Indigenous Experience Today
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Indigenous Experience Today

Edited by

MARISOL DE LA CADENA AND ORIN STARN
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A century ago, the idea of indigenous people as an active force in the contemporary world was unthinkable. According to most Western thinkers, native societies belonged to an earlier, inferior stage of human history doomed to extinction by the forward march of progress and history. Even those sympathetic with indigenous peoples—whether Maori in New Zealand, San in South Africa, or Miskitu in Nicaragua—felt little could be done to prevent their destruction or at least assimilation into the mainstream. The U.S. poet Henry Wadsworth Longfellow described Native Americans as “the red sun descending” in The Song of Hiawatha, an immensely popular and by turns maudlin, mesmerizing, and romantic 1855 epic poem. As forward-looking as he was in some respects, an icon of anti-imperialist Latin American nationalism, Augusto César Sandino, longed for the day when Nicaraguan Indians would be absorbed into a single mestizo, or mixed nation. The future of the world, it seemed, belonged everywhere to the West and its own peculiar brand of progress and civilization.

History has not turned out that way at all. Many tribal societies have indeed been wiped out by war, disease, exploitation, and cultural assimilation over these last centuries. But far from vanishing as the confident predictions once had it, native peoples today show demographic strength, even growth. More than four million people in the United States now classify themselves as “Native American.” Many times more claim indigenous membership globally from the BaSarwa in Botswana to New Caledonians in Oceania and the Ainu of northern Japan. One recent estimate puts the number at over 250 million worldwide spread across more than 4,000 different groups. Just as importantly, indigenous peoples have asserted their place in 21st-century global
culture, economy, and politics. New Zealand Maori have become a force to be reckoned with in the arts, sports, music, and national life with Maori actors starring in the box-office hits *Once Were Warriors* (1994) and *The Whale Rider* (2003). In Ecuador, newly elected Quichua mayors have transformed local government. And although poverty, discrimination and second-class citizenship very often shape indigenous lives today, notable exceptions also undercut any simple association of indigeneity with misery and marginalization—and the status of indigenous peoples as objects of sometimes condescending pity. In the especially dramatic case of the United States, once impoverished tribes like the Pequot, Kumeyaay, and Umatilla have built casino complexes complete with golf courses, luxury hotels, tribal museums, and giant parking lots for visitors bused in from big cities. These groups have gone from poor, forgotten, and virtually invisible to a formidable force in less than a generation.

Equally evident is that indigenous peoples are highly heterogeneous in their views and agendas. Consider two contrasting examples. In Alaska, the Kaktovik Inupiat Corporation—an organization made up of Kaktovikmiut and local whaling captains—supports oil development in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge (ANWR), which some native people feel was created without adequate consultation in the first place. This group has clashed with environmentalists, and wants to work with the Shell Oil Company. By contrast, Bolivian President Evo Morales, the first self-declared indigenous president in modern Andean history, ordered troops to occupy his country’s oil and gas fields ceded earlier to multinational corporations. “Capitalism is the worst enemy of humanity,” he announced together with his intention to renegotiate all contracts. If most talk about “diversity” and indigenous peoples concentrates on culture and language, the variety of their sometimes conflicting economic and political viewpoints prove just as pronounced.

This book examines the varied faces of indigenous experience today. By contrast with the image of natives rooted always to their original territories, the chapters collected here chart diasporic indigenous experiences, and the global circulation of the discourse and politics of indigeneity. Rather than relying on shopworn notions of unchanging “native tradition,” our contributors show indigenous people dealing with the tense dynamics of being categorized by others and seeking to define themselves within and against indigeneity’s dense web of symbols, fantasies, and meanings. None of these chapters assume that the criteria for indigeneity are ever self-evident or intrinsic; they
examine instead the changing boundary politics and epistemologies of blood and culture, time, and place that define who will or will not count as indigenous in the first place. We share a view of mixture, eclecticism, and dynamism as the essence of indigeneity as opposed to a falling off or “corruption” of some original state of purity. A further common thread is our desire to historicize indigeneity so as to expose its lack of preestablished, “natural” boundaries of any sort. We believe this the only way to undo thickly sedimented stereotypes about timeless “tribal cultures” that materialize in everything from glossy travel magazines to Hollywood movies and state policies—and sometimes in the declarations of activists and advocates themselves. Reckoning with indigeneity demands recognizing it as a relational field of governance, subjectivities, and knowledges that involves us all—indigenous and nonindigenous—in the making and remaking of its structures of power and imagination.

**Reconceptualizing Indigeneity**

In the last decades the public presence of indigenous intellectuals has successfully undermined evolutionary historicism’s authority to force a rethinking of the notion of indigeneity itself. One thinks of the short stories of Coeur D’Alene writer Sherman Alexie, the painting of Australian aboriginal artist Emily Kngwarreye, or the filmmaking of Inuit director Zacharias Kunuk. Maori educators have influenced national social policy in New Zealand, while Aymara historians and Maya linguists have had a strong hand in constitutional reforms in Bolivia and Guatemala. The very idea of such interventions would have been unimaginable within older modernist teleologies that had no place for indigenous agency or futures.

But, as a number of indigenous critics have themselves insisted, recent achievements do not mean that indigenous individuals have somehow suddenly found deliverance in a happily multicultural world. Neither does it mean that in its new public presence, indigeneity is peopled by instinctive environmentalists, spiritual do-gooders averse to material things, and naturally communitarian leftists always aligned against capitalist interests and the status quo. These views too often express what Ramachandra Guha (1989) has called “reverse Orientalism” a discourse that precludes an understanding of indigeneity as an open-ended historical process, inevitably marked by past and present colonialisms and yet also unfolding along as yet undetermined pathways. By contrast, we borrow from Stuart Hall’s (1996) influential
conception of black cultural politics to propose that indigenous activism is “without guarantees.” Indigenism has never been a singular ideology, program, or movement, and its politics resist closure. To assume that it possesses a unified much less predetermined trajectory is historically inaccurate, conceptually flawed, and simplistic. Although indigenous activism can well be linked to social justice and inspire transformative visions, as a political order it can be motivated by different ideological positions, all of them able to effect exclusions and forced inclusions (Mouffe 2005).

But how, then, might indigeneity be reconceptualized? A vital starting point is to recognize that indigeneity emerges only within larger social fields of difference and sameness; it acquires its “positive” meaning not from some essential properties of its own, but through its relation to what it is not, to what it exceeds or lacks. (Butler 1993; Hall 1996). This is not to say that the indigenous condition is somehow derivative or without powerful visions and directions of its own. What it does mean is that indigenous cultural practices, institutions, and politics become such in articulation with what is not considered indigenous within the particular social formation where they exist. Indigeneity, in other words, is at once historically contingent and encompassing of the nonindigenous—and thus never about untouched reality. “Settler and native go together,” as political theorist Mahmood Mamdani (2004: 10) concludes, and “there can be no settler without a native, and vice versa.”

As Mary Louise Pratt writes in her contribution to this volume, indigeneity names a relationship based on a conception of time and space that differentiates among groups of people. Words like Indian in the Americas and Aborigine in Australia were European inventions for peoples already there, prior to the arrival of the colonizers; and for its part indigenous derives from the French indigene and the Latin indigena. The label indigenous further disclosed a relationship with other non-Europeans: The first English usage comes in a 1598 report about the discovery of America to distinguish between “indigenes” (defined as “people bred upon that very soyle”) and the people that Spaniards and Portuguese brought from Africa as slaves. Not surprisingly, these forms of relationality expressed European superiority insofar as “indigenous” was synonymous with “pagan,” heathen souls to be saved through Christianity. Later, as reason displaced faith as authority’s foundation, “the pagan” was renamed “the primitive” (as opposed to “civilized”) including those classified as “tribal,” “native” and “aborigine” in colonial administrative lexicons.
Tensions between difference and sameness also characterized colonial articulations of indigeneity. Although it would be hard to imagine groups more unlike each other than, say, the small-scale, egalitarian bands of the Kalahari Desert and, at another extreme, the vast, highly stratified, militaristic empires of the Incas and Aztecs in the Americas; to colonial administrators and their sciences, the differences only reflected stages in the evolution of human societies. And yet, measuring native societies with evolutionary yardsticks also yielded differences that, notwithstanding the ahistorical imagination that conceived of them, became material practice as they shaped colonial policies that influenced postcolonial relations to our days. Take the West African case of Togo. Kabre villagers in the mountainous North seemed to French colonizers to be more intractably “savage” and “uncivilized” than the more urban, politically centralized Ewe in the coastal south, who had experience with earlier European slavers and traders. Thus, the French concentrated missionary and educational efforts with the Ewe, enabling them to become teachers, priests, and civil servants. The Kabre were instead conscripted as forced laborers to build roads and railroads for their French and then German masters. These colonial policies fed a dynamic in which the southern Ewe regarded the northern Kabre as backward and brutish and the Kabre, in turn, resented the southerners that the European colonizers favored. The resulting divisions shape Togo’s fraught postcolonial politics even today (Piot 1999; Toulabor 1985).

If differences among local societies were important, the policies of different colonial powers were also varied and changeable across time, with still further consequences for indigeneity’s divergent pathways. For example, the 16th-century Iberian conquerors of Mexico intermarried with Indians enabling the later invention of the mestizo, the racial category made emblematic in modern Mexican nationalism of the supposed reconciliation between the Spanish and Indian worlds. By contrast, the Dutch colonizers of 19th-century Indonesia adhered to dogmas about “racial degeneration” then dominant in scientific discourse; they choose to enforce white endogamy to try to prevent “dangerous mixtures” between Europeans and natives (Stoler 2002). The same imperial epistemology of native original sameness—and the disavowal of local ethnicities and their mixtures—underlay Indonesian elite nationalism years later, this time with nativeness positively recoded as the touchstone of a homogenized vision of national citizenship. These contrasting colonial histories manifest themselves in conditions of indigeneity today. Although in Mexico being indigenous is an old and
unchallenged image, convenient and even necessary for the constant production of the mestizo, in Indonesia claiming to be indigenous is a new and highly controversial step for poor and rural minorities in their challenge to elite nationalist claims of native sameness. The diversity of indigenous histories is yet more evident when one considers non-European forms of colonialism. The Ami, Atayal, and other aboriginal peoples in present-day Taiwan suffered multiple colonizations: first by 17th-century Fulao and Hakka farmers from mainland China; second by the Japanese following the Sino-Japanese War in 1894; and finally by Chinese nationalist forces fleeing Mao’s Communist revolution in 1949. These native groups must seek cultural and political rights in a society where the more numerous Fulao and Hakka now claim to be “indigenous Taiwanese” for having predated the massive Kuomintang landing (Chung-min et al. 1994; Wachman 1994).

All this heterogeneity has been at uneasy odds with visions of indigeneity as a unitary category occupied by those imagined at humanity’s “lowest” rung. Whether Indians in Ibero-America or “tribals” in Africa, India, or North America, these labels described mostly rural populations (“hunter-gatherers” or “cultivators”) uniformly imagined as close to “nature” (the beginning of the world) and far-off from “civilization” (the goal of History). Denied were the manifold particular histories of interaction among natives, settlers, and other groups (like the African slaves who arrived to the Americas with the Spanish or the indentured Indian laborers brought to Fiji by the British). Canonical Western philosophers—most notably Immanuel Kant and Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel—used linear time and proximity to nature to explain cultural (and racial) difference between “non-civilized” peoples and Europeans. In the social sciences, Emile Durkheim, Lucien Lévy-Bruhl, and other prominent scholars would have agreed with E. B. Tylor, a founding figure in anthropology, that “one set of savages is like the other” (1903: 6). Even if scholars granted importance to local specificities, these would always fit the evolutionary epistemology that Universal History had popularized. Rome was “the embryo of human civilization” claimed James Frazer (1931 [1888]) and primitive cultures were survivals;\(^5\) differences among them represented different moments of the past. What Michel-Rolph Trouillot (1991) calls the “savage slot” further materialized with the new disciplinary field of anthropology taking indigenous peoples for its object of study and, at times, advocacy.

Yet Western scholars and bureaucrats were never alone in crafting indigeneity. This formation also owes its complex genealogy precisely
to those intellectuals, politicians, and common people classified by colonial knowledge as “natives” (in its multiple synonyms) who challenged their alleged anachronism, denounced European ignorance and inhumanity; in so doing, they contributed to alternative, often disparate, representations of indigeneity. For example, Guamán Poma de Ayala, a Quechua Indian, took up his pen in 1585 to detail the abuses of Spanish priests, judges, and soldiers in a 1,200 page letter to King Phillip III. In the 1780s, as the Iroquois Confederation came under attack following the American Revolution, Thayeendanegea, a Mohawk leader (whose Christian name was Joseph Brandt, and who had been educated in the classics at Moor’s Charity School, now Dartmouth College) wrote to George Washington’s new government. Thayeendanegea reminded the U.S. authorities that he was born and raised “among those whom you are pleased to call savages,” that he had traveled extensively in North America and Europe meeting great leaders. “Nevertheless,” he continued, “after all this experience and after every exertion to divest myself of prejudice, I am obliged to give my opinion in favour of my own people” because “in the government you call civilized, the happiness of the people is constantly sacrificed to the splendor of empire.” (Tully 1995: 95)

Similar concerns triggered minor acts of resistance, small-scale uprisings, and sometimes massive rebellions. Contemporaries of Thayeendanegea, Túpac Amaru and Túpac Katari (Quechua and Aymara indigenous leaders, respectively) mounted massive insurrections reaching hundreds of miles across the Andes (Thomson 2003). In the 19th century (at the time when Ibero-America severed colonial ties with the Spanish and Portuguese Crowns) Maoris protesting British rule of their island—Aotearoa, or New Zealand in English—joined the Pai Maire revolt led by Te Ua Haumene, a politician who subscribed to millenarian ideologies of European expulsion and the restoration of native rule. Like Guamán Poma, Maori also addressed the ruling monarch, this time the British Queen, denouncing settler ignorance and abuse (Adas 1979). These often very cosmopolitan indigenous activists contributed to the dense dialogic formation we are calling “indigeneity,” in which groups and individuals occupying nonindigenous subject positions also participated.

This activism, however, did not undo the opposition between the “primitive” and the “civilized,” which remained pivotal in indigeneity’s intricate field of meanings, practices, and politics, and was sometimes adopted by indigenous leaders themselves. A grammar of analogous contrasts has further linked indigeneity to the backward, rural, and
illiterate as against the goals of modernity, urbanization, and literacy enshrined as the desired endpoints of development and progress. As the project of assimilation gained currency in the early 20th century, the aim of absorbing indigenous people into homogenized modern nation-states found expression in the Latin American ideology of mestizaje; the U.S. policy of so-called “termination and relocation” during the Eisenhower years; and in France’s *mission civilisatrice* (civilizing mission) in its African colonies. Assimilation was sanctioned by the UN International Labor Organization (ILO) in 1957: it encouraged member states to “integrate” the “tribal” and “semi-tribal” populations who occupied “a less advanced stage than the average in their country.”

Meanwhile, many Marxist groups dismissed indigenous practices as an “archaic” brand of “false consciousness” that obstructed class unity and revolution. And far from exclusive to the West, Muslim and Hindu intellectuals also imagined a backward population of their own, which they identified as lacking a world religion; classified as “animists,” these groups, mostly rural and peasants, were labeled as tribal and traditional, a backward Other assumed to be “behind” civilization’s curve (see Baviskar this volume).

But by the late 20th century, indigenous political movements worldwide were forcefully questioning assimilationism. The ILO reversed field in 1989 to recognize “the aspirations of these peoples to exercise control over their own institutions, ways of life and economic development … and to maintain and develop their identities, languages and religions, within the framework of the States in which they live.”

The gradual discrediting of assimilationist agendas and their replacement with diversity as the putative goal of social policy—coinciding with the Cold War’s end and the seeming triumph of the so-called neoliberal model of capitalism and democracy—accompanied the ascendance of various forms of multiculturalism (Kymlicka 2001; Van Cott 2000). Although embracing the credo of cultural pluralism and equality, multiculturalism has posed new dilemmas and constraints of its own. Critics worry that “multicultural neoliberalism” incorporates “diversity” as little more than a strategy of management, containment, and global capitalist expansion without any real change to structures of racial hierarchy and economic inequality (Hale 2006; Poster and Zamosc 2004). And even in cases in which multiculturalism has sparked genuine talk about dignity and respect for native cultures, it has not done away with the compulsion to equate indigeneity, or at least authentic indigeneity, with autocthony and the premodern.
Emerging from, along with, and against these political and academic practices contemporary indigenous experiences are marked by inconsistent expectations underpinned by fantasies of indigeneity as exterior to history and uniquely nonmodern. On the one hand, those who dress in feathers, face paint, “native costume” or otherwise publicly embrace their traditions risk self-positioning in the semantic extremes of exotic primitivism, what Ramos (1998) calls “the hyperreal Indian.” On the other hand, those who do not seem to measure up to stereotypical “feathers-and-beads” expectations often find themselves stigmatized as “half-breeds,” “assimilated,” or even imposters; wearing suit and tie risks accusations of false indigenousness. Recently for example, the acclaimed Peruvian writer Mario Vargas Llosa, dismissed Bolivian Aymara President Evo Morales as a “fake” Indian—in spite of the fact that Morales speaks the indigenous language and grew up in a poor mountain village. “Evo,” Vargas Llosa asserts, is “the emblematic Latin American criollo, cunning as a squirrel, a political climber and charlatan, with a vast experience as a manipulator of men and women acquired in his long trajectory as leader of coca leaf growers and member of the labor union aristocracy.” The spurious calculus of authenticity and cultural purity here at work assumes that “genuine” indigenous intellectuals, businessmen, filmmakers, sports stars, and politicians do not, indeed cannot, exist—or are rare, oxymoronic exceptions, at best.

That the same Mario Vargas Llosa had, some years earlier, approvingly identified the new Peruvian president Alejandro Toledo as an Indian only underlines the fickle, sometimes contradictory expectations surrounding indigeneity. Besides Toledo not speaking Quechua, the main difference between him and Morales is ideological: the Bolivian opposes neoliberalism, the Peruvian embraces it—as does Vargas Llosa. The famous writer’s selective willingness to grant Indian authenticity to one and not the other might be labeled politically motivated; some might claim the same about Morales’s or Toledo’s self-positioning as indigenous. More deeply, it becomes evident that very different notions of “indigenous identity” can coexist in the mind of one and the same person (in this case an internationally acclaimed novelist): as an evolutionary narrative according to which no modern politician can really be indigenous, or by contrast as a fixed subject position deriving from “blood,” “heritage,” and social background in which current occupation is irrelevant. Both interpretations are part of indigeneity as a social formation—although neither is more real than the other one, their respective truth claims have different political and economic consequences.
Indigeneity Beyond Ethnicity?

The last few decades have witnessed the convergence of indigenous activists in what some have called a global indigenous movement (Niezen 2000). The most immediate roots of this new organizing date to the protest years of the 1960s and 1970s and the indigenous groups that emerged in that period of decolonization and social upheaval. The U.S. Red Power movement—which joined elements of Marxist and Indian pride ideologies—was one especially important influence (Smith and Warrior 1996). Extensive media coverage of protests like the takeover of Alcatraz Island and the Trail of Broken Treaties broadcast indigenous concerns worldwide. But even within the United States, this activism was never neatly unified in ideology or aims; on the contrary, tensions and antagonisms were part of the indigenous political sphere. Some older Native American activists disliked the Red Power radicalism of the American Indian Movement—and some women found its male-dominated “warrior” ethos to be oppressively patriarchal. In New Zealand, the Marxist-inspired Polynesian Panther Movement (with ties to the Black Panthers in the United States) squared off against the Nga Tamatoa, a non-Marxist, antiracist, and more culturally minded group led by university-trained Maori intellectuals.10 In Latin America, indigenous groups ranged from militant ethnic nationalist groups that rejected any outsider involvement—like some early Bolivian Aymara organizations—to organizations working for modest state reforms, while promoting indigenous integration into capitalist markets. Indigenous organizations multiplied in the 1980s and 1990s with important support from NGOs with indigenous concerns acquiring unprecedented political visibility in Latin America, the United States, Canada, New Zealand, and Australia.

Varied demands found vigorous expression. They included land claims, control over cultural heritage, bilingual education, the inclusion and commemoration of indigenous histories in national imaginaries, and the rights of indigenous peoples to speak for and represent themselves as opposed to being “spoken for” by nonindigenous experts, bureaucrats, and policymakers. The increasing visibility of this activism—aided by multiculturalism’s new ascendancy in global political discourse—led the United Nations to declare 1993 the “Year of the World’s Indigenous Peoples.” A Maya woman, Rigoberta Menchú, won the Nobel Peace prize and became a lightning rod for controversy about the brutal counterinsurgency campaign of the Guatemalan army against Indian villagers.11 The concept of indigenous rights traveled to new parts of
the world with varying results (Brysk 2000; García 2005; Hodgson 2001; Tsing 2005).

Contemporary indigenous political activism raises fundamental issues, some familiar and others less so. Current indigenism continues to challenge the Western model of civilization and progress by insisting that Euroamerican colonialism and capitalist expansion have been a misadventure of violence, destruction and the trampling of non-Western peoples. New attempts have also been made to decolonize the categories of “Indian” and “native,” undoing evolutionary viewpoints and recovering the historical local distinctiveness of marginalized groups. Moreover, in some emergent versions a concerted effort has occurred to connect indigenous and nonindigenous subaltern groups that share relatively similar political interests. This strategy—at least in theory—would yield a broad coalition of subaltern organizations underpinned by a flexible notion of demands for “cultural rights” including claims for the political self-representation of marginalized groups. Such indigenous activism thus may serve to articulate projects for social justice beyond exclusive notions of ethnic identity. In this vein, Peruvian sociologist Aníbal Quijano perceives a trend among Andean activists toward “subalternizing indigenous politics and indigenizing subaltern politics” to generate an organic link among political organizations representing ethnic and non-ethnic subaltern interests (Quijano 2006). The Zapatista movement originating in Mexico’s impoverished Mayan-dominated Lacandon jungle region is one tangible example of such new expressions of indigeneity.

The resulting new mixed forms of indigenous identity and politics involve what anthropologist Tania Li calls “positionings” historically enabled by “sedimented practices, landscapes, and repertoires of meaning” and brought about through “particular patterns of engagement and struggle” (2000: 151). As it always has been, indigenism today is a process; a series of encounters; a structure of power; a set of relationships; a matter of becoming, in short, and not a fixed state of being. In its most ambitious expressions, and articulated to alter-globalization processes, the new indigenism seeks to undo hegemonic signifiers, affect their usual semantic chemistry to produce new valences, and thus reconfigure indigeneity itself opening it up to the acknowledgement of historical contemporaneity and radical social justice. Obviously, because indigenous activism is not a monolithic entity but, on the contrary, a necessarily fragmented process, some of its fractions are included in the dominant and the hegemonic (Hall 1996; Williams 1977), whereas others emerge as counterhegemonic formations—and still others
straddle both, or move from one to the other. Moreover, we have to remember that indigeneity encompasses much more than identities or social movements. It is a worldwide field of governance, subjectivities, and knowledges involving both indigenous and nonindigenous peoples in their own different ways. Indigeneity itself materializes in an intricate dynamic among converging and competing agendas, visions, and interests that transpire at local, national, and global levels.

The chapters in this volume show the immense variation in the processes of localization (or rejection) of indigenous identities and the diverging national and regional forms they can assume. Together they seek to contribute to what James Clifford (this volume) calls “an interactive, dynamic process of shifting scales and affiliations, uprooting and rerooting, the waxing and waning of identities” that has historically characterized indigenous experiences. The histories described in the chapters that follow are not deviations from some baseline, “normative” checklist of expectations for indigenous culture and politics. They aim instead to release indigeneity from the flattening epistemologies that overlook that any attempt to define what is indigenous and what is not is necessarily relational and historical—and therefore provisional and context related.

**Indigenous Identities, Old and New**

The globalization of the concept of indigenous rights has been by turns powerful, uneven, and unpredictable. As it has traveled from familiar contexts like Canada, the United States, and Brazil to newer ones like India and Indonesia, the discourse of indigeneity has encountered interlocutors among marginalized, usually rural populations. Here nationalist policies have very often classified villagers as “backward” and “in need of improvement” while simultaneously declaring the entire national citizenry to be “indigenous” and thus obscuring the cultural singularity of local minority groups (usually non-Muslim, or non-Hindu). In Indonesia, for example, Anna Tsing (this volume) describes how young environmental activists carved a national space for indigeneity by articulating it to adat, a local idiom with long historical semantics, and therefore local leverage, but that had to be resignified in the process of political activism. By contrast with North America, where a racialized biopolitics of white supremacy and brown subalternity has imprinted the dynamics of indigeneity, in Indonesia or India, caste or religion mark the difference between those potentially considered indigenous or nonindigenous, which therefore
do not necessarily “look” different as usually imagined in Canada or the United States. Tsing insists that any assessment of the “powerful traveling axes of indigenous concern” must attend to the “concrete history of divergent indigeneities” and trace “links without subsuming them to universals.”

And, in fact, given the weight of local histories, the spread of these emergent forms of indigeneity has met with opposition or at least indifference in some places—even where indigenous peoples have had a long-established marginal presence. For example, by contrast to vigorous activism in neighboring Bolivia and Ecuador, Peruvian Aymaras and Quechuas have been relatively unresponsive to social movements organized under the banner of indigenous cultural rights. Emily Yeh (this volume) examines the case of Tibet as an example of indigenism disavowed. Although they might seem to fit the archetypal formula of inhabiting an ancestral homeland, possessing a distinctive language and culture, and being colonized by outsiders, Tibetans seldom call themselves “indigenous,” and more often use as “sa skye rdo skyes (lit., ‘born of this soil and rock’).” Yeh traces this lack of “uptake” of the widely circulating global category of “indigenous peoples” partly to official Chinese policy. State insistence that everyone in China is “indigenous” has effectively stripped the category of its power to convey Tibetan feelings of occupation and domination by Beijing. Many Tibetan exiles also find the idiom of indigenous rights—and its association with a claim of sovereignty as opposed to secession—too weak to express their desire for independence from China. Becoming indigenous is always only a possibility negotiated within political fields of culture and history.

Every generation, too, may seek to redefine indigenous identities. Claudia Briones (this volume) finds young Argentine Mapuches less interested in older Mapuche agendas of land rights and traditional political organizing than in asserting their Mapucheness while establishing identities as punk rock and heavy metal fans and musicians. These self-announced “Mapunkies” and “Maheavies” embrace the rebelliousness of global youth culture and, at the same time, add a new dimension as in lyrics about the travails of Mapuche history. An older, more organized politics aiming to transform or even sever relations between Mapuches and the Argentine state gives way to a new cultural politics that focuses on the body, material culture, and the politics of style and mass media—while at the same time asserting their right to a place as Mapuches in Argentina as a nation. These younger Mapuche with their tattoos, piercings, and black leather jackets define a new
urban indigenous identity. Their presence undercuts standard views of Argentina as a homogeneously white nation while underscoring the absurdity of persisting mythologies about Indians as still somehow belonging to a premodern world of the grass hut and the bow and arrow.

** Territory and the Question of Sovereignty**

The more familiar matters of territory and sovereignty remain very much of concern to indigenous peoples in many parts of the world. Many groups possess a sense of rootedness to the land—and of prior occupation to foreign invaders—characterized by distinctive historically and culturally shaped understandings and connections to an intimately known landscape (Kirsch 2001). This is the case of First Nation individuals, in Northern Yukon Territories, whose oral traditions, according to Julie Cruikshank (this volume), reveal a “dwelling perspective” derived from “intense engagement with environment maintained through millennia.” Land and water were the basis of indigenous life in an older day, and remain so in some cases today. Because colonization by outsiders so often went along with the traumatic breakdown of precolonial ways of being, the defense or recovery of territory has very often become more than just a matter of economic survival, but also connected to the dream of revitalization, homeland, and restored dignity. At the same time, struggles over territory are seldom neatly cohesive or driven by noble or utopian ideals alone. Money and corporate appetites can enter the mix, creating dissension within native groups or pitting them against one another. A well-known example is the long-running, sometimes fierce dispute between Navajo and Hopi over Arizona land claimed by both tribes exacerbated by the involvement of the giant Peabody Coal Company and the lucrative mineral leasing rights involved.

Anthropologist Francesca Merlan (this volume) considers the case of Australia. She scrutinizes the key role that land has taken in aboriginal political mobilization there over the last three decades. As Merlan sees it, privileging land as an object of struggle assumes a kind of uniformity of native interest in defense of the land and environment that belies that some aboriginal groups have supported mining and other development with hopes for employment and economic opportunity. To stress native links to a fixed territory can also inadvertently reinforce a dominant Australian vision of aborigines as “undomesticated” and “wild”—and a corresponding view of those who live in cities as “in-authentic” and not “real” native people. Most aborigines make their
homes now in Sydney and other big cities. Their social needs, Merlan notes, revolve around the educational system, access to health care and good jobs for these families that have not lived off the land in any traditional sense for generations. Merlan suggests that aboriginal political activism might be recalibrated so as to address territorial rights in conjunction with more encompassing agendas of social welfare and economic opportunity.

The concern for territory links to broader demands for sovereignty. Anthropologist Valerie Lambert (this volume) examines the accomplishments and challenges for the Choctaw in the United States in their quest for a measure of real tribal power over their own lives and land. As victims of violent removal to Oklahoma under Andrew Jackson’s hard-line Indian policy in the early 19th century, the Choctaw were devastated by the march of white conquest. Now the tribe has managed to win a hard-earned measure of prosperity through its tribal gas stations, casinos, and other business ventures bringing in several hundred million dollars a year through an entrepreneurial brand of “reservation capitalism.” But Lambert, Choctaw herself, also points to limits in this native success story. U.S. Indian policy draws a strict, sometime arbitrary line between federally “recognized” and “unrecognized” tribes, the latter without any rights to land or sovereignty. Even “recognized” tribes like the Choctaw find their authority far more restricted than the official government rhetoric of Indian sovereignty and self-determination allows. The Choctaw have been unable even to secure complete recognition of water rights within their own tribal territorial boundaries. Choctaw poverty and unemployment rates remain higher than the national average despite the major recent advances (and in contrast to mistaken assumptions that most or all of the more than 400 casino-owning tribes in the United States have somehow become flush overnight with glitzy gambling cash).

Michael Brown (this volume) observes that sovereignty has become a crucial watchword in indigenous activism worldwide. But Brown questions this broad trend and its possible negative consequences for social change and justice. He points to the danger of “native sovereignty” being invoked by tribes to justify discriminatory policies as in one New Mexico pueblo’s policy of denying tribal citizenship to the children of women with nontribal members but granting it to those of men who marry outside the tribe. That tribes may be exempted from federal labor laws also raises potential for abuses of worker’s rights at casinos and other reservation businesses. Brown also argues that the very concept of sovereignty fails to admit the fluid, multiplex realities of native mobility
and cultural intermixture; it rests instead on the misleading premise of stable, clear-cut cultural, ethnic, and territorial boundaries and fixed, singular identities. Such assumptions overlook that many non-natives live on reservations or other tribally controlled territories, among other potential complications to simple visions of indigenous autonomy and self-determination (Valerie Lambert notes that roughly 90 percent of those living within Choctaw tribal boundaries are non-Indian, having married in or from white or African American families who have long resided there). Brown reminds us that the idea of sovereignty derives in the first place from Western and not any native political philosophy. Perhaps, he concludes, it should “wing its way back to its birthplace in the cheerless castles of Europe.”

It may be useful to think of indigenous sovereignty as a hard-won political feat, and yet also as a set of questions. Is the problem the lack of respect for native sovereignty as the Choctaw experience suggests? Or is the very concept so flawed as to be more obstacle than help to indigenous struggles for dignity and justice? What alternative forms of political imagination and organization might be worth considering? The Mohawk political scientist Taiaiake Alfred suggests, albeit very schematically, drawing on older indigenous traditions that rejected “absolute authority,” “coercive enforcement decisions,” and the separation of political rule from other aspects of everyday life (2001: 27). Others have called for a “decentered diverse democratic federalism” allowing for real native autonomy and self-government yet without any rigid separatist agenda (Young 2000: 253). As much as indigeneity itself, the debate about sovereignty is linked to social context and political dynamics, and there is no “disinterested” position about its content and limits. The complex, contested, and often powerfully emotional questions at stake guarantee that sovereignty will continue to be applied and reworked in multiple, tense, and sometimes contradictory ways.

**Indigeneity Beyond Borders**

Conventional thinking about indigenous groups still often assumes the stable, continuous occupation of a single territory. What Donald Moore (2004) calls “the ethnospatial fix” can occlude the centrality of uprooting and displacement in indigenous experience, and the vicissitudes of being rounded up, confined, and marched to new, less desirable corners of the earth. The Cherokee were driven from the southeastern United States to Oklahoma on the Trail of Tears (Ehle 1988); the Australian government shipped aboriginal children to boarding schools halfway
across the country to learn “civilized” ways (Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission 1997); the authoritarian postcolonial regime in Zimbabwe “resettled” rebellious tribal groups in new “model” villages (Moore 2004). Even earlier, chronologically speaking, forastero (foreigner) was a Spanish colonial label for indigenous Andean villagers who left home to avoid tribute and forced labor obligations; but these migrants very often maintained connections with their rural kin, or ayllu, and periodically returned to tend land and animals. These migrations, forced or voluntary, sometimes achieved intended ends of assimilation and control, but they could also fortify oppositional feelings of victimization and solidarity or even generate new forms of indigeneity. “What made us one people is the common legacy of colonialism and diaspora” writes cultural critic Paul Chaat Smith (1994: 38) in describing how “Indian” became a shared identity for diverse, widely scattered Native North American tribes only in the aftermath of European conquest.

James Clifford (this volume) speaks of “indigenous diasporas.” He underlines that native peoples today are rarely bound to any one place and that geographic mobility whether forced or chosen is not a recent feature of indigeneity. Indigenous cosmopolitanism has only increased with the borders between tribal “homeland” and urban center, home and away, here and there now crisscrossed everywhere by frequent travel, family visits, e-mail, text messages, and phone calls. “Across the current range of indigenous experiences,” Clifford says, “identifications are seldom exclusively local or inward looking but, rather, work at multiple scales of interaction.”

As Louisa Schein (this volume) shows for the Hmong/Miao, the trials of transnationality can power nostalgia for lost homelands. The Hmong/Miao diaspora stretches from China to Laos, Thailand, Vietnam and overseas to North America, including some 200,000 refugees arriving to California, Minnesota, and other parts of the United States following the Vietnam War. Their condition of what Schein calls “chronic statelessness” and minoritization is transected today by return visits and business ventures, remittances to poor kin back in Asia, and other forms of trans-Pacific interconnectedness. A thriving Hmong/Miao video-making business now produces historical epics about the trauma of the Vietnam War and the longer history of Hmong/Miao loss and displacement. These videos also cater to and strengthen migrant desires for an often idealized traditional past. Foklorized images of country festivals, cherry blossoms and gurgling brooks, and costumed protagonists enact a “virtual or remote place-making” that answers to these longings for
“cultural continuity” and “fixed significance” (and sometimes play to patriarchal male fantasies about a “virginal,” “pure,” and “loyal” village femininity). Like Tibetans, the Miao-Hmong have not embraced the discourse of indigeneity for reasons of their own. But Schein argues that those “diasporic longing and those championing preservation of indigenous lifeways are not so far apart.” Diasporic identity, indigenous or not, entails a measure of marginality or at least off-centeredness in relationship to ruling states. Schein suggests a “worldwide malaise that prompts those with the means of representation to offer recuperations of the traditional, the untouched, and the timeless alongside cautionary tales about too much intercourse with the outside.”

Michelle Bigenho (this volume) explores music’s role in the transnational cultural politics of indigeneity. She focuses on Andean music as it travels from Bolivia and Peru to Tokyo and back home. A nonindigenous Peruvian folklorist composed the famous, seemingly “indigenous” Andean anthem, *El Cóndor Pasa*; the U.S. megastars Paul Simon and Art Garfunkel made it into a worldwide folk hit later in the 20th century. That rendition piqued the interest of Japanese musicians in Andean folk music in these zig-zagging global circuits in which new interest in “indigenous cultural references” came about partly “through a circuitous route of foreign associations.” Although donning ponchos, woven belts, and other “Indian” garb for their performances, the majority of the touring Bolivian musicians Bigenho describes would not themselves identify as indigenous at home (and she, a North American, played violin in this group). A mix of essentialism and nostalgia for its own imagined “non-Western” past heightens Japanese feelings of “intimate distance” with Andean music. Bigenho believes the multiplex desires, interests, and contexts in such global circulations of indigeneity warn against simple dismissals of the phenomenon as the “mere commodification of the exotic.” She worries nonetheless that Japanese interest in Bolivian music remains at best “disjointed” from any real engagement with Bolivia’s fraught history of poverty, discrimination, and struggle.

**The Boundary Politics of Indigeneity**

It should be evident that the boundaries between indigenous and nonindigenous spheres are a matter of history and politics. Consider the United States. In recent decades, various factors have made it more acceptable, even glamorous and exotic, to be Indian. In what Circe Sturm calls “race-shifting” (2002), Americans have begun to claim tribal
heritage in a “migration from whiteness to redness.” The increasing numbers of those checking “American Indian/Alaska Native” on the census box is one reason for strong Native American demographic growth in the late 20th century. Are these “race-shifters” little more than “wannabes” without any real claim to indigenous identity? Or does the turn to embrace Indianness measure recognition of native genealogies that earlier generations chose or were forced to deny in the age of assimilationism? The sometimes vitriolic debate about these questions underlines the volatility of the changing boundary politics of belonging and exclusion.

We should also recall that indigeneity operates within larger structures of ethnicity and identification. “National formations of alterity,” as Claudia Briones (this volume) calls them, position native peoples within hierarchies of color, gender, generation, geography and class that operate to differentiate between and within groups. The structure of society seldom, if ever, involves a neat binary between indigenous people and colonizers or their descendants—and even less so given the frequent lines of tension and cleavage that often exist among different groups in any particular place. Forming political alliances within and across multiple divides can be a difficult endeavor with unpredictable outcomes.

The example of India illustrates the pitfalls, dilemmas, and varied valences of indigenous mobilization. Here the influence of the global discourse of indigeneity has helped to give the category of adivasi, or tribal people, a growing visibility in recent years. As Amita Baviskar (this volume) shows, the new politics of adivasi identity invokes aspects of old colonial visions of them as “uncivilized” exotic, loincloth-wearing forest peoples (and overlooks that many adivasi live now in cities and towns). The trajectory of adivasi organizing has also been shaped by the changing dynamics of caste and modern state classificatory schemes as well as the powerful sometimes deadly religious violence and hatred pitting Hindus against Muslim. Baviskar shows how the image of “natural,” “ancestral” adivasi ties to the earth became a powerful rallying point in the courageous fight against the destructive Narmada Valley dam project. But she also notes the more problematic pathways of indigenous claims, and, in particular, how adivasis have sometimes joined Hindu supremacists in hate politics and mass violence against Muslim minorities. Baviskar further worries that drawing lines between “tribal” peoples and other poor Indians—a legacy of colonial British social classification—may obstruct efforts to mobilize a more common front for change in India. “We cannot assume,” she underlines,
“that indigeneity is intrinsically a sign of subalternity or a mode of resistance.”

The politics of indigeneity in parts of Africa also raises very difficult, critical questions about exclusion and inclusion, and the perils of social boundary drawing gone awry. Colonialism and its strategies of governance and classification imposed strict divisions both between Europeans and Africans and various “tribal” groups. The notorious case of apartheid South Africa involved an ideology of ethnic belonging that linked particular groups to strictly circumscribed, supposedly partly autonomous “homelands,” or “Bantutustans.” This Afrikaner social engineering restricted the mobility of black South Africans, kept them in marginal areas, and denied them the vote and full national citizenship. The 1994 Rwandan genocide points to the most extreme and perilous potential deployments of the idiom of indigeneity. There, Belgian colonizers had helped to foster a so-called “Hamitic hypothesis” asserting Tutsis to have migrated to Rwanda from northern Africa with Hutu as the real “autochthonous” inhabitants of the country. A view of the Tutsi as foreign usurpers underlay Hutu hatred that led to the slaughter of several hundred thousand Tutsi with the United States and the rest of the international community failing to intervene to stop the violence (Mamdani 2002).

Anthropologist Francis Nyamnjoh (this volume) examines competing nativist claims in Botswana. Although its economy has prospered in recent decades, the country has witnessed growing tensions with competing tribal claims to “indigenous” occupation of the land. Thus, the Batswana majority distinguish between themselves as fully entitled “owners of the home (beng gae)” in relation to other tribal identities labeled as “close (Ba tswana)” all the way to putatively more recently arrived “outsiders (Makwerekwere).” Here the claim of firstness is deployed to legitimate stratification, exclusion, and ethnic domination, no matter that it has no real historical basis of any kind. The most “indigenous” Botswanans by longevity of occupation would be the so-called “Bushmen,” more properly called the BaSarwa. These traditionally hunter-gatherer people have inhabited the country’s deserts for at least 2,000 years. But the BaSarwa have virtually no voice under a calculus of backwardness and advancement that allows for “rightful ownership” only by settled farmers. Nyamnjoh argues that this particular brand of indigeneity and nativism denies the hybrid, heterogeneous, and shifting realities of Botswanan experience. Prevailing instead are what he calls “ever-diminishing circles of inclusion.” Nymanjoh suggests the need for a “flexible indigeneity” that would recognize and even
embrace the fact of multiple allegiances, geographical mobility, and entangled histories.

Linda Tuhiwai Smith (this volume) explores the more hopeful history of New Zealand. The Thatcheresque neoliberal model first implemented in the mid–1980s dismantled New Zealand’s welfare state in favor of privatization, deregulation, and the slashing of government programs. These measures threatened to undermine Maori organizing that had been gathering strength around protecting native rights accorded by the 1840 Treaty of Waitangi and Maori language revitalization. But many Maori had no love lost for the old welfare state with its dimensions of paternalism, condescension, and insensitivity to native concerns. As Tuhiwai Smith shows, they took advantage of “pauses” and “spaces” in the emerging neoliberal order to further their own decolonizing agendas, especially in educational reform. New state policy promoted a more entrepreneurial, market-based model of schooling that foregrounded “school choice” and “parental control.” Native activists adopted this language to press successfully for Kara Kaupapa Maori, or Maori language immersion schools, and other at least partial reforms to a formerly white-controlled, assimilation-minded educational system.

Tuhiwai Smith draws lessons from New Zealand for thinking about indigeneity in the age of advanced global capitalism. If an uneasy kind of multicultural neoliberalism has developed there, it has done so in the push and pull of familiar dominant ideologies of free markets and individual entrepreneurship and the struggle of Maori activists for a measure of group rights and recognition. Multicultural neoliberal regimes have themselves encouraged forms of collective indigenous subjectivity in other parts of the world. One notable example is Brazil, where new state policies granting land rights to indigenous and slave descendant groups have given new incentive for community identification and organizing (French 2004). As Brazilian analyst Evelina Dagnino (2002) puts it, current political processes are marked by “perverse confluences” between neoliberalism and social justice activism. The relationship between neoliberal modes of governmentality and indigenous activism is indeed at once deeply intertwined and marked by fissures, disjunctures, and confrontations of various kinds. Tuhiwai Smith notes varied obstacles in the Maori case including activist “burn out,” the temptations of assimilationism, and internal divisions. She finds evidence even so in New Zealand for how marginalized groups may be able to find “aspects of neoliberal reform with which communities can engage and can find ground to shift the agenda.”
Indigenous Self-Representation, Nonindigenous Collaborators, and the Politics of Knowledge

We have heard recent warnings about the dangers of cultural criticism and postcolonial theory. “Is it the duty of intellectuals to add fresh ruins to the field of ruins?” asks Bruno Latour (2004: 225). It should be obvious enough that this book’s sensibilities bear the imprint of the antifoundationalist agendas of various brands of poststructural and postcolonial theory with their suspicion of purity claims, fixed borders, and singular narratives. But our purpose is not to debunk, disable, or to play the tired role of the all-seeing critic who claims to see truth uncontaminated by illusion. Tracing the trajectories of indigeneity should be about enablement and not endless deconstruction. We are motivated by an ethics of concern, care, and accountability to forms of vision and organizing that embrace a situated interconnectivity in any work toward sustainable futures and new horizons of hope (Braidotti 2006). A role for careful, engaged scholarship can be to contribute to understanding and activism that recognizes the paradoxes, limits, and possibilities of indigeneity’s varied vectors instead of falling back into tired, monological brands of essentialized analysis and judgment.

The very ground of research, scholarship and the politics of knowledge has been shifting in other ways. Indigenous activism has broken up the old monopoly of outside “experts” on explicating the “reality” about native life. Perhaps the single most publicized example of growing demands for native self-representation has been the big new National Museum of the American Indian (NMAI) of the Smithsonian Institution. As a curator at this newest museum on the mall in Washington, D.C., Paul Chaat Smith (this volume) offers an insider’s view of the challenges of putting together the exhibits in time for its 2004 opening. In an older day, anthropologists and other whites ran museums with their dioramas and exhibits about native life. The native-curated, native-directed NMAI reflects a changing economy of visibility, money, and representation. Chaat Smith underlines that these changes bring a whole new set of uncertainties and dilemmas into play—and that the stakes were heightened at the NMAI by the $300 million budget and equally large expectations. What about “essentialist Indian gatekeepers” who might want the museum to avoid history’s complexities? Could the NMAI develop a “Simpsons model” to make the museum appealing to children while at the same time to adults through other, more sophisticated references, layers, and double meanings? And how would the curators deal with so many stories, languages, and ways of being that were
lost for good in the storm of conquest? Chaat Smith describes the final product as a matter of “brilliant mistakes,” “realized dreams,” and limiting constraints. Self-representation, as the NMAI shows, is never simple or straightforward—and even less so when that “self” is a group that has always been internally differentiated culturally, politically, and economically.

Moreover, indigenous self-representation involves broad networks of collaboration that include peoples from many walks of life. Chaat Smith notes that non-native museum specialists and others were important collaborators at the NMAI, and, more broadly, indigeneity has always involved enunciation, both conflicting and harmonizing, from indigenous and nonindigenous subject positions. This volume itself involves the collaboration of contributors writing from varied standpoints, indigenous and not. Although sharing common training in academic idioms and epistemologies, we also come from different disciplinary traditions: anthropology, geography, history, literature, and sociology. If economists, political scientists, or demographers had been involved, this project would doubtless have had another cast. As annoying a buzzword as interdisciplinarity can sometimes be, the project of working across and beyond established academic boundaries remains full of potential. The larger promise lies in generating new, “undisciplined” forms of understanding and knowledge in the best sense of the word (Escobar in press).

Thus, while recognizing that all knowledge is produced through vast collaborative networks, it is vital to remember that political narratives—embedded in discourses of universal knowledge—work to make some actors and their practices more visible than others (Latour 1993). In her chapter in this volume, Julie Cruikshank analyzes the collaboration between First Nation individuals in the Yukon Territory and archaeologists, climatologists, physicists, and environmentalists—and herself, a cultural anthropologist—arising from converging interests in histories and facts around the melting glaciers of Canada’s Saint Elias Mountains. This work, Cruikshank observed, although amicable, and indeed respectful of all parts involved, was entangled in the complex hegemony of scientific knowledge even as its practitioners were aware of the need, and willing, to take local stories into consideration. For example, in local Atapashkan and Tinglit narratives, glaciers figure as sentient actors in a relational cosmology that explains weather change and colonial encounters, natural and social history, in one and the same stream of thought. Of significance, these narratives, notes Cruikshank, “are continuously made in situations of human encounter: between
coastal and interior neighbors, between colonial visitors and residents, and among contemporary scientists, managers, environmentalists, and First Nations.” Included in the collaboration are well-meaning definitions of indigenous knowledge that imagine these local stories as a bundle of myth and wisdom handed down unchanged across the generations. The task of Western scientists (of any sort) then becomes to “discover” such knowledge, extricating it as “information” and thus disregarding storytelling as a historical form of knowledge that changes—just as science does—with the circumstances. Such problematic treatment of storytelling transmogrifies completely contemporary interpretations into fixed, dehistoricized cultural “data” putatively transmitted by “the vessel of culture” to present day people—who therefore belong to our past. The coloniality of indigeneity, Cruikshank reminds us, may be reinforced by hierarchies of knowledge even in seemingly progressive contexts.

Like Cruikshank, many of us have also been involved in forms of collaboration involving both academic and nonacademic intellectuals (e.g., de la Cadena 2006; Tuhiwai Smith 1999). We want to call attention to the profound asymmetries organizing such collaboration—which start with inequalities of geography, economy, race, and gender but go far beyond, right into the heart of the knowledge-production venture itself. As Talal Asad wrote more than 20 years ago, languages are structurally imbued with differentiated power, and this affects the production of knowledge. “Western languages,” he wrote, “produce and deploy desired knowledge more readily than Third World languages do.” Conversely, “the knowledge that Third World languages deploy more easily is not sought by Western societies in quite the same way, or for the same reason” (Asad 1986: 162).

More recently, Dipesh Chakrabarty has called this condition one of “asymmetric ignorance.” Speaking about his discipline, history, he writes: “Third world historians feel a need to refer to works in European history; historians of Europe do not feel any need to reciprocate” (Chakrabarty 2000: 28). An analogy can be drawn with almost any discipline—anthropology obviously included. Ideological coincidences, although helpful in joint political ventures, do not alter the structural and historical asymmetries that organize collaborative efforts among “Europeans” and “non-Europeans” broadly understood. Images of smooth, equal participation in research ventures, as comforting as they be, are hard to achieve and as often as not a well-intended academic illusion. Collaborations wanting to undo preexisting epistemic institutions and hierarchies—including those that have historically separated
Western and non-Western spheres of knowledge and their languages—require more than desire for horizontal work relations; it requires awareness of the hegemony of established epistemologies, and the need at least to question them. It also demands constant multidirectional negotiation as well as recognition and inspection of the conflicts that give rise to such negotiation. Last, although this should be the starting point as well, collaboration also requires the acceptance that complex entanglements of power will always structure the relationship—although, of course, the entanglement will constantly shift forms and connections. In all these may lie potential for a different way of laboring, which could produce new visions of reality, new concepts emerging from those visions—in which “new” does not mean “moving forward,” but moving in any direction, differently. Such work would seek to change knowledge production through, for example, hybrid genres simultaneously academic and nonacademic, local and universal, and committed to blurring the boundaries between these spheres while intervening in them all.

But these remain fragile emergent ideas and heterotopias, available for exploration. The chapters that follow explore indigeneity’s lines of containment and flight into this early 21st century present. We hope they may also be of some value in thinking toward the future and its limits and possibilities.

Notes

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2. See the website of Survival International (www.survival-international.org) for more on these figures. Of course, calculating any total depends very much on the tricky question of who should be counted as “indigenous” in the first place, a question taken up in this introduction and throughout the volume.

3. Other Kaktovikmiut oppose oil drilling in ANWR.


6. These populations were regarded as “indigenous” following their occupation of the country prior to the time “of conquest or colonization” (Thornberry 2003).


9. The writer said: “It is very interesting for an Indian without resentments, without complexes, without scornfulness to occupy the Presidency [of Peru].” Interview by Joaquín Ibarz, Diario La Vanguardia, Barcelona, April, 6, 2001.

10. See Ahu n.d.


12. This is the translation we believe best captures Quijano’s original phrasing in Spanish—“popularizar lo indígena e indigineizar lo popular.” See also García Linera (2006).


14. Cruikshank takes the phrase “dwelling perspective” from the work of Timothy Ingold (2000).


16. We are grateful to Michael Brown for the citations here, and he discusses the work of Alfred and Young more extensively in his chapter in this volume.

17. Only quite recently have scholars begun to examine in the interlocking forms of discrimination and intimate connection among African Americans, Indians, and whites in the United States (Brooks 2002). New work about the sometimes-tense relationships between Chinese and Sikh migrants and Aborigines has added another level of complexity to ways of narrating Australian history as just a matter of white conquest (De Lepervanche 1984; Reynolds 2003).
References


Part 1

Indigenous Identities, Old and New
The global indigenous movement is alive with promising contradictions. Inverting national development standards, it promises unity based on plurality: diversity without assimilation. It endorses authenticity and invention, subsistence and wealth, traditional knowledge and new technologies, territory and diaspora. The excitement of indigenous rights claims draws from the creative possibilities of such juxtapositions.

Yet, given this heady brew, it is perhaps not surprising that scholars have had mixed reactions. Some are excited by the struggle against discrimination, violence, and resource theft. Others are suspicious of the support of neoliberal reformers and the movement’s inattention to class. Some note continuities with colonial discourses of race and cultural essence. Others celebrate cultural revitalization. Meanwhile, both boosters and critics tend to base their evaluations on one of two research models: either case studies, with their plethora of distinguishing particulars, or generalizations about indigeneity at large. Collections continue to string together cases with the assumption of commonality; analysis searches for fundamental principles without attention to the histories that make such principles more or less relevant. Both models reduce indigeneity to a singular set of logics and dilemmas. Whether they base their commentary on single cases or on generalizations about all indigeneity, most scholarly reports have shown little curiosity about the diversity of indigenous problems, rhetorics, and causes. Those of us who enter the field to understand how the obscure ethnographic situation we know best fits into global mobilizations are offered few clues about divergent histories and conflicting claims. In response, this chapter begins the task of laying out a historically concrete history of divergent indigeneities.
My method abandons neither place-based particularity nor the links across places. Instead of imagining links only as a route to homogenization, however, I highlight the friction that creates both grip and gaps, both misunderstandings and common ground. In this spirit, I begin my story with the dynamics of indigeneity in one place, Indonesia, and use the questions raised from that situation to guide my wider inquiry.³

Indigeneity is not a self-evident category in Indonesia. Almost everyone is “indigenous” in the sense of deriving from original stocks; Indonesia is not a white settler state. Yet activists and community leaders fighting for the rights of marginal rural communities have increasingly used the rhetoric of indigeneity to draw attention to their causes. In both cities and villages this rhetoric engenders debate; it is difficult to consider “indigenous rights” without running into disagreements about terms. This situation stimulates me to begin with talk about indigeneity, rather than jumping immediately to indigenous experience. It also presses me to consider how the national political scene—with its cultural forms and its potential alliances—structures indigenous claims. As I turn from Indonesia to trace indigenous rhetorics more widely, I thus attend to how nations, and the dialogues between nations, shape indigenous voices. In these transnational dialogues, powerful traveling axes of indigenous concern are formed.

I begin, then, with Indonesia, before turning to my general thesis.

**Translation Questions**

In Indonesia, the phrase used as an equivalent for “indigenous peoples” is *masyarakat adat*. However, the effective translation of the transnational indigenous movement goes beyond the problem of words. Many Indonesians oppose activist attempts to single out certain rural communities as deserving of special rights. Nationalism in Indonesia runs strong, and the directive to blend cultural communities into a common nation—“from the many, one”⁴—is still among the more progressive programs of Indonesian nationalism. In contrast, the division of the nation into ethnic communities is seen as a heritage of colonial “divide and rule” policies.

It is hard to deny that the separation of cultural minorities and majorities throughout Asia and Africa was, and continues to be, a colonial habit. The use of Southeast Asian mountain people by U.S. imperial forces in Indochina serves as an important reminder of the colonial history of nurturing loyal tribes. International identification