

## LAND TENURE LEGALIZATION, PLURICULTURALISM AND MULTIETHNICITY IN BOLIVIA

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**Abstract:** Among the second generation reforms introduced in Bolivia in the mid 1990s are the Law of Popular Participation, a decentralization measure, and a reform of the 1953 agrarian reform. Both new laws included features of multiculturalism. This paper discusses these laws and some of their limitations and shows how the laws nonetheless are being used in the strategies for territorial control and autonomy of indigenous peoples and communities, as is illustrated with the case of the Raqaypampa community in the Cochabamba Department.

**Résumé:** Entre les réformes introduites en Bolivie dans la seconde moitié des années 1990 sont la Loi de Participation Populaire –de décentralisation administrative– et une réforme de la réforme agraire de 1953. La nouvelle législation contient certains aspects de multiculturalisme. Cet exposé discute la nouvelle législation et ses limitations et cherche montrer comment les peuples et communautés indigènes néanmoins utilisent la législation dans leur stratégies de contrôle territoriale et de autonomie. Le cas de la communauté de Raqaypampa dans le Département de Cochababa illustre cette stratégie.

**Key words:** Bolivia, multiethnicity, territory, autonomy, indigenous peoples

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## LAND TENURE LEGALIZATION, PLURICULTURALISM AND MULTIETHNICITY IN BOLIVIA

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According to Bolivia's 2001 census 62% of the country's 8.3 million inhabitants identify themselves with some indigenous people, principally the Quechuas (2.5 million) and Aymaras (2 million) of the Andean highlands and valleys and the colonization areas of the eastern lowlands, while the remainder is to be found among over 30 smaller indigenous peoples in the tropical eastern lowlands. Like a dozen other Latin American countries Bolivia has recognized the pluricultural and multiethnic composition of its population. In 1991 the country ratified ILO Convention 169 on Tribal and Indigenous Peoples in Independent Countries and in early 1995 a modification of the Constitution was ratified. A new Article 1 recognizes the pluri-multi character of the population and Article 171 recognizes, respects and protects the cultural, social and economic rights of the indigenous peoples. It specifically mentions their rights to *Tierras Comunitarias de Origen* (Original Communitarian Lands), recognizes the legal personhood of indigenous and peasant communities and *sindicatos* (peasant unions) as well as the judicial function of the natural authorities of the indigenous and peasant communities as a form of alternative conflict resolution. In this way the country took leave of the path taken after the 1952 revolution,

when the term *indio* had formally been banned from official discourse, and joined the trend towards multiculturalist policies in Latin America.

The constitutional reform was part of a broader package of “second generation” reforms that were to complement the harsh structural adjustment measures introduced in 1985. During the first government of Gonzalo Sánchez de Lozada (1993-1997) the major public enterprises were “capitalized” (privatization linked to a controversial reform of the pension system), while other reforms included elements of multiculturalism. The Popular Participation Law (1994) was a decentralization measure that virtually created over 300 new municipalities and recognized the *Organizaciones Territoriales de Base* (Territorial Base Organizations, OTB), a generic term to design all sorts of indigenous and peasant organizations, which were to be represented in *Comités de Vigilancia* (Oversight Committees) to orient and monitor the municipal governments. An educational reform (1994) introduced bilingual education and new agrarian and forestry legislation (1996) included stipulations regarding indigenous peoples. In this paper I will focus on the new agrarian legislation and the Law on Popular Participation and show how peasant-indigenous communities work with and around these laws to reconstruct their territories.

## **Reform of the reform**

In the early 1990s Bolivia set out to reform the land reform that had ensued from its 1952 revolution, under the pressure of rural mobilization. The immediate cause for this endeavor was the Bolibras-scandal that had erupted in 1992 and led to the “intervention” of the two agencies created to implement the 1953 reform, the *Servicio Nacional de Reforma Agraria* (SNRA, 1953) and the *Instituto Nacional de Colonización* (National Colonization Institute, INC). The Bolibras-scandal, involved education Minister Hedim Céspedes and his Brazilian associates, who fraudulently had received 100.000 hectares, but that was only a symptom of the corruption to which the reform process had fallen victim under post-revolutionary governments and, particularly, the military dictatorships of the 1964-1982 period. By the time the SNRA and INC were “intervened” land distribution had once again become highly polarized. Due to the irregularity of the redistribution process data on landholding are rather unreliable, (MACPIO 2001:51-52; World-Bank 1995). It was estimated that between 30% and 60% of the national territory was affected by overlapping titles and that in some cases up to seven titles might overlap. The overall picture was that landholding in the Andes region had become extremely fragmented as a result of post-reform subdivisions and the virtual abandonment (Urioste 2003; Urioste and Pacheco, 2000) of the reform in the region from the early 1960s onward. On the one hand, “food aid” had out-competed staple production in much of the region, where technical assistance had also been quite scarce. On the other hand, particularly from the early

1970s onward, development strategies had privileged the eastern lowlands and the consolidation of large enterprises –neolatifundia– supposedly dedicated to export production, cattle raising and to staples for the internal market.

The chaos and corruption in the reform institutions was such that the initially foreseen intervention period of three months had to be extended. Meanwhile, with the support of the World Bank, new agrarian legislation started to be prepared and in 1994 the Sánchez de Lozada government presented a first draft, the *Ley del Instituto Nacional de Tierras* (INTI). Its general orientation was one of market enablement and market-assisted reform and it immediately met with the opposition of the main indigenous-peasant organizations. On the one hand, in the early 1980s the *Confederación Sindical Única de Trabajadores Campesinos de Bolivia* (CSUTCB) had elaborated a Fundamental Agrarian Law of its own, which had been presented to president Siles Zuazo in 1984 “wrapped in Aymara textiles” (Albó 1991):316).<sup>1</sup> A central aspect of this proposal was the creation of a *Corporación Agropecuaria Campesina* (CORACA), which would be involved in the marketing of produce and procuring inputs and was to be managed autonomously by the peasant-indigenous organizations.

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<sup>1</sup> The CSUTCB emerged in the late 1970s from the *Confederación Nacional de Trabajadores Campesinos de Bolivia* (CNTCB), which had been created in the early 1950s. The CNTCB had for quite some time been a main pillar of support for the MNR governments and subsequently for the military regimes, under which a formal Military-Peasant Pact had been established. Around the mid-1970s this pact broke down and the Katarista movement, named after the leader of the great late 18<sup>th</sup> century indigenous rebellion, gained influence within the CNTCB. This movement stressed that the rural population not only constituted an exploited class, as peasants, but at the same time was an oppressed nation. It thus proposed to “look at reality with two eyes.” The renaming of the CNTCB as CSUTCB symbolized the re-alignment of the organization with the opposition and the organization would play an important role in the struggle for democracy.

On the other hand, in 1990 indigenous peoples of the eastern lowlands had undertaken a historic, widely publicized, March for Territory and Dignity to protest timber exploitation in their territories with which they had ruptured their “invisibility.”<sup>2</sup> President Jaime Paz Zamora (1989-1993) had personally gone to meet the marchers and issued various decrees recognizing indigenous territories in the eastern lowlands and in 1991 Bolivia ratified ILO Convention 169. Such events had prepared the country to embrace multiculturalism and to undertake a reform of its Constitution, which was ratified in early 1995.

In response to the governmental INTI law proposal the peasant and indigenous organizations presented a hastily drafted counterproposal, the *Ley de Instituto Nacional Kollasuyo-Andino-Amazónico* (INKA). By early 1995 a commission was created, consisting of government, business sector, and indigenous and peasant representatives to negotiate new legislation. Although on various occasions consensus was reached, unilateral modifications of the drafts by the executive prompted the indigenous and peasant organizations to call for a March for Land and Territory, Political Rights and Development in August 1996. New negotiations revealed the fragility of the alliance between the lowland organization CIDOB, which gained some important concessions regarding territorial rights and the Andean CSUTCB, which withdrew from the negotiations. On the other hand,

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<sup>2</sup> With the help of anthropologists a series of encounters had been organized in the lowlands, leading in 1982 to the creation of the *Confederación de Pueblos Indígenas del Oriente Boliviano* (CIDOB).

the business sector, particularly those based in Santa Cruz, also vehemently opposed the law.

The *Ley del Servicio Nacional de Reforma Agraria*, commonly known as *Ley INRA (Instituto Nacional de Reforma Agraria)* was promulgated in October 1996. As a result of the pressure from indigenous-peasant movements it is a heterodox law that only partly liberalizes the land market. It distinguishes between properties that fulfill a “social function” and those that comply with a “social-economic” function. In the first category we find the *solar campesino* (peasant housing plot), small properties, communal properties and the *Tierras Comunitarios de Origen*. These properties should primarily serve subsistence purposes, may as a rule not be divided, alienated or mortgaged and are exempted from taxation. On the other hand, medium-size properties and agrarian enterprises should fulfill a social-economic function, pay tax and may be sold and mortgaged. The land tax was intended to stimulate market-led land redistribution, while the failure to pay tax or to fulfill the social-economic function could be cause for *reversion* or *expropriation* and these lands then could be redistributed in favor of peasant and indigenous communities.

As noted, the indigenous peoples of the eastern lowlands stood to gain most from the new law, which included the legal figure of the TCO, defined as the habitat of indigenous or originary peoples and communities, where they live according to their own forms of economic, social and cultural organization, a definition that resonates

with ILO Convention 169. For the first time in Bolivian history the lands occupied by the lowland indigenous peoples could be legalized as their collective property. Unlike the Colombian *resguardos*, however, which can be equated with municipalities, the TCO were not incorporated into the political-administrative structure. The INRA law avoids the term “territory” which would imply jurisdiction and a degree of self-government.

The highland organization CSUTCB condemned the INRA law as one of the “damned laws,” along with the capitalization law and the Popular Participation Law. The organization therefore sought to replace the INRA law. In the course of the 1980s, however, rival organizations had begun to emerge in the region seeking the “reconstitution” of the *ayllu*<sup>3</sup> and taking the CSUTCB to task for being *sindicalista* and promoting a peasant-worker identity.<sup>4</sup> In 1997 these organizational efforts culminated in the formation of the *Consejo de Ayllus y Markas del Qullasuyu* (CONAMAQ), which stresses “traditionality,” cultural revalorization and *ayllu*-based development.<sup>5</sup> Instead of rejecting the INRA law these organizations have taken up the legal figure of the TCO, which often was thought only to suit the lowland indigenous peoples and their particular form of productive organization. In some of the highland cases TCO are demanded and in other cases the demand is for the conversion of community or individually titled lands into TCO.

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<sup>3</sup> A kinship-based social unit which possesses a specific, continuous or discontinuous, territory.

<sup>4</sup> Katarismo had not really attempted to break with the peasant-union form of organization that had been introduced in rural areas since the 1930s. Whereas it flourished in hacienda-dominated areas, this form of organization was much more problematic in regions where *ayllus* persisted.

<sup>5</sup> The organization has its mainstay in Oruro, but also has influence in parts of Potosí and La Paz.

By 2005 some 56 TCOs had been demanded in the lowlands with a total surface of 22.1 million hectares but only 5.4 million hectares (19%) had effectively been titled (Romero, 2005:118), reflecting the extremely slow and implementation of the new agrarian legislation, which officially should be concluded in 2006. On the other hand, in the highlands some 171 TCO had been demanded with a total surface of 12 million hectares, but by early 2005 only 434,000 hectares had been titled (3%) (Romero, 2005:127).

### **Popular participation**

Until the promulgation of the Law of Popular Participation in April 1994 Bolivia was a highly centralized country. Effective municipal government only existed in the 9 Department capitals and some 10 intermediate cities. Municipal government was restricted to the urban areas. The Popular Participation Law converted the over 300 sections of provinces –an administrative category that until then had not had any real significance– into municipalities with jurisdiction including the rural areas. These new municipalities were to receive 20% of total tax revenues and would have competencies in the areas of education, healthcare, basic sanitation, culture, sports, micro-irrigation and local roads. The municipalities were to implement Municipal Development Plans through Annual Operative Plans that should reflect the necessities expressed by the *Organizaciones Territoriales de Base* (OTB, such as indigenous and peasant communities and

neighborhood associations), which could register and apply for legal personhood. These organizations are represented in a *Comité de Vigilancia* that should orient and monitor the performance of the municipal government.

In a comment on the Law of Popular Participation (Calla 2000) has argued that the decentralization policy constituted its “hard” nucleus whereas participation and the concern with recognition of the indigenous constitutes its “soft” nucleus and were largely rhetoric. He argued that the advent of the Banzer government (1997-2002) brought a policy shift that would de-emphasize the “soft” nucleus, while at the same time indigenous organizations like the CSUTCB and CIDOB were losing strength. His skepticism was shared by many other observers. The registration of OTB indeed was a confusing and difficult process, particularly in the Andean region where the CSUTCB had condemned the Popular Participation Law. Nonetheless, local organizations took up the opportunity to register and acquire legal personhood and by 1997 11,585 peasant communities, 2,766 neighborhood associations and 528 indigenous communities had registered, adding up to a total of 14,879. It was observed, however, that many indigenous communities had been registered as peasant communities, under the pressure of local authorities who feared that classification as indigenous communities might give rise to territorial claims. Confusion also existed about the registration of existing organizations under their own name, instead of under the generic OTB label. After protests it was clarified that they could register and apply for legal personhood under their own name. It furthermore was

noted that the Vigilance Committees, designed to be the main vehicles for participation by indigenous organizations in local governance, remained toothless appendices to the municipal government. On the other hand, under the first municipal elections that took place under the Popular Participation Law in 1995, some 464 (28.6%) indigenous-peasant representatives were elected as municipal councilors and 79 indigenous-peasant representatives became mayor, postulating for various parties. However, a study of their fate in subsequent years showed that between 1996 and 1998 their number had declined by 16% to 66, which suggested that local mestizo elites were regaining ground (Albó, 1999:69-70, Ayo, 1999:130-133). The 1999 municipal elections confirmed this tendency.<sup>6</sup>

One of the main issues raised by the Popular Participation Law, a major problem was what has been called “disempowerment by boundaries” (Booth, Clisby and Widmark, 1997) or the non-correspondence of the political-administrative map and social organization on the ground. Really existing communities, using various ecological zones, might belong to various municipalities and therefore, instead of empowering them the Popular Participation Law might result in fragmentation. Communities might also be marginalized because the extension of effective planning could be impractical from the municipal capital. The case of the TCO, created through agrarian law, and their relation with municipalities, provinces

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<sup>6</sup> The 2004 municipal elections, which took place at a moment of total breakdown of the established party system, may have brought a reversal of the trend, but as far as I know no systematic study has yet been made.

or departments is particularly illustrative. TCO might, for example, belong to various municipalities and thus would have to deal with various municipal governments, each with their own development and investment plans, a situation that clearly undermines the management or governability of the TCO and tends to fragment the social organization that underpins the recognition of the TCO.

In order to mitigate some of the negative consequences of municipalization, the Popular Participation Law and subsequent legislation allowed for the creation of municipal districts according to geographic, socio-cultural, productive or economic criteria. Such districts would be headed by a vice-mayor appointed by the mayor. In the case of districts created according to socio-cultural criteria the appointment of a vice-mayor should take account of the originary authorities.<sup>7</sup> The competencies of such indigenous municipal districts, however, were not defined and they would largely be dependent of the goodwill of the municipal mayor. According to Arias (2004) by 2002 Bolivia counted 158 indigenous municipal districts, most of them in the Department of Oruro (37), followed by Potosí (33), La Paz (27), Santa Cruz (24), Cochabamba (15), Pando (9), Beni (7) and Chuquisaca. In most cases, however, such districts lead a rather fledgling existence and are little institutionalized.

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<sup>7</sup> Districts belonging to different municipalities, in turn, could form *mancomunidades* (commonwealths).

## **Convergence: The example of Raqaypampa**

The policies of recognition in Bolivia, as we have seen in the foregoing, have been rather ambiguous. In agrarian legislation the term territory was expressly avoided and the TCO were not regarded as administrative units, which undermines their governability. On the other hand, the Popular Participation Law did only recognize indigenous authorities under the figure of the ill defined indigenous municipal districts. As Albó (1999) has argued, a more consequent approach would to allow for the creation of indigenous municipalities, as also has been suggested in 1998 in a joint proposal of the CSUTCB and CIDOB. More recently, it seems that indigenous organizations increasingly consciously have adopted a dual strategy toward a reconstruction of territorial autonomy, pursuing the creation of indigenous municipal districts and demanding the creation of TCO which coincide with the district. A next step would be to convert the TCO/indigenous municipal district into a municipality in its own right under the 2000 Law on Political-Administrative Units, which opens the way for a redrawing of administrative boundaries and allows for the creation of municipalities corresponding to homogeneous socio-cultural areas if they count over 5,000 inhabitants.

The community of Raqaypampa in the Mizque municipality<sup>8</sup> of the Department of Cochabamba provides an example of such a dual strategy. In the early 17<sup>th</sup> century the Raqaypampa region had started to become dominated by haciendas, which gradually diversified their

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<sup>8</sup> One of the three municipalities that make up the Mizque province.

production to cater for the mining centers in the country, especially the silver mines in Potosí. Labor relations were characterized by the *colonato* system under which workers would receive a small parcel for the cultivation of subsistence crops and were obliged to work on the patron's fields and to provide all kinds of services. With the opening of the railway line to Chile in 1861, the haciendas faced the competition of cheap imports and began to fragment while and some of the workers bought their parcels and became independent smallholders.

While organizational efforts had been under way in the Cochabamba region and Mizque was the scene of rebellions in the second half of the 1940s, a *sindicato* (peasant union) emerged in Raqaypampa in 1952. The revolution brought the end of the hacienda and its parcelation among the *colonos*. As the hacienda system largely had shattered precolonial forms of organization –in contrast to other regions where the *ayllu* persisted, albeit transformed in the course of time– the *sindicato* became the basic form of community organization, becoming one of the varieties of what Carter and Albó (1988) have characterized as “mini-states in conflict” (with the state). They have a territoriality of their own, their authorities, their ways of doing justice and organizing the use of material and human resources (Carter and Albó, 1988:490). With the demise of the hacienda system the Raqaypampeños also developed a new and color-full dressing style of their own. In the early 1980s the Raqaypampa union led an attempt to organize a *Central Especial de Alturas*, which reflected a sentiment of differentiation from the overarching provincial

organization and an effort to loosen control of the Mizque highlands by the valley region and its unions. The attempt was short-lived, however, and in 1989 the *Central Especial* dissolved and its unions became undifferentiated parts of the Mizque central again (Calvo and Regalsky, 1994:19-20).

By 1996, however, the Popular Participation policy opened up new horizons and various state agencies actively promoted the creation of indigenous municipal districts and proposed the creation of a *Distrito Mayor Indígena de Raqaypampa*. In July 1997 the Mizque municipality recognized this district by municipal resolution. That same year saw the emergence of a new overarching regional organization, the *Central Regional Única de Campesinos Indígenas de Raqaypampa* (CRSUC-IR), now clearly emphasizing the peasant-indigenous identity. This organization presents itself as the highest authority of the indigenous territory and consists of five sub-centrals that, in turn, are based in 41 community-level *sindicatos* (Municipio de Mizque, 2003:17). The *Distrito Mayor* is divided into five minor districts that correspond to the subcentrals. The union organization thus provides the effective political infrastructure of the municipal district. Conflicts or problems within the communities, for example, should be resolved at that level in the first instance, but if that turns out to be impossible they may go to the next level of the sub-central and then to the level of the central.

An interesting feature of the CRSUC-IR is that it has elaborated its own *Reglamento del Distrito Municipal Indígena de Raqaypampa* and

that this *Reglamento* has been approved by the Mizque municipal council in December 2001, being the first such *Reglamento* in Bolivia. It regulates the interface between the official state structure and the union organization by incorporating state agents, such as the sub-mayor, into the union structure and making them accountable to this structure. The sub-mayor is to be elected in a CRSUC-IR assembly and then appointed by the Mayor of Mizque. It is the assembly that proposes the development plan for the municipal district as well as the annual operative plans for approval by the municipal council and it is the assembly that evaluates the execution of these plans and the administration of the sub-mayor who is permanently supervised by the executive committee of the CRSUC-IR.

Parallel to the creation of a municipal district the CRSUC-IR demanded the creation of a TCO through the agrarian legislation and managed to get a TCO with a surface of 55,000 hectares and over 10,000 inhabitants approved in 2004. It is one of the largest and most populous highland TCO and it stands out because the name of the TCO is CRSUC-IR, in contrast to all other TCO which bear the name of an *ayllu* or a community. It thus is the first case of a TCO corresponding to a union mode of governance, albeit that the union presents itself as a peasant-indigenous one. Another interesting aspect is that the conversion to TCO implies a collective title and that the distribution and redistribution of use-rights, according to the INRA law, will be governed by customary practice. Formally, at least, this means that the inhabitants of the CRSUC-IR TCO have relinquished their individual titles obtained under the 1953 agrarian legislation.

Land transactions are subject to the decision-making process of the CRSUC-IR and its authorities.

Since the demise of the hacienda system the inhabitants of Raqaypampa have gone through a dynamic process of identity and cultural affirmation. Elaborately embroidered clothing came to serve as an identity marker and the festive cycle, related to the agricultural calendar, was reinvigorated. The strengthening of regional unionism signified empowerment in relation to the Mizque-based provincial central and in relation to the Mizque valley in general. Whereas in the Mizque valley commercial irrigated agriculture predominates, the Raqaypampeños preserve non-monetary exchanges and rather pursue a risk-aversion strategy of diversification. Such differences provided the basis for the creation of an indigenous municipal district and the filing of a TCO demand a little later. By consolidating their union structure, which functions as the local government, the Raqaypampeños made sure that the authorities that serve as the relays between the state and the local community –the sub-mayor in particular– will be elected locally and will be accountable to the local population in the first place. Following a dual strategy that makes use of the political-administrative decentralization policy of popular participation and of agrarian legislation regarding collective property they consolidated the hold over a territory where they exercise authority and jurisdiction.

The Raqaypampa case stands out because, although a conscious effort at cultural identity recuperation and re-articulation is being

made and the indigenusness of the population is reiterated, the organization model is that of the peasant unions rather than that of the *ayllus* or other presumably traditional organization models. Regional idiosyncrasies were sufficiently marked to make the region eligible for the formation of an indigenous district during the first years of the popular participation policy when some state agencies actively promoted the formation of such districts. This recognition then also could underpin the demand for originary community lands. However, although exceptional in this sense, the process of territorialization and of dual strategizing to achieve this seems to have been adopted throughout Bolivia in recent years and we have noted the rapid increase in TCO demands in the highland region since 2000. The *Marka* Jesús de Machaqa, which was part of the unwieldy municipality of Viacha near the Titicaca lake in the La Paz Department, is another case in point. Here the peasant union structure had precariously coexisted with the *ayllu* mode of organization, but recent years have seen a recuperation of the latter (Ticona and Albó, 1997). After years of pressuring for independence from the distant capital of Viacha with the 2004 municipal elections Jesús de Machaqa finally realized its aspirations and was recognized as an independent municipality, which the inhabitants characterize as an “indigenous municipality” although as yet that does not exist as an official legal figure. Here too TCO were demanded and granted, but in this case each of the *ayllus* that make up the *marka* demanded its own TCO. On the other hand, in presenting candidates for the municipal elections care was taken that each of the *ayllus* would be represented, following the Andean precepts of dual organization.

The phenomena described here are as yet poorly understood and little systematic study exists so most of the evidence is anecdotic. Nonetheless, the emergence of larger TCO claims in the highland region, often going together with an increasingly militant Aymara nationalist discourse was sufficiently worrying for the World Bank to temporarily suspend funding for the creation of TCO in 2003.

### **By way of conclusion**

The 1994 Popular Participation Law and the 1996 agrarian legislation were part and parcel of the second generation of structural adjustment reforms. We have seen that the Popular Participation Law was essentially a decentralization policy, although it was dressed up with features of multiculturalism, which had become politically fashionable at the time. The reform of agrarian legislation initially aimed for land market liberalization but as a result of peasant-indigenous mobilization a heterodox approach was adopted which included the possibility of creating TCO, a legal figure that was essentially meant to provide legal security for the lowland indigenous peoples who only recently had made their appearance on the political scene with their 1990 March for Territory and Dignity. For the highland indigenous peasantry the law essentially maintained the status quo that had resulted from the 1953 agrarian reform, partly because their main organization the CSUTCB had withdrawn from the negotiations over the new law and rejected it as one of the

“damned laws” of neoliberalism, along with the Popular Participation Law. Both laws indeed implied a rather limited recognition of multiculturalism and the way they were implemented further confirmed these limitations, particularly under the Banzer-Quiroga government (1997-2002) when multicultural rhetoric receded far to the background.

Meanwhile, however, ethnic reaffirmation among indigenous peoples became increasingly strong. While the CSUTCB maintained a confrontational style its rhetoric became strongly ethno-nationalist, while the emerging rival organization CONAMAQ was less confrontational, similar to the lowland CIDOB, and clearly rooted in more traditional models of organization such as the *ayllu*. Whereas most indigenous districts had been created in the mid-1990s and often existed only on paper, the demand for TCO spread to the highlands by the late 1990s, initially mostly promoted by CONAMAQ. In this context the strategy of demanding TCO through agrarian law and reinvigorating the indigenous municipal districts, which had its roots in the lowlands, became increasingly widespread in tandem with the pressure for the creation of indigenous municipalities. As noted, in Colombia –which has a much smaller indigenous population– the *resguardos*, governed through indigenous authority structures, have been recognized as part of the administrative structure of the state, on a par with municipalities. In the Mexican state of Oaxaca *usos y costumbres* (customary rules) for the designation of municipal authorities have been recognized.

In Bolivia the context for indigenous demand-making has dramatically changed with the onset of the protest cycle in 2000, which culminated in the Gas War of October 2003 and the ouster of President Gonzalo Sánchez de Lozada and the subsequent renunciation of President Carlos Mesa in June 2005. Indigenous organizations became important protagonists of the protests and ethnic reaffirmation became increasingly pronounced, including demands for a reconstruction of *Kollasuyu*, one of the quarters of the Inca state. The 2002 presidential elections marked the beginning of the breakdown of the established party system, which was wiped away in the December 2005 elections that resulted in the landslide victory of Evo Morales, the first indigenous president of the country and a militant opponent of neoliberalism. Meanwhile, a Constituent Assembly as has been demanded by indigenous organizations since the late 1990s is on the agenda.

In this paper I have briefly discussed the “silent revolution” that has been taking place in Raqaypampa as an example of the “silent revolutions” that seem to have been taking place throughout the country. The dramatic change of political context and the prospect of a Constituent Assembly open up new but very uncertain perspectives. A political-administrative reconfiguration of the Bolivian state, in which ethnically defined territorialities will play an important role, is a prominent issue and points to a complete overhaul of the state that goes well beyond the cosmetic tinkering in the context of the second generation structural adjustment reforms, which are under question altogether. One of the prominent talking-heads on Bolivian

t.v. screens, mathematician, sociologist and political analyst Álvaro García Linera, who now has become vice-president of the republic, characterized the Bolivian situation as one of a “catastrophic stalemate.” At the time he was one, among many, who drafted proposals for a reconfiguration of the Bolivian state. Proposals are plentiful and consensus, at the time of writing this paper, seems scarce. Proposals range from indigenous municipalities to the creation of entirely new departments and confront the aspirations of the Oriental elites for regional autonomy –which, although invoking an ethnic *camba* identity as opposed to the highlander’s *kolla* identity, has very little sympathy for the lowland indigenous peoples, despite some rhetoric. In 2000 Donna Lee Van Cott entitled her seminal study of the politics of recognition in the Andean region “The Friendly Liquidation of the Past.” At present this optimism of the will may be losing ground to what Gramsci called the pessimism of the mind. Will the “catastrophic stalemate” be broken or will an unfriendly confrontation lie ahead?

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