To be or not to be indigenous, that is the question

Indigenous rights, identity and politics in a divided Bolivia

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Indigenous rights, identity and politics in a divided Bolivia

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"if men define situations as real, they are real in their consequences"

(Thomas & Thomas 1928:572)

Picture on front page:

The hat represents the Guaraní hat, standing for the *Camba* identity. The poncho represents indigenous clothing of the highlands (Aymara, Quechua). Chapter 4 will clarify the meaning behind these symbols.

Picture by Alfonzo Román, www.alfonzoroman.com.

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Preface

During the Master Conflict Studies and Human Rights, it became clear to me that my main interest within the study was in minority rights and conflicts between minorities and the state. This interest stemmed from my former study, the Master Cultural Anthropology - Multiculturalism in Comparative Perspective. During that study, I focused on the Tibetan struggle against Chinese oppression and how Tibetans' human rights were protected (or neglected). During the research I carried out among the Tibetan diaspora in Northern India, my interest in conflict analysis developed, which persuaded me to enroll for another Master: Conflict Studies and Human Rights.

During this Master, I continued to focus on minorities and minority rights. Since I had already carried out fieldwork abroad, I decided to do an internship during this Master. The choice was quickly made; I wanted to do my internship at an organization that was committed to working for the recognition and protection of the rights of minorities. I was happy to obtain an internship at the Netherlands Centre for Indigenous Peoples (NCIV). This internship helped me to understand the possibilities and constraints in acknowledging the rights of indigenous peoples. This internship induced me to write my thesis on the rights and the struggles of indigenous peoples.

To focus my thesis on Bolivia was also a straightforward choice. A few years ago, I visited Bolivia and the country left a tremendous impression on me. I will never forget the friendly people of Bolivia, the beautiful countryside and the overwhelmingly bright colors of indigenous dresses. However, I will also never forget the obvious differences between the different groups of people in Bolivia and the visible poverty. During my internship at the NCIV, I learned more about the background of the indigenous struggle in Bolivia and I understood that where Bolivia stands now might very well be a revolutionary turning point for the country and, for that matter, for Latin America and the international indigenous movement. Therefore, I chose to write my thesis on the rights of indigenous peoples, the struggle of indigenous peoples in Bolivia and the impact and counteractions it gave rise to. Consequently, it is with great pleasure that I can now present to you my Masters' thesis: 'To be indigenous or not, that is the question – indigenous rights, identity and politics in a divided Bolivia'.

Introduction

> *"There are two Bolivias now," said Damian Caguara, a pro-Morales member of a popular assembly. "The Bolivia of the traditional, conservative, right- wing governments, embodied in PODEMOS and the peasant one, the poor one, the indigenous one that has been in a state of submission for years. The latter is the one that is now running the political scene through the MAS and this is provoking a harsh reaction from the former bosses that cannot stand their servants, the Indians, to be ruling. For them, this is simply humiliating." (Carroll and Schipani 2008)*

As demonstrated in the text above from an article in *The Guardian* newspaper, Bolivia today seems to be roughly divided in two parts: one that supports Morales, the first indigenous president of Latin America and his Movimiento al Socialismo (MAS), and one part that supports the leading opposition party, Poder Democrático Social (PODEMOS), the neoliberal right based in the east of Bolivia. The eastern departments of Pando, Beni, Santa Cruz and Tarija form a bloc of political leaders and citizens that position themselves against the Morales administration both in the assembly – in order to rewrite the constitution – and in the streets. Currently, they are articulating a demand for regional autonomy, which would strengthen the idea of 'the two Bolivia's'. The autonomy they are working towards is in opposition to the nationalization of resources and redistribution of wealth pushed by Morales. These departments make up what is called the *media luna*[1], or half moon, named for their geographical shape. Now they are demanding autonomy for the *media luna* in order to have some form of independence from the western highlands, where most of the indigenous supporters of Morales reside. The mobilizations of indigenous peoples leading up to the victory of Morales and his MAS party (which will be explained in chapter 2) and the autonomy movement of the *media luna* (explained in chapter 4) have regularly led to violent clashes between the groups, resulting innumerous casualties. Journalists started to refer to several street blockages and protests as '*guerras*' (for instance the '*guerra del agua*' and the '*guerra del gas*' – see chapter 3) and still today people are killed during violent demonstrations, such as during the Pando massacre in 2008.

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[1]   For a map of Bolivia and the *media luna* see appendix 1

In 2008, a referendum for greater autonomy from the central government was organized in Santa Cruz and other *media luna* departments. An overwhelming margin of *Cruceños*[2] approved the autonomy petition. The referendum was declared illegal by the national electoral court and disapproved by the national government, but it is nevertheless a token that demonstrates the continuing chasm in Bolivian society.

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Bolivia: a country divided

The conflict between these 'two Bolivias' occurs on multiple levels of class, race and location and is currently expressed by a coalescence of alliances around Bolivia's two main political parties. MAS counts the on support of poorer, indigenous peoples, who are concentrated in rural areas and the western highlands, whilst PODEMOS and the conservative opposition are formed by wealthier people of *mestizo*[3] or *criollo*[4] descent, who are concentrated in urban areas and the eastern lowlands.[5] This division is of course approximate. The lowland areas contain many indigenous peoples, just as the highland areas contain many *mestizos*. Urban areas are equally mixed and to make an easy distinction between *mestizo* and indigenous peoples is difficult. However, this division is reflected in how Bolivians view themselves. Around 62 per cent identify themselves as

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[2] *Cruceños* refers to the residents of Santa Cruz.
[3] *Mestizo* refers a person of mixed European and 'Amerindian' ancestry.
[4] *Criollo* refers to a descendant of Spanish colonialists, born in Latin America.
[5] For a table on the definitions used by the Spanish for the miscegenation in Spanish colonies, see Appendix 2.

indigenous, almost 80 per cent of whom live in the five western highland departments (Bright 2008:2). This is also reflected in how they see their history, expressed in the saying: "One Bolivia has made the rules and the other has chafed under them" (Ibid.). This saying expresses the fact that although the majority of the Bolivian population can be considered indigenous, until recently they have only scarcely been politically represented as such. Recently, there has been a dramatic shift in the political representation of indigenous peoples in Bolivia. In 2006, Evo Morales, a former coca farmer and indigenous leader from Aymara descent, was elected the first indigenous president of Latin America and with an absolute majority unprecedented since the reinstatement in 1985 of electoral democracy. On the night of his victory, Morales proclaimed: "Indigenous comrades, for the first time we are presidents! […] Next year […] begins the new history of Bolivia" (Postero 2007:1).

The largest indigenous nations of Bolivia, the Aymara and the Quechua, reside in the western highlands of Bolivia. The richer departments of Bolivia are located in the eastern lowlands. This east-west divide is strengthened by Bolivia's geography: the Andes in the west and the Amazon in the east. The regional divisions are now reflected explicitly in the growth of secessionist and autonomy movements in the wealthier lowland provinces of eastern Bolivia. The social chasm divides a comparatively small wealthy minority and a large dispossessed majority of the population. Next to this, Bolivia is almost universally acknowledged as one of the poorest countries in Latin America. Approximately 60 per cent of the Bolivian population has a standard of living below the poverty line (Chielens 2009:20). Bolivia is presently one of the most unequal countries - by income, human and physical assets - in the world's most unequal continent. The enduring nature of social and economic inequality in Bolivia is explained primarily by the resilience of group-based inequality nurtured by class, regional and ethnic-based differences (Gray Molina 2005:29).

Indigenous Rights

The rise of indigenous identity in Bolivian politics is not a new phenomenon, but it has been subject to change. According to Gray Molina, the social and political construction of ethnicity is tightly linked to episodes of ethnic politicization throughout the twentieth century. The meaning and ascription of terms such as 'Indian', 'indigenous', *campesino*, 'ethnic', 'originary' or 'autochthonous' has changed substantially over the decades (Gray

Molina 2005:5). The fact that indigenous identity has been so profoundly present in Bolivian politics recently might not surprise us, since internationally, indigenous peoples received substantial attention when the UN declared the International Decade of the Worlds' Indigenous Peoples (1995-2004), which led to the adoption of the 2007 Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP). This attention for indigenous peoples around the world provided a discourse for indigenous politics in Bolivia; a readily available language of indigenous rights became a source for persuasive cultural analogies that framed the shared deprivations of previously divided indigenous sectors in society. The recognition of a shared culture made it possible to supersede this previous fragmentation of oppositional politics (Albro 2005:446). The new focus on the human rights of indigenous people influenced the policies of Morales, who started to campaign for a new constitution including far-reaching rights for indigenous peoples. In January 2009, the new constitution was accepted, making Bolivia the first country in the history of South America to declare the right of indigenous people to govern themselves, transforming the country into a twenty-first century standard bearer for South America's native populations.

The new Bolivian Constitution ascribes rights to indigenous and peasant peoples that echo the 2007 UN Declaration (Gustafson 2009:1005). Although the UNDRIP ensures far-reaching rights for indigenous peoples, the UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues has not adopted an official definition of indigenous peoples; instead, it focuses on the self-identification of indigenous peoples. Self-identification as indigenous or tribal is considered as a fundamental criterion and this is the practice followed in the United Nations[6] Also, in the Bolivian case no strict definition has been approved on who is entitled to 'indigenous autonomy': the constitution presumes a multiplicity of avenues to autonomy and multiple types of relations between territory and ethnic identity which will precede through local negotiations and decision-making, rather than top-down ascription (Gustafson 2009:1004). This left some negotiating space for tactics from the economic elite who felt threatened by the indigenous mobilization. The negotiating space, created by self-definition, sparked conservative reactions as elites began to re-inscribe regional difference as racialized self-understanding and with intellectuals imagining that the interculturalism described in Bolivia's new constitution meant that all Bolivians had ethnic particularity and 'indigenous-like autonomy rights' (Gustafson 2009:994).

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[6] Working Paper on the concept of "indigenous peoples" of the Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues

It is exactly this tension, the reactions from the former mestizo and criollo elite on the new indigenous rights and indigenous politics, which will be the focus of this thesis. The question this thesis will attempt to answer is:

> *How has the United Nations Declaration on Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP) affected the dynamics of identity politics in Bolivia and what are the implications for state-society relations in the context of the conflict between the indigenous peoples (principally based in the west) and the* criollo *elite (principally based in the east)?*

This paper will attempt to answer this question through the following sub-questions:

> *a) What is the historical background of identity politics in Bolivia?*
> *b) How was indigenous identity constructed and used as a mobilizing force?*
> *c) What was the effect of the UNDRIP on the construction of indigenous identity?*
> *d) How did the* criollo *elite respond to the mobilization of indigenous identity?*
> *e) How was the regional identity of the east constructed?*
> *f) In what ways were the new indigenous rights, derived from the UNDRIP, claimed in Bolivia?*

Identity politics

In order to answer this question, the analysis will use the concept of identity politics. Postero describes how identity changes over time and is used for political means when she describes how the discourse of multiculturalism and indigenous rights gained ground in Bolivia, which inspired many Bolivian Indians to identify themselves as *pueblos indigenarios* (original peoples). Thus 'indigenous' took on a specific meaning in the context of the times. According to Postero, indigenousness, is a category that can only be understood in the context of the political, economic and social relations that produce it (Postero 2007:12). To be able to understand the rise of indigenous identity in Bolivian politics therefore, is best done through the concept of identity politics.

Identity politics refers to political arguments that focus upon the self-interest and perspectives of social minorities or self-identified social interest groups. Group advocates

will often have a self-belief, a self-schema or explanatory narrative, that they are a marginalized group. Typically, these group identities are defined in terms of race, ethnicity, religion, gender or sexual orientation. Identity politics has come to signify a wide range of political activity and theorizing founded in shared experiences of injustice of members of certain social groups. Rather than organizing solely around belief systems, programmatic manifestos, or party affiliation, identity political formations typically aim to secure the political freedom of a specific constituency marginalized within its larger context. Members of that constituency assert or reclaim ways of understanding their distinctiveness that challenge dominant oppressive characterizations and contain the goal of greater self-determination (Heyes 2007:1). As this explanation shows, the frame of identity politics can show how indigenous peoples shape their constructed identities in order to achieve goals like self-determination or autonomy. The frameworks that give meaning to indigenous identity are in constant evolution. This is because indigenousness – like any identity – is not an uncontested category of domination, but a contingent category negotiated by individual and collective subjects (Postero 2007:11).

Discourse

Self-identification based upon a self-belief and an explanatory narrative is the basis for identity politics. Discourse, as defined by Foucault,, is a central concept for this process. For Foucault, people do not have a 'real' or 'fixed' identity within themselves, although this identity is created through discourse – a way of talking about the self. An identity is communicated to others in interaction with others; it is a shifting, temporary construction (Foucault 1970). Identity is determined through discourse; who determines the discourse has the power and who has the power defines the discourse. By showing the different discourses across time, shifts can be seen in identification and in identity politics.

The rise of indigenous identity in Bolivian politics is not a new phenomenon, but it has been subject to change. For Bolivia, identity has been a key feature in politics ever since Spanish colonization. In order for us to understand fully the concept of identity politics within the Bolivian setting, we need to discuss its history. As Jabri points out, social structures (and therein social relations of hierarchy) are 'materialized' in discourses and institutions. Discourses about signification and legitimation give meaning to the way a

society is constructed. Structures of signification are mobilized to legitimate the sectional interests of hegemonic groups (Jabri 1996:96) through discourses. The next chapter will discuss how discourse, across time, was used and shaped by hegemonic groups in Bolivia in order to legitimate their position within society and to shape the social structures in society as a whole.

Structure of the thesis

Chapter 2 will focus on Bolivia's history and discuss the changes in the political construction of ethnicity, the alterations in national identities and the discourses surrounding them across time. After describing the historical context, it will focus on the rise of indigenous politics in Bolivia through indigenous mobilization, the way indigenous identity was constructed. It will then discuss the incorporation of indigenous rights in the Bolivian constitution in Chapter 3. In Chapter 4, it will examine one of the implications of indigenous rights in Bolivia: the countermovement in the shape of the *criollo/mestizo* demand for indigenous-like autonomy forms in the *media luna*. This chapter will show how the former political elite of Bolivia also embraces identity politics in their counter-discourse to indigenous politics by reconstructing the ideal of *mestizaje* identity. Chapter 5 will contain some concluding remarks: what the meaning of the Bolivian case is for the international struggle for indigenous rights, the implications for the international community and the implications for political theory.

Chapter 2

The History of the Two Bolivia's

The history of the two Bolivias

The struggle of indigenous peoples in Bolivia against domination began more than five hundred years ago with the arrival of the Europeans in the Americas and continues to affect the lives of indigenous peoples today in numerous ways. Although these regimes and their categories have changed over time, each subsequent regime has left its cumulative traces in the culture and social relations in Bolivian society.

After the conquest of the Inca Empire in the Peruvian highlands, Spaniards set up a colonial administration in its former area, which included what is now Bolivia. After the discovery of silver veins, a silver mining boom took shape up until the 1600s and a *criollo* class of settlers developed on large haciendas to support the mining project. The eastern lowlands, however, had no silver, so this region was left mainly to missionaries and rubber producers. Some Spanish explorers seeking paths to the silver mines, and not finding a way up the mountains, settled in the area. Jesuit and Franciscan missionaries established numerous missions, bringing dispersed Guaranís[7] into *reducciones* (mission towns), in which they were forced to participate in mission agricultural schemes. The Guaranís revolted against the missionaries but military invasions attacked the 'savage' Guaranís. Spanish settlers increased in numbers and established large farms and cattle-ranching haciendas. The histories of colonial domination in the lowlands are filled with accounts of insurrections and brutal repression, followed by short periods of peace and then additional cycles of uprisings. The brutal repressions led to a sharp drop in the Guaraní population. Meanwhile, inevitable processes of *mestizaje*[8] began, as the Guaraní began to be *españolizado* ('Spanish-ized'). The Guaraní communities that remained came under economic and political dominance of the regional elites. Other remaining Indians gradually became part of the region's *mestizo* poor (Postero 2007:25-27).

Colonial domination in the highlands

Colonial domination in the highlands took a different path. Here the Indian population was

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[7]   Guaranís are a group of indigenous peoples in the eastern Bolivian lowlands.

[8]   *Mestizaje* was the political ideology of a modern national identity, largely created by the philosopher Concelos, who envisioned a *'raza cosmica,* a race of people of completely mixed European and Amerindian descent.

much larger and the Inca Empire had left a pre-existing system of indirect rule. The Spanish assumed control over this system and left local governing power to local elites whose authority was inherited from Incan nobility forebears.

The Spanish Crown set up two separate legal and institutional systems: the *república de los españoles* for Spaniards and the *república de indios* for Indians. Indians became a separate juridical and political category of subjects from Spanish *criollos* or *mestizos,* with separate rights and obligations. Indians were allowed to hold and use communal property in what were called *communidades indígenas*, and they maintained the right to local self-governance. Indians were entitled to royal protection on the basis of their "inferior condition" and their fulfillment of their tributary obligations (Postero 2007:27-28). So-called free indigenous communities were obliged to render goods and services as tribute directly to the Spanish Crown (Healey 2009:87), which became an important source of revenue for it.

The colonial tribute system was paired with and justified by a biological discourse about race, which established categories based on purity of blood. This system ranked the Spaniards (considered to be people of pure blood) at the top, *castas* (mixed-blood people) in the middle and Indians and Africans on the bottom. Of course, such artificially created categories quickly became impossible to police, as intermarrying between groups and migration produced new racial categories, such as the *mestizos.* Racial identity quickly became a matter determined more by social markers than biology. Despite these difficulties in administering this socio-racial stratification, colonial powers maintained this system because it was the legal mechanism necessary to maintain the economic basis of the colonies: Indian labor and tribute (Postero 2007:28).

The end of colonial rule

While colonized peoples around the world and throughout history have suffered atrocities, the abuse of highland indigenous peoples in the mining areas of Bolivia and Peru is regarded as having been particularly severe. Spanish colonialism became entirely dependent on the superexploitation of indigenous labor for its mining and the agricultural production needed to support it. The period known as the Great Rebellion (1780-1782) produced a number of indigenous uprisings – led by Tomás Katari, Tupac Amaru and Tupac Katari – some of which were sustained for several months before being defeated

(Healey 2009:87). The uprisings were put down and the leaders were killed, but the institutional strength of the Spanish system had faded.

In the early 1800s, *criollo* independence movements began to reconsider the colonial order and, with it, the special status of Indians. When the *creole* elites began to push for independence from Spain, one of the justifications they used was the degraded condition of the Indians. After independence in 1825, republicans struggled to impose liberal political economic reforms in Bolivia, but many in the ruling class rejected these notions and sought to hold onto their privileges and the values of colonial periods. *Criollo* leaders of the new Bolivian Republic reinstated the tribute because they badly needed revenue for an economy that had been crippled by the independence war (Postero 2007:32).

By the mid-nineteenth century, capitalist demands for land, labor and raw materials pushed liberal reforms back onto the *criollo* agenda. Modernization required the ideology of nation-making. The solution the elites introduced was land reform. The idea behind this policy was that Indian communal organizations tied Indians more to local and ethnic-based power relations than to the state, which left them outside the liberal notion of the individual citizen (Larson 2004:49). By destroying the juridical base of communal property and dissolving the communities as collective entities, the Bolivian elite believed they were opening the path to modernity.

The overall result of republican liberalism for the majority of Indians in the Andean region was a stunning loss of communal lands and deep cultural incursions as Indians became subjects of law and liberal bureaucratic regimes controlled by *criollos* and *mestizos*. Although there was never a unitary discourse about race, race continued to play a central part in oligarchic debates about the formation of the nation, the role of Indians in the modern society and the fitness of nonwhite subalterns for national inclusion. The new republican elites argued that the cause of backwardness in their civilization was the indigenous race, being particularly unresponsive to innovation and progress. Yet because the Indian population was so large, assimilation was not a short-term possibility. In Bolivia, the boundaries between 'white' and 'Indian' remained salient and *mestizos* were seen as impure and degraded hybrids sharing none of the virtues of either race (Larson & Wade in Postero 2007:34). The elites' assumptions about Indians' barbarous and communal natures justified their exclusion from the nation. Although Indians were officially citizens of

the Republic, they continued to be subject to colonial forms of discrimination and exploitation by powerful local elites. Ideological justifications for a hierarchical and discriminatory society varied in some respects between the colonial period and the neocolonial republic, but in ways that led to fairly similar directions (Albó 2008:17).

Still, it would be incorrect to conclude that the political class during this period of colonial and neocolonial rule consisted solely of a dominant white minority possibly enlarged by *mestizo* allies and that indigenous peoples simply adopted a passive pre-political posture. That this may have been what the elite hoped for is another matter. The continuous struggles and rebellions of indigenous peoples, both during the colonial period and then under the republic, are evidence of constant political activity (Albó 2008:17). The twentieth century saw continued resistance by highland Indians protesting republican forms of economic and political domination. In a cycle of rebellions, Aymara leaders articulated a series of political demands. Indians articulated a desire to return to the economic systems they had enjoyed before the colonial and liberal impositions (Postero 2007:37). These demands were at odds with oligarchs who were expanding their private landholdings, as well as modernizers who saw the future of Bolivia as a unified nation of peasant farmers contributing to the national market.

The 1952 Revolution

In the chaotic years after the Chaco War in the 1930s between Bolivia and Paraguay, the oligarchy was replaced by emerging political actors who saw the Indian peasantry and the miners as allies for political change. The old political system began to fall apart. The new *Movimiento Nacional Revolucionario* (MNR), a political party mostly run by the urban, white middle class, brought together the labor unions, middle class and Indian peasants to institute in revolutionary republic under MNR leadership in 1952. After the revolution, the populist MNR party established itself as the dominant inclusionary organization bringing together the main social classes. For indigenous peoples, this new political system took the forms of state sponsored peasant unions, which integrated indigenous peoples into the state as producers and not as indigenous peoples or Indians per se. For the MNR, instituting a unifying nationalist program meant an attempt to erase all ethnic references (Postero 2009; Healey 2009; Ströble-Gregor 1994). The 1952 Revolution caused the "disappearance of the Indigenous" in the context of a hegemonic and homogeneous social

and political project (Rivera in Gray Molina 2005:8). As a stigmatizing term, 'Indian' was officially abolished and replaced with *campesino* (peasant).

The Revolution constructed a new cohesive identity linked to the working classes, peasantry and a national bourgeoisie. The *campesino* played a key role in defining the identity of the protagonists of the revolution's most important action: the 1953 Agrarian Reform. A significant feature of the Agrarian Reform was the dissolution of all forms of agrarian labor exploitation coupled by over thirty years of massive redistribution of land. The Agrarian Reform decree erased all mention of 'Indian peoples', 'Indian race', Aymara or Quechua identity from official discourse. The *campesino* union system, created to redistribute land, was to provide a long lasting link between the MNR and the rural society and economy for nearly half a century (Gray Molina 2005:8).

After the Revolution, indigenous peoples were to be assimilated into the state, their labor incorporated in to the market, and their differences minimized and managed. The *campesino* unions proved an effective means for land acquisition after the abolition of the feudal haciendas, and indigenous peoples tended to feel included in the nation through their membership in the state-sponsored *campesino* federations. The result was that the Indian *campesinos* of the highlands were able to use the collectivist organizations to channel their demands directly to the state in a way that had never before been possible. Yet neither acquiring land nor forming peasant unions resolved the unequal relations with *hacendados* (owners of large farming estates) or the merchant class, as poor *campesinos* remained tied to these elite through economic relations of production as well as cultural and kinship practices. Nor did it resolve racial questions, as 'Indian' and *campesino* became synonymous (Lagos in Postero 2007:39-40). Although the reforms after the revolution addressed some of the inequalities that had faced Bolivia's indigenous peoples, they also provoked an ambiguity between class and ethnicity that has continued to the present. The small *criollo* minority, seeing itself as white, continued to use the state to enforce its economic and political interests and thus dominated not only politically, economically and socially, but also culturally. Their aim was to solve the "Indian problem" by assimilating the Indians (Ströbele-Gregor 1994:108). Even in the areas where indigenous *campesinos* benefited from the state's attention, the *campesino* movements did not amount to a radical empowerment of indigenous peoples. During the decades after the revolution, *campesino* unions were increasingly brought under state control. The MNR

started to lose many of its adherents and weakened (Postero 2007:40-41). By 1964, the military took control of Bolivia, leaving the country until 1985 under regimes of military dictators.

The 1952 Revolution, paradoxically, deprived people of their indigenous Indian identity as the necessary price for achieving full citizenship. The ideal was to build a society that was more inclusive, but also more homogeneous, through the adoption of *mestizo* culture. Paradoxically then, a system originally designed to overcome ethnic discrimination ended, boomerang-like, by creating yet another form of cultural discrimination (Albó 2008:21). The offer of citizenship did not overcome racism but rather was a reflection of it; indigenous peoples were offered it only if they abandoned their identity as Indians and incorporated themselves into national society. As a result, the saying "One will no longer be discriminated against when one stops being Indian" came into existence (Postero 2007: 42).

Post-revolutionary frustrations: the Katarismo movement
The frustrations from enduring discrimination provoked several different responses in the highlands. The most important was the *Katarismo* movement, which arose in the 1960s from Aymara intellectuals who called for cultural recognition and Indian rights within a 'multicultural' Bolivia. Named after the eighteenth-century insurrection leader Túpac Katari, it began as a cultural movement and then developed into a strong trade-unionist movement that tied ethnic questions to the primary notion of class. Central to the movement was the reclamation of the past. *Katarista* ideology offered a powerful tradition that was counter-hegemonic to both liberal nation-building projects and to Eurocentric ideals of cultural homogenization and citizenship under a reified form of cultural *mestizaje* (Sanjinés 2002:155). Its analysis revealed the fundamental challenge of melding a long pre-Hispanic and anti-colonial memory with a short, revolutionary memory into a collective indigenous identity and political vision. The frustrated expectations born of the 1952 Revolution revived the memories of centuries-old indigenous resistance to the state and gave rise to a new ethnic consciousness and a more sophisticated understanding of the political challenges at hand (Ticona in Healey 2009:89).

By 1987, the *Katarismo* movement had split into two factions. The moderate or 'indigenous' group, Movimiento Revolucionario Túpac Katari de Liberación (MRTKL), under the leadership of Víctor Hugo Cárdenas, tried to work within the political system. It

analyzed the problems of Bolivian society through the "theory of two eyes": one eye focusing on the problems of exploited social classes and the other seeing these as problems of oppressed nations, peoples and ethnic groups (Sanjinés 2002:160). The more radical or 'Indianist' group, the Movimiento Indio Túpac Katari (MITKA), maintained a more radical outsider strategy, refusing to ally with *mestizo* political parties. This split reflected more the personal or internal group disputes, as each faction conceived ethnicity, indigenous and Indian, on different terms (Gray Molina 2005:10). The whole process of recovering ethnic consciousness through the *Katarista* movement was something essentially endogenous to Bolivia, taking place as it did well before the ethnic factor began to loom large on the international scene (Albó 2008:23).

The *media luna*

As described earlier, developments in Bolivian society took different paths in the highlands and the lowlands. Therefore, lowland Indians came to national attention along a different trajectory. The 1930s Chaco War brought highlanders to the eastern lowlands and began what is now a permanent opening of the area to national development (Postero 2007:45). Over time, deculturation, combined with the enormous loss of life and commercial exploitation of natural resources, significantly altered the ecology of large parts of the lowlands. Lowland cultures were less able to withstand the consequences of dependency, forced assimilation and the loss of vast territories over which to range.

After the 1952 Revolution, the MNR stimulated capitalist agriculture by granting loans and offering assistance and capital investments in the east. The government ensured that large, capitalized agricultural enterprises were exempt from expropriation and it encouraged people in the densely populated parts of the country to migrate and acquire larger holdings in areas where land was abundant – meaning the eastern lowlands. Since enterprises were exempt from expropriation, the Agrarian Reform had an entirely different impact in the lowlands than it did in the highlands. As a result, of government investments, the 1960s saw tremendous growth in the lowlands. Large-scale producers who received government subsidies often became enormously wealthy in a short time and, thus, a new lowland elite emerged. The east was largely unaffected by the organization of *campesino* unions and the redistribution of land to indigenous peoples. Nor was the lowland indigenous population emancipated from feudal-type labor obligations to the same extent

as that of the highlands (Postero 2007:47-48, Healey 2009:89) Poor people from the highlands began to migrate to the city of Santa Cruz and the surrounding cities. In the 1990s, new gas reserves were found in so-called *media luna* in the departments of Santa Cruz, Tarija, Pando and Beni. These natural gas resources still represent a large proportion of state revenues and have brought the *media luna* into the center of Bolivia's economic, political and social agendas.

Internal colonization

This chapter has shown that episodes of ethnic politicization, contestation and rebellion need to be explained in historical context along with a focus on the self-understanding and self-identification of ethnicity, indigenous, Indian, originary peoples or *campesinos* across time. The history of the second half the twentieth century, particularly since the National Revolution of 1952, seems to point to class-based patterns of state-led inclusion and political co-optation, sustained by a deliberate policy of redefining key social and political actors in non-ethnic terms. The "disappearance of the indigenous" did not, however, last long.

The Revolution of 1952 deprived indigenous peoples of their indigenous identity, supplanting it with *mestizo* and class-based identity, but it never resolved the unequal relations between the *criollos* and the indigenous peoples (or *campesinos*)*.* In fact, similar hierarchies in power were translated into class-based hierarchies, instead of the former colonial hierarchy of races. The unequal relationships inherited from colonial times remained in place. Tully (2000) describes this phenomenon as 'internal colonization'. Internal colonization refers to the historical processes by which structures of domination have been set in place over indigenous peoples and their territories without their consent and as a response to their resistance against and within these structures. Subordinate indigenous societies are 'incorporated' within the new structures of society, ensuring that indigenous peoples exist within the dominant societies as minorities or as secondary class citizens. This form of colonization is 'internal' as opposed to 'external' because the colonizing society is built in the territories of the formerly free and now colonized peoples (in external colonization, colonies and the imperial society coexist on different territories). The colonizing or imperial society exercises exclusive jurisdiction over local peoples and their territories; indigenous peoples, although they comply and adapt, refuse to surrender their freedom of territorial self-determination and continue to resist within the system as a

whole as best they can. The essence of internal colonization – the ground of the relation – is the appropriation of the land, resources and jurisdiction of indigenous peoples, not (only) for the sake of resettlement and exploitation, but for the territorial foundation of the dominant society itself (Tully 2000:39). As will be shown in the next chapter, the process of internal colonization is an ongoing process; appropriation and the upholding of land and resources are still the basis for unequal relations in Bolivia and it resulted in a renewal of indigenous discourse and power that can be traced to the present (Gray Molina 2005:29).

Chapter 3

Mobilizing Indigenous Identity

Mobilizing indigenous identity

From the 1980s and 1990s and onwards, various indigenous peoples started to organize and work together in regional federations, which resulted in periods of massive indigenous mobilizations. Especially in the lowlands, there has been historic hostility between some of the indigenous groups, which remained an initial obstacle to national organizing. One central issue unified them however: the need to defend and control their own land from increasing settlement in lowland areas (Postero 2007:49), since the most immediate effect of the lowlands' intense growth was the endangerment of their lands. In 1990, indigenous groups overcame their differences and united to articulate publicly their demand for territory. The peoples of the lowlands undertook the broadly publicized *Marcha por Territorio y Dignidad* (March for Dignity and Territory). They set out from the town of Trinidad por La Paz andarrived thirty-five days later (Molina 2008:8). On reaching the highlands, they were greeted enthusiastically by the local indigenous population, who until then had been virtually oblivious of their existence. It was a historic moment in which the indigenous peoples of the lowlands forced themselves upon the national scene (Assies & Salman 2005:275). According to Postero, this march has changed the face of Bolivia forever: indigenous people and their demands for territory and recognition as part of the nation caused an immediate response by the government. President Zamora met with the indigenous leaders and negotiated with them on their demands; the result was the creation of seven indigenous territories by presidential decree (Postero 2007:49). The march was an impressive demonstration of the mobilizing force of lowland Indians, while the reaction of the state reflected the emerging international discourse on indigenous rights. Bolivian indigenous activism of the 1980s and 1990s was part of a larger trend across Latin America.

<u>The international mobilization of indigenous identity</u>

In the 1990s, the indigenous rights movement became a forceful political presence in the international arena as well as within the Latin American region itself. This evolution was critically dependent on the effective use made of the international arena and on the support that was given by the UN and other international institutions (Molyneux 2001:1).

The indigenous rights movement turned local knowledge to global power in a way that sometimes they were able to bypass the state-level structures of domination (Brysk 1996:51).

The fact that the indigenous rights movement gained ground in Latin America is remarkable since, according to Karst and Rosenn, it appears to be difficult for the universalist legal system to find a proper place at all in Latin America, where personal connections still tend to triumph over a system of rules. The roots of this situation are in the way the rules were introduced and applied in the colonial period. To the elite, the law became a norm; to the unprivileged, the law was arbitrary and alien (Karst and Rosenn 1975:701). In this legal culture, law was made in order to serve the elite, as verbalized in the expression **"*a los amigos, justicia y gracia; a los enemigos, la ley a secas*"** (García in Montez 2009:1), which loosely translates as: "you do justice to your friends, the law you apply to your enemy." It is therefore especially noteworthy that universal rights for indigenous peoples (the 'unprivileged') are becoming a forceful political presence in Latin America.

However, the combination of an increasingly organized, well-networked regional movement and a sympathetic international environment provided indigenous rights activists in Latin America with a favorable context in which to pursue their demands. The UN Decade of Indigenous Peoples (1995-2005) has undoubtedly helped to raise awareness and funds for campaigns and to persuade governments to improve their records on these issues. Thereafter, attention for indigenous rights has increased again though a Second Decade of Indigenous Peoples (2005-2015) and ultimately the adoption in 2007 of the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP) by the General Assembly. A transnational indigenous movement was born that espoused a discourse linking indigenous identity, human rights and democracy (Postero 2007:50).

International relations became an increasingly important determinant of domestic social change, while transnational alliances played a growing role in social movement activity (Brysk 1996:38). The indigenous rights movement was able to act globally because it worked as a new social movement based on identity and consciousness rather than objective material position. This new perspective depicts social movement activity as the mobilization of identity rather than material resources (Brysk 1996:39). This is also clearly

present in popular protests in Bolivia, as this chapter will discuss in terms of the 'Water War' and the 'Gas War'.

'Indigenousness' is an identity constructed, shaped and lived in the politicized context of contemporary colonialism. The concept 'indigenous peoples', developed principally within western traditions of scholarship and legal reform, has nurtured the revival of traditional identities. It has transcended it symbolic use by acquiring legal authority through the UNDRIP. It is the focus of widening struggles by increasing numbers of 'peoples' for recognition, legitimacy and validation. It has been taken control of by its living subjects -reverse-engineered, rearticulated, and put to use as a tool of liberation (Niezen 2003:221). How 'indigenousness' has been constructed, shaped and used as a tool of liberation in Bolivian society will now be discussed.

The mobilization of identity in Bolivia

After the *Marcha por Territorio y Dignidad,* new political parties arose that appealed primarily to the poorer and indigenous Bolivians. Elections in 1993 yielded a MNR government, headed by Sanchez de Lozada with Aymara leader Víctor Hugo Cárdenas (a former *Katarista* leader) as his vice-president. This surprising alliance was designed to attract voters who would otherwise have voted for the new parties. Although *Katarismo* had declined as an organizing force, what it did achieve was the widespread acceptance of ideas of multiculturalism among the Bolivian population and some politicians. *Katarismo* articulated indigenous demands and insisted on a radical multiculturalist challenge to the homogenizing nature of post-revolutionary regimes of citizenship. Under pressure of the growing indigenous influence, the first Lozada administration amended the Bolivian constitution to declare Bolivia to be multiethnicand pluricultural. Thus, a drive for reform characterized the Lozada government. Postero calls the reforms "state-led multiculturalism", caused by a "push from below" (Postero 2007:125)

One of the main reforms of the Lozada government was the introduction of the Law on Popular Participation. This law brought an extensive decentralization of the country's political-administrative structure through upgrading the, until then insignificant, municipal level of government. The Law thus decentralized administration and opened up local government to indigenous participation for the first time. Although advances were made

and indigenous people became more prominent in Bolivian polity, the advances are more modest than often claimed (Assies & Salman 2005:277). The concrete effects of recognizing the multicultural state were limited, since they were embedded in a more general neoliberal policy framework that brought little benefit to large sectors of the population and often directly hurt their interests. The polity is characterized by a 'representation deficit' that forces popular feelings and demands to be expressed in extra-institutional or even anti-institutional ways. While popular protest had not been previously absent before2000, this year marked a turning point as protest became more broad and vehement and finally spilled over into the political system (Assies & Salman 2005:277).

La guerra del agua (The Water War)
In 2000, a series of conflicts, the so-called Water War, developed in the city of Cochabamba. By April of that year, discontent over the privatization of the city's water supply erupted into massive popular demonstrations. A successful alliance between urban workers, rural peasant irrigators, members of local water collectives, students and ordinary *Chochabambios* formed, which called itself the *Coordinadora en Defensa de Agua y Vida*. The *Coordinadora* staged marches and such acts of resistance as burning water bills en masse in the public plaza. The conflict escalated as protestors took to the streets. Thousands fought the police across barricades. The government responded with repression, which led to violent confrontations, but after four months, the government was forced to annul the contract with the private water company. The Water War was widely heralded as a victory by 'the people' against corporate globalization in Latin America, a sort of David and Goliath-like victory for the opposition, and regarded as the first victory of popular movements after fifteen years of defeats in the face of neoliberal policies (Assies & Salman 2005:279).

A central component of the Cochabamba struggle was the defense of cultural heritage and collective indigenous rights to water. Although this was not a struggle led by indigenous organizations, as the campaign developed, the language centered increasingly around the protection of *usos y costumbres* (traditional custom and usages) and the inherent paradox between Andean spirituality and neoliberal notions. This was not just a strategic use of the discourse of indigenous rights in the context of the identity politics of multiculturalism. Rather, it was a new form of coalitional politics that emerged as the most important form of social movement protagonism in Bolivia today. Yet the protestors did not unite around their

identity as indigenous or Indian, but around a common idea of how cultural practices were threatened by market forces. According to Postero, instead of organizing around class or ethnicity, the protestors came together around a shared notion of exploitation based on both culture and poverty (Postero 2007:195).

The state declared a state of siege, not only because of the violent clashes in the Water War, but also because of a wave of indigenous-*campesino* roadblocks erupted around the same time. The roadblocks started as teachers demonstrated for a salary raise. While this conflict escalated, *cocaleros* (coca growers) initiated roadblocks to protest against forced coca eradication and militarization (as part of the War on Drugs in Bolivia that had been initiated by the USA). Meanwhile, a series of other conflicts erupted, and, by the end of September 2000, some ten different conflicts were ongoing (Assies & Salman 2005:281). The government then negotiated the various disputes, produced decree after decree and elevated the Vice Ministry of Indigenous and Originary People's Affairs to the rank of a Ministry for Peasant, Indigenous and Originary People. The wake of the Water War became an opportunity for several groups to press their demands.

The Cocalero-roots of the MAS
The city of Chapare was center stage for the protests of the *cocaleros.* The conflict intensified when various police officers were ambushed and killed, and the government accused Evo Morales, a parliamentarian and one of the main leaders of the *cocaleros,* of being the intellectual author of the crimes and called for the lifting of his parliamentary immunity. When, at the end of 2001, violent confrontations re-emerged, deputies voted for the definitive separation of Morales, which meant his virtual eradication form the political scene. When Morales was expelled from Congress, people felt deeply offended and humiliated; it was felt that the government had only dared to do this because Morales was an Indian. The racist contempt of the governing class rebounded on them like a boomerang. The usually divided factions of the *campesino* movement closed ranks and called for roadblocks. The *cocaleros* did the same and support for Morales broadened (Assies & Salman 2005: 285).

With the collapse of class-based political options (as explained in chapter 2; the classes created after the 1952 Revolution such as the *campesino* unions) during the era of multiculturalism, strategies of dissent based on cultural identity became more important for

the struggle of the *cocaleros*, who self-consciously framed their conflict with the State in terms of a tradition of radical Andean cultural alterity. *Cocaleros* decided to articulate their goals in line with those of the indigenous movements (Albro 2005:438). The predecessor of the MAS, the Assembly for the Sovereignty of the People (ASP), was clear in advocating a commitment to disregard the "artificial division between the worker and Bolivia's original inhabitants". This strategy of alliance-building included bridging class and ethnic divides in Bolivia's opposition movement and is still viable and visible in MAS's strategies today. If among themselves the *cocaleros* often self-identify as *campesinos*, nationally and internationally, *cocaleros* highlight their indigenous heritage, encompassing class with culture (Albro 2005:439). According to Keck and Sikkink, this is the 'boomerang effect' of international indigenous activism; it gives the *cocaleros* a public relations tool beyond the State to use in their protracted conflict with the State (Keck & Sikkink 1998:12-13).

In the Water War period, Morales' MAS party started to combine a discourse on the defense of the 'sacred leaf' (coca) with anti-imperialism, an indigenous rights-focus and a socialist programme, which enabled it to draw on electoral support beyond Morales' home base and among various sectors of the population. The appeal of Morales' identity politics was not limited to the *cocaleros* or the indigenous population anymore; Bolivia's poor also identified with him, being born as he was in a poor farmer's family, and regarded him as one of their own -. MAS declared itself as a party for all the popular and indigenous groups of Bolivia who had suffered indignities and oppression by the *criollo* elite. The ethnic message mixed with a simple populist message: "there are rich people and then there are the rest of us – poor, hard working, and excluded. Now it's our turn" (Postero 2007:200). The readily available language of indigenous rights has become a source for persuasive cultural analogies that frame the shared deprivations of indigenous and urban non-indigenous popular sectors alike. To supersede the identity-based factionalism that has fragmented oppositional politics in the past, their struggle has shifted away from class-specific issues to the recognition of culture as a shared condition of class (Albro 2005:446).

La guerra del gas (The Gas War)
In 2002, the MAS, under the leadership of Morales, became the second largest party after the elections. In spite of this electoral success, the real victory was felt in the streets of

Bolivia. In 2003, new massive social mobilizations took place, which are collectively called the Gas War. The center of conflict was the city of El Alto, where people protested against the plans to export gas to Chile, an historically enemy of Bolivia. The main reason for the protests though was the general discontent with the selling of Bolivia's resources, while the majority of the peoples would remain excluded from its revenues. The Gas War, like the Water War, was a response to the perceived violation of Bolivian 'national sovereignty' by both transnational corporations and a so-called political elite who were accused of failing to protect Bolivia's national interests. Military reactions to the protests lead to a death toll of over sixty citizens. President Sánchez de Lozada was forced to resign and fled the country. Vice president Mesa took over his position, but he was quickly forced to resign as well because of new rounds of popular protests. Although the protests in this period were not always focused on the indigenous peoples, indigenous identity was always present in symbolic objects, clothing and language. Indigenous advocacy in Bolivia, articulated by the MAS, took the form of broader and more plural civil society coalitions rather than pursuing a marginal, if more exclusively autonomous, identity politics of its own (Albro 2005:436).

Morales: the first indigenous president

The Gas War and the Water War paved the way for Morales' victory in the 2005 national elections. Morales won 51 per cent of the vote, more than any other president since the country's return to democracy. He won the support of a wide spectrum of Bolivians, but most of his support came from the highlands. He won all the departments in the western part of the country, while PODEMOS won the eastern departments. Even in those eastern regions however, Morales garnered the support of labor and *campesino* unions, the poor, the landless and indigenous organizations (Postero 2007:214).

The dramatic shift in the politics of Bolivia was enabled by the support of an international campaign aimed at strengthening indigenous rights. Indigenous *campesino* leaders, *cocaleros* and intellectuals in Bolivia created a powerful tool in identity politics that appealed to people's subjective consciousness and beliefs while taking full advantage of the institutional

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benefits provided by the organized *campesino* and *cocalero* movements. Highland and lowland indigenous leaders, with overlapping as well as divergent priorities based in ethnicity and geographical provenance, have effectively wielded identity to seize the new political opportunities made possible by a decentralizing neoliberal state (Healey 2009:97).

The UN Declaration of the Right of Indigenous Peoples

Two years after his election, Morales' campaign for indigenous rights received a tremendous boost from the adoption of the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP). Bolivia was the first country to approve the UNDRIP. Morales was already campaigning for a new Bolivian Constitution which would include many indigenous rights, among which the right for indigenous peoples to govern themselves through a form of autonomy (Barié 2007:7). The adoption of the UNDRIP facilitated his campaign, and, in January 2009, a referendum was held in which the new constitution was accepted by the majority of Bolivians. Bolivia was the first state to incorporate the UNDRIP in its national legislation and, subsequently, its constitution, which transformed the country into a twenty-first century standard bearer for South America's native populations.

Indigenous rights in the Bolivian Constitution

The obvious focus on indigenous rights in the new constitution can be seen in article 2:

> *Dada la existencia precolonial de las naciones y pueblos indígena originario campesinos y su dominio ancestral sobre sus territorios, se garantiza su libre determinación en el marco de la unidad del Estado, que consiste en su derecho a la autonomía, al autogobierno, a su cultura, al reconocimiento de sus instituciones y a la consolidación de sus entidades territoriales, conforme a esta Constitución y la ley (República del Bolivia 2009).[9]*

Since the adoption of the new constitution, Bolivia is no longer a multicultural state, but described as a plurinational state:

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[9] "Given the precolonial existence of indigenous nations and peoples, of indigenous campesino territories and their ancestral domination of their territories, to ensure their free determination within the framework of the unity of the State, they have the right to autonomy, to self-government, to their own culture, to recognition of its institutions and to the consolidation of its territorial entities, in accordance with this Constitution and the law." [author's own translation]

Artículo 98.

I. La diversidad cultural constituye la base esencial del Estado Plurinacional Comunitario. La interculturalidad es el instrumento para la cohesión y la convivencia armónica y equilibrada entre todos los pueblos y naciones. La interculturalidad tendrá lugar con respeto a las diferencias y en igualdad de condiciones (República del Bolivia 2009).[10]

Self-identification

The new constitution endorses far-ranging rights for indigenous peoples encapsulated in a plurinational state with autonomies of different types for indigenous peoples, regions and municipalities. The constitution clearly echoes the UNDRIP. Indigenous autonomy in the constitution is guaranteed through the creation of Indigenous Originary Peasant Autonomies and Autonomous Indigenous Territories (Article 289). These autonomies may be formed from municipalities where indigenous peoples are a majority or from multiple nations of ethnically diverse territories and municipalities grouping together. These may unite with other territories to form intercultural regional autonomies as well. This presumes a multiplicity of avenues to autonomy and multiple types of relations between territory and ethnic identity which will precede through local negotiations and decision-making, rather than top-down ascription (Gustafson 2009:1004).

These multiple possibilities for identity of indigenous peoples as mentioned in the Bolivian Constitution is also provided for in the UNDRIP. The UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues has not adopted an official definition on indigenous peoples, instead it focuses on self-identification of indigenous peoples; according to the Forum, self-identification is a fundamental criterion. In addition, many scholars agree on the importance of indigenous self-identification. Ultimately the question, "Who is indigenous?" is, according to many, best answered by indigenous communities themselves (Corntassel 2008:129). The fact that there are multiple ways to and types of autonomy, based on the idea of self-identification described in the new constitution, also brings some problems. Local decision-making leaves room for different interpretations of autonomy, which creates tensions within the country. The next chapter will focus on these tensions and the differences in the

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[10] "Cultural diversity is the foundation of the Plurinational Comunitarian State. Interculturality is the instrument for cohesion and balanced and harmonious coexistence among all peoples and nations. The interculturality takes place with respect to differences and equality." [author's own translation]

interpretation of indigenous autonomy. It remains to be seen if in reality "interculturality is the instrument for cohesion and balanced and harmonious coexistence among all peoples and nations."

Chapter 4

Media Luna's Quest for Regional Autonomy

Media luna's quest for regional autonomy

In 2004, Miss Bolivia, a native of Santa Cruz, the industrial, agricultural and banking center close to large natural gas reserves, created an international scandal by commenting that "Unfortunately, people who don't know Bolivia very much think that we are all just Indian people," adding that the image typified La Paz, which has "poor people and very short people and Indian people...I'm from the other side of the country. We are tall and we are white people and we know English." The young woman from Santa Cruz expressed succinctly the racial divide that separates highland and lowland Bolivia and the perception in Santa Cruz that outsiders know of only the Andes (Schroeder 2007:105).

<u>The elite countermovement</u>

The divide described by Miss Bolivia in 2004, one between highland and lowland Bolivia (extensively discussed in Chapters 1 and 2), still maintains strong influence in Bolivian society today. Indigenous mobilizations took place primarily in the highlands, and the majority of the MAS supporters and supporters of other indigenous organizations came from the western highlands of Bolivia. The east (also *media luna)* has therefore lost a considerable amount of power in Bolivian politics.

Having sensed the erosion of power underway because of the mobilizations, by the early 2000s, traditional *criollo* and *mestizo* elites began to retreat from the centralized state upon which they had long depended (Gustafson 2006:352). In the past, as demonstrated in chapter 2, Bolivian centralism very much operated in ways that promoted elites in east Bolivia. With their influence in the national government, the elites of the *media luna* used the centralized state in the 1980s and 1990s in the service of neo-liberalism for their own benefits. Market-friendly and pro-export economic policies where disproportionately benefiting the east, while having a strongly negative impact in the western part of the country (Eaton 2007:79-80). Morales and the indigenous movements have provided changes in the power balance and worked to refound the nation-state by nationalizing the country's oil and gas industries, accelerating redistributive land reform and rewriting the constitution to incorporate the indigenous majority. These moves have sparked explosive

reactions from conservative elites, who have responded with racially charged demands for regional autonomy and with paramilitary violence to oppose the popular indigenous challenge.

Through voicing demands for more decentralization, encouraged by the hope that natural resources would come under regional rather than national control, elites began to entrench themselves discursively and institutionally in the departments. They promoted a discourse of departmental autonomy (Gustafson 2006:352) and used similar discourses as those in the indigenous movements' requests for indigenous autonomy. Morales' administration mobilized discourses and performances of Andean indigenous culture with the claim to reorder or cleanse Bolivian society of the colonial legacy of racism and the more contemporary evils of capitalism and neoliberalism (Postero 2007:194). Yet foundational to the growth and development of right-wing politics in the *media luna* has been right-wing reappropriation of such performative strategies from the indigenous movements. It is the pursuit of regional autonomy rather than authoritarianism (as is typical in Bolivia's history) that has defined the elite's response to indigenous mobilization in Bolivia (Eaton 2007:72).

From the standpoint of these elites, the changes in current Bolivian politics cannot be easily reversed; rather, they appear to constrict for the foreseeable future the channels of influence on which elites have long depended. Particularly at the national level, the meteoric rise of the MAS – in a party system in which no single party in the post-1982 period was ever able to win a majority – signifies a deep challenge to elite interests. Whereas the fragmentation of Bolivia's party system forced all presidents in the contemporary democratic period to negotiate interparty pacts in order to govern, the emergence of the MAS as a majority party after 2002 means that Morales does not need to negotiate with any traditional parties. As a result, economic elites in the *media luna* do not perceive their loss of voice in the national government to be a temporary matter and believe instead that the defense of their interests now requires some sort of autonomy from the government (Eaton 2007:83).

Autonomy as a legal concept
Generally, autonomy is understood to refer to independence of action in the internal or domestic level, as foreign affairs and defense normally are in the hands of the central or national government (Hannum 1980:860), a difference also referred to as 'internal self-

determination' as opposed to 'external self-determination'. Most autonomous territories therefore have no international personality and are not treated as states for the purposes of international law. Until recently, autonomy was not a term or a concept that has a generally accepted definition in international law (Hannum 1980:885-886). The term autonomy is a loose concept capable of morphing into various kinds of legal and social relationships. As a legal concept, it remains vague. Essentially, it is an institutional arrangement, enabling minorities to achieve some sort of internal self-government. It is viewed as a step below full self-determination but a step above minority rights (Suksi in Sydenham 2004:7). Still, until the UNDRIP was adopted, there was no general right to autonomy for indigenous peoples or minorities under international law (Pentassuglia 2002:8,15). This has changed since the adoption of the UNDRIP in which Article 4 clearly states that:

> Indigenous peoples, in exercising their right to self-determination, have the right
> to autonomy or self-government in matters relating to their internal and local
> affairs, as well as ways and means for financing their autonomous functions.[11]

Although the fact that the right to autonomy is acknowledged in a legal international text for the first time is in itself an achievement for indigenous peoples and minorities, it does not imply immediate national enforcement. The Declaration is soft law, a non-binding text with no enforcement mechanisms to ensure its implementation, and therefore, the Declaration is often referred to as a 'paper tiger'. The rights it describes are far-reaching, but without implementation in national legislation, claims to these rights cannot be granted. However, as chapter 3 has shown, Bolivia is the first country to implement effectively the rights of the 'paper tiger' in its national constitution through granting rights to indigenous autonomy and self-government (see chapter 2).

Although autonomy has only recently been recognized as a right, it has for a long time been one of the most sought after devices for conflict management. It has been viewed in recent years as a panacea for cultural diversity, providing a means of retaining state unity while satisfying claims to self-government (Sydenham 2004:8). Within the international realm of conflict resolution, autonomy has often been an instrument to protect territorial minorities within a state. Where the physical or cultural existence of a minority is at stake,

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[11]   For the entire Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, see Appendix 3

autonomy is typically viewed as a means for protection. In the case of Bolivia, the question is whether the *media luna*'s quest for autonomy might be regarded as a quest for protection or as a means to hold on to previously enjoyed (economic) privileges.

Santa Cruz

The demand for autonomy is particularly acute in the eastern lowland department of Santa Cruz, which occupies a third of the national territory and is home to the country's most productive economic activities and most well-organized business associations. Grouped together in the *Comité Pro-Santa Cruz* (Pro-Santa Cruz Committee – CPSC), these business associations are threatened directly by the antimarket sentiment that indigenous political groups in the highlands have so successfully harnessed. Santa Cruz, as the agroindustrial capital of Bolivia, accounts for 42 per cent of the nation's agricultural output. Tarija, a neighboring *media luna* department, accounts for 80 per cent of its natural gas. With only five percent of Bolivia's population, Tarija's share of royalties and taxes from gas production could disproportionately influence the distribution of future economic investment throughout the country. Elite groups that stand to benefit from such economic prosperity have joined forces to promote political decentralization in the *media luna*. By staging a series of spectacular events, right-wing *Comité Pro Santa Cruz* leaders built an urban base of support and ultimately created a powerful social movement. This chapter will show which strategies these elites use to mobilize the *media luna* population and the discourses they use in their identity politics.

Mobilizations in the *media luna*

On January 28, 2005, a town meeting to support autonomy brought 350,000 people into the streets of Santa Cruz. The rally clearly demonstrated that *mestizos* in Santa Cruz could mobilize a population just as well as indigenous leaders of the highlands. As surely as indigenous communities in the highlands exert influence over political processes in Bolivia by taking to the streets, *mestizo* groups in the lowlands can use similar means to further their own political agenda (Schroeder 2007:106). At the time, this pressure on President Mesa lead to an agreement to hold a nationwide referendum on departmental autonomy. While a majority of Bolivians (56 per cent) rejected regional autonomy in the referendum held on July 2, 2006, the affirmative vote for autonomy had as much as 70 per cent support in the eastern provinces (Eaton 2007:84; Gustafson 2009:1007). Talk of

autonomy intensified in print and TV media, especially in the *media luna*. Elites staged political rituals that appropriated symbols of sovereignty and indigenous slogans on land and freedom and tactics of the Bolivian left. In late 2007, when the new constitution was drafted, autonomists in Santa Cruz, though backed by no law, circulated their own autonomy statute: the *Asamblea Provisional* 2007 (Gustafson 2009:1007).

After rightist protest against the upcoming constitutional changes, Evo Morales, then president, directly confronted the right wing countermovement by calling for a national recall referendum on August 19, 2008, in which the electorate was asked to ratify the process of change under his leadership. Morales achieved an impressive victory, winning more than 67 per cent of the vote, far exceeding the absolute majority of 54 per cent he garnered in the 2005 presidential elections (Fabricant 2009:779-780). The opposition wasted little time in reacting to this recall referendum; they organized what some have referred to as a 'civic coup' by taking over central government buildings in the lowlands, including the tax office, the agricultural reform offices and the national telecommunications company. They also seized the local airport and set up roadblocks to cut off the critical highways linking Santa Cruz to the rest of the country (Ibid.).

Indigenous rights and the autonomy discourse of the east

Discourses of indigenous rights and indigenous culture provided for massive support for Morales and his MAS party. The elite in the *media luna* realized that they too needed a discourse that would give their cause credibility as an issue of cultural pride and identity – a powerful political claim in the twenty-first century – rather than frame it as a nakedly economic issue of complete control over all gas and oil deposits (Fabricant 2009:773; Sologuren 2009:7). The elites in the *media luna* started to create a discourse similar to the indigenous discourse, using the same kind of slogans and basing their tactics on the same kind of rights (Gustafson 2009:1007-1009). In the extralegal autonomy statue of Santa Cruz, the *Asamblea Provisional*, references to indigenous rights are evident:

> Article 161: Recognition
> In agreement with the ILO Convention 169 and the UN Declaration on
> Indigenous Peoples, the Cruceño people (people from Santa Cruz) recognizes
> with pride its majoritarian mestizo racial condition and to that measure, its

obligation to conserve and promote the integral and autonomous development of the five indigenous peoples dwelling in the department: Chiquitano, Guaraní, Guarayo, Ayoreo and Mojeño, in conformity with that established in this Statute (Gustafson 2009:1008-1009).

Though citing at that time the recently approved UNDRIP, the statute affirms the "majoritarian *mestizo* racial condition" of the region and denies indigenous peoples any autonomy by 'conserving' and 'developing' them within departmental authority. In order to suffice the requirements for indigenous autonomy, as developed in the new constitution, the elites started to embrace indigenous rights within their own autonomy discourse by developing a regional identity which combines the *mestizo* identity with the Guaraní identity (the largest indigenous population in the *media luna*).

The 'Camba' identity

In Santa Cruz, being the epicentre of the autonomy movement of the east, the CPSC refers to itself as the "moral government of all *Cruceños*" (people of Santa Cruz), and as the ultimate arbiter of what it means to be *Cruceño*. Given the considerable flows of migration from the highlands to Santa Cruz, a major challenge for the CPSC has been to cultivate the support of migrants who make up ever larger shares of the department's population. The CPSC has made a conscious choice to strike a more inclusive tone by defining *Cruceños* as '*vivientes en Santa Cruz*' (those who live in Santa Cruz) rather than '*nacidos en Santa Cruz*' (those who were born in Santa Cruz). Even more important is the existence of a word *Camba*, or 'lowlander', which conveniently refers to all lowland Bolivians independent of their ethnic, linguistic or socioeconomic status. *Camba* is a very useful term for those who wish to emphasize the common interests of all the residents of the *media luna* against the interests of *Collas* or 'highlanders' in the west. Because C*amba* and *Colla* are territorial rather than ethnic markers, this enables the elite to portray themselves as the victim of *Collas*, and thereby to refrain from explicitly anti-indigenous rhetoric (Eaton 2007:91).

The *Camba*'s 'Other' is the C*olla* Andean Bolivian, either Quechua or Aymara, *criollo, mestizo* or *cholo* (urban indigenous). With the resurgence of indigeneity as a privileged marker of territorial rights in intercultural Bolivia, elite *Cruceños* and *Cambas* increasingly

speak of themselves as *mestizos* who share the heritage of lowland native peoples of the *media luna*. Non-indigenous *Cambas* view these peoples as '*nuestras étnias*' (our ethnics), integrating them within a distinct history of *mestizaje* that is culturally and racially superior to Andean *mestizaje* (Gustafson 2006:356).

To sustain the *Camba* identity against what they see as the threats of racial and political-economic fragmentation, autonomists congregate around the Civic Committee; an unelected entity dominated by business and agro-industrial elites in Santa Cruz. In 2004, a faction of a lowland indigenous Guaraní organization was invited to join the committee in a subordinate (non-voting) niche, a move that sought to weaken indigenous unity in eastern Bolivia and demonstrate the *Camba* support of 'our own' indigenous *Cambas* (Gustafson 2006:363). At the extreme edge of civic regionalism is the pro-secession *Nación Camba* (Camba Nation).The Camba Nation is a group of intellectual, right-wing political figures. Its radical position of separatism allows Civic Committee leaders to cast their calls for autonomy as moderate political demands.

Criollo leaders today make use of Guaraní culture in their festivals and parades to forge a shared ethnic identity. As Bolivians of European origin, they are obviously unable to show a genuinely indigenous face, so they have constructed a hybrid identity paradigm mixing *Cruceño* and Guaraní, using an adroitly manufactured shared past and contemporary discourse of resistance out of what is actually a history of white supremacy and exploitation. Now, in a striking departure from previous racial myths, political tales are articulated of the Guaraní as Amazonian 'warriors' who protected their economic and territorial interests by standing up to attempts by the highland Incan Empire to expand into the lowlands. *Cambas* have seized on mythic tales and appropriated the Guaraní warrior as a central character in their performances of autonomy (Fabricant 2009:772).

Pruden argues that this new version of the historical incident (the Guaraní warrior as a powerful and unstoppable force against the Incan Empire) allows the later lowland encounter of white Spaniards and indigenous Guaranís to be framed as a "kind of clash of the titans" rather than a casual colonial foray by a powerful empire into an unimportant hinterland. It became appealing to use narratives as the myths of successful ancestral resistance to their *Colla* counterparts (Pruden 2003:51). Whereas expeditions and conquests in the late 1800s depended on assertions of pure Spanish blood to acquire

material assets, in this new identity politics of the Bolivia, it is suddenly necessary for the descendants Spanish colonists to claim a shared identity with the very people they previously attempted to eradicate (Fabricant 2009:773).

Performances of autonomy

During the festive month of *Cruceñidad,* in September 2005, a folkloric civic parade was held in Santa Cruz. Interspersed among the green and white flags of Santa Cruz were the green and black flags of the Camba Nation movement. These were symbols of the

secessionist stance, scattered amidst marchers of various institutions, to demonstrate for the inclusion of its ideology into official local and regional spaces. The Camba Nation marched as its own block. They passed the reviewing stand shouting "*Au-to-no-mía! Au-to-no-mía!*" A banner quoted a passage of the UN Charter of Human Rights: "All Peoples Have the Right to Self-Determination."

Photo by N. Fabricant

Another appropriated an indigenous slogan: "Territory, Identity, and Power: Bases of Camba Nationalism." At the rear, a black banner with white letters proclaimed: "The Camba Nation is Unstoppable Because God is a Cruceño" followed by a message to 'outsiders': "The Land is Ours, Invaders Get Out!" (Gustafson 2006:367).

The new discourse on identity, where the Guaraní identity becomes part of the *Camba* identity, was demonstrated by this public display at a civic parade. Males performed the *Camba* identity by wearing straw hats, sandals and white *campesino* pants and shirt[12]. Displays of *Cambas* as warriors resisting Andean incursions complemented this *campesino* character. The male *Cruceño* claimed the warrior blood of the Indian and the hardiness of the *Camba campesino* to defend their patrimony against usurpers. The female *Cambas* wore a *tipoi*, a dress said to be typical of indigenous women. Yet, even

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[12] Fabricant describes a similar use of Guaraní symbols and clothing by *criollos* during festivities in 2009 – see Fabricant 2009:773

when dressed as Guaranís or *campesinos*, *Cruceños* tended to emphasize their urban, cosmopolitan whiteness as an expression of their aspiration to participate in an idealized 'global' middle-upper class consumer society. Waving green and white flags of Santa Cruz, the crowds celebrated autonomy as a new way of imagining themselves in relation to the Bolivian nation-state.

Cruceños used folk performances to claim national and regional identities; they used the image of the lowland Guaraní to assert their claim to regional autonomy. By claiming the Guaranís as *lo nuestro* (our own), they hoped to assert their rights to the natural resources on and below their soil (Fabricant 2009:773). Performances like these create an opportunity for the *Cambas* to build solidarity across race, class and ethnic identity. Whether they identify as urban Indians or working-class *mestizos*, elites convince them that they are linked in a political struggle, as their social and economic problems are blamed principally on Bolivia's centralist state.

The Camba drawback
While festivities demonstrated a celebration of *Camba* identity with Guaraní symbols, which portrays an idea of parity between *mestizos* and lowland indigenous peoples, the reality was grim. During the civic parade in *Cruceñidad,* troops were sent to disperse a Guaraní blockade on the highway south of Santa Cruz. While *Cruceños* danced as Guaraní in the town center, Guaraní on the poor southern periphery were disrupting the regional order by demanding a larger share of gas royalties for the country's indigenous population (Gustafson 2006:370). Increased social violence in recent years also reveals the instability of the *Camba* project: the violence of criminality; the appearance of armed groups hired by landowners to attack *campesinos*; and street brawls over municipal posts that reflect the competition for public resources. Beneath the facade of *Camba* regionalism as displayed during festivities, this violence reveals structural inequalities and the instability of elite power (Gustafson 2006:371). In 2008, the government implemented a stage of siege after a massacre of indigenous peoples in Pando by *Camba* autonomists, which resulted in over twenty people killed (Tedesco 2008:2). The process of *mestizaje* seems to work at *Camba* festivities, but it this is only a narrow cultural compromise (Wimmer 2002).

<u>*Mestizaje* and its constraints</u>

In everyday Bolivian discourse, *razas* (races) are spoken of in ethnic and regional terms. A colonial paradigm of race[13] is crosscut by regional paradigms of race, in which different *criollo-mestizo* (non-indigenous) and indigenous subjects are deemed to also possess distinct bio-social characteristics (beauty, laziness, stinginess, etc.) defined less by skin color than by naturalized (in relation to the land) and regionalized histories of colonialism. Indigenous resurgence is dismantling the colonial racial paradigm, while an elite defensive tactic involves retrenchment of regionalist categories of race and *mestizaje*, which effectively rescales coloniality to departmental levels (Gustafson 2009:1012). By reinserting race and *mestizo* into the language of departmental law, as in the *Asamblea Provisional*, autonomy merges regionalist and colonial racial paradigms.

The construction of the mestizo *identity*
Wade is quite critical in his analysis of *mestizaje*: while it appears to erase origins and primordial categories of race and culture, *mestizaje* actually reconstructs them. The idea depends on the conception of original or parent races and cultures in order to constitute the very possibility of mixing them. All identities are constituted relationally through discourse and depend on others to exist: *mestizo* identities are no exception. They may be deployed to different effects in different contexts, but to exist at all, they must invoke origins. The constitution of racial origins is an inherent part of *mestizaje*. Blackness, whiteness and indigenousness are constantly recreated as, in a real sense, racial absolutes with primordial origins. A mixture of these identities/origins cannot be set simply against original and essential identities. Instead, the discourse recreates them and redeploys them and, in doing so, re-establishes the basis for racism. In short, to see mixture and hybridization as inherently opposed to racial absolutism and essentialism is quite wrong (Wade 2004:356).

If mixture reconstitutes origins, then it is not surprising that, as numerous studies of Latin America have made argued, racism has no trouble at all co-existing with ideologies and practices of *mestizaje*. Indeed racism feeds on these ideas and practices to mask its operation (Wade 2004:362-363), which is also the case in the adoption of *mestizaje* for a *Camba* identity. The previous inequalities of power cannot be erased by simply adopting a

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[13] Arranging bodies on an evolutionary scale from whites to Indians and Blacks – see appendix 2

homogeneous identity or, as Sanjinés puts it: *mestizaje* attempts to impose a homogeneous order upon a totality whose internal coherence is built vertically by the structures of power. In Bolivia, the paradigm of *mestizaje* is no more than a cultural discourse with the purpose to justify the hegemony of a *mestizo-criollo* liberal upper class (Sanjinés 2002:39). Once again, the elites try to hold on to the privileges and values of the colonial period like they did shortly after independence (Postero 2007:32) and to hold on to the practices of internal colonization.

'Elite autonomy' versus 'indigenous autonomy'

Mestizaje has been used as a means to re-articulate an older model of corporatist-style elite domination with a folkloric sense of culture and history as territorialized patrimony. This is antithetical to indigenous agendas that mobilize culture as a way of talking about inequality and which view history as an unfinished issue to be resolved through national, racial and economic decolonization. *Cambas* voice a neoliberal rhetoric of markets and autonomy as a trait of self-regulating regional space free of bureaucratic oppression.

The elite regional autonomy project is at base an anti-democratic defense of race and class privilege. It involves no prior history of self-governance, deploys a spurious claim to ethnic-regional minority status and relies on illegal claims and tactics – from illegal land seizures during the dictatorships of the 1970s to ethnic and political violence today. Departmental autonomy at best proposes a market-friendly space for securing resource and rent extraction; at worse, it pursues a violent rationality of racist ethnic cleansing. Autonomy seeks to harden boundaries through its enclosure of the region and concepts of citizenship within a territorial enclave. It is like a gated community, not a model for democratic society (Gustafson 2009:1010). Contrary to this, indigenous autonomies must be thought of not as seeking the condition of a state (body) within a state (body), but pursuing transformative spaces and processes of social articulation and equality across multiple territorial scales. By virtue of their claims on legal rights through the state – and their resistance to the de facto effects of neoliberal deregulation – their movements aim to national sovereignty and indigenous self-determination. This shows that indigenous self-determination and autonomy might express itself in ways that build on territorial spaces, yet are not limited to territorial enclosure (Gustafson 2009:998), in contrast to the *media luna*'s request for autonomy.

What has happened in Bolivia can be seen as a 'counter-intuitive reversal' (Gustafson 2009:994): the westernizing elite's embrace of ethnoterritorial identity and particularity as opposed to the indigenous embrace of legal systems and national sovereignty. It raises dilemmas for analysts and advocates of indigenous rights as they are placed in a position to consider processes conventionally seen as incompatible: how indigenous rights might be reconciled with a resurgent nationalist agenda.

The invention of tradition

Eric Hobsbawm and Terrance Ranger's (1983) well-known concept of 'invented tradition' provides an opportunity for the analysis of the creation of a shared *Cruceño*-Guaraní past. They argue that invented tradition is a set of ritual or symbolic practices governed by overtly or tacitly accepted rules that seek to inculcate certain behavioral values and norms through repetition, which, in turn, implies continuity with the past. In the *media luna*, the newly cast 'common history' and 'common identity' between the Gauraní and the *Cruceños*, based upon a discourse of *mestizaje*, serve as the backbones for the *Camba* movements' quest for neoliberal autonomy, in which their old privileges of elite domination can be maintained. By means of discourses of *mestizaje*, an 'imagined community' (Anderson 1983) came into existence, based upon an invented tradition. To some, the idea of 'inventing' and 'imagining' might seem a deceit of reality. Yet, as seen in the previous chapters, identity, and thus the community that relies on this identity, is constructed and shaped through discourses. What is 'real' and what is 'imagined' cannot always be established; rather, the question is if a divide between 'real' and 'imagined' actually exists. As the 'Thomas Theorem' reads: "if men define situations as real, they are real in their consequences" (Thomas & Thomas 1928:572). No matter how much constructing, inventing and imagining takes place in the shaping of a shared identity (whether *Camba*, *campesino* or indigenous), if people perceive this to be real, they will act upon this perceived reality.

Chapter 5

Conclusion

Conclusion

For only when the realization is made that identity is not a state but a dynamic process can indigenous peoples be said to have been truly decolonized.
(Barcham 2000:151)

As we have seen in the case of the 'two Bolivias', the minority problematique appears to be part of the general setting of 'us-them' divides that separates the world into dichotomies and binary oppositions and bases itself upon discourses about the world and ourselves.

Recognition for the 'invented' identity

Mobilization and protest, such as that described in previous chapters, occurs around identities that go beyond those of class, and it is more the norm than the exception that actors have multiple identities. While the theme of a protest might privilege interests linked to one of these identities – such as the indigenous identity that became a primary theme during the Water War and the Gas War –, the others remain relevant. Rather than reflecting an essence, these identities are produced, created and imagined through the position of actors within networks of social relationships and discourses. Identities might also be consciously cultivated as 'strategic essentialism' (Bebbington & Bebbington forthcoming) or as parts of the 'invention of tradition' (Hobsbawm & Ranger 1983) in order to strengthen claim making, recruit adherents and/or obfuscate other interests. Activists from these communities who are making claims are often well aware that they are essentializing something which is, in fact, much more fluid and contradictory, but they do so in order that their claims be heard (Cowan, Dembour & Wilson 2001:10).

Even though actors have multiple identities, during mobilizations they agree to defend and promote one aspect of their identity, such as indigenousness (chapter 3) or a regional identity (chapter 4), above their other identity-related differences; this identification can be sustained for generations (Tully 2002:160). Within identity politics, the multiplicity of overlapping identities entails the granting of public priority to one identity at any time. In order to realize this, the people who make demands on the basis of an identity must try to convince a majority of their own internally diverse members, via discourses, that they are a

distinct nation or people (or region) and that this distinction is worth fighting for (Tully 2002:164), they must create an 'imagined community' (Anderson 1983). Demands are articulated around crisscrossing and overlapping allegiances: indigenousness; nationality; culture; region; religion; ethnicity; language; immigration; and individual expression. A minority group that demands recognition from a larger political association often finds that other minorities, indigenous peoples, multicultural citizens, or immigrants within also demand recognition and protection (Tully 2002:159). This is referred to as the 'irony of collective equity': with each supposed solution to one minority problematique, a new majority-minority divide manifests itself and results in new inequities
(De Gaay Fortman forthcoming (a):13).

Self-identification and indigenous rights

Groups tend to essentialize their identity in order for their claims to be heard, and this is the case within minority rights and indigenous rights especially. According rights to collectivities may exacerbate the tendency of strategic essentialism by compelling minorities to define a unanimous, or seemingly unanimous, set of demands (Cowan, Dembour & Wilson 2001:11). While people do not have a 'real' or 'fixed' identity, it is often the way of talking about the self, a discourse (Foucault 1970).

The current UN framework on minority rights provides no incentive for any minority to identify itself as a minority. Instead, all minorities have an overwhelming incentive to define, or redefine, themselves as indigenous peoples, since indigenous peoples are granted more far-reaching rights than minorities. Therefore, an increasing tendency for minority groups to adopt the label of indigenous peoples, not surprisingly, can be noted. Any number of minorities is now debating whether to adopt the label of and to redefine themselves as indigenous peoples (Kymlicka 2007:16-17). According to Kymlicka, the net effect of such shifts in self-identification would be the total collapse of the international system of indigenous rights. Many states supported the UNDRIP only because it was seen as exceptional, relevant to a very specific and relatively small set of groups and not as a precedent that could be invoked by other groups, such as national minorities. Kymlicka warns that the movement for indigenous rights is actually in danger of becoming a victim of its own success (Kymlicka 2007:18). When socio-cultural groups within a nation-state suddenly self-identify as 'indigenous peoples' just like that, the UNDRIP loses its meaning

(De Gaay Fortman forthcoming (b):9-10). In Bolivia, the quest for autonomy based on the idea of *Camba* identity by the *media luna* is a clear example of this backlash in the concept of self-identification within indigenous rights.

There is an intriguing dialectic between the discourse and practices of human rights and those groups that appeal to them. It is not even clear that all the cultures or identities caught up in the process exist prior to their rights claims; rights may be constitutive of cultures and their associated identities (Cowan, Dembour & Wilson 2001:11). This thesis provides an illustration in the claim for autonomy rights based on *Camba* identity. Claimants to rights are compelled to use a discourse of rights in pursuit of what they need or want and to portray themselves as certain kinds of groups entitled to these rights; however, these definitions may have been previously alien to their self-understandings, so it is evident that rights discourses are not ethically unambiguous or neutral (Ibid.).

<u>To be or not to be indigenous</u>

As this thesis has shown, indigenous-settler relations and the rights of indigenous peoples within society are part of an ongoing dynamic, with many issues that still remain to be resolved. At this point in time the most important of these, appears to be the problematization of indigenous identity (Barcham 2000:138). These problems of 'indigenous identity' are symptomatic of a more fundamental deficiency in current theories and praxis of indigenous rights: the recognition of difference only in terms of the maintenance of prior identity. With the new category of indigenous rights, theorists and practitioners alike have created and reified an ahistorical idealization of the indigenous self whereby the constitution of oneself as an 'authentic' indigenous self has been conflated with specific ahistorical assumptions concerning the nature of indigeneity, a process intricately linked to the continued subordination of difference to identity (Ibid).

With the politics of difference, what we are asked to recognize is the unique identity of an individual or group and their distinctiveness from every other individual or group. The idea is that it is precisely this distinctiveness that has been ignored, glossed over and assimilated to a dominant majority identity. The politics of difference often redefines nondiscrimination and requires that we make these distinctions the basis of differential treatment (Taylor 1994:38-39), such as granting indigenous rights.

However, as identity is 'constructed', 'imagined' and 'invented', a group identity is not a permanent changeless identity. The inability to take into account changes in both the discursive outlines and the substantive institutional and organizational forms that groups take over time leads to another complication. In the transference of ideas of group identity to the level of policy implementation, as is the case for Bolivian autonomy rights, an operational 'politics of difference' based on this atemporal dichotomy of being indigenous or not being indigenous may lead – through the synchronic reification of community – to exclusion and an associated increase in levels of oppression among the very groups for whom the 'politics of difference' were created to assist (Barcham 2000:139). Indigeneity is taken as a 'natural' and unproblematic category where in reality it is, as are all identities, socially constructed and historically contingent. Problems arise, however, when this interpretation of indigeneity is used as the basis for policy creation (Barcham 2000:140), as has been the case in Bolivia and the autonomy quest of the *media luna.*

The prioritization of identity over difference leads to the synchronic predication that people live in an ahistorical essentialism wherein reality is collapsed into a timeless present, in such a way that what is now is the same as what was, which in turn is the same as what will be, thereby effectively excluding any chance of recognizing notions of social transformation and change. The prioritization of identity over difference has led to the creation of an existential dichotomy of being and non-being (Barcham 2000:138). For indigenous autonomy rights in Bolivia this has led to questions of whether claims to autonomy can or cannot be made or not and, consequently, of whether to be or not to be indigenous.

Questions arise whether rights should be based on identity when identity, as it changes constantly through discourses and identity politics, cannot be defined. To imagine that a useful and reliable legal definition of 'minority' or 'indigenous' will emerge seems a naïve dream. Instead, the obvious result of granting special or extra rights of self-government or secession, or even mere special protection of illimitable 'groups' is that groups – however defined – will multiply and compete in the political arena in an attempt to take advantage of such rights. This generally has led towards, rather than away from, greater political strife. The characteristics of a group or person can never be fully determined. Therefore, the impossible dream of precisely defining existence should be done away with, and instead,

indeterminacy should be embraced, celebrated or, at least, recognized. In any discourse of identity, the danger is always present that identities will be dogmatized into some naturalistic or immutable essence that could, in turn, lead to the generation of destructive resentments and fears; for while all identities are formed through difference, all identities are simultaneously threatened by these same differences (Barcham 2000:149). Indeed, legalistic questions about definitions of 'minority' and 'indigenous' must be put to the side. Instead of focusing on the enforcement of rights based on legal status –which evidently engenders legal battles over status while rights go unrealized for decade after decade –, human rights must be envisaged and implemented in a perspective of wider human dignity that includes human development and human security (De Gaay Fortman forthcoming (b):10). To completely let go of the idea of identity-based rights is currently premature, yet to refocus on a wider human dignity perspective will hopefully provide some solutions for the problems as discussed in this thesis.

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Appendix

La Media Luna

Table on the definitions for the miscegenation in Spanish colonies

Miscegenation in Spanish colonies			
African —— Spaniard	Spaniard	Amerindian	—— African
↓	↓	↓	↓
Mulatto	Criollo	Mestizo	Zambo

United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples

Adopted by General Assembly Resolution 61/295 on 13 September 2007

The General Assembly,
Guided by the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations, and good faith in the fulfilment of the obligations assumed by States in accordance with the Charter,

Affirming that indigenous peoples are equal to all other peoples, while recognizing the right of all peoples to be different, to consider themselves different, and to be respected as such,

Affirming also that all peoples contribute to the diversity and richness of civilizations and cultures, which constitute the common heritage of humankind,

Affirming further that all doctrines, policies and practices based on or advocating superiority of peoples or individuals on the basis of national origin or racial, religious, ethnic or cultural differences are racist, scientifically false, legally invalid, morally condemnable and socially unjust,

Reaffirming that indigenous peoples, in the exercise of their rights, should be free from discrimination of any kind,

Concerned that indigenous peoples have suffered from historic injustices as a result of, inter alia, their colonization and dispossession of their lands, territories and resources, thus preventing them from exercising, in particular, their right to development in accordance with their own needs and interests,

Recognizing the urgent need to respect and promote the inherent rights of indigenous peoples which derive from their political, economic and social structures and from their cultures, spiritual traditions, histories and philosophies, especially their rights to their lands, territories and resources,

Recognizing also the urgent need to respect and promote the rights of indigenous peoples affirmed in treaties, agreements and other constructive arrangements with States,

Welcoming the fact that indigenous peoples are organizing themselves for political, economic, social and cultural enhancement and in order to bring to an end all forms of discrimination and oppression wherever they occur,

Convinced that control by indigenous peoples over developments affecting them and their lands, territories and resources will enable them to maintain and strengthen their institutions, cultures and traditions, and to promote their development in accordance with their aspirations and needs,

Recognizing that respect for indigenous knowledge, cultures and traditional practices contributes to sustainable and equitable development and proper management of the environment,

Emphasizing the contribution of the demilitarization of the lands and territories of indigenous peoples to peace, economic and social progress and development, understanding and friendly relations among nations and peoples of the world,

Recognizing in particular the right of indigenous families and communities to retain shared responsibility for the upbringing, training, education and well-being of their children, consistent with the rights of the child,

Considering that the rights affirmed in treaties, agreements and other constructive arrangements between States and indigenous peoples are, in some situations, matters of international concern,

interest, responsibility and character,

Considering also that treaties, agreements and other constructive arrangements, and the relationship they represent, are the basis for a strengthened partnership between indigenous peoples and States,

Acknowledging that the Charter of the United Nations, the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (2) and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights,2 as well as the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action,(3) affirm the fundamental importance of the right to self-determination of all peoples, by virtue of which they freely determine their political status and freely pursue their economic, social and cultural development,

Bearing in mind that nothing in this Declaration may be used to deny any peoples their right to self-determination, exercised in conformity with international law,

Convinced that the recognition of the rights of indigenous peoples in this Declaration will enhance harmonious and cooperative relations between the State and indigenous peoples, based on principles of justice, democracy, respect for human rights, non-discrimination and good faith,

Encouraging States to comply with and effectively implement all their obligations as they apply to indigenous peoples under international instruments, in particular those related to human rights, in consultation and cooperation with the peoples concerned,

Emphasizing that the United Nations has an important and continuing role to play in promoting and protecting the rights of indigenous peoples,

Believing that this Declaration is a further important step forward for the recognition, promotion and protection of the rights and freedoms of indigenous peoples and in the development of relevant activities of the United Nations system in this field,

Recognizing and reaffirming that indigenous individuals are entitled without discrimination to all human rights recognized in international law, and that indigenous peoples possess collective rights which are indispensable for their existence, well-being and integral development as peoples,

Recognizing that the situation of indigenous peoples varies from region to region and from country to country and that the significance of national and regional particularities and various historical and cultural backgrounds should be taken into consideration,

Solemnly proclaims the following United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples as a standard of achievement to be pursued in a spirit of partnership and mutual respect:

Article 1
Indigenous peoples have the right to the full enjoyment, as a collective or as individuals, of all human rights and fundamental freedoms as recognized in the Charter of the United Nations, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights(4) and international human rights law.

Article 2
Indigenous peoples and individuals are free and equal to all other peoples and individuals and have the right to be free from any kind of discrimination, in the exercise of their rights, in particular that based on their indigenous origin or identity.

Article 3
Indigenous peoples have the right to self-determination. By virtue of that right they freely determine their political status and freely pursue their economic, social and cultural development.

Article 4
Indigenous peoples, in exercising their right to self-determination, have the right to autonomy or self-government in matters relating to their internal and local affairs, as well as ways and means for financing their autonomous functions.

Article 5
Indigenous peoples have the right to maintain and strengthen their distinct political, legal, economic, social and cultural institutions, while retaining their right to participate fully, if they so choose, in the political, economic, social and cultural life of the State.

Article 6
Every indigenous individual has the right to a nationality.

Article 7
1. Indigenous individuals have the rights to life, physical and mental integrity, liberty and security of person.
2. Indigenous peoples have the collective right to live in freedom, peace and security as distinct peoples and shall not be subjected to any act of genocide or any other act of violence, including forcibly removing children of the group to another group.

Article 8
1. Indigenous peoples and individuals have the right not to be subjected to forced assimilation or destruction of their culture.
2. States shall provide effective mechanisms for prevention of, and redress for:
(a) Any action which has the aim or effect of depriving them of their integrity as distinct peoples, or of their cultural values or ethnic identities;
(b) Any action which has the aim or effect of dispossessing them of their lands, territories or resources;
(c) Any form of forced population transfer which has the aim or effect of violating or undermining any of their rights;
(d) Any form of forced assimilation or integration;
(e) Any form of propaganda designed to promote or incite racial or ethnic discrimination directed against them.

Article 9
Indigenous peoples and individuals have the right to belong to an indigenous community or nation, in accordance with the traditions and customs of the community or nation concerned. No discrimination of any kind may arise from the exercise of such a right.

Article 10
Indigenous peoples shall not be forcibly removed from their lands or territories. No relocation shall take place without the free, prior and informed consent of the indigenous peoples concerned and after agreement on just and fair compensation and, where possible, with the option of return.

Article 11
1. Indigenous peoples have the right to practise and revitalize their cultural traditions and customs. This includes the right to maintain, protect and develop the past, present and future manifestations of their cultures, such as archaeological and historical sites, artefacts, designs, ceremonies, technologies and visual and performing arts and literature.
2. States shall provide redress through effective mechanisms, which may include restitution, developed in conjunction with indigenous peoples, with respect to their cultural, intellectual, religious and spiritual property taken without their free, prior and informed consent or in violation of their laws, traditions and customs.

Article 12
1. Indigenous peoples have the right to manifest, practise, develop and teach their spiritual and religious traditions, customs and ceremonies; the right to maintain, protect, and have access in privacy to their religious and cultural sites; the right to the use and control of their ceremonial objects; and the right to the repatriation of their human remains.
2. States shall seek to enable the access and/or repatriation of ceremonial objects and human remains in their possession through fair, transparent and effective mechanisms developed in conjunction with indigenous peoples concerned.

Article 13
1. Indigenous peoples have the right to revitalize, use, develop and transmit to future generations their histories, languages, oral traditions, philosophies, writing systems and literatures, and to designate and retain their own names for communities, places and persons.

2. States shall take effective measures to ensure that this right is protected and also to ensure that indigenous peoples can understand and be understood in political, legal and administrative proceedings, where necessary through the provision of interpretation or by other appropriate means.

Article 14
1. Indigenous peoples have the right to establish and control their educational systems and institutions providing education in their own languages, in a manner appropriate to their cultural methods of teaching and learning.
2. Indigenous individuals, particularly children, have the right to all levels and forms of education of the State without discrimination.
3. States shall, in conjunction with indigenous peoples, take effective measures, in order for indigenous individuals, particularly children, including those living outside their communities, to have access, when possible, to an education in their own culture and provided in their own language.

Article 15
1. Indigenous peoples have the right to the dignity and diversity of their cultures, traditions, histories and aspirations which shall be appropriately reflected in education and public information.
2. States shall take effective measures, in consultation and cooperation with the indigenous peoples concerned, to combat prejudice and eliminate discrimination and to promote tolerance, understanding and good relations among indigenous peoples and all other segments of society.

Article 16
1. Indigenous peoples have the right to establish their own media in their own languages and to have access to all forms of non-indigenous media without discrimination.
2. States shall take effective measures to ensure that State-owned media duly reflect indigenous cultural diversity. States, without prejudice to ensuring full freedom of expression, should encourage privately owned media to adequately reflect indigenous cultural diversity.

Article 17
1. Indigenous individuals and peoples have the right to enjoy fully all rights established under applicable international and domestic labour law.
2. States shall in consultation and cooperation with indigenous peoples take specific measures to protect indigenous children from economic exploitation and from performing any work that is likely to be hazardous or to interfere with the child's education, or to be harmful to the child's health or physical, mental, spiritual, moral or social development, taking into account their special vulnerability and the importance of education for their empowerment.
3. Indigenous individuals have the right not to be subjected to any discriminatory conditions of labour and, inter alia, employment or salary.

Article 18
Indigenous peoples have the right to participate in decision-making in matters which would affect their rights, through representatives chosen by themselves in accordance with their own procedures, as well as to maintain and develop their own indigenous decision-making institutions.

Article 19
States shall consult and cooperate in good faith with the indigenous peoples concerned through their own representative institutions in order to obtain their free, prior and informed consent before adopting and implementing legislative or administrative measures that may affect them.

Article 20
1. Indigenous peoples have the right to maintain and develop their political, economic and social systems or institutions, to be secure in the enjoyment of their own means of subsistence and development, and to engage freely in all their traditional and other economic activities.
2. Indigenous peoples deprived of their means of subsistence and development are entitled to just and fair redress.

Article 21
1. Indigenous peoples have the right, without discrimination, to the improvement of their economic and social conditions, including, inter alia, in the areas of education, employment, vocational training and retraining, housing, sanitation, health and social security.
2. States shall take effective measures and, where appropriate, special measures to ensure continuing

improvement of their economic and social conditions. Particular attention shall be paid to the rights and special needs of indigenous elders, women, youth, children and persons with disabilities.

Article 22

1. Particular attention shall be paid to the rights and special needs of indigenous elders, women, youth, children and persons with disabilities in the implementation of this Declaration.

2. States shall take measures, in conjunction with indigenous peoples, to ensure that indigenous women and children enjoy the full protection and guarantees against all forms of violence and discrimination.

Article 23

Indigenous peoples have the right to determine and develop priorities and strategies for exercising their right to development. In particular, indigenous peoples have the right to be actively involved in developing and determining health, housing and other economic and social programmes affecting them and, as far as possible, to administer such programmes through their own institutions.

Article 24

1. Indigenous peoples have the right to their traditional medicines and to maintain their health practices, including the conservation of their vital medicinal plants, animals and minerals. Indigenous individuals also have the right to access, without any discrimination, to all social and health services.

2. Indigenous individuals have an equal right to the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health. States shall take the necessary steps with a view to achieving progressively the full realization of this right.

Article 25

Indigenous peoples have the right to maintain and strengthen their distinctive spiritual relationship with their traditionally owned or otherwise occupied and used lands, territories, waters and coastal seas and other resources and to uphold their responsibilities to future generations in this regard.

Article 26

1. Indigenous peoples have the right to the lands, territories and resources which they have traditionally owned, occupied or otherwise used or acquired.

2. Indigenous peoples have the right to own, use, develop and control the lands, territories and resources that they possess by reason of traditional ownership or other traditional occupation or use, as well as those which they have otherwise acquired.

3. States shall give legal recognition and protection to these lands, territories and resources. Such recognition shall be conducted with due respect to the customs, traditions and land tenure systems of the indigenous peoples concerned.

Article 27

States shall establish and implement, in conjunction with indigenous peoples concerned, a fair, independent, impartial, open and transparent process, giving due recognition to indigenous peoples' laws, traditions, customs and land tenure systems, to recognize and adjudicate the rights of indigenous peoples pertaining to their lands, territories and resources, including those which were traditionally owned or otherwise occupied or used. Indigenous peoples shall have the right to participate in this process.

Article 28

1. Indigenous peoples have the right to redress, by means that can include restitution or, when this is not possible, just, fair and equitable compensation, for the lands, territories and resources which they have traditionally owned or otherwise occupied or used, and which have been confiscated, taken, occupied, used or damaged without their free, prior and informed consent.

2. Unless otherwise freely agreed upon by the peoples concerned, compensation shall take the form of lands, territories and resources equal in quality, size and legal status or of monetary compensation or other appropriate redress.

Article 29

1. Indigenous peoples have the right to the conservation and protection of the environment and the productive capacity of their lands or territories and resources. States shall establish and implement assistance programmes for indigenous peoples for such conservation and protection, without discrimination.

2. States shall take effective measures to ensure that no storage or disposal of hazardous materials shall take place in the lands or territories of indigenous peoples without their free, prior and informed consent.

3. States shall also take effective measures to ensure, as needed, that programmes for monitoring, maintaining and restoring the health of indigenous peoples, as developed and implemented by the peoples affected by such materials, are duly implemented.

Article 30

1. Military activities shall not take place in the lands or territories of indigenous peoples, unless justified by a relevant public interest or otherwise freely agreed with or requested by the indigenous peoples concerned.

2. States shall undertake effective consultations with the indigenous peoples concerned, through appropriate procedures and in particular through their representative institutions, prior to using their lands or territories for military activities.

Article 31

1. Indigenous peoples have the right to maintain, control, protect and develop their cultural heritage, traditional knowledge and traditional cultural expressions, as well as the manifestations of their sciences, technologies and cultures, including human and genetic resources, seeds, medicines, knowledge of the properties of fauna and flora, oral traditions, literatures, designs, sports and traditional games and visual and performing arts. They also have the right to maintain, control, protect and develop their intellectual property over such cultural heritage, traditional knowledge, and traditional cultural expressions.

2. In conjunction with indigenous peoples, States shall take effective measures to recognize and protect the exercise of these rights.

Article 32

1. Indigenous peoples have the right to determine and develop priorities and strategies for the development or use of their lands or territories and other resources.

2. States shall consult and cooperate in good faith with the indigenous peoples concerned through their own representative institutions in order to obtain their free and informed consent prior to the approval of any project affecting their lands or territories and other resources, particularly in connection with the development, utilization or exploitation of mineral, water or other resources.

3. States shall provide effective mechanisms for just and fair redress for any such activities, and appropriate measures shall be taken to mitigate adverse environmental, economic, social, cultural or spiritual impact.

Article 33

1. Indigenous peoples have the right to determine their own identity or membership in accordance with their customs and traditions. This does not impair the right of indigenous individuals to obtain citizenship of the States in which they live.

2. Indigenous peoples have the right to determine the structures and to select the membership of their institutions in accordance with their own procedures.

Article 34

Indigenous peoples have the right to promote, develop and maintain their institutional structures and their distinctive customs, spirituality, traditions, procedures, practices and, in the cases where they exist, juridical systems or customs, in accordance with international human rights standards.

Article 35

Indigenous peoples have the right to determine the responsibilities of individuals to their communities.

Article 36

1. Indigenous peoples, in particular those divided by international borders, have the right to maintain and develop contacts, relations and cooperation, including activities for spiritual, cultural, political, economic and social purposes, with their own members as well as other peoples across borders.

2. States, in consultation and cooperation with indigenous peoples, shall take effective measures to facilitate the exercise and ensure the implementation of this right.

Article 37

1. Indigenous peoples have the right to the recognition, observance and enforcement of treaties,

agreements and other constructive arrangements concluded with States or their successors and to have States honour and respect such treaties, agreements and other constructive arrangements.
2. Nothing in this Declaration may be interpreted as diminishing or eliminating the rights of indigenous peoples contained in treaties, agreements and other constructive arrangements.

Article 38
States in consultation and cooperation with indigenous peoples, shall take the appropriate measures, including legislative measures, to achieve the ends of this Declaration.

Article 39
Indigenous peoples have the right to have access to financial and technical assistance from States and through international cooperation, for the enjoyment of the rights contained in this Declaration.

Article 40
Indigenous peoples have the right to access to and prompt decision through just and fair procedures for the resolution of conflicts and disputes with States or other parties, as well as to effective remedies for all infringements of their individual and collective rights. Such a decision shall give due consideration to the customs, traditions, rules and legal systems of the indigenous peoples concerned and international human rights.

Article 41
The organs and specialized agencies of the United Nations system and other intergovernmental organizations shall contribute to the full realization of the provisions of this Declaration through the mobilization, inter alia, of financial cooperation and technical assistance. Ways and means of ensuring participation of indigenous peoples on issues affecting them shall be established.

Article 42
The United Nations, its bodies, including the Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues, and specialized agencies, including at the country level, and States shall promote respect for and full application of the provisions of this Declaration and follow up the effectiveness of this Declaration.

Article 43
The rights recognized herein constitute the minimum standards for the survival, dignity and well-being of the indigenous peoples of the world.

Article 44
All the rights and freedoms recognized herein are equally guaranteed to male and female indigenous individuals.

Article 45
Nothing in this Declaration may be construed as diminishing or extinguishing the rights indigenous peoples have now or may acquire in the future.

Article 46
1. Nothing in this Declaration may be interpreted as implying for any State, people, group or person any right to engage in any activity or to perform any act contrary to the Charter of the United Nations or construed as authorizing or encouraging any action which would dismember or impair, totally or in part, the territorial integrity or political unity of sovereign and independent States.
2. In the exercise of the rights enunciated in the present Declaration, human rights and fundamental freedoms of all shall be respected. The exercise of the rights set forth in this Declaration shall be subject only to such limitations as are determined by law and in accordance with international human rights obligations. Any such limitations shall be non-discriminatory and strictly necessary solely for the purpose of securing due recognition and respect for the rights and freedoms of others and for meeting the just and most compelling requirements of a democratic society.
3. The provisions set forth in this Declaration shall be interpreted in accordance with the principles of justice, democracy, respect for human rights, equality, non-discrimination, good governance and good faith.

(2) See resolution 2200 A (XXI), annex.

(3) A/CONF.157/24 (Part I), chap. III.

(4) Resolution 217 A (III).