The Third Nation: A Project of National Identity Formation in Bolivia

Sandra Vanessa Bernal Heredia
University of Miami, s.bernalheredia@umiami.edu

Follow this and additional works at: https://scholarlyrepository.miami.edu/oa_theses

Recommended Citation
https://scholarlyrepository.miami.edu/oa_theses/221

This Open access is brought to you for free and open access by the Electronic Theses and Dissertations at Scholarly Repository. It has been accepted for inclusion in Open Access Theses by an authorized administrator of Scholarly Repository. For more information, please contact repository.library@miami.edu.
THE THIRD NATION:
A PROJECT OF NATIONAL IDENTITY FORMATION IN BOLIVIA

By
Sandra Vanessa Bernal Heredia

A THESIS

Submitted to the Faculty
of the University of Miami
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for
the degree of Master of Science

Coral Gables, Florida
August 2009
THE THIRD NATION:  
A PROJECT OF NATIONAL IDENTITY FORMATION IN BOLIVIA

Sandra Vanessa Bernal Heredia

Approved:

Tracy Devine Guzmán, Ph.D.  
Assistant Professor of Modern  
Languages and Literature  

Terri A. Scandura, Ph.D.  
Dean of the Graduate School

Traci Ardren, Ph.D.  
Associate Professor of Anthropology

Kate Ramsey, Ph.D.  
Assistant Professor of History

Marten Brienen, M.A.  
Lecturer in Latin American Studies and Africana Studies
Over the past decade, well-organized mobilizations have brought groups of Bolivian miners, urban workers, farmers, and especially indigenous peoples together in identification with and response to the rhetoric of indigenous self-recognition. These events culminated in the election of Evo Morales in 2005 as the country’s first indigenous president. The contemporary resurgence of indigeneity has been perceived by many as either revolutionary or apocalyptic. My thesis examines why a country with an indigenous population of some 80%, has now decided to politically voice their indigeneity after years of silence.

My paper begins with an analysis of the history of indigenous peoples in Latin America and shows that since colonization, Bolivia, like other countries in the region, has struggled with the question of how to “incorporate” indigeneity into the project of national identity formation.

I argue that there is no one concept to identify clearly or unequivocally what being “indigenous” means. Indigeneity is therefore not something set; its meaning changes according to personal identification, the perceptions of others, and the social, cultural, political, and economic circumstances at hand. This conceptual problem makes it difficult to determine who is authentically indigenous, or what the demands of indigenous people really are.
Within this complex scenario, Evo Morales has laid out a political strategy and agenda organized around the concepts of ethnicity and identity. To analyze Morales’ platform and examine its relative success among indigenous Bolivians, I compare and contrast his work with that of another indigenous leader, Felipe Quispe. Quispe, who is a well-known figure across Bolivia, became involved with the indigenous cause in 1978, when he joined Indianist Movimiento Indio Tupak Katari. Quispe is not only an activist but also a prolific scholar who has written several works on issues related to indigenous oppression. Since beginning his career as an activist, Quispe has put forth a well-defined ideological project to form a separate indigenous nation and identity. However, the comparatively radical understanding of indigenous identity and the exclusiveness of his project (which only included self-identifying indigenous peoples and aimed to “indianize” non-Indians) limited his support among the general Bolivian electorate.

In contrast, Morales’ agenda as President of Bolivia has drawn on a diverse and pluri-cultural national identity in which “Indian element” can be incorporated and represented alongside whites, mestizos, blacks, and other historically marginalized groups. Morales’ model breaks with previous understandings of Bolivian and indigenous identities as mutually exclusive and recognizes that these identities can be inclusive and in fact complementary. I argue that the project proposed and developed by Morales is compatible with the project of building a democratic society in Bolivia and consider the viability of that project in light of the many social, political, and economic challenges now being faced by his administration.
Dedication:

For my dad, Willy Bernal, my mother, Ada Heredia de Bernal, and my brother Giovanni who have offered me unconditional love and support throughout my life and education. Thanks for always believing in me. For my friends, Gabriel and Pamela, who have been great sources of motivation throughout the course of this thesis project. For everyone who cared enough to ask how I was doing. Just by showing interest in my learning process, you gave me the motivation to achieve my goals.

Finally, for everyone whose academic and personal interests include the well-being, and celebration of indigeneity.
Acknowledgments

From the formative stages of this thesis to the final corrections, I owe an immense debt of gratitude to my supervisor, Dr. Tracy Devine Guzmán. She has been an unconditional teacher and friend; her sound advice and careful guidance were invaluable to the success and completion of my thesis.

I would also like to thank Mr. Marten Brienen for his advice, especially at the beginning of my thesis. His knowledge about Bolivia helped me to understand the country’s complex social structures and relationships.

Finally, I would like to thank Dr. Traci Ardren, Dr. Kate Ramsey and Dr. Lillian Manzor for their support and assistance. Their guidance and insight helped me to strengthen my arguments.

To each of the above, I extend my deepest appreciation.
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapter</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Chapter One: Understanding the Subjectivity Nature of Indigeneity</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Indigeneity through Time</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Indigenous Identity</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Chapter Two: The “Indigeneity” of Evo Morales and Felipe Quispe</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Evo Morales</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Felipe Quispe</td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>An Authentic Indigenous Identity?</td>
<td>58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Chapter Three: Two Visions of the Bolivian Future</td>
<td>62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“Pasado como Futuro”</td>
<td>62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“Looking back, we will move forward”</td>
<td>64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“Agradezco a Dios y a la Pacha Mama, por haberme dado la oportunidad para conducir el país”</td>
<td>69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Quispe and Morales—A Study in Contrast</td>
<td>73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Indians and Q’aras</td>
<td>74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“El mestizaje me da asco”</td>
<td>75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“Bolivia is a multiethnic country, but that is only in theory. If we win we have to change the country, not only in theory but in reality”</td>
<td>79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Indians and the Occident</td>
<td>81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“Hablar de coca cero es hablar de cero quechuas, cero aymaras y cero guaranties”</td>
<td>82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Chapter Four: Conclusions</td>
<td>88</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

WORKS CITED                                                                 | 93   |
Introduction

[H]uge, popular, mass organizations of the most repressed population in the hemisphere [have] entered the political arena [and] were able to elect a president of their own ranks” (Noam Chomsky)

Bolivia, situated in the center of South America, is a country of great geographical, ethnic, and cultural diversity. Bolivian society reflects not only the many native groups that have inhabited the country for thousands of years, but also the historical relationship of those groups with descendents of white Europeans as well as peoples of African and Asian descent. In Latin America, Bolivia is one of three countries whose populations are significantly comprised by indigenous peoples, the other two being Guatemala and Peru. Based on the July 1, 2009 estimate by the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, the Bolivian population approximates 9,863,000 inhabitants (UN 2009). Of this estimated number, over half of the population is of indigenous origin. While the greater part of this population comprises Aymara, Quechua, and Guarani peoples, there are over 32 culturally differentiated groups or peoples (UNICEF). Since 1996, the Bolivian Constitution has recognized the pluri-ethnic and pluri-cultural character of the country. However, historically, a general attitude of exclusion and discrimination of indigenous communities has prevailed.

The appearance of protestors in the streets of Bolivia in the past decade has drawn a good deal of international attention. These well-organized mobilizations brought groups of miners, urban workers, farmers, and especially indigenous peoples together in identification with and response to the rhetoric of indigenous self-recognition. The

1 The 2001 census in Bolivia reported that approximately 62% of the Bolivian population self-identified as indigenous, but the census did not allow respondents to identify as mestizo (INE).
2 Article One of the Reformed Constitution of the State declares Bolivia a “multi-ethnic and pluri-cultural” nation. More specifically, Article 171 declares that “the social, economic, and cultural rights of the indigenous peoples who inhabit the national territory are recognized, respected, and protected” (Grey 197).
exaltation over the mobilizations was furthered manifested in December 2005 with the presidential victory of Evo Morales and the Movimiento Al Socialismo (MAS). The media has presented the importance of Morales’ election with a catch-phrase: “the first indigenous president in Bolivia and Latin America.” This statement requires some “unpacking.”

The election of Morales constitutes a clear social and political transformation in Bolivian society and also in the way that many Bolivians understand indigeneity. In my thesis, I argue that the project proposed and developed by Morales and the MAS is potentially compatible with the project of building a democratic society in Bolivia. Morales’ idea of fomenting a multi-ethnic and pluri-cultural nation, where the so-called “Indian element” is equally incorporated and represented, present the possibility of a democratic solution to the historically exclusive and racist construction of an official national identity in Bolivia. In building this argument, I have divided my thesis into three chapters that explore construction of identity, the projects of national identity building, and the formulation and reconstruction of the nature of indigeneity in the work and thought of Evo Morales and competing indigenous leader, Felipe Quispe. In order to analyze Morales’ work in the broader context of Bolivian social history, I decided to compare his work with that of another well-known indigenous leader: Felipe Quispe. Quispe is a well-known figure across Bolivia who has been involved with the indigenous cause longer than Morales - since 1978, when he became a member of an Indianist organization called the Movimiento Indio Tupak Katari. Quispe is not only an activist but also a scholar; he has written several works on the issues of indigenous peoples’
oppression and has put forward a project to form an autonomous indigenous nation and identity.

In Chapter One, “Understanding the Subjective Nature of Indigeneity,” I analyze the body of dominant thought regarding the identification of indigenous peoples in Latin America from the colonial period to the present. By analyzing the work of several Latin American thinkers through time, I argue that “indigenous identity” is not static and that it has changed historically to meet the political and social goals of both Indians and non-Indians. For instance, during colonization and colonial times, indigenous peoples and their cultures were sometimes considered less than human. In the 1800s, when confronted by the hegemonic power of the United States, many Latin American thinkers drew on their supposed “indigenous roots” to differentiate themselves from North America and present a united front against the growing power of their northern neighbors. In the twentieth century, partially as a result of the influence of Marxist and socialist ideas, indigenous peoples were stripped of their cultural and ethnic identities and assigned class-based identities, instead (most typically that of “campesino.”)

Although I have argued that indigeneity is a malleable concept I have also shown that indigenous identity in Latin America has generally carried negative connotations. Indigeneity has been perceived as “exclusively rural, essentially backward, irrational and illiterate” (Grey 161). Several national projects have been developed around the idea of indigeneity and have championed the exclusion of the “indigenous element.” These projects sought to form national identities based on the ideal citizen - the mestizo - who has been “designed” to represent the improvement of indigeneity. Alongside earlier
projects of national-identity formation, Morales’ project thus stands out as inclusive and comparatively egalitarian.

In Chapter Two, “The Indigeneity of Evo Morales and Felipe Quispe,” I draw on autobiographical sources and third-person accounts to offer an historical analysis of the life stories of these two men. Morales’ ethnic heritage has granted him broad appeal with the diverse populations in Bolivia. Also his continuous fight to defense the coca leaf (nowadays a symbol of Bolivianness) as well as other natural resources has earned him the respect not only of indigenous peoples but also of many non-Indians. The U.S. “war on drugs” has targeted the coca leaf and demanded its eradication. The international scope of the drug war has strengthened the struggle of cocaleros by making their demands more “global.” Morales’ political activism on this front reached international importance even before he managed to become well-known nationally.

On the other hand, Felipe Quispe has remained popular in a very limited sector of Bolivia. His extreme sectarism has limited his appeal to the Aymara ethnic groups, alienating him from other indigenous groups and especially from non-Indians. Quispe’s extremism has led him to become a member of violent Indianist groups that have targeted state buildings and victimized (albeit unintentionally) innocent citizens. Quispe has been a fervent defendant of the indigenous cause and participated in the cycle of protests that started in 2000 with the Guerra del Agua and ended in 2005 with the Guerra del Gas. However, his radical protest methods and continuous references to the “impurity” of non-Indians hindered his chances of achieving national support. The comparison between Morales and Quispe, I argue, can give us a better understanding of the multiple processes
of indigenous identity formation and the particular intellectual trajectories that have competed for power in Bolivian society.

In chapter three, “Two Visions for the Bolivian Future,” I analyze the competing agendas of these two indigenous leaders with regard to the inclusion of indigenous cultures and their relationships with non-Indians and modern occidental cultures and societies. Both Morales and Quispe have identified themselves as indigenous and each of them claims to represent “indigenous identity” in very distinctive ways. Felipe Quispe has a “radical” political approach to the role of indigenous people in Bolivia; his model is famously separatist and aims to form an Indian nation with no ties to dominant Bolivian culture. On the other hand, Evo Morales’ rhetoric is inclusive. His political campaign promoted a broadly-conceived nationalism - a pluri-ethnic and pluri-cultural nation that emphasizes “unidad en la diversidad” (García 4). In short, the indigenista identity that Evo Morales has tried to construct is more flexible than the radical indianismo of Felipe Quispe.

My thesis argues that Morales presents an innovative project for Bolivian national identity formation that brings together the diverse ethnic groups of the population. Morales’ model breaks with previous understandings of Bolivian and indigenous identities as mutually exclusive. In this sense, indigenous peoples will not have to give up their indigeneity, assimilate, or be “improved” in order to become Bolivian citizens. This new notion of Bolivianess draws on ethnic, political and class-based sectors of national society and has democratic potential in countries like Bolivia with radically heterogeneous populations.
Chapter One: Understanding the Subjective Nature of Indigeneity

A person of dark skin without economic and educational means—one who is illiterate, impoverished, and rural—is considered an *indio*. If this *indio* puts on some shoes, learns Spanish, and moves to a larger city, he becomes a *mestizo*. In Bolivia, after the 1952 revolution and subsequent project to integrate the nation and forge a new national identity, the *indio* became a *campesino*. However, in the popular demonstrations of the past twenty years, protestors have opposed this “evolutionary” discourse on indigeneity, praising and utilizing their indigenous identity as a tool to counteract the longstanding colonialist attacks of dominant culture. 3 People no longer “whitened” their surnames to hide their indigenous background. Instead, protest leaders like Evo Morales and Felipe Quispe would dress in traditional clothing, sometimes address the crowds in indigenous languages, and often add an indigenous element to national demands.

Indigeneity is a complex subject. Being indigenous can be understood as an intersection of the conception of others and self-identification. Indigenous identity is neither static nor a relic from former times. On the contrary, indigenous identity has changed over time; it is ambivalent, and it is influenced by social, legal, and political changes.

This chapter explores the changing nature of indigeneity. I first give a brief historical account of the use of the term “indigenous” by Latin American intellectuals since the arrival of the Europeans to the American continent. I then explore the complex

3 The last few decades have witnessed a growing activism and the reemergence of indigenous identities. Across Latin America, powerful indigenous movements have emerged that have sought to restore indigenous traditions and identities. For instance, in 1992, the indigenous campaign, “500 Years of Resistance” took place on the anniversary of the “discovery of the New World.” This campaign protested years of repression and resistance since the European conquest. In Ecuador during the 1990s, there were five large indigenous uprisings and several demonstrations in opposition to neoliberal reforms. In Bolivia, a coalition of indigenous, peasants and workers participated in the Guerra del Agua (2000) to protest the privatization of water and the Guerras del Gas (2003 and 2005) to demand the recovery of natural gas reserves from transnational corporations.
and controversial topic of identity. I aim to explain the changing articulation of indigeneity over time. As we will see, the specificities about indigenous identity have never been clear or explicit. Therefore, I argue that indigenous identity has been fomented, invented, or adopted strategically to achieve particular political and social goals.

Handed-down nationalities

When most countries in Latin America achieved political independence from Spain and Portugal in the early-nineteenth century, the ideas of nationalism and the formation of nation-states were just beginning to emerge as new central forces of political community (Pakkasvirta 24). When talking about nations and nationalism, Benedict Anderson’s *Imagined Communities* is essential. According to Anderson, the pioneers of nationhood were the Creole elites created in the Americas by European colonialism. He argues that the earliest genuinely “national” revolutions occurred not in Europe but in the colonized Western Hemisphere between 1776 and 1838. The Creoles aimed to found an independent, decolonized American society and culture while retaining European values and white supremacy. This idea of nationalism arose from the threatening claims for equality of subordinated indigenous, *mestizo*, and African majorities and the deliberate oppression of the Europeans. Consequently the Creoles imagined themselves as members of separate communities different from the administrators who ruled over them and the masses under them. The masses were not included in this notion of nationalism. On the contrary, they were “political baptized” (Anderson 47); their Peruvian, Bolivian, and Colombian identities and citizenships were handed down to them. This idea of

---

4 The term creoles usually refers to the people of a race of mixture thereof who were descended of the European settlers in the New World. However, Anderson defines “Creole pioneers” as exclusively white settlers in the Americas (50-51).
nationalism spread to the remaining colonized states through the “pirating” of the modular conception of nation invented in the Americas. Anderson comments: “The “nation” thus became something capable of being consciously aspired to form early on, rather than a slowly sharpening frame of vision. Indeed, as we shall see, the “nation” proved an invention on which it was impossible to secure a patent. It became available for pirating by widely different, and sometimes unexpected, hands” (67).

The process of independence was based on a vision for national inequality because the Creole elite wanted to maintain dominance in the Americas. This model created states and nations with internal struggles, and handed down and undefined nationalities. This lack of well-defined nation states has been raised repeatedly by generations of Latin American intellectuals.

These thinkers have come up with various ways of defining national identity. Some would find the definition by differentiating and defending themselves from the United States’ imperialist threat; others would argue not for a national identity but for a continental one, thereby building a single Latin American nation. Yet others would use “race” as a dividing line and the designation of “Others” as a tool to construct national formations. Regardless how they went about constructing a national identity, Latin American states have typically tried to create an image of homogenous groups of people within the parameters of a common history, culture, and origins. When confronted with this idea, mestizaje emerged as a way of ascertaining a Spanish American difference.

Mestizaje usually refers to racial and/or cultural mixing of Amerindians with Europeans⁵. The Mexican writer, educator, and politician José Vasconcelos (1882-1959)

---

⁵ In some cases it also referred to people of African descent, but this population was not of primary concern, except in Brazil.
published *La Raza Cósmica: Misión de la Raza Iberoamericana* in 1925, which layed out a fully-developed ideology of *mestizaje*. He Explained:

[…] ya no será la raza de un solo color, de rasgos particulares, la que en esta vez salga de la olvidada Atlántica; no será la futura ni una quinta ni una sexta raza, destinada a prevalecer sobre sus antecesoras; lo que de allí va a salir es la raza definitiva, la raza síntesis o raza integral, hecha con el genio y con la sangre de todos los pueblos y, por lo mismo, más capaz de verdadera fraternidad y de visión realmente universal. (67)

Vasconcelos aimed *mestizaje* to be the political ideology of modern national identity, unity, and social progress. However, his vision insisted on *blanqueamiento* (whitening—in racial and cultural terms) and “improving the race and culture” following a European pattern (Miller 44). Across Latin America, states adopted *mestizaje* as an official ideology of nation-building in their bids to forge national identities and an attempt to mitigate tensions between the indigenous populations and the descendants of Spanish colonists. However, as anthropologist Peter Wade argues, *mestizaje* has failed to unify nation states. Instead it coexists with and mediates discrimination and exclusion: “*mestizaje* as a nationalist ideology appears to be an inclusive process, in that everyone is eligible to become a *mestizo*, but in reality it is exclusive because it marginalizes blackness and indigenousness, while valuing whiteness” (Wade 240).

The concept of *mestizaje* still contained residual imperial relations and remained strongly hierarchical. Indian and black cultural traits were seen as negative and needed to be eliminated or subsumed to the “national” culture of *mestizaje*. As Wade puts it:
The recreation of blackness and indigenousness in the nationalist discourse of this period is, of course, neither accidental nor benign. It is necessary because elites and middle classes want to re-establish the possibility of making hierarchical distinctions of race (and thus also class and region), distinctions which threaten to vanish if the process of mestizaje were really to reach its ideological goal of homogenization. (245)

History shows that this initiative, while seeking to foster “inclusion” and create a common identity, has continuously excluded indigenous peoples. The building of a homogeneous identity has aimed to prevent indigenous and other ethnic groups from retaining their identities. However, despite an agenda of “whitening” or mestizaje, the resurgence of indigenous identities in recent decades demonstrates that indigeneity is strong and alive in today’s societies, posing radical challenges to the extant model of nation-state and notions of democracy and development.

**Indigeneity through Time**

Beginning with the Enlightenment and the influence of the U.S. and French revolutions, leaders of independence movements in Latin America were arguably more inspired by concepts of economic liberty and political sovereignty than by the ideal of creating “cultural” nation-states (Pakkasvirta 24). For instance, Simón Bolívar, the great liberator of South America, was heavily influenced by the liberation of the North American colonies from British rule. In 1807, after his trip to Europe, Bolívar returned to his place of birth, Venezuela, with the firm purpose of liberating Hispanic America from Spain. He not only believed in armed struggle against the Spanish colonizers, but also in a political project to unify the region under what would be known as “Gran Colombia” (Lynch 213).
Bolívar entered world history as one of the first modern leaders of a national liberation movement; he was a nationalist who aimed to create Hispanic America as a unique model comprised of peoples from Europe, Africa, and of native origins. In 1822 he declared: “The great day of America has not yet dawned. We have expelled our oppressors, broken the tables of their tyrannical laws and founded legitimate institutions. But we still need to establish the basis of the social contract, which ought to form of this world a nation of republics” (Lynch 213).

From the very beginning of the revolutions of independence, Bolívar’s sense of national identity transcended individual nations to embrace a greater America. His ideal nation was based on the principles of liberty, equality, and the rule of law and he was deeply convinced that the administration of justice and rule of law would protect the rights of the individual and correct the inequalities of a heterogeneous society. He queried: “Who will resist America reunited in heart, subject to one law, and guided by the torch of liberty?” (Lynch 213). However, Bolívar’s aim to bring the people of America together in a league of nations was far from possible; America’s racially and culturally diverse societies were a constraint to this ideal.

As consequence of having disregarded America’s cultural traits, the frontiers of these newborn states were not based on racial or linguistic homogeneity, but on an administrative system of viceroyalties formed by imperial Iberian bureaucracy (Pakkasvirta 24). Such heterogeneity has led to an uneven process of modernization and development, making the consolidation of nations and national identity a difficult and painful process. As the renowned and controversial Peruvian writer Mario Vargas Llosa put it:
Una nación es una ficción política impuesta sobre una realidad social y geográfica casi siempre por la fuerza, en beneficio de una minoría política y mantenida a través de un sistema uniformizador que, a veces con mano blanda y a veces dura, impone la homogeneidad al precio de la desaparición de una heterogeneidad preexistente e instala barreras y obstáculos a menudo insalvables para el desarrollo de una diversidad religiosa, cultura o étnica en su seno. (Tallán 18)

While many countries are home to diverse and heterogeneous populations, the formation of “nations” relies on a process of homogenization that can lead to the disappearance of ethnic groups. In the process of national identity formation, intellectuals have struggled with what they called the “Indian problem”: What to do with these Indians? This question has been shorthand for the cultural, economic, and political legacies of conquest and colonialism, which in the vision of national elites have constituted obstacles to Latin America’s “progress”.

An important historical representative of this view is the Argentine Domingo Faustino Sarmiento (1811-1888) who posited as fact a colonist grid outlining the superiority of one culture over others. In his seminal work, Facundo: civilización y barbarie, European immigration, rationalism, progress, and a settled life in cities all meant “civilization” while “barbarism,” took the form of indigenous customs, the law of the caudillos, and the life of the gauchos. He argued that Argentines needed “to mix [with] the populations of more advanced countries, so they… [could learn] their arts,

---

6 Gaucho is a term commonly used to described residents of the South American pampas, chacos or Patagonian grasslands, found principally in parts of Argentina, Uruguay, Southern Chile and Rio Grande do Sul, the southernmost state of Brazil. The word gaucho can be described as a loose equivalent to the North American “Cowboy.” The term often connotes the 19th century more than the present day, then gauchos made up the majority of the rural population, herding cows and practicing hunting as their main economic activities.
their industry, their activity and adeptness at work” (91). According to his view, European immigration “would correct the indigenous blood with new ideas, [thereby] ending… Argentina’s medievalism” (91). Sarmiento claimed that the only way to resolve the dichotomy between civilization and barbarism was through the assimilation of the Indian into dominant Argentine culture in order to create a superior race. Although, Sarmiento argued for the mixing of population of the interior of the country (home to indigenous and aboriginal groups) with Europeans, his doctrine served as the basis for the Conquest of the Desert,\(^7\) the military domination and genocide of much of the indigenous population of Argentine territory in 1879 (Helg 44).

Another foundationalist approach to the “Indian problem” came from the Cuban intellectual, writer, and revolutionary José Martí (1853-1895). In his nationalist, pan-American essay “Nuestra América” (1891), Martí aimed to convince Latin Americans to reject the United States’ interference in their internal affairs, which he considered contrary to their political, cultural, and economic interests (Tulchin 287-339). The essay articulates the threat that the hegemonic power of North America posed on Latin America’s sovereignty:

\(^7\) The Indians were considered the most challenging enemy of Argentinean civilization until the early 1880s. In 1879, General Julio A. Roca initiated his Conquest of the Desert, a misnamed war that expanded the Argentinean frontier westward and southward by subduing or exterminating entire aboriginal groups. By 1890, most of Argentina’s Indians had been either killed or enslaved, that is, forcibly incorporated into the army, taken by soldiers as concubines, assigned to sugar mills as peons or to Buenos Aires’ families as servants (Helg 44).
Y como los pueblos viriles, que se han hecho de sí propios, con la escopeta y la ley, aman, y sólo aman, a los pueblos viriles; como la hora del desenfreno y la ambición, de que acaso se libre, por el predominio de lo más puro de su sangre, la América del Norte, o en que pudieran lanzarla sus masas vengativas y sórdidas, la tradición de conquista y el interés de un caudillo hábil, no está tan cercana aún a los ojos del más espantadizo, que no dé tiempo a la prueba de altivez, continua y discreta, con que se la pudiera encara y desviarla; como su decoro de república pone a la América del Norte, ante los pueblos atentos del Universo, un freno que no le ha de quitar la provocación pueril o la arrogancia ostentosa o la discordia parricida de nuestra América, el deber urgente de nuestra América es enseñarse como es, una en alma e intento, vencedora veloz de un pasado sofocante, manchada sólo con sangre de abono que arranca a las manos la pelea con las ruinas, y la de las venas que nos dejaron picadas nuestros dueños. (Martí 2)

Martí presentó una idea inclusiva de “América” que incorporó el “Otro” (el indio) como una participante activa en el proceso de la construcción del país: “La América trabajadora; del Bravo a Magallanes, sentado en el lomo del cóndor, regó el Gran Semí, por la naciones románticas del continente y por las islas dolorosas del mar, la semilla de la América nueva” (Martí 2). Su idea de la inclusión del “elemento indio” en la creación de una nueva américa fue reforzada por su conceptualización subyacente de la historia: “saber es resolver” (Bojórquez 207). Martí sostiene: “La historia de América, de los incas acá, ha de enseñarse al dedillo, aunque no se enseñe la de los arcontes de Grecia. Nuestra Grecia es preferible a la Grecia que no es nuestra. Nos es más necesaria” (2). Martí argumentó por el aprendizaje y el entendimiento del pasado indio y esto minimizó los diferencias internas, y combinió partes étnicamente diversas en una entidad homogénea para contrarrestar las pretensiones hegemónicas de los Estados Unidos.

Aunque Martí’s vision of the role of indigenous culture and identity was revelatory and innovative for his time, his work maintains the colonialist model of racial superiority: “Con los pies en el Rosario, la cabeza blanca y el cuerpo pinto de indio y
criollo, venimos, denodados, al mundo de las naciones” (3). On the one hand, he argues for the inclusion of the Indian element but on the other hand, he does not differ that much from Sarmiento’s argument. The dilemma here is that although Martí proposed a progressive ideology, he sees indigenous people from a colonialist perspective, as the “body”—a headless brute force unprepared to govern itself, needing the tutelage and direction of a white minority.

The question of the Indian’s role in the nation became a more pressing problem in the early-twentieth century as growing economies required more labor and improved communications brought indigenous peoples and dominant society into closer and more frequent contact. Elite intellectuals began to consider whether Indians might somehow be “improved” enough to be part of a modern nation (Zulawski 22). In the 1920s, a primarily literary but also sociological and political movement, called *indigenismo*, emerged. *Indigenismo* represented a non-Indian formulation of the “Indian problem,” as well as questioning of Indians’ rights and culture (Dawson 279). Among the prominent indigenist thinkers was Peruvian Victor Raúl Haya de la Torre (1895-1979), founder of the socialist Alianza Popular Revolucionaria Americana (APRA). APRA influenced several political movements throughout Latin America, including Bolivia’s Movimiento Nacionalista Revolucionario (MNR) and Costa Rica’s Partido Liberación Nacional (Bakewell 516). Haya thought of the APRA as a movement that was neither national nor altogether international but distinctly Latin American in scope. They identified as: “Nosotros, los representantes de las provincias unidas de Sud América” (Rivera 1938, 1).

Haya sought to re-assert the dignity and historical accomplishment of indigenous peoples and to strengthen Latin America by integrating native populations more fully into
national social, economic, and political life. In his quest to unite Latin America, Haya used the term Indo-America to highlight the region’s indigenous roots. He explained: “Aprismo […] applies to the philosophy of history the new scientific and philosophical concept of space-time. And on this concept bases its examination of the objective conditions of the social reality of Indo-America and the interpretation of its historical future (1926, 756). Haya argues for the strengthening of the political and economic unity of the continent through the “emancipación mental indoamericana de los moldes y dictados europeos” (1977, 407). He tried to construct an authentic Indo-American political ideology that adapted to the Indo-American reality by thinking and analyzing the political phenomenon of the Indo-American from within. This idea represented a broader “revolution” in the way Latin America and the world might conceptualize the role of indigenous peoples in the region. This concept is being employed by indigenous leaders in Latin America today. Both Felipe Quispe and Evo Morales for example, believe that the reconstruction of Bolivian society needs to start from within by incorporating the “indigenous element” as an active participant of change.

Another strong representative of indigenismo in Latin America is Peruvian José Carlos Mariátegui (1894-1930). Mariátegui and his family migrated to Lima from provincial Moquegua in the south of Peru with the hopes of bettering their social condition (Schutte 21-22). Having dropped out of school in order to work, Mariátegui rose to prominence with the growing journalism industry despite his lack of formal education. He did not turn his full attention to the “problem” of the Indian until his return from Europe in 1923, when he famously stated that his “exile” had allowed him to see Peru for the first time (Schutte 21). In the debate over the “Indian problem” in relation to
Peruvian nationality and identity, Mariátegui brought new ideas to the table. He converged currents of international socialism with new ideas about how indigenous people themselves would be the solution to Peru’s problem:9 “El problema de los indios es el problema de cuatro millones de peruanos. Es el problema de las tres cuartas partes de la población del Perú. Es el problema de la mayoría. Es el problema de la nacionalidad” (Mariátegui 1988, 42). Mariátegui argued that the Indian problem was not a problem of race but instead of class. Unlike Europe, Peru had very little industrialization, limited capitalism, and almost no industrial proletariat or organized working class. In the Marxist scheme, how could you have a socialist revolution without a working class? Mariátegui found his answer in the indigenous Indian populations of Peru. Since in Peru the majority of the masses were indigenous: “Nuestro socialismo no sería, pues, peruano, —ni sería siquiera socialismo, si no se solidarizase, primeramente, con las reivindicaciones indígenas” (Mariátegui 1987, 75-76).

He made the materialist claim that at its core Indian oppression was a socioeconomic issue rooted in the unequal distribution of land and the failure to overcome the legacy of feudalism in the Peruvian countryside (Schutte 21-22). These views are eloquently expressed in his famous collection of writings, Siete ensayos de interpretación de la realidad peruana. While many indigenistas believed that the solution to Indian poverty and marginalization lay in their assimilation to western culture,  

---

8 His view about socialism and the indigenous element gained him many critics from the APRA and the intellectual elite, who described his idea as “exotic” and unfit for Peruvian reality. In response to the critics of Luis Alberto Sánchez, renounced APRA leader, Mariátegui pointed out: “No me llame Luis Alberto Sánchez ‘nacionalista ni ‘indigenista, ni ‘seudo indigenista” pues para clasificarme no hacen falta estos términos, llámeme simplemente socialista. Toda la clave de mis actitudes está en esta sencilla y explícita palabra”. He added “Lo que afirmo por mi cuenta es que de la confluencia o alianza del indigenismo y socialismo nadie…puede sorprenderse. El socialismo ordena y define las reivindicaciones de las masas, de la clase trabajadora, y en el Perú las masas, la clase trabajadora son las cuatro quintas partes indígenas. Nuestro socialismo no sería pues peruano… sino se solidarizase con las reivindicaciones indígenas” (Muñoz 7).
Mariátegui maintained that Indian society would only be transformed through a socialist revolution: “sólo el movimiento revolucionario clasista de las masas indígenas explotadas podrá permitirles dar un sentido real a la liberación de su raza de la explotación, favoreciendo las posibilidades de su autodeterminación política” (1994, 81). Although Mariátegui discussed the possibility of indigenous revolution, the underlying assumption was that Indians were not ready or able to liberate themselves. Therefore, it was important for others, as Peruvians, to identify with and advocate for their indigenous brothers and sisters. According to Mariátegui, solidarity could be expressed through literature:

La literatura indigenista no puede darnos una versión rigurosamente verista del indio. Tiene que idealizarlo y estilizarlo. Tampoco puede darnos su propia alma. Es todavía una literatura de mestizos. Por eso se llama indigenista y no indígena. Una literatura indígena, si debe venir, vendrá en su tiempo. Cuando los propios indios estén en grado de producirla. (1928, 306)

*Indigenismo* has thus claimed to speak of the Indian’s plight, but in fact, it has been a phenomenon that occurs almost entirely within the majority *mestiza* culture of the continent. Through its use of and implicit advocacy for the dominant language and culture, *indigenismo* has tended to exclude those very subjects it claimed to represent. *Indigenismo* should therefore be viewed less as a window on the indigenous people of Latin America and more as a complex example of how intellectuals have imagined alterity, or otherness, in the continent (Coronado 3).

Beginning in the early twentieth century, this idea of “bettering” indigenous people was put in practice by Latin American states. By the second half of the twentieth century, politicians would seek to ban the term “Indian”, and replace it with national
labels like “Bolivian” or “Peruvian.” In 1953, the Bolivian government replaced the terms “Indians” and “indigenous” with campesinos, insisting again on the idea of improvement (Abercrombie 96). The Bolivian national revolution of 1952 led by the Movimiento Nacionalista Revolucionario (MNR) had a Marxist discourse and was seen as a protest located in class struggle. Among the revolutionaries’ main objectives were universal suffrage, agrarian reform, and the nationalization of the mining sector. The significant feature of the Agrarian reform in 1953 was the dissolution of all forms of agrarian labor exploitation coupled with the massive redistribution of land over thirty years. The agrarian reform decree erased all mention of ‘Indian peoples’, ‘Indian race’, Aymara or Quechua identity from official discourse. Rural peoples were categorized as campesinos, and a rural union was formed rooted in the class discourse and seeing the peasants as first and foremost workers of the rural areas.

In the late 1990s, a new form of indianismo appeared as a reaction to indigenismo. Indianismo emphasized the cultural values of Indian civilization—not sustaining or reconstructing pre-Columbian models, but differentiating Indian culture

---

9 In Peru in 1970, the populist and corporatist government policies of General Juan Velasco Alvarado classified indigenous populations by class-based labels and social programs. Velasco famously prohibited even the use of the term Indian, promoting instead identification as campesinos or peasants. According to the anthropologist and historian María Elena García, the de-emphatization of ethnic identities during the government of Velasco (1968-1975) contributed to the absence of indigenous political activity in Peru nowadays (7).

10 The Agrarian Reform decree of August 2, 1953 proclaims the following objectives: “Son objetivos fundamentales de la Reforma Agraria: (a) proporcionar tierra labrantía a los campesinos que no la poseen, o que la posean muy escasa,[…] (b) liberar a los trabajadores campesinos de su condición de siervos,[…] (f) promover Corrientes de migración interna de la población rural campesina, ahora excesivamente concentrada en la zona interandina…(Decreto Ley 03464 de Reforma Agraria, 2 de agosto de 1953)” (Gray 6)

11 Indianismo also refers to the literary movement in the nineteenth-century. Indianismo was concerned with the romantic portrayal of passive, uncivilized Natives in an exotic, erotically charged natural setting. This movement was greatly influenced by French Enlightenment thinkers, who were widely read throughout South America, especially Montaigne’s “Des Cannibals” and the writings of Voltaire, Raynal, and Marmontel (particularly Les incas) (Kaup & Rosenthal 124-125).
from that of the national societies of Latin America (Bolivar 2). This contemporary *indianista* discourse is a creation of indigenous communities that are making ethnic-cultural, political, and economic demands of their nation-states. This movement emphasized self-determination, autonomy, the rights of nations in international law, and community-directed economic development. Since the European colonization, indigenous people have voiced their demands in various ways against the injustices they have suffered. However, this relatively recent trend is one of the few occasions in which non-indigenous entities’ attention to indigenous demands have helped to foster democratic representation rather than wipe it out. The “Indian problem” is being addressed from within as indigenous peoples have become active participants in their national societies and makers of their own destiny.

Bolivia is on the front lines of this ongoing struggle. Bolivian intellectual, activist, and writer Fausto Reinaga (1906-1994) was an important founding voice for this evolution of the notion of indigeneity and the changing role of indigenous peoples in Latin America. His work has inspired future generations of indigenous leaders throughout the Americas and particularly in his native country. Reinaga saw *indianismo* as an anti-colonial, anti-Occidental ideology coming from indigenous peoples themselves, as opposed to the state-led polices fashioned by non-Indians. In 1969 he explained:

A mi regreso de Europa, rompo con toda mi tradición intelectual y con toda mi producción cholista. Hubiese querido que no existiese […]. Es otra etapa, otro camino que he encontrado; y tengo otra meta en el horizonte. En mis obras de 1940 a 1960 yo buscaba la asimilación del indio por el cholaje blanco-mestizo. Y en las que he publicado de 1964 a 1970 yo busco la liberación del indio; previa destrucción del cholaje blanco-mestizo […] y yo planteo la Revolución India. (463)
For Reinaga and his followers, *indianismo* would enable indigenous people to mobilize collectively on the basis of their historic sovereign right to territory and culture. Responding to historical marginalization and the lack of action from the government, indigenous peoples undertook political activism in order to call attention to their problems and gain international support.

In Bolivia, the longstanding problem of the incomplete process of national identity has reemerged in the ongoing demands of indigenous peoples. As we trace the history of these demands and the place of indigenous peoples in the process of national formations, we see that indigenous people appear historically as mere “objects” in the nation-building process. National-identity constructions have been predominantly a creation of a white/mestizo dominant society. This tendency dates to the Conquest, when subordinate groups like indigenous peoples were not taken into consideration as political subjects (or sometimes even as human beings), but rather, were put aside or eliminated.

In contrast to this grim history of racist oppression, the last few decades of indigenous history in Bolivia present the possibility of more optimistic future. With the presence of Evo Morales, the current president of Bolivia, and Felipe Quispe, a popular Aymara leader and intellectual, the concept of indigenous identity has moved from the periphery of the political arena to center stage. These two leaders have revolutionized the concept of a Bolivian indigenous national identity. After decades and centuries of contemporary indigenous cultures being represented as anachronistic, “backward,” and a detriment to the progress of the nation, “lo indígena” (“that which is Indian” or “indigeneity”) has become a powerful national symbol.
Indigenous Identity

There is little agreement among academics or people who self-identify as indigenous regarding what constitutes an indigenous identity, how to measure it, and who truly posses it (Weaver 1). Traditional scholars treated ethnicity as singular, deeply-rooted, and fixed. This approach to understanding ethnicity, known as “primordialism,” assumed, implicitly or explicitly, that individuals have only one ethnic identity and that they perceive a sense of group membership based on shared cultural “givens.” As a result, ethnic identity is a permanent fixture not subject to modification over time or in light of social changes brought about by modernization. The primordialist approach has been largely supplanted by a different approach, called “constructivism” which maintains that identity is a socially-constructed phenomenon subject to change as previously disassociated cultures interact with new social situations (Shoup 2). Representatives of constructivism have argued that individuals assume different identities in different social, political, or economic contexts.

A leading figure in the constructivist approach today is Stuart Hall; rather than thinking of identity as an “already accomplished historical fact” he thinks instead of “identity as a production which is never complete, always in process, and always constituted within, not outside, representation” (1996a, 210). Hall broke with the traditional model of identity, arguing that identities are multiple and change over time. Throughout this chapter we have seen that traditional identity politics have tended to emphasize unity and the suppression of difference. To this, Hall prefers the idea of

12 Representatives of primordialism are Clifford Geerts, Donald L. Horowitz, and Stephen Van Evera.

13 Representatives of constructivism are: Kanchan Chandra, Marisol de la Cadena, Melissa Nobles, and Alejandro Portes.
“unities” in “difference”. In this context, Hall recognizes that: “Every identity is placed, positioned, in a culture, a language, a history […]. It insists on specificity, on conjecture. But it is not necessarily armour-plated against other identities. It is not tied to fixed, permanent, unalterable oppositions. It is not wholly defined by exclusion” (1987, 46).

Hall believes that identities are not mutually exclusive, as people might possess multiples identities. Another important argument that Hall makes is to acknowledge the “critical points of deep and significant difference which constitute ‘what we really are’; or rather—since history has intervened—‘what we have become’” (1990, 225). From this point of view, cultural identity is a:

[…] matter of ‘becoming’ as well as of ‘being’. It belongs to the future as much as to the past. It is not something which already exists, transcending place, time, history and culture. Cultural identities come from somewhere, have histories. But like everything which is historical, they undergo constant transformation. Far from being eternally fixed in some essentialised past, they are subject to the continuous ‘play’ of history, culture and power. Far from being grounded in mere ‘recovery’ of the past, which is waiting to be found, and which when found, will secure our sense of ourselves into eternity, identities are the names we give to the different ways we are positioned by, and position ourselves within, the narratives of the past. (1990, 225)

Hall acknowledges the place of history, language and culture in the construction of identity as well as the fact that all discourse is placed, positioned, and situated. Identity thus encompasses representations of ourselves through sexuality, culture, nationality, religions, community, appearance, personality, beliefs, and fears. Because all these might change over time and be influenced by outside factors, identity is “an unfolding story… continually recast in the course of experience” (Sennett 176-177). This notion of identity can help us to understand the subjective nature of indigenous identity in the Bolivian case, for as we have seen, the identity of indigenous people has changed
over time in a dialectical relationship with a broad set of external factors that are ascribed to self or others.

One of these external factors in the case of Bolivia (and all of Latin America) has been state policy. During the mid-twentieth century, many Latin American governments followed the example of Mariátegui and Peruvian socialists in seeking to reshape their indigenous populations around the notion of class identity, organizing them into peasant associations that were closely linked to the state. The last few decades, however, have witnessed the re-election of this erasure and the reemergence of ethnic identities (Madrid 8). Powerful indigenous movements have emerged in Ecuador, Bolivia, Mexico, Guatemala, and Paraguay that have sought to restore indigenous traditions and identities. In the Bolivian case, with regional and national protests such as the Marcha por Territorio y Dignidad, La Guerra del Agua, and Las Guerras del Gas, these movements have put pressure on the government to recognize indigenous traditions, grant autonomy to indigenous areas, and create State institutions and programs to accommodate the needs of the indigenous population.

In addition to the importance of external factors, history changes one’s conception of oneself. Therefore, another critical aspect of identity is the relationship between self and Other. As Hall puts it, “only when there is an Other can you know who you are”

---

14 In July 1990, 300 people embarked on an ambitious and well publicized 600-kilometer march from the lowlands up the Andes to La Paz called the Marcha por la Dignidad y el Territorio. The protestors demanded formal land rights as well as an end to the constant appropriation of their traditional territory by outsiders. Common government practice had been to grant logging concessions without consulting the affected indigenous groups. The march was the beginning of a new period of struggle in which indigenous groups were no longer isolated and intimidated. The president at the time, Paz Zamora, met with the indigenous leaders, negotiated with them regarding their demands, and created seven indigenous territories presidential decree (Grey 195-196).

Las Guerras del Agua started in the city of Cochabamba in 2000. These massive demonstrations protested against Bechel, a U.S. corporation that had taken control of the city’s water supply as part of the privatization of public utilities in Bolivia. Las Guerras del Gas started in 2003 and were a chain of protests against the European multinationals, principally British petroleum and Repsol from Spain that wanted to seize the country’s huge natural gas reserves.
Identity exists not solely within an individual or category of individuals but through difference in relationship with a variety of Others. For instance, there was no Native American identity prior to contact with Europeans. Likewise, immigrants from various European nations had to learn to define themselves as “white” rather than according to their national origins or cultural groups. The Lakota (Native American) intellectual Hillary Weaver also mentions that, before they were in contact with Europeans, indigenous people identified themselves as distinct from other indigenous people and constructed their identities accordingly (3). Stuart Hall’s asserts that, “the traumatic nature of the colonial experience” has “imposed will and domination, by the power of inner compulsion and subjective conformation to the norm” (1990, 226). The colonized have unfairly been projected upon as “the Other,” and so cultural identity is often “not an essence but a positioning” (1990, 226).

Several theorists agree therefore that identity is a combination of self-identification and perceptions by and of Others. Weaver helps break down this complicated relationship by identifying three facets of identity: self-identification, community identification, and external identification. Self-identification, she argues, is not static, but progresses through developmental stages in which an individual has a changing sense of who he or she is, perhaps leading to a rediscovered sense of being indigenous (4). Developing a cultural identity consists of a lifelong learning process of awareness and understanding. Community identification, on the other hand, implies that the “indigenous identity is connected to a sense of peoplehood” (Weaver 4). For Weaver, an individual must be integrated into a society, not simply stand alone in order to be fully human (4). Finally, Weaver understands external identification as the tendency for native
identity to be defined from a nonnative perspective. Such an assertion raises critical questions about authenticity: who decides who is an indigenous person, a native, or non-native?

In the case of Latin America, the task of answering this question has usually been delegated to the State, which in most cases has at one time or another imposed its own standard of indigeneity. For instance, the fact that representatives of the Bolivian State decided in 1953 to refer to indigenous people as campesinos rather than “Indians” raises important questions. What is the influence of social and economic policies on identity? Why do people identify themselves as indigenous (or not)? Can State laws define who people are? (Weaver 6). The 2005 election of Evo Morales, as Bolivia’s first indigenous president, is one way to explore further these questions regarding the construction and manipulation of indigenous identities. In a country where nearly 80% of the population is of indigenous descent, why did it take so long for an indigenous person to be elected president?

To begin to address the paradox of ethnic identification, it is helpful to consider three common theoretical approaches: the assimilation model, the ethnic competition model, and the political approach (Madrid 8). These models are helpful because they attempt to predict the different reasons that individuals identify with one or another identity. In short, the assimilation model would expect that indigenous identification would be inversely related to socio-economic status and residential and linguistic integration; the ethnic competition model makes the opposite prediction, and the political approach links indigenous identification to the political socialization of individuals.
The assimilation model which was developed by Robert Park and other members of the “Chicago School” in the 1950s, argued that ethnic identification gradually faded among members of immigrant groups as they climbed the socio-economic ladder (Madrid 6). According to this approach, rising levels of income and education would facilitate assimilation and thus weaken ethnic identification. Assimilation theorists and other scholars have argued that mastery of the dominant language and residential integration also speeds up the assimilation process, thereby weakening previous ethnic ties. Although indigenous people in Latin America do not represent an immigrant group, they do face comparable pressures to assimilate or adopt non-indigenous identities, especially considering high levels of discrimination they face and the social, economic, and political dominance enjoyed by non-indigenous populations (Madrid 8).

In her book, Indigenous Mestizos, Peruvian anthropologist Marisol de la Cadena defines “the ethnic taxonomies that distinguish Indians—the putative contemporary descents of the original pre-colonial civilization—from mestizos—former Indians, but not white yet” (2000, 29). She shows that difference between Indians and mestizos is directly related to levels of literacy and urbanity, which makes it analogous to the “assimilation model” developed by Park in the U.S.-American context. In Peru, Indians were conceived of as illiterate agriculturalists, possessing vestiges of pre-colonial culture while mestizos were conceived of as incompletely educated highlanders, residents of cities or rural towns, and petty merchants (2000, 29). According to De la Cadena, “both groups lacked the cultural capital to enter rational, lettered society and were subordinate to the unmarked possessors of education” (2000, 29). In Bolivia, as in Peru, mestizaje was the gradual process by which Indians gradually became literate and acquired urban skills and
“naturally” discarded their original cultures (2000, 29). Therefore, we might expect that people of indigenous descent who are wealthier and more educated (i.e. more assimilated into dominant national culture) are less likely to identify as indigenous.

The relationship between competition and ethnic relations can be traced to the influential work of Fredick Barth and his associates in the late 1960s. In his influential work, Ethnic Groups and Boundaries, Barth argued that ethnicity was best conceived as a system of intergroup boundaries whose strength and salience in interaction was determined, in part, by the extent of contact and resources competition among ethnic groups. Therefore, the ethnic competition\textsuperscript{15} approach has argued that socio-economic progress and contact with other ethnic groups strengthens ethnic identities rather than weakening them (Madrid 10). According to this view, as people move up the socio-economic ladder, master the dominant language, or move into integrated neighborhoods, they compete increasingly for jobs and other resources with members of other ethnic groups, and they also become increasingly aware of discrimination. Competition with members of other ethnic groups and greater awareness of discrimination against one’s own ethnic group, in turn, tend to strengthen an individual’s ethnic identification. The ethnic competition approach takes into consideration the same variables as the assimilation model, but predicts the opposite outcome. It would be expected, for example, that wealthier and more educated people of indigenous ancestry, especially those people who speak Spanish and live in integrated areas, would be more inclined to identify as indigenous because they would be more likely to have competed with members of other ethnic groups for resources, such as housing, jobs, and school grades.

\textsuperscript{15} By ethnic competition the authors refer to the tendency for modernization and industrialization to increase levels of contact with and competition among various ethnic populations for jobs, housing, and other scarce resources, which in turn, has increased levels of ethnic mobilization (Gap Min and Kim 23).
and admissions. This approach sees individual’s ethnic identification as situational depending on the competitive utility of ethnic identification in different settings.

During the 1980s, neoliberalism was spreading throughout the world via international financial institutions and transnational corporate hegemony. The effects of these neoliberal reforms were especially acute in Latin America, where many nations faced debt crises directly related to the international economic system. In order for many nations in Latin America to deal with this economic crisis, they were forced to implement several neoliberal economic policies, including privatization, macroeconomic stability, and trade openness. As a result of these reforms, governments lost size and involvement in key industries and services such as oil, gas, water, pensions, schools, and health care.

In the past decade, Bolivia has seen competition over its natural resources (gas and water) from transnational corporations including Betchel, Repsol and and British Petroleum. On the one hand, the Bolivian government and economic elites partnered with foreign corporations to push for the privatization of water and natural gas resources. On the other hand, indigenous groups, miners, workers, and students (among others) have fought to defend the nationalization of these resources. This situation has increased ethnic identification as indigenous peoples have presented themselves as the guardians of nature, and argued that privatizing natural resources jeopardizes their physical and cultural well-being. Many Bolivians who previously did not identify themselves as indigenous have joined this struggle, invoking their indigenous identity.

Finally, this political construction of ethnicity represents a distinct approach to understanding identity as a social or economic one. Race and ethnicity tend to become more politicized in some contexts and periods than others, and some ideologies may seek
to promote racial or ethnic consciousness while others may try to suppress it (Madrid 8). In this view, when the government recognizes ethnicity as the basis for political organization, ethnic identity and ethnic mobilization are likely to increase (Gap Min 23).

After the Bolivian revolution in 1952, the government sought to suppress ethnic identification by organizing indigenous people around rather than ethnic identity (Madrid 12). Members of the rural population were categorized as campesinos, and a new rural union was formed, rooted in a class discourse that considered peasants to be, first and foremost, rural workers. Government officials, educators, elites and even the indigenous population of Bolivia came to reject the categorization indio (Andersson 2004, 2). During the 1970s, however, an indigenous movement called Katarismo, emerged among the Aymara-speaking communities of the highlands and gradually took control of the peasant unions in the area (Madrid 12). This movement sought to increase ethnic consciousness, restore indigenous traditions, and eliminate economic and social discrimination of the indigenous population (Madrid 12).

These three theoretical approaches can be useful when understanding ethnic identification as a “rigid” concept. All three approaches present valid arguments that indeed apply to the situation of Bolivia in one way or another. However, the overlapping of variables producing opposite outcomes in the case of the assimilation and competition models reveals that identity is not so predictable; some situations might yield distinct outcomes from similar situations, and intellectuals might need to come up with different theories to explain this phenomenon. If identity is understood as a multifarious and malleable concept and if we acknowledge that humans are different from each other and

---

16 I will discuss Katarismo in the following chapters.
posses unique characteristics, the complexity of ethnic identification cannot be limited to only three determining scenarios.

It is clear that indigeneity has changed through time to acquire different meanings for members of the dominant class as well as for “indigenous” peoples. It is important to note that an official definition of “indigenous” has not been adopted by the United Nations or by any of its subsidiary organizations. According to the United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues, the most fruitful way to addressing indigenous issues is to identify rather than define indigenous peoples (1). This approach is based on the fundamental criterion of self-identification as underlined in a number of important human rights documents, including the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. The UN has therefore developed a modern understanding of the term “indigenous” based on the following criteria: 1) Self-identification as indigenous peoples at the individual level and acceptance by a community; 2) historical continuity with pre-colonial and/or pre-settler societies; 3) strong ties to territories and surrounding natural resources; 4) distinct social, economic or political systems that are distinct from those of dominant national society; 5) distinct language, cultural practices, and beliefs that are distinct from those of dominant national society; and 6) the desire to maintain and reproduce ancestral environments and systems as distinctive peoples and communities (2).

According to these criteria, indigenous people see themselves and are seen by others as the holders of unique languages, knowledge systems, and beliefs who possess invaluable information to support the sustainable use and management of natural resources. They have a special relation with and use of their traditional lands, which are
of fundamental importance for their collective physical and cultural survival as peoples. Indigenous peoples hold diverse concepts of development based on their traditional values, visions, needs, and priorities.

According to Marisol de la Cadena, “those who dress in feathers, face paint, “native costume” and otherwise publicly embrace their traditions risk self-positioning in the semantic extremes of exotic primitivism, thereby contributing to the propagation of that which Brazilian anthropologist Alcida Rita Ramos (1998) has called “the hyperreal Indian” (De la Cadena 2007, 9). On the other hand, those who do not seem to measure up to the stereotypical “feathers-and-beads” expectations often find themselves stigmatized as “half-breeds,” “assimilated” or even “imposters” (De la Cadena 2007, 9). Adding to this complicated issue, the idea of indigeneity is constantly subject to different interpretations. For instance, Evo Morales and Felipe Quispe both self-identify as indigenous and claim to represent “indigenous identity” in Bolivia. However, Felipe Quispe fiercely argues that Evo Morales “no está con la causa indígena” (Equipo Nizkor). The authenticity of Evo Morales’ indigeneity has been challenged not only by the “indigenous” leader Felipe Quispe, but also by “white” intellectuals like Mario Vargas Llosa. Vargas Llosa refers to Evo Morales as a “fake” Indian even though Morales speaks an indigenous language and grew up in a poor mountain village. According to Vargas Llosa, “Morales, is the emblematic Latin American criollo, cunning as a squirrel, a political climber, and charlatan with a vast experience as a manipulator of men and women acquired in his long trajectory as leader of coca leaf growers and member of the labor union aristocracy” (De la Cadena 2007, 9).

---

Criollo is a term first used in the seventeenth century in Latino America to differentiate the people with European descent from the indios and the blacks.
Ironically, some years ago Mario Vargas Llosa identified the Peruvian President Alejandro Toledo as an “Indian.” Toledo has Quechua indigenous Andean roots, as he was born in the town of Cabana, in the province of Ancash. At the age of sixteen, with the guidance of members of the Peace Corps, Toledo studied at the University of San Francisco on a one-year scholarship. Later on, he attended Stanford University, where he received a Masters in Economics, and a Masters in Education, and in 1993 he completed his PhD in Education. He is now a prominent politician and economist. For Marisol de la Cadena, this double-standard underlines the fickle and oftentimes contradictory expectations surrounding indigeneity (2007, 9).

Vargas Llosa and his contradictions are emblematic of other opinions in Bolivia, the Andes, Latin America, and the developing/developed world. Vargas Llosa represents the “hispanist” ideological current that still exists in Latin America and believes in the gradual disappearance of Indianness through mestizaje as “progress” and nation-building. Vargas Llosa expressed his support of Toledo by describing him as a “modern Indian, […] without grudges or inferiority complexes” (De la Cadena 2001, 11). Toledo’s life story cannot be further from the traditional idea of being “indigenous.” Toledo’s indigenous heritage and educational background make him a mestizo, or as Peruvians would call him: a cholo. Contrary to this evolutionary ideology which has ruled the social structure in Latin America since the European conquest, contemporary indigenous leaders like Quispe and Morales have come to offer a completely different discourse to counter the “hispanist” superiority model and disregards mestizaje in favor of embracing indianness (Indianness).
Chapter Two: The “Indigeneity” of Evo Morales and Felipe Quispe

As I argued in the first chapter, identity should not be conceived as inherent or innate, but rather, as dynamically and pluralistically constituted via an individual’s various relationships with other people, as well as with different ideologies, social roles, practices, and institutions. An individual’s social, geographical, and historical contexts change, and so does her or his identity, making one’s identity fragmented, multiple, and sometimes contradictory. This chapter presents the critical biography of indigenous leaders Evo Morales and Felipe Quispe. By analyzing the roots and development of these important figures, I am to understand the processes of their identity construction, which will in turn, provide a window onto their decisions, actions and ideologies.

Constructivist theorists consider symbolic practices that create meaning and organize human experiences to be fundamental mechanisms for constituting identity. Hall therefore reminds us that:

\[\text{practices of representation always implicate the positions from which we speak or write—the positions of enunciation. What recent theories of enunciation suggest is that, though we speak, so to say “in our own name”, of ourselves and from our own experience, nevertheless who speaks, and the subject who is spoken of, are never identical, never exactly in the same place. […] We all write and speak from a particular place and time, from a history and a culture which is specific. What we say is always “in context,” positioned […]}. \text{(1990, 222)}\]

Hall affirms that people have a specific take on a certain issue depending on their particular time, history, culture, and place. Therefore, when analyzing the identity of Quispe and Morales through biographical accounts and third-person comments, we need to take into consideration that rather than approaching cultural production as a mechanism for the expression or documentation of a “true” or “authentic” self, such
practices are understood as participating in the process of identity construction. In other words, in creating a historical account of both leaders, I aim to mediate the “truth,” since we need to keep in mind that the “truth” is always based on a subjective viewpoint. Morales and Quispe’s “indigenous identity” is a combination of their own version of their life stories, and what other people (intellectuals, politicians, Bolivian voters, international critics, etc.) have to say about them.

In Latin America, the idea of reinforcing national identities has tended to be mutually exclusive with the goal of strengthening of the indigenous identities. Historically, efforts to construct a national Bolivian identity have relied on a primordialist or essentialist approach, where identities are defined by difference, the marking of “us” and “them.” For instance, the mestizo, the representation of the “ideal” Bolivian identity has relied on something outside itself: namely, another identity, the indigenous one. The mestizo identity has been distinguished by what it is not. To be mestizo is to be “not an Indian”. In this case, difference is underpinned by exclusion; if you were indigenous, you could be Bolivian, and vice versa.

There are certain norms that dominant Bolivian society has developed to define an “Indian”. Quispe’s indigenous identity has never been challenged; his life story, appearance, thoughts, and actions fit perfectly with Bolivians’ expectations for “Indianess.” Quispe has been called a terrorist, radical, and racist, among other pejorative terms. However, the authenticity of his indigenous identity has never been disputed. His campaign has utilized this idea to advance his political goals, claiming that he and his party are the only “true representatives” of indigenous people. Quispe was the first one to contest the legitimacy of Evo Morales’ efforts to speak in the name of the
indigenous peoples of Bolivia. In 2005, he proclaimed, “Evo Morales is waging war against me, because I am his bad conscience. As soon as he deviates from a line in defense of the peasants, I give him no peace” (do Alto). According to Quispe, Morales and his party (Movimiento Al Socialismo) do not fulfill the expectations of indigeneity. Instead, he sees them as a cocalero (coca farmers’) union that also “claims” to advance the indigenous cause. Morales’ diverse array of activities and demands breaks with the overstated notion of a singular identity. Throughout his life, Morales has presented himself in different ways as by using one or more than one of his multiples identities at a time: the cocalero, the unionist, the indigenous leader, and the Bolivian. His multiple identities relate to Hall’s idea that identities do not need to be mutually exclusive. Morales introduces a new way of conceptualizing indigenous identity, as inclusive and complementary. He can be a unionist leader as well as an indigenous leader and Bolivian citizen, all at the same time.

**Evo Morales**

Juan Evo Morales Ayma was born on October 26, 1959 into an extremely poor Aymara family in Isallawi. He explains:

> En Isallawi vivíamos en una casita de adobe y techo de paja. Era pequeña: no más de tres por cuatro metros. Nos servía como dormitorio, cocina, comedor y prácticamente de todo; al lado teníamos el corral para nuestros animales. Vivíamos en la pobreza como todos los comunarios. (Pineda 25)

Isallawi, also known as K’alawillka, was located 155 km from the city of Oruro. This community is inhabited primarily by families with the last names Morales, Almas, and Veras. The Morales’ community is close to other communities: Payacollo, Tarachulpa, Misikuni, Laguiloma and Tolaloma. All six (including Isallawi) constitute the *Ayllu*
Sullka (Poma 19). *Ayllu* is a defined political and socio-economic unit of territory and population which dates back to pre-Inca and Inca life. Based on collective land ownership, on strong family ties, and on common work, each resident of the *ayllu* has received from local indigenous authorities (according to the needs of its family unit) land to cultivate (Poma 19). This system avoids conflicts that may arise due to unequal land ownership and helps protect the production and natural resources of the *ayllu*. *Ayllus* not only play an economic role in the life of their inhabitants; they also embody Andean values and practices such as communalism and solidarity. Morales’ *ayllu* played an important role in influencing his political life.

Morales was one of seven children born to herders and farmers, Dionisio Morales Choque and María Aima de Morales. Only Morales and two of his siblings survived childhood:

Somos una familia de nacionalidad Aymara. Somos siete hermanos, de los cuales sólo vivimos tres. Mis otros hermanos perdieron la vida de uno a dos años; éste es el término de vida que tienen las familias o los niños en las comunidades campesinas. Más de la mitad se muere y nosotros, qué suerte, nos salvamos tres de los siete. (Pineda 25)

Since he was very young, Morales has had a life of challenges and hard work. Following in his parents’ footsteps Morales started as a llama shepherd:

Ese pico, ahí es donde yo estaba cuidando las llamitas. Mi papá venía conmigo caminando desde Orinoca (unos 20 kilómetros) y me dejaba allá. Yo tenía un poblado cerca, bajo la montaña, donde a veces bajaba a comprar algo de comida, pero rápido regresaba con el rebaño. Recuerdo que esperaba a que llegara de nuevo mi papá para regresar a Orinoca. Estaba solo en el cerro un mes o mes y medio, era muy pequeño y ya cuidaba a las llamitas. (Pienda 26)

---

18 Around the area where Morales lived, there are three Ayllus: Sullka, K’ollana and Ichura. These three have their administrative center or “capital” in Orinoca (Poma 20).
At the age of six, he travelled to Argentina with his father as a *zafrero* (seasonal migrant) to work on the sugar harvest (BIF). As a high school student, Morales also worked as a bricklayer, breadmaker, and trumpet player. Morales was born into poverty and he and his family struggled to survive.

In the 1980s, the region of Isallawi was hit by a *helada* (intense cold front) which destroyed farmland and forced Morales and his family to emigrate towards the region of Chapare (Poma 29). About this incident Morales commented:

> Una tarde acabamos el *aporque* (remover la tierra) de la papa con muchos peones, luego vino un viento por la noche y llegó la helada. Al día siguiente estaba el papal quemado, negro, con un olor feo. Mi mamá lloraba todo el día, mi papá estaba con mis tíos y allí decidieron: “aquí jamás vamos a progresar, jamás vamos a ser campesinos prósperos: hay que ir a buscar tierra al oriente boliviano.” (Pineda 27)

The Chapare is a rural province in the northern region of the Cochabamba Department in central Bolivia (Healy 101). The territory is comprised of valleys and rainforests, making it a very fertile area for the cultivation of the coca leaf. The change Morales’ family made was radical, considering that Chapare’s climate was very different to the one in Orinoca. The warm climate with great vegetation and rain compared to the cold, dry, and arid climate of the *altiplano* (highlands). And yet life was still very difficult: “En el Chapare la vida era dura; al usar hachas y machetes se reventaban las manos. Los colonos decían que nuestras manos estaban llorando sangre, pero en mi chaco, como nunca antes había soñado, tenía plantaciones de naranja, pomelo, papaya y coca” (Pineda 28).

As a result of a 1983 *helada*, the first ones to emigrate to the Chapare were from highland Andean communities, as in the case of Morales’ family. Then, in 1985, the closure of the State-run mining company put over 2,000 miners out of work (Dangl 39).
Although it resulted from a drop in tin prices, the closure was also part of a neoliberal plan to privatize State-run industries and break up the union of the miners, who made up the most powerful labor movement in the country (Dangl 39). Under these circumstances, the Chapare became an attractive center for displaced miners and peasants because of the great market of the coca-leaf and the manufacture of cocaine. Originally, the majority of Chapare residents were from the Quechua-speaking regions of the Cochabamba valleys. However, with a wave of Aymara migrants from the highlands, the Chapare became ethnically diverse. The ethnic diversification in the Chapare was a great step for the unity of Bolivian indigenous groups. In the Chapare, Morales was introduced to the Quechua identity, and later, this unique personal background (both Aymara and Quechua) favored his appeal to all factions of the indigenous majority. Being tied personally to both prominent ethnic groups enabled Morales to politicize a unified ethnic movement at the national level.

A surprisingly important aspect of Morales’ private and political is his passion for soccer. When Morales move to the Chapare, soccer was a key that opened doors of friendship in the new area and a tool that linked him with his neighbors. He explained: “Un día entré a jugar fútbol con los colonos y fui el goleador. Luego todos querían que jugara con ellos. Oye joven, ¿dónde está tu chaco?, ¿desde cuándo vives aquí?, me decían y ya en la noche vinieron a visitarme, me hice amigos” (Poma 59). Morales’ passion for soccer started in Isallawi. At age 13, he founded a team in his community called “Fraternity.” He was the captain, manager, and referee. At the age of 16, he was chosen to be technical director of the district: “tenía que trasquilar oveja, [y] lana de llama[,] Mi

---

19 The indigenous population has typically been divided between Aymara and Quechua groups. These two prominent ethnic groups have had a long history of discord that further fragmented the indigenous majority.
papá me ayudaba [porque] era muy deportista[.] Vendíamos la lana para comprar pelotas [y] uniformes” (Chatterhee). Soccer was also the road that led him to politics. Within a few months of arriving at Chapare, he was elected “sports secretary” of the coca farmers’ sindicato, and began his life as a unionist leader.20 As the most popular sport in Latin America, soccer opened the doors for him to friendships, connections, organizations and politics. Morales’ passion for this sport has transcended cultural and ethnic settings.

Migrants to the Chapare formed sindicatos, which are community organizations similar to unions, to fill the void left by an ineffective government. The sindicatos organized work cycles, distributed land, and mediated disputes (Dangl 39). Through obligatory communal work, roads, health clinics, and schools were built by sindicato members. Participation in protests, meetings, and blockades was also mandatory. According to Morales, these unions were completely different from the indigenous communitarian organization that he experienced in Isallawi: “[…] todavía no conocía la estructura del sindicato. En el altiplano es muy diferente, no había sindicatos y en el Chapare llamaban lista, te pedían aportes” (Poma 67). The union structure grew into the Six Federations, which is now an umbrella union that includes around 40,000 coca farmers in the Chapare (Dangl 39). The Six Federations have become a powerful instrument through which farmers organize, protest, and lobby the government regarding contentious Drug War policies (Dangl 39).21

---

20 Even now, as a head of State, Morales manages to integrate soccer into his daily life as a political tool. For instance, in the People’s Summit in 2008 in Lima, President Morales planned as an alternative event to the summit, a soccer match against the 1970 Peruvian World Cup team (TNI).

21 The War on Drugs is a controversial prohibition campaign undertaken by the United States government with the assistance of participating countries, intended to reduce the illegal drug trade. This initiative includes a set of laws and policies intended to discourage the production, distribution, and consumption of targeted substances principally cocaine.
The closure of tin mines in the 1980s coincided with a boom in demand from the U.S. and Europe for cocaine (Dangl 40). Coca quickly replaced tin as the largest exported product of the decade. Coca was also easier than other products to grow, store, and transport in the Chapare, which at the time did not have major roads or bridges. Consequently, attempts by the U.S. Drug Enforcement Agency (DEA) to eradicate coca made the region unstable, with frequent confrontations between cocaleros, the DEA, and the Bolivian government (40). Morales remembers vividly that in 1981 during the military dictatorship of Luis García Meza, an anti-drug team in central Chipiriri beat and burned alive a trade unionist because he did not want to confess to narcotrafficking:

Un hecho que quedó grabado por siempre en mi pensamiento y en mi conciencia ocurrió en Senda Bayer, central Chipiriri, en 1981: un cocalero fue asesinado en forma salvaje por los militares del gobierno de García Meza cuando, en estado de ebriedad, le golpearon salvajemente porque no quería declararse culpable por tráfico de drogas; entonces, sin ninguna contemplación, le rociaron gasolina en todo el cuerpo y a la vista de varios colonos le quemaron vivo. […] Fue un crimen horrodeo. (Pineda 28)

Morales concluded: "desde esa vez prometí luchar incansablemente por el respeto a los derechos humanos, por la paz, por la tranquilidad en nuestras tierras, por el libre cultivo de la hoja de coca, por los recursos naturales, por el territorio, por la defensa de la soberanía nacional, por la dignidad de los bolivianos y por nuestra libertad” (Pineda 28). Following these ideals, in 1985, Morales became the secretary-general of his union, (San Francisco) and in 1988, the executive secretary of the Federación Especial de Trabajadores Campesinos del Trópico de Cochabamba (FETCTC), one of the Six Federations (Evo Morales).

The United States’ involvement in Bolivia increased dramatically in 1985 during the worst economic crisis in Bolivia’s history (Garza). At this time the Bolivian
government accepted aid from the U.S. government and the World Bank in exchange for the implementation of neoliberal policies. One of the most important laws to be passed with U.S. influence was “Ley 1008” in 1988. This law was the first major step toward complete coca eradication in the Chapare and was met with grassroots demonstrations against both the implicit degradation of the integrity of the coca plant and the U.S.-funded militarization of the Chapare tropics to enforce this law (Garza). With this law, human rights abuses increased; peasants of the region accused the military of rape, physical abuse, and corruption. In response to the atrocities, peasants organized marches and demonstrations to protest these practices.

In 1989, the FETCTC organized an assembly to pay tribute to the fallen cocaleros in the War on Drugs (Evo Morales). At this event, Morales made an angry speech in which he continually attacked his enemies: the Bolivian government, the military and the DEA. The next morning, members of the UMOPAR (Unidad Móvil para el Patrullaje) arrived by boat to San Francisco and walked to Morales’ house (Poma 87). The UMOPAR kidnapped and beat Morales, and dumped him in the bushes, thinking he was dead. Members of his community found him and took him to the hospital, where he recuperated. This atrocity, far from scaring the coca farmers, revitalized their fighting spirit.

Morales’ life as a unionist has been marked by imprisonment, confinement, and torture. When referring to the hardship of his life as a unionist, he commented: “He pasado momentos difíciles en Eterazama (1997), donde desde un helicóptero, la DEA ha

---

22 UMOPAR is part of the Fuerza Especial de Lucha contra el Narcotráfico (FELCN) and is a police unit charged with interdiction in rural areas. UMOPAR specializes in jungle patrol, reconnaissance, air insertions, mobile roadlocks, and river operations. Its units are now stationed throughout Bolivia but based primarily in Chapare, Yungas, and Trinidad (Youngers and Rosin 152)
ametrallado y hubo cinco muertos en minutos.” [...] “En la sede de derechos Humanos de Villa Tunari (2000), intentaron acribillarme pero fracasaron, la bala paso rozándome” (Evo Morales). These stories show the strong spirit and conviction Morales has for the defense of the cocaleros and the coca leaf. Morales activism, to the point of risking his life several times, has authenticated his unionist identity and granted him the respect of his followers.

After his recuperation, Morales continued with his unionist activity. As leader of his union, he attended several conferences, national union congresses, and met with indigenous leaders. It was at this time that he realized that the defense of the coca leaf was largely a localized issue, compelling mostly to those Bolivians living in coca-growing territories. In order for the cocaleros to raise national awareness, their demands needed to broaden and incorporate other elements. Therefore, it is not a coincidence that Morales has used the terms cocaleros and indigenous people interchangeably throughout his unionist career in order to emphasize the cultural aspect of the coca and its importance to indigenous and Bolivian cultures. Indigenous people in Bolivia and other Latin American countries have been growing and chewing coca leaves, and drinking teas made from coca plants for thousands of years (Klein 53-64). Following this premise, Morales opened his struggle to include all indigenous people: “[…] hablar de “coca cero” es hablar de cero quechuas, cero aymaras y cero guaraníes” (Poma 88). Morales turned a localized resistance against the eradication of the coca leaf into a struggle against the survival of indigenous cultures.

At a national congress addressing these issues, Morales met Felipe Quispe, a prominent Aymara leader and militant. Quispe was known for being the leader of a
“terrorist” Indianist group called the EGTK (Ejército Guerrillero Tupak Katari). This group claimed to fight for the rights of indigenous people and aimed to restore the dignity and respect for them through armed struggle. This group committed several attacks against civilians in their attempt to destabilize the Bolivian government (Poma 83). Morales strongly disagreed with the violent approach fellow indigenous leaders were taking to advance the indigenous cause. Instead, Morales decided to strengthen the structure and organization of unionist movements. Morales’ choice reveals a lot about his character and his continuous search to finding peaceful solutions. While Quispe and Morales both have a subaltern position in national society, Quispe has intensified his subaltern position by attacking the government through violent acts that date back to the indigenous rebellions of the 1780s. Morales, on the other hand, has complied with the dominant class system and approached the problem through a democratic route that has granted him legitimacy on national and international levels.

In June 1990, Morales and the cocaleros organized a peaceful march from the city of Trinidad in the Department of Benin over 600 kilometers to the seat of government in La Paz in order to express their indignation about the effects of drug-control policies in their region. Along the way, a group of cocaleros were attacked by the military, but managed to continue their journey. Hundreds of people joined the march offering food, water, clothing, and shoes to the protesters (Poma 90). Under the pressure of these protesters, government authorities in La Paz agreed to discuss the issues. However, once the cocaleros returned to Cochabamba, the authorities refused to carry out the terms of their agreements and sent the military, once again, to threaten the cocaleros.
In October 1993, Morales was elected president of the Six Federations of Coca Leaf Growers (“Evo Morales”). In February 1994, Lee Brown (the Director of the Office of National Drug Control Policy during the Clinton administration) demanded the complete eradication of the coca and imposed the “coca cero” policy. This was a great affront to indigenous people. Wanting to eradicate cocaine in the U.S., Brown completely disregarded the value of the coca leaf to indigenous cultures. This policy intensified human rights abuses and the disregard for the property of cocaleros and indigenous peoples. The struggle of the cocaleros provoked solidarity movements throughout the world.

In 1995, Morales traveled to Europe to campaign in defense of the coca leaf. Invited by fourteen NGOs, Morales visited Austria, Belgium, Denmark, Germany, Luxembourg, Holland, the United Kingdom, and Italy (Poma 118). The aim of this trip was to gain support and educate people on the differences between coca leaves and cocaine. In a speech on these issues, Morales told reporters: “I am not a drug trafficker. I am a coca grower. I cultivate coca leaf, which is a natural product. I do not refine [it into] cocaine, and neither cocaine nor drugs have ever been part of the Andean culture” (“Evo Morales”). Morales’ growing popularity spread outside Bolivia, giving him an international audience. Morales was elected ambassador and spokesman for the indigenous peoples worldwide by the delegates of eighteen countries in the First International Solidarity Congress with Bolivia. More importantly, Morales’ activism has been recognized internationally, as he was nominated “Pacifista de las Drogas” for the Nobel Peace Prize in 1995 and 1996 by international politicians and academics because

---

23 In 1994, during the War on Drugs, the US pushed the government of Gonzalo Sánchez de Lozada to formulated the “Cero Coca” plan which aimed to eliminate coca leaf plantings. From the outset, the peasantry strongly opposed this policy and organized large protests, marches and other resistance actions.
of his leadership of a non-violent movement against the War on Drugs. The *cocalero* leader from the remote area of the Chapare thus rose to international prominence even before he and his ideas appealed to the greater population in Bolivia. The international scope and impact of the “War on Drugs” boosted Morales’ popularity and fomented international support for his visionary idea of launching an international campaign to legalize the coca leaf.

Although Morales’ unionist career reached its limits; he succeeded in raising awareness of the eradication of the coca leaf at a national and international level. However, his approach ran parallel to his frustration over the union’s inability to enact legal change. Morales thus encouraged *cocaleros* to try to form a political party called the ASP-IPSP: Asamblea por la Soberanía de los Pueblos (ASP) and Instrumento por la Soberanía de los Pueblos (IPSP). Unfortunately, the National Electoral Court denied the group their own acronym and the formation of a legal entity. Nevertheless, the ASP-IPSP joined candidates from the United Left (IU), a group of leftist parties that was headed by the Communist Party of Bolivia (PCB) and agreed to participate in a coalition. In the municipal elections of December 1995, the IU captured ten municipalities and 49 town councillorships, all in the department of Cochabamba (“Evo Morales”). In the national elections of June 1997, the IU won four seats in Parliament (out of 130). This was second milestone (first was union work) in Morales political career. Morales won a seat in the National Congress with an overwhelming 70% of the votes: “En 1997, aunque era muy difícil de creer, resulté ser el diputado que más votos obtuvo en Bolivia. ¡[…] Al fin era diputado […]! Un sueño largamente perseguido pero, al mismo tiempo, un compromiso social y político de mayor responsabilidad” (“Evo Morales”).
Since Morales wanted to participate in the local elections of December 1999, he came to a paradoxical agreement with the leader of Movimiento Al Socialismo-Unzagismo, David Añez Pedraza. Añez was a powerful businessman and former member of the military who had been known for his staunch opposition to indigenous movements (“Evo Morales”). This alliance was out of the ordinary, but the decision was made to benefit both political parties (the cocalero movement was just starting to grow, and the MAS-U was a declining political party). Morales and Añez agreed that in the future, the IPSP would take on the MAS’ acronym. Sealing the agreement, the MAS-IPSP started in January 1999 with Morales as president. Añez was made honorary ‘president for life’ of the MAS-IPSP as a way to thank him for the acquisition of the name and the colors of the MAS-U. Soon after, the MAS-IPSP was simply called Movimiento Al Socialismo (MAS). In the municipal elections of December 1999, the MAS, with 3.2% of the votes, was considered a purely regional organization limited to the departments of Cochabamba and La Paz (especially the Yungas, amply populated by coca farmers) (“Evo Morales”).

In 2001, the US-led “Plan Dignidad,” which sought to reduce coca production to zero, intensified its armed efforts (Gamarra 2). From his seat in Parliament, Morales denounced the militarization of the conflict and the “massacre” perpetrated in the Chapare. Morales publicly declared not only that he supported the peasants’ rights to self-defense, but that he would participate in the organization of popular self-defense groups (“Evo Morales”). This statement earned him a severe warning from the highest authorities. On January 24, 2002, these threats materialized, and Morales was removed

---

24 Unzaguismo was the name given in honor of Unzaga de la Vega, the founder of Bolivia’s Falange (the fascist party).
from his seat in Parliament. The Parliamentary Ethics Commission asserted that Morales had committed “faltas graves en el ejercicio de sus funciones” (“Evo Morales”).

Beginning in early 2001, Morales and the MAS began campaigning across Bolivia for the June 30, 2002 presidential elections (Rodríguez). The MAS platform included: the nationalization of strategic industries; price reductions and a price freeze on household goods; the provision of basic services for all; defense of free public health and education; increased taxes on the wealthy; an end to corruption; the redistribution of land to those that work it; a new political apparatus; an end to neo-liberal economic policies; and the defense of the production of the coca leaf (Rodríguez). In the 2002 elections, Evo Morales came second to Sánchez de Lozada in the presidential race, losing by less than 2%. These unexpectedly good results gave the party a sense that they could win electorally (Webber).

Beginning in 2000, Bolivia had entered a cycle of constant popular insurrection, starting with the Guerra del Agua of 2000 in the city of Cochabamba and its surrounding countryside. This popular revolt against the privatization of water signified popular condemnation of the entire period of neoliberalism (1985-2000), with its rampant privatization, growing inequity, and ongoing poverty (Gómez 143). The Guerra del Agua was followed by three weeks of mobilization and road blockades by the Aymara peasantry in the altiplano in September and October 2000 (Ballvé 155). The height came during the October 2003 Guerra del Gas that forced neoliberal president Gonzalo Sánchez de Lozada to flee the country. In June 2005, Sánchez de Lozada’s successor, Carlos Mesa, was forced to resign due to his refusal to break with the neoliberal economic model (Hylton and Thomson 161). In these turbulent times, Morales, far from
being quieted or neutralized politically, became the representative of the people unjustly affected by the controversial politics and saw his popularity flourish. Facing brutal repression under the U.S.-led “War on Drugs,” the cocaleros developed an anti-imperialist and anti-neoliberal ideology, thereby making their demands more appealing to a wider sector of the Bolivian people. On December 18, 2005, Morales became president of the Republic of Bolivia with more than 54% of the popular vote (Garver). With this overwhelming support, the Bolivian people showed their support for Morales’ actions and judgment in defense of the rights of indigenous peoples and the general population.

**Felipe Quispe**

Felipe Quispe, also known as “Mallku” (in Aymara: Condor or highest communal authority), is a Bolivian indigenous leader. He was born on August 22, 1942 in an Aymara family in Great Ajllata, the province of Omasuyos (Achacachi). He was the sixth child of Gabino Quispe and Leandra Huanca. Quispe attended middle school in Santiago de Huata. In 1963, he provided military service to the Grupo Aéreo de Cobertura in Riberalta. He married Vicenta Mamani and had seven children: Eusebio, Rosario, Patricia, Justina, Dominga, Juan Santos and Felipe (Achacachi).

Quispe has worked in various capacities throughout his life, including farmer, activist, philosopher, writer, guerrilla member, and founder and candidate of the Movimiento Indígena Pachakuti (MIP). All of these roles have influenced the formation of Quispe’s identity. Quispe is well known and respected in the highlands of Bolivia for voicing the demands of indigenous peoples. However, his strong and confrontational language of cultural nationalism has excluded various sectors of the Bolivian population: he has challenged the existence of whites and mestizos in Bolivia (Canessa 241) and
frequently denounced the *q’aras* [whites] for “bathing in indigenous blood” (Madrid 17). Such rhetoric alienated non-Indians as well as many indigenous peoples. Quispe’s political base has been limited primarily to the Aymara nationalist thus alienating the Quechua population.

Quispe’s primordialist approach supports the idea of an exclusive identity. For Quispe, there is no room for an indigenous Bolivian identity. He goes as far as to deny the existence of the Bolivian State and institutions and has urged the Aymara population to separate from Bolivia and form their own state by reconstructing the Qullasuyo\(^{25}\) (Canessa 243). According to Quispe, the objective of the Qullasuyu is to create a territory where indigenous communities practice socialism by using *trueque* (the exchange of goods). Quispe wants the indigenous communities to govern themselves and to elect their own authorities. The Bolivian State authorities, police and the army would be absolutely denied from entering.\(^{26}\) Although Aymara activism could be seen as a positive sign as indigenous peoples struggle for self-representation, Quispe’s radical leadership has not been a progressive turn. He exploited racial divisions that date back to European colonization.

Felipe Quispe has developed the problematic of indigenous peoples through extensive written work, including *Indio En Escena*, *Tupak Katari Vive y Vuelve*, *Carajo...*, *Mi Captura*, *Alejo Veliz, De Pedagogo a Demagogo*, and *El primer congreso indigenal de 1945* (Achacachi). In his book *Tupak Katari Vive y Vuelve... Carajo*, Quispe retraces his Aymara descent:

---

\(^{25}\) *Qullasuyu* was the southeastern provincial region of the Inca Empire. It related specifically to the Aymara territories which are now largely incorporated into the modern South American states of northern Chile and Argentina, Peru, and Bolivia.

\(^{26}\) This idea will be developed further in the third chapter.
Soy Aymara descendiente de la estirpe de los valerosos “Qhispis” de Azángaro, como mi antepasado Diego Qhispí; soy de tal tronco tal astilla y pretendo seguir y forjar esa ideología de la lucha armada. Diego Quispe ha sido el comunario más preclaro y combatiente místico; peleó como soldado de Andrés Tupak Amaru y luego al lado de Julián Apaza “Tupak Katari” con el grado de Coronel en el Ejército Aymara de Liberación. (1990, 13)

When considering Quispe’s indigenous identity the question of indigenous ancestry is crucial. Much of Quispe’s identity is directly related to feelings of pride regarding important indigenous leaders of the past. This connection to the past is meant to authenticate Quispe’s indigeneity and voice for the indigenous communities. In Quispe’s discourse, the mission and actions of the martyred Andean rebel Túpac Katari has been central. Despite Katari’s defeat and murder, he is remembered as a hero by modern indigenous movements in Bolivia who identify themselves with katarismo.

In the 1970s, katarismo emerged as a response to the “hegemonic mestizo model” that had been imposed for almost twenty years by the Movimiento Nacionalista Revolucionario (MNR) in the effort to form a pluri-ethnic society after the 1952 revolution. Katarismo is the ideological project promoted by university-trained Aymara intellectuals. At the heart of the katarista ideology is the chance to recover a powerful tradition counter to both the hegemonic liberal projects of nation building and the Eurocentric ideals of cultural homogenization and citizenship under a reified form of cultural mestizaje (Sanjinés 138). Katarismo transcended the frame that nationalism

---

27 Túpac Katari (c.1750- 15 November 1781) born Julián Apasa, was a leader in the rebellions of indigenous people in Bolivia in the early 1780s. Apasa an Aymara took the name “Tupac Katari” to honor two rebel leaders: Tómas Katari, and Tupac Amaru II. He raised an army of some 40,000 and laid siege to the city of La Paz in 1781. Katari and his wife, Bartolina Sisa maintained the siege for 184 days, from March to June and from August to October. The siege was broken by colonial troops who advanced from Lima and Buenos Aires. Katari laid siege again later in the year, this time joined by Andrés Túpac Amaru, nephew of Tupac Amaru II. But Katari was again unsuccessful. Despite his defeat, torture, and execution (torn by his extremities into four pieces), Túpac Katari is remembered as a hero by modern indigenous movements in Bolivia.
imposes on reality with its homogenous vision of Bolivia as “one nation” (Sanjinés 139). *Katarismo* made clear for the first time that Bolivia is a mosaic of cultures and identities and opposed vehemently the cultural assimilation of indigenous population to a reductionist Bolivian nation under *mestizo-criollo* hegemony (139).

Cultural critic Javier Sanjinés describes two types of *katarismo*, a moderate one represented by the Movimiento Revolucionario Tupak Katari (MRTK), led by Aymara leader Victor Hugo Cárdenas, and a radical one represented by the Movimiento Indio Tupak Katari (MITKA), led by Quispe (137-140). Victor Cardenas’ moderate *katarismo* attempted to incorporate the “Indian element” into Bolivian society. As an Aymara intellectual who served as Bolivia’s Vice President during Gonzalo Sánchez de Lozada’s first presidency (1993-97), Cardenas made alliances with neoliberal movements such as the Movimiento Nacionalista Revolucionario (MNR) and created a political reform called *Plan de Todos* in 1993 (Sanjinés 140). This plan gave new recognition to indigenous peoples who could now hold political power in local municipalities, develop curricula in their own languages, and obtain land titles recognizing their territories. According to Sanjinés, moderate *katarismo* attempt to combine models of Western rationalization with the multicultural and plurilingual nature of Bolivian society.

Radical *katarismo*, on the other hand, disregards the State’s structure and political system and maintains and reconstructs in the present the violent political, cultural, and racial struggles of the eighteenth-century indigenous rebellion. Quispe states:
Es que por la vía democrática yo sé que no vamos a poder cambiar este país, que no vamos a poder reconstituir el Qullasuyu, porque nuestra meta-objetivo es capturar el poder político, recuperar el territorio, la tierra que nos corresponde, son dos puntos principales e importantes que estamos planteando, el resto son ramas porque no es el tronco principal, por otro lado hay otro brazo que no está solo así, sino el brazo que tenemos debajo del poncho está también trabajando, porque sabemos muy bien que nuestros antepasados como Tupak Katari y Tupak Amaru en la Colonia, se levantaron e hicieron tambalear la Colonia española como también Zárate Willka\textsuperscript{28} en la República ha tenido que levantarse y plantear la lucha armada a los criollos, a los latifundistas, a los gamonales de esa época, inclusive hubo ya un gobierno Indio en Peñas, población ubicada actualmente en la provincia Poopó, si no me equivoco en Oruro. (Ignacio)

Quispe’s speech and written work reveal great resentment and a long tradition of resistance and insurrection. Quispe aimed not only to displace mestizaje as a sign of domination, but also to destroy or appropriate the authority to dominate society, that is, to create a pachakuti or “real turning of things upside down”.\textsuperscript{29} Turning mestizaje “upside down” indicates a new understanding of knowledge, a displacement of the mestizo pedagogues and intellectuals who have traditionally controlled both education and value of knowledge. Quispe argues:

La educación ante todo debe responder a nuestra mentalidad y realidad y ella es el colonialismo interno y externo, esto quiere decir que las naciones originarias poseemos un admirable tradición cultural, a la vez que somos mayórias, sin embargo pasamos hambre, miseria, ignorancia, explotación, ilegalidad y opresión, contrariamente a las minorías y la élite gobernante que gozan de bienestar, derechos, educación y abundancia, ejercitando la corrupción, dominación, dependencia y entreguismo. …[L]a educación que postulamos es una propuesta de liberación, de protección de nuestros recursos naturales, de satisfacer el hambre con dignidad y productividad, de organización y colaboración comunal promoviendo el desarrollo integral de la nación pero con identidad cultural. (Quispe 2005, 3)

\textsuperscript{28} Pablo Zárate Willka also known as “El Temible Willka” was indigenous caudillos of Bolivia. He joined the Bolivian army and became a “Coronel”. Willka is remembered because he advanced the indigenous cause by fighting against the Spanish at the end of the 19\textsuperscript{th} century.

\textsuperscript{29} I will explain more on pachakuti in the next chapter.
Apart from the radical *katarista* influence, Quispe also claims that he found inspiration in the work of Fausto Reinaga (1906-1994). Fausto Reinaga was one of the most influential theorists of *indianismo* in Bolivia and Latin America. His work, especially his 1969 classic *La Revolución India*, had a profound impact on the development of indigenous intellectuals and social movements. Reinaga and those who have followed him see *indianismo* as an anti-colonial, anti-Occidental ideology that comes from indigenous peoples themselves, as opposed to the state-led policies or *mestizo*-written literatures of *indigenismo* (Lucero). Reinaga proposed a revolutionary ideology that would displace the ideologies of *hispanidad* and *mestizaje* that had served to legitimize the internal colonial orders of Latin American states (Lucero). In the highlands, Reinaga’s Partido Indio Boliviano (PIB) served as an inspiration for indigenous leaders beginning in the late 1960s. Reinaga did not search for the inclusion of the *indio* in dominant society. On the contrary, he sought the freedom of indigenous people through an “Indian revolution.” His work was pioneering in that it advocated the emancipation of indigenous peoples through the valorization of their own origins (languages, religions, and cultures). He explained: “En las [obras] que he publicado de 1964 a 1970 yo busco la liberación del indio; previa destrucción del cholaje blanco-mestizo… y yo planteo la Revolución India” (Tarifa). Reinaga not only disregarded the idea of *mestizaje* but he argued for the complete displacement of the pluricultural and plurilingual version of a Bolivian nation building. This idea is also primordial in Quispe’s speech and constitutes the most radical difference between him and Morales.

Quispe has incorporated the *katarista* ideology and Reinaga’s teachings into the various organizations he has founded and led. Quispe worked as secretary executive of
the MITKA until 1980. After the coup d’etat of Luis García Mesain 1980,³⁰ Quispe was exiled-first to Peru, then to Mexico, Guatemala, and El Salvador. In 1983, he returned to Bolivia and was elected leader of the Federación Sindical de Trabajadores Campesinos de la Paz. In 1987, he was elected secretary of Foreign Affairs of the Central Obrera Departamental de La Paz (Achacachi).

In 1986, Quispe founded the Ofensiva Roja de Ayllus Tupakaristas (ORAT) in the city of Sucre. In 1989, the ORAT presented a document proposing the liberation of indigenous peoples through armed struggle to the Congress of the Confederación Sindical Unica de Trabajadores de Bolivia (CSUTCB) and the Central Obrera Boliviana (COB). As a result, Felipe Quispe was jailed for seven months before being liberated under the sponsorship of the National Executive Committee of the CSUTCB.

Even after spending months in prison, in 1990, Felipe participated in the creation of another violent organization called the Ejército Guerrillero Túpac Katari (EGTK). The organization descended directly from the revolutionaries trained by Che Guevara in the 1960s. The EGTK hoped to decrease Western influence in Bolivian and increase the indigenous Indian populace’s power over the country’s culture and priorities. With this objective, the EGTK participated in a number of violent attacks, including low-level bombings of power pylons, oil pipelines, government facilities, and missionary churches. In addition to these attacks on domestic power and oil facilities, the EGTK bombed several Mormon churches in Bolivia, and a US Agency for International Development facility. Accounts differ as to whether they killed people, but it is generally acknowledged that they attacked infrastructure and financial targets, not people. The

³⁰ Luis García Meza Tejada is a former Bolivian dictator. A native of La Paz, he was career military officer who rose to the Rank of general during the reign of dictator Hugo Banzer. García Meza became Dictator in 1980.
EGTK was only briefly active. It first materialized on July 5, 1991 and by the end of 1992, the group’s leadership had been captured (Kushner 368). Felipe Quispe was captured on August 19, 1992. During his incarceration he was severely tortured by the security forces. Quispe was in prison for five and a half years, during which no evidence was ever presented against him. He was never convicted of any crime. Finally, on July 17, 1997, Quispe was liberated when the peasants of the Omasuyos province surrounded the prison and demanded his freedom. On November 28, 1998, after his liberation, a reporter asked Quispe his motives for leading a “terrorist cell.” He answered: “Para que mi hija no sea tu empleada domestica” (Achacachi). Quispe’s resentment of the light-skinned and white-skinned people of Bolivia has resulted not only from his own experience but from centuries of racialized conflict, hatred, and violence.

In the cycle of protests in Bolivia that started in 2000, Quispe emerged as the dominant leader of the indigenous peasant movement. Quispe said that his ultimate goals were to force the constitutionally elected President Hugo Banzer\textsuperscript{31} to resign and reverse his pro-market economic policies: “Banzer is incapable, inept and he can’t govern […] […].” He has to go” said Quispe (Krauss). Banzer was president during the Guerra del Agua of 2000 and had agreed to the privatization of water in Bolivia’s third-largest city, Cochabamba. The demonstrations led by Quispe forced Banzer to resign in August 2001 and to abandon the project, declaring the contract void.

On November 14, 2000, Quispe founded the Movimiento Indígena Pachakuti (MIP) in Peñas, where Túpac Katari was dismembered in 1782. Quispe founded the MIP with the intention of running as a candidate for the presidential elections in 2002. In the

\textsuperscript{31} Hugo Banzer Suárez was a politician, military general, and President of Bolivia. He held the Bolivian presidency twice: from August 22, 1971 to July 21, 1978, as a dictator; and then again from August 6, 1997 to August 7, 2001, as constitutional President.
2002 elections, Quispe came in fifth out of eleven contenders, with 6.1% of the vote. The MIP gained six representatives in Bolivia’s 157-seat National Congress (Stoner). Morales’ MAS, with 35 seats, was the second-strongest block in Congress, behind Gonzalo Sánchez de Lozada’s National revolutionary Movement (MNR).

After Banzer, Gonzalo Sánchez de Lozada was elected president in August 2002. During his first year in office, he created a plan to let foreign investors build a five billion-dollar pipeline through Chile to export Bolivia’s natural gas to the United States and Mexico. In September 2003, Quispe began protests in the Aymara communities against these policies. Student groups, labor unions, and opposition political parties joined the movement. Demonstrators assembled on the streets of the capital and soldiers encircled the palace to protect the president. Armed with dynamite, protesters blocked roads and blew up bridges, practically bringing the transportation system to a halt. In some regions, food, fuel, and hospital supplies were in short supply. Hoping to restore order, Sánchez de Lozada called on his army, but bloody confrontations ensued, and an estimated seventy people died. On October 17, 2003, Sánchez de Lozada stepped down from office. After his resignation, he fled to the United States and his vice president, Carlos Mesa, took power.

Quispe’s leadership in the Aymara communities was crucial in starting the protest that led to these events. His blockades were so effective that the Bolivian Air Force was sent in to deliver food to cities. Meat became scarce, and vegetables and fruits more than doubled in price in many markets. The activism and input of Quispe in the cycle of protest was crucial. Without his organization and energy, protest mobilization would not have been as successful as it was, resulting in the ousting of two presidents. The protests
reveal the fragility of democracy in Bolivia, and the resulting deaths reveal the little respect for human rights on behalf of the government. Quispe commented: “Estamos acostumbrado a que nos maten en democracia; en la dictadura nos matan, no nos queda de otra; cuántos muertos hemos soportado en la Colonia, en la República. Toda una vida hemos puesto nuestro esfuerzo, sangre, pero aún así seguimos adelante como nación indígena en este siglo” (Escobar).

In the Guerra del Agua and the Guerra del Gas, the privatization of essential natural resources was a highly controversial political move by the government. These policies not only affected indigenous peoples, but also other social sectors, such as teachers, the police, and students. Unfortunately, these protests would not have escalated to the point they did if the politicians in charge had considered the Bolivian peoples’ interest above of the Bolivian elite and its foreigner investors. Even if the revenues would have been larger for the Bolivian people, as a moral matter, basic resources such as water and natural gas should be maintained under the control of the Bolivian people and State or at least the government should have applied restrictions to the companies and prevent negative effects in the Bolivian society.

An Authentic Indigenous Identity?

The biographic account of the lives, thoughts, demands and actions of Evo Morales and Felipe Quispe provide insight into Bolivia’s so-called “Indian problem” in Bolivia. From birth, both leaders could claim indigenous identity, as they were born in poverty to indigenous families in the rural areas of Bolivia. However, as mentioned before, identity can change over time and is not necessarily tied to place or social status.
Both leaders at any time in their lives could have decided not to see and call themselves “indigenous.”

Morales’ political base started with the *cocalero* movement in the Chapare region. The importance of the coca leaf to the indigenous culture and people was the connection Morales needed to make the *cocaleros’* struggle fit a broader set of demands. Morales’ indigenous connections, heritage, and physical appearance allowed him to advance an indigenous discourse as well as a unionist one. On the other hand, throughout his life, Quispe has maintained a radical *indianist* discourse. His violent methods to address the “Indian problem” have decreased the support needed to make democratic changes in Bolivia. Nevertheless, Quispe’s involvement in indigenous activism has been crucial to recent events in Bolivian history. Interestingly, the protests and demonstrations led mainly by Quispe gave Morales the support and popularity he needed to become President in 2005. On this, Quispe commented: “Mientras nosotros estamos peleando, ellos [Morales and MAS] están ahí, contentos y alegres, salen al balcón y nos miran y a lo último, cuando ya estamos por tumbar el gobierno, también se pliegan a la lucha. Siempre han jugado así, sucio” (Escobar).

Quispe and Morales have never had a good relationship. For Quispe, there is a shortage of indigeneity in Morales’ discourse. He states: “Puede que Evo tenga el rostro indio, la nariz ligeramente encurvada, pero el discurso no es nada “indianista.” Por la mala suerte este señor tiene rostro indio y por su carita todo el mundo lo admira y piensa que el indigenismo está en el poder” (Desde el Exilio). For Quispe, in order for Morales to be an authentic indigenous representative, he needs to present a strong front that posits exclusively the advancement of indigenous peoples’ well-being. Morales’ multiples
identities have been a challenge to his “authenticity” when representing indigenous peoples’ demands.

When confronting the idea of authenticity, scholars have struggled to determine who has the right to speak of and for whom. In Latin America, there is a clear relation between power and the right of representation. The dominant elite have had nearly exclusive claim to a credible voice when writing history. In her famous essay “Can the Subaltern Speak,” the Indian writer Gayatri Spivak suggested that the subaltern is denied access to both mimetic and political forms of representation. Throughout history, indigenous people have played the role of the “subalterns.” The subjective nature of their identity has been constituted by shifting discourses of power that speak endlessly through them, situating them here and there in particular positions and relations. In these terms indigenous peoples are not the authors of their history. They do not construct their own identities, but have others create it for them. Does the fact that Morales and Quispe have defined their own “indigenous identities,” mean that their subaltern position has changed? If they have changed their subaltern position, does this will mean that they can no longer represent the indigenous people?

According to the Argentine critic Walter Mignolo, conquest, Christian Evangelism, colonial domination, and capitalism are all western blueprints for domination. These factors have all served to control the histories, geographies, languages, and temporal spaces of the subaltern peoples. Mignolo identifies this dominance with a linear chronology of “social evolution” and “development.” As an alternative, Mignolo proposes a philosophy of decolonization that aims to empower marginalized communities that he associates with “border thinking:” “Border thinking from the perspective of
subalternity is a machine for intellectual decolonization” (45). He conceptualizes the role of border thinkers as intellectuals who move between dominant and marginalized communities in order to generate a process of intellectual, economic and social liberation.

I would like to suggest that Quispe, as well as Morales, are examples of “border thinkers.” They both reject the linear notion of history in favor of an “Indian understanding” of cyclical history that I will explore in the following chapter. By claiming indigenous identity, they both adopt subalterns’ positions in Bolivian society. While Quispe’s colonialist and racial rhetoric, subversive and rebellious methods to achieve dominance, and reluctance to comply with the Bolivian State’s institutions have limited his appeal within the Bolivian subaltern sector and also with the dominant class, Morales’ political methods have garnered greater support. Morales has taken a more democratic route to power and broadened his demands to include various sectors of the Bolivian society without losing the connection with his subaltern base.
Chapter Three: Two Visions of the Bolivian Future

“Pasado como Futuro”

In their struggle against exploitation, marginalization, and dispossession, indigenous peoples and other ethnic minorities are re-defining themselves in terms of shared cultural practices and the possession of a common past. Indigenous movements have adopted their cultural past as a means of resisting processes of social fragmentation in the present and reviving and revaluing the indigenous identity (Buchli 131). The incorporation of the cultural past in the formation of indigenous movements gives their participants a notion of cultural rights that is embedded in cultural property, uniqueness, and authenticity (Buchli 131).

The leaders of Andean indigenous coalitions often speak of the project to “refound the country” in the cultural and cosmological terms of a pachakuti (Abro 395). For instance, in 2000, Felipe Quispe founded the Pachakuti Indigenous Movement, in which pachakuti referred to reconstruction of the Bolivian nation through an Indian revolution (Quispe 2007, 10). Likewise, supporters of Evo Morales characterized his 2005 presidential victory as a new pachakuti that would bring about structural changes within Bolivian society, namely, its institutions and social practices (Gironda 1).

In both Quechua and Aymara, pachakuti refers to the conception of duality that is in permanent opposition, and yet complementary, like the principle of ying/yang that expresses the opposition between day/night, light/dark, man/woman, and up/down. This principle of duality applies to each pachakuti (Bouysse-Cassagne and Harris 28). Literally, pachakuti means the turning (or returning) (kuti) of the earth (pacha). It has
been translated, alternatively as “new beginning”, “reawakening,” “revolution,” or “renovation.” *Pachakuti* is also the name of a fifteenth-century Inca leader who ruled during a time of territorial expansion (Van Cott 770). The concept as used in my thesis implies a restorative inversion of time, accordingly which the “past” might productively become the future.

In the Inca Empire, the *pachakuti* referred to a mythical idea of the life natural cycle that applied to human affairs, political domination, and social submission. In accordance with the *pachakuti’s* prophecy of radical change, indigenous leaders can account for the conquest of indigenous peoples by Europeans, but also foresee an end to their hegemony. In moments of popular protest, indigenous leaders have not seen merely their cultural heritage a source of retrospective reflection, but also one of a potentially constitutive nature. The reemergence of indigenous protest in the past two decades have been interpreted by some leaders as the signs of the coming *pachakuti*. For instance, the Marcha por el Territorio y la Dignidad, in 1991, summoned more than 700 people representing the ten Amazonian tribes in Beni Department. This was interpreted by indigenous leaders as clear public indication of the country’s “indigenous re-emergence.” The specific aim of the march was to recognition indigenous peoples’ territorial rights vis-à-vis loggers and other illegal settlers (Canessa 246). It had a profound effect on the consciousness of the Bolivian elite and provoked resonances with the siege of La Paz in 1781 by Túpac Katari (Albó 1995). For some residents, Katari’s prophecy of “returning

---

32 During the five hundred years of the “eighth *pachakuti*”, Pachacuteq (the greatest spiritual leader of the Incas and the builder of Machu Picchu) ruled. This was a time of light when the Inca Empire flourished and there was expansion and good fortune. The “ninth *pachakuti*,” on the other hand, brought with it the five hundred years of darkness when the Spanish invaders conquered the Inca and the Andes people lost their power. Currently, we are entering the “tenth *pachakuti*,” which some Andean people refer to as the returning of Pachacuteq the returning of the Light.
as millions and millions” seemed to have been fulfilled. Silvia Rivera Cusicanqui, for example, described the indigenous march as a *pachakuti*, to unite “the fragmented parts of the indigenous body” (1993, 53). Robert Albro, an expert in Latin America, has described the multi-sector popular coalitions of recent years as *pachakuti*-like performative spectacles of protest (295).

The “Return of the Indian,” has thus taken place under the sign of a potential *pachakuti*. The resurgence of the cultural past in modern indigenous politics has shaped the ways that elites, *mestizos* and the State represent indigenous cultures within the national community (Albó 1991). In seeking to construct a better future for natives people, indigenous movements have utilized the past, a common history, culture, and struggle, to unify identities and satisfy the various demands of the numerous groups who identify as indigenous. The evocation of the cultural past has also been useful in achieving recognition from international organizations and foreign governments.

**“Looking back, we will move forward”**

The discourse of Felipe Quispe is exclusionary and his politics are famously separatist. His language is sharp, stark, and racialized. In Quispe’s trajectory as an indigenous leader, the “past” has been his most important tool for trying to unify indigenous identities and peoples. In looking to the “shared past,” he believes he has found the source and solution to indigenous peoples’ many struggles. In quoting from the “past,” he has helped to shape indigenous peoples’ interests and demands in the present. From the “past” he has aimed to create a model for the future.

---

33 “*Qhiparu nayraru uñtas sartañani*” (Quispe 2005, 9).
In his book, *Tupak Katari Vive y Vuelve… Carajo*, Quispe argues that since the European invasion of the Americas in the 1500s, the historical recollection of events has been tainted (2007, 9). Like Mignolo, Quispe questions the linear, Eurocentric notion of history. Quispe claims that the colonizers have had the power to write histories that exclude and marginalize the native population. They manipulated the minds of the native inhabitants and thus have distorted the historical accounts. He thus argues that in order to re-create an indigenous identity, history itself needs to be de-colonized. Indigenous peoples need to learn about their own heroes, symbols, religion, and natural resources, and understand that their culture is in fact superior to “the occidental one.” He explains: “El país es de nosotros los indios, es tierra de Indios, tiene la tradición cultural más admirable de la humanidad, es nación, con su propia religión, con sus propios héroes y símbolos, tiene variedad de recursos naturales, su historia es muy superior a la bárbara occidente, por lo tanto no necesitamos ventajas ni coartadas” (2007, 15).

Since the Spanish colonization, indigenous people have been made to believe that their cultures were uncivilized, primitive, barbaric, and also a significant hindrance to the social, cultural, legal, and economic development of Bolivia (García 2001, 63). Indians have been constantly reminded of their “inferiority” in relation to other social groups. Nineteenth-century racisms are alive and well in contemporary Bolivian society. As Ruth Lozada, leader of the Civic Committee of Women in Santa Cruz recently stated: “Qué podemos esperar de un indio maldito [Evo Morales], y lo digo de corazón, porque no le tengo miedo, un cocalero, un sindicalista, qué podemos esperar de un tipo que no sabe nada” (ABI).
As Lozada’s quote indicates, the marginalization of indigenous peoples has been directly related to the misrepresentation of their cultures as inferior. The very fact that Lozada, as a modern female leader of a women’s movement, would make such a racist comment about another minority group supports Quispe’s position regarding the importance of the de-colonization of minds and historiography. Quispe claims that most Indians have in fact internalized dominant historiography and its generally negative portrayal of them, which makes them submissive and ashamed of their indigenous heritage (2007, 10). Therefore, the de-colonization of minds must start with the reconstruction, reformulation, and rewriting of history rooted in katarismo.

As the memory of Túpac Katari has been revitalized and politicized, one of his well-known phrase has became central to the indigenous social movement: “Nayawa jiwtxa nayjarusti waranga waranqanakawa kutanipxa” (“I will die but be resurrected as millions”) (Quispe 2007, 14).34 Katari was defeated before liberating the Indians from European domination. However, his objective is now being developed by new indigenous movements. Quispe has pushed for indigenous groups to produce their own “organic intellectuals” as well as indigenous university students and professors to “recover and re-elaborate the indigenous past and its forms of historical knowledge” (Ticona 12).

In his book Pachakuti Educativo (2005) written while Quispe was the executive secretary of the Confederación Sindical Unica de Trabajadores y Campesinos en Bolivia (CSUTCB), the Aymara leader proposed a major educational reform. The reform demanded the creation of indigenous universities and the modification of the current educational structure to one that would represent the needs of the “authentic” cultures.

34 Oral tradition attributes these words to the hero Túpac Katari moments before his execution in Quispe 2007, 14.
His reformist ideas were derived from the Escuela – Ayllu de Warisata, where education emphasized as Quispe put it, “el conocimiento científico de nuestra propia cultura, historia, realidad socio-económica, tradición y política” (2005, 2). The Escuela-Ayllu de Warisata was an “integral school” based on the ayllu institutions created in 1931 in Achacachi, a rebellious municipality, and destroyed in the 1940s by the national government (Perez). The Warisata School had an educational structure that incorporated principles of reciprocity and complementariness between the community and the environment, and it took into consideration the basic problems of land, productivity, and cultural identity. As Qusipe explains, the Warisata School sustained: “liberación, la organización comunal, la producción comunal, la revalorización de la identidad cultural, la solidaridad y reciprocidad” (2005, 2).

Quispe has disagreed with any attempts the Bolivian State has made to push for an inter-cultural and bilingual educational curriculum. He argues that by teaching the same “colonized history” in their own language (mostly Aymara or Quechua, but also any of Bolivia’s more than two dozen native languages), the educational system would be using Indian languages as a means to “de-culturalize” Indian cultures and strengthen the dominant or “colonized” one (2005, 13). He claims, furthermore, that public education ought to respond to the reality and needs of the people (2005, 13). Therefore, the reform Quispe has suggested comprises not only an educational project, but also a political, ideological, historical, and philosophical one.

In the reality Quispe portrays, indigenous peoples have been continually exploited, kept poor, and subordinated to mestizo, “white” and foreign elites. In contrast to this vision, Quispe depicts an idealized rendition of the past and offers it up as an
alternative future reality. He continually revives the Inca Empire or Tawantinsuyu, and idealizes the reign of the Native American nations in a “Golden Age” that was relatively free from disease, hunger, and basic material wants (Painter 101). He explains:

En la época de nuestros abuelos, no había ni un ladrón, no holgazán, ni un adúltero; tampoco se permitía entre nosotros, gente de mal vivir en lo moral. En este sentido, los hombres y mujeres tenían sus ocupaciones honestas, de manera que eran felices porque no hubo hambre ni miseria, es por ellos que es nuestro idioma no existe la palabra “pobre”; con esto quiero decir que no hubo la pobreza en nuestra sociedad de los antiguos Quillas y Aymaras, Pukinas, Uru, Tiwanakines, Uma-Suyus, Lupa’kas, Paka-jaqis. Los mismos españoles relatan que nuestros antepasados estaban vestidos y calzados de oro y plata, pero no como hoy que estamos vestidos de “trapos sucios” llenos de mugre y remiendos (2005, 19).

His main political demand—the formation of an autonomous indigenous nation—resides in this statement (2005, 14).

Quispe’s goal of fomenting a new indigenous nation stems from the “authenticity” of indigenous peoples and their right to property, which in his view is derived from their ancestral ties to Bolivian territory, culture, and language.

We, the indigenous, have our own territory. This territory does not belong to the occidentals, to the colonizers. It is ours. We have our own history, our own philosophy, our laws, religion, language, habits and customs. From this perspective, we, the Aymaras, consider ourselves to be nation and from there we have the idea of self-determination. We don’t follow the tri-colored flag of Bolivia that our oppressors carry. We have the whiphala. We have our own authorities and we are the owners of the territory. (Gómez 2002)

“Bolivia is an abstract fiction,” according to Quispe. There is no possibility of real cohesion or justice under the current State. There cannot be a pluri-cultural or multi-ethnic nation. The only alternative is to return to the structure of the indigenous nation

35 The Tawantinsuyu is the real name to what it is known now a days by most people as the “Inka Empire.” This territory comprised four territories (Tawa = Four and Suyu = Territory), which are: Chinchasuyu to the North, Qollasuyu to the South, the Antisuyu to the East, and the Kuntisuyu to the West (Bolin: 25-26).
that existed prior to the European conquest. As he puts it: “Bolivia has nothing. Bolivia is anchored in our territory; Bolivia does not have its own language because that language belongs to the Spanish. It does not have its own religion. The religion that they have brought is a bloody one. You get in a church and you are going to see a man who was sacrificed, that poor man was tortured, it is pure blood” (Gómez 2002).

In his idea of reconstructing the Qullasuyu, Quispe incorporates the return to the social and political structure of the ayllu as part of his political mandate: 36 “The Indian must be the social actor in politics and ideology. We cannot simply be voting masses or political supports for the bourgeois parties, the traditional parties that have betrayed us. We want to govern ourselves, we want to reconstruct the Qullasuyu, the communitarian socialist society of the ayllus” (Resumen Latino Americano). Despite the sometimes conflicting academic interpretation of the ayllu, Felipe Quispe’s idea of indigeneity is rooted in the “past”. By re-appropriating ancestral indigenous culture, Quispe wants to re-indianize the indigenous people and liberate the “Indian mind” from “foreign ideology.” In articulating the unity of indigenous people, Quispe opts to idealize the indigenous peoples’ past and offers a political utopia in which native peoples could return to “what [they] were” (Quispe 2005, 10).

“Agradezco a Dios y a la Pacha Mama, por haberme dado la oportunidad para conducir el país”

In constrast to that of Qusipe, Evo Morales’s political rhetoric aims to create an inclusive Bolivian identity. Therefore, he is careful to avoid presenting himself and his party, the Movimiento al Socialismo (MAS), as an exclusively indigenous party. MAS is first and foremost a coca-growers’ union; however, the movement also marries class

36 The ayllu is the basic Andean social unit comprised of kinship groups and communal landholdings (Orta, 200).
identity with an ethnic one and combines both in a broad anti-globalization discourse. With this in mind, Morales’ invocation of the “past” is limited but effective. In order to include and satisfy the demands of the majority, Morales cannot risk losing the support of the masses by failing to reconstruct an indigenous “past.” Therefore, he highlights indigenous concerns and recalls the “past” whenever necessary, especially when trying to unify supporters or garner the support of the majority.

In his speeches, Morales usually invokes the “past” to argue against the continuous human rights abuses, discrimination and exploitation suffered by indigenous people. In his first presidential speech, for example, he said: “[W]e had been condemned to extermination and now here we are […] precisely to change our history” (Gómez 2006, 141). Like Quispe, Morales recognizes the “reality” of indigenous people as one of exploitation and oppression. Morales does not accentuate the struggle of indigenous peoples in colonial times; instead, he claims that today’s injustices and inequalities, and the systematic poverty of the masses are a result of capitalism, neo-liberal reforms, and globalization. He explains: “Formado por auténticos representantes de los pueblos indígenas, campesinos y obreros el MAS es, actualmente, la expresión de todos los sectores marginados de la sociedad que, oprimida por el modelo neoliberal y por la globalización, lucha por sus reivindicaciones, por su identidad, su autodeterminación, la soberanía y la dignidad” (Movimiento al Socialismo).

By identifying the neo-liberal system and globalization as sources of exploitation, Morales centers his argument around a specific and fairly recent economic and social course of events that intensified in the 1980s (Kurtz and Brooks 231). Neoliberal policies
and ideologies have not only put indigenous people at risk, but affected Bolivians in general, as well as other developing countries in Latin America and around the world.

Morales praises the language of ancestry by incorporating tropes of “Indianness” into his discourse, such as the *pachakuti*, the *pachamama* (mother earth), and the sacredness of the land. Morales has used the *pachakuti* concept to explain his 2005 presidential victory (Van Cott 754): “Quiero decir a los hermanos indígenas que la campaña de 500 años de resistencia indígena y popular no ha sido en vano, estamos acá para decir basta de resistencia, vamos de la resistencia de 500 años a la toma del poder para 500 años” (Gómez 2006, 141). Picking up on this association with traditional Andean belief system, some of his supporters have characterized Morales as the new messiah, the “one” who will incorporate and value the Indian element in the country’s institutions, habits and customs (Gironda 2).

Morales uses indigeneity as a language of protest over the unjust exploitation of resources and as a force to defend the *patria* against the forces of globalization. According to him, indigenous people are more “ecological,” and at one with nature than non-Indians. Morales thus uses indigenous concepts to establish a context in which indigenous groups can claim having the true interests of the nation at heart. Observing the poor management of national resources, he lamented: “No puedo entender: esta madre tierra saqueada por más de 500 años y tiene petróleo a flor de tierra, chorreando. [...] Esta es nuestra madre tierra, llamada Pachamama, nos da la vida. Pero ¿cómo es posible que las trasnacionales se lleven todo? Vemos los resultados, primero de la modificación de la ley de hidrocarburos” (Foro Humanista Latino Americano).
By positing the struggle to preserve Bolivian national interests in terms of indigeneity, Morales is not excluding the non-indigenous population from his discourse. On the contrary, he aims to unify Bolivians by defending their natural resources from the external threats of neoliberalism and globalization, which (at least in his view) is an effort that should be equally important to indigenous and non-indigenous peoples. The defense of natural resources is therefore a national struggle against the transnational corporations: “Con el gas obtendremos recursos para crear empleos y luchar contra la pobreza […] Ya no será el Estado al servicio de las transnacionales, sino al revés” (Canessa 251). From Quispe’s perspective, the broad appeal of these issues means that MAS is not just “an indigenous party.” Nevertheless, it is the broad indigenous base that has given Morales the mass support needed to win elections.

Another symbolic invocation of the sacred importance of the indigenous “past” stems from the importance of the coca leaf in the discourse of Evo Morales. His party indeed grew up around the traditional use of the coca leaf. Morales and the MAS grassroots’ base belong to the coca-growers unions, which have in the past appealed to mestizos and criollos as well as indigenous peoples. While Morales’ continuous rally to prevent the eradication of the coca-leaf almost cost him his life, his fight to prevent the coca eradication has raised national and international awareness about the differences between traditional coca use and the abuse of narcotics (Cocalero). He explains: “Quiero decirle a la comunidad internacional que la droga, la cocaína, el narcotráfico, no es la cultura andina amazónica. Lamentablemente este mal lo han importado. Hay que acabar con el narcotráfico, hay que acabar con la cocaína. No habrá cero coca, apostamos por cero cocaína, narcotráfico cero” (Aporrea). Nowadays, the coca leaf has become an
emblem of Bolivian culture—not just indigenous cultures. Most Bolivians drink coca tea, and many chew the coca leaf (Canessa 254). The coca is seen as a “symbol of national identity and flag of unity in defense of our national dignity” (Sepúlveda). While serving as a symbol of “Bolivianess,” the authenticity and protection of the coca leaf has therefore also been used to rally against neocolonialism and globalization.

**Quispe and Morales—A Study in Contrast**

These two prominent national and indigenous leaders have contrasting visions regarding the incorporation of the “past” into their political discourses. On the one hand, Felipe Quispe’s indigenism is resolutely exclusive. He wants to construct an Indian nation and an ethnic state based on the model of the Quyllasuyu. Quispe’s concept of indigeniety is founded in the replication of a “past” with minimum or no association to modern times and changes. On the other hand, Evo Morales’ discourse is broader and much more inclusive. Morales praises certain indigenous values and customs and tries to make them relevant to the greater Bolivian population.

Indigenous movements other idealize the rural and communitarian traditions of their ancestors in order to oppose them to the present in which they have achieved less prosperity than they would have hoped. On the one hand, the invocation of the shared “past” has helped to channel distinct indigenous identities in Bolivia and to unify the political and social demand of different groups. Michael Painter, for example, argues that the recollection of the indigenous past allows modern indigenous movements to claim a certain “authenticity” and thus claim cultural and territorial rights. On the other hand, the use of the Indian “past” can be very exclusive for Bolivians who do not share in any indigenous heritage. In either case, in their efforts to garner support and satisfy the
demands of their supporters, indigenous leaders have often re-created a past that is more mythical than historically accurate. This romanticized indigenous notion has been utilized by indigenous leaders as a tool to achieve specific political ends. In the case of Felipe Quispe, the unrelenting appeal to the past runs the risk of limiting the political participation of indigenous peoples in the political realities of the present. In the case of Morales, on the other hand, a more nuanced invocation of the past has managed to integrate and unify a diverse group of people.

**Indians and Q’aras**

As we have seen, Indigenous identity is a complex and controversial topic. In Bolivia, there is little agreement on precisely what constitutes an indigenous identity, how to measure it, and who truly posses it. Most theorists agree, however that identity exists not solely in an individual or category of individuals, but rather, through difference in relation to others. In a pluri-racial and pluri-cultural country like Bolivia, indigenous people share the national space with many other social and cultural groups. In this section, I address some of the historical relationships between indigenous peoples and non-Indians in Bolivian society and discuss the “proper” role for whites and mestizos in the Bolivian nation from the perspective of Morales and Quispe.

The word *q’ara* is a pejorative Aymara term to refer to white people and mestizos. *Q’ara* literally means “bare,” but in a general context implies someone devoid of culture and moral value (Canessa 250). Quispe perceives whites and mestizos as *q’aras*—enemies to indigenous people and to their identity. Quispe often uses the phrase “jayata jutiri” which literally means “those who come from far away,” and is meant to contrast the native character of Indians and the “foreignness” of white people (Canessa 251).
Morales’ understanding of indigeneity, on the other hand, does not exclude any part of Bolivian society.

“El mestizaje me da asco”

Felipe Quispe’s arguments regarding the place and role of non-Indians in national society stem from his call for the necessary “decolonization” of the “Indian mind.” Quispe identifies emphatically as an Aymara politician and has a particularly strong base in the highlands around La Paz. Despite having adopted Esther Balboa (a Quechua-speaking woman) as his vice-Presidential candidate in the 2005 elections, he has enjoyed relatively little success beyond his Aymara homeland (Canessa 250). Quispe’s discourse is predominantly confrontational. He claims that his party is the only truly representation of “authentic” indigenous people. Quispe questions white people and mestizos’ “rights” to Bolivian territory. He has spoken frequently and openly about “bloodshed:” “es verdad que hemos tributado con muchas vidas, mucha sangre en las movilizaciones, porque los blancos, o como decimos entre paréntesis (q’aras) nos han aniquilado paulatinamente […]” (Ignacio). He has also frequently allowed to the desireable “elimination” of whites and mestizos and those of the economically successful indigenous elite: “se ve que ha unos cuantos, que tendrán sus casas… entonces nosotros tendríamos también que eliminarlos” (Vinelli). Quispe’s strong words and participation in violent groups that victimized white and mestizo institutions confirm his willingness to use radical methods to achieve his objectives. However, as I will explain later, Quispe also offers mestizos and whites the alternative to “become Indian,” thus preventing their elimination.

Since his political beginnings, Quispe has been involved in organizations like the “Ponchos Rojos” and the “Ejército Guerrillero Túpac Katari” (EGTK), both of which
promote the exclusive unification of indigenous people. These radical groups have tried to appeal to Aymaras, Quechas, and other indigenous nations for the creation of a new madre patria, the “Unión de las Naciones Socialistas de Qullasuyu” (Sanjinés 146). In presenting his idea of a new autonomous and ethnic state, Quispe explains his stance towards non-Indians:

Those lying q’aras. When the Pachamama walks again in Qullasuyu, when her laws reign, then we will be able to judge them. Those who want to leave can go; but those who stay will eat what we eat; they will work the way we work, dripping with sweat; they will have blisters on their hands; they will suffer like we do. Then truly the Aymara nation, what people call the indigenous [nation], what we call Qullasuyu, will come forth. We won’t kill them, we won’t do anything to them: we won’t hate them the way they hate us; we will be as one single trunk, one single way of thinking; and we will arrive at a way of thinking to live in a free and sovereign nation, without tears in our eyes. That is what we think, brother. (Canessa 245)

According to Javier Sanjinés, Quispe’s reluctance to include the q’aras as active members of the new nation unless they are “indianized” lies in the claim that there are two Bolivias—one for Indians (t’aras) and one for non-Indians (k’aras) (148). Sanjinés argues that this vision of a split country is based on the belief that “one Bolivia is the dominant, exclusive, successful and racist; and the other one is being exploited, impoverished, and is backward” (148). By acknowledging this, Quispe transcends the “fact” of Bolivian hegemonic nationalism. His idea challenges the assumption of Bolivia as a “nación única.”

Influenced by katarismo, Quispe puts forward a notion of Bolivia as a diverse group of cultures and identities and opposes any cultural subjugation of the indigenous population to the hegemony of whites and mestizos. The image of the Aymara hero Túpac Katari is also present in this argument. The metaphorical image of the
reconstitution of the fragmented body of Túpac Katari is meant to exemplify the rebirth of an indigenous nation and serves as a symbol of the reunion of a “broken Bolivia” and its pursuit of freedom.

In order to achieve his objective of creating a reformed indigenous nation, Quispe relies on what Sanjinés has called a “una pedagogía al revés” (150) in which he subverts the status quo and the dominant, traditional logic of mestizaje, rejecting occidental forms of liberal democracy and the “unifying virtues” of mestizaje. Quispe challenged this construction first as an outsider through radical and “terrorist” organizations and then as a political candidate. Although Quispe argues that Bolivia is a fictional concept and his position resists the involvement of Aymaras and other indigenous nationalities in the “reality” constructed by and for non-indigenous people, the foundation of the MIP, his political career in Congress, and his bid for the presidency all seem to contradict this argument. By participating in the democratic Bolivia, Quispe is subordinated to the the mestizo and criollo dominant class construction.

In 2000, the Pulso newspaper published an editorial criticizing Quispe that stated: “El mestizaje es naturalmente bueno y debe ser facilitado y promovido” (Sanjinés 148). In contrast to Quispe’s “racism,” this article promoted a diverse and pluralistic society that was not based on social exclusion. By declaring “el mestizaje me da asco” (mestizaje makes me sick) Quispe presents himself as a racist while challenging a dominant current of social thought in Bolivia. Since colonization, the logic of mestizaje has been employed or imagined to create a homogenous cultural society by erasing the “colonial cultural differences” that existed in Latin America (Sanjinés 150). Quispe’s ideology breaks out
of this logic of erasure and presents a different possibility in which subalterns can challenge the criollo-mestizo elite rather than be absorbed by it.

In his work to counter the dominant logic of mestizaje and “Indianize the whites,” Quispe targets the work of the famous politician and educator, Franz Tamayo:37 “Tamayo nos quitó la ropa y nos vistió como mestizos. Hemos estado viviendo con ropa prestada desde entonces. Pero no podemos seguir viviendo burlados para siempre. Sabemos que esa ropa no nos pertenece, aunque mucho insistían algunos en seguir usando corbatas y pareciéndose a los chanchos gordos. Debajo son indios y seguirán siéndolo” (Sanjinés 150).

Quispe’s discourse reveals a conflict with the supposition of a model of modernity and development. Not only does he blame indigenous suffering on the “foreigners;” he also argues that indigenous people have virtues that q’aras lack and most importantly. These virtues he argues, be the foundation of the new nation: “Nosotros tenemos otro camino más viable, más honesto, más aymara: el de Tupaj Katari y Zárate Willka” (Ignacio). Quispe demands from the subaltern (the Indians) a radical change in order to

---

37 Franz Tamayo Solares (1878-1956) was an influential Bolivian intellectual, writer, and politician who wrote a number of educational treaties and practiced law, journalism, and diplomacy. Tamayo was of mestizo background; he had both Aymara and Spanish ancestry (Smith 138). Tamayo’s racial concepts were and continue to be very influential in Bolivian thought, life, and culture. He considered Indians skilled only in the faculties of physical labor, such as agricultural work or military service, but deficient in faculties of the mind. He considered mestizos proficient in both of physical and mental labor, and therefore able to function as citizens of the Bolivian Republic. This racialized understanding of the mestizo and modern citizen would greatly influence Bolivia’s politics and national identity after the 1952 revolution. In her book, The Citizen Factory: Schooling and Cultural Production in Bolivia, Aurolyn Luykx analyzes Bolivian educational and schooling issues through and examination of a teachers’ college or “normal school.” This analysis includes first-hand classroom observation and interviews focuses on the Aymara becoming rural schoolteachers and the attempts by the normal school to mold them and their students from “indigenous” Aymara into mestizo citizens. According to Luyks, the work of Tamayo, the “Creación de la Pedagogía Nacional,” has portrayed a Bolivian “national character” that is overwhelmingly negative. Tamayo’s turn-of-the-century ethnic stereotypes were not use as jumping-off points for critique. To the contrary, much of the class consisted of professorial confirmations of Tamayo’s derogatory portrayal of Bolivia: “We don’t have any scholars, nor do we have great works of art, and alcoholism is an aspect of our national character[...]]” (Luykx 135).
reject “mestizo intelligence” and pushes them to “usar la cabeza propia” (Sanjinés 140). By “Indianizing” non-Indians, Quispe’s attitude aims to politicize subalterns and bring them “maturity” by applying a reverse pedagogy (“una pedagogía al revés”) (Sanjinés 152). For Sanjinés “pedagogía al revés” refers to the questioning from below (non-dominant groups) of the ideology of mestizaje that dominant groups have promulgated since the beginning of the century and their desire to remove or invert it.

“Bolivia is a multiethnic democratic country, but that is only in theory. If we win we have to change the country, not only in theory but in reality” (Vera-Zavala)

In contrary to Quispe’s proposal to Indianize Bolivia and exclude “whitening” Morales aims to create a heterogeneous Bolivian nation by drawing support from different social, racial, and political sectors. Morales and the MAS have been careful to avoid the sectarianism of Quispe. Since his political campaign, Morales has sought to construct a form of governance at once “democratic, plural, participative, communitarian, and representative, based on the diversity of the people” (Council on Hemispheric Affairs). To follow this objective, Morales’ MAS has gone beyond creating a strong indigenous base to build strategic Indian/non-Indian alliances. The election of the q’ara, Álvaro García Linares as Morales’ vice-president symbolizes the president’s objective to foment national racial unity. Although, García Linera is not indigenous, he has long been an activist for the indigenous cause. In the 1980s, García Linera fought side by side with Quispe as members of the Ponchos Rojos (Poma 145). His light skin, educational background, and career as a political analyst have made him an appealing public figure to the middle and upper class in Bolivia non-Indian sector. García Linera is symbolic of Morales’ claim for an inclusive indigenous Bolivian identity. Morales argues for the
understanding of indigeneity as related to progress and modernity as well as to other groups in society.

Morales wears his indigeneity much more “lightly” than other indigenous leaders; he refers to his indigenous roots and considers himself exclusively of “Aymara nationality,” but is also careful to avoid representing himself and his party as exclusively indigenous (Canessa 252). MAS and Morales aim to appeal to Bolivian society as a whole:

After more than five hundred years, we, the Quechuas and Aymaras, are still the rightful owners of this land. We, the indigenous people, after five hundred years of resistance, are taking the power. This retaking of power is oriented towards the recovery of our own riches, our own natural resources such as the hydrocarbons. This affects the interests of the transitional corporations and the interests of the neoliberal system. Nevertheless, I am convinced that the power of the people is increasing and strengthening. This power is changing presidents, economic models and politics. We are convinced that capitalism is the enemy of the earth, of humanity and of culture. The US government does not understand our way of life and our demands with the participation of the Bolivian people. (Dangl 40)

Here, Morales moves swiftly from identifying himself specifically with the “Quechuas and Aymaras,” to identifying more broadly with “indigenous people,” and finally, with the Bolivian people as a whole. In a similar way, he emphasizes his indigenous identity and resistance and moves to comment about “natural resources”. By the end of this brief quote, Morales is talking about the earth and humanity, thus illustrating the breath of his political message, which goes far beyond the concerns of indigenous people. One of the greatest successes of MAS and Morales has been their ability to avoid creating a racialized nationalism. Morales has tried to articulate indigenous political programs with a far broader appeal.
Because Morales incorporates *mestizos* and *criollos* into his party, MAS is, as far as Quispe is concerned, “the worst enemy of the indigenous peoples’ movement” (Canessa 250). Others have also raised concerns about Evo Morales’ “indigenous” identity. Associating himself with various ethnic groups, Morales has for these critics undermined his own “authenticity.” Academics have described Morales either as an “indo-mestizo,” or as an indigenous-descended leader of the coca growers, who are taken to be a miscegenated peasant movement (Albro 417). Still others have argued that his appropriation of indigenous attributes is merely a strategic political play (Albro 417).

Since the 1970s *katarismo* movements, indigenous politics in Bolivia have had aimed to achieve political and cultural autonomy and self-determination as distinct “nations” within a pluri-national Bolivia (Albro 420). Indigenous politics thus posit not only that indigenous people exist, but that they have rights that are not subordinate to those of non-indigenous people. To benefit from this recognition, indigenous leaders have looked to differentiate themselves from non-Indians by forming exclusive groups with strict rules regarding what it means to be indigenous. Quispe’s exclusionary and particularistic discourse follows the parameters of this model. On the other hand, the general support Bolivian society has given to Morales and his proposal for a united Bolivia where the Indian element is included equally, alongside other ethnic groups points to the need to reconsider how indigenous identity is currently represented in Bolivia by dominant society, subalterns, politicians, and the media.

**Indians and the Occident**

The next relationship I will analyze is between Bolivian indigenous peoples and what I will broadly conceive of as “occidental ideas”—political, economic, social, and
cultural forces that form a worldview that indigenous people consider both foreign and threatening. I use “occident” as an umbrella term to refer broadly to the individual and combined forces of globalization, neo-liberalism, capitalism, and U.S. military and political intervention. If we understand globalization as the movement of global capital that has resulted directly or indirectly in the weakening of nation-states and the increasing homogenization of products and cultures around the world, then what can be more anti-global than an “indigenous identity?” If capitalism is about privately-owned wealth, indigeneity is about communitarian property. If neoliberalism is about the exploitation of natural resources, eco-Indians are the best guardians of those resources. If foreign intervention causes the deterioration and fracturing of traditional communities and identities, advocating or promoting indigeneity is about securing an enduring, rooted, and authentic identity. In light of these contrasts, Morales and Quispe’s views on the relationship between Indians and the occident are remarkably similar. They have both been active participants in the struggle to preserve “indigenous” identity against the forces of the “occident.” Interestingly enough, Morales and Quispe both see the “occident” as a threat, but they have different strategies to respond to it.

“Hablar de coca cero es hablar de cero quechuas, cero aymaras y cero guaraníes”

Evo Morales’ views on “the occident” are inseparable from the platform of his socialist party, MAS, which has a long history of struggle against neoliberal policies and foreign intervention. As mentioned earlier, the actions of MAS and Evo Morales have turned a relatively localized fight against the eradication of the coca in the Chapare region, into a national and international issue. The U.S. sponsored “coca cero” policy has been highly problematic and unpopular, not only because coca is a highly valued cultural
asset for the majority of Bolivians, but also because it constitutes one of the few viable economic pursuits still available to them.

Coca eradication has become a central issue affecting the vast majority of Bolivians. Morales has defended the coca industry with his life by claiming that it is the cultural and economic lifeblood of his home region and indigenous culture. Morales refers constantly to the sacredness of the coca leaf in Aymara culture, as a symbol of revered rituals and a valued way of life. Nowadays, the energy of the coca leaf still helps many peasants survive their precarious labor conditions. Morales’ engagement with indigeneity has been strategic in this challenge. He has gone as far as to equate the forcible eradication of the coca leaf with the U.S. “desire” to eradicate indigenous people altogether. In an interview with Radio France in the Maison de la Radio in 2006, Morales commented: “Estados Unidos quiere hacer desaparecer a los indios quechuas y aymaras que cultivamos y consumimos la coca desde nuestros ancestros […] Con el “Plan dignidad” somos traficantes y después del 11 de septiembre somos terroristas” (Poma 113).

As indigenous culture has increasingly become a source of pride rather than a mark of shame in Bolivia, the symbolism of the coca leaf has gained even more importance, and the U.S. war against it has stoked Morales’ popularity. The protection of natural resources in general has also become an appealing strategic position for many indigenous leaders, including Morales and Quispe. When referring to the protection of natural resources, Morales commented:
Compañeros vamos a tomar este reto de pelear por lo que es nuestro. Como campesinos, somos dueños de nuestros recursos naturales, que por desgracia los gobiernos de este país se han encargado de vender a los extranjeros [...] Si queremos transformar este sistema, tenemos que empezar por transformarnos nosotros mismos. Vamos juntos a crear una nueva patria, un pachakuti [...]. Ahora este enfrentamiento es el de la conciencia contra la plata [...]. [T]éngalo muy claro; es más importante el capital humano que el financiero.” (Poma 117)

Quispe, on the other hand, offers the following:

[…] Ya es tiempo de que recuperemos nuestros recursos naturales; somos un país de indios, que deben defender esos recursos si es posible [...] con su vida. Estamos regalando el gas a un dólar, o más barato [...]. Brasil y Argentina absorben el gas del petróleo y el gas de nuestro país; entonces claro que les afecta, están acostumbrado a chupar, a mamar barato.” (Escobar)

Morales, Quispe and their respective organizations have put forth a clear ideological response to what they identify in their discourse as various forces of the “occident”. On 21 April 2008, President Morales delivered the opening address to the Seventh Session of the U.N. Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues in New York. His speech highlighted the threat of capitalism, the protection of the environment, and the reckless consumption of natural resources. He said:

If we want to save the planet earth, to save life and humanity, we have a duty to put an end to the capitalist system. Unless we put an end to the capitalist system, it is impossible to imagine that there will be equality and justice on this planet earth. This is why I believe that it is important to put an end to the exploitation of human beings and to the pillage of natural resources, to put an end to destructive wars for markets and raw materials, to the plundering of energy, particularly fossil fuels, to the excessive consumption of goods and to the accumulation of waste. The capitalist system only allows us to heap up waste. I would like to propose that the trillions of money earmarked for war should be channeled to make good the damage to the environment, [sic] to make reparations to the earth. (Shenfield)

Here, Morales presents himself as a fervent anti-capitalist. In several other interviews, Morales has also pointed to socialism as the alternative to capitalism. As he put it:
“socialism is something deeper […]. It is to live in community and equality” (Shenfield). The politics of Morales and MAS, have reflected socialist principles such as the annulment of privatization contracts and the nationalization of natural resources. However, MAS’ members have also asserted that the MAS is not a revolutionary party and does not follow Marxist doctrine. According to one key party manager: “our ideology is under construction; it is not defined and it is fed by different forces, movements, and distinct actors” (Albró 420).

Like Quispe, Morales relates socialism to the traditional peasant community of the Andes rather than to foreign discourse. He explains: “there was no private property in the past. Everything was communal property. In the Indian community where I was born, everything belonged to the community. This way of life is more equitable” (Shenfield). According to Morales, the *ayllu* reflects two traditional principals of socialism: communal landholding and “respect for Mother Earth” (Morales).

When asked if he would describe himself as a Marxist, Morales’ answer is sharp: “What is Marxism..? I can talk about Marxism but what importance does it have….? Don’t speak to me about Marxism, Leninism, Trotskyism, we waste time. Here it is about understanding and living our problems in order to propose solutions” (Fuentes). Morales’ comments regarding socialism have been harshly criticized by intellectuals who argue that he does not understand it (Fuentes). Morales responds by asserting that his brand of socialism is more pragmatic than ideological. As he puts it: “el MAS, como un instrumento político de liberación no ha sido creado por politólogos o un grupo de intelectuales, sino por congresos campesinos para acabar con los problemas de la gente” (Dieterich).
Quispe presents an even starker rejection of capitalism. He argues: “The project of a socialist society of the ayllus is not compatible with capitalist society […] because they are totally antagonistic systems” (Global Protest). Quispe also does not credit Marx with any original thinking regarding socialist society. On the contrary, he argues that the world of the Incas, developed in the Andes is an authentic socialist community, and that Marx in fact founded his writings on the idea of the ayllu:

Nosotros conocemos el marxismo como nuestra palma de la mano, porque el marxismo que han llevado de acá lo llevaron como una varita. Lo han teñido en Europa y lo han traído de vuelta, porque créase o no Marx ha visto la forma comunitaria de los ayllus, o de los indígenas, y se basó en eso. Desde el preincanato, desde el Tiwanaco, el ayllu estaba estructurado como una comunidad sin capital, ¡y hasta ahora no hay capital en algunas comunidades, hay trueque! Yo te doy mi producción y tú me das tu producción, cambiamos de igual a igual, de forma horizontal y no vertical. (Rivas)

Quispe goes on to argue that Marx’s version of communism is incapable of dealing with the indigenous realities of Latin America. He claims instead that the social change must come from within and wants indigenous peoples to take control of their destiny and thoughts by re-implementing the social and economic structures of the ayllu:

“El indio tiene que ser el actor social en lo político y en lo ideológico. No podemos ser simplemente masas votantes o escaleras políticas de los partidos burgueses, de los partidos tradicionales que nos han traicionado. Queremos auto-gobernarnos, queremos reconstruir el Qullasuyu, la sociedad socialista comunitaria de los ayllus” (Rivas).

According to Quispe, then, the simple fact that Morales and MAS have allied with the Bolivian left constitutes a betrayal of the indigenous cause. “MAS is a hybrid, a mixture. They are not the expression of the indigenous nation. They are from the middle class and
the sour destitute Left. MAS is like a whorehouse where leftist prostitutes work. We are different. We are indigenists” (Albró 416).
Chapter Four: Conclusions

In the past decade, Bolivia has experienced a boom in indigenous organizations, the politicization of indigenous identities, and demands for indigenous rights. On January 22, 2006, Juan Evo Morales Ayma, an Aymara leader of the political party and social movement, Movimiento Al Socialismo, (MAS) achieved the ultimate level of success for social movements, becoming the country’s indigenous president (BBC). Morales’ election marks a historic and consequential change in Bolivian society. In the past, social movements have mobilized along socio-economic lines. With time, social movements have integrated ethnic elements into their organizations. The MAS and Morales’ project has proven to be strong, inclusive, and well-organized. It has created a wider, strongly rooted, and assuring relationship between a majority of the population and the leaders of the political movements. Many critics see the recent upheavals and election of Morales as part of a wider process of the reaffirmation of indigenous rights and identity throughout the country and Latin America. I began this study by asking why this event has struck many as surprising. If Bolivia is one of the countries most significantly comprised by indigenous peoples, why have Bolivians not organized their identity based on their cultural heritage before? Has this been an inevitable process, reflecting essential, stable identities? Is the ascendency of indigenous groups in countries also inevitable?

One of my first conclusions has been that identity is nothing set, but rather, a malleable concept that changes. Also, it depends not only on our own perceptions of ourselves but also on how others perceive us. This notion of identity can help us to understand the subjective nature of indigenous identity in the Bolivian case, for as we
have seen, the identities of indigenous peoples have changed over time in a dialectical relationship with a broad set of external factors that are ascribed by the self or by others. “Indigenous identity” has changed historically to meet the political and social goals of both Indians and non-Indians. Although, the majority of the population has been perceived and defined as “indigenous,” Bolivians might have not identified themselves as such. Previously, the concept of indigeneity was perceived as “backward” and needing to be “hidden.” Therefore, people might have opted or actually been obligated (by state policies) to pursue other identities. For instance, after the 1952 national revolution, indigenous people were “encouraged” by the State to trade their indigenous identities for a campesino one (a class-based concept).

My second conclusion is that historically, there have been two main projects of national identity formation in Bolivia. The first one was mestizaje which emerged as an official discourse of national formation and carried a “hispanist” influence. Going back to the conception of indigeneity as something undesired, hispanists perceived the diversity of Latin America’s population as a setback. Therefore, in order to create a homogenous group of people, Latin American intellectuals relied on mestizaje, which has commonly been combined with a powerful ideology of whitening, in which mixture, far from being neutral process of the amalgamation of Africans, indigenous peoples, and Europeans, has been a process to eliminate blackness and indigenousness from the national body. This ideology has been one of the main factors to prevent indigenous people from reclaiming their indigenous identities. In these circumstances, there is need to change the deep structures that failed to consider an indigenous perspective and at the same time reshape and re-imagine history to include indigeneity.
The second model has been popular within some indigenous communities and emerged as a reaction to *mestizaje*. Represented by Felipe Quispe (and Fausto Reinaga) in the Bolivian case, this model has aimed to create an exclusive Indian national identity or new *Indianismo*. This notion fuses cultural traits with supposedly innate biological elements and argues for the reversion of the dominant order, thus positioning indigenous peoples as representative of the true original “Bolivia.” Quispe’s approach to dealing with non-Indians is directly connected to the notion of sectarianism that he uses to structure his discourse. For him, there are only two groups of people: Indians and non-Indians. Through Quispe’s eyes, identities are stable and allow no room for change, he also maintains that these two groups have very exclusive characteristics. As a result, any alliance with non-Indians or inclusion of “foreign” ideologies must be perceived as a betrayal of the “authentic” indigenous cause. This perception of identity has not been appealing in a country like Bolivia, with so many distinct ethnic groups.

My third conclusion is that Evo Morales, in comparison, has argued for a diverse and pluri-cultural identity that does allow room for the modification of the concept of indigeneity. I argue, therefore, that the project proposed and developed by Morales and the MAS appears to be more compatible with the project of building a democratic society in Bolivia. Morales’ idea of fomenting a multi-ethnic and pluri-cultural nation, where Indians are incorporated and represented alongside whites, *mestizos*, blacks, and other groups, presents a potentially democratic solution to the historically exclusive and racist construction of an official national identity in Bolivia.

My thesis concludes that Morales presents an innovative project for Bolivian national identity formation by bringing together diverse ethnic groups of the population.
Morales’ model breaks with previous understandings of Bolivian and indigenous identities as mutually exclusive and proposes that these identities can be inclusive and in fact complementary. Morales’ own ethnic heritage and collection of multiple identities (i.e., cocalero, minero, Aymara) exemplifies this idea clearly. After embarking on his career of political activism, Morales presented himself first as a cocalero unionist, then as indigenous, and most importantly, as Bolivian. For some critics, these changes might be seemed to use identity as a political strategy in order to adapt to different political situations. However, if we understand identity as multiple and complementary, these changes might mean that Morales is being true to his own complex conception of himself. In the project he proposes and exemplifies, indigenous peoples will not have to give up their indigeneity, assimilate, or be “improved” in order to become Bolivian citizens. Instead, the notion of Bolivianness is broadened enough to include different identities, and demands that draw on the ethnic, social, and class-based identities and identifications of the Bolivian population.

This model is potentially inclusive rather than exclusive, and, leads me to my fourth and final conclusion: that Morales’ approach has democratic potential in countries like Bolivia, with diverse populations and marked ethnic cleavages. Noam Chomsky recently praised Bolivia as “probably the most democratic country in the world” (Democracy Now). According to Chomsky, Morales represents Bolivians “in a sense in which democracy is supposed to work.” Will Bolivia be democratic enough to accept such an approach to national identity formation. The Bolivian people have spoken democratically at the ballot box. However, the country has always been divided along overlapping lines of ethnicity, class, and regionalism. The protests against the election of
Morales by the habitants of Santa Cruz, the increase of violent acts against indigenous peoples, and the recall referendum on the mandates of President Evo Morales all reveal that Bolivia’s democracy is still fragile. The white/mestizo minority has long had the upper hand in the country’s power and decision-making, and does not appear ready to hand over power to the majority without a great deal of resistance. On the one hand, the outcome of this situation might help to strengthen the move toward inclusivity and truly representative governance. On the other, as we have seen in the latest news, new movements for regional autonomy might be empowered. The question thus becomes: will Bolivia be able to survive the consequences of its own democracy?
Works Cited:


Bouysse-Cassagne, Thérése and Harris, Olivia. Tres reflexiones sobre el pensamiento andino. La Paz: HISBOL. 1987.


Cocalero by Alejandro Landes. First Run Features. New York, 2006


Mariátegui, José Carlos, “El proceso de la literatura” Siete Ensayos Interpretación de la Realidad peruana Lima: Amauta 1928, 229-350.


Rivera, Diego. “Haya de de la Torre y la Democracia: ¿Un programa de lucha o de adaptación al imperialismo norteamericano?”. *New International*. November 9, 1938.


Shoup, Brian. “Public Policy and the Primordialist/Constructivist Controversy”. Midwest Political Science Association Indian University, 2002.


Youngers, Coletta and Eileen Rosin. *Drugs and Democracy in Latin America*