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SPHERE ON THE PRACTICE OF DEMOCRACY:  
THE *TALLER DE HISTORIA ORAL ANDINA* IN BOLIVIA**

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## ABSTRACT

This paper analyzes the impact of an indigenous counterpublic sphere in contemporary Bolivia. It argues that the elaboration of the indigenous counterpublic sphere as an arena of oppositional consciousness locates agency in indigenous peoples and challenges prevailing practices that would relegate them to the category of premodern Other. Examining specifically the work carried out by the Aymara nongovernmental organization known as the *Taller de Historia Oral Andina* [Andean Oral History Workshop], the essay underscores the significance of the indigenous counterpublic sphere in Bolivia not only as a discursive arena but also as an autonomous spatial or territorial arena where Andean cultural and political identities can be enacted and legitimated.

## RESUMEN

Este artículo analiza el impacto de la contraesfera pública indígena en la Bolivia contemporánea. El artículo sostiene que la elaboración de la contraesfera pública indígena como una arena de conciencia opositora localiza la agencia en los pueblos indígenas y desafía a las prácticas prevalecientes que las relegarían a la categoría de Otro premoderno. Examinando específicamente el trabajo de la organización no gubernamental Aymara *Taller de Historia Oral Andina*, el ensayo subraya la importancia de la contraesfera pública indígena en Bolivia no sólo como una arena discursiva, sino como una arena espacial y territorial autónoma donde las identidades políticas y culturales andinas pueden ser puestas en acto y legitimadas.

In recent years numerous groups including academics, human rights activists, and international women's organizations have given critical attention to the pressing issues of democratic struggle and the practice of citizenship. Particular consideration has been paid to urban grassroots organizations as well as to popular social movements and the ways they have shaped incipient democracies. These crucial debates also form the centerpiece of many contemporary indigenous movements. In an insightful study of recent indigenous mobilization in Mexico, Guatemala, Ecuador, and Bolivia, Deborah Yashar examines how indigenous organization is challenging both the "practice and terms of citizenship in Latin America's new democracies" (Yashar 1998, 23). Although political liberalization of the 1980s and 1990s has legalized the right for groups to organize, state reforms have limited access to the financial wherewithal to maintain the political and cultural autonomy that many indigenous communities had established over past decades (24). Finding themselves disenfranchised as individual and collective political actors, indigenous peoples have mobilized around the question of indigenous identity. Yashar asserts that the resurgence of indigenous organization in Latin America flies in the face of liberal and Marxist assumptions that the modern impulse would render a politicized indigenous identity obsolete (27; see also Delgado P. 1994; Stephenson 1999).

In the case of Latin America indigenous peoples historically have been contradictorily interpellated by prevailing democratic discourses. To paraphrase Chantal Mouffe, as citizens indigenous peoples are interpellated as equal, but because they are indigenous peoples their equality is negated (Mouffe 1988, 95). For anthropologist Guillermo Delgado, this kind of contradictory interpellation confirms that indigenous peoples continue to be constructed in subordination by the logic of colonialism. The subalternity of indigenous peoples repositions them within a neocolonialism that, Delgado argues, still holds the power to name (Delgado P. 1998, 184–85). By deploying discourses such as *indigenismo*, Latin American states have attempted to integrate indigenous peoples through processes of assimilation with the hopes of eliminating native organizational and cultural practices. In the homogenizing discourses of *mestizaje*, accordingly, terms such as 'land' and 'populations' supplant 'territory' and 'peoples' (Delgado P. 1998, 186).<sup>1</sup>

With the beginning of the new millennium, however, the force of *indigenismo* as a unifying project has begun to slowly disintegrate. Refusing to be merely "a word in somebody else's conversation" (Sequoya-Magdaleno 1995, 88), indigenous peoples are claiming positionality as social actors and demanding greater representation and say-so in the political practices of the state.<sup>2</sup> And they insist on the right to participate as Indians. This collective,

identity-based stance requires the redefinition of the nation-state and the institutions encompassed within it (Delgado 1998, 212–13). It challenges democracy to acknowledge the existence of a plurality of groups, including those whom it has traditionally marginalized or excluded. For example, indigenous movements for self-determination and autonomy directly contest the policies and practices of neoliberal reform and resist a “single relationship between the state and its citizens” (Yashar 1998, 39). Indigenous organizations “challenge policy-makers and states to recognize both individual and communal rights in an ideologically meaningful, practically feasible, enduring way. Such recognition requires that the law be configured on the basis of universal claims to citizenship and differentiated claims to difference” (ibid.).

Anthropologist Héctor Díaz Polanco contends that at the very least, autonomy presumes the following conditions: “(a) a *political-territorial* foundation and a corresponding jurisdiction, (b) *self-government* (autonomous government), and (c) *competences* that give shape to the *political* decentralization essential to the regime of autonomy” (Díaz Polanco 1997, 151). Autonomy is critical for indigenous peoples because the acquisition of standard civil rights does not resolve all of their interests and needs. “These rights, while generally essential, do not contain or reflect the whole range of these groups’ collective necessities. In some cases, the way in which the civil law is formulated makes it restrictive of the socio-cultural practices of Indian peoples. This means that on occasion ethnic groups are temporarily or permanently ‘outlaws’” (90). Autonomy facilitates the satisfaction of oppositional interests and needs and prescribes a method for minimizing the conflict these interests might create for the state (96). Because autonomy and self-determination require that the groups involved actively participate through the “*seizure and expression of rights*,” they represent a greater democratization of society (143).

The interface between contestatory indigenous movements and processes of democratization suggest that there must also be other “conceptual resources” (Fraser 1997, 70) that enable the expression of oppositional cultural identities. One such conceptual resource useful to understanding how oppositional groups critically engage the practice of democracy is the public sphere. Jürgen Habermas describes the public sphere as “the sphere of private people come together as a public” (Habermas 1991, 27). It is a discursive arena separate from the state, a “sphere of criticism of public authority,” where citizens can debate issues of common interest (51).<sup>3</sup> Fundamental to Habermas’s work is the assumption that citizenship has already been universally implemented and fully extended to individuals. In the case of Latin American states, however, the discourse of citizenship and liberal democracy has been essential to the consolidation of *criollo* and *mestizo* hegemony and the erasure of difference throughout the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Based on a series of “legal and

ideological fictions,” citizenship continually threatens marginalized groups with exclusion even as it proclaims them to be equals (Varese 1996a, 18–19).

Critical efforts devoted to rethinking the public sphere have given rise to the theorization of counterpublic spheres or what Nancy Fraser terms “subaltern counterpublic spheres” “in order to signal that they are parallel discursive arenas where members of subordinated social groups invent and circulate counterdiscourses, which in turn permit them to formulate oppositional interpretations of their identities, interests, and needs” (Fraser 1997, 81). This scholarship points to the need for further research on the formation and resonance of an indigenous counterpublic sphere and its impact on the processes of democratization and citizenship. In general terms, it will help us to see how indigenous peoples have been affected by the constitution of the modern state and the processes of democratization. It will also show the relevant changes the nation-state has implemented in its efforts to rethink citizenship and to facilitate the representation of disadvantaged groups such as indigenous peoples.

### **The Taller de Historia Oral Andina: A Brief History of an Indigenous Counterpublic Sphere**

Within the hemispheric context of indigenous struggles, it is important to underline the Bolivian case, a country of six million inhabitants, two-thirds of whom self-identify as Indians. A close reading of the indigenous counterpublic sphere in Bolivia raises fundamental considerations that shed further light on the relationship between recent processes of democratization and contestatory publics. A central claim of this essay is that the work of the pioneering Aymara nongovernmental organization known as the Taller de Historia Oral Andina (THOA) has been fundamental to the formation of an indigenous counterpublic sphere. Understanding the accomplishments of THOA in light of recent theory on the public sphere is particularly apt because it raises questions of subjectivity and the politics of change or transformation.

The elaboration of the indigenous counterpublic sphere as an arena of oppositional consciousness in Bolivia locates agency in indigenous peoples and challenges prevailing dehumanizing practices that would relegate them to the category of premodern Other. Moreover, the indigenous counterpublic sphere legitimizes the cultural right to difference and generates a forum for indigenous peoples to come together from different areas of the country in common interest. As Charles Merewether has argued in another context, “The public sphere can thus be reclaimed as a critical site for different communities, which have previously been excluded from it. This leads to a creation of a new space in which to address experiences constituting the foundation for other forms of social affiliation and of rights to the difference and sharing of democracy” (Merewether 1996, 113–14).

As a first critical endeavor, THOA fosters the elaboration and expression of Andean

cultural identities by collecting and circulating historical, political, and testimonial documents disseminated mainly in bilingual (Aymara/Spanish) publications, videos, and radio programs or *radionovelas*. The deployment of bilingual documents generates an oppositional forum where native peoples can explore their own identities and voices, experience of political disenfranchisement, and cultural dislocation (see Felski 1989, 167). At the same time, this cultural production presumes native linguistic agency by rewriting ‘Bolivian history’. This alternative understanding of Bolivian history is one in which prenatal culture is rooted. In this manner, THOA defines itself in opposition to the homogenizing logic of *criollo* political and social culture. And yet, because these documents are also in Spanish they reach outward to society as a whole. Drawing from Rita Felski’s work on the feminist public sphere, we can say that THOA’s strategic use of Spanish “seeks to convince society as a whole of the validity of [indigenous] claims, challenging existing structures of authority through political activity and theoretical critique” (Felski 1989, 168).

As a second undertaking, THOA helps organize and promote the movement to reconstitute the Andean community structure known as the *ayllu*. The *ayllu* is the fundamental social organization based on kinship groups and communally held territory that encompasses lands located in a variety of ecosystems. Throughout the long history of colonialism, the fragmentation and dispersal of indigenous territory has had devastating material and social consequences for many Andean communities. The geopolitical movement to reconstitute the *ayllu* calls for the recognition of colonial territorial boundaries between communities and the reestablishment of traditional Andean forms of governance. Even though it has been fragmented, the *ayllu* continues to be the dynamic space of indigenous social and cultural practices that are intimately linked to nature and the community’s ancestral relationships (Mamani Condori 1992: 9–10). Thus, this essay underscores the significance of the indigenous counterpublic sphere in Bolivia not only as a discursive arena but also as *an autonomous spatial or territorial arena* where oppositional cultural and political identities can be enacted and legitimated.

Autonomy and self-determination do not mean isolationism, however. Indeed, THOA’s efforts to reconstitute the *ayllu* have forged strong links with other significant Aymara organizations that share common objectives such as the right to territory and dignity and respect for indigenous political, social, and cultural traditions. THOA collaborates with NGOs such as CADA (Centro Andino de Desarrollo Agropecuario) and CDIMA (Centro de Discusión Ideológica de la Mujer Aymara) with whom it has organized various workshops and meetings, including the “Primer Encuentro sobre Derechos de los Pueblos y Naciones Originarias” in 1994. The group additionally participates in projects and exchanges organizational experience with indigenous peoples from Bolivia’s lowlands. For example, in

June 1998 THOA hosted the “Segunda Conferencia de Organizaciones e Instituciones que Apoyan a la Reconstitución del Ayllu.” This gathering included the participation of Amalio Siyé, the president of CIDOB (Confederación Indígena de Bolivia). On the international front, THOA’s work is increasingly grounded in the wider, transnational indigenous movement, a growing Indian rights network that recognizes “both the current limits of purely domestic attempts at democratization, and the potential for grass-roots leverage through ‘acting globally’” (Brysk 1994, 30).<sup>4</sup> In particular, THOA has participated in several meetings and exchanges with CONAIE (Confederación de Nacionalidades Indígenas del Ecuador). These international meetings facilitate the exchange of organizational experiences and provide opportunities to demonstrate solidarity and support for shared political objectives.

Emphasizing territorial autonomy, self-determination, and recognition of customary law, organizations that THOA collaborates with distinguish the movement to reconstitute the *ayllu* from the *sindicato* movement, a western organizational structure imposed on the *ayllu* following the 1952 Revolution.<sup>5</sup> Simón Yampara H., the executive director of CADA (Centro Andino de Desarrollo Agropecuario), and Quintín Apaza Ch. outline the basic differences in the controversial debate between the reconstitution of the *ayllu* and the *sindicato* movement. Whereas the *ayllu* movement asserts territorial claims, the establishment of traditional forms of governance, locally managed use of sustainable resources, and the legitimation of native languages and cultural forms, the *sindicato* gives preference to land reform and individual property rights and the state’s prerogative to administer the natural resources (Yampara H. and Apaza Ch. 1996, 9–12). In many areas the two organizational forms cannot be easily separated because they have coexisted since 1952; in other places, such as northern Potosí, the *ayllu* continues to predominate, while in the La Paz area the *sindicato* has had more prevalence. Because political parties typically back the *sindicato*, it has exacerbated problems of political clientelism and de-emphasized the importance of community elders in the structure of governance. According to THOA member María Eugenia Choque Quispe, the *sindicato* brought about another kind of cultural break by establishing the ability to read as the primary requirement for leadership. This regulation contrasts with customary *ayllu* forms of leadership that are carried out by married couples, a tradition that gives prestige and a certain amount of authority to women as well as to men (Limachi 1996, n.p.). Simón Yampara H. argues that, ultimately, through the implementation of the *sindicato*, the traditional Left has ‘distracted’ the First Nation<sup>6</sup> movement with “medidas reivindicacionistas y conciliadores con el sistema republicano y capitalista, es más, se mueve en un espacio occicéntrica, negadora de lo originario, y segregacionista de género (mujer)” [measures that are both conciliatory and vindicatory toward the republican, capitalist system; what’s more, [the Left] moves in a



western-centric space, denying all that is native, and isolating gender [issues] (women)] (Yampara H. 1995, 22).

THOA originated as a research collective on 13 November 1983. The group designated this date to commemorate the death of Santos Marka T'ula, an influential Aymara leader and activist during the 1920s and 1930s. Most of THOA's ten or so original members were born and raised in *ayllu* communities. Having benefited from the implementation of mandatory rural primary education, they formed part of a first generation of Aymara students attending the San Andrés University in La Paz during the 1970s (Harris 1992, 101). Many obtained BA degrees in history and sociology; some went on to complete MA degrees in Andean history at FLACSO in Quito, Ecuador. The students' interest in Andean history was an outgrowth of their life experience as Aymara Indians, their coursework under the directorship of Silvia Rivera Cusicanqui, and their activist participation in the burgeoning Indian movement of the 1980s as leaders or *mallcus* of the Movimiento Universitario Julián Apasa (MUJA) and the Partido Indio.<sup>7</sup> The group's primary intent was to study a crucial time period in Andean history beginning in 1866 with the republic's aggressive and sustained assault on the indigenous *ayllu* and ending in 1950 prior to state-instituted agrarian reform.<sup>8</sup> During these years the republican regime intensified its efforts to fragment the *ayllu* through land reform legislation emphasizing liberal notions of private property and individualism at the expense of traditional communal practices of exchange and reciprocity. Summarizing, María Eugenia Choque Quispe explains that THOA's decision to concentrate on this time period was an outgrowth of the demands of the indigenous movements of the 1980s and of the desire to understand history from the point of view of the oppressed as a way of contesting the larger culture's dehumanizing treatment of indigenous peoples (Choque Quispe 1997, 1).

THOA members began with a working hypothesis positing that in spite of the ongoing history of colonialism and repression, there persisted throughout the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries an autonomous indigenous historical memory and subjectivity. This native historical memory was fundamental to indigenous resistance to intensifying efforts on the part of the radicalized working class to assimilate the Indian as a campesino and on the part of the MNR (Movimiento Nacionalista Revolucionario) to transform the Indian into an acculturated *mestizo* (see Salmón 1997).<sup>9</sup> This research project gave occasion to extensive archival investigation which provided THOA members with a catalog of names and *ayllus* of important Aymara leaders from the turn of the century. While their initial inquiries did not turn up much detailed information, the data they did uncover pointed to the existence of an ongoing indigenous movement spread throughout the Bolivian Andes to retain communal lands. As they learned more about this network of indigenous leaders, THOA members were able to identify the common struggle underlying the series of uprisings traditionally identified by *criollo*

historiography as isolated and ‘irrational’ ‘rebellions’ (Rivera Cusicanqui 1986, 83). The research team subsequently travelled to these *ayllus* and conducted lengthy oral interviews with elders and their families who had participated in the struggles of the 1920s and 1930s. The oral histories they collected confirmed both the existence and magnitude of indigenous organization. This original investigation resulted in several important publications, including the bilingual booklet *El indio Santos Marka T’ula* (THOA 1988 [1984]) and the Aymara *radionovela* of the same name.

In her introduction to the English translation of the booklet, Olivia Harris calls the reader’s attention to the text’s significance and innovation, identifying it as “probably the first modern experience of writing history in Aymara” (Harris 1992, 101). Indeed, THOA’s groundbreaking publication on Santos Marka T’ula rethinks traditional western historiographic practices within a framework that combines a tradition of writing in existence among many Andean indigenous communities since the colonial period with alternative methodologies and techniques associated with the collection of oral histories in the native language (see Mamani Condori 1989, 1991). One of THOA’s fundamental beliefs was that this knowledge must be returned to the indigenous communities so that a fortified sense of collective identity and unity might enable indigenous peoples to face their common problems and consequently empower them to move together into the future (Mamani Condori 1989, 23). In order to accomplish this objective, THOA had to make the text linguistically accessible and economically affordable. Olivia Harris describes the relationship between the format of the booklet and its contents, noting that “The juxtaposition of Aymara and Spanish in the original vividly illustrated the way that Bolivia is a divided country. Written in accessible language, with the oral testimonies transcribed in the original Aymara accompanied by a Spanish translation, it was published as a cheap mimeographed pamphlet and was easily accessible to rural school-teachers and the younger literate generations of Indian peasants” (Harris 1992, 101–2). The popular success this initial work has enjoyed, evidenced by its widespread use in rural schools, demonstrates how the recovery and decolonization of native historical knowledge can empower a community to reclaim its identity.<sup>10</sup> This transformational relationship that forges links between the past and the future is best expressed in the Aymara saying “Qhiparu nayraru uñtas sartañani” [Looking back we will move forward] (Mamani Condori 1992, 14).

Both the booklet and the *radionovela* recount the life and work of Santos Marka T’ula (?–1939), a legendary Aymara leader dedicated to organizing indigenous resistance to colonialism. Like the mimeographed pamphlet, the *radionovela* was such a success that the 90-episode series was broadcast three times in Aymara to communities throughout the *altiplano*. In Kevin Healy’s words, “the Mark’a Thola story climbed to the top of the

popularity charts of rural radio programming in the altiplano towns and hamlets” (Healy 2000). According to María Eugenia Choque Quispe, the show ran Mondays through Fridays; the Saturday slot was reserved for public discussion and commentary, thereby facilitating interaction with the wider Aymara community. People listening to the program contacted THOA’s offices with additional documents concerning the *cacique*; others called in to offer corrections to the narrative. These collaborative exchanges enabled Aymara communities to learn more about the historical and symbolic repercussions of the man’s life and work and about the people who struggled with him (Limachi 1996).<sup>11</sup> Nevertheless, the success of the radio program and publication rests not only on the participatory act of remembering and retelling. THOA’s work caused both specific Aymara leaders and ‘sites of experience’ to become visible to a wide Aymara interpretative community (see Merewether 1996, 108). Thus, through these interactive broadcasts, THOA was able to forge a legitimate space open to the presence of marginalized others within the public sphere.<sup>12</sup> THOA’s investigation consequently set into motion an extensive process of collective reevaluation of the history of native identity which initiated a series of similar projects in various communities throughout the *altiplano*. As a result, the figure of Santos Marka T’ula, who personified a large-scale indigenous movement that took place during the first forty years of this century, also became the shared symbol of First Nation identity for a generation of Aymara young people living at the end of the century (Ticona, Rojas, and Albó 1995, 199–200).

### **Toward a Methodology of Revisionist Andean Historiography**

These early publications and radio broadcasts by THOA members insist on the significance of identity and land as interlocking elements vital to the dialogics of an oppositional Andean cultural politics. In this context the *ayllu*, or the traditional Andean community, takes on critical symbolic currency because it encompasses three basic characteristics: “población, gobierno y territorio” [population, government, and territory] (Federación de Ayllus 1993, 12). Designated as ‘*jatha*’ or ‘seed’, the community constitutes the model space where Andean civilizations and political structures such as Tawantinsuyu have germinated (THOA 1995, 11). THOA’s work emphasizing the importance of the *ayllu* as a symbolic and material space underscores the relationship between territory and identity (see also Rivera and THOA 1992; Rasnake 1988). The operations of native historical memory constitute an important channel of identity that, in this case, is built on a series of social and cultural relationships that are spatially configured. The deconstruction of the *ayllu* thus brings about the deconstruction of memory (see Wachtel 1986, 215).

THOA member Carlos Mamani Condori foregrounds this reciprocal relationship among

territory, identity, and social memory in his seminal publication *Taraq 1866–1935: Masacre, guerra y ‘Renovación’ en la biografía de Eduardo L. Nina Qhispi* (1991). For Mamani Condori, what began as a plan to write a biography of the life and thought of the leading Aymara intellectual and leader Eduardo Nina Qhispi (1887–1936), a contemporary of Santos Marka T’ula, soon turned into a larger epistemological and methodological problem. Because his initial investigations uncovered very little recorded information concerning this important leader’s career, Mamani Condori was obliged to ask the following question: “¿En qué documentos podríamos investigar la vida de un indio? Lo único con que contábamos desde el principio era la fecha de su nacimiento y la de su muerte” [In what documents could we investigate the life of an Indian? The only information we had from the beginning were the dates of his birth and death] (Mamani Condori 1991, 160). In order to explore further the events and circumstances surrounding the Aymara leader’s life, Mamani Condori had to combine archival investigation with the collection of oral histories, much as the larger research team did when working on the Santos Marka T’ula project. This alternative methodology resulted in the discovery that he could not write about Nina Qhispi without first writing about Nina Qhispi’s *ayllu* and, subsequently, about surrounding *ayllus*. Mamani Condori explains that his approach brought him back to a traditional Andean belief: “que la historia de un individuo no es sino un hilo en el tejido de la historia colectiva” [the history of an individual is only one thread in the weave of collective history] (12). Thus, the project that began as a western-style biography, centered on a unitary subject, became instead an extensive, collective history of the *altiplano* region (9–10). By decentering the individual subject, Mamani Condori was able to uncover an alternative history that official, *criollo* histories had ignored or dismissed as irrelevant. As Mamani Condori puts it in the book’s concluding sentence, revisionary indigenous historiography “nos permite reconocer la historia de la persona en la historia del ayllu, de la marka, y de los otros indios de la república, y así abordar la otra cara de la historia criolla, tan cuidadosamente ocultada por la historiografía tradicional” [enables us to identify the history of the individual in the history of the *ayllu*, the *marka*,<sup>13</sup> and the other Indians of the republic, and, thus, to approach the other side of *criollo* history, one carefully hidden by traditional historiography] (160). Mamani Condori’s publication brings to crisis elite historiography by laying bare its investment in the creation and maintenance of *criollo* authority and power.<sup>14</sup> Writing more generally on the relationship between indigenous historicism and colonialism, Arif Dirlik notes that “It may be out of this deep sense of the historical destruction of their societies that indigenous writers insist on recovering the process of history ‘as it really was’—for them. Because indigenous people were written out of history for being ‘unhistorical’, it becomes all the more necessary to document meticulously the process whereby they were erased from history in order to recover historicity” (1996, 23–24).

Not long after the publication of *Taraq*, THOA and the Taraqu Agrarian Center organized a weekend seminar, “La Lucha Anticolonial de los Comunarios de Taraqu,” based on Mamani Condori’s book, to be held in the Taraqu community. The seminar had two objectives. The first was to ‘return’ the book to the community, and the second was to reflect on the history of First Nation peoples thereby opening “una comunicación sin la intermediación paternalista criollo mestiza” [communication without paternalizing *criollo-mestizo* intermediation] (“Seminario” 1992, n.p.). Topics for discussion included the importance of the Aymara language in history, the colonial land titles, and the Andean woman in history. As this experience indicates, the impact of THOA’s work goes beyond merely supplementing traditional written histories. Nathan Wachtel, speaking of the importance of oral history, suggests that such a process, ‘from the bottom up’, questions the official record and uncovers a counter-history and a counter-memory at the same time (Wachtel 1986, 207–8). For Mamani Condori, however, this enduring counter-history should not be understood merely in terms of its repetition; continuation is also “cambio, maduración, renovación” [change, maturation, renovation] (Mamani Condori 1991, 159). Revisionist Andean historiography therefore becomes a powerful catalyst in the reclaiming of a collective identity and the dignity of being human: “Si partimos del problema de la colonización, lo primero que nos ha sido afectado por ese hecho, es nuestra identidad, nuestro orgullo étnico. Nuestra autoestima fue pisoteada por el colonialismo y lo que nosotros hemos tratado es precisamente restituir esa autoestima mediante esta primera experiencia de investigación histórica” [Beginning with the problem of colonization, the first aspect of our lives that was affected was our identity, our ethnic pride. Our self-esteem was trampled under by colonialism and so we attempted to restore it through our first experience of historical investigation] (García Mérida 1994).

THOA’s trailblazing publications brought the organization to the attention of many. The dissemination of the group’s research was facilitated in part by the publishing house Historia Social Boliviana (HISBOL) and, later, by the formation of Editorial Aruwiyiri in 1991.<sup>15</sup> In their discussion of the counterpublic sphere both Nancy Fraser and Rita Felski emphasize the importance of mass media and public forms of communication for the formation of a contestatory discursive arena. When subordinated groups do not have equal access to the means of equal participation, “political economy enforces structurally what culture accomplishes informally” (Fraser 1997, 79). Fraser and Felski point to the ways in which feminist counterpublics in the United States have benefited from a wide range of discursive infrastructures including journals, bookstores, alternative publishing companies, research centers, academic programs, and so on. So, too, Michael C. Dawson expresses the importance of diverse institutional bases for the formation of a black public sphere: “throughout Black

history a multiplicity of Black institutions have formed the material basis for a subaltern counterpublic. An independent Black press, the production and circulation of socially and politically sharp popular Black music, and the Black church have provided institutional bases for the Black counterpublic since the Civil War” (Dawson 1995, 210). Recently, the internet has facilitated networking and collaboration among some indigenous societies even as it reinforces preexisting social structures in those places where a lack of resources and technology makes electronic communication prohibitively expensive (see Delgado P. and Becker 1998). THOA, for example, only acquired internet access approximately three years ago. Moreover, as the memory of the quincentenary in 1992 slowly fades, support for indigenous organizations from ‘granting agencies’ in the developed world has gradually declined. While THOA has received grants from international organizations such as OXFAM, the Inter-American Foundation, and Fondo Indígena, resources for equal access to equal participation are obviously exceedingly difficult to acquire. Following her external evaluation of THOA in 1993, Virginia Ayllón notes in her report that THOA’s accomplishments in publishing nevertheless constitute one of its greatest achievements: “En un país donde la actividad editorial es una aventura llena de riesgos y las más de las veces de fracasos, el THOA ha demostrado ser una institución capaz de llevar adelante semejante desafío” [In a country where publishing is an activity fraught with risks and failures, THOA has shown itself to be an institution capable of meeting such a challenge] (Ayllón 1993, 21). Moreover, Ayllón continues, THOA’s rigorous methodology and professional presentation make the group’s publications accessible to a broad audience. Ayllón reports that one concern she had at first was that the written texts might be directed more toward an academic audience rather than to the indigenous communities. These fears were dispelled, however, after interviewing representatives from different communities who stated categorically that the materials were both clear and useful. Ayllón also spoke with Professor Apala from PEIB (Proyecto de Educación Intercultural Bilingüe) who reported that rural teachers found THOA’s publications to be well-suited for the classroom (22–23). In addition to the pamphlet on Santos Marka T’ula, publications that have been used widely by indigenous communities include Roberto Santos Escóbar’s *Fechas históricas indígenas* (1992), THOA’s *Ayllu: Pasado y futuro de los pueblos originarios* (1995), Roberto Choque et al.’s *Educación indígena ¿Ciudadanía o colonización?* (1992), Tomás Huanca’s *Jilirinaksan arsüwipa: Testimonios de nuestros mayores* (1991), and the Federación de Ayllus-Provincia Ingavi’s *Estructura orgánica* (1993). Notwithstanding the excellent quality of all of THOA’s publications, their dissemination to indigenous communities constitutes an ongoing challenge due to a lack of sufficient funds. Furthermore, the material disadvantages that THOA faces means that the expansion of its analysis and critique throughout Bolivian society is a very slow process.

Over the years, THOA has increasingly coordinated its activities with other NGOs, grassroots organizations, and academics. Commenting on the latter group, however, Kevin Healy points out that “THOA’s rising profile in the academic community was due not only to its unconventional Andean themes and methodologies but also to the off-beat ‘intercultural’ events sponsored by the organization. Aymara was spoken along with Spanish for the first time at public university events and on occasion the indigenous rural social etiquette of ‘acullicu’, a communal sharing of coca leaves for solidarity and friendship, took place in lieu of serving wine” (Healy 2000). THOA’s impressive achievements toward the formation of a counterpublic gave new prominence to a young, dynamic group of Aymara intellectuals, both men and women. As the group substantiated the theoretical and methodological underpinnings of a specifically indigenous historiography during the early 1980s, it also laid the groundwork for the group’s participation in the *ayllu* movement of the 1980s and 1990s.

### **The Movement to Reconstitute the Ayllu**

Even during the early years of organization, THOA’s efforts increasingly mobilized around the movement to reconstitute the *ayllu*, a movement that had been growing following the widespread devastation and hunger of the terrible drought in 1982 and 1983. The restoration of the traditional Andean community, and with it the right to self-governance and self-determination, was perceived as a vital way of mitigating the catastrophic effects of natural disasters.<sup>16</sup> Consequently, THOA members recognized the reconstitution of the *ayllu* as a political act of decolonization. María Eugenia Choque Quispe explains that THOA did not decide alone, in vertical top-down fashion, to work on the reconstitution of the *ayllu*. Rather, the group’s involvement came about as a result of repeated requests on the part of *ayllu* communities themselves (Limachi 1996). Under the administration of Gonzalo Sánchez de Lozada and Víctor Hugo Cárdenas (1993–97), unprecedented state legislation recognized, at least on paper, the rights of indigenous peoples to territory and native forms of governance. Sought out by native leaders who understood the importance of this political conjuncture, THOA members had to assume organizational and advisory roles as they accompanied the communities in their efforts to reconstitute themselves officially as *ayllus*. THOA’s new direction included assisting communities with the development of leadership workshops, devising strategies for reconstituting and strengthening the community’s traditional governmental structures, and researching in archives to compile historical documents, including colonial land titles and boundary surveys (Choque Quispe 1998).

Between the years 1987 and 1988 indigenous peoples formed two regional federations: the Federation of Ayllus of Southern Oruro, and the Federation of Ayllus of Northern Potosí.

At the same time THOA began working with indigenous organizations from the Ingavi province in the department of La Paz; these efforts resulted in the Federación de Ayllus y Comunidades Originarias de la Provincia Ingavi (FACOPI) in 1993. Later federations included the Federación de Ayllus y Markas Aymara-Qhichwas de la Provincia Muñecas (1995), the Central de Ayllus y Comunidades Originarias de Umala (CACOU) (1995), and the Federación de Comunidades Originarias de la Marka de Achacachi (FEDECOMA) (1996). In 1997 the *ayllus* and *markas* of the Pacajes Province officially formed as the “Jach’a Suyu Pakajaqi” [The Great Nation of Pakajaqi]. These reconstituted *ayllus* serve as model examples for others to follow as, indeed, is happening in the Villarroel and Loayza provinces (THOA n.d., 1–2; Choque Quispe 1998).<sup>17</sup>

One important resource that resulted from this organizational experience is the booklet *Estructura orgánica*, compiled by the Ingavi Province Ayllu Federation. As Florentino Gómez Callisaya explains in the book’s introduction, in January 1993 some seven hundred representatives from the Ingavi province’s eight cantons participated in the Primer Magno Congreso Orgánico de Desaguadero. Concerned about the devastating effects of neoliberal reforms, the representatives came together to strategize ways of fortifying organizational structures at different levels, including: the local level of the *ayllu*; the regional level of groups of *ayllus* sharing common cultural and linguistic ties; and, finally, the provincial level incorporating all the *ayllus* of the district. They appointed a Commission whose mandate was to study the communities’ traditions and ways of life and then to draft statutes of governance that could be implemented at each organizational level (Federación de Ayllus 1993, 5–6). *Estructura orgánica* lays out the statutes as they were approved by the Ayllu Federation three months later. This booklet has served as a useful guide for other communities desirous of strengthening their traditions and reconstituting customary forms of governance.<sup>18</sup>

The process of reconstituting the *ayllu* usually begins with community members examining resources such as the *Estructura orgánica* while carrying out sustained discussions analyzing traditions of the past and the material circumstances of the present. In the case of Umala, THOA explains, the organizing method originated with the collective reading and analysis of the colonial titles and the 1718 and 1883 Boundary Surveys. This initial stage helped reinforce the cultural and historical identity of the inhabitants who, in relation to other areas from the Aroma province, have preserved to a greater degree their traditions of organization. On the cobblestones of the town of Umala’s central plaza one can see the inscription dating from 1878 of the names of all the *ayllus* that make up the Umala *marka*. This register of names becomes a powerful catalyst for reclaiming the control of territory and asserting the right to self-determination (THOA n.d., 3–4). The collective, ceremonial act of reading the official documents and the register of *ayllu* names enables the community to



reenact Andean and Spanish ‘categories of meaning’ (Digges and Rappaport 1992, 150). According to María Eugenia Choque Quispe, performative rituals such as walking the *ayllu* boundaries or reading the colonial land titles are effective means of monitoring the indigenous community’s territory (Choque Quispe 1998).<sup>19</sup> These rituals, moreover, underscore the dynamic relationship between the community’s territorial extension and its ability to provide the infrastructure that sustains humanity, designated by the interdependent expressions ‘*suma manq’aña*’ (eating well), and ‘*suma jakaña*’ (living well).

Jesús de Machaca in the Ingavi Province exemplifies another model that other *markas* have tried to emulate. The land is divided according to tradition with six large land tracts in the higher altitudes and six at the lower altitudes making up a total of twelve *ayllus* (THOA 1995, 33). Each *ayllu* symbolizes a part of the human body: one head, two shoulders, one torso, and two feet for both the lower and higher ecological zones. In this rotating hierarchy, the head occupies the most important place, and the feet the least important (34). It is known that the four parts of the Inca Empire Tawantinsuyu were believed to represent a body. According to Gordon Brotherston, “The shape of Tahuantinsuyu is discussed in several of the native texts in Quechua and Spanish that were prompted by Pizarro’s invasion; and it still informs Quechua narrative and song, imaged as the great body that has its brow in Quito (Ecuador), its navel in Cuzco—the meaning of that word in Quechua—(Peru), and its sex in Titicaca (Bolivia)” (Brotherston 1992, 28; see also Bastien 1985). For the native peoples of Jesús de Machaca, this piecing together of the fragments of the Andean body (politic), its ‘remembrance’ as it were, points to the insistent reinscription of differences such that the *ayllu* becomes a political, symbolic, and geographical space for the enactment of resistant, subaltern identities.

In spite of its consequential achievements, the effort to reconstitute the Andean body politic, designated as the right to land and dignity, has come up against numerous obstacles, many of which are an outgrowth of colonialism. Marginalization, inequality, and exclusion are but three factors that continue to weaken the *ayllu*’s already vulnerable socioeconomic structures. Indigenous peoples experience a deep sense of frustration, social discontent, and distrust of the government and its representatives (THOA n.d., 5).

In 1993 the Sánchez de Lozada administration addressed some of these problems through a series of unprecedented legislative reforms designed to bring about administrative and fiscal decentralization. The *Ley de Participación Popular* [Law of Popular Participation] (LPP) was to fortify regional power and autonomy by turning monies over to local municipalities, thus granting them greater authority and control over the distribution of resources. According to governmental figures, in 1993, one year before the implementation of the LPP, the nine departmental capitals received 92% of state monies, while the remaining 8%

was allotted to rural municipalities (República de Bolivia 1997, 12).<sup>20</sup> The LPP created a municipality for each of the country's 311 *secciones de provincias* [county or township districts], which included 83 new indigenous municipal districts, and established a per capita basis for the distribution of monies to municipalities which now receive 20% of the national budget. In addition, the LPP transferred to these municipalities the regulatory authority to administer and maintain services for education, health, recreation, regional roads and irrigation (13–14). Through the establishment of these municipalities the state officially recognized traditional Andean forms of organization and their representatives, thereby acknowledging indigenous communities as participatory subjects in the present democracy (Ticona, Rojas, and Albó 1995, 158). As a result of these reforms, the Ministerio de Desarrollo Humano and the Secretaría Nacional de Participación Popular optimistically argued that the LPP inaugurated the struggle “por lograr que Bolivia tenga menos habitantes y más ciudadanos” [for Bolivia to have fewer inhabitants and more citizens] (República de Bolivia 1997, 13).

In theory, this innovative legislation seeks to eliminate the prevailing political, social, and economic conditions of disenfranchisement in which Bolivia's majority peoples currently live. Nevertheless, its implementation continues to be structured by a top-down verticality, favoritism, and the search for personal benefit—factors that effectively prevent more democratic participation (THOA n.d., 8). Moreover, THOA points out that the redistricting process was carried out in an arbitrary manner that disregarded traditional boundaries demarcating indigenous territories, provoking, as a consequence, a large number of unanticipated regional and local jurisdictional conflicts (6). Benjamin Kohl observes that even though the redistribution of monies to the municipalities represented a “relatively large commitment in terms of the share of the national budget, in 1997 it translated to only US\$28 per person” (Kohl n.d., 13 note 16). Moreover, the municipality's new power to distribute fiscal resources has generated forms of corruption that benefit the *mestizo* municipal bureaucracy and increase antagonism between the administration and the native communities (THOA n.d., 6–7).

The redistricting process and the formation of new rural municipalities has impacted in other ways on democratic processes. According to Kohl, “The Law of Popular Participation successfully changed the direction of much of the popular resistance to recent neoliberal programs by allotting enough resources to municipalities to attract the attention of local populations while simultaneously redefining the spaces of opposition” (Kohl n.d., 23). Decentralization and other neoliberal economic reforms effectively suppressed the political leverage that the traditional Left had wielded nationally since 1952. “When the Law of Popular Participation directed attention away from national processes to local ones, opposition

became fragmented and more closely tied to grassroots territorial organizations, while municipal struggles for limited resources became increasingly local in focus” (Kohl n.d., 24). THOA’s analysis suggests that even though in certain instances the movement to fortify the *ayllu* has enabled a few Andean communities to utilize the state’s redistricting process to their benefit, the primary beneficiaries continue to be *mestizo* townspeople (see also Kohl n.d., 24–25).<sup>21</sup>

### **The Political Resonance of an Indigenous Counterpublic Sphere**

Carlos F. Toranzo Roca has argued that the gradual strengthening of democracy in Bolivia since the 1980s has expanded the possibility of political and social expression beyond the traditional standoff between dictatorship and socialism to encompass more extensive discussions on race, gender, ecology, the environment, bilingualism, and social and cultural diversity (Toranzo Roca 1997, 197). Proponents of the LPP similarly contend that the move to decentralize the state by channelling resources and competences to municipal districts will further the stability of democracy because it validates the visibility and voice of new social actors, “bosquejando una nueva manera de hacer política ‘desde abajo’”[charting a new way of doing politics ‘from below’] (Ayo 1997, 334). According to Toranzo Roca, the creation and fortification of the citizen-subject is crucial for the furtherance of democracy even though the atomization of society in this way can lead to subjects whose conduct becomes marked by an exaggerated ‘possessive individualism’ (see MacPherson 1962). This is especially so for societies like Bolivia where the social fabric has recently been traumatically destroyed (Toranzo Roca 1997, 207).<sup>22</sup>

For Toranzo Roca, however, in addition to the individual citizen-subject, the collective subject is also necessary for a democracy that is not only representative but participatory: “Junto al yo individual se requiere el yo colectivo, es decir, es menester reconstruir el tejido social desarticulado, es preciso soldar a los ciudadanos en actores sociales colectivos, de tal modo que éstos influyan en la política, en la definición de necesidades y en la fiscalización de su cobertura” [Next to the individual ‘I,’ the collective ‘I’ is necessary; in other words, it is essential that we reconstruct the fragmented social body; we must bring citizens together so that they become collective social actors, in such a way that they influence politics by defining their needs and supervising the way these needs are met] (208). Toranzo Roca argues that the elaboration and expansion of public spheres will be vital to the formation of new collective subjects capable of defining and implementing their social and political needs on the local as well as national level (208–9).

The state has attempted to regulate the formation and shape of these collective subjects

through the establishment of Grassroots Territorial Organizations or *Organizaciones Territoriales de Base* (OTBs). According to article #3 of the LPP, campesino communities, indigenous communities, and urban neighborhood organizations should all be designated as OTBs (Secretaría Nacional de Participación Popular et al. 1994, 3–4). By defining three very different kinds of communities in such generic and unified terms, however, the law denies the distinctive rights of indigenous peoples as stipulated in ILO Convention N. 169, of which Bolivia is a signatory country.<sup>23</sup> Article N. 1 of the Convention grants indigenous peoples the right to maintain their political, social, economic, and cultural ways of life. Although the OTB officially recognizes the jurisdiction of the localized *ayllu*, it denies the authority of more encompassing indigenous political structures such as the *marka* and the *suyu*.<sup>24</sup>

This ambiguous politics of inclusion continues to oppress marginalized peoples because it does not ultimately transform entrenched modes of domination. These ongoing problems suggest that ‘democracy’ in Bolivia is still a colonial institution constituted through racial and social exclusion (see Dhaliwal 1996). For example, Diego Ayo notes that while many urban elites who figure as part of a more cosmopolitan and progressive generation welcome the LPP reforms, they do not imagine that the political transformation of rural areas (through the granting of more autonomy to indigenous communities, for example) will impact in any way on their own authority and power: “Es decir, por más que estos grupos de élites urbanas comiencen a diferenciarse de la moralidad prevaleciente o practicada por las élites tradicionales, no terminan de inscribir en su agenda la problemática cultural” [In other words, however much these groups of urban elites are beginning to differentiate themselves from the prevailing morality practiced by the traditional elites, they continue to include the cultural problematic in their agenda] (Ayo 1997, 340).<sup>25</sup> Writing more generally about the combined effect of the Law of Popular Participation and the Law of Capitalization, Benjamin Kohl argues that “The current laws, however, do not aim to replace an oppressive government with an enlightened one but rather to replace a corporate state that limits private economic activity with a neoliberal one that promotes it” (Kohl n.d., 8).<sup>26</sup>

In the context of the current political and economic crisis, the importance of an indigenous counterpublic sphere cannot be overestimated. The combined efforts of rural community elders and indigenous intellectuals from groups such as THOA to strengthen the possibilities for genuine dialogue and political participation from the perspective of the *ayllu* gave rise to the formation of the Consejo de Ayllus y Markas de Qullasuyu (CONAMAQ) (Mamani Condori 2000, 16). Organized in 1997, CONAMAQ is an indigenous federation of *ayllus* from the La Paz, Oruro, Potosí, Cochabamba, and Chuquisaca departments. Its objectives include the unification of indigenous peoples, the right to territory and dignity, and the defense of native cultural and political traditions. CONAMAQ has joined the international

mobilization of indigenous peoples by forging strong ties with organizations such as CONAIE (Confederación de Nacionalidades Indígenas del Ecuador) in Ecuador. In 1998 CONAMAQ hosted leaders from CONAIE who visited several *ayllus* in Bolivia and subsequently participated in workshops with local and regional leaders. The following year CONAMAQ leaders travelled to Ecuador at the invitation of CONAIE. This kind of international collaboration foregrounds the interconnectedness of indigenous groups working toward developing and strengthening local and regional indigenous authority. While it is still too early to know what kind of impact CONAMAQ will have on the democratization process in Bolivia, it has already played an important role in the growing politization of indigenous peoples around the question of indigenous identity.

By drawing on a varied range of national and international allegiances and critical sites of opposition, an indigenous counterpublic sphere, such as the one in Bolivia that THOA has helped to forge, challenges inchoate democratic institutions to acknowledge the existence and legitimacy of a plurality of groups within the state's decision-making process. In particular, THOA serves as a compelling model for other indigenous organizations precisely because, in spite of limited resources, the group has strategically combined revisionist Andean historiography with territorial claims and political action.

## NOTES

- <sup>1</sup> For a discussion of the relationship among territory, indigenous peoples, and self-determination in the context of globalization, see Varese (1996b), Delgado P. (1996), and Díaz Polanco (1997).
- <sup>2</sup> Even today indigenous peoples are regularly excluded from academic discussions centered on indigenous issues. Javier Mendoza Pizarro acknowledged this problem in Bolivia at the 1985 “III Encuentro de Estudios Bolivianos,” when he stated: “mi papel en esta presentación es sencillamente el de un traductor. Para aclarar lo que acabo de decir quisiera ante todo hacer una justificación... En el país estamos acostumbrados a hablar de los indios en su ausencia, a sus espaldas podríamos decir, como estamos acostumbrados a tomar decisiones que afectan su vida sin que ellos participen. En otras palabras, los indios siguen siendo objeto de discusión que se hace sobre ellos, o de las medidas que se toman para ellos” [my role in this presentation is simply that of a translator. To clarify what I just said, I would like above all to make a justification... In this country [Bolivia] we are used to speaking about Indians in their absence, behind their backs we might say, since we are accustomed to making decisions that affect their lives without their participation. In other words, Indians continue to be the object of discussions about them or of the measures that will be adopted for them] (Javier Mendoza Pizarro, “Partidos y movimientos indios.” *Boletín Chitakolla*, 27 (1985): 6. Cited in Mamani Condori 2000, footnote 1).
- <sup>3</sup> Not surprisingly, in the Americas the official public sphere has tended to be white, masculinist, and upper-middle class to the exclusion of most women, people of color, and men and women of the working and popular classes. For example, cultural critic Houston Baker has argued that because black slaves were brought to the colonies as property and deliberately prevented from acquiring the ability to read and write, they were completely disenfranchised from the kind of public sphere Habermas idealizes. “Historically, therefore, nothing might seem less realistic, attractive or believable to black Americans than the notion of a black public sphere. Unless, of course, such a notion was meant to symbolize a strangely distorting chiasma: a separate and inverted opposite of a historically imagined white rationality in action” (1995, 13).
- <sup>4</sup> Indigenous organizations are increasingly looking to the international front in their struggles for self-determination. Indeed, the transnational indigenous movement has been gaining ground at the end of the millennium even as state-sponsored political and economic reforms continue to marginalize native peoples. Stefano Varese argues that indigenous peoples throughout the Americas are engaged in a “desnacionalismo de estado” [denationalization of the state], looking to interlocutors beyond the nation-state with the desire to construct alternative forums of political and cultural identification (1996a, 23). According to Varese, “No solamente las organizaciones indígenas internacionalizan la confrontación, sino que abren simultáneamente frentes de acción en varios niveles de la sociedad global: con la ‘sociedad civil transnacional’, las organizaciones no-gubernamentales de ambientalistas, derechos humanos y defensa legal; al mismo tiempo se dirigen a los organismos intergubernamentales financieros y técnicos de desarrollo... Finalmente, desde hace casi diez años, los indígenas han llevado el debate y su lucha, a las Naciones Unidas a las que le reclaman, mayor democratización y posturas menos nacionalistas y más pro-pueblos sin estados” [Not only are indigenous organizations internationalizing the confrontation but also they are simultaneously opening up fronts of action at various levels of global society: with the ‘transnational civil society,’ environmental nongovernmental organizations, human rights and legal defense; at the same time they address intergovernmental financial and technical development organizations... Finally, for the last ten years indigenous peoples have taken the debate and their struggle to the United Nations where they demand greater democratization and positions that are less nationalistic and more pro-nations without states] (1996a, 24–25). For more on the transnational indigenous movement, see Brysk (1994); Comisión Internacional de Juristas et al. (1996); Maiguashca (1994); Varese (1991, 1996b).
- <sup>5</sup> While its roots can be found in the period subsequent to the Chaco War (1932–35), rural syndicalism came about following the 1952 Revolution with the MNR’s (Movimiento Nacionalista Revolucionario) desire to reorganize the state and ‘modernize’ indigenous communities. Revolutionary elites perceived the syndicate

system to be a useful way of incorporating indigenous peoples into the national economy as peasants or *campesinos* by promoting land reform, the universal right to vote, and the replacement of traditional indigenous positions of authority with elected offices. The intent was to align the rural community more closely with the miners' and workers' movement and to bolster the political base of the MNR. For more analysis of rural syndicalism, see Calderón and Dandler (1984), and Mamani Condori (2000).

- 6 My use of the term 'First Nation' is a translation of the phrase 'pueblos originarios' utilized by Andean indigenous peoples when referring to themselves.
- 7 Many THOA members have received some university education and the majority of them reside in El Alto. For these reasons, some foreign social scientists view them as urban *mestizos*. However, THOA members self-identify as Indians and most maintain familial ties and labor obligations with their *ayllu* communities.
- 8 According to Héctor Díaz Polanco, in Latin America during the second half of the nineteenth century both liberals and conservatives employed tactics that adversely affected indigenous communities. "The main goal of the conservatives was not to destroy indigenous communities but to maintain with some modifications the oppressive conditions and exploitative relations they suffered. The liberals sought to cancel those relations by dismantling the communities. The liberals' true goal was to attack the agrarian and corporative pillars on which conservative power rested, projecting a program that left no room for sociocultural distinctions. Their federalism resulted in new types of centralism. With regard to ethnic composition it was not pluralistic but homogenizing" (Díaz Polanco 1997, 16–17).
- 9 Carlos Mamani Condori, personal communication, 2 October 1998.
- 10 M. Jacqui Alexander and Chandra Talpade Mohanty suggestively posit decolonization as "thinking oneself out of the spaces of domination, but always *within* the context of a collective or communal process (the distinction between identification as a woman and gender consciousness—the former refers to a social designation, the latter to a critical awareness of the implications of this designation). This thinking 'out' of colonization happens only through action and reflection, through praxis. After all, social transformation cannot remain at the level of ideas, it must engage practice" (Alexander and Mohanty 1997, xxviii).
- 11 In an interview María Eugenia Choque Quispe discusses Santos Marca T'ula's resonance for the Aymara: "Según la memoria oral, le decían cargador de títulos (titul khepinakha). Tenía el carácter decidido, y fue encarcelado. Marca Thola es uno de los principales líderes del movimiento indígena. A partir de esta recopilación encontramos que hay mucha leyenda sobre su muerte.  
Unos dicen que fue colocado en un cajón y luego sumergido en el río, y tras largos años emergió su cuerpo. Los indígenas andinos cuentan que de su corazón floreció la más hermosa de las flores, como signo de que hay esperanza para este pueblo."  
[According to oral memory, they called him the title bearer (titul khepinakha). He was a very resolute person, and he was jailed. Marca Thola is one of the principal leaders of the Indian movement. From this compilation of oral histories we discovered that there are many legends surrounding his death.  
Some say that he was placed in a crate and then submerged in the river. After many years, his body emerged. Andean Indians tell that from his heart there bloomed the most beautiful of flowers as a sign of hope for Aymara peoples] (Limachi 1996).
- 12 See Mamani Condori (2000) for a discussion of the important work of pioneer Aymara broadcasters such as Pedro Tapia from the 1960s and 1970s. For information on Aymara broadcasters working more recently, see Asociación de Radio Emisoras Aymaras de La Paz (1996).
- 13 A *marka* is the jurisdiction formed by a group of *ayllus*.
- 14 In her introductory essay to *Selected Subaltern Studies* Gayatri Spivak argues that "It is the force of a crisis that operates functional displacements in discursive fields. In my reading of the volumes of *Subaltern Studies*, this critical force or bringing-to-crisis can be located in the energy of the questioning of humanism in the post-Nietzschean sector of Western European structuralism, for our group Michel Foucault, Roland Barthes, and a certain Lévi-Strauss. These structuralists question humanism by exposing its hero—the sovereign subject as author, the subject of authority, legitimacy, and power. There is an affinity between the imperialist subject and the subject of humanism" (1988, 10).

- 15 See Healy (2000) for his important discussion of the link between THOA and HISBOL.
- 16 See also articles by Conde Mamani (1996) and Callisaya Cuentas (1996).
- 17 According to THOA, the principal area of work includes the “Altiplano Central (provincias Pacajes, Aroma, Ingavi y los Andes), valles interandinos (provincias Muñecas, Inquisivi) del departamento de La Paz, asimismo colabora con organizaciones de ayllu del Norte de Potosí (FAOInp) y Sur de Oruro (FASOR)” [central altiplano (the Pacajes, Aroma, Ingavi, and los Andes provinces) and high valleys (Muñecas and Inquisivi provinces) from the La Paz department; they also collaborate with ayllu organizations from the north of Potosí (FAOInp) and the south of Oruro (FASOR)] (THOAn.d., 3, note 4).
- 18 THOA maintains in its archives copies of the organic statutes of communities that have reconstituted themselves as *ayllus*. Included, among others, are the statutes for the following communities: the Comunidad Originaria, Ayllu Colque Alta, Provincia Pacajes (1994); the Federación de Ayllus y Markas Qhichwas-Aymaras de la Provincia Muñecas (1995); Central de Ayllus y Comunidades Originarias de Umala (1995); the Comunidad Originaria Laura Jayuma (1995); the Federación de Comunidades Originarias y Ayllus de la Marka Achacachi (1996); the Federación de Ayllus y Markas del Gran Suyu Pakajaqi (1996); the Federación de Comunidades Originarias de la Provincia Loayza-Tupaj Katari-Bartolina Sisa (1997).
- 19 As Diana Digges and Joanne Rappaport suggestively argue in the case of the native community of Cumbal, Colombia, “Words, acts, and images all come together here to form a signifying system; they cannot simply be translated into the dominant discourse of written law. They are mediated by political power that is itself ceremonially, historically, and geographically validated. It is the unity of words, acts, and images in a particular context or event that gives them meaning” (1992, 150).
- 20 Governmental figures stated that in 1992, 58% of Bolivia’s population lived in urban areas while 42% lived in rural areas. This showed a marked change from 1976 census figures that indicated 32% of the population lived in urban areas with 68% in rural areas. The LPP was designed in part to help reverse the rapid urbanization of the country (República de Bolivia 1997, 12).
- 21 THOA cites the 1995 example of the reconstitution of the Umala *ayllu* (Aroma Province). Following this process the community became more aggressive about confronting and participating in the municipal electoral process thereby advancing local power and influence (THOAn.d., 3–4).
- 22 Toranzo Roca explains, “El caso boliviano es una ilustración paradigmática de lo que aquí se describe, pues el entramado social boliviano estaba construido y articulado de manera dominante a través de la forma sindicato. Sin embargo, luego de la evaporación del Estado de 1952, influido por el desastre de la hiperinflación y operado por medio de la estabilización y el ajuste estructural, la forma sindicato pierde poder de nucleamiento y de atracción social; su fuerza de convocatoria se diluye. Otro tanto, aunque con intensidad diversa, acontece con la forma partido. Sumados ambos elementos, percibimos que la sociedad queda librada a la desarticulación social y a la desnudez del sujeto individual comprendido como ciudadano” [The Bolivian case is a paradigmatic illustration of what I am describing; the Bolivian social fabric was constructed and articulated through the syndicate. Nevertheless, following the evaporation of the 1952 State, influenced by the disaster of hyperinflation and brought about by stabilization and structural adjustment, the syndicate lost its power of coalition and social attraction; its convocational capacity was diluted. A similar problem, although with a different intensity, is happening to the political party. Adding these two together, we find that Bolivian society has become fragmented, stripped down to the individual subject understood as a citizen] (Toranzo Roca 1997, 207).
- 23 Iris Marion Young has also noted that “when participatory democratic structures define citizenship in universalistic and unified terms, they tend to reproduce existing group oppression” (1995, 185).
- 24 Interview with Carlos Mamani Condori, May 1999. ‘*Suyu*’ here refers to a large jurisdiction of territory comprised of a group of *markas*.
- 25 Guillermo Delgado similarly points to the discrepancy between ‘paper laws’ and real government actions: “Es el caso de Decretos Supremos firmados por el gobierno de Bolivia, que concedieron en 1991 ‘derechos territoriales’ a varias etnias de la Amazonia. En septiembre de 1996, las mismas etnias regresaron a demandar, organizando una marcha-movilización indígena de treinta días, la inoperatividad de esos Decretos Supremos.



Repentinamente los Decretos se disiparon” [In 1991 some Supreme Decrees signed by the Bolivian government conceded ‘territorial rights’ to various ethnic groups of the Amazon. In September 1996 the same ethnic groups came back, organizing a thirty-day march-mobilization of indigenous peoples, to bring action against the government due to the inoperativeness of these Supreme Decrees. Suddenly, the Decrees vanished] (Delgado P. 1998, 200–201) .

- <sup>26</sup> In his essay “Decentralization as a Tool for Stabilizing Economic Restructuring: Popular Participation and Capitalization in Bolivia,” Kohl convincingly asserts that “the Law of Capitalization and the Law of Popular Participation, the centerpieces of [the Gonzalo Sánchez de Lozada administration’s] Plan de Todos, are, in fact manifestations of policies promoted by international development agents and represent their attempts to reinforce a global neoliberal agenda that conflates the concept of democracy with that of free markets. In this context, the promotion of local democratic institutions actually forms part of a new regime of control in an attempt to provide the political stability necessary to attract foreign capital rather than promote local autonomy and economic development” (Kohl n.d., 3).

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