

Narrating Violence and Negotiating Belonging: The Politics of (Self-) Representation in an Andean Tinkuy Story

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R E S U M E N

Tinkuys, o “batallas rituales,” son peleas a puñetazos que ocurren durante fiestas católicas en algunas partes de los Andes de Bolivia y Perú. Aunque sus representaciones no circulan abiertamente, luchadores recuerdan sus peleas en días y, a veces, años después de una batalla. Basándome en la narración de un campeón del tinkuy, sugiero que peleadores pueden producir identidades complejas. En la Bolivia contemporánea pelear tinkuy implica ser “indio,” y además que solamente los indios andinos—nunca los “más civilizados”—lo pelean. Pero los peleadores que narran sus historias también movilizan asociaciones con muchos grupos, que incluyen a los españoles, la nación moderna, el ayllu, y la familia. Este artículo analiza los significados, tanto referenciales como no referenciales, de un relato del tinkuy y por lo tanto clarifica el proceso de la auto construcción del campeón. Indico los mecanismos por los cuales se afirma a la vez raza, género, etnicidad, y ciudadanía. Reflexionar sobre la narración del tinkuy como instrumento para reclamar masculinidad hegemonía y ciudadanía desafía las categorías binarias del indio y blanco; además sugiere caminos nuevos para investigar el tinkuy como práctica vivida.

Tinkuys, often termed “ritual battles,” are events of hand-to-hand fighting that occur during Catholic feast days in some parts of the Bolivian and Peruvian Andes. Although their representations do not often circulate widely, tinkuy fighters tell stories of their experiences long after the battle is over. Drawing on a narrative told by a self-described tinkuy champion, the article demonstrates that individuals may make complicated claims to subjectivity that imbricate race, gender, ethnicity, and citizenship in their stories. In contemporary Bolivia tinkuy is closely associated with racialized discourses

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of indianness and violence, yet fighters who narrate their experiences may mobilize multiple associations—with the Spanish and the nation as well as with the ayllu—and may negotiate belonging to diverse communities. Attention to the nonreferential, as well as to the referential, content of this fighter's narrative illuminates the mechanisms through which an individual may constitute self in interaction. Considering the ways narratives of Andean ritual violence may be used to claim hegemonic masculinity and citizenship challenges the categorical distinctions between indian and white and suggests potential avenues for further research on tinkuy as a living practice.

PALABRAS CLAVES: etnicidad, género, los Andes, narración, rituales, violencia

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WHEN SEBASTIAN,¹ A 60-YEAR-OLD MIGRANT FROM a Quechua-speaking community in the Bolivian highlands, told me of his experiences fighting *tinkuy*,² I was initially surprised by his evaluation of the event. Tinkuys, sometimes called “ritual battles,” are events of hand-to-hand fighting that take place annually on specific Catholic feast days and between designated collectivities in some parts of the Andean region.³ Documented since the 17th century, in contemporary Bolivia the practice is closely associated with rurality and native Andean identity. Moreover, many of the textual and visual representations of tinkuy that circulate nationally, and even transnationally, reinforce a widespread racial discourse that distinguishes “indians” from “whites” and links violence to indigeneity.⁴ The simple act of relating the personal experience of fighting tinkuy may reinforce the speaker's subject position as “indian.” Yet after narrating how he came to be a tinkuy champion some four decades earlier, Sebastian stated matter of factly that “tinkuy is a Spanish custom.” He continued, “A long time ago, during the time of the Inca, they say that there wasn't any fighting ... No one fought tinkuy before the Spanish arrived. But since the time that the Spanish came, and still today, there is tinkuy.” With these words Sebastian partially challenges popular and scholarly assumptions about the practice and origins of tinkuy and raises the question of just how fighters make use of their experiences in the days, and even years, after a battle.

We all tell stories about life events in order to remember the past and envision the future, evaluate a situation, make sense of the unexpected, or act upon the situation at hand. Not only are personal narratives ubiquitous in the everyday lives of people in many societies, but narratives are also important arenas for understanding the production and expression of identity, the relational positioning of self and other. Scholars in a variety of disciplines have examined both “what stories tell us about the teller's self” and “how processes of narration produce a self.”⁵ As

Georgakopoulou (2006:123) suggests, these sometimes separate trajectories may be productively integrated by asking, “How do we *do self* (and other) in narrative genres in a variety of sites of engagement?” Narratives may be variable in form and content, told by one person or jointly constructed, framed chronologically around an overarching plotline or composed of fragmented episodes (e.g., Ochs and Capps 2001). As a social activity, narration enables individuals to navigate their relationships with other social actors or to claim positions relative to events and characters within a story. Analyzing narratives may, thus, reveal both the construction of individual subjectivities in ongoing interactions and the reproduction or transformation of categories of identity more generally.

Although most representations of tinkuy that circulate widely are produced by observers, such as journalists, those who fight tinkuy also represent and interpret these events as they recount their experiences to friends, relatives, and acquaintances. Yet scant attention has been directed toward the specific mechanisms through which individuals may produce self and other through personal narratives of tinkuy. In the following analysis I argue that remembering and retelling tinkuy produces complex claims to multifaceted subjectivities. As fighters describe a particular battle, or even explain tinkuy in general, they narrate themselves as both objects and subjects of various collectivities. In the process of telling his story, Sebastian identifies with his ethnic group (*ayllu*, Q.) and male relatives and *simultaneously* claims belonging to a “more modern” Bolivian nation. He thus forges a complex, layered identity that imbricates ethnicity, masculinity, violence, and citizenship. Individuals may explicitly or implicitly draw on racial or gendered categories of identity and utilize these categories *as if* they were essential or fixed, as does Sebastian. In the very process narrating tinkuy, however, individuals may also disrupt the standard meanings of those categories and forge more complex versions of self.

Asking the question, “How does Sebastian *do self* (and other) in his narrative of tinkuy?” allows for the possibility that a tinkuy fighter may “do” or “be” something more complicated than “indian.” Answering the question, “How does Sebastian *do self* (and other) in his narrative of tinkuy?” requires exploration of the linguistic and social tactics through which claims about identities are made. A second and more methodological argument is that attention to nonreferential aspects of narrative provides important avenues for understanding the construction of identities in interaction.⁶ On the surface, the story Sebastian tells is “about” a much younger Sebastian getting thrown into a tinkuy unexpectedly and subsequently beating so many opponents that ultimately he is named champion. However, Sebastian also indexes, or points toward, various allegiances and positionalities through the use of intertexts (including news reports, idiomatic sayings, and previous conversations) and embedded speech (including the quotation of the words of strangers and

relatives). This non referential content overlaps the referential content of his narrative, complicating the meanings of his story.

In the first part of the article, I will interweave three episodes of Sebastian's narrative, recorded in 2001 (and subsequently transcribed and translated from Spanish), with basic information, drawn from my observations during field research in 1995–96 in Pocoata ayllu and from other ethnographic, historical, and fictional accounts, about the social and structural parameters of tinkuy. The description does not account for variations among tinkuys fought at different geographical locations or historical moments but is meant to provide a foundation for readers unfamiliar with tinkuy as well as background for the narrative analysis. I will then describe the situational details of the story-telling event, interpreting some contemporaneously circulating popular texts and framing the broader social, political, and economic context. In the third section, I will trace the ways Sebastian simultaneously emphasizes the "Spanishness" of tinkuy and highlights his relationships with his male relatives, companions, and ancestors in both referential and nonreferential aspects of his narrative. In the final section, I will draw attention to the gendered dimensions of Sebastian's story and discuss some of the ways that narrating tinkuy may enable individuals to navigate the ambivalences of citizenship. Closely analyzing this narrative illuminates the ways Sebastian gives positive valence to tinkuy and links tinkuy to hegemonic masculinity and citizenship in Bolivia, in spite of the racialized discourses surrounding the ritual.

A Late 20th Century Tinkuy Narrative

Sebastian remembers most vividly the tinkuy fought between Pocoatas and Machas on the feast day of San Miguel in the provincial town of Colquechaka. He was a young, unmarried man of almost 20 years. The three episodes that constitute the core of Sebastian's narrative are presented in the order that they occurred and describe how he became the champion of the tinkuy even though he had not planned on fighting at all. He began his story in this way:

"But I Was Not Ready"

I entered the town of Colquechaka and made my way to the center of town, to the ring of fighters. I was a teenager then, a young man. And, I was a little drunk, yes, a little drunk.

Then ... my friend got me pushed into the fight, saying, "Sure, as long as you've already come so close, you should fight!"

But I was not ready to stand up [and fight] then. The other fighters were very well protected with gloves, with helmets (*muntiras*, Q.), with belts lashed tightly [around their waists], with smaller belts wrapped around their hands. Well, I was

not like that. I was naked (*q'ara*, Q.)! I was just wearing a T-shirt and pants, nothing more ...

He put me in the ring because I was a teenager. I fought, and I won! Another time I entered the ring, another time I fought, and another time, I won! Just like that!

Anthropologists have written little about how individuals prepare for a tinkuy or why they choose to fight in the first place. Most note, however, that tinkuys are not battles over territory and do not reflect an essential enmity between groups or individuals (e.g., Orlove 1994). The word “tinkuy,” in Quechua, means “to encounter” and has the connotation of a meeting between two forces that enables a “commingling of energy” (Harrison 1989:30). Tinkuys are always part of an annual fiesta dedicated to a Catholic saint or celebrating a religious feast day. In an ideal sense, a tinkuy is fought between two defined opposing groups on the same feast day each year. At least in Bolivia, the sociopolitical structuring of ayllus—loosely kin-based sociopolitical units—partly determines the “opposing groups.” The tinkuy in Colquechaka on the feast day of San Miguel is fought between the ayllu of Pocoata and Macha. These are “maximal ayllu” (Platt 1986), each of which encompasses several smaller ayllus, hundreds of communities, and thousands of people. During other fiestas the opposing groups might be two smaller ayllus nested within a maximal ayllu. For example, the ayllu of Majasaya and Alasaya (which are also moieties of Pocoata ayllu) fight in the town of Pocoata each year during the *Vera Cruz* (True Cross) fiesta (Fig. 1). Similarly, the ayllu (or moieties) of Majasaya and Alasaya within Macha ayllu fight in the town of Macha each year during the same fiesta. Thus, over the course of a year, two groups that battle against each other in one tinkuy may band together to oppose another group in a tinkuy on different feast day.

Although hundreds of people arrive in a provincial town from small rural communities or Bolivian cities for a fiesta, only a fraction of them fight. During the *Vera Cruz* fiestas that I observed, people paraded into the town; walked the streets, playing and singing music; bought dry goods and clothing in the market; ate freshly roasted pork and ice cream cones; attended Catholic mass; made libations and drank corn beer in honor of the supernatural forces of the universe; and visited friends and family members who lived in distant communities or cities. When a fight erupted men, boys, and some women formed a ring around the adversaries to watch. Others stood on park benches, climbed trees, or leaned out of second floor windows to get a better view. Onlookers commented upon the match of the fighters and the punches thrown, finding the battle at times hilarious, at times horrifying (cf. Bouysse-Cassagne and Harris 1987:30; Platt 1987). On occasion the bare-fisted punches and the screaming encouragement of the crowd escalated into rock throwing, and the plaza rapidly emptied of vendors and bystanders.



Figure 1 Two men relax with the *tatacruz* of their community after parading into the town of Pocoata for the Vera Cruz fiesta.

According to his story, Sebastian had been standing in a crowd of onlookers, moving toward the inner edge of the circle to get a better view of the fighting when, suddenly, he found himself in the ring. Even unprepared, Sebastian beat several Macha opponents. Later his companions pulled him out of the ring to give him something to drink and let him rest: “They offered me something, a beer, some cane alcohol, some corn beer (*aqha*, Q.). ‘*Ay carajo!* Our brother is handsome, our brother is strong!’ they were saying.”

“I Was a Kicker”

Sebastian explained his successful encounters in tinkuy by reiterating that he was a teenager at the time. He also acknowledged that he kicked his opponents in addition to using the traditional form of hand-to-hand combat (*warakazu*, Q.), in which opponents swing their arms from the side (rather than punching from the front) of the body. “Well, when I was a young man, I was a kicker. Before my opponent could get close to me, I gave him a kick and then a punch! And then there [he was]—on the ground! The kicker! I beat two, three, four, five people that time!” He fought so well that people became afraid of him. The political authorities of the various Macha communities had to search for opponents for him, and the most experienced tinkuy fighters of each Macha community were paired with Sebastian.

Let’s see, the mayor said to an experienced fighter, “*Carajo!* Fight with that one, with Mamani.” Already, already, the people know me. “Mamani, it is Mamani again,”

[the crowd is] saying. I hear people mentioning, “The Mamanis, they are from T’anta.” Someone else says, “They sure are fighters!” ...

Then, before my opponent comes close to me, I give him a kick. That’s it! He’s already outside the ring! I don’t give them a chance. I don’t give them time. Not one second! Perhaps one of those more experienced fighters might have beaten me, but I did not give them time ... Another Macha opponent enters. Well, the poor man enters, and while he is standing there, I go to fight, saying to myself, “All right, before this one even gets to the center of the ring, I’ll give him a kick.” Then, there he is, *P’UN P’UN* [sound effect], on the floor!

A tinkuy is a spectacle for rural subsistence farmers (*campesinos*, Sp.), provincial elite, and even tourists. A tinkuy is also, usually, controlled. Local authorities help determine who goes into the ring, seek opponents for a fighter who stands unopposed, and ensure that an individual does not continue to fight when his opponent has fallen to the ground. When only two people fight at a time, opponents are ideally equally matched. An elderly man is paired with an elderly man from the opposing ayllu, a teenaged boy with another teenaged boy. In some localities, women fight women from an opposing ayllu (Platt 1987; Harris 1994). Wielding short whips cut from used tires, the provincial elite may beat combatants who get out of hand and spectators who move in too close in their broader efforts to prevent a general melee from developing. Most opponents do not recognize each other personally, and in spite of the clear ideal categorization of just who should be fighting whom, in the heat of the moment people are not always completely sure who is Pocoata or Macha, Alasay or Majasaya.

Yet in his narrative, Sebastian tells of how he defeats so many opponents that spectators begin to recognize him. Not only is Sebastian paired with older and more experienced fighters, but strangers point him out using the name of his family and his natal community. Sebastian repeats the words of these spectators: “‘*Carajo!* This Sebastian is *macho!*’ they say. ‘He is from T’anta,’ they say. The people are talking like this; there are commentaries about me. ‘*Carajo*, a T’anta! His family is Mamani.’ The people are talking. I am listening.” He is no longer an anonymous youth but a recognized fighter.

“I left as the champion!”

By the end of the narrative Sebastian claims to have won several fights and to have become the champion of the entire tinkuy. At the conclusion of his story, he highlights his victory in this way:

Yes, now I am champion, right! The people are afraid of me now. No one stands up to me. No one stops me! The fighting continues ... and then one last time, no one has stood against me. And I have won it all!

Then, all of a sudden, the people of Macha [undecipherable] rush at me! As if they were one person, they come after me. All of them together! All of them are against me! *UTA WSHSH!* [sound effect] They have thrown me to the floor! All against me! *UTA WSHSH!* They have hurled me to the floor! But there are so many people!

At that very moment, my friends lift me up. Running they take hold of him! *RRRRRR* [sound effect]. The crowd moves back and lets us pass through.

Yes, my companions were there, but they were not champions! It was I who finally won! I left as the champion!

Sebastian presents this story as accomplished fact, but his narrative does not necessarily reflect events as they happened, or even his understanding of the tinkuy as a young man. In most scholarly accounts of tinkuy, no individual champion or victorious ayllu is named (e.g., Platt 1987). Sebastian's narrative may include some fantastical elements: the sheer number of opponents that he fights over the course of the day and the final moments when all the Machas rush toward him are reminiscent of the action movies that he still enjoys watching. However, tinkuys do, sometimes, exceed the control of local and state authorities. Fighting may become widespread with several rings operating at once. Entire groups of people may rush at each other, throwing rocks and generally ignoring any attempts at restraint. The national police may intervene, shooting tear gas into the crowd of men, women, and children to disperse fighters and spectators alike. Moreover, in other Andean rituals, people and groups compete and garner symbolic capital through competition. The relative "success" of an individual or ayllu is usually attributed to their relationship with a saint or supernatural being, diligence and ability to work hard, and relationships with other people whom they may call upon for assistance (e.g., Gelles 1995:721). Sebastian's emphasis on being the champion may reflect efforts to position himself in positive ways, both within the narrative and in the narrative event.

Situating Sebastian's Narrative

Thus, rather than evaluating the fit between events as they "actually" happened and Sebastian's version of events (or the degree of truth or falsity in the content of his narrative), I view his telling as a *process* of meaning-making that represents events in particular ways and is situated in particular circumstances. As Briggs (1986, 2007) has noted, anthropologists and their interlocutors enter into interviews with different motivations, goals, and assumptions about the social interaction and the topic at hand—and at best have only partial understandings of them. These and other aspects of the situational and social context shape the meanings of a narrative.

Before tracing the ways Sebastian produces identifications through various mechanisms within his narrative, I will describe aspects of the social and historical context in which this version of his story was told.

A consummate storyteller, Sebastian was born and raised in the small community of T'anta (ayllu Pocoata) in one of the poorest and most rural provinces of Bolivia (Chayanta, Department of Potosí). As an adult Sebastian migrated to the city of Cochabamba with his wife and two children, but as a child Sebastian helped his parents with subsistence farming and herding sheep for the nearby hacienda; he worked briefly in the Colquechaka tin mines as a teenager. He had been living in the city of Cochabamba for almost a decade when I met him in T'anta on one of his frequent visits to his elderly parents in 1995. I visited Sebastian and his wife that year in Cochabamba, and later on several short follow-up field trips. Although I had not interviewed him before 2001, I had previously heard him tell his tinkuy stories.

Our conversation in 2001 occurred in the midst of what Sebastian and other Bolivians were referring to as “La Crisis.” A faltering economy, lack of educational and economic opportunities, and social and political unrest among large sectors of the population left many Bolivians increasingly concerned about how they would support their families.⁷ On the day that he told me this version of the tinkuy story, Sebastian complained that he had been ill. Laid off the month before from a cement factory, Sebastian worried that the only money coming into the household was that earned by his wife who sold produce in the market. He mused about the possibilities of migrating to Spain for work but lamented that he was getting too old. Sitting at a table with my tape recorder between us, we spoke primarily in Spanish. Sebastian's four-year-old grandson (whose parents had migrated to Spain several months before) alternately listened to our conversation and ran about the courtyard.

Sebastian's choice to tell his narrative in Spanish reflects his relative fluency in the language, acknowledgement that my Quechua had become rusty from disuse, and desire that his Spanish-speaking grandson understand his story. Using Spanish also, of course, indexes an urban, mestizo, Bolivian identity in ways that Quechua does not.⁸ In the Andes racial identities are structured according to an opposition between “white” and “indian” and naturalized through discourses of “culture,” decency, level of education, language, and access to commodities (e.g., de la Cadena 2000; Weismantel 2001). Where the very languages that people speak are hierarchically ordered and closely intertwined with racial and gendered discourses, even mundane moments of interaction can powerfully shape the social and material contingencies of individuals' daily lives (e.g., Mannheim 1991; Seligmann 1993). Thus, part of the social context in which the narrative is told includes the more broadly circulating discourses of race.⁹

In Bolivia, racial discourses that denigrate campesinos or native Andeans as “lazy,” “dirty,” or “backwards” circulate in rural and urban regions (e.g., de la

Cadena 2000; Weismantel 2001; Canessa 2005, 2008). Individuals in rural communities of POCOATA would at times emphasize the importance of “advancing” or “civilizing” themselves and their nation by residing in urban areas, speaking Spanish, attending school, or buying commodities (Van Vleet 2008:27–9). Tinkuy, in contrast, is often presented as an “uncivilized” practice, carried out by campesinos in the poorest and most marginal areas of the country. An assumed (and essentialized) attribute of fighters is their indigenous identity. Of course, many contemporary tinkuy participants who drink, dance, and fight also travel to and live in Bolivian, Argentinean, and Spanish cities, earn wages, serve in the military, and attend high schools and universities. Many are active and knowledgeable about local, national, and global politics; some own cars, televisions, and cameras. The practice of tinkuy is not, however, generally conceived of as part of the national project of modernization. Rather, tinkuy is most explicitly naturalized as “senseless savagery” in contrast to the “reason and self-control” of whites (Harris 1994:40–41; also see Goldstein 2004).

This perspective is evident in Bolivian national news reports, which explicitly link the ritual violence of tinkuy to other kinds of “indian savagery” at the turn of the 21st century. For example, a conflict that erupted in December 1999 between Qaqachakas and Laymis, two neighboring ayllus in the Departments of Oruro and Potosí, respectively, and that was later dubbed the Ayllu War, is repeatedly associated with tinkuy in the Cochabamba daily, *Los Tiempos*. In the Ayllu War, disputes over land erupted and escalated quickly as people attacked each other’s communities, stealing sheep and llamas, burning houses, and assaulting residents. Some articles describe the Laymis and Qaqachakas as having a rivalry “so ancient that no one knows when or how it began” (*Los Tiempos* 2000e) or dating from the time of the Inca (*Los Tiempos* 2000a, b). Other articles explicitly interpret the Ayllu War as a sacrifice of blood through reference to the (technically unrelated) ritual event of tinkuy (*Los Tiempos* 2000c, d).¹⁰ In one article focused on tinkuy as an annual Andean ritual, journalists explain that campesinos believe that “if there are no deaths [during a tinkuy], there will be a bad harvest” (*Los Tiempos* 2000d). The article then abruptly shifts to a discussion of the Ayllu War and its casualties.

By linking the widely reported conflict between Laymis and Qaqachakas with allusions to tinkuy and ancient dispositions, beliefs, and enmities, the articles embed historical events in ritual and myth and reinforce rather than ameliorate images of violent and irrational indians, and ethnocentric reactions toward them. Anthropologists have occasionally noted that disputes over territory or other conflicts can spill into the ritual battle of the tinkuy (Platt 1987:166; Harris 1994), thereby situating the ritual event in a specific historical moment. However, the *Los Tiempos* articles do the opposite. The articles suggest that the Ayllu War had an ancient origin and cosmological significance that could be understood through reference to

tinkuy. These representations naturalize the violence of native Andeans and suggest that the tragic loss of lives and livelihoods in the Ayllu War may be explained a distant and isolated past.¹¹

Sebastian was well aware of the fighting between the Laymis and the Qaqachakas, having read news reports and listened to radio broadcasts about the conflict. As detailed in my fieldnotes, the Ayllu War was among the topics we chatted about before recording his narrative. Although Sebastian may not have read the exact news articles referenced here, these texts clarify the national discourses that bind tinkuy fighters to essentialized categories of identity and naturalize an association between violence and indianness.¹² Just how the process of *identifying with* a group is associated with *narrating* tinkuy in a specific instance remains a question to be explored.

Narrating Identities through Tinkuy

In other words, understanding how an individual might render an action (such as fighting tinkuy) meaningful, or mobilize a story of a past experience to navigate the present, requires more than an appellation of an identity category or a claim to an ancient or mythical past. As Bucholtz and Hall (2005:594) note, one of the mechanisms through which people (consciously and unconsciously) “construct identity positions” linguistically or lay claim to belonging to particular collectivities is through indexicality. An index might be a word, phrase, or some linguistic form that depends on the context for its meanings. For example, many pronouns (I, he, she, we, here, there, that) change meaning depending on who speaks and in what context the words are spoken. The “overt mention of identity categories and labels” or the “use of linguistic structures and systems that are ideologically associated with specific personas and groups” may also be “indexical processes through which identities emerge” (Bucholtz and Hall 2005:594). In retelling tinkuy, people may explicitly name an identity category (such as “the Spanish”). Narrators may also point to associations with various collectivities (such as ayllu or nation) by mobilizing symbolic resources, embedding other people’s words through direct and indirect quotation, or implicitly or explicitly referencing co-occurring texts. Thus, I return to Sebastian’s narrative, teasing apart the referential and nonreferential meanings of his story, in order to demonstrate that Sebastian forges belonging to the ayllu and the nation in a way that complicates the assumed binary between indian and white.

“But I Was Not Ready”: Identifying as Q’ara

From the outset of his story, Sebastian emphasizes that he did not arrive prepared to fight. Although this may be a simple statement of fact, he further indexes his distance from indianness by saying that he did not wear a muntira, or helmet. Muntiras are iconic of indianness for men much in the way that wide-skirted *poll-*

eras and bowler hats are for women (e.g., Femenias 2005). Men wear muntiras only in ritual fighting and during certain fiestas when they perform dances representing tinkuy. Of course, wearing a muntira has practical as well as symbolic consequences. The cow-hide helmets are very hard and protect the wearers from serious blows to the head, temples, and ears. Over the last decade young men have increasingly fought without helmets (Delgado Lara et al. 2005), but in the context of the story Sebastian uses his “clean head” and lack of bodily protection as a way to distinguish himself from others.

Sebastian also explicitly characterizes himself as q'ara. Literally the term means “naked” in Quechua, but q'ara is also widely (and sometimes derogatorily) used among Quechua speakers to reference a person who no longer abides by the moral values and sociability of the rural community. A person who follows white or urban ideologies and practices, rather than Quechua ones, is said to be q'ara because he or she lacks the social networks and relationships of reciprocity seen as necessary for life. Sebastian uses the term in both senses. He foregrounds his nakedness, his lack of bodily preparation for fighting: pulling on imaginary gloves, wrapping non-existent woven belts around his hands, waist, and chest, and pretending to press a helmet onto his head as he tells this part of his story. By pointing toward the potent symbols of ethnicity that he lacks—the clothing usually worn to fight—he also establishes an implicit identification with non-indianness. He reinforces this by using a local racialized category, q'ara, and directing that evaluative term toward himself as a young man.

Later he reinforces this identification in his metacommentary on tinkuy. After he had concluded his narrative, I asked Sebastian to explain the significance of tinkuy. He answered that the practice was passed down from the Spanish:

Well, it was a custom from the Spaniards. The Spaniards made them fight. A long time ago, during the time of the Inca, they say that there wasn't any fighting ... There was no stealing either, and there was no drunkenness. You see, they say that the Inca would cut off the hands of a thief. No one fought tinkuy before the Spanish arrived.

Now, since the time that the Spanish arrived, and still today, there is tinkuy. They say that those very Spanish made them fight. They say the Spaniards gave the names Alasaya and Majasaya to different groups. [The Spanish] named the ayllus ... [saying], “That territory belongs to those people. Yes, their land is over there. And you belong to this territory ...” And from that moment, they used to fight ... The helmets [muntiras] that are used for the tinkuy even today, those are copied from the Spanish. The Spanish wore helmets exactly like that.

With these words, Sebastian reframes tinkuy: rather than an ancient Andean custom, tinkuy is a custom brought to Bolivia by the Spanish. Ethno-historical

evidence does not support his interpretation, but the Spanish did divide native Andean people and territories among haciendas, created new administrative and economic divisions, and consolidated dispersed settlements into centralized towns during the colonial period (e.g., Stern 1982). Sebastian's emphasis that the Spanish "made them fight" points to the violent history of colonial and republican eras, which mandated slave and peon labor and required taxes and tributary payments from groups whose populations were decimated and territories usurped.

By insisting that the significance of tinkuy is that the Spanish "made them fight," Sebastian also resists the notion that "indians" are more violent than whites. He further validates his interpretation of the origins of fighting in the European invasion by alluding to another co-occurring text that circulates in Bolivian (and more generally Andean) popular culture. The idiomatic saying that people "did not lie, did not steal, and were not lazy" during the time of the Inca is reiterated by individuals from all walks of life (Colloredo-Mansfield 2002). The phrase is used to enjoin people to a citizenship that incorporates romanticized indigenous roots or to highlight the degraded social conditions of the present. Sebastian reworks this phrase by inserting "fighting" alongside stealing and drunkenness, emphasizing that long ago these were practices not accepted by the Inca. He then points back to his own story, noting that tinkuy fighters even today wear helmets shaped to resemble the double-peaked helmets of the Spanish conquerors. These intertexts indicate that Sebastian, and perhaps other fighters as well, identify with their imaginings of the Spanish colonial state (or the Spanish hegemony of the contemporary Bolivian state) when they fight and narrate tinkuy.

"I Was a Kicker": Embedded Speech and Indigeneity

Throughout his narrative Sebastian highlights an individuality and capacity for action that may be linked to notions of modernity while simultaneously acknowledging his social alignments with Pocoata supernatural forces, his companions, and his male relatives, both living and dead. He does this directly through the referential content of his story and indirectly through grammatical shifts, indexical content, and embedded speech. For example, Sebastian announces, "I was the champion!" or "I won!" or "I beat them all!" at different moments. He celebrates his fighting prowess, reinforcing his personal accomplishment. He almost exclusively uses first person pronouns, which are more likely than other pronouns, proper nouns, and common nouns to be found in the position of agent rather than object (e.g., Ahearn 2001:122–123). Although grammatical agency does not always overlap social agency, in a political economic context in which "civilization" and capitalism are linked to individuality, the prominence he gives to his own capacity for action cannot be interpreted outside the hegemonic values of the modern Bolivian nation.¹³

Yet Sebastian also underscores the supernatural and social alignments that support his success. One of the most striking moments in which Sebastian narrates

his reliance on others is when the Machas, “as one person,” attack him. Sebastian’s friends lift him by the arms and carry him away from the crowd. Sebastian never refers to any of his companions—probably his male siblings, cousins, and friends—by name, but in that instance Sebastian speaks of himself in the third person. Sebastian says, “Running they take hold of him,” placing himself as the object rather than the subject of the sentence in a grammatical move that marks his passivity and the actions of his companions.

Sebastian’s reliance on his companions and on supernatural forces also emerges in other ways. Sebastian indexes both sets of relationships when he mentions drinking and drunkenness. In the Andes, drinking corn beer and other alcoholic beverages and making libations “enlivens” people to carry out particular tasks and forges connections among human beings and between humans and supernatural forces (e.g., Harvey 1991; Saignes 1993) (Fig. 2). For Sebastian, the masculine spirits of the mountains surrounding Colquechaka and the patron saint of the fiesta, San Miguel, would have been the supernatural forces significant to his success. Those companions who offered or “invited” Sebastian to drink reinforced their social relationships and alignments with him and demonstrated their willingness to care for him.

Sebastian also integrates many direct and indirect quotations into his story, using other voices to highlight his fighting prowess and reinforce his belonging to a particular extended family and community. In the context of the story, he hears his friends telling him that he is strong; he also hears the comments of strangers in the crowd. Spectators exclaim, “This Sebastian is macho!” “He is from T’anta!” The mayor of one community says, “Carajo! Fight with this one, with the Mamani.” As Judith Irvine (1996:151) suggests, the process of direct quotation in narrative is so pervasive “that it puts in doubt the very possibility that a sentence might represent but a single subjectivity.” By embedding the words of unnamed others, Sebastian brings the context of the tinkuy fought long ago into the immediate context of the telling of the story, and he implicitly indicates the importance of his social alliances with his male relatives and ancestors (Mamanis), natal community (T’anta), and ayllu (Pocoata).

Sebastian returns to this alignment with his family and ayllu later in the course of the interview. He reminisces about going to see tinkuy as a child, reflects on the fighting skills of his uncles, and reiterates fragments of his father’s stories of tinkuy. He tells me that his father and uncles would always sit chewing coca until they were ready to fight, and only then would they go together to the ring. One or the other would always win, he said:

I have seen many tinkuys. A long time ago, the fighting was more brutal. It’s not so brutal now. Now, people fight as if tinkuy were just a sport. Before, no, tinkuy was serious then. They used to kill people. Yes, they killed people ...

My father always told me that a long time ago they would put nails into their sandals, pointing up, like this [indicating with two fingers pointing up from the toe of his shoe], like the mouth of a serpent. The nails stuck up and when a person kicked ... it caused more damage to his opponent. Yes, they used to be well protected, with nails ... to kick *P'UN!* [sound effect] ... My father said that a person's body had to be well protected, here, on the shin, as well ... And, if you were thrown down, you had to get up right away. If you did not get up at that very moment, the kick [your opponent] gave you could kill you.

Sebastian's commentary about the past brutality of tinkuy is partially aligned with the broader discourse on tinkuy as an uncivilized, indian practice. At another level, through direct and indirect quotations, Sebastian explicitly aligns himself with his father and uncles, with the family members whom he watched fight and listened to after the battle as they recounted their stories. When Sebastian gives voice to his father's words describing the practice of studding sandals with nails so that kicking was potentially lethal, he laminates earlier moments in history (when his father and uncles fought) with earlier moments in his own narrative (when he acknowledges "I was a kicker"). Thus, he aligns himself with the men in his family both through the embedded comments of others about Mamanis and T'antas being fighters and through his recollections of his father and uncles who taught him how to fight even the most experienced Machas successfully. Sebastian thus underscores a violence that is individually performed but collectively enabled and intertwined with a specific sociality among men within the ayllu and within the nation.

Citizenship, Kinship, and the Value of a Good Story

Of course, the dichotomy between ayllu and nation is increasingly contested by Bolivians, and by scholars (e.g., Goodale 2006). Moreover, these racial and ethnic categorizations are also transected by gendered discourses. In a region where indigeneity is often symbolized by the figure of the native woman (de la Cadena 1991; Stephenson 1999; Weismantel 2001; Canessa 2005, 2008), and where indigenous men are often feminized in relation to mestizo men (Gill 1997; Canessa 2008), narrating tinkuy may allow men to align with discourses of urban hegemonic as well as indigenous masculinity (cf. Harris 1994) (Fig. 2).

As Canessa (2008:51) has noted, "for urban whites and mestizos membership in the nation, that is, citizenship, is a given and rarely questioned. For indian people, however, citizenship must be learned and earned." Military service has been analyzed as an important prerequisite to national belonging for many men in Bolivia (Gill 1997; Canessa 2005, 2008). Completing military service and obtaining military documents (needed for obtaining a passport, receiving a university degree, or



Figure 2 Two brothers make libations and play music before fighting in the True Cross tinkuy in the town of Pocoata.

accessing many jobs) has crucial material consequences. However, the military also institutionalizes a masculinity that relies on hegemonic ideologies of gender, race, and class in spite of attempts to forge male bonds that ameliorate regional and class differences. Recruits withstand verbal abuse that is permeated with derogatory views of women: recruits are called “whores” (*putas*, Sp.), “faggots” (*maricones*, Sp.) and “little ladies” (*señoritas*, Sp.) (Gill 1997:534). Men who are unable to withstand the rigors of training are dressed in polleras. Those unable to speak Spanish well are roundly criticized as backwards and, as one of Canessa’s informants notes, “cannot expect to be officers unless ... they ‘progress’ and change their name from ‘Condori to Cortes’” (Canessa 2008:51). Recruits are also exposed to forms of sexuality that are infrequent in rural communities (Canessa 2005). A recruit’s ability to take on certain aspects of white masculinity and sexuality, mobilize different forms of violence, and successfully participate in the military enable him to claim a certain belonging to the nation that women cannot claim.

Tinkuy is not a direct means of accessing citizenship, linked as it is to discourses of indianness and violence. Moreover, the violence of “making citizens” in the military is morally justified at a national level in ways that tinkuy is not. Although news reports and popular representations of tinkuy suggest that fighters do not “belong” in the modern Bolivian nation, fighters may, nevertheless, appropriate aspects of their practice to garner symbolic capital. As Harris (1994:50) notes of

ayllu Laymi, tinkuy fighting is admired and serves as a transition to manhood. Locally salient discourses of masculinity link virility, strength, and fertility through a metaphorical association of men with bulls (Harris 1994:50–51). Bulls are vital to agricultural production; their strength and vitality are valorized and their unpredictable aggression is respected. The bravery, stoicism, and strength needed to successfully fight tinkuy are also qualities that men rely upon to lay claim to a masculine citizenship garnered within the military. As he narrates and celebrates tinkuy, Sebastian indexes Bolivianness and masculinity as much as he claims belonging to his ayllu. Although he may quite literally be challenging the assumed origins of tinkuy, in a more figurative way he reframes the practices through which citizenship is claimed.

The ambivalence of this subjectivity, in which an urban hegemonic masculinity is imbricated with local Andean ideologies of masculinity and virility, and racial discourses of indian violence, is further complicated by Sebastian's emphasis on his alliance with an array of *male* friends, relatives, ancestors, and supernatural forces. That these alliances with kin and companions figure prominently is not surprising: the social and political structure of rural communities, and of neighborhoods where many rural to urban migrants live, relies on a gender division of labor. Postmarital residence is usually patrilocal, and men tend to socialize, work, and participate in rituals in same-gendered groups. Ideally, male kin are close and supportive; however, in practice, everyday relationships among men—especially among brothers and between uncles and nephews—are hierarchical and often strained. Brothers may help each other with agricultural work, but they also compete for resources. Relationships among brothers may become contentious, sometimes leading to physical violence (Van Vleet 2008:70–72). In a region where resources, including land, are scarce, rivalries between brothers may extend across generations, fragmenting the bonds between uncles, nephews, fathers, and sons.

Thus, narrating tinkuy may be as much about reinforcing fragile relationships among male kin as it is about expressing distinctions between ayllus or any essential “indian” identity. When he talks about his father and uncles who go together to fight, aligns himself with his male relatives who were also “kickers,” or emphasizes that his companions were “little fighters,” Sebastian acknowledges both the bonds and the competition among men. Narrating tinkuy, and perhaps even fighting tinkuy, may forge or reinforce these social bonds. When a father tells a son or a grandfather tells a grandson his stories of tinkuy, he passes along crucial practical information and constitutes affective, gendered, and social ties of relatedness. When a man pulls a brother or cousin out of the fighting and offers him drinks—or when a fighter narrates the caring actions of others—each is actively naming and constituting sociality. Moreover, for an individual who migrated from his rural

community, narrating tinkuy reinforces identification with an ayllu, community, or family and reestablishes (at least idealized) ties with a network of others who may have continuing social, economic, and political importance in spite of geographical distance.

Conclusions

Narratives are dialogical performances, as well as texts, which emerge through the efforts of people to communicate divergent experiences, negotiate relationships and inequalities, and constitute subjectivities. In this article I have considered how Sebastian *does self* (and other)—and the ways he actively configures the very boundaries of the categories of “Pocoata” or “Spanish,” “citizen” or “campesino”—within the narrative of tinkuy. Sebastian stories his experience of being thrown into a ritual battle only to emerge as the champion. Supported by his relatives and companions, he nevertheless emphasizes his individual success. Aligning himself with the Spanish who (he claims) brought tinkuy to Bolivia, he reframes the links between tinkuy and indigeneity. In the context of racialized discourses of indian savagery and masculinity, Sebastian mobilizes his narrative to constitute a complex “self,” to claim belonging to multiple collectivities (including the nation), and to negotiate a variety of social relationships.

Narrating tinkuy is, thus, a living social practice through which people draw upon and contribute to a local politics of representation. Although this analysis has focused on only one telling, Sebastian’s narrative is not idiosyncratic. Fighters often produce these representations, and the narratives may be told and retold over time. Narrators, and their interlocutors, engage in a process of controlling the boundaries of tinkuy—and of claiming belonging to collectivities—as they tell others about their experiences. Although representations of violence produced in personal narratives may not share the same means of production and distribution, or reach diverse audiences, they may nevertheless draw upon wider rhetorical and discursive structures (e.g., Van Vleet 2001, 2003; Briggs 2007). This analysis illuminates a story that circulates between a fighter and an anthropologist yet traces other points of articulation (between father and son, grandfather and grandchild, brothers and age-mates, news source and consumers). Further research into the ways textual and visual representations of tinkuy are embedded in wider relations of production and circulation are crucial to understanding not only tinkuy but also the relationships between personal narrative, popular texts, and formations of violence in a social and political context where ethnic, racial, and gendered identities are increasingly contested.

From a more methodological perspective, this article suggests that anthropologists might productively direct more attention to the nonreferential aspects of

talk. That identities are shaped by multiple trajectories of power, produced in interactions, and embedded in particular social, historical, and cultural contexts are well-accepted perspectives in anthropology. However, the particular social and linguistic practices through which individuals constitute identities and negotiate social relationships in specific interactions are less well understood. The ways that individuals cite other people's words, make use of other "texts," and index positionality through a variety of linguistic forms are significant to the meanings of a narrative and to the process of identity construction. As we develop more complicated and dynamic understandings of the contested politics of identity in the Andes and elsewhere, it is crucial to turn attention to the nuances of spoken interaction.

Finally, close attention to various genres of talk and text about tinkuy might reframe understandings of these events of ritual violence and of other violent practices.¹⁴ Whereas most anthropologists have attempted to situate tinkuy within a specifically Andean "tradition" or cultural context, little attention has been directed to the performative aspects of tinkuy, the voiced interpretations of participants, or the linkages between tinkuy and national discourses or social institutions. Tinkuy has been presented as an activity that native Andeans participate in—and have participated in since time immemorial—rather than an activity through which identities are enacted, performed, and transformed. Focusing on narrating tinkuy as a social practice clarifies the ways that fighting tinkuy may also be a creative means through which contemporary participants reinforce belonging or realign identities. In a context of symbolic inclusion but practical exclusion from the nation, the ability of individuals to identify with ethnic collectivities such as the ayllu, and at the same time with hegemonic representations of modernity and masculinity, may serve as an important resource for navigating complex everyday relationships. Moreover, this analysis suggests that narrating tinkuy is shaped by regional disputes and locally salient historical events, by power relationships and state institutions, and by personal histories and interactions. However tinkuy fighters represent themselves, anthropologists may positively contribute to representations of tinkuy through texts that highlight the processes through which individuals identify with, perform, and negotiate relationships and inequalities within specific cultural frames and contexts of power.

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Notes

¹Except for the names of provincial towns and ayllus, all names are pseudonyms.

²Several popular and academic texts use the term *tinku*. Quechua speakers in Poochoa use the term “*tinkuy*.” *Tinkuy* is the grammatically appropriate nominalization of the verb stem, *tinku*-. The zero-nominalized form, *tinku*, suggests an ambiguous relationship between the participants and the action, but there is no ambiguity in this case. Thanks to Bruce Mannheim for clarifying this point.

³I discuss the organization of *tinkuy* battles further below. Many anthropologists have analyzed *tinkuy* as a way of establishing equilibrium between opposing (kinship, territorial, and/or administrative) groups; the competition or “play” between oppositional forces generates energy that is cycled through the universe. See, among others, Alencastre and Dumézil (1953), Palomino Flores (1971), Hopkins (1982), Schüler (1982), Platt (1986, 1987), Bouysse-Cassagne and Harris (1987), Remy (1991), Zuidema (1991), Urton (1993), Harris (1994), Mayer (1994), Orlove (1994), Gelles (1995:721, 735), Zorn (2002). See also Arguedas (1985) for a fictional account.

⁴I use “indian” and “white” to reference an *assumed* essential identity or the categorical opposition that shapes racial discourses in much of the Andean region (Weismantel 2001; Canessa 2005:24–25). On the racialized discourse that links indians and violence, see Remy (1991), Harris (1994:40–41), Mayer (1994). For popular press examples, see *Los Tiempos* (2000c, d, 2002), Wheeler (2001), *New York Times* (2007).

⁵Among many others, see Hymes (1981), Eckert and McConnell-Ginet (1992), Brockmeier and Carbaugh (2001), Ochs and Capps (2001), Bucholtz and Hall (2005), de Fina et al. (2006), Georgakopoulou (2006), Reissman (2008), Van Vleet (2008).

⁶In addition to footnote 5, see Briggs (1986), Urban (1991), Briggs and Bauman (1992), Mannheim and Tedlock (1995), Hanks (1996), Irvine (1996), Silverstein and Urban (1996), Howard-Malverde (1997), Mannheim and Van Vleet (1998).

⁷"The Crisis" was exacerbated by the collapse of Argentina's economy in 2001 but foreshadowed by decades of political and economic decisions. Plagued by a debt crisis of massive proportions, rampant inflation, and unemployment in the 1980s, Bolivia instituted neoliberal fiscal policies that were promoted by the IMF. The austerity measures had some success in the 1990s, partly balanced on income generated by the cocaine economy. However, increased pressure to eradicate coca, privatize industries, and continue austerity measures contributed to increasingly difficult political and economic conditions for most Bolivians.

⁸On language ideologies in the region see, for example, Harvey (1991), Seligmann (1993), Howard-Malverde (1995, 1997), Arnold (2006).

⁹On race (and its intersection with gender, ethnicity, and class) in the Andes see, among many, de la Cadena (1991, 2000), Seligmann (1993), Gill (1997), Weismantel (2001), Goldstein (2004), Canessa (2005, 2008), Goodale (2006), Whitten (2007), Van Vleet (2008).

¹⁰The idea that spilling blood or causing a death will renew the earth's fertility romanticizes violence as magical or religious (Remy 1991:263; also see Mayer 1994:151–152). While Inca ritual sacrifice may provide a historically grounded explanation for the associations of blood and fertility, Remy (1991) shows that this idea was originally drawn from Peruvian poet and linguist Andrés Ballesteros and promulgated by French anthropologist Georges Dumézil (Ballesteros and Dumézil 1953). The notion circulates widely in urban Bolivian and Peruvian opinion, anthropological accounts (e.g., Hopkins 1982; Platt 1986; Sallnow 1987:136–146; Urton 1993:11–15; Harris 1994:46–47), and international publications such as *Outside Magazine* (Wheeler 2001) and the *New York Times* (2007).

¹¹Distinctions between backward, irrational Indian and civilized white also partly sustain the notion that violence requires state intervention (Remy 1991; Harris 1994:40–41; Mayer 1994). The army entered weeks before a non military solution was attempted for the Ayllu War. The subsequent relocation of families to the Departments of Beni and La Paz was justified through allusions to the Inca tradition of the "vertical archipelago" (Los Tiempos 2000b, c; see also Murra 1975). Reports of people unwilling to leave their lands and of the "fighting spirit in their blood" (*Los Tiempos* 2000f) contributed to an image of irrational natives in need of state control.

¹²The process of linking intertexts to a specific situation is ambiguous. Socially circulated texts may integrate a community into state structures (e.g., Spitulnik 1996; Urban 2001) or consolidate a discursive or rhetorical structure (Briggs 2007). Communities may, however, have different degrees of access to and precedents for integrating texts into the process of narration. Ethnographers cannot necessarily know the particular array of intertexts harnessed by an individual, and the "same" texts may be received, interpreted, and reproduced differently by individuals with different experiences and histories of interaction (Mannheim and Tedlock 1995).

¹³The literature on agency is too extensive to reference here but see Desjarlais (1997:204) on agency and capitalism. See Ahearn (2001) and Bucholtz and Hall (2005) on agency and language.

¹⁴On forms of violence and the politics of representation in Latin America see, among many, Harris (1994), Mayer (1994), Poole (1994), Coyle (2001), Van Vleet (2002), Goldstein (2004), Canessa (2005), Briggs (2007), Chacon and Mendoza (2007).

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Los Tiempos

- 2000a June 7. Continúa la violencia contra los qaqachacas.
- 2000b July 7. Banzer da luz verde para el traslado voluntario de ayllus.
- 2000c July 8. Si no se van, se buscará el desarrollo alternativo.
- 2000d July 9. El ‘Tinkuy’, tributo a la Madre Tierra para asegurar buena cosecha.
- 2000e July 11. Torturaron y extrajeron los ojos de una de las víctimas.
- 2000f September 6. 120 qaqachakas y 60 laimes, trasladados a oriente.
- 2002 February 25. Los peruanos se adueñan del tinkuy; los potosinos protestan.

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