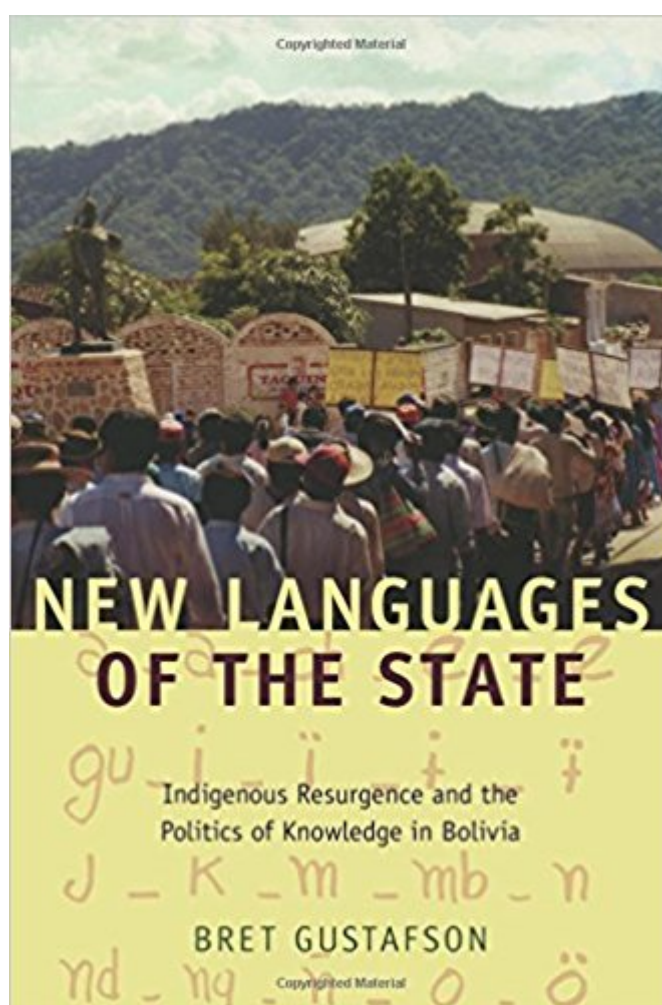


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# New Languages Of The State: Indigenous Resurgence And The Politics Of Knowledge In Bolivia (Narrating Native Histories)



## Synopsis

During the mid-1990s, a bilingual intercultural education initiative was launched to promote the introduction of indigenous languages alongside Spanish in public elementary schools in Bolivia's indigenous regions. Bret Gustafson spent fourteen years studying and working in southeastern Bolivia with the Guarani, who were at the vanguard of the movement for bilingual education. Drawing on his collaborative work with indigenous organizations and bilingual-education activists as well as more traditional ethnographic research, Gustafson traces two decades of indigenous resurgence and education politics in Bolivia, from the 1980s through the election of Evo Morales in 2005. Bilingual education was a component of education reform linked to foreign-aid development mandates, and foreign aid workers figure in *New Languages of the State*, as do teachers and their unions, transnational intellectual networks, and assertive indigenous political and intellectual movements across the Andes. Gustafson shows that bilingual education is an issue that extends far beyond the classroom. Public schools are at the center of a broader battle over territory, power, and knowledge as indigenous movements across Latin America actively defend their languages and knowledge systems. In attempting to decolonize nation-states, the indigenous movements are challenging deep-rooted colonial racism and neoliberal reforms intended to mold public education to serve the market. Meanwhile, market reformers nominally embrace cultural pluralism while implementing political and economic policies that exacerbate inequality. Juxtaposing Guarani life, language, and activism with intimate portraits of reform politics among academics, bureaucrats, and others in and beyond La Paz, Gustafson illuminates the issues, strategic dilemmas, and imperfect alliances behind bilingual intercultural education.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

"In *New Languages of the State*, Gustafson provides the vivid narrative of EIB from the colonizers' destruction and violence, which is justified and legitimated by the colonizers, through the Guaraní challenge and resistance to the official lies. Students of bilingual education everywhere will benefit from reading this account because everywhere, bilingual education is about challenging and resisting the hegemony of colonizers and their languages." - Sheila M. Shannon, *Latin American Politics and Society*

"Bret Gustafson has written a subtle and illuminating ethnography of the interactions and intersections of grassroots and official projects of interculturalism in Bolivia. . . . A core success of the book stems from Gustafson's ability to push against unidirectional analytic or critical positions without leaving readers stranded on islands of particularism or mired in irreducible complexity." - Andrew Orta, *Journal of Latin American and Caribbean Anthropology*

"*New Languages of the State* is an excellent and engaging piece of scholarly work, based on long-term ethnographic and historical research in three diverse areas of enquiry, which the author articulates into a complex study of the state, education reform, and indigenous movements. It should appeal to scholars interested in these themes in Latin America and in other regions of the world." - Maria L. Lagos, *American Ethnologist*

"Gustafson's nuanced and dynamic portrait of reform provides a wealth of information and insight for followers of indigenous education and politics. Hopefully, his narrative about this oft-neglected corner of the globe will find an audience not only among fellow anthropologists but among educational activists and policy-makers as well." - Aurolyn Luykx, *Anthropos*

"Gustafson has written a magisterial book on Indigenous politics in Bolivia that should be required reading for all graduate students interested in Indigenous politics, decolonization, and political ethnography." - José Antonio Lucero, *A Contracorriente*

"While arguably the best ethnography of Guaraní country produced in recent years, Gustafson's book is also situated at the intersections of state-building and social movements; it will therefore be of broad interest to scholars in anthropology, political science, sociology, and beyond. . . . This book is clearly a major contribution to our understanding of contemporary Bolivia, indigenous movements, and the politics of indigenous education. . . . With a keen understanding of the contentious nature of Bolivian society, Gustafson has provided a

complex and compelling portrait of new forms of struggle, belonging, and hope. As news of violent conflicts in Bolivia continues to surface, the need for such a message could scarcely be more urgent.

—Marjorie Elena García, *Current Anthropology*

“A beautifully crafted, magnificently expansive, and inspiring work of engaged historical ethnography! Bret Gustafson traces Bolivia’s heralded experiment in bilingual education by planting it deep in the subsoil of Guaraní culture and politics and by projecting it against the larger canvass of neoliberal reformism in the 1990s. In plotting the choreography of state, NGO, and grassroots struggles over indigenous knowledge and schooling, Gustafson opens up new horizons on Bolivia’s vibrant Guaraní movement and its radicalizing agendas in the early 2000s. This is, quite simply, the work of a seasoned anthropologist and gifted writer.”

—Brooke Larson, author of *Trials of Nation Making. Liberalism, Race, and Ethnicity in the Andes, 1810-1910*

“Much anticipated by anthropologists of Latin America, *New Languages of the State* is an entirely new contribution to the ethnography of the Andes, and it speaks to much broader issues about development banks, globalization, indigenous movements, and more. Bret Gustafson makes sense of transnational processes, bureaucratic logics, and ideological formations by moving between diverse locales in Bolivia, from the most remote locations in Chaco, to the upscale professional offices of La Paz, and then on to international meetings in Thailand and the United States.”

—Julia Paley, author of *Marketing Democracy: Power and Social Movements in Post-Dictatorship Chile*

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