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**The Devil in Nationalism:  
Indigenous Heritage and the Challenges of Decolonization <sup>1</sup>**

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Abstract: In 2006, Bolivians began living under their first indigenous president and undergoing an explicitly pro-indigenous “process of change,” alongside much rhetoric of indigenous autonomy and state “decolonization.” However, this article suggests that this same government’s 21<sup>st</sup> century policies regarding intangible heritage and “culture” hardly mark a departure from mid-20<sup>th</sup> century mestizo-dominated liberal nationalist projects. Through ethnography of disputed cultural claims to folklore, such as those with Peru involving the devil dance, this paper examines how proprietary nationalism is experienced and expressed among certain Bolivians. For example, indignant internationally touring folklore workers imagine a hyperreal scarcity of specific expressions that have become framed as “cultural resources” for the nation. Indeed, it was common to hear propertied language employed when international disputes heated up—as cultural images circulated at high speeds through social networks and digital media. Within these media platforms, the visual sensory mode often overshadows aural and kinesthetic ones, as socially interwoven music and dance expressions fade into the background and stand-alone images of spectacular costumes move forward.

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When Miss Peru wore the *diablada* (devil dance) costume at the 2009 Miss Universe Pageant, the Bolivian Minister of Cultures accused her of appropriating cultural heritage, and also issued a statement that Bolivia's unit for the registration of intellectual property would begin an international campaign to reclaim this dance as the nation's cultural heritage (*La razón*, agosto 2009). In support of its case, Bolivian officials cited UNESCO's 2001 proclamation of Bolivia's Carnival in Oruro as Intangible Heritage of Humanity; Oruro's Carnival is a ritual context that prominently features this devil dance (Figure 1). Official Bolivian statements of indignation even included talk of turning to the International Tribunal in The Hague (*La razón*, agosto 2009). In 2014, Bolivian Ministry of Cultures officials were miffed when several dances they considered their own appeared in a video that Peru had presented to UNESCO as part of a petition to have Puno's Festival of the Virgen de Candelaria inscribed in this country's officially recognized intangible heritage list. The Candelaria Festival is celebrated in a southern region of Peru that borders Bolivia--a region that might be thought to share Aymara and Quechua indigenous histories, before colonial and republican ones carved out national borders.

In the Bolivian context, the above-mentioned devil dance evokes a complex array of indigenous, non-indigenous, and nationalist meanings, making it a compelling case through which to examine in practice the thorny issues behind state-level intangible heritage governance and indigenous politics of the region. Within UNESCO's framework, "indigenous heritage" poses something of a paradox because recognition instruments operate through UN member states. On this point, indigenous rights activists fault the 2003 Convention for the Safeguarding of Intangible Cultural Heritage, adding that many

nation-states that have indigenous populations whose intangible heritage might be recognized through this instrument, have been slow to ratify the Convention.<sup>2</sup> Most Latin American states, however, many with significant indigenous populations, have ratified UNESCO's Intangible Heritage Convention, in spite of critiques that indigenous rights activists have leveled against it. Peru and Bolivia fall into this camp of ratifiers.

Bolivia provides an intriguing case for highlighting the complexities of indigenous and national intangible heritage issues. Firstly, a significant part of the population self-identifies as indigenous. Secondly, starting in 2006, Bolivians began living under their first indigenous president, Evo Morales, who oversaw the drafting of a new constitution (2009) that on paper granted significant rights to indigenous peoples.<sup>3</sup> Thirdly, in the country's unique present historical moment, the Bolivian government attempted to decolonize the state through an officially declared "process of change," a complex constellation analyzed by some scholars as a "social movement state."<sup>4</sup> In the midst of these processes, Bolivia has experienced a veritable intangible heritage "fever," taking rather protectionist stances towards "culture" as a potential "resource." Finally, Bolivia has played a long-term role in intangible heritage politics. Since the 1970s, the country has been involved in international discussions that led to UNESCO's instruments on "intangible heritage."<sup>5</sup> Under Morales' government, and especially in the aftermath of the Miss Peru incident of 2009, Bolivians at the center of national government have privileged proprietary nationalist approaches to intangible heritage. Within Bolivia, the

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<sup>2</sup> Marrie 2009.

<sup>3</sup> Morales' subject position as "indigenous" has been questioned and he himself has denied being indigenous, emphasizing instead his labor union background (*Página Siete* 25 Sept. 2011, pg. 7). However, he remained in power over these years because those of humble backgrounds, who might be considered "indigenous" by others, voted for him as "one of their own."

<sup>4</sup> See Gustafson 2010.

<sup>5</sup> Sherkin 2001.

legislature has taken a piecemeal approach, passing laws that one by one declare as intangible heritage and “national property” specifically named ritual dances, something akin to what the Comaroffs might call “lawfare.”<sup>6</sup>

However, Bolivian processes of intense cultural nationalism also need to be understood within the broader context of the country taking control of its natural resources to ensure greater benefits for its citizens. From many Bolivian perspectives, outsiders have always profited from the country’s resources, whether those are silver, tin, gas, lithium, or...dances. If anything, state attempts to claim heritage as property have intensified since the rise to power of Evo Morales, who—as demanded by the social movements that swept him to power—nationalized gas extraction soon after entering office.<sup>7</sup> Such details must be part of an “ecological perspective” that attempts to grasp holistically the meanings of intangible heritage claims in Bolivia.<sup>8</sup>

In this article, we set aside the local heritage dynamics within Bolivia—something we address in other writings—and emphasize the Bolivian national and state-level proprietary intangible heritage claims on music and dance forms, placing these twenty-first century concerns in relation to the country’s twentieth century non-indigenous nationalist projects that championed indigenous expressions (*indigenismo*). We argue that Bolivian enthusiasm for intangible heritage protections emerged not as a major part of the country’s pro-indigenous anti-neoliberal “process of change,” but rather has its roots in mestizo nationalist projects of *indigenismo*. Furthermore, we argue that the Morales administration’s policies on “culture” hardly mark a departure from this mid-20<sup>th</sup> century

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<sup>6</sup> Comaroff and Comaroff 2009:56.

<sup>7</sup> The nationalization process, at closer examination, was a renegotiation of Bolivia’s existing contracts, a process that left Bolivia as the majority shareholder and with a more generous percentage of the profits on major fields (see Hylton and Thomson 2007).

<sup>8</sup> See Brown 2005:40.

nationalist project; rather, Bolivia's contemporary cultural politics emerge in part through indigenismo's processes—that is the 20<sup>th</sup> century incorporation of indigenous cultural expressions into a non-indigenous nationalist project. What is left in indigenismo's wake thus poses challenges for contemporary attempts at state-directed decolonization. The rise in proprietary nationalism under Morales' presidency, we further argue, may be attributed in part to the accelerated circulation of images made possible by the digital age. At diverse intersections of new media platforms, visual aspects of cultural expressions, such as dance costumes, often carry greater symbolic, representational, and discursive weight than auditory and kinesthetic ones, like musical sound and choreographed movements. In this sensory shift that once again begs the question of the tangible/intangible distinction in heritage,<sup>9</sup> we note how some non-indigenous Bolivian attitudes reflect a hyperreal sense of scarcity about “culture” as a resource.

In the following sections, we first locate the complexities of Bolivian indigeneities and indigenismo. Next, we explore the layered meanings of the devil dance as one example of contested national heritage. We then interpret two recent ethnographic interactions related to Bolivian heritage discussions (a participatory workshop and a departmental council of cultures meeting in 2012). This is followed by some historical background to the contemporary state's proprietary heritage policies. Finally, we briefly touch on the 2014 Peru-Bolivia heritage spats that exploded over social media in relation to Peru's Candelaria Festival heritage claim.

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<sup>9</sup> For critical perspectives on the tangible/intangible divide see Kirshenblatt-Gimblett 2004; Torres and Romero 2005; Smith 2006; Lacarrieu 2008; Smith and Akagawa 2009; Byrne 2009; Collins 2012; Harrison 2013.

### **Bolivian Indigeneity and *Indigenismo*?**

What is *indigenismo*? In the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, Andean indigenous cultural expressions in Bolivia went from being disdained by mestizos to being the core of a national project. The category of “mestizo,” slippery and context sensitive, may refer literally to “mixed race,” but is more often understood as “non-indigenous,” and in practice more related to culture and class.<sup>10</sup> *Indigenismo* refers to processes through which mestizo-led governments mined indigenous expressions for their potential as nationalist culture—often transforming and re-framing these expressions so as to appeal to Western-oriented aesthetics.<sup>11</sup> *Indigenismo* nationalized and celebrated these indigenous expressions, but without challenging the structures that continued to marginalize the country’s indigenous peoples. Ideologies of *mestizaje* (that the nation consists of homogeneous liberal citizens) and *indigenismo* went hand in hand, and became the centerpiece of the cultural politics of the 1952 Revolution. This historic reference to mid-20th century *indigenismo* should be distinguished from what some authors have referred to as the “indigenista” tendency of the Morales government; the latter is a decolonizing project that attempts to bring indigenous ideas into the very organization of government.<sup>12</sup>

While *indigenismo* was a specific 20th century national cultural project, multiple indigeneities are at work in 21<sup>st</sup> century Bolivia. The country’s indigenous populations comprise Aymaras and Quechuas, who generally live in the western highlands, and over 33 different ethno-linguistic groups who live in the eastern lowlands. In the 2001 census,

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<sup>10</sup> See Barragán 1992a; Barragán 1992b.

<sup>11</sup> Salmón 1997; Rossells 2004; Bigenho 2005; Bigenho 2006.

<sup>12</sup> See Postero 2010.

62% of Bolivians self-identified as indigenous, but only 48% did so in 2012 (following six years under Evo Morales). Neither census included the option of "mestizo," a point of considerable controversy. As the Morales administration attempted to institutionalize indigenous discourses through constitutional and legislative reforms, it faced the challenge of articulating these multiple and shifting indigeneities.

Shortly after Morales's election in 2005, the new president called for a constituent assembly to write a new constitution that would better represent the country's significant indigenous populations. Bolivia has been operating under the new constitution, which was approved by referendum vote in 2009. Now officially "The Plurinational State of Bolivia," the government claimed to represent indigenous interests and work against the problems of the homogenizing mestizo nationalist frame.

Being indigenous in Bolivia is not about blood quantum, tribal rolls, or rural peasantry. It is related to colonial structures that shaped separate "Spanish" and "Indian" republics, and that today continue to color marginalizing structures and racist practices in many Latin American national contexts.<sup>13</sup> Ongoing and often blatant racism remains a reality in Bolivia; for example, the notorious attacks on indigenous authorities in Sucre in May 2008 hastened the 2010 antiracism law. Many of Bolivia's self-identified indigenous peoples live in cities and speak Spanish as their first language, their experiences of indigeneity sometimes having more to do with difference, rights, and opposition to global forces than to connections with the land or descent from pre-conquest populations.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> Hale 1994; Nelson 1999; Colloredo-Mansfeld 1999; Canessa 2012.

<sup>14</sup> See Canessa 2007; Lazar 2008.

Indigenities in Bolivia differ significantly from those of North America, as the intercultural dynamics of the former are not fundamentally structured through a politics of native sovereignty. Rather, in Bolivia they are shaped by questions of social inequality, marginalization, autonomy, rights to prior consultation, and specific practices of social organization that can move with people as they leave rural contexts. Therefore, the Bolivian case promotes a somewhat different political location from which to revisit the issues of the “In Defense of Property” debates.<sup>15</sup> In the Bolivian case at hand, the very cultural expressions under dispute may have indigenous roots, but they have also become synonymous with Bolivian nationalist claims through the historical processes of the fraternal twin discourses of indigenismo and mestizaje.<sup>16</sup> We argue that indigenismo's effects have remained strong under Morales' government, in spite of the supposedly radically different moment the Bolivian state has been experiencing.

Whose indigeneity is represented in Morales' government? Can the state ever move beyond the framings of the “authorized” and “unruly” Indian? —terms coined by Bolivian scholar Silvia Rivera Cusicanqui and then circulated through the North American academic context by Charles Hale.<sup>17</sup> Tensions have surrounded the perceived dominance of highland Aymara indigeneity as represented by Morales' government. Other fissures of indigeneity have appeared. In 2011, major indigenous organizations that previously supported Morales' government split with him over key struggles like the

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<sup>15</sup> Carpenter, Katyal, and Riley 2009; Brown 2010; Carpenter, Katyal, and Riley 2010.

<sup>16</sup> Bigenho 2006:268.

<sup>17</sup> Hale 2004.

TIPNIS demand for prior consultation in the building of a road through lowland indigenous areas.<sup>18</sup>

Within the officially labeled “process of change,” the state has replaced the “Vice-ministry of Culture” (singular) with the “Ministry of Cultures” (plural). A branch of this state apparatus even includes a “Vice-ministry of Decolonization.” However, Bolivian national sovereignty, rather than indigenous cultural rights or indigenous sovereignty, may be seen to motivate much of the government’s cultural policy work, particularly in the area of specific dances that the state has moved under “intangible heritage,” a rubric that, in direct contradiction with UNESCO’s principles, has fostered ideas about exclusive forms of property-like protection.

### **What Makes the Devil Dance**

The devil carries multiple meanings within Andean studies. It represents a spirit of the underworld or *ukhu pacha* and can go by various names (*supay*, *diablo*, *tío* etc.); these spirits share features: they are dangerous; they are associated with artistic creativity, fertility, and wealth to be found deep in the mines.<sup>19</sup> Stobart’s work on the *sirenas* (spirit beings from which musicians receive new tunes) locates these spirits in a similar world of *supays*, devils, and demons—all-powerful but ambiguous beings from the underworld.<sup>20</sup> When it comes to the devil dance in urban festivals, however, the dance’s meanings need to be considered within the social webs of its performances. June Nash’s ethnography located this dance with ties to miners who worshipped both the Virgin of the Mineshaft

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<sup>18</sup> TIPNIS marched twice to La Paz in 2011 and 2012. The “prior” consultation was finally held, and in official terms the result was in favor of building this road. However, reports detail the contested nature of this consultation (Achtenberg 2012).

<sup>19</sup> Martínez 2010:144.

<sup>20</sup> Stobart 2006:115.

and the God of the mountain (momo, supay, el Tío).<sup>21</sup> In subsequent ethnographic work, Abercrombie discussed the “Indian within” the non-Indian dancer, as expressed in these Carnival performances of urban folk nationalism.<sup>22</sup>

As performed today, the devil dance involves Andean cosmologies, mestizo nationalism, forms of collective organizing, and local artisan economies. The other dances of Bolivia’s various urban ritual processions (*morenadas*, *caporales*, *llameradas*, *tinkus*, etc.) —similarly perceived by Bolivians to be under siege by neighboring countries—thrive within the same social fabric of layered meanings and organizations, some with greater participation by urban Aymaras (i.e. *morenadas*), and others with greater participation by mestizos (i.e. *caporales*), but many of them, in a way, standing in for Bolivian mestizo nationalism, folklore, and intangible heritage relative to the international stage.

Bolivia’s urban ritual dance processions unfold over months of rehearsals and planning, showcasing vibrant social structures that go far beyond the narrow time-space of the ritual dance processions themselves. The work of Rossana Barragán and Cleverth Cárdenas highlights the social order necessary to move 30,000 costumed participants, all moving in choreographed steps, through the streets of La Paz in the *Entrada del Gran Poder*, a celebration similar in format to that which occurs in Oruro's Carnival; the authors set up this argument about *order* in direct contestation to the sometimes over-zealous Bakhtinian interpretations of fiestas as moments of social disorder and the world turned upside down.<sup>23</sup> In his work with Aymara traders in La Paz, Nico Tassi has shown how principles of abundance, rather than scarcity, motivate exchanges and structure

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<sup>21</sup> Nash 1979:121-169.

<sup>22</sup> Abercrombie 1991:119.

<sup>23</sup> Barragán and Cárdenas 2009.

everything from market presentation to a ritual parade like Gran Poder.<sup>24</sup> In contrast, the idea that another country could “steal” or “appropriate” these performances, a perspective often voiced by mestizo folklore workers (especially dancers), seems to overlook completely the social orders that sustain them. Such concerns of “theft” and “plagiarism” reflect hyperreal ideas about culture as a scarce resource.

To specify, the hyperreal rests on simulacra, which are copies that have no originals in reality, but that still have social effects because of their perceived existence.<sup>25</sup> These devil dance wars reflect how some Bolivians have come to see “culture” as a scarce resource when it is anything but scarce. In this case, culture is imagined within a zero-sum equation with neighboring countries. If Peru names as heritage something Bolivians see as “theirs,” Bolivians lose, and vice versa. While the potentially real returns of tourism are in the mix of these concerns, more research is needed to show any direct correlation between heritage declarations of one country and the corresponding tourism losses of a neighboring country. This hyperreal scarcity of culture emerges precisely as spectacular digital images of costumed dancers proliferate and circulate widely. As a way to distinguish the present highly digitized devil dance wars under President Evo Morales, it should be noted that Miss Chile wore a diablada costume at the Miss Universe pageant in 1983, 1984, and 1989, and these moments of “appropriation” did not draw the same heated reactions.<sup>26</sup> Indeed, the uptick in devil dance fever, we argue, has more to do with the greater facility with which images of these dances circulate in today’s Internet and social media arenas. In these cyberspatial circulations, the visually apprehended overwhelms other realms of cultural experience—what might be heard in music, felt in

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<sup>24</sup> Tassi 2016:128-132.

<sup>25</sup> Baudrillard 1995.

<sup>26</sup> Córdova 2009:9.

the choreography, or expressed as abundance.<sup>27</sup> In 2014, the devil dance wars ignited once again, as Peru had petitioned UNESCO to have the Fiesta of the Virgen de Candelaria (Puno) entered on Peru's representative list of intangible cultural heritage of humanity. Arguments about shared historic transformations and continuities of indigenous Aymara and Quechua regions that extend across contemporary national borders did not enter the Bolivian on-line discussions that occurred in relation to this expression of possessive mestizo nationalism. The peculiarity of these devil dance wars was one reason we decided to organize the following workshop.

### **A Workshop and a Meeting of the Departmental Council of Cultures**

In July 2012 we convened a four-day participatory workshop in Coroico entitled “Rethinking Creativity, Recognition and Indigeneity” with twenty Bolivians involved in various aspects of culture and media, including representatives of indigenous groups.<sup>28</sup> We began to plan this workshop after we both, independently, had been drawn into discussions with our respective Bolivian musician friends who raised concerns about intellectual property, piracy, and heritage policies. The workshop aimed to serve as a space where Bolivians from diverse backgrounds, who would not usually meet, could discuss their concerns and share experiences. The country's new constitution and its wake of developing policies on culture, intellectual property, and heritage formed an important

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<sup>27</sup> On principles and aesthetics of abundance in an urban Aymara context, see Tassi 2016. In ethnography completed in the 1990s, Bigenho noted how Bolivian folklore festival contexts, with a very different structuring of performance time, led to a privileging of the visual over the aural and kinesthetic--altering the duration, content, and overall significance of music performances. (2002:61-96). In the twenty-first century era of social media, these sensory shifts towards the visual have become even more exaggerated.

<sup>28</sup> The workshop was supported by the National Science Foundation and was co-organized together with Bolivian research assistants Juan Carlos Cordero and Bernardo Rozo, and Hampshire College student Phoebe Smolin.

backdrop to these discussions.<sup>29</sup> For the present discussion, we briefly consider just one aspect of the workshop: heritage, a topic that touched a particularly raw nerve among the participants who expressed great concern about the “fever” of heritage registration sweeping the county and the conflicts it provoked. For example, in 2011 alone, eleven dances were legally declared Bolivian national heritage, a campaign to assert ownership set in motion by the devil dance controversy. Workshop participants described the confusion and lack of communication between regional and national bodies involved in heritage registration procedures, and discussed how heritage was being widely misunderstood as property. Participants mentioned that some Bolivians were even talking about “patenting” cultural expressions as “heritage.” We heard how declarations of “cradle” and “capital” status for cultural expressions had ignited conflicts not only between neighboring countries, but also between adjacent communities. Through the comment threads on YouTube music videos and dances, Peruvians and Bolivians had already waged a xenophobic war of words about conflicting heritage claims.<sup>30</sup> However, the extent of heritage-derived conflicts *within* the country was new to us. In the days following the workshop, and together with Bolivian colleagues, we found ourselves reflecting upon the idea of de-heritagization and even drafted—but never published—an article for a Bolivian national newspaper proposing this idea. In this context of serious misgivings about the benefits of Bolivia’s proprietary and nationalistic approaches to heritage policy—shaped by old indigenismo nationalism rather than decolonizing tendencies—we were invited to a meeting of the La Paz Departmental Council of Cultures.

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<sup>29</sup> The workshop’s discussions and associated dissemination activities are detailed in a dedicated website. See Bigenho and Stobart 2014.

<sup>30</sup> Stobart 2010.

On the evening of July 24, 2012, a workshop participant we will call "Juana" had arranged to have the workshop organizers talk with the La Paz Departmental Council of Cultures. Juana was an employee of the Ministry of Cultures, heading up the Unit of the Departmental Councils of Cultures, entities that have emerged from the processes of the 2010 Law to Frame Autonomies and Decentralization. The meeting itself marked a relatively new local political time-space in which Bolivians performed the politics of their new autonomies, in this case with respect to cultural policies in the Department of La Paz.<sup>31</sup> After the President of the Council touched on a few points and gave a brief introduction, we were asked to speak about some of the issues we had been discussing in the 2012 workshop. We had not been given much advance notice as to the purpose of the meeting or the reason for our invitation to speak. We--Bigenho, Stobart, and Cordero (one of the Bolivian members of the organizing team)--focused on heritage problems, introduced the idea of deheritagization, and also spoke about seeking a balance in intellectual property between users' rights and creators' rights.

In response we listened to impassioned, mixed, and sometimes contradictory interventions by Council members, some of which we reconstruct here from notes:<sup>32</sup>

An actor we will call "Antonio" seemed quite peeved by our presence; he minced no words in his interventions. He said, "It's no bad thing that heritage becomes seen as property. But this doesn't happen here. And because we are not conscious about what is ours, they steal from us." In what seemed to be a response to part of our presentation that included a discussion of indigenous case studies in other parts of the world and

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<sup>31</sup> Each department has its own council that includes 20 members--10 regular members and 10 substitutes. These councils exist as part of a relatively new autonomous local governing structure.

<sup>32</sup> The quotes are reconstructed from notes rather than directly quoted from a recording. With the exceptions of the names of workshop organizers and public figures, we have used pseudonyms in this passage.

alternatives to intellectual property, such as the application of protocols, Antonio said, “That might be what happens over there. But I have to publish with my own money. We need to dialogue with the context in which we live.” We were not sure if this reaction was aimed at the foreigners in the room (Stobart, Bigenho, and an undergraduate student from Bigenho's institution) or against any alternative indigenous proposals that might come from outside Bolivia. In any case, we could hear in his statement the strong echoes of the individual creator of art whose interests tend to diverge from collective indigenous concerns. “I have to publish with my own money.”

Cordero, the one Bolivian workshop organizer who was able to attend this meeting, reminded the Council that the current models of intellectual property and heritage were indeed coming from outside Bolivia. However, Antonio responded, “Knowledge is the property of the world. But there is nothing wrong with it being under intellectual property. Bolivians are lacking in this way of thinking.” At another moment he added, “Property is not synonymous with prohibition. There should be benefits for the creator.” In our presentation, we raised the issue of Guaraní nationhood, a point that had emerged in the workshop discussion, a questioning of the Bolivian national borders that divided this indigenous nation. Antonio insisted, “As for the Guaraní, it's a lie that they are Brazilian and other nationalities. *They are Bolivian* and they have to be defended as such.” Furthermore, he critiqued the Workshop's preliminary conclusions that called for a Summit of Cultures. He said, “...There should be a summit of *arts* and cultures.”

The workshop's suggestions equally unsettled "Marina," a dancer who has been involved in folklore performances under international touring contracts, and whom Bigenho has known since the 1990s. She said, “I'm disappointed. In the dance world,

they are taking our property, our culture. The Ministry should take a wider view (*ser más amplia*). They complain about the movements when they say that borders didn't exist before. They should be saying 'these things are Bolivian,' like *caporales*... The problem is in the denomination. There are devil dancers in many countries. We need to do something like brand it for the country. It is our cultural capital. I have traveled to other places and I've seen people wearing the dress of the *chola paceña*. I have to correct them and say this dress is not from Puno [Peru], but from La Paz [Bolivia]. Others, like the Chileans, are taking care of *their* property. The problem is the recognition of origin. The problem is the appropriation by other countries... What heritage do they have? Don't the Chileans have the Mapuche? Instead, Chile is doing things with our dances and they are doing this through the media (*mediaticamente*)."

We note here how, under this folklorist's perspective, indigenous peoples and by extension their creative expressions became literally national possessions. "Don't the Chileans have the Mapuche?" As a folklore dancer whose cultural work comes from representing Bolivia's dances to the world, Marina has a personal interest in seeing clearly defined lines as to what belongs within Bolivian claims. During a 1996 tour of France, a Bolivian dance troupe with which Marina participated took the Chaco dances out of their presentation repertoire when they were performing alongside an Argentine ensemble, because these genres (*chacarera, triunfo, gato*) looked so much like the Argentine performance. Bolivian folklore performers boast a wide variety of music and dance genres they can call their own. Not performing "the Chaco set" did not diminish the Bolivian presentation. One can imagine, however, a dancer's concern at the possibility of other national folklore groups taking up other "Bolivian dances" as their

own. We call attention to Marina's awareness of the media circulation of these dances. As more people see, post, and exchange images, via YouTube, Facebook, and other forms of social media, the visuals--and even more specifically, those of clothes and costumes--seem to be the points of contention, rather than the sonorous and musical accompaniments or the dance steps.

Marina's husband, "David," a musician who also had worked on international tours in Europe and Japan intervened, trying to distinguish between regimes of authors' rights and those of heritage. He marked the importance of recognizing artists who might have distinct interests in these debates, and he also suggested that other countries have more "advanced" cultural policies than Bolivia.

Cordero intervened at this point, referencing the example of an *empanada* (a cheese or meat-filled pastry that might be eaten at afternoon tea in Bolivia). If the empanada is part of Bolivian "culture," how should Bolivians respond to demands to patent this culinary specialty? Cordero drew on recent positions articulated at the workshop by a businessman we will call "Ramiro"—a man who owns a chain of shops that sells cheese pastries. At the workshop, Ramiro drew on his experiences in radio and as an independent record producer; he was one of the few workshop participants who favored an aggressive intellectual property agenda, including the patenting of his famous pastries. Cordero, on the other hand, suggested Bolivians should backtrack to point zero, to consider if this is really the direction they want to go. Cordero, a well-known Bolivian musician with national and international experience, once worked for Bolivia's royalty collection society. He then became active with the transnational working group called

CopySouth/CopiaSur.<sup>33</sup> Through these discussions, he started to take a critical view of how copyright has been administered in Bolivia. At this Council meeting, his ideas were met with somewhat puzzled looks. Perhaps the hypotheticals he presented about culture as overly protected by intellectual property law did not resonate yet with personal experiences, particularly in a contemporary context where Bolivians are looking fervently to the emancipatory potential of law-making, something we, along with other ethnographers of Bolivia, have noticed.<sup>34</sup>

Within the array of voices that represented primarily mestizo artists and folklore workers, an Aymara man, "Tomás," intervened, also responding to the proposal for a national summit of cultures: "Tawantinsuyo [Inca empire] has been forgotten. I am Aymara and they have imposed this on us. The system is to blame... But then they call us 'Indian,' then 'poor,' then 'national sellout' (*vendepatria*)... A summit? Congress? But what is our identity?" Tomás's words, distant from the concerns of folklore workers who found themselves facing off with other international folklore troupes, brought the conversation back to internal colonial relations and the question of discriminatory practices against those who might identify as indigenous before, or at least as much as they identify as Bolivian.

After the meeting, the workshop's organizing team commented on the overpowering voices that represented "artists" and their concerns. We wondered if the Councils of Cultures in other Departments were so skewed to the interests of people making a living in folklore performance, people who tend to be urban-based mestizos for whom different forms of indigeneity represent potential material to be nationally branded.

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<sup>33</sup> See Copy/South Research Group 2006.

<sup>34</sup> See Fabricant 2012.

The most prominently heard voices at this meeting called for precisely what workshop participants had found problematic; they definitely wanted heritage to be property, and to be the property of the *Bolivian nation*. The lone voice of the Aymara man reminded us all of colonial impositions and the subsequent national boundaries that divided Tawantinsuyo. His statement could be glossing over at least two moments of empire, that of the Inca rule over Aymara kingdoms and then that of the Spanish over Tawantinsuyo. For Tomás, the collective histories of discrimination were far more important than any sense of ownership over cultural expressions. He was the only one who asked the “who are *we*?” question, implicitly querying the nationalist umbrella that was supposed to cover everyone.<sup>35</sup> The story of the La Paz Council Meeting demonstrates how indigenous Bolivian heritage is entangled with nationalism and the economic futures of mestizo performing artists. Bolivian governments, however, have also played consistent roles in the country’s heritage policies.

### **Indigenous Heritage as Property of the State**

In 2003, the presidents of Andean countries put forward the “Declaration of Quirama.” Among other things, this document instructed national authorities to rally behind UNESCO’s newly established International Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity. The application of this international instrument was seen as important for protecting “the memory and identity of Andean cultures.” Then Bolivian President Gonzalo Sánchez de Lozada, a figure with a long political trajectory as the architect of Bolivia’s neoliberal policies, signed this document.

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<sup>35</sup> The “who are *we*?” question, or who constitutes the community and thereby the practitioners of a particular heritage is a problematic point identified by others working on heritage (Kearney 2009: 215), and was seen in the Kallawayá case as studied by Callahan (2011).

Four months later, he was ousted from office by a broad array of social movements that shut down the country, demanded his resignation, clamored for the nationalization of hydrocarbon resources, and called for radical transformations in the country's governing structures. In 2005, Bolivians elected Evo Morales as the country's first indigenous president, and he came to power with a people's mandate for a constitutional overhaul. During this historical moment of political transformation, however, the politics of intangible heritage continued on the same path. Within the first year of Morales' administration, the government wrapped up Sánchez de Lozada's unfinished business with intangible heritage, formally ratifying UNESCO's 2003 Convention on the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity. These seemingly radically different political regimes of Sánchez de Lozada and Morales actually coincided considerably on intangible cultural heritage policies.

We argue that Bolivian governments, since the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century, consistently have tied folklore or intangible heritage to nationalism and to the economic promise of tourism. Culture framed as heritage becomes more readily available for consumption.<sup>36</sup> Regardless of political color, Bolivian governments read heritage instruments as one more way to rework indigeneity into the nationalist project—an extension of the 20<sup>th</sup> century projects of indigenismo. Indeed, it is notable that the music and dance genres registered as heritage in Bolivia are rarely endangered indigenous expressions with narrow localized aesthetic appeal. Rather, in the name of proprietary nationalist claims, mestizo actors and indigenismo processes frame a narrative of scarce cultural resources that actually reference dynamic national folklore traditions.

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<sup>36</sup> Torres and Romero 2005:281.

UNESCO histories and documents often cite Bolivia's 1973 request that a protocol be added to the Universal Copyright Convention to protect "popular arts and cultural patrimony of all nations."<sup>37</sup> Where does such a request fit in Bolivia's own history? When the Bolivian government raised its voice on this issue, the country was under the dictatorship of General Hugo Banzer Suárez (1971-1978), but his cultural politics have been interpreted as a continuation of the nationalist project that began with the 1952 Revolution.<sup>38</sup> The '52 national revolutionary project was broad in scope, but ultimately liberal in outcome. It included an agrarian reform law that aimed to dismantle large land holdings (1953). It brought universal suffrage, but by including all people as homogeneous mestizo citizens. The negative term *indio* was banished and replaced officially with the term *campesino* ("peasant"). In this national revolutionary process of universal liberal citizenship, indigeneity took a special place on stage, as the raw materials of a nationalist identity; non-indigenous mestizos staged indigenous things and presented them with pride as Bolivian nationalist expressions.<sup>39</sup> Within these arrangements, however, the Bolivian state maintained the coloniality implicit within the mestizo-dominated state.<sup>40</sup>

During his dictatorship in the 1970s, Banzer moved forward this nationalist cultural project by bringing popular anonymously authored folkloric expressions not only under the realm of "property of the State," but also as "Cultural Heritage of the Nation"; additionally, he emitted a Supreme Decree that called for maintaining the purity of folkloric expressions because they were like a "touristic good [commodity]"; the decree

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<sup>37</sup> Sherkin 2001.

<sup>38</sup> Sánchez C. 2001.

<sup>39</sup> See Bigenho 2006.

<sup>40</sup> Rivera Cusicanqui 1993.

prohibited carrying folklore to “other foreign places” so as to shield it from “alteration and usurpation”; other passages of the document, in a seemingly contradictory manner, encouraged the dissemination of folklore.<sup>41</sup> Through this decree, Banzer pushed for national control over cultural elements that happened to include mostly indigenous music and dance. In doing so, he facilitated the mining of these expressions for their economic potential in tourism.

A 1989 UNESCO document even suggested that Bolivia’s 1973 call for an international protocol on cultural expressions was linked to the economic success of Simon and Garfunkel’s 1970 cover of “El cóndor pasa” (as “If I Could,” on the album *Bridge over Troubled Water*), which lacked copyright protection.<sup>42</sup> Until quite recently, certain Bolivian musicians dedicated efforts to proving that “El cóndor pasa” was of national origin. However, others have argued that it was composed by the Peruvian, Daniel Alomía Robles in 1913, as part of a *zarzuela*; the piece was originally scored for orchestral rather than the folkloric instruments with which it has become associated.<sup>43</sup> Within the layered ironies of this tune's history, its “composer” was said to have been inspired by indigenous music—read “unauthored” and “uncopyrightable”—he heard in the Peruvian countryside, and in proper indigenista refashioning, he made this music his own.<sup>44</sup> In 2004, the tune was officially declared Peruvian national heritage. In the wake of the 2009 devil dance controversy, and in an effort to distinguish Bolivian and Peruvian

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<sup>41</sup> Sánchez C. 2001:116; Decreto Supremo 15304, 1978. For the Mexican context, Elizabeth Emma Ferry refers to this as the “idiom” of heritage in the national project; in the case she analyzed, the Mexican Revolution redefined property in ways that would promote the goals of the revolution; thus mining cooperatives used “patrimonial strategies” to organize labor production and consumption (2002:338).

<sup>42</sup> Sherkin 2001: 54, n. 13.

<sup>43</sup> See Llórens Amico 1983.

<sup>44</sup> Llórens Amico 1983:102.

cultural expressions, Bolivia's Minister of Cultures, Pablo Groux held out an olive branch by officially acknowledging the Peruvian origins of "El cóndor pasa" (*El Comercio*, 22 September 2009).<sup>45</sup>

Bolivia's 1973 request for a protocol can also be located in relation to a film called *Argentinísima*, which was screened that year in Bolivia. Even though Argentina has indigenous Andean populations, primarily in the north, Bolivians began drawing nationalist cultural boundaries when Jaime Torres, an Argentine born musician of Bolivian parentage was featured in this film. Torres' performance in *Argentinísimo* caused uproar and sparked nationalist reactions in relation to the instrument and the musical repertoire he played in this film.<sup>46</sup> Torres performed on the *charango*, a small mandolin-like instrument that is heard in many Andean music performances. The national origins of this instrument were and continue to be a major point of contention among Andean countries.

UNESCO histories then recount the endless ping pong effect that followed Bolivia's 1973 request, as different entities of global governance weighed in on the matter—UNESCO, Berne Convention (agreement that seeks to make uniform the intellectual property laws within different nation-states), and WIPO (World Intellectual Property Organization). Discussions went back and forth as to whether or not folklore or heritage should be connected at all to the intellectual property regimes implied by economic motivations, or whether it should remain in the realm of cultural rights.<sup>47</sup> When intellectual property problems emerged specifically in UNESCO's debates on intangible

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<sup>45</sup> For ethnography on this tune's importance for global "Andean" music, see Bigenho (2012:32-59).

<sup>46</sup> Rios 2014.

<sup>47</sup> Sherkin 2001; Aikawa 2004.

cultural heritage, they were cordoned off as the appropriate realm for WIPO and the WTO (World Trade Organization); thus “economic rights” of intellectual property were separated from the “cultural dimension” of intangible cultural heritage, and UNESCO directed its attention to the latter realm.<sup>48</sup> Now, however, WIPO is also engaging with issues of what it has labeled Traditional Cultural Expressions (TCEs), even though the ethnographic record shows WIPO’s well-intentioned attempts to translate these expressions to intellectual property frames have come up short.<sup>49</sup> While global governing entities attempted to segregate the economic and the cultural, Bolivian governments were already marrying economic interest to a framing of heritage as property and potential commodity of a nation-state eager to mine its tourism futures.

Bolivia’s neoliberal era, beginning in 1985, would not shift entirely from this *liberal* national cultural project. For example, in spite of talk about a shrinking state, the 1992 Authors’ Rights Law (still in force at the time of this writing) considers un-authored music as property of the State.<sup>50</sup> The present “anti-neoliberal” government continues on the same path of considering traditional cultural expressions as potential economic resources, although in some cases privatizing cultural heritage has been interpreted as a calculated decision within Bolivia’s still on-going neoliberal approaches.<sup>51</sup>

In other areas, however, President Morales has taken a position against proprietary approaches to cultural knowledge, even if only at the level of strong rhetoric. For example, in the name of food sovereignty, he has taken a position against the article of the TRIPS agreement (Trade Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights) that

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<sup>48</sup> Aikawa-Faure 2009.

<sup>49</sup> WIPO 2010; see Noble 2007.

<sup>50</sup> Also see Sánchez C. 2001:118-119; Bigenho 2002:199-225.

<sup>51</sup> Albro 2010:160.

permits proprietary approaches to biological materials, such as seeds. In the interest of collective “food sovereignty,” a concept now enshrined in the new constitution, cultural knowledge about seeds should be shared and intellectual property regimes forestalled.<sup>52</sup> While one can see a convergence in these policies around the theme of national sovereignty, Bolivia’s approach to intangible heritage seems more like its approach to mineral resources. With an eye on economic futures in a global market, the government seeks to control these resources. Their rhetorical approach is quite different in the area of seeds, a realm in which commodification is supposed to be held at bay, and priority is given to the idea of nourishing the population and ensuring people will “live well” (*suma qawsay*) – a key discursive idea in the Bolivian state’s decolonizing rhetoric. Food sovereignty potentially points beyond national borders and suggests concern for the global stakes in the future of food production and access. The Bolivian government’s desire to control intangible heritage, however, implies the inscribing of propertied logics and the drawing of clear boundaries with its geographic neighbors.

### **Seen and Not Heard**

Transforming embodied performances into intangible heritage involves a specific inscription of the “repertoire” into the “archive,” a specific metacultural process that brings its own problems.<sup>53</sup> The UNESCO intangible heritage list provides just such a vehicle for this transformation. When national cultural expressions are placed on this list,

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<sup>52</sup> Nicole Fabricant reveals on-the-ground challenges to President Morales' rhetoric, showing, for example, how soybean production in Santa Cruz depends on genetically modified seeds as sold by the likes of Monsanto. See Fabricant 2012:176-178.

<sup>53</sup> Taylor 2003; Kirshenblatt-Gimblett 2004.

they are perceived as accruing greater transnational value.<sup>54</sup> As mentioned earlier, in 2014 the devil dance wars—our catch-all phrase for the arguments about several different dances under dispute—once again flared up, on and off-line, in response to Peru’s attempt to present to UNESCO the Fiesta of the Virgin de Candelaria in Puno as another Peruvian contribution to the representative list of intangible heritage of humanity. The materials Peru presented for its case were placed on UNESCO’s website and included their application form, representative photos, community consent forms, and a documentary video.<sup>55</sup>

Peru’s documentary video features images of several dances, but they are shown in quick succession and with a poor quality sound track. Images of religious devotion, elaborate costumes, masks, and indigenous wind instruments catch the eye, but the few seconds of the different musical sound examples hardly put music at the center of this disagreement. Providing a singular exception in the video, the final 38 seconds feature night-time images (brilliant costumes shadowed under darkness) that are accompanied by one continuous track of *morenada* music, a music that accompanies another dance that some Bolivians perceive to be nationally theirs, and that they believe Peruvians have appropriated. This is the longest uninterrupted stretch of music in the entire 10-minute video.

In late October and early November 2014, several images, articles and posts circulated via Facebook feeds, as Bolivians in Bolivia as well as outside the country (notably Bolivians in Britain, Argentina, and Japan), started mobilizing on-line against the Peruvian case. In discussing these ethnographic details from social media exchanges,

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<sup>54</sup> Even intangible heritage, supposedly focusing on the local, also embraces global value and universalist discourses. See Coombe and Baird 2016:347.

<sup>55</sup> <http://www.unesco.org/culture/ich/index.php?lg=en&pg=748>; accessed November 12, 2014.

we do not pretend to represent the multiple sides to this dispute and we recognize the skewed nature of our Facebook feeds as constructed through our Bolivian “Facebook friends” in music and folklore. Because we followed many of these threads through personal Facebook feeds, and not simply through openly posted comments to digital articles, we registered passionate postings, pleas to join causes, and few “uncivil” exchanges; these were postings made to an imagined but restricted public of Facebook audiences, a very different kind of “public” framed through social network spheres<sup>56</sup> We have no intention of weighing in on the dispute itself, but rather wish to point to how these disputes became focused on what was *seen* rather than what was *heard*. Additionally, of interest are the terms of discourse about national ownership or authorship, the language of legal and ethical recourse through the UNESCO Convention itself, and ultimately the hyperreal framing of such ubiquitous cultural materials as scarce.

Here are some of the Internet examples that surfaced through Facebook feeds. An article from the Bolivian paper *Página siete* was circulated that carried the headline “In Five Years, there have been denunciations of 10 cases of plagiarism of Bolivian music and dance.” The article featured a spectacular photo of a devil dance costume (Oct. 28, 2014).<sup>57</sup> A Facebook comment to the shared article read, “We have to defend our heritage from delinquents who seek to benefit economically from Bolivia’s common cultural property (*acervo*). A time-yellowed newspaper clipping of a 1968 Peruvian article was shared; for those who do not have the superpowers of microscopic vision, a link was included to Oruro’s Departmental Committee of Ethnography and Folklore, which had posted a blog of the article in 2010. The Peruvian article—essentially a

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<sup>56</sup> See Gershon 2010.

<sup>57</sup> <http://www.paginasiete.bo/cultura/2014/10/28/cinco-anos-denunciaron-casos-plagio-musica-danzas-bolivianas-36515.html> accessed Nov. 7, 2014.

complaint about invasive Bolivian dances—was presented as evidence that a few years before 1968, the fiesta in Puno did not include diabladas or morenadas, two key dances at the center of this dispute.<sup>58</sup> In another Facebook shared post, the Bolivian Organization for the Defense and Dissemination of Folklore (OBDEFO) called for a protest in front of UNESCO’s office in Calacoto, La Paz. They protested the Peruvians’ “indiscriminate theft” of their dances, music, and traditions. The call to protest was prefaced with mention of the “negligence, indifference, and passivity” of Bolivian authorities. Another shared post called for a worldwide simultaneous protest at UNESCO offices in “every city and country possible.” We note the transnational implications, real and imagined, of these comments. Through postings and comments, people emphasized that Bolivian dances have an *origin* that needed to be recognized. A Facebook group even formed with the name “Bolivian dances don’t have borders, but they do have origins and they are Bolivian.” Throughout this visually encountered dispute, intangible heritage claims were being read as markers of geographic origin, as Facebook users slapped tricolored national flag themed “Made in Bolivia” stickers on stunning photos of costumed dancers.

The Bolivian Minister of Cultures, Pablo Groux eventually did respond, and a YouTube video of his statement was posted.<sup>59</sup> In an 18-minute video, he justified Bolivia’s formal objection to Peru’s petition, detailing specific articles of the Convention on intangible heritage that he believed to be compromised in Peru’s petition process. He said that four minutes of the 10-minute documentary video contained dances that came from Oruro’s Carnival. In his point-by-point justification for Bolivia’s objection, he faulted Peru’s petition because it did not mention the Bolivian origin of many dances in

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<sup>58</sup> <http://comitedeetnografiayfolklore.blogspot.com>, accessed November 14, 2014.

<sup>59</sup> [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ohdy\\_O\\_6yQQ](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ohdy_O_6yQQ), accessed November 7, 2014

the fiesta, did not mention Bolivians' participation in the fiesta, and did not include a specific *inventory* of the dances included under the umbrella of the fiesta, other than the fact that they included Quechua and Aymara communities as participants. He said the Bolivian musicians, choreographers, and artisans were not recognized for their creative contributions to what Peru was claiming as their folklore. He closed the video with a formal request for Bolivian participation at the UNESCO November 2014 meeting in Paris. Groux's call for the inventory brings to mind Brown's cautionary note about the problems of such lists in "a world of permeable borders."<sup>60</sup> In this case, Peru left out the list, but Groux's knowledge of global governance led him to demand it.

An article from *Infodiez* (pitched as a digital newspaper for the Bolivian community in Argentina) was shared on November 12, 2014, and it featured the Bolivian Ambassador to UNESCO, Sergio Cáceres weighing in with a position quite different from Groux's.<sup>61</sup> Cáceres stated that the Peruvian inscription was basically a done deal and that Bolivians did not need to do anything because the country's national heritage was "not at risk." He also wanted to clarify for Bolivians the fact that "inscribing something in this list of intangible heritage does not grant a certificate of property, origin, or exclusivity about any kind of cultural practice." The article was followed by a comment thread that almost uniformly expressed some form of chauvinistic Bolivian nationalism and questioned the patriotism of the Bolivian Ambassador.

Another article posted on Facebook featured a discussion of how the Oruro bands, in possible protest, would consider not traveling to Puno for the Candelaria Fiesta.

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<sup>60</sup> Brown 2004:51.

<sup>61</sup> <http://www.infodiez.com/2014/11/12/embajador-boliviano-ante-la-unesco-defiende-a-peru-en-tema-danzas-bolivia-como-pais-no-deberia-hacer-nada-no-hay-nada-que-ponga-en-riesgo-el-patrimonio-nacional/>, accessed November 13, 2014.

However, the president of the Departmental Federation of Bands and Professional Musicians of Oruro (Fedbampo) stated a wish to avoid getting in the way of musicians' rights to seek work contracts, even when these might take them across the border.<sup>62</sup> Comment posts in Facebook called for musicians to “put on the Bolivian T-shirt.” During Oruro's Carnival 2015, the authors followed on-line discussions critiquing Bolivian bands that had taken contracts to play in the Puno festival. Working musicians were publically shamed for seeking these work contracts across the Peruvian-Bolivian border.

The Internet and even more specifically, social media circulations have added a heightened awareness around nationalist cultural boundary maintenance. These boundary projects are being promoted by those who, on a regular basis, have access to the Internet, and who quickly latch onto the visual images associated with folklore dance, and even more specifically on dance costumes. In this case, Bolivian culture boundary vigilantes tended to be mestizos, a far cry from any circumscribable indigenous community that might be struggling for greater control over haphazard digital circulation of their culture's images.<sup>63</sup> Although the ambassador tried to clarify that the intangible heritage list does not operate as a registration for exclusive use, many Bolivians continued to read heritage this way, imagining a scarcity of cultural resources as competitively claimed by culturally warring countries. We heard about the same concerns at the Departmental Council of Culture meeting, when Marina insisted on the need to “correct” dancers from other Andean countries when they used clothing she associated with La Paz (Bolivia), even though such dress is also worn in Puno (Peru). Some of the posts mentioned specific concerns about Bolivia losing tourism to Peru in the wake of this declaration. As noted

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<sup>62</sup> <http://www.paginasiete.bo/2014/11/14/bandas-musica-revisan-participacion-fiesta-puno-38217.html> , accessed November 19, 2014.

<sup>63</sup> See Hennessy 2012.

above, more research would be needed to address any real economic losses to Bolivia on this front, research that would consider why tourists might choose one destination over another (time of possible travel and coincidence with fiesta dates, visa requirements, cost of an airline ticket to the capital of the country, infrastructure to accommodate tourists etc.). We argue that a hyperreal sense of scarcity fuels many of these devil dance wars, and that this sensitivity extends from sensory-media intersections that privilege the visual mode, a mode that too easily blocks out sounds, choreography, and the complex social relations that make any of these fiestas possible in the first place.

### **Conclusions: The Devil in Nationalism**

President Morales requested Groux's resignation shortly after the Candelaria debacle. In fact, during his presidency, several different people have held the post of Minister of Culture(s) and Tourism--one reason for caution when it comes to reading state outcomes as clear expressions of specifically stated policies. States are not single black boxes. Nor are nationalist projects consistently coherent. However, the Morales pro-indigenous government set out to decolonize what had been a long-standing mestizo-centered state, and they did so through a major constitutional overhaul and an explicit decolonizing project. Early in the Morales regime, skeptics and champions of the new regime argued over whether or not it was even possible to decolonize a state.<sup>64</sup> Even those who worked within the regime saw the limits of this project. For example, David Aruquipa, who served as the country's director of cultural heritage over the first four years of Morales' presidency (2006-10), reminisced, "Decolonization quickly became a slogan rather than

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<sup>64</sup> Bigenho recalls an extended discussion on this topic at a panel of the Latin American Studies Association Congress in 2007.

the substantive center of all we did,” This, he suggested, related to the legacy of neo-liberalism, the constraints on his team from the presidential palace, and the socially conservative forces within the then Vice Ministry of Culture. He went on to propose that the cultural heritage laws his team was tasked to create fed “a new form of hegemony that reduces the possibilities of innovative kinds of cultural constructions and threatens to create new forms of exclusion,” where culture is reduced to “the production of ‘indigenous’ handicrafts, music, and dress.”<sup>65</sup> Disillusionment with the decolonial framework is even more trenchantly expressed by Silvia Rivera Cusicanqui, who has stated that it is “practically useless for action in the streets and for engaging with concrete indigenous struggles. It has, nevertheless, been cleverly adopted by new aspirants to internal colonialist power, in Bolivia and elsewhere, and this is an even more pressing reason for remaining outside its lure.”<sup>66</sup>

In spite of the officially reframed Bolivian “Plurinational State,” indigenous sovereignties here are anything but givens. Rather, the government has taken a national proprietary approach to Bolivia’s expressive cultures—a policy that, as we have argued, has its roots in indigenismo, the culturally performative flipside of the mestizo nation as promoted through the ’52 Revolution. Bolivia’s approach to the defense of its cultural expressions cannot be easily extricated from a history of 20<sup>th</sup> century indigenismo—filtered through the unfinished work of building a mestizo nation and the dark days of Banzer’s 1970s’ dictatorship. While Bolivia’s neoliberal policies were implemented starting in 1985 and recent heritage-making case studies we examine in other ethnographic work reflect neoliberal approaches (with their own contradictions that

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<sup>65</sup> Farthing and Kohl 2014:60.

<sup>66</sup> Rivera Cusicanqui 2014.

are beyond the scope of this article), here we point out the *liberal* nationalist project that continues to haunt many of Bolivia's internationally prominent cultural heritage disputes. Scholars continue to assess whether or not President Morales could ever really decolonize a state or effectively promote an anti-neoliberal project in the contemporary global context,<sup>67</sup> but here we underscore that a liberal mestizo/indigenista nationalist project lives on in the mestizo-driven heritage politics of this self-described decolonizing government.<sup>68</sup> While decolonizing the state has been a central concern in the process of change, less attention has been paid to the need for decolonizing the still predominant mestizo nationalist project.

The La Paz Departmental Council of Cultures, part of the new local autonomous governments, strongly reflected the interests of mestizo folklore artists according to whom Bolivia's indigeneity should be nationally branded. This position looks not all that different from the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century indigenismo, the staging of indigenous things as the main act of Bolivian cultural nationalism. We note some differences, however, primary among them being the overt language of intellectual property: "We're going to *patent* it like patrimony" and "*brand* it for the country."<sup>69</sup> During the November 2014 Facebook interactions, one dancer even referenced Bolivian dances as related to her own registered trademark: "This is my cultural identity, my Origin, my Essence, my Registered Trademark." In spite of UNESCO's official readings of heritage (i.e. it's not supposed to

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<sup>67</sup> See Webber 2009; Howard 2010; Fabricant 2012; Postero 2013.

<sup>68</sup> Postero's work shows how the Morales government has maintained powerful central governmental structures, in spite of legal nods to autonomies. She also reads the TIPNIS confrontation as revealing the tensions of "liberal democracy" within Bolivia's new plurinational form. See Postero 2014:410, 419.

<sup>69</sup> Nation branding has taken off in these countries as well. Peru beat Bolivia to this strategy, producing a brand insignia based on the Nazca traces in 2011. See Silverman 2015. Bolivia has followed with a "Bolivia awaits you" branded message and image.

be about property), some Bolivians interacting internationally on and off-line have come to see heritage as threatened by a hyperreal scarcity of cultural resources.

Heritage governance, even under a supposedly pro-indigenous regime, inevitably gets caught in the bureaucratic and nationalist nets already cast since the mid-20th century. We argue that the present government, in spite of its decolonizing intentions, has not managed to decouple heritage politics from the legacies of mestizo-centered indigenismo and its accompanying nationalist project. Indeed, in the present context, heritage politics start to look like a form of updated indigenismo, only this time it is digitally charged, visually focused, much more proprietary, and under the simulacrum of scarcity. *That* is the devil in Bolivia's nationalism.

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