RESEARCH REPORTS AND NOTES

FORGING AN INDIGENOUS COUNTERPUBLIC SPHERE: The Taller de Historia Oral Andina in Bolivia*

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Abstract: This essay analyzes the impact of an indigenous counterpublic sphere in contemporary Bolivia, arguing that it functions as an arena of differential consciousness for Aymara intellectuals and activists. In examining the work carried out by the Aymara nongovernmental organization known as the Taller de Historia Oral Andina (THOA), the essay highlights this sphere's importance as both a discursive and territorial arena where agency is expressed in the collaborative spirit of community. THOA's work is significant in strategically formulating a methodology of decolonization based on revisionist Andean historiography, territorial demands, and collective political action.

In recent years, academics, human rights activists, international women's organizations, and other groups have analyzed the pressing issues of democratic struggle and the practice of citizenship. Particular consideration has been paid to urban grassroots organizations and to popular

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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 examined how indigenous organization is challenging both the "practice and terms of citizenship in Latin America's new democracies" (Yashar 1998, 23). Although political liberalization in the 1980s and 1990s 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 (Yashar 1998, 24). Finding themselves disenfranchised as individual and collective political actors, indigenous peoples have mobilized around the question of 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 (1998, 27; see also Delgado 1994; Stephenson 1999). With the beginning of the new millennium, then, indigenous peoples are claiming positionality as social actors and demanding greater representation and say-so in the political practices of the state. They are also insisting on the right to participate as Indians. This collective, identity-based stance requires redefinition of the nation-state and the institutions it encompasses (Delgado 1998, 212–13). This stance thus challenges democracy to acknowledge the existence of a plurality of groups, including those traditionally marginalized or excluded.

The interface between contestatory indigenous movements and processes of democratization suggests that distinct "conceptual resources" must enable the expression of oppositional cultural identities (Fraser 1997, 70). One such conceptual resource useful to understanding how oppositional groups critically engage the practice of democracy is the public sphere. Jürgen Habermas described the public sphere as "the sphere of private people come together as a public" (Habermas 1991, 27). This sphere is a discursive arena separate from the state, a "sphere of criticism of public authority," where citizens can debate issues of common interest (Habermas 1991, 51). Fundamental to Habermas's work is the assumption that citizenship has already been universally implemented and fully extended to individuals. But as already observed, in Latin American states, the practices of citizenship and liberal democracy have helped consolidate criollo and mestizo hegemony and erase ethnic differences throughout the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Based on a series of "legal and ideological fictions," citizenship in these countries continually threatens marginalized groups with exclusion even as it proclaims them to be equals (Varese 1996, 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 discur-

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sive 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). The counterpublic sphere is thus an arena where subordinated groups become subjects rather than objects of discourse. As such, the counterpublic sphere can be a site for formulating and expressing alternate ways of knowing, thereby legitimizing the cultural and political right to difference. Drawing from Chandra Mohanty's discussion of third world women's oppositional struggles, it can be said that the indigenous counterpublic sphere is an activist community of indigenous peoples "with divergent histories and social locations, woven together by the *political* threads of opposition to forms of domination that are not only pervasive but also systemic" (Mohanty 1991, 4, emphasis in original). What distinguishes the indigenous counterpublic sphere from other contestatory publics, however, is the importance of territorial demands and the struggle to achieve autonomy and self-determination.

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

Within the hemispheric context of indigenous struggles, it is important to underscore the Bolivian case. Approximately 60 percent of the country's 6 million inhabitants are indigenous peoples living in rural and urban areas (Rivera 1993, 52). On the heels of devastating neoliberal economic policies implemented during the early 1980s came a resurgence of indigenous organization in both the Andean highlands and the Amazonian lowlands. To mention just a few examples, in 1982 in Santa Cruz, indigenous peoples from the lowlands organized the Primer Encuentro de Pueblos Indígenas del Oriente Boliviano. At this meeting, indigenous peoples publicly denounced for the first time in recent history the injustices that were being committed against them. As a result of this assembly, the participants formed a regional association known as the Confederación de Indígenas del Oriente Boliviano (CIDOB), an association that has called for the right to territory and autonomy. Soon after the establishment of CIDOB, the Ava-Guaraní from the Cordillera province formed the Asamblea del Pueblo Guaraní (Healy 2001, 74–82). In the highlands a few years later, leaders and representatives from indigenous communities came together to create the Federación de Ayllus del Sur de Oruro and the Federación de Ayllus de Norte de Potosí.

While it is beyond the scope of this research note to provide a history of indigenous organization and movements in Bolivia, it is important to call attention to the significant event that took place in October 1990, when more than eight hundred Amazonian Indians began the arduous seven-hundred-kilometer march from Trinidad to La Paz to demand human and

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territorial rights from the government. According to sociologist Silvia Rivera, the March for Territory and Dignity encapsulated the complex historical dimensions of the indigenous movement by calling for the right of indigenous peoples to be treated with dignity and respected for their historical, cultural, and political specificities (Rivera 1993, 53). When the marchers reached the mountain pass that is both a physical and symbolic border between the highlands and the lowlands, they were welcomed by thousands of Aymaras, Qhichwas, and Urus and also by non-Indians who had come out to meet them. Those present declared the event to be the restoration of the body of the eighteenth-century Aymara leader Tupak Katari, whose violent death at the hands of Spanish colonial authorities symbolized the disintegration of the Inca Empire Tawantinsuyu. Rivera described the intense emotional charge of this historically significant encounter: "La unión de las partes fragmentadas del cuerpo indígena—unión ctónica, desde las profundidades del tiempo-espacio—pareció vislumbrarse, o al menos así lo percibimos la mayoría de los presentes, como un *pachakuti*, un vuelco cósmico, que irrumpía nuevamente como un rayo en el cielo despejado del tiempo lineal" (1993, 53).[1]

This momentous coming together of indigenous peoples from all over Bolivia heralded the formation of a new arena of public debate and contestation. In the years since the 1990 march, this counterpublic sphere has created a forum for indigenous peoples to join together from different areas of the country to pursue common interests, although not without serious ideological differences between groups. This counterpublic sphere underscores the historical agency of indigenous peoples and challenges prevailing dehumanizing practices that for over five hundred years had relegated them to the category of premodern Other. 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 the 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).

The work of the pioneering Aymara nongovernmental organization known as the Taller de Historia Oral Andina (THOA) has contributed in

1. Historian and cultural critic Michel de Certeau has argued that the history of repression and resistance has been written on the native body. The body thus figures as a site of memory for Latin American indigenous peoples. He observed, "This *tortured* body and another body, the *altered earth*, represent a beginning, a rebirth of the will to *construct* a *political* association. A unity born of hardship and resistance to hardship is the historical locus, the collective memory of the social body, where a will that neither confirms nor denies this writing of history originates. It deciphers the scars on the body proper [*le corps proper*]—or the fallen 'heroes' and 'martyrs' who correspond to them in narrative—as the index of a *history* yet to be made" (Certeau 1986, 227, emphases in original).

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key ways to the formation of the indigenous counterpublic sphere in Bolivia. While it may not be as well known abroad as other political organizations like the Confederación Sindical Unica de Trabajadores Campesinos de Bolivia (CSUTCB), THOA has conducted an ongoing critique of Western epistemologies through writings and activism for close to two decades. THOA is not the only organization in Bolivia to undertake the difficult task of re-examining prevailing historiographic and intellectual paradigms from the point of view of indigenous peoples. The seminal work of Aymara historian Roberto Choque Canqui represents one of the first sustained efforts in this area. Following Choque Canqui's lead, other centers' journals and centers such as *Mink'a*, *Qhantati*, *Chitakolla*, and Centro Pusisuyu have published studies expressing profound commitment to an alternate form of historical consciousness (Mamani Condori 2001, 51–52). THOA's emphasis on the significant role of community elders as well as the influential contributions of women to the struggle for autonomy and self-determination exemplifies the efforts of this new generation of indigenous intellectuals. Understanding the accomplishments of THOA in light of recent studies of the public sphere is particularly apt because the group's theory and method of struggle consistently foreground questions of indigenous subjectivity and agency as expressed in the collaborative context of a community.

As its first critical endeavor, THOA has fostered the elaboration and expression of Andean cultural identities by collecting and circulating historical, political, and testimonial documents disseminated mainly in bilingual (Aymara and 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." The alternate understanding of Bolivian history is one in which pre-national culture is rooted. In this manner, THOA has defined its goals 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, it is possible to argue 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).

In a second undertaking, THOA helps organize and promote the movement to reconstitute the Andean community structure known as the *ayllu*. It is the fundamental social organization loosely 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 of indigenous territory has led to devastating material and social

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consequences for many Andean communities. The geopolitical movement to reconstitute the ayllu calls for recognizing colonial territorial boundaries between communities and reestablishing traditional Andean forms of governance. Although 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). Therefore, this essay underscores the significance of the indigenous counterpublic sphere in Bolivia as not only a discursive arena but also an autonomous spatial or territorial arena where oppositional cultural and political identities can be enacted and legitimated.

Autonomy and self-determination do not imply isolationism, however. THOA's efforts to reconstitute the ayllu have forged strong links with other significant Aymara organizations having common objectives such as the right to territory and dignity as well as respect for indigenous political, social, and cultural traditions. THOA collaborates with nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) such as the Centro Andino de Desarrollo Agropecuario (CADA) and the Centro de Discusión Ideológica de la Mujer Aymara (CDIMA), cosponsoring various workshops and meetings including the Primer Encuentro sobre Derechos de los Pueblos y Naciones Originarias in 1994. THOA also maintains close association with CONAMAQ (Consejo de Ayllus y Markas del Qullasuyu), an indigenous federation created in 1997 by ayllus from the departments of La Paz, Oruro, Potosí, Cochabamba, and Chuquisaca. THOA also participates in projects and exchanges organizational experience with indigenous peoples from the Bolivian 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 Amalio Siyé, the president of CIDOB.

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).[2] THOA has participated in several meetings and exchanges with CONAIE (the 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.

THOA was established 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

2. For more on the transnational indigenous movement, see Brysk (1994), Comisión Internacional de Juristas et al. (1996), Maiguashca (1994), Varese (1991), and Varese, ed. (1996).

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primary education, they were part of the first generation of Aymara students attending the San Andrés University in La Paz in the 1970s (Harris 1992, 101). Many obtained bachelor's degrees in history and sociology, and some completed master's degrees in Andean history at FLACSO in Quito. The students' interest in Andean history grew out of their life experience as Aymara Indians, their coursework under the directorship of Silvia Rivera, and their active participation in the burgeoning Indian movement of the 1980s as leaders or *mallkus* of the Movimiento Universitario Julián Apasa (MUJA) and the Partido Indio.[3] The group's initial 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. During these years, the republican regimes intensified 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. María Eugenia Choque Quispe explained that THOA's decision to concentrate on this time period arose from the demands of the indigenous movements of the 1980s and 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 n.d., 1).

THOA members began with a working hypothesis positing that despite the ongoing history of colonialism and repression, an autonomous indigenous historical memory and subjectivity persisted throughout the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. This native historical memory was fundamental to indigenous resistance to intensifying efforts by the radicalized working class to assimilate Indians as *campesinos* and by the MNR (Movimiento Nacionalista Revolucionario) to transform Indians into acculturated mestizos.[4] This research project required extensive archival investigation that provided THOA members with a catalog of names and ayllus of important Aymara leaders from the beginning of the twentieth century. While their initial inquiries did not turn up much detailed information, the data they uncovered pointed to the existence of an ongoing indigenous movement 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 1986, 83). The research team subsequently trav-

3. Many THOA members have obtained some university education, and the majority of them reside in El Alto. For these reasons, some social scientists view them as urban mestizos. Yet THOA members self-identify as Indians, and most maintain familial ties and labor obligations with their ayllu communities.

4. Carlos Mamani Condori, personal communication via E-mail, 2 Oct. 1998.

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eled to these ayllus and conducted lengthy oral interviews with community elders and their families who had participated in the struggles of the 1920s and 1930s. The oral histories collected confirmed both the existence and the magnitude of indigenous organization. This original investigation resulted in several important publications, including the bilingual booklet *El indio Santos Marka T'ula* (1984) and the Aymara radionovela of the same name.

In her introduction to the English translation of the booklet, Olivia Harris called the reader's attention to the text's significance and innovation, identifying it as "probably the first modern experience of writing history in Aymara" (1992, 101). THOA's groundbreaking publication on Santos Marka T'ula represents a rethinking of 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 collecting 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 empower them to move together into the future (Mamani Condori 1989, 23). To accomplish this objective, THOA had to make the text linguistically accessible and affordable. Harris described the relationship between the format of the booklet and its contents: "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 schoolteachers and the younger literate generations of Indian peasants" (Harris 1992, 101–2). The popular success enjoyed by this initial work, 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. The 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; Rivera 1986).

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 the pervasive effects of colonialism. Like the mimeographed pamphlet, the radionovela was such a success that in 1986 the series of ninety episodes was broadcast three times in Aymara to communities throughout La Paz, Oruro, and parts of Potosí and Cochabamba (Ticona Alejo and Albó 1996, 255). Kevin Healy observed, "the Santos Marka T'ula story climbed to the top of the popularity charts of rural radio pro-

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gramming in the altiplano towns and hamlets" (Healy 2001, 87). According to María Eugenia Choque Quispe, the show ran Mondays through Fridays, with the Saturday slot 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 on the *cacique*, while 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 the people who struggled with him.[5]

Yet the success of the radio program and publication rests on more than the participatory act of remembering and retelling: THOA's work caused specific Aymara leaders and "sites of experience" to become visible to a wide Aymara interpretative community (see Merewether 1996, 108). Esteban Ticona Alejo and Xavier Albó commented similarly that the impact of the radio program "no fue un simple acto de recordación sino el inicio del proceso de revaloración de la identidad histórica y difusión de la lucha de cientos de comunidades originarias y ex-haciendas" (1996, 255). Through these interactive broadcasts, THOA was able to create a legitimate space open to the presence of marginalized others within the public sphere. THOA's investigation consequently set into motion an extensive process of collective reevaluation of the history of native identity that 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 in the first forty years of the twentieth century, also became the shared symbol of First Nation identity (as *pueblos originarios*) for a generation of Aymara young people living at the end of the century (Ticona, Rojas, and Albó 1995, 199–200; also Ticona Alejo and Albó 1996, 254–55).[6]

These early publications and radio broadcasts by THOA members insisted 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 traditional Andean community acquired critical symbolic value because it encompassed three basic characteristics: "población, gobierno y territorio" (Federación de Ayllus 1993, 12). Designated as "*jatha*" (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 has underscored the relationship between territory and identity (see also Choque Canqui and Ticona Alejo 1996; Callisaya Cuentas 1996; Conde Mamani 1996; Rivera and THOA 1992;

5. Luisa Limachi, "Tenemos que aprender de la experiencia de los viejos: Con María Eugenia Choque Quispe, directora del THOA." Interview published in *Presencia*, 30 Aug. 1996.

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.

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Rasnake 1988). The operations of native historical memory form a key channel of identity that in this case is built on a series of spatially configured social and cultural relationships. The de-structuring of the ayllu thus brings about the de-structuring of memory (see Wachtel 1986, 215).

Carlos Mamani Condori foregrounded this reciprocal relationship among territory, identity, and social memory in his seminal publication *Taraqu, 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 undertaking. Because his initial investigations uncovered little recorded information on this important leader's career, Mamani Condori was obliged to ask: "¿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" (Mamani Condori 1991, 160). 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 alternate 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 explained 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" (1991, 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 (Mamani Condori 1991, 9–11). By decentering the individual subject, Mamani Condori was able to uncover an alternative history that criollo official histories had ignored or dismissed as irrelevant. Mamani Condori concluded that revisionary indigenous historiography "nos permite reconocer la historia de la persona en la historia del ayllu, de la marka,[7] 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" (1991, 160).

Mamani Condori's publication brought elite historiography to a crisis by laying bare its investment in creating and maintaining criollo authority and power.[8] Writing more generally on the relationship between indigenous

7. A *marka* is the jurisdiction formed by a group of ayllus.

8. In her introductory essay to *Selected Subaltern Studies*, Gayatri Spivak argued, "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.

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historicism and colonialism, Arif Dirlik noted, "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" (Dirlik 1996, 23–24).

Not long after the publication of *Taraqu*, THOA and the Taraqu Agrarian Center organized a weekend seminar entitled "La Lucha Anticolonial de los Comunarios de Taraqu." It was based on Mamani Condori's book and was 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 "a conversation without paternalistic criollo-mestizo mediation."[9] Topics for discussion included the importance of the Aymara language in history, colonial land titles, and Andean women. This experience indicates that the impact of THOA's work goes beyond merely supplementing traditional written histories. Nathan Wachtel, speaking on the importance of oral history, suggested that such a process "from the bottom up" questions the official record and uncovers a counterhistory and a countermemory at the same time (Wachtel 1986, 207–8). For Mamani Condori, however, this enduring counterhistory should not be understood merely in terms of its repetition. Continuation is also "cambio, maduración, renovación" (Mamani Condori 1991, 159). Revisionist Andean historiography thus becomes a powerful catalyst in reclaiming 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 restituír esa autoestima mediante esta primera experiencia de investigación histórica."[10]

THOA's trailblazing publications brought the organization to the attention of many. Dissemination of the group's research was facilitated in part by the publishing house Historia Social Boliviana (HISBOL) and later by the formation in 1991 of Editorial Aruwiyiri.[11] In their discussions of the

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" (Spivak 1988, 10).

9. "Seminario sobre 'Lucha anticolonial de los comunarios de Taraqu,'" *Presencia*, 15 May 1992.

10. Wilson García Mérida, "Intelectuales indígenas en la mira: Aurolyn Luykx y Carlos Mamani Condori, dos enfoques sobre una 'novedad' social," interview in *Datos y Análisis* 1, no. 4, 11 Dec. 1994 (published in Cochabamba).

11. See Healy (2001) for his discussion of the link between THOA and HISBOL.

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counterpublic sphere, both Nancy Fraser and Rita Felski have emphasized the importance of mass media and public forms of communication in creating a contestatory discursive arena. When subordinated groups lack equal access to the means of equal participation, "political economy enforces structurally what culture accomplishes informally" (Fraser 1997, 79). Fraser and Felski have pointed out the ways in which feminist counterpublics in the United States have benefited from a wide range of discursive infrastructures that include journals, bookstores, alternative publishing companies, research centers, and academic programs. So too Michael Dawson has expressed 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 has reinforced preexisting social structures in places where a lack of resources and technology makes electronic communication prohibitively expensive (Delgado and Becker 1998). For example, THOA acquired Internet access only about six years ago. Moreover, as the memory of the Columbian Quincentenary in 1992 slowly fades, support for indigenous organizations from "granting agencies" in the so-called developed world has gradually declined. Although 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 exceedingly difficult to acquire. Following an external evaluation of THOA in 1993, Virginia Ayllón noted in her report that THOA's accomplishments in publishing constitute one of its greatest achievements (Ayllón 1993, 21). She also praised THOA's rigorous methodology and professional presentation, which make the group's publications accessible to a broad audience. Ayllón was concerned at first that the written texts might be directed more toward an academic audience than toward the indigenous communities. These fears were dispelled after interviewing representatives from different communities who stated categorically that the materials were both very clear and useful. Ayllón also spoke with Professor Félix Apala of the Proyecto de Educación Intercultural Bilingüe (PEIB), who reported that rural teachers found THOA's publications well suited for the classroom (Ayllón 1993, 22–23). In addition to the pamphlet on Santos Marka T'ula, publications widely used 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 Canqui and his coauthors' *Educación indígena ¿Ciudadanía o colonización?* (1992), Tomás Huanca's *Jilirinaksan arsüwipa: Testimonios de nuestros mayores* (1991), and the

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Federación de Ayllus–Provincia Ingavi's *Estructura orgánica* (1993). Notwithstanding the excellent quality of all THOA publications, their dissemination to indigenous communities remains an ongoing challenge due to insufficient funds. And the material disadvantages that THOA faces means that its analysis and critique expand slowly throughout Bolivian society.

Over the years, THOA has increasingly coordinated its activities with other NGOs, grassroots organizations, and academics. But as Kevin Healy has pointed out, "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 2001, 87). THOA's impressive achievements in forming a counterpublic sphere gave new prominence to a dynamic group of young Aymara intellectuals, both men and women. As the group substantiated the theoretical and methodological underpinnings of an indigenous historiography in 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 in the early years of organization, THOA's efforts increasingly coalesced around the movement to reconstitute the ayllu, which had been growing during the early 1980s following austerity measures introduced by neoliberal reform and terrible devastation from ongoing drought. Restoration of the traditional Andean community, and with it the right to self-governance and self-determination, was perceived as a vital means of mitigating the catastrophic effects of economic and natural disasters. Consequently, THOA members recognized reconstitution of the ayllu as a political act of decolonization. María Eugenia Choque Quispe explained that THOA did not decide alone, in vertical top-down fashion, to work on reconstituting the ayllu. Rather, the group's involvement came about as a result of repeated requests on the part of ayllu communities themselves.[12] Under the administration of President Gonzalo Sánchez de Lozada and Vice President Víctor Hugo Cárdenas (1993–1997), unprecedented state legislation recognized, at least on paper, the rights of indigenous peoples to territory and native forms of governance. Sought out by indigenous 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 de-

12. Limachi interview with María Eugenia Choque, *Presencia*, 30 Aug. 1996.

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velopment of leadership workshops, devising strategies for reconstituting and strengthening the ayllu, and researching archives to compile historical documents, including colonial land titles (Choque Quispe 1998).

In 1987 and 1988, indigenous peoples formed two regional federations: the Federación de Ayllus del Sur de Oruro and the Federación de Ayllus del Norte de Potosí. At the same time, THOA began working with indigenous organizations from the province of Ingavi 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 is occurring in the provinces of Villarroel and Loayza (THOA n.d., 1–2; Choque Quispe 1998).

The process of reconstituting the ayllu can be initiated in different ways. The history of the Federación de Jesús de Machaqa in the province of Ingavi offers one representative example. In their multivolume study of Jesús de Machaqa, Roberto Choque Canqui, Esteban Ticona Alejo, and Xavier Albó traced the complex dialectic that evolved throughout the twentieth century as the organizational tradition of the ayllu had to confront various forms of state intervention, notably that of rural syndicalism. While the roots of this movement can be found in the period following the Chaco War (1932–1935), rural syndicalism flourished subsequent to the Revolution of 1952 with the desire of the Movimiento Nacionalista Revolucionario (MNR) to reorganize the state and "modernize" indigenous communities. Revolutionary elites perceived the syndicate system as 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 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 thus bolster the political base of the MNR.[13] The year 1992 marked a watershed, as the transnational indigenous movement gathered forces to celebrate five hundred years of resistance to colonialism. Indigenous peoples in Bolivia joined the call to come together by forming the Asamblea de las Nacionalidades. In the province of Ingavi, indigenous peoples reclaimed the structure of the ayllu and marka while turning away from the organizational arrangement set forth by syndicalism (Ticona Alejo and Albó 1996, 266).

13. For more analysis of rural syndicalism, see Calderón and Dandler (1984) and Mamani Condori (2001).

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An important resource resulting from this experience of reorganization is the booklet *Estructura orgánica*, compiled by the Federación de Ayllus y Comunidades Originarias de la Provincia Ingavi (FACOPI) and published by THOA. *Mallku* (leader) Florentino Gómez Callisaya outlined in the prologue the major events as they took place. According to his account, in January 1993 some seven hundred representatives from the province of Ingavi's eight cantons participated in the Primer Magno Congreso Orgánico de Desaguadero. 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 the provincial level incorporating all the ayllus in the district. They appointed a commission to study the communities' traditions and ways of life and then draft statutes of governance that could be implemented at each organizational level (Federación de Ayllus 1993, 5–6). As Ticona Alejo and Albó noted, the statutes reintroduce the use of traditional Aymara names for different leadership positions, making only oblique references to the titles and ranks established by rural syndicalism (1996, 266). *Estructura orgánica* lays out the statutes as they were approved by FACOPI three months later. Disseminated widely by THOA, this booklet has served as a useful guide for other communities wanting to strengthen their traditions and reconstitute customary forms of governance.[14]

Following the example of the Federación de Ayllus y Comunidades Originarias de la Provincia Ingavi, other communities seeking to strengthen the ayllu tradition are consulting resources such as *Estructura orgánica* while carrying out sustained discussions analyzing traditions of the past and the material circumstances of the present. In the town of Umala, 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 comparison with other areas of the province of Aroma, have preserved more of their traditions of organization. On the cobblestones 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 became 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

14. THOA maintains in its archives copies of the founding statutes of communities that have reconstituted themselves as ayllus. Included are the statutes for the Comunidad Originaria, Ayllu Colque Alta, Provincia Pacajes (1994); the Federación de Ayllus y Markas Qhichwas-Aymaras de la Provincia Muñecas (1995); the 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); and the Federación de Comunidades Originarias de la Provincia Loayza—Tupaj Katari–Bartolina Sisa (1997).

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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).[15] These rituals also 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).

In spite of considerable 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 them an outgrowth of colonialism. Marginalization, inequality, and exclusion are but three factors that continue to weaken the ayllu's vulnerable socioeconomic structures. Most recently, the state's redistricting process and the formation of new rural municipalities threatens to fragment the traditional community further. Indigenous peoples are experiencing a deep sense of frustration, social discontent, and distrust of the government and its representatives (THOA n.d., 5).

It is precisely this sense of frustration and discontent resulting from the longstanding experience of political disenfranchisement that has led to the recent mobilization of indigenous peoples throughout Latin America. Indigenous movements for self-determination and autonomy are directly contesting the policies and practices of neoliberal reform and resisting a "single relationship between the state and its citizens" (Yashar 1998, 39). According to Yashar, indigenous organizations "challenge policymakers 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" (1998, 39). In this context, the importance of international ties among indigenous organizations cannot be overestimated. Stefano Varese has argued that indigenous peoples throughout the Americas are engaged in "un desnacionalismo de estado," looking to interlocutors beyond the nation-state with the desire to construct alternate forums of political and cultural identification (Varese 1996, 23).[16]

15. As Diana Digges and Joanne Rappaport suggestively argued 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" (Digges and Rappaport 1992, 150).

16. According to Stefano Varese, "No solamente las organizaciones indígenas internacionalizan la confrontación, sino que abren simultáneamente frentes de acción en varios niveles de

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

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" (Varese 1996, 24–25).

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