

Gender historiography in Bolivia

Historiografía de género en Bolivia

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Abstract

This article examines the construction of gender in Bolivia from the history of gender studies. Also rescues the contributions and studies of different authors with regard to gender in Bolivia, without neglecting the social historical context of the historiography of gender in Bolivia, to do a literature review was conducted from an analysis is performed taking into account the category of gender justice and thus make a contribution to the historiographical current that studies women in community.

Género, Contexto histórico, Bolivia

Resumen

Este artículo examina la construcción del género en Bolivia desde la historia de los estudios de género. Asimismo rescata los aportes y estudios de diferentes autores con respecto al género en Bolivia, sin dejar de lado el contexto histórico social de la historiografía de género en Bolivia, para ello se realizó una revisión bibliográfica a partir de un análisis que se realiza tomando en cuenta la categoría de justicia de género y de esta manera hacer un aporte a la corriente historiográfica que estudia a la mujer en comunidad.

Género, Contexto histórico, Bolivia

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Introduction

The 20th century has been characterised by different social struggles in both Latin America and Bolivia, and among the social struggles, women's struggles can also be identified. For this reason, this article does not study outstanding women, but rather women as a collective.

The study will not be framed within a traditional historiography that only remembers heroine or celebrity women, because it does not study a single woman, nor does it take Bolivian women as a homogeneous group, but rather recognises that despite the fact that women live in common situations because they live in the same territory, there is a difference in class, culture and ethnicity, and therefore the demands of urban and rural women are different because some are mestizo, indigenous, pollera and so on. In this sense, women are studied collectively and not individually.

In order to understand the construction process of gender historiography in Bolivia, taking into account the meanings of gender, equality, equity and gender justice, the article is divided into four sections: The first section provides background information on gender studies in Latin America and Bolivia, the second section presents the historical and contextual issues in Latin America and Bolivia, the third section studies the construction of gender, taking into account the concepts of gender, sex differences, gender equality and gender justice, and the fourth section analyses the construction of gender historiography in Bolivia.

Background to gender studies

In recent years, gender studies have been carried out more intensively all over the world, but what interests us here are the studies carried out in Latin America and Bolivia:

Among the recent works there is extensive work since 2001, as there are several articles on the subject of gender. De Lucas (2011) "Women's human rights: advances and challenges", in this study the author addresses the issue of women's human rights, reviewing and reformulating the concept of human rights. Bouanzari (2011) "Gender perspective and human rights. Global equality from dialogue", carries out a sociological analysis of the situation of women in developing countries.

An article by Nobre and Viudes (2011) "Possibilities and limitations in the construction of equality in the solidarity economy", in which they analyse the presence of women in the various meeting spaces of the solidarity economy movement in Latin America. On the other hand, Guevara (2011) "Estrategias, retos y propuestas en la defensa de los derechos humanos desde una perspectiva de género. Las Mélicas", her article shows in detail the work of Las Mélicas, which is a feminist organisation that seeks to achieve the empowerment of women.

Boule (2011) "Dialogue with the Feminist Collective Semillas de Flora Tristán" in the article reflects the debate with the feminist collective Semillas de Flora Tristán, where she shows the feminisation of poverty, the institutionalisation of mobilisations and the impact of the activities of the aforementioned collective.

In Bolivia, the studies that have been carried out on the issue of gender are Apilánz (2011) "Mujeres construyendo ciudadanías en Bolivia", which addresses the problem of women's non-citizenship and the struggles against patriarchy.

Other more recent works are by Uriona (2012) "Las Jornadas de octubre: intercambio horizontes emancipatorios", which studies the different moments of women's struggle for emancipation. Gallardo's (2012) article "La urgencia de retomar la radicalidad", where she points out that thanks to collective actions, women have emancipated themselves from the tutelage of the state, the parties and the church.

Another author who wrote an article with a gender focus is Paredes (2012) "Las trampas del patriarcado" (The traps of patriarchy), where she points out that it is necessary to break out of the patriarchal logic of the power of financing and imposing hegemonies. In the same vein, Lugones (2012) "Subjetividad esclava, colonialidad de género, marginalidad y opresiones múltiples" (Slave subjectivity, gender coloniality, marginality and multiple oppressions) proposes a framework of decolonial feminism.

Huanca (2012) "La Lucha de las mujeres indígenas" (The struggle of indigenous women), whose object of study is indigenous women, indicates that indigenous women are strong and tireless. Another article that also refers to indigenous women is Irayigra (2012) "Caminando juntos alcanzaremos la victoria" (Walking together we will achieve victory), which shows the presence of indigenous women in all the historical events of mobilisation in Bolivia.

Pessah (2012) "Feminismo de colour y descolonización", her main contribution is to the history of black slave women. In the same vein Salguero (2012) "Feminismo de colores e interculturalidad", which also refers to black women.

Fries (2012) "Identifying the roots of oppression: women's human rights", points out that the 20th century had one of its greatest expressions in the women's movement and the struggle for their rights. Likewise, Zabala (2012) "Los objetivos de la lucha: de las cuotas hacia una política de la presencia", studies the decade of the 80's when democracy was recovered and women gained decision-making spaces. On the other hand, Cobo (2012) "Sociología del género y teorías feministas" (Sociology of gender and feminist theories), takes different theories and paradigms that refer to the issue of gender or women.

Historical and contextual issues

a) At the Latin American level

According to Molyneux (2010) the Latin American region has a long history in its struggle for citizenship and women's rights, dating back to the 19th century and reaching significant achievements in the 20th century.

The Latin American territory has been colonised by the Spanish, so that after independence the countries were founded according to religious, political and legal tradition, "colonial laws attributed different rights to men and women and imposed on women the obligation to serve and obey men, little changed after independence" [Molyneux, 2010: 188]. In this sense, the situation of women did not change at all, as women continued to be seen in the domestic sphere, looking after children and taking care of the household.

In the mid-19th century, with the arrival of liberalism and the ideas of modernism, there were changes in terms of government and justice. "Just as Latin American modernity, whether in its liberal, revolutionary or cooperative moments, included women selectively and far from what it would have been under equal conditions" [Molyneux, 2010: 189].

In the twentieth century, ideas about women's rights changed, as the twentieth century was characterised by a variety of struggles for women's rights.

The 20th century was characterised by a variety of social struggles, which is why it is convenient to contextualise the Latin American and Bolivian context in order to approach the women's movement. "(...) for much of the twentieth century, citizens' rights rested on deeply rooted notions of gender difference, which coincided with the socially asymmetrical positions occupied by sex" [Molyneux, 2010: 189].

On the other hand, she points out that the women's movement from the 1960s onwards began to demand not only that women's civil rights should be incorporated into modern society, but also that society should incorporate the feminine vision into the world.

It was especially in the 1970s that women's movements emerged, "it was during the transition that marked the end of the Latin American dictatorships at the end of the 1970s that progress was made in terms of women's rights" [Molyneux, 2004: 192].

From the 1970s onwards there were advances in terms of gender by feminist activists, "feminism itself diversified, and in the last decades of the 20th century, it gained more support for some of the ideas of working class women. It was not until the 1980s that respect for difference was included in feminist politics" [Molyneux, 2010: 193]. From the 1980s onwards, the formation of autonomous feminist groups towards exploited and oppressed sectors of women such as workers, peasants or urban women from popular sectors was characterised by a greater formation of autonomous feminist groups.

On the other hand, in these same years in Latin America, according to Molyneux (2010), work on the subject of gender increased, both theoretical and empirical, as these studies advanced together with the women's movements unleashed in those years.

b) At the national level

The Bolivian territory has suffered three centuries of Spanish colonialism just like other Latin American countries, as this condition marked racial differences, since the colonial system took root in Bolivian society, from language to religion.

According to Paredes (2012), colonisation has penetrated both men and women, which is why after Bolivia's independence, patriarchy has continued to be maintained. On the other hand, Huanca (2012) points out that colonialism comes with racism and patriarchy, education and religion are instruments of patriarchy, as they made women and indigenous peoples believe that they had to suffer.

According to Lugones (2012) the development of conquest, colony and capital became the quintessential Spanish project, as it introduced the racial dichotomy with regard to people, work, social practices, language and society itself. In this sense, women have gone through different stages in the history of Bolivia, in the colonial period, XVI, XVII and XVIII centuries and even in the republican period, XIX century, women were still occupied in domestic services, manufacturing and small trades according to the social class to which they belonged.

On the other hand, in the 20th century, as in other Latin American countries, women acquired a certain economic independence, they already had civil rights, they could organise themselves into trade unions, they had access to education and later to higher education for their professionalisation. "In the mid-twentieth century they were recognised as a collective subject, with a female identity under construction, loaded with diverse political sensibilities, depending on national, ethnic and religious cultures (...)" [Gallardo, 2012: 74].

The women's movement in Bolivia began in 1960, since, according to Gallardo (2012), feminists in the 1960s began to investigate the history of women with which to identify themselves that did not come from an alien definition, and they constructed their own methods and ways to regulate their being, participating and acting independently of men in all spheres of reality.

According to Gallardo (2012), this change in women's history shook the patriarchal sediments because feminists promoted an emancipatory process independent of the male collective, as they prefigured feminist autonomy as well as organisation through their way of doing politics. The transformations were most noticeable between 1980 and 2005, as peasant, indigenous and professional women managed to organise themselves with their respective identities around the demands and needs of each sector. All these changes were provoked by the different events that Bolivia went through.

The last few years have seen significant changes in terms of gender, as in 2012 forums were held to address and debate issues with a gender focus, organised by Conexión Fondo de Emancipación.

Towards a gender construction

a) Difference between sex and gender

Sex is a biological variable, determined from birth, and is therefore permanent and universal, since it "refers to the biological, manifest and generally permanent differences between men and women. It describes the biological, physical and genetic composition with which we are born" [Pinto, 2012 cit. in Martel, 2013: 15].

Gender is a socio-cultural construct, learned through socialisation and therefore varies over time and across cultures, it is changeable because it "refers to the set of qualities, roles (values, behaviours and activities) functions and responsibilities socially determined and assigned to people on the basis of their biological differences" [Martel, 2013: 15]. Gender is culturally and socially constructed, historical and changing.

If there is a difference between sex and gender, since gender varies over time and even within the same culture, since one learns to be a man and to be a woman, therefore masculine and feminine are not natural characteristics, because they are learned in the socialisation process.

b) Between gender equality and gender equity

Gender equality is not about people becoming equal, but that their rights and opportunities do not depend on whether they are born male or female, because:

- Being equal should not be confused with being identical. The problem is not in the difference, which is in itself natural, but in the unfair discrimination. Equality opens up a world of opportunities and experiences that traditionally belonged to one sex or the other. Equality is to build equal relations between the two sexes, with the same value, and different experiences and views [Domínguez, 2011 cit. in Martel, 2013: 19].

In gender equality both men and women should enjoy the same conditions and opportunities to develop their rights, the aspirations and needs of men and women should be considered, valued and promoted equally. In other words, gender equality implies the idea that all men and women are free to develop their personal capacities and make choices.

In order to achieve gender equality, gender equity needs to be understood as a principle and mode of action that seeks to compensate for disadvantages, "gender equity, understood as fairness in the treatment of men and women according to their respective needs, is the means to achieve gender equality" [Pinto, 2012 cit. in Martel, 2013: 20]. Therefore, equity is to compensate for the historical and social disadvantages between men and women that prevent them from equality in conditions.

Often when we hear the word gender, we think of women, but gender equality is not only a matter for women, but should rather concern and involve both men and women. Because in order to achieve gender equality, the equal involvement of men and women is required to eliminate the current power relations based on the subordination of women.

c) Gender justice

According to Molyneux (2010) the term gender justice implies a concept of justice that refers to the social and legal relations that prevail between the sexes. In this sense, the category of gender allows for an analysis of the relations between men and women, of the inequalities that exist between men and women that have been constructed in the social and family spheres.

The relations between men and women have arisen from a cultural type that has constituted fixed identities and roles, in this sense "gender justice can comprise diverse conceptions of justice, in an arc that goes from simple equality to concepts of differentiated equality [...] that equality continues to be a fundamental principle of justice" [Molyneux, 2010: 183]. On the other hand, she also says that gender justice in modern political language implies women's full citizenship.

For Martel (2012) gender justice aims to contribute to gender equality as well as to promote power sharing and its main outcome is the full, equal participation of men and women in all spheres of society, including participation in decision-making processes and access to power. It is known that there are privileges and spaces that men defend, but there are also opportunities and spaces for women to conquer.

Gender justice implies understanding and recognising equality between men and women as a human right, since "gender justice aims to contribute to gender equality, as well as to promote a redistribution of power. Its main outcome is the full and equal participation of men and women in all spheres of society, including participation in decision-making and access to power" [Martel, 2013: 22]. One cannot expect relations of subordination to change spontaneously and hope that justice for women will come without both men and women fighting and working for gender justice, because a major transformation cannot be achieved separately.

The recognition of human rights and the obligation to respect and fulfil them is in order to achieve gender justice, to understand that men and women have the same rights. In this sense, gender justice is not a struggle against men in order to displace them and take their place, reversing the relationship of power and subordination, but rather in favour of all men and women.

Analysis of gender historiography in Bolivia

Gender studies, whether they have a gender perspective or a gender approach, are expanding with each passing year. According to background data, both in Latin America and Bolivia, more articles have been written on gender issues, citizenship, empowerment, gender justice, participatory democracy and others, but from a gender perspective. As a result, there has been a change in the thinking of women intellectuals who are concerned about these issues.

According to the meaning of gender justice, it is important to refer to both men and women, since talking about gender is not synonymous with talking only about women, since gender justice encompasses society as a whole for a better life, in equality and equity between men and women.

On the other hand, a historiography of gender in Bolivia could not be carried out without thinking about Latin America, since no event is isolated, but rather is part of it, which is why it was important to know the social-historical contextualisation of the construction of gender, since it is clear that the subject of gender has been known since the 20th century.

The changes and struggles of the 20th century favoured the construction of a historiography of gender in Bolivia, since after having known the history of gender in Latin America and Bolivia, it can be said that its history has been marked by colonisation, since after the independence of the Latin American peoples, including Bolivia, they continued with the colonial system based on patriarchy.

Bolivia, after its liberation from the Spanish yoke in the 19th century, was still under the colonial patriarchal system, since patriarchy made women believe that they could only take care of household activities, take care of their children and be subject and subordinate to their husbands, which is why they could not even think of being part of public spaces, since these spaces were for men.

The 20th century was the century of struggles, women's struggles took place in Bolivia from the 1960s onwards, but were strongest between 1970-1980, when women's organisations emerged to fight against the dictatorships of those years. The results show that after democracy, women's organisations became more diverse, whether they were organised along political lines or by social sector.

According to the parameters used in the section on the construction of gender, the women's organisations and movements of the 1960s and 1970s have not yet defined what gender justice means, as the women's movements do not fight for civic participation, but rather for the rights of their children and families, and not for themselves.

But since the 1980s, specifically with the advent of democracy, women have been fighting for active participation in the different spheres of the state. The transformations were more noticeable from 1980 to 2005, as peasant, indigenous and professional women managed to organise themselves with their respective identities around the demands and needs of each sector. All these changes were provoked by the different events that Bolivia went through.

Between the years 2000-2005, women have had an active participation in social movements, as they were seen actively participating in social mobilisations.

All these aspects of Bolivian women and their dynamic participation in Bolivian history since the 20th century show the capacity and strength of Bolivian women, especially those women who were historically disadvantaged, such as indigenous women and women from popular urban sectors. The categories of equality, equity and gender justice are bearing fruit in Bolivia in the 21st century, since the most outstanding characteristics in recent years is the level of participation that women have achieved, since women today occupy important positions in the political and social sphere, have become leaders and occupy different positions, whether as women in the arts and literature, women in parliament, in the executive branch, or as councillors and mayors. This may be because lately Bolivian women, especially in the popular urban sectors, have been talking and training about equality, equity and gender justice.

All the achievements of women's empowerment in terms of local and national decision-making are due to women's performance in Bolivia's history, which opened up new spaces for participation.

Conclusions

Throughout history, women have been seen as companions and poor, which makes women subordinate, which is why they have had more disadvantages in terms of rights and the occupation of public spaces, but this does not mean that the issue of gender is only about women and for women, because if we want to talk about gender, we must necessarily talk about men and women.

Therefore, gender studies must take into account the interrelationship between men and women, and this must condition any gender analysis. All research or projects must be carried out from a gender perspective.

Carrying out a gender analysis, through an inclusive theory, is in favour of the whole of society, because from an analysis it is possible to implement projects that favour both men and women, gender justice also refers to the implementation of policies, supporting equal rights, demanding their fulfilment as men and women and in this way achieving gender equality.

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