WHOSE AUTONOMY?

AN ANALYSIS OF THE DIFFERENT MEANINGS OF AUTONOMY IN BOLIVIA,

AND THEIR IMPACT ON THE AUTONOMY REGIME

by

MARIA POMÉS LORENCÉS

A THESIS

Presented to the Department of International Studies
and the Graduate School of the University of Oregon
in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of
Master of Arts

June 2019

THESIS APPROVAL PAGE

Student: Maria Pomés Lorencés

Title: Whose Autonomy? An Analysis of the Different Meanings of Autonomy in Bolivia, and their Impact on the Autonomy Regime.

This thesis has been accepted and approved in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Master of Arts degree in the Department of International Studies by:

Derrick Hindery	Chairperson
Erin Beck	Member
Will Johnson	Member

and

Janet Woodruff-Borden	Vice Provost and Dean of the Graduate School

Original approval signatures are on file with the University of Oregon Graduate School.

Degree awarded June 2019

THESIS ABSTRACT

Maria Pomés Lorencés

Master of Arts

Department of International Studies

June 2019

Title: Whose Autonomy? An Analysis of the Different Meanings of Autonomy in Bolivia, and their Impact on the Autonomy Regime.

This thesis explores the diverse meanings attached to the concept of *autonomy* in Bolivia. Different sectors of society at the state level, and individuals from indigenous nations at the local level –in particular the Monkoxt of Lomerío–, attach different meanings, expectations and hopes to *autonomy*. This thesis analyzes how the different understandings have impacted the implementation of the autonomy system, and it also explores how they may influence the future of the autonomy model in Bolivia.

CURRICULUM VITAE

NAME OF AUTHOR: Maria Pomés Lorencés

GRADUATE AND UNDERGRADUATE SCHOOLS ATTENDED:

University of Oregon, Eugene
University of California, Berkeley
Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona, Barcelona
Universitat de Barcelona, Barcelona

DEGREES AWARDED:

Master of Arts, International Studies, 2019, University of Oregon
Graduate Certificate in Nonprofit Management, 2019, University of Oregon
Bachelor of Arts, Journalism, 2013, Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona

AREAS OF SPECIAL INTEREST:

Indigenous Rights; Human Rights
Gender and development

PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE:

Graduate Teaching Assistant, University of Oregon, 2017-2019
ESL Teacher, International House Montevideo, 2014-2016

GRANTS, AWARDS, AND HONORS:

Tinker Field Research Grant, CLLAS, University of Oregon, 2018
Slape Award, University of Oregon, 2018
Promising Scholar Award, University of Oregon, 2017
University Access Distinction, Generalitat de Catalunya, 2008

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF FIGURES

LIST OF TABLES

x

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

In 2005, after continued unrest and social mobilizations, the Bolivian people elected their first indigenous president: Evo Morales. Since then, indigeneity has become an integral part of how the Bolivian state defines itself and explains its policies and objectives.

There are many indigenous groups in Bolivia. Some indigenous nations have traditionally lived in the highlands, in the Andes, from where the federal government operates. However, many other indigenous peoples have their ancestral territories in the lowlands, in the East of the country and far from the heights of the Andes. Their lands are located in hilly dry forests, and even further east, in the Amazon basin. These lowland nations have been an essential part of the coalition that brought Evo Morales' government to power, and that passed a new Bolivian Constitution in 2009. This Constitution is the first in Bolivia's history to recognize the self-determination rights of indigenous nations and to also effectively establish an indigenous autonomy regime.

The strength and accomplishments of the indigenous rights movement in the last few decades is not unique to Bolivia, but part of a larger wave that has soared throughout Latin America. As it's the case in Bolivia, for most of the 20th century indigenous groups throughout the region mobilized on the basis of class-based identities, mostly as part of peasant movements and organizations. However, during the 1980s and by the early 1990s, indigenous identities became salient and were the basis of wide mobilizations.

The specialized literature has identified two main causes to explain the salience of indigenous identity as a mobilizing tool during the 1980s and 1990s: (1) the creation of national and international networks that stimulated the formation of indigenous coalitions and the articulation of common goals, with indigenous autonomy taking center stage (Brysk, 1996); and (2) the implementation of neoliberal policies that deeply transformed the relationship between states and their citizens. As states transitioned from a corporatist to a neoliberal mode of governance, indigenous citizens also organized around new axes to claim their rights and oppose the effects of neoliberalism (Postero, 2010b).

The newly formed indigenous coalitions protested, marched and demonstrated to demand territorial rights, the capacity to manage the natural resources existing in their

lands, and the protection and promotion of their cultures, practices and languages. While indigenous autonomies have existed in Latin America throughout history, by the early 1990s indigenous organizations gave the concept a new, politicized meaning that encompassed their goals. Demanding autonomy from the state became synonymous with claiming the right to self-determination of indigenous nations. Implementing *indigenous autonomy* was then understood to mean the establishment of territorial jurisdictions with the following attributes:

> (i) a significant transfer of independent decision-making capacities and administrative competencies to local –indigenous or multiethnic– elected authorities; (ii) the creation of self-governing political structures within a recognized legal jurisdiction; and finally (iii) the delimitation of a territory in which collective rights to land and natural resources are granted and they can be exercised (González, 2015, pg. 17).

Due to the pressure exercised by the highly mobilized indigenous coalitions, the neoliberal administrations governing Ecuador, Venezuela, Colombia, and also Bolivia enacted Constitutional reforms in the 1990s that recognized some indigenous rights. These reforms centered on decentralizing state competencies to regional governments, mostly municipalities. At different levels, these reforms allowed for the election of local representatives following indigenous decision-making procedures, limited levels of territorial control, and some recognition of indigenous languages and cultures.

However, they did not come close to the understanding of autonomy of indigenous organizations. While in some cases –such as Ecuador and Colombia– these reforms stated the aspiration to create indigenous autonomies in the future, they remained vague and were never fully implemented. In the mentioned Ecuadorian and Colombian case, the laws that would allow for the implementation of indigenous autonomies were never passed (González, 2015).

By the early 2000s the demand of indigenous autonomy, linked to the right to self-determination of indigenous peoples, reached a new momentum. Indigenous organizations participated in the election of left-wing candidates throughout the region, leading, as it did in the case of Bolivia, to indigenous autonomy being incorporated into the state's administrative system.

This thesis will analyze the case of the Monkoxt of Lomerío, a Bolivian indigenous nation from the lowlands, specifically the Santa Cruz province. The Monkoxt are currently pursuing autonomy from the central state, and are only a referendum away from being able to form their own indigenous government in their territory, Lomerío.

However, the Monkoxt have been organizing to claim their rights over their territory, and also to demand the respect and protection of their language and culture, since the early 1980s. It was then that they formally created the CICOL, the *Central Indígena de Comunidades Originarias de Lomerío* (Indigenous Central of the Originary Communities of Lomerío), the organization that has represented the Monkoxt *vis a vis* the state[1].

During the 1980s, many indigenous organizations formed in other areas of the Bolivian lowlands, just as they were appearing throughout Latin America. By 1990, they came together to organize the *Marcha por el Territorio y la Dignidad* (March for Territory and Dignity), which "without a doubt, changed the face of Bolivia forever" (Postero, 2007, p. 49). More than 800 men, women, and children walked for 34 days from the Beni province in the lowlands to the capital, La Paz, to claim their right to control and govern their ancestral territories. They were received in La Paz "by the waving of *wiphala* flags[2] by the Aymaras and Quechuas of the CSTUCB[3]" (Albó, 2008a, pg. 42).

The march brought the rights of lowland indigenous peoples to the forefront of national politics and highlighted their struggle for territorial rights, a claim that would be adopted by the Aymara and Quechua communities in the highlands. The mobilization of

---

[1] For more on CICOL, see Flores Gonzales (2018).

[2] The *wiphala* is an emblem, normally used as a flag, that represents indigenous nations in the Andes. It is used in the states of Bolivia, Peru, Ecuador, Argentina, Chile and Colombia. President Evo Morales made the Bolivian version of the *wiphala* an official flag of the State, and has since also been used to represent lowland indigenous nations. See "The Wiphala" (2018) for the flag's meaning, and Calpin (2011) for its use in Bolivia after Morales.

[3] The CSUTCB, the *Confederación Sindical Única de Trabajadores Campesinos de Bolivia* (Unified Syndical Federation of Peasant Workers of Bolivia) was a union created to support rural indigenous workers from the highlands. Their leaders and founders belonged to the *Katarista* movement. This movement wanted to reclaim the indigenous identity of rural workers of the Andes, particularly from the Aymara nation. The CSUTCB would be extremely influential in pushing for the recognition of indigenous rights in the 1990s, and its leader in the 2000s, Felipe Quispe, would play an essential role in the uprisings that would lead to Evo Morales' presidency in the early 2000s. See Albó (2008a) section 2.4.

indigenous groups to claim their collective rights would deeply shape the policies passed by several neoliberal administrations in the 1990s, wen the Constitution was changed to officially declare Bolivia as a "multicultural" state[4].

The Monkoxt made use of these multicultural policies. For example, they collectively titled their territory, Lomerío, and instituted a municipality to govern it[5]. However, dissatisfied with the limits the traditional liberal state still imposed on them, they supported Evo Morales' claim to the presidency. They trusted that Morales would transform the state, and the Monkoxt would then be able to declare Lomerío an indigenous autonomy within a new, plurinational Bolivian state.

Shortly after his election, President Morales fulfilled his commitment to indigenous nations such as the Monkoxt, and called a Constitutional Assembly to write a new *Magna Carta*. The Assembly met between August 2006, and December 2007, and was contentious from the beginning. Despite the controversies, and after lengthy negotiations, a new Constitution was passed and approved in a referendum in 2009. Since then, the Bolivian State has had the mandate of decolonizing its structures and transitioning from a traditional liberal model to a plurinational model – the basis of which are indigenous autonomies ("Constitución Política del Estado," 2009).

The Bolivian case is particularly relevant to the indigenous autonomy debate as "Bolivia is perhaps today the country with the most advanced and comprehensive conceptualization of territorial autonomies in Latin America" (González, 2015, pg. 17). However, the term *autonomy* has been particularly contested in Bolivia, and it has been wielded by various sectors of society pursuing different, if not opposing, projects. At the state level, these different understandings became obvious during the drafting of the 2009 Constitution, and deeply influenced the new *Magna Carta.* This thesis will explore the limits of Bolivia's plurinational model and autonomy regime, contrasting them with the demands of indigenous organizations.

The meaning of autonomy, however, is not only contested at the state level, there are also disjunctures and different understanding among individuals from indigenous

---

[4] For more on Bolivia's multiculturalism, see Postero (2007) introduction, chapters 4 and 5.

[5] For more on the collective titling of Lomerío, and the municipality established by the Monkoxt, see Flores Gonzales (2018), and Peña, Tubari, Chuvé, Choré, & Ipi (2016).

communities. This thesis will also analyze the case study of the Monkoxt of Lomerío, who are currently pursuing autonomy from the central state.

To Monkoxt of Lomerío are a particularly noteworthy case study to explore the various understandings and implications of indigenous autonomy at the local level. They were the first indigenous group in Bolivia to pursue autonomy from the central state. They actually drafted their statute, the law governing an autonomy, in 2009: one year before the Bolivian state drafted and passed the *Ley Marco de Autonomías y Descentralización* (Framework Law of Autonomies and Decentralization), the law regulating the creation of indigenous autonomies in Bolivia.

Because of this mismatch, the Monkoxt had to overcome further bureaucratic complications and their original statute was deeply modified by the Bolivian Constitutional Court (TCP). Their experiences, and the analysis of the modifications demanded by the Court, offer great insight into the differences between the top-down legislation pushed by the state, and the bottom-up hopes and expectations that prompted the Monkoxt to pursue autonomy in the first place.

Most academic literature on indigenous autonomy focuses on the different understandings of autonomy at the state level. This thesis will certainly enter this debate. It will explore the diverse meanings attached to the concept of *autonomy* in Bolivia, analyzing how different sectors of society at the state level understand the concept. However, this thesis will also analyze how individuals from indigenous nations at the local level –in particular the Monkoxt of Lomerío–, attach different meanings, expectations and hopes to *autonomy*. It will analyze how the different understandings have impacted the implementation of the autonomy system, and it will also explore how they may influence the future of the autonomy model in Bolivia.

Research Question

This thesis will answer the following research question:
How have various actors in Bolivia, both at the state level and at the local level, differently interpreted autonomy, and with what impact on the definition and implementation of the autonomy model?

5

I will start answering the research question by addressing the issue from the macro perspective: the understandings of autonomy at the state level. In the second chapter, *Autonomy from the State's Perspective*, I will discuss the views of the three main actors that defined the meaning and implementation of autonomy at the state level: (1) *social movement organizations*, represented by Evo Morales' MAS party[6]; (2) *identity based indigenous organizations*; and (3) *Media Luna*[7] *elites*. During the drafting of the 2009 Bolivian Constitution, these groups contended to have their view of the Bolivian state, and the autonomy system, enshrined in the new *Magna Carta*. Their different views, and subsequent negotiations, impacted the final autonomy model defined in the 2009 Constitution. Social movement organizations had allied with identity based indigenous organizations to topple Bolivia's neoliberal government, and had supported their autonomy proposal. However, once Evo Morales was elected to the presidency and a new Constitution had to be drafted and passed, social movement organizations and *Media Luna* elites reached strategic agreements that marginalized the goals defended by identity based indigenous groups, including their proposed autonomy regime.

In this chapter I will also discuss how the conflicting ideologies within the MAS government have also affected the implementation of the 2009 Constitution and the new autonomy system. Originally, Morales' government was formed by members from the three sectors that had supported him in gaining the presidency: (1) the *indigenista* sector, formed by cabinet members belonging to *identity based indigenous organizations*; (2) the *populista* group, led by Evo Morales, representing *social movement organizations*; and (3) the *estatista* sector, representing the classical left (Laserna 2010).

Expanding the power of the central state and the implementation of developmentalist policies became the priorities of the *populista* and *estatista* sector, marginalizing the interests defended by the *indigenista* sector and, among them, a wide

---

[6] The *Movimiento al Socialismo,* MAS (Movement Towards Socialism) is a socialist party led by Evo Morales and founded in 1998. It is constituted by different social movement organizations, from coca growers' unions to neighborhood associations. See Postero (2010b) section: *The MAS Phenomenon: A New Plebeian Bolivia* for the formation of MAS.

[7] The *Media Luna* (literally translated as the half moon) is a term used to refer to the lowland Bolivian provinces of Beni, Pando, Tarija and Santa Cruz. The Andes do not cross through these provinces, which have a different social and economic history than the Andes' provinces. See Crabtree (2005).

implementation of the autonomy system. I will illustrate this developments by discussing the TIPNIS case.

In the third chapter, *The Impact of the State's Perspective on the Monkoxi[8] Autonomy,* I will analyze the *Ley Marco de Autonomías y Descentralización* or LMAD (Framework Law of Autonomies and Decentralization), the law that regulates the implementation of the autonomy system. The tensions and contradictions that became apparent in the constituent process resurfaced in the drafting of the LMAD, which set an extremely complex bureaucratic process for indigenous groups to constitute autonomies. I will discuss how the LMAD influenced the Monkoxt's pursuit of autonomy and the final version of the *Estatuto Autonómico de Lomerío*, the legal document that will govern their territory once the Monkoxt have held a final referendum on autonomy ("Estatuto Autonómico de Lomerío," 2015).

In the fourth chapter, *Whose Estatuto?* I will discuss the drafting of the *Estatuto Autonómico* from the local perspective. I will analyze which actors participated in the process, how they influenced the document, and which sectors of the Monkoxt community, particularly women, were left out of the drafting of the statute.

Finally, in the fifth chapter, *Autonomy as Identity,* I will show that conflicting views of autonomy have also appeared at the local level. I will discuss the different meanings given to autonomy by individual members of the Monkoxi nation. The members of the Monkoxt community I interviewed understand autonomy as a practical tool related to the goals they seek to achieve with the implementation of an autonomous government. For most interviewees, the most salient goal of autonomy is to promote the protection and revitalization of what they define as their "culture:" their language, their ancestors' farming style, and their traditional tales and practices.

Throughout this chapter, I will also analyze how women's understanding of autonomy, and Monkoxi culture, departs from men's. In the case of male interviewees, autonomy was understood as a tool to protect traditional Monkoxi practices, and with them, men's power in the community's current *status quo.* Males' discussion of cultural conservation and revitalization related to the communal power they derive from their

---

[8] Considering Bésiro grammar, and following the model of the *Estatuto Autonómico de Lomerío*, I will use the term "Monkoxt" as a noun, and the term "Monkoxi" as an adjective.

capacity to speak Bésiro and their engagement with traditional practices. They considered Lomerío a paradise threatened by modern transformations.

Female interviewees, however, felt disconnected from the autonomy process and from political participation and representation in Lomerío. Women do not derive political power form their capacity to speak Bésiro or their participation in traditional culture. Therefore, while also concerned about the loss of Monkoxi culture and the Bésiro language, they discussed the embodied consequences of their loss, considering the disjunctures it creates among different generations. Moreover, they also saw certain transformations in a positive light, as they enabled women to challenge established gender roles and access conventionally male-only spheres.

Finally, in the *Conclusion*, I will analyze how the different views at the state level, at the local level, and the interactions between these two spheres, have impacted the understanding of autonomy in Bolivia and the implementation of the autonomy system. I will discuss the views of the different actors involved, as shown in Table I, and how these differences have shaped the current system and may impact the future of autonomy in Bolivia.

The aims of this research and the final design of the research question have gone through several transformations. My initial goal when I decided to pursue this research topic was to identify which characteristics lowland indigenous Bolivians, particularly the Monkoxt of Lomerío, considered essential to their identity. I wanted to understand the connections between their cultural repertoire[9] and their demands of political autonomy and self-determination, also exploring which policies indigenous groups wanted to see implemented to protect and promote their identities.

In June 2018, as I will explain in the *Methods* section later in this chapter, I travelled to Bolivia and started participating in community events and having informal conversations with members of the Monkoxt community. I realized that my original research hypotheses and goals made assumptions that did not correspond to the understandings of most individuals. I also recognized that there were significant differences in the understanding of autonomy among different actors, which I had not accounted for in the original design of my research.

---

[9] For more on the relevance of cultural repertoires in social movement research, see Swidler (1986).

Table I. Autonomy in Bolivia: Main Actors and their Understanding of Autonomy

Actors	Views on Autonomy
I. State level	
I.I *Social Movement Organizations*	With MAS at the center, *social movement organizations* supported the implementation of indigenous autonomy as understood by *identity based indigenous organizations*. However, they did not consider it nonnegotiable, and did not believe autonomies should limit the centralized power of the State.
I.II *Identity Based Indigenous Organizations*	To them, autonomy should be the basis of a new, transformed plurinational Bolivia. They believe the autonomy system is the key to decolonizing Bolivia and abandoning the liberal model of the state. They understand autonomy as closely related to indigenous peoples' right to self-determination, and to governing and managing the resources in their ancestral territories through their traditional norms and customs.
I.II *Media Luna Elites*	Threatened by the vision of autonomy defended by *identity base indigenous organizations,* they organized to promote an autonomy model based on granting more power to regional governments. Their goal was to protect their economic and political interests.
II. Local Level – *The Monkoxt of Lomerío*	
II.I *Men*	Male interviewees referred to autonomy as a practical tool. They discussed resource management and the capacity to expel traditional political parties from their territory. However, the most salient goals for male interviewees were continuing their ancestors' quest for freedom and the conservation of their culture. Interviewees over forty years old hoped autonomy would compel the younger generations to work the land, to use Bésiro in their daily lives, and to reject the attraction of the big city, of "modern" life.
II.II *Women*	Similarly to men, the women interviewed are clearly worried by what they identify as the disappearance of traditional Monkoxi culture. However, they detect that this process creates disjunctures in understandings and expectations between generations and genders, an issue ignored by the male interviewees. Moreover, they see these transformations as partly positive, as they allow them to gain access to traditionally male-only spheres.

9

I had assumed that because actors at the state level linked autonomy to indigenous peoples' self-determination rights, individual community members at the local level would share that understanding. Firstly, actors at the state level, as explained, had more diverse and complex views than my prior research had indicated. Secondly, out of the eleven people I interviewed from the Monkoxt nation, only one understood the meaning of the concept "self-determination" when directly asked, and he did not link it to the Monkoxt's pursuit of indigenous autonomy.

This realization pushed me to reconsider the goals of my research, and what I had assumed to be a universal understanding of autonomy. To Monkoxt community members, autonomy is a tool to achieve certain goals, not an abstract concept related to their rights as indigenous people. To them, therefore, it made no sense to separate the definition of autonomy from the policies it would allow them to implement. I consequently decided to re-frame my research to analyze the different understandings of autonomy at the state and local level, to understand how they have impacted the implementation of the autonomy model.

Methods

The findings presented in this thesis are based on primary, secondary, and field research. I have analyzed academic articles and books that reflect on the mobilizations that lead to the election of Evo Morales as president of Bolivia; the views of the actors that participated in the Constituent Assembly that drafted the 2009 Constitution; and an analysis of the two Morales administrations and their relationship with indigenous communities and the autonomy system as a whole.

These texts belong to different academic disciplines. Some authors, such as Nancy Postero or John McNeish, are anthropologists[10]. Other authors, such as Jason Tockman and Jeffrey Webber, are political scientists[11]. Moreover, I also examined texts written by Bolivian authors such as Juan Luís Espada or Elba Flores González, who work

[10] See Postero (2007), and McNeish (2002).

[11] See Tockman & Cameron (2014), and Tockman, Cameron & Plata (2015).

for the nonprofit CEJIS[12], and also texts written by Monkoxt authors on their history, such as *Camino hacia la libertad* by Peña, Tubari, Chuvé, Choré, & Ipi (2016)[13].

I have also analyzed primary sources, such as newspaper articles and legal and political texts. I analyzed the 2009 Bolivian Constitution (2009), and the law that regulates the implementation of the autonomy system, the *Ley Marco de Autonomías y Descentralización or LMAD* (Framework Law of Autonomies and Decentralization) (2010).

I also analyzed the declaration put forward by the *Pacto de Unidad,*[14] and the texts by social movements' scholar Álvaro García Linera (2012) on the Morales' administration extractive policies, as he was the vice-president of Bolivia and his perspective reflected the views of certain sectors of the left.

My conclusions are also based on the research I conducted from June 15th, 2018, to August 10th, 2018. The first four weeks I participated in a research project, "Dialogue Between Knowledge Systems," run by Dr. Wendy Townsend. My main role was enabling the interaction, as a translator, between indigenous Bolivians from Lomerío and three Native American women who participated in the research project with the goal of conducting research and engaging in cultural exchange.

This experience enabled me to build a relationship with community members, both with people involved in political projects and with those who had never participated in CICOL.

After my participation in Dr. Townsend's project, I focused on my research. I participated in important community celebrations and in weekly events. I attended, for example, a game of a local soccer tournament and talked to many people about their culture and their views on autonomy while commenting on the game and drinking

---

[12] CEJIS, *Centro de Estudios Jurídicos e Investigación Social* (Center of Judicial Studies and Social Investigation) is a Santa Cruz nonprofit that has collaborated with the Monkoxt in the communal titling of their lands and in their pursuit of autonomy from the central government. Experts from CEJIS, known as *técnicos*, have provided essential technical and logistical support to CICOL. See chapter IV of this thesis, and Flores González (2018).

[13] Booklet published by the CICOL with the collaboration of CEJIS, the University of East Anglia and the UNASUR university on the history of the Monkoxt nation and their pursuit of autonomy.

[14] Federation formed by several *identity based indigenous organizations* to ask for a Constituent Assembly that reformed the Bolivian Constitution to include the rights of indigenous peoples over their territory. See Garcés et.al., (2010).

chicha[15]. I helped women pick wood from the forest to fire clay pots, and talked to them about their artisanry and daily lives. I organized a workshop to help women work with a sewing machine they didn't know how to use. Participating in these community events allowed me to connect with both men and women in the community in a more relaxed manner.

I also talked to several men in charge of important positions in CICOL and in the Lomerío municipality. I discussed the questions I had planned on asking before my trip, and got suggestions and guidance over whom to interview. Through these conversations and through the informal talks I was having with other community members, I refined my questions and focused on asking about personal history and experiences, the perceptions of gender equality and transformation of gender roles, and the perceptions about what autonomy meant to them. I asked open questions and allowed the interviewee to guide the conversation.

I had designed my in-depth interviews and my research plan following the methodological recommendations given by Donatella Della Porta in *Methodological Practices in Social Movement Research* (2014). I chose to conduct long, in-depth interviews:

> As a way to 'give voice' to the activists: a methodological choice which reflected a theoretical attention given to the subjective construction of meaning [...] in-depth interviews with activists were combined with participant observation in order to understand the emotional and cognitive dimensions in the creation of grass-roots protest groups movements. As she [Kathleen Blee] observed, 'observations alone do not provide sufficient data because people don't talk about what they take for granted. To correct this, lengthy, semi-structured interviews probed activists' experiences and interpretations' (Blee 2012). (Della Porta, 2014, pg. 232).

I conducted eleven long, semi-structured interviews, of about an hour long each. I interviewed six men, and five women, ranging from twenty-seven years old to eighty-two years old. In this thesis, all their names will be changed to protect their privacy. They were all individual interviews, except for one with a woman in San Lorenzo's artisanry center that started as an individual interview, but two other women joined the

---

[15] Drink traditionally made by indigenous communities in South and Central America. It is made of fermented corn. See Kulas (2015).

conversation. Because it made the interview more lively and interactive, I adapted the questions and continued with the interview with the three women.

Some interviewees had been involved with CICOL and the autonomy process, while others had no involvement in political processes. I selected the interviews looking for this diversity, based on the experiences and methods described by sociologist Joselyn Viterna in *Women in War: The Micro-Processes of Mobilization in El Salvador* (2011)[16]. In her research on women's participation in the FMLN, Viterna avoided interviewing only the leadership of the movement, or for that matter, only participants, combatants or women. To guarantee representativeness, she selected her interviewees as randomly as possible, avoiding the concentration of a particular profile, allowing for more diverse, complex and representative conclusions.

However, ten of my interviewees either supported or had a positive view of autonomy, except for one single interviewee. I hypothesize this is due to the geographical proximity to the seat of CICOL, and therefore to the meetings held to pursue autonomy from the central state. Most interviewees had been born or lived either in Puquio Cristo Rey –CICOL's seat– or San Lorenzo de Lomerío, the community where most meetings to pursue autonomy had been held. Interestingly, the only interviewee that showed a complete rejection of the autonomy process –and political participation in general– was from another community, San Antonio de Lomerío, the seat of the municipal government[17].

I also attended a meeting of the CICOL directory. CICOL, the main indigenous organization of the territory, achieved the communal titling of Lomerío in the name of the Monkoxt, and they are currently in charge of pursuing political autonomy from the central government. Attending the meeting gave me a chance to observe the inner workings and power dynamics in the organization, and I was also able to hear the leaders of CICOL discuss autonomy.

In Santa Cruz de la Sierra, the regional capital, I talked about my experience and findings with several experts who have worked with the Monkoxt in different capacities.

---

[16] See Viterna (2011) *Appendix B: Data and Methods.*

[17] See the *Autonomy from the State's Perspective* chapter in this thesis, section *Autonomy versus State Control – The Case for the Municipalities,* to understand the opposition to autonomy of the municipal government and its conflict with CICOL.

I talked to Miguel González, who works for the Bolivian nonprofit CEJIS and has been the main consultant collaborating with the Monkoxt to achieve autonomy. I also met with José Martínez, a sociologist who works in the University of Santa Cruz and has collaborated with lowland indigenous communities for decades.

I also talked to Miguel Aragón, a lawyer who has worked for and with indigenous organizations and who directly participated in the collective titling of Monkoxi land and territory. I met with Bienvenido Zacu, indigenous leader of the Guarayo nation, who served as Congressman and gave me an inside perspective of how the central government views autonomy. Finally, I met with Elisa Saldías, sociologist who has worked analyzing the gendered attitudes and inequalities existing in several indigenous communities, among them the Monkoxt of Lomerío.

Once I was back in Eugene, Oregon, the fall of 2018, I started to code my interviews, again following the indications in *Methodological Practices in Social Movement Research* (Della Porta, 2014). I transcribed the interviews, highlighting the information I considered more relevant to my research question and also the statements that re-appeared in different interviews, focusing on the narratives interviewees referred to the most.

I then elaborated two codes, one to codify and account for the meaning given to autonomy by the different interviewees, with the four stated understandings outlined, which were the most salient among interviewees: (1) resource management; (2) rejection of traditional political parties, and more broadly, political conflict; (3) a quest for freedom, related to a historical arc of overcoming exploitation; and (4) cultural conservation.

Having observed that cultural conservation was the most salient meaning of autonomy for interviewees, I created a second code to understand what "culture" meant to them, which included traditional farming techniques, and the lifestyle associated to them; Bésiro, their language; daily tasks and celebrations –particularly the musical instruments used in each–, and creational stories. Interestingly, when discussing their culture, they also mentioned the importance and influence slavery had had on their ancestors.

Finally, I re-read all the transcriptions and put together all the quotes –with accompanying notes– of both men's and women's references to gender relations, tasks and differences, also recording all the different perceptions of women *vis a vis* men.

Throughout this thesis, I have tried to present the views of the interviewees as faithfully as possible, considering that, as stated by anthropologist Katherine Borland (1991), as researchers:

> *We* identify chunks of artful talk within this flow of conversation, give them physical existence (most often through writing), and embed them in a new context of expressive or at least communicative activity [...]. Thus, we construct a second-level narrative based upon, but at the same time reshaping, the first. (Borland, 1991, pg. 63).

Therefore, I do not claim that the conclusions presented in this thesis fully represent the views of the Monkoxt, or even the complete views of the eleven interviewees that worked with me. I have, through my lens, honestly analyzed their words and strived to be fair to what they intended to say and the context in which it was said. However, I have interpreted and presented them in a way that made sense and fit the described research question and methods.

Moreover, the conclusions presented in this thesis constitute indications of what the majority of the Monkoxt may believe in regards to the autonomy project. However, the results cannot be generalized as they are based on eleven interviews, certainly not enough to represent the whole population of Lomerío. Nevertheless, the results presented open the possibility of new research projects, with more interviewees, to see if the results outlined in this thesis are applicable to the general Monkoxi nation, other indigenous groups in Bolivia, and even Latin America.

I do not believe this diminishes the validity of my conclusions. But I also do not claim that this thesis in any way represents the "truth" on the Monkoxt's views of autonomy. I do hope to add my voice to the conversation about the meaning of indigenous autonomy in Bolivia and Latin America, hopefully presenting a more nuanced view of the issue, and particularly illuminating the inherent power dynamics that exist within indigenous communities and that further marginalize certain groups who have less power and representation, such as women.

Most of all, I hope this thesis can be useful for those seeking to learn about the

15

autonomy regime in Bolivia, with the goal of supporting indigenous peoples' struggle to gain control over their territories, protect and revitalize their languages and their cultures, without forgetting the inequalities that exist within these communities. As stated by anthropologist Deborah D'Amico-Samuels (2010):

> Our translation of the experiences of the world's exploited peoples into language understood by those with access to greater power than themselves is useful only insofar as it prompts us to ask questions about the nature of this power in our lives and work and as it spurs our contribution to attempts to alter the global balance of power responsible for their poverty and oppression. (pg. 69).

<u>Positionality</u>

My view on indigenous autonomy, and my interest in the topic, has definitely been influenced by my political beliefs and my experiences as a white, European woman from a stateless nation.

I identify as a white/Hispanic woman from the Catalan nation, currently under the Spanish state. Spain is a state of autonomies. The establishment of the autonomy system in the late 1970s, after the death of the fascist dictator Francisco Franco[18], certainly brought hope to those who, in *Catalunya*, wanted to have further capacities to govern themselves as a nation, protecting their culture and revitalizing their language. However, there is currently a deep disappointment towards autonomy in *Catalunya*, which I feel too. Autonomy in Spain has become a tight corset that grants certain governmental capacities to Catalan people while never recognizing their nationhood or their right to self-determination.

When I first started studying indigenous autonomy, I regarded the issue as a great success of indigenous peoples throughout Latin America. I particularly admired the achievements of indigenous Bolivians, who had their self-determination rights recognized and instituted in the 2009 Constitution. However, as I delved into the topic, I started seeing similarities with the disappointments my own people have had with autonomy. The parallels I can draw with the Catalan case have certainly prompted me to analyze autonomy with a more critical lens than I might have had otherwise.

---

[18] See Preston (2015).

My identity as a Catalan person became double-edged when conducting research in Bolivia. One the one hand, it allowed me to establish connections with members of the Monkoxt community. As the members of older generations, Spanish is my second language, and I used to be made fun of for speaking it with an accent. Moreover, interviewees would tell me about how their parents and grandparents, in school, were scolded and beaten for speaking Bésiro, their language, instead of Spanish. My parents had similar experiences growing up, which I talked about with some interviewees, establishing a common grown.

On the other hand, however, these experiences did not erase the power dynamics present due to my privilege: although I come from a working class background, I grew up as a white woman in Europe, with privileges and possibilities available to me that my interviewees could never enjoy. Moreover, even if I don't identify as such, I am from Spain, which still carries a heavy weight in Bolivia. My ancestors participated in the plundering and exploitation of the Monkoxi people. Moreover, when I first arrived in Lomerío, I was travelling with a group of women from the United States, who are also identified with the economic exploitation of Bolivia.

This power dynamics were certainly present in my relationship with my interviewees. I worked to create close personal relationships with them, so that we could discuss these issues freely. While certainly not erasing them, being able to discuss these power differences with the interviewees that brought them up certainly facilitated our communication and connection as individuals.

My experiences doing research as a woman were also double-edged. On the one hand, it facilitated my interviews with men, even if there were a few uncomfortable moments. Men did not feel threatened by my questions or my presence in community and CICOL meetings, since as a woman I was presumed to be innocent and harmless. They also wanted to support me in my work and to protect me, as they thought it was their duty as good hosts and as men. There were a few uncomfortable moments in which men did not fully respect my personal boundaries or sought to turn our relationship into something I did not want it to be. However, I never felt in danger or personally threatened, although I did feel uncomfortable, and that certainly added difficulty and tension to my research.

My work with men, and their attitudes, did however make establishing relationships with women difficult. They did perceive me as a threat. I believe that to be because I was not married, and I spent time alone with men, something uncommon in Monkoxi culture for an unmarried woman of my age. However, by participating in community events and having open, honest conversations, I connected with some of the women, which allowed me to establish good relationships with other women in the community.

CHAPTER II

AUTONOMY FROM THE STATE'S PERSPECTIVE

In this chapter, I will show that the drafting of the 2009 Bolivian Constitution was extremely contentious. Three main actors participated in the process: (1) *social movement organizations*, represented by Evo Morales' MAS party; (2) *identity based indigenous organizations*; and (3) *Media Luna elites*. These three groups collided to defend their own view of the Bolivian nation. MAS and *identity based indigenous organizations* wanted to deeply transform Bolivia by drafting a revolutionary Constitution. *Media Luna elites*, however, wanted to maintain the *status quo* and gain more political and economic control over their departments.

Autonomy was a particularly crucial issue for indigenous organizations and *Media Luna elites*. However, they had opposing understandings of what autonomy meant and how it should re-shape the Bolivian State. *Identity based indigenous organizations* wanted to implement an autonomy system that allowed indigenous nations to govern and manage the resources of their ancestral territories through their traditional norms and customs. *Media Luna elites* opposed this vision, and mobilized to institute an autonomy system that granted more regional autonomy to departments and that benefitted their economic interests. Although MAS supported the indigenous groups' view of autonomy, they did not consider it a nonnegotiable issue. At several points during the Constituent process, MAS chose to ally with the right-wing, *Media Luna elites*, a tactic that generated disappointment in indigenous organizations.

The final 2009 Constitution, which was approved by the Bolivian people in a referendum, reflects these tensions and conflicting visions. The new Constitution certainly breaks with Bolivian republicanism, and establishes the mandate of decolonizing the State's structures. It openly calls for a transition from a traditional liberal model to a plurinational model. However, the *Magna Carta* doesn't fully embody the hopes of *identity based indigenous organizations*. While the Constitution does recognize indigenous autonomies, it limits their political scope and indigenous people's capacity to manage the natural resources that exist in their territories.

Moreover, the implementation of the autonomy system has also reflected the conflicting ideologies within the MAS government. Expanding the power of the central state and the implementation of developmentalist policies have become the priorities of the Morales administration. The MAS government, particularly during its second administration, has shown that it will sacrifice the decentralization of the state through indigenous autonomies if it threatens its hold on regional power.

The Demand for a Constituent Assembly – Alliances, Opposition, and Conflicting Views of Autonomy

Shortly after his election, Evo Morales called for a Constituent Assembly to write a new *Carta Magna.* The new Constitution was to start a deep reconfiguration of the Bolivian State, in President Morales' words, "to close the doors to racism, to discrimination and to exclusion, by starting to build a Plurinational, intercultural State that is authentically democratic and is founded on the cultural plurality of our motherland"[19] ("Constitución Política del Estado*,"* 2009, pg. 3).

There were three main actors that impacted the process of the Constituent Assembly and the drafting of the 2009 Bolivian Constitution: (1) a broad base of social movements –which would become the founders and main constituency of Evo Morales' party, MAS–, (2) identity based indigenous organizations, and (3) the Santa Cruz elites, which built an alliance with the bourgeoisie of other lowland provinces, known as the *Media Luna*.

(1) A Social Movements' Assembly

The 1980s were an incredibly transformative decade for Bolivia's economy. In 1982, former dictator and army general Hugo Banzer was democratically elected to the presidency. He put together an economic team composed of technocrats and members of the mining and finance sectors, as well as business owners. Banzer and his economic team implemented neoliberal structural adjustment policies, which his successor, Víctor Paz Estenssoro, continued to apply after 1985. Paz Estenssoro appointed Gonzalo

---

[19] Translated by the author.

Sánchez de Lozada as his Planning Minister, which meant that Lozada would be the head of economic policy in the Bolivian government. Sánchez de Lozada was an outspoken advocate of austerity and neoliberal policies, and secured the collaboration of American economist Jeffrey Sachs to transform Bolivia's economy (Postero, 2007).

As explained by Derrick Hindery (2013):

In the mid-1980s, Bolivia became kind of a living laboratory for Harvard economist Jeffrey Sachs to test the ideas of structural adjustment and neoliberal trade rules. These reached fruition in the mid-1990s, as   privatization of state sectors, large-scale enclosures, massive reductions of state employment, deregulation, decentralization, and free trade policies were implemented through a sharp recession, increasing inequality and contraction of state services. (Hindery, 2013, pg. xi)

Sánchez de Lozada's policies were effective in halting hyperinflation, but at a huge social costs. The enormous cuts on the state apparatus and industries implemented by de Lozada led to massive layoffs and a sharp increase in poverty levels. The effects on Bolivian society were deep and all-encompassing: "one striking result of the massive layoffs was the migration of the *relocalizados* [relocated] to urban zones in El Alto, Cochabamba, and Santa Cruz, as well as to the coca-growing Chapare region, where coca cultivation tripled in the late 1980s" (Postero, 2007, pg. 126).

By 1993, Gonzalo Sánchez de Lozada –nicknamed 'Goni'–, was elected president of the Republic. With the support of international funders, 'Goni' and Sacks extended the application of neoliberal structural adjustment policies. They completely abandoned the import substitution model that had characterized Bolivia's economy until the early 1980s, even when the social impacts such economic transformations were having were obvious (Webber, 2008a).

By the mid-2000s, a wide variety of groups had sprung throughout Bolivia opposing de Lozada's neoliberal policies and their effects. I will call these groups *social movement organizations*. They were incredibly diverse and included, for example, *cocalero* trade unions[20] –where Evo Morales would start his political career– or

---

[20] For more on coca growers' unions, their origins and influence, see Malá (2008).

neighborhood associations[21]. These organizations would become founders and the main constituency of the MAS party. Many of their members identified as indigenous, deployed indigeneity as a mobilizing weapon, and supported indigenous autonomy. However, their main goals weren't tied to their ethnic identity: they came together to reject de Lozada's neoliberal policies and their social effects. They demanded the transformation of the state's political structures, and wanted a better distribution of Bolivia's resources and wealth –highly privatized since the 1980s– and more political representation. They embraced the demand of a Constituent Assembly to revolutionize the Bolivian state, and although they supported indigenous autonomy, they did not consider it a nonnegotiable issue. Their main goal was to establish a political system that represented and defended the rights of the most marginalized citizens of the Bolivian nation. Trade unions and neighborhood associations saw the drafting of a new Constitution as a tool to reform the political and economic system of the country, particularly to reverse the neoliberal policies that had been applied to Bolivia since the early 1980s.

Paradigmatic of this movement was the conflict over the privatization of water that took place in the early 2000s in Cochabamba. The radical liberalization of the country's economy had terrible effects in Bolivia's countryside. Incapable of competing with cheaper foreign products, thousands of farmers and herders went bankrupt and were forced to migrate *en masse* to urban centers such as Cochabamba (Postero, 2007). The city massively grew due to the mounting numbers of displaced immigrants that arrived looking to find subsistence, normally in the informal economy. Many of them settled in areas without basic services, where they dug their own water wells and formed cooperatives.

However, president Hugo Banzer had passed a law allowing the privatization of water supplies, which the city of Cochabamba took advantage of. The concession was granted to *Aguas del Tunari,* a company owned by the French Bechtel. By April of 2002, massive demonstrations occurred: "a successful alliance between urban workers, rural peasant irrigators, members of local water collectives, students, and ordinary *Cochabambinos* was formed, calling itself the *Coordinadora en Defensa de[l] Agua y la*

---

[21] For more on neighborhood associations, see Albó (2008a).

Vida (Coalition in Defense of Water and Life)" (Postero, 2007, pg. 194). Although the police tried to repress the huge demonstrations, the protesters built barricades and fought back, with dozens wounded and even one person killed. The government was forced to retreat and cancel the contract with *Aguas del Tunari.*

The *Coordinadora* had several demands, among them calling a Constituent Assembly. Oscar Olivera, the *Coordinadora's* most visible leader, stated:

> The Constituent Assembly… should be understood as a great sovereign meeting of citizen representatives elected by their neighborhood organizations, their urban and rural associations, their unions, their communes. There, citizen representatives would bring with them ideas and projects concerning how to organize the political life of the country. They would seek to define the best way of organizing and managing the common good, the institutions of society, and the means that would unite the different individual interests in order to form a great collective national interest [...]. (Webber, 2008b, pg. 84).

As this quote shows, social movement organizations called for a Constituent Assembly, just as identity based indigenous organizations would do. However, their core demands diverged: social movement organizations' main goals related to extending more economic rights to vulnerable Bolivians, and to reforming the political system; although many of them identified as indigenous, their claims centered on economic and political claims based on Bolivian citizenship, not ethnic identity. Autonomy was not a central or nonnegotiable demand for this sector. On the other hand, identity based indigenous organizations wanted a Constituent Assembly to have their rights as indigenous nations, based on their ethnic identity, recognized and expanded.

The first time these tensions erupted was in the design of the Constituent Assembly. After his election in 2005, Evo Morales started negotiations to determine when and where the assembly would be held, and the election procedures to elect representatives to the Constituent Assembly. MAS did not have a majority in the Senate and Morales chose to negotiate with the far right elites, mostly from Santa Cruz (Webber, 2008b). Together, the far right and MAS opposed the identity based indigenous organizations' demand that indigenous organizations could elect delegates though their own traditional norms and procedures. MAS prioritized establishing an electoral system that guaranteed their party's control of the assembly. They passed an electoral law that

starkly limited the number of indigenous delegates that could attend the Assembly, as it was based on political party membership (Postero, 2017).

Moreover, and to gain the vote of the far right, the electoral law for the Constituent Assembly had a:

> Dramatically disproportional clause built into the assembly law which ensured that the process would not lead to structural reforms, never mind revolutionary change: in each electoral district the party or organization that comprised the relative majority could only send two representatives, according to a curious 'minority protection' rule. In accordance with this resolution, even if a party secures 75 percent of the votes in its district, as long as one of the minority parties receives more than 5 percent, this latter party will get the 'third' minority representative as long as one of the minority parties receives more than 5 percent, this latter party will get the 'third' minority representative. This clause assured not so much the 'plurality' proclaimed at the time, as a means to assure representation for a small minority of ad hoc right-wing organizations with some local clout. Without this clause, these groups would not attain representation in the assembly. (as cited in Webber 2008b, pg. 85).

MAS' prioritization of their electoral and political interests, far from disappearing, would continue to appear during the Constitution's drafting and in MAS' management of indigenous autonomy.

(2) An Indigenous Assembly

In the 1980s, indigenous federations formed throughout Bolivia to oppose neoliberal policies and to claim a wider set of rights for indigenous nations[22]. I call these groups *identity based indigenous organizations* because they organized on the basis of indigenous identity, whether it was belonging to the Aymara or Quechua nations in the highlands, or the Guaraní or Chiquitano nations in the lowlands, for example. Their members identified as indigenous, and their goals and claims were based on their indigeneity. In the early 2000s, social movement organizations would also appear and proudly proclaimed their indigenous roots, as explained it the prior section. However, their main organizing principle wasn't indigeneity, and although they may have supported indigenous demands, their main goals related to and expansion of economic rights and political representation.

---

[22] See Albó (2008a).

The identity based coalitions that started to form in the 1980s not only demanded the recognition of indigenous cultures and languages, they also claimed the right of indigenous nations to control and govern their ancestral territories. For the first time, and thanks to the support of international NGOs, identity based indigenous organizations used the language of international human rights to support their claims: they cited the 169 Indigenous and Tribal Peoples Convention passed by the ILO in 1989, and the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples[23].

Paradigmatic of this movement was the *Marcha por el Territorio y la Dignidad* (March for Territory and Dignity), which took place in 1990. More than 800 men, women, and children walked for 34 days from the Beni province in the lowlands to the capital, La Paz, to claim their right to govern their ancestral territories[24]. They believed that to achieve their goals, a Constituent Assembly had to be called to redefine the Bolivian state and its relationship to its indigenous citizens. They envisioned the creation of indigenous autonomies, in which indigenous nations governed themselves through their traditional norms and customs, and fully managed the natural resources present in their lands. Indigenous autonomies would become, in their view, the basis of the new plurinational Bolivia (McNeish 2002).

The mobilizations and strength showed by identity based indigenous organizations successfully pressured the Bolivian government. In the mid-1990s, President Gonzalo Sánchez de Lozada –nicknamed 'Goni'–, reformed the Bolivian Constitution, declaring the country a multiethnic and pluricultural nation[25]. Moreover, article 171 of the new Constitution established that:

> the social, economic, and cultural rights of the indigenous peoples who inhabit the national territory are recognized, respected, and protected within this legal framework, especially the rights to their communal lands of origin, guaranteeing the use and sustainable exploitation of natural resources, and to their identity, values, languages, customs and institutions" (cited in Postero, 2007, pg. 52).

---

[23] See "Indigenous and Tribal Peoples Convention" (1989) and the "United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples" (n.d).

[24] For more on the *Marcha por el Territorio y la Dignidad,* see Albó (2008a).

[25] See Albó (2008b).

Sánchez de Lozada also passed a law establishing the *Instituto Nacional de Reforma Agraria* (National Institute of Agrarian Reform) known as INRA. The law established a legal path for indigenous people to gain collective titling for their ancestral territories, and expanded their capacity to govern them through the municipal system. The titled communal lands, governed by a municipal government, came to be known as TCOs, *Territorios Comunitarios de Origen* (Communal Lands of Origin) (Postero, 2007). However, the implementation of INRA was slow and indigenous nations, particularly in the lowlands, had great difficulties having their territories recognized as TCOs: it took the Monkoxt of Lomerío almost 10 years to have their territory recognized as a *Territorio Comunitario de Origen* (Flores Gonzales, 2018).

However, the TCO status wasn't enough to fulfill the desire of self-government and self-determination that identity based indigenous organizations desired. In the early 2000s, representatives from highland and lowland organizations came together to form the *Pacto de Unidad* (Unity Pact), an alliance of indigenous and peasant federations[26]. They met in 2004 to continue to demand a Constituent Assembly that would recognize their historical rights as indigenous nations (Postero, 2017). They published a Declaration that articulated "a theoretical perspective of plurinationalism that transcends the model of the liberal and monocultural state based on the individual citizen and specifically identifies the creation of indigenous autonomies as the key mechanism for the construction of a plurinational state[27]" (Tockman & Cameron, 2014, pg. 48). For the *Pacto*, autonomy was the key to transitioning from a neoliberal, multicultural state, to a plurinational system in which autonomies would have the same legal status as the central government.

According to the *Pacto de Unidad*'s proposal, once autonomies had been constituted, indigenous peoples would elect their political representatives through their traditional *usos y costumbres*[28] (norms and customs). They would design their own judicial systems, and would have complete control over their land and resources, both renewable and nonrenewable. Only after indigenous autonomies had been constituted

---

[26] See Garcés (2010).

[27] For more on plurinational states, see Tockman & Cameron (2014).

[28] For more on traditional norms and customs, see Eisenstadt (2013).

would the territorial administrative map be redesigned, with the central state having a mediating role and no power to overturn the decisions made by autonomies (Garcés, 2010). In the new administrative map, departments would lose importance and would have no autonomy of their own, as autonomy would be reserved for indigenous nations living in their ancestral territories. Indigenous autonomies would therefore be the foundation of the state, with the central apparatus only coming after the decentralized, indigenous-controlled entities, and with very little power over them. These goals were clearly expressed in the *Pacto*'s proposal, particularly in the following points that were presented to the Constituent Assembly:

1. As originary indigenous nations and peoples we propose a Unitary Plurinational State, Pluricultural and Multilingual. The constitution of this Plurinational State implies redefining our country, which historically has been organized in a colonial fashion and has privileged the oligarchic elites of the country. The Plurinational State has to be based on the participation of the originary indigenous nations and peoples in all the tiers of the state structure and in the government of our country.

2. Constitution of *Autonomías Territoriales Indígenas Originarias y Campesinas* [autonomies] through which the country will be territorially reorganized. We recognize the existence of Intercultural Urban Autonomies. On the basis of these territorial tiers regions will be reconstituted.

3. Recuperation and full exercise of the Property of our Natural Resources [sic], both renewable and nonrenewable, in our self-determined territories as originary indigenous nations and peoples. The management and distribution of the benefits of Natural Resources will be based on the principles of solidarity and reciprocity that characterize the life of our communities.

4. Recognition of the originary judicial systems within the principle of judicial pluralism that will characterize the Plurinational State.

5. Recuperation of indigenous and originary Authority over the land and the territories ancestrally occupied by indigenous, peasant, and originary peoples, to redistribute them fairly, considering gender equality and equity principles. Administration and use of our land and resources through the traditional norms of our communities.[29] (Garcés, 2010, pg. 49).

---

[29] Translated by the author.

(3) No Constituent Assembly: Santa Cruz's Departmental Autonomy

By the early 2000s Bolivia's social movements had grown and transformed. A strong coalition of identity based indigenous organizations, *cocalero* trade unions, neighborhood associations, miners' unions, peasant organizations, etc. had built a powerful alliance that would shift the center of Bolivia's politics.

During that time, however, the economic center of Bolivia had also shifted from the mining centers at the west of the country to the growing agro-businesses and large *haciendas* in the Eastern lowlands. These lowland departments –Pando, Tarija, Beni and Santa Cruz– came to be known as the *Media Luna* (because of their geography), with the Santa Cruz department becoming the richest, and its capital, Santa Cruz de la Sierra, the main economic hub of Bolivia (Webber, 2008a).

The *Media Luna* provinces, and Santa Cruz in particular, had a unique economic history. The Agrarian Reform Law passed after the 1953 Revolution had led to land distribution and the growth of small land-holdings in the highlands. However, it had had the opposite result in the lowlands. As explained by the Monkoxt indigenous writers Peña, Tubari, Chuvé, Choré, & Ipi (2016), the Agrarian reform law didn't recognize communal property, which led to indigenous lands being expropriated and redistributed in an individual basis, "therefore contributing to the expansion of cattle ranching and the subjugation of indigenous families under *patrones* and landowners."[30] (Peña, Tubari, Chuvé, Choré, & Ipi 2016, pg. 23).

In the 1970s, the land concentration process continued, while the *Media Luna* departments' were economically growing with the application of the Bohan Plan. The plan proposed economic diversification, monetary stabilization and import substitution policies of basic agricultural commodities, particularly in the Santa Cruz region[31]. The central government also implemented highway projects that connected the Chapare region and Santa Cruz de la Sierra to the highlands, and "awarded large land concessions to individuals and agribusinesses –almost 10 million hectares in Santa Cruz alone [...] Agricultural programs supervised by the U.S. Agency for International Development

---

[30] Translated by author.

[31] For more on the Bohan plan, see Crabtree (2005).

28

(USAID), made credit, fertilizer, seed, and machinery available to Santa Cruz oligarchy"
(Postero, 2007, pg. 47).

In the 1980s the region saw an even more dramatic economic growth. As stated
by Benjamin Kohl (2010) "Santa Cruz thrived under neoliberalism's privileging of
private capital, quickly becoming the fastest growing part of one of South America's
poorest countries" (Kohl, 2010, pg. 109). By the early 2000s, Santa Cruz generated 40%
of Bolivia's export revenues and 42% of its tax revenues. As a department, Santa Cruz
attracted –and still does– more foreign direct investments that any other region in the
country, and when it comes to Gross National Product, Santa Cruz still leads the country
in electricity and gas production, industrial manufacturing, commerce, finance and
agricultural profits (Webber, 2008b).

However, the growth of left-wing social movement organizations and Evo
Morales' MAS party in the early 2000s represented a challenge for the Santa Cruz and
Media Luna elites. If ever elected to office, Morales and his allies had promised to
reverse the neoliberal policies that had proved so beneficial for the Santa Cruz
bourgeoisie. Moreover, the *Media Luna* elites also felt threatened by the growing strength
of identity based indigenous organizations.

In their case, their fears centered on lowland organizations such as CIDOB, the
Confederación de los Pueblos Indígenas de Bolivia (Confederation of the Indigenous
Peoples of Bolivia)*,* and their Monkoxt affiliate, CICOL, the *Central Indígena de
Comunidades Originaras de Lomerío* (Indigenous Central of the Originary Communities
of Lomerío). Both organizations were building alliances in the lowlands and the
highlands to push for the implementation of indigenous autonomies, which could have
directly threatened the large *haciendas* and land holdings that Santa Cruz's elite
depended on.

Under these circumstances, the Santa Cruz elites, traditionally divided, came
together under two main organizations, the FEPB-SC and the CPSC (Eaton, 2007). The
FEPB-SC, the *Federación de Empresarios Privados de Bolivia – Santa Cruz* (Federation
of Private Entrepreneurs of Bolivia, Santa Cruz), represented a wide array of business
organizations in Santa Cruz, including the CAO (Eastern Agricultural and Cattle

Chamber), the *Federación de Ganaderos* (Cattle Ranchers' Federation) or the *Cámara de Hidrocarburos* (Hydrocarbons Chamber).

The CPSC, the *Comité Pro-Santa Cruz* (Pro Santa Cruz Committee) became the political tool of the Santa Cruz elites, and the organization through which they first promoted, in the early 2000s, their proposal for departmental autonomy. As explained by Eaton:

> The various fractions of the *cruceño* capitalist class have been able to close ranks under the banner of autonomy, where autonomy is generally understood to mean (1) regional control over natural resources (e.g. land, timber, gas, and oil), (2) the right to retain control over two-thirds of all tax revenues generated in the department, and (3) authority to set all policies other than defense, currency, tariffs, and foreign relations. (Eaton, as cited in Webber 2008b, pg. 90).

The departmental autonomy model proposed by the Santa Cruz elites would surpass by far any autonomy model in Latin America. It would dramatically limit the central government's capacity to redistribute wealth, therefore having a negative effect on non-elite actors in Santa Cruz (Eaton, 2007). Moreover, their autonomy proposal challenged the autonomy demands made by indigenous groups. Departmental autonomy, as envisioned by *Media Luna* elites, would make the application of indigenous autonomy impossible.

The departmental autonomy project, however, has successfully co-opted certain non-elite civil society organizations and trade unions, and promoted the growth of sympathizer organizations, including the proto fascist youth league UJC, the *Unión Juvenil Cruceñista* (Cruceño Youth Union)[32]. The alliance with far-right actors can be understood when considering that "current autonomy demands deploy an explicitly racist discourse: highland valley indigenous peoples are identified as backward and the source of Bolivia's poverty, while the 'whiter' eastern lowlands are symbols of modernity, economic dynamism, and promises of a brighter future" (Kohl, 2010, pg. 109-110).

The racism underpinning the departmental autonomy project is based on a mythology about the particularism of lowland history. According to this mythology, the

---

[32] For more on the *Unión Juvenil Cruceñista* (Cruceño Youth Union), see Eaton (2007).

inhabitants of the lowlands, the *cambas*, have a whiter heritage than the *collas*, the indigenous inhabitants of the highlands:

> Militant *cambas* describe '*camba*-ness' as if it were a goal-directed zeitgeist unfolding in Bolivian history, born of the original synthesis of two noble *razas* [races]. One side of the lineage is emblematized by the white Spanish conquistador, the other by the dusky tropical (*not* Andean) indigenous maiden. (Lowrey, as cited in Webber, 2008b, pg. 89).

The racist *camba* discourse is reproduced even by members of lowland indigenous nations that defend indigenous autonomy and oppose the Santa Cruz elites. That is the case of Julio. Julio is a member of the Monkoxt community. He has worked with CICOL, the Monkoxt's main indigenous organization, since the early 1980s. He is a passionate defender of indigenous autonomy. Although he criticizes Santa Cruz's elites, he shares their racism against highland indigenous immigrants. When asked about the Monkoxt's relationship with highland indigenous people, *collas,* he explains that they don't have a good relationship, since:

> In the last years the highlanders are trying to invade our territory, they are leaving the highlands to come occupy our lands here in the Orient. And they come with a very different mindset from our own. They want to divide up the land and sell it. While we are trying to preserve it, they only want to sell it, buy cars, Volvos... And the *colla* women... they are bad.[33]

In 2003, the alliance between *social movement organizations* and *identity based indigenous organizations* was able to overthrow neoliberal president Gonzalo Sánchez de Lozada. His Vice-President, Carlos Mesa, assumed the presidency, but his administration would only last 2 years. In 2003 the electoral strength of Evo Morales' party, MAS, was undeniable, and his election to the Bolivian presidency seemed only a matter of time. The Santa Cruz elites, through CPSC, the *Comité Pro-Santa Cruz* (Pro Santa Cruz Committee), organized two massive demonstrations in support of departmental autonomy. The first one took place in June of 2004, and the second one in January of 2005. The second demonstration was particularly relevant, since the organizers claimed that over 350,000 people demonstrated in Santa Cruz, in the biggest demonstration of Bolivia's history (Eaton, 2007).

---

[33] Interview with the author, translated. San Lorenzo de Lomerío, 07.11.2018

During the months between the two demonstrations, the CPSC also collected over 500,000 signatures in favor of departmental autonomy, holding additional strikes and protests to try to force the government to hold a referendum on departmental autonomy. They wanted their autonomy proposal to be made into law before Evo Morales could be elected and could transform the country's political system, possibly also implementing the indigenous autonomy model organizations like the *Pacto de Unidad* were campaigning for.

The massive mobilizations and protests organized by CSPC successfully pressured interim President Carlos Mesa, who agreed to two sets of elections. First, he accepted to jointly hold, with presidential and legislative elections, the first direct election of regional prefects in Bolivia's history. As explained by Benjamin Kohl (2010):

> This shifted political power –at least discursively– from the central state to the regions and fed conflict because the new position's competencies, powers and procedures have not been clearly defined. When right-wing prefects won five of the country's nine departments, [...] they wasted no time in agitating for the collapse of what they perceived as a hostile, even communist government. (pg. 110).

The government Kohl is referring to is Evo Morales' government, who was elected President at the same time as the right-wing prefects.

The prefects successfully pressured Morales to keep Mesa's second promised vote: a nationwide referendum on departmental autonomy. Morales not only agreed to fulfill Mesa's promise but he added another vote to the same date, July 2nd of 2006: the election of representatives for the Constituent Assembly (Eaton, 2007).

The departmental autonomy referendum became a victory for Morales and MAS: even though 71% of voters in Santa Cruz supported departmental autonomy, a majority of Bolivians, 56%, rejected the departmental model, giving Morales a chance to initiate – and control– a debate on autonomy during the Constituent Assembly (Eaton, 2007).

<u>The Constituent Assembly– Conflicts, Violence, and Concessions</u>

The Assembly met between August 6, 2006, and December 15, 2007. MAS delegates were elected to a large number of seats, 137 of 255, while *Media Luna* parties

that supported departmental autonomy occupied a majority of the leftover seats. (Schilling-Vacaflor, 2011). The Assembly was contentious from the beginning. Violent protests erupted in the streets several times during the negotiations, and the commissions in charge of writing articles related to land reform, autonomy and indigenous rights faced stark divisions and conflicts (Postero, 2017).

It was clear from the outset that the right-wing *Media Luna* parties that supported departmental autonomy would not hesitate to use their veto power in the assembly and to protest in the streets to achieve their goals. The first major confrontation came shortly after the start of the Assembly. MAS declared that "the 'two-thirds' rule of the Constituent Assembly would only apply to the final text of the draft constitution at the end of the process, whereas the decisions leading up to the final text would be determined by simple majority" (Webber, 2008b, pg. 85).

The CPSC, outraged with the decision, declared itself in state of emergency and Tuto Quiroga, the leader of the right-wing PODEMOS party, presented one of many appeals to the Bolivian Supreme Court claiming that Morales and MAS were using the Constituent Assembly to stage a power grab. With the support of CPSC, PODEMOS joined other *Media Luna* parties to hold massive demonstrations against the assembly in *Media Luna* provinces. These demonstrations erupted to violence in several occasions, with the burning of the seats of non-profit and indigenous organizations (Postero, 2017).

By December of 2006, "the civic committees of Beni, Pando, Tarija, and Santa Cruz issued an ultimatum to the government, threatening to declare *de facto* autonomy if the government refused to bend to their demands" (Webber, 2008b, pg. 85). Although Vice-President García Linera was able to reach an agreement on procedures with *Media Luna* parties, the conflicts continued: in May 2008 the *Media Luna* departments organized an illegal referendum on departmental autonomy, parallel to the Constituent Assembly negotiations. Their goal was to force the Assembly to recognize their autonomy demands and reject the indigenous autonomy project. The voting day generated tensions and conflicts between supporters of departmental autonomy and indigenous organizations that supported the indigenous autonomy model, particularly in Santa Cruz.

Meanwhile, MAS supporters and lowland indigenous organizations also held massive demonstrations in the streets and staged hunger strikes against the departmental autonomy project of the *Media Luna* elites. Tensions reached a high point when in the *Media Luna* department of Pando, eleven MAS supporters were assassinated while protesting in favor of their party's position in the Constituent Assembly. The national trauma this event generated forced all parties back to the negotiation table, and procedural agreements were finally reached.

MAS, however, made important concessions on land reform, the scope of indigenous autonomy, and they also granted *Media Luna* departments limited autonomy. (Postero, 2017). The Constitution would also include protections for private property (Article 56) and *latifundios* (Article 315, 399) (Regalsky, 2010). The concessions made by MAS mostly related to the goals that had been defended by identity based indigenous organizations, which didn't have much strength in the Assembly.

Firstly, the electoral law passed by MAS and right-wing parties, as explained in former sections, had debilitated their representation. Secondly, most MAS delegates belonged to social movement organizations such as *cocalero* unions. Identity based indigenous organizations had far fewer representatives within MAS, which gave them less strength in pushing their demands forward during the drafting of the Constitution (Schilling-Vacaflor, 2011).

MAS chose to prioritize the interests of social movement organizations, their main supporters and founders, and sacrificed some of the key demands of their allies, the identity based indigenous organizations. The tensions between social movement organizations and identity based indigenous organizations were obvious during the Constituent Assembly. As stated by Almut Schilling-Vacaflor:

> While the priority of the indigenous lowland and Ayllu organizations[34]
> [highland identity based indigenous organizations] was to achieve the creation
> of strong self-governed entities (with respect to land rights and to natural
> resources) and secure direct representation in state institutions, the MAS party

[34] Ayllus are pre-Inca, social, political and administrative units in the Andes, common among the Aymara and Quechua communities, particularly in Bolivia and Peru. Ayllus became the basis of municipalities after Sánchez de Lozada's multicultural reforms in the 1990s, and they are the basis of many municipal autonomies. For more on the ayllu, see Vigiani (2008).

and the peasant organizations aspired to the construction of a new state hegemony and the strengthening of the national level. (Schilling-Vacaflor, 2011 pg. 8).

<u>The 2009 Constitution – Between Classical Liberalism and Plurinationalism</u>

Despite the conflicts and disappointments, the Constituent Assembly was able to agree on a constitutional text that would be passed in a referendum in January 25th of 2009 by a 60% margin (Postero, 2017). The 2009 Constitution certainly represented a break from traditional Bolivian republicanism. It is the first *Magna Carta* in Bolivia's history to recognize the rights of indigenous Bolivians, defining the State, in article 1, as a "unitary social state under the rule of law, plurinational and communitarian, free, independent, sovereign, democratic, intercultural, decentralized, and with autonomies"[35] ("Constitución Política del Estado*,"* 2009, pg. 5). Article 2 is particularly relevant, as it recognizes that the rights of Bolivia's indigenous nations do not emanate from the state, but precede its existence:

> Given the precolonial existence of the nations and indigenous originary peasant peoples and their ancestral control over their territories, their self-determination is guaranteed within the framework of unity of the State, which consists in their right to autonomy, self-government, their culture, and the recognition of their institutions and the consolidation of their territorial entities, following this Constitution and the law.[36] ("Constitución Política del Estado," 2009, pg. 5).

According to Morales, the goal of this Constitution was to "vernacularize" the Western liberal state enabling the transformation of the Bolivian Republic into a decolonized, plurinational nation (Postero, 2017). According to Jason Tockman and John Cameron (2014), who have extensively researched indigenous rights and the autonomy system in Bolivia:

> Plurinationalism has emerged as a way of reconceiving the nation-state, positing a departure from a liberal multicultural framework for constructing state-society relations to a conceptualization of the state as the composite of multiple nations to which greater rights are extended. At plurinationalism's

---

[35] Translated by the author.
[36] Translated by the author.

core, proponents advocate for the broadening of collective rights to peoples whose existence precedes the advent of the colonial and republican state. (pg. 46).

The 2009 Constitution certainly embraces the language of plurinationalism. It tries to reach a balance between the form and principles of a traditional liberal state, while expanding the rights of traditionally marginalized groups, particularly indigenous nations. It breaks with liberal tradition by claiming that the Bolivian nation is not only constituted by individual subjects –citizens– but also by *colectivos*, such as indigenous peoples, intercultural groups and afro-Bolivian communities, who hold rights not only as individual citizens but as members of these groups (article 3, "Constitución Política del Estado," 2009).

However, this equilibrium isn't always easy to find. Juan Carlos Urenda Díaz, lawyer and scholar tied to the land-owning lowland elite in Santa Cruz, claimed that the Constitution, by enshrining the rights of indigenous Bolivians, was discriminating against non-indigenous citizens. According to him, granting privileges to citizens based on their ethnicity contradicted the principles of equality that are the basis of a liberal democratic system, claiming that "'indigenous peoples' right to participate in the benefits of natural resource exploitation (Article 30) is a racial privilege." (Hindery, 2013, pg.166). For conservative parties and the lowland elite, the 2009 Constitution, and its declaration of a plurinational state, represents an attack to their rights as citizens.

Also illuminating is the tension between article 4 and article 8 of the Constitution, as pointed out by Nancy Postero in her article *The Struggle to Create a Radical Democracy in Bolivia* (2010). In a traditionally liberal fashion, "article 4 guarantees 'liberty of religion and spiritual beliefs, in accordance with *cosmovisiones* [literally worldviews] and declares the state independent of all religion" (pg. 72). However, article 8 establishes that the state will promote ethical and moral principles that are in accordance with particular indigenous values such as *ama qhilla, ama llulla, ama suwa* (don't be lazy, don't be a liar, don't be a thief) or *suma qamaña* (*vivir bien* or live well). The inclusion of these ethical principles in the Constitution, first of all, can be essentializing, since it ignores the diverse views and beliefs of indigenous nations and ignores culture's capacity to change and evolve.

Secondly, and more importantly for this discussion, are the contradictions between article 4 and article 8, and the deviation it represents from Western liberalism. Nancy Postero (2017) expresses the contradictions between the desire to adhere to liberal democracy while radically transforming the state when she asks "how can this be a legitimate liberal constitution if it privileges one cultural framework over all others?" (pg. 73) and, "can the liberal nation-state form accommodate the forms of self-government that are at the heart of indigenous communities' demands for decolonization?" (pg. 43).

When it comes to autonomy, the 2009 Constitution accepted some tenets of the *Pacto de Unidad*'s proposal and embraced its plurinational language. However, it substantially modified and reduced the scope of indigenous autonomy that identity based indigenous organizations had envisioned. As a result, the 2009 Constitution is a fundamentally liberal constitution in which indigenous forms of democracy are forced to co-exist, in a subaltern status, with representative liberal democracy, particularly when pertaining to autonomies.

In the final Constitutional text indigenous autonomies are far from the constitutive entities of a decolonized, decentralized, plurinational state: although recognized, the central state retains the power of determining which territories can become indigenous autonomies, imposing liberal election systems rather than respecting traditional norms and procedures for electing representatives, always under state supervision. The Constitution:

> Clearly conditions such recognition on the preservation of the unitary state. Articles 2 and 290 specify that, although the design of indigenous self-governments can be based on indigenous norms and procedures, it must also comply with the Constitution and secondary laws. In this context, AIOCs [autonomies] should be understood as administrative units that comply with and reproduce the unitary state. [...] the Constitution incorporates indigenous modes of governance more deeply into the state structure. (Tockman, Cameron & Plata, 2015, pg. 39).

Moreover, indigenous autonomies will not control the non-renewable resources of their territories. Although the central government will have to consult them before developing an extractive project in their territories, the consultation will be non-binding and can easily be ignored by the central state. In the words of Tockman & Cameron (2015), "Bolivia's new model for indigenous autonomy is similar to other more

established autonomy regimes in Latin America, which provide strong rhethorical [sic] and, in some cases, constitutional recognition of indigenous rights but undermine them in practice" (pg. 48).

<center>Decolonization and Development – A Divided Government</center>

The issues regarding autonomy and its implementation did not end with the drafting of the 2009 Constitution: the Morales government's attitude towards the issue shifted during their first administration, adding yet more complications to indigenous nations pursuing autonomy. The main causes of the shift were the divisions within the Morales government, the extractive policies prioritized by the Morales administration, and the role municipal governments played in consolidating MAS' regional power.

Despite public performances of unity and unconditional embrace of plurinationalism, the Morales administration was never cohesive, and three main ideological trends contended for power and to have their goals set as executive priorities: (1) the *indigenista* sector represented by David Choquehuanca, the Minister of the Exterior; (2) the *populista* group led by Evo Morales; and (3) the *estatista* sector of the classical left represented by Vice President –of the first Morales administration– and social movements' scholar Álvaro García Linera. As stated by Roberto Laserna (2010):

> The discursive analysis of speeches, proposals and decisions made by MAS allow us to characterize it as a *caudillista* movement in which at least three tendencies converge with projects that are not necessarily compatible nor harmonious, united by the personal leadership of Evo Morales.[37] (pg. 39).

<center>*(1) The indigenista sector*</center>

The *indigenista* sector considered that the main goal of the administration was to stage a cultural and democratic revolution. Most Aymara ministers and cabinet officials belonged to this tendency. This group took charge of the country's foreign policy and representation, focusing at home on passing multilingual education laws and constructing

---

[37] Translated by the author.

<center>38</center>

a carefully curated discourse in the media, based on indigenous symbology. As stated by Nancy Postero (2017),

> Choquehuanca and the first MAS minister of education, the Aymara sociologist Félix Patzi, utilized idealized versions of Andean culture to project an indigenous image onto the government's economic projects, arguing that Bolivia's indigenous peoples have solutions to the ills caused by Western capitalism. (pg. 34)

This sector gave Evo Morales the symbolic capital (Bourdieu, 1989) he needed to present himself as an indigenous President that fully represented the rights and interests of the indigenous majority of the country.

The root of the *indigenista* sector's indigenous "credentials" came from its members' involvement with the *Katarista* movement. The origins of this movement can be traced back to the mid-1960s, when Aymara students and intellectuals, many of them studying in La Paz, developed a movement that "linked rural and urban Aymaras, calling for cultural recognition of Indian rights within a 'multicultural' Bolivia" (Postero, 2007, pg.42).

The state that grew out of the 1952 Revolution was a corporatist, liberal state. It incorporated indigenous Bolivians to the political system as individual citizens, as right-holders *vis à vis* the state. Their inclusion in the system was based on assimilation and an elimination of difference, rather than the recognition of indigenous cultures and identities:

> For Indians, this corporatist political system took the form of state sponsored peasant unions, which integrated Indians into the state as producers and not as Indians per se. This meant the official codification of a new social and political category for them: *campesinos*. (Postero, 2007, pg. 38).

The *Katarista* movement rejected this categorization, and was an ideological inspiration for many identity based indigenous organizations in the highlands: it based its mobilization strategies and frames on re-claiming indigeneity as the most salient identity of Aymara Bolivians. By "mobilizing memory" (Farthing & Kohl, 2013, pg. 362), *Kataristas* were able to draw from Bolivia's indigenous, historical heroes such as Túpac Katari. They also referenced past experiences of struggle and liberation, linking them to present issues of lack of representation and economic exploitation. *Katarismo* enacted an

"ethnic ideology not only expressed in its name and heroes [...] [but also] in the revaluation of traditional authorities, in its Aymara-speaking radio shows, and in many other details that remained but were suppressed in peoples collective imaginary."[38] (Albó, 2008a, pg. 38).

The *Katarista* movement became a key actor in peasant struggles against Hugo Bánzer's dictatorship. They formed their own union, the *Sindical Única de Trabajadores Campesinos de Bolivia* (CSUTCB the Unified Federation of Peasant Workers of Bolivia) which would be extremely influential in pushing for recognition of indigenous rights in the 1990s. The union's leader, Felipe Quispe, would play an essential role in the early 2000s uprisings that would bring down the neoliberal government of Gonzalo Sánchez de Lozada.

However, *Katarismo*'s main contribution to Bolivia's politics was bringing to the foreground the 'Indian question.' *Katarismo* provided "a powerful tradition that is counterhegemonic to both liberal (ethnocidal) nation-building projects, and Eurocentric ideals of cultural homogenization and citizenship under a reified form of cultural *mestizaje*" (Sanjinés, as cited in Postero, 2007, pg. 43). The ministers and cabinet members that belonged to this tradition were, therefore, deeply committed to the implementation of a plurinational state and supported the indigenous autonomy project unconditionally.

(2) The Populista Sector

Evo Morales was the main representative of what Laserna (2010) calls the *populista* group. Activists who had played key roles in peasant unions and neighborhood associations –social movement organizations– composed this sector. Whether it was at the forefront or in the second line, they had all been involved in mobilizations such as the Water War in Cochabamba that had brought down Sánchez de Lozada's government in the early 2000s. As stated, the members of this sector were mostly concerned with reversing the economic policies that they considered had harmed their constituencies, rather than pursuing indigenous rights.

---

[38] Translated by author.

Many of them, however, identified as indigenous. Neighborhood associations, for example, were mostly formed by indigenous Bolivians who had emigrated from the countryside to places like El Alto. There, they were faced with having to work in the informal economy to earn a living, with an almost complete lack of basic services. As explained by Xavier Albó (2008a):

> The importance of immigrants from rural origin, many of whom maintain ties with the countryside, has facilitated a stronger relationship and even solidarity between both areas. This [tendency] is mostly visible in El Alto, the poor but also more creative appendix of La Paz, in which 74% [of inhabitants] self-identified as Aymara in the 2001 Census.[39] (pg. 45).

This connection facilitated building an alliance with identity based indigenous organizations. In many cases, members of the *populista* sector supported the goals of identity based indigenous organizations, but they weren't their core demands and did not consider them nonnegotiable, as the Constituent process had already shown.

(3) The Estatista Sector

Finally, there was the group Laserna (2010) calls the *estatista* sector, with Álvaro García Linera in the lead. Those who had been linked to the classical Marxist left before joining MAS composed this sector. The main goal of this group was to transform the relationship between the state and the market to move towards socialism (pg. 39).

To do so, they believed the state had to expand its reach and push for a nationalist industrialization, in which the economic surplus would be equally distributed among the masses. According to their view, the first step was to nationalize the exploitation of natural resources and use the revenues to expand the state and implement a wide range of social programs. Particularly in the first Morales administration, the *estatista* sector was in an enviable position to achieve their goals:

> In fact, we could say that practically all the economy-related ministries are held by members of this tendency, and they are the ones promoting the 'recuperation' of the state companies. [...] This tendency has, therefore, a privileged position in the Morales cabinet, but they also occupy relevant spaces in Congress and especially in the Senate. (Laserna, 2010, pg. 41).

---

[39] Translated by author.

Morales' charismatic leadership and the ideological flexibility of the *populista* tendency allowed for a balancing of the interests of the *estatista* and *indigenista* sectors during the first Morales administration. However, the application of the economic policies designed by the *estatista* sector collided with a full implementation of the autonomy system. These policies consisted on extractive projects based on the exploitation of Bolivia's natural resources. They multiplied the State's revenues, allowing the government to implement the social programs it had promised to its constituency.

In May 2006, the Morales administration 'nationalized' the oil and gas sectors, even sending the army –in a highly publicized strategy– to the gas installations owned by foreign companies (Postero, 2017). It also "sharply raised taxes and royalties on gas producers, and taxed natural gas profits, imposing what are called *impuestos directos a los hidrocarburos* (IDH) [direct taxes on hydrocarbons]" (Postero, 2017). According to data from the Andean Information Network cited by Nancy Postero, the gas and oil companies had kept around 82% of the revenues from their operations in Bolivia. After being forced to renegotiate with the Morales administration, the state retained 54% of these profits (Postero, 2017).

The effects of this law were transformative: governmental income from oil and gas increased from $173 million in 2002 to about $1.57 billion in 2007 (Bolivian Ministry of Hydrocarbons and Energy, as cited in Postero, 2017, pg. 98), which allowed the Bolivian government to eliminate its deficit and even to start running a surplus. The impact on the Bolivian economy was massive:

> Urban unemployment levels fell from 8.1% in 2005 to only 4% in 2013. On the other hand, and referring to the impact of social programs, the National Minimum Salary was raised from 500 Bolivian [pesos] in 2005 to 1,656 Bolivian [pesos] in 2015.[40] (Arze Vargas, 2016, pg. 6).

An important percentage of the new revenues received by the Bolivian government came from the *impuestos directos a los hidrocarburos* (IDH). The revenues of the IDH were used to implement incredibly popular –and publicized– programs, such

---

[40] Translated by author.

as a universal retirement account for senior citizens, cash transfer programs such as the *Juancito Pino* program –1.7 million primary school students receive $28 a year–, and the *Juana Azurduy* program –for expectant and new mothers (Postero, 2017).

These programs became essential for the Morales' administration image, and therefore the government became dependent on the source of their funding: extractivist policies and the exploitation of natural resources. To implement these extractivist policies, the government needed to access and exploit the natural resources present in indigenous territories. A full embrace of a plurinational state model and of the indigenous autonomy system –in which indigenous communities would decide how to manage all natural resources in their territories– would have threatened the government's economic policies, as it would have limited its capacity to implement the extractivist projects it saw fit. When faced with this conflict, the Morales administration chose to protect its extractivist interest, defended by the *populista* and *estatista* sector, and sacrificed its commitment to indigenous autonomy, supported by the *indigenista* sector:

> Facing growing tensions between plurinationalism and the dependence on nonrenewable natural resource exports, the state appears to be leaving behind its support for indigenous autonomy in favor of a model of development focused on the redistribution of state rents from resource extraction (often labeled as neoextractivist; (Veltmeyer 2013) and highly partisan political strategies to control state power. (Tockman & Cameron, 2014, pg. 59).

The TIPNIS case is paradigmatic of this tension, and the government's choice. In 2011, the Morales administration announced its intention to build a highway from Villa Tunari (Cochabamba) to San Ignacio de Mojos in the Beni region, crossing through the protected territory of the TIPNIS, "one of the largest and most diverse tropical reserves and home to sixty-three Moxeño, Yuracaré, and Chimane communities." (Postero, 2017, pg. 122).

The first two sections of the road (on either side, outside of TIPNIS lands) were already under construction although no environmental review had been done, and no consultation process had been organized with the indigenous communities. Although consultations are not binding, they are mandated by the 2009 Constitution. After the scandal broke, the Morales government refused to compromise and said that the road would certainly be built, with Morales himself stating: "I want to tell you, like it or not,

43

we are going to build this road and this administration is going to deliver the Villa Tunari San Ignacio de Mojos highway." (*La Jornada,* 2011, as cited in Postero, 2017, pg. 123).

Faced with an intransigent government, the indigenous organizations CIDOB, the *Confederación de los Pueblos Indígenas de Bolivia* (Confederation of the Indigenous Peoples of Bolivia) and CONAMAQ, *Consejo Nacional de Ayllus y Marcas del Qullasuyu* (National Council of the Ayllus and Marcas of the Qullasuyu) organized a march to La Paz: Morales refused to negotiate with the protesters and in September 25th, 2011, the national police attacked the marchers. According to Bolivia's *Defensor del Pueblo* (ombudsman), the police used disproportionate violence in an action that amounted to human rights violations.

National outrage and international pressure forced the Morales administration to hold the constitutionally mandated referendum. Although most voters supported the construction of the road, Rolando Vilena, the *Defensor del Pueblo:*

> Issued a harsh critique of the consultation process, which he characterized as 'authoritarian, colonialist, and unilateral'. In addition to failing to comply with international requirements for a prior consultation (before financing and construction commitments), to be carried out in good faith and in accordance with indigenous customs and governing structures, [...] the process did not achieve the agreement of all parties, as required by the Plurinational Constitutional Court (TCP), as a condition of its constitutionality. (Postero, 2017, pg. 127).

The TIPNIS case is paradigmatic of the success of the *estatista* sector in setting the priorities of the state, and the sacrifice of indigenous autonomy as a governmental priority. When a confrontation between indigenous rights and the interests of the state took place as it did in the TIPNIS case, the Morales administration opted to protect state power and its interests rather than the rights of indigenous peoples to their land and territory. Members of what Laserna (2010) called the *indigenista* sector resigned after the TIPNIS controversy, and indigenous organizations expressed a sense of betrayal from an administration they had helped get elected.

Vice President García Linera, in his book *Geopolitics of the Amazon: Landed-Patrimonial Power and Capitalist Accumulation* (2012), disassociated the TIPNIS conflict from indigenous rights and demands, and blamed the protests on the foreign

influence of well-meaning environmentalists, who according to him, and however indirectly, served the interests of big capital:

> The most dramatic thing of all is that this planetary farce of a capitalism that is strategically destructive of nature but tactically preserves environmental niches has as the executioners of its plans for capitalist gains an army of well-meaning environmental activists –with salaries paid by multinational companies– that 'preserve' the forests of poor countries and at the end of their work day, deliver to the mega-company an *extraterritorial environmental surplus* that will increase even more the prices of its stock. [...] a tiny portion [of the surplus] goes to the hands of the environmentalists, who long for the continued marginalization of the inhabitants of the forest of some country in the South, such as those in the TIPNIS, and they chase away the State so that it doesn't disturb their 'harmonic' poverty, completing a sinister planetary mechanism of 'environmental capitalist accumulation.'[41] (García Linera, 2012, pg. 88-89).

Morales' argument to defend the TIPNIS road, however, was different from García Linera's and more congruent with his *populista* ideology. The TIPNIS conflict represented a challenge to the power of the state and the capacity the central government had to implement the policies it saw fit in the whole national territory, particularly in areas controlled by indigenous communities. For Morales, the construction of a strong state –and his hold of it–, surpassed any other consideration, as he insinuated in 2011 when he stated that:

> In the Constitution, it says that natural resources belong to the Bolivian people under the administration of the Plurinational State. In some regions, they are trying to generate confusion [...] some of our brothers say that because they have indigenous first peoples' autonomy they are entitled to natural resources. [These], especially hydrocarbons, metal and nonmetal resources, belong to the national government. (*Los Tiempos,* 2011, as cited in Tockman & Cameron, 2014, pg. 54).

<u>Autonomy *versus* State Control – The Case of the Municipalities</u>

The people I interviewed in my time in Lomerío identified one main opposing force to the autonomy process: the political parties elected to the municipality. According to Julio, historical CICOL leader, "those who are used to clinging to political parties are

---

[41] Translated by author.

45

the ones that don't like it [autonomy]."[42] Like Julio, the other interviewees identified personal and political interests behind their opposition. Antonio, who works in the municipality himself but is also involved in CICOL and supports autonomy, agrees with the others: "I see it related to the issue of power. Fear of losing power, their salary, their job. They don't fight for our society as a whole, they fight for themselves and create trouble."[43]

Even MAS supporters and representatives have opposed autonomy and favored the continuity of municipalities. Cameron & Tockman (2014), who have studied the autonomy conversion processes of many indigenous communities both in the highlands and in the lowlands, believe that:

> The reticence of the state towards indigenous autonomy also needs to be understood in the context of the priority the MAS party has put in winning municipal elections as a strategy for building a base of popular support and controlling political power (pg. 61).

As early as 2009, during the elections, MAS supporters falsely stated that converting the municipality into an indigenous autonomy would lead to an increase of local taxes. In the several municipalities where Tockman & Cameron (2014) conducted their research, such as Jesús de Machaca, MAS ran candidates that openly opposed autonomy, and after they got elected, they blocked the autonomy process to effectively extend their terms as mayors and councilors from two to five years. Even Morales himself warned that his government would not work with municipalities where MAS officials weren't elected (*La Prensa* 2010, as cited in Tockman & Cameron, 2014, pg. 57).

The crux of MAS' opposition to autonomy was that in many cases, the statutes that were being drafted rejected liberal democratic elections and favored elections through traditional norms and procedures, which normally involved assemblies: in these systems, political parties would not be allowed to run. That is the case of the Monkoxt of Lomerío, as Luis, a young CICOL representative, explains:

---

[42] Interview with the author, translated. San Lorenzo de Lomerío, 07.11.2018

[43] Interview with the author, translated. San Lorenzo de Lomerío, 07.18.2018

With autonomy all public functionaries are also going to serve 5-year terms [as they do in the municipal system]. Those who will run to become the mayor are not going to be elected through a vote; they are going to be subject to [*someter*] an assembly. Secret [vote], acclamation, that's what we are still discussing. When there are issues with the administration of the autonomous government, an assembly will be called and the man [the mayor] leaves, that's it. That is going to be the change. We are not going to vow [*someter*] to political parties. There is going to be an assembly of the twenty-nine communities, there he is revoked, supported, or he runs again, but it's going to be according to the work that the autonomous government does. [44]

According to Julio, the transformation of the electoral system was one of the reasons behind the autonomy process:

A component of autonomy has a lot to do with the transformation of the system of government in our territory. Because when we titled it [and obtained TCO recognition] we also thought about it, how we should govern ourselves. Although it is true that we have a municipality, they still have the same traditional mentality of the political parties. [45]

For Pedro, an elder in the community, the origin of such transformation doesn't only come from an embrace of traditional decision-making procedures, or even from the TCO process. Sánchez de Lozada, in the mid-90s, passed the *Ley de Participación Popular* (Popular Participation Law) that came to be known as LPP. Its goal was to achieve a:

Decentralizing of a significant percentage of government expenditure to local government budgets, the creation of new opportunities for rural communities to partake in the planning and regulation of local government, and formal recognition of indigenous and popular organizations as political entities with rights. (McNeish, 2002, pg. 229).

The LPP had some positive effects by increasing the representation of indigenous peoples in municipal governments. In the municipal elections of 1995, the first after the law was passed, "more than 500 peasants and *indígenas* were elected as municipal councilors (*concejales*) or, in some cases, mayors. In the 2000 municipal elections, that number rose to over 1,000, or 65 percent of the total number of seats" (Albó and Quispe, 2004, as cited in Albó, 2008a, pg. 27). For Pedro, once they were been able to elect

---

[44] Interview with the author, translated. San Lorenzo de Lomerío, 07.20.2018.

[45] Interview with the author, translated. San Lorenzo de Lomerío, 07.11.2018.

indigenous representatives from Lomerío, they realized that political parties only brought conflict:

> What is always harming us here, inside the TCO, are political colors. That is what divides people, nothing else. Before this there was politics of course, but no one thought it could be different. There weren't any candidates from Lomerío. We could only support candidates that came from political parties in Concepción or Santa Cruz. Nothing else. But nowadays there can be candidates from Lomerío. And you have to look into the specific person, you see? If they are responsible, if they like solidarity, caring for all the communities, because there are a lot of people who want to come in, do their campaign, but it's all for personal interests. Nothing else. They don't work for the communities, they only have personal interests, and that's bad: once they get elected, they forget about the communities.[46]

Antonio defends a similar thesis to Pedro's. Although the LPP allowed for more indigenous representation, it still forced the Monkoxt who wanted to get involved in local politics to run in a political party. For him, in the current system, participating in party politics was inevitable as it was the only way to gain representation in political institutions that have a critical impact on the lives of the Monkoxt. That will change once autonomy is implemented:

> Political parties used to be like ladders. Because if we didn't get in, we didn't have representation. We had to get involved, want it or not. [...] For example now, if autonomy were consolidated, we wouldn't have political parties anymore. And then we shouldn't fight, because we are all indigenous, wouldn't that be better? It's not like in other places, in which there are divisions [...] Here we are all indigenous and most of us are family. Here what we need is not more socialization [of the statute], what we need to do is make everything more participative. Include community members in everything, in everything. So that if some of us get arrested, the fight doesn't have to stop, it can continue.[47]

The fact that these perceptions are enshrined in the Monkoxt statute –and the six studied by Tockman and Cameron (2014)– is a clear challenge to MAS' political power throughout Bolivia. This challenge, together with the need to continue expanding the extractivist policies that have funded the Morales administration's social programs, has effectively led the government to restrict the exercise of autonomy and to impede the full implementation of a true Plurinational State.

---

[46] Interview with the author, translated. San Lorenzo de Lomerío, 07.19.2018

[47] Interview with the author, translated. San Lorenzo de Lomerío, 07.18.2018.

CHAPTER III

THE IMPACT OF THE STATE'S PERSPECTIVE ON THE MONKOXI AUTONOMY

In this chapter, I will analyze how the different views of autonomy that contended at the state level, as described in the prior chapter, impacted the Monkoxt's autonomy process and their autonomy statute, the *Estatuto Autonómico de la Nación Monkoxt de Lomerío* (2015).

After the passing of the 2009 Constitution, Evo Morales' administration designed and passed the LMAD, the *Ley Marco de Autonomías y Descentralización* (Framework Law of Autonomies and Decentralization). The LMAD is the law that regulates the implementation of the autonomy system. I will show that the tensions and contradictions that became apparent in the constituent process resurfaced in the drafting of the LMAD. The law establishes an extremely complex bureaucratic process to access autonomy, and its design shows that the Morales government wanted to avoid a deep reconfiguration of the state.

In the second section of this chapter, *Autonomy and the Monkoxt –A Process vis a vis State Bureaucracy,* I will show that in the case of the Monkoxt, the implementation of the LMAD has been particularly problematic: the CICOL, the organization representing the Monkoxt *vis a vis* the state in the autonomy process, started their process to pursue autonomy before the law was passed. Because of that, they have had to jump even further bureaucratic hurdles to adapt their process to the requirements of the law.

Finally, in the section *The Estatuto Autonómico de Lomerío*, I will analyze how the LMAD impacted the final version of the Monkoxt's statute, showing the sacrifices it demanded from the original draft written by the CICOL in 2015.

The LMAD – Contradictions of a Centralizing State

The contradictions that surfaced and were written into the 2009 Bolivian Constitution are reproduced in the *Ley Marco de Autonomías y Descentralización* (Framework Law of Autonomies and Descentralization) the LMAD, the law set to regulate the decentralization of the Bolivian state and the constitution of indigenous autonomies.

As explained, and according to the 2009 Constitution, indigenous nations have the right to constitute autonomies in their territories and govern themselves through their own traditional norms, customs, and institutions. Not only that, but their capacity to achieve autonomy and govern themselves is an expression of their inalienable right to self-determination, recognized in article 1 of the 2009 Bolivian Constitution ("Constitución Política del Estado", 2009).

However, many indigenous groups and organizations such as CEJIS –a Santa Cruz based NGO that has closely collaborated with the Monkoxt in the autonomy process–, consider that "the Framework Law of Autonomies and Decentralization [LMAD] is an obvious violation of the Constitution, and its contents are even considered as a betrayal of the constitutional process by indigenous groups"[48] (Jiménez Pimentel, 2010, pg. 106).

The LMAD establishes several paths and types of autonomy. Departmental autonomy is relatively easy to achieve, and although it grants more administrative capacities to the department, it does not suppose the creation of a new political entity within the state. This is the type of autonomy that *Media Luna* elites had defended and that Evo Morales had agreed to include in the 2009 Constitution.

However, indigenous autonomies, as defended by identity based indigenous groups, lead to a deeper transformation of the state's structures, and can be constituted in –and then separate from– an autonomous department.

When it comes to indigenous autonomy, the LMAD has prioritized the municipal path, which has come to be known as the "quick" path. The process to achieve this type of autonomy is much shorter and less demanding, probably because once an autonomy is formed, it does not modify the current administrative organization of the state. The municipality is governed by indigenous nations through their norms and customs, but it remains under the same regional government, under the same administrative system.

The other main path established in the LMAD, the territorial path, allows indigenous nations to become an autonomy based on their ancestral territories. Once autonomy is constituted, the administrative lines established by the state have to be redefined. This path has come to be known as the "long" path. It demands that indigenous

---

[48] Translated by the author.

nations follow an eleven-step process filled with bureaucratic hurdles and challenges. The *Monkoxi* of Lomerío, one of the first indigenous nations to start the bureaucratic procedures to have their autonomy recognized by the state, have still not complied with all the requirements, over ten years after they started the process.

According to the territorial path, first of all, indigenous nations have to obtain a state certification that declares them indigenous and recognizes their right to self-determination over their ancestral lands, a right that is already recognized in the Bolivian Constitution[49].

Secondly, the law determines that there must be a minimum population in the indigenous territory, and that they must prove the economic viability of the future autonomic entity. However, as explained by CEJIS scholars, "the law contradictorily imposes population and viability requirements to the indigenous peoples that wish to constitute an autonomy in their territory that, however, can be waived if they choose the municipal path" (Jiménez Pimentel, 2010, pg. 110).

Thirdly, indigenous nations are required to collectively confirm their will to constitute an autonomy in front of the Bolivian state. They can't, however, make that decision through their traditional norms and procedures without governmental approval. First, their norms and procedures have to be approved and certified by a state official. Only then will indigenous groups be allowed to use these procedures to decide on whether or not they want to become an autonomous territory, and always under state supervision.

Moreover, "the law imposes specific elements of institutional design that appear to have no connection to any indigenous norm, instead reinforcing liberal principles and municipal institutions" (Tockman, Cameron & Plata, 2015, pg. 42). For example, even when properly certified, monitored and approved, before the autonomy process can continue, the central government forces indigenous peoples to confirm their decision to become an autonomy by holding a Western-style liberal referendum, based on an electoral census determined by government officials. This is not the only case in which liberal modes are given primacy over indigenous traditional norms and procedures. Article 62 of the LMAD also imposes a particular form of government to be adopted by

---

[49] See "Constitución Política del Estado Plurinacional" (2009)

indigenous autonomies, requiring a division between executive, legislative and administrative branches, also including specific directions on how the branches must be designed (Tockman, Cameron & Plata, 2015).

Finally, indigenous autonomies cannot, even after following all the turns and intricacies of the law, go over departmental borders. It does not matter that the Constitution recognizes indigenous nations' right to territorial restitution, or their claims to their ancestral lands: the structure of the liberal state supersedes their rights.   As clearly explained by researcher Georgina Jiménez Pimentel, from CEJIS, the impossibility of modifying departmental borders to form autonomous territories forces indigenous nations to "resign their inalienable right to self-determination, their right to self-government, their right to territory and autonomy, to secure the continuity of the territorial organization of the liberal, colonial state"[50] (Jiménez Pimentel, 2017, pg. 109).

Table II presents a simplified account of the steps indigenous nations need to follow to pursue territorial autonomy. According to CEJIS scholars:

> Behind these requirements there is the desire to curve –through laws, rules and prerequisites– the aspiration of self-government and the deepening of the pluralist and communitarian character that establishes the CPE [Constitution] to return to the liberal institutionalism inherited from colonial times.[51] (Flores Gonzales, 2018, pg. 189).

---

[50] Translated by the author.
[51] Translated by the author.

Table II: LMAD, Steps and Requirements. Designed by the author, following the information in Flores Gonzales, 2018, pg. 183-189.

Steps	Procedures according to the LMAD
Step 1 – Ancestrality, Population and Governmental Viability Certificate	Given by the Ministry of Autonomies, this certificate verifies the "indigeneity" of those pursuing autonomy. It also certifies that they fulfill the minimum population requirement set by law, and their capacity to govern themselves based on their indigenous institutions.
Step 2 – Referendum to Access Autonomy	The indigenous group must confirm their desire to pursue autonomy in a referendum supervised by the Electoral Plurinational Organ and the Intercultural Service of Democratic Strengthening (SIFDE).
Step 3 – Constitution of the Deliberative Organ	Election of the community representatives that will write the future autonomy's statute. In the case of the Monkoxt, the deliberative organ was called the CCA, the *Consejo Consultivo Autonómico* (Autonomic Advisory Council).
Step 4 – Participative Drafting of the Statute	Once the Deliberative Organ is constituted, it must determine the rules and procedures according to which it will function. It also has to establish the participative methodology through which it will draft the contents of the statute. As stated, the design of the new autonomy has to follow the minimum conditions specified in article 62 of the LMAD.
Step 5 – Approval of the Autonomy Statute	The Statute must be approved by two thirds of the Deliberative Organ, and then through the indigenous nation's traditional norms and procedures.
Step 6 – Constitutional Control	The approved statute must be sent to the Bolivian Plurinational Constitutional Court for control and approval. Once it has been approved, the indigenous group must petition the Electoral Plurinational Organ to call for a referendum in the territory.
Step 7 – Creation of the Territorial Unity Law	The Bolivian Congress, known as the Plurinational Legislative Assembly, must pass a law approving the constitution of a new territorial autonomous entity within the State, and determine its borders with other regions.

Table II continued:

Steps	Procedures according to the LMAD
Step 8 – Calling the Referendum	Once the Plurinational Constitutional Court has approved the statute, and the law of Creation of Territorial Unity has been passed, the Plurinational Electoral Organ will call for a referendum, which will be administered by the Departmental Electoral Court, following a census defined by the Electoral Supreme Court.
Step 9 – Constitution of the Government	If the statute is approved in referendum, the new indigenous autonomy will be allowed to form its government, according to the rules and procedures determined in the approved Statute, under the supervision of the Plurinational Electoral Organ.

Autonomy and the Monkoxt –A Process *vis a vis* State Bureaucracy

The Monkoxt of Lomerío were one of the first indigenous nations to pursue autonomy and to deal with the complicated intricacies of the LMAD, the *Ley Marco de Autonomías y Descentralización* (Framework Law of Autonomies and Descentralization). Their case is particularly interesting, as they started to pursue autonomy for their territory *before* the law was drafted and passed.

Before the current autonomy process, the Monkoxt reference as their main achievement towards self-determination the communal titling of their land to become a TCO, a *Tierra Comunitaria de Origen* (Communal Land of Origin)[52] on May 30th, 2006 (Flores Gonzales, 2018). As stated by Carmen, a young professional that collaborates in the communications' department of CICOL:

> Lomerío is a TCO where we live, constituted by twenty-nine communities and [the organization] that represents the twenty-nine communities is the CICOL, which means *Central Indígena de Comunidades Originaras de Lomerío* [Indigenous Central of the Originary Communities of Lomerío].
> CICOL, thirty-six years after it was created, has been fighting for the rights of the indigenous communities. The great achievement until now has been the titling of the TCO where we live.[53]

---

[52] See Postero (2007) chapter 1, section *State-Sponsored Multiculturalism,* for more on TCOs, *Tierras Comunitaria de Origen* (Communal Lands of Origin).

[53] Translated by the author.

CICOL, the *Central Indígena de Comunidades Originaras de Lomerío* (Indigenous Central of the Originary Communities of Lomerío), is the indigenous organization that has represented the Monkoxt since the 1980s. CICOL, with the help of Santa Cruz NGOs, negotiated and processed the documents necessary to have their territory, Lomerío, recognized with communal titles as the ancestral territory of the Monkoxt.

However, the TCO status wasn't enough to fulfill the desire of self-government and self-determination that CICOL was pursuing:

> Actually, conquering our territory hasn't been easy, we have marched to force them to listen to our demands until after ten years the state gave us our [TCO] title. The titled territory is bigger than the territory under the municipal government, [...] that is why the [Monkoxt] Assembly analyzed this situation and in 2008 decided to pursue an indigenous autonomy based on the titled territory[54] (María Choré, President of the CCA, as cited in Flores Gonzales, 2018, pg. 155-156).

Since the Constitution and the LMAD hadn't yet passed, to legally support their autonomy demands, they cited the 169 Indigenous and Tribal Peoples Convention passed by the ILO in 1989, and the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples that had been ratified by the Constitution passed by the Gonzalo Sánchez de Lozada administration in the 1990s (Flores Gonzales, 2018).

Because there was no legal frame of reference, the Monkoxt pursued autonomy following their traditional *usos y costumbres*: CICOL called for a general assembly of the Lomerío communities in March of 2008. The assembly took place in the community of Puquio Cristo Rey. In the meeting, CICOL declared Lomerío the "first autonomous indigenous territory of Bolivia" and stated their intention to write and pass an autonomy statute following their traditional norms and procedures.

Following the resolution, the CICOL called for a meeting of the representatives of the 29 communities the 13th and 14th of July of 2009, in San Lorenzo de Lomerío. The meeting was titled *Primer Encuentro Autonómico Territorial de Lomerío* (First Autonomous Meeting of the Territory of Lomerío). Each community elected its

---

[54] Translated by the author.

representatives following traditional norms and procedures. The first Morales administration showed its full support to the process, so that "the 56 assembly representatives were recognized by the then Minister of Autonomies Dr. Carlos Romero, in a big event that took place in Puquio in July 20th 2009" (Flores Gonzales, 2018, pg. 163).

These representatives met in San Lorenzo and elected the *Consejo Autonómico Monkoxi del Territorio de Lomerío,* CCA (the Autonomy Council of the Lomerío Territory). The Council had the mandate of writing a first draft of the Autonomy Statute and establishing a participative process to share it with the communities.

The final draft of the *Estatuto* was finished by August 2009, and it was presented to President Evo Morales in Camiri, a small city in the Santa Cruz province, together with other indigenous communities that also wanted to pursue autonomy: the municipalities of Jesús de Machaca and Charazani from La Paz, Tarabuco and Mojocoya from Chuquisaca, Chayanta from Potosí and Rajaypama from Cochabamba ("*El Gobierno junta 5.000 campesinos*", 2008).

Therefore, the Monkoxt had written and approved their *Estatuto Autonómico* (Autonomy Statute) in 2009, a year before the LMAD was signed into law in 2010. By then, and once the law was passed, the Ministry of Autonomies under Carlos Romero identified the municipalities of Jesús de Machaca in the highlands, and Lomerío in the lowlands, as exemplary cases to prove the viability of the municipal conversion path. However, CICOL, as the grass-roots organization representing Lomerío, opposed the government's push and decided to follow the territorial path:

> We didn't want to pursue indigenous autonomy through the municipal path, despite the insistence of the Minister of Autonomies Carlos Romero, who told us it would be the shortest route and it would make our access [to autonomy] quicker, saying that we had chosen the longest path. Why? There are a lot of advantages for us in the territorial path, and talking geographically it is better for us to follow the territorial path because the TCO title we have goes beyond the limits of the municipality, so if we chose the municipal path some communities would be left out and that would be a disadvantage [...][55] (Elmar Masay, General Cacique of CICOL, as cited in Flores Gonzales, 2018, pg. 170-171).

---

[55] Translated by author.

However, CICOL had to face the problems the mismatch between the steps set out in the LMAD and their own autonomy process generated. Between 2008 and 2009, CICOL had held a consultation according the their traditional norms and procedures, appointed a Deliberative Council –the CCA, the *Consejo Consultivo Autonómico* (Autonomic Advisory Council)– and written and approved an autonomy statute: following the steps set in the LMAD, it had completed steps two, three and four. However, state representatives hadn't monitored these procedures, and CICOL had yet to present the certificates of Ancestrality and Governmental Viability, which were the first step in the autonomy process according to the law. Because of that, the autonomy process of the Monkoxt was in a stalemate, and they were forced to present documents that would prove that the statute and the procedures through which it had been written complied with legal requirements.

Moreover, and with the help of CEJIS *técnicos*, CICOL had to present the following documents to the Ministry of Autonomies to obtain the Certificate of Ancestrality: organic statute of CICOL, internal rules, reports presented to the INRA when titling their territory to prove their claim to their lands, and photocopies of the certificates INRA had given them when they had titled the TCO.

To obtain the certificates of Governmental Viability and Population minimum (*base poblacional)*, they had to present a photocopy of the Ancestrality Certificate (once it was obtained), an integral development plan for the territory, data on the last census, an administrative resolution from the Ministry of Autonomies certifying their governmental viability, and further documents that although not required according to the law, individual workers in the Ministry of Autonomies demanded to process CICOL's demands (Flores Gonzales, 2018).

CICOL also had to present the resolutions and minutes of the assemblies in which they had voted to pursue territorial autonomy, elected the CCA and approved the statute. The process was so taxing and they faced so many bureaucratic delays, that CICOL didn't obtain all the documents necessary to continue the autonomy process where they had left off until six years later, in 2016. Then, they were finally able to send their proposed statute to the Plurinational Constitutional Court (TCP) of Bolivia for revision and approval.

The Plurinational Constitutional Court (TCP) mandated the modification of nineteen articles of the statute presented by CICOL. Two of the modifications demanded are particularly interesting for the discussion of this chapter. Article 3, entitled *Jurisdicción Territorial* –Territorial Jurisdiction– established the territorial limits of the future autonomous territory. However, the TCP demanded that the whole article be eliminated: only the central state, through the Bolivian Congress, had the legal right to determine the territorial limits of Lomerío's autonomous territory, by passing the law of Creation of Territorial Unity (step six according to the LMAD).

The Constitutional Court also demanded the modification of article 5, entitled *Jerarquía Normativa del Estatuto Autonómico* –Normative Hierarchy of the Autonomy Statute– that started by stating that "the following Statute is the constitutive *Magna Carta* of the Territorial Autonomy of the Monkoxt Nation of Lomerío;" (Flores Gonzales, 2018, pg. 221). There can only be one constitutive *Magna Carta* in Bolivia, and that is the Plurinational Constitution passed by the central state in 2009.

In the following section, I will analyze the most salient modifications according to the CICOL's understanding of indigenous autonomy, as outlined in the first version of the *Estatuto Autonómico de la Nación Monkoxt de Lomerío*, published in 2015.

The *Estatuto Autonómico de Lomerío*

While in Bolivia, I conducted eleven interviews with members of the Monkoxi nation of Lomerío[56]. While some had been actively involved with the autonomy process, and were active members of CICOL, others felt disconnected from the autonomy process and did not regularly participate in CICOL meetings. I discussed autonomy with them, and the meaning they gave to the concept. Despite their differences, they all understood autonomy as a practical tool related to four main categories: (1) resource management; (2) rejection of traditional political parties, and more broadly, political conflict; (3) a quest for freedom, related to a historical arc of overcoming exploitation; and (4) cultural

---

[56] See *Methods* section, in the first chapter of this thesis.

conservation, particularly tied to their language, farming lifestyle, and traditional tales and practices[57].

In this section, I will show how each category appears in the legal document that would govern the Monkoxi autonomy, the *Estatuto Autonómico de Lomerío* (Autonomy Statute of Lomerío) (2015). I will reference the first version of the *Estatuto,* published in 2015, before the Constitutional Court of Bolivia mandated the modification of several articles. A comparison between the final version of the *Estatuto* and the 2015 draft, illuminates the clashes between the view of autonomy set in the 2009 Constitution and the LMAD at the state level, and the understanding of the concept of autonomy of CICOL, at the local level.

(1) Resource Management

The management of natural resources was a particularly sensitive issue for CICOL and the central government. As explained in prior chapters, identity based indigenous organizations wanted the 2009 Constitution to recognize the right of indigenous nations to fully manage their natural resources without interference from the central government. However, their proposal wasn't fully included in the final Constitutional text. According to the 2009 *Carta Magna,* indigenous nations have the legal right to manage the renewable resources present in their territories, but the central government retains the right to exploit the nonrenewable resources present in their lands. The government has the obligation to consult the affected communities, but the result of the consultation is non-binding and the state can proceed to develop an extractive project in indigenous lands even if the communities oppose it.[58]

This distinction strongly affected the *Estatuto Autonómico* written by the Monkoxt. To achieve autonomy, the Plurinational Constitutional Court of Bolivia (TCP) had to approve the *Estatuto* drafted by the indigenous nation. The CICOL presented their *Estatuto* for revision an approval to the Court in 2016, and the TCP mandated the modification of nineteen articles, most of them related to resource management.

---

[57] See the fourth chapter, *Autonomy as Identity,* of this thesis for an indepth analysis of the meanings attached to autonomy by individual interviewees of the Monkoxi nation.

[58] See *Autonomy from the State's Perspective* Chapter.

An analysis of the *Estatuto* published by CICOL in 2015 –before the Court's corrections– is relevant as it allows us to understand how the CICOL planned to manage the natural resources in their territory. However, the 2015 version of the *Estatuto* remained vague even before the TCP's corrections. There were references to sustainability and making sure future generations could enjoy Lomerío's natural resources, but there was no specificity on the application of these principles.

For example, part 5 of the *Estatuto* is devoted to the *Estructura Económica y Social, Recursos Naturales, Tierra, Territorio y Medioambiente* (Social and Economic Structure, Natural Resources, Land, Territory and Environment). In chapter I of this section, right after detailing what they mean by natural resources (articles 61 and 62), the Monkoxt included article 63, entitled *Cosmovisión y Protección* (Cosmovision and Protection). This article stated that all policies relating to the use of natural resources must respect "'Jichi' owner of the hill," a Monkoxt deity that lives in and protects nature. Moreover, section I of article 63 established that:

> I. The Autonomous Monkoxi Government of Lomerío will promote the protection, use, access, and sustainable management of natural resources and biodiversity, in the framework of the cosmovision and needs of its families. It will consider the related practices they undertake such as hunting, fishing, [...] for family consumption.[59] ("Estatuto Autonómico de Lomerío," 2015, pg. 40).

However, the TCP mandated the elimination of this section as it considered that it infringed on the competencies of the central government.

There are further references to the connections between resource management and cultural values throughout the *Estatuto.* In the second chapter of the document, article 12 *Valores Ancestrales y Principios* (Ancestral values and principles) section II, states that:

> II. Ancestral values and principles are the basis, the cement on which we build our "*Casa Grande*" [Big Home] as we call our territory. On them we build our future, recovering the historical past of our nation, valuing our present, which allows us to protect, use, manage and adequately make use of the natural resources we possess. (pg. 15).

---

[59] Translated by the author. All excerpts from the *Estatuto Autonómico de Lomerío*, unless otherwise indicated, have been translated by the author.

However, the TCP also mandated the elimination of this section. In the same article, section III, the Monkoxt outlined their values and principles. These included freedom, collaboration and solidarity, among others. There is also one ancestral value outlined that relates to resource management:

> 9. **Sustainability**, is making use and utilizing natural resources considering the future of our children and grandchildren, taking care of the forest, the pampa, the water and all the living beings that live in the "*Casa Grande,*" making sure they don't run out (pg. 16).

The Constitutional Court also demanded the modification of this section, mandating that it had to specify that: "sustainability is making use and utilizing *the renewable natural resources, arid and aggregated*" (Flores Gonzales, 2018, pg. 226).

Article 14 was similarly affected. This article outlined the rights and duties of the inhabitants of Lomerío. Several rights related to the management of natural resources:

> 4. Receiving timely and truthful information about the activities undertaken in the territory.
> 9. Using, managing and utilizing natural resources respecting sustainability rules and thinking about future generations.
> 13. Being consulted if natural resources are exploited, and enjoying its benefits fairly and equitably. (pg. 18).

The rules are vague and do not clarify what it would entail to exploit natural resources "thinking about future generations," or "enjoying its benefits [of natural resource exploitation] fairly and equitably." However, the TCP mandated, as it had for article 12, that section I, number 9 was modified to read: "9. Using, managing and utilizing *the renewable natural resources, arid and aggregated*, respecting sustainability rules and thinking about future generations" (Flores Gonzales, 2018, pg. 226).

The Constitutional Court mandated similar modifications throughout the *Estatuto,* demanding the elimination of full sections or the addition of the "*renewable natural resources, arid and aggregated*" epithet to several articles.

Another interesting modification related to the management of natural resources affected article 15. As it has been explained earlier in this thesis, the Monkoxt have fought for the recognition of their nation, and their rights over their territory, for decades.

61

They have opposed slavery, marched through the Andes to La Paz, and even confronted violent opposition from local landowners. These experiences explain the wording in article 15, in which they established the defense of their territory as a duty of all inhabitants of Lomerío:

> 4. Protecting, using and *defending* [emphasis added] the territory and environment.
>
> 14. *Defending* the unity and harmony within the community and the territory.
>
> 16. *Defending* the territorial unity of the government of the Monkoxt nation. (pg. 18).

However, the TCP did not accept the use of the term *defending* in the final document: it mandated the suppression of the word in number 4, and demanded its substitution for the term *maintaining* in 14 and 16.

The original draft of the *Estatuto Autonómico de Lomerío* shows that the CICOL closely ties resource management to cultural and ancestral values. They state in their *Estatuto* that natural resources should be managed sustainably and protecting the interests of future generations. They also consider that protecting their territory and resources is a duty of Lomerío's inhabitants. Even though the text is not specific about the shape the protection and sustainable exploitation should take, it has already generated conflicts with the central state. The CICOL's interpretation of the relationship between resource management and autonomy does not correspond to the state's interpretation of the same rights.

Currently, however, the interviewees do not consider resource management as their main understanding of autonomy, which explains CICOL's embrace of the *Estatuto,* even after the aforementioned mandated modifications. However, as I will explain in the *Autonomy as Resource Management* section in the following chapter, the lack of control over natural resources may be contested and challenged by the Monkoxt and CICOL if it threatens their capacity to pursue other salient goals the interviewees associate with indigenous autonomy.

(2) Rejection of Political Parties

The *Estatuto* drafted by CICOL insisted on their right to remain autonomous and independent from foreign influences. Most interviewees understood political parties as foreign structures that created conflict in their territory. Interestingly, the existence of political parties is completely ignored in the *Estatuto*. There aren't any direct references to political parties in the whole text. However, there is a clear intention of expelling them from the future autonomous government, as the system and structure outlined leave no space for party representation. As early as in article 6 of the document it is established that the Monkoxi autonomy will be governed through direct democracy:

Article 6. Model of Government

I.   The model of government of the indigenous autonomy of the Monkoxi nation of Lomerío will be based on community, direct and participative democracy.

II.   The elected authorities will assume their duties in application of our norms and procedures in the framework of the current State. (pg. 12).

The second part of the *Estatuto* is titled *Estructura de Gobierno* (Structure of Government). The first articles of section one outline the structure of the future autonomous government, and the method to elect representatives:

Article 24. General Assembly
The general assembly is the main authority, with power to make decisions, of the Autonomous Government of the Monkoxi Nation of Lomerío.

Article 25. Design of the General Assembly and Election System

I.   The General Assembly will be formed by representatives from the 29 communities affiliated with CICOL, which form the Lomerío TCO.

II.   The delegates designated by the assembly of each community will participate in the General Assembly, with proper accreditation. (pg. 25).

This model blends the traditional decision-making procedures implemented by CICOL with elements of municipal governance as introduced in the mid-1990s. This model is similar to the systems outlined in other statutes passed by several Bolivian

indigenous communities. Tockman, Cameron and Plata (2015) studied five other autonomy statutes and found that they:

> Introduce important innovations that signify some departure from municipal governance, [however] they also reproduce much of the municipal system established by the LPP in 1994. Most significantly, despite changes in the names of specific institutions, the five statutes all propose systems of governance that include legislative and executive organs that are remarkably similar to municipal councils and mayors' offices in municipal systems. [...] The emerging model of indigenous autonomy in Bolivia focuses primarily on innovations in the design of political institutions of local governance, selection procedures, and judicial decision-making – the latter of which remain largely undefined– but not in bureaucratic management. (pg. 49).

Traditional political parties play no role in this election system: although an elected representative may sympathize or be affiliated with a certain party, their election is based on their involvement with their community and the personal merits their neighbors consider they have.

Political parties are also left out from the election of the *Yarusirixi Yiriabuxi*, the equivalent of a mayor, who leads the executive branch of the government:

> **Article 30. Nityanu Niriakaxi**
> Is the administrative and executive organ of the Monkoxi Autonomous Government of Lomerío, and is formed by the Yarusirixi Niriabuxi (woman) or the Yarusirixi Yiriabuxi (man).
>
> **Article 31. Election System**
>
> I.   Each community will have the right to present their candidates properly accredited and confirmed by the General Assembly for their designation. Then, the Assembly will elect the Yarusirixi Niriabuxi (woman) or the Yarusirixi Yiriabuxi (man) following our own norms and procedures. ("Estatuto Autonómico de Lomerío," 2015, pg. 26-27).

There is no mention of political parties in the following articles, including article 32, which details the requirements to become an elected representative. There is also no mention of political parties to be elected to the legislative organ or other administrative commissions ("Estatuto Autonómico de la Nación Monkoxt de Lomerío," 2015).

A connection between history, autonomy, and freedom is apparent in the 2015 version of the *Estatuto.* I will discuss this issue further in the *Autonomy as Freedom* section in the following chapter. In the 2015 *Estatuto* draft, chapter two dealt with the *Principios y Finalidad de la Autonomía Monkoxi de Lomerío* (Principles and Objective of the Monkoxi Autonomy of Lomerío). The second section of article 12, cited earlier in this chapter, made a direct reference to the recovery of the history of the Monkoxt:

> II. Ancestral values and principles are the basis, the cement on which we build our "*Casa Grande*" [Big Home] as we call our territory. On them we build our future, *recovering the historical past of our nation* [emphasis added], valuing our present, which allows us to protect, use, manage and adequately make use of the natural resources we possess. (pg. 15).

Right under this section, the *Estatuto* outlined the principles and values that would guide the Monkoxi autonomous government. The first two principles cited directly relate to what the Monkoxt understand as their quest towards freedom:

> 1. **Freedom**, which expresses our bravery and struggle to live without masters or *patrones*, without being subjugated to or subjugate other peoples, not allowing the exploitation of any individual.

> 2. **Self-Determination,** is the highest expression of our historical and political will of making our own decisions in our territory and defining it within the framework of our identity as the Monkoxi Nation. (pg. 15).

As these excerpts reflect, the *Estatuto* ties self-determination to the Monkoxi nation's will of freedom. Freedom is understood as the capacity to live without *patrones* who subjugate and exploit them, being able to make their own decisions in their territory. Interestingly, the capacity to make their own decisions, as it's phrased in the document, is connected to their "framework of identity": in this context, freedom is understood as a communal right to decision making based on a particular set of principles and cultural values, not a right of the individual.

There is another relevant value mentioned in article 12, value "15. **Independence**, freedom of action, in the political, social, cultural, ideological and religious realms, free

from external pressures and interests foreign to the Monkoxi nation, to protect and respect our self-determination." (pg. 16).

The *Estatuto* therefore claims independence from anyone that does not belong to the Monkoxi nation. What constitutes an external pressure, or a foreign interest, is understood in various ways by different members of the community. The TCP mandated the elimination of principle 15 from the *Estatuto*, but as I will explain further in this chapter, the desire to remain autonomous from outside influences and powers –such as political parties–, remains strong among community members.

(4) Cultural Conservation

The *Estatuto* is extremely concerned with the culture, symbols, and cultural identity of the Monkoxi nation of Lomerío. After the articles defining the geographic limits of the future autonomy and establishing its legal hierarchy *vis a vis* the State, articles 7 and 9 discuss Monkoxi identity and their language, the Bésiro:

> **Article 7. Identity of the Monkoxi Nation of Lomerío**
> I. The women and men, as the originary inhabitants of the indigenous territory of Lomerío, re-value our origin identifying as 'Monkoxi nation' maintaining at the same time our identity as Bolivian citizens.

> **Article 9.**
> I.   The inhabitants of the indigenous territory of Lomerío, women and men, share a common language called Bésiro that is considered the official language in the jurisdiction of the Autonomous Government of the Monkoxi Nation of Lomerío.
> II.   Spanish is recognized as the second official language.
> III. The official documents of the Autonomous Government of the Monkoxi Nation of Lomerío will be in Bésiro, Spanish, and others. ("Estatuto Autonómico de Lomerío," 2015, pg. 12-13).

Moreover, article 10 establishes the symbols and the religious and spiritual beliefs that represent the Monkoxi nation:

> **Article 10. Symbols**
> I.   The symbols representing the Monkoxi nation are:
>   a. The Monkoxi, with his *tari*, next to his bow, arrow, ax, machete and shovel, symbolize the work in the hill and the *chaco* [small plot of land].

b. **The hill**, with which we coexist and from which we eat.
c. **Dress**, the *tipoi*, the palm hat (*sumpreruxi*), the sandal (*nariyeruxi*) for the man.
d. **The *Xarityúxi* mask**, made out of leather or wood, used for the Carnival celebrations.
e. **The dances,** from which we derive joy and we celebrate, are: *tokokoxi sukiununúxi* (dance in a wheel or circle), *Xarityúxi* (danced during Carnival), the *carnavalito* and the *sarao.*
f. **Musical Instruments,** the flute, the *fífano, churiqui, secu-secu* for Easter (yoresoka) and the *secu-secu* for the *Purísima*, *yoresomanka, tyopíxi* (long flute), *caja, cola de tatú,* the *bombo.*
g. **The full moon,** with a colorful crown, like the rainbow, announces an epidemic, with a white crown announces rain, bad weather, a moon tilted to the North announces rain, a moon tilted to the South means wind, a sitting moon means drought.
h. **The new moon,** towards the North is a sign of rains. It's no good to plant or harvest corn, cutting wood or cleaning clothes.
i. **The sun,** depending on its color, announces rains, drought or sickness. A white sun in the morning announces rain, when there's an eclipse water is contaminated, it gets sick.
j. **The Southern Cross,** used for orientation.
k. **The rainbow,** to the West announces rains and to the East, God remembers the man.
l. **Marked stones,** are signs or codes that signal places where there are precious minerals such as gold, and in other cases are a sign of slavery, where thousands of sisters and brothers died or were taken to do forced labor in the rubber exploitations, they represent the fight and resistance of the Monkoxi people.
m. **Nasaikíxhi** (Jasaye).

II. The symbols of all the indigenous originary and peasant peoples and nationalities of the Plurinational State of Bolivia are respected, in the framework of a meeting between cultures, in respect of diversity and an intra and intercultural dialogue.

Article 11. Religion and Spirituality
I. The Monkoxi Autonomous Government of Lomerío respects and guarantees the spiritual and ritual practices of the cosmovision of the Monkoxi nation, and also the freedom of religion and worship of all its population.
II. Everything in nature has an owner or master called 'Jichi,' who intervenes in the relationship between humans and nature. To the Monkoxt there are magical places where the master of each element of nature resides, his role is to take care of every species on Earth so that it doesn't disappear, and to protect and establish norms regarding its use.

III.   There are protector owners of all natural resources in the territory: flora (hill), fauna (hunting and fishing), water, mineral rocks and the land (*chacos*):
1. Nixhí Tuki, master of the water in the *puquios* [wells] and springs.
2. Nixhí Yirityuxi, master of the mountain.
3. Nixhí Niunxi, master of the hill.
4. Nixhí Taxi, master of rain.
5. Nixhí Xhoense, master of the pampa.
6. Nixhí Tobíchi, master of the night.
7. Choborese, devil.

IV.   To the Monkoxi nation of Lomerío good and evil coexist, and each person is free to choose the path of good or evil. (pg. 13-14).

These symbols, ancestral values, and principles are referenced throughout the *Estatuto*. Several principles have already been discussed in this chapter, including freedom, self-determination, and sustainability. Principle 8 is also relevant for the present discussion:

8. Cultural Identity
It is our pride to be indigenous [peoples] from the Monkoxi nation.
(pg. 13-14).

The recurrence of references to symbols, principles and values of the Monkoxi nation show that the CICOL, in drafting the *Estatuto*, considered their culture and traditions the basis of their future autonomous government. The high number of articles and the importance given in the document to cultural values and beliefs shows the relevance their culture and its conservation have for the CICOL, and the Monkoxt as a whole. The great value given to cultural protection is confirmed by the interviewees: continuing their path towards freedom and protecting and revitalizing Monkoxi culture were the two most cited understandings of autonomy.

CHAPTER IV

WHOSE *ESTATUTO*?

In this chapter I will analyze the drafting of the Monkoxi *Estatuto* from a local perspective. In the first section, *CICOL and CEJIS' Estatuto?,* I will examine the impact on the autonomy process of two key actors: CICOL and CEJIS.

CICOL, the *Central Indígena de Comunidades Originarias de Lomerío* (Indigenous Central of the Originary Communities of Lomerío) is the organization that has represented the Monkoxt since the early 1980s and that led the autonomy process in Lomerío. CEJIS, *Centro de Estudios Jurídicos e Investigación Social* (Center of Judicial Studies and Social Investigation), has worked with the Monkoxt for decades, and its *técnicos* have provided essential technical and logistical support to CICOL during the autonomy process. The inner dynamics of CICOL, together with the influence of CEJIS *técnicos*, had a deep impact on the drafting of the Monkoxi statute.

In the second section, *Women's Estatuto?,* I will discuss how Monkoxt women were left out from the autonomy process and the drafting of the *Estatuto.* I will also discuss their low participation in political processes in Lomerío, and the causes both men and women identify for their lack of involvement in politics, and their reduced access to elected positions.

CICOL and CEJIS' *Estatuto*?

The Monkoxt faced a long and complicated process to draft and get their autonomy statute recognized by the Bolivian state. As early as March of 2008, over ten years ago, CICOL called for its XXVI Ordinary General Assembly, which met in the community of Puquio Cristo Rey. In this meeting, CICOL declared Lomerío the "first autonomous indigenous territory of Bolivia" and stated their intention to write and pass an autonomy statute following their traditional norms and procedures (from the General Assembly's resolution, cited in Flores Gonzales, 2018, pg. 160-161).

Following the resolution, the CICOL called for a meeting of the representatives of the twenty-nine communities the 13th and 14th of July of 2009, in San Lorenzo de Lomerío. The meeting was titled *Primer Encuentro Autonómico Territorial de Lomerío* (First Autonomous Meeting of the Territory of Lomerío).

Each community elected 2 representatives following traditional norms and procedures. The representatives elected were people who had a track record of community participation and involvement with CICOL, and therefore supported indigenous autonomy. CICOL is an organization with wide support in Lomerío, but those that don't support autonomy or are not interested in political participation do not tend to attend CICOL local assemblies. Therefore, those elected, although certainly representing their communities, had a specific profile: they had been involved with CICOL, or had shown a keen interest in the organization, and supported indigenous autonomy.

The representatives to the titled *Primer Encuentro Autonómico Territorial de Lomerío* (First Autonomous Meeting of the Territory of Lomerío) elected the *Consejo Autonómico Monkoxi del Territorio de Lomerío,* CCA (the Autonomy Council of the Lomerío Territory). The Council had the mandate of writing a first draft of the Autonomy Statute, share it with the communities, and incorporate their notes and suggestions (Flores Gonzales, 2018, pg. 162-163).

Those elected to the CCA also had a very specific profile: in their case, they had all been involved with CICOL for a long time and were recognized as community leaders. Three men and two women were elected, although the women's positions carried less responsibility than the men's:

- Juan Soqueré O.: was in charge of calling and directing the Autonomous Assembly.
- María Choré: was to substitute Juan Soqueré in case of absence.
- Antonia Cuasace Ch.: was in charge of taking minutes of the meetings.
- Pedro Sesarí: was in charge of systematizing the data from future workshops throughout Lomerío's territory.
- Miguel García Chuvé: was in charge of offering support in designated tasks.

The CCA, once elected in mid-July, found itself in a bind: President Evo Morales had called a meeting in August 2nd of that same year titled *Día de la Autonomía Indígena* (Day of Indigenous Autonomy) in Camiri, a small city in the Santa Cruz province. In this public meeting, Morales would receive the autonomy proposals of different indigenous

groups, and the CICOL leadership considered extremely important to present their own *Estatuto* to the President in Camiri.

The CCA counted with an extremely valuable ally to meet the deadline: the Santa Cruz nonprofit CEJIS, *Centro de Estudios Jurídicos e Investigación Social* (Center of Judicial Studies and Social Investigation)[60]. Experts from CEJIS, known as *técnicos*, have provided essential technical and logistical support to CICOL. They have helped the Monkoxt transform their demands into legally adequate documents, and they were also key in the process to title Lomerío's territory and obtain the TCO status.

The support of CEJIS *técnicos* was vital to write the first draft of Lomerío's statute in time to present it to Evo Morales in Camiri ("*El Gobierno junta 5.000 campesinos*", 2008). They also played an essential role in helping the Monkoxt put together the documents required by the LMAD, and in facing the legal challenges put forward by the opposition and the Plurinational Constitutional Court of Bolivia.

During my time in Lomerío, I was able to observe the deep influence CEJIS *técnicos* still have with CICOL. I was invited to attend a meeting of the CICOL directory in which autonomy and land use were to be discussed. The meeting was run by the CICOL leadership, and the elected representatives of the twenty-nine communities were called to attend. However, any community member could join to present complaints or demands to the CICOL leadership.

The meeting was held a sunny Monday morning, on July 23rd of 2018. About forty people attended, only three of which were women. Land use and autonomy were last on the topics to discuss. When the time came to talk about territorial rights, the CICOL leadership, without further comment, introduced a CEJIS *técnica* who had actively supported and helped draft and collect the legal documents necessary to obtain the TCO status.

The *técnica* started her speech in a scolding tone: she stated how unhappy she was with how land was being managed, and reminded the CICOL leadership how tough it had been to obtain the TCO status and the titles for the lands it included. She explained that she had received reports that the elected leaders of certain communities –known as *caciques*– were giving lands to people who did not belong to the Monkoxi nation.

---

[60] See "CEJIS" (n.d.)

A young man in the audience raised his hand and tried to tell her there was nothing they could do, as each *cacique* had the right to manage their community's lands as they saw fit. She quickly corrected him, explaining that according to the TCO status they, the Monkoxt, had obtained, the land belonged to every single member of the community. She prompted CICOL to control what individual *caciques* were doing with the land: no piece of the territory could be given away without the consent of the Monkoxt as a whole. After the *técnica*'s explanations, members of the CICOL directory supported her statements, and reminded everyone in attendance that she had been key in obtaining the TCO status.

Similarly, when the time to talk about autonomy came, the CICOL leadership introduced Miguel González, the CEJIS *técnico* that had most closely worked with the Monkoxt in drafting the *Estatuto*. He had also supported them in collecting all the necessary documents to meet the bureaucratic demands of the LMAD, the *Ley Marco de Autonomías y Descentralización* (Framework Law of Autonomies and Decentralization).

Miguel *explained* the autonomy process to the CICOL leadership, answering questions about the stages they had gone through. Using a big piece of paper taped to the wall, as shown in Figure I, he drew a running track, and presented autonomy as a hurdle race, explaining the different stages the Monkoxt had had to go through, and how the LMAD and the 2009 Constitution had delayed the approval of the *Estatuto*.
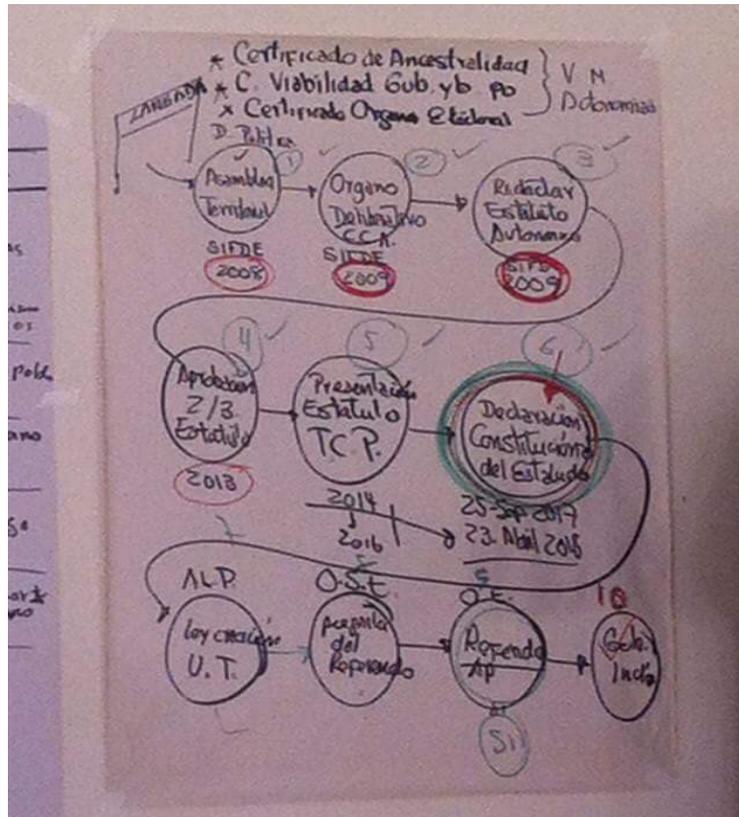
Miguel's command of the issue was unparalleled in the room, and after his speech, the CICOL leadership decided to follow his advice and start a political campaign in favor of autonomy, as the Monkoxt still have to vote on a referendum before being able to finally implement their autonomous government.

The Monkoxt aren't the only indigenous group to have received important support from nonprofit organizations. Jason Tockman, John Cameron and Wilfredo Plata (2015) analyzed the autonomy process –and the *Estatutos* they led to– in five different indigenous territories: Charagua, Mojocoya, Pampa Aullagas, Totora and Uru Chipa.

They found that these groups had followed a similar process to the Monkoxt. To draft their statues, they had called several assemblies with representatives from the different communities involved. The researchers also found that personnel from the

Ministry of Autonomies, nonprofits and private consulting firms had also attended the meetings, reaching 30% of attendees in some cases (Tockman, Cameron & Plata 2015).

According to Tockman, Cameron & Plata's (2015) research:

> The behavior of government technocrats and consultants had a significant impact on the autonomy deliberations and on the content of the statutes themselves. Indeed, we believe that the interventions of these outside actors seriously limited the development and articulation of the ideals of indigenous self-government, as articulated in Bolivia before 2009 and in the UNDRIP [the United Nations' Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples]. In some cases, this influence was perhaps unintended, while in others, it was clearly deliberate and patronizing. (pg. 43).

The researchers found that the five statutes were impacted by outside actors in five main spheres: (1) the consultants had provided a common format for the statutes, therefore standardizing the final documents produced by the different communities; (2) technical staff pushed the indigenous communities to frame their *estatutos* within the limits set by the Constitution and national laws; (3) their recommendations suggested a bias in favor of municipal governance systems; (4) they had privileged the use of Spanish in the documents; (5) the experts actually wrote and edited much of the text of the autonomy statutes (pg. 43-44).

Some of Tockman, Cameron & Plata's (2015) conclusions certainly apply to the Monkoxt. They did not hire outside consultants, but they counted with the support of CEJIS *técnicos* such as Miguel González, who had worked with CICOL for many years. CEJIS *técnicos* privileged Spanish, as they did not speak Bésiro, and they certainly followed a set format to write the *Estatuto*, for which they did an important share of the writing.

However, the Monkoxt's case departed from Tockman, Cameron and Plata's conclusions in relevant aspects. Because the LMAD hadn't yet been passed when the first draft of the *Estatuto* was written, and the Constitution had just been approved in referendum, they departed from these laws in the writing of several articles. Actually, the Plurinational Constitutional Court of Bolivia demanded important modifications to the first draft of the *Estatuto* to declare it Constitutional, as discussed in *Chapter III, The Impact of the State's Perspective on the Monkoxi autonomy*.

Moreover, and although CEJIS *técnicos* had a very important role in the writing of the first draft, the *Estatuto* was edited to incorporate comments and suggestions from different community members. This point was particularly important to Miguel González, who considered that it distinguished the work of CEJIS from hired consulting firms. He considered that the time used to incorporate community members' opinions explained why the articulation of the final draft of the *Estatuto Autonómico de la Nación Monkoxt de Lomerío* had taken much longer than in other indigenous communities. In a conversation I had with him in his office in Santa Cruz, Miguel showed me that the 2015 version of the *Estatuto* included a page outlining over 30 workshops held in different communities of Lomerío to share the *Estatuto* with community members and incorporate their comments and notes.[61] ("Estatuto Autonómico de Lomerío," 2015, pg. 50).

However, similarly to the election of CICOL representatives, those that attended autonomy related workshops were generally in favor of autonomy, and not critical of the process. Most attendees had very little knowledge of the legal demands to pass the *Estatuto*. Moreover, an important share of people over forty years old in Lomerío have difficulties reading and writing.

The drafting to the statute took place almost ten years ago, in a very particular historical moment: the younger generations and those that didn't participate in the workshops are not familiar with the contents of the text. Moreover, and in my experience attending workshops organized by CICOL, 80% of attendees are men, with very few women attending, and even less actively participating. Therefore, and despite the efforts to make the *Estatuto Autonómico de Lomerío* as representative of all views as possible, the final result was deeply influenced by the participation of CEJIS *técnicos* and the views and hopes of the CICOL leadership that was most involved in the autonomy process.

Furthermore, the final version of the *Estatuto*, declared constitutional in February 20th, 2009, had to be edited to conform to the limits to indigenous autonomy set by the new Constitution of Bolivia, as shown in earlier chapters. Therefore, the final statute was deeply shaped by the influence of CEJIS *técnicos,* the views of the CICOL leadership, and the limitations set by the LMAD and the 2009 Constitution.

---

[61] Interview with author, Santa Cruz de la Sierra, 28.07.2018.

<u>Women's *Estatuto*?</u>

I met with Mercedes, Juana and Lourdes in San Lorenzo's sewing cooperative. Mercedes and Juana were closer in age: Mercedes was sixty years old and Juana had just turned fifty. Lourdes was much younger, as she was only twenty-seven years old at the time of the interview. The three women met almost every afternoon in the cooperative, where they fixed their families' clothes and also made purses and other accessories to sell in the San Antonio artisanry shop. They got the 15 sewing machines they had in the cooperative from an international nonprofit. However, they only used 5 of them, as they were not sure how the others worked and they were afraid to break them. A nonprofit worker had given them a two-hour tutorial on how to use them when they first got the machines. That, however, was many years ago, and no one from the nonprofit had ever come back to answer their questions.

When I first asked Mercedes, Juana and Lourdes about indigenous autonomy, the three sat in silence and looked at me with an empty stare. As I let the silence go on, they started to uncomfortably move in their chairs. Lourdes, the youngest, looked at the other women, back at me, and leaning in, she stated: "What's going on is that we don't really know about that. Read, they tell me. Nothing, I don't have time for that with two kids. We would like more information, because we don't actually know what autonomy is."[62]

The other two women nodded vehemently. Juana, more confident after Lourdes had spoken, added:

> We want them to explain to us what's going to happen with autonomy. I understand we are the owners and want to be autonomous with our things. Our territory, that's why it's called autonomy, that's what I understand. [...] Because I know autonomy is long [she refers to the *Estatuto*], it has many chapters... But they should explain it to us in the simplest words so we can understand. That's it. Because we don't understand technical words.[63]

Mercedes, the oldest, concluded: "Sometimes, they call, the leadership, they call for us to go and listen. But us talking... They never include us."[64]

---

[62] Interview with author, San Lorenzo de Lomerío, 07/18/2018.

[63] Interview with author, San Lorenzo de Lomerío, 07/18/2018.

The five women interviewed agreed that women's participation in the autonomy process –and in political discussions in general–, was still very lacking.

As these statements show, women feel so disconnected from the autonomy process that they want it *explained* to them, they don't expect to be included in the deliberations or the design of the new autonomic system in any other way. Only one of the five women interviewed, Carmen, was actively involved with CICOL. When asked about her participation, however, Carmen didn't refer to a personal desire to participate, but to her father's involvement with the organization:

> I [have participated] since I was a kid because my dad was a CICOL leader. He told me to participate so I would know why CICOL existed. As a little girl I always participated, since I was in school. When I was older I went to university, I finished university, and I came back to support them.[65]

Women believe that there are two main reasons for their lack of participation. Firstly, they have to work longer hours than men. They have to work in agriculture, just as men do, and they also have to take care of their children, the elderly of the family, and their home. Secondly, it has only been recently that women have been able to participate in community meetings, and their word isn't taken as seriously as a man's, as Dolores explains:

> Now when there's a meeting, and one asks to speak, at least they have to listen and they don't make so much fun of you, when you give your opinion. Because sometimes we give our opinion and they make fun of us. But one is trying to speak, I don't know if what we say is correct, but we're just trying to give our opinion. But sometimes we make mistakes... No one is perfect not to make mistakes when speaking! Now there's been a change for us because at least they listen to us, when there's a meeting. They correct us, but to help.[66]

Most men interviewed agreed that women's participation in political discussions is still much lower than men's: four out of the six men interviewed considered that women have a smaller presence in public Monkoxt life than men.

---

[64] Interview with author, San Lorenzo de Lomerío, 07/18/2018.

[65] Interview with author, Santa Cruz de la Sierra, 08/02/2018.

[66] Interview with author, San Lorenzo de Lomerío, 07/16/2018.

However, the causes men identify to explain this mismatch are different from the ones cited by women. Antonio, who works in the municipality, considers that autonomy has engaged more women in politics than prior political processes. But he recognizes that women still participated in much lower numbers than men. He believes the mismatch is an issue that stems from the education of children from a very early age:

> It's from birth. I see it like that. Because for example when we go to work, we have always seen that women are pushed aside to do certain things. For example when I was a boy, if she was a woman, [she belonged] in the kitchen. And the man... Well, it started from birth, we were educated like that. But now with participation in politics, some women are getting in, but still very few.[67]

Juan agrees with Antonio that the role of education is what has prevented women from having a more active participation in politics. However, he also believes that women are still not as prepared as men, and that some of them have simply been elected because they are charming:

> Now we are trying to balance it a little, because before only men could talk. [...] For the Monkoxt, [the men] after reading and writing went to do their military service and there they learnt to speak Spanish and all that through beatings. They came back with a different mentality, they were superior, they could have a public position in society. Now it's very different. It's balanced. Not long ago we had a representative from here [San Lorenzo de Lomerío] Nélida, and she was the leader of CICOL. We have a councilor that is a woman. Some women have also participated [in autonomy] and things are getting balanced but it's very difficult because there is no academic education [for women] to become authorities. Sometimes she is elected because she is charming [*simpática*], because she talks more, but when it comes to managing an organization, like a mayor's office... no. It's not a lot [women know], it's not enough. More education is needed, more knowledge.[68]

Juan's explanation has several layers. On the one hand, he clearly values Spanish over Bésiro, and considers those who have received an education outside of Lomerío "superior" to those that haven't left the territory. Moreover, he also clearly considers that women lack the knowledge necessary to hold positions of responsibility and to represent

---

[67] Interview with author, San Lorenzo de Lomerío, 07/18/2018.

[68] Interview with author, San Lorenzo de Lomerío, 07/18/2018.

the community. His explanations align with the conclusions of studies conducted in Lomerío and the Chiquitanía region.

In 2009, Mercedes Nostas Adaya and Carmen Elena Sanabria Salmón published an investigation on the role of women in several indigenous communities of the Chiquitanía, titled *Detrás del cristal con que se mira: Mujeres chiquitanas, órdenes normativos e interlegalidad* (2009) (*Behind the glass you look through: Chiquitano women, normative systems and inter-legality*).

They collaborated with women from each community to do the fieldwork and help them in the interviews. Women reported that comments similar to Juan's were widespread. They described feeling excluded, undervalued and discriminated against when they participated in political processes. They explained that in many cases "the attitudes of leaders symbolically reproduced the relationship of the Chiquitano couple, characterized by masculine authority [over women]"[69] (Nostas Adaya & Sanabria Salmón, 2009, pg. 215). Moreover, they also reported that when participating in politics, they received personal attacks, and their motives for political participation were questioned. Their sexuality also became a topic men commented on, and they were either labeled as lesbians or divorcees (pg. 216).

Luis' comments, for example, fell into the first category. He stated that women have participated in the autonomy process as much as men – considering that 3 women having important positions to 6 men constituted a good example of equality. He also questioned women's reasons for joining CICOL. He suggested that women were interested in earning money, and that they quit political participation when they saw there was no money to be made with CICOL:

> No one has been pushed aside. It has been fought a lot [for women and men to have the same rights]. This leadership is implementing the participation of women. Right now in CICOL, we are nine elected representatives: three women and six men. And women had some of the strongest positions. But only one is left. The other two have abandoned [their positions]. What happens is that CICOL is a nonprofit organization. We function with the support of some institutions, some cooperatives, we don't make any money.[70]

---

[69] Translated by the author.

[70] Interview with author, San Lorenzo de Lomerío, 07/20/2018

Julio's comments fell into the second category: he stated that married women simply couldn't serve in CICOL for long, as their husbands would demand them to abandon their political positions to focus on the care of the family and the home:

> Equality? Not at a 100%. Here women are in a position of disadvantage when it comes to [political] responsibilities, because sometimes when a woman has occupied a position here in CICOL, all of a sudden, after a short time, the husband tells her to leave the position to take care of the children, the family, or the home. Most of the time it's men that leave to work constantly and sometimes they go outside [of Lomerío] too. That's why many [women] feel obligated to leave their position. Because here women are normally never alone. They have a husband, and because they have a husband, they have children and therefore they have responsibilities in the home. [...] It's one of the things limiting gender equality. It's still rare to see a husband that allows a woman the freedom to exercise the position. Normally here the women that stay in the position are the women that... well... To put it one way, they don't have a husband, or they are single mothers, normally the ones that have a husband don't carry out [the term].[71]

Julio's explanation also shows that taking care of children, elderly family members, and the home, are considered gendered tasks that are to be carried out by women. He also clearly considers that men have the authority to allow –or not– their wives to pursue political representation and participation.

His opinion is also particularly relevant as he currently has an important position in Lomerío related to gender: he is in charge of promoting gender equality and women's rights. He complained that he didn't have enough funding to pursue his goals, an issue voiced by other gender representatives in Nostas Adaya and Sanabria Salmón's study (Nostas Adaya & Sanabria Salmón 2009:216). However, when asked about his work regarding gender, he explained that his goal was to get indigenous autonomy implemented *for everyone*, and he didn't mention any goal directly related to gender equality or women's rights:

> Right now my priority is to work on indigenous autonomy, I'm supporting [campaigns] with men, women, the youth, I'm going to give conferences in schools mostly [...] I'm going to explain all the autonomy process since the creation of CICOL and its achievements, because autonomy is an achievement fought for by CICOL.[72]

---

[71] Interview with author, San Lorenzo de Lomerío, 07/11/2018

[72] Interview with author, Santa Cruz de la Sierra, 09/08/2018

Although he was asked several times, his answer remained the same: his goal as a gender representative was to promote indigenous autonomy. When asked about the effect of autonomy on women, he also refused to discuss women as a separate category:

> [Autonomy] is not just for women, but for everyone, we fought for freedom to thrive in our territory. Our ancestors, our grandparents were slaves and we don't want slavery to ever happen again. And that's not for men or for women, that's for everyone, not only women. That's the framework we always discuss, for everyone.[73]

Julio's only references to work done regarding *machismo* and gender equality were due to a partnership with a nonprofit organization from Santa Cruz:

> When I had just been elected there was an activity I did in June [a year before], and we coordinated with the NGO Proceso that also works on gender, then we shared our responsibility to give talks about leadership and women's rights [...] What we are trying to do is to make more flexible, to reflect on women and men's attitudes towards women. What we lately have been referring to as masculinity. Trying to change both [genders'] attitude, but mostly men's, to try to change a little the attitude of *machismo* towards women. Then... well... And also about some laws in favor of women that we now have in Bolivia under this government [...] There are laws against violence... Although I don't remember their name. But there are some laws.[74]

Women have therefore felt excluded from the autonomy process and from political participation in general. Both men and women believe their lack of inclusion is caused by the gendered division of tasks prevalent in Lomerío, as childrearing, taking care of the elderly, and the home, are considered female responsibilities.

Women also report feeling underestimated by men, while their male peers believe women are unprepared to take on political positions and label the few that do participate in politics as divorcees, single mothers or lesbians. Moreover, they consider it is a husband's prerogative to decide if his wife should or should not participate in political organizations.

---

[73] Interview with author, Santa Cruz de la Sierra, 09/08/2018.

[74] Interview with author, Santa Cruz de la Sierra, 09/08/2018.

Julio's reflections, as the man in charge of promoting gender equality in Lomerío, are also relevant. His statements show that women's rights are considered subordinate to the autonomy process, and the promotion of gender equality is easily sacrificed in favor of what CICOL considers the goals of the "majority."

CHAPTER V

AUTONOMY AS IDENTITY

The concept of indigenous autonomy has become popular throughout Latin America and different indigenous groups from Colombia, Ecuador, and Peru, among other countries, have gained control over their territories under different autonomy regimes[75].

The term 'indigenous autonomy' has been understood and applied in different ways. It has been molded by different groups with different histories and in varied circumstances, reflecting complex trajectories, disjunctures, and power relations both within indigenous groups and *vis a vis* the state. Although the UN may have defined the right to self-determination and autonomy, the meaning of these concepts has mutated in different contexts. They are a paradigmatic example of Ann-Belinda Preis' (1996) argument that human rights have become 'culture':

> Human rights increasingly form part of a wider network of perspectives which are shared and exchanged between the North and South, centers and peripheries, in multiple, creative, and sometimes conflict-ridden ways. Human Rights have become 'universalized' as values subject to interpretation, negotiation, and accommodation. They have become 'culture.' (pg. 133).

Catalan anthropologist Pere Torra i Morell (2017) has studied the autonomy process of the Guaraní of Charagua. He argues similarly, borrowing the term *significante vacío* from Argentine philosopher Ernesto Laclau*,* translated to English as *empty universal*: "images, words or nouns used for political struggles that are able to express and constitute 'links' or 'equivalence chains' between multiple social demands, heterogeneous and particular, but that are all unsatisfied by the constituted political system."[76] (pg. 66). According to Torra i Morell, autonomy in Bolivia, and more generally in Latin America, has become a *significante vacío,* an all-encompassing concept with different meanings and hopes attached to it by different groups and individuals.

---

[75] See González (2015) on different autonomy regimes in Latin America.

[76] Translated by the author.

Torra i Morell's analysis applies to the Monkoxt. In this chapter, I will present how individual interviewees from the Monkoxi nation understand autonomy. I interviewed eleven members of the Monkoxi nation, six men and five women. Most of them lived in the community of San Lorenzo de Lomerío, although three of them lived or had been born in other communities, such as Puquio Cristo Rey. The oldest interviewee was eighty-two years old, while the youngest was twenty-seven years old at the time of the interview. Out of eleven interviewees, six were over forty years old.

The interviewees understood autonomy as a practical tool, not an abstract concept. To explain their understanding of autonomy, they referred to the goals they hoped an autonomous government would help them achieve as an indigenous nation. The interviewees referred to four main goals: (1) resource management; (2) rejection of political parties, since interviewees believed that autonomy would lead to the disappearance of political parties in Lomerío, and with them, the disappearance of political conflict; (3) freedom, related to a historical arc of overcoming exploitation; (4) cultural conservation, particularly of their language, farming lifestyle, and traditional tales and practices.

Although several referred to resource management, only two considered that a higher influence in the management of Lomerío's natural resources was the most relevant goal of autonomy. Seven interviewees referred to political parties, but only one considered their elimination from Lomerío's government an essential goal of autonomy. However, eight interviewees referred to their ancestor's quest to free themselves from slavery and exploitation as vital to their identity and their support of autonomy. Out of eleven interviewees, ten mentioned the conservation of their culture as one of the main goals of autonomy. Interestingly, the interviewees that discussed resource management and the disappearance of political parties to define autonomy also considered that these goals were tied to the protection and revitalization of their language, their ancestors farming techniques, and their traditional tales and practices.

Over half the women interviewed, from different age groups, felt excluded from the political process behind indigenous autonomy, and from political participation in general: they believed that their responsibilities in the home, raising their children, and

84

taking care of the elderly in the family made it impossible for them to engage in political participation in the same terms as men.

Like their male counterparts, the women interviewed were deeply concerned about the disappearance of their language and Monkoxi traditional practices. However, the women went further in their analysis of the issue. They also reflected on the disjunctures the transformations of farming practices, education access, and traditional celebrations create between different generations and genders, and the conflicts they generate.

The female interviewees over fifty years old rejected these transformations and blamed the younger women for the loss of Bésiro and traditional outfits, for example. They were also weary of how the younger generations engage with tradition, and how they have transformed some practices, for example, with young girls playing instruments that used to only be played by men.

The interviewees under fifty, while still valuing traditional Monkoxi culture, Bésiro, and certain practices, were critical of their lack of opportunities in comparison to men, and wanted to negotiate the meaning and understanding of certain practices, trying to adapt them to their present needs and expectations.

However, the expectations of both genders go beyond the scope of an autonomous government. Particularly the interviewees over forty years old hope that autonomy will allow them to compel the younger generations to work the land, to use Bésiro in their daily lives, and to reject the charm of the big city. Although autonomy will allow them to have more control over their resources and to implement programs to promote their culture, it is unlikely that it will allow them to convince the younger generations to live as their parents and grandparents did. If autonomy is implemented in Lomerío, the implausible expectations of its supporters may lead to a bitter disappointment with the autonomous government, or with autonomy as a whole.

<u>Autonomy as Resource Management</u>

There is a general understanding among interviewees that the meaning of autonomy relates to controlling their territory and the resources within it. Lourdes, a

young mother of two, expressed this general understanding clearly when she stated that: "We are the owners [of our territory] and we want to be autonomous in all our things in our territory, that is why it's called autonomy, that is what I understand"[77]

The sense of ownership of their territory has been passed on generation from generation. The Monkoxt understand having control over their titled territory as a historical right – from which resource management emanates. This excerpt from an interview with Julio, a respected CICOL member, illustrates this perspective:

> I didn't meet my grandparents. But my father told me, when he came back from the Chaco War, he was a veteran. He always told us, told me, that he fought so we would have our territory to dispose of. That land came before everything else, it is for us, and it has to be ours.
>
> *Interviewer: What does it mean for the land to be yours?*
> That someone else doesn't come in and appropriates it. That someone from outside wouldn't come to take it from us. That land remains our source of life, and we have to take care of it, we have to sustain it from here on.[78]

Interviewees have a similar understanding of the relationship between autonomy and resource management as outlined in the *Estatuto*. The ownership and management of natural resources is perceived as an inherited right, and there is a common understanding that resources should be protected and exploited in a sustainable manner.

However, there was no further specificity in the interviews. Most interviewees didn't consider resource management as the core meaning of autonomy. Out of eleven interviewees, only five referenced resource management when explaining what autonomy meant for them. Only two of them considered it the defining goal of autonomy: Juan and Luis. They are both men who, in different capacities, have jobs that are affected by the use of Lomerío's land.

Juan defines autonomy as gaining further rights over their territory. He doesn't have a specific view of how resources should be managed, but he is deeply displeased by the lack of control his community has over Lomerío's natural resources *vis a vis* the State. He believes that autonomy should protect the economic interests of those working

---

[77] Interview with author, San Lorenzo de Lomerío, 07.18.2018.
[78] Interview with author, San Lorenzo de Lomerío, 07.11.2018.

the land from state intervention and outside companies that take advantage of their territory:

> Autonomy would be managing our own resources, and that we have the rights [over them]. For example now the general wealth [of the territory] isn't ours. It is purely the State's, we don't have power to say how it is managed. Then automatically the State comes, militarizes everything, and we are left with nothing. Since we aren't autonomous yet, they come and do whatever they want. This is a clear example. They can take advantage [of the resources]. For example, in a man's *chaco*[79] it could happen that they go in and don't compensate him. They take it from him and that's it. That's it.[80]

Antonio does not consider resource management the main meaning of autonomy. However, when asked about the issue, he voices a similar perspective to Juan's:

> I have always believed that one should be able to manage their own natural resources. That would be important. Because if we don't manage them, how do we continue? For example if we want to talk about the issue of wood, we have to go to the corresponding [state] institutions. If we talk about mining, we can't manage it either, we have to go there [the corresponding state institution]. In other words, we can't [manage our natural resources]. It should be everything, the whole territory, I should be able to dispose of all of that, in consensus with everyone.[81]

Juan and Antonio's understanding of resource management directly clashes with the 2009 Constitution, just as the *Estatuto* did when it was reviewed by the Plurinational Constitutional Court of Bolivia. Lomerío becoming an indigenous autonomy would certainly give the Monkoxt more capacity to determine how the natural resources present in their territory are managed. However, according to the 2009 Constitution, the central state retains the right to exploit nonrenewable resources in indigenous autonomies. Juan and Antonio would be able to vote in a consultation, but the results wouldn't be binding: they would not prevent the government from developing an extractive project in Lomerío, or to give a private company the concession to do so.

Luis was the only other interviewee, aside from Juan, to directly tie the meaning of autonomy to resource management. He understands autonomy as increasing the Monkoxt's capacity to administer Lomerío's natural resources, managing them as they

---

[79] Small plot of land cultivated for family consumption.

[80] Interview with author, San Lorenzo de Lomerío, 07.18.2018.
[81] Interview with author, San Lorenzo de Lomerío, 07.18.2018

see fit. Although he believes that's what the Monkoxt have traditionally done, he also thinks that they need to regain control over Lomerío's natural resources and obtain constitutional backing to protect their rights. However, he is not specific over which policies should be applied. Moreover, he ties resource management to the recuperation and protection of traditional agricultural practices and the revitalization of the Monkoxt's language, Bésiro:

> Well, there is a demand of ours, autonomy, we already are autonomous. We've been exercising autonomy for a long time. It's only that we now want to make it constitutional. To exercise it, in accordance with the Constitution. Why is it that we are asking for autonomy? Because we have a territory and within that titled territory that we have, we want to administer the natural resources. The different types of wood, if there's mineral resources too. To do it within our possibilities without introducing machinery, none of that. Cultivate our language, Bésiro, further, and to go back to simply doing what we did before, planting corn, rice, which is disappearing, we're even losing our native seeds.[82]

As this quote shows, resource management is essential for Luis, but directly tied to the protection and promotion of the Monkoxt's language and traditional agricultural practices. Particularly relevant is his rejection of using machinery in farming. The interviewees tied the use of machines to agribusiness and foreign companies that exploit the mineral resources of their territory. Similarly to Luis, interviewees didn't consider that type of farming Monkoxt farming.

The desire to "go back to simply doing what we did before" is also prevalent in the interviews. Interviewees voiced this desire when talking about farming, but also when discussing their culture and their ancestral beliefs. Most interviewees –particularly men– are suspicious of technological and cultural transformations. They regard a return to past practices as desirable, and tightly related to their pursuit of autonomy. This issue is explored further in the *Autonomy as Cultural Conservation* section.

At the state level, the management of natural resources in indigenous lands was a key issue that polarized the Constituent Assembly and the drafting of the 2009 Constitution. It was one of the main goals outlined by identity based indigenous organizations. In their narrative, autonomy was an expression of indigenous nations' right to self-determination in their territories, tied to managing the natural resources present in

---

[82] Interview with author, San Lorenzo de Lomerío, 07.18.2018.

their lands. Although resource management was mentioned by several interviewees, it did not appear as the defining meaning they assigned to autonomy. Out of eleven interviewees, five mentioned resource management when discussing autonomy. Only two of the five considered it the core principle behind the Monkoxt's pursuit of autonomy. Moreover, interviewees expressed the idea that resource management was only the beginning, a tool for the recovery of traditional practices and their language, rather than the only goal of autonomy.

However, resource management may become salient for the interviewees if the state promotes an unpopular extractive project in Lomerío. As it will be explained in the following sections, the Monkoxt have a negative opinion of political parties and greatly value exercising freedom from foreign influences in their territory. If the central government –and the political party in power– threatens the Monkoxt's sense of freedom and control over Lomerío's natural resources by implementing an extractive project, the administration of Lomerío's resources may become a highly contested topic. This desire may also become salient if they feel that they lack the funds necessary to pursue their key understandings of autonomy, such as cultural conservation.

<center>Autonomy as Rejection of Political Parties</center>

The *Estatuto* written by the Monkoxt and approved by the Plurinational Constitutional Court of Bolivia envisioned a new system of government for the Monkoxi nation. The new system would be based on a combination of municipal governance and the deliberative assemblies that many indigenous nations have traditionally used for community decision-making. In the case of the Monkoxt, deliberative assemblies have been the main tool for decision-making and conflict resolution in the twenty-nine communities, and are also the basis of CICOL's election system.

Luis is a member of CICOL who has been actively involved in the autonomy process. For him, the main meaning of autonomy relates to resource management. When asked about the future autonomous government, he outlines some similarities and differences between the new system and the municipal government they currently have. He also states –in an excerpt also analyzed in the *Autonomy versus State Control – The*

Case for the Municipalities section–, that the main goal behind transforming Lomerío's political system is eliminating the control exercised by political parties:

> With autonomy all public functionaries are also going to serve 5-year terms [as they do in the municipal system]. Those who will run to become the mayor are not going to be elected through a vote; they are going to be subject to [*someter*] an assembly. Secret [vote], acclamation, that's what we are still discussing. When there are issues with the administration of the autonomous government, an assembly will be called and the man [the mayor] leaves, that's it. That is going to be the change. We are not going to vow [*someter*] to political parties. There is going to be an assembly of the twenty-nine communities, there he is revoked, supported, or he runs again, but it's going to be according to the work that the autonomous government does.[83]

Luis therefore believes that the new system of government would allow for a better control of public representatives, and a higher capacity to hold them accountable for their actions. Julio agrees with Luis. Like him, Julio has also been actively involved in the autonomy process, and has collaborated with CICOL since the 1980s. He is the only interviewee that discussed self-government to explain his understanding of autonomy. Like Luis, he believes that getting rid of the influence of political parties will be the main benefit of establishing an autonomous government. However, he ties self-government to other cultural goals that he considers essential for the strength of the Monkoxi nation:

> The autonomy we want here is to liberate ourselves, we want the election of our authorities to be through our own *usos y costumbres*, not through political colors. Because political colors have divided us and brained washed us, they have debilitated our organizing and that is why we prefer our elections to be through our own *usos y costumbres.* And also to strengthen our culture and our language. It is also a means for our culture to remain strong and not disappear. We also want our language to be taught in schools, high schools and universities, and other public institutions. Because we know that it is through its culture and language that an indigenous nation grows strong.[84]

Out of eleven interviewees, seven referred to political parties, all in negative terms. The main argument behind their distrust is that parties are foreign structures, used by those seeking to advance their personal interests. They do not really represent the Monkoxt. Because of that, interviewees also referred to political parties when discussing

---

[83] Interview with author, San Lorenzo de Lomerío, 07.20.2018.
[84] Interview with author, San Lorenzo de Lomerío, 07.11.2018.

opposition to autonomy. They believe that those involved with parties feel threatened by autonomy, as Carmen, a young woman who actively participates in CICOL, explains. If autonomy were implemented, political parties would lose influence, and with them, those who have been elected to public office as party members. That is why the main opposition to autonomy comes from the mayor's office in San Antonio:

> They believe [in the municipality], that it's not going to be a municipality, it's going to be an autonomous government, something bigger, that's what they don't understand. It's not going to work as a municipality, but like an autonomous government that's going to be able to manage its own resources, we'll see how, there are not going to be political campaigns, politicians are not going to be able to intervene here anymore. Now politicians intervene a lot. For each election the parties come, the MAS, the EMR, the Democrats... [...] For an indigenous person to be the mayor he has to join one of the parties. But now with indigenous autonomy, that is not going to be needed anymore, parties are going to stop getting in between the indigenous people of Lomerío. That is the idea. They also don't let you explain it to them, they're closed to it. Because they have an appointment [in the municipality] and they don't want to lose it.[85]

There is also a sense among interviewees that political parties are the main cause for conflict in Lomerío, and the expectation that political strife will disappear with them. Don Pedro, an elder in the community, expresses that view: "What is always causing harm here, in the TCO, is political color, nothing else. That is what divides people, it's politics, nothing else."[86] Antonio, a middle aged professional, expresses a similar view – in an excerpt that was also analyzed in the *Autonomy versus State Control – The Case for the Municipalities* section–. He works in the municipality, and thinks that under the current election system, they had no option but to join political parties to work for their communities. However, he believes indigenous autonomy will be better than the municipal system, and conveys the expectation that conflict will disappear with the implementation of autonomy:

> Parties, they used to be like a ladder. Because if we didn't join, we didn't get any representatives either. We had no option but to join. [...] For example now, if autonomy were implemented, we wouldn't have political parties anymore. And

---

[85] Interview with author, Santa Cruz de la Sierra, 08.02.2018.

[86] Interview with author, San Lorenzo de Lomerío, 07.19.2018.

91

then we shouldn't fight, because we are all indigenous, wouldn't that be better? It's not like in other places, in which there are divisions [...] Here we are all indigenous and most of us are family.[87]

There is a general distrust of political parties among interviewees. Moreover, they believe that parties are the main cause of conflict between individuals and communities in Lomerío. Several interviewees, like Don Pedro and Antonio, are convinced that conflict will disappear if autonomy is implemented and political parties vanish from Lomerío.

This expectation can be problematic. Deliberative assemblies will certainly take away most of the power and influence political parties currently hold. It isn't clear, however, that political parties will completely disappear. Even if they did, it would still be unlikely that conflict would vanish from Lomerío altogether. The autonomous government would still have to distribute funding and resources, and prioritize certain projects over others. Some communities would most likely receive more funding than others. Political decisions inextricably generate disagreements and, in many cases, conflict. The expectation that political conflict would fade with the implementation of autonomy –and the supposed disappearance of political parties–may lead to disappointment with the autonomous government or autonomy as a whole.

<div align="center">Autonomy as Freedom</div>

In the last few years, the Monkoxt of Lomerío have participated in several publications about their history, partnering with nonprofit organizations from Santa Cruz and from the Global North. They published a short history book titled *Camino hacia la libertad* (2015) (Path towards freedom)*,* and a book about their autonomy process, titled *Sueños de libertad: Proceso autonómico de la nación Monkoxi de Lomerío* (2018) (Dreaming about freedom: The autonomy process of the Monkoxi nation of Lomerío). A main theme in these publications is the reconstruction of the Monkoxt's history as a nation. The retelling of their history focuses on distinguishing them from other lowland nations, and on tying their past grievances to their current demand of autonomy, establishing an overarching quest for freedom.

---

[87] Interview with author, San Lorenzo de Lomerío, 07.18.2018.

Julio, a CICOL leader passionate about the recovery of the Monkoxt's language and history, traces the origins of their history to pre-colonial times:

> Well, the Monkoxt are one of the forty-five tribes [*etnias*] that existed before the colonization of America, dispersed among the five provinces of what is now known as the *Gran Chiquitanía*. Then, the Jesuit *reducciones* came, in the past, and they were distributed among the provinces too, they created ten *reducciones*. The first one was in San Javier, then Concepción, San Ignacio, San Miguel, San Rafael, Santa Ana, San Juan, San José, Santo Corazón and one more that I don't remember. But in these ten *reducciones* they distributed the forty-five tribes and they were subjected to evangelization.[88]

Julio's account only partly aligns with Birgit Krekeler's *Historia de los Chiquitanos* (1995) edited by Jürgen Riester, and the most cited history of the *Chiquitanía*'s indigenous nations.

During colonial times, many lowland indigenous groups were forced to live in *reducciones*, settlements created and ran by Jesuit priests closely aligned with the Spanish crown. Indigenous peoples were captured and forced to live and work in these settlements, also known as *misiones*. The Jesuits, as part of their evangelizing mission, also forced them to abandon many cultural and spiritual practices, and violently forced them to adopt Catholicism (Krekeler, 1995, pg. 80).

The history of these indigenous nations was radically shaped by this traumatic experience. In the *reducciones,* the different groups mixed, and their forced cohabitation led to a cultural amalgam, with only a few languages surviving (pg. 26). Historians believe that the indigenous nations that currently exist in the *Chiquitanía* region are a mix of different pre-colonial groups, and it is nowadays almost impossible to trace back the origins of each group.

Therefore, the Monkoxt can't be considered direct descendants of a particular pre-colonial indigenous group, as Julio claimed. However, his explanation aligns with a general desire of the interviewees to present the Monkoxt as a separate nation from other Chiquitano groups. Since the pursuit of autonomy, the Monkoxt have reclaimed and redefined their history, focusing on the historical events and processes that distinguish

---

[88] Interview with author, San Lorenzo de Lomerío, 07.11.2018.

them from other nations in the *Chiquitanía*. For example, some in the CICOL leadership, like Julio himself, have started to reject the term Chiquitanos:

> We are now identifying as the Monkoxt nation, within our autonomous land, in our demand of indigenous autonomy. [...] Many of the writers and historians that came from outside didn't identify us as such, they always called us Chiquitanos, which for us, the current inhabitants, Chiquitano is the nickname that colonizers gave us during that time. So now we have decided to reclaim our own name.[89]

Most interviewees still used the term Chiquitano and Monkoxt interchangeably, but only referred to events pertaining to Lomerío's history when talking about their past as an indigenous group. When discussing their identity and history, eight out of eleven interviewees referred to their ancestors' experiences of exploitation and slavery. Luis, for example, explained:

> I am proud to be indigenous, proud to be Monkoxt [...] the Monkoxt identity, the name itself says it, we are born here. Monkoxt [in Bésiro] means that we were always here inhabiting this land. Then, in the times of slavery, this was a place of refuge for our ancestors, our grandparents, our parents' parents. There was a lot of slavery and that's why they came to this place, this place was a refuge for the indigenous people of the time.[90]

Don Pedro's account is quite similar to Luis':

> From the beginning, our parents, our grandparents lived here. But before, they came from different provinces. Because of slavery, because of the *patrones*, there was a lot of discrimination. They were even beaten. That was the *patrones'* way. They [grandparents and parents] came together here in Lomerío. They came from San Javier, from San Ignacio, from Velasco [...] they came from different provinces and came together here in Lomerío. [...] That is why they're called Chiquitano, Monkoxt. The word Monkoxt means from the beginning, have never separated, they have only lived here.[91]

The interviewees retelling of their ancestors' history continues by explaining how others arrived to Lomerío escaping from rubber exploitations, to which they had been

---

[89] Interview with author, San Lorenzo de Lomerío, 07.11.2018.

[90] Interview with author, San Lorenzo de Lomerío, 07.20.2018.
[91] Interview with author, San Lorenzo de Lomerío, 07.19.2018.

dragged to as slaves. Eventually, however, they were also enslaved in Lomerío, forced to work for *patrones,* beaten and mistreated.

Interviewees didn't see these events as tales from the past, disconnected from the present. Like Julio, they tightly connect their ancestors' experiences with CICOL's current demand of autonomy:

> The historical part of the Monkoxt is that they love freedom [...] The foundation of this territory of Lomerío, of the communities, was done by families that ran away from slavery [...] They sought refuge in the Lomerío territory in the search for freedom and a peaceful life [...] they stayed in the land we have now, which we claimed as a *Territorio Comunitario de Origen* [TCO] and it was titled, and now we have the demand to continue to be free through autonomy.[92]

Carmen is almost thirty years younger than Julio, but puts forward the same argument, tying her ancestors' desire of freedom with CICOL's current pursuit of autonomy:

> For them [her parents and grandparents] it is a great achievement because they have always dreamt about being autonomous. As I was telling you they were enslaved, but now they decide how to live, in freedom, without a *patrón*. For them, if autonomy passes [in a referendum] it will be a dream come true, what they always wanted, desired, what their parents dreamt about.[93]

Carmen's account, however, does not correspond with the elders' recollections of their parents and grandparents' political opinions and goals. There is a disjuncture between the narratives of younger generations and older members of the community, such as Don Pedro. Don Pedro is a highly respected elder in the San Lorenzo community. Many afternoons, he meets with San Lorenzo's school children, who ask him about Monkoxi history and traditions to include them in their homework. Don Pedro explains that his parents never thought or considered autonomy:

> Before, they didn't talk about that. They didn't. They didn't know. They were under exploitation, under discrimination. And they were fewer; they also didn't unite to have an organization [to represent them]. Being Monkoxt was preserved only because they maintained their culture, which nowadays is very much

---

[92] Interview with author, San Lorenzo de Lomerío, 07.11.2018.

[93] Interview with author, Santa Cruz de la Sierra, 08.02.2018.

disappearing. They, they lived according to what they had learnt. They played their *cajas* [traditional drums], [they drank] their *chicha*, [they held] their celebrations... [...] But they maintained their autonomy. They never said this is ours, our autonomy, only because they didn't understand.[94]

The contrast between Don Pedro's explanation and Carmen's account isn't simply anecdotic: it shows how the meaning of autonomy, and even the understanding of Monkoxi identity, is being redefined according to current understandings of what being from Lomerío, what being Monkoxt, entails. As stated by Margaret Jolly (1996), "[...] tradition is not a static burden of the past but something created for the present" (pg. 151).

There is certainly a historical basis for the reconstruction of the Monkoxi nation's history. However, framing and retelling of history is never neutral, and it always reflects the interests and goals of those shaping it in the present. In their pursuit of autonomy, the Monkoxt are mobilizing "different understandings of history and seek to construct and project historically based identities in efforts to generate legitimacy [...]." (Cameron, 2013, pg. 180).

This process is not unique to the Monkoxt. John McNeish (2010), after conducting research in the *Santuario de Quillacas*, an Aymara-speaking municipality in the Bolivian highlands, reached a similar conclusion. He stated that "although globalization is responsible for an increase in the spread and economic diversification of rural Andean communities, local people continue to ground their different identities in a sense of tradition and past" (pg. 228).

Linda Farthing and Benjamin Kohl (2013) have dubbed this process *mobilizing memory*:

> Each generation and movement has built highly instrumental, site and time-specific memory bridges between present needs and interpretations of history. Social movement leaders actively deploy these constructed memories to bind movements together through tapping into political participants' deeper emotions and aspirations (pg. 362).

---

[94] Interview with author, San Lorenzo de Lomerío, 07/19/2018.

By interpreting their history through the eyes of the present, the Monkoxt give legitimacy to their claim of autonomy, connecting it with their ancestors' struggle against slavery, establishing an overarching quest towards freedom.

There are, however, further disjunctures beyond the differences in the narratives of older and younger generations. The understandings of slavery and freedom also change between women and men.

Mercedes and Dolores, when discussing slavery, both referred to Doña Elisa, the wife of the *patrón*:

> My mother used to plant cotton, harvest it, and at night spin it. And during the day she would work in the *chaco*, she would make clay pots, and hammocks. But at night, she spun the cotton. And with the threat she would sew, and that's God's power, God's help to us, because she had the intelligence to work like that. She sews, makes almost 5 meters of cotton fabric, makes trousers [...] She would go to the old *patrón*'s place, in Piedra Marcada, his name was Don Benjamín, her name [the *patrón*'s wife] was Doña Elisa. She would bring fabric with colors from the city. She [her mother] would exchange her fabric and bring colors for us, green... [...].[95]

Although the men had widely talked about slavery, and many had mentioned Don Benjamín, the *patrón,* and Piedra Marcada, his *hacienda,* none had referred to Doña Elisa. This omission shows that during slavery gendered relationships and tasks were clearly reinforced.

Moreover, Dolores also used the concept of slavery to refer to her mother, explaining that she was a slave to her father. She also pointed to disjunctures between different generations of women, and their understanding of their role *vis a vis* their husbands:

> Yes, my mother was a slave to my father, she suffered a lot, my mother. Bad, she said my father was. Bad, he made her work, she would arrive from the *chaco* and he would make her spin [to make wool], take care of his hammock, and at three am again, she wouldn't rest well. He beat her often. It was bad. I don't know why. Maybe they [women] couldn't state their opinions, tell their husbands, I don't know. 'No way!' I told my mother. 'You let my father boss you around a lot.' When my father died, with the new husband she had, she didn't work like that. It was good. She says not only men have rights, women do too, but we shouldn't take it too far. That's what my mother says. Sometimes when I get

---

[95] Interview with author, San Lorenzo de Lomerío, 07/18/2018.

angry with my husband, she tells me: 'don't treat your husband like that!' 'No, he better get used to it' I tell her. We all have a right to give our opinions, I tell her.[96]

Carmen was only five years younger than Dolores but she had had a very different life. Dolores didn't have the means to finish primary school, she could only write her name and read very slowly if she needed to. She couldn't read quickly like her children could, she explained. Carmen, on the other hand, was able to go to university in Santa Cruz, and she never got married, although she was a single mother. Despite their differences, she made a similar point to Dolores:

> "I have seen my grandfathers and my father, I have seen them beating up their women. Nowadays you don't see it as much, women, we stand stronger so that doesn't happen. Maybe not 100% but an important share..."[97]

The women interviewed did share men's understanding that autonomy is tied to freedom. However, women's perceptions of "freedom" referred to embodied experiences, to personal choice, rather than an overarching Monkoxi project. Their understanding of freedom was also linked to not being "beaten up", as Dolores' comments show:

> Elmar [the current leader of CICOL] came and explained [autonomy] to us. Before I used to think that autonomy was the *gringos* coming and bossing us around. But no, it's not like that. Elmar explained it to us, he knows, you see? 'Do not think that autonomy means someone is going to come to boss us around, no.' He said. We are autonomous. We can decide what we work on without being bossed around. We are free to go wherever we want. We are free, free, no one can beat you up anymore.[98]

There is certainly an understanding among women that earning the right to not be beaten, and the laws against gender violence that enforce it, have come from outside of Lomerío. Lourdes, for example, stated that it has been the last government, referring to Evo Morales' administration, which has pushed men to: "leave discrimination behind. Before here only men had the right to study, women were only to have children and [to work] in the kitchen.[99] Dolores, in her early forties, agreed with Lourdes:

---

[96] Interview with author, San Lorenzo de Lomerío, 07/16/2018.

[97] Interview with author, Santa Cruz de la Sierra, 08/02/2018.

[98] Interview with author, San Lorenzo de Lomerío, 07/16/2018.

[99] Interview with author, San Lorenzo de Lomerío, 07/18/2018.

There's been plenty of changes, plenty of changes. Now I hear it on TV at night, there have been changes. They say that now it is not ok anymore that a woman is beaten by her husband. She has to sue him if her husband goes too far. There is a law by Evo. That's what I've heard on TV. Now you can tell your husband, if he beats me, if you beat me, you have some place to go to defend yourself. That is the change now, through Evo. It was thanks to him, that we have rights. Autonomy too, that too.[100]

Violence against women was a recurring topic mentioned in the interviews with women, usually appearing as the issue women identified with *machismo*, and through which they measured the evolution of women's status in Monkoxi society.

Dolores, for example, was quite adamant in explaining that women had many more responsibilities than men, since they had to work in the *chaco* just like the men did, and also had to take care of cooking, raising their children, and taking care of the home. She was quite proud that her husband cooked too, although she explained that many considered that inappropriate, as they believed a man should not spend time in the kitchen. However, she considered *machismo* had disappeared in Lomerío because her husband had never beaten her:

There was [*machismo*] before but not anymore. There isn't anymore. That's why I'm telling you things have changed, they have changed a lot. I'm from San Antonio, not from San Lorenzo. But when I first came [to San Lorenzo] I saw [violence against women]. My husband has never beaten me, since we got married until now. We fight, but not like that. We fight, but the next day we talk and solve it. But him beating me, no. I've never had to live with that.[101]

When discussing her identity as a Monkoxi person, however, Dolores showed her unhappiness with the current distribution of tasks according to gender:

Mmm... You want to know what being Monkoxt is? Well we work on making hammocks, pots, those are jobs exclusively of women, of housewives. And we also have our chores, cooking, cleaning, she also goes to the *chaco*. [...] The man only has one job, only one job. But women... *Pucha*! We have a lot more work than men[...] cleaning the children, washing clothes... All of that. The day is too short for a mother. However, men only have one job. He comes back [from the *chaco*], he rests... He doesn't say 'oh, I'm going to wash my

---

[100] Interview with author, San Lorenzo de Lomerío, 07/16/2018.

[101] Interview with author, San Lorenzo de Lomerío, 07/16/2018.

clothes.' It's always the woman that cleans. There is no rest, always working. Only at night do we get to rest.[102]

Carmen was also displeased with the distribution of tasks between men and women. She questioned the gendered nature of the traditional division of labor in Monkoxt families, and would have liked to see men "helping" more:

> When she [her mother] gets home, she still has a lot to do, she has to feed the children, maybe clean, she makes a double sacrifice. Because the man arrives and waits for the food. That's what I see in my father, he is like that. My parents both work in agriculture, they have their cows, their pigs, and their *chaco* [...] They have to toil every day, and if it's only them, she has to cook and he waits. Instead of helping her! That's what I complain about, because if they both have responsibilities, why don't they help each other? But that isn't going to happen because my father is pretty old and it's difficult for him to change[103]

Women therefore considered that they enjoyed further freedoms than their mothers, including having to endure much less violence in the hands of their husbands. They, however, were starting to question the gendered division of labor that forced them to do "double sacrifices," and questioned, like Lourdes, their lack of opportunities in comparison to men:

> Why aren't women as educated? Because we are in the kitchen, doing things [...] If I leave [to the city to study] my husband, and not just my husband, but other people will tell him why did you let her go? She is going to leave you, they don't think well of women. But what happens if the husband leaves? Nothing, but if the woman goes *uuuh*, they will criticize you. [...][104]

Juana, older than Lourdes, nods and adds:

> "the majority of women here that want to study, and are young, are told to wait, not to have a partner. Not to have a family [...] Like she was saying now... Men and women are equal, but women better be careful not to have a family [if they want to study]."[105]

---

[102] Interview with author, San Lorenzo de Lomerío, 07/16/2018.

[103] Interview with author, Santa Cruz de la Sierra, 08/02/2018.

[104] Interview with author, San Lorenzo de Lomerío, 07/18/2018.

[105] Interview with author, San Lorenzo de Lomerío, 07/18/2018.

100

Women, therefore, are a lot more critical with the Monkoxt's narrative of presenting their history as a quest towards freedom, with constant improvements over time. They contrasted their current situation to their mothers and grandmothers'. While certainly appreciative of being able to enjoy further freedoms than prior generations of women, they were still critical of their situation. They did not concur with male definitions of "freedom" and "slavery," challenging the narrative male leaders of CICOL such as Antonio have put forward:

> I'm proud to be Monkoxt, because we live in freedom in this territory, in Lomerío. We almost have everything, this is a paradise. As an indigenous [man] I'm proud to be Monkoxt.[106]

Autonomy as Cultural Conservation

There will be a soccer game. My neighbors have been excitedly telling me all week: you have to come, you will see what being Monkoxt is like there, Don Pedro insists. The game is the talk of the town, as Lomerío's soccer season is about to start again and the local team of San Lorenzo is playing at home.

The soccer field is only a few minutes' away in the forest, and easy walk from the house I'm staying in, on the edge of San Lorenzo de Lomerío. The path isn't paved, so a small cloud of dust follows me and the dog that has adopted me as we walk down the street. At our right, some spotted cows graze peacefully. At our left, about fifteen pigs bathe in the mud and soak in the winter sun.

The field is easy to find, we only have to follow the music and laughter. After a couple minutes walking under tall trees and avoiding treacherous bushes, the green veil opens up and we see the field. Twenty-two young men dressed in colorful jerseys chase each other and the ball on an uneven field of natural grass. Most of the field is surrounded by forest, but the path leads me to a cleared area, where about thirty people sit in small groups. Most of them sit under little roofs made with wooden poles and covered with palm leaves, to avoid the direct sun. They are eating snacks and drinking *chicha* they carry in re-used plastic water bottles. A group of four elderly men are playing local instruments, different types of flutes and little drums. When they take a break, however, a

---

[106] Interview with author, San Lorenzo de Lomerío, 07/18/2018.

group of young men blasts some *cumbia* from a big set of speakers, but they turn it down as soon as the musicians are ready to play again.

I sit on a tall wooden bench with the dog, close to the field. Shortly after, Don Pedro comes over with his nephew, who is about my age. They both smile broadly and seem happy to see me there. They offer me their *chicha*, and proudly explain that it is homemade, following a Lomerian recipe, and I won't find better *chicha* anywhere else. They insist on refilling my glass before it's empty, and tease each other about who made the best *chicha* – although I find later on that it was actually their wives that made it.

Don Pedro explains that this game is part of a league where only teams from Lomerío can compete: all the players were born and raised there, and each team comes from one of the 29 towns of the territory. I ask him if his team does well, but he doesn't really know. According to him, what matters the most is the atmosphere: the chance to catch up with friends and family, to listen to and play their traditional instruments, and to drink and share *chicha.* This, he tells me, is their autonomy. This is what being Monkoxt means, and what they are trying to preserve: this is who they are.

Don Pedro is very clear on what he understands as autonomy:

> Autonomy means our way of life, our culture, our customs. Our culture is what we do. Our work, like that and... Our plot of land, we work it with our own two hands, we don't use machines. We grow corn, rice, yucca, bananas... A bit of everything. That is our culture, our autonomy. When there's a festivity, we make *chicha,* we celebrate and we play our instruments, which are original from here. [...] Culture surviving, our language surviving, that's what it means to be autonomous, indigenous autonomy as we call it.[107]

Out of eleven interviewees, ten referenced cultural conservation as essential to their understanding of autonomy. Like Don Pedro, they explained that autonomy would allow them to revitalize their culture. "Culture," however, is an extremely broad concept that can be defined and understood in a myriad of ways. In the case of the interviewees, when they talked about their "culture," they referred to three main categories: (1) Bésiro, their language; (2) farming and the lifestyle they associate with it; (3) traditional tales and practices, also intimately related to farming.

---

[107] Interview with author, San Lorenzo de Lomerío, 07.19.2018.

(1) Language – Bésiro

On the first chapter of the Statute, right after the territorial delimitations of Lomerío and the role of the Statute *vis a vis* the Bolivian Constitution, there is the first mention of Bésiro, the Monkoxi language. Article 9 of the *Estatuto* defines Bésiro as the common language of the inhabitants of Lomerío, and establishes that it will be considered the official language in the jurisdiction of the Autonomous Government of the Monkoxi Nation of Lomerío (*Estatuto Autonómico de Lomerío* 2015:13).

According to the Education Ministry of Bolivia, Lomerío is the only region where Bésiro is still commonly spoken. But even in Lomerío, Spanish is quickly displacing Bésiro, as the children and youth of the area have "a passive knowledge of it, since the primary language of socialization is Spanish" ("*Ministerio de Educación*" 2014, pg. 45). Carmen, in her mid-thirties, agrees with the Ministerio's account. She is actively involved with CICOL and speaks some Bésiro in certain meetings, but not with her friends or her younger siblings, who can't speak the language at all:

> We also have a language that nowadays, sadly, I can say, is disappearing [*se nos está yendo*]. Very few of us speak it. I for example can still speak it, I understand it, but we don't speak it when we get together with friends for example, it's only Spanish, the language [we use]. It is not used day to day. Even worse my younger siblings don't speak it at all, don't speak it at all.[108]

The same report by the Ministry of Education explains that Bésiro is still known by adults over forty, even those that use Spanish as their primary language. Bésiro has become essential to be recognized as an appropriate representative in community assemblies:

> [Bésiro] possesses a very important symbolic value among these groups as it allows them to regulate the representational capacity of their leaders. [...] The virtual loss of Bésiro contrasts with the value given to it by the Chiquitanos as their original language, whether they speak it or not, and the leaders and intellectuals of this nation want to reactivate it and revitalize it. ("*Ministerio de Educación,*" 2014, pg. 45)

---

[108] Interview with author, Santa Cruz de la Sierra, 08.02.2018.

This affirmation is consistent with my interviews: ten out of eleven interviewees discussed Bésiro and expressed a desire to revitalize it. Of these, the four men and two women who were over forty years old reported speaking fluent Bésiro, while the two men and the woman who were younger reported not being able to speak it fluently and varying levels of understanding. Only Carmen, among the interviewees under forty, reported being able to fluently speak it.

However, they all expressed a desire to recover the language and promote its use among younger generations, considering Bésiro key to Monkoxt identity, as expressed by Juana:

> The young ones, there aren't many speaking Bésiro. Their moms specially, when talking to them, don't speak in Bésiro. Almost none, the Monkoxt, their culture, their language... Very little [is used]. We have to revitalize [*recuperar*] our native language. We have to revitalize [*recuperar*] our culture. But who is going to revitalize it [*recuperar*] if no one practices it? Now there is help if one writes, if one makes books [in Bésiro]... Comparing with the *collas,* though... They have their own language. On the streets, on TV, you see them, talking, singing, in their own language. And we seem ashamed of speaking our own language.[109]

Many remember why Bésiro became a residual language among the young. Julio explains it emphatically:

> When I was a boy, they forbade us from speaking Bésiro in school, and when we did, the teacher beat us. Then, it was forbidden to speak in our native language because they despised us, they discriminated against us, they insulted us. They said that speaking our native language in school was a savage thing [salvajismo], barbaric, and other demeaning terms, I remember that clearly. Because of that, as years went by, the younger generations lost the value [of Bésiro], their self-esteem, and their identity too [...] Even some of our elders, I've heard them say: 'I'm going to send my son to Santa Cruz so he gets civilized.' You can imagine the distorted mentality that we have suffered.[110]

The ten interviewees that mentioned Bésiro believe that autonomy will be an essential tool to revitalize it. They believe that it should be an individual initiative, of parents and grandparents talking to their children and grandchildren in Bésiro, but think that autonomy will provide the tools for Bésiro to thrive again.

---

[109] Interview with author, San Lorenzo de Lomerío, 07.18.2018.

[110] Interview with author, San Lorenzo de Lomerío, 07.11.2018.

However, considering the recuperation of Bésiro a family issue puts a heavy weight on those in the community that raise children: women.

The Monkoxt women interviewed believed that they themselves were to blame for the disappearance of Bésiro, as they didn't use the language with their children. Even Lourdes, who doesn't speak Bésiro herself, blamed mothers for not passing on the language to their children: "If the mother doesn't speak [in Bésiro], they don't learn. They are trying now with indigenous autonomy, but we have to talk too."[111]

The women interviewed agreed with male interviewees that language revitalization would be one of the main goals autonomy would allow them to achieve. Carmen, for example, stated that:

> I think so [Bésiro can be revitalized]. But [at the moment] there isn't a strategy to speak it normally, like we speak in Spanish, I think we need one, it [Bésiro] has to be in everything, starting at school, the family... We have to incentivize speaking the language that is what we are going to do with autonomy. I think we can do it [revitalize Bésiro] if we all work together. But if some are ashamed of speaking it... [...] but I think if we all work together, if we incentivize it, if we start campaigns, we can do it.[112]

Interestingly, while men had discussed the disappearance and recuperation of their language in the abstract, women discussed the practical consequences of the disappearance of Bésiro, particularly in the relationships between different generations. Lourdes is the youngest of the three women interviewed in the sewing cooperative. She explains feeling guilt and isolation from older generations for not speaking Bésiro:

> And about speaking [Bésiro], I didn't learn to speak it. They tried to teach me when I was leaving [school]. I learnt the names of a few animals, but not enough to have a conversation [*para charlar*]. For example they [points to two older women] talk, it seems important, they look scared, or they laugh, and I don't know what they are saying, I don't know anything.[113]

Dolores also worried about the practical effects of the loss of Bésiro, reflecting on the disjunctures it creates between generations. She explained her family's case, in which

---

[111] Interview with author, San Lorenzo de Lomerío, 07.18.2018.

[112] Interview with author, Santa Cruz de la Sierra, 08.02.2018.

[113] Interview with author, San Lorenzo de Lomerío, 07.18.2018.

105

there is a disconnect between her children, that don't speak Bésiro, herself, and her mother, who barely speaks Spanish:

> My children barely speak [Bésiro]. When I ask them to do something [in Bésiro], they say 'what are you saying mom?' When I tell them [speaks in Bésiro] I'm telling them to go and bring me some water. They don't like it. [...] 'Tell me in Spanish!' They don't like it [...] On the other hand, my mom can't speak like you and I [in Spanish]. It's difficult for her. She speaks in Bésiro. She can't talk like we are talking right now. She can barely talk [in Spanish]. She can't talk like that to her grandchildren.[114]

The loss of Bésiro, the Monkoxt's language, is therefore analyzed differenlty by male and female interviewees. Men discussed the loss of the language as it relates to their indigenous identity, particularly as they derive communal power from being able to speak Bésiro.

Women, as explained in former sections, do not derive political power from their capacity to speak the language, as they are still excluded from wide political representation. Their concerns related to the embodied effects of the loss, and the disjunctures it creates among generations.

(2) Farming Lifestyle

As stated by Don Pedro at the beginning of this section, the Monkoxt equate their culture to their daily practices, and therefore, to agriculture. Most interviewees share this understanding. Ten out of eleven interviewees mentioned farming when explaining their identity as Monkoxt, and also when discussing their culture. Interviewees define Monkoxt farming as working by hand, without machines. They also refer to the *chaco*, a small plot of land cultivated for the families' own consumption, complemented by fishing and hunting. As explained by Antonio:

> Lomerío is composed of twenty-nine communities, the Monkoxt nation speaks Bésiro, and well... Until now we have our culture, our identity, our own language, clothing... Our housing, we work, mainly we work in agriculture but in small quantities, only for our consumption, not for sale. We have also hunted and fished, and collected fruits from the forest. Now we have some basic services

---

[114] Interview with author, San Lorenzo de Lomerío, 07.16.2018.

in some communities, although until about twenty years ago we drank water from a *paúro*, from the river I mean, because we didn't have machinery then. There also wasn't any electricity, we used candles. No communications... And it would take two weeks to arrive to Santa Cruz by cart.[115]

There is a sense among interviewees over forty –six out of the ten– that the Monkoxt were better off when they remained faithful to their traditions, that they were healthier and happier. Their animals grew bigger, and they were healthier to eat.

They are also worried that the younger generations have lost interest in farming. They believe that they aren't ready to put in the work necessary to maintain a *chaco*. Luis, for example, thinks that their young are simply not ready to commit to working year round. He believes that since the road to Santa Cruz was built, buses to travel made available, and phones became ubiquitous, the attraction of the city became irresistible for the younger generations[116].

Women also pointed to the role of education to understand why the youth aren't interested in maintaining a *chaco*. Women over forty expressed a contradictory feeling. On the one hand, they understood that the chance to pursue higher education in Santa Cruz represents a great opportunity for the young. But as explained by Juana, it may come at too high a price:

> The *chaco* is only to eat, for the family. But it's disappearing. Now the young want to study, get ahead, well. But it's not so good. They wait to see if there's a truck coming full of bananas to buy them. Because we don't plant, we don't harvest anymore. Young people don't have one, they don't have a *chaco*. They just wait for the truck to arrive with the corn, the bananas, the rice, whatever it is, they buy everything [...] Now we want autonomy. We want our land. But what are we doing with it? We aren't planting. And they come and they take the wood anyway. The young sell the wood and that's where they get their money from [...] Things are changing, but not for the better. We are despising ourselves, our own lands.[117]

However, Lourdes and Carmen, the younger women –twenty-seven and thirty-five respectively–, did not agree with Juana over the role education has played in the disappearance of traditional practices, including farming in the *chaco*. They greatly

---

[115] Interview with author, San Lorenzo de Lomerío, 07.18.2018.

[116] Interview with author, San Lorenzo de Lomerío, 07.20.2018.

[117] Interview with author, San Lorenzo de Lomerío, 07.18.2018.

valued the possibility of getting an education. As explained in earlier sections, Lourdes' main complaint regarding women's status in Monkoxt society was that they didn't have the same possibilities to get an education as men did. Interestingly, whether women should or shouldn't get a formal education appeared as another disjuncture between different generations of women, as Carmen's explanation shows:

> Before, my mother tells me, when it comes to education, women didn't have the possibility of going to school. My mother is illiterate, she doesn't know how to read, because my grandmother didn't allow her to, she said only men go to school [...], women belong in the home to take care [*atender*] of their husbands, to have children. It has evolved, women now have professions, more or less almost 50% of the women [in Lomerío] decide to go to university. Another story is that they may not get there due to a lack of means, because coming from the countryside to the city is difficult, it's very expensive. But I was able to go with a grant, and I'm very, very proud of it.[118]

In Dolores case –she was forty years old– her desire to learn new things had even led to direct confrontations with her mother, and what Dolores described as painful, although gratifying, conversations:

> I like [learning] about everything. My mother never wanted me to learn. I told her 'you want me to be as stupid as you!' I told her [she covers her mouth with her hand, in a sign of disbelief]. But now, my mother is impressed by all the things I know how to make. I gave her a hammock, she couldn't believe it [..]. 'We have to learn about everything, mamita' I told her.[119]

The men over forty shared the older women's diagnosis: going to the city transforms the young, who come back with different values and interests. Julio went as far as saying that they lose some of their indigeneity, and their minds become corrupted:

> For example a young man, no matter how *lomeriano* he may be, how indigenous he may be, how Monkoxt he may be, arrives at the University of Santa Cruz and comes back with a different mentality. He is still indigenous but he has a different mentality, he has been brain washed. Then they come back, they get an appointment [with CICOL or the municipality] and they do whatever, anything but good work. That is one of the main distortions, the corruption of the mentality, the way of thinking [*modelo mental*] that our youth has compared to what we live here [in Lomerío], those of us who love culture.[120]

---

[118] Interview with author, Santa Cruz de la Sierra, 08/02/2018.
[119] Interview with author, San Lorenzo de Lomerío, 07.16.2018.

[120] Interview with author, San Lorenzo de Lomerío, 07.11.2018.

The four interviewees under forty years old, however, also defined their identity in relation to traditional farming, and referenced fishing and hunting as essential to their identity as Monkoxt. However, they expressed a desire to see more development projects implemented in their territory and more opportunities to pursue higher education in Santa Cruz. One of them, Juan, was quite critical of the reproaches expressed by older generations and directly critiqued traditional agricultural practices:

> How we live now, with dogs and pigs running around, that shouldn't exist. The chickens too, cows... Each animal should have its own space, the owner should have the capacity to give it specific food. They [the animals] live off whatever they can find and that is not right. Everything should be much more organized, we are very behind, we need to teach people about how to take care of animals, themselves, proper, modern farming, because animals can transmit diseases to men, and men to animals.[121]

The contrast between the perceptions of younger and older generations, particularly relating to traditional culture and education, show how some Monkoxt resent the changes they see in the lives, desires, and expectations of their young. Particularly older generations fear that these changes will erase Monkoxi culture, and, with it, Monkoxi identity.

These disjunctures, however, also point towards internal power dynamics at work between different sectors within Monkoxt society. Bésiro and certain aspects of what is defined as "traditional culture" have become markers of true indigeneity, of truly being Monkoxt. The older men, who also hold positions of power in CICOL, particularly worry about these issues as they constitute the source of their political and communal power, and worry that the transformations they see in younger generations will deprive them of the influence that particular cultural capital confers them.

Women, however, do not derive communal or political power from their engagement with "traditional culture" and Bésiro. Even the older generations of women, although also worried about the transformations they see in younger generations, focus on the concrete, the embodied experience generated by the loss of tradition and Bésiro. They worry about the generational barriers such loss creates, both between women and

---

[121] Interview with author, San Lorenzo de Lomerío, 07.18.2018.

within families. Moreover, they internalize the guilt for not being able to pass on these markers of "Monkoxtiness," as their gender is tasked with raising the future generations appropriately.

(3) Traditional Tales and Practices

The *Estatuto* outlined the symbols, and the spiritual and religious beliefs, that are traditional to the Monkoxi nation according to their cosmovisión ("Estatuto Autonómico de Lomerío," 2015, pg. 13-14). They are intimately tied to farming practices and traditional celebrations, which many times align with harvest or planting seasons. The interviewees considered some of these practices essential to their understanding of their culture and Monkoxi identity, and expressed the fear that they are disappearing.

Although the *Estatuto* mentions several deities, the interviewees only referred to one: *Jichi*, protector of nature. As explained by Don Facundo:

> My grandfather told me that there are Jichis. And people older than him thought so too. Supposedly, we still believe in jichis. They preserve water and forests. In our *Estatuto* it says we have different kinds of jichis, in the forest, the stones, they maintain nature's equilibrium. They protect *puquios,*[122] for example. You can't bathe in *puquios* with soap or with smelly things, those are the enemies of the jichi, he doesn't like that. If you go there with soap, or wash clothes for example, the jichi will leave and the *puquio* will dry out.[123]

Out of the ten interviewees that talked about traditional practices and beliefs, six referred to the new moon, and its impact on planting and harvesting. They also explained that practicing particular rituals during the new moon would expel certain evils and bring good fortune, as explained by Don Pedro and Julio:

> There are some beliefs. One is that to plant corn, if there is a new moon, they say it will be no good. Cutting wood during a new moon, no good.[124]

> One of the beliefs that still survives in all the [Monkoxt] communities is about the new moon. During the new moon, our ancestors practiced rituals to ask for

---

[122] Natural water wells.

[123] Interview with author, San Lorenzo de Lomerío, 07.29.2018.

[124] Interview with author, San Lorenzo de Lomerío, 07.20.2018.

changes. For example, if you were my wife and we had a child, and our little boy cried a lot, or was prone to sickness, when there's a new moon we would present it to the moon and hit him like this [with his hand, he models slightly hitting a child's bum while holding him up] like a ritual asking the moon to take away the evil in the boy and to give us good things. You also have to be very careful of planting when the moon is like that. You can't plant at that time. One week before the new moon you can't plant because it won't be good. It will grow, but if there's a strong wind it will break, it's too weak. You can't harvest corn or rice either. It will rot when you put it away. It won't be any good.[125]

Doña Dolores regularly works in the *chaco* with her husband and is proud to know what she calls "origin stories." For example, she explains, the tobacco plant used to be a woman, and should be treated as such:

The tobacco plant is a woman. That is why you can't scratch the land around it, take away the plants that surround it or harm it [*carpir*]. If you do that, it won't be any good, any good. I used to have tons of tobacco here [points at her garden] but then I did it [*yo lo carpí*] and now I barely have any tobacco left. That's because tobacco is a woman. She [tobacco] told her husband: 'you hate me so much, don't you? Hate me if you want. But I'm going to leave you some day. And you are going to see me everywhere, in everyone's mouth, in other men's mouths.' The woman said. That's how tobacco is, because it's a woman. That's why when you harm it, she leaves, she goes somewhere else. That's it. It's pretty, isn't it? My dad told me this story, and my children wrote it down in their notebooks for school, because when they have homework they go and present on it.[126]

Dolores says that her children aren't very interested in the stories, however, and they certainly do not believe in them. They are asked to collect them for school, but to them is only another part of their homework. Like Dolores, Doña Juana doesn't think incorporating traditional Monkoxi culture to the schools' curriculum is necessarily working: the young are simply interested in other things:

What makes us Monkoxt, from so long ago, is our culture, different from others, how do you say, the *collas*, they are different. The language, that's what I think. And now, that's how I see it, teachers are trying to teach some Bésiro in schools, but I don't see any [results]. They still talk in Spanish. With our [traditional] clothing too, we don't wear it anymore, our daughters, like we used to before, with our little dresses. Now, shorts, nothing else, or trousers. They wear the dress

---

[125] Interview with author, San Lorenzo de Lomerío, 07.11.2018.

[126] Interview with author, San Lorenzo de Lomerío, 07.16.2018.

because they must, to go to school. They put it on, go to class, it's their uniform. But then they come home and take it off, they are ashamed because their own mothers don't wear the [traditional] dress at home. The kids nowadays don't want to wear it.[127]

Juana gave another example of a disappearing practice: the production of clay *cántaros*, a special type of clay pots:

[...] Before we had cotton in the *chaco*, but not anymore. And other plants too. Some still know how to make *cántaros* [type of clay pots], to make *chicha*. How to prepare the clay, how to cook it... But it's something that's not valued anymore. People... It's being lost. People buy pots now.[128]

Lourdes nodded and agreed with Juana:

People don't want [*clay pots*] anymore. Many don't even know how to make them. I have one drying right now. But most people don't want them. 'It smells like dirt,' they say. They don't want clay anymore.[129]

Luis pointed out to another changing practice: playing the traditional Monkoxi instruments. Nine other interviewees also mentioned the importance of these instruments, and the role they play in Monkoxt festivities:

Culture, we have a traditional culture... We play the *fífano,* the flute, the *secu-secu,* and the *ioresomanque,* all these instruments have a particular time when they are played. The *fífano* is played during carnival. The *secu-secu* during Easter celebrations. They are very important for our culture.[130]

Women are also worried about the disappearance of traditional practices, as shown in the following reflection shared by Dolores. She also refers to the loss of traditional musical instruments. However, her explanation points to an interesting transformation in the practice:

Nowadays our culture is being lost. Our culture is the *cajita* and the *bombo* [traditional instruments]... now almost no one plays them. We say that when the old men die it's only going to be speakers. That's not our culture. Our culture

---

[127] Interview with author, San Lorenzo de Lomerío, 07.18.2018.

[128] Interview with author, San Lorenzo de Lomerío, 07.18.2018.

[129] Interview with author, San Lorenzo de Lomerío, 07.18.2018.

[130] Interview with author, San Lorenzo de Lomerío, 07.20.2018.

is the flute, the *bombo*... But now it's only speakers. The young are not interested in learning anymore. That's why I say it's going to disappear, even though we don't want it to, and we want our children to learn [...] They only learn because they have to in school, they learn to play the flute, the *secu- secu*, the *bombo*... That is how my son learnt. [...] Even women know how to play the *secu-secu* now![131]

Dolores mischievously laughs, and her smile grows wider when I ask her if women played the *secu-secu* when she was younger, revealing an interesting conversation between her mother and her daughter:

UUUh no! Our parents didn't want us to play before. They would beat us. My mother used to say: 'do you have balls to be playing the flute?' She used to say. She doesn't like that her granddaughter plays. "Your job is to spin! That's not for women." She doesn't like it, my mother. 'What are you doing with that, granddaughter? Do you have balls, or what?' 'Grandmother that's what we learn in school' 'Spinning is what they should be teaching you.' My mother didn't let us play soccer. 'That's for boys,' she said. [...] 'You give your daughter too much freedom, playing soccer, playing the *secu-secu*... One they she'll get married and her husband won't have a hammock. She doesn't know how to spin, is she going to make the hammock out of leather?' She tells her 'if one day I get married I'm going to buy him a hammock to swing. There is no way I'm going to spend my time spinning!' My mother would have beaten me [if I had said that]. She didn't like that my daughter played soccer, but her father [Dolores' husband] said: 'we can't discriminate against the girl! If she wants to play soccer...' And everywhere! Now [girls] all over the country are playing soccer![132]

Male interviewees over forty worry about the disappearance of traditional practices and beliefs. However, many of these practices relate to women's work, as women have traditionally made clothing, made clay *cántaros,* and prepared *chicha.* Women have also traditionally passed on the creational stories that are now slowly being forgotten.

Interestingly, men consider that traditional Monkoxi music and instruments are disappearing, as the younger generations prefer to listen to "modern" music through loud speakers. However, women explain that although playing traditional music is certainly not as popular as it was before, the practice is transforming, since women are learning to play these instruments in school.

---

[131] Interview with author, San Lorenzo de Lomerío, 07.16.2018.

[132] Interview with author, San Lorenzo de Lomerío, 07.16.2018.

In their discussion, males ignore these transformations, equating them to the disappearance of traditional culture. Women, however, have a two-sided attitude towards them. As Dolores' discussion with her mother shows, they recognize that these transformations lead to the loss of certain traditions, such as making hammocks for their husbands. Older women are particularly resentful of these transformations.

However, younger women embrace the transformations in these practices, as they entail subverting traditional gender roles. Women are now able to enter traditionally male spheres such as playing musical instruments, playing soccer, or getting a formal education, even if with more difficulties than men.

As stated by Allan Pred (1992):

> Localized confrontations between some form of 'tradition' and some form of 'modernity' are not likely to involve an automatic, unproblematic capitulation of the former to the latter [...]. Instead, such confrontations between the traditional and the modern are almost certain to generate cultural tension between classes, groups, institutions, or gendered women and men with different interests, almost certain to bring the cultural modalities of different classes, groups, institutions, or gendered women and men into new forms of opposition [...] such localized confrontations are almost certain to demand some translation, some reworking" (pg. 176-177).

CHAPTER VI

CONCLUSION

This thesis has analyzed the different meanings attached to autonomy in Bolivia. Starting from a macro perspective, it examined the autonomy debate at the state level. Three main groups led the autonomy debate and defined the contents and shape of the 2009 Bolivian Constitution: (1) *social movement organizations*, represented by Evo Morales' MAS party; (2) *identity based indigenous organizations*; and (3) *Media Luna elites*.

These groups contended over the meaning of autonomy: was autonomy linked to self-determination, and therefore reserved to indigenous nations? Or, could autonomy also be claimed by regional governments? They also clashed over the use and management of natural resources. Should the exploitation of natural resources remain in the hands of the central state? Should it be transferred to regional governments? Or as part of indigenous nations' territorial rights, should they be the ones to decide on the management of natural resources present in their territories?

For *Identity based indigenous organizations,* there could only be one type of autonomy: indigenous autonomy. They envisioned the re-funding of Bolivia through the creation of indigenous autonomies. These autonomies would be governed following traditional norms and customs, would not depend on any regional government, and would guarantee that indigenous peoples had absolute control over the natural resources present in the territories. *Identity based indigenous organizations* demanded a Constituent Assembly to reform the Constitution and include their understanding of autonomy in the *Magna Carta.* In their view, indigenous autonomy would therefore transform the traditional liberal republic, leading to a new, plurinational Bolivia (Garcés, 2010).

The autonomy project proposed by *Media Luna elites* was at the other end of the spectrum. Their autonomy proposal was created to counter *identity based indigenous organizations,* and it was based on giving more power to the regional governments that existed in Bolivia under the liberal state. It did not consider that indigenous nations were entitled to their own governments, claiming that it would be racist to grant them rights solely based on their ethnicity (Kohl, 2010; Webber, 2008b). According to their autonomy proposal, which called for the decentralization of extensive political and fiscal

115

competencies, departmental governments would be the only recognized regional entity and would decide how to manage and exploit the natural resources present in that department (Eaton, 2007).

Evo Morales' government and party, MAS, built strategic alliances with both camps.

During the early 2000s, *social movement organizations* and *identity based indigenous organizations* became political allies, demonstrating, marching, and protesting together against the neoliberal government of Gonzalo Sánchez de Lozada (Postero, 2007). At this point, their interests aligned: both types of organizations mostly identified as indigenous, and defended indigenous rights over land, territory, and expanded cultural recognition and protection; they opposed the neoliberal policies applied in Bolivia since the 1980s; they wanted to call a Constituent Assembly to re-fund Bolivia, and write a new Constitution that expanded the political and economic rights of all Bolivians.

However, their core demands diverged. *Social movement organizations*' main goals related to extending more economic rights to vulnerable Bolivians. They wanted to write a new Constitution to transform the political system. Although many of them identified as indigenous, their claims centered on economic and political claims based on Bolivian citizenship, not ethnic identity. Autonomy was not a central or nonnegotiable demand for this sector. On the other hand, *identity based indigenous organizations* wanted a Constituent Assembly to have their rights as indigenous nations, based on their ethnic identity, recognized and expanded.

In 2006 Morales and MAS formed their first government, and the time came for Morales and his administration to deliver the main promise of their campaign: calling a Constituent Assembly to draft a new Constitution.

However, at this point, and for the first time since Morales' election, the interests of the new government diverged from the interests of *identity based indigenous organizations*. Morales chose to build an alliance with the representatives of the *Media Luna elites* in the Senate, and pass an electoral law to the Constituent Assembly based on party representation (Schilling-Vacaflor, 2011). MAS trusted that this type of election system would earn them the votes of indigenous Bolivians and give MAS a majority in

the assembly. Although *identity based indigenous organizations* managed to get several representatives elected to the assembly, MAS' strategy was successful.

The assembly, however, was extremely contentious and the *Media Luna elites* boycotted it and staged wide protests, bringing the process to a halt in several occasions. MAS and *identity based indigenous groups* allied to protest against *Media Luna elites,* and to promote their own transformative visions of the new Bolivia they wanted to create through the Constitution. *Identity based indigenous organizations* even staged hunger strikes against the departmental autonomy project of the *Media Luna* elites (Postero, 2017; Webber, 2008b).

However, once again, MAS decided to negotiate with the *Media Luna elites* to get a Constitution passed. They made concessions on the goals *identity based indigenous organizations* considered a priority. The new Constitution reduced the scope of the autonomy model proposed by indigenous organizations and included the demand of departmental autonomy proposed by *Media Luna elites*. Both models, watered down, would therefore be forced to coexist in the new *Magna Carta*. The Constitution also included protections for private property (Article 56) and *latifundios* (Article 315, 399) (Regalsky, 2010).

According to Morales, the goal of the new Constitution, finally passed in referendum in 2009, was to "vernacularize" the Western liberal state, leading to a decolonized, plurinational nation (Postero, 2017). However, indigenous autonomies, as set in the *Magna Carta,* are far from the constitutive entities of a decolonized, decentralized, plurinational state: although recognized, the central state retains the power of determining which territories can become indigenous autonomies, imposing liberal election systems rather than respecting traditional norms and procedures for electing representatives, and always under state supervision. ("Constitución Política del Estado*,"* 2009).

Moreover, indigenous autonomies are not given control over the non-renewable resources of their territories. Although the central government will have to consult them before developing an extractive project in their territories, the consultation will be non-binding and can easily be ignored by the central state (Jiménez Pimentel, 2010).

117

The policies implemented by the first and second Morales administrations have further separated MAS from the interests defended by *identity based indigenous organizations*. Originally, Morales' government was formed by members from the three sectors that had supported him in gaining the presidency: (1) the *indigenista* sector, formed by cabinet members belonging to *identity based indigenous organizations*; (2) the *populista* group, led by Evo Morales, representing *social movement organizations*; and (3) the *estatista* sector, representing the classical left (Laserna 2010).

The *populista group* and the *estatista sector* considered that the government's priorities were to redistribute wealth in Bolivia, rolling back the neoliberal policies implemented since the 1980s. They also wanted to consolidate their political power throughout the country to secure control of the state. Both objectives were incompatible with the wide implementation of autonomy defended by the ministers from the *indigenista* sector: many of the cabinet members from this group have resigned or have been marginalized in the administration.

Morales' governments have certainly implemented a wide array of social measures that have massively reduced poverty levels in Bolivia. However, the funding for these projects comes from extractive projects that exploit Bolivia's natural resources, many of which are found in indigenous territories. MAS has taken advantage of the central government's Constitutional right to exploit the nonrenewable resources in indigenous territories. They have even, as they did in the TIPNIS case, ignored indigenous nations Constitutional right to an informed consultation, implementing extractive projects without consulting the indigenous groups affected (Postero 2017).

In the regional and municipal level, MAS candidates have also opposed pro-indigenous autonomy candidates and have even tried to block the implementation of indigenous autonomies (Cameron & Tockman, 2014). In most cases, once these autonomies are created, political parties play no role in the election of political representatives. This election model thwarts MAS' objective of consolidating political power throughout Bolivia, explaining the resistance of MAS' local representatives and supporters to the implementation of indigenous autonomy.

These tensions also explain the design, in 2010, of the LMAD, the *Ley Marco de Autonomias y Descentralización* (Framework Law of Autonomies and Decentralization).

The LMAD is the law that regulates the creation of autonomies in Bolivia. It establishes several paths and types of autonomy. Departmental autonomy, as agreed with *Media Luna elites* during the constituent process, is relatively easy to achieve, and although it grants more administrative capacities to the department, it does not suppose the creation of a new political entity within the state (Jiménez Pimentel, 2010).

When it comes to indigenous autonomy, the LMAD has prioritized the municipal path, which has come to be known as the "quick" path. The process to achieve this type of autonomy is much shorter and less demanding, probably because once an autonomy is constituted, it does not modify the current administrative organization of the state. The municipality is governed by indigenous nations through their norms and customs, but it remains under the same regional government, under the same administrative system (Tockman, Cameron & Plata 2015).

The other main path established in the LMAD, the territorial path, allows indigenous nations to become an autonomy based on their ancestral territories. Once autonomy is constituted, the administrative lines established by the state have to be redefined. This path has come to be known as the "long" path. It demands that indigenous nations follow an eleven-step process filled with bureaucratic hurdles and challenges. The Monkoxt of Lomerío, one of the first indigenous nations to start the bureaucratic procedures to have their autonomy recognized by the state, have still not complied with all the requirements, over ten years after they started the process.

The design of the LMAD confirms MAS' abandonment of the autonomy project as proposed by *identity based indigenous groups*. The law, for example, demands that indigenous nations obtain a state certification that declares them indigenous and recognizes their right to self-determination over their ancestral lands, a right already recognized in the Bolivian Constitution. It also forces indigenous nations to have their traditional norms and procedures certified and validated by the state, while imposing Western-style liberal referendums at several points during the autonomy process. Moreover, indigenous autonomies cannot, even after following all the turns and intricacies of the law, go over departmental borders. It does not matter that the Constitution recognizes indigenous nations' right to territorial restitution, or their claims

to their ancestral lands: the structure of the liberal state supersedes their rights (Flores Gonzales, 2018).

The impact of the 2009 Constitution and the LMAD in limiting indigenous groups' understanding and implementation of autonomy is clear when we analyze the case of the Monkoxi nation of Lomerío. The Monkoxt faced astonishing bureaucratic obstacles during their autonomy process, exacerbated by the fact that they had begun their autonomy process –and drafted a first version of their autonomy statute– before the LMAD had been passed in 2010.

By 2016 –seven years after writing the first draft of their *Estatuto*– the Monkoxt were finally able to send their proposed statute to the Plurinational Constitutional Court of Bolivia (TCP) for revision and approval. The Court mandated the modification of nineteen articles of the statute. Most of the corrections related to the use and management of natural resources: the TCP forced the Monkoxt to recognize in their *Estatuto* that they could only manage the renewable resources of Lomerío, but that the central state retained the right to administer and exploit as it saw fit the nonrenewable resources of their territory (Flores Gonzales, 2018).

Bolivia's experience with indigenous autonomy, and the Monkoxt's engagement with state legality, align with the general evolution of autonomy regimes in Latin America, and parallel their successes and challenges. Miguel González (2015), in his analysis of the literature's considerations of different autonomy models throughout the region, identifies three main issues that have and will influence indigenous autonomy in the future:

> (i) first, the latitude of indigenous self-government institutions –or the challenges of self-governance– and to what extent governance models of indigenous territorial autonomy are to be inserted in traditional state institutions, or, if instead, institutional innovations will emerge, ones that might be able to reflect the worldviews and identities of indigenous peoples; (ii) threats to self-determination and self-governance derived by the dominant extractive economic model, militarization of indigenous territories, and by the new developmental/universalist approach promoted by several states in Latin America, and in which indigenous peoples are important majorities; and (iii) the significance of the emergence of a paradigm that resembles a type of post-neoliberal governmental pluralism that accommodates indigenous territorial

autonomies while at the same time restricts their potential as spaces for social emancipation. (González, 2015, pg. 29).

The literature's conclusions apply to the Bolivian case if we only analyze the autonomy debate at the state level. An analysis limited to this macro perspective would lead us to believe that the political control and the exploitation of natural resources in indigenous territories are the most salient understandings –and issues–, of autonomy in Bolivia. However, a closer analysis of dynamics that impacted the drafting of the *Estatuto Autonómico* of the Monkoxt of Lomerío shows the deficiencies of this analysis.

The autonomy process of the Monkoxt has been led by the CICOL, the *Central Indígena de Comunidades Originaras de Lomerío* (Indigenous Central of the Originary Communities of Lomerío), which is the indigenous organization that has represented the Monkoxt since the 1980s. The CICOL elected the committee that would write the first draft of their statute through its traditional norms and procedures, in an assembly that included representatives from the twenty-nine communities of Lomerío.

Nevertheless, the elected representatives of CICOL had –and still have– a very specific profile: they had been involved with CICOL, or had shown a keen interest in the organization, and supported indigenous autonomy. Therefore, the views of those that oppose autonomy or simply did not participate in CICOL meetings were excluded from the process.

Throughout the process to draft the statute and collect the documents necessary to validate it according to the LMAD, the CICOL received the support of the Santa Cruz nonprofit CEJIS, *Centro de Estudios Jurídicos e Investigación Social* (Center of Judicial Studies and Social Investigation). Experts from CEJIS, known as *técnicos*, provided essential technical and logistical support to CICOL.

Their influence, however, greatly impacted the final statute. In accordance to the findings by Tockman, Cameron & Plata (2015), CEJIS *técnicos* privileged Spanish over Bésiro, the Monkoxt's language, as they did not speak it or understand it. The *técnicos* also followed a set format to write the *Estatuto*, for which they did an important share of the writing.

CEJIS *técnicos* did not have the intention of transforming the will of the Monkoxt, and did not want to manipulate their understanding of autonomy. They found

themselves in a difficult position. Having worked with CICOL for decades, CEJIS *técnicos* understood what hopes and goals the Monkoxt attached to autonomy, and the long struggle they had faced to finally be able to form their own local government run through their *usos y costumbres*. However, they also had the legal knowledge that most of the Monkoxt lacked, and understood that compromises would have to be made to adapt the *Estatuto* to the complex, bureaucratic demands of the LMAD.

Therefore, CEJIS *técnicos* acted as brokers between the central state's legality and the Monkoxt's autonomy process. The *Estatuto* produced by the Monkoxt of Lomerío would have most likely taken a very different shape if CEJIS *técnicos* hadn't participated in the process of drafting it and adapting it to the demands of the Bolivian Constitutional Court. However, it is also likely that the Monkoxt wouldn't have been able to successfully and efficiently face the bureaucratic challenges of the LMAD without the *técnicos'* support.

CEJIS and CICOL also worked to incorporate the comments and suggestions from different community members. However, those that attended autonomy related workshops were generally in favor of autonomy, and not critical of the process. Most attendees had very little knowledge of the legal demands to pass the *Estatuto*, and an important share of people over fifty years old in Lomerío have difficulties reading and writing.

The drafting of the statute took place almost ten years ago, and therefore the younger generations and those that didn't participate in the workshops are not familiar with the contents of the text. Moreover, and in my experience attending workshops organized by CICOL, 80% of attendees are men, with very few women attending, and even less actively participating.

Therefore, and despite the efforts to make the *Estatuto Autonómico de la Nación Monkoxt de Lomerío* as representative of all views as possible, the final result was deeply influenced by the participation of CEJIS *técnicos* and the views and hopes of the CICOL leadership that was most involved in the autonomy process. Women's views were also excluded due to their lack of representation in Lomerío's assemblies and workshops.

My interviews with eleven individual members of the Monkoxt nation, six men and five women, confirmed this conclusion. Most interviewees lived in the community of

San Lorenzo de Lomerío, although three of them lived or had been born in other communities, such as Puquio Cristo Rey. The oldest interviewee was eighty-two years old, while the youngest was twenty-seven years old at the time of the interview. Out eleven interviewees, six were over forty years old. While some interviewees had been actively involved in the autonomy process and with CICOL, others did not participate in political meetings and had no connection to indigenous autonomy.

The conclusions presented in this thesis constitute indications of what the majority of the Monkoxt may believe, and think, in regards to the autonomy project. However, the results cannot be generalized as they are based on eleven interviewees, certainly not enough to represent the whole population of Lomerío, and the general opinion of indigenous nations in Bolivia. However, the results open possibilities to new research projects, with more interviewees, to see if the results outlined in this thesis are applicable to the general Monkoxi nation, other Bolivian indigenous groups, and other indigenous organizations throughout Latin America.

The interviewees understood autonomy as a practical tool, not an abstract concept. They did not refer to self-determination or the transformation of the liberal state to explain what autonomy meant to them. To explain their understanding of autonomy, they referred to the goals they hoped an autonomous government would help them achieve. The interviewees referred to four main goals: (1) resource management; (2) rejection of political parties, since interviewees believed that autonomy would lead to the disappearance of political parties in Lomerío, and with them, the disappearance of political conflict; (3) freedom, related to a historical arc of overcoming exploitation; (4) cultural conservation, particularly of their language, farming lifestyle, and traditional tales and practices.

Although several referred to resource management, only two considered that a higher influence in the management of Lomerío's natural resources was the most relevant goal of autonomy, indicating a big disjuncture with the autonomy debate at the state level.

Seven interviewees referred to political parties, but only one considered their elimination from Lomerío's government an essential goal of autonomy. However, eight

interviewees referred to their ancestor's quest to free themselves from slavery and exploitation as vital to their identity and their support of autonomy.

Their identity, and its conservation, was presented by the interviewees as synonymous to autonomy. Out of eleven interviewees, ten mentioned the conservation of their culture as one of the main goals of autonomy. Interestingly, the interviewees that discussed resource management and the disappearance of political parties to define autonomy also considered that these goals were tied to the protection and revitalization of their language, their ancestors farming techniques, and their traditional tales and practices.

There is therefore a wide disjuncture between the autonomy debate at the state level and the debate at the local level. But there are also relevant differences in the understanding of autonomy among individual actors at the local level, particularly between men and women.

Over half the women interviewed, from different age groups, felt excluded from the political process that has promoted indigenous autonomy, and also from political participation in general. They believed that their responsibilities in the home, raising children, and taking care of the elderly in the family made it impossible for them to engage in political participation in the same terms as men.

Like their male counterparts, the women interviewed were deeply concerned about the disappearance of their language and Monkoxi traditional practices. For men, speaking Bésiro and engaging in certain cultural practices is a source of communal power, a sing of "Monkoxtiness."

Women do not derive communal or political power from their engagement with "traditional culture" and Bésiro, as their access to political institutions is still very limited. Therefore, their worries relate to their embodied experience of culture, and the practical consequences the loss of Bésiro and traditional practices produce. Women considered the generational barriers these transformations create, both between women and within families. However, because they are tasked with raising children and have an important role in the private sphere, women also showed that they internalize the blame for not passing on Bésiro and "traditional culture," the markers of "Monkoxtiness," to future generations.

Male interviewees were also concerned by the disappearance of traditional practices and beliefs. However, many of these practices relate to women's work, as women have traditionally made clothing, made clay *cántaros,* and prepared *chicha*. Women have also traditionally passed on the creational stories that are now slowly disappearing.

Interestingly, men simply reflected on the loss of these practices, and the need to engage younger generations in, for example, learning how to play traditional instruments. Again, women painted a much more complex picture. Although certain practices such as playing traditional music is certainly not as popular as it used to be, the practice is not fully disappearing, but transforming: while it used to be only men that played these instruments, nowadays young girls are also learning to play them in school.

In their discussion, males ignored these transformations, equating them to the disappearance of traditional culture. Women, while recognizing that certain traditions such as making hammocks or clay *cántaros* are disappearing, also embraced some of the changes these transformations in traditional culture have brought. Women can now also play Monkoxi instruments, play soccer, and go to school, leading to an expansion of their worlds and a subversion of traditional gender roles.

This thesis has therefore shown a wide disconnection between the understanding of autonomy at the state level and the meaning and goals attached to autonomy at the local level. The representatives of indigenous nations at the state level presented autonomy as an embodiment of the self-determination rights of indigenous groups. According to their view, autonomy challenged the traditional liberal model of the state, and would lead to indigenous nations' gaining the capacity to economically and politically control their territories.

The conclusions of my eleven interviews point towards a much more complex and practical understanding of autonomy at the local level, particularly in the case of the Monkoxi nation of Lomerío. To them, autonomy is a practical tool, not an abstract concept. To explain it, they referred to the goals they hoped an autonomous government would help them achieve. While the extended political rights and the control of natural resources –the two main understandings of autonomy at the state level– were mentioned by the interviewees, the capacity to maintain and protect their identity, their culture, and

their traditional practices, were by far the most salient understandings and goals of autonomy for the interviewees at the local level.

Therefore, this thesis has confirmed the statement of Catalan anthropologist Pere Torra i Morell (2017) that autonomy in Latin America has become a *significante vacío,* an all-encompassing concept with different meanings and hopes attached to it by different groups and individuals.

The existing academic literature has widely analyzed the autonomy debate in Latin America, but from a macro perspective. Most studies fall on the legalistic side of the autonomy debate. They discuss its inclusion –and specific shape– in the constitutions passed since the 1990s, and the challenges faced in its implementation, particularly considering the extractive policies applied by many governments in Latin America. However, there is a gap in the literature, as there are very few discussions of the various understandings of autonomy from the ground.

This thesis certainly points to the need of analyzing the meaning individual indigenous community members throughout Latin America give to autonomy. As this thesis has shown, and as it's the case among my interviewees in Lomerío, there might be wide disjunctures between the meaning given to autonomy by states, indigenous organizations, and academics, and the understanding of autonomy of different indigenous communities.

The Monkoxt interviewees, when discussing autonomy, gave a preeminent importance to identity and cultural conservation, together with the desire to protect traditional practices from a certain type of capitalist development. Both issues are not often discussed in the Latin American autonomy debate, which focuses on self-determination and territorial rights.

A wide, careful analysis of individual community members' experiences and understandings of autonomy will help us further understand the current state of indigenous autonomy. It will also allow us comprehend the future goals, challenges and transformations the concept of *indigenous autonomy* will have to face if it is to remain an aspirational goal for indigenous nations throughout the region.

Considering my findings, both analyzing the autonomy discussion at the state level and the meanings attached to the concept in Lomerío, dissatisfaction and

126

disappointment with the current implementation of indigenous autonomy in Bolivia seem inevitable. At the state level, *identity based indigenous organizations* were unable to include their understanding of autonomy in the 2009 Constitution. The state still has the power to determine which indigenous groups can constitute autonomous governments, and the central administration also retained the capacity to exploit the nonrenewable resources present in indigenous territories unilaterally. However, this failure may extend the validity of autonomy as an aspirational project: *identity based indigenous organizations* may identify the shortcomings of autonomy not as a failure of the project, but they may blame its deficiencies on the limited interpretation of indigenous autonomy incorporated in the 2009 Constitution.

At the local level, the expectations of the Monkoxt also go beyond the definition of autonomy set in the 2009 Constitution. The interviewees hope that autonomy will allow them to compel the younger generations to work the land, to use Bésiro in their daily lives, and to reject the charm of the big city: they hope it will compel younger generations to reject "modernity."

However, the goals and understandings at the state level and at the local level may align in the future. If Evo Morales –or a new administration– was to implement an extractive project in Lomerío, the Monkoxt would most likely oppose both the project and the government implementing it. If that were to happen, interestingly, the autonomy debate at the local level may align with the demands of *identity based indigenous organizations* at the state level: individual community members would most likely claim their right to control the natural resources present in their territory, embracing the understanding of autonomy deployed at the state level. They would blame the limited interpretation of autonomy of the central government for the implementation of the extractive project, rather than blaming and rejecting the autonomy project as a whole.

Without the implementation of an extractive project, the disjunctures in the understanding of autonomy at the state level and at the local level will most likely continue. At the local level, and considering the novel implementation of autonomy, it may take the election and relative failure of one or two administrations before local supporters are disappointed with their autonomous governments. In that case, they may

censure a specific administration for not being able to apply the project properly, without rejecting autonomy as a desirable project.

Moreover, they may also consider that the autonomous government simply does not have the resources necessary to succeed in its goals. In that case, they may blame the central government for not transferring enough resources to autonomous governments. That interpretation may lead to a new alliance of indigenous groups, breathing new life in the autonomy project of *identity based indigenous organizations*. They may demand a deeper re-configuration of the state to further promote local, direct democracies *vis a vis* the central government, prompting a greater transformation of the Bolivian state into a more plurinational, decentralized entity.

Indigenous autonomies, and the Monkoxt autonomy if executed, may succeed in implementing a novel experiment in direct, assembly-based democracy. They may be able to build an alternative mode of governance, re-valuing and adapting the traditional decision-making practices of indigenous nations to the twenty-first century. However, as stated, the Monkoxt interviewees closely tie their identity, and its conservation, to their understanding of autonomy. They believe autonomy will allow them to counter a certain type of development that leads to the abandonment of the land and the traditional practices and beliefs attached to it.

It is unlikely that any autonomous government, no matter how well-managed, succeeds in reverting the cultural and social changes that have transformed Bolivia since the early 1980s with the implementation of neoliberal policies. Morales' administrations have certainly applied projects to lift many out of extreme poverty, but they haven't completely abandoned the neoliberal economic model, and certainly remain within the capitalist mode of production.

There is the possibility that the Monkoxt blame their economic and cultural grievances, as some have started to do, on the capitalist development model. In that case, the autonomy project, if it is to remain salient among indigenous Bolivians, will have to offer an alternative. It will have to, once again, expand its meaning to incorporate new demands of a more sustainable, equitable economic development. Otherwise, we might see the creation of new alliances based on economic and class parameters, rather than

ethnic or identity objectives, and an abandonment of the autonomy project as a desirable aspiration.

It remains unlikely, however, for the Monkoxt to abandon the autonomy project in favor of pursuing independence from the Bolivian state. The interviewees considered that their identity as Monkoxt was tied to being indigenous Bolivians, and did in no case question the compatibility of these two identities.

Women are also likely to play a key role in the future of autonomy. In the case of Lomerío, women feel excluded from the political process behind indigenous autonomy, and from political participation in general. If they are not incorporated in the future autonomous government, they may reject autonomy as a whole, particularly considering that women's main concerns –related to the disjunctures created by the loss of traditional practices between different generations and within families–, are the concerns autonomy is less likely to be able to address.

On the other hand, the incorporation of women in the future autonomous government would present a new opportunity for women to subvert traditional gender roles and enter traditionally closed, male spheres. Younger women who have been able to pursue higher education have given great value and vehemently defended this newly earnt right – they might do the same for the autonomy project if they are able to fully participate in the election of representatives and the design and implementation of government policies.

However, the incorporation of women to traditionally male spheres has typically led their devaluation in the eyes of men. The incorporation of women to the expected autonomous government of Lomerío may seem the only path to fully make autonomy inclusive and representative of all. If not accompanied by a transformation of sexist attitudes and beliefs, however, it may also lead to the abandonment of autonomy as an aspirational project for the Monkoxt of Lomerío.

Autonomy in Latin America, and certainly in Bolivia, has to therefore be analyzed considering the tensions and disjunctures between the autonomy debate at the state and academic level, and the understanding of autonomy at the local level. It is crucial that we consider the impact of state legality on different autonomy processes.

The Bolivian case constitutes an example of how the top-down implementation of autonomy generated incredible bureaucratic hurdles for indigenous groups. It also greatly constricted their ability to design an autonomy model that fit their desires and goals, being forced to adapt to the type of autonomy the central state had deemed acceptable.

Moreover, as this thesis has shown, we have to further analyze the power dynamics and inequalities that exist at the local level, within indigenous nations: these groups aren't completely homogenous, conflict free paradises. As in any other community, different opinions lead to conflict, and some sectors –normally men–, have privileges and hold communal power, and therefore have had the critical capacity to define their community's current relationship with autonomy.

The case of the Monkoxt constitutes an example of these dynamics. However, the patriarchal dynamics that appeared in my analysis, the great influence held by brokers with technical knowledge, and the constrictions of the state, are certainly not unique to the Monkoxt, to indigenous groups, or to Latin America. Experiences with participative, direct democracy bring to the foreground the inequalities present in most societies, and patriarchal structures of power are omnipresent in our world.

Indigenous autonomy –and its future development–, constitutes an opportunity to further challenge the power of the central state and to contest the limitations it imposes on local projects, such as autonomy, that dispute its power over the national territory. It constitutes an opportunity to face the inequalities that still exist among indigenous community members, to transform them, and to design and implement more equitable governance models that will hopefully lead to fairer societies.

APPENDIX: SUPPLEMENTAL SOURCES

Albro, R. (2006). The culture of democracy and Bolivia's indigenous movements. *Critique of Anthropology, Vol 26(4),* 387-410.

Alexander, S. (2007). Dual power in Bolivia: Movement and government since the election of 2005. *Urban Anthropology and Studies of Cultural Systems and World Economic Development, Vol. 36, No.3, Power, Indigeneity, Economic Development and Politics in Contemporary Bolivia,* 161-193.

Becker, M. (2012). Building a plurinational Ecuador: Complications and contradictions. *Socialism and Democracy, 26:3,* 72-92.

Brysk, A. (1996). Turning weakness into strength: The internationalization of indian rights. *Latin American Perspectives, Vol. 23, No.2*, 38-57.

Cameron, D. J. (2009). Hacía la alcaldía: The Municipalization of peasant politics in the Andes. *Latin American Perspectives, issue 167, Vol. 36 No. 4,* 64-82.

Crespo Flores, C. (2005). La crisis del discurso consensualista de las políticas públicas en Bolivia y conflictos sociales. *Conflicto y colaboración en el manejo de recursos naturales (experiencias de Bolivia y Argentina)*, 39-59.

Escobar, A. (2010). Latin America at a crossroads: Alternative modernizations, post-liberalism, or post-development? *Cultural Studies, Vol. 24, No. 1,* 1-65.

Fabricant, N., & Postero, N. (2014). Performing the 'wounded indian': a new platform of democracy and human rights in Bolivia's autonomy movement, *Identities, 21:4,* 395-411.

García Linera, A. (2005). Democracia, conflicto y movimientos sociales. *Conflicto y colaboración en el manejo de recursos naturales (experiencias de Bolivia y Argentina)*, 31-38.

Galeano, E. (1987I. *Las venas abiertas de América Latina.* México, D.F: Siglo Veintiuno.

García Linera, A. (2005). Democracia, conflicto y movimientos sociales. *Conflicto y colaboración en el manejo de recursos naturales (experiencias de Bolivia y Argentina)*, 31-38.

Goodwin, J., & Jasper, J. M. (1990). Caught in a winding, snarling vine: The structural bias of political process theory. *Sociological Forum, 14(1)*, 27–54.

Gray Molina, G. (2008). State-Society relations in Bolivia: The strength of weakness. In C.M. Conaghan (Ed.), *Unresolved Tensions: Bolivia, Past and Present* (pp.109-124). Pittsburgh, Pa.: University of Pittsburg Press.

Heijdra, H. (1996). Participación y exclusión indígena en el desarrollo: Banco Mundial, CIDOB y el pueblo Ayoréo en el Proyecto Tierras Bajas del este de Bolivia. In J. Riester (Ed.), *Pueblos indígenas de las tierras bajas de Bolivia*, *Vol. 6*. Santa Cruz, Bolivia.

Klandermans, B. (2002). How group identification helps to overcome the dilemma of collective action." In *American Behavioral Scientist,* Vol. 45 No.5: 887-900.

Klandermans, P. G. (2014). Identity politics and politicized identities: Identity processes and the dynamics of protest. *Political Psychology, Vol. 35, No.1,* 1-22.

Landívar Mosiño, E. C. (2015). Indigenismo y Constitución en Bolivia: Un enforque desde 1990 a la fecha. *Revista boliviana de derecho, no. 19,* 470-507.

Lowrey, K. (2006). *Bolivia multiétnico y pluricultural*, ten years later: white separatism in the Bolivian lowlands. *Latin American and Caribbean Ethnic Studies, 1*, 6-84.

Mokvist, A.U. (2010). Bolivia: A year of consolidation. *Revista de ciencia política, volumen 30, no. 2,* 191-211.

Noguera, A. F. (2009). Diálogos sobre la plurinacionalidad y la organización territorial del estado en Bolivia. *Revista Española de Derecho Constitucional, No. 87,* 241-270.

Noonan, R. K. (1995). Women against the State: Political opportunities and collective action frames in Chile's transition to democracy. *Sociological Forum, Vol.10*, *No.1*, 81-111.

Paz Patiño, S. (2005). Reflexiones sobre interculturalidad y el conflicto. *Conflicto y colaboración en el manejo de recursos naturales (experiencias de Bolivia y Argentina)*, 31-38.

Polletta, F. (1990). Snarls, quacks, and quarrels: Culture and structure in political process theory." *Sociological Forum 14(1)*, 63–70.

Polletta, F., & Jasper, J. M. (2001). Collective identity and social movements. *Annual Review of Sociology*, *27*, 283–305.

Simon, B., & Klandermans, B. (2001). Politicized collective identity: A social psychological analysis. *American Psychologist, Vol. 56, No. 4,* 319-331.

Tockman, J. (2016). Decentralization, socio-territoriality and the exercise of indigenous self-governance in Bolivia. *Third World QuarTerly, Vol. 37, N0. 1,* 153-171.

Williams, R. H. (1995). Constructing the public good: Social movements and cultural resources." *Social Problems, Vol. 42*, *No. 1*, 124-144.

REFERNCES CITED

Albó, X. (2008a). *Movimientos y poder indígena en Bolivia, Ecuador y Perú.* La Paz, Bolivia: CIPCA.

Albó, X. (2008b). The 'long memory' of ethnicity and some temporary oscillations. In C.M. Conaghan (Ed.), *Unresolved Tensions: Bolivia, Past and Present* (pp. 13–34). Pittsburgh, PA: University of Pittsburg Press.

Arze, C. (2016). Una década de gobierno: ¿Construyendo el Vivir Bien o un capitalismo salvaje? *Revista del Grupo sobre Política Fiscal y Desarrollo (GPFD), 15,* 1-27.

Borland, K. (1991). 'That's Not What I Said.' In S.B. Gluck, & D. Patai (Ed.), *Women's words: The feminist practice of oral history* (pp. 63-75). New York, NY: Routledge.

Bourdieu, P. (1989). Social Space and Symbolic Power. *Sociological Theory, American Sociological Association, Vol.7 n.1*, 14-25.

Brysk, A. (1996). Turning weakness into strength: The internationalization of indian rights. *Latin American Perspectives, Vol. 23, No.2*, 38-57.

C169 Indigenous and tribal peoples convention, 1989 (No.169). (n.d.). Retrieved from https://www.ilo.org/dyn/normlex/en/f?p=NORMLEXPUB:12100:0::NO::P12100_ILO_CODE:C169

Cameron, J. D. (2013). Bolivia's contentious politics of 'normas y procedimientos propios'. *Latin American and Caribbean Ethnic Studies, Vol.8:2*, 179-201.

Caplin, D. (2011). Wiphala-relic or re-invention? Retrieved from http://www.bolivianexpress.org/blog/posts/wiphala-relic-or-re-invention

Central Indígena de Comunidades Originarias de Lomerío (CICOL) & Consejo Consultivo Autonómico de la Nación Monkoxi de Lomerío (CCA). (2015). *Estatuto autonómico de la nación Monkotxt de Lomerío.* Santa Cruz de la Sierra, Bolivia: Centro de Estudios Jurídicos e Investigación Social (CEJIS).

CEJIS. (n.d.). Retrieved from http://www.cejis.org/cejis/

Constitución Política del Estado Plurinacional de Bolivia. (2009).

Crabtree, J. (2005). The land question in Santa Cruz. In J. McNeil (Ed.), *Patterns of protest – Politics and social movements in Bolivia* (pp. 47–62). London, UK: Latin America Bureau.

D'Amico-Samuels, D. (2010). Undoing fieldwork: Personal, political, theoretical, and methodological implications. In F. B. Harrison (Ed.), *Decolonizing anthropology: Moving further toward an anthropology for liberation* (pp. 68-87). Arlington, VA: American Anthropological Association.

Della Porta, D. (Ed.) (2014). *Methodological practices in social movement research.* Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press.

Eaton, K. (2007). Backlash in Bolivia: Regional autonomy as a reaction against indigenous mobilization. *Politics and Society, 35*, 71-102.

Espada, J. L. (2013). Autonomías: Oportunidad para una reforma fiscal. *Separata, Artículo Primero, n.20, Autonomías Indígenas*, 91-103.

El Gobierno junta 5 mil campesinos en Camiri para recibir estatutos indígenas. (2008). *Ejú.* Retrieved from http://eju.tv/2009/08/el-gobierno-junta-5-mil-campesinos-en-camiri-para-recibir-estatutos-indiacute-genas/

Eisenstadt, T. A. (Ed.) (2013). *Latin America's multicultural movements: The struggle between communitarianism, autonomy and human rights.* New York, NY: Oxford University Press.

Estatuto Autonómico de la Nación Monkoxt de Lomerío. (2015).

Farthing, L., & Kohl, B. (2013). Mobilizing Memory: Bolivia's Enduring Social Movements. *Social Movement Studies 12(4),* 361–376.

Flores Gonzales, E. (2018). *Sueños de libertad: Proceso autonómico de la nación Monkoxt de Lomerío.* Santa Cruz de la Sierra, Bolivia: Centro de Estudios Jurídicos e Investigación Social (CEJIS).

Garcés, F. (2010). *El Pacto de Unidad y el proceso de construcción de una constitución política del estado – sistematización de la experiencia.* La Paz, Bolivia: Preview Gráfica.

García Linera, A. (2012). *Geopolítica de la Amazonía: Poder hacendal-patrimonial y acumulación capitalista.* La Paz, Bolivia: Vicepresidencia del Estado.

González, M. (2015). Indigenous territorial autonomy in Latin America: An overview. *Latin American and Caribbean Ethnic Studies, 10:1*, 10-36.

Hindery, D. (2013). *From Enron to Evo: Pipeline politics, global environmentalism, and indigenous rights in Bolivia.* Tucson, Arizona: The University of Arizona Press.

Jiménez Pimentel, G. (2010). Autonomía indígena y estado plurinacional. *Separata, Artículo Primero, n.20, Autonomías Indígenas*, 105-111.

Krekeler, B. (1995). *Historia de los chiquitanos*. J. Riester (Ed.) La Paz, Bolivia: Talleres gráficos *hisbol.*

Kohl, B. (2010). Bolivia under Morales: A Work in Progress. *Latin American Perspectives, Vol.3, No. 3, Bolivia Under Morales. Part1. Consolidating Power, Initiating Decolonization*, 107-122.

Kulas, E. (2015). The origins of chicha. Retrieved from https://u.osu.edu/chicha/sample-page/

Laserna, R. (2010). Mire, la democracia boliviana, en los hechos. *Actually Existing Democracies, special issue of the Latin American Research Review 45*, 27-58.

McNeish, J. (2002). Globalization and the reinvention of Andean tradition: The politics of community and ethnicity in highland Bolivia. *The Journal of Peasant Studies, Vol. 29 (3-4),* 228-269.

Malá, S. (2008). El movimiento "cocalero" en Bolivia durante los años 80 y 90: Sus causas y su desarrollo. *Revista Esboços, Vol. 15 (20),* 101-117.

Ministerio de Educación, Estado Plurinacional de Bolivia. (2014). *Estado de Situación de las Lenguas y Culturas de los Pueblos Indígena Originario: Ayoreo, Chiquitano, Guarayo, Sirionó, Guarasug'we, Mojeño Trinitario y Mojeño Ignaciano del Estado Plurinacional de Bolivia.* La Paz, Bolivia: Ministerio de Educación, Estado Plurinacional de Bolivia.

Morell i Torra, P. (2017). Disputar la autonomía: crónica etnopolítica del referéndum de aprobación del Estatuto de Autonomía Guaraní Charagua Iyambae." *Cuestión Agraria, Vol.3*, 61-104.

Notas Ardaya, M., & Sanabria Salmón, C. Elena. (2009). *Detrás del cristal con que se mira: Mujeres chiquitanas, órdenes normativos e interlegalidad.* La Paz, Bolivia: Periodismo Editores.

Regalsky,P. (2010). Political processes and the reconfiguration of the state in Bolivia. M. Ortega Breña (Tr.) *Latin American Perspectives*, *Issue 172, Vol.37, No.3*, 35-50.

Peña, A., Tubari, P., Chuve, L., Choré, M., & Ipi, C. (2016). *El camino hacia la libertad*. Santa Cruz de la Sierra, Bolivia: CICOL.

Postero, N. (2007). *Now we are citizens: Indigenous politics in postmulticultural Bolivia*. Stanford, California: Stanford University Press.

Postero, N. (2010a). The struggle to create a radical democracy in Bolivia. *Latin America Research Review, Vol. 45, Special Issue: Living in Actually Existing Democracie*s, 59-78.

Postero, N. (2010b). Morale's MAS Government: Building indigenous popular hegemony in Bolivia. *Latin American Perspectives, Vol. 37, No. 3, Bolivia Under Morales. Part1. Consolidating Power, Initiating Decolonization*, 18-34.

Postero, N. (2017). *The Indigenous State - Race, Politics, and Performance in Plurinational Bolivia*. Oakland, California: University of California Press.

Pred, A. (1992). Capitalisms, crises, and cultures II: Notes on local transformation and everyday cultural struggles. In S. Schech & J. Haggis (Ed.), *Development: A Cultural Studies Reader* (pp. 168-181). Oxford, MA: Blackwell Publishing Ltd.

Preis, A. B. S. (1995). Human rights as cultural practice: An anthropological critique. In S. Schech & J. Haggis (Ed.), *Development: A Cultural Studies Reader* (pp. 132-143). Oxford, MA: Blackwell Publishing Ltd.

Preston, P. (2015). Spain feels Franco's legacy 40 years after his death. *BBC.* Retrieved from https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-34844939

Swidler, A. (1986). Culture in action: Symbols and strategies. *American Sociological Review, Vol. 51, No. 2,* 273-286.

The Wiphala: what does this indigenous flag mean? (2018). *Chile Today.* Retrieved from https://www.chiletoday.cl/the-wiphala-what-does-this-indigenous-flag-mean/

Tockman, J., & Cameron, J. D. (2014). Indigenous autonomy and the contradictions of plurinationalism in Bolivia. *Latin American Politics and Society*, *Vol.56*:*3*, 46-69.

Tockman, J., Cameron, J. D., & Plata, W. (2015). New institutions of indigenous self-governance in Bolivia: Between autonomy and self-discipline. *Latin American and Caribbean Ethnic Studies, Vol.10:1*, 37-59.

United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. (n.d). Retrieved from https://www.un.org/development/desa/indigenouspeoples/declaration-on- the-rights-of-indigenous-peoples.html

Vigiani, A. (2008). Storia e attualità dell'ayllu nel contesto boliviano. *Achab, Rivista de Antropologia, n. 12,* 2-12.

Webber, J. R. (2008a). Rebellion to reform in Bolivia. Part III: Domestic class structure, Latin-American trends, and capitalist imperialism. *Historical Materialism*, *Vol.16,* 23-58.

Webber, J. R. (2008b). Rebellion to reform in Bolivia. Part III: Neoliberal continuities, the autonomist right, and the political economy of indigenous struggle. *Historical Materialism*, *Vol.16,* 67-109.