

NANCY POSTERO

THE INDIGENOUS STATE

Race, Politics, and Performance
in Plurinational Bolivia

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Race, Politics, and Performance in Plurinational Bolivia



Nancy Postero



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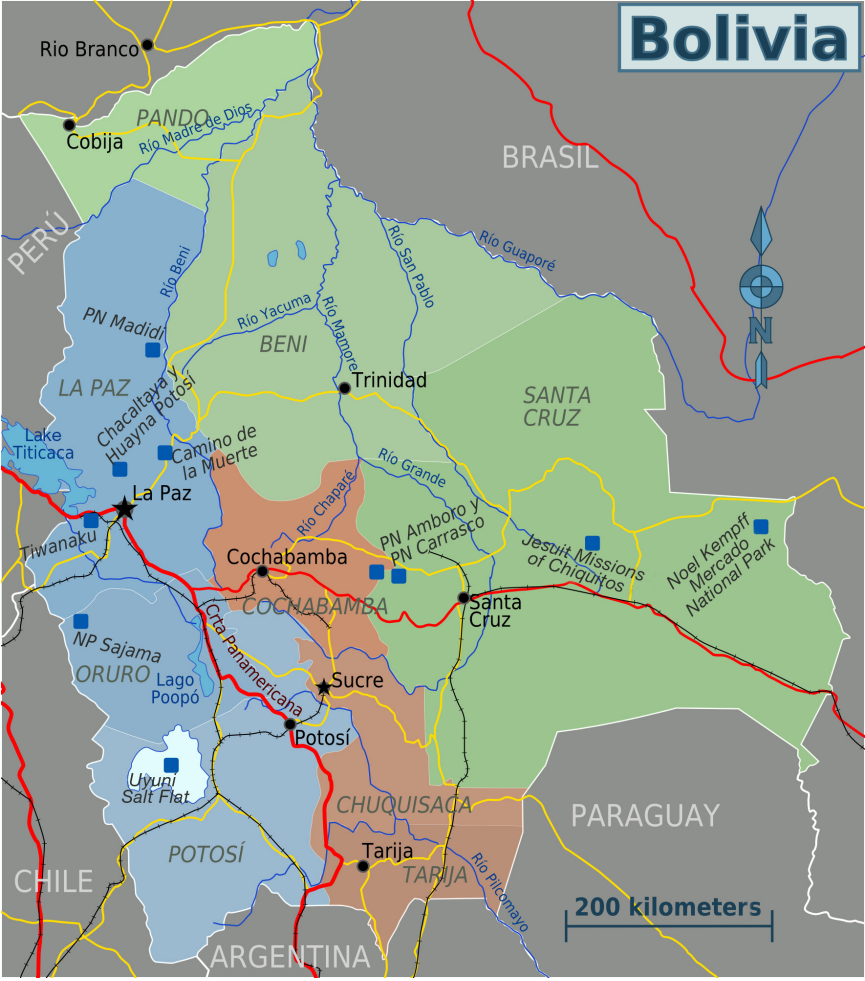


FIGURE 1. Map of Bolivia. Credit: Peter Fitzgerald. <https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/3.0>.

Introduction

The “Cultural Democratic Revolution” of Evo Morales

In August 2006, Bolivia witnessed a historic event, the inauguration of the Constituent Assembly, a convention of popularly elected delegates to rewrite the constitution and “refound the nation.” For many, this was the culmination of centuries of indigenous struggles against domination by white–mestizo elites. Colonized by the Spanish in the 1500s, Bolivia’s native peoples endured centuries of oppression and exploitation and were barred from cultural and political participation in colonial administration and later national affairs. Since the founding of the Republic of Bolivia in 1825, the white–mestizo political elite had written all the following constitutions, without meaningful representation by the indigenous poor who make up the majority of Bolivia’s population. But starting in 2000, the tables have begun to turn. A series of massive popular protests against neoliberal policies staged by indigenous peoples, peasants, and the urban poor forced the resignation of President Gonzalo Sánchez de Lozada, and in 2005, Bolivia elected its first self-identifying indigenous president, Evo Morales. Morales and his Movimiento al Socialismo (MAS; Movement towards Socialism) party gained the largest electoral majority since Bolivia’s return to democracy in the early 1980s, representing a sea change in the country’s political landscape. Claiming to represent Bolivia’s excluded peoples, Morales promised his government would inaugurate a “cultural democratic revolution” (Morales 2006). The next year, he convened the Constituent Assembly, a constitutional convention to rewrite the constitution, a long-held demand by indigenous organizations, to begin this revolution and codify into law the “process of change” that would lead to a decolonized Bolivia.

The Constituent Assembly began on August 6, the day on which Bolivians celebrate independence from Spain, in the beautiful colonial city of Sucre, where the

country's original constitution had been written in 1825. The city was filled with delegates, visitors, media, and large contingents from each of Bolivia's thirty-six indigenous groups, mingling in the noisy fiesta in the central plaza. My anthropologist credentials got me a press pass, so I was able to observe the ceremony with journalists from around the world. It was an amazing performance of indigenous pride and power. Right above us, from the balcony of the Palacio de Justicia, President Morales oversaw the festivities, flanked by his vice president, Álvaro García Linera, and various international luminaries, including the Nobel Peace Prize winner and Guatemalan indigenous leader Rigoberta Menchú. The president of the Assembly, Silvia Lazarte, a former domestic worker and union leader, called the Assembly to order. The most striking part of the day was the introduction of the 225 delegates, many of whom were dressed in clothing marking them as indigenous. As the roll call of clearly recognizable indigenous names rang out, it became clear that the authors of this constitution were very different from those of previous constitutions. "Mamani? Presente! Quispe? Presente!" Many of the delegates responded in their native tongues: Aymara, Quechua, Guaraní. All around me, faces were wet with tears, as we witnessed what would have seemed almost impossible ten years earlier: indigenous people making a new state. Vice President García Linera congratulated Bolivia's indigenous peoples for "reclaiming their place in society not with bullets, but with votes and words." He said Bolivia's strength is its "communitarian capacity," from which the rest of the world could learn. "The *jacha uru*, the great day, for the indigenous peoples has arrived," declared President Morales (Spinelli 2006). Then a rowdy parade began, made up of all the different social movements whose struggles had made this day possible: indigenous peoples in colorful traditional clothes, labor and peasant unions, women's organizations, students, and miners with their hard hats. With enormous pride, marchers sang and played traditional instruments, carrying signs encouraging the delegates to refound the nation and to begin the process of decolonizing Bolivia. "¡Nunca Más sin Nosotros!" declared the signs, "Never Again without Us!" The whole day, the descendants of those excluded for centuries past marched through the streets declaring that it was their turn to write the future.

Over the next two years, Bolivia's Constituent Assembly would be the site of tremendous conflict as its delegates struggled to rework the model of the state and the role of indigenous peoples within it. The resulting constitution, passed in a national referendum in 2009, declares Bolivia to be a plurinational, communitarian state, and establishes a series of rights for "indigenous originary and peasant peoples and nations," including rights to autonomy and self-government, to culture, recognition of their institutions, and the consolidation of their territories (Bolivia 2009: Article 2). More importantly, it declares the fundamental goal of the new plurinational state to be "decolonization." Article 9 of the new constitution codifies the idea into law, specifying the first goal and essential function of the



FIGURE 2. Guaraní women at the inauguration of the 2006 Constituent Assembly. Credit: Nancy Postero.

state as being to “constitute a just and harmonious society, cemented in *decolonization*, without discrimination or exploitation, with full social justice, to consolidate plurinational identities.”

This is the promise of the Morales government: to create a new form of state that will inaugurate a new kind of decolonized society. What does “decolonization” mean? How has the Morales government instituted this revolutionary idea and what have the effects been for Bolivia? Has the Morales government been able to fulfill the promises of this revolutionary idea? These are the questions this book seeks to answer. In this ethnography of indigenous state-making, I examine the discourses, policies, and practices of the Morales government to see what difference it might make for formerly oppressed groups to take state power. The Bolivian experiment inspired people across the world because it promised an alternative to both neoliberal economic policies and Western colonial legacies, especially racism. Because it drew from the repertoire of indigenous values and practices,



FIGURE 3. Celebrating the inauguration of the 2006 Constituent Assembly. Credit: Nancy Postero.

it challenged the fundamental tenets of liberalism, offering a chance to overturn them or at least modify them for the twenty-first century.

Yet my research shows that this did not happen. While the Morales government did enact policies that greatly benefited Bolivia's indigenous citizens, the "indigenous state" continues to be fundamentally liberal, and the country has not only continued but expanded its reliance on market capitalism. Indigeneity and decolonization were the rallying cries for the Morales revolution, serving as what the French political philosopher Jacques Rancière terms an emancipatory "politics" (Rancière 1999). Yet, as the MAS government consolidated its control and defeated its political adversaries on the right, its support for indigenous self-determination waned. Morales continues to invoke indigenous history and culture, but he does so in performances of a state-controlled version of indigeneity that legitimizes state power. The new constitution subsumes indigenous local autonomy rights under a liberal government in which the central state retains decision-making power over

most significant matters, especially as regards the extraction of natural resources. Moreover, the MAS government has made it clear that it will sacrifice some indigenous communities to its national development project.

The central argument in this book is that indigeneity has been transformed in Bolivia from a site of emancipation to one of liberal nation-state building. Since Morales came to power, inclusion and citizenship have increasingly been articulated in terms of class rather than of ethnicity. In recent years, Morales has argued for Bolivia's "economic liberation," blending anti-imperialism with market development. This new discourse is especially popular among the emerging indigenous middle class, who have benefited from the expanding economy. Yet it is not shared by all indigenous people. I document a number of sites where local indigenous communities are reasserting centuries-old demands for indigenous sovereignty in opposition to this conjuncture of liberalism and development.

Throughout this book, I focus on the deep disagreements these circumstances produce. In what follows in this Introduction, I introduce four central sites of contestation. First, I ask what it means to be indigenous and who counts as indigenous in Bolivia. To what extent are the tensions in contemporary Bolivia questions of race and racism? Second, I consider the multiple meanings of the idea of decolonization, and inquire into what a decolonized society would look like. Third, I look at the liberal state and ask what alternatives an "indigenous state" might produce. Finally, I consider the political struggles under way in Bolivia, introducing a key theoretical framework for the book in the form of Rancière's conception of politics. For Bolivia's indigenous peoples, Morales's administration represents a historic change, but there are deep disagreements about whether his government is producing an emancipatory politics for indigenous people or whether, like all liberal regimes, it is introducing a new form of policing. This fourth section investigates performance as a key tool of both politics and policing, showing how the struggles I describe—for control of the state, for decolonization, and for local autonomy—are enacted at the discursive and symbolic level, including spectacular political performances and rituals that invoke Bolivian history, religion, and culture.

THE MEANINGS OF INDIGENEITY

Evo Morales is Bolivia's first "indigenous" president. I put the word indigenous in quotation marks, because defining and representing indigeneity is a subject of great debate in Bolivia, as elsewhere in the world (see, e.g., Albro 2005, 2007; Canessa 2006, 2012; Postero and Zamosc 2004; K. Webber 2012, 2013). In Morales's life and political identity, we can see the complex intersections between race and class that characterize indigeneity. He was raised in a family of Aymara-speaking highland peasants, but he spent most of his life in the Chapare region of the lowlands, where he rose to be the president of the coca-growers' union. As a *cocalero*

leader, he originally emphasized class distinctions and anti-imperialism rather than ethnic demands, but during the multicultural 1990s, Morales gradually “Indianized” his position, making indigeneity a central part of his public persona and political agenda (Albro 2005). Yet he was careful in his 2005 electoral campaign to build a platform based on both class and ethnic demands, framing it in what Raúl Madrid has called “ethno-populist” terms (Madrid 2008). Robert Albro has demonstrated that one of the strengths of Morales’s MAS party was its ability to bridge between local, collective, and culture-based indigenous communities and identities, on the one hand, and an urban pluralist recognition of indigenous heritage not tied to specific localities, on the other (Albro 2005: 449). This gave indigenous politics a “new articulatory power” and made it an “effective tool for broad based coalition building,” since it linked the common lived experiences of displaced indigenous peasants, urban workers in the informal sector, and poor mestizos, all of whom were suffering the effects of neoliberal restructuring (449–50; see also Postero 2007a).

Once in office, Morales began to portray himself and his government as representing indigenous peoples, emphasizing indigeneity over class. Beginning with his Andean inauguration at the pre-Inca religious center of Tiwanaku in January 2006, where he was blessed by Aymara spiritual practitioners and recognized as Apumallku, or the highest authority (Postero 2007b), Morales has trumpeted his own indigenous identity and made indigeneity a central icon for his administration’s radical reforms. Over the years, he gradually formulated what Andrew Canessa calls the “new language of national political identity,” a discursive representation of indigeneity as the solution to domestic and global problems (Canessa 2006). In international fora, Morales proclaims indigenous values like *suma qamaña* (living well), a model of sustainable development based on respect for Mother Earth, to articulate agendas on climate change and coca production (Postero 2012). At the domestic level, Morales has passed an important anti-racism law and established a Vice Ministry of Decolonization to put into effect a “process of change” to cleanse Bolivian society of racism and patriarchy and to recuperate indigenous identities and customs (Cárdenas 2011: 16). I concur with Canessa’s argument that in Bolivia, “political legitimacy rests on being indigenous.” He notes that Morales has positioned indigeneity as a site from which to defend and protect the nation’s national resources and to push for social justice. “In short,” he concludes, “indigeneity is the foundation of a new nationalism” (Canessa 2012: 17–18).

How has indigeneity taken on such a positive valence, and how is it defined? Who counts as “indigenous” in any society is a fundamentally political question, since such representations emerge from struggles over particular social, cultural, environmental, and economic matters at particular moments (García 2008; Friedlander 1975). It is a historically contingent formulation that changes over time. Moreover, indigeneity is relational; like all forms of identity, it emerges

from contested and co-constituting social fields of difference and sameness (see Bigenho 2007; Fuss 1995 Nelson 1999). As Marisol de la Cadena and Orin Starn point out, “indigenous cultural practices, institutions, and politics *become such* in articulation with what is not considered indigenous within the particular social formation in which they exist” (2007: 4). Thus, throughout this book, when I use the terms “indigenous” or “white–mestizo,” I am referring to social categories that take on specific meanings in the Bolivian context.

Race is a central line of fracture in Bolivia, where somewhere between 40 and 60 percent of people identify in national censuses as indigenous (INE 2003, 2012). There is an enormous diversity among this self-identifying group, with big differences between highland and lowland communities and between urban and rural residents. Yet the dominant class has grappled with “the Indian question” in every era—trying to determine the proper role of indigenous people in society and the economy (Postero and Zamosc 2004; Zavaleta Mercado 1986). In some eras, this question was explicitly tied to race; in others, it was described in terms of ethnicity or subsumed under class. Following Peter Wade (1997), I use the terms “race” and “racism” to describe relations between Bolivia’s native peoples and the whites and mestizos who dominated them for centuries. Needless to say, scientists now agree that there is no basis for describing human differences in terms of race, but in Bolivia, indigenous people have been and continue to be subjected to overt racism. Thus, describing these relations as “racialized” draws attention to the ways creating and enforcing categories of difference can act as a form of domination. In Bolivia, racialized difference was created historically in part through long-term extractivist patterns of development that tore native peoples from their lands, exploited their labor, and denied them full membership in the polity (Galeano 1973; Larson 2004; Platt 1982). Racism in the form of discourses about the inferiority, savagery, and childishness of Indians justified this violence, but racism was also produced in the practices and power relations that resulted. That is, in wielding power over indigenous peoples and claiming the right to exploit their territories’ resources, white–mestizo elites enacted the situated practices of domination I am referring to as racism.

In the Bolivian case, Thomas Abercrombie argues that the colonial opposition of “Indian” to “European” was always a semiotic construction based in a system of inequality (Abercrombie 2001: 97). Before contact with Europeans, of course, no such overarching category united native communities and groups. Beginning in the colonial era, Indians were forced to pay tribute taxes and to work in near-slavery conditions on colonizers’ haciendas and in silver mines, the profits of which helped fuel Europe’s industrial revolution (Galeano 1973). In the lowlands, native peoples were forced into servitude during the rubber boom. In the colonial period, difference was explicitly racialized; the *casta* system, based on “blood purity,” determined status. After the conquest, and with colonization by the Spanish, already

fragmented Andean communities underwent radical transformations—their ritual-economic-political systems were replaced by Christian practices, and their noble authorities by town councils. These changes may have eliminated the differentia of Indianness and produced what Silvia Rivera Cusicanqui calls a “cultural mestizaje” (1993: 64), but Abercrombie argues that the invented category persisted because it was the foundation of both Spanish landholders’ claims to labor and, ironically, for native peoples’ claims to limited autonomy (Abercrombie 2001: 104). These stereotypes were “invested with terrible power” (ibid): those categorized as Indians were forced to provide labor and tribute and restricted from living in certain places, like city centers (Platt 1982; Harris 1995). Aníbal Quijano concludes that these colonial structures of political and cultural domination established new racialized social identities based on the distribution of work, which set in place a long-term system of classification and knowledge production he calls the “coloniality of power” (Quijano 2007). In Bolivia, Rivera Cusicanqui argues, this colonial opposition was a dialectical process. Through permanent confrontation of images and self-images, three fundamental identities were forged: *indio* (Indian), *q̄ara* (white), and *cholo* (mestizo), the latter being a category filled with ambiguity and discursive insecurity (Rivera Cusicanqui 1993: 57–60).

The oppositional categories were both exacerbated and then reformulated as a result of the “age of insurrection” in the 1780s, when Andeans mounted a formidable rebellion against Spanish colonial power, and then again after the 1898 civil war, when the Aymara cacique Pablo Zárate (dubbed *el temible Willka*—“the frightful Wilka”—by the local press), who fought with the Federal army, provoked a rising in the Altiplano against the liberal government in La Paz. After a massacre of whites and mestizos by Willka’s followers, fears of “race war” caused Bolivia’s mestizo–Creole elite to rethink the position of indigenous populations vis-à-vis the state (Bigenho 2006: 267; Egan 2007). In their search for enlightened methods to control the native population, Bolivian artists, intellectuals, and writers developed a “discourse on the autochthonous,” expressing “ambivalent racial sentiments of pride, nostalgia, and fascination with the Indian” (Sanjinés 2004). Gabrielle Kuenzli documents, for instance, how intellectuals and local communities reworked the meaning of Aymara identity, seeking to cleanse it of its “barbarism” by projecting fictional links to a noble Inca past (Kuenzli 2013). Known as *indigenismo*, this new vision sought to bring Indians into the nation by disciplining, improving, or assimilating them.

After winning independence from Spain in 1825, Creole elites exploited native peoples in different ways, arguing that indigenous collective landholding was an obstacle to the creation of a modern nation-state. Legislation deprived Indians of their lands and drove them into exploitative labor relations with rich landowners. A small cadre of mestizo families controlled the mining sector, also fueled by indigenous labor (Rivera Cusicanqui 1983 [2003]; Larson 2004; Zavaleta Mercado

1986). Dissatisfaction with these patron–peon patterns contributed largely to revolution in 1952. Peasant uprisings and land takeovers pushed the new government to put an end to the system of large landowning, called *latifundio*, and to implement a wide-ranging agrarian reform to give the indigenous peasant farming class access to land. After the 1952 revolution, the category of Indian was erased and rural people were all considered simply as *campesinos*, or peasants, their differences elided in an effort to produce a mestizo nation. In this period, the category of Indian was buried in the discourse of class, but racism did not disappear. If the category of *campesino* was intended to resolve the “Indian question” by drawing attention away from race or ethnicity, in practice, indigenous peasants continued to feel the effects of racism. The reforms after the revolution were intended to reverse some of the worst of these abuses, but they made only slight inroads into the structured poverty that resulted from the colonial land grabs.

As Michelle Bigenho explains, *indigenismo* was critical to this effort as well, as staged performances of Indian culture and folklore contributed to a reformulation of indigeneity. As the elite appropriated and enacted Indian customs and culture in order to domesticate and incorporate them, the fictional and essentialized boundaries between Indians and Europeans became blurred, transforming indigeneity from a despised category into the basis of a reconceptualized mestizo nation (Bigenho 2006: 274). Meanwhile, the liberal form of citizenship instituted after 1952 relied on a “cultural package of behavioral prescriptions designed to turn the unruly but ‘passive’ Indian into an active mestizo ‘citizen’: property-owning, integrated into the capitalist market, and ‘castilianized’ (speaking Spanish)” (Rivera Cusicanqui 2010b: 33). *Mestizaje* thus became the dominant paradigm for the Bolivian nation. This meant, in part that the status of mestizo became blurred with whiteness, as the educated and elite classes identified themselves as mestizos. I use the term “white–mestizo” to refer to this group, who may be seen by indigenous people as *q̄aras*, or whites, but may see themselves as mestizos. But as Rivera Cusicanqui makes clear, the integrating mechanisms of school, army barracks, and union also generated new forms of violence and exclusion, simultaneously recomposing the devalued categories of *cholos* and indigenous (Rivera Cusicanqui 1993: 78). During the years of dictatorship that followed, these structures were further exacerbated, as elites expanded their cattle, logging, and agribusiness empires, taking over indigenous lands throughout the lowlands.

Andean intellectuals began rethinking this politics of race and class, and in the 1980s, the Aymara-based Katarista movement pushed a more nuanced revolutionary vision, characterizing oppression of indigenous people as the result of both their ethnicity and their class (Hurtado 1986; Reinaga 1969). They began not only to struggle for economic justice but also to push for the recognition and defense of their history, values, and language. Lamenting the paternalism of Bolivian society and the humiliating poverty in which they lived, they called for indigenous

peasants to organize as a people (*pueblo*) whose most important resource is its culture. While not explicitly referring to race, the Kataristas spoke of oppression, racism, human rights, and the liberation of the Indian peoples (Hurtado 1986).

The term “indigenous” that we hear today became dominant in the 1980s, sparked in part by an international discourse of indigenous rights (Postero and Zamosc 2004; Tsing 2007). Responding in part to marches and increasingly public demands by indigenous peoples inspired by the new discourses of identity politics and the long historical memory of resistance, in the 1990s, the Bolivian government implemented a new scheme of neoliberal multicultural citizenship, which included expanded political participation, intercultural education, and collective territorial titling. The category of “indigenous people” (*pueblos indígenas*) became the term of choice for lowland peoples, and “originary peoples” (*pueblos originarios*) for highland peoples. For neoliberal politicians, the answer to the Indian question was to transform unruly Indians into disciplined political participants and responsible managers of their own territories and communities (Postero 2007a). In this era, difference was overtly recognized and tamed: Indians were now indigenous citizens, but this citizenship was limited. Indigenous citizens could participate in local government as long as they were carefully inserted into the neoliberal system of governance (Hale 2004; Postero 2007a). Lowland groups took up the indigenous label to organize demands for territory, relying on international conceptions of indigenous rights such as the International Labour Organization’s 1989 Indigenous and Tribal Peoples Convention (No. 169), which was adopted by Bolivia in 1991. Highland groups were less enthusiastic about this new framing, since many of them had successfully organized as peasant unions (Rivera Cusicanqui 1983 [2003]). Katinka Webber shows how even in the lowlands, some groups never self-identified as indigenous, but did adopt the category in order to make claims on the state or access legal rights such as territorial titles (K. Webber 2012). Nevertheless, 62 percent of the adult population reportedly self-identified as indigenous in the 2001 census (INE 2003). Yet despite this seeming advance in the recognition of oppressed peoples, the neoliberal period of privatization and structural adjustment did little to change their economic situation. A World Bank study indicated that 52 percent of Bolivia’s indigenous peoples still lived in extreme poverty in 2004 (World Bank 2005).

The Bolivian case demonstrates that, rather than being a static identity, indigeneity is a contested and changing “relational field of governance, subjectivities, and knowledges” (de la Cadena and Starn 2007: 3). The Morales victory in 2005 represented a historic chance to rewrite the national narrative and to provide new answers to the persistent Indian question. Thus, while the Morales administration was concerned with restructuring the economy, launching a new national development model, and rolling back two decades of neoliberalism, it was also engaged in a critical battle over the meaning of indigeneity. From the beginning of

his administration, Morales took on the role of representing indigenous people in this historic reconfiguration. Through political spectacles and speeches invoking his Andean ancestors, Morales made clear that his administration was fundamentally committed to changing the position of indigenous people in Bolivia. He has continued this role throughout his time as president, invoking indigenous history and customs as the backbone of the new Bolivia and the source of the new decolonized society.

The Morales government has brought about enormous changes for Bolivia's native peoples. First, having an indigenous president has been a source of great pride for Bolivians who identify as indigenous or of indigenous heritage. Second, the MAS government has overturned many of the neoliberal economic policies, notably by "nationalizing" the hydrocarbon industry and returning a significant portion of the profits to the country's poor in the form of infrastructure projects and cash transfers. The government's continued adherence to a development model based on extraction of natural resources has many critics, especially among those whose lands continue to be sacrificed to it. However, many see sharing the benefits of Bolivia's "patrimony" with the poor and indigenous as a sort of *pachakuti*, or radical reversal of Bolivia's history. But perhaps the most important changes have been constitutional and legal. The 2009 constitution declares Bolivia to be a plurinational, communitarian state, and establishes a series of rights for "indigenous originary and peasant peoples and nations," including rights to autonomy and self-government, to culture, recognition of their institutions, and the consolidation of their territories (Bolivia 2009: Article 2).

In practice, however, the meaning of indigeneity and the claims of indigenous people remain sites of bitter contestation. As Anna Tsing suggests, "powerful frames for indigeneity are also spaces for disagreement. Not everyone can fit into these frames" (Tsing 2007: 52). Critics argue that the emancipatory language about indigenous rights in the constitution obscures the more important results of the constitution: the overarching power of the central state in the new model (Tapia 2010; Regalsky 2010). At the Constituent Assembly, the MAS, which controlled the majority of the delegates, vetoed indigenous activists' proposals for indigenous self-determination and finally passed a much-reduced version of indigenous autonomy with limited authority and resources (Garcés 2011). Many indigenous activists, especially from the lowlands, are now opposed to the MAS, claiming that it has abandoned the revolutionary promise of plurinationalism and instead institutionalized a liberal, reformist, centralized state (Regalsky 2010). A second example of this contestation is the recent conflict over the government's proposed highway through the Territorio Indígena y Parque Nacional Isiboro Sécure (TIPNIS; Isiboro Sécure Indigenous Territory and National Park), described in chapter 5. The TIPNIS case shows the stark contrast between the government's international claims to put into effect a development model based on indigenous Andean

cosmovisiones (worldviews), on the one hand, and state practices that harshly impact indigenous lands and livelihoods, on the other.

DECOLONIZATION: DISCOURSE AND PRACTICE

The fundamental means by which Morales and the MAS government have both claimed and reworked the meaning of indigeneity is through the use of the discourse and attendant policies of decolonization. Decolonization is not defined in the constitution, but the term is used widely in Bolivia, often to refer to efforts to overcome the legacies of colonial forms of domination to enable a new society based on social justice. For some, it means ending racism (Chivi 2011b). For others, the main goal is to overturn structures of inequality built into the political and landownership systems (Portugal 2011). Yet others point to the need to make visible the multicultural and plurilinguistic character of Bolivia (Vega Camacho 2011) and to democratize the country by creating equal opportunities for all (Patzi 2009). I consider decolonization to be a form of transitional justice, a term I borrow from the human rights literature (e.g., Arthur 2009), where it is used to refer generally to mechanisms to move post-civil war societies past the horrors of war and to create new patterns of peaceful coexistence. I see decolonization in that way, as an effort to move beyond racialized systems of servitude and structural inequalities to a new, more equitable society. These goals are, of course, horizons, and this book traces the difficult and often contested efforts of the Bolivian state and its citizens to move towards them. The discourse of decolonization is a way of representing or orienting these efforts, by drawing attention to past injustices and the forms of knowledge, power, and subjectivities that persist into the contemporary era.

In the Bolivian public sphere, several overlapping lines of thought that come together in these definitions can be identified (see Portugal 2011a and Zuñiga 2014). All of them begin with colonization, the violent system of genocide, dispossession, and exploitation imposed by the Spanish crown. The first is a very local “Indianista” perspective put forward by Bolivian indigenous intellectuals and others who consider decolonization as the necessary overturning of foreign control over native lands. Inspired by Fausto Reinaga, who declared in *La revolución india* (1969) that the only solution to the Indian problem was emancipation, these thinkers, many of them from the Katarista movement, look to the history of oppression and land dispossession as the key to decolonization. The Aymara intellectual Pedro Portugal Mollinedo personifies this trend, arguing that decolonization is “the process by which the peoples who were stripped of their self-government by the foreign invasion recuperate their self-determination” (2011: 65). For him, decolonization is a “concrete historical and political process” that “liquidates the colonial system” and returns territory to the original owners (66). This is a primarily political approach, focused on taking control of state and territory.

A second important line of thought comes from subaltern studies (see Guha 1983), focused on revolutionary decolonizing efforts in other formerly colonized countries like India and Algeria. A key influence for this perspective is Franz Fanon, who argued that decolonization was an inherently violent process through which the entire society would be transformed and new decolonized subject would be born (Fanon 1963). This focus on the “subjectivity of the colonized” calls on colonized subjects to decolonize themselves and their ways of thinking. It also calls attention to the question of internal colonialism, a topic of continuing interest to Bolivian scholars (Cárdenas 2011; Chivi 2011a; Rivera Cusicanqui 1983; Zavaleta Mercado 1986). The postcolonial studies of academics such as Walter Mignolo (2000), Aníbal Quijano (2007), and Catherine Walsh (2007) offer a third important line of thought. While there are many differences among these thinkers, their collective contribution to this debate is a focus on the relation between power, knowledge, and culture. They point out how colonial forms of domination obscured indigenous ways of thinking and knowing, privileging Western categories and epistemologies—what is termed “coloniality of knowledge” (Quijano 2007). A fundamental aspect of this critique is a recognition of the ongoing nature of this distortion in what is termed “modernity/coloniality,” thus calling for a rethinking of the binaries between nature and culture that underlie capitalism and development (see Escobar 2007, 2008, 2010; Blaser 2010; de la Cadena 2010, 2015). In this view, decolonization requires thinking and speaking from a different locus of enunciation, claiming a new epistemological relation to the state, and recuperating non-Western culture, language, cosmology, and forms of being. A Bolivian example of this perspective is the Aymara philosopher Rafael Bautista, who argues that the central feature of colonial domination is the still powerful myth of white superiority, which devalued indigenous cultures, religions, languages, and ways of life. In his view, to decolonize Bolivian society is to cleanse it of these dangerous foundations and recuperate indigenous pride, forms of knowledge, and practices (personal communication, August 22, 2012). The new society will involve a new “ethical structuration of the subject,” based on the principle of *vivir bien* (living well) and the protection of Mother Earth (Bautista 2010b). While this approach is often criticized as merely culturalist or for failing to combine these insights with the political urgency of engaged social movements (see Rivera Cusicanqui 2010: 58; Portugal 2011), it remains an important rationale in most debates in Bolivia (see, e.g., Burman 2011b; Víaña et al. 2010). The Aymara feminist Julieta Paredes concludes that while decolonization must also address the material aspects of colonial domination, a central task is “create a new imaginary, a new concept of culture.” During the neoliberal era, much of the nation’s creative work was taken over by the middle class, she told me. Decolonization now requires reconceptualizing society in ways that “decolonize both heads and bodies, but mostly heads, ways of thinking. . . . We Indians ourselves have to be creating, producing poetry” (personal communication, July 2012).

DECOLONIZING THE STATE

The MAS government has produced several documents that provide guidelines for how decolonization should orient state action. Its 2006 Plan Nacional de Desarrollo (PND; National Development Plan) mandated that the state dismantle the colonial state apparatus and eliminate colonial forms of domination in all social spheres (Bolivia 2006: 14). This would require a transformation of the state, a recognition of the political, economic, and cultural practices of previously excluded peoples, and a focus on representations, discourses, and ideological structures of race and ethnicity. Idón Chivi, a key spokesperson for the Vice Ministry of Decolonization, suggests that decolonization must be carried out in multiple dimensions, intervening at the political level through state policies, programs, and legislation, as well as at the cultural level, remaking the Bolivian imagination (*Cambio* 2011).

The MAS insists that by exposing coloniality in all its aspects, the state can construct a just society (Mamani and Chivi 2010: 25). Taking a cue from Aníbal Quijano, Bolivia's Viceministro de Descolonización declared that "decolonization is the concentration of state energies to combat racism and patriarchy (the substrate of coloniality), and it is accomplished by critically establishing the functioning of the coloniality of knowledge, power, and being" (ibid). It promises to do this by establishing new normative models, redesigning institutions, and projecting new horizons and life goals for the new generation (24–26). In chapter 3, I focus on efforts to generate changes at the symbolic and cultural levels. Using the example of a spectacular "collective wedding of our traditions" that the Vice Ministry held in 2011, I examine how decolonization works to foment alternative positive visions of indigeneity and how the state relies on idealizations of indigeneity to justify its own agendas.

This brings us to the fundamental question of the state. The central paradox of the decolonization process in Bolivia today is the tension between the desire to overturn coloniality and all its legacies and the use of liberal state mechanisms to do so. In this book, I trace the ways the Morales government uses the tools and apparatus of the state to advance its anti-colonial agenda and, in the process, engages in state formation, constructing a powerful image of a new plurinational state and its acceptable subjects. Here, I follow Akhil Gupta, who argues that states "are not just functional bureaucratic apparatuses, but powerful sites of symbolic and cultural production" (Gupta 2012: 43). The sociologist Philip Abrams has argued that we should think about the state, not as an ontological reality, but as a powerful "idea" endowed with "coherence, singularity, and legitimacy." The state acts as a mask that "prevents our seeing political practice as it is." Consequently, we should suspend our belief in the "state idea" and instead consider how this idea and the resulting "state system" (institutional apparatus and its practices) combine to legitimize rule and domination (Abrams [1977] 1988: 82; see also Gupta and Sharma 2006: 279).

This has several implications. First, the assumed reality and coherence of the state must be questioned. Abrams's followers use this insight to draw attention to the fact that states are "imagined": they are "entities that are conceptualized and made socially effective through particular imaginative and symbolic devices" (Gupta 2012: 43; Krupa and Nugent 2015). This calls for us to study the apparatus of the state to discover how this idea is mobilized, represented, and imbricated in state institutions and practices, such as bureaucracy, state rituals, and so on (Gupta 2012: 43). Second, the understanding of the state as created calls our attention to the processes by which this occurs and the effects this has on the subjects of the state. Following Abrams, Philip Corrigan and Derek Sayer (1985) make clear that state formation is a "cultural revolution." "The repertoire of activities and institutions conventionally identified as the state," they argue, are "cultural forms," "statements that define, in great detail, acceptable forms and images of social activity and individual and collective identity. . . . [They] regulate much of social life" (3). We can thus understand the state as a "performative category," an idea that is performed and reiterated, creating new forms of subjectivity in the process (Blom Hansen and Stepputat 2005: 7).

In the Bolivian case I describe here, I begin by demonstrating the lack of coherence in the MAS state. Chapter 1 describes the diverse and often conflicting ideologies and agendas of those who brought the MAS to power and took places in the state apparatus. These divisions, especially between indigenous activists pushing sustainable development based on native *cosmovisiones*, and leftists pushing industrialization, have proved long-lasting. Chapters 4 and 5 return to these schisms and the bitter disputes over national development models based on resource extraction. Yet a key contribution of the book is showing how, at least in the first years of their administration, Morales and his MAS party officials engaged in state formation by mobilizing a discourse of decolonization. The Bolivian state is not coherent by any means, but its actors engage in a wide range of "decolonizing" activities, ranging from legislation and policy to public speeches and spectacular performances. I observe how these constitute a "cultural revolution," and how they seek to form certain acceptable subjects of the plurinational state. Yet, as Abrams insisted, the point here is to understand the disunity and struggle concealed by the mask of a coherent state (Abrams [1977] 1988: 79). Throughout the book, I show how the discourse of decolonization operates to enable certain practices and to silence others. This offers a challenge to those who hold out decolonization as an incontrovertible good, asking us to see what is produced by its invocation and what is obscured.

One of the greatest disagreements the Morales government has had to face has to do with what form the state should take. When Morales came to power, his "democratic cultural revolution" proposed a new kind of state. Exhausted by centuries of liberal government, which had benefited the white–mestizo class, many

indigenous activists hoped to refound the state and create a regime based upon indigenous customs and ontologies, or ways of understanding reality. In their view, the indigenous Bolivian state offered an exciting challenging to the liberal state. Liberalism is a complicated concept, with a long history, both economic and political dimensions, and multiple interpretations (see Brown 2003). Restricting ourselves here to the political dimension, we can say that liberalism's central tenet is individual liberty. As Wendy Brown puts it, "liberalism signifies an order in which the state exists to secure the freedom of individuals on a formally egalitarian basis" (ibid.). A liberal state can have a variety of differing economic policies, leaning towards Keynesian welfare policies to maximize equality or towards the maximization of free trade and competition. Regardless of which economic policies are favored, however, liberalism requires constitutional constraints on the arbitrary exercise of governmental authority. "The *sine qua non* of the liberal state in all its varieties is that governmental power and authority be limited by a system of constitutional rules and practices in which individual liberty and the equality of persons under the rule of law are respected" (Gray 2003: 71–72). Yet scholars have long noted that liberalism's embrace of individual liberty is based on systematic exclusion of those not deemed worthy of rights (Mehta 1997). As is well known, the foundations of liberalism were established in the French and American revolutionary constitutions, which summarily excluded slaves, women, and the illiterate from citizenship (Holston 2008; Dubois 2004). In Bolivia, liberal citizenship schemes since the republican era excluded the large indigenous majority (Postero 2007a). Even after universal suffrage was officially granted after the 1952 revolution, indigenous people lacked substantive citizenship rights and protections. Thus, liberalism offers little inspiration for most indigenous Bolivians.

The Portuguese scholar Boaventura de Sousa Santos has documented the exciting turn to refound the state across Latin America, and to imagine alternatives to liberalism, colonialism, and capitalism. He points to a central tension across the region between those who think that the liberal state is so linked to the colonial past that it cannot be redeemed, and those who believe that if reformed, the state can be part of the solution (Santos 2010: 63). In Bolivia, for instance, the Aymara intellectual Pablo Mamani has argued that trying to use the power of the liberal state to reorder society is an inherently colonial move that does nothing to alter the ontology of power. Santos argues that the central question remains whether the liberal state, long an instrument of racialized and class hegemony, can become a counterhegemonic instrument. Can social movements seeking justice find use in the tools of liberalism, like representative democracy, the rule of law, human rights, and constitutionalism? (67).

There are no simple answers to Santos's question. The Morales government has found itself caught between its critiques of previous liberal states and its own embrace of liberal democracy. The MAS came to power through peaceful elections,

and it continues to legitimize its rule as democratically elected. Yet at the 2006 Constituent Assembly, the MAS was accused of illiberal and anti-democratic power grabs. Moreover, the new liberal Bolivian state, controlled by a political party intent on consolidating its power, also posed obstacles to the demands for liberation proposed by indigenous peoples. The MAS's choice to condense power into the central state forms the basis of vehement dissent, as social movement actors lament the foreclosing of popular and communal forms of political practice in favor of state institutions. The Bolivian case analyzed here confirms that the reality of political practices is disunity, even in an indigenous-led state.

POLITICS, DISAGREEMENT, AND PERFORMANCE

Throughout this book, I draw inspiration from the French political philosopher Jacques Rancière, who defines politics as a process of emancipation brought about by disagreement. Rancière's terms feel somewhat awkward in English translation, but I find them useful in understanding how those excluded from power can become legible political subjects. He distinguishes between two terms. "Policing" is the implicit law or order that partitions out places and forms of participation and exclusion in the world. This partition creates coordinates whereby some people have recognizable "parts" in society, while others are "the part with no part." "Politics," on the other hand, involves calling attention to the "scandal" of this distribution and to the exclusions it creates (Rancière 1999). The essence of politics thus resides in acts that challenge the seemingly natural order of bodies in the name of equality and, in the process, reconfigure the existing order (Rancière 2006 [2004]: 90). By emphasizing these disagreements, it becomes possible to interpret the ongoing forms of contestation that animate contemporary Bolivia as its people attempt to decolonize, develop, and refashion their country as a plurinational indigenous state.

Using Rancière's terms, we can think of indigenous organizing over recent decades as an emancipatory politics intended to draw attention to the "miscount" or exclusion of indigenous peoples from the nation. By making their presence visible, this "part without a part" demonstrates the "wrong" committed by the police order, or the structures of society. There is little doubt that during the "water war" in 2000 and the "gas war" in 2003, Bolivia's excluded indigenous and poor inhabitants made themselves visible, claiming their rights as citizens, and demanding to be taken into account (Postero 2007a). Yet as the colonial studies approach to decolonization makes clear, this recount does not happen only at the institutional or legal level, but also at deep cultural and even psychological levels. Rancière describes this in terms of aesthetics, explaining that a fundamental way that society is ordered is through a "distribution of the sensible." By this he refers to the ways in which certain people and certain voices are neither seen nor heard: they are

simply not perceived. It is only through disagreement, through polemically inserting their voices into what is supposed to be a common sphere, that the order can be changed and the previously excluded be perceived (Rancière 1999: 41).

But how do those seemingly invisible “parts without a part” make themselves visible? Judith Butler argues that much of what we see as political activism is in fact performative. Building on Hannah Arendt’s notion of the “space of appearance” (Arendt 1958: 198), Butler says: “when bodies assemble on the street, in the square, or in other forms of public space . . . they are exercising a plural and performative right to appear, one that asserts and instates the body in the midst of the political field, and which in its expressive and signifying function, delivers a bodily demand for a more livable set of economic, social, and political conditions no longer afflicted by induced forms of precarity” (Butler 2015: 11). Butler argues that through the performative act of “appearing,” what she calls “enactments”—some through language, and others through the body—even the most disenfranchised can “reclaim or resignify” existing social relations, thus exposing and, sometimes, transforming the limits of the political. In this view, we can see the efforts of the state, and especially the Vice Ministry of Decolonization, to make coloniality visible as an ongoing “politics” with a goal of reordering the distribution of the sensible. Throughout Bolivia’s history, indigenous peoples have been discursively opposed to whites and mestizos and depicted as savage obstacles to modernity and progress. The fundamental task of decolonization is to change these ideas, held at the deepest aesthetic levels. The political theorist Benjamin Arditi evokes the image of the “awkward guest” who calls on “the disruptive noise of the people,” disregarding the “table manners of democratic politics” (Arditi 2007: 78). Decolonization can act this way, too. Vice Minister of Decolonization Félix Cárdenas told me in 2011 that his job is to “dismantle and deconstruct the colonial state . . . to make everyone uncomfortable, to question everything” (personal interview, August 2011).

Following Butler and Rancière, then, we can see that a central role of decolonization is to provide a “space of appearance” for those rendered invisible by colonial legacies. Discursive battles over names and images do some of this work. As I describe in chapter 1, for instance, the government has taken great care to name new public works after indigenous heroes. The Túpac Katari communications satellite launched in 2013, named after the leader of anti-colonial insurrection in 1781, is a prime example. However, throughout the book, I also focus on the realm of performance, and especially on the highly contested sphere of political ritual. Diana Taylor argues that performances function as “vital acts of transfer, transmitting social knowledge, memory, and a sense of identity” through reiterated behaviors. “Embodied practice,” she says, “offers a way of knowing” (2003: 2–3). While there are many sorts of performances in the public sphere, she especially focuses on theatricality and spectacle, where actors draw from the ephemeral repertoire of embodied practices and knowledge such as spoken language, dance, and ritual (19).

I use this notion of performance to demonstrate how the actors on all sides of the Bolivian political spectrum use their bodies and charged symbols of indigeneity, history, and the nation in public performances. Morales is especially adept in his performance of indigeneity, gaining legitimacy for his government agenda, but, as becomes clear in my analysis of the TIPNIS controversy (chapter 5), performances and claims about indigeneity also bolster the claims of state critics, disrupting the police order.

I have suggested that we can see decolonization as a form of emancipatory politics. Returning to Rancière, I want to propose that the discourse and practices of decolonization can also act as a form of “policing.” That is, the state can utilize the ideas and rhetoric of decolonization to legitimate its own power, turning decolonization from a call for alternative epistemologies into a state-sponsored form of multicultural recognition. The state has enormous power to engage in what Corrigan and Sayer call “moral regulation” (1998: 3–4). As described in the previous section, the Morales state has engaged in an active campaign to represent indigenous peoples, in the process defining acceptable versions of indigeneity. Throughout this book, however, I explore the possibility that the decolonization discourse linked to a generic form of indigeneity acts to consolidate state power. By silencing the heterogeneity and disagreement about indigenous life and throwing the weight of the state behind a particular vision of indigeneity, the state acts as if there were a consensus about what decolonization is and who counts as the subjects of it. To the extent that this succeeds, we can characterize it as “post-political,” a term political philosophers use to describe practices of governance that operate through a prefigured consensus surrounding the seemingly politically neutral fields of intervention (Rancière 2006; Swyngedouw 2009, 2010; Žižek 1999, 2006; Postero and Elinoff, forthcoming).

However, as this book demonstrates over and over again, indigeneity and decolonization are not neutral fields, but sites of overarching tension and contradiction that have been reworked and recontextualized in the Morales era. In the second half of the book, I argue that as the Morales government has continued and expanded its dependence on extractive development, these organizing frameworks have been at the center of enormous public battles over national development models and race. In chapters 4 and 5, I describe how the government tries to balance the tensions between capitalist notions of industrialization and extraction and alternative visions of development based on indigenous customs and values.

I argue that the resulting contestations are contestations over race. On the one hand, the government’s agenda sparked a strong, violent racist countermovement from elite white–mestizo agribusiness in the eastern lowlands for regional autonomy and independence from the central state. On the other, notwithstanding government rhetoric to the contrary, the country’s extractivist development model adversely affects indigenous communities. Furthermore, This tension came to a

head in the controversy over the government's plan to build a highway through the TIPNIS national park and indigenous territory, which illuminates how indigenous peoples' bodies and territories continue to be the site of political and economic violence by both the Left and the Right.

In chapter 6, I argue that in recent years, indigeneity and decolonization have undergone yet another recontextualization. I show how since 2011, decolonization and indigenous culture have been displaced by a new discourse of "economic liberation," through which the state has combined its earlier demands for economic justice with an emphasis on national sovereignty. Through a case study of three local indigenous communities, I show how in some circumstances, ethnic identities are giving way to class alliances as indigenous groups press for justice. In the final chapter 7, I describe the determined efforts of one indigenous Guaraní community, that of Charagua, to make strategic use of the discourses of decolonization and the new tools in the plurinational constitution to work towards long-held goals of indigenous autonomy.

This study of the confusing and exhilarating world of indigenous state-making in Bolivia focuses precisely on the blurry boundary between politics and policing, illuminating the tensions within liberalism, the continuing costs of capitalist development, and the promises of a decolonized Bolivia. The cover of this book—a satellite image of deforestation in the department of Santa Cruz, the product of the expansion of agriculture, ranches, and neighborhoods into the zone's tropical forests—attempts to articulate these tensions. Is it beautiful or terrifying—or both?

SITUATING THE AUTHOR

Before going further, I want to take a moment to situate myself and to give the reader a way to fit this book into the larger trajectory of my research. It builds on over twenty years of research in Bolivia. I first traveled to Bolivia as a radio journalist in 1990, working on a series called *Vanishing Homelands* that was aired on National Public Radio (see <http://homelands.org/projects/vanishing-homelands>). That series focused on the relation between development, indigenous peoples, and the environment, and took me all over Latin America. But it was Bolivia that captured my passion. While producing stories about indigenous peoples and missionaries in the Bolivian tropics, and the informal market in Cochabamba, I learned about the growing indigenous peoples' movement in Bolivia and their revolutionary demands to transform Bolivian society. I was determined to follow—and understand—this fascinating process. I entered graduate school in 1994, seeking theoretical tools to help me do so, and began research for my dissertation in 1995. Since 1995, I have divided my time between California and Bolivia, where I lived for extended periods between 1997 and 2000, and have subsequently returned every year or two for summer fieldwork.

In Bolivia, to understand national-level politics, I work in the nation's capital, La Paz, but my home base is in Santa Cruz de la Sierra, the capital of the lowland state of Santa Cruz, where I have worked with the Guaraní indigenous organization, the Capitanía Zona Cruz, since 1995. The Guaraní's struggles for recognition are at the center of my dissertation and my first book, *Now We Are Citizens: Indigenous Politics in Post-multicultural Bolivia* (2007a). In it, I examine the ways in which Bolivia's neoliberal multiculturalism created new forms of citizenship for Bolivia's indigenous people. Tracing the long arc of citizenship regimes across Bolivia's history, I argue that neoliberal citizenship of the 1990s created an expectation of citizenship, but did not resolve the demands for self-determination indigenous peoples had made since colonial times. I ended that book with the election of Evo Morales and the exciting promise of the post-multicultural era his presidency inaugurated.

The present book brings me full circle to evaluate those promises. It brings together much of the work I have done over the intervening years, studying the historic Constituent Assembly of 2006, the new constitution, the tensions resulting from the national development agenda, and the discourses and policies of the Morales government. Over these years, I have carried out new fieldwork in the highland communities of Tiwanaku and El Alto (chapters 3 and 6) and in Charagua, in the Chaco region (chapter 7), as well as returning regularly to the Guaraní communities of "Bella Flor" and "El Futuro," where I did my original dissertation research (chapter 6). Thus, I hope this book provides a comprehensive view of contemporary Bolivia. But, as with my first book, my primary lens onto these subjects is through the perspective of my indigenous friends from the Guaraní communities in the lowlands. I have remained in close contact with them, and their vision of the Morales state is central my analysis here. My own research and observations are augmented by the opinions of my fellow Bolivia scholars, the many brilliant Bolivian intellectuals I consult, dedicated NGO workers who are closest to the struggles on the ground, and committed government officials who have chosen to work from within the MAS state. My Guaraní contacts give me a decentered analysis—what Veena Das and Deborah Poole (2004) would call from the "margins"—that never ceases to impress me with its grounded, historic, patient understanding of Bolivian politics. I hope my analysis here does justice to their continued friendship and trust in me. Like them, I look towards the horizons of possibilities the Morales era has initiated. I hope my work here contributes to the process of change that has already begun to transform Bolivia.

PART ONE

Refounding the State

The Emergence of Indigenous Nationalism in Bolivia

Social Movements and the MAS State

As the preceding Introduction makes clear, Evo Morales's administration has gained an international reputation for upholding indigenous rights and making decolonization the central framework for the "process of change." Perhaps nothing symbolized this intention better than the format of his inauguration as the first indigenous president of Bolivia in January 2006, which took place in two very different venues. On January 21, he participated in a popular ceremony at Tiwanaku, a pre-Inca site near La Paz, where, after walking barefoot over coca leaves, he was blessed by Andean religious leaders and recognized as their Apumallku, or highest authority. To the thousands of admirers shivering in the freezing *altiplano* morning, he declared that "a new millennium has arrived for the original peoples [*pueblos originarios*] of the world" (*La Razón* 2006a).

The next day, his official inauguration took place in the Congress building in Plaza Murillo in La Paz. He began with a moment of silence for the "martyrs of liberation," such as indigenous insurrectionists of the colonial period, intellectuals and priests killed during the dictatorship, coca growers fallen in the struggles over drug eradication, and urban activists killed during the struggles against neoliberalism.¹ Then he described his plans for a new Bolivia, saying that he planned a "cultural democratic revolution" that would be a continuation of the struggle of anti-colonial insurgency leader Túpac Katari to restore Tahuantinsuyo (the Inca empire), of Simón Bolívar to found a *patria grande*, and of Che Guevara to establish "a new world in equality." Five hundred years of resistance by indigenous peoples, blacks, and the popular sectors was enough, he said. Now began the next five hundred years, in which indigenous Bolivians and workers could end the injustice they had suffered as Aymaras, Quechuas, and Guaranís (which he compared to

South African apartheid). In conclusion, quoting the spokesman of Mexico's Zapatista Army of National Liberation, Subcomandante Marcos, Morales promised to "rule by obeying" the Bolivian people (Morales 2006).

In this rainbow of revolutionary representations, Morales committed his *Movimiento al Socialismo* (MAS; Movement towards Socialism) party and the new government to fight against neoliberalism and for indigenous cultural and political rights, national and territorial sovereignty, human rights, workers' rights, and socialism. This chapter analyzes the emergence of the MAS and its efforts to articulate three very different lines of struggle—for indigenous rights, economic justice, and popular democracy. In the process, the formerly dispossessed and excluded of Bolivia formed an alliance that enabled them to take state power and then defeat the various opposition groups, particularly the elite from the lowlands.

I begin by briefly tracing efforts at social reform from Bolivia's 1952 revolution until 1985, a period in which activism generally took the form of either Marxist-oriented struggles for labor rights or indigenous demands for recognition. Subsequently, during the 1990s, the *cocaleros* and the MAS inherited the mantle of the labor struggles of the neoliberal era, and labor activists of various tendencies came together under the MAS's banner, creating tensions in the Morales government. The MAS made productive use of these tensions, tacking back and forth between strategies focusing on mass activism and parliamentary politics. As a result, it managed to unite its heterogeneous constituencies around a core agenda that could be called "indigenous nationalism." Although this fragile alliance was subject to significant contestation, it provided a strong basis for Morales's popularity among the country's rural poor and urban indigenous populations, his main constituency. To use Rancière's terminology, the MAS used contestations over race and class to construct an emancipatory "politics" (Rancière 1999).

Subsequent chapters will show how the MAS state utilized the discourses of indigeneity and decolonization to consolidate power and put into place a national development plan. Like any form of nation-building, it excluded certain groups and categories in the process of creating ideal national subjects. In the final chapters, I argue that once the MAS consolidated its power, concern for indigenous rights gave way to an agenda focused on economic development, and emancipatory politics gave way to policing.

MOVEMENTS FOR SOCIAL JUSTICE IN BOLIVIA: A BRIEF HISTORY

Two facts about Bolivia are important to this history. First, Bolivia's population is and has always been predominantly indigenous. According to the 2001 census, nearly 62 percent of its people claimed to be native speakers of an indigenous language (INE 2003; World Bank 2005). While the meaning of the term "indigenous" is under debate, as described in the Introduction, there can be no doubt that it is

a central category around which a large sector of Bolivians have organized and made political and cultural claims in the past few decades (see Albro 2005; Canessa 2006). Second, the two main historic sources of production and income have been peasant agricultural workers and miners exploiting subsurface resources, notably silver during the colonial period and tin during the modern era. (In contemporary Bolivia, two important new sources have emerged: revenues from natural gas and remittances from migrants abroad.) My framing of these facts—the first from the perspective of race/ethnicity and the second from a political economy focus on class—and their interrelations—reflect the two ways Bolivian movements for social change have been organized in the country's recent history.

Beginning in the 1930s, Bolivia's miners were the most important civil society protagonists, organizing for workers' rights and fighting repression by the mining companies. As they formed federations across the country and allied with other labor organizations such as factory workers, they established the union, or *sindicato*, as the primary form of political and economic resistance. Organized armed miners were instrumental in the MNR party's victory in the revolution of 1952, and the Central Obrero Boliviano (COB; Bolivian Workers Central) governed the country jointly with the MNR for the first few years after the revolution. As a result, unions became the primary legitimate form of accessing political rights, which were negotiated and struggled for through a collective union-driven process (García Linera et al. 2004: 42). The unions' relations to the state necessarily changed over time as control over the state shifted from left to right, sometimes working with the state, and sometimes against it, as during their historic protests against the military dictatorships. What is important, however, is the way the *sindicato* model fused citizenship and labor rights, through a unifying discourse focusing on the historical and national value of labor (44). Moreover, the miners stood in for all Bolivians, because their struggles often went beyond their own material interests to demands for democracy and human rights. It is also worth noting that popular movements chose the union as the privileged form of organizing over political parties, which were seen as controlled by the elite (Stefanoni 2003). This line of organizing was deeply influenced by a Marxist analysis of history, based in an ideology which privileged industrial modernization and state control of the ownership and distribution of resources (García Linera 2010). This sector was known for its radical consciousness and militant struggles, the legacy of which continues in contemporary organizing (J. Webber 2007).

The other important sector of the labor movement was made up of *campesinos*, the mostly indigenous peasant farmers of the highlands. In the 1940s, radical *sindicatos campesinos* began organizing against the latifundia system, taking over large haciendas, and demanding the return of their collective lands, echoing indigenous demands since the colonial period (Rivera Cusicanqui 1983; Gordillo 2000). Campesinos also supported the MNR at the time of the revolution, and were rewarded with a number of important reforms in the new postrevolutionary state: universal suffrage, rural education programs, and most important, an

agrarian reform that gave out land to thousands of campesinos. The MNR program was paired with a new discourse of campesino identity: indigenouness was submerged in a class-based identity and mediated by a patron state through client unions. The national federation of sindicatos campesinos, the Confederación Sindical Única de Trabajadores Campesinos de Bolivia (CSUTCB; United Confederation of Peasant Workers of Bolivia), allied with the COB as representatives of the masses. Yet throughout its history, the CSUTCB reflected a continuous tension between leftist worker-based ideologies and a more ethnically based set of demands that recognized the indigenous nature of most of its members. In many areas of the highlands, as Xavier Albó has noted, the *sindicato* took on many of the features of the traditional Andean sociopolitical organization, the *ayllu*, blending the boundary between Indian and peasant (Albó 2000).

Labor and the state had made class the dominant form of expression of social identity, but there were also activists making renewed claims based on indigenouness. The most important of these were the young urban Ayamara intellectuals of the Katarista movement in the late 1960s and early 1970s who embraced anti-colonial heroes like Túpac Katari and his spouse Bartolina Sisa and organized around the demand for bilingual education and other cultural aspirations (Hurtado 1986; Rivera Cusicanqui 1983). As the movement developed, it argued that the problems of indigenous peoples must be viewed through the “theory of the two eyes”—pointing out that indigenous peoples were doubly oppressed as an exploited class and as a dominated ethnic group (Sanjinés 2004). The Kataristas’ important Tiwanaku Manifiesto (1973), which declared indigenous people to be “economically exploited and culturally and politically oppressed,” set the stage for demands we now characterize as multiculturalism.² This was in essence a “reinvention of Indianness . . . as a subject of emancipation . . . and a political project” (García Linera 2008). The Kataristas were also influential in the campesino movement, pushing the CSUTCB to gradually become more and more “indigenized.” They eventually split into two groups. One, headed by Victor Hugo Cárdenas, worked in a limited and ultimately unsuccessful way within the political system to push for reforms. Cárdenas later served as vice president under Gonzalo Sánchez de Lozada, where he headed efforts to institutionalize state-led multiculturalism. The other group opted for a more exclusionary radical path of Aymara nationalism, and formed a guerrilla army led by Felipe Quispe (el Mallku). Álvaro García Linera, the current vice president, was a member of this latter group.

THE NEOLIBERAL ERA: THE RISE OF NEW SOCIAL MOVEMENTS

This tension between race and class continued through the 1970s and 1980s until 1985, when what we might call the neoliberal era began in Bolivia. Bolivia returned

to democracy in 1982 with the end of the military dictatorship and by 1985, the new elected government, again led by the MNR party, began to institute the aggressive economic reforms that were the conditions of loans from the IMF and the World Bank. Central to this “New Economic Policy” was the closing and privatizing of the tin mines, whose profit margins had fallen during the preceding years as world tin prices collapsed. This meant the firing, or *relocalización*, of thousands of miners, which amounted to the effective silencing of the most combative segment of civil society. This was combined with a liberalization of trade and a deregulation of labor laws to allow industries to be competitive on the global market, further weakening the position of unions. While unions and merchant associations continue to be a fundamental form of organizing, especially among campesinos and workers in the urban informal markets (see Lazar 2008), the neoliberal era dealt a harsh blow to the power of *sindicatos*.

This had several important consequences. “Relocated” miners migrated to cities like El Alto, where they became involved in urban political struggles, or, most importantly, to the tropical Chapare area of Cochabamba, where they began to grow coca and to organize in what became Bolivia’s most important new social movement, the *cocaleros*, or coca growers’ union. In essence, this was what several scholars refer to as an *irradiación*, or outward radiation, of the old workers’ ideology to new forms under new conjunctures (García Linera 2003; Stefanoni 2003). The historian James Dunkerly characterizes this new formation as a deindustrialization that reversed the “normal” historical evolution. He argues that “modern” wagedworkers were thrown back into social circuits associated with other historical epochs, combining a legacy of proletarian organizations, a new enforced engagement with agriculture, and market rationalities (Dunkerly 2007: 40). If the old discourse of worker citizenship was based on labor, the new discourse of *cocalero* solidarity was based on a strong anti-imperialism stance and an increasing recognition of the importance of ethnic demands (*reivindicaciones*). The *cocaleros* came of age in a low-intensity war on drugs led by the U.S. Drug Enforcement Agency, whose drug eradication efforts linked the *cocaleros* and their leader, Evo Morales, to “narco-terrorism.” The *cocaleros* fought back with a repertoire based on traditional union strategies—blockades, demonstrations, and hunger strikes—combined with new claims that the coca leaf was sacred according to Andean *cosmovisión* (worldview). This latter claim worked especially well in the international sphere, where *cocaleros* jumped on the bandwagon of the international indigenous movement (see Albro 2005). The drug wars of the 1990s cost many *cocaleros*’ lives, but their movement gained strength, emerging as a renewed and recontextualized organization firmly opposed to U.S. imperialism and neoliberal economic policies.

The second important process that Bolivia saw in the 1990s was the rise of the national indigenous movement, led largely by groups from the eastern lowlands, or *Oriente*, whose lands were being invaded by loggers, cattle ranchers, and

colonizers from the highlands. Influenced by the growing international indigenous movement, and supported by NGOs, anthropologists, and progressive Jesuits, indigenous groups began organizing in the 1980s. By 1990, they had formed a national organization called the Confederación Indígena del Oriente Boliviano (CIDOB; Indigenous Federation of Eastern Bolivia), which began articulating new demands for indigenous recognition and for collective landownership, which was expressed under the rubric of *territorio* (territory). This new social movement was very different from both the *sindicato* model and the Katarista demands that linked race with class. Instead, it relied on identity politics, in which culture and ethnic difference were the most salient basis for rights, and did not make any radical challenges to capitalism. The lack of a class component made it particularly amenable to being incorporated into the neoliberal government's new forms of governance, which others and I have termed neoliberal multiculturalism (see Hale 2002, 2004; Postero 2007a). In the mid 1990s, the Sánchez de Lozada government deepened the economic restructurings of the 1980s, while at the same time pairing them with a series of reforms that explicitly recognized indigenous demands. These multicultural reforms included an agrarian reform that allowed for collective titling of indigenous territories, the establishment of intercultural, bilingual education, and the Law of Popular Participation, a form of decentralization that recognized indigenous groups and their leaders as actors in municipal development decisions. I have argued that this form of state-led multiculturalism had important symbolic effects in that it created a powerful discourse of indigenous citizenship. Nevertheless, my research showed that Bolivia's neoliberal multiculturalism was more effective as a politics of recognition than as a politics of redistribution. It did not substantially alter the structural inequalities facing indigenous peoples. Rather, it was a top-down effort by the neoliberal state to incorporate indigenous peoples into the national project as responsible, docile neoliberal subjects (Postero 2007a). As the events since 2000 have shown, however, this was not the result.

THE MAS PHENOMENON: A NEW PLEBIAN BOLIVIA

The failure of the multicultural reforms to substantially alter the endemic racism that marks Bolivian society or to curb the power of the elite-led political parties had a surprising result. In the mid 1990s, indigenous organizations began to put up candidates from their own political parties, the most successful of which was the MAS, headed by the cocalero leader Evo Morales. The MAS took shape in the mid-1990s in the congresses of the *Asamblea por la Soberanía de los Pueblos* (ASP; Assembly for the Sovereignty of the People), a loose federation of campesino and cocalero unions. The ASP formed what was called the *Instrumento Político por la Soberanía de los Pueblos* (IPSP; Political Instrument for the Sovereignty of the People) and borrowed the name and legal identity of an existing political party, the

Movimiento al Socialismo, or MAS, from the Falange Socialista Boliviana, originally a far-right party.³ So, from the beginning, while this group intended to intervene in electoral politics, they did so through a very different form of organization that reflected both the syndical logic and the heterogeneity of its constituency. As Morales often reminded people, the MAS-IPSP is not a traditional party, but the political instrument of the social movements that form its base. And that base is eclectic—campesinos, the landless movement, leftist lawyers, women's groups, some lowland indigenous leaders, and assorted Trotskyites. That means that the MAS does not have a defined ideological base, but, as the anthropologist Robert Albro has pointed out, relies instead on “tactical flexibility, . . . extra-political sources of legitimacy, successful cross-sector alliances, emphasis on ‘works’ over ‘ideas,’ and the use of Andean cultural frames” (Albro 2006: 420).

An influential group of Bolivian scholars called the Comuna Group, which included Vice President García Linera, argued—compellingly, I think—that this sort of fragmented “multitude” is the form working-class demands took in Bolivia at the turn of the twenty-first century. Following the insights of the Bolivian political scientist René Zavaleta Mercado (1986), they argue that Bolivia is a *formación abigarrada*, a motley or multicolored formation, in which several very different forms of social and economic relations coexist in an unequal and disarticulated way. They suggest that in the past, as traditional structures of production gave way to modernity, unions represented one means by which subalterns struggled for inclusion and social protection. With the demise of the union under neoliberalism and post-Fordism, however, a new form of plebian organization evolved, in which preexisting forms of organization such as guilds and peasant organizations, “rooted in local spaces and concerns,” played a greater role, bringing collective demands and forms of knowledge to the fore. In their view, Bolivia’s new “multitude” formations are not as rigid as previous union-style formations, but rather bring together people and groups in “affiliational relationships” and “assembly style democracy.” In contrast to traditional forms of association, which control and mobilize their members, they suggest, these forms maintain their power through moral authority, relying on participants’ conviction in the cause. This is the new *plebeya*, or plebian Bolivia (García Linera 2004; see also Gutiérrez et al. 2002; Tapia 2002; Dunkerly 2007: 38–40).⁴

In fact, local forms of organizing have proved essential to the transformations in Bolivia that this book describes, as well as to the many disagreements that followed. From 2000 to 2003, resistance to the effects of neoliberalism grew across the country, resulting in an outpouring of demonstrations, beginning with the “water war” in Cochabamba, where residents protested the privatization of water resources, and culminating in the now famous “gas war” of 2003, when President Sánchez de Lozada was forced to resign after six weeks of demonstrations against a proposed plan to transport natural gas from Bolivia’s Oriente across Chile and

to the United States (see Postero 2007a). The union leader Oscar Olivera was the head of the *Coordinadora en Defensa del Agua y de la Vida* (Coalition in Defense of Water and Life) that organized the 2000 Water War. In 2012, he told me that the water war had planted two important seeds in Bolivian society. First, he said it drew attention to the neoliberal economic model that perpetuated the colonial and neo-colonial pattern of territorial occupation and expropriation. The water war not only broke with that model, it did so by putting forth a simple idea based on indigenous understandings, “that water was a living being, and a resource for life.” Second, it began a profound rethinking of who gets to make these important decisions. The protestors said, for this first time, “we want to decide.” This was the beginning of what he considers a “new form of popular power based fundamentally in new forms of organization that had nothing to do with traditional union organizing,” instead recuperating ancestral communitarian practices. This “reconstitution of the social fabric,” he told me, was essential for the coming together of the MAS, and eventually for Morales’s election (personal communication, August 2012).

With this fragmented “plebian” organization in place, MAS candidates began to win local elections in 1995, especially in the Chapare, and by 1997, six MAS candidates won seats in Congress, including Morales. The MAS articulated a fairly radical discourse at that point, reflecting the combined anti-government sentiments of its wide base. In 2002, Morales ran for the presidency, coming within a few points of Sánchez de Lozada, who became president through a pact between parties. From that point, the MAS began to change strategies, moving from the position of outsider social movement to that of a vocal opposition party inside the parliamentary process. Many on the left feel that the MAS lost its revolutionary potential at that point, arguing that it changed into “a reformist party bent on winning elections through the courting of the middle class” (J. Webber 2007; see also Petras 2008). There is some evidence for this position. Neither Morales nor the MAS were actively involved in either the gas war or the water war, both of which arose from local grassroots organizing. As Jeffrey Webber has forcefully argued, Morales supported a constitutional exit from the crisis in 2003, and then formed a temporary alliance with Sánchez de Lozada’s successor, Carlos Mesa, who continued many neoliberal policies until he was forced to resign by popular demonstrations in May–June of 2005 (J. Webber 2006; see also Petras 2008). This pact with Mesa was deeply contested by labor, peasant movements, and the water war *Coordinadora* (Olivera, personal communication, August 2012). Webber suggests that Morales and the MAS then took advantage of this historic shift in the structure of social forces to win the 2005 presidential campaign, incorporating the language of indigenous liberation of the popular struggles, but abandoning the revolutionary project at its heart (J. Webber 2006).

Was this reformism or savvy politicking? I agree with Webber that Morales backed away from a revolutionary position in 2005, but I am convinced that part

of the reason Bolivia did not spin completely out of control in 2005 was precisely because Morales and the MAS existed as an official political party with sufficient legitimacy to hold out the promise of a liberal but transformed state. This paved the way for the peaceful takeover of the state by the MAS and their efforts to implement what many see as a transformative agenda. Nevertheless, Webber's argument draws attention to the deep tensions between a revolutionary aim to decolonize the state and society and overturn neoliberalism, on the one hand, and the liberal state-building project the MAS chose to accomplish this agenda, on the other. This tension is at the heart of the political struggles I analyze in the following chapters, and we see a distinct shift over the decade of MAS rule. In the early days, indigenous activists held more power in the MAS alliance and were able to push forward policies intended to decolonize the state and institute indigenous rights, while in later years, as I document in the second half of this book, these gave way to a development agenda focused on resource exploitation and centralized state power.

THE MAS GOVERNMENT: AN UNSTABLE CONFEDERATION?

In his 2005 presidential campaign, Morales laid out the elements of the “revolutionary” agenda. Articulating concerns of class and race, he claimed to represent the Bolivian people (*el pueblo boliviano*), which was both poor and indigenous: his party's motto was “Somos pueblo, somos MAS” (We are the people, we are MAS [more]). He did this by focusing on three things. First, he promised to make the Bolivian state truly participatory, by allowing the social movements, most of whom represented indigenous Bolivians, to be the base of his new government. Second, he argued that neoliberalism was a fundamental cause of the shared suffering of Bolivians, and promised to reverse it. Finally, he promoted a national sovereignty free from the strictures U.S. imperialism and neoliberal capitalism had imposed. National dignity would allow Bolivians the right to grow the sacred coca leaf of their ancestors and to take control of their natural resources. Taken together, this platform amounts to what Stefanoni calls an indigenous nationalism (Stefanoni 2006a).

It is one thing to propose such an ambitious agenda, and quite another to put it into practice. First, it is important to point out that despite the desires for independence from global capitalism and imperialism, Bolivia must also respond to a global context where powerful interests place limits on change and development. This is not to excuse the Morales administration, but merely to highlight that decisions and directions are not always set domestically. As such, Morales and his team must negotiate a complex international sphere, making pragmatic decisions to maximize the income and opportunities they can provide for the country. As I explain in greater depth in chapters 4 and 5, Bolivia's economy relies on selling its

natural resources, especially hydrocarbons, on the global market, and this “path dependency” makes radical changes very difficult.

Moreover, this radical agenda had to be implemented by a state administered by a very diverse MAS coalition. The “indigenous state,” it turns out, was never just that. Instead, as the Argentinian scholar and journalist Pablo Stefanoni has argued, the MAS was an “unstable confederation of ideological factions” (Stefanoni 2006a). The Bolivian political scientist Roberto Laserna suggested that from the start, it was made up of “three tendencies with projects that are not necessarily coincidental or harmonious, united by the personal leadership of Evo Morales” (Laserna 2010). The groups Laserna identified were: an *indigenista* group, a socialist group, and a populist group. I think the lines between these categories were more blurred than Laserna suggested, but his analysis provides a helpful way to see how the historical forms I have just traced came together in the first Morales administration. I identify these as a way to see the complexities of the so-called indigenous state, recognizing that they are abstract categories that do not map perfectly onto individuals. Also, as time passed, there were substantial ruptures, since many early supporters of the MAS agenda departed, expressing deep dissent and disappointment at the way the MAS state developed.

The first group we can identify is the *indigenista* group, led by the minister of the exterior, the Aymara intellectual David Choquehuanca. This group, which had most visibility internationally, saw the government’s main role as decolonizing Bolivian society and bringing about the “cultural and democratic revolution” Morales spoke of in his inauguration. It carried the demands and ideas of the Katarista movement of the 1970s, pushing for indigenous rights and recognition, and was active in what Laserna calls the “symbolic spaces, providing symbols and references to the discourse of the president, and projecting a highly charged international image of the government” (Laserna 2010: 40, my translation). Choquehuanca and the first MAS minister of education, the Aymara sociologist Félix Patzi, utilized idealized versions of Andean culture to project an indigenous image onto the government’s economic projects, arguing that Bolivia’s indigenous peoples have solutions to the ills caused by Western capitalism (see Postero 2007b). This group used the media, especially a network of government-funded community radios, to elaborate this “symbolic and cultural discourse.” The *indigenistas* were also very important during the Constituent Assembly (CA), where popularly elected—and mostly indigenous—delegates gathered to rewrite the constitution. The influence of this tendency can also be seen in Morales’s appearances in international fora, such as his 2008 declaration at the United Nations that the best way to resolve the global climate change crisis was to end capitalism and to adopt a more harmonious, indigenous, relation to the earth (*El Deber* 2008a). Choquehuanca remains in his position as of this writing (2016), but Patzi served only until 2007. He gained further notoriety in 2010, when after an arrest

for drunk driving, he relied on indigenous justice codes, paying his debt to society by making adobe bricks by hand. He formed a new political party and in 2015 was elected the governor of the department of La Paz, handing the MAS a resounding defeat in what some called an “Aymara rebellion” (Molina 2015). Some suggest he might be a viable presidential candidate in a post-Evo era.

A second sector Laserna identified is that led by President Morales. This populist group emphasized the strong role of popular sector social movements, especially the *sindicatos campesinos* (peasant unions), and *juntas vecinales* (urban neighborhood associations). This group urged a radical transformation of Bolivian politics, reversing the traditional hold the political elite had on public decision-making. This tendency is the glue that bound the party together originally, and had a strong presence both in the MAS party and in the Congress. Laserna says this group was “not defined by its political orientation of ideology, but rather by its method: *el basismo* (populism, or grassroots politics). Its fundamental principle, which the president repeats with frequency, is that ‘la voz del pueblo es la voz de dios’ (the voice of the people is the voice of God)” (Laserna 2010). The strength of this sector was in its ability to mobilize its constituency and take over the streets. Morales certainly benefited from his populist image as an indigenous man of humble origins with years of service to the movement. Morales actively cultivates this image, continuing to attend union congresses and popular meetings throughout his presidency, renovating the charismatic face-to-face links he has with the public (Stefanoni 2006a: 40). As a result, he could call upon the base to quickly take to the streets to support him when challenged. During the conflicted months of the Constituent Assembly in 2006–7, MAS supporters from across the country mobilized to Sucre, offering the right-wing opposition a clear sign of Morales’s popular support.

Of course, here we see how Laserna’s categorizations are blurred in practice. Morales has had such strong support from his bases largely because of the ways he and the government have used indigenous history and bodies in political performance, borrowing heavily from indigenous social movement tactics and strategies. As Linda Farthing and Benjamin Kohl (2013) note, the robust rural oral history traditions in Bolivia facilitate cross-generational transmission of past injustices, transforming storytelling, commemorations, and rituals into critical sites for political mobilization. Morales has been particularly adept at these sorts of performances. For every critical legislative reform, Morales rallies support through spectacular events mobilizing indigenous history and tales of oppression and injustice. For instance, when Morales passed the New Agrarian Reform law in 2006, he organized social movement activists in the city of Peñas, the site of the brutal death of the eighteenth-century anti-colonial Aymara rebel Túpac Katari. Addressing thousands of peasant farmers, he declared: “I stand before you today . . . at the site where Julian Túpac Katari, one of the few literate Indian slaves,



FIGURE 4. President Evo Morales at an “Andean” ceremony at Tiwanaku in 2015 celebrating his 2014 reelection. Credit: U.S. Embassy in La Paz, <https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/3.0>.



FIGURE 5. Depiction of the anti-colonial leader Túpac Katari at the 2015 celebration at Tiwanaku. Credit: David G. Silvers–Cancillería del Ecuador. <https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/3.0>.

was *descuartizado* [quartered]. . . . We are here to liberate our country, and Katari is the principal reference point for the indigenous struggles in Bolivia and a constant reminder of the obligation to decolonize Bolivia” (*La República* 2006).

He has repeatedly used the venue of Tiwanaku to cement his indigenous pedigree, building on his 2006 inauguration. In 2015, he held yet another “ancestral” ceremony there to mark his victory in the 2104 elections. This time, the walls of the archaeological site were covered with a massive representation of Túpac Katari, Bolivia’s most famous indigenous anti-colonial rebel (see Figures 4 and 5).

Through these symbolic and performative events, Morales creates new “figurations,” to use Donna Haraway’s terms, “potent fictions” that draw the public into a redemptive narrative (Haraway 2004: 243). He embodies the spirit of Katari as the leader of a movement liberating the country from a colonialist and racist history. Here we see the hegemonic redemption story of the new state, which promises to put the evil of colonialism in the past and lead the way to a future of justice (see Meister 2011). “Gathering up” past and contemporary struggles over land and territory, Morales makes his national project of decolonization seem universal and uncontested. He also incorporates stories of social movement struggle into his own person, becoming a figure who represents all Bolivians, and especially all indigenous peoples. After Morales’s 2014 election, enormous billboards announced “Yo soy Evo/Nosotros somos Evo” (I am Evo/We are Evo).

Laserna’s third tendency consisted of leftists, led by Vice President Álvaro García Linera. This group saw the role of the government as reversing the neoliberal years, and forging a state that takes a strong protagonist role in the economy, especially “recuperating natural resources as a basis of accumulation for national industrialization.” This group included both old-style Marxists who urged a transition to socialism and technocrats who wanted to rework the Import Substitution Industrialization (ISI) strategies of the 1950s and 1960s (Laserna 2010). García Linera was outspoken about the need to overturn neoliberalism. In a 2007 speech, he argued that neoliberalism “signifies a process of fragmentation—structural disintegration—of support networks, solidarity, and popular mobilization.” It reduces and deforms the state, setting out to destroy the “notion of the state as collective or commonwealth, in order to impose a type of corporate ideology calling for appropriation and squandering of collective wealth.” The new socialist Bolivia, he argued, must work to overcome this fragmentation, re-socialize collective wealth privatized over the past few decades, and empower the state with economic, cultural, and political strength so that it can “provide a protective shield for the social movements, an international armor for growth of the social struggles” (García Linera 2007). The left/socialist tendency controlled government economic policy and administration, as well as a large part of the MAS’s representation in the Senate, and oversaw the 2006 nationalization of the natural gas industry and the telecommunications sector.⁵ In later years, this wing grew in strength, and leftist

technocrats held leading positions: Carlos Romero Bonifaz served as minister of the Presidency and then of the Government, and Luis Alberto Arce Cotacora served as minister of the Treasury and then of economy and public finance. This team tends to be pragmatic about engaging with capital markets and to see extractivism as an essential platform for national development.

It is helpful to contrast Morales's performative indigeneity with the Marxist ideology of García Linera in order to appreciate the contrasting logics and strategies that co-existed within the MAS. Applying a neo-Marxist indigenist-cum-Gramscian approach to analyses of the MAS and its struggle to take power in Bolivia, García Linera has described five phases of the struggle. In the first, the contradictions in the forces of domination became visible. The second was a "revolutionary epoch" of contestation in which there was a "catastrophic draw" between two opposing blocs of power (García Linera 2010: 15). One fundamental nucleus is the indigenous movement, made up of both campesinos and urban workers. "Its economic program is centered on the internal market, taking as its axis the peasant community, urban-artisanal and micro-business activity, a revitalized role for the state as producer and industrializing force, and a central role for the indigenous majority in driving the new state" (García Linera 2006: 83). At the other pole is the "ascendant agro-export, financial, and petroleum business bloc," which favors the subordination of the state to private enterprise and the preservation, or restoration, of the old political system. This political polarity is further structured, he suggested, by three underlying cleavages: "ethno-cultural (indigenous/whites-*q'aras-gringos*), class (workers/businessmen), and regional (Andean west/Amazonian crescent)." In this highly political field, both tendencies pushed for solutions, but neither managed to construct a bloc with a majority capable of a long-term hold on state power. García Linera saw two alternatives from the point of view of the social movements in 2006: either an insurrection for revolutionary change or "a path of gradual, institutional change by electoral means led by Evo Morales." The second, for which he advocated, would require an electoral bloc, negotiated with other leaders and movements, that would "generate a unified popular and indigenous pole with the ability to rule" and attract the consent of the middle class (84). In the third period, social movement mobilization was converted into state power. This described the first few years of the MAS government, and especially the convening of the Constituent Assembly. The fourth he called the "point of bifurcation," in which the two polarized blocs came to an irreconcilable confrontation, leading to the triumph of the popular bloc.

A final phase, in García Linera's view, is "the emergence of creative contradictions" (2012c: 23). Here he explains the dissent against the MAS state that grew as it consolidated its power. Even people supportive of and working within the MAS became extremely critical of the way Morales and his tight inner circle made the majority of important decisions. The minister of hydrocarbons, Andrés

Soliz Rada, for instance, resigned in 2006, claiming Morales had tied his hands (Stefanoni 2006b). Raúl Prada Alcoreza, the political philosopher who served as a key MAS delegate to the Constituent Assembly, and then as the vice minister of strategic planning in the Ministry of Economy and Finance, resigned and, along with several other key intellectuals, issued a manifesto decrying MAS policy and practice (*Manifiesto 22 de Junio* 2011). Among the indigenous base, many began to feel depoliticized and locked out of the decision-making. For instance, a Guaraní leader from Santa Cruz who served as an alternate (*suplente*) MAS congressman complained to me in 2010 that he and his lowland constituencies had been ignored completely by the MAS. From his tiny alternate's office in Santa Cruz, he gestured in the direction of La Paz. "They want to control everything, to do everything according to their culture, the Andean culture," he told me. "Very little of what we hoped for as [lowland] indigenous people is being advanced, only the things that Evo wants. . . . No, Evo and his ministers have abandoned us. . . . And those ministers aren't the people who were in the streets with us. They are from the Left. . . . Even Evo's own base is silenced now, saying, 'Let those *ministros parásitos* [parasitic ministers] defend him!'"

This comment reflects the difficulties the MAS strategy produced at the popular level. On the one hand, this leader commended Morales for asserting sovereignty and nationalizing the gas and then distributing royalty money to the poor and the elderly. On the other, he clearly reflects the disappointment and anger he and many others felt as their loyalty was disregarded at the whim of the president.

CONCLUSION

The Morales/MAS government brought together a complex blend of ideologies and strategies. Sometimes these provide contradictory results, as when the "indigenist" group pushed for rural development in accordance with indigenous *cosmovisión* and the leftists in the Economics Ministry pushed for hydrocarbon exploitation and industrialization. This tension will be explored in greater depth in chapters 4 and 5, as we see how mega-development projects affect indigenous communities. This combination also explains the criticism Morales and the MAS receive from all sides. The traditional Left, especially the labor sector represented by the COB (which mounted strikes during the summer of 2008 pushing the government for a reformed pension law) argued Morales is just a reformer in league with transnational corporations. They argue that Morales's renegotiation of natural gas contracts with oil companies fell far short of nationalization. This position is echoed by leftist analysts like Jeffrey Webber and James Petras, who argue that Morales made pacts with the Right, negotiated joint ventures with oil companies, and demobilized mass movements in an effort to consolidate political power (J.Webber 2007; Petras 2008). The Right, especially the elite in the so-called Media

Luna (see chapter 2) saw Morales as reasserting an Andean centralized state power over the lowland departments, fueling their massive push for regional autonomy. They also criticized Morales as being in league with leftists such as Venezuela's Hugo Chávez and determined to destroy democracy and capitalism. Supporters of the previous president, Sánchez de Lozada (called Gonistas), complained that the MAS unnecessarily isolated Bolivia from the international community by its belligerent relations with the United States, and was unable to administer the state effectively. Perhaps the truth lies somewhere in between: the MAS coalition negotiated its contradictions by mobilizing a radical discourse of change and liberation, while continuing and benefiting from the extractivist development structures in place.

So, for the first years, tacking back and forth between populist mass activism based on indigenous vindications, on the one hand, and classic electoral politicking in the halls of the Parliament, on the other, allowed the MAS to continue institutionalizing its agenda and consolidating its power. The next chapter turns to the 2006–9 Constituent Assembly, where the tensions I have described in this chapter were played out on a grand scale in political and ideological battles between the MAS, indigenous intellectuals, and the opposition parties on the Right. This chapter has highlighted the differences between the various segments of the MAS party; the next focuses on the fundamental tension in the MAS administration about how to implement the change it promised: through a liberal nation-state or by embracing radical “popular” alternatives to it.

The Constituent Assembly

Challenges to Liberalism

BOLIVIA'S "CULTURAL DEMOCRATIC REVOLUTION"

In April 2008, Bolivia's President Evo Morales was invited to address the Permanent Forum for Indigenous Affairs at the United Nations in New York. Addressing a group of nearly three thousand delegates on the first anniversary of the Declaration of the Rights of Indigenous People, Morales made a provocative recommendation. He said that the international community should "eradicate capitalism" and replace it with "communitarian socialism" if it ever hoped to save the planet from dangers like climate change. He blamed the capitalist system for fomenting industrialization and consumption based on profit and the exploitation of natural resources. He ended by offering a new set of Ten Commandments for the future of the earth, inspired by Andean indigenous values. They include renouncing war, imperialism, and colonialism; considering water, energy, and education as human rights not subject to private business interests; and constructing a communitarian socialism in harmony with Mother Earth (*El Deber* 2008a).

Not surprisingly, Morales gained a reputation, along with Venezuela's Hugo Chávez, as a rabble-rousing socialist leading the continent to the Left. This image was reinforced when he kicked the U.S. ambassador out of Bolivia for allegedly intervening in an uprising in the lowland capital of Santa Cruz in 2008. He also ejected the U.S. Drug Enforcement Agency, which had been carrying out a long-term low-intensity war on coca production. Morales's position as the head of the cocoa growers union and his advocacy for the "millennial leaf" did not endear him to U.S. officials.

But Morales did not gain power through an armed revolution or an illegal coup. Instead, he has clearly and consistently characterized his administration in liberal

democratic terms. He called his government a “cultural democratic revolution” and emphasized that he and his party gained power as a result of popular elections, where he gained the greatest majority in Bolivian history. This reflects a larger trend: in recent decades, social movements across Latin America traded in the Marxist-based ideologies of class warfare that motivated 1970s movements for social change for a decidedly liberal framework tied to international discourses of both human rights and indigenous rights. Social movements across the continent turned to the framework of citizenship and rights to seek recognition and resources from the state (Alvarez et al. 1998; Postero and Zamosc 2004; Speed 2008). This was made possible by a convergence of two important trends, what the Brazilian scholar Evelina Dagnino has termed a “perverse confluence” (2003: 7). On the one hand, she suggests, social movements and civil society empowered by the return to democracy demanded more meaningful participation in society. On the other, neoliberal governance passed on many of the responsibilities of governing from the state to “responsible” neoliberal citizens (see also Peck and Tickell 2002).

In the Bolivian case, as I have previously argued (Postero 2007a), in the mid 1990s, the neoliberal government instituted such a set of political reforms aimed at ending what it saw as an inefficient, conflictive corporatist form of civil society. Through the medium of “neoliberal multiculturalism,” it offered a new form of citizenship based on a decentralized system of “popular participation” in municipal development decision-making. Many indigenous and poor people ended up frustrated by the failure of these political reforms to overturn the underlying racism of the country—as well as by the terrible social costs of the accompanying neoliberal economic restructuring—but they did take on the idea that liberal institutions could be transformed to meet their interests. One response was the formation of the MAS, which, after the gas war of 2003, brought Morales to power.

Since his election in 2005, Morales and his MAS party used liberal electoral politics to push forward a two-pronged agenda. First, through executive decrees and laws passed by the MAS-controlled congress, they substantially reworked the relation between the state and market, making the state once again a primary actor in economic development. I describe this effort in greater detail in chapters 4 and 5. Secondly, and potentially more important, the MAS government implemented an experiment in direct democracy, a popularly elected Constituent Assembly (hereafter, CA) to rewrite the constitution and refound Bolivia as a decolonized, plurinational nation. In January 2009, Bolivians passed a national referendum approving the new constitution, which enacts fundamental changes in the form of the state; grants autonomy to departments and indigenous communities; recognizes indigenous cultures, languages, and customs; and institutionalizes a new land reform program.

I suggest that these two stances—a push for social justice to overcome both colonialism and neoliberalism, on the one hand, and the embrace of liberal

political institutions (like elections, constitutional conventions, and direct public referenda) to do so, on the other hand—are the source of a profound tension within the Morales administration. In this chapter, I take a close look at some of the conflicts that his administration has produced as it tries to balance these two frameworks, pointing out some underlying tensions within liberalism itself that sometimes make it a difficult vehicle for social change. I trace indigenous challenges to liberalism at the CA, and show how, ultimately, the Morales government opted to dilute the indigenous alternative, maintaining the sovereignty of the central state. The resulting constitution does provide new resources for peoples dominated and oppressed for centuries. For instance, one indigenous community in the lowlands used the new rights established in the constitution to convert their town into an “indigenous autonomy,” a form of indigenous self-government. I describe these efforts in chapter 7. However, the history of Bolivia’s CA raises questions about the relation between liberal political institutions and decolonization. Can the liberal state decolonize itself from within, using these mechanisms? That is, can liberal norms such as the rule of law, which emerge from Western notions of democracy, accomplish the transformations required to overcome centuries of racialized domination? Can the liberal nation-state form accommodate the forms of self-government that are at the heart of indigenous communities’ demands for decolonization?

To think through these difficult—and probably undecidable—questions, I take inspiration from Jacques Rancière, who defines politics as a process of emancipation brought about by disagreement. As described in the Introduction, Rancière distinguishes “policing,” the implicit law or order that partitions out places and forms of participation and exclusion in the world, from “politics,” disagreements that call attention to the exclusions it creates (Rancière 1999). The essence of politics is found in acts that “challenge the ‘natural order of bodies’ in the name of equality and polemically reconfigure the distribution of the sensible” (Rancière 2004: 90). Through such acts of politics, actors can “crack open the unity of the given” and “sketch a new topography of the possible,” a new “distribution of capacities and incapacities” (Rancière 2004: 49). By emphasizing these disagreements, it becomes possible to see the ongoing forms of contestation that animate contemporary Bolivia as its people attempted to decolonize, develop, and refashion their nation as a plurinational indigenous state.

Rancière is helpful here because he argues that political subjects come into being by creating a “scandal” about the “miscount” upon which the existing social order is based. For centuries, indigenous and peasant peoples in Bolivia have been challenging the coordinates that excluded them from political, cultural, and economic participation. John Andrew McNeish reminds us that this insurgency is a fundamental part of Bolivian society, because of the embedded nature of prejudice and the social divisions that make a lasting pact between state and its

indigenous and poor populations difficult (McNeish 2008: 80). Differing regimes of citizenship—from the republican period to the postrevolutionary 1950s to the neoliberal era—distributed rights to some, but continued to leave others marginalized, as “the part with no part” (Postero 2007a). The revolution that brought Morales into power and especially the Constituent Assembly of 2006 was a critical conjuncture where the previously impossible—real meaningful citizenship for all Bolivians—seemed possible (see Arditi 2007: 88). As McNeish reminds us, this was a moment of “insurgent citizenship,” to use James Holston’s term (Holston 2008). Calling on a tradition of rebellion, indigenous actors decided to use the political process to go beyond protest to engage with and enter into the state, seeking new spaces for “possible alternative futures” (McNeish 2008: 80).

The existential disagreements at the CA were aimed at the question of *who counts* as citizens of plurinational Bolivia and what their rights should be. To understand their debates, I ask who the subjects of this historical process are and what the common project is upon which the nation was being formed. I describe the vision of the plurinational state advanced by an alliance of indigenous peoples and peasants called the Pacto de Unidad, showing the new distribution of the sensible they proposed. Then, I consider the conflicted process through which the constitution was produced. Finally, I show how the approved constitution differs from the Pacto’s historic vision, reinforcing a liberal nation-state. Ultimately, I ask whether liberal institutions can be part of emancipatory politics or if they can only serve as a form of policing, reinforcing systems of inclusion and exclusion.

THE CONSTITUENT ASSEMBLY

The Constituent Assembly (CA) was not part of the MAS’s original platform. It was a long-held demand of indigenous and popular organizations that reemerged as a central demand after the 2000 water war and the 2003 gas war (Tapia 2010: 143). Many Bolivians felt that during the neoliberal years, public decision-making, especially about natural resources, had been privatized, and decisions had been made by a small elite along with transnational corporations. The CA was supposed to be an effort to reverse this, to return this to “the people,” through a process of “direct democracy.” Morales holds out his government as “the government of social movements,” but as we saw in chapter 1, beneath his leadership, there is a deep sea of political actors pushing towards conflicting visions of a more democratic and just Bolivia.

The Aymara theorist Rafael Bautista argues that to understand the new plurinational state, one must ask about the historical contradictions that produced it (Bautista 2010a). What was the mode of its historical appearance? How was it constituted? What did it overcome? Most important, who are the historic subjects who produced this state? How did they fill the “idea” of the state with “content”? Here Bautista uses the framework of the Bolivian political scientist René Zavaleta



FIGURE 6. Poster for the 2006 Constituent Assembly depicting Simón Bolívar, Che Guevara, the Bolivian martyr Father Luis Espinal, and President Evo Morales (on the Wiphala flag representing Andean native peoples). Credit: A. Davey. <https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/3.0>.

Mercado, who argued that the previous Bolivian states were failures, only “apparent states” without sufficient “national-popular content” (Zavaleta Mercado 1986). Zavaleta uses this term to show how the demands or interests of those in the poor and Indian populations were excluded from previous forms of the state. The liberal nation-state form implies a specific relation between the state and civil society, and is based upon an assumption that the state represents the people, *el pueblo*, the nation. The Bolivian political theorist Luis Tapia explains that this is based on the idea of a correspondence between a “process of political unification,” emerging from a set of institutions that form a single system of administration of political power, on one hand, and a “process of homogenization or unification of the culture,” on the other (Tapia 2010: 151). Zavaleta argued that the Bolivian republic lacked this sort of unity because it was founded, not by the mass of indigenous peasant Bolivians, who were the “real” national popular bloc, but by the white–mestizo oligarchy, who loathed and feared the indigenous masses and always felt foreign or alienated from them. This produced the “señorial paradox” in which the elite found themselves: to kill the *indio* was to kill their ability to be the *señor* (lord or master). As a result, the señorial class never “belonged.” It was never able to bring about national unity, or imbue the nation with sufficient national-popular content (Zavaleta Mercado 1986).

This paradox was not truly resolved by the 1952 revolution, when the MNR-led state included indigenous peoples by de-Indianizing them and subsuming them

into a modernizing nationalist ideology. For Bautista, the only way the new plurinational state can overcome the still-existing colonial power relations is by finally resolving this vexing question of national unity. This real national content cannot come from the top down or from the state as an institution; rather this constituting act of remaking the state must emerge from self-conscious subjects articulating their concrete ways of life (*modo-de-vida*) and the rationalities of their “life worlds” (*mundo-de-la-vida*) (Bautista 2010a: 174). But Bautista’s formulation leads to a fundamental and problematic question: how can unity emerge in such a deeply divided society? He suggests that a new, more equitable distribution is bound to emerge from revolutionary indigenous subjects who represent the “real” people. Here we return to the idea of insurgent citizens. For Rancière, however, such a guaranteed outcome is impossible and unknowable. Instead, whatever unity or emancipation might be possible can only be determined when actors challenge the established framework or police order (Rancière 2004: 90). As this chapter demonstrates, that emancipation is always uncertain.

The members of the Pacto de Unidad, the main public advocate for the plurinational state, presented themselves as historic subjects working for this emancipation. This alliance of indigenous, peasant, and workers’ organizations formed in 2004 (before Morales’s election), bringing together social organizations from across the country to demand a Constituent Assembly.¹ The proposition that the Pacto articulated was a combination of decades—or centuries—of demands from the original peoples of Bolivia. I cannot detail here the long history of indigenous experience, memory, and claims, analyzed in great depth elsewhere.² Let me briefly describe several important lines of “historic accumulation,” emanating from the differing trajectories of the Pacto’s members, that coalesced into its proposal (Tapia 2010: 136). It will have resonance with the makeup of the MAS, as described in chapter 1, but it has some significant differences. Beginning in the 1980s and 1990s, there was a process of unification among lowland indigenous communities, marked by public marches demanding territory and cultural recognition (see Postero 2007a). In its fourth march in 2002, the lowland Confederación de Pueblos Indígenas de Bolivia (CIDOB; Confederation of Indigenous Peoples of Bolivia) demanded a Constituent Assembly, making clear the need for the state to be radically reformed to include indigenous peoples and their cultures (Romero Bonifaz 2005). Their demands for expanded notions of citizenship reflected the limitations of the neoliberal multiculturalism of the 1990s, and they left an important legacy: characterizing the people and cultures of lowland indigenous people as “nations” (Tapia 2010: 138).

The lowland project was linked to a second line, the Katarista movement of the highland Aymaras. Since the 1970s, the Kataristas had pushed for recognition of indigenous cultures, languages, and organizations from a perspective combining class and culture. They argued that indigenous peasants were doubly discriminated against, both as an exploited class and as a nation and culture (Sanjinés 2004).

Tapia suggests that in the multicultural 1990s, Katarista activists and intellectuals were central to making Bolivians begin to recognize and accept the country's cultural diversity (Tapia 2010: 139). He argues that organizing around the idea of a nation in both the lowlands and the highlands was particularly important because it constituted critical new subjects, collectivities, and communities. "[T]he nation is a mode of translating into modern terms a process of articulation and political unification that articulates economic life, social life, social reproduction and forms of government in relation to historic territories." By considering themselves as nations, he argues, these groups positioned themselves as subjects and social totalities able to demand reform of the Bolivian state (140).

The final line of political organizing that merged with these two trajectories came from the urban popular uprisings beginning in 2000, particularly the "water war" in Cochabamba, where a wide coalition of popular movements (farmers, urban residents, factory workers, and students) united to protest neoliberal privatization of public water services (see Olivera and Lewis 2004). Popular demands included the reconstitution of public services, the nationalization of natural resources, and the establishment of a Constituent Assembly. Tapia points out that while the diverse militants of the water war did not identify as *a* nation, they were calling for the reconstitution of *the* Bolivian nation through the creation of a plurinational state. Thus the desire for a new form of the state emerged not just from indigenous people but became a "national necessity" across sectors (2010: 141).

These three trajectories converged in the Pacto de Unidad, in which members of all these groups came together to imagine and construct a new Bolivia. In the process, to use Rancière's terms, those who had had "no part" for centuries enunciated their capacity and right to a reordering of society in which they were counted and valued. This was visible at the inauguration of the CA, where indigenous groups carried signs saying "¡Nunca Más Sin Nosotros!" (Never Again without Us!). Of course the "us" in this declaration was a construction. Lowland indigenous groups and highland peasant groups had very different historical and political trajectories and had not worked together successfully in the past. So the unity of the Unity Pact was more an aspiration than a fact. Yet the historic possibilities brought them together in a thrilling political spectacle. I attended meetings of the Pacto in Sucre during the first weeks of the CA in August of 2006, and witnessed the incredible energy and hopefulness the delegates brought to the encounters. On one afternoon, hundreds of delegates, supporters, intellectuals, NGO allies, and journalists crowded into a meeting space. The leaders of the Pacto—highland peasants in their trademark leather jackets and lowland leaders in embroidered shirts—presented their proposal (detailed below), to the crowd, who responded with thundering applause. There was an overwhelming feeling that day that these were the founders of a new Bolivia, that the Bolivia they had known was from this day on going to be the past.

On the other side of town, however, other delegates to CA had very different agendas. These were the opposition groups, who brought together a coalition of political and economic elites. The strongest sector was made up of the *comites civicos* (civic committees) of the lowland departments, which represent the elite landowning and business class, which are collectively referred to as the *Media Luna*, or half-moon (so-named because of the shape of this region). The Oriente, or Eastern lowlands, is the main economic engine of the country, where the agribusiness elite cultivates soy, sunflowers, sorghum, and cattle for the global market. This is also the area where Bolivia's huge natural gas reserves are located. The political leaders of the *Media Luna* were firmly opposed to Morales's agenda of refounding the nation, and even more firmly against his efforts to overturn neoliberalism, which they saw as threatening their class interests. These elite leaders articulated their interests through a political movement demanding regional autonomy, meaning a system in which departments have the ability to tax, legislate, and make decisions about development projects, free from the oversight of La Paz. In the process, they mined long-term popular regional resentments against La Paz and racist fears (Gustafson 2006). I discuss this in greater detail in chapter 5.

The Bolivian anthropologist and MAS critic Pablo Regalsky argues that the MAS ended up in the middle, acting as an arbiter between these two sectors at the CA (Regalsky 2008, 2010). Perhaps more important to the concerns of this chapter, Tapia characterizes the Pacto as the "collective organic intellectual" that imagined and designed the new plurinational state, while the MAS acted to adapt this imaginary into the format of a modern liberal state (Tapia 2010). This statement points to the severe tensions that underlay the constituting acts of reforming the state and that continue to impact the constitution that was produced.

In an important move that stacked the decks in its favor, Morales opposed indigenous organizations' demands that they be able to send delegates to the CA representing their organizations, based on *usos y costumbres* (traditional norms). Instead, the MAS limited the number of indigenous delegates to the CA, and insisted on an election scheme based on political party membership. This allowed Morales to control a majority of MAS delegates and to pull indigenous representatives into the CA as their own MAS delegates. The minority opposition parties, held together by the lowland civic committees, resisted the MAS actively, boycotting Assembly meetings. In the middle of the CA, they held a referendum to create a new legal status of departmental autonomy (even though the Electoral Court ruled it illegal). It was in this context of ethnic polarization and political confusion that the Constituent Assembly took place.

TROUBLING TACTICS

The August 2006 inauguration of the CA in Sucre—where the first Bolivian constitution was written in 1825 entirely by white, landowning men—was a political

spectacle, attended by delegations from all the country's indigenous groups and social movements. There was an incredible feeling of social revolution in the air. The MAS delegates, most of whom were indigenous or from the popular sector, occupied 52 percent of the seats, physically embodying a startling statement about the revolution at hand.

After the heady days of the inauguration, the Assembly began its work. While the MAS had a majority of delegates, it did not have the two-thirds majority necessary to approve new articles under the terms of the Bolivian constitution or the special law convoking the assembly. As a result, everyone knew the proceedings would be contentious. In September 2006, however, MAS delegates voted by majority to change the rules of debate. In the controversial Article 70, they declared the Assembly to be *originaria* (original)—as opposed to *derivada*, or derived from the previous constitution—and authorized an absolute majority to approve all decisions except the final text, which would still require a two-thirds majority (*La Razon* 2006a). This caused a political firestorm, as people decried what looked like a blatant power grab. The right-wing Podemos party leader Jorge “Tuto” Quiroga said “the antidemocratic attitude of the MAS is leading to disaster [*fracaso*]” (*La Razón* 2006a). After months of political mudslinging, the Supreme Court ruled that while the original constitution was still in force, the Assembly was in fact derived from it and the *ley convocatoria* (the enabling legislation), and so the delegates to the assembly could not depart from this legal framework. MAS delegates nonetheless maintained that the assembly was something new, derived from the power of the people. “By declaring itself *originaria*, the Asamblea Constituyente is [now] above all constituted power, including the constitution,” the MAS delegate Raúl Prada Alcoreza said. This was not a constitutional convention, but a constituent assembly, an “extraordinary political event that was born of social crisis” (*El Deber* 2006).

This remarkable comment illustrates what the MAS delegates believed was at stake in the CA. For them, election to the assembly and the election of Morales to the presidency was not just an election in the liberal sense of representation. Rather, it was a revolutionary intervention—not just to occupy the old structures of power, but to fundamentally reshape them. They did not accept the liberal—and neoliberal—notion of the state as a neutral referee or night watchman. Instead, they were attempting to call the bluff on this “misrecognition,” to change the very nature of the state. This brings us back to Bautista’s argument that these were historic subjects constituting a new state on the basis of their substantive content. Yet Morales and his government were in a bind. They had come to power through these liberal institutions—and laid claims to legitimacy at the international level because of that, declaring that theirs had been a peaceful and democratic revolution. Yet these “reluctant liberals” keep running up against the difficult fact that liberal democratic institutions as they currently existed did not accomplish the form of justice social movement activists felt Bolivia needed.

The assembly was paralyzed for months. Opposition groups held massive marches, boycotted the assembly, and in December of 2006 organized a series of hunger strikes across the country (see Fabricant and Postero 2013). At one point, newspapers estimated up to 1,200 people were on hunger strikes (*La Razón* 2006b). Finally, in February 2007, the MAS and the right-wing political parties reached a settlement, in which each article would be approved by two-thirds of the commissions in charge of it, and then by the entire body, and then pass to a public referendum for approval of the full text. (Unresolved articles would pass to a committee to be settled, or go to public vote in the referendum.) With this compromise, the assembly ended its seven-month impasse and began its work on the content of the new constitution.

The tensions that began the CA never diminished, however. Commissions assigned to tackle the difficult issues such as land reform, autonomy, and indigenous rights worked diligently, but with great divisions (see Schavelzon 2012 and Beaulieu 2008 for excellent accounts of the workings of these commissions). Many came up with compromise language for the text, but many submitted both majority and minority provisions. Near the end, stalemates over these issues threatened the viability of the whole process. Public protest in the streets of Sucre took a violent turn, when the MAS refused to allow Sucre delegates to propose that Sucre be named the capital, as it had been in the early days of the republic. Indigenous delegates faced violent and racist reactions from protestors in the streets and feared for their lives (Schavelzon 2012; see more about this in chapter 5). Vice President García Linera convened a dialogue with the opposition parties, but made little progress. Delegates from the Right began to boycott the Assembly's commissions and meetings, and the MAS delegates faced dangerous street violence in Sucre. Finally, Morales and the MAS made a political decision not to let the process run aground. They bused many of the delegates—not including those in the oppositional parties—to the nearby city of Oruro, and in a highly controversial special session, passed a version of the constitution by a two-thirds vote of those attending.

That text still needed to go before the Bolivian people, which required the legislature to pass a bill scheduling the referendum. That proved very difficult, inasmuch as the MAS did not control Congress, so for several months the new constitution was left hanging in the air. Meanwhile, in Santa Cruz, in September 2008, what looked like a regional coup began. Autonomy activists took control of state buildings, burning several down, and the new prefect/governor declared that the department was an autonomous entity with its own laws and leaders. A mass of highland indigenous supporters of the MAS headed for Santa Cruz, and many believed a showdown was inevitable (*El Deber* 2008b; Romero 2008a, 2008b). Then, in the northern department of Pando, a group of eleven indigenous MAS supporters were brutally massacred under the leadership of the prefecto/governor (Naciones Unidas Derechos Humanos 2009). The shock of this event turned the

tide of public opinion, and led to negotiations between the state and leaders of the autonomy movement. In a few weeks, they had come up with a new negotiated version of the constitution, which all parties agreed to put to public vote. The MAS made substantial concessions on land reform, grandfathering in existing large landholdings, and limiting Morales's ability to hold office indefinitely. In exchange, departments won limited autonomy and ability to administer their own revenues. The referendum took place on January 25, 2009, and the constitution passed by a 60 percent margin.

I discuss the content of the new constitution below, but first I address the process by which it was passed, which was very troubling on a number of grounds. Many Bolivians expressed serious concern about the seemingly anti-democratic way in which the Constituent Assembly was run, the attempted "power grab" over the two-thirds rule, and most seriously, the way the MAS passed the constitution in Oruro. As a result, for many, this text was completely tainted. Then, the fact that the terms of the constitution, agonizingly negotiated by Assembly delegates, could be bartered by Morales and company in a political compromise seemed to make a mockery of all the claims to direct democracy. Often, these concerns were voiced in terms of the fear of an authoritarian or populist form of government. (A popular banner in Santa Cruz demonstrations declared: *EVO ASESINO DE DEMOCRACIA: "Evo, Assassin of Democracy."*) Many white-mestizo Bolivians characterized these actions in more ethnic terms, arguing that this was a racial takeover, motivated by revenge or reverse racism, while the majority of MASistas saw these events as absolutely appropriate actions challenging the long-entrenched power of the white-mestizo elite.

What do these tensions tell us about the possibility of balancing indigenous interests in social justice and liberal democratic notions of due process? This draws our attention to the complex relationship between populism, pluralism, and democracy, as well as the difficulties in defining or interpreting the terms themselves. In some formulations, populism is seen as external or opposed to democracy, a top-down form of government that emerges when political parties or civil society are weak or illegitimate, and inspiring leaders stand for the marginalized, excluded "people" against the immoral elite. Using a moralistic political style, populist leaders often bend the rule of law to establish an authoritarian regime that gathers power to itself while claiming to represent the sovereign will of the unitary and virtuous people (see de la Torre 1997). In the Bolivian case, this oppositional framing has been expressed as a difficult balance between popular participation and authoritarianism. Given that liberal democratic institutions have long been used by the elite to serve their own interests, some see the authoritarian use of the state to remedy this as an acceptable setting aside of democratic rules (Schilling-Vacaflor 2011). Other formulations suggest instead that populism is internal to democracy, as its redemptive face through which authentic popular will is expressed (Canovan 1999).

Noting that populism is both constituent of democracy and also the site of violations of its norms, many scholars conclude that populism has an ambivalent relation with democracy (de la Torre 2007; Mouffe 2005). I am compelled by Benjamin Arditi's characterization of populism as the "internal periphery" or "specter" of democracy. Here he draws attention to the region where the distinction between inside and outside is both blurred and a matter of dispute (Arditi 2007: 3). For Arditi, the democratic aspect of populism and its possible ominous tones are "undecidable," and only become visible through polemic or disagreement (7). Some forms of populism are compatible with democracy, indeed necessary for it; others put it in danger. Thus, says Arditi, we can think of populism as a "symptom of democracy," a paradoxical element that can both disturb and renew democratic politics. Ultimately, he says, populism "functions as a mirror, through which democracy can look at the rougher, less palatable edges that remain veiled by the gentrifying veneer of its liberal format" (60)

There clearly is a lot at stake: the MAS was using this liberal democratic process to operationalize its larger agenda of transforming the relation between the state, the market, and society. Market processes are surrounded by and enacted within a web of social and political relations, which act both to restrain and produce economic and industrial development. Orthodox neoliberal theorists push to disembody capital from all such constraints, arguing that capital must be allowed unfettered access and mobility (Harvey 2005: 11). Many critical of neoliberalism's caustic effects have argued that this narrow version of liberalism obscures social relations, excludes concerns about welfare, redistribution, and equity, and ultimately fails to offer a satisfying resolution of the antagonisms that are at the heart of contemporary society (see Brown 2003; Lazar 2004). This is precisely the position Morales and the MAS took. Their goal for this "radical anti-neoliberal democracy" was to embed the economy and market processes in social and cultural webs in such a way as to move towards greater equality.

The dispute over these procedures made it clear that these historic subjects did not feel bound by the constraints of existing forms of liberalism. Instead, they posed procedural and substantive challenges that drew attention to several limitations inherent in liberalism. First, liberalism's insistence on the rule of law can act as an empty formalism concerned with legal procedures over substance or justice. Laws that appear to uphold the rights of all citizens may in fact obscure—or, worse, reinforce—underlying inequalities. Citizenship is not a neutral legal status inhabited by pre-political subjects, but rather a contested process involving actors whose subject positions are not only culturally and politically constructed, but constructed in relation to the political process itself. So, who gets to be a citizen turns out to be both a procedural and a substantive question. As Rancière would suggest, then, it is by calling attention to the unequal effects of existing laws and constitutions that newly emerging political subjects enact change. So, for many

of the delegates in Sucre, the goal of the CA was to make this historical system of injustice visible and to overturn it. Their determination to control the Constituent Assembly and to dictate the terms of the new constitution was motivated, not by a cavalier attitude to the law, but by a desire to change the law to make meaningful citizenship possible in the current contexts.

The striking signs declaring “Never Again without Us!” pointed to a second limitation indigenous delegates challenged: the fact that liberalism is based upon a Western hegemonic notion of the universal. Judith Butler has written compellingly about this, suggesting not only that the “universal” is a contested term subject to cultural variability, but also that the scope of what different peoples consider as universal is only partly articulated, and under ongoing redefinition (Butler 1996: 46–47). It is, she suggests, an “open-ended ideal that has not been adequately encoded by any given set of legal conventions” (48). Looking at it from this perspective, we might see the struggles over the CA as disputes over what rights should be considered “universal” for all Bolivian citizens. For hundreds of years, Indians were not considered legitimate bearers of any sort of “universal” right, because they were not considered fully human, rational persons, and because they did not meet the requirements to be fully participating citizens (Egan 2007). At the CA, the MAS delegates were arguing that the underlying assumptions of universality in the previous constitution were no longer valid, and would have to give way to new values and procedures. For the indigenous delegates, especially those of the Pacto, indigenous values and historic demands—not only Western ideas—formed the basis of their emancipatory politics, and they believed those ideas could radically alter the police order. I turn now to their proposal to describe how they drew together indigeneity and decolonization as an alternative to liberalism.

THE PACTO PROPOSAL

The Pacto’s vision for the new plurinational state developed through dialogues and intense political debates and was expressed in two documents. After the CA was convoked in March 2006, the group that had convened in Santa Cruz in 2002 sprang into action to prepare for it. They held regional meetings across the country, which culminated in a National Assembly of Indigenous, Originary, Peasant, and Colonists Organizations in May of 2006. The result of their debates was the *Propuesta para la Nueva Constitución Política del Estado* (PNCPE; Proposal for the New Political State Constitution) (Pacto de Unidad 2006). This first draft lays out the idea of the new plurinational state and the reasons for it, and was intended as a tool to help orient the debates at the CA. Over the next year, as the Pacto members and advisers participated in the CA commissions and made further alliances, their proposal developed into a more polished constitution-like form, a May 2007 draft titled the *Constitución Política del Estado Boliviano*, *Propuesta*

Consensuada del Pacto de Unidad (PCPU; Political Constitution of the Bolivian State, Consensus Proposal of the Unity Pact) (Pacto de Unidad 2007). Reading them together we can see three interlinking themes: (1) autonomy and decolonization, (2) plurality within national unity, and (3) shared decision-making.

In the first document, the authors explain the plurinational state as a “new model of the state founded by indigenous, originary, and peasant nations and peoples as a collective subject that transcends the monocultural liberal model based upon the individual citizen” (Pacto de Unidad 2006: 4). Detailing the ways the Western model marginalized and weakened *pueblos originarios*’ (original peoples’) cultures and political and judicial systems, they argue that only a model of political organization based on collective rights will “decolonize our nations and peoples” (ibid). Here we see an explicit adoption of plurinationalism over the idea of multiculturalism. As I have explained above, multiculturalism was the form of inclusion adopted by neoliberal governments across Latin America in the 1990s (Hale 2002; Postero 2007a). Recognizing the cultural diversity of Bolivia, the neoliberal state adopted laws fomenting the political participation of indigenous peoples and granting some collective rights, like collective landownership. Will Kymlicka has called this form of recognition “liberal multicultural citizenship” (1996). Yet Bolivians found that multiculturalism did not fundamentally change the underlying racism or the structure of the state. Thus, the Pacto hoped to refound the state by recognizing not just the existence of indigenous peoples, but their sovereignty as nations.³

Scholars have defined sovereignty in a number of ways. Foundational accounts characterize sovereignty as the mark of state power, evolving from the original power of the king to enact violence—the right to kill. Under liberalism, this power devolves through a social contract to “the people,” understood as citizens (Hobbes [1651] 1971). Building on his definition of the political, which for him lies in the antagonistic relations between friends and enemies, the political theorist Carl Schmitt argued sovereignty was the power behind the law, that is, the power of a political entity to decide who counts as friends or enemies and what counts as law (Schmitt [1932] 1996). Recent scholarship has tried to disentangle sovereignty from state power (Blom Hansen and Stepputat 2005: 11). Foucault famously contrasted sovereign power to biopower, arguing that instead of the sovereign’s right to kill, modern forms of power center on life, especially that of the population (1977). Bringing together Schmitt and Foucault, Giorgio Agamben argues that sovereign power of violence continues to be constitutive of the political community in contemporary period. Describing the sovereign sphere as a “state of exception,” he showed how sovereign power can render certain people “bare life,” excluded completely from legality (Agamben 1998). These theories have led Thomas Blom Hansen and Finn Stepputat (2005) to conclude that sovereignty and the violence that marks it should be studied as “practices dispersed throughout and across societies” (3). They argue

that sovereignty is a social construction, a “tentative and unstable project whose efficacy and legitimacy depend on repeated performances of violence and a ‘will to rule’” (ibid). These performances are historically and culturally specific, they say, but they always construct their authority through a “capacity for visiting violence on human bodies” (ibid). Pierre Clastres rejected such “ethnocentric” notions of political power, which he argued were based solely on Western societies. He argued that not all societies allowed political institutions or leaders to exercise such power. The “primitive” indigenous societies he studied in the Amazon region of Latin America refused to allow this potential for violence to be possessed by any one leader. Instead, in these “societies against the state,” society as a whole was the site of political power, and leaders acted as mediators to promote harmony rather than to exercise command over others. Individual people and communities maintained autonomy, only giving power to leaders in emergencies like times of war (Clastres [1974] 1989).

The question of sovereignty takes on a specific valence in postcolonial settler states, of course. Robert Meister (2011) argues that in nation-states founded in the wake of settler colonialism, the claim of settlers to self-determination was at fundamental odds with the parallel claim of aboriginal peoples, resulting in the removal or elimination of those native peoples, and their erasure as peoples or nations. Thus, for most indigenous peoples, national sovereignty has always entailed their rendering as bare life. Claims of indigenous sovereignty can therefore act as a stark challenge to national sovereignty, both laying bare the violent dispossessions on which it is based, and proposing an unthinkable notion of indigenous peoples who claim membership in their own sovereign nations (Simpson 2014). Across Latin America, indigenous activists have pushed back against liberal multicultural notions of inclusion, arguing instead for self-determination and territorial control as nations.

In the Pacto’s proposal, the key mechanism to accomplish this decolonized form of sovereignty is *autonomía indígena originaria y campesina* (AIOC; indigenous originary peasant autonomy). Seen as a path to *autodeterminación* (self-determination), autonomy will allow indigenous peoples to “define our communitarian politics, social, economic, political and juridical systems,” and “reaffirm our structures of government, election of authorities, and administration of justice, respecting different ways of using space and territory” (Pacto de Unidad 2006: 4). This autonomy is “the condition and principle of liberty of our people and nations” and the keystone of decolonization (10).

In this description of autonomy, one can already see how it is linked to the second theme, plurality. It is because colonial structures tried to erase plurality that autonomy is necessary: to recognize and support those original peoples who resisted and still maintain their identities. But this requires a radical reform of the state. Where the liberal nation-state imagined a unified homogeneous Bolivian

people, the proponents of the plurinational model make a very different assumption: they argue that the underlying *pueblo* is plural and diverse. The authors argue for plurality in several forms. First, they recognize the presence of the country's *diversas naciones, pueblos, y culturas* (diverse nations, peoples, and cultures) (Pacto de Unidad 2006: 4). Second, they call for juridical pluralism, defined as “the co-existence, within the plurinational state, of indigenous originary and peasant juridical systems, on a plane of equality, respect, and coordination” (4, n. 4). Third, the plurinational state should respect diverse forms of government and democracy. Thus, liberal institutions of participatory and representative democracy should co-exist with indigenous forms of communitarian democracy and mechanisms of participation such as assemblies and *cabildos* (mass meetings). Leaders should be elected either by universal vote or through traditional mechanisms called *usos y costumbres* (6). These plural enactments are to be given respect, but also equal legal and political value.

These calls for and recognition of plurality are not phrased as separatism, but rather as the basis of a common and unified nation. The diverse nations and peoples have the right to *convivencia solidaria y pacífica* (solidary and peaceful co-existence), and to achieve this, the authors propose a “unitary plurinational state” (4). The fundamental principles of this state are “juridical pluralism, unity, complementarity, reciprocity, equality, [and] solidarity . . .” (ibid). Throughout the proposals, the authors link plurality to unity, making clear that this vision of pluralism will be the “motor of unity and social well-being for all Bolivians” (ibid). In his analysis of the Pacto’s proposals, Luis Tapia emphasizes the importance of reciprocity as a way to mediate the seeming tension between the need for a common government and the need to recognize difference. This, for him, is the key to decolonization: the complementary and reciprocal recognition and inclusion of those formerly depreciated by colonialism and later global capitalism (Tapia 2010: 145).

Rafael Bautista makes a similar argument. He argues that what is exceptional about the *pluri* in the plurinational is not just the recognition of difference or the diversity, but the historical process by which the diverse converges into community. So, rather than being simply a “culturalist” additive, the notion of the *pluri* acts as a critique to the devalued form of modern liberal politics, which privatizes and reduces public decision-making to the univocal colonial state. The *pluri* demands a democratization of the decision-making sphere, overcoming the false opposition between the state and society, making possible a congregation of all into what he calls *común-unidad* (common-unity). But this unity is not a given; it emerges in the process of recognition of the Other as a subject, as a human being with dignity and rights. Based in this reciprocal recognition, the *pluri* makes a fundamental claim: that unity is based in community or it is nothing (Bautista 2010a: 185–87).

This, then, brings us to the third axis of the Pacto’s proposals: shared decision-making. The authors describe a form of government in which autonomous

indigenous originary and peasant communities govern themselves at the local level *and* are actively involved in the state's decision-making about national issues, where they are to "co-administer and co-manage" resources (*co-administración y co-gestión*). Their draft called for 70 of the 167 delegates to the Plurinational Assembly (the Congress) to be elected by indigenous originary and peasant nations and *pueblos*. The plan to share decision-making is especially notable in the sections on natural resource exploitation, where local peoples will "participate in the making of decisions about exploration, exploitation, industrialization, and commercialization of non-renewable resources in their territories" (Pacto de Unidad 2006: 12). They would be consulted in advance about such development, and this consultation would be *vinculante*, or binding. Overall, the documents call for "direct representation" of indigenous originary and peasant peoples and nations in the administration and running of the plurinational state (4, 12). The plurinational state, then, was envisioned as a mechanism for the plurality of the Bolivian people to participate directly in "public power" (4). In the final draft, this was expressed by saying that both sovereignty and constituent power reside in the "indigenous originary peasant nations and peoples and in the culturally diverse population of the countryside and the city," who must exercise their power directly through participation in decision-making.

THE PLURINATIONAL STATE CODIFIED

The Pacto's proposed constitution was substantially modified in the political struggles between the Pacto, the MAS, and the opposition parties, first at the CA and then in the negotiations after the CA had concluded. The reasons for these modifications are complex and the subject of continuing debates. Clearly, the MAS was forced to negotiate with the opposition parties, whose stalling techniques had made the CA almost unviable. The *comites cívicos* (civic committees), the site of local oligarchic and agribusiness power in the lowlands, were adamant about certain issues, such as limiting land reform and privileging departmental autonomy over indigenous autonomy. MAS concessions on these issues sparked accusations that they had betrayed the revolutionary potential of the CA. Instead, say critics, the "reformist" MAS failed to confront the economic power of the Santa Cruz oligarchy and chose, instead, to support the capital-intensive forms of agricultural production and natural resource extraction that bring in the majority of the country's income (J. Webber 2011, 2012; see Postero 2012). Again, we must remember that since Bolivia's economy is deeply entangled with global and regional markets, Morales may have had less choice in all this than his critics gave him credit for having.

But the modifications cannot all be blamed on the need to assuage the Right or global capital. The MAS agenda was always different from the Pacto's. As Devin Beaulieu (2008) makes clear, the MAS's goal was always state capture. That is, the

MAS chose to use the political openings of the neoliberal period, particularly electoral politics, to gain control of the state, so as to be able to restructure the national development model and then redistribute the benefits of Bolivian patrimony to the Bolivian people. Beaulieu frames the MAS agenda in Polanyian terms, characterizing it as part of the “double movement” to complete the neoliberal promise of multiculturalism and redistribution. However, he argues, the limitations of that form of power constrained social movements’ abilities to change it (Beaulieu 2008: 55). This brings us back to the central question of this chapter: the possibilities and drawbacks of a strong liberal state. The MAS chose to embrace a model of the state that it felt would give it as much power as possible to accomplish its goals, while protecting its political hegemony (Garcés 2011: 63; Schilling-Vacaflor 2011). The result is a text that is not entirely coherent (Tapia 2010: 157). It contains much of the liberatory language of the Pacto’s draft, especially in those sections that recognize the precolonial existence of indigenous Bolivians. However, the state form remains fundamentally liberal and reserves the majority of the power to the central state, allowing only limited forms of autonomy and decision-making subordinated to the central state.

The preamble, already cited, and the first and third articles echo and codify the “plurality within unity” theme we saw in the Pacto proposal:

Article 1. Bolivia is constituted as a state that is unitary, based on the rule of social law, a plurinational communitarian state, free, independent, sovereign, democratic, intercultural, decentralized, and with autonomies. Bolivia is founded in plurality and in political, economic, juridical, cultural, and linguistic pluralism, within the integrating state process.

Article 3. The Bolivian nation is made up of the totality of Bolivianas and Bolivianos, the indigenous originary peasant nations and peoples, and the intercultural and Afro-Bolivian communities that as a whole constitute the Bolivian people.

Throughout the constitution, plural cultures are recognized and given value. In Article 8, the constitution makes indigenous moral principles the underlying ethical bedrock of the new state. Moreover, the notion of *vivir bien* or *suma qamaña* (living well) is held up to be the ideal form of society and forms the basis of the state’s economic and welfare policies.

The second article takes up the demands for autonomy:

Article 2. Given the precolonial existence of the indigenous originary peasant nations and peoples and their ancestral dominion over their territories, their self-determination is guaranteed within the framework of the unity of the state, consisting of their right to autonomy, to self-government, to their culture, to recognition of their institutions, and to the consolidation of their territorial entities, in conformity with this Constitution and the law.

This is the place in the constitution that appears most to embody the ideas put forward by the Pacto. It gives indigenous peoples the “right” to autonomy and

self-government and the “recognition” of their institutions, but this is a far cry from a plurinational state based on the equal co-existence of plural forms of democracy and governments. Indeed, the rest of the constitution lays out what Tapia calls a “constitutional hierarchy” (2010: 157). That is, we see many elements of a traditional liberal state model, with pretensions of universality and general validity, on the one hand, and a secondary rung of different normative systems that are recognized and allowed, but under the supervision of the dominant system, on the other. This, says Tapia, is merely the sort of multicultural recognition enacted in Bolivia in the neoliberal period (156).

The Pacto proposal imagined indigenous autonomy (AIOC) as the central form of political organization in the country, making indigenous institutions parallel to the central state. In the new constitution, and particularly as it was implemented in the later law on autonomies, however, the category of indigenous autonomy is greatly reduced, or “domesticated” as Fernando Garcés puts it (2011). First, they are not open to all forms of indigenous originary or peasant organizations, but only to those municipalities or established territories (TIOCs) with majority indigenous populations that follow constitutionally approved norms and procedures (Bolivia 2009: Art. 293). This means that many long-standing unrecognized demands for territory will not be included. The law also sets out tight bureaucratic procedures by which the proponents of an AIOC status may go about claiming that status—through a government supervised referendum, and so forth. These requirements are so strict that only eleven municipalities in the whole country were able to begin the process in the first round of applications. (Chapter 7 looks at the case of Charagua, one of the eleven, and the first to win this status.) In his in-depth analysis of the autonomy process and especially the legislation implementing it, John Cameron demonstrates how government policies and practices restrict and undermine opportunities to exercise autonomy. While the MAS officially supports the conversion to AIOCs, it has provided only minimal funding for the Autonomy process. More important, in many of the communities considering conversion, the MAS has made it known to its supporters that they will not receive government support if they push for autonomy. It is clear that the state sees indigenous control over natural resource extraction as a threat to its own power (Cameron 2013).

This brings us to the second way in which autonomy has been diminished. While the idea of the AIOC was to allow original peoples the possibility of governing themselves —*libre determinación*—the constitution establishes a clear hierarchy of jurisdictions, with the central state carrying out the seemingly universal work of governing the country and the people, and the AIOCs making decisions that only apply to their community and do not contradict the central state (Bolivia 2009: Art. 290). In Art. 30 of the Constitution, the section dealing with indigenous rights, this is echoed: indigenous peoples have the right to *their* political juridical and economic systems. Most important, the constitution eliminates the heart of

the plurinational proposal: shared decision-making. Nowhere does it mention co-administration or co-decision-making. Instead of giving a large number of special congressional seats to indigenous representatives, the constitution delegated the decision about how to proportion seats to the Plurinational Assembly, which was to draft the Electoral Law. In 2011, over huge protests by lowland groups, the Assembly settled on a tiny number: seven special seats. Perhaps most important, in the fundamental sections on natural resource exploitation (Art. 30, 15; Art. 348ff.), the central state retains exclusive control over decision-making.

Article 349. Natural resources are the property and direct, indivisible, and inalienable dominion of the Bolivian people, and it is the state's responsibility to administer them for the collective interest.

Article 351. The state will assume control and direction over the exploration, exploitation, industrialization, transportation, and commercialization of strategic resources . . .

And, in place of the *consulta previa vinculante*, the binding consultation process envisioned by the Pacto, the new constitution only guarantees a previous and informed consultation, with no possibility of the veto power hoped for in a plurinational state co-administered by complementary others (Art. 30, 15). As we will see in chapter 5, where I describe the controversy over the TIPNIS national park and indigenous territory, this has become a source of enormous contestation, calling into question not only the government's commitment to due process but also its claims to decolonization.

THE EMANCIPATORY POTENTIAL OF DISAGREEMENT

The struggles of the Pacto de Unidad delegates to enact their vision of a plurinational state illuminates the tensions at the heart of the new Bolivian development model, where the need to develop natural resources conflicts with the interests of the local peoples to govern themselves according to their own customs. These are made visible in the stark gap between the shared decision-making the Pacto proposed and the centralized decision-making the final constitution enabled. Despite all the inspiring language about recognizing and respecting the plurality of the Bolivian *pueblo*, the power to decide for the *pueblo* remained in the hands of the central state, demonstrating the continued colonialism of what I see as a profoundly liberal state. Finally, those inclined to characterize Morales as an anti-democratic populist leader might see in the constitutional process another example of how he consolidated state power.

The contestation over decision-making also reveals something else: the profound and continuing tensions within liberal democracy itself, which take on particular valences here as Bolivians balance liberalism with indigenous visions of

self-governance. In every state, the notion of “the people” is a constructed one, and the state must claim to legitimately represent that people, whether it be unitary or plural. Throughout his administration, Morales has held himself out as representing the sovereign will of the people—as all presidents do. His notion of who exactly this *pueblo* is has, naturally, varied depending upon his audience. At some points, he characterized “the people” as both poor and indigenous; at others, he has focused on more unifying notions of Bolivians. But who counts as the people and what rights they have or should have is the fundamental “political” question always at play. In the Constituent Assembly, the Pacto put forward a new vision of how Bolivia should be ordered, with a radically different “count” of who should have a part in the nation’s political, cultural, and economic order. As much as Morales identified publicly with the indigenous agenda of pluralism and evokes indigenous *cosmovisión* (worldview) in all his international talks, it is clear that the Pacto’s call for a recount severely threatened the order policed by the MAS. Morales and the MAS have worked hard to achieve the power they have, fighting off right-wing opposition parties and leftist critiques. Moreover, the Morales regime has invested enormous energy in a new “distribution of the sensible” in which the language, epistemology, and aesthetics of indigeneity are central to state legitimacy. In the next chapter, I show one way the MAS state has done this, describing a spectacular wedding held by the Vice Ministry of Decolonization and the meanings participants make of it. Thus, we can say that the MAS regime has *already* carried out a recount, making “the indigenous” visible—and valorized.⁴ This has been one of the MAS’s greatest successes, in fact, giving indigenous and peasant peoples a vastly increased sense of belonging and citizenship.

Yet the disagreements visible in the struggle at the Constituent Assembly show that the MAS’s positive resignification of the category of indigenous was not a sufficiently meaningful recount for the Pacto activists. For them, the questions at hand were not merely about recognition of their indigeneity, but about what that category actually means. For the Pacto visionaries, recognition of Bolivia’s pluralism involves the right of that plurality to make decisions. In essence their disagreement is a disagreement about the form democracy will take in Bolivia. Is this going to be a classic liberal state where the central state retains the power to decide such things as resource extraction (or highway placement, as we will see in chapter 5) or is this going to be an “indigenous state” where local communities have autonomy to decide such things for themselves? These are not just symbolic questions. The new constitution highlights the complex material and epistemological implications of a state that is at once indigenous and developmentalist.

Such fundamental disputes are clarified when political subjects, like the Pacto activists, draw attention to a new set of emancipatory possibilities through disagreement. Rancière notes that such acts are tenuous, precarious, and not likely to alter the status quo; rather, what they do is open the possibilities to the future.

Benjamin Arditi suggests that the Occupy movement in the United States performed a similar function, providing a “passageway to the future” simply by drawing attention (“We are the 99%”) to the miscount (Arditi 2015). The Pacto’s proposal was emancipatory precisely because it interrupted the way things were ordered or policed, and produced a “body and a capacity for enunciation not previously identifiable.” This, in turn, reconfigures the field of experience (Rancière 1999: 35). What is this new body and capacity? It is the plural body of the *pueblo boliviano*, the people “of a plural composition” described in the constitution and given voice and action by these “speaking beings” (30). This is not a new category, of course, but a persistent category put forward for centuries by indigenous people, and miscounted over and over again by the dominant orders. The disagreements over the constitution—both the activists’ demands and the state’s response—demonstrate that the category still remained miscounted in the MAS era, despite the rhetoric of plurinationalism. Now, however, regardless of the outcome in this case, this category has taken on greater political meaning. McNeish concludes that while it did not meet all the demands of its insurgent proponents, the CA process did form a “general and irreversible acceptance of the need to accept plurality as part of the national identity” (2008: 93). That is, the plurality expressed in the constitution is not just a rhetorical abstraction in the text, but an active force made up of those historic subjects Bautista referred to who are pushing the state to continue to evolve and respond. Now the state must respond to accusations of colonialism carried out by the so-called decolonizing state. Now the state is held accountable for the gap between its discourse about the *pachamama* (Mother Earth) and its practices on the ground. And here, we must acknowledge an important difference between the indigenous activists I describe here and the Occupy movement: while they both call attention to the miscount, the Bolivian activists also posit a territory, subject, and history from which to “disagree.” That is, these speaking beings also assert that they are citizens with rights that emerge from their history and the constitution.⁵

This returns us to the issue of whether the MAS is a populist regime. To what extent does Morales represent the people? Which people? The Bolivian case described here makes clear that we can only evaluate the MAS’s actions as part of the undecidable tensions between popular will and equality, on the one hand, and the seemingly intractable need for the state to exercise its power to manage the country and the economy, on the other (what Canovan 1999 terms the redemptive vs. the pragmatic faces of democratic government). This points out that the dual role the MAS government plays. On the one hand, the MAS has practiced an emancipatory “politics,” rewriting the constitution, instituting a policy of decolonization, and engaging in a campaign of symbolic acts intended to make visible the historic racialized miscount of Bolivia’s indigenous peoples. But on the other, by taking the mantle of the liberal state, it also acts as the police order, governing through law as

well as violence, calling into being other forms of politics. This is the hybrid nature of the Morales state.

Did the Pacto activists interrupt the MAS police order? Certainly, the MAS has enormous power, but as Foucault explains, government power is never totalizing. Rather, governing is the ability “to structure the possible field of action of others” (Foucault 1982: 221). Thus, while the MAS may structure the field, it does not completely limit the ways social movements can contest its power. Clearly, the Pacto was not able to make all the radical changes it envisioned, but it did plant seeds that may develop into a real and active plurinationalism over time. The Guaraní leaders pushing indigenous autonomy in Charagua, described in chapter 7, are working to make this a reality. The Bolivian theorist Raúl Prada Alcoreza suggests that this transition will occur as the constitution is interpreted by legislators and put into practice. He predicts that the “pluralist episteme” inaugurated by the CA debates and the constitutional text will be developed through the transgressive practices of the plural Bolivian multitude, whose collective construction of the laws will rupture the government practices (Prada Alcoreza 2014). Both Prada and Bautista remind us of what Frantz Fanon (1963) made clear, that decolonization is a continuing constituent process carried out by actors whose subjectivities are only formed in the process of struggling for revolutionary change. In contemporary Bolivia, we are witnessing precisely that: the ongoing struggle to define who counts as *el pueblo boliviano* and what that means for Bolivian democracy. The plurality of answers to these ultimately undecidable questions will only be illuminated by further disagreement.

Wedding the Nation

Spectacle and Political Performance

On May 7, 2011, the Depatriarchalization Unit of Bolivia's Vice Ministry of Decolonization brought together 355 indigenous couples to be married in a big public coliseum, the Coliseo Cerrado, in El Alto, a mostly Aymara city perched on the high plateau above Bolivia's capital, La Paz. There, in a grand spectacle of "indigenous" religious and ethnic pride, the couples were wedded in a ceremony officiated by Andean religious experts called *amautas*. President Evo Morales played the role of *padrino*, or godfather, to all the couples. This event was part of the government's central agenda of decolonization, a complex project to overturn the legacies of systemic racial domination begun in the colonial period. In the government's view, decolonization requires a new model of the family, based not on the Catholic Church, but on indigenous values and practices, particularly the Andean notion of *chachawarmi*, or gender complementarity. Looking out over the sea of couples brightly attired in their "traditional" clothing, President Morales congratulated the *amautas* for the beautiful "natural" ceremony and the couples for beginning to decolonize themselves.¹ "The family is the center of a community, and for that reason, new families will be central for the plurinational state," he said. "In our families, there is shared responsibility between men and women, shared responsibility in the community, and in the *patria grande, la familia grande* [the homeland and the big family] that is Bolivia" (*Bodas Colectivas* 2011, DVD, 1: 48–49).

The next year, in September 2012, Vice President Álvaro García Linera married Claudia Fernández, a national television news reporter. García Linera and Fernández are both urban white-mestizos with no claim to indigenous heritage. Their union, dubbed "the wedding of the year" by the media, was intensely awaited and blogged.² The main ceremony took place in the Cathedral of San Francisco,

Bolivia's most important Catholic Church, but the day before, they participated in an "Andean" or "ancestral" wedding ceremony at the pre-Inca temple at Tiwanaku, where Morales held his first inauguration in 2006 (see Postero 2007b). Dressed in elegant clothes designed to reflect Andean style, with colorful accents and decorations, the pair were "married" by amautas before hundreds of visitors and community members. The minister of cultures and his team organized the event, which culminated in a ride in a traditional *titora* (woven reed) boat on a nearby lake.

What was the effect of these spectacular ceremonies? How did they enact or produce decolonization? Did they enhance the legitimacy of the "indigenous state"? Using anthropological understandings of performance, I examine how these state rituals reworked the historical and ongoing tensions in Bolivian society, in which the category of "indigenous" has long been opposed to that of "white" or "mestizo." Morales's government asserted that the marriages were part of a radical transformation of Bolivian society by positively valuing the indigenous, but I show how the rituals fit into a long tradition of cultural performances, such as folklore festivals and religious dances, in which elites or the state perform stylized versions of indigeneity in order to incorporate the dangerous indigenous "other" into the nation (Abercrombie 2001; Rogers 1999; Rockefeller 1999). Using ambiguous polyvalent symbols and spatial effects to mediate between the highly charged indigenous-colonizer poles, these wedding rituals performed a managed vision of indigeneity that serves as a foundation for the new plurinational state. Yet such performances are always subject to multiple, contested interpretations by participants and audience members (Bigenho 2006; Mendoza 2000). Using the Rancièrian framework laid out in the Introduction, we could say that while the weddings enacted emancipatory *politics* by explicitly encouraging a new valuation of indigenous culture and attacking the myths of Indian inferiority upon which coloniality is based (Bautista 2010; Quijano 2007), they also worked in parallel ways as a form of *policing*, recontextualizing masculinist colonial state power and foreclosing disagreements about the meaning of indigeneity and who is entitled to represent it.

DECOLONIZATION AS DISAGREEMENT

In the Introduction, I described the polyvalent notion of decolonization that guides the Morales administration's agenda for the plurinational state. As the preceding chapters have shown, "decolonization" can mean many things. The Pacto de Unidad activists at the Constituent Assembly, described in chapter 2, saw decolonization as the creation of a plurinational state based on local self-government and shared decision-making. They, along with many other indigenous activists also saw decolonization as the radical transformation of national development, moving from Western notions of capitalist extraction to ideas of more sustainable

development they call *vivir bien*, or living well. As chapter 4 will show, the Morales state's equation of extractivist development with decolonization underwrote very different ideas about development.

Despite the ongoing contestations over the multiple meanings of the term, Morales and the officials of his government have continued to use the language of decolonization to legitimize their policies. The Vice Ministry of Decolonization (VMD), a department of the Ministry of Cultures, is headed by Félix Cárdenas, an Aymara activist who was a MAS delegate to the Constituent Assembly. The VMD is charged with implementing decolonization and seeing to it that other agencies are acting in accordance with this overarching mandate. The VMD produces texts explaining decolonization and organizes "cultural" events across the country to promote decolonization. In the Introduction, I describe several ways of thinking about decolonization, emerging from different ideological trajectories. The VMD draws most overtly from postcolonial studies, focusing on how colonial forms of domination obscured indigenous ways of thinking and knowing, privileging Western categories and epistemologies in what Aníbal Quijano calls the "coloniality of knowledge" (Quijano 2007; see also *Cambio* 2011). In this view, decolonization requires thinking and speaking from a different locus of enunciation, claiming a new epistemological relation to the state, and recuperating Bolivia's non-Western culture, language, cosmology, and forms of being. Vice Minister Cárdenas often explains that the central feature of colonial domination is still the powerful myth of white superiority that devalued indigenous cultures, religions, languages, and ways of life. For him and other indigenous intellectuals, to decolonize Bolivian society is to cleanse it of such colonial devaluation and restore indigenous pride, forms of knowledge, and practices (see Bautista 2010; Burman 2011b; Cárdenas 2011).

Here a return to Rancière's notion of politics is helpful to explain why the Bolivian state has invested so much effort in what many see as propaganda or "merely culturalist" efforts. In the Introduction, I proposed that, using Rancièrean terms, we can think of indigenous organizing as emancipatory politics intended to draw attention to the "miscount" or exclusion of indigenous peoples from the nation (Rancière 1999). By making their presence visible, the "part without a part" demonstrates the "wrong" committed by the police order, or the structures of society. Rancière describes this in terms of aesthetics, explaining that one fundamental way in which society is ordered is through a "distribution of the sensible." He calls attention to the ways some people are not sensed as real or important, just noise in the system. In this view, we can see the efforts of the VMD to make coloniality visible as an ongoing politics. Given that throughout Bolivia's history, indigenous peoples have been discursively opposed to whites and mestizos, and treated as savage obstacles to modernity and progress, a fundamental task of decolonization is to change these ideas, held at the deepest aesthetic and cultural levels. The collective marriage I describe in this chapter was central to the VMD's efforts to "make

coloniality visible in all its aspects” and to radically transform Bolivian culture by making indigenous customs and norms perceivable (Mamani and Chivi 2010: 25).

DEPATRIARCHALIZATION

The 2011 collective marriage was intended to project a new horizon for Andean families. Why focus on families? Designed by the Depatriarchalization unit of the VMD, the weddings were intended to play a part in accomplishing the unit’s overarching goals: “to make visible, destabilize, and transform patriarchal social relations in the State, society, and economy” (Mamani and Chivi 2010: 10; Chivi 2011b). According to the VMD, patriarchy is not just *machismo*, or sexism. Rather, it is a broader “system of power relations made in the image and likeness of the masculine” (Mamani and Chivi 2010: 28). Writing for the VMD, Amalia Mamani and Idón Chivi trace the history of contemporary patriarchy to sixteenth-century Spanish colonialism, brought to the Americas by soldiers and Catholic priests (29). This follows a large body of feminist scholarship recognizing the ways in which colonialism was always gendered (see, e.g., Choque-Quispe 1998; Rivera Cusicanqui 1996; Rivera Cusicanqui and Barragán 1997; Schiwy 2007). In her analysis of British colonialism, for instance, Anne McClintock argues that “gender power was not the superficial patina of empire, an ephemeral gloss over the more decisive mechanics of class or race. Rather, gender dynamics were, from the outset, fundamental to the securing and maintenance of the imperial enterprise” (1995: 5–7). The precolonial gender system in the Andes has been described as a “dynamic and contentious equilibrium,” where women and men had public and family rights more or less on par with each other (Rivera Cusicanqui 2010b: 31; see also Harris 1978), but María Lugones explains that Europeans brought with them a conception of civilization that privileged white men as “the human being par excellence.” This turned “the colonized woman” into an empty signifier, a sort of “non-human” whose sex became a legitimate site of exploitation, violence, and terror (Lugones 2010: 744). This was accomplished in part through Christian understandings of women’s sexuality as evil (745), and in part through the imposition of a strongly heterosexual model of the family. Rossana Barragán explains how this heterosexual model was further embedded during the republican period, when Bolivian legislators adopted a Victorian model of the family in which the paterfamilias acted as the sole public representative of the family, subordinating wives and children under his authority (cited in Rivera Cusicanqui 2010b: 30).

In 2011, I visited the offices of the VMD and spoke to the director of the Depatriarchalization Unit, Doña Esperanza Huanca. She, too, had been a delegate to the Constituent Assembly, and we remembered meeting in Sucre at the inauguration in 2006. Now, years later, she worked in the VMD, in the crowded Ministry of Cultures building in downtown La Paz. The office buzzed with conversations

in various languages, and its walls were covered with colorful posters advertising workshops on decolonization as well as important tourist sites. The great majority of the officials and employees self-identified as indigenous, and as a result, visiting the office is a very different experience than my many interviews of government officials in the 1990s. Then, officials were almost all mestizo men, dressed in formal suits. Now, the Depatriarchalization office was filled with indigenous women dressed in clothing that marked them as indigenous. A trained eye could identify which region and linguistic group each belonged to from their hats, blouses, and skirt styles. Doña Esperanza was proud to tell me about the collective marriages. Sitting under a poster of Evo Morales smiling down over the office, she explained that to confront colonial legacies, the new plurinational state must create new families. She pointed to Article 62 of the new constitution, which says that “the state recognizes and protects families as the fundamental nucleus of society, and guarantees the social and economic condition necessary for its integral development.” The collective marriages were an opportunity for the state to help instill into these couples these important values of the “new family”: horizontal relations of rights and duties as to their children; ending sexual, physical, and psychological violence; and shared responsibility for domestic labor (see Chivi 2011a). They began this effort with several inspirational talks at preparatory meetings for the wedding participants.

Vice Minister Félix Cárdenas was also enthusiastic about the weddings. He began our 2011 interview by describing his political trajectory from his early work as a labor leader in the peasant unions in Oruro to his struggles with the national labor union, the CSUTCB, around the 500-year anniversary of the invasion of the Americas. He described his experience as a delegate to the Constituent Assembly, where he had been the head of the *Visión del País* (Vision of the Country) Commission. Our job, he said, was to ask “what kind of country are we going to construct? And to do that we had to understand our identities, our history, and the myths we have been told since childhood.” This trajectory, he said, explained the excitement and the energy he brought to the VMD, where the first assumption was understanding that “today we are a colonial state.” That state is “reproduced permanently on the basis of two fundamental axes: racism and patriarchy.” To decolonize, then, is to “deconstruct that colonial state, and understand that all the institutions of the state are colonial and racist and patriarchal.” So, the weddings were intended to begin the process of changing those axes. He told me:

We want to re-position our spiritual thinking, our spiritual practices, and recuperate our ceremonial places and practices. . . . We want to revalorize our amautas, our Aymara priests. Through these weddings we are holding, we want to understand that [Catholic] marriage has a patriarchal and *machista* foundation in which the man is the owner of the woman, the children, and even the future of the family. We want

to put forth a new model of the family, marrying people with our own priests, and instituting families that live in complementarity, in solidarity, and fundamentally in co-responsibility. (personal interview, August 2011)

This argument faults European-based patriarchy as the source of gender discrimination, and holds out indigenous values as the idealized solutions. But does all gender discrimination come from colonialism? Does chachawarmi perhaps also conceal an autochthonous form of gender inequality, as Anders Burman suggests (2011a: 75)? These questions have been the subject of substantial debate and study across Latin America, as indigenous women have organized and mobilized for change (see, e.g., Oliart 2008; Richards 2004; Sierra 2001 Speed 2008; Speed et al. 2006). In her review of this now extensive literature, Stéphanie Rousseau concludes that indigenous women activists can find themselves caught between their support for their movements' collective projects of decolonization and autonomy, on the one hand, and their critiques of patriarchal practices and norms within their communities, on the other (Rousseau 2011: 9). For instance, she suggests that their role as agents for preserving and reproducing the community can be empowering, since this strengthens endangered identities, but it can also act as an obstacle to full participation in public or political roles. Even more problematic is the revaluation of customary law, which does not always embody women's rights (ibid). Yet scholars have documented the creative ways in which these women have used indigenous ideas of complementarity to struggle for justice within their communities and within their families. While some reject feminism as a Western bourgeois notion and defend indigenous *cosmovisiones* as a more legitimate space of resistance, others have increasingly put forward new forms of "indigenous feminism," in which their positions as both women and indigenous are mutually reinforcing (Hernández Castillo 2010; Speed 2008). In a provocative intervention into this debate, the Bolivian sociologist and public intellectual Silvia Rivera Cusicanqui argues that indigenous organizing focused on recovering territories in fact ignores the issues most important to indigenous women who live and work in cities—exploitative labor and sexual violence. By limiting their activism to questions of political or territorial rights, she says, male indigenous leaders are missing broader and potentially more liberatory notions of rights (Rivera Cusicanqui 2010b: 49–50).

In Bolivia, these debates have revolved mainly around the issue of whether Andean culture can be claimed as a source of empowerment or is, rather, just another site of patriarchy—precisely the question this collective wedding brings up. The Aymara feminist Julieta Paredes told me that there are two forms of patriarchy: an ancestral patriarchy that can be seen from the period of the Incas on, and a colonial patriarchy brought by the Spanish. These are linked and reinforce each other. For her, depatriarchalization can only be successful if it recognizes

both forms, that of the European conquerors towards indigenous people, but also that of the indigenous men vis-à-vis indigenous women (personal communication, August 2012, see also Paredes 2011). The Aymara intellectual María Eugenia Choque-Quispe agrees, pointing out that the colonial order radically transformed gender relations between indigenous men and women, since the latter were transformed into a commodity whose value hinged on their reproductive capacities (Choque-Quispe 1998: 12). As a result, she rejects the concept of *chachawarmi*, characterizing it as a romanticized and deeply conservative notion that serves to conceal the ongoing subordination of women in their communities (15). This sentiment is echoed by some of the Aymara activists interviewed by Anders Burman (2011a), who recognized the gap between the indigenous *ideal* of *chachawarmi* and the way it is *practiced* in contemporary indigenous communities—where women are often still silenced and subordinated to indigenous men. Nevertheless, they still saw great emancipatory potential in revitalizing traditional gender practices as part of the decolonizing process. Clearly, the VMD takes this last approach, as we see in the collective wedding.

PUTTING ON A WEDDING FOR 355 COUPLES

The VMD began by broadcasting an invitation on the radio in Spanish and indigenous languages on the radio stations that are the main source of information in the rural areas. The written convocation said the goal of the marriages was to “promote and recuperate the culture of tolerance through the plurinational weddings in order to facilitate the process of the institutionalization of the diversity of religious practices, strengthening spiritual beliefs in accordance with the *cosmovisiones* [worldviews] of the indigenous originary peasant nations and peoples, to live well in harmony with Mother Earth” (Bolivia 2010).

Besides the opportunity to take part in this unique public celebration of cultural diversity, there were several important material incentives for participating. First, the VMD was footing the bill. In Bolivia, there are two forms of wedding ceremonies. The first is a civil marriage, called *registro civil*, officiated by a notary public, with two witnesses. Since 1911, this has been all that is necessary for a marriage to be legal and recognized by the state.³ But many people, including many indigenous Andeans, also celebrate a religious ceremony in the Catholic Church, and have their marriage license signed by the priest. As I describe below, this is usually followed by a costly wedding celebration. This expense is a big obstacle for poor people who often wait years to gather the funds and social capital to be able to hold such ceremonies.⁴ Many of the couples that participated in the collective wedding had been together for many years and had children, but they had never been able to afford to formalize their relationship. So it was significant that the state promised to cover the costs of whatever documentation was necessary,

such as procuring birth certificates or *carnets* (national identity cards), as well as the cost of the civil marriage registry and all the costs of the collective celebration. Every couple I spoke to said the cost was the main reason they participated in the collective wedding. I would also suggest that this was an easy pathway to state documentation: by participating in this state ritual, they avoided other much more complicated and costly bureaucratic rituals.

Potentially more significant was the state's offer to build each of the couples a house. The VMD paired with the Vice Ministry of Housing and Urbanization to establish a special program called "El Casado Casa Quiere" based on the common saying, "Cuando la pareja joven se casa, casa quiere" (When a young couple marries, they want a house).⁵ In many Aymara communities, the couple's parents and neighbors build the couple a new house. As Denise Arnold has shown, in the Andes, the construction of the house and the final roofing ceremony serves to weave the house and the couple into the network of the community and the cosmos (Arnold 1992). Citing Article 19 of the new constitution, which declares that all people have "the right to adequate habitat and housing," the VMD argued that the state, as the "big community," should support the couples with housing (Chivi 2011b). This was also part of a larger home building project that the MAS government began in 2006, called the Programa Vivienda Social y Solidaria (Social and Solidarity Housing Program), intended to meet the serious problem of lack of housing in the rural areas.⁶

The morning of the wedding, notary publics set up shop in the Coliseo Cerrado, allowing those couples not already married under the registro civil to accomplish this legal step. As is the norm in Bolivia, notaries required the couples to swear before God. Photographs from that morning show couples swearing with the common hand gesture of thumb and first finger crossed in the sign of a cross, evidence of the continuing influence of the Catholic ecclesiastic traditions. The event organizers had been very clear in the pre-wedding meetings that the couples should wear "traditional" clothing. What did traditional clothing mean? I asked. For Natalia and Crispín,⁷ a participating couple I spoke with in 2012, it meant old-style clothing (*ropa antigua*) made of sheep's wool. This was not like the Western-style clothes they wear now in their rural community near Tiwanaku, but rather clothing such as their grandparents wore. They had inherited such clothing, which they kept for special ceremonial or civic events. Gregorio and Amalia, from another rural hamlet near Tiwanaku, had to buy these clothes, quite an investment, but one they were happy to make. They felt that the old customs were being lost, so it was fun to be involved in "recuperating" them. For couples that live in the city and regularly wear Western-style clothes (*de vestido*), this meant buying clothes marking them as indigenous. Beauticians offered free haircuts and styling, as well as makeup for the women. (Rural women rarely wear makeup, something considered more appropriate for urban women.) Urban women, few of whom wear their

hair in the long braids common in the rural areas or in the *cholita* style in the city, had their hair braided by the hair stylists. As several of the couples I interviewed told me, the long white wedding dress and suit in which so many people marry these days doesn't suit them. Luis, a neighborhood activist from El Alto, told me he was happy to be able to wear these clothes as an example for his children. His wife Celestina, an urban merchant who normally dresses *de vestido*, told me "I felt different, I felt good in these clothes!... This was an opportunity to be part of decolonization."

Here we see the critical importance of clothing in marking the categories and meanings of indigeneity. Cecilia Salazar has explored how the Indian has been continually recreated through the "manipulation of signs and corporalities," especially clothing choices. She argues that as biological racism gave way to social racism, clothing acted as a "second skin" that makes visible class and power (Salazar 2006: 10). In her analysis of folkloric performances in Ecuador, Rebecca Tolen argues that dress is by far the most important icon for portraying the place of indigenous people in the nation—tied to a timeless, rural ethnicity opposed to civilized whiteness (Tolen 1999). But such signs undergo constant reinterpretation. Rossana Barragán described how the clothing of the *chola paceña*—the icon of feminine ethnicity in Bolivia—all borrowed from European fashions. The large skirts of the *pollera*, flowered Manila shawl, and Borsalino bowler hat were originally adopted in acts of cultural mimesis intended to give indigenous migrants to the city social mobility and access to markets (Barragán 1992). In recent years, this style has been "converted into a form of resistance against cultural assimilation, as the clothing items have come to be seen as emblems of an oppressed and subaltern ethnicity" (Rivera Cusicanqui 2010b: 46). This is ever more the case since the election of Evo Morales, since government ministries like the VMD are filled with self-identifying indigenous women in polleras. Yet, as both Rivera Cusicanqui and Barragán have pointed out, this donning of polleras by chola women in La Paz remains ambiguous. On the one hand, it highlights and negates indigenous differences of gesture and conduct, but it may also mask assimilationist aspirations and self-perceptions as "mestizas" or "middle-class" women (ibid; Barragán 2006). (I return to the complex issue of the intersection of race and class in chapter 6.) I suggest the wearing of "indigenous" clothing in the wedding ceremony is equally ambiguous, and productively so. While it marks its wearers as indigenous, the theatrical context allows the participants to adopt the part for the spectacle, and then shed that "second skin" after the event if they want. Nonetheless, as signs of a newly valued identity, such clothing can also be enormously meaningful, especially in a ritual context.

The big event began with the couples entering the brightly decorated Coliseo Cerrado in groups, community by community, carrying flowers. They formed an enormous circle around the edges of the arena. Then, the amautas—pairs of

men and women ritual experts—entered, blowing conch shell horns and burning incense. Seated before ritual *mesas*, small tables with flowers and ritual objects, they chanted, invoking the deities of the mountains and the Pachamama. At the center of the arena was a dais, where the governor of La Paz, the vice minister of decolonization, and the minister of cultures were seated. From a doorway at the top of the arena, President Morales descended to the arena, where he greeted all the couples, followed closely by the ministry's video team. Then a collective theater group of 120 actors and dancers performed a drama showing the violent process of evangelization and colonization by the Spanish. Spanish colonizers and priests whipped, kicked, and enslaved the indigenous peoples, until the end, when the indigenous peoples rose up, killing the oppressors, to the applause of the audience and the president. A final dance showed the return of the Inca gods and warriors. Then, the amautas performed the marriage ceremony, giving each couple words of advice, blowing incense smoke in their faces, linking them together with ropes, and sprinkling alcohol on them and the ground.

Finally, President Morales spoke. Morales, who is single, joked that seeing all these families in *nuestras vestimentas* (our clothing) made him want to get married. Calling on the couples to continue to decolonize themselves and be an example for their children, he urged them to share responsibility in the home and in the big family of Bolivia. The event ended with Morales posing for pictures with each community group and then the couples going outside to make offerings at the ritual *mesas* prepared by the amautas.

CULTURAL PERFORMANCE AND MORAL REGULATION

This wedding spectacle provoked all kinds of responses in Bolivia. Anarcho-feminists protested the event's heterosexual privileging.⁸ Aymara activists from the Pukara group argued that this event reduced struggles over fundamental questions of power and domination to a silly symbolic "culturalist" response, focusing on things like dress and music (Turpo Choquehuanca 2011).⁹ In talking with many different Bolivians about these collective weddings, however, the overwhelming response I received was one of cynicism: "Es un show, no más" ("It's just a show"), they say. There is no doubt that this marriage was a show. It was intended to be. This was a performance carried out by the state, invested with state resources, using elements of folklore and theater to accomplish a political agenda. But this was a special kind of cultural performance: a public performance of a ritual we normally associate with private domestic relationships.¹⁰ Before analyzing the effects of this spectacle, I want to consider first why a state would choose ritual and performance to accomplish its political work, and then ask why it might intervene into the family sphere. Then I turn to how it used symbol and imagery to accomplish its goals.

Cultural performances are key sites of meaning making. David Guss defines performances as clearly framed events set off from normative everyday reality, which involve dramatizations that enable participants to understand, criticize, and change the worlds in which they live (Guss 2000: 9). This is possible because such performances are profoundly discursive: they are dialogical and polyphonic fields of action where competing claims can be challenged and negotiated, producing new meanings in the process. This means that cultural performance is not merely reflective of social experience, but also productive of it (10). Relying on Clifford Geertz's work on the theater state in Bali (1980) and Emile Durkheim's work on collective consciousness (1915), scholars have demonstrated how political actors use ritual and performance to gain legitimacy and to create and strengthen social solidarity. Festivals and cultural performance have been especially important mechanisms for forging new national identities, a sort of "social dramaturgy" intended to instill faith in new states. Nationalism was often supported by invented traditions based on forms of commonality imagined to be authentic (Guss 2000: 13; Anderson 1991; Hobsbawn and Ranger 1992).

Yet the question of authenticity or invention has proved to be a tricky one. As Stuart Rockefeller notes, folkloric performances are not really about "truth," but are more productively considered as vehicles for teaching. For him, the question is who is making the representations and who is benefiting from them (Rockefeller 1999: 124). While performances can produce social solidarity, they can also be used to contest power, or as processes of negotiation (Bowie 1997). Especially in class-structured or conflicted societies, struggles between different ethnic and social groups can result in intense semiotic battles (Lukes 1975: 305; Stepputat 2004). Jean Comaroff famously argued that in oppressive societies, resistance is a "struggle for the possession of the sign" (1985: 196). Yet a fundamental attribute of cultural performances is that they often utilize ambiguous symbolic elements that can be interpreted in very different ways (Cohen 1982; Guss 2000). This multivocality enables political actors to build solidarity in the absence of consensus, but also allows for creative utilization of such symbols to contest domination (Bowie 1997: 43; Gal 1991; Kertzer 1988: 11).

Rituals are a particularly powerful form of performance. They work by linking political interests to symbols of commonly held values, and especially to the sacred (Turner 1967; Kertzer 1988). Here I am defining ritual as symbolic actions that give meaning to actions in the here-and-now by linking them to the past (Kertzer 1988). Through dense semiotic links between elements internal to the ritual scene and others outside it, rituals "make present" something outside it through a felt quality of contiguity (Stasch 2011: 161). Thus, rituals can have what Rupert Stasch calls a "world-making" effect, as ritual actors "bootstrap into existence" the very conditions the rituals represent (163). Another reason for the efficacy of ritual is that it unites a particular image of the universe with a strong emotional



FIGURE 7. *Amautas*, or Andean spiritual practitioners, at an international meeting in Cochabamba in 2012. The Morales government utilizes them frequently to give events an “indigenous” identity. Credit: Juan Manuel Herrera/OAS. <https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/3.0>.

attachment to that image (Kertzer 1988: 40). As emotions are heightened, people focus on a limited range of symbols, and can easily accept the simple and often dualistic messages presented, especially imagery defining “us” and “them” (99–100). So, when the VMD wanted to challenge the myths of colonialism, it opted for a cultural performance combining ritual, pageantry, folklore, and history.” This “intertextual mixing of genres” accomplishes an important “representational shift” (Rogers 1999: 5–6; see also Rockefeller 1999). By drawing behaviors and cultural matter from one domain of experience, in this case, the sacred space of weddings, into another, in this case, a public state-sponsored spectacle, the behavior is “re-realized” through a mimetic act that reorganizes the world and makes sense of what appears to be given (5–6). One result is that the plurinational state is invested with a sense of the sacred.

States have enormous power to use ritual and performance to accomplish what the historical sociologists Philip Corrigan and Derek Sayer (1985) called “moral regulation.” This can happen in many ways, but Michael Warner points out that marriage is one key “institution by which the state regulates and permeates people’s most intimate lives” (1999). For instance, Sara Friedman shows how the People’s Republic of China worked to reform “backward” feudal marriage practices, urging

women to form the affective ties necessary to the modern conjugal bond, and, in the process, become productive, liberated subjects of the socialist nation (Friedman 2005: 312). Similarly, in the Soviet Union, state authorities tried to undermine the power of traditional religious systems by inventing new civil ceremonies for various rites of passage, such as baptism, funerals, and weddings. “Red wedding” ceremonies brought together folkloric elements with overtly nationalistic ones (like busts of Lenin) to link the individual and the Soviet state at the most intimate and momentous times of life (Lane 1979; McDowell 1974; Schmemmann 1983).

State regulation of domestic arrangements like weddings can also act as a site of racial and ethnic definition. Gender roles, marriage, and the family have been primary foci for nations striving to create a coherent nation out of heterogeneous populations (see Anthias and Yuval-Davis 1992; Canessa 2005a; Radcliffe and Westwood 1996). This has been particularly clear in Bolivia. For instance, Brooke Larson and Marcia Stephenson have documented the ways in which modernizing Andean nation-states struggled to manage their indigenous populations in the early 1900s. “Nationalist ideologies,” Larson says, “quickly fastened on the family . . . to promote cultural reforms designed to reproduce healthy, efficient, patriotic citizen-workers or peasants” (2005: 34). The Bolivian state, worried about the rising indigenous insurgency in the countryside, mounted an extraordinary project of rural education that focused on *el hogar campesino*, (the peasant home). The child and the family were the “object, mechanism, and rationale for state intervention”—through which “bodily habits of hygiene, consumption, clothing, diet, housing, and sexuality were targeted for resocialization with the goal of creating docile indigenous subjects (39). All of these inscribed social and cultural meanings on to the body’s surfaces, thereby producing the difference between dirty/pathological/disordered indigenous bodies, and clean/normalized/modern mestizo bodies (Stephenson 1999: 121). Sometimes elites focused on building a nuclear farm family, sometimes on urging indigenous peasants to leave behind their indigenous practices so as to take on mestizo status, and sometimes on converting rural women into modern domestic housewives. The central goal of all these interventions was to fix “racial, class, and gender hierarchies in ways that subordinated the Indian peasantry to the state” (Larson 2005: 35).

As I describe in the Introduction, by the 1940s, this effort to modernize indigenous peoples gave way to a more overt and determined effort to make cultural *mestizaje* the central unifying nationalist project. The historian Laura Gotkowitz (2007) describes how the Movimiento Nacionalista Revolucionario (MNR; National Revolutionary Movement) also focused on women to accomplish its goals. Instead of targeting indigenous women, President Gualberto Villarroel López and the MNR made the “working-class, mestiza mother the icon and vehicle of a strong nation” (174). In a key reform of family law, they legalized common-law marriages (*concubinato*), securing legal status for the “self-sacrificing, valiant women” whose

reproductive and productive labors formed the basis of the Bolivian nation. Gotkowitz also documents the ways in which the Villarroel administration used state ritual to express this vision of national harmony. In 1944, he made Heroínas (Heroines) Day, a regional celebration in Cochabamba honoring a group of mestiza market women who fought in the war of independence, into Bolivia's sole national holiday. In a spectacular show, Villarroel appeared at the annual parade sponsored by a merchant association, broke ground on several public works projects, and called on the heroic women to become the model for the "new Bolivia." Gotkowitz argues that the mestiza market women became the ideal image for the new mestizo Bolivia because "they bridged private and public spheres, for they stood simultaneously as mothers of a healthy 'race,' custodians of an abundant market, and brave patriots who died defending national independence and honor" (184). These studies and others document an unrelenting effort by the Bolivian state to use the family as a site of both discursive and institutional interventions to create a unified nation. Moreover, we see how the same oppositional elements (indigenous vs. white-mestizo, savage vs. civilization, etc.) have been utilized over and over in these symbolic battles with a goal of creating a consensus about the position of the Indian in the nation.

This can also be seen in the large literature on folkloric cultural performances in the Andes (Abercrombie 2001; Bigenho 2006; Guss 2000; Mendoza 2000; Paulson 2006; Rogers 1999; Weismantel 2001). In these performances, such as dance and music festivals, beauty pageants, and folkloric presentations, we find multiple actors enacting, reproducing, and contesting images of indigeneity. While all these performances begin with the assumptions of separate, coherent, and primordial cultural differences recognizable in "indigenous," "traditional" culture and customs, this separation is blurred by the playful dramatizations. In performances in the late 1990s described by Mark Rogers (1999) and others, for example, participants assumed identities other than their own everyday personas. White-mestizos took on the roles of indigenous people, and indigenous people danced as mestizos but also portrayed stylized versions of indigeneity, all distorting reality so that indigeneity was relieved of its threatening components and prepared for incorporation in a white-mestizo hegemony (10). Thomas Abercrombie's description of the iconic carnival celebrations in Oruro describes how this interchange between supposedly closed cultural systems works. White-mestizo participants dressed as wild Indians and pre-Columbian devils dance and enact the "Indian within," until the climax, when they shed their wildness and hear mass before the Virgin in the Catholic Cathedral. The suppressed and dangerous identities are enacted, domesticated, and then re-repressed, allowing the development of a national identity based on a distinctive Indian past firmly under control of a modern nation (2001). What emerges most strongly from this research is a calling into question of essentialized notions of indigenous culture and

its opposition to Western culture, and an understanding, instead, of identity as constantly being formulated through dialogue in particular and often contested political and historical contexts (Tolen 1999).

I want to turn now to how the collective weddings again reproduced and reworked these traditional oppositions. I argue the state ritual again put images of indigeneity and European in conflict to depict a new Bolivia unified by a strong state and a manageable form of indigeneity.

IMAGINARY WEDDINGS

Let us look more closely at the wedding spectacle. First, the event brought together couples from three departments: La Paz, Potosí, and Oruro. There was an enormous heterogeneity of cultures, languages, and social status in this group. There were Aymara families from communities near La Paz, many of whom are merchants or transporters who live part time in El Alto; monolingual Aymara couples from rural communities; Afro-Bolivians from the Yungas area, who speak their own Afro-Yungueño dialect and practice African-inspired dances and religious rituals; urban Paceños who dress *de vestido* and speak only Spanish; and an assortment of indigenous groups from Argentina and Chile. Despite this variety, the speakers lumped all of them together, referring to “our” tradition, “our” identity, and “our” *amautas*. Here the state was creating a fictional unity for its purposes, inventing the sort of commonality often invoked by nation-states (Guss 2000). The linguistic references were key to this, as the terms “us” and “our” indexed a presumed category into which all the participants fit. This was reinforced by the symbolic references to the past, especially the theater production about the conquest. There, in dramatic relief, the oppositions between “us” and “them” were made horrifyingly clear. “We” are the (good, noble) “indigenous” victims of (bad, evil) “them,” the Spanish/whites. The emotions evoked were remarkable: people watched with serious, almost scared looks on their faces, and then applauded loudly as “we” took revenge. The ritual made it appear that the *amautas*, the Andean spiritual practitioners, were the bearers of the wisdom and teachings of one coherent, age-old sacred tradition.

Second, the event created a new marriage ritual and asserted that it represented the authentic way of marrying according to “our tradition.” Let me be clear that I am not disqualifying this ceremony as inauthentic—as I have made clear above, all traditions are invented and constantly evolving. Rather, I point this out to highlight the particular political configuration in which this new tradition was produced. But the orchestrators of this wedding did not explain they were creating something new, like patching together the remnants of the past to make something meaningful and relevant for an indigeneity under construction, as in the case of the Colombian indigenous communities Joanne Rappaport describes (2005), or

inventing new secular rituals to support socialism, as in the Soviet case Christel Lane describes (1979). Instead, they declared that this was a “recuperation” of real, past traditions that had survived and resisted the centuries of colonization. In doing so, they not only obscured the practice’s invented nature, but also its political implications.

Scholars of Andean cultures suggest that in most Aymara and Quechua communities, marriages are established over time and in several stages. This takes time, sometimes years, while the couple is already living together and having children. The religious wedding ceremony tends to be the last stage of this longer process of becoming married. Customs vary widely from community to community, of course, and are changing rapidly as more and more rural people move into the city. However, scholars report some general trends across the Andes. The first stage of the process is the initiation of the new relationship. Couples make their own decisions about whom to marry, and often start sleeping together clandestinely. In some places, it is common for the man to “steal” the woman (*robo*, or *raption*) in a sort of elopement (Balán 1996: 81).¹² Then, the man and his family petition the woman’s family, repeatedly bringing food and other material goods to show the young man’s intentions and suitability. Once both sets of parents agree, the bride and groom move in together, usually into the home of the man’s family (although this varies). This begins the second stage, when the couple begins to acquire the resources to form their own household and form new kinship relations by finding *compadres*, a respected couple who will help finance the wedding. The sociologist Jorge Balán explains that this relationship is a lifelong one, tying the families together in a complex set of rights and obligations within wide bilateral kinship networks (Balán 1996: 72). This period also gives time for the families to prepare the gifts of land, animals, tools, and cash necessary for a wedding ceremony, and for the construction of a new house (*ibid*). Couples may legalize their relationship through the civil registry during this period, but many do not.

The final stage, which may take place in a year or after many years, is the religious wedding ceremony. It begins with a mass in the Catholic Church and then continues with a (sometimes days-long) celebration and party in the community. There may be dancing, music, and processions, depending on the community and the customs (Pórcel Gira et al 2002a, b). In many communities, it is crucial to demonstrate one’s material success and prestige through extravagant provisioning of the party. Such shared consumption is auspicious of a productive and successful future life.¹³ A fundamental part of these ceremonies is the giving of advice (*consejos*) from the padrinos to the newly married couple, exhorting them to live well together, and to remember their obligations to their parents, padrinos, and neighbors (*ibid*). Finally, the new couple may move into a new house, after an important collective roof thatching ceremony (Arnold 1992).¹⁴ In the process of following these steps, the couple moves from adolescence to adulthood, acquiring

the status of *jaqe*, or person, which is only possible as a part of the social unit of marriage (Canessa 2005b).

So the collective Andean marriage in El Alto condensed what is often a long, socially involved process into a discrete, state-sponsored moment that narrowed the range of traditions that normally constitute Andean marriage practices. It was also a very strange event for most of the participating couples. The couples I spoke with (as well as several Aymara intellectuals in the city) said that Andean ritual specialists did not normally play a role in weddings, but were consulted for other things, like healing, divination, or potions for luck in love and business. This invented ceremony combined the Catholic weddings they were used to with a new sacred and familiar role for the amautas. This was intentional. The VMD overtly aimed to create a new role for amautas. But what is interesting is that the new role is actually that of the Catholic priest. Symbolically, the amautas had the aura and moral weight of religious experts and did what the Catholic priests the participants were familiar with had always done in the past: they burned incense, chanted, and performed weddings. Although they were supposedly the anti-Church element of this rite, the amautas and their words and practices were made to appear sacred to the participants by their ritual links to symbols of the Church. Borrowing the structural traits and symbols from Christianity lends a sense of permanence and timelessness to the amautas' roles, giving it a sacred feeling (Lane 1979).

This blurring between Catholic and Aymara idioms reprises—but inverts—centuries of borrowing since Christian missionaries came to the Americas intent on proselytizing local peoples. Scholars have described the ways in which local deities were overlain with Catholic saints, creating syncretic religions in which elements of both remained salient. Andrew Orta (2004) has traced how Catholic missionaries in Bolivia dealt with co-existing Aymara beliefs and practices. Earlier efforts to extirpate native deities gave way in the 1990s to an era of “inculturation,” in which missionaries sought to incorporate indigenous understandings and spirituality into a Christian identity. He shows how in this period catechists—local Aymaras acting as vernacular priests—understood themselves, not as caught between two different belief systems, but as situated actors in a coherent, lived social world. When the catechists burned candles or made offerings, they, like Aymara healers or *yatiris*, experienced themselves according to Aymara idioms of embodiment and notions of obligation to the community. Orta concludes that their interactive orientation to the *chuyma*, the Aymara notion of heart or center, is experienced within a “field of entangled revelations” (180). This insight helps us understand the entangled roles the amautas played in the collective marriages described here.

THE MASCULINE STATE

What about the goal of reinforcing chachawarmi and attacking machismo? Much of the symbolism of the event was, in fact, centered on complementary gender

relations. The amautas came in couples, linked together with braided ropes. Even the announcers were a pair, a woman and man, who took turns introducing people. Both announcers alternated between Spanish and Aymara, making sure all the events and guests were presented in both languages. The most important person in the auditorium was President Morales, who is single. To have him perform the role of padrino not only went against the goal of gender complementarity, it also violated Andean custom. In a scathing editorial, the Aymara Pukara collective said “[t]he pair of padrinos, in the Andean world, are the authority that as a model guides the formation of a new jaqe unit. One is jaqe, that is a human person, only through marriage, and whoever is not jaqe cannot attribute to themselves the ability of being a model or authority for the social edification of the family, that is, cannot be the padrino of a marriage” (Pukara 2011). To his credit, Morales did not attempt to give the couples advice; he left that up to the amautas.

Nevertheless, Morales is a particularly bad role model in terms of gender equality. He regularly makes embarrassingly sexist remarks and jokes. During the 2011 lowland indigenous march over the state’s proposed highway through the TIPNIS indigenous territory and national park, Morales suggested that his supporters the coca growers go out and seduce local indigenous women to garner their support (Erbol 2011). In 2012, he caused a scandal at carnival, when he sang several *coplas*, or rhyming couplets, in which he suggested he could sleep with female ministers or social movement leaders (Página Siete 2012). In 2012, while inspecting a petroleum well, Morales asked several women employees whether they were *perforadoras o perforadas* (drillers or drilled) (Eju TV 2012a).

Given Morales’s reputation, one can read the tableaux at the wedding differently. What is striking is the single man, a powerful head of state, giving his sanction to the ceremony from above on the dais. The spatial arrangement makes clear that the male state is above all the people. Morales appears here not as the padrino, but as the father figure or priest, the force bringing the couples together. Right behind him stands a military official, making clear that this state has all the power of the military force behind him. He enacts the plurinational state, performing a particular form of nationalism through his own body. Like the amautas, through the ritualized event, his position is linked to the sacred, to the moral high ground, to collective legitimacy. He emerged from the highest place in the arena like a king and received all the pomp and ceremony such a role merited. His speech was the climax of the event: his “blessing” linked the plurinational state to the ancient powers of the king, of the Church, of the deities. Here, his singleness is no longer dangerous or out of place. King and priest embody safe, known forms of power.

These symbolic links can be seen especially clearly when we consider the fact that Evo was presiding over a mass wedding. Collective marriages, while rare, occur in many places across the globe. The Moonie mass weddings put on by South Korea’s Unification Church are probably the most famous—although these are not actually legal weddings, but simply the blessing of the couples. Elsewhere, such

events are sometimes organized to defray costs, but more commonly are intended to draw attention to a cause.¹⁵ In the Andes, however, collective weddings have a history. Reportedly, the Inca state mandated group marriage ceremonies in villages once a year: “men and women of marriageable age stood facing each other in two rows in front of a visiting government official,” Richard Price recounts. “Each man, beginning with local dignitaries, selected a girl and placed her behind him, with her hands on his shoulders. The couples then received together the official blessing of the Inca’s representative. Thus concluded, marriages were completely indissoluble, with the imposition of the death penalty even for adultery. The state provided a house, tools, and fields for the newlyweds, and the man immediately entered the ranks of taxpaying adults” (Price 1965: 312).

The other important echo is with the Catholic Church, which also performed mass weddings. Price describes how across the Andes during his fieldwork in the early 1960s, itinerant priests would travel to rural communities and bring together unmarried couples “living in sin” to marry in collective ceremonies during the Lenten season. Local leaders participated in these unannounced round-ups, capturing the couples known to be sleeping together to bring them to the priest. Like the spectacular wedding in 2011, these weddings had financial advantages: they cost only 10% as much as a large private wedding, because they involved only minimal celebrations and no dancing since they always occurred during Lent (318).¹⁶

In my reading of this performance, Morales’s presiding over this mass ceremony appears to reenact precisely the powerful patriarchal colonial institutions—Church and empire—that decolonization claims to dismantle. Feminists like Jenny Ybarnegaray Ortiz and Julieta Paredes argue that despite the effort to depatriarchalize marriage, nothing the VMD has done—including this event—has changed the basic patriarchal form of marriage in Bolivia. Women still take their husbands’ names and suffer from profound inequality. The collective wedding did nothing but institutionalize the same heterosexual models of the family that the Christian church imposed (Paredes 2011). *Amautas* were substituted for priests, but nothing else changed. If they wanted to do away with the colonializing power of the state and the Church, Paredes asks, why have the state involved at all in weddings? (personal communication, 2011).

This is the fundamental question here. Why promote marriages in the first place? I suggest that the family continues to be an amenable target for subject creation, just as it has been since colonial times. Here, from a wide variety of possibilities—the many forms of cultural difference, or “pluriverse” identified by indigenous activists—the state appears to be narrowing the options, “fixing” the acceptable ways of being indigenous (see Nelson 1999: 28). Through an emotional and meaning-filled ritual that enacts a new way to be indigenous—through embracing state-sponsored indigenous cultural forms—the state created new subjects who can embody and symbolize its unifying power. At the same time that the

state is celebrating gender complementarity, however, it also appears to be giving the stamp of approval to liberal state-sanctioned marriages. Delinked from the community obligations understood as central to traditional Andean marriages, these weddings tie the couples and the family directly to the state. This was accomplished not by doing away with the colonial symbols of the Church or empire, but instead, by using their symbolic power to legitimize a particular new vision of indigenous family relations. By merging Catholic symbols and ritual practices with opposing symbols of indigenous practices, the ritual exposes the fundamental racial conflicts underlying Bolivian society. Like the cultural performances during the *indigenismo* period, this fearful tension is ultimately mediated by a conservative Christian resolution: a heterosexual wedding overseen by a strong masculine state. The “scary” side of indigeneity is domesticated, and no mention is made of kidnapping or years of living together before marriage. The result is a performed indigeneity that avoids the dangers of the dirty, resistant, or savage Indian—or any disagreements they might provoke. Instead, the indigeneity promoted by this paternal state is orderly, beautiful, and legitimized by its obvious links to the sacred. And what it most clearly performed is that the wedding is “ours,” that is, under the control of the beneficent state. Charles Hale argues that neoliberal multiculturalism produced an *indio permitido*, a permissible Indian whose cultural difference was recognized so long as it did not interfere with the state or with capitalism (Hale 2004). I suggest that this ritualized decolonization attempts to create a similar subject: the *descolonizado permitido*, the authorized decolonized subject supporting the MAS state.

The vice president’s dramatized dual weddings—one in the Catholic Church and the other in a staged “indigenous” space—can be seen to produce the same thing. Once again, a mixture of Catholic and indigenous symbols at Tiwanaku blended to acknowledge, but at the same time minimize and erase, the extreme race and class differences made obvious by the extravagant wedding in the Cathedral. The feminist Maria Galindo captured this perfectly, saying the wedding was “Catholic to make the Church and the middle class content,” but also employing “a rural and indigenous scene to continue the fetishistic use of the indigenous as a sexual and political toy. It shows us that one is not opposed to the other, but that they can be perversely complementary and simultaneously useful” (Galindo 2012).

MULTIPLE READINGS?

Like all performances, these spectacles had multiple audiences and could be read in many ways. For those self-identified as indigenous Andeans, and especially those invested in the state process of decolonization, this ritual performance was a chance to reverse the colonial forms of knowledge that continue to erase indigenous values and practices. Attending a follow-up with the wedding participants a

few months later, I observed the reverence with which VMD personnel and many of the participants treated the amautas who inaugurated the meeting. The disjuncture between the crowded city streets of El Alto, where the meeting occurred, and the earthy smells of burning wood and incense as the amautas chanted and prayed, called attention to the radical transformation such efforts involve. As Anders Burman (2011b) makes clear, introducing “spiritual” matters into what is normally considered “politics” makes visible the effects of colonialism and modernity, and the losses they have caused. In his analysis of contemporary Andean curing rituals, he suggests that Aymaras see colonialism as an illness that can be cured by cleansing the “strange element” that has been imposed when the *ajayu* (spirit) is lost. That strange element is the “Spaniard within” who must be exorcised to allow the spirit to recover (2011b: 465). In this view, decolonization is an ongoing process to “transform the state into something less ‘strange’” (469), and ritual practices such as the collective wedding and the marriage of the vice president at Tiwanaku are essential. For them, these are direct attacks on the coloniality of power, and a rethinking of the relation between nature, culture, and politics. In this sense, we can see the use of these cultural forms as means to construct a new political reality, a horizon or utopia towards which these activists want Bolivian society to move. Joanne Rappaport explains that the indigenous cultural activists she works with in the Cauca region of Colombia see culture, not as a concrete or preexisting thing, but as a tool for delineating a political project: “Essentializing constructs are more usefully understood as guides for disseminating cultural policy and engaging in political action than as totalizing truths; they are something to be continually questioned, redefined, and redeployed” (Rappaport 2005: 38–39). Clearly, the indigenous VMD activists are engaged in this form of cultural political action.

How about the participants? A year after the weddings, I asked participants what they thought of the whole thing. Had it changed things for them? I met with several couples in the city and traveled to a small community outside Tiwanaku to meet more.¹⁷ All of the couples I spoke with said they were glad they had gotten married in El Alto event and they were happy to have supported the president in his *proceso de cambio* (process of change). They had enjoyed the spectacle and the excitement of the event, but it was strange, and somewhat disappointing. I met one couple, Natalia and Crispín, in the main plaza of Tiwanaku late one afternoon. They had walked the long way into town on foot and brought me some cheese made from their sheep’s milk. They had enjoyed wearing their ancestral clothes, they said, but they had missed having their family with them. I spoke with another couple, Gregorio and Amalia, at their adobe house looking over the long valley back into the town of Tiwanaku. Sitting against a wall, we warmed ourselves in the afternoon sun. Gregorio said he hadn’t understood exactly what he was getting into, and honestly wished the ceremony had allowed him to be married and blessed by a Catholic priest. In his community, he said, weddings produce

a marriage certificate signed by the priest, and he regretted that theirs did not. I asked if they felt the meetings they had attended focusing on gender and equal family relations had been of much importance to them. No, they both said, they hadn't really learned anything new there. "We are already living that life," said Amalia. "Nosotros andamos bien [literally, we are walking well]. It is part of our Catholic faith, to walk well in life. It shows, if you are happy. If not, people in the community will intervene."

They also pointed out that this wedding did not bring the sorts of social interconnections from which they would have benefitted in a normal wedding. President Morales was their padrino, but this was in name only. Gregorio had just emerged from a three-week stay in a hospital in La Paz to heal a broken leg. "If I had a real padrino, he would have come to help me in the hospital," he lamented. Amalia said the wedding was sad for her, because instead of having a long community party, after the ceremony in El Alto, they were alone in the city. Fortunately, they had a relative who made them dinner. Other people had more humorous takes on this. Virgilio, Gregorio's neighbor, took time away from a neighborhood soccer game to describe his experiences to me. He said that in their community they have the custom of going to the padrino's house once a year at carnival time, to check in, take them gifts, and account for their behavior over the previous year. "Should I call on Evo this *carnaval*?" he asked playfully. More important to them was the fact that the VMD had not fulfilled its promise to build them houses. Natalia and Crispín, mentioned above, described this as a great disappointment. They couldn't believe Don Evo would let that happen. They are part of the committee the couples in the Tiwanaku area have formed to push their demands that the promise be kept. The VMD told me that this lapse was the result of a reorganization of the Vice Ministry of Housing, and they expected the program would soon get back on its feet. Whether this is true or whether this is another example of government corruption (see *Opinión* 2012), the newly married couples are hoping the government will come through. When I checked in with the VMD in 2015 about this, they fumbled around and said they would get back to me, but they never did.

The responses from these couples demonstrate the layered and contradictory effects such state efforts at cultural hegemony can have. The participants are not passive recipients of state-imposed policies, but agents with their own understandings and agendas. They understood this event was a show, and they played a part in it for diverse reasons—from getting a house to feeling pride in their civic role to perhaps having fun playing with the tropes of indigeneity. But many also made clear that the various meanings they attached to their participation were understood within the context of social and political relationships of clientelism, party political militancy, and the MAS's wider agenda. That is, they saw the wedding as an effort by the MAS government to gain support and legitimacy. This

was even truer of the wedding of Vice President García Linera, which was to take place in the ceremonial complex in nearby Tiwanaku in the next few weeks after my visit. The wedding plans had gotten a lot of publicity. The well-known Aymara leader Felipe Quispe said the wedding would bring the sacred place bad luck, dirtying it. “No Aymaras marry there,” he said. “García is just pretending [*aparentar*]. If he wanted to indianize himself, he should have married an indigenous woman and not an elite aristocrat of his own caste” (Eju TV 2012b). The couples I spoke with were not so dismissive. They were, once again, excited to have such a spotlight on their community and wondered if it would help bring in money to local businesses. And the vice president’s wedding itself? “Fine [*Bien, no más*],” said Gregorio. “But it’s odd. They’re not even from here. Another show [*Otro show*]. . . . But it makes sense. This is where Evo started his government.” He rightly recalled another moment of spectacle in which Morales linked his legitimacy to his indigenous heritage.

This draws our attention to the question of who the audience for this spectacle was intended to be. The public spectacle nature of the event suggests that it was not just intended for the participants. Instead, it was more likely intended for the MAS’s electoral constituency, especially the large population of people who have indigenous roots, but no longer “identify closely with the lifeways and cultural values of their communities of origin” (Canessa 2014: 20). Andrew Canessa argues that a large number of people in Bolivia fit into this category, including coca growers in the Chapare, and the large group of landless peasants, urban merchants, and highland colonists in the lowlands. El Alto, where the collective wedding ceremony was staged, is the country’s largest concentration of urbanized indigenous people, many of whom who make their livings in the commerce, transportation, and service sectors. While a large number of *Alteños* keep close connections to the rural communities and bring communal practices into their city lives, as Sian Lazar (2007) has shown, others have gradually left these behind as they enter the middle class. I take up this new identity in further detail in chapter 6. What does the invented and generic version of indigeneity presented in the weddings spectacle offer them?

There is no simple answer. On the one hand, as Canessa makes clear, this group has a historical consciousness of racism and injustice. Morales’s election has meant that they are now identifying less as *mestizos* and more as *cholos*, or indigenous, even though they are living urban middle-class lifestyles (Canessa 2014: 20). Morales’s example and the form of idealized indigeneity he offers allow these “indigenous cosmopolitans” (Goodale 2006) a way to deepen this identity without returning to the rural community, or to engage in the sort of collective or community relationships and obligations Gregorio and Virgilio from Tiwanaku describe. Like the growing celebrations of Andean New Year, which enable urban residents and foreign tourists alike to enjoy Andean spirituality (Sammels 2012),

the wedding spectacle presented a form of indigeneity easily incorporated into urban lives. In 2012, Silvia Rivera Cusicanqui told me that this was one of the primary appeals of the MAS discourse of ethnicity: “we no longer feel shame about our identity.” More important, “Evo gives us an ‘umbrella’ under which we can be different. He permits us in some ways to resist the subtle scripts of transnational consumer capitalism” (personal communication 2012).¹⁸

But accepting this idealized and homogenized version of indigeneity has its costs: obscuring the complex reality of indigenous life. The Aymara activist Pedro Portugal argues that the focus on a supposed ancient millennial Andean culture and rituals is a dangerous mystification of real contemporary Aymaras. He observed that, although Aymaras are a dynamic force for capitalism, industry, and progress in Bolivia, *pachamamismo* — the discourse valorizing Andean *cosmovisiones*, especially those relating to the Pachamama, Mother Earth—makes them seem exotic and backward. Not only is this folklorization degrading, it is dangerous, because it awakens latent fears among mestizos, who worry that the Indians are trying to “flip the tortilla” and return to some irrational past (personal communication, 2012). Similarly, Silvia Rivera Cusicanqui objects to the “purist” nature of this folklorization because it depreciates the existing forms of indigenous religiosity. “The majority of indigenous people who practice religion do so with crosses, virgins, saints, and chapels; taking that away is taking away their foundation” (personal communication, 2012). In essence, they are arguing that the Morales administration is doing what the indigenismo project of the early twentieth century did: resorting to a distorted, static, and homogenizing vision of the “authentic” Indian.

CONCLUSION

These cultural performances act as vehicles for the representation and re-representation of Bolivian society’s most enduring tensions. As a result, they sparked numerous and contesting interpretations. For some, using these highly charged symbolic cultural performances and rituals to make coloniality visible and celebrate alternative forms of domestic relationships is a prime example of how the state can move Bolivian society forward on a path to social justice, countering the racism that has relegated indigenous peoples to what Rancière would call “non-existence.” In this view, these symbolic acts were not frivolous shows, but acts of emancipatory politics attempting to radically alter the distribution of the sensible.

For others, however, the weddings called into question the credibility of the state’s commitment to decolonization. Instead of promoting a different form of knowledge or epistemology—a recognition of different ways of thinking and being in the world, which would require a radically different form of indigenous self-government—these weddings instead acted as further mechanism to cement the MAS project of state-making. In this view, the weddings evacuated indigeneity of

its complexity and its emancipatory potential, instead reworking it into a folkloric national subject position subsumed under the state's beneficent control. Instead of expressing the "disagreement" that characterized indigeneity at the beginning of the Morales era, when indigenous actors offered radical challenges to the neoliberal system, these performances used the discourse of decolonization to form a consensus about what indigeneity means and who speaks for it. Such efforts to form consensus is a classic nation-building strategy, inasmuch as nation-states are justified by representations—nearly always fictional—of a coherent national subject. We might also characterize it as a form of "post-politics," what political theorists call the emerging practices of governance that operate through a prefigured consensus surrounding the seemingly politically neutral fields of technical intervention (Swyngedouw 2009, 2010; see also Postero and Elinoff, forthcoming). Rancière warns that such practices have the effect of foreclosing the possibility of essential disagreements over the existing order (Rancière 2006: 81). Is the Morales government engaging in this sort of post-politics by owning decolonization and indigeneity? Obviously, this is not the same sort of technical intervention we see in other forms of post-politics, like development NGOs or climate change scientists. Yet the same result can be seen: the state apparatus produces a seemingly uncontested consensus about indigeneity, which serves to delegitimize disagreement. This illuminates how easily politics can be turned into policing, as the state takes up the category of indigeneity to justify its own existence. It also raises important questions about the possibility of the liberal state's ability to foster revolutionary politics. Can the state ever be the site of politics in Rancière's sense of the term, or is the state always structurally bound to reinforcing the police order? What if the police order is already based on an emancipatory recount, as was the MAS's plurinational project? This is the paradox of the MAS state: it is at once an indigenous state and a liberal state. Yet, as this chapter has shown, the multiple interpretations of the weddings demonstrate not only the blurry boundary between politics and policing but the continuing promise of decolonization.

PART TWO

Development and Decolonization

Living Well? The Battle for National Development

THE COCHABAMBA SUMMIT

In April 2010, Bolivian President Evo Morales held an international conference on global climate change near Cochabamba, Bolivia. Representatives, indigenous groups, and social movements from 140 countries attended “The World Peoples’ Summit on Climate Change and the Rights of Mother Earth” (also known as “the Cochabamba Summit”). Bolivia is already experiencing devastating effects of climate change. Its Amazonian regions have suffered terrible flooding over the past few years, while its desert lowlands have witnessed severe droughts. In the highlands, the two main glaciers that provide drinking water are shrinking. The Chacaltaya glacier disappeared completely in recent years; others have already lost 40–50 percent of their capacity (Democracy Now 2010a; Rosenthal 2009). Lake Poopó, near Oruro, has dried up completely. So it was with a great sense of urgency that Morales convened the Cochabamba Summit. In a festive air of popular democratic participation, some thirty thousand people and seventeen working groups met to negotiate resolutions intended to address the problems left unanswered by the 2009 United Nations Climate Change Conference, held in Copenhagen the previous December. In his opening address, President Morales set the tone for the meeting: “We are here because in Copenhagen, the so-called developed countries failed in their obligation to provide substantial commitments to reduce greenhouse gases. We have two paths: either Pachamama or death. Either capitalism lives or Mother Earth lives. Of course, brothers and sisters, we are here for life, for humanity, and for the rights of Mother Earth. Long live the rights of Mother Earth! Death to capitalism!” (Democracy Now 2010a).

Morales had spent the previous year trying—unsuccessfully—to make these points. He began his crusade at the United Nations in September 2009, saying that he believed defending Mother Earth had become more important than defending human rights. He said that “Mother Earth, Planet Earth, can exist without human life, but human life cannot exist without Mother Earth” (Morales 2009). Then, at the Copenhagen Conference in December 2009, Morales called on world leaders to hold temperature increases over the next century to just one degree Celsius (instead of the two degrees Celsius finally agreed upon). Even more provocatively, he argued that rich countries should pay climate reparations—what he terms a “climate debt”—to those poorer countries suffering the effects of climate change. Warning of a “climate holocaust” that will destroy Africa and many island nations, he called for an international climate court of justice to prosecute countries for climate “crimes” (Vidal 2009).

The resulting “World Peoples Agreement” at the end of the Cochabamba Summit echoed Morales’s concerns (Cooper 2010). It denounced the Copenhagen accords, and supported Morales’s call to limit global warming to one degree Celsius. It also called for the passage of a Universal Declaration of the Rights of Mother Earth, the creation of an International Tribunal to prosecute polluters, protection for climate migrants, the establishment of an “Adaptation Fund” to help countries affected by climate change, and full recognition of the 2007 UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, whose lands and livelihoods are most affected by climate change. The agreement concluded with the need to hold a global referendum to consult with the world’s peoples on all of these issues, combining the fate of the planet with the need for global democracy.

THE PACHAMAMA DISCOURSE: LOVING MOTHER EARTH

The Cochabamba Summit cemented Morales’s international reputation, giving him a highly visible platform for his long-standing criticism of imperialism, militarism, and neoliberalism. One of the most important accomplishments of the summit, he told Democracy Now’s Amy Goodman, was that instead of just talking about the effects of climate change, this summit examined the underlying cause, namely, capitalism (Democracy Now 2010b). Morales has often spoken about the need to end irrational consumer-driven industrialization, saying that such forms of capitalism are the “worst enemy of humanity” (Democracy Now 2009). To this Western form of development, Morales posed a liberatory alternative: a sustainable model of development based on indigenous values and reverence for the *pachamama*, or Mother Earth, called *vivir bien*, to live well. In the first years of his administration, Morales often referred to *vivir bien*, arguing that the only way to end global warming is to end the “search for living better,” or what he characterizes as the goal of

consumerist capitalism. He explained it this way: “Living better is to exploit human beings. It’s plundering natural resources. It’s egoism and individualism. Therefore, in those promises of capitalism, there is no solidarity or complementarity. There’s no reciprocity. . . . Living better is always at someone else’s expense. Living better is at the expense of destroying the environment” (cited in Democracy Now 2009).

This discourse has been enormously influential, at least at the symbolic level. But while this discourse has increased Morales’s reputation abroad, at home in Bolivia, there are ongoing and serious controversies over development. On the one hand, Morales and his government have vowed to put into place a sustainable development model based on indigenous values. On the other, the government continues to exploit its natural resources to bring in the income necessary to redistribute the benefits to Bolivia’s poor populations. In this chapter, I demonstrate how these two seemingly irreconcilable impulses have been contested, and how they are articulated to the MAS state’s notion of decolonization. I trace the ways in which the government has theorized indigeneity, *vivir bien*, and decolonization in its official documents, as well as its policies and practices, and show how the balance between them has changed over time. Development appears to be a malleable notion that can take on “indigenous” valences when necessary to support the overarching agenda of decolonization. Yet, ultimately, the Morales government has ignored radical alternatives based on indigenous values in favor of more traditional ideas of capitalist and extractivist development.

Focusing on the political economy of Bolivia under Morales draws our attention to a particular site of politics. In Rancière’s terms, development decisions are a site of both politics and policing, just like the collective wedding described in chapter 3. As the description of the Cochabamba Alternative Climate Summit makes clear, Morales and the MAS government have represented natural resources and the environment as a site of emancipatory politics. Overturning the long history of exploitative relations between Bolivia as a producer of raw materials and foreign markets is not only a widely popular form of anti-imperialism, but also a form of decolonization, inasmuch as it benefits Bolivia’s poor and indigenous populations. Yet this form of politics also enables a new form of policing, because the “indigenous” government consolidated power over decision-making about national development and natural resource extraction. I suggest that over time, the government decided its need to continue extractivist forms of development overshadowed other goals. In the process, decolonization lost much of its original emancipatory meaning, leaving indigenous activists with fewer resources to accomplish their political goals.

THE 2006 NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN

In the first years of Morales’s administration, the MAS government made significant steps to transform the relation between the state and the market and

overturn the neoliberal project of the previous decades. The MAS aimed to make the state a primary actor in the economy, re-embedding economic development in the fabric of social, political, and cultural life. This is an overt contestation of orthodox neoliberal ideology—but not practices—which urge the separation of the economic and the political. Orthodox neoliberal policies attempt to keep the state out of the economic sphere, protecting the freedom of individuals to make contracts in “free markets” (Harvey 2005). The government issued a road map to its plans in June 2006, when it published its Plan Nacional de Desarrollo (PND), or National Development Plan (Bolivia 2006). It is worth taking a close look at the language of the PND to understand both how the MAS discursively linked neoliberalism to colonialism and how it located its alternative project in indigenous customs and potential.

The PND describes the goal of national development as “remov[ing], from its roots, the profound social inequality and inhuman exclusion that oppress the majority of the Bolivian population, particularly those of indigenous origin” (1). This inequality, the PND makes clear, is the product of colonialism, capitalism, and neoliberalism. Colonialism, continuing through the republican period, denied indigenous peoples not only their dignity and their labor, but also their right to the means of production, especially land. Then, the capitalist primary export model of silver and tin mining deepened these inequalities, benefitting a small nucleus of oligarchs. Throughout the first half of the twentieth century, most of Bolivia’s natural riches were exported to other countries, along with the profits from their exploitation. The reforms of the 1952 revolution, including nationalization of the mines, were not enough to overcome the original causes of the structural inequalities and social exclusions. Instead, the state capitalism of the second half of the twentieth century only gave rise to new regional oligarchs who appropriated state patrimony. This period ended in the crisis of external debt and hyperinflation, ushering in the neoliberal period (*ibid.*).

The neoliberal model, says the PND, was imposed to resolve the failure of the welfare state, which was roundly held to be inefficient and corrupt. “In this way, the market took over the role of state, assigning resources for the production of goods and services, and also distributing wealth” (2). The result was the exacerbation of the concentration of wealth, access to means of production, and jobs to one-tenth of the population. This “inequality and social discrimination, called ‘poverty’ by neoliberal colonialism,” led to compensatory measures such as the poverty reduction policies that often accompanied structural adjustment programs and, in 2000, the UN’s Millennium Development Goals. Although this amounted to a recognition of the failure of the market and the need for state intervention, neoliberal anti-poverty efforts continued to be subject to the logic of the market. NGOs and foreign aid stepped into this void with development projects, but since they did not address the fundamental causes, they could not resolve the problems either,

instead creating projects catering to foreign objectives, debilitating the government, and wasting enormous amounts of money. Thus, under neoliberalism, the PDN says, the development of the country was subject to the interests of multilateral organizations and transnational corporations (3).

This model of development failed because it is the product of a “system of ethnic, cultural, and political domination, impregnated with racism” (12). So the new development plan must have as its object

the suppression of the causes of the inequality and social exclusion in the country, which means to change to primary export model and the foundations of colonialism and neoliberalism that sustain it. That is to say, to dismantle not only the economic mechanisms, but also the political, cultural, colonial, neoliberal ones, erected by the dominant culture, which are encountered disseminated in the deepest interstices of the organization of the state and also in the minds of people across social and individual practices, to the detriment of solidarity and complementarity. (4)

To do this, the PND proposed an alternative model of development arising from social demands of the majority of the population whose voices were silenced by neoliberalism. Because neoliberalism conceived of development as exclusively associated with economic growth, delinked from the state or politics, “it expropriated from the people their right to propose and debate their common future” (9). Now, however, this population rejects the neoliberal development model, which was based on Western ideas and obscured mechanisms of domination and power. Instead the Plan offered a new model based on *vivir bien*, to live well—what Morales was referring to in his interview quoted above. Derived from the *cosmovisión* (worldview) of indigenous peoples, it refers to communitarian forms of *convivencia*, or living together. It implies intercultural respect and symmetries of power: “One cannot live well if others live badly” (10). The PND argues that this collective notion of well-being is very different from Western notions of individual well-being, which can be obtained at the expense of others or the environment. It also differs from Western notions in that it goes beyond the material and economic to include such values as emotions, recognition, difference, social prestige, and dignity (10). Bolivians are not alone in advancing this notion—in Ecuador, where it is called *sumak kawsay* (a Quechua term for “good life”), it is also promoted as the basis of alternative forms of development (see Radcliffe 2012).

The PND insisted that to put this alternative form of development into effect would require the intervention of the state as “promoter and protagonist of national development” (4). This is because the state is a “new power that surges from the popular and indigenous sectors, from the peasant communities, and from the workers of the city and the countryside”(14). It will act to transform society and the economy, but “only if all peoples and cultures are present in the economic and political decisions of the State” (15). This means that the people’s

capacity to decide must be recuperated within a new notion of the nation that recognizes the pluri-ethnicity and multiculturalism of the country, as well as the vitality of the social movements. The PND suggested finally that these newly empowered social actors would create a new state during democratic debate in the Constituent Assembly. That did in fact happen (see chapter 2), and the language of *vivir bien* was a fundamental part of the constitution that emerged. Bolivia's 2009 Constitution reads: "The state is sustained in the values of unity, equality, inclusion, dignity, liberty, solidarity, reciprocity, respect, complementarity, harmony, transparency, equilibrium, equality of opportunity, social and gender equity in participation, common well-being, responsibility, social justice, distribution and redistribution of products and social goods, *to live well*" (Bolivia 2009, Art. 8, pt. 2; emphasis added).

The PND sheds significant light on the ways the MAS state articulated indigeneity, development, and decolonization. This is evident in the way the document returns time and again to its assertion that the foundation of Bolivian society is its indigenous peoples, tying the well-being of all Bolivians and the nation as a whole to its indigenous peoples and social movements. By characterizing the majority of the population as indigenous, however, it elides the complex relationship between race and class that has led poor Bolivians to identify in some periods as *campesinos* (peasant farmers) and in others as *indígenas* or *pueblos originarios* (indigenous or original peoples) (Postero 2007a; Albó 2000; Canessa 2006). Many urban people have very ambiguous identities, adopting the category of *cholo*, taking pride in their indigenous heritage, but also identifying as members of the mestizo middle class (Barragán 2006; Rivera Cusicanqui 2010). We have already seen in the discussion about the collective wedding that the category of indigeneity is a site of ambiguity as well as of substantial symbolic and discursive work. Who counts as indigenous remains a central question in Bolivia today, and one that is susceptible to multiple and contested interpretations. Here we see how the authors of the PND utilized this ambiguity, combining values drawn from the indigenous repertoire with tried and true values of liberalism, then linking them to the internationally recognized discourses of multiculturalism, environmental sustainability, democratization, and human rights. The document demonstrates what a very rich repertoire indigenous culture and values can be, and how flexibly it can be adapted.

The PND articulates indigeneity to national development in a second, related way, by linking neoliberalism and colonialism as stages in a coherent long-term model of cultural and economic exploitation. The document explains that its authors reject the neoliberal definition of development as strictly economic or material, and intentionally redefine it to include cultural and political rights, especially focusing on human dignity and human rights. Thus, for these authors, development must be understood in terms of cultural values and forms of social organization (Bolivia 2006: 12). The MAS rhetoric challenging colonial neoliberalism

articulates a reality that Bolivia's poor and indigenous people know all too well: the market is not a neutral site, but one that reinforces already existing power relations of race and class. That is, the MAS did not offer its project merely as a different economic model to be debated among dueling economists. Rather, it represented itself as creating a new decolonized nation based on social justice and multicultural equality. To use Rancière's terms, this is a form of politics, calling for the formerly invisible indigenous and poor peoples of Bolivia not only to be seen and heard but also to be the beneficiaries of national development.

THE MORALES DEVELOPMENT PROJECT: REASSERTING THE ROLE OF THE CENTRAL STATE

The most salient aspect of Morales's anti-neoliberal program had already begun as the PND was being developed. In May 2006, Morales "nationalized" the oil and gas sector, sending the Bolivian army to take over the foreign-owned natural gas installations in the eastern section of the country. Gas and mining resources were nationalized by the state after the 1952 revolution and run by state-owned companies until the neoliberal era, when they were privatized. As a result, there is a long collective memory of the state's involvement in exploitation of what is considered the national patrimony. Perhaps even more important, the mines constituted a large sector of public employment, with good salaries, benefits, and high status associated with working for the nation (Nash 1979). The miners' layoffs in the late 1980s as part of the neoliberal restructuring were perceived by many as a blow to the dignity of Bolivia's working people (see Nash 1992). Thus Morales struck a deeply emotional and nationalist chord when he staged the takeover in May 2007.

Clearly, this reassertion of the role of the state in the economy defies the neoliberal model, signaling a reversal of the waves of privatizations of the 1990s. Yet it is not just a return to the past. Morales did not seize the assets of the foreign corporations working the gas concessions. Rather, the nationalization decree gave the companies six months to renegotiate their contracts with the state. It also sharply raised taxes and royalties on gas producers, and taxed natural gas profits, imposing what are called *impuestos directos a los hidrocarburos* (IDH). Previously, companies had retained some 82 percent of the profits, leaving the Bolivian state with only a small portion. The new taxes, royalties, and renegotiated contracts changed these proportions; under the new arrangement, the central government receives about 54 percent of the profits (Andean Information Network 2007a, b). However, this was hardly a "nationalization." By 2014, transnational corporations were producing 86 percent of exports, whereas Bolivia's state-owned gas company YPFB only produces 14 percent (Arze 2016: 14). Thus, this model is neither an inward-turning policy like those practiced under so-called import-substitution industrialization in the 1970s nor an end to the primary export model so decried

in the PND. Bolivia's national development has remained deeply linked to global capitalism.

Vice President Álvaro García Linera explained this reliance on capitalist exploitation of hydrocarbons is part of the state's overall development model, which he calls "Andean-Amazonian capitalism":

It is a question of building a strong state, which can coordinate in a balanced way the three "economic-productive" platforms that coexist in Bolivia: the community-based, the family-based and the "modern industrial." It is a question of transferring a part of the surplus of the nationalised hydrocarbons [oil and gas] in order to encourage the setting up of forms of self-organization, of self-management and of commercial development that is really Andean and Amazonian. Up to now, these traditional sectors have not been able to develop because of a "modern-industrial" sector that has cornered the surpluses. Our idea is that these traditional sectors should have an economic support, should have access to raw materials and markets, which could then generate prosperity within these artisan and family-based processes. Bolivia will still be capitalist in 50 or 100 years. (Stefanoni 2005)

According to García Linera, as the state invests in modernizing these indigenous family-based economies, over time a proletariat will emerge that is able to bring about the eventual transition to socialism.

In the meantime, however, as a result of this reassertion of control over profits from its natural resources, Bolivia was able to radically alter its financial situation. Government income from oil and gas went from U.S.\$173 million in 2002 to an estimated U.S.\$1.57 billion in 2007 (Bolivian Ministry of Hydrocarbons and Energy 2007, cited in Andean Information Network 2007a). Much of this was due to the fact that oil prices rose dramatically for the first years of the MAS administration, to nearly five times as much as during the Sánchez de Lozada years (Laserna Rojas et al. 2009: 31). The country's deficit, which averaged 4.9 percent during the neoliberal years, was effectively eliminated. For the first time, Bolivia began to run a surplus, which reached 5 percent of GDP in 2008, and it amassed large international reserves—almost \$8.5 billion (Weisbrot et al. 2009: 13, 20). Using this surplus in its fiscal policy, Bolivia was able to manage the financial downturn much better than other countries in the region. Moreover, the economy registered 5.2 percent annual growth from 2006 to 2009.

In recent years, the economy has faced some challenges. Most important, gas and mineral prices dropped, reducing revenue. U.S. trade sanctions imposed on Bolivia under the Andean Trade Promotion and Drug Eradication Act in 2007 prohibited Bolivian exports to the United States (Weisbrot et al. 2009: 27). And in December 2010, citing concerns that much of Bolivia's highly subsidized oil and gas was being sold on the black market in neighboring countries, Morales announced he was cutting fuel subsidies and raising domestic prices, classic neoliberal shock

therapy. After massive demonstrations and strikes protesting what was called the *gasolinazo*, Morales backed down, urging social movements to come together with the government to come up with solutions (Quiroga 2011). This pointed out that Bolivia's challenge is to meet growing domestic demand while still being able to export to its neighbors, particularly Argentina and Brazil (Kaup 2010).

However, even during the global recession, Bolivia maintained its positive trajectory due to strong demand for its oil and gas from Brazil and Argentina. From 2006 to 2014, Gross Domestic Product reached an annual rate of 5 percent (INE, as reported in Arze 2016: 3). This dropped to about 4 percent in 2015, and slowed slightly in 2016 as commodity prices fell (*Economist* 2016). Nevertheless, the statistics for economic well-being have remained strong. Per capita income has risen from \$1,010 in 2005 to \$2,922 in 2013. The country's exports went from \$2.8 billion in 2005 to \$12.8 billion in 2014 (*ibid.*). Urban unemployment fell from 8.1 percent in 2005 to 4 percent in 2013, and the government raised the minimum wage from 500 to 1,656 bolivianos a month (about \$236) in 2015. Probably most important is that the official levels of poverty have dropped considerably. Moderate poverty dropped from 60 percent in 2005 to 39 percent in 2013, while extreme poverty dropped from 38 percent to 18.8 percent in the same period (Arze 2016: 4).

The government claims that these increased levels of welfare are the result of the state's redistribution of money to the population. Like Venezuela, the Bolivian government began using state hydrocarbon resources for new forms of public spending, state subsidies, and social security programs. The 2005 oil and gas law established that the direct taxes from natural gas profits, the IDH, should be distributed to public universities, municipalities, departments (regional governments), and indigenous groups. Royalties are also distributed to the departments and state Treasury through a complicated formula (see Laserna et al. 2009). At the national level, the government has spent about 30 percent of its IDH monies on a popular retirement account for senior citizens, called the *renta dignidad*. (This is a continuation of the Bonosol program begun in the neoliberal years.) This is a universal program with no conditions: all Bolivians over the age of sixty now receive about \$300 a year. There are also two conditional cash transfer programs. This first is for children attending school, called the Juancito Pinto program, in which each child who attends school receives a small but significant amount (about \$28 per year) to encourage attendance and minimize dropouts (Yáñez et al. 2011). By 2010, the program was extended to cover all students from first to eighth grades—this means more than 1.7 million students receive the payment each school year (Navarro 2012; McGuire 2013). The second is the Juana Azurduy program for expectant and new mothers. The IDH also partially funds a \$600 million home construction program that provides loans to low-income families. Additionally, with Cuba's help, the central government funded a national literacy program in Spanish, Quechua, and Aymara; a "zero malnutrition" program to eliminate childhood malnutrition;

and a large campaign for eye health, providing checkups and glasses for those who need them, as well as over 100,000 eye surgeries (Weisbrot and Sandoval 2007).

Some question the efficacy of these programs, since they do not raise the standard of living in a significant way (J. Webber 2011). Critics like the social movement leader Oscar Olivera suggest that cash transfers are merely neoliberal measures that act as simple palliatives, not changing the economic structure of the country in any substantial way (personal communication, August 2012; see also Arze 2016: 12). Some studies argue, however, that cash transfers are actually very important in bringing people out of poverty because they allow the poor to invest in the projects most likely to increase their production and income (Laserna et al. 2010; J. Goldstein 2013). This is a discussion that is occurring around the world, and cash transfers have become a regular part of many government policies. This is true, as James Ferguson (2015) points out, for many neoliberal countries. Ferguson argues that it is time to rethink these programs. He suggests that in many places, like South Africa, instead of thinking of cash transfers as gifts or social assistance based on generosity, many people consider them as part of social transfers, as rightful shares that are due to citizens who should benefit from the vast national wealth (2015: 26). This is certainly the way the programs are characterized in Bolivia, and part of the reason why they are so popular.

It is very hard to assess the results of these programs, however. For instance, President Morales declared in a 2013 speech that the Juancito Pinto program had reduced the dropout rate from 6 percent in 2006 to 2 percent in 2012, but scholars point out there were no baseline studies beforehand (McGuire 2013: 15). Most studies to date show that CCT programs may provide short-term cash or increase enrollments, but do not affect long-term poverty rates (Avila 2012; McGuire 2013). In her analysis of the JP program, Alieza Durana concludes that the small amount of the transfers really do not cover the opportunity costs of attending school, the nutritional needs of the students, or other economic factors relating to attendance. Instead, the value of the program lies in “its symbolic value as a charisma-granting act” of President Morales, which reaffirms his “authority as a moral leader” (2010: 73). More study appears necessary, but for now we can say that the programs are enormously popular among Bolivia’s poor and indigenous majority, Morales’s main constituency.

Bolivia’s economic model has been widely contested from both the Right and the Left. The conservative economist Roberto Laserna argued that the Morales government falls into the classic *rentier* mentality of previous governments, viewing hydrocarbon resources as something to be plundered without concern for making the country more productive or creating jobs (Laserna Rojas et al. 2009). The Marxist analyst Jeffery Webber, on the other hand, characterizes the Morales development model as disappointingly reformist, arguing that it reinforces existing class and capitalist structures through a neostructuralist development model

that favors transnational corporations, the agricultural elite, and fiscal security over real structural change benefiting the poor (J. Webber 2011). In a more sympathetic analysis, Brent Kaup argues that the Morales government continues to be constrained in its options by the “path-dependent” effects of the neoliberal years, which set Bolivia on a development trajectory that is very difficult to change. Although it was able to renegotiate the rents from its natural gas resources, it was not able to change radically the material constraints of gas extraction, transport, and use, which keep it supplying gas benefiting Bolivia’s neighbors’ development projects more than its own (Kaup 2010).

In a scathing 2016 review of the first decade of MAS economic policy, the Bolivian economist Carlos Arze brings together all these critiques. He argues the government has followed a rent-seeking model that has returned the country to dependence on exporting primary materials. The nationalization, he asserts, was basically a reform of the tax regime with one central goal: to allow the government to capture profits from gas production for use for its populist projects, rather than to increase national economic growth. He shows that over the past decade, oil and gas exports have taken over a larger and larger percentage of the GNP, while agriculture and industry have fallen (2016: 6). Instead of producing goods for consumption, the country is importing more and more. As small-scale agriculture gives way to large agribusiness profiting a small elite, many campesinos are moving to the cities, where precarity and underemployment await them. The statistics on employment do not take into account the rise in vulnerable informal labor and the “pauperization” of the work force, he argues (11).

Moreover, despite the substantial changes to the economic system the MAS has enacted—restoring the state’s role as a critical economic actor, redistributing resources to the poor, and so on—Bolivia remains deeply embedded in and vulnerable to global market forces. Its fortunes depend on global prices for its exports, and inasmuch as its reliance on gas-sector imports have increased over the decade of MAS administration, this dependency has only become greater. This makes the country’s economic picture much less stable and has important implications for any claim to national sovereignty. Arze documents how the government has increased incentives for transnational companies working in Bolivia, allowing them to recover many costs. As a result, the transnationals have tripled their profits since 2005 (15).

Arze concludes that there is no sign of the indigenous alternatives promised by García Linera; instead, as market capitalism continues to be dominant and the state continues to capture rents from extractivism, communal forms of economy are reduced and the country becomes ever more dependent on monopoly capitalism. (27; see also Solón 2016). Eduardo Gudynas, a researcher at the Latin American Center for Social Ecology in Uruguay, has called this “progressive neo-extractivism,” which he defines as an emerging national development model of

progressive governments like Morales's based upon the exploitation of natural resources and the export of primary materials. Gudynas contends that this differs a little from the traditional extractivist model because "the state plays a more active role, and gives extractivism a greater legitimacy because it redistributes some of the surplus to the population." Nevertheless, "it still repeats the negative environmental and social impacts of the old extractivism" (Gudynas 2010: 1; see also Bebbington 2010). Far from repudiating the dependence on international companies and markets, as that first emancipatory PND claimed a plurinational Bolivia would do, these progressive leaders maintain this dependence, replacing the negative connotations of exports and world markets with a new discourse about globalization and competition (4). Disappointed indigenous intellectuals point out that this return to Western notions of capitalism endangers the planet. Rafael Quispe, leader of the highland organization CONAMAQ, observes: "Capitalism or socialism is extractive, consumerist, developmentalist. In this sense they are the same. We have to speak of a new model of development, an alternative to this system. Because both capitalism and socialism will go on changing the planet" (quoted in Weinberg 2010).

Let us turn, then, to the environmental effects of the development model.

THE LEGACIES OF EXTRACTIVISM IN BOLIVIA

It is important to note that, long before the MAS came to power, Bolivia had a less than enviable record in terms of environmental protection (see Hindery 2013 for a detailed analysis of this record). For instance, in 1996, a tailings dam broke near the mining center of Potosí, flooding the Pilcomayo River with toxic materials. Because the mine was owned by Bolivia's president at the time, Gonzalo Sánchez de Lozada, the government did not insist on remediation (Farthing 2009: 27). Environmentalists and local activists are still pushing for remedies, and to close down the many ore-processing plants in the region. In 2000, a pipeline broke near a shallow part of Lake Titicaca, spilling thousands of gallons of oil into the Desaguadero River, contaminating 2,400 square miles of crop and grazing lands belonging to local indigenous people (Farthing 2009: 26; Haglund 2008). Again, little has been done to assist the victims.

These brief descriptions demonstrate what scholars and activists have been saying for years: Bolivia's historical legacy of extractive damage is ongoing, and it continues to create terrible environmental costs, much of which is borne by indigenous peoples at the local level (see Bebbington and Bury 2013). Environmentalists and local people fear that the development model put forward by the Morales government will continue this trajectory. The issue that received the most coverage at the 2010 Cochabamba Summit was the San Cristóbal mine, in the Nor Lípez province of Potosí department, near the famous Salar de Uyuni salt flats. The

Japanese Sumitomo corporation had operated the massive open pit mine since 2008, when it took it over from Apex Silver, extracting silver, lead, and zinc. Over the weeks leading up to the Cochabamba Summit, the Regional Federation of Peasant Workers of the Southern Altiplano (FRUCTAS) led community members and workers in protest, blockading the roads and taking over the offices (López Pardo 2010). FRUCTAS representatives said the mine uses 15,000 cubic meters of water a day—that is, 600 liters every second—from the aquifer below the mine without paying for it. The result, they said, is that local streams have dried up, the rivers are polluted with toxic refuse, and agriculture has been ruined (Democracy Now 2010a). They demanded that the mine replenish the massive amounts of water it is currently using in its extraction processes, and that the usage be subject to taxes. For its part, the mine claimed it had lived up to its obligations under the 1997 mining law, and that it had paid about \$350 million dollars in taxes over the past ten years, although nothing for water (Carvajal 2010). The community members also wanted the mine to fulfill the promises it made when it began operations, such as electrification and improved roads (López Pardo 2010). Although FRUCTAS had made unsuccessful demands for years, the 2010 blockades finally got the government's attention. David Choquehuanca, Bolivia's foreign minister, blasted Sumitomo, calling it a "transnational that steals our natural resources, plundering tons of minerals every day but does not pay" for the water (Agence France-Presse 2010). The San Cristóbal mine, however, is only one of many toxic mines across the country. In 2010, the genetics department at the Universidad Mayor de San Andrés in La Paz reported that its tests at the San José Mine in Oruro had revealed genetic damage to residents who had inhaled the "contaminated" air near the mine. Scientists reported that 35 percent of mothers and 38 percent of children that they examined had alterations to their DNA as a result (Asociación de Teledifusoras de Bolivia 2010). The lack of government monitoring gives scientists and activists reason to fear that toxic wastes are creating a legacy of health problems, including increased risk of cancer, that will trouble Bolivia for generations to come.

Morales's government gave a huge concession to the Indian company Jindal to mine iron ore at the Mutún site near Puerto Suárez in the eastern Amazon area, near Bolivia's border with Brazil. Activists worried about the toxic by-products that seem likely to result from what would be the largest iron ore mine in South America. In recent years, disputes over the terms of the concession tabled the plan, but it might be revived again at any time. This draws attention to the question looming over many Latin American countries: overseas investments from the new Asian economies, especially China. While many have lauded the large amounts of money China has invested across the region, especially in petroleum, mineral extraction, and large-scale agriculture, scholars have noted the dangers that accompany this boom. Rebecca Ray and her colleagues note that Chinese investments are concentrated in sectors already vulnerable to environmental degradation and

social conflicts about rights and working conditions. Few Latin American countries have been able to mitigate the social and environmental costs of trade and investment with China, they say (Ray et al. 2015: 2). In Bolivia, China has become an important trading partner, signing over four hundred cooperation, aid, and loan agreements. It is active in the mining sector and plans to become even more involved in exploiting Bolivia's lithium. China also exports large amounts of manufactured capital and consumer goods to Bolivia. Alejandra Saravia López and Adam Rua Quiroga report that despite high mineral exports, Bolivia has experienced a significant trade deficit with China (2015: 1). In their examination of China's Jungie Tin Mine, they conclude that the mine has caused significant clashes with local communities over water use and pollution. While the mining company has engaged in a productive community consultation process that appears to have resolved some of the social conflicts, the authors continue to be concerned about the lack of government environmental oversight and especially the new Law of Mining and Metallurgy, which gives mining priority use of water.

Mining has many additional associated environmental costs. For example, although the Jindal mine has not yet been opened, there are already huge damages from the highway that would support the mine. It is part of the new Bio-Oceanic Highway planned as part of the South American Regional Infrastructure Initiative (IIRSA; see de Alcantara 2013). The portion of that road already under construction from Santa Cruz to Puerto Suárez crosses through the department of Santa Cruz, across the dry forest lands of the Chiquitano people. The Organización Indígena Chiquitana (OICH; Indigenous Chiquitano Organization) has been protesting this road since its inception in 2000 and has documented serious damage to the fragile ecosystems along the road's trajectory, including deforestation, contamination of water sources, land conflicts, and loss of flora and fauna. OICH has also decried the lack of consultation with their authorities, bad working conditions, and the increase in social problems, including prostitution (Bailaba 2004; Erbol 2010a, b; Hindery 2013).

Bolivia's main source of income comes from the exploitation of hydrocarbons, mainly in the form of natural gas. But what are the effects of oil and gas development on local people? Most of the oil and gas wells—about 350 wells—are located in the Chaco area, in the dry lowlands in the southeast. Eighty-three percent of the reserves lie under the lands of the Guaraní people, who through the land reforms of the 1990s were able to get collective title to small areas of their traditional territories, called *territorios comunitarios de origen* (TCOS). Geographer Penelope Anthias has documented the struggles of one TCO, the Itika Guasu TCO, where the largest gas field, Margarita, is located. Margarita is operated by a consortium of transnational oil companies, headed by Repsol and Maxus. Anthias documents the dismissive approach the companies took as they planned and carried out the exploration and development of the wells, ignoring Guaraní protests and demands,

and polluting the lands of the communities in the process of drilling and extraction (Anthias, forthcoming). Years of protest by the people and the Asamblea del Pueblo Guaraní (APG) have produced little change, although a 2004 blockade and takeover of the well forced the government to establish a fund by which 2 percent of gas rents paid to the state would be reserved for development projects in Guaraní communities (Perreault 2008:12). Similarly, the geographer Derrick Hindery has detailed the effects that a natural gas pipeline through the Chiquitania Dry Forest has had on the Chiquitanos' lands. He argues that one should not analyze the effects of specific projects alone, like the pipeline, but instead should consider the "synergistic effects" of the whole "extractive complex" of development, including the secondary developments that come into the region along with the pipeline, like roads, which bring loggers, smugglers, and narco-traffickers, and additional projects like gold mines, with their own environmental risks (2013: 209).

The legacies of this form of extraction are well known in Bolivia, especially because indigenous peoples have been actively protesting against them for decades. That is why it is difficult for many indigenous people to understand why, despite the strong terms of both the PDN and García Linera's Andean Amazonian plan, the Morales government is aggressively pursuing several new megaprojects that have the potential for devastating impacts. First are the giant new lithium fields in the vast salt flat in southwestern Bolivia, the Salar de Uyuni. Because ultra-light lithium batteries will power cell phones and hybrid and electric cars in the new "green" future, there is a huge and growing demand for lithium. It could challenge petroleum as the dominant fuel of the future (Wright 2010). The good news for Bolivia is that the newly discovered fields contain about half the world's known lithium—an estimated 5.4 million tons—prompting many to predict that Bolivia will become the "Saudi Arabia of lithium" (Howard 2009; Romero 2009; Wright 2010). This effort is under way: a Chinese-funded plant making ion lithium batteries was inaugurated in 2014, and in 2015, Bolivia signed contracts with the German company K-UTECH AG Salt Technologies to design a lithium carbonate pilot plant and Chinese CAMC Engineering to build a potassium salt industrial plant (Sagárnaga López 2015). Scholars have serious doubts about the lithium development plan, pointing out that the government's figures do not seem to show the project is meeting its widely advertised promise (Guzmán 2014: 6).

Scholars and activists have expressed deep concerns about the environmental dangers the project may bring. They argue that like any other non-renewable resource, producing lithium will take its toll on the fragile ecosystem of the Salar de Uyuni, and the Rio Grande delta, where flamingos breed. To exploit the lithium, Bolivia will create large brine beds and evaporation ponds, and then re-inject the leftover salt, increasing salinity of the rivers, which local people use to irrigate their farms. The simplest way of processing lithium involves mixing magnesium with the lithium, producing toxic magnesium hydroxide (Meridian 2008; Tegel 2013).

Activists and community members are worried about contamination if this method is chosen, as well as the big question of where the water will come from for all this (Tegel 2013). The Bolivian anthropologist Ricardo Calla has investigated the various options, and fears the government has chosen the most dangerous form of extraction (R. Calla Ortega 2014). Because the government is not entirely transparent about the project, however, it is difficult to make conclusive evaluations. Environmentalists are also concerned about the dangers of highly corrosive lithium hydroxide, produced when lithium combines with water. During the rainy season, the *salar* often floods—which is why the birds come to breed there. The Foro Boliviano sobre Medio Ambiente y Desarrollo (FOBOMADE; Bolivian Environmental Defense League) warns that the government has not carried out sufficient water or environmental studies yet, so it is difficult to project what the long-term effect might be (Howard 2009; see also R. Calla Ortega 2014). The Salar de Uyuni is now the most visited ecotourist attraction in Bolivia, and many fear the lithium production will harm this critical resource and source of income (Aguilar-Fernández 2009).

What will this project mean for local populations? There is no clear answer yet, because the project is in its initial stages, but investigators are already seeing significant effects. The local indigenous people have traditionally made their living mainly by growing quinoa and raising camelid livestock. The local communities are spread out across the region, and organized in cultural-political entities called *ayllus*, as well as in originary communities and peasant unions, or *sindicatos* (R. Calla Ortega 2014). Agriculture still represents 65–85 percent of their income, but they have increasingly turned to ecotourism, construction, seasonal migration, salt farming, and craftwork to supplement their incomes. Rodrigo Aguilar-Fernández suggests that using the limited water resources for lithium processing will make it impossible for local communities to continue farming quinoa, despite its high yield and steady market prices (2009). Calla argues that the project has already produced enormous cultural and political change, inasmuch as the Federación Regional Única de Trabajadores Campesinos del Altiplano Sur (FRUTCAS; Regional Federation of Peasant Workers of the Southern Altiplano), has negotiated with the state over the years to title peasants' lands under the territorial titling act, or INRA. To ensure that it would have control over the lithium resources, the state cut a deal, giving collective title to three enormous TCOS to local peasant communities. In exchange, the Salar de Uyuni remains under the control of the central state. Calla argues this was an enormous loss for the local indigenous people, who “lost in favor of the state all property rights over the *salar*. . . . Thus, an ancient and proud centuries-old perception held by the old *ayllus* and rural communities that the Salar of Uyuni had been and would be theirs was juridically cut off, perhaps forever” (R. Calla Ortega 2014: 51). He suggests that they remain vulnerable to environmental damage, especially if the soils become salinated. An

ecological disaster like that, he says, would lead to the disappearance of the cultures of the rural indigenous peoples, who would have to abandon their pastoral livelihoods and emigrate to the cities, increasing a trend already under way (53). Some local community members are expressing their fears that the water levels are already going down, harming the animals, and “killing our Mother” (see interviews in Martín-Cabrera and Ramírez Pimenta 2016). Calla notes that for the most part, local communities do not know what the project will bring and are waiting to see what will happen and what benefits might come.

Yet many other national, regional, and local actors—including some who identify as indigenous—continue to push for lithium despite these dangers. The government has made it clear that this is a high priority, and has promised to make this a new sort of extraction, where, instead of only providing raw materials to foreign companies, Bolivia would benefit equally with its international partners by producing value-added products. Regional governments in Potosí are supportive because they want the state to channel profits from lithium back to the region, one of Bolivia’s poorest departments. The large mining sector in the region means there are already many people, including indigenous residents, who work as miners and see the lithium project as a potentially lucrative source of employment. Many in the tourism industry see the lithium industry as a way to attract important infrastructure, like airports and an asphalted highway (Ströbele-Gregor 2010). These desires for work and infrastructure explain, in part, why the local peasant organization, FRUTCAS, which represents many indigenous farmers, has been one of the strongest supporters of the state’s initiative, and especially its anti-imperialist stance towards developing it. FRUTCAS is strongly *MASista*, and has benefited enormously from MAS’s continued support—especially territorial recognition. FRUTCAS argues that the lithium project is part of a sustainable use of natural resources that will benefit all. “This project is ours, because we are the guardians and monitors of good development of this strategic project, for the region, the department, and the country,” FRUTCAS’s leader declared (cited in Ströbele-Gregor 2012: 62). Here indigeneity is equated with sovereignty over natural resources, and not opposed to extractivism or development.

The second mega-project looming on the horizon is the Cachuela Esperanza dam planned as part of the IIRSA (Initiative for the Integration of the Regional Infrastructure of South America) initiative in the Beni region of the Bolivian Amazon. This dam is part of the Madeira River Hydroelectric Complex, the largest hydroelectric project in the Amazon. The project will dam the second largest river of the Amazon basin, inferior only to the Amazon River itself. The Madeira River carries half of the sediments of the entire basin and feeds one of the most biologically diverse regions of the world, which is shared by three countries: Bolivia, Brazil, and Peru. The Complex involves the construction of four hydroelectric plants: two in Rondônia, Brazil, near the border with Bolivia, are under construction; a third one,



FIGURE 8. The advancing agricultural frontier in Santa Cruz. Credit: Sam Beebbe. <https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/3.0>.

Cachuela Esperanza located in northern Bolivia, is in advanced stage of studies; and the fourth one, Guayar-Mirin located in bi-national (Brazilian–Bolivian) waters, is still in initial studies (Bank Information Center 2010). Indigenous peoples all along the river’s trajectory have protested the dams, which will inundate millions of acres of lands and forests, destroying wildlife and ecosystems. A particular concern is the fish population, one of the most diverse on the planet. Critics claim that the dams will disturb mercury deposits—refuse from mining over the years—which will be ingested by the fish, and then by the river-dwelling populations who subsist on those fish (Denvir and Riofrancos 2008). Despite these concerns, the MAS government is proceeding, and in March 2016, it signed a memorandum of understanding with Brazil to spur viability, design, and construction studies for both the Rio Madera and Cachuela Esperanza dams. The goal is to expand hydroelectric power generation (Fox News Latino 2016). This project is still in the planning stages, so there is little reported about how local people are responding.

Finally, we cannot understand Bolivia’s economic and environmental situation without calling attention to the growing importance of capital-intensive mechanized agribusiness model in the lowlands. As Nicole Fabricant and I have described in our 2014 analysis of the long-term patterns of agriculture in lowland Bolivia, indigenous labor and lands have long been incorporated into large-scale

commodity production, from rubber to sugar to the current dominant product, soy. Since the 1940s Bohan Plan, the government has organized large-scale colonization of the lowlands as a way to bring poor farmers from the dry highlands to the fertile lowlands. They cleared an enormous amount of land in the first period. But over the past two decades, expanding soy plantations have altered the agrarian structure and led to major environmental changes. Ben McKay and Gonzalo Colque describe the development of what they call the mechanization, concentration, and expansion of the “soy complex.” They argue that in the 1980s and 1990s, with the advent of foreign producers and capital, and the introduction of new technologies, labor power became less necessary and industrial crops began to be exported. Much of Bolivia’s fertile land is now owned by foreigners—especially Brazilians, Croatians, and Japanese—and Mennonites (McKay and Colque 2015; Urioste 2011). Global demands for soy product, especially from China and Europe, have exacerbated this process, and the use of industrial fertilizers, genetically modified seeds, and the large amount of capital needed now make this level of production very difficult for small-scale farmers (McKay and Colque 2015: 2). The result, they say is a process of “productive exclusion” marked by the proletarianization of the rural work force and a concentration of capital and land into a small elite of agribusiness interests. Scholars have described the massive deforestation that this agribusiness system produces, ascribing to mechanization the largest cause of loss of forested areas (Mueller et al. 2012; INESAD 2013).

Originally, Morales and the MAS government threatened the agribusiness sectors, calling for massive land reform. Concerns about this new form of latifundio as well as its environmental effects were an important source of debate at the Constituent Assembly, where delegates voted to limit the number of hectares anyone could control. The Bolivian public voted in a special referendum about the exact number, agreeing to five thousand hectares, which is now mandated by Article 38 of the Constitution. Yet the government negotiated with the agro-industrial groups to incorporate an additional provision allowing an unlimited number of business associates to hold up to five thousand hectares apiece (Bolivia 2009: Art. 315, pt. 2), “rendering the land ceiling futile” (15). In recent years, Morales has essentially cut a deal with this sector, allowing it to export without any trade restrictions, and supporting it with infrastructure. The new development plan for the next decade, *Agenda Patriótica 2025*, calls for an expanded agricultural frontier in order to increase the country’s ability to feed itself. Such calls are cause for grave concern to indigenous and environmental organizations.

THE TENSIONS IN THE NEW EXTRACTIVISM

How do we make sense of the dissonance between Morales’s words about protecting Mother Earth and these images from Bolivia of the environment and indigenous

communities under attack? First, as pointed out above, it is unfair to blame Morales for Bolivia's long history of natural resource development. Bolivia has exported primary materials since the Spaniards began mining gold and silver, through the long years of tin mining, to the recent years of natural gas extraction. "Bolivia's history and environment have been dominated by relentless extraction" (Farthing 2009: 25). In essence, Morales took on a country that was already "primary resource-dependent," and to alter that model will take time and effort (Denvir and Riofrancos 2008). Bolivia does not exist in a vacuum, but is and has long been enmeshed in a global economic system that exerts its own force and momentum.

Second, the Morales government has taken a leading role in pushing international institutions to rethink their approaches to global climate change. Influenced in part by civil society organizations like the Plataforma Boliviana Frente al Cambio Climático (Bolivian Platform against Climate Change), which brings together indigenous and other popular sector demands, the Morales government has urged developed countries to slash their emissions farther than they have pledged to do. Morales gave fiery speeches at the Copenhagen Summit in 2009, and Bolivia refused to sign onto the negotiated accord, drawing the ire of the United States (Schipani and Vidal 2014). In Copenhagen and beyond, Morales and his UN representative, Pablo Solón, relentlessly pushed back against the idea of a market-based model of carbon offsets, arguing that such a model does not resolve the underlying causes of deforestation and degradation of forests. They have been key players in the debates over programs like Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation (REDD and REDD+) in which industrialized countries would purchase offsets and establish funds to pay developing countries to maintain forests. Morales and Solón have argued that these "false solutions" only reinforce the capitalist production responsible for climate change in the first place, while attempting to drag developing countries like Bolivia further into the logic of the market. At the Doha Climate Convention in 2012, Bolivia's Minister of the Environment and Water, José Antonio Zamora Gutiérrez, followed suit, arguing that the "climate is not for sale," and declaring that the withdrawal of developed countries from the Kyoto Accord was an attack on Mother Earth (cited in Hicks and Fabricant 2016: 17). Kathryn Hicks and Nicole Fabricant trace the influences the Plataforma Boliviana had on the Morales government in the first administration, showing how they used discourses of the "ecological Indian" strategically to problematize normative models of development and push for more sustainable models (*ibid.*). The alternative Cochabamba Summit, with which this chapter opens, was another key site where indigeneity was the frame for critique and organizing.

Nevertheless, the Morales government argues it must continue to extract natural resources in order to provide for the welfare of the poorest and most marginalized people of Bolivia. Defending a government plan to build a highway through a

tropical park and indigenous territory (discussed in the next chapter), Vice President Álvaro García Linera made clear the government's priorities:

We are going to construct highways, we will drill wells, we will industrialize our country, preserving our resources in consultation with the people, but we need resources to generate development, for education, transportation, and the health of our people. We are not going to turn ourselves into park rangers for the powers of the North who live happily, while we continue in poverty. (Erbol 2010c; my translation)

One can read the vice president's statement as a demonstration of the tensions inherent in the model between the indigenous value of *buen vivir* and the search for alternatives to capitalism, on the one hand, and the desire for and the need to redistribute the profits from natural resource extraction to the Bolivian people, on the other. But even this difficult duality is not so clear. As the preceding chapters have made clear, what is "indigenous" is not a given; rather it is a site of politics, in which different parties claim indigeneity as either a way to contest the existing order, or a site of policing from which to consolidate new orders. *Vivir bien* is also a discursive artifact, useful for the state to push its views at the international level, and useful for activists at the Constituent Assembly to push for the alternative sorts of development they envisioned. What becomes visible from understanding indigeneity as a site of politics and policing is that the changing political economy has altered the meanings and potential of all these ideas and terms.

In the first MAS administration, *vivir bien* was shorthand for challenging the neoliberal development projects of past eras, making indigeneity into a vehicle of change and a window onto a horizon of possibility. But, as the government continued its extractivist development model, these alternatives faded in importance in the public sphere, and indigeneity and *buen vivir* became linked to state projects like lithium extraction. The call for a just distribution of Bolivia's natural patrimony was an essential part of the water and gas wars that brought Morales to power in the first place and led to his reelection in 2010. As the poster in figure 9 makes clear, the sense that Bolivia was moving forward, "advancing" was important. Note that this was not just a call to keep the profits at home, but also a call to industrialize at home. The majority of Bolivians, and that includes many indigenous people, are proud of the nationalization, and delighted that Morales and his associates reversed the unfair terms of the gas business. They *want* lithium to be developed, and they want their standards of living to improve. This is part of *pachakuti*, the turning of the timetable, the change of destiny. This is the time for the formerly poor to receive their fair share. A large number of indigenous Bolivians live in cities, surviving in difficult economic situations. For them, the most important goal of the new decolonized state is to pass the benefits of national patrimony to the poor who were traditionally barred from those benefits. They are not as concerned about environmental damage to rural lands as they are about overcoming poverty.



FIGURE 9. 2010 election campaign poster for Morales. It reads: “Evo, again. Bolivia advances.” Credit: jmage. <https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/3.0/>

As Nicole Fabricant points out, for urban people, gaining access to water and jobs may be more important than any abstract notion of Pachamama or even climate change (Fabricant 2013). Bret Gustafson concludes that “gas in Bolivia is not primarily understood through the lens of climate change—though climate change and its effects and causes are clearly part of Bolivian political consciousness—but as a medium for negotiating rights, well-being, and exchange between citizens and the state” (Gustafson 2013: 64). He points to the public spectacles that have become common in recent years, as the president inaugurates new natural gas lines into domestic homes in El Alto and La Paz with great pomp and much publicity. Sweeping aside the environmental costs to those whose lands were sacrificed to provide this gas to urban residents, Morales tells the public that “Thanks to Mother Earth,” Bolivia has “cheap gas” (*ibid.*). For many, this was a welcome message.

Oscar Olivera, the leader of the protesters in the 2000 water war in Cochabamba, suggests that this tension existed even before the Constituent Assembly. Emerging from the water and gas wars in 2000 and 2003, and then a referendum on gas exploitation in 2004, and eventually the nationalization of gas in 2006, he told me, most people felt that “a process of transformation, of substantial change



FIGURE 10. Morales supporters at 2013 rally in Cochabamba. Credit: Fernanda LeMarie–Cancillería de Ecuador. <https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/3.0>.



FIGURE 11. Morales supporter at 2013 rally in Cochabamba. The slogan on his coat translates as: “We are the People/We are MAS/We are more.” Credit: Fernanda LeMarie–Cancillería de Ecuador. <https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/3.0>.

had to pass through a stage of re-appropriation of our natural resources.” But this did not have to be accomplished through a “purely state-run process.” Instead, the idea was “the social reappropriation of the inherited patrimony of our parents, of our grandparents: the natural resources and public enterprises that had been privatized” (personal communication, August 2012). The question, of course, is how can this “social reappropriation” work in a state dedicated to continued engagement with state-controlled global capitalism?

These tensions have not eased; rather, they have become even more intense. What has changed is the government’s discourse, which now links natural resource extraction to decolonization. Part of this is because the original makeup of the government, as described in chapter 1, has evolved. The indigenista proponents of *vivir bien* have mostly left the government. For example, Raúl Prada, one of the architects of the Pacto Unidad’s constitutional proposals, served as minister of development and planning in the first Morales administration. He used that position to push for sustainable development alternatives based on indigenous customs, but left the government as it became obvious how little priority the government was giving these options. Now he is now firmly in the dissenters’ camp, writing eloquent critiques of the extractivist program of the government (see, e.g., Prada Alcoreza, 2012, 2013). At the same time, the vice president’s push to industrialize has gained strength, and his vision of development has taken new legal form. This culminated in October 2012 when the congress approved the Ley Marco de Madre Tierra y Desarrollo Integral para Vivir Bien (the Framing Law of Mother Earth and Integral Development to Live Well), which brings the language of *vivir bien* and the goal of integral development together.

While one can read this new law as a commitment to protection of the environment, a close reading makes clear that the law subsumes the “horizon” of *vivir bien* to the state-led process of “integral development.” This term is not defined, but the law’s terms make clear that it is a balancing act, in which capitalism and decolonization must be held in productive tension—similar to the tensions within the 1990s term “sustainable development.” *Vivir bien* is described as a “new cultural and civilizational horizon” which operates as “an alternative to capitalism and modernity” and arises from the *cosmovisión* of indigenous originary peasant peoples and nations (Ley Marco, Art. 5, no. 2). So, *vivir bien* is still the goal at which the plurinational state aims, but the mechanism by which it will accomplish this has changed. Under the new law, the means by which this horizon is to be reached is integral development, which is understood “within the framework of decolonization” (Art. 8). The text explains that the move towards *vivir bien* can only be implemented understanding the complementarity between four sets of rights:

- (a) the rights of Mother Earth, as a collective subject of public interest;
- (b) the individual and collective rights of indigenous, originary, peasant,

- intercultural, and Afro-Bolivians;
- (c) the fundamental civil, social, economic, and cultural rights of the Bolivian people to live well through integral development; and
 - (d) the right of the urban and rural populations to live in a society of justice, fairness, and solidarity without material social, or spiritual poverty . . .
- (Art. 4, no. 1)

The political economist Eduardo Gudynas argues this new formulation is extremely significant. He says “it restores the idea of development, legitimating it in a political norm and placing it as a necessary element for *vivir bien*. . . . This turnabout should not be understated, because it minimizes *vivir bien* and robs it of its vocation as a radical break with development and the transcendence of modernity. Not only this, but now, a certain type of development is necessary to achieve *vivir bien*” (Gudynas 2013: 25). For Gudynas, the new law is a sign that the Morales government has for all intents and purposes silenced those hoping for real alternatives to development. “This restoration of the idea of development closes a chapter in the Bolivian process,” he says. “Now it is possible to promote extractivism and defend it as a necessary form of integral development without falling into contradictions” (ibid.).

In this chapter, I have traced the evolution of the relation between development and decolonization since Morales’s election, arguing that after taking power, the government was forced to balance tensions between capitalist notions of industrialization and extraction against alternative visions of development based on indigenous customs and values. By 2012, despite its earlier rhetoric, the state appeared to have accepted the inevitability of capitalist models, and justified this as necessary to move the country and its peoples forward to decolonization, social justice, and living well. Moreover, it accomplished this in great part by using the discourses of indigeneity, transforming the site of politics into a kind of policing that is difficult to contest. As I show in the following chapters, the consolidation of the capitalist extraction model has had several important effects. In the next chapter, I consider the profound effects it has had on the question of race relations and on racism. I show how the Morales government has not only continued the development path but also reinscribes the racialized effects of it, sacrificing lowland indigenous lives and lands. In chapters 6 and 7, I describe how this new discourse increasingly requires local political actors to negotiate their identities and demands for citizenship in terms of economic development and class.

Race and Racism in the New Bolivia

MARCHING TO LA PAZ

The 2011 historic Indigenous March for Life, for Indigenous Rights and for the Environment was the eighth such march in Bolivia since 1990, when indigenous organizations began a tradition of walking from the lowlands up the Andes to La Paz to bring public attention to their demands. Often wearing only sandals, the marchers covered nearly 750 miles on their journey from the tropical forest of the Beni region to the cold, dry highlands of La Paz. Mothers marched with their children strapped to them. As protestors entered Cochabamba, a city halfway along the route, they filled the plaza with music and lowland accents. Protestors planted the Bolivian flag in the middle of the plaza alongside a banner bearing the *patajú* flower, a symbol now associated with lowland indigenous culture. They shouted: “We are defending ourselves from destructive capitalism, long live the march!” Urban residents, students, intellectuals, and non-governmental (NGO) representatives joined the rally. Surrounding the plaza, they chanted in unison: “We are all TIPNIS!”

This march was in response to President Morales’s plan to build a highway linking the tropics of Cochabamba to the Brazilian border, to be funded by the Brazilian national development bank, opening new possibilities for trade with Brazil. The Morales government claimed that the road would bring prosperity and trade to lowland peoples and help the state achieve control of the national territory. But the proposed highway would run through the forest preserve and communally held indigenous land of the Territorio Indígena y Parque Nacional Isiboro Sécore (TIPNIS; Isiboro Sécore Indigenous Territory and National Park). The protesters charged that the road amounted to internal colonialism, and that



FIGURE 12. Indigenous women protesters in the 2011 TIPNIS march. Credit: MMajias. <https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/3.0>.

just like earlier governments, Morales was sacrificing indigenous peoples to capitalist extractive development.

At least at the beginning of the MAS administration, its “revolution” and ambitious anti-neoliberal agenda was based on a profound revaluation of indigenous and peasant peoples and their customs. According to the new constitution passed in 2009, a central goal of the new plurinational state is to end the centuries of discrimination against the country’s indigenous peoples, who make up a large majority of the population. While these reforms have produced enormous advances for Bolivia’s poor and indigenous peoples, an analysis of the ways they have been experienced and resisted demonstrates that they have also created a new “moment of danger” in which race plays a central role (Pred 2000: 8). On the one hand, the government’s combined focus on reversing neoliberalism and revaluing indigeneity sparked a strong and often racist countermovement among the white–mestizo agribusiness elite sectors of the eastern lowlands, who pushed for regional autonomy and independence from the central state. On the other, despite government rhetoric, the country continues to be deeply enmeshed in an extractivist capitalist development model that adversely affects indigenous communities. In this chapter, I show how indigenous peoples’ bodies and territories continue to

suffer political and economic violence as Bolivia struggles to negotiate between global capitalism and social and economic justice. Ironically, even in plurinational Bolivia, a country known across the world as a model for indigenous liberation, racist colonial discourses are reproduced in the process.

Here, again, we find discourses about indigeneity on the blurry boundary between politics and policing as understood by Jacques Rancière (1999). They function both as a tool useful in the state's struggle against racism, making indigenous people visible, and as a means of consolidating state power and reinforcing racism. But in emphasizing the ongoing and complex contestations over race, this chapter shows how difficult such politics can be to enact. While the emancipatory discourse of indigeneity was fairly successful in the highlands, it was not so well received in the lowlands, where entirely different racial and cultural logics prevail. If the MAS used politics to claim a "miscount" in previous political accounting justifying the decolonizing agenda of plurinational Bolivia, the mestizo elite in Santa Cruz and the protesters in the TIPNIS case made counterclaims to having been wronged, producing enormous pushback. More important, because the MAS government continued its commitment to extracting natural resources, it reinforced the racialized practices linked to it. This chapter examines the racial politics of the MAS state to determine what the decolonized plurinational Bolivian state became in practice.

THE STRUCTURES OF INEQUALITY

During the neoliberal era of the 1980s and 1990s, the traditional white–mestizo political class instituted orthodox restructuring, including privatization of state-owned enterprises, cut backs on social spending, and opening the country to foreign capital (Postero 2007a: 190–93). Laying off thousands of (mostly Andean) miners at the state mining corporation, the state privatized most publicly owned enterprises and cut public sector employment (Arze and Kruse 2004: 27). Bolivia's small-scale farm economy was also devastated by the commercial liberalization, because the products of peasant farmers and herders were unable to compete with cheaper imports. As the poor shouldered these burdens, incomes for the local economic and political elites tied to transnational capital rose (Portes and Hoffman 2003: 65). The result was an increasing sense among most Bolivians that the elite and foreign capital had commandeered control of the national economy, and that this continued the colonial patterns of domination and exploitation. As the Plan Nacional de Desarrollo (PND; National Development Plan) described in chapter 4 explained, neoliberalism continued to privilege whites and mestizos, while Bolivia's indigenous and peasant populations bore the brunt of the reforms.

As elsewhere, neoliberal reforms in Bolivia were not limited to the economic sphere. Instead, these economic policies were part of a larger set of changes,

pairing economic reforms with a discourse of “market democracy” linking free trade to the promotion of democracy. This resulted in policies such as decentralization, the devolution of state power to cities/regions, on the one hand, and the empowerment of civil society, on the other. The Bolivian Law of Popular Participation (1994) was a prime example of such neoliberal governance. Under this form of “neoliberal multiculturalism,” indigenous and social movements were encouraged to participate in development and budget decisions at the municipal level. While this scheme did recognize indigenous people as legitimate actors, the overarching racism in the country and the continuing control of political parties by the white–mestizo elite made it difficult for indigenous people and their representatives to gain meaningful access to the political process. But the neoliberal reforms had unexpected consequences. Indigenous and peasant activists also began to use the neoliberal political structures to contest local elections. As we have seen, in 2002, the MAS was formed, uniting highland Andean peoples, lowland indigenous groups, labor and the traditional Left, and many progressive mestizos, and in 2005 its leader, Evo Morales, became president.

However, in the eastern lowlands, where the white–mestizo agribusiness elite was threatened not only by the MAS’s challenges to neoliberal economic policies but also by its racial politics, Morales’s election was bitterly opposed. In the lowland capital of Santa Cruz de la Sierra, the call to “decolonize” Bolivia and embrace indigenous rights was not a welcome one, and it reconfigured the fields of force at play in Bolivia, ushering in a period of transition and social upheaval (García Linera 2010). With a charismatic leader and a growing indigenous coalition, the MAS-controlled state had new grounds to transform the economy and impetus to take command of the lowland region’s considerable resources. At the heart of this region lies the department of Santa Cruz, which accounts for more than 42 percent of the country’s agricultural production.¹ The neighboring state Tarija, also part of the lowland region, accounts for 80 percent of the natural gas. The highlands’ rich deposits of zinc, silver, tin, and other minerals were once Bolivia’s economic mainstay, but since the mid twentieth century, the center of economic activity has shifted to the lowlands, where agribusiness elites raise cattle and grow soy beans, sunflowers, and sorghum for the global market. This large-scale agrarian production has involved the usurpation of new lands and resources and the funneling of wealth from the periphery to urban centers (Gustafson 2006).

I have worked for the past five years with the anthropologist Nicole Fabricant to think about the relation between race and political economy in Santa Cruz. Many of this chapter’s insights are the result of our enormously productive collaborations. Fabricant and I have described how the lowland’s political economy produced and continues to reinforce racialized structures of power. Documenting the ways in which particular forms of capital accumulation map and re-map spatial meanings onto territories, bodies, and people (Pred and Watts 1992; see also

Fabricant and Gustafson 2011), we argued that the exploitation of the lowland region has long relied on the vulnerabilities of indigenous people whose lands hold exploitable natural resources and whose labor underlies agricultural production. Expansive capitalism has defined the lowlands in terms of globalized commodities such as rubber, sugar, and soy, creating a class of large landholders whose original holdings in rubber and sugar plantations were later transferred to agro-industrial capital. The same class continues to hold economic power, now holding huge swathes of the lowlands in soy and other agribusiness commodity production (Fabricant and Postero 2013). This long history of resource-based extraction and large-scale agricultural production in the lowlands came under threat in the 1990s when indigenous people began to organize and mobilize for territory. It came under even greater threat when Morales was elected and promised to redistribute the patrimony of the country, and even more alarming, promised radical land reform.

Regional elites were strongly opposed to Morales's agenda, which they saw as a direct threat to their economic productivity. They also contested the interference in regional politics and business by the central state, echoing narratives of historical domination by La Paz. *Cambas* (a term used for *cruceños*, or people from Santa Cruz)² have long rebelled against the control of the central state, mounting a number of independence and autonomy movements over the years (Pruden 2012; Peña Hasbun 2003). This *camba* identity is often expressed as a deeply felt sense of injustice, especially in relation to Andeans and the Andean capital, La Paz. *Cambas* imagine themselves as racially, ethnically, and culturally different from the Andean people whom they see as invading their lands and usurping natural resource wealth in the region (Fabricant 2009). They see themselves as independent and hard-working, building their frontier state with their own entrepreneurial efforts. This difference—coded sometimes as cultural and sometimes overtly racialized—was mobilized both by the Morales government to justify and legitimize progressive reforms and by the *camba* elite as a basis for opposition. As Morales's power increased, the lowland civic committees, unelected associations of powerful political actors, began to organize a regional autonomy movement, shaped around historical discourses of being an “oppressed” or “victimized” region (Pruden 2012). During the Constituent Assembly, the right-wing opposition did everything possible to oppose the MAS process of change, and especially the agrarian reform, from boycotts of the process to a massive campaign of hunger strikes across the lowlands (Fabricant and Postero 2013). This political movement was also characterized as a cultural struggle, as *cambas* opposed their customs, values, and histories to those of highland indigenous peoples, often expressing these differences through violent acts of racism.

The racism against indigenous people was particularly harsh during the Constituent Assembly held in Sucre. For instance, Morales appointed an indigenous woman, Silvia Lazarte, as president of the Constituent Assembly. Lazarte, who had

only a few years of schooling, had worked as a domestic and a labor activist. During the Assembly process, she suffered many terrible insults at the hands of the opposition, including being called a “llama”—the iconic herd animal of the Andes. During the celebrations of the inauguration of the Assembly, the streets were filled with international reporters and indigenous delegates proudly wore their *polleras* or carried the whips signaling their positions of authority. Yet, soon, as the business of the assembly began, racism reared its head. In the first month of the Assembly, a battle emerged about whether to return the seat of government to Sucre, Bolivia’s constitutional capital, and make that city the full national capital again (as it had been until 1898). The MAS flatly refused to debate this issue, enraging the residents of the city and provoking massive street protests against the MAS—and indirectly anyone who “looked” like a MAS delegate. What this meant in practice was the indigenous or rural delegates were insulted, chased, and on many occasions beaten by local people. Andrés Calla and Khantuta Muruchi see these racist outrages as the result of indigenous delegates being perceived as having “transgressed” their traditional place in society, rather than as political disputes over the issue of the nation’s capital (Calla and Muruchi 2011: 301). The silent racism that always existed in Bolivia became openly visible during the Constituent Assembly because historically excluded people like Lazarte were seen as dislodging the political elite and taking spaces of political power long denied them, such as roles in the Congress or in the Constituent Assembly. Calla and Muruchi describe the racism these delegates endured on a daily basis, such as being brushed aside by mestizo delegates who could not conceive of such rural persons being fellow delegates, or being insulted in the streets for carrying bags of coca. (Coca chewing is a regular daily practice of many highland indigenous people, and is also associated with the *cocaleros*, the peasant union led by Morales.) (303–4). Some delegates were forced to change their clothes to avoid public humiliation; others avoided the main plaza, a potent symbolic site of elite power. One delegate described being driven from the streets when wearing her *pollera*: “They said ‘Indian pigs, mules, go back to Oruro’” (305).

During this tense time, racial incidents increased across the country. In Santa Cruz, the Autonomy movement led by the Civic Committees was accompanied by a thinly disguised racial campaign. Civic leaders argued that Andean migrants were invading their city, taking land and economic opportunities from local people (Fabricant 2009; Gustafson 2006). Elites openly asked how Morales, an uneducated Indian, could be the president. A Santa Cruz youth group carried out numerous attacks against Andean migrants to the city, and city officials banned street vendors, “protecting” the city from the dangers of unhygienic Indian bodies (Fabricant 2009). Perhaps the most shocking incident of this overt racism came during the last conflicted days of the Assembly in Sucre, in May 2008, when opponents captured a group of Andean MAS supporters. Hurling racist insults at

them, the attackers forced them to strip to the waist, and kneel down in the plaza, kissing the flag. Humiliated, with tears in their eyes, the victims bowed in shame and fear (see P. Calla Ortega 2011). This incident, which was captured on video, horrified the country, and demonstrated how close to the surface colonial relations of domination and subjugation remain.

Here we see race at the center of the debate: indigeneity, long linked to practices of domination, took on new meanings in the context of the power struggles between the MAS and the lowland elite sector. On the one hand, indigenous activism and ideas were held up by the Morales government and the social movements it represented as the solution to centuries of colonial oppression. On the other, the old faces of racism continued to be potent tools of contestation. Allan Pred and Michael Watts have pointed out that periods of reconstruction are inevitable structural attributes of capitalism, which regularly undergoes transitions. The result, they argued, is invariably contestation, in which local actors defend their specific interests and identities through re-mappings of space and forms of difference (1992: 11, 17). We can see the pushback from the lowland elite, then, as a response to the emancipatory politics of indigeneity in this first period, as the MAS state shook the established order, rupturing the status quo and making clear that the old order would undergo radical changes. Yet the next part of the story makes us question this dualistic characterization. Let us turn to the case that rocked Bolivia: TIPNIS.

THE RACIAL POLITICS OF MORALES'S DEMOCRATIC AND CULTURAL REVOLUTION: SACRIFICING INDIGENOUS TERRITORIES

In 2011, the government announced its decision to build a highway from Villa Tunari in Cochabamba to San Ignacio de Mojos in the Beni region. The road would pass through TIPNIS, one of Bolivia's largest and most diverse tropical reserves and home to sixty-three Moxeño, Yuracaré, and Chimane communities. President René Barrientos Ortuño originally declared TIPNIS a national park in 1965. Then in 1990, after the first indigenous march, the March for Territory and Dignity, President Jaime Paz Zamora issued a presidential decree declaring it an indigenous territory to be co-managed by the three groups living there. Soon, TIPNIS was at risk of colonization by the many highland migrants to the Chapare region of Cochabamba, who make their living growing coca. In 1992, the TIPNIS indigenous leader Marcial Fabricano and Evo Morales, then the leader of the Cocalero organization of Chapare, agreed on the borders of the park and drew a "red line" setting off areas not open to settlement. Finally, in the neoliberal era, TIPNIS was designated a *territorio comunitario de origen*, or TCO, under the new agrarian reform law. TIPNIS is now a preserve consisting of 3,869 square miles, home to sixty-three communities, organized into two *subcentrales*. The southernmost area,

the so-called Polígono 7, is occupied by coca growers and is severely deforested (Achtenberg 2011a; Paz 2012).

The proposed road through TIPNIS is part of a 190-mile highway being built to connect Bolivia's heartland to its Amazonian hinterlands and link Bolivia to international trade routes. When the controversy broke in 2010, two sections of the road were already under construction; the middle section crossing the TIPNIS had not yet undergone environmental review or the constitutionally mandated consultation process. Some local indigenous communities were pleased with the possibilities the paved road might hold: linking them to bigger cities and markets, and bringing increased access to education and healthcare systems. Others, however, feared that the road would bring ever greater ecological destruction to a region already deeply affected by cattle ranching, illegal forestry, and coca growing. Many were particularly concerned that it would open up their lands to further colonization by Andean coca growers, who already inhabited Polígono 7. In his analysis of the TIPNIS case, John Andrew McNeish (2013) explains these opposing views by pointing to differing relationships with resource extraction: some indigenous communities are linked to the market in deeper and more positive ways than others. Building on McNeish, Anna Laing (2015) argues that the contrasting ideas about territory, rights, and nature that emerged on the marches reflected competing demands for resource sovereignty. As a result, Cecilie Hirsch argues, local leaders were forced to make difficult pragmatic decisions to bring resources to their communities, some supporting the road, others, the march (2012).

It is important to emphasize that not all the marchers were opposed to development in general, or even to the construction of highway (and not all were indigenous). Mónica Tapera, a Guaraní journalist who worked as part of the communications committee of the march, told me that the marchers were mostly concerned that they had not been consulted about the placement of the road or the potential damage to the environment. This was the crux of the crisis: the government had begun the highway project without carrying out any consultation with the local indigenous organizations, and then, when challenged, took an intransigent stance. Morales said that the consultations were not binding and that whether the indigenous organizations liked it or not, this road would be built. "Quiero decirles, quieran o no quieran, vamos construir este camino y en esta gestión vamos a entregar el camino Villa Tunari–San Ignacio de Moxos" (I want to tell you, like it or not, we are going to construct this road and this administration is going to deliver the Villa Tunari–San Ignacio de Moxos highway) (*La Jornada* 2011). Tapera says that for this reason, the TIPNIS struggle represented a much larger concern than the highway itself. "If they could enter in this territory that was titled by the government, and a national park, they would enter into any indigenous territory. So TIPNIS signified the gateway to all indigenous territories" (personal communication, July 11, 2016).



FIGURE 13. The 2011 TIPNIS march. Credit: RAraoz. <https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/3.0>.

Unsurprisingly, indigenous organizations characterized the government's position as a reenactment of the worst sort of colonialism. They argued that the great majority of the indigenous people in the park did not want the road and feared the terrible environmental damage that would inevitably occur. Studies show that deforestation by the *cocaleros* has already begun to bleed over the "red line" into the park, harming the flora and fauna, as well as threatening the livelihoods of the people (Defensor del Pueblo 2011). When their arguments went unanswered, the national lowland indigenous Confederación de Indígenas de Bolivia (CIDOB), along with some highland organizations, including the Consejo Nacional de Ayllus y Marcas del Qullasuyu (CONAMAQ), began a massive march from the lowland capital of Trinidad, in the Beni region, to La Paz. The march, which included several thousand indigenous people, including women and children, received enormous support from students, environmentalists, and urban labor sectors across the country, as well as lowland elite leaders, who used the controversy as an opportunity to once again criticize the authoritarian character of the Morales administration.

Morales refused to negotiate in what was "the chronicle of a conflict foretold" (Prada Alcoreza 2012), and the whole country watched the march on TV. Finally, on September 25, 2011, the national police intercepted the marchers and violently



FIGURE 14. The 2011 TIPNIS march. Credit: RAraoz. <https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/3.0>.

assaulted them, beating them, firing tear gas, and causing many injuries. The report of the Defensor del Pueblo (the National Ombudsman) concluded that the police's actions had been disproportionately violent and amounted to human rights violations. The police also insulted the protesters, using deprecatory racial terms, which is now against the law in Bolivia, and violated their rights to political association. Finally, the Defensor concluded that the government violated the indigenous communities' right to a *consulta previa* (prior consultation) under the constitution and International Labor Organization 169, the binding international convention establishing indigenous peoples' rights to culture and territory (Defensor del Pueblo 2011).

This shocking event led to both public anger and confusion. Wasn't this the indigenous president whose allegedly decolonizing plurinationalist state had radically re-represented indigenous people and their customs? In other words, had they not implemented a new distribution of the sensible, making indigeneity the central positive value? The increasingly obvious gap between Morales's discourse about indigenous values and his deeds, and particularly the violence against the vulnerable marchers, turned public opinion. When the march arrived in La Paz, there was a massive and supportive welcome, with crowds holding signs reading "¡Todos somos TIPNIS!" (We are all TIPNIS!). The government finally relented,

signing an agreement that TIPNIS would be *intangible*, or untouchable. In the months that followed, the government issued a new proposal for a community consultation, which was contested as too late (how can a prior consultation happen after the fact?) and too restrictive (since it would only take into consideration the desires of the communities inside TIPNIS). This would sideline CIDOB, the more politically powerful national organization, and make the small indigenous communities in the park vulnerable to pressure from both the government and the cocaleros.

Over the next year, the government carried out the new consultation process, negotiating with several new indigenous and colonizer groups that had appeared, many in favor of the highway. Concerns about who had the right to represent the TIPNIS communities surfaced, and eventually CIDOB and the TIPNIS sub-centrales mounted another march in 2012 to demand a fair and legal consultation. Faced with competing indigenous groups and a government that appeared to be negotiating, the public gave much less support to the second march, even when the police sprayed the marchers with water hoses and tear gas in La Paz in July 2012. When the government adamantly refused to meet their demands, the marchers returned to their communities to fight the highway project from within their communities.

Then the government orchestrated the takeover of CIDOB, the national indigenous organization established in the early 1990s. The 2012 march had exacerbated long-existing fractures within CIDOB, and in August 2012, a parallel, government-friendly group that does not oppose the highway held elections and voted in a new governing board. That group forced its way into CIDOB's Santa Cruz headquarters, backed by the police. Many of my Guaraní friends from Santa Cruz tried to avert the takeover, but they were overwhelmed by force. One woman, who lived on-site, described the horror of seeing the beloved headquarters of lowland activism taken over by "goons." She and her newborn twins had to flee, suffering beatings from the newcomers and inhaling tear gas. CIDOB's originally elected leaders held a vigil in front of the church in the main plaza for several weeks. I spent several days with them there, observing their desperate efforts to gain support from the media and the public. It was literally unbelievable to them that the state's clientelist tactics had defeated their organization. Many noted the irony that CIDOB had been able to withstand thirty years of struggle with white-mestizo politicians, only to be undone by an indigenous president. I come back to this development in chapter 6, to show how this co-optation helped consolidate the MAS government's development agenda throughout the lowlands.

The TIPNIS consultation officially concluded in December 2012 with a favorable vote for the road. However, Bolivia's human rights ombudsman Rolando Villena issued a harsh critique of the consultation process, which he characterized as "authoritarian, colonialist, and unilateral." "In addition to failing to comply with

international requirements for a prior consultation (before financing and construction commitments), to be carried out in good faith and in accordance with indigenous customs and governing structures, . . . the process did not achieve the agreement of all parties, as required by the Plurinational Constitutional Tribunal (TCP), as a condition of its constitutionality” (Achtenberg 2012).

There was an enormous range of opinions within the state apparatus about the TIPNIS case. During fieldwork in 2011 and 2012, I heard dissent even from MAS militants working in state ministries, especially those indigenous intellectuals who had been delegates to the Constituent Assembly and had worked closely with lowland indigenous organizations there. The minister of defense, María Chacón renounced her position after the Chaparina violence, and the national ombudsperson issued a harsh critique of it (Defensor del Pueblo 2011). Yet Morales and his closest advisers put up a united front defending the road. Why was the government so stubborn about this project in the face of such substantial indigenous and public opposition to it? The highway project would support the extractivist development model and dovetails with a larger regional integration project known as IIRSA (Integration of the Regional Infrastructure of South America), which will establish trade corridors across the region, and open access to oil and gas blocks already contracted to foreign gas companies. The Brazilian Development Bank was slated to pay 80 percent of the estimated \$415 million for construction (J. Webber 2012). There are many concerns about the highway, and growing Brazilian imperialism is one of them (Friedman-Rudovsky 2012). The government argued that the road would bring critical resources to the residents of the park and access to markets for their products. This would allow greater access for education and healthcare, make their products more competitive, and provide opportunities for new enterprises, such as sustainable forestry and ecotourism (Achtenberg 2011b). Second, the road would link all parts of Bolivia, giving Bolivia sovereign control of its territory. This is a long-held national interest. Finally, the new road would challenge the monopoly of financial interests of lowland oligarchy, who control much of the lumber, meat, and agricultural production in the zone.

The best explanation of the government’s position is that articulated in Vice President García Linera’s book *Geopolítica de la Amazonía: Poder hacendal-patrimonial y acumulación capitalista* (Geopolitics of Amazonia: Landed Hereditary Power and Capitalist Accumulation) (2012b). As Devin Beaulieu and I have argued, this text is a forceful argument for the role of the state and the need to develop Bolivia’s natural resources (Beaulieu and Postero 2013). *Geopolítica* surveys the social and political history of the Bolivian Amazon to buttress García Linera’s claim that the TIPNIS march and CIDOB are tools of what he calls “extraterritorial environmentalism.” Real power in the Amazon, he says, rests with foreign companies, the governments of developed capitalist countries, regional bourgeois-seigniorial landlords, and NGOs. Lands collectively titled to indigenous communities, like

TIPNIS, he argues, actually serve to subsume indigenous territory and natural resources under the control of a feudal, or patrimonial-hacienda, “arch of power and domination.” He says the “pseudo-environmentalism” rallied by the TIPNIS march and its supporters against state extractivism is a paternalistic “environmentalism for the poor” that in Manichaean colonial fashion divides Bolivia’s popular indigenous-peasant bloc between romanticized “good” lowland indigenous communities living in harmony with nature and vilified “bad” highland peasants out to ravage nature for illicit drug markets (García Linera 2012b: 75–76). García Linera is a brilliant theorist and he rightly points out that indigeneity is not as simple as people often assume. Indigenous people do not only live on communal lands, and many people in the cities and in zones of colonization also self-identify as indigenous. The literature on the TIPNIS controversy initially, at least, tended to pose lowland peoples against the coca growers, characterizing the TIPNIS communities as authentically indigenous (but see McNeish 2013 and Laing 2015).

Yet García Linera matches this essentialist regional dichotomy with his own dualisms. For García Linera, historically poised against the reactionary “arch of power” in the Amazon is the plurinational state, whose foundation is the “syndical capture of state power” (2012b: 9). “In the Amazon, it is not the indigenous peoples who have taken control of territorial power, as occurred years ago in the highlands and valleys, where agrarian unions and communities performed the role of indigenous micro-states with a territorial presence, and in reality were the material foundation for the construction of the present plurinational state,” García Linera argues (25). In contrast to the virtuous highlanders, he portrays the oppressed lowland indigenous people as the passive victims of patrimonial-hacienda power (internal capitalist accumulation), on the one hand, and foreign corporations (external capitalist accumulation), on the other. Without any apparent agency to defend their lands or their livelihoods, he suggests, they can only be saved by the state. Thus, García Linera assumes that all indigenous demands must be subsumed to the state and to the hegemony of its integral capitalist development model.

García Linera sees the highway as the crucial means of wresting control of the Amazon from foreign powers by extending the sovereign reach of the state: “OUR State . . . the Amazon is ours, it belongs to Bolivians, not to North Americans or Europeans, nor to the companies or NGOs that claim to be ‘teaching us to protect it’” (66). Declaring that the Bolivian state will take sole responsibility for protecting Mother Earth, he asserts: “We will never accept the principle of shared sovereignty in any piece of Bolivian territory. Whoever at this point is opposed to the presence of the state in the Amazon is in fact defending the presence in it of the United States. There is no in-between position” (ibid.). Apparently, state will not share the Amazon even with the indigenous peoples who live there.

Finally, García Linera argues against anti-capitalist critiques of natural resource extractivism. Rehearsing an argument he made previously in a widely debated

Le Monde article (2012a), he insists that extractivism is not the fundamental issue for the transformation from capitalism to socialism. Critics confuse a technical system with mode of production, he says. The capitalist mode of production is rather a fundamentally political problem of “planetary geopolitical dimension” beyond the scope of one country. Thus, for him, only worldwide communism can overturn this mode of production (104). Rather, as a technical form, extractivism can be “a point of departure” for overcoming capitalism (107). He argues that critiques that “fill the mouth with injuries against extractivism” (ibid.) miss the point that it is a material means to generate wealth and distribute it with justice, in order to satisfy the basic and “urgent necessities of the population” (110). For García Linera, the current task is to fulfill these basic necessities, part of a much longer historical process that is now understood as decolonization.

Critics point to other reasons for the government’s position. The coca growers of the Chapare were anxious to expand their land base, and TIPNIS offered them an opportunity to gain more land without having to invade the agribusinesses of the Santa Cruz oligarchs or those lands already colonized by other highland migrants. The cocaleros have already invaded the southern part of TIPNIS, and many of the lowland indigenous residents have been incorporated into the coca-growing business as low-paid labor (J. Webber 2012). Clearly, the Morales government was responding to this important constituency, which has been actively advocating for the road, in part because it will make it easier to sell their coca, but also because it will make more forest land available for farming (Paz 2012). So, it is important to recognize that there are conflicting interests among different sectors and classes of indigenous and rural peoples in the area (Frantz 2011; J. Webber 2012; McNeish 2013). Critics also worry that the road will enable illegal narco-trafficking and logging, further benefiting the rich, and by extension the state, through channels of corruption (J. Webber 2012). The possibility of there being large reserves of hydrocarbons within TIPNIS also emerged. The minister of hydrocarbons admitted this possibility during the crisis, and gas concessions in the area have already been allotted to two companies (Prada Alcoreza 2011; Paz 2012). The bottom line for the MAS government, however, is that this highway will allow for increased state sovereignty over the Amazon, as García Linera made clear in his 2012 manifesto (2012b).

The TIPNIS conflict once again brought the relation between indigeneity and development into the public arena, but with a different and ironic twist. This time, it was an indigenous president who raised the “Indian Question,” suggesting that the TIPNIS indigenous communities were acting as obstacles to national development. Here we see what Morales’s claim to head “the indigenous state” allowed him to do. Having taken the mantle of emancipatory politics, fighting for a new decolonized plurinational Bolivia, he felt entitled to define who is an acceptable decolonized subject, the *descolonizado permitido* we saw in the description of the collective marriage in chapter 3. Morales used the classic strategy of labeling one

set of indigenous peoples as “good Indians” and others as “bad Indians” (see Hale 2002). In his many public performances, Morales frequently used the symbol of the highland Aymara or Quechua as those pushing forward a modern development agenda, and Túpac Katari and other highland anti-colonial leaders have become icons of this new, modern progressive nation. A communications satellite dubbed Túpac Katari 1 was built and launched in 2013 by China on behalf of the government of Bolivia, which has also named airplanes in the military airline after Katari and other revolutionary leaders (see Tórrez Rubín de Celis and Arce 2014: 123). A widely distributed poster inaugurating the satellite has the now familiar pairing of Morales and Katari’s faces, along with the words attributed to Katari at his death, “Volveré y seré millones” (I will return and be millions). With this satellite, the Bolivian state promises to go beyond the nation-state to “decolonize space” (124).

Probably the culmination of this symbolic pairing was the spectacular screening in 2012 of the film *Insurgentes* (Insurgents), a state-funded movie tracing indigenous and popular rebellions from the colonial period through the republican era to the gas and water wars of the early 2000s, and ending in the election of Morales. Just as the second TIPNIS march ended, somewhat defeated, and its leaders headed back to their communities to regroup, the grand opening of the film took place in La Paz. President Morales and Vice President García Linera walked down a red carpet to meet the famed Bolivian director Javier Sanjinés. In its montage style, the various insurrections across Bolivia’s history become continuous, leading naturally to Morales’s triumph (see Tórrez Rubín de Celis and Arce 2014: 157).

If these performances of the virtuous and heroic Andean past promised a new Andean modernity, this was in stark contrast to the ways the TIPNIS protestors were represented as living in the past and resisting progress. For instance, the MAS militant and national peasant union leader Roberto Coraite suggested that the TIPNIS protesters should choose between the road, which would bring them trade and development, or else “stay in clandestinity, as indigents, remaining as savages” (*La Prensa* 2011a). Of course, this obscures the fact that many of the protesters were not opposed to the construction of the road, but to the fact that they had not been consulted about its placement or possible environmental consequences. Arguing that the road would bring the benefits of modernity, like health care and education, to the TIPNIS communities, as well as access to the market for their products, Morales flatly discounted their desires to protect their territories. When the communities refused to back down, government ministers accused CIDOB of taking money from USAID or being puppets for external NGOs (Achtenberg 2011a, 2011b). Here we see the government reprising classic racist tropes of earlier governments, claiming indigenous people were childlike or too easily manipulated to be full citizens. Like the early modernizing states, the MAS government argued

that the best solution to the “Indian Question” was for these unruly Indians to submit to the larger good of national development.

Yet it is not only the government that is returning to discourses about indigeneity to defend its position. Lowland indigenous people I spoke to during the march felt the government’s actions represented a horrifying reappearance of colonialism and a terrible betrayal of Morales’s claims to defend indigenous peoples. Critics characterized the government’s actions as “internal colonialism” and decried its cynical efforts to demean the movement (see Contreras Baspineiro 2012). Across the country, indigenous people and intellectuals questioned Morales’s commitment to indigenous autonomy and even his identity as indigenous. Rafael Quispe, a prominent Aymara leader, suggested that in its dealings with the TIPNIS protesters, “the government has revealed its true identity. The indigenous mask has fallen off, and its neoliberal face is revealed” (cited in Orellana Candia, 2011).

These responses make clear that, for these indigenous citizens at least, the MAS government’s efforts to make indigenous people visible has not been sufficient for emancipation or for a real lived sense of decolonization. The recount carried out by the Constituent Assembly was significant, but it appears to have only opened the door to contestation, and has not fully reconstituted a Bolivian society where there is a consensus about indigeneity. One possible lesson is that politics is not made through definitive revolutions, but rather through reiterative disagreements (see Arditi 2007). The TIPNIS case sparked ongoing contestation, inasmuch as the dispute illuminated the limited ability—or willingness—of the plurinational state to enact the promises it had made about representing and protecting indigenous peoples and their lands and customs.

Indigenous groups and their allies also resorted to classic tropes of indigeneity to support their cause, this time claiming to represent the “good Indians” bravely resisting the state and defending the environment. If Morales was not “really indigenous,” the TIPNIS protesters claimed they were. Fabricant and I have described how, throughout the controversy, the interests of indigenous protesters were represented in the media, and especially by environmentalist allies, as linked to the viability of the Amazonian forest (Fabricant and Postero, forthcoming). This association between indigenous peoples and nature reinforces the trope of the virtuous eco-Indian, and also works to link indigenous interests with the larger concerns for the environment and global climate. As the battle over TIPNIS raged, images of beautiful and vulnerable nature abounded in the massive poster production online and on the walls across the country. One iconic image was a poster that read: “Is this really progress? Let’s save TIPNIS.” The image shows the lush Amazon forest, with verdant trees and a brilliant blue sky, cut through by a highway. A huge leopard lies dead in the foreground, run over by an SUV. Here nature, as represented by the tragic leopard, also stands in for the indigenous people of TIPNIS. The body

of the lowland Indian and Mother Earth are semiotically linked, tugging on the heartstrings of the audience.

But it was the seemingly racist and violent aspect of the administration's dealing with the TIPNIS case that really shocked people, both in Bolivia and abroad. As I have mentioned, the Defensor del Pueblo's 2011 report determined that the military attack at Chaparina violated human rights in numerous ways, including racist epithets the police used in the attack and violent acts against the women and children on the march (Defensor del Pueblo 2011). If there was any question about colonial politics resurfacing, Morales made things crystal clear when he suggested to his supporters, the coca growers, that they should go out and seduce local indigenous TIPNIS women to garner their support for the road (Erbol 2011). A congresswoman from the Left–Center Movimiento sin Miedo (MSM; Movement without Fear) party, Marcela Revollo, summed up the feelings of repugnance Morales's comment had produced across the country: "Oh, the cost of hurting and humiliating the bodies of these women, the indigenous of TIPNIS. . . . That is an act that is profoundly patriarchal, sexist, and colonial. That is how the Spanish colony entered the American territories, raping and damaging to conquer the territory" (ibid.).

Revollo's comment makes an important point: once again, indigenous people are paying the costs for capitalist development. The TIPNIS affair provides an eerie repetition of previous epochs of state sacrifice of indigenous peoples' territories in the name of progress, as the geographies of exploitation continue regardless of who leads the state. While the MAS state faces the complex tensions described above and must represent a spectrum of indigenous and non-indigenous constituents, in the end, its entanglement with global capitalism appears to enable, if not justify, a renewed sacrifice of indigenous communities, along with a renewed racist discourse.

THE WOUNDED INDIAN BODY

If, in his efforts to push through a highway to support international trade, Morales utilized classic racist tropes of the Indian, the right-wing opposition's reaction to the TIPNIS struggle was little better. First, it is important to note that by the time of the TIPNIS proposal, the civic committees in the eastern lowlands had lost most of their real power. During the Constituent Assembly in 2006 and 2007, they were able to mount a strong opposition platform and nearly brought the Assembly to a standstill. At home, they were able to convoke huge public demonstrations in the streets pushing for departmental autonomy and increased shares of revenues from the hydrocarbon industries. At that apex, the Santa Cruz Civic Committee held a public meeting attended by a million flag-waving protestors. The civic committees were backed by the agribusiness sector, which feared Morales's anti-neoliberal

rhetoric meant the end of their successful export business.³ But, after a violent takeover of public buildings in what was called a “prefectural coup” in 2008 and then a bloody massacre of MAS supporters in the northeastern department of Pando the same year, the political fortunes of the lowland elites began to diminish. Their opposition lost further force after the passage of the new constitution, which instituted a form of departmental autonomy. Although lowland leaders complained that the new political structure does not give them enough local power (for instance, departments do not have authority to raise taxes), the substance of their demands was met. The department of Santa Cruz is now an autonomous region, which has its own governor, elected by its people, and a new autonomy statute, passed in 2015. Two further blows decimated the *Comite Cívico*’s opposition to the MAS. First, Morales negotiated a deal with agribusiness leaders, encouraging them to continue production without fear of nationalization or export bans. In essence, he realized how important the business sector was for food sovereignty as well as national income. This agreement left the civic committees without their financial backers, so their protests began to look like toothless bluffing. Then, government agents uncovered a conspiracy to assassinate President Morales and traced the funding back to several prominent lowland leaders. This tainted the entire civic committee with the possibility of terrorism, and many fled to other countries to avoid prosecution.

In this weakened state, the civic committee was forced to push its agenda through different means. *Camba* leaders presented themselves as the victims of an authoritarian government set on destroying them through illegal and immoral acts. Fabricant and I examined how *camba* activists framed their cause in human rights terms, arguing that their political leaders were persecuted and exiled. They emphasized their victimhood by using social protests of the kind most often used by those with few political options, like hunger strikes and posters of “disappeared” leaders (Fabricant and Postero 2013). While these acts garnered them little sympathy from the highlands or at the national level, they acted, as such forms of political protest often do, to foment solidarity among their followers.

The TIPNIS situation offered them a way to expand this strategy. When the 2012 TIPNIS march ended in defeat and CIDOB was taken over, CIDOB’s leaders returned to Santa Cruz to the open arms of the civic committee. A TIPNIS/CIDOB encampment in the main plaza with placards decrying government abuse echoed the *camba*’s messages of political persecution across the plaza. The civic committee held press conferences defending the TIPNIS protesters, drawing similarities between the highland migrants to Santa Cruz, who have colonized the rural zones, and the highland coca growers who were ready to invade TIPNIS. Many in Bolivia argued that the *camba* elites were cynically utilizing the indigenous to advance their own interests. While it is clear that the *cívicos* were trying to breathe new life into their badly damaged movement with this alliance with the TIPNIS activists,

what I draw attention to here is the way they used a particular representation of indigenous people to do so. Like the MAS government, the opposition used racial politics to bring political pressure to bear. And, like the government, the Right was rewriting history and geography to create a new identity and a new place in Bolivian society. Ironically, they use an old trope of powerless and wounded Indians to write themselves into a new role: the protector of Indians.

This was obvious at an August 2012 political rally in Santa Cruz put on by the civic committee that Fabricant and I attended. Thousands of people dressed in the green and white colors of the Santa Cruz flag jammed the city's largest soccer stadium. At the height of the assembly, *camba* leaders introduced a young indigenous leader from the TIPNIS rebellious communities. Reminding the audience of the violent attacks on indigenous marchers and all the sacrifices they had made during the 2011 march, he called upon the *camba* public to join the marchers' struggle for justice and human rights. The crowd, many wearing "Defend TIPNIS" T-shirts, roared their approval. Using symbols evoking indigeneity and democracy, the civic leaders created a "representational field" where two bodies—the indigenous (symbolically wounded by the highway crossing their community and physically wounded in the Chaparina attack), and the mestizo *campesinos* (symbolically wounded by being marginalized and persecuted by the nation-state)—are linked and condensed into one single struggle against a state that violates human rights. By doing so, this alliance legitimates the struggles of the *camba* elites because it associates them with the sacrifice and wounded bodies of the indigenous marchers (Fabricant and Postero 2014; Jones 2009).

This surprising strategic political alliance also revealed the highly racialized power relations upon which it was erected. At this rally and across the city that summer, Fabricant and I heard *campesinos* supporting the TIPNIS protestors using sadly familiar paternalistic and colonial tropes. At the CIDOB vigil in the plaza, passersby gazed at posters of women and children marching in the cold mud of the Andes. They often expressed their admiration for these sacrifices necessary to protect their traditional way of life in the forest. "Sadly," one woman said, "when they enter civilization, that is when their degradation begins." Another said "we have to defend them, they are ours. . . . If we let them, they [the *cocaleros*] will overcome them." Here we see how the sacrificed bodies of the TIPNIS indigenous people open the space so the *camba* elite can play the role of benefactor and protector of the indigenous, who are evoked as childlike and backward. Using a human rights framework, they re-represent themselves as allies in victimhood. This is truly ironic, given how the lowland elite historically exploited indigenous labor in the haciendas and sugarcane plantations, often using violence to discipline the workers. But this truth is obscured by their newfound kinship with the "good Indians" who—like the *campesinos*—are victims sacrificed to the MAS agenda.

Here, once again, we see how enduring colonial and racist images of the Indian emerge as a tool for contesting larger political and economic battles. Yet these tropes produce new positions for those who use them in this period of transition. The *camba* elite, shaken from its position of privilege by the reordering undertaken by the MAS government, responded to the unfamiliar world by a “phantasmagorical” rewriting of history and re-remembering of the geographies of oppression (Pred 2000). The Bolivian Right in this plurinational period projected a reality in which others (the MAS state) were the racists and they were the upholders of law and democracy. Yet this “would-be” re-representation was belied by the situated practices of racism that escaped the rhetoric.

THE OPEN QUESTION OF RACE

This chapter has explored the ways in which the remarkable transformations in Bolivia since Morales’s election have shattered traditional structures of political power, restructured economic models, and challenged cultural constructs. In the “process of change,” as the MAS calls its agenda, everyday notions of belonging were up-ended, as new geographies of power produced new subjects and meanings. With a new indigenous president and a new constitution enacting new valuations of indigeneity, the fields of force radically changed. Yet old imaginaries and meanings of indigenous people haunted this period of change. As the decolonization process shook up the old order of things, actors on all sides of the “Indian Question” attempted to rewrite the narrative, using bits and pieces of the past, combined with new discourses of indigenous and human rights to suit their present agendas.

What does this tell us about the decolonization and the indigenous state? The Bolivian case I have described shows how diverse actors used a politics marked by disagreement to restructure notions of indigeneity and to produce decolonization. In this long-awaited revolution, however, historical continuity appeared just as salient as disjuncture. In plurinational Bolivia, so far, colonial relations of race have been reconfigured as indigenous people take power, but they have not disappeared—even though erasing them is the proclaimed central goal of the indigenous state. While it is clear that the MAS reforms are in fact making significant improvements to Bolivian society, I suggest the TIPNIS controversy demonstrates a troubling continuity: from the colonial period to the current moment, the extractivist development model continues to be structured around exploitation of indigenous bodies and lands. It is precisely in a moment of supposed “restructuring” of this model that the situated practices of racism in place since colonial times reemerge in both traditional and new forms. This result has important implications for the potential and long-term success of the emancipatory politics of the

MAS. If, despite demanding and, in fact, carrying out a constitutional “recount” of the previous orderings of society to make indigenous peoples and their cultures visible, the state is not able to put that recount into practice in a meaningful way, we must ask whether this politics is successful. Rancière (1999) makes clear that in his vision, emancipatory politics does not always produce a reordering, but does make visible the wrongful (or scandalous) order and those previously excluded from it. It produces a space for new political subjects to disagree with that order. If we take this definition, we might say the MAS process of decolonization has been successful. The contestations we see in this chapter make clear, however, that because the state is so deeply committed to continuing the long-term extractivist models of development that produced and maintained that racist order, the plurinational state has not yet been able to create a new order. In fact, we might argue that it serves to police the existing order. Yet prying open the uncomfortable question of race in contemporary Bolivia reveals that it is a site of continued reworking and reiterative disagreements, where actors are constantly making new aspects of racism visible and challenging them.

From Indigeneity to Economic Liberation

In July 2015, Pope Francis visited Bolivia. During his three-day stay, he repeated the message of his pastoral encyclical calling for a new global ecological ethic linking care for the earth—“our common home”—with care for the poor (Vatican 2015). Observers expected his message would have important echoes with Bolivia’s indigenous president, Evo Morales, who has achieved international attention for his left-leaning economic policies, his advocacy for Bolivia’s majority indigenous population, and his activism about global climate change. As I have described in previous chapters, since Morales’s election, Bolivia has become a site of global inspiration for the Left. Bolivia’s new 2009 constitution, with its revolutionary focus on decolonization and *vivir bien*, or living well, has sparked the imagination of people across the world.

That spark was tangible at the Global Meeting of Social Movements in the lowland city of Santa Cruz, Bolivia. I joined thousands of delegates from across Latin America who came together to greet the pope and to discuss the Vatican’s broad themes for social change: Madre Tierra, Techo, y Trabajo (Mother Earth, Housing, and Work). As the tropical rains pounded on the roof of the coliseum, people waved colorful banners from across the region illustrating the agendas of their groups. The participants gave rousing speeches about the efforts of social movements to end poverty and defend their lands against the depredations of transnational corporations. “We are one single river,” declared an indigenous woman from Canada, “oppressed, colonized, and tortured.” Over and over the speakers cried: “We are fighting one common enemy: global capitalism!!!”

President Morales gave the final speech of the afternoon. Standing against a background of huge posters of global peacemakers, like Mahatma Gandhi, Nelson

Mandela, and Bolivia's Domitila Barrios de Chungara,¹ Morales waved to the cheering crowd. "We coincide strongly with the pope on political and social economy," he said. "What can we do with capitalist system? The work now, with the Catholic Church and other churches, is to think about natural resources and basic services. There is plenty of money, it is just badly distributed." Describing Bolivia's "rich experience" with nationalizing its natural gas resources, he explained that Bolivia now has huge national reserves, and as a result, its GDP has tripled. "How the economic system has improved here!" he cried. "This is the result of the struggles of popular movements. And now we are working for economic, political, and technological liberation. ¡Viva Bolivia, Jallalla! Papa Francisco!"

Morales's speech is notable as much for what it leaves out as what it includes. In contrast to the speeches from his early years that I have described in previous chapters, where he argued that indigenous values would save Mother Earth, here he focuses on economic development as the solution to Bolivia's—and by extension the world's—problems. "Economic liberation" is a new euphemism for what scholars call "progressive extractivism" (Gudynas 2010): a national development model based on the extraction and exportation of natural resources on the global market, paired with redistribution of profits to the poor. I argue here that this has become a powerful new consensus in plurinational Bolivia, building on and, in part, replacing previous "revolutionary" discourses of indigeneity, decolonization, and global climate change. In this chapter, I show how indigeneity, once considered the site of ontological alternatives to capitalism, is now rearticulated to global capitalism under a new rubric of economic liberation.

What does this shift mean for indigenous communities? What do decolonization and plurinationalism mean to political activists at the local level, given this shifting terrain? To what extent does indigeneity still serve as a site of politics in the Rancièrian sense after ten years of the MAS state? I examine these questions from the vantage points of three communities: a marginal Aymara neighborhood in the highland city of El Alto, where residents are aiming for middle-class status in the booming economy; and two urban Guaraní communities in lowland Santa Cruz, where struggles over jobs and environmental justice appear to be taking precedence over indigenous identity. In these very differently situated communities, local actors have very different answers to these questions, depending upon their ethnic identification, their economic situations, and their relations to land and markets. In some of the communities I describe, community members hold tightly to their identities as indigenous and continue to make claims on the state to ensure their rights to territory and local self-government. In others, especially the urban communities, ethnic identities appear to be giving way, at least, in some contexts, to larger questions of development and economic well-being.

THE NEW DEVELOPMENTALISM

There is little doubt that a conjuncture of forces in the 1990s led to important forms of resistance across the country and created the political space for the formulation of revolutionary alternatives. Many scholars hoped that Bolivia would lead the world into a post-neoliberal moment (see Escobar 2010). Far from being a post-neoliberal or post-capitalist reality, however, what we see in Bolivia today is a new form of developmentalism based on resource extractivism, industrialization, and commercial agriculture—precisely what the new plurinational Bolivia was supposed to transform. During the TIPNIS controversy, the MAS government adopted a compelling discourse linking economic development and decolonization. In 2011, the government's approach to the protests, and especially its violent attack on the marchers, were roundly rebuked by the Bolivian public. But Bolivians paid little attention to the 2012 march, even when military police aimed water cannons at women marchers in La Paz. What had changed? During the intervening year, the government began a powerful campaign painting the TIPNIS protesters as backward savages who were creating obstacles to national development. As we saw in chapter 5, Vice President Álvaro García Linera's book *Geopolítica de la Amazonía* (García Linera 2012b) articulated the ways in which lowland peoples have been exploited by transnational corporations and lowland elites, contending that the MAS development model would reclaim control of the region and use its resources to redistribute wealth to the poorest people. This ideological argument was bolstered by showcase public works and co-optation of opposition. In many indigenous communities in the TIPNIS region, the government distributed goods and services, including schoolbooks, outboard motors, and foodstuffs. In the highly contested consultation process carried out by the government over the following year, TIPNIS community members were asked, not if they wanted the highway, but if they wanted development. Unsurprisingly, a majority of those who participated said yes.

In July 2015, I visited one of the most visible spokespeople for the 2011 TIPNIS march, Justa Cabrera, a Guaraní woman in her fifties. Doña Justa lives in a small community on the periphery of Santa Cruz. I have known her for almost twenty years, since my first years of fieldwork with the Capitanía Zona Cruz, the Guaraní organization bringing together over twenty communities of Guaranís who migrated to the urban zone in the 1970s. When I first met her in 1996, she was the leader of her small community, and the director of land and territory issues for the Capitanía. Her husband was a member of the Equipo Técnico Zonal, a group of young Guaranís who served as technical advisers to the organization's leader. I documented the work of the Equipo and the Capitanía in my first book (Postero 2007a) and have stayed in touch with them and with Justa over the intervening years. She served in a number of roles in the regional and national indigenous

movement, always as an outspoken militant for indigenous causes. By 2010, Justa was president of the national indigenous women's organization, CENAMIB, which had its office in the compound of CIDOB, the national indigenous organization. I checked in with her every few years when I returned to Santa Cruz, visiting her at her office and hearing about the work she was doing to advance women's rights. She worked with European NGOs, local Church groups, and the national government to find funding for workshops and development projects. She had also traveled widely and was invited to international workshops and conferences. When the TIPNIS struggle began, Justa participated by gathering funds to keep the marchers fed. She gained national and international attention speaking to media about the suffering women marchers and their children endured. She bitterly opposed not only the TIPNIS highway but the MAS government. In a newspaper interview, she said that Evo Morales had become a *capataz*, an overseer for the transnational corporations, linking him to the evils of past forced labor systems that had enslaved her people (*La Cl@se* 2011). As described in chapter 5, the second TIPNIS march came to a disastrous end, and with little support, the marchers returned to Santa Cruz to regroup. In 2012, I met with Justa in the city's central plaza, where the CIDOB leaders had pitched tents to make their plight known to the public. Their headquarters had been taken over by MAS supporters, and their struggle appeared at an end. Justa was distraught, and told me about her own harrowing experiences during the takeover, when the "intruders" pushed her to the ground and pulled her hair.

Now, three years later, she and her husband Gregorio are firm supporters of the MAS. As we walked through their quiet village, past the traditional mud and thatch homes under shady trees, she pointed out an open lot. "Here is where the government has promised to build a new coliseum," she said, "and here the new school building." Justa explains how President Evo called her to a private meeting in La Paz the year before, and asked her to support his government. In exchange, he offered her a housing project of one hundred new homes for two of the villages in her area and promised to buy land for five hundred more homes for families without land. Then, in a dazzling show for the media, Evo himself appeared in her village, flying in on a helicopter to make these promises public. In exchange, she declared herself a supporter of the MAS and the president in his 2014 reelection bid.

Naturally, she has been the subject of enormous critique and speculation as a result. This, say many Guaraní, is just how Evo does it: he buys off the vocal leaders, silencing them with *obras* (public works). "This is *egoismo* [egotism, or selfishness]," they say, using a term that in Spanish criticizes those who act in their own interests rather than those of the larger community, implying also that the person is corrupt, receiving personal benefits or bribes. "They have divided us, and this is the mechanism," said one Guaraní friend. Used this way, the term *egoismo* both serves to "out" individuals who do not act within the broader logic of the collective

and shows envy of individuals who are skillful at negotiating the clientelist logic of the new developmental state. Justa and Gregorio have another, very different perspective, and they explained their pragmatic decision to work with the MAS thus:

After the [2012] march, and the [2014] elections [in which Morales was reelected], we analyzed the situation and said: Do we continue to confront them? Do we just keep marching? No, we need a new process, because to confront them now will take another twenty years. We decided instead to enter the government. The other option was to keep marching, with all our organizations divided. . . . Of course, once inside the MAS government, there are still a lot of fights, many interests. But who has more capacity to fight corruption? Them or us? So we say: Who is the *dueño* [owner] of this process of change? Who marched? We have spent twenty years working for these opportunities, like those coming from the nationalization of the natural resources. Why hasn't [the benefit of] all that arrived here for us?

Justa and Gregorio are not alone. All across the country, former opponents of the MAS “han subido al tren” (have gotten on the train), voting for and working with the MAS in order to channel funds to their communities. And throughout the country, there is tangible evidence of these public works: shiny school buildings, sports complexes, potable water systems, and modular *viviendas* (private family houses). Signs with Morales’s face frame these works as proof of the process of change at work. *Evo Cumple*, the signs say: Evo fulfills. As the rest of this chapter makes clear, I am not criticizing these pragmatic decisions. Most of the people I interviewed are happy that the government is funding these important local projects. Rather, my goal here is to point out the way the government’s policies and practices have created a new sphere for local organizing—one that focuses on infrastructure, development, and reaping the benefits of natural resource extraction instead of decolonization and indigenous rights.

For the government, the focus on redistribution of profits from extraction has meant wide popular approval: Morales won his third election in 2014, with 60 percent of the vote, (although he did not win a referendum to change the constitution to allow him to run for president again). This popularity allowed the government to formulate a new national development plan, called the *Agenda Patriótica 2025* (Patriotic Agenda for 2025) (Bolivia 2013). In it, the government describes how it hopes to make Bolivia a “sovereign and dignified” country. Its agenda is based on thirteen pillars, starting with eradicating poverty, providing basic services, and making sure that all Bolivians have health care, education, and sports facilities. The plan calls for a diversified economy to make this possible. Mining and hydrocarbons will continue to figure largely in the picture, and the country will continue to move towards nationalization, industrialization, and commercialization of these strategic resources. But Bolivia will move beyond the “colonial dependence” on these sectors to develop important new sources of income. First, it will become

a major exporter of energy, drawing on its hydroelectric potential as well as its renewable energy capacities. Second, it will become a producer and exporter of food products, converting artisanal farming into mechanized, irrigated, and technologically advanced systems. This is part of a larger push for “food sovereignty,” aimed at ensuring Bolivians’ food security by means of a massive industrialization of the production of food and the exploitation of forest products and other natural resources (*ibid.*).

The plan continues to frame the country’s overall goals in terms of *vivir bien*, and protection of the Madre Tierra, but analysts argue this is really window dressing for a modernist capitalist development project based on continued natural resource extraction and a radical expansion of the agricultural frontier. Alcides Pinto Vadilla of Fundación Tierra, a Bolivian NGO focused on agrarian policies, points out that the plan links Bolivian producers ever more to the global market and to commodity prices established globally (personal communication, July 27, 2015). Moreover, critics fear these plans have dangerous implications for the environment and climate change. For example, in 2014, Morales declared that by 2025, the country should increase the number of hectares in production from the current level of 3.5 million hectares to 10 million (*El Diario* 2014; Urioste 2015). To accomplish this, the government has recently agreed that people can deforest up to twenty hectares without any permission from the Forest Ministry as long as they use the land to produce food. This is a radical departure from previous regulations, and promises a rapid deforestation of fragile Amazonian lands. Perhaps more shocking, in 2015, the government passed a decree authorizing oil exploration within Protected Areas (like national parks and nature preserves) and indigenous territories (*La Razón* 2015). Morales also declared that prior consultation with indigenous people was unnecessary and a “waste of time” (Erbol 2015).

These changes belie much of the language and revolutionary character of the new constitution, yet there has been very little opposition to them. This is the result of meeting the interests of some sectors and silencing of others. The *campesino* (peasant farmer) sector is broadly supportive of this developmentalist agenda. Indigenous Andean peasants tend to have small plots of land, and they produce for both national and international markets. They are linked to urban centers through kinship-based commercial networks. The coca-growing sector in the tropics and temperate Yungas areas and the large migrant farming population in the eastern lowlands are also dependent on marketing their products and support new government investments in highways linking their zones to larger centers. (Their support for the proposed TIPNIS highway was illustrative of their interests.) All these producers welcome the renewed focus on agricultural production and benefit from government gas price subsidies and credit programs. As Alessandra Pellegrini Calderón (2016) points out in her new work on Yungueño coca growers, these rural farmers are an “emerging peasant middle class with increasingly entrepreneurial,

market-based activities in both production and commerce.” Rather than seeing themselves as indigenous peoples, they situate themselves as both peasants and as a socially upward moving group (2016: 149).

Urban indigenous peoples also appear to benefit in both indirect and direct ways. As described above, the economy has grown enormously as a result of the nationalization of the hydrocarbon sector, and the redistribution of the government’s share of royalties and gas rents has been invested at the local and departmental (state) level across the country. The large emphasis on public works means growth in the construction industry and growing indigenous employment in the municipal and departmental governments. As Nico Tassi and his collaborators have shown, this has also led to a booming import and export business linking Bolivia to Brazil, Chile, and China, producing a new sector: the Aymara global merchant (Tassi et al. 2013). For many urban residents, the hope of economic prosperity appears to drive political support for Morales.

Even the lowlands elites have seemed content in recent years. In the initial years of the MAS administration, mestizo elites and commercial farmers in the lowland region felt threatened by the MAS economic agenda to radically redistribute lands and natural resource revenues to the poor (Fabricant and Postero 2013). Their opposition to the MAS was especially salient during the Constituent Assembly, when they organized massive public protests across the country and even a “prefectural coup” to push for departmental autonomy. Many of their demands lost force, however, after the passage of the new constitution, which instituted a form of both indigenous and departmental autonomy. But most important, by 2012, the government had made an economic pact with this sector, ensuring the ability of regional agribusinesses to continue to grow. Morales hopes that Bolivia will soon become a regional leader in soy production, further contributing to the booming lowland economy. This is a goal that lowland elites share.

While many critics see this new developmentalism as a betrayal of the promises of an indigenous alternative, others see it as an inevitable result of class interests. Alcides Pinto Vadilla of Fundación Tierra puts it this way:

Many see Evo as a traitor. I don’t see him that way. I see him as who he is, a leader of a campesino union. Where did we get the idea that the campesinos were revolutionary? They are allied with capitalism when the economy is good, and revolutionary when it is not. So Evo is just serving their interests. His proposals are to help his sector, they are not transformative . . . [The MAS has] generated a new mechanism for accumulating wealth for their followers. They have made a pact with the lowland productive sectors, but they have not allowed them to govern. They let them [the rich lowland business sector] do their business, but they say, don’t tell us how to spend the resources.

This pact with the business sector, then, allows money to flow, keeps the former opposition happy, and promotes a strong, market-based economy. In exchange

for almost complete control over the political institutions, the government keeps loosening environmental regulations, making extraction and commercial farming easier and more profitable.

But what about indigenous people in the lowlands? While many lowland indigenous people also live in urban or peri-urban communities, a large proportion live in rural areas, relying on forms of production and subsistence requiring large areas of land. As noted in the Introduction, since the 1990s, lowland groups' traditional livelihood strategies have received state recognition and many have received collectively titled territories (although many demands are still in process). They have been at the forefront of political struggles for self-determination and autonomy, seeking to control their own lands according to their customs and culture. They were a central voice in the Pacto Unidad, the group of indigenous organizations that articulated much of the language of indigenous rights and *vivir bien* that makes the new constitution so revolutionary. Their demands have been consistently different from those of the campesino sector described above (Rivera Cusicanqui 2015). They have defended their territories, their forms of life, and their right to make decisions about development, consistently articulating a strong concern for the environment, and represented themselves as caretakers of the Earth. Thus, the current government policies of economic development based on extractivism and the expansion of the agricultural frontier are a substantial challenge for them and their abilities to move towards the forms of revolutionary political transformation the new constitution promised.

A crucial step in the Morales government's ability to push through its development plan was the silencing of critical voices from the lowlands. CIDOB, the lowlands indigenous organization, had been a central protagonist in the push for indigenous rights for nearly thirty years, and its leaders had organized and spearheaded the TIPNIS marches. I have described the post-TIPNIS takeover of CIDOB in chapter 5, giving eyewitness accounts of how a parallel organization took control of the CIDOB headquarters, backed by tear gas and government police. Its leader, Melva Hurtado, from the Beni region, made clear from the beginning that this new CIDOB supported "brother" Evo Morales, and that they just wanted to work for development in their communities (*La Jornada* 2012). In exchange, the new CIDOB received over a million dollars in funding from the MAS government. With it, they transformed the headquarters, building a modern four-story office complex with air-conditioning and apartments for the organization's leaders. They administered production projects in indigenous communities friendly to the government, providing tractors for improvement of pasture and wells for cattle and craft and textile projects for women. In her public appearances, Melva Hurtado faithfully echoed the lines from the government playbook. In August 2015, I traveled to the town of Guarayo, in the eastern part of the country to observe the Guarayo indigenous organization's twenty-eighth anniversary.

Melva was an honored guest at the ceremony. Speaking from the dais to the crowd of residents and visitors braving the suffocating tropical heat, she described the projects CIDOB had sponsored there. “We are here to work for the development of all,” she told the crowd. “We are searching for peace, for unity among indigenous brothers, and to construct the *patria grande* [the great country]. . . . *We have left politics behind; we are looking for development.* . . . We must work together to move forward, without *egoismo*, without divisions” (emphasis added).

Thus, one of the most important oppositional voices, CIDOB, is now firmly in the MAS camp. They did not utter any public protest to the 2015 decrees opening up indigenous territories and protected areas to exploration. To the contrary, when I asked CIDOB’s Environmental and Climate Change Officer, Rafael Álvarez, about that, he denied that the MAS government had any responsibility. “The government is not causing any damage; it is the foreigners, like the United States. Bolivia is the victim of climate change!” All that is left, he says, is adaptation to the damages, learning how to live with the environmental changes and moving forward. “What else can we do? The industrialized countries just go ahead [polluting] and we just keep conserving our forests. Should we just stay in poverty while everyone else lives well? No! We need development” (personal communication, July 28, 2015). But, like Melva, he too gave voice to the fears of egoism and corruption that circulate in tandem with this developmentalist discourse. A few months previously, leaders of the national indigenous fund, the Fondo Indígena, had been accused of diverting millions of dollars intended for local indigenous development projects. Álvarez denied any wrongdoing on the part of CIDOB, pointing instead to the supposed wrongdoings of the prior president, who had led the TIPNIS marches. Only a few months later, however, Melva Hurtado herself was jailed for improprieties as part of the Fondo Indígena scandal. That case is still pending as of this writing.

This leaves the other traditional voice of opposition, the NGOs. They, too, are under threat, as the government launched a campaign to discredit and silence them. In June 2015, Morales issued a statement that any NGOs that object to the government plans to explore for natural resources in forest reserves or indigenous territories would be subject to being thrown out of the country. He said that he would not allow NGOs who were the pawns of foreign interests to prejudice Bolivia’s interests. “We have the obligation to explore what we have in our territory. . . . Of course it is our obligation to take care of our environment, but we can’t be the park rangers for the industrialized countries” (Yunasby 2015). This created an enormous uproar among NGOs, and made many of them extremely nervous. Several told me privately they felt very vulnerable and unable to exercise what they saw as their role as civil society watchdogs. “Who can speak for the environment now?” one NGO worker asked. “They have co-opted the indigenous organizations and threatened us.”

Indigenous communities negotiate this new conjuncture from very different perspectives. In the rest of this chapter and in chapter 7, I turn to examples of local indigenous community responses. Of course, these communities cannot stand in for all indigenous people in Bolivia. Rather, they offer a view of the diversity of interests and strategies we see among local peoples. They also represent different lengths of fieldwork on my part. My description of the reactions of urban Aymara is the result of a few weeks of fieldwork in 2015, based mostly on interviews. While I have lived and worked in La Paz and El Alto off and on since 1995, I have not carried out long-term fieldwork in El Alto. Thus, the story I relate is descriptive, although it squares with longer-term data from other researchers and NGO workers. The case studies in the lowlands, on the other hand, are the result of many years of research and participant observation. I have been working in Bella Flor and El Futuro,³ neighboring Guaraní communities in peri-urban Santa Cruz, for twenty years, returning every year or two since 1995. My first book is based upon my research with the federation of Guaraní villages these two communities belong to, and I lived off and on in Bella Flor during 1997–99. I first visited Charagua, the subject of chapter 7, in 1997, accompanying Guaraní friends from Santa Cruz to an assembly of the national Guaraní federation, the *Asamblea del Pueblo Guaraní* (APG). Since 2010, I have carried out three periods of field research there, most recently in 2015, observing the autonomy process as it unfolded. My previous work with the Guaranís of Santa Cruz opened many doors for me in Charagua. Several of my closest Guaraní friends and informants from Bella Flor are, in fact, originally from Charagua, and I have been able to use their kin networks to establish connections. The fact that I wrote a book about Zona Cruz also makes a difference. It is a helpful entrée in most local communities. When I hand out copies of the Spanish translation of my book, people understand I have been collaborating with Guaranís for many years and are more likely to be willing to discuss their lives with me.

URBAN AYMARAS: “CON PLATA VIVIMOS”
(WITH MONEY, WE LIVE)

In July 2015, I visited the community of Rio Negro, an urban barrio on the outskirts of El Alto. I had previously met the community’s leader, Gonzalo León, to talk about how urban Aymara communities were experiencing Evo Morales’s “indigenous state.” Over the past few years, commentators and scholars had been describing the rise of a new indigenous middle class. The excellent work of Nico Tassi and his colleagues, for instance, has shown how Aymara merchants leveraged kin relations and Aymara logics of circulation to build enormous amounts of capital and create transnational circuits from Chile through Bolivia to China (Tassi et al. 2013). This has allowed the new Aymara entrepreneurs to develop a



FIGURE 15. Middle-class neighborhoods in La Paz. Credit: Cliff Helles. <https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/3.0>.

distinctive form of conspicuous consumption that has been garnering international attention. For instance, the “Nuevo-Tiwanaku” style of the Aymara architect Freddy Mamani Silvestre’s multicolored *cholets* (a witty combination of *cholos*—urban Andean indigenous—and “chalets”), which have sprung up all over the city of El Alto (*La Nación* 2015), has been lauded by a portfolio in the *New Yorker* (Granser and Thurman, 2015). I was interested to learn if this new affluence and sense of prosperity are also felt in the marginal communities. What did decolonization and indigeneity mean in these contexts?

Gonzalo and I met in a coffee shop in downtown La Paz, introduced by a sociologist who had worked in his community for some time. Over the course of several hours, Gonzalo described his life trajectory and the struggles he and his neighbors have waged to build their community from a vacant field on the windy plains they took over in 2009 to the growing urban barrio it is today. Gonzalo’s trajectory was similar to those of many in his neighborhood, he said. He was born in the provinces, in the department of La Paz, and came to the city at the age of fifteen to find work. After his military service, he went to Argentina, where he worked for a decade in construction and clothing factories. He returned home with a little capital to try to build a life. He bought a minivan and began working as a chauffeur for tourists, as well as transporting merchandise from the country to the city. He

met his wife, also a migrant from the countryside, and together they found a small lot in Rio Negro. First, they put up a wall around their lot and built a tiny one-room house. Gradually, they built up their assets, buying several more minibuses, which he rented to family members. With loans from family and friends, Gonzalo then began importing cars from Chile. With profits from this business, he bought a larger truck, and his wife began a small store on their lot. First, she sold groceries, and then opened a second, adjoining store selling bricks and cement—a smart move in the rapidly growing neighborhood. On the weekends, they added onto their house, brick by brick and room by room. I asked if he considered himself to be middle-class now. Well, not yet, he said, but “I have a house and two stores, five kids all in school. I hope they will be educated. Soon, we will build a *salon de fiestas*, a venue for people to rent for parties. And my biggest hope is to gain a fixed job, as a chauffeur or in an office.”

Gonzalo’s answer raises the question of how to measure the middle class. Even though only 17 percent of Bolivians meet the World Bank’s criterion of earning at least \$10 per day, 53 percent consider themselves middle-class, according to a 2013 Informe Latinobarómetro survey (*Los Tiempos* 2013), and the figure is even higher in El Alto, where fully 70 percent see themselves as middle-class (World Bank 2013). As my discussion with Gonzalo makes clear, identifying as middle-class is a subjective call: “self-positioning in terms of class is not an absolute and objective measurement of a quantity of goods, but rather a relative measure of the position of each person in society. It has to do with the power that each person has to belong to a social group. The poor are not poor only because they are poor in goods, but poor in terms of power” (*Los Tiempos* 2013). In Bolivia, it is argued, the election of Morales to the presidency has given many people a sense of power they never had before, and this translates into a sense of economic well-being (*ibid.*). Is this so? Or is it the reverse?

Gonzalo made it clear that the money flowing from the government is the reason why many Alteños support Morales:

NGP: So what do you think about the discourse of Evo about decolonization? How about all the work at the Constituent Assembly, and the ideas of *vivir bien*, etc.?

G: Look, this has served the people, because the transnational companies had 80 percent of the gas money and the state only had 20 percent. So the Constituent Assembly changed all that, now it is 18 percent to the TNCs and the rest for the country. And this has generated a lot of money! . . . *Ha habido mucho recurso!* [There have been many resources!]

Here Gonzalo makes a common mistake, suggesting that it was the Constituent Assembly that nationalized the hydrocarbon sector. In fact, President Morales accomplished this through an executive decree. However, this mistake demonstrates a

larger “truth”: for most poor people, decolonization is not about colonial legacies or the rights of indigenous peoples, but rather the just distribution of the profits from national development. As I explained in previous chapters, the government has argued that its national development agenda based on extractivism and redistribution is, in fact, a form of decolonization. Gonzalo’s explanation appears to embrace that view. Yet he lamented the fact that these funds have been badly administered by the government and make for substantial corruption. He explained that government redistribution through public works has produced new kinds of patronage:

Evo has a hold on the social movements. It is through the popular organizations that he gets support. The leaders go meet with Evo, and he gives them *obras* (public works). . . . Evo has the power, and so they can say: Evo is going to come to give us this *obra*, so we all have to be there, and applaud. . . . So that makes it really hard for other political parties to compete. For example, the Coliseo Cerrado [the public coliseum in El Alto] cost two million bolivianos. Without nationalization we wouldn’t have had this. That is where the money comes from. So we all say thank you, Evo, and thanks to the nationalization of natural resources. And in the process, we are campaigning for Evo.

The next week, I met Gonzalo in his community. I made my way on the windy dirt lanes to the new sports complex, where the *junta vecinal* (JV; neighborhood association) was holding its weekly meeting. Nearly a hundred people sat on plastic chairs, bundled up in blankets, listening to debates about how to best push the city to bring plumbing out to the community. A constant stream of people approached the head table, bringing their monthly *cuotas*, or fees, and their house booklets to be stamped. Each household must send a representative to get the stamp and pay the two-boliviano (about 40 U.S. cents) fee, or be fined. The treasurer carried out a careful accounting with each resident. As the meeting wrapped up, I talked to a group of neighbors about how El Alto was changing.

Luis, a thin man in his fifties, shyly told me he and his family were part of the land takeover that had formed the community. They were there since this place was nothing but dirt and bushes. They put up a little tent to claim ownership of the land, and have been struggling ever since to get basic services like water, electricity, and sewage. An older man, Samuel, said: “We Aymara are very organized, as you can see. We all pay our *cuotas*, and if we have to, we protest.” Pointing to the sports complex, he said, “this center is the result of our protest, marches, and strikes. We fought for it.” But they all agreed with the signs I had seen throughout the city saying, “Nuestra Ciudad Está Cambiando” (Our city is changing). Luis explained: “Life is better in Bolivia now with Evo. Before, all our money was going out of the country to the USA and the transnationals. There was no money and no jobs.”

Samuel chimed in: “Yes, now there are jobs. We came here from the provinces to educate our kids. In the provinces, there were no schools, no jobs. And we like

to have fun just like you in the U.S.! . . . Before Evo, we couldn't get in to those jobs, to those schools. The elite saw us as black, only people like you, white, could go to schools. Now it is all the same, we are all equal. He has opened the doors to all this. And this is really important! Our kids can become professionals." So, I asked, are you all middle-class? José, a wiry man with his coat buttoned up to his nose, nodded enthusiastically. "Yes! Now I have lots of work, I have built a house here, and my three kids are in school. I expect them to be professionals and that is the point. That's why we came. There are now jobs and money, and that's why we support Evo. We have jobs."

This positive perspective echoed with what I had heard all over the city. From scholars to government officials to taxi drivers, people explained Morales's popularity as a result of the booming economy. One Aymara woman I interviewed in La Paz explained that the economy didn't benefit everyone equally, but things were better. Doña Patricia and her family own a jewelry store where they fabricate and sell the ornate gold-plated jewelry *cholas* wear for dress-up occasions like weddings and baptisms. She showed me the huge new synthetic gems that local wholesalers had imported from China. "It is the importers who are making all the money," she complained, "not us merchants." Her intuitions are reflected in the economic data: China is exporting large amounts of goods to Bolivia. Alejandra Saravia López and Adam Rua Quiroga (2015) show that Chinese imports (notably, mining machinery, motorcycles, cell phones, and herbicides) far outweigh Bolivian exports to China, resulting in a significant trade deficit (10). They argue this trend has consequences for manufacturers in Bolivia, as they are losing their sales position within both the national and international market. This "call[s] into question the survival of a large number of small and medium-sized enterprises" (10–11). Carlos Arze Vargas (2016) makes a compelling argument that the massive increase in imports from China, and the large proportion of people working in the informal market—the majority in sales of these imported goods—means that Bolivia is increasingly unable to sustain itself by producing its own food or consumer goods. Yet, as Patricia the jeweler shows, this has not kept people from supporting the president.

She lamented the corruption in the local *juntas vecinales*, where local leaders were skimming money off the new urban infrastructure projects. But she said, of course, she voted for Morales. "Who else???" she asked, as if that were beyond debate.

NGP: So the president talks about being indigenous . . . Do you identify as indigenous or Aymara?

P: We are Aymara, of course. *Indios somos, pero*. [Of course, we are Indians].

NGP: So when he talks about the new plurinational state, or descolonization, what does that mean to you? Or, what is decolonization?

A: Hmm, well, it means that things are different from before. [pause] But, what does it mean, then? Really, it is all politics.

NGP: Politics?

P: Yes, politics, you know, a matter for the political parties.

NGP: Doesn't it mean anything for you?

A: Well, no. I am not against the government, though.

NGP: Why?

A: *Pues, ha habido mucha plata* [There has been a lot of money].

NGP: You mean there is more money flowing now?

A: Yes. You know my mother and grandmother didn't ever know money. They didn't touch it, they lived on haciendas in the countryside. There was a lot of oppression then, no? But now, we have money, they have money. *Con plata vivimos* [With money, we live].

In Rio Negro, local leaders like Gonzalo have taken advantage of the new political and economic conjuncture to get the city to build the sports complex a few years ago, and now a new community nursery school is being built, with some foreign foundation funding and some support from the city. They took me to tour the construction project, displaying the new classrooms and kitchen. Later I spoke with Johnny Huanca, an Aymara migrant who runs a lumber mill and hardware store in the neighborhood. We sat in his store, surrounded by rolls of wire, PVC pipe, and buckets of screws, as he proudly recounted his trajectory. Like Gonzalo, he and his wife began with a small lot and a small artisanal lumber mill serving the neighbors. Now his business moves \$200,000 worth of lumber per month from the Beni region in the Amazonian lowlands to fuel the construction boom in El Alto. He has just finished building two additional floors above his businesses, adding three bedrooms, a living room, kitchen, and study.

NGP: So do you consider yourself middle-class?

JH: Yes. We have transformed ourselves from what our parents' lives were in the campo. But I still identify as Aymara. We have a house, stores, three kids in school. No car yet, but I want to get one soon to drive the kids around in.

NGP: Is this the result of the MAS? Do you support the MAS?

JH: Yes, but there is good and bad. The bad thing is that we have to pay a lot of taxes now. . . . The good is that thanks to Evo, our people are now working in offices, they use the internet—there are *cholitas* in *polleras* in government offices! This was never the case before. We weren't allowed to go up to those places. I remember as a kid with my grandmother hearing white people say, here come those *indios*. That never leaves you, it is inside you. But now it is different, Evo has opened the doors.

In Rio Negro, then, the most important effect of the “indigenous state” is that it has “opened the doors” of both political and economic opportunity to the Aymara and poor residents. With money flowing from the state to the city and through the social movements, people sense that the Morales government has benefited “the people” instead of transnational companies. While they all make clear they identify as Aymara, these residents’ sense of decolonization does not reflect a simple notion of indigenous rights or any notion of indigeneity being an alternative to capitalism. Rather, it echoes the government’s discourse of economic liberation: for them, liberation implies economic well-being and everyone getting an equal piece of the pie. They see themselves rising in class status and a brighter future for their children as professionals.

BELLA FLOR AND EL FUTURO: COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT STRUGGLES

Let us move now across the country, to the outskirts of the lowland capital of Santa Cruz, to the communities of Bella Flor and El Futuro. These barrios came into being in the 1960s, when Guaraní indigenous families moved to the region to work in the sugarcane harvest. Guaraní families moved from the Chaco region in the south to what was then open land some twenty kilometers outside the city of Santa Cruz, building three separate communities on a large parcel of 500 hectares. Through the agrarian reform, they received title to the parcel, and over the following years, more families settled there. When I did my fieldwork there in 1995–98, the three villages were organized as indigenous Guaraní communities, with leaders elected in assemblies according to Guaraní traditions (see Postero 2007a). They were part of the larger regional Guaraní federation, the *Capitanía Zona Cruz*, which represented twenty-five communities around the Santa Cruz region. During that period, the Guaraní of Zona Cruz were engaging with the provisions of the new Law of Popular Participation, one of the key provisions of Bolivia’s neoliberal multicultural reforms. Through this law, indigenous communities were recognized by the state, and incorporated into state governance through *usos y costumbres*, or traditional customs. This meant that local politics was organized around ethnic categories: the indigenous organization, called the *capitanía*, was the official representative to the municipal government and participated in budget and development decisions. I observed as my Guaraní friends learned how to register their organizations legally, understand municipal politics, and make demands on behalf of their communities. In Santa Cruz, this new form of citizenship produced minimal results for the Guaranís because they remained marginalized minorities. In other regions, where indigenous people were more numerous, the reforms enabled indigenous organizations to win local political offices such as city council and mayoral seats. The Charagua case discussed in chapter 7 is an example of this.

For the Guaranís of Bella Flor and El Futuro, the multicultural years were a boom period: they got grants from foreign aid to form and strengthen their indigenous institutions; many young people got scholarships for training and some went to college; and local leaders were plugged in directly to city funding sources. Development projects aimed at helping the indigenous poor targeted them, helping urban women produce Guaraní textiles and crafts. In the following years, however, their circumstances changed radically. The city overtook their rural villages, and migrants from the highlands poured into Santa Cruz. Many Guaranís sold their shares in the original parcel, causing enormous disputes in the villages. That dispute eventually resolved, giving most of the Guaranís title to some individual lots. The result is astonishing: the original Guaraní villages are no longer recognizable, swallowed up by a huge *urbanización*, or urban housing development. Each of these two communities, which had about sixty Guaraní families in 1996, now has over twenty thousand residents, the great majority of whom are Andean migrants from the highlands. Once quiet rural communities of mud-and-thatch Guaraní houses, now they are bustling, peri-urban working- and middle-class neighborhoods.

I have watched this process closely over the years, as I have remained close friends with the family with whom I lived in Bella Flor during my fieldwork, the Taperas. They remain in Bella Flor. Don Jesús, the patriarch, now in his late sixties, is an evangelical pastor, and his wife Susana, although quite ill, continues to run the household. Their children are all adults now, and the house is filled with grandchildren, especially on the weekends. Their daughter Mónica, who received a scholarship to train as a journalist, works at a radio station dedicated to indigenous culture and politics. She and her small family live with their parents in Bella Flor. Mónica's brother, Samuel, my closest friend, has finished law school, thanks to a scholarship, and works as a consultant for the Capitanía. He also teaches Guaraní. He and his family live nearby in a rented apartment in El Futuro. Thanks to the sale of several lots they received in the settlement, the Taperas have rebuilt their home. Now they have a brick construction with three bedrooms. It is not fancy—only one of the rooms has a tiled floor, the others are still packed-down dirt—but they have electricity, running water, and a separate bathroom outside. Susana sells groceries and cold soda from a small storefront building facing onto the street, attracting customers from the busy health post across from them. They have friendly relations with *kolla* (people from the highlands) neighbors interspersed throughout their barrio.

Like the residents of Rio Negro described in the previous section, the Taperas and many of their Guaraní neighbors are moving from poverty to middle-class status. They have urban jobs, stable houses, and their children are being educated. They, too, have benefited from infrastructure investments by the state and the city: a large sports complex draws people to the central plaza of Bella Flor, and a new

secundaria (high school) has just been built in El Futuro. Yet, they have very different opinions about Morales, the “indigenous state,” and decolonization. First, it is important to situate their communities for the reader. As I have described in previous chapters, Santa Cruz was the center of opposition to Morales. Its white-mestizo political class mounted a strong pushback to the Constituent Assembly and organized a successful regional autonomy movement. Santa Cruz continues to be led by opposition parties at both the departmental and city levels. (This has begun to change recently, however. In the 2014 presidential elections, the MAS won Santa Cruz.)

Perhaps more important, however, many Guaranís have continued to identify with the lowland indigenous agenda, and this has pitted them against the Morales government. The TIPNIS struggle described in chapter 5 was a central watershed for many. The leadership of the Capitanía Zona Cruz participated in the 2011 TIPNIS march, and the local communities supported them with money and material support. Mónica Tapera was on her way to the march when the Chaparina police intervention happened, and so she and others organized a hunger strike in the central plaza of Santa Cruz that mobilized public opposition to Morales. She spent much of the next few years reporting on the TIPNIS case and continues to work with former CIDOB leaders to press their case through the Defensor del Pueblo (Bolivia’s national ombudsman) and on to the Inter American Human Rights Court. For Mónica and Samuel, watching the way the government handled the TIPNIS issue made it clear that all the language in the constitution about indigenous rights means nothing in practice. They were deeply disappointed and hurt. The next year, 2012, Samuel Tapera led a contingent of Zona Cruz Guaranís to defend the CIDOB office from takeover by the MAS-allied sector. They camped out in the compound for a week, but without material support, were unable to continue. Shortly afterward, the current leaders stormed the headquarters with police and strongmen. One of the original CZX Equipo Técnico, Rosana Moreno, was living at CIDOB at the time and had just given birth to twins a few days before. I met with her a few weeks after the event, and she described the hellish experience of having to pack up her children and flee through the melee and tear gas. Beaten and insulted by the opposing group, she says she will never forgive the Morales government for its treason. For these Guaranís, decolonization is a joke, a “cynical” discourse that Morales uses to justify his power. They lament the way the MAS state has co-opted indigenous organizations, reducing everything to money and obras. Mónica Tapera explained:

The government has taken over all the possible spaces, CIDOB, the electoral council, the judicial sector. There are no spaces left now. And now everything is about money. They say, “We will give you this if you support us.” And the indigenous groups have no choice, they don’t say anything, because *todos tenemos cola* [literally, we all have tails, meaning, we are all guilty or bought off]. Look how many indigenous leaders

have stopped making any real demands, and now they are all *funcionarios con pegas* [they all have government jobs]. *¡Tan barato se vende!!* [How cheaply they sell themselves!]

So for these urban Guaranís, their identity as indigenous peoples remains a central part of their identity and a central lens from which they evaluate their lives. In Bella Flor, they have had to struggle to maintain political power, given the demographic change in the barrio. Their kolla neighbors control the school board and have argued that the capitania should cede its position with the city to a junta vecinal (JV). Yet the Guaraní leader, Diego Eloy, supported by his community, pushes back. I spoke to him one afternoon at his house. He is a taxi driver, and his three sons were washing his car before he began his shift in the city. The neat house and yard reflect his strong sense of dignity and his aspirations for his family and neighbors. "We can't lose our traditions," he says. "We are the only barrio left where we Guaraní are the majority. In El Futuro, the kollas have already stomped on everything. But here, we Guaranís still rule [*mandan*]." He refuses to let them run the show, he says, but he has had to collaborate with them. They have organized with the city to get the plaza refurbished, create a green space, get some new schoolrooms, and so on. His biggest project, though, has been accomplished as the capitania. Everyone agreed that the worst problem facing the community was youth gangs, *pandillas*, who hung out in the streets at night, smoking marijuana, drinking, fighting, and robbing people. Don Diego finally intervened, organizing with local police to create a youth patrol made up of Guaraní and kolla youth. The police donated a vehicle that had been seized in a drug- forfeiture case, and the new patrol circulated at night monitoring the barrio and calling the police when necessary. This was so successful that the police are beginning a new program in which these youth cadets are getting formal training that will (hopefully) lead them to jobs with the police. Don Diego says that with this success, he has shown the kollas that the Guaranís are still a force to be reckoned with.

In El Futuro, a few kilometers away, however, things are very different. There, the Guaraní are working with their kolla neighbors to confront a much bigger problem: a huge toxic landfill on their borders. The landfill is run by the city of Santa Cruz, and it was set up long after the Guaranís arrived. In the intervening years, it has grown precipitously, mirroring the explosive growth of the city. It is a horrible stinking mess, venting methane gases and leaking sewage onto surrounding roads and lands. In El Futuro, depending on wind direction, an acrid burning smell fills the neighborhood, stinging people's eyes and causing respiratory illnesses. When it rains, sewage flows into people's yards and pollutes their water. Over the years, surrounding communities have mounted repeated demands that the landfill be closed. Time after time, the city has agreed to some of the conditions of the protesters and negotiated an end to the protests. An independent audit contracted by the Santa Cruz state government confirmed that the area was

contaminated and causing health risks to the residents (CAVE 2015). Yet the city keeps postponing the closing, pending finding another site for a new landfill.

In 2015, Sandra Chávez, the *segunda capitana*, or second in command of the Guaraní capitania of El Futuro decided to start working on this problem with her kolla neighbors. She invited me to her house to explain. We sat in the front yard, according to Guaraní custom, and she poured a drink she had made from chia seeds—to try to be healthy, she said. Her sister, head of the women's organization, joined us, as did her neighbor Patti, and Jorge, a highland migrant from Cochabamba. Sandra explained that the previous leaders had not wanted to work with the kollas, but she disagreed. "Why discriminate?" she argued. "We are not pure Guaranís here, and we have important problems to face. We have to work together." For her, the health issues they faced as neighbors overcame any ethnic difference. With Jorge and other kolla neighbors, they began organizing the barrio, and then in March 2015, they carried out a massive blockade of the landfill. Over three hundred people took over the entrance, preventing the entrance of waste disposal and garbage trucks from the city. They lasted five days, surrounded by police with all the pressure of the mayor's office and public disapproval. As garbage piled up, the neighbors held on. The mayor came to negotiate, but they had signed an agreement ahead of time that they would not be bought off like the leaders of previous protests. Eventually, they were dislodged and did not gain any major concessions. However, they felt happy with their efforts. The press had been supportive, and a big article ran in the local paper saying the landfill should be closed (*El Deber* 2015). Their blockade had forced the release of the independent audit, which supported their position. They are not naïve enough to think this alone will force the city's hand, but they do have hopes that the evidence will push public opinion forward.

Like Sandra, their highland neighbor Jorge felt that it was worth overcoming the tensions between ethnic groups. He privileged their shared class struggles, born from the precarious situations in which they lived. Patti, Sandra's neighbor made that especially clear:

When we held the blockade, they worried that people in the city would get sick [because garbage was not being picked up]. But what about us getting sick? They say: why did you buy out there next to the landfill? But we are poor, we have nowhere else to go. The people in the richer parts of the city—their rights are getting protected. What about our rights? *Y por el hecho de ser pobre, ¿no tenemos derechos?* [Just because we are poor, don't we have rights?]

Jorge agreed:

Our rights have to be respected, these are human rights at stake. With the laws that Evo has made, he says he values the environment, worries about contamination, prioritizes health. But this is a discourse. They don't respect human rights, or is it that they don't think we are humans?

For these neighbors, then, organizing around ethnicity sometimes gives way to more basic pragmatic issues of justice. In the case of El Futuro, as Patti suggested, “this was a civic movement, demanding rights of life and health.” Their ethnic differences have not disappeared, as Don Diego of Bella Flor makes clear, but in contrast to the multicultural era, in this period, working together for basic forms of community development appears to be ever more necessary and important.

CONCLUSION

This chapter has focused on the lived experiences of some of the many indigenous communities in Bolivia, to consider the effects of a decade of MAS policy and practice. There are large differences between the circumstances and economies facing these communities, and their political trajectories are even more opposed. The highland migrants to El Alto I describe are part of the core constituency of the MAS party, sharing ethnic identity and history with their “brother Evo.” The Guaraní on the outskirts of Santa Cruz come from a different trajectory: the lowland indigenous organizations that came into being in the 1990s, formed part of the Pacto Unidad at the Constituent Assembly, but broke from the MAS as a result of the TIPNIS controversy. Having an indigenous president and an indigenous state has meant very different things to these communities.

I suggest that in the contemporary period, indigeneity appears to be a less salient site of organizing as the dominant government discourse shifts to one of economic liberation and development. I do not wish to be misunderstood here. For each of the people I presented in this chapter, their ethnic identity—as Aymara or Guaraní—remains central to their lives, kin relations, and community struggles. As we saw in the case of El Futuro, the forms of political representation hard-won in the 1990s are not easily relinquished. Yet more and more, in both El Alto and the Guaraní communities, other issues and other forms of doing politics are emerging. Indigeneity was the site of emancipatory politics in the multicultural 1990s and into the Morales era, giving people a way of seeing themselves, and expressing their demands for inclusion and self-government. The struggles I document in this chapter show that indigeneity no longer serves as a sufficient basis for such politics. Of course, class and race/ethnicity have always been intersecting categories, as I showed in the Introduction. They continue to be so today. I suggest that, as the Morales government consolidated its hold on the state in large part by justifying its government through discourses of indigeneity and decolonization, those discourses lost some of their emancipatory power, remaining important in the symbolic dimension, but losing importance in the realm of local politics. As Patricia, the jewelry seller in El Alto put it, “that is a matter for the political parties.”

Charagua's Struggle for Indigenous Autonomy

In chapter 6, we saw how three local communities are negotiating the contemporary conjunctures in Bolivia, especially the discourse of economic liberation put forth by the Morales government, which privileges public works, development, and economic well-being. I argued that in some communities, this emphasis has made indigeneity a less salient site of political organizing than ethnic identity, which, as we have seen in previous chapters, was central to emancipatory politics at the beginning of the Morales administration. For these communities, decolonization signified either an empty promise from a cynical government or a means to class advancement. In this chapter, I take up a very different situation: the case of Charagua, where indigenous Guaraní activists have won an important political victory, establishing their city as the country's first—and only, so far—indigenous autonomous municipality. I show how the Guaranís of Charagua are strategically using the rights established in the new constitution to move towards their long-term goal of reconstituting a Guaraní nation. For the Guaranís, decolonization is both an important goal and discourse and set of juridical tools they utilize in their own struggle for local autonomy.

The victory in Charagua in 2015 was the first step in what is likely to be a long process of seeking autonomous status for indigenous lands—many more communities are preparing their initiatives. It was also a very significant accomplishment, bringing the Guaranís of Charagua one step closer to their goal of autonomy. In this chapter, I focus on how Guaraní leaders managed to overcome local tensions to win the election. This chapter traces their pragmatic politics as they negotiate in the spaces between national, departmental, and local sovereignties, carrying out what Francisco Pifarré has called “Guaraní diplomacy” (1989: 294; see also Albó

2012: 29). While still subsumed within the liberal nation-state, this new form of local government offers the first institutionalized vision of indigenous alternatives to liberalism. Here we see a first glimpse of what the “indigenous state” could mean at the local level. Here I push further on the notion of politics, arguing that contrary to Jacques Rancière’s theory, politics might not only result from disagreements or recounts, but also require the hard work of consensus building.

AUTONOMÍA GUARANÍ CHARAGUA IYAMBÆ

Charagua is a small town in the high desert Chaco region of the department of Santa Cruz, a dry forest crossed by occasional rivers and streams. It is Bolivia’s largest municipality in terms of size—well over 28,000 square miles—and according to the 2012 census, has about 35,000 inhabitants. It is vast in size, but also in social complexity. Albó estimates that about 60 percent of the population are indigenous Guaraní (Albó 2012). The Guaraní are organized into four *capitanías*, or local federations, made of two different groups of Guaraní—the Avas of Charagua Norte and Parapetiguasu (Charagua Sur) and the Izozeños from the more remote Bajo and Alto Izozog zones. These groups live in small, dispersed communities throughout the large municipality, mostly farming corn and raising small herds of cattle and other livestock. Their organizations are part of the larger national Guaraní organization, the Asamblea del Pueblo Guaraní (APG; Assembly of the Guaraní People), founded in 1987, and centered in the city of Camiri, three hours’ drive south of Charagua. It was they who put forward the demand for autonomy. But this project was deeply contested by the other groups in the region. Throughout the zone, white–mestizo families have large landholdings, where they raise cattle for sale. These are the traditional elites, who since colonial times have exercised economic and political power over the Guaraní (Pifarré 1989; Postero 2007a; Albó 2012). Guaraní have worked on their haciendas and in some sectors were held in a form of slavery. The *hacendados* (large landholders) live in the town, called the *pueblo*, where they have run the municipality until recently. They have traditionally been allied with the conservative mestizo political Verdad y Democracia Social party of Santa Cruz, called the Verdes (Greens) (for the green and white colors of the party) and now officially called Demócratas. As in Santa Cruz, the Civic Committee, run by the elites and their families, has been a central site of local politics. The other important organizations are the Asociación de Ganaderos de Cordillera–Charagua (AGACOR; Cattle Ranchers Association), which advocates for the cattle owners’ interests, and the Junta Vecinal, or neighborhood association, which represents the urban residents and is run mostly by mestizo schoolteachers. As I describe below, these sectors have been vocal public opponents of the autonomy process.

There are two other major sectors. There is a large group of Mennonites who have established large *colonias*, or colonies, in the region. These German-speaking migrants live in closed communities where they work extensive holdings, farming wheat and raising cattle. Their dairies provide milk and cheese for the entire region. Although they make up about 20 percent of the region's population, they are not a factor in political calculations, because their religion requires them to stay out of political debates. They do not vote. Xavier Albó suggests that Guaraní therefore constitute 80 percent of the voting population (2012: 93.) In the past few decades, highland Andean migrants have moved to the zone, establishing an urban settlement a few kilometers outside town near the old train station. The residents of this sector, La Estación, are farmers, merchants, and *transportistas*. Most speak Quechua and are supporters of Morales and his MAS party. So although they make up a large majority of the population, the Guaraní activists pushing for indigenous autonomy were forced to negotiate with the rest of the people living in the municipality.

Over the six years of struggle to achieve autonomy—what Guaraní leaders call a *peregrinación*, or pilgrimage, given the endless trips and meetings with state and judicial officials—leaders have maintained a dogged commitment to gaining state recognition for their autonomous government, what their statute calls *Autonomía Guaraní Charagua Iyambae* (The Guaraní Indigenous Autonomy of Charagua Iyambe) (*iyambae* is a Guaraní term often translated as “freedom,” or “without owners or masters”). I have been observing their process since 2010, when they held an assembly to draft an autonomy statute, essentially a new constitution for their community. In 2010, I asked René Gómez, the president of the assembly, to explain the goals of their efforts. What did they mean by autonomy? Patiently, with smiling eyes, he explained.

We understand autonomy as being free [*ser libre*]. . . . Not that we aren't already. We, the Guaraní nation, have always been autonomous, free. But there are no laws or norms that say we are autonomous. So for us, autonomy consists of when one can govern oneself [*uno gobierne por si solo*], that is self-government [*autogobierno*], without political parties. . . . What we are doing here in Charagua with our assembly is the fruit of decolonization and its transversal themes of racism, discrimination, and dependence. . . . We are decolonizing because we are thinking from another world [or space: *en otro ambito*]. These are new forms of thinking, seeing things in another way, as we indigenous peoples have always done (personal communication, August 12, 2010).

Don René is saying what I heard over and over during my visits to Charagua: that the Guaraní believe that they are already autonomous and have always been so. Their goal with the assembly and in invoking the autonomy law was to make this fact visible and functional in the world of liberal laws and norms. Don René

hoped the process of decolonization begun by the Constituent Assembly and the new constitution would provide an opportunity for them to articulate their understanding of sovereignty with that of the rest of the people in the country. “Every pueblo has its culture,” he said, “its form of living, its *ñandereko* [our way of being].” Here he used a complex term that has multiple meanings. *Ñandereko* is sometimes translated as “the harmonious life” (Bolivia 2009). However, Bartolomeu Meliá, the most important historian of the Guaraní, makes clear that it refers, not only to the Guaraní way of being, its culture and customs, but also to the place and medium that make that way of being possible: the interrelated cultural, economic, social, religious, and political spaces linking land, beings, and people (Meliá in Medina 2002: 100–101).

Don René’s statement here is echoed in the Catalán anthropologist Pere Morrell i Torra’s suggestion that for the Guaraní, autonomy is a set of intersecting meanings (2013: 11). First, it is an already existing set of social practices that have emerged over hundreds of years. Drawing on historical archives, especially the work of the historian Isabelle Combès (2005), Morrell i Torra describes the ways in which differing sectors of Guaranís in the Cordillera region have long maintained autonomy from one another. Each community has made its own decisions, except during times of war. Here we see an iteration of Pierre Clastres’s notion of the “society against the state,” since throughout their history, the Guaranís have privileged the independence of local communities over a centralized leadership (see Clastres 1989). Even in the past twenty years, as these autonomous communities formed the Asamblea del Pueblo Guaraní federation to push for territorial rights, in practice, each *capitanía*, or local organization, has maintained its decision-making power. This is what Don René means when he says “We, the Guaraní nation, have always been autonomous, free.”

Second, autonomy is a political discourse used by the Guaraní leadership to create a united Guaraní nation. Unity itself is a relatively new goal, given the long history of tensions between Avas and Izozeños, who have long been at odds with each other, and have employed very different strategies in relation to the dominant politicians (see Morrell i Torra 2013: 51). As Albó makes clear, the Izozeños have more often allied with the Cruzeño elite (2012). Yet since the multicultural era and the formation of the APG, the Guaranís have been working together consistently towards the control of their territory and towards the formation of an indigenous-led government. Albó’s comprehensive history of the Guaranís’ efforts demonstrates a careful and determined strategy of using every possible political opening to do so. He shows how the APG worked with various NGOs to create development projects for their communities. Then, during the 1990s, they took advantage of the many multicultural reforms aimed at including indigenous groups. Most important was the APG’s claim to millions of hectares under the 1997 Agrarian Reform law, or Ley INRA. By 2011, they had successfully gained title to over 800,000

hectares, plus two large protected areas, one of which was named a national park (Albó 2012: 98). This new limited form of territorial titling allowed local communities to negotiate with the transnational oil companies that were pumping oil and gas from under their lands. The funds they obtained from this went directly to the individual *capitanías*, to be used for local development (84–85). Albó also documents the ways in which the Guaraní took up the Law of Popular Participation, which channeled state funds to municipalities. Beginning in 1995, the Guaraní began participating in municipal politics, putting up their leaders for city council and mayor. Tracing their progress election by election, Albó argues that this strategy consolidated the Guaraní as mature political actors able to articulate their demands for autonomy. Don René knows this *en carne propia*, in his own flesh, since he served several terms on Charagua's city council in the 1990s.

Finally, Morrell i Torra suggests, indigenous autonomy is a status of juridical recognition by the state. This is what René meant when he explained that “there are no laws or norms that say we are autonomous.” Thus, even though the status of indigenous autonomy was not all they hoped it would be when the Constituent Assembly met in 2006, the Guaraní saw state recognition as another step towards the larger project. As we saw in chapter 2, at Bolivia's Constituent Assembly in 2006–8, indigenous activists and their allies proposed new forms of self-government that would return both territorial control and traditional forms of governance to indigenous communities as part of their centuries-old demands for self-determination. The Guaraní of Charagua participated in these debates. Don Avilio Vaca from Charagua Norte was a delegate to the Assembly and served on the Commission on Autonomies. Yet the form of indigenous autonomy in the final constitution is a substantially watered down version of what activists had proposed. Instead of the far-reaching self-determination indigenous activists had longed for since the Spanish conquest, and for which they fought in insurrections up until the nineteenth century, the current version of indigenous autonomy in Bolivia is not significantly discernable from a local administrative entity within a liberal centralized state. There are some meaningful changes, as I show below, but this form of governance continues to be embedded in a strong centralized state model.

Thus, instead of a radical challenge to liberalism, Bolivia's indigenous autonomy may be closer to what Audra Simpson calls “nested sovereignties.” Given the continuing monopoly of military and institutional power held by settler states, she suggests “like indigenous bodies, indigenous sovereignties and indigenous political orders prevail within and apart from settler governance” (Simpson 2015: 11). “Sovereignty may exist within sovereignty. One does not entirely negate the other, but they necessarily stand in terrific tension and pose serious jurisdictional and normative challenges to each other” (10). Simpson shows how the Mohawks negotiate these tensions, often “refusing” the offer of citizenship from the United States and Canada, the settler states that claim jurisdiction over them, bearing their own

passports across national borders they find illegitimate. The Guaranís I describe here also find themselves in a complex set of nested sovereignties crossing national, departmental (state), and local levels. Yet they do not operate through refusal. Instead, they have used the resources of the plurinational constitution and alliances with multiple political factions to press forward towards self-determination.

THE PILGRIMAGE TOWARDS AUTONOMY

The path to autonomy was long and complex. The Bolivian constitution establishes the rights of indigenous people to self-government under what are called *autonomías indígenas originarias campesinas* (AIOCs), or “indigenous originary peasant autonomies” (Bolivia 2009: Arts. 2 and 289–96).¹ The constitution clearly lays out the exclusive and shared *competencias*, or areas of jurisdiction, at each level of government, defining the limited areas where local governments can act, always within the framework of a coherent national government. In 2009, Morales began the process of autonomy with Decree Law 231, which set up a complex system of requirements for local communities seeking conversion to this status. There are three possibilities: the conversion of already existing municipalities; the conversion of indigenously held *territorios indígenas originarios campesinos* (TIOCs), or “indigenous originary peasant territories”; or the creation of new regional autonomies composed of two or more converted municipalities (see Tockman and Cameron 2014 for a more comprehensive description of the process.) The government then put out a formal call for municipalities to apply for the status (see also Tockman et al. 2015). Then, in 2010, Congress passed an enabling law, the *Ley Marco de Autonomía y Descentralización* (LMAD; Framework Law on Autonomy and Decentralization), which formalized all the requirements for creation and operation of the autonomies. The second path, that of the TIOCs, only opened in 2012, when the Tribunal Supremo Electoral approved Resolution 0075/2012 (Reglamento de Supervisión del Acceso a las Autonomías Indígena Originario Campesinas). That trajectory, which will arise not from a referendum but by a consultation based in norms and procedures, is under way in about ten indigenous territories (see Tockman 2014: 248–49).

The first step of this complex process was to apply to hold a public referendum to begin the conversion process. As Jason Tockman and John Cameron (2014) report, the bureaucratic requirements were onerous. Those who wanted to begin the AIOC process had to collect the signatures of 10 percent of the municipality’s voting population, provide evidence of precolonial occupation of the municipality, and secure from the municipal council ratification by two-thirds of the council’s members of an ordinance supporting conversion. Besides that, the deadlines were tight, and only twelve communities managed to file these in time (53). Since the state did not provide funding or administrative help, the communities had to rely

on technical help from local NGOs. The first round of referenda was held in 2009, and only eleven were successful in their bids. Charagua was one of only two low-land communities to pass this step, with 55.7 percent voting yes (Albó 2012: 125). The second step was to convene a representative autonomy assembly to elaborate formal “autonomy statutes.” This was a time-consuming process, in which the differing sectors and interests debated whether and how autonomy might serve the community’s interests. In several cases, the tensions proved insurmountable. For instance, the highland community of Jesús de Machaca, originally presumed to be the most likely to gain autonomy, was not able to come to consensus and did not press forward (Cameron 2013). Tockman reports that cleavages there between sectors centered on disputes about forms of representation, with those aligned with the MAS arguing for a more liberal electoral competition, and those aligning with the local *ayllu* organization arguing for a system requiring service in the traditional rotational distribution of *cargos*, or responsibilities (2014: 129ff.).

In Charagua, the Guaraní held an assembly to draft the autonomy statute, bringing elected delegates from various sectors to the table. In an assembly lasting several months overseen by the central government’s Ministry of Autonomies, the delegates drafted a statute establishing a new form of municipal government based on Guaraní norms and procedures. Once written, these statutes were submitted to Bolivia’s Plurinational Constitutional Tribunal (TCP) to ensure they complied with constitutional requirements. Charagua’s statute was presented to the high court in Sucre in October 2012, and in December 2013, the TCP issued its ruling of constitutionality. This ruling was provisional, pending several required revisions, the most significant of which was the ruling that the statute’s investment of broad oversight powers in the *ñemboatí guasu*, the highest deliberative assembly, was unconstitutional. As Tockman points out, this intervention in the statute’s internal distribution of faculties “seems to be aimed at enforcing a particular view of the balance of powers—one that favours the independence of the executive” (Tockman 2014: 182). After the assembly revised the statute on these and several other issues, the final statute was approved in June 2014. The final step was a second referendum. If a majority of the public in the municipalities approved, the process of conversion could commence (53). In September 2015, two communities, Totora Marka in the highlands, and Charagua, in the lowlands, had passed all these requirements and put their new statutes to the test in referenda. Only Charagua won, with a slim but significant margin of 53 percent (Portugal 2015; Colque 2015).

Thus, Charagua’s new statute is a historic document, one that moves the country forward in terms of what local autonomy might look like in practice. It is the result of a long deliberative process of local democracy. The proponents of the conversion process organized the assembly in 2010 with help from local NGO Centro de Investigación y Promoción del Campesinado (CIPCA; Center for Investigation

and Promotion of the Peasantry) and with oversight from the national Ministry of Autonomies. The ministers did come to town several times at key moments to encourage participation, and did provide some minimal help printing posters and copies of the statutes. Nevertheless, the Guaraní relied instead on CIPCA, which had grants from private and public Spanish foundations (Morell i Tora 2013: 84).

The Guaraní designed an assembly with delegates from all the sectors of Charagua's population. The Guaraní delegates attended regularly, although the length of the assembly made it hard for everyone, since they had to leave their jobs or their farms for weeks at a time. Yet there was very little attendance by the white–mestizo sectors. In 2011 and 2012, I interviewed *vecinos* from the pueblo and found they had opted not to be part of the process. These elite made clear their fears. They did not participate in the assembly because they felt it was illegal or useless since they were the minority, but they raged against the process as having been imposed from the outside. One Verde city councilor told me the autonomy process was a MAS government project “intended to knock us over” (*tumbarnos*), meaning to overturn elite power in the region. The people of the pueblo also openly expressed a deep racism when they spoke of a possible future under indigenous autonomy. One cattle rancher called the idea of indigenous autonomy “retrograde, it takes us back to ancestral times” using ancient customs. “Imagine, our grandchildren living in an indigenous municipality. . . . This is a dark and uncertain future, because I know them. They have lots of land, but they do not know how to produce.” Relying on classic tropes of the corrupt, lazy, or backward Indian, these white–mestizo leaders could not imagine ceding or even sharing power with their indigenous neighbors. The Charagua cattle ranchers had been part of the departmental autonomy struggles described in chapter 5, so they saw indigenous autonomy struggle as a part of the MAS agenda they had been fighting for years.

In 2011, I attended the Autonomy assembly, which took place in the Arakuaaranda Cultural Center at the edge of town. Besides the large assembly room where the main meetings were held, it had a few other classrooms, a big kitchen and dining room, and dormitories with rows of bunk beds. I had been there before in 1998 with my friends from Zona Cruz for a regional meeting of Guaraní organizations, but the assembly this time had a very different and decidedly historic feel to it. Section by section, the delegates put forward their ideas, drawn from commission meetings and discussions with local base communities. Long debates in Guaraní and Spanish followed, as the delegates considered the structure of the new form of government they wanted to create. The technical team from CIPCA sat in the back with their laptops, recording and systematizing the material. The long hot days in the hall were broken up by shared lunches and coffee breaks, where discussions continued.

Over the process, the delegates designed a new system of local governance, based on Guaraní values and notions of autonomy. Because I had followed the

negotiations at the Constituent Assembly, and seen how this new legal status was so embedded within the liberal structure of the nation-state, I wondered how this new system could actually accomplish any real change. In my discussions with delegates then, and in the visits that followed in 2012 and 2015, I asked everyone I met: How would this new system of governance change things? What would autonomy mean in the light of the constitutional constraints? They returned to several themes again and again. First, Guaraní told me that they wanted a system that prevented political parties from monopolizing power. At first I did not understand the depth of this concern. I assumed it was an expression of the kind that I had heard all over Bolivia, a distrust of the corrupting power of the traditional political class, which was dominated by whites and mestizos. Yes, it was that, people said, but it was also the result of their own experiences in Charagua over the past twenty years. Although they had been able to get Guaraní elected to the city council and even as mayor, often those leaders had been co-opted by the political parties, “betraying” the Guaraní project. This had caused enormous discord within the communities, and they wanted to avoid that. “Tenemos que ser unidos, hermanos” (We have to be unified, brothers and sisters), they said frequently to each other and to me. Second, they wanted to find a way of getting resources directly, without the mediation of the mayor’s office, political parties, or the departmental government. As I describe in the following section, the current funding process requires indigenous groups to present proposals to the governor and to the mayor for any development projects they might be trying to implement. Not only was this a tiresome and uncertain process, it put them in the position of supplicants begging for resources. As they made clear, the resources flowing from the national government to the departments are the result of extractivist projects carried out on indigenous territories. “These are our resources,” said one delegate, “we should control them and decide what kind of development we need.” The capitánías have experience with administering development projects, since they have been receiving payments directly from some of the petroleum companies for some time, so this is not a surprising demand.

The statute the delegates designed went through several revisions: first with a constitutional lawyer hired to make sure their ideas would conform to the constitution,² and then in response to the Constitutional Tribunal’s requirements. The final statute organizes municipal government in a radically decentralized manner. Each of the six sectors (the four Guaraní capitánías, the pueblo, and the Estación) will be an autonomous entity, with the right to elect its own representatives according to their traditional *usos y costumbres*. For the capitánías, this will mean by consensus at public assemblies. For the other two, this could be by secret vote according to liberal notions of democracy, or however they decide to do it. Each zone will send representatives to collective decision-making bodies—at the communal,

zonal, and municipal levels—as well as to a legislative body. There is an executive body, but rather than a mayor and council, it is a body made up of representatives from each zone. Is this new system actually different or is this another example of indigeneity as emancipatory politics ceding to indigeneity as symbolic window dressing for a continuation of liberalism?

I agree with Morrell i Torra that while this statute is in fact “very distant from the discourse of ancestrality that prevails in the usual theoretical approaches to indigenous autonomy” (2013: 96), it could bring about some important transformations in the relations of power, forms of territorial control, and sociocultural dynamics in Charagua. He points to three specific changes. First, he signals the way the statute decentralizes or disperses power from a political institution to a collective body (98). This follows the indigenous model Pierre Clastres described as “societies against the state,” in which no one leader held the power of violence over others. Instead, society as a whole was the site of political power, and leaders acted as mediators to promote harmony rather than to exercise command over others. Individual people and communities maintained autonomy, only giving power to leaders in emergencies, like times of war (see Clastres 1989). The Charagua autonomy statute continued this logic by separating power from a mayor and dispersing it throughout a series of collective decision-making bodies in which positions are rotated across time and communities. (It is worth noting again, however, that this effort to disperse power was diminished by the TCP’s 2013 rulings; see Tockman 2014: 182–83). In 2015, Mayor Belarmino Solano explained it to me this way: “Before the mayor was above everyone and important, now we want the leaders to be in contact with everyone, to come down to society. This is a way to decolonize, with open doors.”

Second, Morrell i Torra suggests that, like the Bolivian constitution, the Charagua statute has inserted within it indigenous values, like *iyambae* (freedom, or “without owners”) and *yaiko kavi pave* (a Guaraní notion often translated as *vivir bien*, but also meaning *vida plena*, a full life) (Morrell i Torra 2013: 113). Following Boaventura de Souza Santos’s thinking on the “experimental state,” Morrell i Torra argues that this is an “intercultural translation,” a form of hybridity in which indigenous logics are inserted into the liberal text as a non-Western and decolonizing resource (ibid., 107, citing Santos 2010: 65). He is careful not to romanticize this, noting this is not a form of utopian post-development. Instead, he reminds us how important development and dependence on gas rents are for the Guaranís (114–15). Finally, he suggests that the statute goes beyond multiculturalism by including all the other sectors and allowing each group the right to organize and represent themselves. This was an important selling point in all the public events I attended, as non-Guaraní expressed their fears of having to conform to Guaraní customs. The statute incorporates others but does not subordinate them (131).

FROM ASPIRATION TO RECOGNITION

While the delegates to the Charagua Assembly were busy formulating a new way to govern their local communities, politics as usual was continuing around them in the nation, department, and the municipality. That is, at the same time they were planning a future of autonomy, they were also living and working in the old system where political parties and discourses were holding sway. To move from their aspirations as expressed in the statute, they had to work in the existing system to assure their rights and get the referendum passed to make the conversion to AIOC a reality.

During the six years they worked on the autonomy process, the political landscape changed radically. When the Guaraní leaders began the autonomy assembly in 2010, the mayor and the majority of the city council members were Verdes (Greens), aligned with the conservative Right. They represented the views of the whites–mestizos of the city center, who were firmly opposed to autonomy. They saw it as a clear threat to their traditional control over the mayor's office and the funding from the state that flowed to the city. As I mentioned above, they also saw autonomy as part of the larger MAS project to overturn traditional elite power. This was not an accurate assessment: in Charagua, AIOC conversion was not a MAS project at all. As Albó points out, most MAS supporters in Charagua were Aymara and Quechua immigrants from the highlands who were opposed the Guaraní-led process (2012). For the Guaranís of Charagua, however, this was not just a MAS project; it was a centuries-long project of territorial self-determination. They were, however, able to use the dominant MAS discourse of decolonization and indigenous rights to legitimize their struggle. In 2010, the narrative of indigenous rights, *vivir bien*, and preservation of Mother Earth was on everyone's tongues, especially the president's, and the Guaranís of Charagua took advantage of it to push their local demands into the national agenda, moving their project through the national level courts.

But by 2011, the president's commitment to indigenous rights began to be called into question. The controversy over the TIPNIS highway, described in chapter 5, made it clear that Morales was willing to sacrifice indigenous lands to extractivist development projects. The transformation from decolonization to development described in chapter 6 had begun. The APG supported the first march for TIPNIS, and many Guaranís from Charagua participated. The way Morales dealt with the marchers, and particularly the violent repression in Chaparina still counts for many as the biggest betrayal of their political lives. The *capitán grande* of Charagua Norte told me that he remembers seeing the Chaparina battle on TV. Still, four years later, his eyes filled with tears at the memory. "I was a MAS member since the beginning," he said bitterly. He pulled his tattered membership card from his wallet. "See? But that destroyed my faith in Evo. No" The MAS's takeover of

CIDOB, its creation of parallel organizations—all this made the MAS an unsavory ally after TIPNIS. But with the autonomy process slowed down and not certain to win, the Guaraní decided to keep pushing that long-term strategy but with a variety of tactics: they would work with the Greens (the Demócratas) and the Blues (the MAS) at the same time at very different levels of government.

First at the departmental level, they took advantage of the new electoral scheme that guaranteed each of the five indigenous groups in the department of Santa Cruz one *asambleista*, or representative to the department legislature. These *asambleistas* were elected according to *usos y costumbres*, or traditional customs, that is, not as part of any political party. This allowed them the ability to form pacts with other parties. Under the current fiscal structure of Bolivia, gas rents and royalties are collected by the central government and distributed to departments, universities, and the Fondo Indígena, the development fund for indigenous peoples. The department then distributes these funds to municipalities. So to get money flowing to their municipality, and to get the governor and legislature to approve projects, the indigenous *asambleistas* had to work with the Verdes in power. The MAS, of course, saw this, as a betrayal. How could indigenous people work with the *camba* elites instead of the indigenous MAS party? But Ruth Yarigua, the current Guaraní *asambleista*, and former *capitana grande* of Charagua Norte, explained that her loyalty is to her people. Their dream for centuries has been to “occupy these spaces of power, at all levels, without regard for political colors. . . . This is just what autonomy in Charagua will also provide: the liberty to decide for ourselves, without conforming ourselves to any political party” (personal communication, July 27, 2015). She and her fellow *asambleistas* put forward development projects to be approved for the annual operating budgets and convince their fellow legislators to approve them.

More important, though, the five indigenous *asambleistas* collaborated with Demócrata *asambleistas* to pass a departmental autonomy statute. (Departments have a similar constitutional requirement to pass their autonomy statutes.) Their goal was to make sure that indigenous rights, especially autonomy, were inserted in the department statute. This was critical for the long-term strategy of autonomy, but it positioned them right in between the MAS and the Verdes. It is clear that Rubén Costas, the powerful governor of Santa Cruz, does not support indigenous autonomy, because it takes away some of his territorial and fiscal power. On the other hand, by taking a public position allying with local indigenous peoples, Costas offers a slap in the face to Morales. Ruth Yarigua explained that in meetings with their bases, the representatives came up with over eighty points they wanted modified in the draft statute. They invited the MAS delegates to collaborate with them, but the latter refused. The Verdes, on the other hand, were eager to work with them to include their amendments. The resulting legislative session to approve and amend the statute was an amazing event. The hall was filled with the

elite of Santa Cruz, there to witness the historic moment for which their movement had struggled so long. As the president of the assembly called for approval of each article, it was the Verde representatives—mostly rich, white members of the traditional political class—who proposed amendments recognizing indigenous peoples' languages, territories, and rights to autonomy. When the votes were called, all the seventeen representatives on the Verdes' side of the hall raised their hands in assent, along with all five of the indigenous representatives on their side. The dramatic physical act of actually choosing sides reinforced the political decisions being made here. This happened for many hours as hundreds of articles were approved one by one. On each vote, the president registered the twenty-two votes in favor, more than enough to create the two-thirds majority of the twenty-seven total votes. The MAS delegates abstained on each vote.

The next day, the legislators presented the approved statute to Governor Costas in an even more spectacular event. In the governor's office on the main plaza, the hall was filled with representatives of the press, legislators, and the public. Finally, Governor Costas came down the stairs accompanied by the leaders of the five indigenous groups and their representatives. Costas said he was sorry to make us all wait but he had to meet with these important indigenous leaders to assure them that Santa Cruz's autonomy "was not just for some, but for all." He said the indigenous peoples are *iyambae*, using the Guaraní word for freedom that has been claimed by the departmental autonomy movement (Lowrey 2006). "They have no fear, no owners, so they are part of this process of autonomy." Then, he acknowledged that without the five indigenous votes, the Verdes could not have passed the new statute. "Thank you!" he roared, bringing the crowd to their feet. "We will continue to coordinate with you, to help meet your demands [*reivindicaciones*], you who have been here even before the republic was formed." He turned to the crowd. "Now we are working on basic services, with women and youth, to create a better society. I told our indigenous brothers, don't worry: now there will be development for all! Let us prepare to keep moving forward!"

Outside the hall, people were congratulating each other, but the Guaraní *asambleista* Ruth Yarigua looked worried. "Well, now we have to insist that they fulfill their promises [*que cumplan*]. Many times they say good things, but they never fulfill them." In fact, few weeks later, she acknowledged their alliance was risky. "He gave us his commitment, but we know that if we are not on top of him, he won't do anything." She also admitted she had been criticized by people in Charagua for having allied with the Verdes. Had she been bribed? some asked. Was this another example of *egoismo*, where the temptations of power had overwhelmed her responsibility to her community? On Costas's side, we can also see a pragmatic sense of compromise. Including indigenous autonomy in the statute may go against the department's own strategic interests, since it may lead to a loss of control over government funds. But it already exists in the national constitution;

so acknowledging it does not risk much. In exchange, the Verdes were able to pass their statute, a milestone in their struggle for departmental autonomy.

STRATEGIES AT HOME

While there were both risks and benefits to working with the Verdes at the departmental level, at home in Charagua, things were different. To get the autonomy statute passed in town, Guaranís chose another path: an alliance with the MAS. Belarmino Solano, a schoolteacher, key advocate for autonomy, and then mayor of Charagua, explained their tactical decision. In 2010, he said, the APG had wanted to make alliances with other parties, especially the MAS, but the Guaranís were divided among themselves, some with the Verdes, some with other particular interests. “And this was a crucial moment for autonomy! We always had indigenous autonomy as Plan A, but this had been delayed, so we went for Plan B, making an alliance with the MAS and the APG.” They began with the 2014 national level elections, putting forward a Guaraní candidate, Abilio Vaca, as a MAS congressman in the national legislature. Their campaign was successful. Both Morales and Vaca won. Then, in the March 2015 municipal elections, they tried the same tactic, all the while knowing the alliance might prove transitory.

This was also a positive alliance for the MAS. Having seen the lowland indigenous groups migrate towards the Verdes at the departmental level, it was a way to exert influence in Charagua, and to have a hand in the autonomy project. As Belarmino made clear, the national elections had shown that the APG could bring out the vote: “They can see we have the power of convoking people here. With the win for Vaca and Evo, they can see that we are part of the *proceso de cambio* that our brother Evo began. We are indigenous people like him, we are brothers. . . . We didn’t want to lose this space and the means to move together towards equality.”

So the APG/MAS candidates campaigned with the blue banner of the MAS, and handily won the mayor’s position and four city councilors, now holding the majority. This was a savvy tactic for a number of reasons, above all because the highland residents of the Estación, who were very leery of the autonomy statute, are strongly MAS voters. By wearing the colors of Evo’s party, the Guaranís hoped to convince their Quechua migrant neighbors they were on the same path. Rosa Mamani, one of the leaders of the women’s Bartolina Sisa association, told me that this alliance would make the town better. I met her at a rally for the referendum, where she and a few other women from the market were waving a flag for their association. Speaking shyly in Quechua-inflected Spanish, Rosa told me that previous mayors had ignored highland demands, like the one her group is pushing for: a new municipal marketplace to sell their products. But when Belarmino came to see their association during his campaign, he was listening. He promised to help them in their demands, and they gave him their support. While she was still not

convinced about the autonomy statute, she was opening up to it. Perhaps, she said, she would just vote blank and not oppose it now.

This strategy did not impress everyone, however. The junta vecinal and the civic committee, made up of white–mestizos who lived in the pueblo, still had strong objections to the statute. One afternoon, I went to talk to them as they finished their meeting, held in the schoolhouse. We met in an empty classroom, with the sounds of children playing noisy games in the schoolyard, and talked for hours about their fears. The president of the civic committee, María Antonia Arancibia, whom I had talked to on each of my visits, was the most vehement. Her family has raised cattle in the region for generations. She argued that the statute was an invention that had nothing to do with the real issues of social relations in the town. “This whole thing is just made up,” she told me, “it is copied from the Andeans, and from Evo Morales.” CIPCA had written it. “Moreover,” and here they all agreed, nodding their heads bitterly, “this new statute excludes us. We don’t even appear in the prologue. We too are ancestral here. We, too, care for the fauna and the space, but in the statute’s prologue, only Guaraní appear. We also live here!!!” The leader of the junta, a schoolteacher named Jorge, said, “Look, we aren’t against autonomy, just not with this statute. It doesn’t recognize us as mestizos. We don’t appear.” A second teacher, Lilly, a young woman with a worried look, said “we are not against the conversion, after all, they are our ancestors. It is that they brought us the statute all finished, without letting us intervene.” I had heard this position (that they had not been invited to the assembly) over the years, yet, it does not square with the facts. In 2011, I had interviewed María Antonia, and then she told me that they had been invited, but they refused to be involved. At that point, the whites–mestizos could not imagine this process would go forward, and didn’t want to have anything to do with it. Now, in 2015, their worst fears were being realized. Lilly continued, “we all know what is going to happen. The community leaders are going to benefit from this, and they won’t share the money with the town or even their own communities. They will completely ignore us from the pueblo.” Jorge added, “No, it will create a Guaraní upper caste, and we will end up supporting it.” In contrast to the first time I interviewed her in 2011, when she refused to even think about autonomy, this time, María Antonia had read the statute carefully. Pointing to various clauses, she argued that the statute would allow the AIOC to establish new tax measures. “Who has the money to pay taxes? We, of the pueblo, will be taxed and we will lose our lands.” They all remained unmoved by the repeated declarations that the statute would allow each sector to govern themselves. “The statute requires that all representatives [to the decision-making bodies] speak Guaraní!! That excludes us all.”

The Guaraní had heard these objections since they began their push for autonomy, and were not deterred. Instead, they used their political control of the mayor’s office to push towards approval of the autonomy statute in the September 2015

referendum. This was evident at a summit meeting co-organized by the mayor's office, the Ministry of Autonomies, and the Electoral Tribunal in July 2015. What was called the "Cumbre de Autonomía Indígena Charagua Iyambae" (Summit on Indigenous Autonomy of Charagua *Iyambe*) brought together protagonists for indigenous autonomy from municipalities all over the Chaco region with officials from various government ministries, cities, and funding institutions. The summit was a powerful way to raise issues and provoke discussion among Charagua's many sectors. It was held over three days in the same cultural center where the assembly had drafted the autonomy statute. The Ministry of Autonomies and the Ministry of Health pooled money to be able to make the event happen, and there were commissions on health, agrarian development, indigenous justice, and education. The Ministry of Autonomies' staff came from La Paz, and they grumbled openly about how little support the central government was giving to this project. They represented one wing of the MAS state—the leftist indigenista advocates we learned about in chapter 1. These were young anthropologists and social scientists dedicated to social change, who were holding on to the one space within the government apparatus where they thought they could make a difference. They said it was only a matter of time before their work would be stymied by the more conservative Hacienda (Treasury) or the State Departments. Until then, they worked creatively to find money for printing, per diems for leaders, and publicity.

The meetings demonstrated the social complexity of the region. My Guaraní friends from Santa Cruz had arrived, to support the process and to learn about how they might use this experience to move their own demands forward. Sitting next to their aunts and uncles from small villages in Charagua, they caught up with family gossip and compared political strategies. I had encouraged María Antonia and the junta vicinal members to attend, to participate. She and Jorge, the schoolteacher, pushed into the crowded room, listening with frowns on their faces. There were representatives from communities all over the Chaco region, several of them in process of petitioning for conversions of their municipalities. At the inauguration, Mayor Belarmino introduced the ministers of autonomies and defense, who had arrived from La Paz, along with indigenous and union leaders who came from across the region to support the process. Melva Hurtado, the leader of the MAS-affiliated CIDOB, came with her entourage. Local NGO and Church people mixed with ministry staff. Representatives from the four capitánías arrived on trucks sent out to fetch them from the outlying villages. Children ran around and babies cried, while this amazing mix of people and interests debated the complex and intersecting needs of the region: infrastructure, health programs, better education, and most important, control over profits from the hydrocarbon industry. In the commission on autonomy, which I attended, the young capitán of Charagua Norte gave an impassioned speech about how the statute would include all sectors of the Charagua community, and how this united community would

benefit from development projects and more direct flow of funds to the town. At a break, María Antonia continued her disapproval, saying she was not moved. Jorge, on the other hand, was impressed with the commissions and the many important projects in the works that he was hearing about. He seemed much more open to working together. “I’m surprised,” he said.

The final afternoon of the summit, the participants delivered the results of their deliberations to the ministers in a public display in the town’s open-air coliseum built recently with funds from the *Bolivia Cambia, Evo Cumple* (Bolivia Changes, Evo Fulfills) program. A huge poster with government logos declared “Guaraní Autonomy will benefit all the population, without excluding or discriminating against anyone.” Many of the town’s residents trickled in, curious to see what the Guaraní mayor could extract from the two MAS ministers. In a classic Bolivian spectacle format, the program included speeches by honored guests, a MAS senator, local Guaraní leaders, and the local priest. All affirmed that the Charagua autonomy process was historic and would serve as an example across the country and even internationally. After a dance number, where Guaraní girls invited the two ministers to dance—a photo op for the journalists, to be sure—the mayor made his tactical move, linking autonomy with getting new development projects. Don Belarmino addressed the ministers, saying how glad they were here to see that Charagua was part of the government’s *proceso de cambio*. “Before, our authorities could never get any projects from the government, but now we are working with Evo. You ministers are the spokespeople now, to say that Charagua is with Evo, and that we will get projects.” He delivered the proposals from the autonomy summit, and using the language of the MAS, he declared, “We are going to continue the process of change right here. You can’t be plurinational without indigenous autonomy. Here we will practice interculturality everyday, defending democracy and promoting development for all. This is autonomy!” Then he began bringing out bulging binders, with the projects his staff had prepared for presentation to the ministers. Handing each one to the minister, he called out the projects, including the completion of the paved highway to the town (huge applause from everyone); construction of a new coliseum in the rural Izozog zone, a new school building, a bus terminal (applause from the *transportistas*), and a municipal market (high-pitched shouts from the highland market women, waving their banner). Entrusted with taking the enormous stack of projects back to La Paz, the ministers were covered with Guaraní textiles and sent on their way.

FIRST STEPS TOWARDS AN INDIGENOUS STATE?

The pragmatic politics of the Guaranís of Charagua succeeded. Only a few weeks after the autonomy summit, a majority of the residents of the city voted yes in the 2015 referendum. The Guaraní leaders are now in the process of implementing the

new statute, converting the municipality into an indigenous autonomous AIOC. What that will mean remains to be seen over the next years, as it gets put into practice. It will undoubtedly be hotly contested. The first steps have shown just what is at stake. The margin was slim, declining slightly from the 55.7 percent they won in the first referendum to 53.3 percent. The autonomy project declined most in the city centers: from 38 percent in 2009 to 33.6 percent in 2015. This includes the Estación, so the Quechua market vendor Rosa Mamani perhaps wasn't so convinced in the long run. It also declined slightly in Bajo and Alto Izozog, where it had received 53 percent in 2009, but the *Sí* vote managed to capture 51 percent of that critical electorate (Bolivia 2016). That means that although the Guaranís won, they are implementing this new structure of governance with a host of people who are opposed to it and determined to make it fail. In September 2016, the town held elections for the various new assemblies, putting the AIOC status into force, and constituting the country's first indigenous governed municipality. The fact that each sector chose its own way of electing their representatives—some by secret vote, and some in assemblies—led some to see this as the first example of an “intercultural public institution” (Villagomez Guzmán 2016). There were all kinds of disputes and accusations, however, mainly from the people of the pueblo. In a shocking move, the *comite civico* threatened CIPCA, the NGO that had assisted in the autonomy process, calling for it to be expelled from town. The UN High Commission on Human Rights in Bolivia had to intervene, protecting its rights (*El Deber* 2016). Yet, the Charagua AIOC has the legal and institutional support of the constitution and the Constitutional Tribunal, even if the MAS's political support is grudgingly given.

Compared to the cases described in chapter 6, the Charagua autonomy project gives us a very different view of what decolonization and a focus on indigeneity can mean at the local level. On the one hand, Belarmino's performance at the summit demonstrates how powerful the developmentalist discourse put forward by the Morales government has become and how local actors—both indigenous and non-indigenous—must utilize that discourse to win the support of their constituencies. Of course, local governments have always depended on public works (see Postero 2007a), but this takes a particular tone these days. Here, Belarmino tied indigenous autonomy to economic development in the same way that Morales does in his new discourse of economic liberation. Morales links “liberation” to successful management of international hydrocarbon markets; here, Belarmino linked “autonomy” to successfully channeling the profits from that resource exploitation to his community in the form of development projects. The Santa Cruz governor, Rubén Costas, demonstrated similar pragmatism when he sealed his alliance with indigenous leaders with a developmental promise. This is not merely mimicry, or instrumental pandering. Local politics is part of these national-level transformations. Morales argues that the national extractivist development project

is liberating and decolonizing because it is under the control of a sovereign plurinational state rather than foreign transnational corporations, and the Guaranis of Charagua similarly push for an autonomy funded by oil and gas rents, but controlled by them.

The Charagua case study shows something else as well: the complex negotiations Guaraní actors carry out in the *spaces between* nested sovereignties. The Guaraní politicians—Belarmino Solano in Charagua, and Ruth Yarigua in the capital—are trying to make visible their own indigenous notion of autonomy in the interstices of liberal politics, while all the while taking advantage of the ambiguities to make both political and material gains. When Governor Costas used the Guaraní word *iyambae*—“freedom,” or “without owners”—and insisted that the indigenous “brothers” were part of departmental autonomy, he was referring to a very different understanding of autonomy. His notion implied regional administrative power in a liberal/neoliberal state system. For many Guaranís, however, autonomy is something entirely different, linked to the Guaraní way of being in the world or a set of historical organizing practices. Yet the Guaranís did not contest Costas’s use of this word, but rather forged an alliance on the basis of it.

Similarly, in Charagua, Belarmino articulated his local autonomy demands in terms understandable in relation to the national MAS discourse: decolonization, plurinationalism, interculturality, and most of all development. Again, these terms mean radically different things to the various actors who use them, but it is this ambiguity, this ability to project various meanings onto them, that makes them such useful tools. These ambiguities also make possible consensus within the Guaraní communities, where there are also significant debates over visions for the future. For some, autonomy is most important because it will bring in more development, in the form of economic resources and educational opportunities for their children. In this sense, the Guaranís accept what Simpson (2014) would call the “gift” of redistribution from state, reinforcing the nation’s sovereignty. For others, however, autonomy is closer to that articulated by Don René Gómez above: a recognition of their reciprocal relationships with each other and their land, and a call to live their own Guaraní way of life. This vision promotes a form of equality, where sovereign actors speak nation to nation. For others, these goals overlap. The Guaraní leaders’ political negotiations have managed to create spaces for all these visions as they come together and swerve apart in the “partial connectedness” that is indigenous life in settler societies (de la Cadena 2015).

When I asked my indigenous collaborators in Charagua how they managed the dizzying dance between political parties and ambiguous meanings, they shook their heads, trying to make me understand. One said, “We have always lived this way, in this space. This is how we work.” They are used to holding in tension conflicting meanings, the sort of cohabitation Silvia Rivera Cusicanqui calls *chi’xi*. This Aymara concept illuminates the fact that something can be simultaneously

white and not white and black and not black. She explains it this way: “It is the color that is the product of juxtaposition, in small points or spots, of opposing or contrasting colors: the white and the black, the red and the green, etc. It is the mottled gray that results from the imperceptible mixture of white and black, they may be confused in perception without ever mixing completely. The notion of *ch’ixi* . . . obeys the Aymara idea of something that is and is not at the same time, that is to say, the logic of the third included” (Rivera Cusicanqui 2010a: 69). This is very different from hybridity; instead, it is a matter of experiencing both strands at the same time. Historians have shown that since colonial times, indigenous groups have managed this multiplicity, living and working between partially connected worlds of rural collective communities on the one hand, and mines and markets, on the other (see Harris 1995). The Guaranís, especially, have always been good at this, forging temporary alliances with different groups to ensure their survival but not disappearing in the process. Pifarré has argued that their central strategy over time was to “make pacts without selling themselves to the *karais* [whites]” (1989: 295–97, cited in Albó 2012: 30). This “Guaraní diplomacy” (294) has given them a practical historical understanding of how to negotiate nested sovereignties.

In this most recent iteration of Guaraní diplomacy, the leaders of Charagua have accomplished something they proudly declare to be *inédito*, or unprecedented. Despite the fact that the Morales government’s discourse and practices have moved away from indigenous rights, these local politicians have doggedly pushed the “indigenous state” to acknowledge their rights to create one at the local level in Charagua. Granted, it is not as radical as it could be, but these new institutions, when enacted, will incorporate collective decision-making practices into the liberal state structure in a new way. As a pilot case, it will be carefully watched and, if successful, emulated. Here, at least, indigeneity and indigenous practices are useful as the basis for emancipatory politics. It remains to be seen whether they will continue to be so.

Conclusion

Between Politics and Policing

In February 2016, Bolivia held a referendum to approve a proposal to amend the 2009 Constitution to allow Evo Morales to run for a fourth term in 2019. His current term expires in 2020. Surprising many observers, the proposal was defeated by a slim margin: 51.27 percent voted No (Casey 2016). Most observers assumed that the positive economic situation I have described in this book and the overarching political support Morales enjoyed from his base would carry him through this referendum as it has every other election. Recall that he was elected in 2005 with the largest majority of any president since the return to democracy, 54 percent; ushered in the new constitution by public referendum in 2009; and then handily won the 2014 election with 60 percent of the vote. But this election had a different outcome, and the results are significant: 2019 might mark the end of the “indigenous state” headed by Morales.

The months leading up to the 2016 referendum had telegraphed possible concerns. There had been a number of scandals involving Morales, including one in which he appeared to have abandoned a child resulting from a love affair. Most important, the country had been appalled by a scandal of the FONDIOC, the Indigenous Development Fund. Millions of dollars had gone missing from phantom development projects, and many of the country’s most important indigenous leaders had been sent to jail. Critics accused the MAS government both of gross mismanagement and of setting up the corruption to gain further state power (see Saavedra 2015). Then, to top it all off, the week before the election, a protest march in El Alto against the opposition mayor Soledad Chapetón turned tragic when the municipal building was set on fire, resulting in the deaths of six. Two MAS militants were arrested, tainting Morales and the MAS in this incident (Casey and Machicao 2016).

In his thoughtful postmortem on the defeat, Bret Gustafson (2016) pointed out that the *No* votes came from the classic opposition headed by the eternal presidential candidate Samuel Doria Medina and former president Tuto Quiroga and the lowland opposition led by the Demócratas party and Governor Rubén Costas. However, even among MAS supporters, Gustafson noted, there was some ambivalence. Although Morales had produced a booming economy, led efforts to help the poor, and pushed back against U.S. imperialism, for many people this was no longer enough. Gustafson notes

as more than one colleague said, “the people are exhausted.” *Desgaste*, exhaustion, was the word I heard most frequently: Evo’s party suffered from political exhaustion (*desgaste político*). Too many deals with too many interests had created machination, manipulation, and corruption within the government. The exodus of committed pro-MAS militants meant that the party’s vision of democratic and cultural revolution had been penetrated by the “*neoMASistas*” or the “new MAS-istas”—that is, politically interested actors of various stripes with little ideological conviction. (Gustafson 2016)

Gustafson cites as prescient the many intellectuals on the Left, like Raúl Prada and Silvia Rivera Cusicanquí, who have long lamented the unfulfilled promises of the democratic cultural revolution. In the weeks before the referendum, several intellectuals issued thoughtful evaluations of the decade of MAS government (see Arze 2016; Solón 2016). But Gustafson reminds us that nearly half of the country voted for the referendum. He concludes that these *Sí* votes were not all markers of blind approval for the MAS. They may have been votes for economic stability. Most important, many voted “Yes” because they were concerned that the end of Evo would bring a return of the past, an unraveling of all the many gains of the process of change. “A ‘Yes’ for Evo was a yes for the longer history of struggle and hope for its future” (*ibid.*).

The contested referendum is an appropriate way to conclude, as it acts to draw attention to the disagreements that I have analyzed throughout this book about the meanings of the Morales revolution. As this phase of the indigenous state under Morales comes to an end, Bolivians continue to debate and contest the topics I have analyzed here: the meanings of indigeneity and decolonization; the form of the state; and the national development model. While the long-term legacy of the Morales state cannot be known for some time, we can summarize the effects so far.

INDIGENEITY AND DECOLONIZATION

Throughout this book, I have explored the meanings of both indigeneity and decolonization, arguing that they formed the basis of what Jacques Rancière calls emancipatory politics—a revolutionary agenda that brought the MAS to power

and propelled its “process of change.” As I have shown, following the rise of the indigenous movement in the 1980s and 1990s, and then the insurrections of the early 2000s, indigenous identity became the platform from which many poor Bolivians began to organize for justice. Whereas class had previously been the most salient category from which to make claims for inclusion, in recent decades, ethnic identity has taken precedence. Morales and the MAS party were able to gather these demands after the gas and water wars at the beginning of the twenty-first century, articulating an agenda that sought to return the profits of Bolivia’s patrimony to *el pueblo boliviano*, the Bolivian people. In his 2005 election campaign, Morales merged an anti-imperialist, anti-neoliberal platform with a populist framing that appealed broadly to the poor, indigenous, and popular sectors. As I showed in chapter 1, from its beginnings, the MAS party and state apparatus was forced to balance the tensions between very different agendas: the indigenous, the leftist, and the populist. Yet Morales and the MAS state made important use of the discourse of indigeneity to legitimate their political, social, and economic agendas. Through his public speeches and performances, Morales claimed to represent the indigenous population, embodying Túpac Katari and thereby linking his agenda to the anti-colonial indigenous insurrections of the past. This was also true in the international venue, where he claimed indigenous values like *vivir bien* could solve climate change. His powerful performances of indigeneity were supplemented by those of the state, as we saw in the collective weddings analyzed in chapter 3. Central to this enactment of indigeneity was the theory and practice of decolonization, which sought to reverse the influence of Western colonial legacies and to empower indigenous values. As described in the Introduction and the first half of this book, the MAS state promised to decolonize not only the state but also the wider society.

It is difficult to overstate the tremendous positive effects this revaluing of indigenous identity has had in Bolivia. When I first began working in Bolivia in 1990, the indigenous people I worked with suffered from structural racism that excluded them from the national imaginary and participation in the political realm. It made them feel ashamed of their cultural practices. I remember how my Guaraní friends would talk about the *vergüenza* (shame) they felt when talking to upper-class white–mestizo people. Their lack of education and perceived inability to behave according to mestizo norms made them fearful of discrimination. While racism is far from being erased, the past decade has radically changed the ways indigenous and indigenous-descended peoples experience their identities. Having a president who proudly declared his indigenous identity and filled government offices with people wearing indigenous clothes and speaking indigenous languages has literally changed their world. As the residents of El Alto we met in chapter 6 explained: “Evo has opened the doors for us.” Now many people who felt fearful to enter state buildings or banks or universities, proudly claim their rights as citizens and residents. They believe the government is the result of their collective

activism, and as a result, is responsive to their interests. This opening of doors has also had tremendous class effects, in essence altering the class structure of the country. Indigenous people now work in commerce, law, and healthcare across the country, have attended universities, and make up the burgeoning indigenous middle class. As described in chapter 4, the government's policies have reduced poverty, massively grown local infrastructure, and distributed national resources to local and state governments. Indigenous people are involved in the country's most fundamental political questions, serving in the Parliament and in the government's ministries. The anti-racism law means racist talk is no longer acceptable and is penalized. These are huge and positive accomplishments of the Morales administration, a sort of sea change similar to the civil rights movement of the 1960s in the United States.

Yet, like the civil rights movement in the United States, which posited inclusion and justice for African Americans, the Bolivian *proceso de cambio* has not resolved the structures of racism it promised to overcome. In the United States, many saw Barack Obama's election as the first African American president as evidence that liberalism is perfectible, and that, with time, democracy can embrace those previously excluded from its benefits. Yet the wave of violence and police brutality that came to light in the 2010s revealed the ongoing exclusions of American liberalism. As the Black Lives Matter movement has made clear, many poor urban blacks are still sacrificed every day to racist state violence. In Bolivia, the cultural democratic revolution promised a similar redemption: putting the evils of colonialism in the past. But because the state has continued to tie its economic policies to a capitalist model of natural resource extraction, it continues to sacrifice those indigenous people whose lands and livelihoods are "obstacles" to national development. As we saw in chapter 5, the MAS state systematically privileges extractivist development over the desires of lowlands indigenous communities. The TIPNIS case was a watershed for the MAS administration, and rendered visible the fact that capitalist development trumped protection of rural indigenous communities. In the era of "economic liberation," national policies focusing on expanding the agricultural frontier, supporting agribusiness, and expanding energy production make clear that these policies will continue, recontextualizing long-standing patterns of racialized development. And despite its discourse of decolonization, the MAS state has utilized co-optation, police violence, and legal mechanisms to silence its opponents, including indigenous groups. Thus, the accomplishments of the Bolivian process of change must also be measured in relation to these ongoing exclusions.

I conclude that, in part because of these tensions, indigeneity and decolonization have faded from their initial privileged discursive positions. If Morales and the MAS initially relied on their ability to enact decolonization for Bolivia's formerly oppressed poor and indigenous peoples, using this discourse as the basis of their emancipatory politics, in the post-TIPNIS period, indigeneity no longer

serves that purpose. Morales's potent indigenous figurations and the state's grand spectacles of anti-Western cultural rituals are increasingly perceived by many—like the residents of Tiwanaku whom we met in chapter 3—as “shows” used by the government to cement its power. Again, I want to emphasize how important such shows can be to ethnic pride. However, as time passed, this symbolic dimension appears to have lost its power to convene constituents. Increasingly, performances of indigeneity serve as tools of state legitimation rather than as sites of liberation. Thus, to return to Rancière, we can say that indigeneity has become a tool of policing.

The 2012 census may be one indication of this development. In 2001, at the height of the neoliberal multicultural era, the census reported 62 percent of the adult population as indigenous (INE 2003), or 66 percent of the entire population with children included. In 2012, however, the number of people identifying as indigenous dropped to 41 percent, with 2.8 million people identifying as members of the thirty-six indigenous groups, out of a total of 6.9 million people over fifteen years of age. The numbers dropped to about 34 percent in the highlands, among Aymara and Quechua peoples, and to about the same amount in the lowlands, among the three largest groups—Guaraní, Chiquitano, and Mojeño. Only where the local peoples were involved in serious disputes with the MAS government—like TIPNIS—did the census show an increase in indigenous peoples (Schavelzon 2014).

The census results were interpreted by many as a blow to the MAS project, which has based its legitimacy in great part on representing the indigenous “majority” (see, e.g., Mesa 2013; Tabra 2013). Vice President García Linera quickly wrote a response to critics (2014), interpreting the census results as a demonstration of the administration's great success. He insisted that indigenous people were a majority of the population and that the new plurinational state represented a new Bolivian nation, which is itself indigenous. He argued that during the first stages of the “process of change,” indigenous people needed to organize as indigenous to defeat the white-mestizo oligarchy that had ruled Bolivia for centuries. Not only has this been accomplished, but the new plurinational state has itself been “indigenized,” leaving indigenous peoples free to identify themselves as Bolivians. Thus, he argued, the census represents a victory for the indigenous majority.

Others had different conclusions. Pablo Stefanoni (2013) pointed out that the census question asked if people identified as “indigenous originary peasant” peoples or nations. This category, which appears in the new constitution, mixes national identity with class identity, in essence “ruralizing” indigeneity (6; see also Tamburini 2013). Many urban people do not feel part of this ruralized vision of indigeneity. Salvador Schavelzon (2014) makes a slightly different argument: he says the generic or “ecumenical” state-led version of indigeneity is not particularly salient for many highland and urban people, because it does not take into account

the lived or territorially shaped identities of local people, but rather is expressed discursively at the national level. Thus, for most of Morales's constituents in the highlands, this sort of indigeneity indexes a political membership rather than a personal or collective identity (2014). But for those in heated struggles over the control of their territory, like those fighting over the TIPNIS highway, indigeneity means something quite different, quite personal and embodied. For these respondents, their identity as indigenous was indicative of their membership in their local communities and struggles.

The case studies in this book support these more nuanced understandings of the evolving political relevance of indigenous identity and show how state versions of indigeneity have lost ground. The participants in the collective wedding described in chapter 3, for instance, held strongly to their identities as Aymara and were happy to support their president in his political project. Yet they were clear that the image of the decolonized indigenous subject they were asked to enact—the *decolonizado permitido*—was a performance that did not represent their daily reality. The urban residents in El Alto presented in chapter 6 also eschewed the label “indigenous.” “The indigenous are those who work the land,” community leader Gonzalo León told me. They did not understand decolonization as having to do with indigeneity, but rather as a form of anti-imperialism allowing the state to reclaim and redistribute the profits from national resource exploitation. Many urban indigenous people appear to be focusing on getting ahead economically and their support or critique of the government tends to be framed in those terms. As we saw in chapters 6 and 7, however, for many lowland indigenous communities, indigeneity continues to be a critical site of contested politics. After the TIPNIS case, many lowland indigenous peoples felt deeply betrayed by Morales and the MAS state. They perceive the MAS state's representations of indigeneity as cynical performances enabling new colonial domination of lowland territories. As the case of the Guaranís of Charagua showed, this context required leaders to partake of the state discourses of development in order to push forward their long-standing struggles for local autonomy, in essence performing their own version of the permitted decolonized Indians.

The findings of this book demonstrate once again the malleability of the category of indigeneity. I explained in the Introduction that who counts as “indigenous” is a fundamentally political question, emerging from struggles over particular social, cultural, environmental, and economic matters during particular moments (García 2008; Friedlander 1975). I do not mean to imply by this that it is a simple construction without real meaning. The cases in this book show quite the opposite: for all the self-identifying indigenous people I describe here, their ethnic identity as Aymara or Guaraní is fundamental to their place in nation, their relations with neighbors, and their location within the political economy. It defines their sense of membership in the plurinational state and in large part structures their hopes

for the future. It is deeply meaningful. Nevertheless, the category of indigeneity is a slippery one that can be claimed and performed by many actors with distinct interests. I conclude that indigeneity is what Elizabeth Povinelli (2011) would call an “ethical substance,” a shared but contestable notion around which actors can frame their disagreements about development, environmentalism, and sovereignty. The many versions of virtuous indigeneity that circulated around the TIPNIS controversy analyzed in chapter 5 are prime examples of this. Thus, indigeneity acts as the site of both politics and policing, providing the cultural material for the blurry boundary between the two.

LIBERALISM, SOVEREIGNTY, AND THE INDIGENOUS STATE

If Morales promised to alter the position of indigenous people, his cultural democratic revolution also promised to decolonize the state. As I explained in chapter 2, perhaps the most revolutionary promise of the MAS state was the possibility of enacting indigenous alternatives to the liberal state. Indigenous intellectuals posed substantial challenges to the classic notions of sovereignty of the nation-state in the Constituent Assembly, arguing for a form of shared decision-making, especially about natural resources. As I have shown, however, the MAS diffused these alternatives, using much of the language of indigenous rights and plurinationalism, but in essence retaining the classic state structure of Western liberal democracies. The new constitution contains some inspiring language about indigenous self-determination and instituted some decentralization, allowing both indigenous municipalities and regions to form autonomous governments. But, as I have shown, the central state still has jurisdiction over all nonrenewable natural resource decisions and channels funding to these entities subsumed to its power. Thus, the nation-state retained full sovereignty, despite language to the contrary.

This surprising result becomes less surprising when we return to the makeup of the MAS, described in chapter 1. While indigenista activists formed an important part of the MAS state, and were especially salient in the face Bolivia presented to the rest of the world, another large part of the MAS inner circle were leftists and union leaders. Their goal was always state capture: gaining control of the state and using its power to accomplish their agendas (see Beaulieu 2008). As I have shown, Vice President García Linera has consistently argued that the MAS state is the best mechanism by which to accomplish revolutionary justice. In his view, the first goal was to overcome the white–mestizo political class that previously controlled the state, and then use state power to intervene in the economy and redistribute benefits to the people. He invoked national sovereignty to justify the ongoing extractivist development project and its most controversial aspect, the TIPNIS highway. In recent years, this form of national sovereignty is the basis of the new discourse

we saw in chapter 6, that of “economic liberation”—the results of a strong nation negotiating in the global market.

Throughout the book, I show the tensions this form of sovereignty produced. Even if one accepts the notion that a strong state might be a tool in the search for economic justice, it is clear that such power also holds danger. Chapter 2 shows the delicate balance at the Constituent Assembly between the actions of MAS militants who wanted to reconstitute the state and those who saw their actions as violating the rule of law. Most important, the indigenous proposals for power sharing were silenced in favor of a powerful central state. In the TIPNIS case, the MAS state exerted violent force to put down challenges to its development agenda.

These developments lead us to a difficult question: at what point does the use of state sovereignty go beyond liberal state sovereignty to illiberal or authoritarian power? As I suggest in chapter 2, these may be “undecidable” questions at the boundary between politics and policing. What appears as overreaching authoritarianism to some may appear to be long overdue popular justice to others. Yet it is clear that, until the 2016 referendum, the MAS successfully countered all challenges, continuously consolidating its power. Thanks to its “nationalization” of hydrocarbon resources, and then to its maneuvering at the Constituent Assembly to foreclose regional or local decision-making on natural resource matters, the MAS state assured it would reap the massive rents from the hydrocarbon sector. This allowed it to distribute funds and infrastructure to its followers, cementing its popularity. This strategy was successful for ten years: in the 2014 election, the MAS even won a majority in Santa Cruz, the center of opposition in the first years. As indigenous leaders explained, it made no sense not to “get on the train,” the government gravy train that was guaranteed to provide jobs and benefits. As the Guaraní activists Justa and Gregorio make clear in chapter 6, it became a matter of common sense to go along with the MAS, even if you opposed it ideologically. “Why should others reap the benefits of the revolution we fought for?” they asked.

By 2016, however, this concentration of power suffered fractures, as allegations of corruption emerged. At the national level, many MAS-supporting indigenous leaders were accused of pocketing money intended for community development from the Fondo Indígena (FONDIOC). Leaders were jailed and the central government was accused of either negligent oversight, or worse, setting up these leaders as a way of silencing them. Either way, this ugliness at the center of indigenous politics hurt the MAS. Morales’s personal scandals multiplied and painted him with a tawdry brush. Across the country, while now legally strictly sanctioned, local corruption appeared to be rampant. In every field site in which I have conducted research in recent years, people have told me about how the MAS funneled money to its militants by giving them government jobs and, more important, contracts for the big infrastructure development projects. New companies blossomed, as the families and friends of MAS civil servants reaped these benefits. I have not

been able to confirm these accusations, but this is common knowledge among ordinary people I have spoken to in La Paz, El Alto, and Santa Cruz. True or not, the sense of widespread clientelism helped undermine the high moral ground on which the MAS indigenous state had begun. Instead of a government beholden to social movements, as it declared itself to be, in recent years, it appears that social movements were in fact beholden supplicants of the rentier state. This sense may help to explain the results of the 2016 referendum. Ten years of power almost inevitably results in these sorts of clientelist structures; they are a feature of all incumbency and one reason why term limits are healthy.

We must also consider the Bolivian case in the wider regional context, where across the continent, moves to the left, the so-called Pink Tide, have been reversed. Once-powerful leftist leaders in Brazil and Argentina have fallen to corruption charges, Venezuela's government is under attack, and even center-left Michelle Bachelet of Chile has lost popularity. Observers agree that conservatives are on the rise, in part because of a widespread disillusionment with the Left (Romero 2016). Bolivian Vice President García Linera ruefully acknowledged this turn: "We are facing a historical turning point in the region; some are talking about a throwback. . . . We must relearn what we learned in the 80s and 90s, when everyone was against us" (*ibid*).

So, how then do we evaluate the indigenous state? First, I conclude that despite the strength of its discourse about indigeneity, this state did not fulfill many indigenous demands. The MAS chose to use the liberal nation-state model instead of any of the more radical alternatives proposed, and used it to consolidate party power. Second, it played up national sovereignty as a way to legitimize its development agenda, silencing local people's objections. I return to this in the next section. Third, as we saw in chapters 2 and 7, efforts to institute alternatives based on collective governance, like indigenous autonomy, received little support from the MAS state. It put up bureaucratic obstacles to these efforts, creating a legal structure that subsumed these municipalities into the central state. In the few cases where local indigenous communities persisted, like Charagua, they were forced to present their forms of self-governance within the dominant state discourse of economic liberation, rather than any challenge to Western liberal national sovereignty. I conclude that if there is such a thing as an indigenous state, we are only seeing the first glimmerings of it in local projects like Charagua's new autonomy statute.

DECOLONIZATION AND GLOBAL CAPITALISM

Finally, there is the question of development. As I suggested at the start of chapter 6, many people on the Left hold Morales and Bolivia up as examples of alternatives to the evils of global capitalism. The activists who came to the Encuentro Social in Santa Cruz in 2015 are like many on the Left I have encountered in the United

States as I talk about my research. They assume that the popular discourse about *vivir bien*, or *buen vivir*, as it is called in other Andean countries, is a reality in Bolivia. Given the fears many of us have about the effects of global climate change, people want to hear that indigenous wisdom can help stave off the looming disaster our Western forms of development and consumption have created. When I describe the forms of resource extraction going on in Bolivia, and the plans for continued expansion of the agricultural frontier, hydroelectric energy production, and lithium mining, laid out in chapter 4, or the struggles over the TIPNIS highway recounted in chapter 5, people are often dismayed. They have a hard time reconciling their image of Morales with the economic policies and practices I describe. At one talk, one member of the audience asked me if I wasn't being too hard on Morales. Hadn't things really improved a lot for people?

As I hope I have made clear throughout the book, things have improved for many Bolivians, on many levels. Yet I think it is important to look beyond the discourses of decolonization and *vivir bien* to see what has been produced. In her wonderful book on development in Ecuador (2015), Sarah Radcliffe documents the disappointment that indigenous women express over the form of *sumak kawsay* (*vivir bien*) the government implemented. Yet they wonder what a version that engaged in the complex social heterogeneity they inhabit might look like—a real intercultural state that respected difference (Radcliffe 2015: 433). Many Bolivians express this same sort of disappointment. At the end of ten years of MAS government, Bolivia is no closer to adopting a decolonized form of economy and has made little progress towards any sustainable development, whether based on indigenous values or otherwise. The data show instead a country moving forward at full gallop towards natural resource extraction, agribusiness, and continuing its dependency on global commodity markets. If the MAS has enabled a shift in the class structure of the country, “opening the doors” to indigenous peoples, it has not made any substantial change in the basic forms of production. Transnational corporations and large-scale agricultural consortiums still produce the majority of the goods and make the majority of the profits, with the state raking profit off the top. When I was discussing this conjuncture with a colleague in Bolivia in 2015, I asked if perhaps Morales had accomplished something unusual, getting capitalist forces to support his progressive agenda. My friend shook his head, disagreeing. No, he said, “I think it is the other way around. I think the owners of the world have won again.”

I do not know if that is the case, but the Bolivian case does show the continuing creativity of capitalism, its ability to adapt to a variety of political and cultural conjunctures. In my analysis of the racialized effects of Bolivia's development project in chapter 5, I cite Allen Pred and Michael Watts's influential work on capitalism (Pred and Watts 1992), which describes the complex ways in which both spatial meanings and cultural identities are produced as capitalism is reworked in

particular moments and places (17–18). Pred and Watts argue that “nonlocal processes driving capital mobility are always experienced, constituted, and mediated locally” (xiii). “Tradition” and “custom” often provide the symbolic raw material with which actors rework and refashion the meanings of such capitalist transformations (15). Yet, they insist, transitions occur “from within, but within limits, set by the logic of capital itself” (8; see also Pred 1992). In contemporary Bolivia, I argue, decolonization has served as a new logic and justification for capitalist production. By translating continued reliance on the global market as a form of “economic liberation” or a form of decolonization, reversing the racist world order, Morales and the MAS have enabled capitalist forces in a new era. Without a doubt, as Eduardo Gudynas (2010) has forcefully argued, this “progressive extractivist” project shares the benefits of production beyond the classic elite class. That is why it is so popular. Yet it is important to acknowledge that wrapping capitalism in revolutionary talk—or indigenous textiles—does not alter the underlying political economy. Given that the state benefits directly from this development path, and given the fact that it has veto power over all projects, it is not surprising that the state has continued to sacrifice those who stand in the way. Thus, decolonization has served as a form of policing to silence those who expected it to be the basis of their emancipation.

NOTES

1. THE EMERGENCE OF INDIGENOUS NATIONALISM IN BOLIVIA: SOCIAL MOVEMENTS AND THE MAS STATE

1. Morales named Manco Inca (who resisted Pizarro's conquest of Cuzco), Túpac Katari, Túpac Amaru, and Bartolina Sisa (leaders of the indigenous insurrection of 1781), Pablo Zárate Willca (Andean indigenous leader in the late 1890s), Atihuaiqui Tumpa (Guaraní leader of the Kuruyuki rebellion in 1892), Andrés Ibañez (Cruceño leader who advocated federalism in the late 1800s), Che Guevara (Cuban revolutionary killed in Bolivia in the 1960s), Marcelo Santa Cruz (a journalist and politician killed during the military dictatorship in 1980), Luís Espinal (a Jesuit priest killed after leading hunger strikes to end the dictatorship), cocaleros (coca-growers) fallen in the tropics of Cochabamba in the struggles over drug eradication, those fallen defending the dignity of El Alto during the so-called "gas war" of 2003, the miners (the traditional backbone of workers' struggles), and the millions of human beings fallen in all of Latin America (Morales 2006)

2. The Tiwanaku Manifesto combined the discourse of indigenous intellectuals struggling against cultural subordination and the discourse of the Left, denouncing economic and political oppression (see Rivera Cusicanqui 1983: 118). For the text of the manifesto, see www.nativeweb.org/papers/statements/identity/tiwanaku.php (accessed January 16, 2017).

3. Inspired by Spanish fascism, the Falange Socialista Boliviana (FSB) tended to support military candidates, including the dictator Hugo Banzer. In the late 1980s, the FSB split into two lines, one on the right, supporting neoliberalism, and one on the left, which eventually changed its name to the Movimiento Al Socialismo Unzaguista. (They later dropped the final word). Evo Morales was a leader of this sector, and borrowed the name and legal identity for the IPSP.

4. This notion of the "multitude," then, is quite different from Hardt and Negri's use of the same term (Hardt and Negri, 2004). Hardt and Negri use the term to describe new forms

of social organization in the post-industrialized world, where new forms of labor they refer to as “immaterial labor” (like communications or information specialists) produce and manage “the common.” For them, this “biopolitical labor” not only produces knowledge, information, communication, relationships, and affective responses, but also creates social life itself. Thus, it can be the basis of resistance, such as we see in the anti-globalization protest networks and the open-source software movement. The Bolivian scholars also use the term to describe an epochal change in labor regimes, but their focus is on the very material concerns of local communities and especially those who labor on the land, such as rights to water and natural resources. Rather than seeing a sense of global commonality as a source of activism, they focus on the ways these groups articulate their interests using indigenous and pre-industrial cultural forms.

5. This group is, interestingly, not made up of representatives from the old labor movement, the COB, or the miners’ federation, which are much reduced in power these days and actively voice opposition to the Morales government. They argue that Morales is merely a reformer in league with transnational mining corporations. During the formative days of the MAS, Evo did have close ties to a veteran miners’ union leader, Filemón Escobar, who was also active in the cocaleros union, but they split. Escobar later accused Evo of having fallen under the influence of what he calls the “old Trotskyite Left” sowing dissent and confrontation (Davalos 2008; Cabrera, 2006).

2. THE CONSTITUENT ASSEMBLY: CHALLENGES TO LIBERALISM

1. The signatories to the Pacto’s proposal at the Constituent Assembly in May 2007 were the Consejo Nacional de Ayllus y Markas del Qullasuyu (CONAMAQ), a federation of highland communities; the Confederación de Pueblos Indígenas de Bolivia (CIDOB), a federation of lowland groups; the Confederación Sindical de Colonizadores de Bolivia (CSCB), mostly highland peoples living in colonization zones in the lowlands; the Confederación Sindical Única de Trabajadores Campesinos de Bolivia (CSUTCB), the peasant workers’ federation; la Federación Nacional de Mujeres Campesinas, Indígenas Originarias Bartolinas Sisa (FNMCIOSB “BS”), the national federation of women peasant workers; el Movimiento Cultural Afrodescendiente, the cultural movement of African descendants; the Asociación Nacional de Regantes y Sistemas Comunitarios de Agua Potable (ANAR-ESCAPYS), the national association of irrigators and communal water systems; and the Coordinadora de Pueblos Étnicos de Santa Cruz (CPESC), a lowland indigenous organization. Other groups, such as the MST, the landless movement, and CPEMB, the Moxeño indigenous organization, participated at earlier periods but did not sign on to the Pacto’s 2007 proposal in Sucre.

2. See Albó 1987, 1994, 2002; García Linera et al. 2004; Postero 2007a; Rivera Cusicanqui 1983, 2010; Sanjinés 2004; Tapia 2010; Thomson 2002.

3. The distinction between multiculturalism and plurinationalism has been widely debated. See Beaulieu 2008, Lazarte Rojas 2009, Radcliffe 2011, and Walsh 2009.

4. I thank Eli Elinoff for this point, among many others.

5. I am grateful to Devin Beaulieu for this important insight.

3. WEDDING THE NATION: SPECTACLE AND POLITICAL PERFORMANCE

1. The term “natural” can have many meanings, and is an interesting choice for the president. One clear reference is to nature, opposing the natural to the cultural or the civilized. This reminds us of colonial discourse, in which savage indigenous people were represented as close to nature, emerging from the land, as opposed to the modern peoples of the “West,” whose lives are oriented by culture and rationality (Hall 1996). In Bolivia, in fact, indigenous people were called *naturales*, or naturals. Perhaps the president was referring to this, reclaiming the term in a decolonized way. Given his frequent citing of the Pachamama, the Mother Earth, this seems likely. It may also have been used to index normality, describing the clothes the participants wore as the natural or normal way for indigenous people to dress and act, as opposed to either the white wedding dress and suit of Western weddings, or even to Western clothes in general. Perhaps he was opposing this ceremony to Catholic weddings, which he deemed to be fake or imposed? These are speculations, of course.

2. For weeks ahead, the public followed who the guests were going to be (they included many of Bolivia’s beauty queens), who was going to do the bride’s makeup and hair (a former beauty queen), and what kind of dress she would wear (it was made in Spain and cost U.S.\$7,000).

3. Law of October 11, 1911. See www.lexivox.org/norms/BO-L-19111011.xhtml. The Servicio Nacional de Registro Civil was created in 1898. See www.lexivox.org/norms/BO-L-18981126-1.xhtml. Before that, all births, deaths, and marriages were registered by the Catholic Church.

4. Just the cost of the civil marriage act can be prohibitive. If both members of the couple already have their birth certificates or carnets, it can still cost B/300–400, or around \$40–50. For rural people, traveling to the city is an additional cost. *Tramites* or getting paperwork also entails frequent multiple visits to government offices, lengthy delays, and sometimes, bribes. Religious ceremonies vary widely in cost. Mena (2011) carried out a survey of the cost of urban weddings, and estimates that the church costs can vary between B/140 and B/1590 (\$20–227). Rural weddings depend less upon cash and more upon the provision of food and alcohol by neighbors and padrinos.

5. This is a pun in Spanish, as *casa* means both to marry and a house.

6. The PVS was instituted by presidential decree #28794 in 2006.

7. In keeping with the Human Subjects Protocols at UCSD, all the names of the couples are pseudonyms.

8. Maria Galindo of the anarcho-feminist collective Mujeres Creando was in fact forcibly ejected from the *coliseo* trying to document the event. Article 63 of the Bolivian constitution defines marriage as between a man and a woman.

9. The Pukara group are Aymara activists and intellectuals led by Pedro Portugal, a historian and former member of the Katarista Indianista movement. After years of advocating on behalf of Aymara culture and politics, Portugal now leads a small group who put out *Pukara*, an online journal critical of the MAS. See www.periodicopukara.com.

10. Weddings have both a public and a private dimension: if registered by the state, they are part of bureaucratic practice, but they may also occur in the private or in a religious arena.

11. I follow Tolen's definition of folkloric as a "genre of representation of cultural difference in which culture or custom is portrayed as distinctive of a group of people, and as an essential or primordial quality of the group." She makes clear that actors are often aware of the genre and self-consciously play with the set of conventions (Tolen 1999: 22).

12. The anthropologist Richard Price documented this pre-marriage cohabitation, called *watanaki* in Quechua, and traced it back to the time of the Inca empire (Price 1965).

13. Personal communication, Pedro Portugal, August 2012.

14. Here is the only place where ritual specialists appear to be important, divining auspicious places for the couple's home, helping to cleanse the new space, and then helping to make offerings to deities and ancestors during the ceremony (Quispe Churqui 2009).

15. In 2011, e.g., 3,500 couples in India married to call attention to the high suicide rate among farmers there (Radio France Internationale 2011). In 2009, the Palestinian Islamic movement Hamas, held a wedding in which a hundred widows who had lost their husbands during an Israeli offensive in Gaza were remarried to Hamas loyalists (Abu Ramadan 2009). In September 2013, after New Mexico began allowing gay weddings, couples held a mass wedding to celebrate (Preston 2013).

16. Apparently, collective Catholic weddings continue to take place in communities where priests visit infrequently.

17. In all, I spoke with about ten couples. Thus, my observations are not based on a comprehensive survey of all the participants. The anthropologist Tatiana Ramos provided additional information supporting these general conclusions.

18. Rivera Cusicanqui is now an active critic of the MAS administration, so this earlier statement should not be understood as an endorsement of the MAS agenda.

5. RACE AND RACISM IN THE NEW BOLIVIA

1. The population of Santa Cruz grew from 43,000 in the 1950s to about 256,000 in early 1976, and to 1.4 million by the early 2000s. Investment by the central government and by U.S. banks in big capitalist farms made the department of Santa Cruz agriculturally self-sufficient by the early 1960s (Stearman 1985). This was a combination of colonization projects, mostly for highland Andean peasants, and state investments for large-scale agriculturalists (Gill 1987).

2. *Camba*, the Guaraní term originally used for dark-skinned hacienda debt peons, is now used to refer to everyone from Santa Cruz and other eastern lowland departments, including whites and mestizos (see Fabricant 2009).

3. In fact, in 2008, after prices inside the country spiked, the government temporarily banned the export of sunflower oil (Schuttel et al. 2011).

6. FROM INDIGENEITY TO ECONOMIC LIBERATION

1. Domitila Barrios de Chungara was a labor leader and feminist active in the miner's struggles in the 1980s. A founder of the Housewives Committee in the Siglo XX mine, she is famous for engaging in protests against the dictatorships in place during that period. Her famous *testimonio* (first person narrative) was called *Let Me Speak!* (Barrios de Chungara and Viezzer 1978)

2. *Jallalla* is a Quechua–Aymara word expressing the conviction and hope that what the speakers are saying and doing will come about.

3. All the names of the communities here, except Charagua, are pseudonyms, as are the names of the people I interview.

7. CHARAGUA'S STRUGGLE FOR INDIGENOUS AUTONOMY

1. The term *indígenas originarias campesinas*, which I am translating here as “indigenous native peasant autonomies,” is a constructed category that came into juridical being at the Constituent Assembly as result of the alliances of highland and lowland indigenous organizations with peasant unions (see Schavelzon 2012). *Indígenas* refers to lowland indigenous groups; *originarias* is a term often used by highland people, similar to “first peoples” or native; and *campesinas* refers to peasants more broadly. This hybrid term was an effort to bring unity to a heterogeneous group of social movements temporarily allied for the CA.

2. Pere Morrell i Torra (2013: 88ff.) shows how the liberal constitutional schema influenced the final statute.

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In 2005, Bolivians elected their first indigenous president, Evo Morales. Ushering in a new “democratic cultural revolution,” Morales promised to overturn neoliberalism and inaugurate a new decolonized society. In this perceptive new book, Nancy Postero examines the successes and failures that have followed in the ten years since Morales’s election. While the Morales government has made many changes that have benefited Bolivia’s majority indigenous population, it has also consolidated power and reinforced extractivist development models. In the process, indigeneity has been transformed from a site of emancipatory politics to a site of liberal nation-state building. By carefully tracing the political origins and practices of decolonization among activists, government administrators, and ordinary citizens, Postero makes an important contribution to our understanding of the meaning and impact of Bolivia’s indigenous state.

“Provides multiple new insights into the Bolivian state in the time of President Evo Morales. It is a must-read for scholars and students interested in the recent political and cultural history of the country.” **JOHN ANDREW MCNEISH**, Professor of International Development and Environmental Studies, Norwegian University of Life Sciences

NANCY POSTERO is Associate Professor of Anthropology at the University of California, San Diego. She is the author of *Now We Are Citizens: Indigenous Politics in Post-Multicultural Bolivia*.

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