Moto Mendez." The meter of the piece is in 6/8, but the composer makes a point to mark 3/4 in parenthesis.

Throughout the piece there are several moments where the piano seems to be in 6/8, resembling many of the key rhythms seen in “Moto Mendez,” while the violinist plays in what feels like 3/4 time. On occasion, the instruments will switch, and the pianist will play the duple meter and the violinist in triple meter.

Figures 4–6 demonstrate the rhythmic complexities of “A La *Cueca*.” In Figure 4, the 6/8 and 3/4 time signatures are placed side-by-side. Figure 5 is bar 5 of the piece, during the piano introduction, with the left hand playing in 6/8 and the right following the violin melody in 3/4 meter. Figure 6, bar 9 and the beginning of section B, is the rhythmic inverse, with the right hand playing chords in 3/4 and the left hand and violin playing in 6/8. In Figure 6 we also see hemiola between the violin triplet sixteenth notes and left hand piano duple sixteenths.

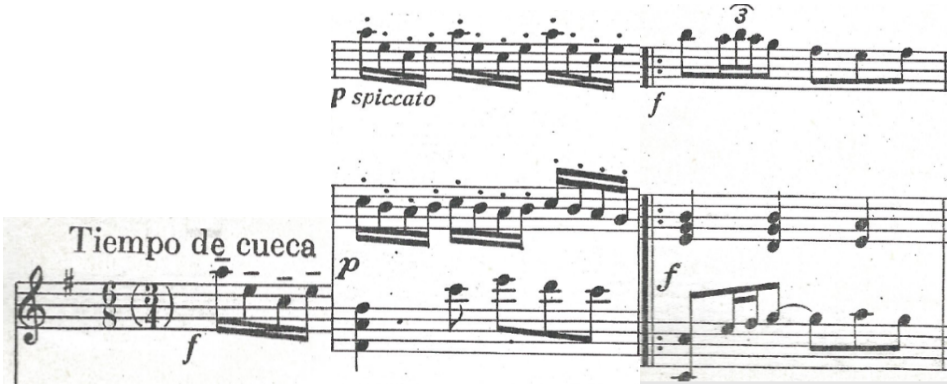


Figure 4 **Figure 5** **Figure 6**

In terms of virtuosity, this rhythmic complexity is more difficult to coordinate than the strong 6/8 in “Moto Mendez” that facilitates communal dancing and singing. The virtuosity is further drawn out by the demands made of the violinist; this soloist must play in varied bowing styles, with left hand pizzicato, in various multiple stops, and loudly in high positions. The complexities of the sonata blur the rhythmic and melodic familiarity of the *cueca*.

The form is relatively similar to “Moto Mendez” at the onset of the piece. There is an eight-bar introduction in “A La *Cueca*” whose final bar, with its fermatas and scale, indicate an

upcoming new section; it is harmonically simple as well, using only the tonic, predominant, and dominant seventh chords. Noticeably, the majority of the piece is in E minor, much different from the jubilant and celebratory A major of "Moto Mendez." The A section, which features mediant, subtonic, supertonic, and submediant chords, is repeated. The B section, however, is entirely different from the A section, as it is unrepeated in a new key with new rhythms. In E-flat major, the B section eventually tonicizes A major at the coda and finally cadences in the original key of E minor in the last three bars. This harmonic complexity would be unprecedented in a *cueca*, especially when paired with the virtuosic playing in the violin and the rhythmic complexity between triple and duple meter.

Conclusion

The *Historia de la Música Boliviana*, as published and disseminated by Auza León, gives us insight to indigenous music and classical institutions in Bolivia, but overlooks the popular music that bridges the two, which is where the constructions and portrayals of regional ideologies lie. By connecting the *cueca* as popular music with its manifestations in classical repertoire and its modern performances, the progression of such ideologies becomes more readily understood. While both "Moto Mendez" and "A La *Cueca*" came into being the same year, they communicate the *cueca* quite differently. Aranicibia maintains the musical and poetic integrity of the popular folkloric song that allows it to be performed more closely in its original indigenous manner, while Auza León takes the key aspects of the *cueca* and toys with them as he shifts the ideology inherent to the piece.

As the Tarijan *cueca* continues to be performed, the ideological shift taking place becomes all the more present. In a 2017 performance celebrating the bicentenary of the Battle of

the Tablada of Tolomosa, which liberated Tarija from Spanish control in 1817 during the War of Bolivian Independence, the "Moto Mendez" was performed amongst a mix of other *cueca*s, Arancibia compositions, and compositions by current composer Erick Ocampo. Most pieces performed were Ocampo's original works. The shift in ideology was ever-present in this performance, as the ballet performance featured a MIDI recording rather than instrumentalists, and the *cueca*s were performed on electric guitars, electric basses, and an electric violin, all on stage with a captive audience. This important celebration of Tarijan identity, sponsored by the state through several regional organizations, was a key locale in showcasing what is important to the Tarijan identity: the *cueca*s, and new compositions, all through a performance by performers rather than enacted for community dancing.

Ocampo's performance mirrors the *peñas* that first brought the indigenous music out of its communal environment. These were physical locales, other state apparatuses, where *cueca*s and other indigenous songs could be performed on a stage for sitting audiences, who would often also be enjoying a meal. These *peñas*, which came about in the 1960s—the same time as "Moto Mendez" and "A La *Cueca*"—separated the indigenous from a higher class who sought to enjoy their music, as "the audiences wanted musica folklorica but not in the raw," which the peñas gave them (Cespedes 1993: 55). This performance is an example of the ideological shift of the popular folkloric music being enacted and solidified in state apparatuses in Bolivia today. As performances of "Moto Mendez" undoubtedly continue in cultural venues across Tarija, this understanding of ideological shift serves to give further insight into the history, progress, and joy of the *cueca*.

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