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**Conflict, Claim and Contradiction in the
New Indigenous State of Bolivia**

Andrew Canessa



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Inequalities in Latin America

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Conflict, Claim and Contradiction in the New Indigenous State of Bolivia

Andrew Canessa¹

Abstract

Recent conflict between indigenous people and a self-styled indigenous state in Bolivia has brought to the fore some of the paradoxes and contradictions within the concept of indigeneity itself. The contemporary politics of state sponsored indigeneity in Bolivia has as much capacity to create new inequalities as it does to address old ones and there is a conceptual deficit in understanding contemporary indigenous rights claims, in particular, as they relate to the state. I reject Peter Geschiere's (2009) suggestion that one should distinguish between 'autochthony' and 'indigeneity' but am inspired by these arguments to suggest that one needs to make a critical distinction between the kinds of claims different indigenous people make against the state. Of interest here are the consequences of indigeneity being transformed from being a language of resistance to a language of governance. I propose a conceptual distinction between inclusive national indigeneity for the majority which seeks to co-opt the state through accessing the language of governance and a minority concept of indigeneity which needs protection from the state and continues to use indigeneity as a language of resistance. Only by looking at the kinds of claims people make through the rhetoric of indigeneity can we make sense of the current indigenous conflict in Bolivia and elsewhere.

Keywords: Indigeneity | The State | Justice

Biographical Notes

Andrew Canessa, Fellow of desiguALdades.net, is a social anthropologist at the University of Essex and Director of the Centre for Latin American and Caribbean Studies. He has conducted fieldwork in highland Bolivia since 1989 and published widely on issues of gender, indigenous identities, race, and mobilization. In recent years he has worked on the use of archaeology in imagining and constructing indigenous futures ('Sitios Antiguos y Nuevas Ciudadanías: El uso de la arqueología para crear autonomía autóctona en Bolivia', in: Orobítz, Gemma (ed.): *Autoctonía, poder local y espacio global frente a la noción de ciudadanía*, Barcelona, 2012 and 'Globalised Indigeneities: New Identities for the Twenty First Century', *LACES* 2012). Among his most recent books are *Intimate Indigeneities: Exploring Race, Sex and History in the Small Spaces of Andean Life* (Duke 2012) which is the culmination of twenty years' fieldwork in an Aymara village. Also forthcoming (with Aída Hernández) is *Hacia un futuro Indígena en Mesoamérica y los Andes: Género, Complementariedades y Exclusiones* (IWGIA & Abya Yala 2012), a collaboration with scholars and indigenous activists looking at the gender issues across indigenous movements.

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Contents

- 1. Introduction**
- 2. Evo Morales and the Indigenous State**
- 3. Indigenous Citizenship**
- 4. Differentiated Indigenous Citizens**
- 5. The Masetén Case**
- 6. Indigenous Colonists**
- 7. The TIPNIS Case**
- 8. Conclusions**
 - 8.1 The Discourse of Indigeneity in Bolivia
 - 8.2 Implications of Bolivia for Theorizing Indigeneity
- 9. Bibliography**

1. Introduction

In July, 2011, a group of indigenous people representing the ethnic groups of the Tsimanes, Moxetenes and Yuracarés left TIPNIS, the Territorio Indígena Parque Nacional Isiboro Securé with the intention of marching to the capital city of La Paz in order to protest the construction of a road across their territory. On the 25th of September, the marchers were prevented from continuing by police on the grounds that they could not guarantee their safety from groups protesting in favor of the road and a violent confrontation ensued. Such a march and protest has become almost commonplace in Latin American countries in recent decades as national governments continue to build roads and drill for oil in indigenous territories. What is surprising in this case is that this occurred in a state which is led by an indigenous president who has placed indigeneity at the very center of how he expresses the legitimacy of his rule and has explicitly created a series of very public rituals to match his rhetoric of having created an indigenous state. His administration introduced a new national constitution giving rights to recognized indigenous communities to manage their own resources and the right to be consulted in areas of development. The confusion is compounded by the fact that those marching in favor of the road were indigenous coca growers and staunch supporters of the President.

In this paper I would like to discuss some of the contradictions at the heart of the new indigenous state in Bolivia. The broader issues, however, relate to our understanding of indigeneity, about its weakness as an anthropological concept as well as a weakness in international law and the way it is understood by the United Nations (UN) and multilateral agencies. Indigeneity may be a useful conceptual tool for understanding conflicts between indigenous people and nation-states where indigenous groups are powerless minorities; they are, I argue, woefully inadequate in understanding conflict between different groups of indigenous people within a nation state, much less between indigenous people and an indigenous state.

First we need to tackle the thorny problem of what indigenous people are and as many scholars have noted it is very difficult to avoid falling into an essentialist trap (Barnard 2006; Bowen 2000; Gausset et al. 2011; Kenrick and Lewis 2004; Kuper 2003a; Paradies 2006; Ramos 2003; Saugestad 2004; Warren and Jackson 2002). Adam Kuper some years ago sparked a controversy over the anthropological use of the term 'indigenous people' (Kuper 2003a; 2003b; 2005) which has occasioned numerous responses to his original *Current Anthropology* article within the pages of that journal (*Current Anthropology* 45, 2, 2004, and 47, 1, 2006) as well as some others (Kenrick and Lewis 2004, Barnard 2006). Much of Kuper's initial paper and a large proportion of

the responses concern themselves with Central and Southern Africa and, in particular, the way in which 'indigenous people' refers to hunter gatherers. As a consequence much of the thrust of his argument and the numerous rejoinders are largely irrelevant to Latin American concerns.¹ Kuper is, however, surely right in pointing out that there is an arbitrariness in distinguishing between one set of marginal peasants and another on the basis of some putative condition of indigeneity or marginal lifestyle in the past and echoes a set of concerns raised by others such as John Gledhill (1999) and André Béteille (1998).

There are many peoples in Latin America who readily conform to the broad description of those described by Kenrick and Lewis (2004) in their rejoinder to Kuper in that they are small groups marginalized by the state who are not or were not historically, settled farmers; and indeed some contemporary lowland groups are sometimes described as 'living in the stone age'.² This does not, however, describe the many millions of people who are farmers – and whose ancestors have a long history (at least five millennia)³ of farming – who are identified as indigenous, nor the possibly greater millions of people who are urban and also identify as indigenous. It seems at least curious that the 'indigenous peoples debate' which revolves around a criticism and defense of organizing around the term 'indigenous people' should so ignore the most successful examples of such organization. Furthermore, although it may appear 'relatively easy' to say who is indigenous in Latin America, as is sometimes suggested (Barnard 2006: 8; Kenrick and Lewis 2004: 6), who is and who isn't indigenous and what it means to be indigenous in Latin America is highly variable, context-specific and changes over time (e.g. Cadena 2000; Canessa 2006; Harris et al. 1995; Martínez Novo 2006). In fact, many of the more same issues that face scholars of indigeneity in Africa (e.g. Hodgson 2011; Lee 2003; Wilmsen 1989) and Asia (e.g. Li 2000; Shah 2010; Tsing 2004), such as the role of the state in constructing indigeneity, the problems of homogenizing indigenous identity, and the apparent arbitrariness in the ways some people are included and others excluded, can easily be reproduced in Latin America.

In an earlier work (2007) I suggested that the best way to understand indigeneity was in terms of a 'claim to justice', one based on awareness of historical injustice the consequences of which have been inherited by contemporary people. This way of understanding indigeneity fits in well with the growing understanding of indigeneity

¹ Kuper mentions the large and successful indigenous movements of Latin America only once in his original paper (2003a: 391) and then only in the most tangential way.

² Alcida Ramos (2003: 397-8), one of the few Latin Americanists to comment on Kuper's paper directs her discussion to Amazonian examples.

³ That is, sedentization was developing in the Andean about a thousand years before it was in Britain. Victorian evolutionists had a much more recent hunter-gather ancestry than native Andeans.

as a globalized discourse of rights which are accessed by peoples engaged in local struggles. Anna Tsing suggests that indigeneity is a 'universal' concept, one which has the ability to spread across cultures and engage with large numbers of different people. These universals cause 'frictions' (Tsing 2004) as they travel, producing new relations, new alliances and new ideas. There is an inherent instability to these travelling universals and the frictions they produce (Tsing 2004: 1-13) and it is such a friction that is producing multiple ways of understanding indigeneity in contemporary Bolivia which often appear at loggerheads with each other.

There can be no doubt that discourses of indigeneity can be very enabling for marginalized peoples who otherwise would not have access to international courts and global mobilizations of interest groups or what Tania Murray Li (2000) has called the 'indigenous people's slot'. Non-governmental organizations (NGOs) have had a considerable role in creating such alliances and developing politically engaged discourses of indigeneity as otherwise disempowered groups make claims to justice against, typically, the states in which they find themselves (Escárcega 2010; Greene 2009; Hathaway 2010; Li 2000; Martínez Novo 2006; Sapignoli 2012; Sieder 2002) and, as such, indigenous movements are often seen as essentially progressive.

Nevertheless the impulse to be strategically essentialist (Spivak 1988) is sometimes difficult to resist when such a discourse is required by international funding agencies (Laurie et al. 2002) or by the very nature of national political discourses (Canessa 2007; Wade 1997). Indigenous groups may find it irresistible to meet outsiders' expectations about a primordial and mystical relation to the land or a highly essentialized view of culture when to do so may open up the only political space to discuss land rights, autonomy and so on. These discourses may not only misrepresent the actual views and practices of people but may arbitrarily create divisions between people. A number of anthropologists, particularly those working in Africa and India (Kuper 2005, Geschiere 2009, Karlson 2003, Shah 2010) have noted that filling the 'indigenous slot' is not always conducive to progressive politics and, moreover, may actually harm the interests of the people they are supposed to serve.

There is an inherent tension between the universality of indigeneity as a powerful and enabling globalized context and the fact that the discourse of indigeneity is one that lays claim to a cultural and temporal specificity: it always argues for a particular status for those attached to a particular place since a particular time. The attachment to ultimately arbitrary axes of space and time almost inevitably lead to essentialist discourses to account for why one people should have rights over a particular territory on the ground that they have occupied it since a particular date. These frictions and

tensions are not only creating new hierarchies between indigenous people but they are exposing contradictions at the heart of the nation-state and conflict between people who one might otherwise expect to be in alliance.

At root is the question: are indigenous people all the descendants of those who lived within the current nation-state boundaries at the time of colonization or are they those who define their attachment to a much smaller territory occupied in a more recent historical period? Under current international law, e.g. International Labor Organization Convention 169 on Indigenous and Tribal Peoples, and the practice of international agencies (World Bank and the UN), indigeneity is explicitly defined in terms of self-identification, independent nation states, and occupation since the time of colonization. These issues may not matter very much when we are talking about the efforts of a cultural distinct people who speak an indigenous language, occupy a clearly defined territory and are in a struggle against a state controlled by people of European descent. They become quite important, however, when indigenous people are arguably the majority of the population and the faces in the cabinet, including the President's, are indigenous; they begin to matter even more when the state styles itself as being 'indigenous'.

2. Evo Morales and the Indigenous State

There can be little doubt that Bolivia is an exemplary example of what has been described as indigenous awakening (Albó 1991; Bengoa 2000; Brysk 2000; Stavenhagen 2002; Wearne 1996) in Latin America and that Evo Morales' winning of the 2005 presidential election is both a product of this 'indigenous awakening' and a contributory factor in setting social and political conditions for an indigenous identity to be increasingly acceptable. It is important to note, however, that even though mobilization by indigenous people increased following neoliberal reforms in the 1990s many of these people mobilizing were not doing so as indigenous people *per se* but, rather, as Bolivian citizens who happened to be indigenous. This is the central argument of Nancy Postero who suggests that the neoliberal reforms had the largely unintended effect of creating a new sense of citizens' entitlement and struggle:

[I]t is clear that even though the faces on the frontlines of the demonstrations were overwhelmingly Indian [...], '*The Bolivian people*' [which the marchers claimed to represent] did not signify indigenous – or more specifically, it did not *only* signify indigenous. (Postero 2007: 221)

This is an important point because it marks a significant shift in indigenous people being on the margins of the nation state and, at best, represented by mestizos and creoles to a growing position where they were considered best able to defend the national patrimony. This shift was shrewdly manipulated by Evo Morales who in about 2002 started to adopt an indigenous rhetoric positioning indigenous people as the moral guardians of the nation state, best able to defend its natural resources.

The 'indigenous awakening' can be dated from the 1990 march from the Lowlands to the Highlands for 'Territory and Dignity' (*marcha por el territorio y la dignidad*), but the alliance between highlanders and lowlanders did not prove to be sustainable and thenceforth the thrust of indigenous mobilization was more securely located in the highlands which progressively moved to articulate broader national rather than particularistic indigenous concerns. Unlike lowlanders, highlanders have a long history of settled agriculture and state politics. These Aymara and Quechua speaking people make up almost half, perhaps more, of the population of the country. They have long resided in the historically more populous western mountains but in recent years have been moving east in search of new economic opportunities. It is these people who constitute the bedrock of support for the current administration. As Nancy Postero and Leon Zamosc (2004: 26) point out 'demographics is a critical factor in shaping the demands of indigenous people' and it should not therefore be surprising that highlanders and lowlanders have very different demands *vis à vis* the state (see also Urban and Scherzer 1991).

To what extent can Bolivia be described as an indigenous state? It is formally a multicultural and plurinational state but the new constitution privileges certain indigenous citizens over others, in particular the kind of citizen described in the constitution as 'originary peasant indigenous' (sic). I will come back to this citizen in a moment but first I want to outline the ways in which the Morales government has placed indigeneity at the very center of the way in which it presents itself to its citizens.

The first and most obvious way was the way in which Morales downplayed the constitutional inauguration ceremony for an indigenous ceremony in the country's premier archaeological site, Tiwanaku. Morales made explicit that his legitimacy derived from the authority of the indigenous people and cultures he represented.

Accompanied by four *amautas*, wise men, he walked to the four cardinal points of the Akapana pyramid and received the staff of office and offerings from the peoples of Abya Yala, an indigenous term for America, from representatives of indigenous people from Patagonia to Canada. In his speech he condemned:

[T]he State which is now going, the State which now dies. A colonial State which permitted the permanent sacking of natural resources from this noble earth, a colonial disciplining State, a colonial State which has always seen us, the indigenous people of the world, as savages, as animals. I don't know how much we will change but we need to change, because the colonial State brings no hope for the peoples of the world.⁴

And so among his first moves, he abolished the Department of Indigenous affairs because from now on all national affairs were indigenous. But in Tiwanaku, he also directed his rhetoric against a world capitalist system and raised the banner of struggle in defense of the earth and humanity against capitalism: 'The peoples of the world on their feet, not kneeling before capitalism. This is an historic battle, a millenarian battle of our ancestors';⁵ he further outlined his ideas of 'living well' or *buen vivir* in which communitarian, indigenous values were raised about the capitalist imperative of extraction and growth. In Tiwanaku he outlined the values of *buen vivir* as follows:

To live well means to live in harmony with everyone and everything, between humans and our Mother Earth; and it consequently implies working for the dignity of all. And nowadays it is more important than ever to know how to share, to know how to distribute wealth equitably. What belongs to the people is for the people. To democratize the economy. That is why we nationalize natural resources: in order that these resources return to the Bolivian people.⁶

In fact, the promotion of *buen vivir* is stated as a state responsibility in Article 8 of the constitution of Bolivia.

Morales has returned to Tiwanaku many times to renew his mandate and to celebrate the 'Aymara New Year', the winter solstice on June 21st. This celebration, which dates

⁴ '[E]l Estado que se va, que muere. Un Estado colonial que permitió el saqueo permanente de los recursos naturales de esta noble tierra, un Estado colonial disciplinador, un Estado colonial que siempre nos ha visto a los pueblos indígenas del mundo como salvajes, como animales. No sé cuánto cambiaremos pero hay que cambiar, porque el Estado colonial no trae ninguna esperanza para los pueblos del mundo' (Translation by author). Full text of public speech available online: <http://www.aporrea.org/internacionales/n72540.html>

⁵ 'Los pueblos del mundo de pie, nunca de rodillas frente al capitalismo. Esta es una lucha histórica, una lucha milenaria de nuestros antepasados' (Translation by author). Full text of public speech available online: <http://www.aporrea.org/internacionales/n72540.html>

⁶ 'Vivir bien significa vivir en armonía con todo y con todos, entre seres humanos y con nuestra madre Tierra, implica por tanto trabajar por la dignidad de todas y todos. Y hoy día es más importante todavía saber compartir, saber distribuir la riqueza de manera equitativa. Lo que es del pueblo, es para el pueblo. Democratizar la economía, por eso nacionalizamos los recursos naturales para que esos recursos económicos vuelvan al pueblo boliviano' (Translation by author). Full text of public speech available online: <http://www.aporrea.org/internacionales/n72540.html>

from the late 1980s, has now spread to many communities. Most recently, as the work of Anne Ebert (personal communication) has shown, the Morales administration is dispatching ministers of state to all department capitals in order to celebrate the solstice, the indigenous New Year and so this Andean invented tradition is nationalized and celebrated as part of statecraft in departments and provinces far from the mountains where it originated. This is not simply an infusion of Andean indigenous rituals into state ritual but surely an attempt to create a new national culture based on indigenous principles. It is somewhat reminiscent of the nation building movement of many Latin American States, starting with Mexico after the Revolution, which attempted to create a new national culture based on mestizo people, culture and values. In this case the nation is imagined as indigenous. So Morales is fond of quoting the maxim widely recognized as Inka in origin: 'Don't be lazy, don't steal, don't lie', or that 'indigenous people are the moral reserve of humanity' (Goodman 2007).

One of the perhaps more bizarre manifestations of this new statecraft is the President's participation in mass marriage ceremonies, most recently in May 2011 (Postero 2011). In this ceremony, over 350 couples were married in an 'ancestral' and 'traditional' ceremony in which the President was the sponsor, i.e., the *padrino* of all the couples who hailed from eleven different ethnic groups and included individuals from Cuba and Nicaragua. We can leave aside, for the moment, the depth of this tradition but what is striking here is that in this ceremony which was intending to 'being a radical process of depatriarchalization of the colonial, liberal and neoliberal family'⁷ the head of state is presenting himself as the indigenous godfather of the nation.

As Postero (2011) points out, the state is creating a 'tradition' which does not conform to any particular indigenous culture and, in particular its assertion that marriage is enacted in a single event, goes against the understandings of the highland cultures it is most closely supposed to represent. The central point is not, however, that this state, as every other, invents tradition, but rather that it is working on creating a national indigenous culture. If much of the politics of indigeneity is about difference and recognizing the cultural and other rights of minority groups, Morales' government is asserting a very different vision of indigeneity: a homogeneous national culture for the majority. The politics of the 1990s seemed to be about a celebration of diversity and the multiplicity of indigenous cultures, to wit the formation of a plurinational and multicultural state. Morales seems to be returning to a much older pattern of ethnic relations where indians were believed to occupy a structurally distinct position whether as the defeated in conquest, a fiscal category, a racial group or a social class. Seen

⁷ Quote from Evo Morales (translation by author): see http://www.prensalibre.com/internacional/Evo-Morales-organiza-parejas-indigenas_0_475752608.html

from this historical perspective, Morales seems to be trying to create a new kind of relationship between indians and the state, one where the indian is privileged rather than disadvantaged, to be sure, but nevertheless inherits a long tradition of seeing indians as essentially a homogeneous category. They share a political positioning but, it seems, also a set of traditions and beliefs.

This discussion of ceremonies and traditions invented or otherwise are largely at the level of the expressive and might be regarded as potentially superficial and ephemeral. The new national constitution, however, is a different matter. Among other things, Article 30 mentions a new political subject the indigenous originary peasant (*indígena originario campesino*): 'An indigenous originary and peasant nation and people is all the human collectivity which shares a cultural identity, language, historical traditions, institutions, territoriality and worldview whose existence predates the Spanish colonial invasion' (translation by the author).

I shall leave aside for a moment why the constitution does not simply refer to an indigenous nation and people and adds the seemingly redundant 'originary and peasant' (the nomenclature was subject to heated controversy and debate) but there is clear an attempt here outline a new vision of the nation-state and one in which indigenous citizens are not simply one of many differentiated groups but have a privileged position within it. Not only is the new indigenous originary and peasant person imagined as the model citizen but, as we saw above, in indigenous cultures is where the moral foundation of the nation-state lies. But what does it mean to talk of indigenous citizenship?

3. Indigenous Citizenship

Postero (2007) titled her book about indigenous politics in Bolivia 'Now We are Citizens' taking the words from Pablo, a Guaraní who was comparing the time when indians were treated 'like animals' to the present when they enjoy a totally new relation to the nation-state (Postero 2007: 9). The feelings of Pablo are doubtless reproduced across the country. In my own research in highland Bolivia I recall Aymara speaking merchants, children of rural peasants, comment that the rural indians 'did not have citizenship' and, in turn, the rural indians agreed: they felt discriminated against by police and judges for being indians and did not even participate in the national Independence Day Celebrations deeming these of interest only to *q'aras*, whites and mestizos. As one Aymara-speaking friend told me, 'That time of the 6th of August was when the whites and mestizos made the government of Bolivia appear. Since then the 6th of August has existed.' There is no question that across Bolivia people have been empowered

by Morales' election night cry 'Now we are *all* Presidents!' and what this implied for indigenous Bolivians.

In Bolivia, moreover, the language of political indigeneity has been clearly used by various groups as an explicit critique of neoliberal globalization (Canessa 2007; Maybury-Lewis 2003; Sieder 2002; Cott 2002; Postero and Zamosc 2004; Yashar 1998), but it has also been used to argue for a new relationship with the nation state as well (Postero 2007: 17; Goodale 2009); that is, a new sense of citizenship and entitlement. This citizenship, however, is clearly not even distributed in Bolivia. It is certainly the case that some groups are able to mobilize in a creative way to form new relationships with the state (Gustafson 2003). Most celebrated are the coca growers (Grisaffi 2010) who were able to articulate a 'lite' (ibid.: 433) version of indigeneity which focused on relations with the state rooted in the coca leaf as a metonym for a broader set of colonial and postcolonial injustices. Nicole Fabricant's (2012) work with landless peasants in the eastern lowlands offers a comparable analysis of mobilized groups who use land as an indigenous trope of political engagement. In these two latter cases, these social movements have not only forged new relationships with the state but have become very closely allied with the state. Not all groups have such privileged access, however, Esther López' (2012) work among the Tacana in the eastern lowlands demonstrates how there is conflict between indigenous groups with some highlanders being seen as having privileged access to the state machinery at the expense of others.

The neoliberal reforms of the 1990s introduced the idea of a multi ethnic and plurinational Bolivia. What we are seeing today is a rejection of *mestizaje* as national ideology many have commented on the new forms of indigenous citizenship indigenous Latin Americans are experiencing today (Kymlicka 1995; Postero 2007; Stavenhagen 2002; Yashar 1998), and in sharp contrast to an historical context where being indigenous *ipso facto* implied a lack of citizenship. María Elena García goes further in her analysis in proposing an indigenous citizenship where 'cultural difference is no longer a criterion for exclusion, but one of inclusion in a multicultural political community' (2005: 165). The contemporary state in Bolivia has rejected the politics of assimilation in favor of a recognition of cultural and ethnic diversity and moved indigenous identity from the margins of the nation state to its very heart: the indigenous is now the paradigmatic citizen (Canessa 2006).

This has partly come about because in Morales' Bolivia, political legitimacy rests on being indigenous (although this is, of course, contested). On many occasions Morales has positioned the indigenous as being the best place from which to defend and

protect the nation's natural resources and to push for social justice on a very wide front; indigeneity provides his government with the legitimacy to rule and a platform from which to protect the nation against cultural and economic globalization (even as he embraces many of its key aspects); in short, indigeneity is the foundation of a new nationalism. This nationalism is, however, founded on a double discourse: the Bolivian nation is indigenous on the world stage as it presents itself in a struggle against global capitalism; internally, however, some people are clearly more indigenous than others. In other words, Morales and his government are articulating a very 19th century vision of the state where each nation, that is people with a shared history and culture, should aspire to their own state, with all the nation-building discourses this implies.

What we are seeing then is something much more than the 'indigenous citizenship' proposed by María Elena García which is really citizenship for indigenous people. In Bolivia today indigenous citizens are not only recognized as citizens of the nation but, rather, they have a privileged position *vis à vis* the state (cf. Postero and Zamosc 2004: 5-7). Indigenous citizenship in this sense is not simply a new model of citizenship for indigenous people but a new model of citizenship *per se*. Joanne Rappaport (2005) has noted that even in Colombia, which has a very small indigenous population, indigenous groups have successfully managed to change the definition of citizenship in that country, and I would argue that it is even more strongly the case in Bolivia.

The Bolivian constitution thus introduces a new political subject, the indigenous originary peasant. It raises the question, however, as to why such a clumsy term was used. Why not just use indigenous? The Spanish word *indígena* has been used for centuries in Bolivia but in recent decades, and especially after the 1952 Revolution which decreed that all peasant indians would thenceforth be called *campesinos*, the term *indígena* has largely been used to describe marginal lowland forest dwellers. Highlanders, even those living very 'traditional' lifestyles did not, until very recently, use the word *indígena* as a self-description. In fact, when I first started conducting fieldwork in the Andes in the early 1990s, none of my interlocutors described themselves as 'indigenous' although today, many will, by making explicit reference to the politics of the Morales administration. Its contemporary use is confusing: on the one hand it often refers to lowland indigenous people, and on the other it refers to a broad set of values most clearly associated with and articulated by the Morales administration.

One of the paradoxes of this contemporary situation is that many highlanders – who at least in certain contexts identify as indigenous – will look down on lowland indigenous people and even other highlanders as less civilized. Alessandra Pelligrini's (pers. comm.) work among coca growers in the Yungas region, a traditional coca-

growing area, observes many instances of ambivalence towards indigeneity. For these coca-growers, the politics of indigeneity is most closely associated with the governing Movement toward Socialism (MAS) party and its policies which clearly favor coca growers. There nevertheless remains a residual ambivalence with respect to their highland kin as well as lowland neighbours. Pelligrini notes that people in the Yungas have pity on their monolingual relatives who are, unlike them, poor; at least, that is their perspective. Highlanders do not know how to make money. What is striking for her fieldwork is that they use the word *jaqi*, an Aymara word that means 'people' and used to distinguish indigenous people from mestizos and whites, in a pejorative sense. Something shoddy, poor, or malfunctioning can be described as *jaqi*, and the cheap soft drink that is often all that highlanders can afford is sometimes referred to as *jaqi* cola.

If the neoliberal reforms changed the way people related to the nation state, that is, they transformed the what Deborah Yashar describes as structures that regulate access to political membership and definitions of citizenship rights, and as structures of intermediation between the state and its citizens, what she identifies as the 'citizenship regime' (Yashar 2005: 6, 47-48), the recent constitution has changed it once again. The new constitution defines thirty-six indigenous nations and languages and explicitly aims at establishing indigenous values if not people at the center of the nation-state.

4. Differentiated Indigenous Citizens

The contemporary Bolivian state explicitly celebrates diversity by recognizing the pluricultural nature of the state and in, for example, translating *buen vivir* in various indigenous languages for the constitution. In practice, however, the state is much more keen on celebrating highland values than lowland ones. The government's insistence on spreading the Aymara New Year across the country is a good example. On a more concrete level is the support or even active encouragement by the state for colonization of lowland areas by highlanders.

The collapse of mining in the 1980s began a massive movement of population from the highlands to the lowlands. Some of these were to the traditional coca growing areas of the *yungas*, but very large numbers of migrants went to areas such as the Chapare region and began cultivating coca leaf. In this period, there were very few viable opportunities for poor Aymara and Quechua people from the highlands. The Chapare was known as a frontier territory but it was not uninhabited. In the 1950s and 1960s the residents of Cochabamba lived in fear of these 'wild indians' but by the 1980s they were being displaced by Aymara and Quechua colonists from the highlands who

treated them little differently to the way lowland indians have been treated historically. They spoke of them as 'savages' who 'didn't know how to work' and their displacement or engagement as wage laborers for the colonists was seen as a civilizing mission. The colonists, after all, were teaching them the virtues of labor.

It is in the Chapare that Morales has his political base and it is here that his political vision was forged. The communities of the Chapare are not the kinds of communities one sees in the highlands with a long history of settlement and complex rituals which bind people together but, rather, a set of new communities focusing on an economic activity which for decades has been subject to military, including US military, intervention.

Unlike other Aymara and Quechua peasants, the coca growers from this and other regions are engaged in cash crop monoculture; they make money. And despite the problems with law enforcement, these areas continue to attract temporary or permanent migrants in search of cash. For example, in the highland community where I have conducted fieldwork, men regularly go to the coca growing areas as seasonal migrants.

Coca growers are one of several groups of people – landless peasants (Fabricant 2012), urban people, highland colonists to the lowlands – who originate in 'traditional' indigenous communities and have an historical consciousness of racism and injustice but who nevertheless do not identify closely with the lifeways and cultural values of their communities of origin. In times past such economically dynamic people would have been on their way to becoming mestizos and accepting the value of dominant mestizo-creole society. That model of assimilation, however, is largely defunct and what we find are large numbers of people who neither see themselves as mestizos or as *jaqi* or *runa*, the Aymara and Quechua words for people who follow a particular traditional lifestyle. In urban areas people are developing an 'indigenous cosmopolitanism' (Goodale 2006) or, as described in a recent paper by Jill Wightman (2011), the new rising middle classes are increasingly less likely to identify as mestizo but will choose to identify as indigenous or *chola* even if their lifestyles would seem to be more consonant with urban middle classes. So Wightman gives an example of a young professional woman, a university educated lawyer, who identifies herself as 'of the *chola* class'.

Urban people, coca growers, and highland colonists to the lowlands form a majority of those people identified as indigenous in the 2001 census (INE 2002). 51% of those identified as indigenous lived in urban areas (the census asked for identification with an originary people (*pueblo originario* or indigenous). In fact, is quite possible that such people constitute an absolute majority of the Bolivian population. It should not be surprising then that the dominant mode of indigeneity in Bolivia today is one that

speaks to a dynamic population engaged in market activities seeking economic growth, rather than one which seeks to sacrifice economic growth in favor of *buen vivir*.

There is a tension, however, in the constitutional insistence that indigenous people have control over their recognized territories, and may choose to refuse exploitation on their lands, and the perceived need for economic growth based on extractive industries and intensive agriculture. One of the clearest political problems facing the government is not that there is oil exploitation in the lowlands, but that there is oil exploitation in the lowlands in areas of greatest political opposition to the government. Their defense of indigenous communities' rights to resist oil exploitation changes when the oil in question is in departments such as La Paz which although considered a highland department has large tracts of land in the lowlands.

5. The Mositén Case

On the 29th of December 2009, in La Paz, the Minister of Hydrocarbons and Energy of Morales' government, Oscar Coca Antezana, signed a resolution⁸ rejecting a petition against an oil exploration project,⁹ made by various leaders from various indigenous organizations.¹⁰

This seemed to be in direct contradiction of the new constitution which explicitly recognizes indigenous peoples' rights to be consulted and reject the exploitation of resources on their territories. The Vice President, Alvaro García, explained the government's surprising position in an interview with Pablo Stefanoni in *Le Monde Diplomatique*:

When we consulted with CPILAP (Central de Pueblos Indígenas de La Paz), they asked us to go and negotiate in Brussels with their law firm and that we respect certain announcements on the environment issued by USAID/ How can this be? Who is preventing the state from exploring for oil in the north of [the Department of] La Paz: the Tacana indigenous communities, an NGO, or foreign countries? We have gone to negotiate from community to community and there we have found the support of the communities to go ahead with the exploration and exploitation of oil. [...] The indigenous popular government has consolidated the long struggle of the people for land and territory. In the case

⁸ Resolución proceso de consulta y participación. Res. 001/2009

⁹ Exploración sísmica 2d bloque Lliquimuni fase 2

¹⁰ Pueblos Indígenas del Departamento de La Paz (CPILAP), Pueblos Indígenas Lecos y Comunidades Originarias de Larecaja (PILCOL) and the Organización del Pueblo Indígena Mositén (OPIM).

of the minority indigenous people of the lowlands, the state has consolidated millions of hectares of historic territory for many groups with low population density, but alongside the right to land of a people is the right of the state, of the state, of the state led by the indigenous-popular and peasant movement, to impose the greater collective interest of all the people. And that is how we are going to proceed. (*Le Monde Diplomatique* September 11, 2009)

Here the government ignored the recognized representatives of the indigenous communities and, in effect, went in search of people who would support the oil exploration, community to community, one by one, offering schools, community buildings, health posts, most of which have yet to materialize.

The key issue, however, is not the state's lack of fulfillment of its promises, but firstly that it follows in a long tradition of discounting indigenous people's voices on the grounds that they are manipulated by NGOs, and secondly that it subordinates indigenous people's interests to that of the state, a state led by an 'indigenous-popular and peasant movement'. The state, in the eyes of the Vice-President, represents and articulates the 'collective interest of all the people' but this state has legitimacy because of its indigenous credentials. Morales successfully articulated a set of issues and interests such as gas and justice as indigenous ones, which got him elected on a broad platform, but he has then moved to subordinate all indigenous interests to that of the state. His performance of state ritual in archaeological sites and apparently innocuous events such as mass marriages are actually important in his construction of a state based on indigenous legitimacy but which, paradoxically, subordinates indigenous interests. And so, in his own words: 'Amazonia without oil' is a slogan for foreign interests'.

Morales continues in that interview:

The right uses some of our brothers to oppose us to suggest things which are so fundamental as to be non-negotiable: how is it possible that all the state lands and national parks be in the hands of some indigenous brothers; that all the logging concessions, once recovered, fall into the hands of the small groups of the Bolivian indigenous movement. I feel it is a form of opposition to the policies we are developing (translation by author). (*Cambio*, 25 June 2010)

Morales here is echoing some of the themes that his Vice-President discussed. The interests of the (indigenous) state cannot be sacrificed to the interests of small groups of marginal people with large tracts of land despite having just established such a right

in the constitution. Among lowlanders, there is consequently considerable opposition to the indigenous president who is seen as favoring highlanders against them.

This leads us to a fundamental contradiction in Bolivia's politics of indigeneity (cf. Postero 2012):

- (1) The Morales Government makes an explicit commitment to alternative models of development, whereby 'living well' is prioritized over economic growth.
- (2) The Morales Government is committed to a program of economic growth based on the exploitation of natural resources such as oil, gas and lithium and the expansion of coca.

The first point addresses the concerns of small indigenous groups who need protection from agribusinesses and extractive industries. The second is for a development of these industries in favor of the small capitalist farmers and the urban poor. On the one hand the rhetoric of *buen vivir* plays well to certain international audiences and in, for example, lobbying the UN to change Earth Day to Mother Earth Day. Another example is his address to the United Nations Climate Change Conference in Copenhagen in 2009 where he said:

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 4/21/10 in Postero 2012).

The '*Pachamama* or death' slogan has been often repeated by Morales but not that often in Bolivia itself in front of Bolivian audiences. Whereas in August of 2009, the United Nations General Assembly declared Morales a 'World Hero of Mother Earth' (Fromherz 2011) and he is widely feted internationally as the indigenous ecowarrior *par excellence*, in Bolivia itself he is following a policy of economic growth which includes exploiting lithium in the highlands and hydrocarbons and monoculture in the lowlands with scant regard for environmental damage (Farthing 2009; Postero 2012). The issue is not so much whether or even what kind of economic development there should be but, rather, who should control it, as well as how the resources and revenues will be distributed.

6. Indigenous Colonists

The globalized concept explicitly presents indigenous people as being subjects of colonization and many scholars have argued for a productive engagement with concepts of indigeneity precisely because it is a means through which relatively powerless people can make justice claims. Indeed, as I have argued (2008), a claim to indigeneity is first and foremost a claim to justice. Justice and powerlessness are, however, relative concepts and there is a danger in assuming that indigenous people are always and everywhere in the right. Bêteille (1998: 90) warns us of this when he asks: 'Is there now such an essentialist view of indigenous people in which they carry their identity with them wherever they go and whatever they do?' How does such a rhetorical question shed light on the situation in Bolivia? The first issue to consider is whether an indigenous identity travels and surely it must: if the state is going to recognize indigenous citizens it must surely do so whether they live in the jungle or in the suburbs in the same way it recognizes other minorities; and surely one is indigenous whatever one does.

The history of Bolivia can easily be described as the history of the oppression of the descendants of pre-European populations in the service of white-dominated agribusiness and mining. There can be surely no issue in celebrating the taking of power from the white elite by a government which represents the indigenous majority. The problem arises, however, when the concept of indigeneity obscures internal differentiation and, to take a specific Bolivian point, when highland peasants arrive as indigenous citizens to occupy land that is unused or underused in the relatively sparsely populated eastern lowlands. Unused, that is, from the perspective of the colonists; not exactly unused from the perspective of the equally indigenous people who live there. That is, it is not enough to assert that 'indigenous people are better understood as those who are discriminated against; they are rarely the ones discriminating against others' (Kenrick and Lewis 2004) because it leaves us with no critical perspective to understand when indigenous people do discriminate against others.

In a recent trip to the lowland town of Rurrenabaque, I spoke to many Aymara and Quechua migrants who arrived mostly since the opening of the road to La Paz in the 1980s which opened the area up for settlement. Today, Rurrenabaque is dominated by Aymara and Quechua shopkeepers.

Aymara shopkeeper Rubén told me what it was like:

I have been here for twenty years. When I first came there was nothing, nothing: just one road and no electricity. It was quiet then, simple, you know. Now it is busy; I liked it more then... These people, you know, didn't know how to do anything. We [the migrants] have made Rurrenabaque what it is today. The people here don't know how to work, we have civilized this place. (translated from Aymara by the author)

The idea that Aymara and Quechua migrants civilize the lowlands is a fairly consistent theme across the region.

Another trader, Marcelino, gave me another, fairly typical account but adds an important gender element:

Oh yes, I have a wife. She is in Santa Cruz but I also have a wife here, a young girl. She is 22 (Marcelino is 45). I have a child with her. The people here are very simple. Before I came twenty years ago there was nothing here. We have brought civilization. They don't understand. In those days they would just give you a woman for twenty pesos. (Laughter) It is very easy to take a woman here. (translated from Aymara by the author)

The juxtaposition of colonization and the taking of indigenous women is not coincidental; it has been, in fact, both an image and practice of conquest since the arrival of the Spanish (Canessa 2012a). The difference here is that it is an Aymara who is invoking this kind of relationship, inserting himself into a colonial relationship as colonizer rather than colonized. As we will see below, the President himself is by no means immune from this kind of language. It is not, however, simply a matter of language since marrying into an indigenous community will give access to land rights as well. Whereas in the past having a non-indigenous father gave certain advantages, now the opposite is often the case, since it is through the indian mother that one can gain access to territorial rights. In many cases, the same people remain in power (López 2012), but instead of legitimizing their positions through their fathers or grandfathers, they do so through their mothers.

Despite state recognition of indigenous land titles, new migrants use their indigeneity to colonize on the grounds that they too are indigenous (López 2012) and the state recognition of an indigenous territory arguably increases exposure to colonists rather than protecting locals from them.

The argument of being indigenous as well, and thus having a right to settling in whichever indigenous territory they choose, highlights the missing mechanism and yet necessity for a legal or even conceptual distinction between indigenous groups. This example also demonstrates how certain indigenous groups are perceived – whether by themselves or by others – to have more legitimacy and power than other groups. Thus, in overlooking fundamental differences between indigenous groups, the state is not only failing to recognize the hierarchy of power between indigenous cultures but is actually exacerbating it: ‘Recognition by power can, and increasingly does, involve as many problems as the neglect and marginalization that comes from an absence of state interest’ (Dombrowski 2002: 1071).

It also points to a scalar issue when considering indigenous issues and identity. Clearly, in some contexts, highlanders are adopting the view that they are indigenous wherever they may be in the country and they, as indigenous people, have the right to occupy and cultivate land when they consider it unoccupied. The idea that lowland indigenous people are sitting on vast tracts of unproductive land is shared by the President and *colonos* alike and both show little patience for the views of lowlanders. This is compounded by globalized definitions of indigeneity which define indigenous people principally in terms of the nation state. If, for example, one can recognize an indigenous person living in a city, and few would want to argue that there is no such thing, then why not recognize the same person as indigenous in any part of the country? This quandary points to a conceptual deficit in distinguishing between indigenous people within the nation state.

7. The TIPNIS¹¹ Case

In May 2010, a meeting uniting community-level leaders from throughout the territory, as well as the various *Sub-centrals* and other organizations, issued a joint declaration stating against the building of a road through the territory:

[O]pening this highway would present a threat to our life as peoples who inhabit TIPNIS due to the loss of the natural resources and all the biodiversity upon which the Moxeños, Yuracarés, and Chimanés sustain their culture and life: a life and culture we have lived in our territory since before the creation of the Bolivia and will continue to live in the future.

¹¹ Territorio Indígena Parque Nacional Isiboro Securé, Indigenous National Territory and Park, Isiburo Sécuré.

Citing this and other reasons, the meeting voted to:

[O]verwhelmingly and non-negotiably reject the construction of the Villa Tunari – San Ignacio de Moxos highway and of any highway segment that would affect our territory.¹²

The road is part of a continent-wide infrastructural investment by Brazil which is providing almost all of the funding for the road. From a more local perspective, the road is important because it connects the Chapare, the coca growing area, with Brazil, without having to go through Santa Cruz, which is the prime locus of opposition to Morales. The road through TIPNIS will also open the area for further colonization by coca growers from the Chapare. This colonization is illegal, but the state is already unable or unwilling to stop it. There is no question that local people understand that intensive colonization will be the first major consequence of the road. It is not surprising, then, that the coca growers are fully in support, and so Morales declared on June 30: 'Like it or not, we are going to build this road.' (*Los Tiempos* 2011a)

The representatives of TIPNIS argued, citing the constitution, that the road could not be built against their wishes but Morales argued in October:

They want the consultation to be binding. That's impossible; it's nonnegotiable. The constitution and international law mandate previous consultation, and we will always respect that, but letting a group of families tell us what to do would mean paralyzing all our work on electrification, hydrocarbons and industries. (*Los Tiempos* 2011b, translation by the author)

As a way of getting out of the problem of the bad publicity, he suggested a wider consultation, including people from outside TIPNIS such as the Chapare. For Morales' part he appeared to think he had consulted with indigenous people, just not those living in TIPNIS. His government, in any case, represented the majority of indigenous people in the country and it appears that his political miscalculation (he eventually had to announce that the road would not be built) rests on his confusion of the place indigenous citizens have in the state he leads and the constitutional right of small groups to resist the state even though legitimized by the support of an indigenous majority.

¹² Translation by author. Full text available online: http://somosur.net/documentos/TIPNIS_ResXXX_EncuentroCorregidores20120318.pdf

What is interesting, too, is that in August of this year he echoed the vision of colonization expressed by Marcelino in Rurrenabaque when he was reported as asking the residents of the Chapare to convince the indigenous people of TIPNIS to give the green light to the construction:

You, *compañeras* and *compañeros*, need to explain, to guide the indigenous *compañeros*. Their own mayor is moving to convince them not to oppose [the road], he [Evo Morales] said. Later he added: If I had time I would go and woo the Yuracaré *compañeras* and convince them not to oppose. That is, young men, you have instructions from the President to seduce [conquistar] the Yuracaré women so that they won't oppose the building of the road. He immediately asked: All in favor? and applause was heard from the assembled. (*La Razón* 2011, translation by the author)

8. Conclusions

Indigeneity always implies a relationship with the state (cf. Aparicio and Blaser 2008; Dombrowski 2002; Li 2000; Urban and Scherzer 1991; Shah 2010). It is not simply that international law and convention explicitly frames indigenous peoples as being subjects of an independent state, but that indigenous rights claims are almost always against states and pursued through national rather than international courts. If we eschew essentialist notions of indigeneity and see it as principally a rights discourse based on a particular relationship to space and time and an historical sense of injustice, then it is clear that it is a relationship with a state that defines indigeneity.

In a recent book, Alpa Shah (2010) makes this very argument and notes that even in the indigenous state of Jharkand in India, the people most easily identified as indigenous are the ones least likely to benefit from the indigenous state. I would make the very same argument for Bolivia and there are striking similarities between these two indigenous states. This should not, however, surprise us: once an indigenous discourse is broad enough to include a majority of people, it is surely inevitable that some groups will have more access to indigenous capital than others. This may occur even in situations when the majority of the population is not identified as indigenous but nevertheless where the state is founded on a basic sense of autochthony. In a recent article, Paula López Caballero (2011) notes how peasants in central Mexico use discourses of indigeneity, authenticity, and primacy to create legitimacy and exclude others, including indigenous people from other parts of Mexico.

The problem then arises in how we distinguish between different rights claims. In a recent book and series of articles Peter Geschiere and colleagues (Geschiere and Nyamnjoh 2000; Geschiere 2009; Gausset 2008) have proposed a conceptual distinction between autochthony and indigeneity. His inspiration was the similarity between discourses of autochthony in West Africa and the Netherlands and Belgium. In many ways it is entirely inappropriate for discussing the Bolivian case because Latin Americans very rarely use the word; but the conceptual distinctions Geschiere and others make may still be useful in understanding the conflict in Bolivia today. In Geschiere's schema, both autochthony and indigeneity are discourses of belonging but with important differences. Autochthons are settled, often in the majority and make claims on the state against those made by others, these others being settlers or, we might add, other minority groups. Indigenous people are best understood in terms of their marginality, often unsettled, who make a very different set of claims against the state which is about preserving claims to land and asserting a cultural difference. Quentin Gausset et al. (2011: 139) summarize the distinction thus: indigenous people are marginalized whereas autochthons are dominant but fear marginalization.

In their recent summary of these debates, Gausset et al. (2011) pose the question as to whether autochthony and indigeneity are 'false twins'. This question in their title remains rhetorical and is never answered. There are two problems with opposing autochthony and indigeneity in this way: the first is that the terms are too vague and unstable; in any case, the term is almost never used in Spanish or Anglophone America; the second problem is that the argument presupposes that there are some people who are autochthons and other who are not; that is, that they can be distinguished in a systematic way. What is clear is that Morales and his government are articulating views more resonant with autochthony movements in Europe and Africa than those of marginalized indigenous groups struggling against the state. This accounts for the otherwise bizarre fact that Morales has his admirers among groups such as German neo-Nazis.¹³

8.1 The Discourse of Indigeneity in Bolivia

Rather than get bogged down in a sterile debate, I suggest that it is more important to make distinctions between different claims of belonging and different claims against the state. The claims of coca growers, landless peasants, and some urban groups are similar to some of the autochthonous discourses described by scholars, but these people are clearly both subaltern as well as in the majority. These are, perhaps, the

¹³ See: http://www.npd-hamburg.de/aktuelles/nachrichten/evo-morales-ein-nationaler-sozialist-bolivien-29092010_1041.html. I am grateful to Sergio Costa for drawing my attention to this.

originary peasant peoples mentioned in the constitution. If we disaggregate them from the 'indigenous', however, we see a very different set of rights claims. Coca growers and urbanites see themselves as excluded parts of the nation and want their rights protected from global capitalism, large scale landowners, and a mestizo creole elite which has long dominated Bolivia's political and economic life. Their discourse may be anti-capitalist on one hand in the sense of being against large multinational corporations but clearly seeks economic growth in capitalist markets; they simply want better access to these markets. In the case of coca growers, they seek the legalization of market. In this context, opening up new areas for coca growing or destroying the highlands plains for the extraction of lithium makes perfect sense; it is about creating wealth and distributing resources to a majority group who have been largely excluded from power and do not want to join the mestizo middle class, although they clearly do want to increase their consumption.

This discourse of indigeneity is founded on a particular critique of globalization and more specifically global corporations and the United States. The discourse of indigeneity rooted in symbols rather than community life or ritual practices lends itself well to a discourse that can manipulate symbols such as the coca leaf or the *Pachamama* without necessarily rooting these into a particular way of life. These originary peasants are seeking a relationship with the state which favors them as iconic citizens. From the government's point of view, they are seeking to articulate an ecumenical sense of indigeneity that applies to a majority of citizens if not exactly all of them. It is hard to see such people as being dominant within the nation-state but their discourse does conform very much to what Geschiere and others say about autochthony, in that they seek to distinguish between citizens and the basis of different criteria of belonging. It is for these reasons that Morales goes to such efforts to nationalize the Aymara New Year and develop a set of indigenous symbols with the widest possible appeal. If, in the twentieth century, the state tried to create a national culture based on *mestizaje*, the Morales government is seeking in the twenty-first century to create a national culture based on indigenous culture. Paradoxically, this national indigenous culture holds a very strong potential of excluding marginal indigenous groups.

The dream articulated by Morales is one of a Bolivia for the kinds of people we might call autochthonous: urban people, coca growers, small peasant farmers, who are suffering from poverty at the hands of large enterprises in the hands of a predominantly white economic elite. Oil production in departments not controlled by the eastern white elite, the expansion of coca growing into the eastern lowlands, a road that bypasses Santa Cruz, the economic and political capital of the east: all are ways in which the state furthers the interests of the small farmer, the urban migrant: people often who

were born in marginal communities on the fringes of the capitalist economy but who now see themselves on a path to economic advancement. People who, incidentally, do not like being called indigenous, and who clearly look down on people they describe as indigenous, and not just lowlanders. They are happy with certain symbols of indigeneity, their originary status which gives them land and other economic rights, a discourse on the coca leaf as an indigenous symbol but most certainly not an embrace of rural highland people who are poor and marginalized or lowlanders who occupy large tracts of land and do 'not know how to use it'.

Much of the recent debate in Bolivia has divided the country into highlands dominated by Aymara and Quechua peasants, the 'natural' supporters of Morales, and the lowlands dominated by a white landowning class and including a large number of small, diverse, and marginalized indigenous people. National political divisions often run along these lines but such a schema obscures important differences. There are many highland groups who are excluded from national indigeneity in similar ways to lowland peasants. One of the most striking examples is that of the people of Jesus de Machaca where I have been conducting fieldwork since 2008. The people of this area have a long history of resistance to the state – historically dominated by mestizo and creole elites – and they played a significant role in the many blockades and mobilizations that ultimately culminated in the election of the first indigenous president of the country. Even here, people struggle with what we might call national indigeneity in their attempts to maintain their political autonomy (Orta 2013; Canessa 2012b; Cameron 2010). Despite passing a law on Indigenous Autonomy in 2009, the government put enormous pressure on the people of the municipality to reject a referendum seeking recognition as an Indigenous Autonomous Community on the grounds that the state was already indigenous and such an act would merely risk division between the state and its natural allies. No lesser person than the Vice-President weighed in with his comments on this issue. The referendum narrowly passed but people continue to be wary and worried at what they see as government bullying.

Other highland communities, such as that of Pocobaya where I have conducted fieldwork since 1989, also exhibit a certain ambivalence towards the new indigenous state. Although enthusiastic supporters of the Morales government, they are bemused by some of the elements of statecraft. It is these people, many of them mestizos, who are best positioned to invoke the abstract symbolization of earth deities and indigeneity in the broad ecumenical sense and are most able to extract resources from the state. I was very surprised recently to hear a mestizo peasant from a community well known for its historical antipathy towards indians describe himself to me as an Aymara and the enthusiasm of creoles and mestizos for celebrating the Aymara New Year. The Aymara

peasants surrounding the town of Sorata, who do not celebrate the Aymara New Year, are puzzled by some of the descriptions of the *Pachamama* as the national symbol of struggle for natural resources and are perplexed when a national politician described natural gas as her fart (Felipe Quispe, interview with author). It cannot be assumed that even in the highlands those who are most rooted in traditional rural lifeways will be the most comfortable with national indigeneity; in fact, it speaks most clearly to a very different constituency.

There is no doubt, however, that such dissonance is most clearly heard among lowland indigenous people. They, too, have a discourse of belonging but may find themselves pitted against the state which is seeking resources for the majority. In fact, the President and ministers may show open irritation at the potential for small indigenous groups to frustrate the states plans for economic growth and development. This frustration echoes many of the concerns of 'autochthonous' groups in Europe and Africa who are concerned about the 'special rights' of minority groups whom they see as impeding national development and prejudicing the rights of the majority. These minority groups are also negotiating a relationship with the state but are principally seeking protection from the state rather than to co-opt the state for their own ends, as is arguably the case for coca growers. They are also seeking protection from highland colonists who, even as they might sometimes describe themselves as indigenous, have little patience for the lifestyle of forest dwellers they see as idle and unproductive.

8.2 Implications of Bolivia for Theorizing Indigeneity

International law and multilateral agencies in defining indigeneity in terms of nation states have a very weak conceptual framework at best to comprehend inter-indigenous conflict that I have been describing. As ever more people are identifying as indigenous and indigeneity becomes increasingly used to articulate a wide range of claims for justice we need more sophisticated concepts the better to distinguish between these claims. The distinction between autochthony and indigeneity cannot sustain a critical analysis in this context but it does point to a first step in making distinctions between them although I do think a distinction between autochthons and indigenes is a dead end. It is, moreover, not enough to recognize the plurality of indigenous cultures; we need to explore more systematically the kinds of relationships indigenous discourses demand of the state. The Bolivian case points to a number of interesting tensions and contradictions which occur when indigeneity shifts from being a language of opposition to the language of governance; from when it moves from articulating the discourses of vulnerable minorities to those of national majorities.

Discourses of indigeneity have as much potential to create hierarchy as to dismantle it and the empowerment of some indigenous people may entail the disempowerment of others. The paradox of why lowland and other indigenous people are often opposed to the government of the first indigenous president and why he appears to have such little patience for lowlanders in particular can be immediately resolved by exploring the diversity of indigenous voices and the different claims they are making against the state. In Bolivia today there are broadly speaking two indigenous discourses: one sees indigenous peoples and values as the foundation of the nation state and seeks to create an ecumenical indigeneity for a majority of Bolivia's citizens; the other seeks to respect cultural difference in its multiple forms and protection of marginal peoples from the state. They are sometimes both articulated by the current government so it is not surprising that contradictory positions are taken since, at root, the two discourses are fundamentally opposed.

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