

### **3. Indigeneity in the Oruro Carnival: official memory, Bolivian identity and the politics of recognition**

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Oruro, Bolivia's fifth city, established in the highlands at an altitude of almost 4,000 metres, nestles quietly most of the year among the mineral-rich mountains that were the reason for its foundation in 1606 as a Spanish colonial mining settlement. Between the months of November and March, its quiet buzz is transformed into a momentous crescendo of activity leading up to the region's most renowned festival, the Oruro Carnival parade. Carnival is celebrated around February or March according to the Christian calendar and celebrations in Oruro include a four-day national public holiday, a street party with food and drink stalls, a variety of private and public rituals, and a dance parade made up of around 16,000 performers. An audience of 400,000 watches the parade (ACFO, 2000, p. 6), from paid seats along its route across the city, and it is broadcast nationally to millions more via television and the internet.

During the festivities, orureños welcome hundreds of thousands of visitors from other cities in Bolivia and around the world, who arrive to witness and take part in the festival. Those who are not performing are watching, drinking, eating, taking part in water fights or dancing, often all at the same time. The event is highly regarded because of its inclusion since 2001 on the UNESCO list of Masterpieces of the Oral and Intangible Heritage of Humanity, and local authorities promote it for its ability to bring the nation together. When I attended the parade in 2008, it was being filmed by the BBC and a number of other international TV crews, as well as local media, and VIP attenders included President Evo Morales and several diplomats.

Months of preparation go into the parade and when the big day arrives it is possible to distinguish different levels of meaning and action. There is much bustling activity: visitors and tourists all bring significant money into circulation as they need to be housed and fed, and they also consume goods and services during their stay. The audience and the media await the parade with much expectation, and onlookers judge how closely troupes are adhering to tradition or, conversely, how innovative their renditions are. Oruro is thus



Figure 3.1. Oruro Carnival parade, 2008. Photo: Ximena Córdova Oviedo.

– for a short period of time – transformed from being a quiet trading town, with little resonance in the collective memory of Bolivians, to being a ‘centre of national imagination’, to borrow Arjun Appadurai’s term (2008, p. 212). Oruro has fulfilled this role since 1970, when the city was named the ‘capital of folklore’ by presidential decree. Subsequently, the Carnival has become the focus of Bolivia’s official repertoire of memory and heritage; Bolivians look to the celebration as a way of remembering their past and traditions, and to locate a sense of national identity.

Since its first records dating back to 1904, the Oruro Carnival has transformed from a humble urban indigenous parade – prohibited from entering Oruro’s main square owing to racial prejudice that discriminated against its indigenous roots – into a commodity for the nation. Local cultural and tourism authorities promote the Oruro Carnival globally as the ‘face of all Bolivians’ because the dances are taken to depict pre-Hispanic and legendary figures from different regions of the country. Carnival came to the Andes and the rest of the Americas with the European invasion of 1492 and, in Oruro, the festival coincides with the feast of Candlemas (3 February), providing an example of how festive saints’ days were superimposed over pre-existing local traditions during the colonial period (MacCormack, 1991; Sallnow, 1987). The ritual focus is the Virgin Mary, in the figure of the Madonna of Candlemas, or the Virgin of the

Mineshaft as she is locally known. All dancers are formally initiated in Carnival dancing by giving an oath led by the priest in a special ceremony, where they vow to dance for three consecutive years and be good Christians. The central feature of the celebration is the three-kilometre danced parade, performed in honour of the Madonna of Candlemas and culminating inside the Church of the Mineshaft, which is home to a sacred painting of the Virgin. During my research several dancers told me that they invested time, money and a huge amount of effort into the Carnival because of their devotion to the Virgin, and that being Catholic has been a pre-requisite for participation since the 1960s.<sup>1</sup>

Carnival represents much more than a devout Catholic celebration in the region, however; it is also linked to the Andean agricultural calendar, particularly in the countryside. The landscape around Oruro is dry and cold, characterised by mostly arid highlands, and surrounded by permanently snow-capped mountains. Carnival coincides with the rainy season and the harvest of the potato, the staple food of the region. The fertility of this period is usually linked to ideas of the spirits of the dead, who, returning to help push the potato shoots up through the soil so the plants can flower, promote good growth and food for the living (Stobart, 2006; Harris, 2000; Téllez Nava, 2003). Many Andeans celebrate by performing rituals dedicated to the spirits, involving dances, music and special feasts between November and March. Some well-off members of rural communities also sponsor a sort of danced parade (sometimes called *anata* or despatch) designed to send off the dead and mark the end of the rainy season until the following year (Stobart, 2006, p. 248).

The sense of polyphony discerned in the celebration, the result of the popularisation of European Catholicism mixed with Andean beliefs (Sallnow, 1987; MacCormack, 1991; Celestino, 1988), has allowed for national identity discourses that emerged during the 20th century to be crystallised in the festivities. This chapter argues that its role in defining official notions of what constitutes Bolivian national heritage has a Eurocentric bias and that this has been shaped by nationalist elites and international organisations such as UNESCO. Discourses of the past in Oruro, although acknowledging the contribution of ancestral indigenous cultures, systematically reject any recent-past or modern-day contributions from indigenous actors. In this chapter the process is called the 'Eclipse of the Indian', adapting Enrique Dussel's naming of the Conquest and the inauguration of modernity (the leading 'universalist' epistemology) as the 'Eclipse of the Other' (1995). The starting premise is that the lack of visibility of some key Carnival actors in the representative dimension of the festivity in national discourse stems from racialised notions of cultural heritage inherited from the colonial period. That lack is also the

1 I recorded these comments during fieldwork and interviews in Oruro between 2007 and 2008.

result of national populist configurations of social hierarchies that reduced the relevance of indigeneity while building segregationist principles attached to colonialist ideas of 'race' into notions of 'class'. However, as demonstrated here, these discourses are at present challenged by alternative carnival displays such as the Anata Andina. In this sense, beyond constituting a nationalist celebration of the Bolivian 'melting pot', the festivities in Oruro have emerged as a locus for competing demands and interpretations of the nation along ethnic and class lines.

### **National populism and festive practices**

The privileged positioning of the Oruro Carnival in the projection of Bolivian identity becomes evident when looking at the development of cultural heritage discourses regarding the parade. Prior to the 1940s, it (like many other urban and rural indigenous cultural expressions) had been practically invisible to non-participants. Thomas Abercrombie (1992) notes that up to this point there had been two carnivals, one for the elite in ballrooms and one for the popular classes, enacted in the streets rather than in front of a formal audience. Festive practices in Oruro in the 1940s underwent forms of modernisation mirroring, to an extent, the political and cultural reconfiguration of the nation taking place during the same decade. In the lead-up to the 1952 Revolution, when the political ideology of national populism was implemented, the advent of managed uses of popular culture influenced the new nation-building project, characterising the Carnival's dynamics from then on (Klein, 2003). National populism gained legitimacy through the redistribution of resources and their reappropriation from foreign hands, social reforms and the championing of national culture, which extended to popular expressions previously in the hands of the lower classes (Williamson, 1992). Ideologically, the main concern of this process was the unification of citizens under the concept of the nation. However, the Eurocentric bias of national populism during the 1940s and 1950s (Zavaleta Mercado, 1987) had a profound effect on the structure of the Oruro festivities. The need for events and practices that could be fed into emerging national imaginaries acted as a preamble for the introduction of Carnival dances and practices to the country's authorities.

During this period General Villarroel (president of a military junta in Bolivia 1943–6) formally invited the Diablada de los Mañazos – the first official Carnival troupe on record, made up of workers from the meat trade and performers of the devil dance – to do a public demonstration at La Paz Stadium. For some present-day Carnival dancers, these developments constituted the first time the political elite of the country had taken an interest in the festival. Pedro C., a high school teacher who self-identified as *cholo*

(roughly translated as ‘urban-indigenous’), recalled how his grandfather and other close relatives were among the founders of the Diablada de los Mañños. According to his recollection, when the first new elite troupe, popularly known as La Fraternidad, was formed in the 1940s, it recruited some of the butchers from the Mañño devil troupe. These included his father, who became La Fraternidad’s lead choreographer but, as Pedro C. explained, the troupe, which has since become the Carnival parade’s referent and main image, ‘erased’ his father’s presence from the group:

My father was one of the founders of the Fraternidad, but ... as a result of racial and social discrimination in the Fraternidad, which had middle-class people, [he] was erased from their Foundation Certificate. My father was the first [choreographer] of the Fraternidad, but he is not mentioned in the records.<sup>2</sup>

This erasure, an experience commonly shared by rural and urban indigenous groups in Bolivia, resonates with Linda Tuhiwai Smith’s observation that there are ‘numerous oral stories’ among indigenous peoples that narrate the feeling of being present and having one’s history deleted ‘before your eyes, dismissed as irrelevant, ignored or rendered as the lunatic ravings of drunken old people’ (1999, p. 29). Tuhiwai Smith describes this process in terms of a ‘negation of indigenous views’ (ibid.). In Oruro, the rearrangement of systems of participation in the festivities, which started to open up to elite groups, worked alongside established class, racial and ethnic lines of social discrimination in which *cholo* or indigenous participants remained invisible. This process determined which practices and actors would enter national discourses, and which would remain excluded from official versions of the festivities, forging an ‘economy of forgetting and remembering’ (Appadurai, 2008, p. 210) in order to uphold the existing matrix of power relations.

## Officialising memory

Oruro anthropologists Marcelo Lara Barrientos (2007) and Gonzalo Araoz Sanjinés (2003) identify two strands of interpretation for the festival that are constantly projected in official discourses: the parade as an expression of Christian-Catholic devotion, and as a folkloric display that frames the transmission of national traditions. Lara Barrientos also demonstrates that the official discourse is in turn elaborated and sustained through established regulations, the press, educational events, books and local authorities (2007). The authorities in Oruro are the political, religious, economic and cultural institutions and individuals who engage in decision-making processes that affect

2 Pedro C., interview with the author, Oruro, 25 Jan.2008.

the majority of the population in the city. These include the tourism/heritage and cultural officers at the mayor's office and other state and local government institutions, the religious representatives at the Temple of the Mineshaft, and the scholars and intellectuals whose research and published works about the Carnival are regarded as 'authoritative'.<sup>3</sup> As products of a discursive approach to representation, such 'authoritative' interpretations of the event seek to render the past in univocal terms. This occurs through the institutional channelling of memory into the framework of heritage via UNESCO, and through the Christianisation of Andean symbols as a source of symbolic capital for the legitimisation of the Eurocentric mestizo discourse.

The Carnival's canonisation by UNESCO, the world's highest authority for specifying connections among civilisations, cultures, education, science and communication, has raised the 'unique' character of the event to the level of universal recognition. The implication is that outsiders ('experts' and institutions) as well as insiders are responsible for preserving the cultural integrity of the festivities, to the extent that the producers of the celebration now hold less sway in the look and feel of the event than the cultural authorities, who act as gate-keepers of tradition. Since 2001, when Oruro was proclaimed a Masterpiece of the Oral and Intangible Heritage of Humanity, the role of UNESCO, and of other institutions that were instrumental in the coordination of the bid, has become central to the festival in terms of raising its profile and dictating the guidelines for its development. For instance, troupe leaders must now present historical research to justify any innovation to the choreography or characters of their dance style.<sup>4</sup> This sort of policing of 'tradition', which stifles natural processes of innovation, appears to be founded on the principle that cultural practices are unchanging and fixed in the first place.

The aims of the 'Convention for the Safeguarding of Intangible Cultural Heritage' (2003)<sup>5</sup> are, according to the official documents, to distinguish what constitutes World Intangible Cultural Heritage from the myriad of cultural expressions around the globe, and to safeguard that heritage. Ashworth et al. argue that UNESCO's criteria for defining 'intangible heritage' is problematic, for it relies on its opposite: tangible heritage (2007, p. 34). The issue here is that the distinction between the two realms is not always clearcut, and the connotations of 'the tangible' and 'the intangible' may be culturally sensitive.

3 A vast array of research literature on all aspects of the festivities has been produced by local authors. Among the most representative are Condarco Santillán (1999), Beltrán Heredia (1962), Fortún (1961) and Murillo Vacarreza (1999). More contemporary works include Romero et al. (2003) and Lara Barrientos (2007).

4 Interview with dancer, Jorge P., Fraternidad, Oruro, 20 Dec. 2007, and interviews with expert Dario A. Mañaso, Oruro, 9 Feb. and 5 March 2008.

5 The text of this is available at: [www.unesco.org/culture/ich/index.php?pg=00006](http://www.unesco.org/culture/ich/index.php?pg=00006) (accessed 4 Sep. 2013).

In order to be awarded the status of Masterpiece of Intangible Heritage, entries were judged according to how closely they fitted UNESCO's criteria of demonstrating the roots of the event 'in the cultural tradition or cultural history of the community concerned'. Entries also had to prove that the event reproduced cultural identity and reinforced a communal bond among its 'members', promoting intercultural exchange among the peoples concerned (UNESCO, 2001, n.p.). In other words, it was necessary to show how belonging and community are embodied in the Carnival, and how these aspects are reaffirmed for the people involved. The following excerpt taken from the bid illustrates how UNESCO's criteria was interpreted by the cultural authorities in Oruro:

The Oruro Carnival is an ongoing cultural process that has unfolded over 2000 years, and it is characterised by a high degree of interculturality and intangibility. It takes place in a layered cultural site, shaped by the accumulation and selection of various cultural expressions over time. (ACFO, 2000, p. 6, my translation)

The bid places prominence on the accumulative powers of the celebration, the festival's capacity to engage with the different historical trajectories of its participants, and its ability to reproduce their diverse symbols, customs and values. However, the document states further on that the carnival has come to acquire an 'urban Catholic' focus from 'the upper layers of society', which has since become 'a phenomenon of universal integration' (ibid., p. 6). There is an internal contradiction here: how did its all-encompassing representativeness come to focus on a single brand of religiosity dictated by an elite group? For Gregory Ashworth et al., this kind of paradox is intrinsic to heritage discourses (2007, p. 37). The Carnival is 'all-encompassing', yet the selection of the symbols for its representation is guided by individual interests. Thus, an essentialised sense of a Bolivian subjectivity begins to emerge from the document, based on a shared legacy of intercultural memories that evolved into Catholic mestizaje. This notion matches the view put forward by scholars who argue that whilst the ideology of mestizaje in the Andes claimed to include 'all the voices' of the past, some 'spoke' louder than others (Larson, 1999, 2007; de la Cadena 2000, 2007). It is as a response to these processes of homogenisation of a sense of Bolivianness that 'peripheral' and more openly political festivities, such as the Anata Andina, have emerged.

### **The Anata Andina**

Anata means 'play' or 'carnival' in Aymara, a highlands indigenous language (Véliz López, 2002, p. 73). Hans Van Den Berg describes the rural anata as one of the Aymara *jallupacha* (rainy season) celebrations to mark the close of



'carnival' in the countryside, which is centred on the *Pachamama*, or 'Mother Earth' deity (1985, cited in Véliz López, 2002, p. 73). It usually takes place *after* Carnival weekend, when Aymaras in rural regions celebrate by decorating their houses, making offerings to the generative powers of the fields and paying visits to each other. Ritual activity is also directed towards the *wak'as* (or religious shrines rooted in the landscape in traditional Andean religiosity), sites entrusted with the fertility of the land, animals and humans. At the end of the anata, there is a celebration with music and drinking, dispatching 'carnival' until the following year.

The Anata Andina parade, on the other hand, is a public performance that takes place in the city of Oruro a few days *before* Carnival. Organised by the Oruro branch of the National Peasant Federation of Rural Workers (FSTUCO),<sup>6</sup> it is the largest of several rural parades that enter the urban space around the same period, all of which involve ritual dancing and music performed along the streets of Oruro. In its overall shape, the Anata Andina is similar to the main Carnival parade and follows its circuit, with coordinated dancing troupes crossing the city, though Anata dances pertain to rural practices. The instruments used to play the accompanying music bear greater similarity to the hand-made instruments, such as *pinkillos* or *tarkas* (today, these are often commercially produced), played in rural festivities during the rainy season. Similarly, the clothes worn by Anata dancing troupes are uniform across each of the groups and resemble the traditional garments of the countryside, which are hand-made using animal products and mechanical tools. At the end of the Anata's circuit, a jury assesses the performances and the winners receive agricultural goods as prizes. According to the festival organisers, Anata parade participants belong to 'peasant' communities, most of whom are rural agricultural workers who spend months of the year living and working in *ayllus* (territory-based indigenous communities), and carry out manual work in urban centres the rest of the time. In terms of their demonstrations of religiosity in public space, however, the Anata and the Carnival parade present some striking differences. The Carnival parade dancers mostly save any expression of religiosity for when they arrive inside the church, perhaps because the dancing itself could be considered a devotional act. The Anata dancers, in contrast, perform many rituals during the parade. Participants burn offerings to the Pachamama before, during, and at the end of the performance, and engage in ritual drinking and animal sacrifices, all of which form part of the religiosity of rural communities in the highlands.

6 FSTUCO is the acronym for the Spanish title: Federación Sindical de Trabajadores Unica del Campo de Oruro (Oruro's local branch of the National Peasant Trade Union Federation).



The emergence of the Anata Andina in 1993 in the Oruro arena, as a public display of rituals normally reserved for the rural sphere of the community, acquires particular relevance when viewed in relation to the disputed position of indigenous peoples in the national imaginary. In Bolivia, the assimilationist project of the 1952 Revolution generated resentment against the state when it became obvious to indigenous populations that they continued to be dominated, or 'co-opted at best'. School education, an instrument that was meant to increase the intellectual capital of the population as a whole, instead emerged as a strategy to incorporate indigenous people into the dominant ideologies of the Church (Canessa, 2000, p. 122). The new *campesino* category, created by the powers of the state to 'name and organise', served to gloss over differences in ethnic traditions shaped by geographically, historically and culturally given contexts (Wade, 2004), and to neutralise any subversion in political and cultural terms (Barragán, 2000, p. 145). Thus, indigenous identity was broken down into parts, some of which were selected to be included in the imaginary of a national identity, while others were discarded.<sup>7</sup> Far from an idea of cultural hybridity whereby the European and the indigenous both found a space to reproduce, it became clear that citizenship – the main promise of becoming a mestizo – implied 'distancing oneself from the Indian social condition and thus de-Indianising' (de la Cadena, 2000, p. 316). This structure was built on the paternalistic belief that the Indian was essentially illiterate, subordinate, prone to savagery and averse to modernisation (Barragán, 2000; Larson, 1999). The managers of the Oruro Carnival adopted this version of mestizaje, tied to Eurocentric ideas about nation-building, as a way to theorise the myriad influences on the development of the festivities. Even today, from the point of view of the authorities and those managing the event, the Carnival's multivocality and its historical contributors are adequately represented by the voice of the mestizo.

According to historians of the region, the cost of the adoption of this new mestizo imaginary for an emerging national consciousness was the neglect of indigenous histories and collective identities in the construction of a national project, largely led by a Western-oriented and urban elite who did not understand indigenous experiences (Klein, 2003; Bautista, 2010; Larson, 1999). In contrast, the appropriation of selected elements of indigenous culture and spaces occurred through the practice of folklore, projecting particular, sanitised, non-subversive and simplified images of the *indio permitido* (or

7 This selection process, which valorised and romanticised certain aspects of indigeneity to the exclusion of others, was common to the ideology of indigenismo as it developed throughout Latin America during the early 20th century in an effort to incorporate indigenous expressions into the nation's culture. In literature this discourse made it acceptable for the elites to appreciate 'foundational fictions' of the nation that crossed racial and social boundaries (Sommer, 1991).

'permitted Indian', Hale, 2004). These representations survive to this day, and do not adequately convey the legacy of discrimination, theft and extermination suffered by indigenous peoples for centuries as a result of colonialism. In Oruro, most of the people I interviewed, when prompted to talk about their own ethnicity, said that they considered themselves mestizos, including those in both the smaller troupes and the elite institutions. The term 'Indian', in the context of the Oruro festivities, was only used to refer to those who perform 'autochthonous dances' in the rural *entradas*, such as the Anata Andina, that are also staged in the city in contrast to the mestizo Carnival parade. These performers are envisaged as people from more remote communities, who dress and live in a parallel world of agricultural self-subsistence and colourful hand-made clothes, unlike the urban, worldly performers of the Carnival parade, who never identified themselves as 'Indians'. Officially, the two 'types' of parades (that is, 'autochthonous' and 'folkloric') are placed at a considerable distance from one another, and the 'autochthonous' parades do not feature prominently in the extensive touristic literature. Oruro cultural and religious authorities, when speaking of the rural parades, tend not to refer to them in neutral terms. Instead, they focus on their 'Otherness', and on how as 'Indians', 'they' get drunk and spoil the city for tourists and for the 'real Orureños' (something I often heard people say), alluding to ideas of decency and propriety. In their view, the 'Otherness' of indigeneity appears both irrelevant and undesirable. Clearly, in the 'staging' of Oruro as a synecdoche of the nation, present-day indigeneity is absent, and the indigenous roots of the nation are placed in the past, distanced from the projected notion of a Bolivian shared subjectivity.

However, the negation of the Indian in the consolidation of Bolivian national subjectivities has prompted new processes of 'self-production' in the context of the Oruro carnival. By analysing these processes through the matrix of performativity (Butler, 1999) and acknowledging that identity is a socially-derived phenomenon, one begins to understand the subject not as having an intrinsic and fixed identity, but as the result of becoming. Performance offers the possibility to respond to ideological forces; those same actors that are 'eclipsed' in representation may also enter into contact with their 'significant others' through performance (Taylor, 1992, p. 25), reemerging to engage in a politics of recognition. In this light, the Anata Andina presents a valuable opportunity to reinstate an updated kind of 'indigeneity' to the nation's map. The processes by which identities materialise through the festive, with the 'indigenous' Anata Andina parade participating in a politics of recognition, strive to reconfigure the indigenous basis of the Bolivian nation. This participation must be contextualised by recent articulations of resistance and performed authenticity, alongside the reconstitution of an indigenous identity



Figure 3.2. Elders performing libation rites on Oruro's main festive stage in preparation for the *Anata Andina*, 2008. Photo: Ximena Córdova Oviedo.

into a larger sense of community with internal structures and a common origin emerging, particularly among the Aymara.

Among the challenges to *mestizaje's* homogenising forces in religious, cultural and ethnic terms, Fausto Reinaga and the Partido Indio de Bolivia (founded in the 1960s) advocated a cultural and political reorganisation of indigenous people led by Indians. Reinaga's *indianismo*, crystallised in his 1973 Manifesto, presented a challenge to elite-led *indigenismo* by exposing school education and Christianisation as mechanisms designed to turn Indians into mestizos and instil in them a Western and capitalist ideology (Manifesto, 1973, cited in Canessa, 2000, p. 124). The Manifesto articulated the idea of the Bolivian nation as a historical and cultural continuum grounded in the ethics and tenets of an Aymara identity, which transformed into the 'Aymara Nation'.<sup>8</sup> This gave rise to *Katarismo*, a political movement that engaged in the 'recuperation of "long memory" obscured by the short memory of the Agrarian Reform' (Rivera, 1987, cited in Canessa, 2000, p. 126). *Katarismo* was inspired by the figure of Tupac Katari, who had led the 1780s uprising against colonial authority and promised its legacy would bring an Indian revolution, even after his death.

8 Canessa observes that although the idea of an Aymara Nation was based on an awareness of historical developments from a particular geopolitical perspective, it was at the same time a new invention (2000, p. 126).

According to a founder of the Anata Andina, the arrival of the parade in Oruro in 1993 was a new attempt to resist colonisation, and to once more channel indigeneity into discourses and actions that challenged power relations and epistemic legitimacies. As such, it brought with it a struggle with the Catholic Church, which

didn't want the Anata Andina entrada to take place ... Because ... we remembered vividly the five hundred years of resistance, the Spanish invasion ... There was a powerful confrontation with the Church, [by] the Aymaras and the Quechuas. We have made strong advances since 1993, we made our own priests. We researched and we have our own Aymara priests now. That's how we had our first Anata in 1993 ... We were able to identify our identity and see that we had been confused by the Spanish evangelising invasions.<sup>9</sup>

It is explicit here that the parade was a concerted effort by marginalised groups to appear on a 'map' that had previously denied their presence. Further, the call for participation for the first Anata Andina in 1993, which was distributed among rural communities, framed the parade as a *pachakuti* (Aymara word for 'revolution') and the start of a new era for indigenous people (Véliz López, 2002). Vladimir Véliz López's contribution to *El Carnaval de Oruro: Aproximaciones*, cited here, includes a photograph taken on the day of the first parade, of about ten people carrying a banner with the message: 'DAMN THE SPANISH RACE OF MURDERERS AND EXPLOITERS. 500 YEARS RESISTING COLONIALISM. JALLALLA KOLLASUYO MARCA' (ibid., p. 78, my translation).<sup>10</sup> Abercrombie refers to this rural storming of Oruro in terms of the 'invasion of Carnival', which corresponded to a broader indigenous 'call to arms' during the 1990s (2003, p. 207). This decade, punctuated by the 1992 Columbus Quincentennial, marked the reemergence of indigenous movements in Latin America. In Bolivia, Xavier Albó (1991) predicted the 'return of the Indian', as the previous decades had shown that indigenous movements were restructuring themselves to respond to global forces in a changing political and economic climate. The Declaración de Quito (Ecuador) in 1991 acted as a catalyst for political campaigns calling for the recognition of indigenous peoples' rights. This was followed by the UN declaring 1993 to be the International Year for the World's Indigenous People, and the start of a ten-year period to mark their recognition. Indigenous Guatemalan peace activist

9 Ivan Z., interview with the author, Oruro, 25 March 2008. All subsequent references to comments made by Ivan Z. relate to this discussion.

10 The last sentence in Aymara reads 'Long live Kollasuyo Marca', the name the Incas used for one of the four quarters of the Incan Empire, which covered portions of the Argentina, Peru, Bolivia and Chile of today.

Rigoberta Menchú won the Nobel peace prize in 1992, and two years later, in 1994, the Zapatista movement in Mexico led a political uprising against the government that received global coverage in the media.

The political developments of the last century have led subaltern groups to realise the urgency of a politics of recognition (Taylor, 1992, p. 27) and to assert their rights to be understood and respected as authentic. In the Anata Andina parade, Aymara participants establish the specificities of their culture through a public language of ritual drinking and animal sacrifice that demands recognition beyond the (contradictory) politics of universalism and difference that characterise the framework of mestizo nationhood. By enacting these otherwise rural rituals in the city, in front of urban Orureños and international TV crews, participants challenge urban notions of 'decency' and 'propriety' with displays of blood and death. These traditions are taken out of their original context to urge broader recognition of the 'equal value' of difference, that is, of different historical trajectories distilled through material and performed culture.

### **Performance, memory, imagination**

In 2008, I joined the Anata Andina organisers on one of their preparatory rituals to honour the Pachamama, which took place in the weeks before the parade. These preparations consisted of a non-Christian pilgrimage to the sacred shrines near Oruro city to perform reciprocity rites or *ch'allas* (see figure 3.3). On our way, the organisers explained that the shrines were 'ancient' ceremonial centres where people offered thanks for what they had received in the year, in terms of health, agricultural products, achievements and personal and communal wellbeing, and to request more good things to come in the new cycle.<sup>11</sup> On arrival at our first destination, a small open space adjacent to the beginning of the main road connecting Oruro to La Paz and Cochabamba, we went to a *wak'a* called the Toad, a big boulder surrounded by the remains of a previous ceremony. A *yatiri* (Aymara shaman) had come especially to lead the offering of libations to the deities and natural forces, and to occasionally orient the discussions of the group – including conversations about history, peppered with jokes and general chit-chat – towards the teachings of *cosmovisión andina* (Andean cosmovision). These moments also constituted social gatherings. People shared experiences regarding the duties of preparing the rituals, while drinking, smoking and chewing coca leaves. I was asked to join in.

The *yatiri* often spoke in a humorous manner. Everyone called each other '*jefe*' (boss), but when the *yatiri* gave instructions, all complied, as he was the

11 Ivan Z. had told me previously in interview that these sacred shrines were not identified until after 1982.



Figure 3.3. Andean *ch'alla* ceremony at the sacred shrine of Cerro Micaela, in preparation for the Anata Andina. Photo: Ximena Córdova Oviedo.

one really in control of our conversation and our attention. At each shrine, as we started to burn the offerings, the yatiri asked for good fortune. In between libations, he interspersed serious information with lighthearted comments on ethnicity and the participants' condition of subalternity as Indians. At one point he joked about the stereotype of Bolivians being 'backward', which in Spanish is *atrasado*, the same word that is used for 'delayed': 'Being Bolivian [means] being *atrasado*, that's just it. Always fifteen minutes behind. [You have] to be more punctual, you just have to get there earlier' (my translation). Whilst making us laugh and diffusing the tension inherent to any ritual performance, he was also passing comment on the insecure character of Bolivians. His joke, eliciting reflection from all present, echoed a critique of the impact of the 'myth of modernity' on the image that Bolivians hold of themselves, as exposed by philosopher, Juan José Bautista: 'we are not just "late" in world history, but Latin America has always been and will always be *atrasada* and dependent on Western Eurocentrism, and from now on North American modern Eurocentrism' (2010, p. 90; my translation).

It is significant that these narratives about being an Indian made reference to what others say about indigeneity. Narratives, as Bakhtin demonstrates (1987), are dialogical and often include external reflections that may not be explicit but which are nevertheless present. It became clear that, in the dynamics of the politics of recognition at play in the Anata Andina, my hosts needed to show



what had already been said about their identity in front of me, as an outsider and city-dweller, in order to represent what the community wanted to say and how they wished to respond to outside perceptions.

As to my presence there, I was asked to perform the rites and get drunk with the group, and to put forward my own requests 'with faith' to the deities. I had to 'walk the walk and talk the talk' with my hosts, in order to leave with my own 'experience' of the rites and practices. The yatiri kept asking us all '*¿cómo les parece mi ch'alla a lo andino?*' (What do you think of my Andean *ch'alla*?), inviting a new personal understanding of certain facets of indigeneity. As participants subjectively involved in the activities, all those present, urban and non-urban Bolivians, were experimenting with the permeable boundaries of our identity as Bolivians, as members of a generation which had been brought up to distance ourselves from any trace of indigeneity.

I later found out from the yatiri and others present that the day had been a historic event, the first time they had been able to complete a pilgrimage to the wak'as in preparation for the Anata reciprocity rituals. On previous occasions, I learned, they had all gathered in someone's house and had travelled 'mentally' to the sites, but the first time they had gone physically as a collective, with the purpose of making offerings and performing in reciprocity with the Pachamama and the other deities, had been on that Tuesday before Carnival in 2008. This made me reflect upon what Ivan Z. had told me earlier, that the Anata Andina gave participants the opportunity to develop their own knowledge, to *imagine their own identity*, to identify areas of learning and pursue them in the knowledge that every day was a step forward.

In my view, the Anata Andina is an explicit demand for recognition. It is an expression that asserts indigeneity in its difference (deconstructing mestizaje) but also in its worth (as carrier of a more 'authentic' heritage of the nation). My experience of indigeneity in 2008 suggests that it is no longer constituted in confrontational dialogue with a particular sector of society (as in the 1993 'Damn the Spanish race of murderers...'). Instead, using festive performance as a political tool, indigenous actors in the Anata look to challenge a persistent ideology that reduces indigenous identity to irrelevance. More than a nostalgic revisiting of the past, the Anata Andina offers the possibility for agency: by taking part in it, Aymara people are able to envision a future in tune with their own sense of subjectivity, rather than that imposed through the celebration of mestizaje and its disdain for indigenous subjects. Participation in the parade allows Aymara people to enter into dialogue with national systems of representation in the public arena, and the preparatory rituals lend the possibility of approaching memory as a work-in-progress with a sense of contiguity with the past. Thus, it becomes clear that 'peripheral' events such as the Anata Andina carry important political implications when



'read' against the nationalist framework of the festive period in Oruro. In this scenario, Carnival becomes a space to make visible alternative political projects and identity debates that concern not only distinct groups but also the nation as a whole.

## Conclusion

Processes of national representation and memory transmission, as experienced by certain performers of Bolivia's most renowned folkloric event, have been informed by the establishment of systems of symbolic difference that categorise social relations according to systems of domination. This symbolic difference has resulted in the projection of racial constructs on to some groups in order to render them invisible or irrelevant in processes of memory transmission at the level of national representation. Yet, an analysis of the dialogical dimension of performance has proved to be a good resource to interrogate how the Oruro Carnival offers its actors the possibility to contest ideological processes that reduce 'Other' identities to invisibility or malformation (Taylor, 1992). The recognition that identity is socially derived informs the choices that people make in the performance of the festivities, and can create spaces for self-realisation through the recovery of personal and cultural memories. The invasion of the urban by rural indigenous festive practices achieved through the Anata Andina challenges the view that mestizo heritage represents all voices, the true multiplicity of all Bolivians, or the 'everyone' in the official discourse that '*todos hacen el Carnaval*' (everyone makes Carnival). The Anata parades contest the notion that national heritage (inherited values, selected traditions and beliefs promoted as the embodiment of the nation) can be homogenously represented by the performative actions and symbols of an increasingly exclusive group.

The emergence of the Anata Andina, as a postcolonial project, responds to the urgent task of recovering the cultures, languages and memories of indigenous and colonised peoples around the world. The Anata Andina also constitutes a shift away from earlier attempts in Bolivia to speak of the nation in terms of 'two countries': one for the groups approaching progress and wellbeing, and another for Indians (Reinaga, 1970). Instead, it works to reinstate indigenous memories but with the aim of weaving indigeneity into the 'official' body of the nation. The Anata organisers are explicitly engaged in the processes of memory recovery, while inviting participants to research and explore new meanings. In this respect, the parade has turned into a kind of laboratory of Andean Cosmovision and the cultural heritage of Aymara and Quechua communities, all enacted through the festival. These strategies highlight the changing face of indigeneity, whereby it can no longer be seen in terms of 'language', 'race', or 'culture', but instead as a place of enhanced visibility and political participation in the now and for the future.

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