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**‘We are all *originarios*’: Political
Conflict and Identity in
Contemporary Bolivia**

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Submitted for Doctor of Philosophy in Social Anthropology

University of Sussex

December 2018

I hereby declare that this thesis has not been, and will not be, submitted in whole or in part to another University for the award of any other degree.

Signature

UNIVERSITY OF SUSSEX

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PHD IN SOCIAL ANTHROPOLOGY

‘WE ARE ALL ORIGNARIOS’: POLITICAL CONFLICT AND IDENTITY IN
CONTEMPORARY BOLIVIA

SUMMARY

Based on long-term ethnographic fieldwork in rural and urban areas of Bolivia, this thesis examines a local political conflict arising out of different understandings of identity and the ongoing processes of change taking place in the country. Within the Quechua-speaking highland indigenous community of Bolívar province in the Cochabamba department of Bolivia there exist multiple overlapping forms of local political authority, including the municipal government, peasant union and the traditional authorities who claim to predate the Spanish conquest. Ironically, the national project of the governing ‘Movement Towards Socialism’ (MAS) party of refounding the Bolivian state to include the country’s ‘indigenous majority’ has coincided with an intensification of conflict between them. While examining the substantive content of their disagreements, this thesis also explores how legal and institutional changes which purport to advance the decolonisation of Bolivian society have served to further conflict among local leaders. In part, ideological differences are articulated through contested notions of what it means to be *originario*: a term roughly equivalent in contemporary Bolivia to indigenous, but which in the context of local discussions relates to what it means to be a member of their community. I suggest that a way of understanding this conflict is as an ‘ethical discourse’: a process in which different groups or persons contest and seek to define key elements of their shared culture, identity and morality.

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Acknowledgements

Firstly, I am tremendously grateful for the financial support from the Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC) which made this research possible. A number of academics provided me with advice on theoretical and practical matters. These include my PhD supervisors, Peter Luetchford and Evan Killick as well as Tristan Platt, Thomas Grisaffi, Martyn Wemyss and Miranda Sheild Johansson. I would also like to thank Gillian Evans, Keir Martin, Jan Grill and John Gledhill at the University of Manchester who all advised me on my original PhD proposal and gave me my introduction to anthropological theory and method. Many of my fellow PhD students in the school of Global Studies at Sussex have made the journey easier for me in various ways and I would like to thank Santiago Ripoll, George Byrne, James McMurray, Valerio Colosio, Esra Demirkol, Nadia Mosquera, Lorena Guzman Elizalde, David Rubyan-Ling, Carmen Leon Himmelstein and Chris Long for their friendship, advice and intellectual insights. Other friends in Brighton who have provided me with emotional support (as well as their sofas or spare rooms when I came to Brighton for supervisions and meetings while living elsewhere) include Tom Matthews, John Evans and Anthony Trory. I would like to give special thanks to my parents, Martin and Elizabeth Doyle, who have always supported me in whatever I chose to do, including the decision to embark on a PhD in Social Anthropology.

Countless people helped me during my fieldwork in Bolivia in many ways. The academics, Fernando Prada and Nelson Antequera, gave much helpful advice and information. Moreover, Cancio Zuna and Ramiro Saravia were local intellectuals and activist figures in Cochabamba who were willing to talk with me at length about Bolivian politics and society. In addition, the indigenous rights lawyers, Piter Gabriel Fuentes, Francisco Larico and Edwin Prada and the NGO adviser, Toribia Lero Quispe, all shared their knowledge with me. Fernando Mendoza was kind enough to sponsor my residency visa in Bolivia in exchange for giving talks at the ALBA institute's 'Cátedra Libre' in Cochabamba and for writing articles in Abya Yala magazine. This was also an interesting and rewarding experience in itself, for which I am grateful. I would also like to thank my Quechua teachers, Hilda Estrada and Don Jesus, for their help in learning this difficult language as well as Julieta Zurita, Juan Carlos Romero and Tata Teofilo Laime. Juan Carlos also helped me with the transcription and translation of some of the Quechua recordings that appear in this thesis.

The local municipal government in Bolívar province, the peasant union and traditional authorities all gave me permission to attend their meetings and to interview them. In Bolívar, particular thanks have to go to Gregorio Jacinto and his family for putting me up in their home for extended periods and spending their time with me. Don Enrique Tola and Don Severino Condori also offered me their homes to stay in as well as their company and conversation. I extend the same thanks to Don Victor Ari and the members of the Baptist Union congregation of Yuraq Rumi. There are countless other individuals, some of whom are mentioned throughout this text and referred to in a list of key informants, who provided me with information and insight. To all of them I would like to offer my sincere gratitude for having shared their time with me and made this thesis possible.

Lastly, this thesis is dedicated to my wife, Natalia Negrete, with whom I have shared much of the last ten years of my life. Not only did she accompany me to Bolivia, but

she helped at many stages of my fieldwork: travelling with me on long journeys through the mountains on rusty overcrowded buses, sleeping on straw mattresses or on the ground, sitting for hours in meetings, bearing the cold of the evenings in the *altiplano* and sharing plates of *ch'uño*. I would not have been able to come to the end of this journey without her and I hope to share more with her in the years to come.

Glossary and Language

Fieldwork was conducted in a mixture of Spanish and Quechua as both are spoken widely. For the most part I have attempted to include direct transcriptions of the spoken language while longer passages are translated into English and the source is indicated in brackets with (Q) for Quechua and (S) for Spanish. Both Quechua and Spanish words and passages are written in italics throughout the thesis.

agregado (S)	category of <i>ayllu</i> membership below <i>originario</i>
alcaldía (S)	municipal government/town hall
altiplano (S)	high plains
ancestros apoderados (S)	ancestors who purchased the <i>ayllu</i> from the Spanish state (see also: <i>soqta achachilas</i>)
apu (Q)	mountain peak and deity
autoridades originarias (S)	traditional or <i>ayllu</i> authorities
ayllu (Q)	Andean territorial unit and social structure
almilla (Q)	traditional black embroidered dress
ampliado general (S)	general meeting of the province
aransaya (Q)	<i>ayllu</i> division
ayni (Q)	labour exchange/reciprocity
ayonoqa (Q)	communal fields
bartolina sisas (S)	women's union
baston de mando (S)	sacred staff of power
cacique (S)	chieftain

campesino (S)	peasant
canton (S)	territorial division of colonial origin
cargo (S)	office held within local civic politics
central provincial (S)	union at level of province
chachawarmi (Q)	principle according to which the <i>cargo</i> is assumed by a married couple
ch'alla (Q)	ritual libation
chalina (S)	scarf worn by traditional authorities
charango (S)	traditional Andean lute instrument
chicha (S)	corn beer
chicote (S)	rope whip
coca (S&Q)	leaf with mild stimulant properties
cocaleros (S)	coca producers/movement
comunidad (S)	hamlet, lowest level of the <i>ayllu</i>
contribución territorial (S)	obsolete land tax of colonial origin
cholo/chola (S)	'semi-indigenous' rural-urban migrant
ch'ullu (Q)	traditional wool hat
ch'uño (Q)	freeze-dried potatoes
choqu (Q)	form of labour exchange, work party
compadrazgo (S)	fictive kinship of godparents
criollo (S)	white Spanish descendant
dirigente (S)	union leader at village level

dirigente provincial (S)	head of peasant union for province/Bolívar
fiesta (S)	festival or ritual event
fiesta cargo system (S)	system of rotative authorities traditionally linked to the sponsorship of <i>fiestas</i>
forastero (S)	outsider, not full member of community
gente humilde (S)	humble folk of the <i>comunidades</i>
hacienda (S)	landed estate of colonial origin
hermano (S)	literally ‘brother’: ‘comrade’ or Evangelical Christian
jap’iy (Q)	<i>ayllu</i> division
jilanku (Q)	traditional authority at village level
jula-jula (S)	traditional group dance in <i>fiestas</i>
katarismo (S)	highland indigenous political movement
kuraj tata (Q)	<i>ayllu</i> leader at level of <i>jap’iy</i>
la parte orgánica (S)	relating to the organisation of civic politics
llaqta runas (Q)	<i>mestizo</i> townsfolk
lote (S)	area of urban land
lliklla (Q)	traditional woven blanket
mallku (Q)	lord or <i>ayllu</i> leader
marka (Q)	pre-colonial territorial division
mestizo (S)	of mixed culture or ethnicity

mink'a (Q)	form of labour exchange
misa mast'ay (Q)	ritual to venerate <i>ayllu</i> documents and ancestors
muyu (Q)	rotation of authorities and <i>ayonoqas</i>
originario (S)	category of <i>ayllu</i> membership, original inhabitant and term for highland indigenous people
organización matriz (S)	parent organisation
padrino (S)	godfather
personería jurídica (S)	juridical/legal personhood
pollera (S)	pleated skirt worn by <i>chola</i> women
poncho (S)	woollen poncho worn by <i>kuraj tatas</i>
ponguaje (S)	quasi-serfdom prior to 1952
patrón (S)	landlord
phututu (Q)	cow horn used to summon meetings
piraño (Q)	<i>ayllu</i> division and authority
pokuy (Q)	flourishing (name of <i>ayllu</i> 's 'political instrument')
qañawa (Q)	Andean crop related to Quinoa
q'ara runas (Q)	white outsiders, the landlord class
runa (Q)	person
runa tinku (Q)	ritualised battle
soqta achachilas (Q)	ancestors who purchased the <i>ayllu</i>
sombrero (S)	traditional sheep hide hat

sub-central (S)	sub-division of the peasant union
saneamiento (S)	process of titling land
secretario (S)	secretary within union organisation
sede sindical (S)	site of local communal assemblies
sindicato campesino (S)	peasant union
suyu (Q)	pre-colonial territorial division
sub-central (S)	lower division of peasant union
tata santísimo (Q)	sacred staff of power
tata santiago (Q)	the Spanish saint Santiago
técnico (Q)	professional or technical adviser
toro tinku (Q)	ritual bullfight
tantachawi (Q)	meeting
tawnitinsuyu (Q)	the Inca empire
thaki (Q)	path taken through <i>cargos</i>
usos y costumbres (S)	internal norms and customs
urinsaya (Q)	<i>ayllu</i> division
uma ruthuku (Q)	child's first haircut
vilacaymense (S)	member of Vilaycayma
wathiya (Q)	earth-baked food (often potatoes)
wiphala (Q)	highland indigenous flag

List of Acronyms

AGRUCO	Agroecología Universidad Cochabamba
AIOC	Autonomía Indígena Originaria Campesina
ADN	Acción Democrática Nacionalista
BDP	Banco de Desarrollo Productivo
COB	Central Obrera Boliviana
CDM	Comité de Desarrollo Municipal
CENDA	Centro de Comunicación y Desarrollo Andino
CIDOB	Confederación de Pueblos Indígenas de Bolivia
COAMAC	Consejo de Ayllus y Markas de Cochabamba
COMIBOL	Corporación Minera de Bolivia
CONAMAQ	Consejo Nacional de Ayllus y Markas del Qollasuyo
CSTUCB	Confederación Sindical Única de Trabajadores Campesinos de Bolivia
FSTMB	Federación Sindical de Trabajadores Mineros de Bolivia
FSUTCC	Federación Sindical Única de Trabajadores Campesinos de Cochabamba
ILO	International Labour Organisation
INRA	Instituto Nacional de Reforma Agraria
LPP	Ley de Participación Popular
LMAD	Ley Marco de Autonomías y Descentralización

MAS	Movimiento Al Socialismo
MITKA	Movimiento Indio Túpak Katari
MNR	Movimiento Nacionalista Revolucionario
MRTK	Movimiento Revolucionario Túpak Katari
NEP	New Economic Policy
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
OTB	Organización Territorial de Base
PROSANA	Programa de Seguridad Alimentaria y Nutricional en Las Provincias de Arque, Bolívar y Tapacari
PC	Partido Comunista
PDM	Plan de Desarrollo Municipal
POA	Plan Operativo Anual
TCO	Tierra Comunitaria de Origen
TIPNIS	Territorio Indígena y Parque Nacional Isiboro Sécore
THOA	Taller de Historia Oral Andina
YPFB	Yacimiento Petrolíferos Fiscales Bolivianos

Chapter 1. Local Political Conflict in the New Bolivia

Introduction

In July 2015 my wife and I were traveling along the dirt road that led from the small town of Bolívar, nestled in a valley among the hills of the dry Bolivian *altiplano*, to attend a meeting in the rural hamlet of Vilaycayma. We had stayed the night before in the home of Gregorio Jacinto, the *Kuraj Mallku* of *Ayllu Kirkiawi*: the name given to the traditional governmental structure still observed among the majority of village communities in the remote area of Bolívar province. The six of us, my wife and I, Gregorio, his wife Dominga, their six-year-old daughter Alina and their two-year-old daughter Heidi, were hitching a lift with a truck driver who was taking the road through the town of Bolívar to the nearby mining city of Oruro. In the morning, Dominga had made a fire to boil water in the courtyard of their adobe brick house so the whole family could bathe and ready themselves for the meeting. With great ceremony, Gregorio polished his shoes and put on a smart shirt and trousers and his wool poncho and later his *ch'ullu*, the traditional hat worn in the *altiplano* woven from llama wool and over this a wide-brimmed hat or *sombrero* made from sheep hide. Lastly, he put on his llama wool *chalina* or scarf and, delicately balanced between the crook of his elbow and his arm in the manner of a royal scepter, a three-foot-long wooden staff topped with a silver pommel. This was his *baston de mando* (or *tata santísimo* as it was normally referred to in Bolívar), the symbol of his authority as leader of the *ayllu*, which is also carried by the *Kuraj Tatas*, the authorities beneath him in the traditional hierarchy. Dominga had changed from the pleated *pollera* skirt she normally wore in the town of Bolívar to a more traditional black *almilla* dress and a beautifully patterned *lliklla* or wool shawl she had woven herself. She dressed her daughter Alina in identical fashion, like a version of herself in miniature.

The truck made its way along the track that wrapped itself around the hills, kicking up clouds of dry earth to the extent that we had to close the windows to stop ourselves from choking. The landscape of Bolívar province is austere and dramatic and the climate is arid between June and September when relative humidity goes down to single figures, resulting in permanently chapped lips, cracked skin and night time temperatures below zero. The view that passed before us through the window was a mosaic of red and yellow earth, green pastures and farming terraces cut into the sides of hills. The truck

turned a final bend and left us at the side of the road by the graveyard of Vilaycayma. The village of Vilaycayma, or *comunidad* as the permanently settled hamlets in Bolívar province are referred to, is spread out along a small valley by the side of the road to Oruro. Not long ago it was the largest permanently settled community in the whole of Bolívar province, but waves of migration, mainly to the cities of Oruro and Cochabamba have left it largely abandoned; the walls and straw roofs of many of the adobe houses are collapsed from neglect, leaving a strange and melancholy landscape of broken down homes and hidden among them the lonely figures of the remaining, mainly elderly, inhabitants. While the elderly and middle-aged permanent residents were friendly people who were willing to share their time and food when we came to visit, many people we came to know from Vilaycayma were examples of the phenomenon known as ‘double residence’. That is, while living permanently in the city, they regularly returned for short periods to the countryside during times of sowing and harvesting crops and to participate in the cultural and political life of their community. So, while the site of Vilaycayma was largely abandoned, it continued to exist as a much larger community of double residents and migrants in the cities of Oruro and Cochabamba.

As we took the path through the graveyard and over the small bridge to the main square of the village we were greeted by Maximo Condori, the *jilanku* or traditional authority of Vilaycayma. Alongside Maximo stood some of Gregorio’s *Kuraj Tatas*, the Mayor of Bolívar province, the leader of the provincial peasant union or *dirigente sindical* and two government representatives from the constitutional court in the city of Sucre, who were here to organise the meeting. A number of local *Vilaycaymenses* were sat around the main square chewing coca leaves and warming themselves in the midday sun. We shook hands with Maximo and the other local dignitaries and sat down to chew coca on one of the stone benches of the square. Today’s meeting or *tantachawi* was being organised as part of a consultation process of the *Tribunal Agroambiental* or Agro-environmental Tribunal to institute a new branch of law pertaining to agricultural and environmental matters. As Bolívar province is a highland indigenous community, Gregorio and other local authorities had been participating in meetings of the constitutional court in Sucre that I too had attended. This consultation process was supposed to reflect the sensitivity of the government towards indigenous peoples and their ways of life in a nation popularly referred to as ‘the most indigenous country in

South America', mainly as a result of a 2001 census in which approximately 60% of the population identified as such. Moreover, in 2005, Evo Morales, often referred to in the international press as Bolivia's first 'indigenous president', assumed the presidency and the Movement towards Socialism or MAS party established itself in government, officially recognising the need to change the constitution to reflect the needs of the 'indigenous majority'. This had finally displaced the traditional political oligarchy and brought an end to twenty years of neoliberal governments. Under its new constitution Bolivia is now a 'plurinational state' that values the cultural rights and autonomy of its different ethnic groups alongside forms of legal pluralism, while the government remains committed to the 'decolonisation' of the nation and a project of reform which is popularly referred to as 'the process of change' ('*el proceso de cambio*').

Maximo sounded a *phututu*, a cow horn used in the Andes to signal the start of a meeting, to alert any other locals who weren't present and shortly after we began to file in from the main square to the hall of the *sede sindical*, the seat of meetings of the local communal assembly of the village. Gregorio unrolled a patterned, traditionally woven *lliklla* blanket on the floor in front of the table which faced the room and another over the table itself. Each of the *Kuraj Tatas* present was dressed in an almost identical fashion to Gregorio, with their ponchos, *ch'ullus*, scarves and wide-brimmed *sombreros*. In addition, each carried their own *tata santísimo* and a *chicote*, a rope whip used to castigate those who infringe the customary norms or *usos y costumbres* of the community and carried as a symbol of the judicial power of the traditional authorities. Each of the authorities placed his *tata santísimo* atop the *lliklla* and they were bound together with a woven thread to form a single structure. Beneath the *tata santísimo* were placed a mound of coca leaves and two bottles of pure alcohol. Gregorio took one of the bottles of alcohol and sprinkled a few tiny drops over the *tata santísimo* as libation to honour the authority and dignity of the *cargo* or post it embodied, before drinking some himself and presenting both bottles to the other traditional authorities, who each partook in turn. More coca leaves were piled on the *lliklla* on the table, behind which were seated the traditional authorities or *autoridades originarios* and the Mayor of Bolívar.

Nevertheless, the traditional authorities were not the only figures present at the meeting. Apart from the local councillors, technical staff and the mayor were the representatives of the *sindicato campesino* or peasant union, most notably the *dirigente* or leader of the province, Olker Nina. Unlike the *ayllu* authorities, whose existence precedes the

colonisation of the Americas, the peasant union dates back only to the reforms of the 1952 national revolution. While some areas of rural Bolivia are controlled by *autoridades originarias* with little presence of the *sindicato*, others (most notably the valley regions of Cochabamba) are entirely represented by peasant unions. Meanwhile, Bolívar Province is a curious example of political hybridity, where the peasant union and the traditional *ayllu* authorities exist side by side, alongside the municipal government. Moreover, the *sindicato* also has a parallel organisation of *Bartolina Sisas*¹ who are composed entirely of women and represent female interests. Beside Olker Nina were lower level peasant union leaders or *dirigentes* of *sub-centrales* as well as three local councillors: two were representatives of the MAS party while one, Augustina Condori, a young woman in her early twenties, was the sole representative of POKUY, a word in Quechua meaning to grow or flourish and chosen as the name of the traditional authorities' 'political instrument', designed to represent the *ayllu* within the local municipal government. Coca was distributed among the rest of us present in the room, who included various lower-level authorities from some of the other *comunidades* that make up Bolívar Province, besides locals from Vilaycayma.

One of the two men from Sucre introduced himself as Juan Sanchez, a lawyer whose job was to consult with indigenous communities so as to understand how the new law would interact with traditional customary norms or *usos y costumbres* and he invited those present to explain how they managed justice in the province. Although Juan Sanchez spoke entirely in Spanish, the meeting was held in a code-switching mixture of Spanish and the local indigenous language of Quechua. Gregorio then explained the role of the traditional authorities such as *jilanku* in managing disputes concerning land and its rotation within communal areas; how they resolved conflicts over the ownership of plots of land or damage caused by grazing animals and how this was done without money because their ancestors would never pay for justice. Olker Nina, the union figure equivalent in stature to Gregorio as *Kuraj Mallku*, spoke immediately afterwards. He greeted everyone present and stated the following:

'Well brothers, a little has been said about lands. The issue of land is coming more to the *central provincial* and here in the *comunidades* there are small parcels, they become divided progressively over time and as a result there are problems. More of this comes in the direction of the *central provincial*...but just this, we receive problems as a result of lands, shall we say...because of inheritance, right? Because of inheritance. So, this is

¹ The Bartolina Sisas or women's union are named after the wife of the eighteenth century indigenous leader Túpak Katari, the most important figure in the imaginary of Bolivian indigenous nationalism.

causing problems, right? People fight between families and the community. For example, there's a *comunidad*, it's happening that way. We're going to see how we solve it. We're looking.' (Q)

The *comunidad* Olker was alluding to was Piruani where a number of families had been physically fighting each other over the inheritance and correct demarcation of adjacent lands, to the point of some individuals being hospitalized with stab wounds. Olker explained the process through which conflicts were normally resolved within a *comunidad*, stating that anything that couldn't be resolved internally should be passed up through the hierarchy of their province to the *dirigente* of the *sub-central*, representing various *comunidades*, to resolve the matter in coordination with the *Kuraj Tata*.

However, the fact that Olker had alluded to the case of Piruani resulted in a series of recriminations between the different authorities present in the room. Not only was Piruani the scene of bitter fighting between families but it had also become a conflict between traditional *ayllu* leaders, the peasant union and local MAS government. Different leaders had offered different solutions and they began to accuse each other of failing to act properly. This brought up the issue of the legal status of the land, as most of the province had been designated as a Native Communal Land or TCO, which meant it was recognised by the state as the collective territory of an indigenous community. This was the result of the efforts of the traditional authorities, who had responded in the 1990s to a reform known as the INRA law to collectively title their lands. However, according to the *dirigentes* this was fueling uncertainty over ownership of the land and the sorts of conflicts that had developed in Piruani. This was met with derision by some of the *ayllu* authorities who claimed to be simply defending their *usos y costumbres* and that in this sense they were the true *originarios*, the true natives of the place, not the peasant union who were merely a 'political' organisation and a European imposition dating to the national revolution. The peasant union and MAS local government simply wanted to seize power and get rid of the *ayllu* and they were being discriminated against for speaking out against the national policies of the MAS government. The discussion then began to focus on *la parte orgánica*, meaning questions related to organisational structure and the responsibilities of community leaders. It was repeatedly pointed out by some of the union figures and by the MAS Mayor, Francisco Delgado, that it was a very sad thing that the different authorities could not coordinate with each other: all three

authorities must work in coordination, he pronounced resoundingly, '*kimsantinku coordinanku tiyan, kimsantinku trabajanku tiyan, coordinación kanan tiyan!*'

To this it was added that the fact that Gregorio and his *Kuraj Tatas* and *jilankus* held their own separate meetings was both illegitimate and divisive, as was their creation of a political party in POKUY, which had nothing to do with the *usos y costumbres*. Don Jesus, a man in his early forties from the *comunidad* of Pampajasi, who had previously assumed roles both as a *jilanku* and a *dirigente* stated the following:

‘I see and I know, some *comunidades* are practicing, *jilanku, dirigente, sub-central, Kuraj Tata*, coordinately they are practicing between themselves, but this is the reality of our life in the *comunidades*. Now, these *usos y costumbres* of ours were before, right? Who in reality is assuming [the responsibility] now brothers? The *dirigentes*. They are assuming it. The *dirigentes* solve the problems that come from the land. So, this means that it isn't the case that here we discriminate among ourselves. No one should say ‘I am truly an *originario* while that person is not...we are all *originarios*, brothers!’ (Q)

To this last remark about all those present being *originarios* there were cries of agreement from many in the room. However, this was not received well by Gregorio and some of the traditional authorities, who seemed annoyed by the repetition of the phrase. It was pointed out that the MAS party were pursuing many of the same neoliberal policies as their predecessors and had not given power to *originarios* like them. As the meeting wore to a close, Juan Sanchez conceded the existence of a divide in the room but stated that they needed to move past the differences expressed towards greater cooperation. After all, he pointed out, they were all part of one family and there is nothing worse than when a family fight among themselves. It was essential to work together so that the plurinational state could exist in practice and not just on paper. This last comment was greeted by general applause throughout the room. Gregorio then formally closed the meeting and admitted that unity between his brothers and sisters was important to him and that now they had to think seriously about the development of their municipality and what was to be done about the huge levels of migration towards the cities, '*Kunanqa piensananchis tiyan en el desarrollo de nuestro municipio y también imayna ciudadman ripushanku, chaykunata más bien imaynatachus ruwayta, no?*'

We returned to Cochabamba the following day, taking the five-hour journey through the mountains from the town of Bolívar. This meeting in Vilaycayma touches upon many issues that were presented to me in the course of nearly a year and half of fieldwork in Bolivia. While the MAS government remains officially committed to various reforms,

including the ‘decolonisation’ of Bolivia and the introduction of legal pluralism and indigenous autonomy, public meetings and consultations like the one described above often seemed to be more about paying lip-service to these ideas and didn’t lead anywhere. What the meeting did represent, however, was a space in which disagreements were made public between the different forms of authority of the province. A meeting that was ostensibly about understanding the customary norms of an indigenous community had become a stage for airing grievances between the traditional authorities of the *ayllu* on one side (represented politically by their local party, POKUY) and the peasant union and local MAS municipal government on the other.



Figure 1: Picture of consultative meeting of the *Tribunal Agroambiental* in Vilaycayma

Don Jesus’ comment that ‘we are all *originarios*’ constituted a piece of rhetoric often used by peasant union leaders in public debates with the *ayllu* authorities and formed part of the discourse of the *sindicato* and the members of the MAS controlled local government. I heard it repeated constantly during my fieldwork in formal meetings and even in arguments at social events. In effect the phrase is a useful rhetorical device which suggests that the traditional authorities are creating division within the *comunidades* of the province when all are really one family. The implication is also that the *autoridades originarias* claim to speak for all the province when they are only one

part of its governmental structure which includes the *sindicato* or peasant union, the women's union and the municipal government. For the union leaders and local MAS politicians, the traditional authorities were illegitimately presenting themselves as the authentic *originarios*, while some of the *autoridades originarias* accused them of being discriminatory, racist and 'anti-indigenous'.

In contemporary Bolivia *originario* is a term of ethnic identification which often forms part of the discourse of indigeneity present in the populist politics of the MAS and other organisations. It is typically used to mean something akin to 'indigenous' or 'first nations people', with the term *originario* or *campesino originario* being the preferred form of self-identification among residents of Bolívar, if they choose to define themselves in this way. In this sense it refers to the ordinary people from the countryside who had been denied power and dignity since the colonisation, as opposed to the people of the towns and cities and in speeches it is sometimes used almost interchangeably with the term *gente humilde* or 'humble folk'. Nevertheless, the term *originario* in Bolívar province has multiple meanings and connotations, including that of being someone who is original to a place. It can, for example, refer to a traditional category of *ayllu* members who are in theory the original occupants of a community. Meanwhile, the traditional leaders are also referred to as the *autoridades originarias* to denote the fact that, unlike the peasant union authorities, they had existed prior to both the 1952 revolution and the colonial state. They therefore believe they embody the original forms of social organisation and values which predate the colonisation of the Americas. On a number of occasions during my fieldwork I heard individuals from the traditional authorities state that they were the true *originarios*, unlike the MAS politicians and the peasant union. For some of them, the peasant union, having only come into existence with the 1953 agrarian reform, is a European ideological imposition with no 'organic' link to the historical territory of Kirkiawi and nothing more than a 'political' organisation. The adjective 'political' in Bolivia often has a negative connotation as it implies a clientelistic form of politics associated with a past when political parties kept the majority rural population excluded from genuine participation in government. Against this, the *sindicato* would repeat that it is illegitimate for the *ayllu* leaders to present themselves in this way, as they were all *originarios* regardless of their affiliations. After all, thanks to the changes that had taken place in Bolivian politics all the councillors and the mayor of the local municipal government were now themselves

originarios from local families, unlike the representatives of the ‘neoliberal parties’ of the past, who were often outsiders chosen ‘*al dedo*’, meaning directly by the party leadership.

The fact that a remote and tiny region inhabited by Quechua-speaking indigenous people should have multiple overlapping forms of political authority which are involved in a public conflict is puzzling, especially when, as the lawyer from Sucre pointed out, these figures are often from the same *comunidades* and families. That this political conflict appears to have escalated during and as a result of the current period of reform and the election of an indigenous president is yet more puzzling still. Some ten years before the events described in this thesis, the traditional authorities and the peasant union in Bolívar saw themselves as allies against the neoliberal government, representing the interests of the *gente humilde* against the traditional oligarchy. A year prior to Evo’s election as president they had together carried out an ‘indigenous takeover’ in the local elections, eliminating the established political parties to take direct control of the municipal government. Yet by the time of my fieldwork in 2015, local and national events had conspired to bring them into a particularly bitter phase of conflict, which I witnessed as I followed meetings of the different forms of authority as well as those of local government, NGOs, government agencies and public rallies during more than a year. During this time, I struggled with the question of why they were in conflict: what did this have to do with the new period of social change and wider politics in Bolivia and what were the substantive issues and ideological differences that divided them? This thesis is an attempt to answer this question and to do so it explores the social and political transformations at both the local and national level that have contributed to this situation. Moreover, it contextualises the national politics of Bolivia and wider political, legal and social processes within a localised political dispute, while exploring the perspectives that motivate it.

I. Finding the Field and Locating the Site of Politics

The original intention behind my fieldwork had been to study the local politics of urban migrants from the highlands through a multi-sited ethnography. I had become interested in Bolivia partly through its fame as a ‘pink tide’ country, with an indigenous president elected by radical social movements engaged in a process of widespread social change. I considered studying how migrants involved in grass roots political activity in the city

maintained links with their communities of origin and the continuities and ruptures in forms of communal life and political practices, alongside their understandings of morality and local concepts of justice. However, the realities of fieldwork meant that the focus of study changed quite dramatically. While the nature of the fieldwork remained multi-sited, the political situation I was confronted with and which became the central theme of this thesis took place primarily in the rural area of Bolívar province. Nevertheless, in following the politics of a remote locality and the lives of some of its inhabitants I travelled frequently between the rural *altiplano* and the city of Cochabamba, as well as to the cities of Sucre, La Paz and Oruro.

Having spent several months between late 2014 and early 2015 learning Quechua while living in a neighbourhood of retired miners in the western suburbs of the city of Cochabamba I had made friends and local contacts who provided me with a great deal of contextual knowledge about Bolivian society, politics and history. One of these was the anthropologist Fernando Prada, whom I had met while organising Quechua-English language exchanges with students and teachers at the local San Simon university. He suggested that if I was interested in understanding or studying the highlands and its political organisation and values, I should approach the offices of COAMAC or the Federation of Ayllus of Cochabamba, the regional branch of the CONAMAQ (National Council of Ayllus and Markas of Qollasuyu) national *ayllu* federation and that their offices were located in a convent of Franciscan Monks in downtown Cochabamba. I found these without too much difficulty but discovered they were not the offices of COAMAC but rather an office that the Franciscan brothers let out to lawyers and academics who provided legal and technical advice to various *ayllus* in the department of Cochabamba. However, there I met the lawyer and indigenous rights activist, Edwin Prada, who introduced me to the leader of *Ayllu Kirkiawi*, Mallku Gregorio Jacinto. Following meetings with the traditional authorities in Cochabamba and later in Vilaycayma in Bolívar province itself, I proposed that I would attend their meetings and study their organisation, procedures and values as well as spend at least several months living in the province. At the time, my intention was still to study the politics of urban migrants, so I planned on establishing some relationships with people in the countryside and then following the networks of migration and double residence to the city. No one raised any objections to my presence, but one *jilanku* emphasised that I should write something in Spanish that could be left in the local educational centre in Bolívar to

serve to educate their children, given that with all the migration to the cities they were forgetting who they were.



Figure 2: Picture of Dominga weaving while taking her sheep to pasture

Throughout my time in Bolivia access to field sites was negotiated with local leaders and it was necessary to introduce myself in public meetings and explain what I was doing. The fact that rural and peri-urban Bolivia is characterised by the presence of local civic-political institutions means that it is very difficult to carry out fieldwork without first consulting the local community through these channels and explaining the potential harm and benefits of one's presence. In addition to the process described above, I also introduced myself in public meetings of the communal assembly of Vilaycayma, the OTB of Copacabana in Cochabamba and the local Baptist Union congregation. Individuals were aware that I was carrying out fieldwork to write a PhD thesis and that my interest was in understanding local politics. All the figures interviewed agreed to be recorded and for their words to be reproduced. Those

individuals who gave their consent in this way have not been anonymised through pseudonyms. Given that this thesis deals with conflict among members of the same community, this raises the question of whether it is ethical to make it public. I would not have written the thesis in the form I did if I believed it would harm the people among whom I worked. Those I spoke with were eager to express their point of view and for this to be included explicitly in any future publication. Moreover, were it the case that persons' safety, livelihoods or reputation were potentially placed in danger by their inclusion within this thesis, the use of pseudonyms would not suffice to keep them completely anonymous, as nearly all are elected officials or other leaders who could be identified by reference to their roles. While this thesis makes clear the nature of the dispute between local political figures and analyses the situations from which these differences have arisen, I do not believe this endangers any group or individual and neither does it cast aspersions on any person's conduct or character or portray the communities of Bolívar province in a way that would be prejudicial to them.

The following month I returned to Bolívar, this time in order to stay for about six weeks in the home of Gregorio along with his wife Dominga and their three children. I was introduced to and spoke with members of the local council and various technical advisers within the municipal government. During this time, I attended meetings of the traditional authorities, the peasant union, the *ampliado general* or general meeting of the province and the municipal development committee or CDM. I also spent time with Gregorio and his family and accompanied his wife Dominga and their children when they went to feed and pasture their animals. I also visited and got to know Don Enrique Tola, the septuagenarian candidate for POKUY from Vilaycayma, as well as the former MAS congressman and union *dirigente*, Severino Condori. Towards the end of this first month I became ill with stomach problems and returned to Cochabamba, having lost quite a lot of weight. I returned to Bolívar the following month, as I had been invited to participate in the local festivity or *fiesta* of *Tata Santiago* in early July. The *comunidad* of Vilaycayma were dancing the *jula-jula* as part of an inter-community contest to celebrate the Catholic saint's day of Santiago the Moor Slayer and I was asked to take part. I continued to follow the circuit of different meetings described above as well as the monthly meeting of the *comunidad* of Vilaycayma, where I began to spend more time and spoke with various residents and accompanied them in their daily activities. I also visited the nearby *comunidad* of Pampajasi with Gregorio, where he and his friend

Javier would play and record traditional *charango* music in a home-made studio for their folk duo: '*Los Caminantes de Kirkiawi*'. During the next few months I kept returning to Bolívar for extended periods and attended the circuit of local political meetings as well as those of NGOs in various locations around the province and at one point organised a workshop in the courtyard of Gregorio's home in which some of the traditional authorities discussed their understandings of the history of their territory and the problems they were facing.

Around this time, I also began accompanying Gregorio and the traditional leaders on their trips to other parts of Bolivia. These included visits to the constitutional capital in Sucre as part of a consultation process for the *Tribunal Agroambiental*, to La Paz for conferences on indigenous justice and to Cochabamba and Oruro for meetings with other *ayllu* authorities. In Oruro I visited two former *Mallkus*, Juan Apaza and Sabino Veizaga, in order to record interviews and I met with the indigenous rights lawyer Piter Fuentes. In October my wife and I took part as delegates in the three-day Climate Summit for Peoples of the Global South in Tiquipaya near Cochabamba, as well as the 'alternative' summit, *Mesa 18*, alongside Mallku Gregorio and the lawyer Edwin Prada, organised to denounce the 'fake environmentalism' of the MAS government.

From November 2015 I began to spend less time in Bolívar as I visited and got to know people in the peri-urban neighbourhoods of Copacabana and Yuraq Rumi in the south of Cochabamba. I came to realise the extent to which the *comunidad* of Vilaycayma where I had spent time was in reality located in multiple places, as many families lived mainly in the cities or in some cases the eastern tropical lowlands and returned periodically for cultural events, local political meetings and to sow and harvest crops: a pattern commonly described as double residence (Antequera, 2011). This reality of highland communities was one of the two major surprises that contradicted my naïve understanding of Bolivia, alongside the fact that the political dispute which reflected the wider changes occurring in Bolivian society largely took place in the countryside and not the city, between the different forms of authority of this remote province.

In the neighbourhoods around Yuraq Rumi I came to know the Baptist Pastor Don Victor Ari and his family and attended the meetings of their congregation, eventually staying in their home in a spare room. In the church, my wife and I organised a weekly English class for the local children and spent time with other families as well as

accompanying them in their work selling products in the centre of Cochabamba and attending local sporting and cultural events and the meetings of residents' committees which serve as a form of local government. However, during all this time I continued to regularly visit Bolívar, attending the circuit of political meetings as well as cultural events and major public political rallies, including a visit by Evo Morales to the town of Bolívar and a rally held in anticipation of a consultative referendum on the terms of a new mining law. In effect, by travelling between these two spaces, I was doing what many double residents who lived in the cities do: returning for cultural events, political meetings and to help take part in agricultural and collective communal work within their home *comunidad*. On some occasions we travelled from Cochabamba alongside people from Bolívar, such as Severino Condori or Don Fermin Mamani, who was selling fertilisers and agricultural products in the highland regions of Cochabamba.

While the form this ethnography took emerged naturally, the multi-sited nature of it could be seen as problematic. A frequent criticism of multi-sited ethnography is that it attenuates the power of traditional fieldwork, which normally requires a period of months or years to become familiar with the intimate patterns of daily life in a particular location (Falzon, 2009; Amit, 2000). A key idea behind multi-sited ethnography, detailed in a famous paper by George E. Marcus (1995), is that moving beyond the traditional single field site is necessary to better understand the nature of reality with its flows or movements of people, ideas or objects across multiple spaces. Tracking the movement of these entities across space allows for the mapping of the networks through which they are transmitted and transformed. Not only was this the case with my fieldwork, but the nature of both the social situations I was following and the community I was observing necessitated movement between different sites. The reality of rural-urban migration, multi-locality and politics in contemporary Bolivia is such that it would have been difficult to study the themes outlined in this thesis without moving between different places. While remaining in one place for the entire period may generate greater ethnographic detail, what is gained in multi-sited fieldwork is an understanding of the wider networks and flows of people, resources and ideas. Travelling between different spaces, as I did between the city and countryside and following the circuit 'walked' by local political authorities, allowed me to comprehend the emic perspective of individuals who understand themselves to be part of social and political entities which traverse multiple locations: a mentality which is arguably

consistent with long-standing cultural logics of Andean peoples and communities, as will be detailed in the following chapter.

Toward the end of my fieldwork I realised that the major theme of my thesis would be the political dispute taking place in Bolívar and the way this reflects the wider changes occurring in Bolivia and the dilemmas and contradictions of the national MAS government. I recorded a series of interviews with a number of the traditional authorities as well as the provincial and departmental union leaders, the Mayor of the province, the head of the local council and the local authorities in Vilaycayma. I also carried out similar interviews with local residents and leaders in the neighbourhoods I came to know in Cochabamba and was able to speak with the former provincial union leader and local councillor from Bolívar, Justinano Cunurana, as well as two professionals who had worked in Bolívar: the anthropologist Nelson Antequera and the NGO coordinator Toribia Lero Quispe. I also recorded interviews with Edwin Prada and the paralegal and activist Francisco Larico. These interviews allowed me to reflect on and analyse the situation I had observed as well as to gather further details and to document the perspectives of key figures.

While I was able to talk extensively with a number of individuals involved in local politics, when it came to understanding their beliefs and motivations I encountered difficulty relating to them, given the tremendous gulf in our backgrounds and experiences. My own background and political beliefs are those of a university educated western leftist. I was brought up in a family that supported the British Labour Party and I have been involved in left politics as part of various socialist organisations since my undergraduate student days. Not only my intellectual understanding of politics and history but my own identity and emotional attachments to certain narratives and symbols centre around conventional notions of a left-right continuum and social class. These concepts are not entirely suited to comprehending how my informants conceive of their identity, history and political projects. My unfamiliarity with the collective narratives, symbols and notions of identity which form the basis of politics in highland Bolivia explains why the situation I encountered, described in the opening scene of this thesis, was such a confusing puzzle for me. Arriving at an understanding of this was a large part of my fieldwork. This consisted of a process of becoming gradually familiar with the language and concepts people used to express their views and reflecting on the meaning of this data both during and after fieldwork: this being arguably one of the

defining elements of ethnography (Eriksen, 2001), the primary methodology used in this research.

Admittedly, numerous factors, including time, my identity as a clearly ‘other’ white European man performing fieldwork among people of indigenous descent and the specific relationships I made shaped my interactions with people, the data I was able to collect and my interpretation and understanding of it. Individuals I was able to gather detailed information from were largely men involved in local civic politics, although some individuals in Bolívar involved in peasant unionism were guarded with me and not entirely comfortable with my presence in public meetings. This was despite the fact I had been granted permission to attend by the relevant leaders and this was related to the tense atmosphere between the *ayllu* authorities and the union and municipal government leaders, as I was staying much of the time in the home of the *Kuraj Mallku*, Gregorio Jacinto. More practically, language proved a barrier that restricted both whom I tended to form relationships with and the sort of information I could gather. While I had learnt to speak conversational Quechua, I lacked fluency and would become lost during lengthy exchanges, which meant interviews were carried out in Spanish and again tended to be with men rather than women, who often lacked even a primary school education. However, the degree to which I spoke Quechua was useful in two respects. Firstly, the Spanish spoken by many people I interacted with was so heavily grammatically and lexically inflected by Quechua it would have been impossible to understand them without some knowledge of it. Secondly, it meant that I was able to follow public meetings (which were in a linguistic code-switching mixture of Quechua and Spanish) and later transcribe and translate parts of what was said.

Both in the countryside and the city I found women treated me with distrust, partly out of a sense that people would interpret their interaction with me as flirting, which alongside language barriers limited the extent to which I formed meaningful relationships with them. My own sense of unease with this situation and the fact that the men who came to be some of my key informants were forthcoming with information and fluent in Spanish meant that I concentrated on their testimonies. However, the fact that the relationships I formed and the interviews I carried out were largely with men represents an admitted limitation to the data gathered over the course of my fieldwork. Although the political spaces in which the ethnography was carried out are male dominated and the overwhelming majority of contributions to discussions are by men,

they are also attended by women (either accompanying family members or representing the women's union or *Bartolina Sisas*) who often take part in more informal discussions during breaks or *cuarto intermedios* and prepare and distribute food to those present. Not only was I not privy to these talks, but the lack of women's perspectives means that this thesis is unable to explain or account for the gendered nature of the division of labour in the political spaces of the province.

Moreover, as much of the participant observation and interviews were carried out with political leaders and most of the individuals I formed meaningful relationships with were men involved in civic politics, this thesis is largely an ethnography of the political spaces of a community, rather than the community of Bolívar province as a whole. While I did spend significant time in more local field sites, living with families from Bolívar in Cochabamba and with the family of the *Kuraj Mallku*, Gregorio Jacinto, much of the substance of this ethnography concerns political meetings in the province and the cities of Cochabamba, Oruro, La Paz and Sucre.

Lastly, I am aware that my reading of social situations in Bolívar province and of Bolivian politics, history and society more generally contains judgments, perspective-taking and generalisations which, while making things meaningful to a general reader, omit some of the full complexity of the social reality being discussed. I take the view that all ethnography is an act of interpretation (Geertz, 1973) and in as much as it renders beliefs, practices and social situations comprehensible it necessarily paints an incomplete picture. Nevertheless, I am confident that the account presented in this thesis contributes to understanding the politics of highland indigenous communities and contemporary Bolivia. Meanwhile, my very naivety and the need to overcome wide cultural differences provided the basis for constructing an original reading of the situation, through observation and dialogue with informants and reflection on my initial mistakes and confusions, an aspect of the ethnographic method that has been described as one of its unique advantages (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992; Erikson, 2005; Rabinow, 1977; Wacquant, 2008).

II. The *Ayllu*, Politics and Morality

This thesis attempts to understand the rift between the traditional *ayllu* leaders and the other forms of authority of Bolívar province as a contemporary political conflict, motivated by certain differences in perspective and values between those involved, and

which is connected to wider changes in Bolivian society. There exists an extensive literature on the Andean *ayllu* as a form of territorial organisation and a system of rotative authorities that embodies a certain relationship between people and the land they inhabit, involving forms of reciprocity and complementarity (Rasnake, 1988; Platt, 1986; Harris, 1995; Larson, 1995). Much of this work has been criticised for not only essentialising Andean rural communities but in fact creating the very category of the *ayllu* as a work of academic imagination (Weismantel, 2006). Orin Starn (1991) famously alleged that anthropologists were engaged in ‘Andeanism’, analogous to Edward Said’s (1978) *Orientalism*: a work of reification which creates the fiction of a pristine Andean community by deliberately omitting the role of connections to urban centres, the existence of various forms of Christianity and altering terms as a way of exoticising the subjects being described, for example, by the very act of describing an area as an *ayllu* rather than a canton or province. Starn claimed this underemphasises the role of politics and in fact de-politicises Andean rural life, explaining the abject failure of anthropologists to comprehend the emergence of the ‘Shining Path’ Marxist guerilla movement in rural Peru.

This view is complicated by the fact that for indigenous intellectuals in Bolivia the *ayllu* is a vital concept for imagining alternative possibilities to existing social conditions and for social movements it is a resource to help mobilise and seek change (Rivera-Cusicanqui, 1990; Choque and Mamani, 2001; Weismantel, 2006). As an oppositional concept based on what is partly real and partly ideal it can be considered a form of ‘strategic essentialism’ (Spivak, 1987). In contemporary Bolivia the *ayllu* has become central to debates concerning the reform and decolonisation of the country (Fabricant, 2010), with the *ayllu* cited as the basis of an alternative developmental model of *el vivir bien* and as a ‘moral reserve’ for the nation’s edification (Morales, 2008). This discourse draws not only on the work of western scholars but a long tradition of native intellectuals, stretching back to the *indigenismo* of the early twentieth century (Mariátegui, 1928; Arguedas, 1956).

Moreover, the term *ayllu* in Bolívar is a genuine emic concept used to refer not only to the traditional authorities or ‘*los del ayllu*’ but to the territory of the province with its people, history and ways of life. While some of the customs and forms of self-representation of the traditional authorities may be labeled as ‘invented traditions’ (Hobsbawm and Ranger, 1983), similar in certain ways to how structuralist

anthropologists interpreted and arguably ‘created’ the *ayllu*, many of the features of the *ayllu* identified in traditional scholarship are apparent in Bolívar. These include ways of managing land and people’s relationship to it, agricultural labour and reciprocity (Sheild-Johannson, 2014), forms of territorial organisation and the system of political leadership roles or *cargos*. However, as shall be explored later, these features of leadership are not limited to the traditional authorities and despite Bolívar province remaining in some ways an *ayllu*, it features a hybrid system of government with multiple overlapping forms of authority.

Much of the early anthropological scholarship on the Andes and the *ayllu* placed a great deal of emphasis on history and sought continuities and discontinuities with the historic communities that formed part of the Inca Empire and Aymara kingdoms (Bouyousse-Cassagne, Harris and Platt, 2004; Platt, 1982; Harris, 1982). It was influenced by a structuralist perspective and the work of the archaeologist and anthropologist John Murra (1956), who identified key elements of the economic and political system of the Inca state. This work often emphasised the historic and continued resistance of *ayllu* communities to the colonial and postcolonial state and capitalist market (Abercrombie, 1998; Platt, 1982, 1986; Rasnake, 1988). While this was certainly a reality, these works arguably paint a one-sided picture of what was a more complex interplay between indigenous communities, the state and market (Larson, Harris and Tandeter, 1995; Stern, 1992). Similarly, a famous and highly influential paper on the relationship between the *ayllu* and peasant union authorities of northern Potosí by the Aymara intellectual Silvia Rivera-Cusicanqui (1990) is based on understanding present conditions through examining deep and longstanding sociocultural patterns which date to the Spanish colonisation and serve to reproduce its categories and logics. Accordingly, the *ayllu* and peasant union are seen as embodying fundamentally distinct forms of democracy with different notions of citizenship and the peasant union as reproducing forms of colonial oppression. This analysis has been influential in drawing attention to the ideological differences between different forms of authority and yet in doing so it arguably reifies them (Sheild-Johannson, 2014). Although this thesis claims that the peasant union and *ayllu* authorities have differing perspective and values, these are not the result of essential timeless features and have as much to do with events and reforms of the last twenty years than the deep history of the post-colony. The community of Bolívar province has existed in a shifting relationship with a wider society that has helped shape

its local identity and internal forms of government, resulting in a hybrid mixture of different cultural elements, customs and forms of governance which retain a sense of meaning for its inhabitants. This is because what makes up a society, its traditions, systems of government and justice are the result of a historical sequence which is being constantly assimilated and interpreted in the present.

This thesis examines the local politics of an area historically considered an *ayllu* and provides ethnographic detail of the lived tensions, contentions and discourses of the different forms of authority within it: how their interpretations of history, representations of their community and notions of belonging to it constitute a political conflict. It also presents how this situation and the processes which gave rise to it are connected to wider changes in Bolivia and the region. While this moves away from earlier structuralist-inspired studies of highland communities, it fits into the existing body of ethnographic work on Bolivia studying local forms of civic politics and citizenship (Lazar, 2008; Goldstein, 2004, 2014; Postero, 2006, 2016). It also relates to growing scholarship on the contradictions of ‘post-neoliberal’ governments (Webber, 2011; Goodale and Postero, 2013), given the fact that the presence and actions of an avowedly post-neoliberal government, committed to decolonisation and the protection of indigenous rights, are related to the intensification of tensions within this indigenous community. This thesis is therefore a work of political anthropology. However, it examines a particular type of political conflict: one which is about articulating competing definitions of the values, institutions and identity of a community and arguing over what is authentic to it. It is therefore necessary to enquire how anthropology approaches the study of politics and how this research engages with and contributes to existing theory.

The field of political anthropology in the first half of the twentieth century was neatly defined as the study of indigenous systems of law and government and especially the forms of governance which exist in the absence of a centralised state (Gledhill, 2000; Evans-Pritchard, 1940). However, this early view of the discipline and the theoretical and methodological presuppositions which supported it, such as British structural functionalism, had been largely abandoned by the final quarter of the century.

Anthropologists became increasingly aware of the interconnections between different social groups and the notion of native societies as bounded entities not subject to change was criticised as a damaging fiction (Wolf, 1982). Perhaps more importantly, the

functionalist approach deliberately stripped out local meanings and cultural idioms from representations of politics in an attempt to get at the ‘real’ underlying social structure (Spencer, 2007; Fortes and Evans-Prichard, 1940), despite this being precisely the sort of data the methodology of anthropological fieldwork is suited to collecting (Geertz, 1995).

Nevertheless, in the period since the 1960s, a series of anthropological studies have demonstrated the advantage of ethnography for investigating various aspects of politics. These include analyses of how power works at the local level and is recreated in everyday practices (Scott, 1985; Ong, 1987), how outside institutions, the state and political leaders interact with local groups and communities and the way relations between them are negotiated and maintained (Scott, 1990; Gledhill, 1997; Wolf, 1999). Moreover, bringing in the wider political and legal institutions and social networks in which smaller communities exist in order to make sense of situations and events was a large part of the ‘case study’ method of the Manchester school (Gluckman, 1961; Mitchell, 1983). What John Gledhill (2000) refers to as ‘getting at structure through events’ involves studying local political events and situations while tracing their connections to wider networks and socio-political processes. Through doing so it is possible to illuminate these occurrences in a way that would not be possible without an understanding of the wider context, while also demonstrating how local events not only reflect larger-scale processes and national-level conflicts but may also contribute to them.

This method of analysis is important to how this thesis develops its argument. Wider social, political and legal changes that have occurred in Bolivia are of great relevance to understanding the situation in Bolívar province. Moreover, local events and situations, including the political dispute between local authorities, are themselves constitutive of them. As shall be explored in Chapters 2 and 4, one of these changes is the breakdown of barriers between the countryside and city and the phenomenon of rural-urban double residence. However, more important to understanding the rift between the authorities of the province is the evolving relationship between communities like Bolívar and the state and other outside institutions. Rural communities like Bolívar have been integrated into larger state structures since before the time of the Spanish colony and this relationship has defined their forms of local governance and sense of identity over a long period. The traditional *cargo* system which the *ayllu* authorities claim to embody owes its

existence in part to the Spanish colonial state and Catholic church, while the peasant union became a feature of life as a result of the changes brought about through the national revolution of 1952. Moreover, legal and political reforms instituted in the 1990s have further modified the way individuals and communities understand themselves and their relationship to wider society. In the current period, the national MAS government is enacting its own national state-building project based on particular interpretations of cultural and legal pluralism and decolonisation, while promoting a new understanding of citizenship. Nevertheless, the meaning of this process and the identities generated by it have been disputed by local and national actors.

The notion of political and legal pluralism has been an object of study not only in Latin America (Ramos, 1994; Hale, 2004; Barrantes-Reynolds, 2016) but in many regions of the world (Chatterjee, 1993; Das, 1995) by scholars who examine how legal and institutional reforms influenced by changes in international human rights law and associated discourses have shaped politics (Spencer, 2007) and encouraged the formation of specific identities. Moreover, this is arguably an illustration of the more general phenomenon of how the modern state, distinguished by its particular presence, forms of bureaucracy and surveillance (Giddens, 1985; Foucault, 1976) channels the efforts of social groups through its administrative apparatus; such groups are therefore compelled to pursue their interests within the domain organised by the state. While the new Bolivian state has officially sought to create legal and political structures that respect the diversity and autonomy of its citizenry, in doing so it obliges individuals and groups to articulate their identities in terms that are legible to it. Much of contemporary politics in Bolivia must be understood as a response to the construction of the new nation state, as various social groups and communities attempt to define both the meaning of this process and their place within it. This is taking place at various scales and involves the interpretation, contestation and adoption of symbols and discourses by different groups. As this thesis will illustrate, this is a phenomenon which may also provoke or deepen rifts within local communities.

Describing this process as political raises the question of what politics should be understood to mean. I use the term in the course of this thesis to describe the local forms of civic politics that exist in rural and peri-urban Bolivia, the national political policies and discourse of the governing MAS party and other social organisations and the conflict between the different forms of authority in Bolívar. Like much of the theoretical

vocabulary of anthropology and the social sciences ‘politics’ is a polythetic term, which rather than corresponding to a precise concept describes distinct but often related social phenomena (Needham, 1975; Sperber, 1985). The way such terms are used may capture certain elements of the social world while obscuring others and consequently much theoretical debate in anthropology has to do with the descriptive adequacy of its lexicon (Ibid.). It is my contention that the way politics is often understood in anthropology limits both its ability to describe some aspects of the political as well as the use of the type of data typically acquired through ethnography.

In part this relates to the growth of studies in anthropology from the 1970s onward focused on the analysis of power and resistance to it by subaltern groups (Scott, 1985; Comaroff, 1985; Ong, 1987). While a valuable area of investigation, it arguably came to define how the discipline approached the study of politics. In doing so it shared a similarly problematic methodology to structural-functionalism, through removing local idioms in the assumption that cultural expressions are ultimately a function of power (Sahlins, 2008; Spencer, 2007). Moreover, the tendency to treat local meanings as a mere epiphenomenon of underlying processes helps explain why anthropology has paradoxically neglected what can be described as the cultural dimension of politics (Spencer, 2007). Here culture is used to refer to the elements of a shared universe of symbolic meaning which humans inhabit while simultaneously creating (Geertz (1995)). According to this view, the ethnographic method allows us to render social phenomena meaningful through the process of ‘thick description’: by describing the cultural meanings which guide action and imbue it with significance (Ibid.). Nevertheless, anthropology has exerted limited use of its powers of thick description in the examination of individuals self-reported motives for political action, emic notions of what ‘politics’ represents and how symbols, values and disputes over them can be constitutive of political processes.

In contemporary Bolivia national and local politics is a cultural spectacle in at least two senses. Firstly, it is often the best show in town: political rallies are normally accompanied by live music, dancing, processions and drinking and are timed to coincide with local or national festivities. Secondly, the performative elements of these events serve to express identities and legitimate persons, organisations and projects. The current state-building enterprise of the national government is expressed through the adoption of various discursive and symbolic elements during public rallies, including

the use of *originario* clothing and the display of symbols that reference indigenous identity and historic struggle. Many, including those within social movements hostile to the MAS government, would subscribe to the view that these elements are ‘purely symbolic’ and mask the real operation of power. This is often because they claim authenticity in the face of what they see as the appropriation of indigenist discourse and symbols and the ‘fake environmentalism’ of the national government. However, it could equally be argued that they are a sincere expression of the project of creating a new Bolivian nation and are themselves constitutive of the new national identity being forged in the ‘process of change’.

The emic notion of politics in much of Bolivia results in it being something of dirty word. *La Política* summons an image of forms of clientelism and prebendalism that were common in the years following the national revolution. Partly for this reason, individuals engaged in local politics will vociferously deny they *are* politicians, even when they stand for election and popular parties will identify themselves as ‘instruments’ of social movements and organisations. While this would seem to echo the view that the essence of politics is the self-interested pursuit of power, the point is that this characterisation is intended as a criticism, while popular social organisations and communitarian forms of local civic politics are believed to embody something fundamentally different. In as much as anthropology and social theory naturalises the operation of self-interested power in politics it struggles to make sense of this distinction. Moreover, in as much as it views everything as a function of power it dismisses an important set of social phenomena that form part of what is often described as politics.

In addition to a struggle for power, politics may also be understood as an attempt on the part of groups and persons to shape their community, offer different perspectives of the common good and their shared identity and in doing so debate the definition of symbolic constituents of their social reality. I contend that this is best analysed through comprehending its moral dimension: how politics and political conflict may involve the way individuals conceive of themselves in relation to society and are motivated by a desire to do what is right and to be a good person. Such an approach does justice to local understandings and employs the tools of thick description characteristic of social anthropology.

Since the turn of the century there has been a tremendous growth in research in anthropology concerning the role of ethics and morality. As Michael Lambek (2010) has pointed out, much of the ‘ethical turn’ is an attempt to take informants seriously: despite the fact that the people anthropologists typically encounter explain or justify their actions in terms of what is right or are involved in some debate about the nature of the collective good, the tendency in modern social theory is to treat the ethical dimension of social life as superficial, marginal or illusory. Although the literature on this topic does not have a consistent theoretical basis², a common thread has been a focus on how individuals reflectively engage in moral behaviour and attempt to make themselves a certain type of person (Laidlaw, 2002, 2014; Mahmood, 2005; Faubion, 2011; Lambek, 2015). These works describe how persons may choose from multiple moral models available to them in their social environment and creatively engage in forming their own identity (Rasanayagam, 2011) in addition to confronting dilemmas in which they are faced with competing ethical demands and are forced to reflect on what constitutes their personal morality. For some, this represents an attempt to break free from the implicit view that the individual is essentially an unfree product of society or culture (Laidlaw, 2002, 2014; Mahmood, 2005).

At the same time, figures in social psychology have been arguing for the need to understand political conflict and ideological difference in terms of morality (Haidt, 2001, 2012; Greene, 2013). Among these figures, developmental psychologist and comparative primatologist Michael Tomasello has contributed the idea that collective intentionality is central to understanding human morality (2007, 2014, 2016). This notion refers to the ability of minds to be jointly directed towards goals, states of affairs or values (Searle, 1990, 2010; Gilbert, 1990; Bratman, 1993). According to this view, although humans are born into a world of pre-existing cultural conventions and institutions they act in part as co-authors of this world and are free to accept, interpret or reject its norms. The individual subject is influenced by competing motives which include those of sympathy, concern for equality and loyalty, adherence to the conventions of their culture and self-interested concerns (Tomasello, 2016). Persons will attempt to balance these different motives while maintaining a consistent sense of moral

² It encompasses work influenced by elements of Anglo-American ordinary language philosophy (Lambek, 2010, 2015; Das, 2010), phenomenology (Zigon, 2006, 2008; Throop, 2010), the later writings of Michel Foucault (Laidlaw, 2002; 2014) and psychology and cognitive science (Shweder et. al, 1987; Mattingly, 2014). The latter has some cross-over with recent growth in moral psychology (Haidt, 2012; Greene, 2013) and experimental philosophy (Appiah, 2009).

selfhood, creatively interpreting practices and norms to provide justification of their actions to themselves and others. According to this model, it is a basic feature of the human condition that individuals are forced to choose between conflicting and at times incommensurable values and their relationship with the social world is not a one-sided process of enculturation but rather an active and creative engagement with norms and models in which they participate in the construction of the social through intersubjective discourse. Collective intentionality explains how the social realm is constructed not as an emergent property of self-interested power-seeking behaviour but through the innate human capacity for taking the perspective of others and cooperating with them. The most basic underlying mode of human morality is formed from our ability to recognise ourselves as equivalent to others and cooperate within specific contexts. This is followed by the social morality that emerges from collective intentionality, comprised of much of the shared background of symbolic meaning of a culture.

The details of this collective social morality may include what it means to be a person or citizen and the virtues this involves, the practices that embody and engender these virtues through the acquisition of skill, character or unconscious habits of thought or action, the idealised conceptions of society and its institutions and the narratives that provide a meaningful sense of individual and group identity and a common goal or purpose. Individuals and groups may not agree on part or all of these and dispute them. To describe this process, I borrow from Jürgen Habermas the term ‘ethical discourse’ (1991)³. Here discourse is taken to mean what happens when there is a breakdown in communication between individuals or groups and it becomes necessary to adduce reasons for the validity of utterances. It is a particular reflexive form of communication in which the meanings of utterances are made salient and contested (Habermas, 1983). Ethical discourse is fundamentally about making a claim to authenticity: about determining what values are germane to the tradition of a sociocultural group. It is concerned with conceptions of the good, with what it means to be a moral person and with the ultimate ends of life. In the case of ‘ethical-political discourse’ (Habermas, 1991) this is related to the collective identity of a community. It is for this reason that it involves not merely the contestation of moral norms but more fundamentally the

³ This does not imply an endorsement of Habermas’ overall project of discourse ethics in which he attempts to explain how universally valid moral norms can emerge from the formal rules of rational communication. Rather, ethical discourse is a descriptive term for the type of intersubjective discourse that takes place within a particular cultural tradition or community when individuals seek to define their collective identity, values and other symbolic constituents of their shared social world.

collective ‘we’ that defines group identity and which is expressed in an idealised representation of what it means to be a member of it. As a contested object of discourse, I refer to this collective ‘we’ as the ‘ethical-political subject’. Sian Lazar’s recent analysis of Argentinian trade unionism (Lazar, 2017) also brings ethics into the anthropological study of politics through examining how activists make themselves into particular subjects and create a ‘collective self’. While this is closely related to the theoretical framework I employ, it draws on Foucauldian notions of ethical subjectivation to understand practices of self-formation and how they link with political action, rather than analysing political conflict as an ethical discourse in the manner outlined above.

This phenomenon can take place during periods of social change in which individuals have to negotiate shifts and conflicts in the ethical models of their society or the breakdown of existing moral orders, as is described skilfully in some ethnographies (Robbins, 2004; Zigon, 2006, 2008; Heintz, 2006). It also describes much of the content and substance of politics in the sense that has been articulated so far, as different groups enter into disputes concerning their visions of the common good, aspects of social norms as well as interpretations of history and what it means to belong to the group, community or nation state. Understood in this way, politics is not always a naked struggle for power. Nevertheless, imbalances in power between groups and persons will result in those with less means of reproducing their perspective struggling to influence the norms, institutions and collective identity of the overall society (Kitcher, 2011). Less powerful groups may encounter strategies for negotiating with and influencing others, including utilising creative ways of appealing to the more basic common morality of sympathy and recognition of self-other equivalence (Tomasello, 2016). I believe that understanding much of political conflict as a form of reflexive discourse about collective morality, conceived of in the broad sense detailed above, could allow social anthropology to fruitfully apply its methodology to political analysis. It is well equipped to investigate how values, collective symbols, narratives and idealised conceptions of society and personhood serve to mobilise individuals, establish legitimacy and become the basis for conflict and contention between persons, factions and groups. Moreover, it allows us to understand cultural and symbolic dimensions as genuinely constitutive of politics itself, rather than as an epiphenomenon of underlying processes.

I contend that the rift between the *ayllu*, peasant union and municipal government in Bolívar represents not only a struggle for power but an ethical discourse in the manner outlined above. While *originario* is a politicised term in contemporary Bolivia, it is also used locally to refer to those who are truly of the place. As belonging to this category means being a certain kind of person, it also entails being judged and judging oneself by its standards. Therefore, in seeking to define the meaning of the term *originario*, those on either side of the divide are really arguing over the content of moral values related to their collective identity: namely the virtues a good person should embody, ideas of the good of life and shared goals. During my fieldwork I saw how these differences were manifested in disagreements over land tenancy, the administration of justice and the future development and political administration of the province. The situations which have given rise to these disputes are in turn the consequence of profound socio-political changes in the communities of Bolívar and in Bolivia as a whole. These include the breakdown of the social and cultural barriers between countryside and city, political reforms carried out from the 1990s which have changed the nature of local governance and the relationship of rural indigenous peoples with the state and in the present period the ongoing attempt by the MAS government to enact a project of nation state-building. Ultimately, the differences between the visions articulated by these authorities relate to their different historical trajectories as social organisations, not least the period of reforms of the 1990s, which together explain how they respectively express distinct dimensions of the common aspirations of their community.

During this time, they saw each other as allies against a neoliberal government of traditional white elites or *q'ara runas* who had kept them marginalised. In the current period, there exists a populist government which is enacting institutional and legal reforms while promoting its own version of national citizenship based on a particular understanding of indigeneity. It is this which has sharpened tensions between the different authorities while also obliging them to articulate their differences in terms of a form of ethnic identification. The term *originario* therefore serves as the ethical-political subject as each side argues for the legitimacy and authenticity of their vision. Despite the fact that the rift between the different forms of authority of the province does involve a contest for power and prestige it also expresses sincere differences in perspectives. Individuals involved in this dispute incorporate ideas and symbols from wider discourses as a result of their connections to larger political organisations and

networks. They do so while seeking to define the nature of the local social institutions, common identity and narrative of their community.

Structure of Thesis

This thesis elucidates the way the different local authorities articulate these understandings of their community, identity and history and how the wider political, legal and institutional changes of the last twenty years have contributed to differences in perspective and provided the basis for the current rift, precisely during the period in office of a reforming government committed to a project of ‘plurinational’ state-building. It does so by providing an analysis of a series of disputes which occurred during my fieldwork in 2015 and early 2016 and the wider processes in which these took place.

Chapter 2 describes the nature of the field sites in which this research was carried out. It briefly describes Bolivia before providing an account of Bolívar province, its territorial divisions and system of local government as well as the way persons, institutions and communities are connected to wider society and may operate across multiple localities. It then describes two local field sites where I spent a considerable period of time: the town of Bolívar and rural hamlet of Vilaycayma and the neighbourhoods around Yuraq Rumi in the south of Cochabamba. Chapter 3 provides a history of Bolívar/Kirkiawi within the Bolivian nation, accounting for national-level social and political processes within the local history of the province.

Chapter 4 discusses how legal changes that allow indigenous peasant communities to become quasi-independent entities with their own forms of internal administration based on traditional customs have served to further intra-community conflict among the different forms of authority of the province. The ambiguities of the conversion process and the ambivalence of the national government have not only led to conflict in Bolívar but also reveal some of the central tensions of the MAS project of political reform. The issue of how to define the competencies of indigenous authorities alongside what constitutes their traditional customs, norms and procedures has led to debate over what are the authentic and legitimate forms of leadership and governance of their community. Nevertheless, in Bolívar province the different forms of authority and the practices of governance and leadership are significantly hybridised.

Chapter 5 deals with the longstanding debate between the traditional authorities and the peasant union over the legal status of land and whether it should be individually titled or collectively recognised as a Native Communal Land or TCO. This debate has arguably been influenced by the reality of rural-urban migration and double residence as families must adapt to changing circumstances in the city and in some cases decide on the need to alter the forms of land tenancy within their home *comunidades*. This issue reveals the differences expressed by certain figures within the union and traditional authorities over what it means to be *originario*, in the sense of being an authentic native member of the place they inhabit.

Chapter 6 discusses the case of Piruani: how a dispute among families about land became a conflict between the different forms of authority that illustrates different understandings of justice, decolonisation and the meanings they attach to the term *originario*. Chapter 7 discusses how national-level discourses about the meaning of development are interpreted locally. In reality, much of the local debates about the issue of development concern how the local peasant union and MAS politicians are accused of re-creating forms of clientelism and prebendalism, against which they had previously fought. The role of the peasant union as a mediator for development funds alongside the status of development as a local emic concept is owed to the reforms of the 1990s which changed the relationship between rural peoples and the state. This also helps explain how a large part of the difference in the meanings attached to development by the different authorities turns on how they represent different dimensions of the common aspirations of highland peoples. These differences are expressed through distinct narratives of historic struggle.

Chapter 8 concludes by summarising the data and arguments outlined above and considering what they say about the current period of reform in Bolivia. This will be related to the wider movement of democratically elected leftist governments in the region and the contradictions and conflicts generated by constitutional reform and attempts to re-define citizenship.

Chapter 2. Following Local Politics in Multiple Locations

Introduction

As was explained in the opening chapter, my original interest in going to Bolivia had been to study the local politics of urban migrants from the highlands through a multi-sited ethnography. While the nature of my fieldwork remained multi-sited, the political situation I was confronted with, which became the central theme of this thesis, centred around the rural community of Bolívar province. To follow this political situation and some of the key actors involved in it I travelled frequently between the countryside and various urban locations. This was necessary for two reasons. Firstly, a number of my informants did not live solely or primarily in the countryside, but rather in the cities of Oruro and Cochabamba and this pattern of migration and double residence had increasingly begun to shape and define the province and the content of its local politics. Secondly, a number of meetings I attended, mainly with the traditional authorities, took place in La Paz, Oruro, Sucre and Cochabamba.

This chapter will describe the field sites in which I worked at various scales. The first section will begin with a brief description of Bolivia before discussing Bolívar province and the structure of its local government. I will then describe the nature of rural-urban migration, double residence and multi-locality, that have become increasingly common characteristics of not only Bolívar but Bolivian society more generally. Finally, I will describe two local field sites in which I spent time: the town of Bolívar and the *comunidad* of Vilaycayma and the peri-urban neighbourhoods of Copacabana and Yuraq Rumi in Cochabamba.

I. Bolivia, Bolívar and Multi-locality

i. Bolivia: a changing landscape

Bolivia is a landlocked country situated in the heart of the South American continent, bordered by Peru, Chile, Paraguay, Argentina and Brazil, with a population of approximately ten million, divided geographically between the western Andean highlands, the central valleys, the eastern tropical lowlands and semi-arid Chaco region, each with different climates, peoples and cultures. The country's primary political divisions are its nine departments that are further divided into provinces and local municipal governments. While a small nation in population and economic power, it

possesses an enormously diverse and complex culture and rich history. Bolivia's ethnic make-up has gathered it some fame as the 'most indigenous' country in the Americas based on a 2001 census result (Postero, 2007). Since the election of the MAS to power and the passing of a new 'plurinational' constitution the state officially recognises 36 indigenous groups, the largest two being the Aymara and Quechua speakers of the highlands. Nevertheless, the reality of ethnic identity in Bolivia is complex and escapes simplistic definition and as in much of Latin America ethnicity is a fluid concept that often interpenetrates with other social categories such as class. Contemporary understandings of ethnicity have evolved from the racial division of Spanish colonial society into indigenous subjects, *criollos* and *peninsulares* or the white ruling class and intermediate mixed-race categories such as *mestizo* or *cholo*, the latter referring to an upwardly mobile person of indigenous ancestry often involved in commerce (Lazar, 2007, 2008; Albro, 2010). Ethnic identity is not defined solely by an individual's phenotype so much as by their use of certain cultural markers of dress and speech, residence, wealth or occupation and people can become more or less 'Indian' by gaining education or employment or moving to the city (Weismantel, 2001).

The fluidity of ethnic categories in Bolivia is relevant to understanding why indigenous self-identification dropped by approximately 20% in the 2012 census (INE, 2012). The reasons for this shift are not entirely clear. One factor could be the increase in migration from the countryside to the cities where the younger generation become bilingual or Spanish-speaking monolinguals and individuals may change their ethnic identification. The large decline among the category of Quechua and Aymara also suggests that many people, such as the inhabitants of valley regions and the colonists of the tropics, who had adopted indigenous identity in a limited and strategic fashion (Grisaffi, 2010; Albro, 2005b), have decided to instead identify as *mestizos*, a phenomenon which may point to popular disaffection with the ethnic nationalist discourse of the MAS (Schavelzon, 2013). Furthermore, the 2012 census, unlike in 2001, had used the term 'peasant' in formulating indigenous identity (*indígena originario campesino* or native indigenous peasant person). The different notions of identity expressed by rural social organisations could have motivated some individuals to answer 'no' due to the use of this word (Stefanoni, 2013). As will be explored in subsequent chapters, the peasant union in Bolívar tend to prefix *originario* with *campesino*, while this use of the word is strongly rejected by various traditional leaders. Moreover, although most of my informants in

Bolívar referred to themselves as *originarios*, this term is linked to the MAS project of popular nationalist indigeneity (Ibid.). As will be discussed further in Chapter 3, while it is common among the *comunidades* of the province for people to have a strong sense of being different from individuals from towns and cities, it is important to distinguish these local notions of personhood from national discourse on ethnic identity.

2001 Census						
Ethnic Group	Quechua	Aymara	Guarani	Chiquitano	Other	None
Population %	30.7	25.2	1.5	2.2	1.4	37.9

2012 Census						
Ethnic Group	Quechua	Aymara	Guarani	Chiquitano	Other	None
Population %	18.7	17.5	1.2	1.4	1.3	58.2

Figure 3: Bolivian ethnic composition. Source: Bolivian Census 2001 and 2012 (INE, 2001, 2012).

In this thesis I frequently use the term indigenous. Nevertheless, many individuals from the communities of Bolívar province consider the Spanish word *indígena* a term for lowland peoples and will use the term *originario* if they wish to be identified in this way. However, *originario* is a word with many complex meanings, including both a category of *ayllu* membership, being a native of a place and being separate from white and *mestizo* society. In addition, I frequently make use of the word Indian, despite the fact that the Spanish *indio* is considered an insult, as it effectively denotes a particular subaltern group of rural highland peoples who share a common social and historical situation. It is also used in this sense by Aymara intellectuals and indigenous political activists who attempt to reclaim the word in an empowering and positive way (Hurtado, 1986). Two related processes that have accelerated in Bolivia in the last twenty years are its transformation from a predominantly rural to a predominantly urban society as a result of migration from the countryside and the entrance into the political arena and seizure of power by indigenous peoples, alongside the rise of indigenous politics. At the local and national level marginalised people who were previously excluded from power have taken control of the levers of government. Both processes have occurred in Bolívar province where the transformation of politics, identity and individuals' relationship with the state and wider society is still under way.

ii. Bolívar: Territory and Government

Bolívar is located in the far corner of the department of Cochabamba. Although Cochabamba is considered a valley region, Bolívar is located among the dry and rugged highland terrain of the Andean *altiplano* and is in fact closer to the city of Oruro than the departmental capital of Cochabamba. Its location and lack of proper roads had maintained it in relative isolation until quite recently and prior to the construction of a bridge over the river Arque in the early 2000s it would have been cut off from the rest of the department by seasonal flooding during half the year.

Bolívar is the smallest, least-populated, poorest and most geographically isolated province in the whole of Cochabamba department, with a population of approximately seven thousand dispersed over 58 scattered hamlets or *comunidades* and the provincial capital. Nevertheless, it has a long and proud history which stretches back to before the colonisation of the Americas. Previously, it had been ‘*canton Kirkiawi*’ of Arque province and gained its independent status in the 1980s, taking the name of the former canton capital of Bolívar. It is believed that the geographical division of Bolívar is almost precisely coterminous with the historic territory of *Ayllu Kirkiawi* (Mendoza et. al., 2002).

It is this longer history that explains the region’s continued sense of identity and territorial integrity. In the past, the term *ayllu* would have referred to a system of territorial organisation among Aymara kingdoms and the Inca empire of *tawintinsuyu*, of which there is evidence the present-day territory of Bolívar province formed a part (Ibid.). In contemporary Bolivia, however, the term *ayllu* is often used to refer to forms of rural community dispersed over multiple locations with their own forms of government and understandings of territorial organisation. In Bolívar I heard the term *ayllu* used primarily in two senses. The first was in a global sense to refer to the place where people lived, the land and the different *comunidades*. The second referred to the traditional authorities who formed the social organisation of the *ayllu*. As in other *ayllu* regions that have been described in classic ethnographic accounts (Rasnake, 1988; Harris, 1978; Cusicanqui, 1990), there exists a Russian doll-like structure in which the same organisational features are repeated at each level of scale. Smaller territorial units are contained within larger ones and each of these possesses authorities with corresponding responsibilities for administering the land and performing associated

ritual activities. The *ayllu* can therefore be understood as a form of territorial and social organisation based around people's relationship with the land, managing its use and the conflicts which result from it.



Figure 4: Map showing the location of Bolívar Province, Cochabamba Department and Bolivia

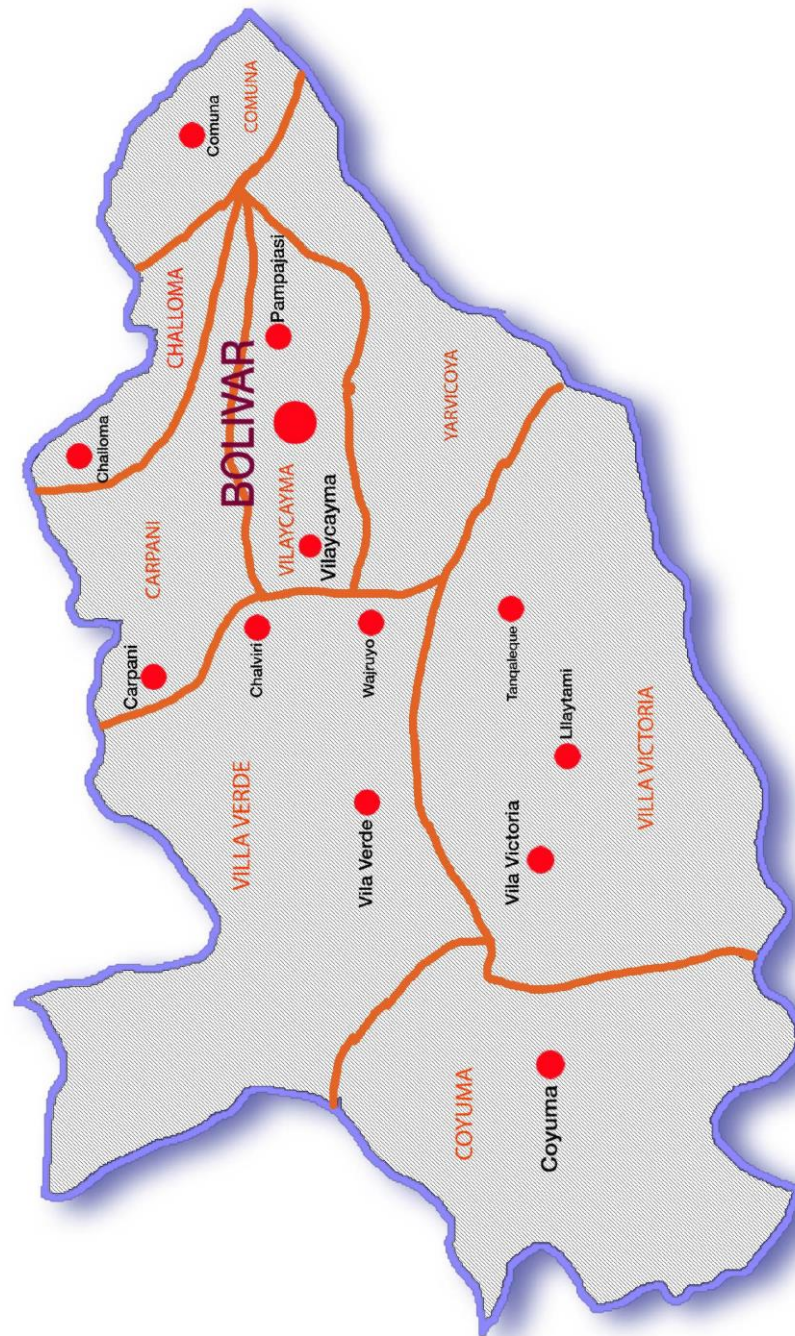


Figure 5: Map of Bolívar Province showing the areas of cantons and the locations of union *sub-centrales*

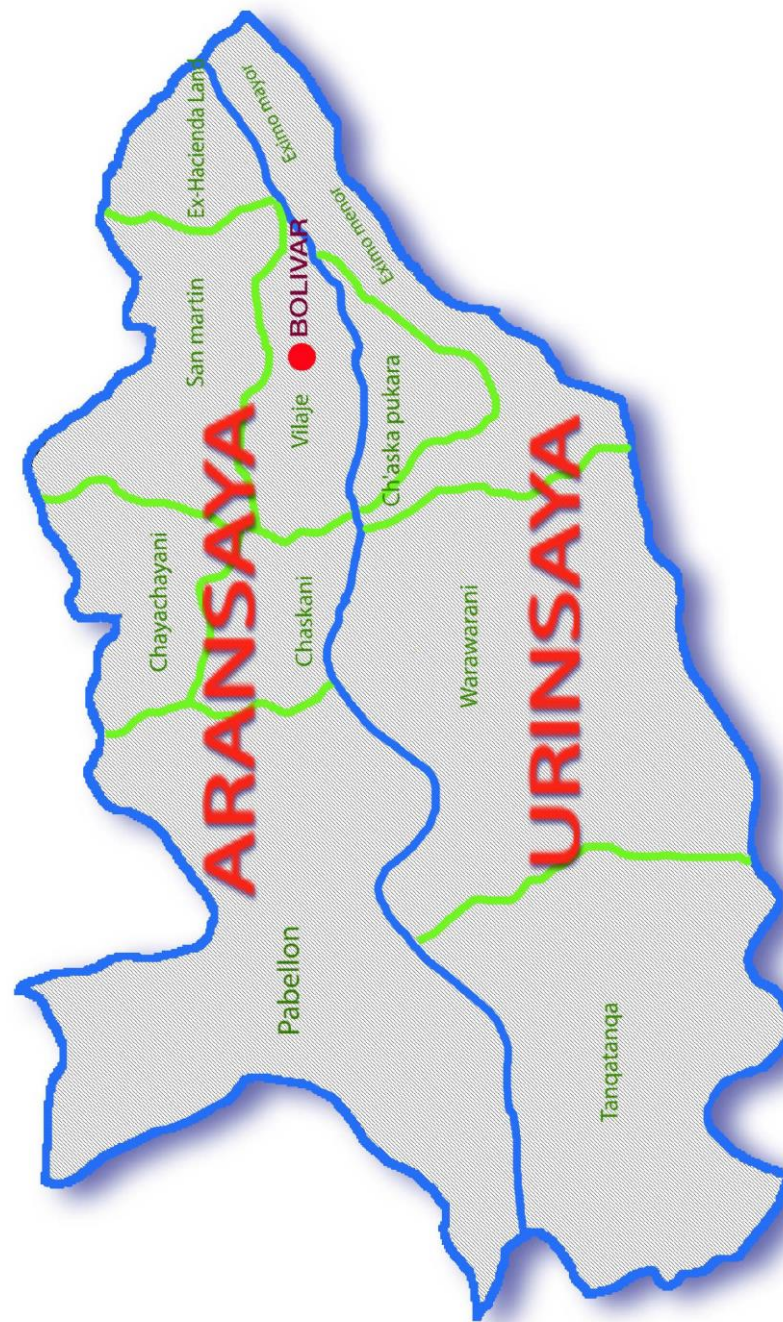


Figure 6: Map of Bolívar Province showing the *ayllu* divisions of *jap'iys* and *piraños*

However, things are complicated in Bolívar by the fact that there exist multiple forms of territorial organisation and political authority. Alongside the *ayllu* authorities are the peasant union and the local municipal government. In addition to a historic *ayllu*, Bolívar is a province and a unitary municipality. The peasant union would have become a feature of local government following the agrarian reform in 1953. In the 1980s, Bolívar gained its status as a province and current name, resulting in the division of its territory into eight administrative sub-divisions or cantons. In addition to the cantons exist the *sub-centrales*, the intermediate level of organisation of the peasant union between the *comunidad* and the province. Prior to the reforms of the 1990s local government would have been decidedly limited in character and out of the direct control of the *originarios* of the *comunidades*. Typically, provinces in Bolivia are made up of multiple small municipalities. However, as Bolívar owes its existence as a province to its historical status as a territory and not its size, the entire province is served by a single municipal council. Moreover, since 2004 the municipal government has been composed solely of representatives from the *ayllu* and peasant union authorities, effectively uniting all the different forms of authority and political organisation into a single system.

The most basic unit of territory and political authority in Bolívar is the *comunidad*. This is a small hamlet of around thirty families, all of whom engage in agricultural work. Access to land and its organisation are administered according to traditional custom or *usos y costumbres* and crucially land use is enjoyed as a usufruct right instead of through private ownership. Within the *comunidad* there exist various forms of local administration, including both a peasant union leader or *dirigente* and a *jilanku*; a traditional authority responsible along with his wife for managing the seasonal rotation and use of land, disputes that arise from it and associated rituals. Along with the *dirigente*, the *jilanku* also helps organise communal work and festive events and coordinates with the local government and NGOs. They also chair the monthly meeting of the *comunidad*: a communal assembly in which all residents discuss and take collective decisions on matters that affect them. Beyond the *comunidad* the territorial structure of the *ayllu* extends to include constellations of typically around five *comunidades* known as *jap'iys*, which in turn make up the two divisions of *wichay pirañu* and *uray pirañu* or *aransaya* and *urinsaya*. According to the emic geographical categories of the province these last two divisions reflect a difference in terrain between the lower and more fertile *zona valle* and the higher *zona puna* that is more suited to the

pasture of animals. Each *jap'iy* corresponds to a mountain peak: a *cerro* or *apu*.

Although the *jap'iys* and union *sub-centrales* are not contiguous they are often spoken about as if they were, as a result of the popular belief that the different forms of authority form a single system.

According to this commonly expressed notion, the different levels of authority within the *ayllu* and peasant union are equivalent to each other and serve complementary functions, as shown in Figure 7. The *ayllu* authorities were often referred to as the *autoridades originarias* or *originario* authorities, although this is frequently translated in this thesis to 'traditional authorities'. At the level of the *jap'iy* are the *Kuraj Tatas* (literally in Quechua 'the elder fathers'), who alongside their wives or *Kuraj Mamas* are responsible for resolving issues related to land among the different *comunidades* and who would have formerly been responsible for collecting the territorial head tax known as the *contribución territorial* or *la tasa*, before this practice ceased at some point after the agrarian reform. The equivalent union authorities are the *dirigentes sub-centrales* who chair meetings of the *sub-centrales*, attended in theory by the various corresponding *jilankus*, *dirigentes* and *Kuraj Tatas*, as well as assuming roles at the level of the province as secretaries of different areas such as education, transport or agricultural production. All these leadership roles or *cargos*, including those of local *dirigente* and *jilanku*, are changed each year in January as new figures take over. This is often described in terms of rotation or *muyu* and ensures that no one family or *comunidad* dominates the others. At the level of the *comunidad*, the rotation takes place between families, whilst at the higher levels it takes place between the *comunidades* themselves (although in the case of the peasant union *sub-centrales* individuals are nominated by their *comunidad* and elected rather than chosen according to a principle of rotation). Unlike the peasant union, all *cargos* in the *ayllu* are theoretically assumed by married couples, a practice referred to in Bolívar as *chachawarmi*. Moreover, the *Kuraj Tatas*, upon assuming their *cargo* take the name of the sacred mountain of their *jap'iy* and are said to embody the place they represent, referring to each other by these names during meetings. Traditionally their commitment to the *cargo* would have meant they would never have appeared in public without wearing the symbols of their office: the long, woven *poncho*, *chalina* scarf, *chicote* rope whip and staff of power or *tata santísimo*. Above the *Kuraj Tatas* are the *piraños*, leaders of *aransaya* and *urinsaya*, who perform similar functions.

The highest forms of authority in the province are the head of the peasant union, sometimes referred to with the honorific *Tata Provincial* or simply as *Dirigente*, the leader of the *ayllu* or *Kuraj Mallku* and the municipal government. The municipal government consists of an elected mayor and a five-person council. The Mayor and four of the councillors are currently representatives of the MAS, while one councillor represents POKUY, the ‘political instrument’ of the *ayllu*. Due to the effects of the reforms of the 1990s the peasant union has a stronger relationship with the municipal government and plays more of a role in delivering and administering development projects and public works, although both *jilanku* and *dirigente* exercise this function locally. Most of the local MAS politicians come from a peasant union background, although some, like the Mayor, Francisco Delgado, are individuals with a more apolitical professional background who worked previously as technical staff or *técnicos* in the municipal government. In addition to the peasant union there exists a women’s union, the *Bartolina Sisas*, named after the wife of indigenous revolutionary Túpak Katari. They work alongside the male peasant union figures and are affiliated to the same parent organisation. The parent organisations or *organizaciones matrices* of the union and *ayllu* involve the local authorities in wider regional and national political networks and discourses. The union is affiliated to the FSUTCC, the departmental division of the National Confederation of Peasant Workers or CSUTCB, which in turn forms part of the unitary Bolivian national trade union federation, known by its acronym of the COB. Meanwhile, the traditional authorities are linked to COAMAC, the departmental level of the national CONAMAQ federation of *ayllus*. While the FSUTCC offices are still staffed and located just south of Cochabamba’s city centre, the COAMAC offices have been abandoned as a result of a lack of funds and the national MAS government’s interference with CONAMAQ. Sabino Veizaga, an ex-*Mallku* from the *comunidad* of Tanqaleque was formerly a full-time employee of COAMAC and complained to me about the fragmentation of the organisation. Meanwhile, the municipal government, which receives and administers funds for development projects from various sources, is linked to the departmental and national government. The departmental and national congresspeople for the MAS party were both often present during the general provincial level meetings of the *ampliado general*.

The aforementioned *ampliado general* is attended by the representatives of the municipal government and all the social organisations of the province. It is held on the

second Saturday of every month in the town of Bolívar and represents a space in which information is passed down from the departmental level, the different authorities issue reports and matters that affect the province are discussed at length. In addition, the Municipal Development Committee or CDM also takes place on a bi-monthly basis and is an opportunity for all the different social leaders to audit the development projects being carried out in the province. The traditional authorities also carry out their own regular meeting that takes place shortly before the *ampliado general*. These meetings will often include discussions of potential sources of funding for education or development but also frequently centre on discussions of national politics, such as legislation concerning mining and extractive industry or indigenous justice and sometimes feature external speakers from other *ayllus* or NGOs.

It is worth taking note of the level of commitment required by someone who takes on a role in local government in Bolívar. For example, without taking into account meetings outside of the province, a *Kuraj Mallku* will typically attend the bi-monthly meetings of the CDM, the *ampliado general*, the *ayllu*, their local *comunidad* and *sub-central*. They will therefore end up attending a circuit of meetings at a pace of roughly one per week during the year. Often these meetings will last between six and ten hours and in some cases will take more than one day, as there is no time limit and issues are simply discussed until consensus is arrived at. I attended all the aforementioned meetings during my fieldwork and my overwhelming memory is of physical discomfort: of sitting cramped for hours in a chair or of feeling the cold slowly creep into my body as the day wore into evening. The extent to which participation in autonomous forms of self-governing civic politics is an obligatory and somewhat onerous duty among local communities in Bolivia has been discussed by various authors (Lazar, 2008; Postero, 2007; Linera, 2004). This is evidently no less the case amongst the inhabitants of Bolívar province.

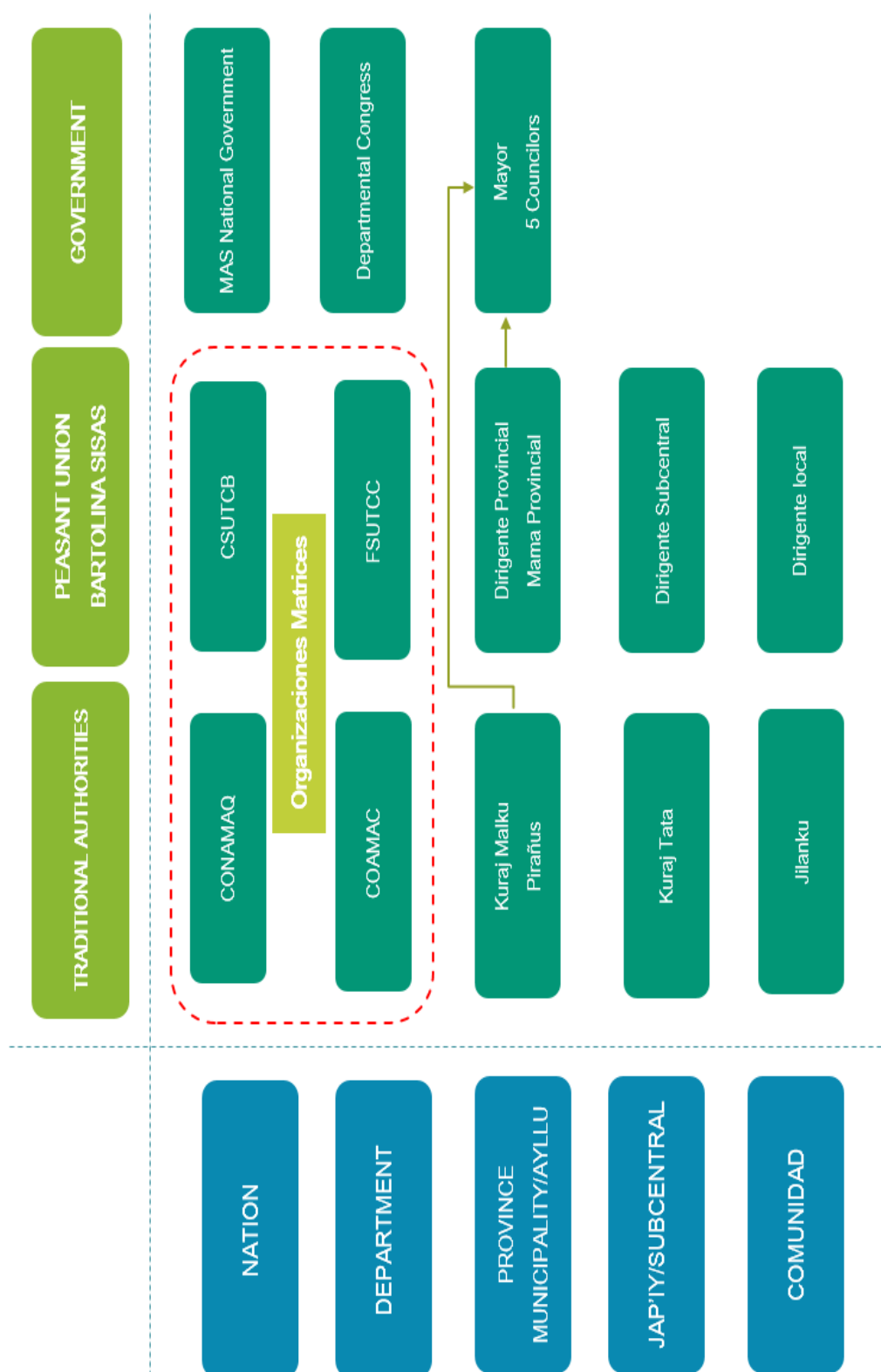


Figure 7: Structure of local government in Bolívar Province

iii. Multi-Locality, Movement and Migration

Individuals from Bolívar province do not always live in one place but tend to move between areas and often maintain multiple residences. This feature of Andean life and social organisation has been studied extensively and is considered one of the defining attributes of *ayllu* communities (Platt, 1986; Harris, 1978). This is often expressed through the notion of ‘verticality’, first used in the works of Archaeologist John Murra (1956), which refers to the control of and access to discontinuous spaces and territories held together by networks of kinship and mediated through cultural institutions in a form of non-market economic and political organisation. For Murra, this is the product of the particular geography of the Andes, with multiple ecological zones suitable for the production of specific goods necessitating the control of discontinuous territories and the movement of people and resources between them, thus resulting in the historic structure of the great *ayllus*, in which communities were distributed between different islands of territory and held together through non-market exchange and seasonal migration, while smaller territorial units and political structures were contained within progressively larger ones. People in Bolívar today are entirely comfortable with the idea of moving between multiple places and residences while maintaining bonds that link them to larger communities and political entities. However, rather than keeping lands within an *ayllu* in different ecological zones and practising seasonal transhumance and economic exchange or integrating themselves within larger *ayllu* polities, this is characterised by temporary and definitive migration to the cities and eastern tropical lowlands, mediated through ties of kinship and cultural institutions that facilitate the flow of goods and persons, alongside the integration of political authorities into wider contemporary networks and spaces.

Seasonal migration between the *comunidades* of Bolívar and the city and in some cases the tropical lowland regions has been a phenomenon for many years. Activity in the *comunidades* is centred around agriculture and seasonal changes in climate that permit certain forms of production. Life in the high *altiplano* is difficult and precarious. Environmental conditions mean that traditional agricultural practices aim to minimise the risks of catastrophic crop failure and seasonal rainfall dictates when crops can be sown and harvested. The calendar of cultural events follows this cycle of production, ritually marking the passage of time and providing occasions that bring the community together when it is necessary to mobilise individuals to work (Antequera, 2013; Sheild-

Johannson, 2014). This agrarian-festive cycle, with its different seasons, activities and ritual events or *fiestas* is represented schematically below.

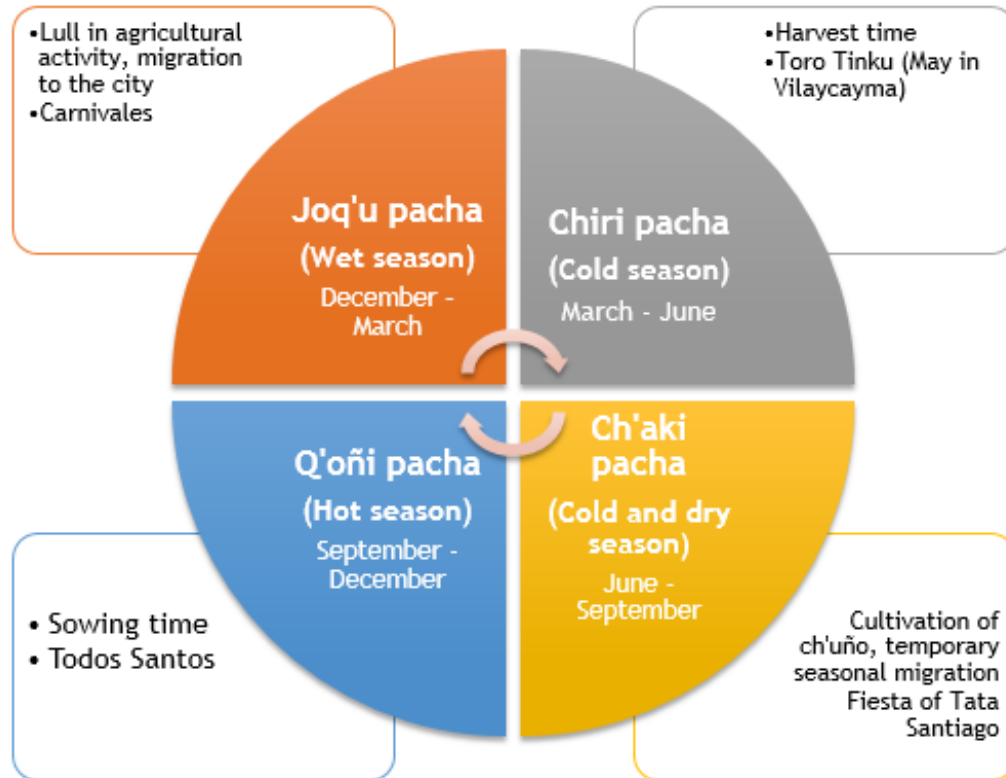


Figure 8: Schematic of the agrarian-festive cycle

Patterns of cyclical migration to and from the cities and the *comunidades* of Bolívar must be understood in terms of this agrarian-festive cycle, something which I witnessed during my time in Bolivia and was described to me by the local anthropologist Nelson Antequera, who has written on this topic in relation to Bolívar province (Antequera, 2011). During the sowing period between September and November and particularly in the weeks following *Todos Santos* or All Saints Day on November 1st large numbers of double residents from the cities of Oruro and Cochabamba return to help sow potatoes and onions in family plots of land. This is a period of intense activity requiring the coordination of large work parties. By December there is a lull in agricultural activity as crops have been sown and people await the rainy season and many rural residents temporarily migrate to the city. Women will often beg in the streets and while men may

do the same, they typically find temporary work as porters in the markets or with a family contact. This is done in order to obtain cash for items such as school equipment and clothing. In Cochabamba in the weeks leading up to Christmas the streets fill up with women from various parts of the *altiplano* accompanied by their young children begging on the pavements, a somewhat uncomfortable sight for the middle-class urban residents of Cochabamba. Between March and April people begin to harvest potatoes while May is the period for harvesting onions. As with the sowing period this requires large work parties and families resident in the cities will return for short periods of intense activity. From June to July almost everyone in Bolívar dedicates themselves to the production of *ch'uño* as it is the month that marks the start of the period of dry and cold weather with very low overnight temperatures necessary for freezing potatoes⁴. Again, families will return to help make *ch'uño* and carry quantities with them to the city for their personal use or sale. The period from the end of July through to September is when there is no longer any agricultural production in the *altiplano* and individuals may seek work in the cities or the tropical regions.

Definitive migration to urban areas or the tropics has increasingly come to characterise the province as many *comunidades* have become effectively emptied out of permanent residents, while younger families seek education for their children and access to the money economy of the cities. In some cases, the majority of their members live elsewhere and return periodically for festive and cultural events and to participate in agricultural work in the manner described above. Another way in which individuals resident in the city are connected to their home *comunidad* is through their more or less obligatory participation in civic political life. The traditional authorities described above could be described as a *fiesta cargo* system, as detailed in classic ethnographic accounts of the Andes (Rasnake, 1988). Such systems of local governance emerged during the colonisation of the Americas in response to the missionisation of native populations by the Catholic church and the partial integration into the state of semi-autonomous native communities. In the Andes, the *cargo* system is traditionally characterised by the rotation of authorities and a path of increased responsibility through which individuals pass, commonly referred to as *thaki*, alongside the duty to sponsor festive activities or *fiestas*, usually tied to traditional Catholic saints' days. Participation is a civic duty of

⁴ Ch'uño is made by leaving potatoes outside overnight to freeze. They are then defrosted and water is squeezed out by stepping on them before being left to dry in the sun. The final product is very durable and is either kept as an emergency food source or sold.

married couples that helps reproduce the community and define what it means to be a person within it.

The extent to which the system of authorities and local governance in Bolívar province approximates to classic definitions of the *cargo* system is complicated by numerous factors, not least the fact that many individuals and entire *comunidades* no longer participate in Catholic festivals and that there exist multiple forms of authority. Much of the significance of the *cargo* system as far as it exists in contemporary Bolívar lies in the fact that assuming roles or *cargos* is a condition of continued membership of the *comunidad* and therefore of access to land, alongside participation in communal assemblies and other elements of civic politics. Those resident in the city continue to participate in the life of their home *comunidades* for a variety of reasons, yet the fact that they have access to lands to supplement their family resources in the city is undoubtedly a major factor. This contributes to the reproduction of the *comunidad* over multiple locations, the continued sense of identity and belonging of those resident in the city and the flow of people and resources between different areas.

As shall be explored in greater detail in the following chapter, since before the colonisation of the Americas highland communities would have been integrated into larger state systems according to notions of reciprocal hierarchical relations. Moreover, the idea of leaders walking far to represent their community and to deal with higher authorities forms an important part of oral history in Bolívar. In the same way that migration and double residence arguably reflect long-standing cultural logics, so is the manner in which the political authorities of the province are integrated into larger governmental structures and political networks. By attending meetings, they walk, both literally and metaphorically, between different locations of the province and political spaces throughout Bolivia. Historically, leaders would travel on foot to visit the families and *comunidades* they serve and to negotiate with authorities outside of their *ayllu*. Today they travel along a circuit of local meetings alongside those of other *ayllus* and union authorities, NGOs, indigenous rights groups and branches of national government. In doing so they become involved in wider networks and discourses that affect the local politics of their province, as shall be explored in later chapters.

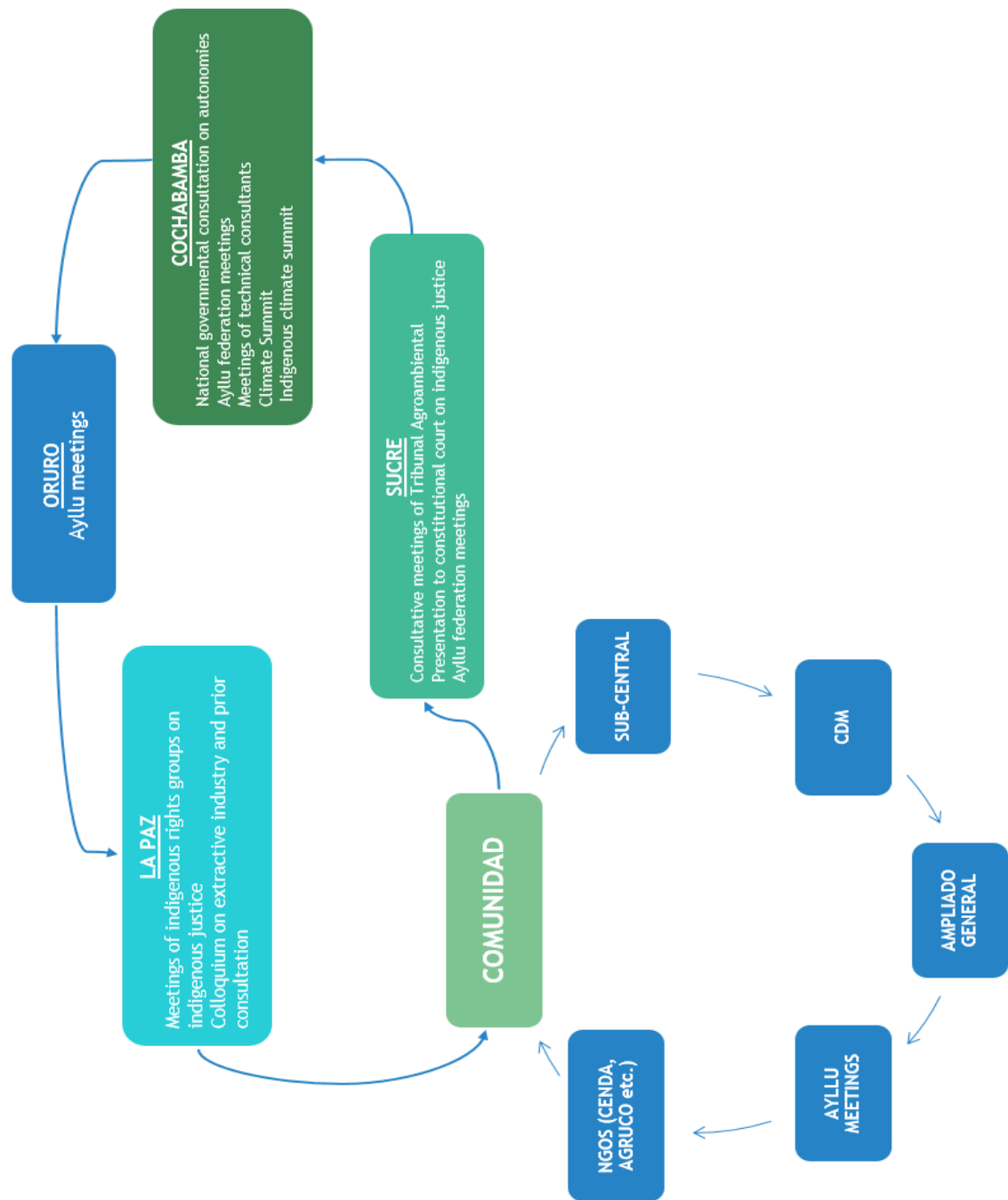


Figure 9: A *Kuraj Tata*'s journey 'walked' between meetings

The fieldwork I carried out in Bolivia was therefore multi-sited in at least two senses. In the first sense I followed the local authorities and the conflict between them through the circuit of political meetings they were involved with both locally and nationally. Secondly, I spent time among the people and local civic politics of the *comunidad* of Vilaycayma, which in reality was spread over multiple locations between the countryside and the cities of Cochabamba and Oruro. I spent time both in this *comunidad* in Bolívar and an urban location that is a destination for migrants from it.

While the political conflict between the different authorities will be explored in detail over the course of this thesis, the next two sections of this chapter will describe these local field sites. This will provide an understanding of the life-worlds of some of the people of Bolívar province within a smaller space closer to that of a traditional ethnographic study and the local forms of civic politics they are engaged in. The aim is to provide, albeit somewhat schematically, localised context in which to better understand the political conflict taking place between the different authorities of the province.

II. Local Field Sites

i. Local Field Site 1: Bolívar and Vilaycayma

Most of my time in Bolívar was spent in the provincial capital and the nearby *comunidad* of Vilaycayma. The entire province is distinguished by an arid and dramatic landscape possessed of an austere beauty, with rugged and mountainous terrain and a climate so denuded of moisture that it is close to desert. The average altitude is just below 4000 metres above sea level, although this varies between about 3600 and 4300 metres. While both the town of Bolívar and Vilaycayma are located in what is considered the lower valley region or *zona valle*, I often felt starved of oxygen upon arrival. The provincial capital is a village comprised of adobe-brick houses with a population of 700 people that owes its name to a mythical visit by ‘the liberator of the Americas’, Simon Bolívar, in 1825. Meanwhile, the town and some outlying *comunidades* are connected to Cochabamba and Oruro by a single-lane dirt road that weaves through the hills and mountains over sudden precipices of hundreds of feet. It is the location of the municipal government buildings and the only shops in the province, alongside recent public works constructed under the government of Evo Morales, such as a football stadium and a sports complex. Nearby, the imposing rust-coloured peak of Vilaje rises above the town and houses a newly installed communications tower which provides mobile phone and internet coverage to the surrounding area. In addition to being the seat of local government, it is where the *ampliado general* and the CDM meetings are held, as well as the site of public celebrations and cultural events which often coincide with political rallies.

People from the nearby *comunidades* journey to the town on foot to buy food, kitchen supplies such as oil or matches and phone credit. The local townsfolk or *llaqta runas* are

themselves farmers and Quechua/Spanish bilinguals. However, they do not usually own lands within the communal areas of the *ayllu comunidades* but in private plots near the town and carry out commercial activities, such as shop keeping or the transport of goods and people. The *llaqta runas* are traditionally seen as separate from the people of the *comunidades* and were previously considered to have an exploitative relationship with them as middlemen and petty merchants. The well-observed cultural and economic divide between the indigenous inhabitants of highland communities and the *mestizos* of the local market towns (Rasnake, 1988; Harris, 1978; Platt, 1982) seems to have pertained in Bolívar province, although it has also broken down to some extent in recent years. I got to know various local families in the town, including Gregorio's neighbour and *padrino de matrimonio* or marriage godfather Don Antonio and the local shopkeeper Don Preksy and his wife. I was invited to Don Antonio's granddaughter's *uma ruthuku*: a traditional ceremony in which a child's hair is cut for the first time and which, like other events such as baptisms or weddings, provides an occasion for giving gifts and establishing ties of fictive kinship or *compadrazgo*. Around the time of November 1st, known in Bolivia as *Todos Santos*, I spent time with various families as they practised the custom of making shrines or *mast'akus* that celebrate the life of a recently deceased family member and invited neighbours to eat, pray and drink corn beer known as *chicha* or *aqha*. The following day, food, particularly bread shaped to represent a person (referred to as a *t'antawawa*) or as a ladder (that allows passage to the afterlife), cigarettes, coca leaves and all manner of alcoholic drinks are distributed in the cemetery next to the grave of the family's loved one. Therefore, despite considering themselves culturally separate from the people of the *comunidades*, the townsfolk, like many people in rural and urban Bolivia, practice a form of folk Catholicism that contains syncretic elements of pre-Colombian beliefs. In fact, they practice these sorts of customs more than in some parts of the outlying countryside, given the conversion of many *comunidades* in Bolívar province to evangelical Christianity, an occurrence the townsfolk credit to their credulity, simplicity and lack of education.

When I asked people from the town about their present relationship with the rest of the inhabitants of the province, they were somewhat ambivalent. They claimed that before they commanded more respect but now felt excluded, despite the welcome investment in their town from the MAS government. A major issue was that they no longer held any power or influence over local government and were unlikely to do so in the future given

that they represent less than 10% of the province's population. When I spoke with individuals from the *comunidades* they told me that in the past the townsfolk were 'like minor *patrones*': exploitative masters who treated them with disdain in one-sided commercial dealings. They informed me that things have changed in the last ten years and that now relations between them are more like those of equals. Besides which, I was told, cultural differences have become blurred as many people live or travel to the city and young women have largely adopted what were described to me as 'city clothes', meaning the traditional *pollera* skirts associated with *mestizo* town people.



Figure 10: Picture of *Uma Ruthuku* in Bolívar

From Bolívar, the *comunidad* of Vilaycayma is just over an hour's walk along the dusty road to Oruro, although I would often hitch a ride with lorry drivers or ride in the back of pick-up trucks that passed along the way. The *comunidad* is a semi-abandoned hamlet of adobe brick houses in the centre of a small valley set a few hundred metres from the road. Besides the central square is the *sede sindical*: a two-storey building in which take place meetings of the local communal assembly, the *ayllu* and visiting government officials and NGOs. On the side of the *sede sindical* there is painted in capitals the words, 'VILAYCAYMA, CAPITAL OF JATUN AYLLU KIRKIWI. VOTE POKUY!' Nearby the central square there are two churches built from adobe, one that represents the Baptist Union and the other the 'Church of God of Prophecy', while what was

formerly the local Catholic church has fallen into complete disrepair. Amongst the rustic adobe houses, either roofed with corrugated iron or straw, are several modern concrete bungalows, being constructed as part of a project from the national housing ministry to provide high-quality accommodation to families in rural areas.

Most permanent residents are grandparents whose children live in the cities or the tropical lowlands. At the time of my fieldwork there were only a dozen families permanently resident and one family with a child living in the *comunidad*. All *Vilaycaymenses* are Evangelical Christians as a result of a mass conversion that took place at some point in the 1980s. The original conversion was to the Baptist Union but more recently a number of residents have affiliated to an obscure Pentecostal Christian sect called the Church of God of Prophecy. However, it seemed that little importance was made of the difference between the two churches: the important distinction being that between Catholic and *hermano*, the term commonly used to refer to individuals converted to Evangelical Christianity. While some Catholic saints' days and festivities are still celebrated alongside customs such as the chewing of coca leaves before sowing crops, they no longer practice the associated feasting and large-scale consumption of alcohol. The chewing of coca leaves remains ubiquitous in the *comunidades*, as it is both a deep-rooted cultural practice that ritually expresses everyday reciprocity in the form of giving and offering handfuls of leaves and is a necessary way of dealing with tiredness and the cold, its daily consumption being analogous in some ways to tea or coffee among people in the UK.

Inhabitants, such as the septuagenarian Don Enrique Tola, told me how the most important thing for them now is God, who they referred to as *Tata Dios*, and that they were better people for having stopped drinking. Everyone who lives in Vilaycayma is primarily involved in agricultural work and I participated in and observed various forms of this during my fieldwork, including the making of *ch'uño* freeze-dried potatoes and pasturing llamas. A number of families have flocks of grazing animals which they take daily to the hills. Land is divided into different categories with distinct rights of access depending on its purpose (this will be explored in greater detail in Chapter 5). Individual families possess plots of arable land within communal fields called *ayonoqas* or *mantas*, only some of which are used at any one time in order to preserve the fertility of the soil.



Figure 11: Picture of a street in Vilaycayma

The communal management of the land is the responsibility of the *jilanku*, who at the time of my fieldwork was Tata Maximo Mamani. The *jilanku* is also responsible, according to traditional custom or the *usos y costumbres*, for the resolution of conflicts, the organisation of certain types of communal work and the traditional rituals associated with these activities. Alongside the peasant union *dirigente*, Don Severino Condori, the two helped organise cultural events, solve common problems, organise communal work and chair the monthly communal assembly. This is held in the *sede sindical* on the first Saturday of every month and tends to vary in size depending on how many of the much larger double resident community from the cities of Oruro and Cochabamba are present. As with other meetings in Bolívar and elsewhere, issues are discussed openly until consensus is arrived at, although conflicts often take place over matters such as the use of land. During one of the first meetings I attended in July 2015 there was an argument concerning the use of arable land for pasture, as this is permitted in the cold season between July and September, leading to a disagreement mainly between those local residents who pasture sheep and llamas and individuals largely resident in the city with land in the *ayonoqas*, who believed it needed more time to rest. While speaking with Tata Maximo and Don Severino, I tried to discover the key difference between their roles but found that in reality they substantially overlap and that the distinction between

the *ayllu* and peasant union at the local level is blurred. Below the union *dirigente* are other roles, such as the *secretario de actas* (who takes the minutes of meetings and collects fines for non-attendance), the sports and cultural secretaries and the *secretario de relaciones* (who coordinates with other nearby communities) and all are present during meetings. All roles or *cargos* are rotated annually, and new incumbents are chosen in early January, meaning that individuals may take up various roles at different times. It has become increasingly common for those resident in the cities to exercise either the role of *jilanku* or *dirigente*, with failure to accept the *cargo* punished by a monthly fine. While Tata Maximo is a full-time resident of Vilaycayma in his early forties who also owns a house in Oruro where his children study, the union *dirigente* is Don Severino, a *Vilaycaymense* resident in Cochabamba for more than fifteen years.

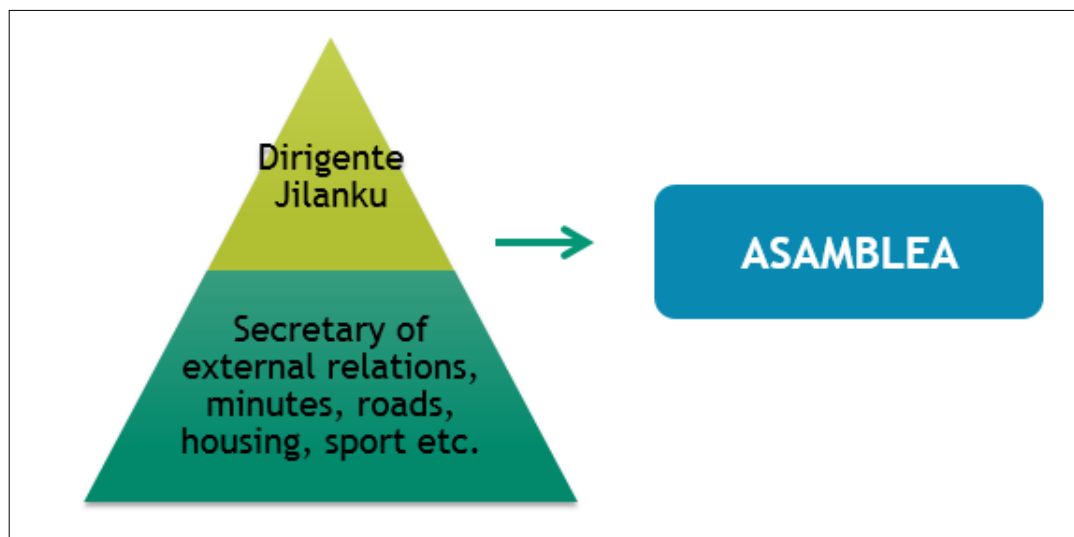


Figure 12: Schematic of the civic political structure in Vilaycayma

Activity in the *comunidad* follows the agrarian-festive cycle described schematically above, which also marks the periods when double residents who reside mainly in the city will return. For example, during the period around *Todos Santos* in early November large numbers of people return to the *comunidad* to participate in the sowing of crops ahead of the rainy season in December and January as well as to visit extended family. When I visited Vilaycayma at this time it was transformed from a semi-abandoned hamlet of elderly residents to a bustling village full of children and young people playing football or with spinning tops next to dozens of cars and pick-up trucks parked along the roadside. These periods also coincide with the largest meetings of the communal assembly, which may become so crowded there is barely space in the *sede sindical* for people to stand. During harvest time in early May, Vilaycayma is famous

for its *Toro Tinku* or ritualised bullfight in which bulls are pitted against each other, again providing a significant cultural event for families who live elsewhere at the time they return to collaborate in harvesting.



Figure 13: Picture of the author dancing the *jula-jula* in the *fiesta* of *tata santiago*

A further event that draws people back to their home *comunidad* is the *fiesta* of *Tata Santiago*, a Spanish Catholic saint who has acquired great significance among people in rural Bolivia and is considered to have powers of prophecy and healing. Years ago, the different *comunidades* of the province would have congregated in the town of Bolívar to participate in a ritualised inter-community fight known as the *Runa Tinku*. Today this has been replaced by an inter-community football tournament and dancing contest and I was asked to take part in this alongside the people of Vilaycayma, much to the amusement of a number of spectators. The event is marked by an enormous influx of individuals resident in the city to their home *comunidades*, who descend in their thousands upon the town in what is a celebration of their identity and home community. Dressed in traditional *originario* clothing they fill up the central square where they wave *wiphala* indigenous flags.

ii. Local Field Site 2: Copacabana and Yuraq Rumi

The neighbourhoods of Yuraq Rumi and Copacabana are located in *Distrito 14* or *Villa Pagador* in the south of the city of Cochabamba, an area that has been heavily settled by highland migrants, especially from the department of Oruro. The atmosphere is warm, dry and full of dust, as what was once an area of pasture in the hills overlooking the city has been transformed into a crowded peri-urban area with little space for vegetation and only the dry, rocky earth of the steep hillside. The neighbourhoods are constructed with each row of houses perched improbably atop the other until they reach the summit, hundreds of feet above the Cochabamba Valley. Most of the inhabitants are Quechua-speaking migrants from Bolívar province, with many from the *comunidad* of Vilaycayma. The older and more established neighbourhoods of the zone, such as Villa Luz, are located closer to the central Los Angeles avenue, while the newer residences are precariously and tenaciously built further up the hill, their physical location and state mirroring their social position and status within the urban space. It was here I spent time with various families from Bolívar and Vilaycayma and initially made contact with people through involvement with the local Baptist Congregation in Yuraq Rumi, where my wife and I gave weekly English classes and made friends with the pastor, Don Victor Ari, himself from Vilaycayma. For the families I knew, various factors provided them with continuity with their home *comunidad* and a sense of community in the city, including their continued participation in rural civic duties, cultural events and the cultivation of communal lands. However, an important factor was their identity as Evangelical Christians or *hermanos*, either as part of the local Baptist Union congregation or the Church of God of Prophecy, which also held regular emotionally charged and confessional meetings in the neighbourhoods.

The land that makes up these neighbourhoods had been divided and sold in small sections or *lotes* of approximately 300 square metres some 15 years ago, when it had been nothing more than an area of open hillside. In order to construct a home, it would have been first necessary to dig into the rocky earth, carve out a space in which to live and mark out the extension of the *lote*: an operation which symbolically mirrors the painstaking legal process of regularising the land and by extension individuals' status as residents of the city. The *lotes* were purchased without title deeds or recognition in the official registry of *derechos reales* and with only a *minuta de compra* or receipt of sale. While families are effectively squatting and have little to no legal recourse against

others who may try to appropriate their land, they accept this situation as the only means of acquiring a foothold in the city. In order to acquire full individual legal title of their *lote* the residents must engage in a long and uncertain bureaucratic process. In essence this consists of four steps: the first is the purchase of the *lote* and the construction of a dwelling with a perimeter wall, following this the inhabitants wait until the census includes their neighbourhood within the National Statistics Institute or INE, meaning the land is recognised as urban, allowing them to petition the government for projects and improvements under the LPP law, before finally paying an architect and topographer to draw up a detailed general plan of the neighbourhood including common areas and the extent of each individual *lote*, which is presented alongside other documents including those showing the original sale of the land and the payment of taxes to the offices of the city government. While it may appear relatively straightforward, this process can suffer numerous setbacks. During my fieldwork in Cochabamba the residents of the neighbourhood of Copacabana had been impeded in individually titling their *lotes* by the fact that not every family which appeared in the general plan corresponded to previous census records. Several residents had bought their *lote* from a prior occupant who in some cases had migrated to Spain or Argentina and were impossible to contact. None of the residents of the sector at the time of my fieldwork had gained full ownership of the land they lived on and by extension lacked legitimacy in the eyes of the state and full inclusion as citizens within the urban area.

Much of the civic organisation within these neighbourhoods is a result of the common condition of legal precarity the residents find themselves in. As Don Victor's wife, Doña Elsa, commented pithily while we were drinking *mazamorra* corn drink in the kitchen of her house one afternoon, 'No one has regularised their land yet. For this reason, we are so united here in this sector.' These forms of local community organisation also function to allow residents access to funds for public services and resources from the city government and external agencies and to carry out general improvements to the neighbourhood. The most common of these is the OTB or *Organización Territorial de Base*, brought about by the 1994 LPP law. For a residents' council or *junta vecinal* to gain status as an OTB it is necessary to formally define the territorial extension and limits of the neighbourhood. Consequently, the individual private ownership of land provides the basis upon which individuals organise and make demands of the state. The general assembly of the OTB of Copacabana meets on a bi-monthly basis in the *casa*

comunal: a building that is functionally similar to the *sede sindical* in which meetings are held in the countryside, acting as a meeting point and the seat of local community organisation. Moreover, the form meetings take is remarkably similar. Residents assemble within the *casa comunal* in front of the *directorio* or committee of the OTB and discuss the issues in an agenda before taking decisions by collective assent.

While the OTB consists of a *directorio* of various secretaries responsible for housing, health, culture, sport and so forth (in a similar fashion to the organisation of the *comunidad*) there is a core committee of about four members including the president, who assume a large amount of the responsibility for organising meetings and dealing with local government. Various residents take the role of *jefe de manzana* or block leader, responsible for communicating information and communal work among their immediate neighbours. Nevertheless, the *asamblea* represents the sovereign body which provides final assent to all actions.

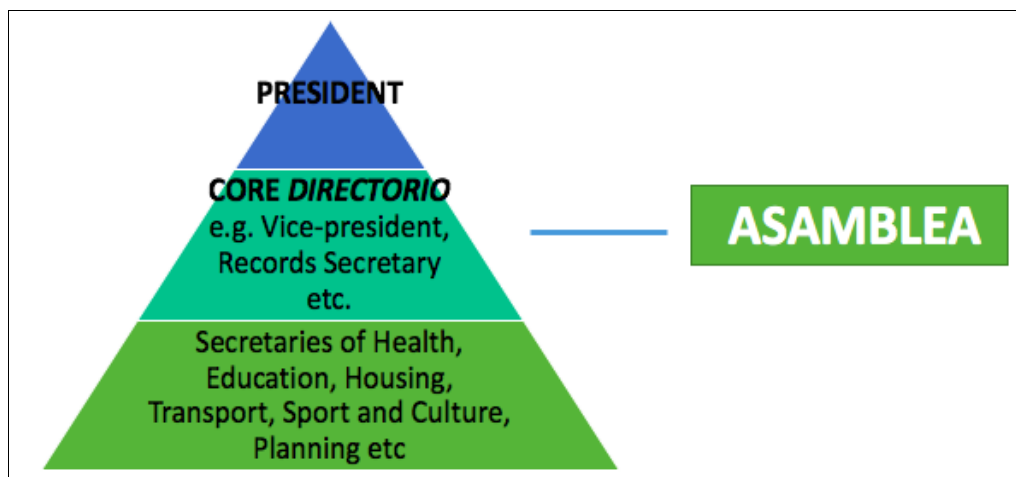


Figure 14: Schematic of the civic political structure of the OTB

Meetings of the *asamblea* are compulsory: regular failure to attend may result in a fine and meetings do not conclude until there is agreement on what to do. If the assembly decides it necessary to carry out communal work, failure to comply is sanctioned with a fine equivalent to a day's salary. During one meeting I attended of Copacabana OTB it was deemed necessary to carry out *trabajo comunal* or communal work to clear earth from the homes of families who had been affected by landslides during the rains and all present immediately organised themselves to meet after lunch and disseminated the information via the block leaders to those not present. This manner of self-government and collective decision making is very similar to that of the countryside and arguably

embodies similar notions of democracy and citizenship, which in turn resemble those of civic republicanism (Linera, 2004; Lazar, 2004, 2007; Postero, 2007). In addition, leadership is conceived of in a similar fashion, with roles referred to as *cargos* and viewed as a form of service to the community which both implies financial and personal costs and bestows prestige and growth on the person. Other local organisations include the *junta escolar*, similar in some respects to a parent-teacher organisation but with much wider scope. Through monthly financial contributions and communal work, the residents of Copacabana had helped build the local school, *Centro Educativo Libertad*, and continued to pay the salaries of some of the teachers. The *comité de agua* or water committee represents another organisation separate to the OTB but affiliated with it. As none of the neighbourhoods in the sector are included within the system of the public water company SEMAPA, the *comité de agua* arranges for the tanker trucks to deliver water to a self-constructed water system, measure usage and calculate the monthly contribution of each family.



Figure 15: View from the church in Yuraq Rumi

While there are obvious continuities in local civic politics between the countryside and the city, the conditions of rural migrant's inclusion as members of the community and the economic activities they are involved in represent a rupture to their way of life. Individuals in peri-urban neighbourhoods like Copacabana and Yuraq Rumi face constant uncertainty as to their inclusion in the city and must fight to acquire individual

title deeds for the land they occupy. A similar condition of uncertainty and precarity results from the way individuals make a living in the money economy of the city. Work in Bolívar province is distinguished by periods of intense activity and relative inactivity and is dictated by the agrarian cycle with its associated cultural activities and seasonal migration to and from the city. Meanwhile, work in Cochabamba is a constant process of acquiring money and maximising the amount one can earn. *Comunidades* like Vilaycayma exhibit certain characteristics of an agrarian subsistence or peasant economy (Wolf, 1966; Scott, 1976; Chayanov, 1986) in the sense that productive activity is directed towards the social reproduction of the family. In making a living the goal is not to maximise yields but to employ various strategies to hedge against the possibility of the catastrophic loss of crops, given the inherent precarity of agriculture in the highlands. Making a living in the city is also inherently uncertain given the nature of the informal economy but leads to different outcomes.

Among the families I came to know men typically work as day labourers in construction and women in informal commerce in the vast open market of *la cancha*, while more affluent residents may work as taxi drivers or have small businesses, sometimes owning fixed stalls or *puestos*, or travel as salesmen between the city and communities in the countryside. When I asked people to describe what is characteristic of working and earning a living in the city, they would explain that in the city '*todo es plata*' (everything is money) and that one must '*trabajar en lo que hay*' or work in whatever is available. In the city, unlike the countryside, there is a need to constantly acquire money to pay for the necessities of life. These include food, transport, the cost of rent or the costs of paying for materials in the construction and improvement of their homes and of legalising their *lote*. Yet working in the informal economy as day labourers or street vendors provides no guaranteed income. Don Victor described it in the following terms:

'...over there [in the countryside] there aren't that many hours: you can pass the time doing nothing. Here we can't pass a single hour doing nothing but rather you always have to do something; in that way the people, shall we say, if you are selling until late then you have more. let's say that's the advantage. If you go early then, well, you have very little...but then you aren't with your child, well the children become brought up...badly...That's the disadvantage here, while there we all share.' (S)

The logic of hedging against uncertainty characteristic of the countryside is reproduced in the city in as much as residents describe their lands in their home *comunidades* as a form of insurance against change in the urban economy, providing them with food for

sale and consumption and a refuge in the event of economic disaster. Yet when it comes to trying to deal with the uncertainty of the money economy, maximising the amount earned becomes the best strategy to hedge against the possibility of poor business. Moreover, the hierarchy of economic roles gives a clear sense of the possibilities for financial progress as part of long-term project to gain inclusion in the city and improve the lives of their families.

Much of this thesis will describe the political conflict which took place through the different spaces described in this chapter, the points of rupture and debates between the different forms of authority as well as the factors which explain how it has reached its present state. In Chapter 5, I will return to examine the phenomenon of multi-locality and double residence in order to consider its impact on debates surrounding land tenancy. However, the following chapter will describe the history of Bolivia and of Bolívar/Kirkiawi from before the colonisation of the Americas until the time of my fieldwork.

Chapter 3. A History of Kirkiawi and the Bolivian Nation

Introduction

Despite its size and relative geographical isolation within the department of Cochabamba, Bolívar has a long history which can be traced to before the colonisation of the Americas. As was mentioned in the previous chapter, it had formerly been ‘*canton Kirkiawi*’ of Arque province and gained its independent status in the 1980s, taking the name of the former ‘canton capital’ of Bolívar. Kirkiawi is the name attributed to the territory which existed prior to the colonisation of the Americas and it is the continued recognition of this historic entity that has provided the area with its ongoing territorial integrity and identity. Bolívar province exhibits a complex and unusual political geography in terms of both its local governmental structure and territorial status, as the area is simultaneously a province, a municipality and an ancestral indigenous territory, legally recognised as a *Tierra Comunitaria de Origen* or TCO. At the same time, it possesses a municipal government, a peasant union and traditional *ayllu* authorities, all of which are composed of individuals from the indigenous *comunidades* of the province. While these different authorities are involved in a local political rift, this ultimately turns on the question of what it means to be *originario*, a term roughly equivalent to indigenous that is used to denote authentic membership of their community.

This current situation can only be properly understood through examining how these present forms of territorial organisation, authority, identity and political consciousness have emerged in the course of history. For marginalised rural peoples like the inhabitants of Bolívar province their historical interaction with the colonial and post-colonial state has been one of cooperation, resistance and exchange. Their history is inseparable from that of the larger state structures with which they have had to negotiate, and which have defined their social institutions and sense of collective identity. In the course of this process they have, in a sense, gradually come to recognise themselves and to be recognised as part of the Bolivian nation. For this reason, the present chapter aims to sketch a history of both the Bolivian nation and of Kirkiawi, with the objective of providing an understanding of the present social and political situation in Bolivia as a whole and how the local politics of this tiny province fit into the larger reality. Through localising wider social and political changes in the regional

histories of Kirkiawi it will provide context for later analysing in detail the different elements of the rift between the *ayllu* authorities and the peasant union and *alcaldía*. When examining long and complex histories it is useful to divide the past into discrete periods and this chapter will do precisely that. The periods I describe correspond closely to those used by the historian Alan Knight (2014) to characterise the change in Latin American states from the time of independence until the present day, while also overlapping with the ‘cycles’ described by Rivera Cusicanqui (1990) in analysing the relationship between the Bolivian state and the *ayllu*. The first section will cover the period from prior to the colonisation until the 1952 national revolution. This in fact encompasses three distinct periods: pre-colonial history, the colonial period and the period of liberal democracy. The second section will describe the corporatist period, the period of neoliberal reforms following Bolivia’s return to democracy and the cycle of near-revolutionary protests that took place at the turn of the new century. The final section will examine how the MAS emerged as a national government in what can be described as the ‘post-neoliberal’ period. It will describe how and why the different elements of the alliance of social movements that helped bring the MAS to power have come into conflict with each other and the somewhat contradictory nature of much of its actions, relating this analysis to the local rift in Bolívar province. This section will address how a governing party which expresses a discourse of populist indigeneity and claims to have refounded the state for the nation’s ‘indigenous majority’ has entered in conflict with indigenous organisations and authorities at both the national and local level.

I. From the Conquest to the National Revolution

i. The Aymara federations and the Incas

There is evidence from mention in historical documents that an *Ayllu Kirkiawi* has existed in some form for at least 400 years (Mendoza et al., 2002), although there exists debate as to whether this Kirkiawi formed part of a larger nation or existed as an independent kingdom inhabited by an ethnic group known as the *Turpas* (Izko, 1992). Evidence is relatively scarce regarding the history of the territory prior to the Spanish colonisation. A local myth that bears a striking resemblance to the biblical story of Sodom and Gomorrah, claims that the name Kirkiawi originally referred to an ancient great lost city that was destroyed in an earthquake. Whatever the precise history of the

territory it is reasonable to assume that it would have existed during the time of the Aymara kingdoms that stretched across the cordillera of the Andes from just south of Cuzco to the northern highlands of present-day Bolivia. The Aymara nations or *gran ayllus* have been characterised as a form of ‘segmentary state’ (Platt, 1988) that had as their base the smaller *ayllu* community. Like other societies in the Andes they were characterised by a form of discontinuous control of territory in the pattern of an archipelago, thereby permitting access to the varied resources necessary for their survival from the diverse ecological niches of the Andean landscape (Bouyouse-Cassagne, 1978). This implied a complex organisational structure and an economy based on practices of reciprocity and redistribution rather than market exchange (Murra, 1956). These forms of reciprocity and redistribution were not the expression of an egalitarian society but rather a social mechanism that responded to the ecological conditions of the Andes; they were linked to a system of centralised political control that allowed for the extraction of surplus by the ruling elites. The *ayllu* in its present form is the result of a long history of fragmentation and internal change. Nevertheless, the history of territories like Kirkiawi within the confederations of Aymara kingdoms is relevant to understanding the political imaginary and ambitions of some of the traditional authorities and organisations such as CONAMAQ, as well as the way the *ayllu* has co-evolved in relationship with the colonial and post-colonial state.

By the middle of the 15th century the kingdom of Quechua-speaking peoples that came to be known as the Incas had expanded from its base in the valley of Cuzco to construct a major empire that stretched throughout the Andes. In the 1460s they were able to extend their influence over the Aymara kingdoms that became integrated into the wider empire through a combination of military conquest and diplomacy. The Inca allowed the traditional Aymara rulers to remain in place and the entire area was organised into its own administrative region or *suyu*, known as *Qollasuyu*: one of the four *suyus* of the Inca empire *Tawintinsuyu*. Some kingdoms would have been granted a greater degree of autonomy than others. The Charka federation, to which it is believed Kirkiawi belonged (Mendoza et al., 2002), maintained a position as subordinate allies to the Incas, providing them with soldiers for their army. Under the Inca ruler Wayna Qhapaq, however, there occurred a process of intensification of military recruitment and the re-ordering of lands and colonies (Bouysse-Cassagne, 1978). Large areas of valley lands in the region known as *Qucha Pampa*, corresponding to the three valleys of modern-day

Cochabamba, were appropriated by the empire and highland colonists or *mitmaq* were settled in the valley regions from the *Charkas*, *Suras* and other groups, establishing the *Qucha Pampa* region as the ‘breadbasket’ of *Tawintinsuyu*. The Inca allowed a great deal of autonomy and independence to the *ayllus* whilst utilising the existing principles of complementarity and reciprocity in order to absorb the surplus product of self-sufficient communities (Murra, 2002). The peasantry was obliged to work in cultivating state land and to provide various forms of labour service, but in a fashion that bore a structural and ideological resemblance to the practices carried out for their Aymara ethnic lords and community.

ii. The conquest and the Toledo reforms

With the arrival of the conquistadores in the 1530s the territories of the Inca empire quickly became subjugated under Spanish colonial rule. As had happened in Mesoamerica a decade earlier, the conquest of the Andes had been facilitated by superior weaponry, horses and the creation of military alliances with regional ethnic groups against the local hegemonic state. In the Andes the conquistadores benefited from a civil war between the royal brothers Huascar and Atahualpa, which in the Southern Andes allowed them to gain support among most of the Aymara lords, who supported the claim of Huascar to the Inca throne (Klein, 2003). Initially the Spanish treated the Inca Manku Yupanki as puppet emperor before he led a major rebellion in 1537 in which the majority of the Aymara nations sided with him. However, by this point Spanish military strength was too great and Manku Yupanki’s forces were soundly defeated. He fled into exile, founding the tiny neo-Inca state of Vilacamba, which persisted for another 36 years until its eventual destruction and the execution of his son, Túpak Amaru (Ibid.).

The basic pattern of early Spanish colonisation of the Americas was dependent upon the existence of pre-existing rural populations and governmental structures that allowed the use of indirect rule to extract surplus value and exploit native labour (Donghi, 1993). In the *ayllu* communities this took the form of a head tax known as *la tasa* and obligatory labour service. In what is present day Bolivia much of the Aymara ethnic nobility were allowed to keep their private lands and rights to community labour in exchange for acting as the official representative of their community to the Spanish crown and guaranteeing the payment of taxes and labour obligations (Rasnake, 1988; Klein, 2003).

The Spanish colony was legally divided into two realms or ‘republics’ under the rule of the crown: the Republic of the Spanish and the Republic of Indians, allowing for the continuation of internal structures of governance or *usos y costumbres*, as well as providing the basis for the racialised segregation of Bolivian society that has continued in some form to the present day.

The fact that territories like Kirkiawi would have existed in relation to larger state systems prior to the Spanish conquest while retaining their own forms of internal self-government and territorial and economic organisation shaped the ways in which they managed their relationship with the colonial and post-colonial state. However, this relationship was never one-sided and straightforward and involved indigenous peoples as active participants. Steve Stern (1992) has pointed out that the composition of Latin American society was not the result of a one-dimensional process of colonisation by a homogeneous group of conquistadors against a passive indigenous population but a complex development in which diverse constituencies competed with each other to define the form and meaning it should take and in which native peoples, ‘engaged — assisted, resisted, appropriated, subverted, redeployed — European colonial projects...and relationships’ (Ibid, p.23). This is no less the case than with the relationship between the state and the Bolivian *ayllu* communities, whose common history has been one alternatively of resistance, co-operation, enmity and negotiation and which explains the social imaginary through which contemporary highland indigenous peoples are able to define themselves and their place within the Bolivian nation.

Among the earliest events to affect communities in the highlands and valleys of Bolivia were the reforms of Viceroy Francisco de Toledo in 1572 in response to the decline of the native population due to European disease and the need to ensure tax revenue and a labour force for the growing mining economy around Potosí. In a series of forced resettlements or ‘Indian reductions’, Toledo attempted to convert *ayllu* communities into nucleated settlements that were easy to tax and account for and introduced a standardised corvée labour system that took its name, the *mita*, from the obligatory labour service which had existed under the Inca empire. While the Toledo reforms undoubtedly changed the nature of rural society, resulting in the destruction and fragmentation of the *ayllus* and larger polities to which they belonged, they inevitably ran up against the problem that they were profoundly incompatible with the cultural

logics and ecological imperatives of communities living in the Andean highlands. Even though rural populations were ‘reduced’ into towns, in many areas the inhabitants later re-established their territorial structures of ‘verticality’, with colonies distributed in the form of an archipelago between different zones of altitude, a pattern that has persisted until the present day in some regions (Platt, 1986; Bouysse-Cassagne, Harris and Platt, 2004). It was from this period also that many highland *ayllus*, despite maintaining a sense of identity and continuity, lost their outlying valley lands (Rasnake, 1988). The first appearance in the colonial record of *Ayllu Kirkiawi* is in 1646, when the authority Miguel Fernandez Mamani made a petition to the colonial administration to regain lost valley lands from nearby Sacaca (Mendoza et al., 2002). These lost lands are still spoken about to this day.

While throughout the colonial period communities like Kirkiawi retained their own internal forms of government, production and exchange, these evolved in interaction with the wider society and economy. Regarding the internal economy of the *ayllu* there has been revision among Andean scholars concerning its relationship with the market. Early ethnographers of the Bolivian Andes (Platt, 1982; Harris, 1982) emphasised the separateness of the *ayllu* from the market economy. For example, Olivia Harris used the term ‘the ethnic economy’ to describe the way exchange is mediated by reciprocity and kinship among the Laymi of Northern Potosí and describes their resistance to the incursion of market exchange within the *ayllu*. More recent scholarship suggests that highland indigenous communities have historically participated in wider networks of trade and that their relationship with the market economy has been one of complex interplay (Larson, Harris and Tandeter, 1995). A major change in the internal government of most *ayllus* took place following the series of uprisings against the Spanish crown in 1780-1782. The indigenous noble class had been gradually worn down by the exactions of the colonial government and their invidious position as landowners and labour exploiters who were simultaneously responsible for protecting the internal customs or *usos y costumbres* of their own communities and ensuring that taxes and labour obligations towards the Spanish state were met (Klein, 2003). However, it was the wave of rebellions towards the end of the 18th century that marks the point when hereditary positions gave way to the rotation of authorities among families, characteristic of most highland indigenous communities (Rasnake, 1988). Interestingly, as has been mentioned earlier, this change did not take place in Kirkiawi

where the positions of higher authority within the *ayllu* remain hereditary, an arrangement that, as we shall see later, continues to have consequences for the local politics of Bolívar province.

Beginning in the 16th century large amounts of Indian lands were seized and converted into *haciendas*, landed estates controlled by a quasi-feudal landlord class of Spanish-descended white *criollos*. Not only were people's lands appropriated but they were forced into providing labour for the owner or *patrón* of the *hacienda* in order to be allowed to reside and farm land within the estate for their own subsistence: a system that became known as *ponguaje*. The landless Indians or *pongos* were responsible for supplying not only the labour for *hacienda* production but also the agricultural inputs and transport to market of goods, alongside obligatory domestic and even sexual services for the landowning family. In the valley regions of Cochabamba, the entire rural population were despoiled of their communal lands. Despite the exploitative nature of this system, many individuals from free highland communities migrated in this period to escape the onerous responsibilities attached to *ayllu* membership, both to *haciendas* and to other *ayllus*. Migrants settled in *ayllus* would have been granted usufruct rights to land only in exchange for sharecropping and service in the work parties of full members of the community and would have been exempt from payment of the head tax. Widespread rural migration therefore gave rise to different categories of *ayllu* membership that were simultaneously fiscal categories, determining the rate of tax payable to the government: with *originarios* paying the full rate, *agregados* a reduced rate and with less access to lands and *forasteros* occupying the position of landless workers exempt from taxation. In Bolívar province today, these colonial categories remain, although it is my understanding that in most *comunidades* the overwhelming majority of families possess *originario* status. At the same time, the state began to recognise ethnic groups or *castas* in addition to those of white and Indian, such as *mestizo* and *cholo*: legal categories that determined an individual's social status based in theory on the relative proportion of their Spanish and Indian ancestry. However, in reality economic and cultural status would define ethnic identity (Harris, 1995). *Mestizo* was used in the countryside to refer to individuals who farmed lands as independent peasant freeholders (Platt, 1986) while *cholo* was often used contemptuously by the urban middle classes to refer to a 'semi-indigenous' person of rural origin who operated a commercial enterprise, such as the female market traders who remain a ubiquitous

presence in Bolivian cities to this day. *Mestizo* in contemporary Bolivia as in other parts of Latin America still refers to an intermediate, culturally and supposedly ethnically mixed social strata between Indians and the white *criollo* class of landowners and urban professionals. Until now in Bolívar the *llaqta runas* or townfolk of the provincial capital remain a culturally separate group, despite being Quechua speakers and sharing certain folk Catholic customs with the people of the *ayllu comunidades*, with whom they had formerly held a somewhat exploitative relationship as petty traders and middlemen.

iii. Independence and the liberal era

In the transition to independence after 1825 there was a continuity in colonial institutions and economic structures. Bolivia's economy remained dependent on mining, the commercial activity of the *haciendas* and the proceeds of the Indian head tax. The colonial separation of the two republics was recreated in the post-colonial society in the failure to fully include the rural indigenous majority as citizens. Indian communities occupied a paradoxical position within Bolivian society. The underdevelopment of the national economy and its reliance on mining, with periodic cycles of boom and bust, meant the state had to continually recur to the collection of the head tax to plug gaps in funding. At the same time, the existence of a rural indigenous majority, with its own customs, languages and forms of government was regarded as both a threat to the physical safety of the white elite and to the social and economic advancement of the nation. From the colony until independence, the relationship between the *ayllus* and the Bolivian state remained one of mutual dependence and intermittent conflict. Tristan Platt (1986) talks of the notion of 'the pact' between state and *ayllu*: the perception that in paying the *tasa* or Indian head tax *ayllu* members secured autonomy over their territory and *usos y costumbres*. While 'the pact' was a widely held belief among *ayllu* members, the state administration for the most part saw the head tax as a simple extraction of ground rent with no corresponding obligations. Nevertheless, due to the importance of the tax for the revenues of the colonial and postcolonial state 'the pact' existed *de facto* until the late nineteenth century.

In the second half of the 19th century various attempts were made to privatise communal lands, particularly under the presidency of Mariano Melgarajo. However, it was under President Tomás Frías that the most significant attempt to expropriate *ayllu* land and

turn it into *hacienda* was carried out with the 1874 disentailment act, legally dissolving Indian communities and reducing them to individually titled plots of land that could be publicly auctioned by the government in the event of non-payment of taxes. This happened during a change in the nature of the national economy that reflected transformations at the level of the entire Latin American region towards policies of free trade (Knight, 2014). A new mining boom, this time driven by tin and focused around the mining centres of Oruro and the construction of railways led to greater integration into the world economy and a decreased reliance on the head tax for the national coffers. This reform was motivated by a combination of laissez-faire economics and a political ideology which saw the continued existence of Indian communities as an obstacle for national development (Platt, 1986). Ostensibly the purpose of the law was to create a private market for lands and a modern system of commercialised agriculture that would replace the supposedly inefficient production systems of the Indian communities. In reality, the policy was a failure, instead creating a mono-export economy dependent on imports for industrial inputs, articles of consumption and basic foodstuffs (Ibid.).

In the period 1880-1930 there was a large-scale shrinkage of *ayllu* lands and the growth of *haciendas* (Cusicanqui, 2010a). A number of indigenous leaders attempted to resist this via judicial means, unearthing old documents dating from the 15th and 16th centuries which designated the *ayllu* leaders, the *kurakas* or *mallkus*, as owners of the territory. It appears that precisely this sort of legal battle took place in the territory of Kirkiawi. There exists a sheep hide document dating from 1564 kept in the *sede sindical* of Vilaycayma, the product of the efforts by the heads of six *originario* families who it is claimed purchased the land from the colonial state in exchange for seven bushels of gold and silver. During the ceremony of *misa mast'ay*, these six ancestors or *soqta achichilas* are venerated and a *ch'alla*, or ritual libation is offered to the ancestral documents of the *ayllu*. This origin story was told to me repeatedly by various traditional authorities, who informed me with great pride how this meant that the landlord class or *q'ara runas* had never been allowed to enter their territory.

Kirkiawi is not unique in holding onto its autonomy and territory in this way, as various other *ayllu* communities in the regions of Oruro, La Paz and Northern Potosi also did so (Ibid.). Nevertheless, much of the valley regions of Cochabamba and Sucre as well as large parts of the department of La Paz became converted into *haciendas* in which the

local populations became dependent tenant farmers who owed labour to the landlord or *hacendado* in exchange for the right to cultivate land (Platt, 1982; Larson, 1998). It is this class of *hacienda* owners that the traditional authorities referred to when they spoke of the *q'ara runas*.

Legal action was not the only form of resistance that indigenous peoples have utilised against the incursion of the state and outsiders. Throughout the colonial and post-colonial period there have been numerous incidents of open violent rebellion. The two best known examples of these were the uprisings of Túpak Katari in 1781 and Zarate Willka in 1899. In a series of rebellions against Spanish rule, which erupted in the period 1780-82, the Aymara peasant Julian Apaza, taking the name Túpak Katari and assisted by his wife, Bartolina Sisa, led an army of over 40,000 warriors to besiege La Paz with the aim of replacing Spanish rule with autonomous indigenous government. The siege was eventually ended and Katari was executed and quartered. Before dying it is claimed he uttered the words 'I die but I shall return tomorrow as millions' (Canessa, 2000). The millenarian nature of Katari's uprising and the dramatic pathos of his downfall has formed an important part of the imaginary of peasant social movements and both Túpak Katari and Bartolina Sisa remain powerful political symbols in contemporary Bolivia.



Figure 16: Picture of the ancestral documents of the *ayllu*

The rebellion of Zarate Willka took place in the context of a civil war between the Liberal and Conservative parties. While the war was effectively between the representatives of two different elite groups (the traditional silver mining oligarchy based in Potosí and Sucre and the new mining and commercial elite linked to La Paz), the Liberal party was able to develop linkages with *ayllu* communities and offered them the promise of recovering lands lost during the preceding 25 years. The Aymara *mallku*, Zarate Willka, placed his army at the service of the Liberals with the goal of reclaiming lost lands and establishing autonomous indigenous government. However, following the victory of the Liberal side various indigenous groups led violent uprisings, looting and burning *hacienda* property and occupying local towns. At this point Kirkiawi again enters into the historical record, as the *originarios* of Kirkiawi took part in the occupation of the town of Sacaca, declaring ‘death to the white and mestizo race’ and their ‘unconditional allegiance to President Willka’ (Condarco, 2002, p.387). For his part in the uprising Willka was imprisoned and later murdered. According to Silvia Rivera Cusicanqui (2010) this rebellion marked the last autonomous Indian rebellion and secured in the imaginary of the urban classes the terrifying image of being besieged by the Indian masses, an image that ultimately harks back to the great rebellion of Túpak Katari a century earlier.

The Chaco war in 1932 marked a point of profound change in Bolivian society and politics. The war, fought between Bolivia and Paraguay for control of the semi-desert region of the Chaco, is widely considered a disastrous folly, with casualties proportionally similar to those suffered by Britain in World War One (Klein, 2003). While the causes of the war are debated and the events that led to it too complicated to relate here, it had been preceded by a period of political crisis precipitated by the decline in the Bolivian economy following the collapse of commodity prices in the world markets due to the effects of the Great Depression. Despite representing a humiliating military defeat, the war had an important nationalising effect on Bolivian society (Cusicanqui, 2010a). The Bolivian army was organised along the lines of its ethnic hierarchy, with the bulk of ordinary conscripts made up of Quechua and Aymara-speaking Indians, while the non-commissioned officers were *mestizos* and the officers were white members of the urban *criollo* middle and upper-classes. For a section of the urban educated middle-classes, the ‘poor relatives of the oligarchy’ (Rene Zaveleta in Cusicanqui, 2010a, p.94) who would later form leftist nationalist political parties such

as the National Revolutionary Movement (MNR), the experience of being sent to fight a bloody and pointless war alongside Quechua and Aymara soldiers made them both bitterly angry with the prevailing political and social order and aware for the first time of the problems faced by the country's indigenous rural majority. Simultaneously, indigenous groups were able to legitimately articulate their demands using the language of citizenship, given their purely formal recognition as such in the course of mass conscription (Cusicanqui, 2010a). The war transformed Bolivia from a politically conservative country to one of the most radical in the region. The militant sectors of the urban middle classes agreed on the need to nationalise the nation's mining industry and redistribute lands in an agrarian reform, summed up in the popular slogan, '*Minas al estado! Tierras al indio!*' (Mines to the state! Land to the Indian!) (Klein, 2003).

In the years prior to the Chaco war highland peoples had continued to organise themselves and had begun to forge alliances between different leaders, establishing common aims and objectives. The first peasant unions were formed in the period immediately after the war in the valleys of Cochabamba, with relatively modest goals such as limited reform to the system of *ponguaje* and the construction of schools. Education and the promotion of literacy, so as to 'learn the language of their oppressors' (Cusicanqui, 2010a, p.114) was a shared objective among all rural indigenous peoples in the highlands and valleys at this time. Following the end of the war, *ayllu* leaders in the highlands, known as *caciques apoderados*, continued to expand their co-operation with each other, the nascent peasant unions and the urban union movements (Ibid.). In 1942 the first 'national congress of indigenous Quechua-speakers' was held in Sucre with support from the National Workers Federation and the student movement. This was followed in 1945 by a national indigenous congress held in the centre of La Paz, calling for an end to the system of *ponguaje* and the restitution of lost lands. The 1945 congress was carried out with the support of the reformist leader Gualberto Villaroel, who had come to power in a military coup and was sufficiently popular among the peasantry to earn the indigenous honorific of *tata*, meaning literally 'father' in both Quechua and Aymara (Ibid.). Despite offering concessions to both the labour movements and the peasantry, such as recognition of the unions and the formal abolition of *ponguaje*, he was opposed by Conservative elements and large sections of the left and in July 1946 a crowd stormed the Palace of Government and publicly lynched the President.

The six years of political and social turmoil following Villaroel's death are known in Bolivia as the *sexenio*. During this time the traditional political parties, representing the established mining and landowning oligarchies, returned to government but were unable to control the constant cycle of protest and rebellion from the peasantry, workers movement and sectors of the urban middle classes. The miners, organised in the powerful FTSMB union had become increasingly radical in their demands and methods, publishing at their national congress in 1946 the Pulacayo Thesis (which called for permanent revolution and the armed struggle of the working class) and engaged repeatedly in strikes and armed uprisings. At the same time, the Quechua and Aymara peasantry were engaged in various forms of resistance and open rebellion. In the valley regions this largely took the form of sit-down strikes in *haciendas* and negotiation through the peasant union and with help from urban activists to establish better conditions and obtain ownership of parcels of land. Meanwhile, in the highlands this more generally took the form of occupying *hacienda* property adjacent to *ayllu* lands and destroying crops, buildings and tools. In the department of La Paz there emerged a degree of cooperation and hybridity between union organisations and *ayllu* leaders (Ibid.).

The National Revolutionary Movement or MNR, whose leadership was composed of radicalised sections of the urban upper and middle classes, had emerged as the largest and most politically moderate of three leftist parties who pursued the goals of nationalisation of the mines and support for the Indian peasantry. In the crisis of the late 1940s it entered into increasing confrontation with the government, eventually leading a civilian revolt that was put down by the army. Despite the heterogeneous nature of the different groups involved in rebellious activity, the way they were repressed by the ruling regime had a homogenising effect on them and helped establish support for the MNR among all sectors of the labour movement (Dunkerley, 1984). Activists from the MNR and workers movement who were imprisoned shared cells with rebel Indian leaders, establishing links that would play an important role in the future (Cusicanqui, 2010a). In the 1951 elections the MNR won an overwhelming victory but the army stepped in and installed General Hugo Ballivian as President. The MNR reacted by arming the workers and peasants and declaring full-scale military opposition. After three days of fighting in La Paz in April of 1952, in which the miners marched on the city, the

MNR finally came to power and enacted the most dynamic program of social and economic change carried out in the region since the Mexican revolution of 1910.

II. From the National Revolution to the Resource Wars and Bolívar's Indigenous Takeover

i. The national revolution and the military-peasant pact

When the MNR came to power in 1952 they were faced with a complete collapse of the old regime and armed militias of peasants and workers clamouring for change. Despite being the most politically moderate of the major leftist parties they were forced by circumstances into carrying out revolutionary reforms and a reordering of Bolivian society (Klein, 2003). The national government of Victor Paz Estenssoro supported the creation of a national union federation, the COB, headed by the FTSMB leader, Juan Lechin, and the nationalisation of the major tin mines and petroleum reserves in the state corporations COMIBOL and YPFB. In the countryside *ponguaje* was abolished and following a campaign of occupations and seizures of land by peasant militias an agrarian reform was carried out. *Hacienda* land was confiscated and distributed to families in individual title deeds, a process that took many years and was never fully completed (Kohl and Farthing, 2014). The effect, however, was to abolish the *hacienda* and the landlord class, who largely reinvented themselves as urban professionals and businesspeople, while massively increasing the class of independent peasant small holders. In addition, the nation's rural majority were suddenly enfranchised by the abolition of literacy requirements in voter registration while universal schooling and education in the Spanish language were declared goals of the revolution. These reforms were carried out under a modernising ideology with similarities to that of the late nineteenth century. However, while the liberal period promoted a laissez-faire economic model and free trade on the world market, the 1952 revolution established a period of corporatist state capitalism and policies of import substitution in line with the direction of other countries in the region during the cold war era. While the goal of these reforms was once again to modernise the rural economy and create a market for land and agricultural goods, this was to be achieved through the abolition of the inefficient and antiquated *hacienda* system and the creation of a new class of peasant smallholders (Dunkerley, 1984). Rural peoples were no longer referred to as Indians but as *campesinos* or peasants and under the MNR's stated ideology of *mestizaje*, the Indian

majority would be assimilated into wider society through linguistic and cultural Hispanicization, creating a culturally homogeneous modern nation. Peoples in the valleys and highlands had imposed upon them what amounted to a class identity as a way of mediating with the state, which in turn shaped the forms of representation and collective action available to them.

It was during the MNR government that peasant unions were formed throughout the highlands and valleys of Bolivia. In many regions this was carried out with the help and participation of the COB and miners, although the formation of peasant unions was eventually encouraged by the state as a way of establishing relations with the peasantry. It has been argued (Platt, 1986; Cusicanqui, 1990) that as civil society organisations that contain practices and ideologies of citizenship and democracy closer to those of western liberalism and which serve to integrate rural populations into the wider nation, that peasant unions are key to the process of modernisation through cultural assimilation that defines the project of *mestizaje*. However, the emergence of peasant unions and their integration into the life of rural communities did not follow a universal pattern or course of development. Broadly speaking, in the valley regions, particularly those of Cochabamba, pre-Hispanic forms of territorial and social organisation had been lost due to *hacienda* expansion; unions had already been established a generation prior to the agrarian reform and were viewed as a natural form of local social organisation. Moreover, among the Quechua-speaking peasantry in these areas there already existed a large class of independent smallholders known as *piqueros* who controlled a significant share of the market in commercial agriculture (Larson, 1998). Arguably, the peasant unions in this region most closely resemble ‘unions’ in the sense commonly attributed to the term: organisations that collectively represent the interests of their members as workers or producers (Cusicanqui, 2010a). Following the agrarian reform, the peasant unions became the primary form of local civic political organisation throughout almost the entire Cochabamba valley region. Meanwhile, in much of the *altiplano* of La Paz the traditional *ayllu* authorities and the peasant union achieved a degree of hybridity in which peasant unions were adopted but integrated into traditional forms of organisation and values of leadership and governance. In other areas, such as Northern Potosí, the union and *ayllu* authorities remained ideologically and culturally distinct from each other and exhibited a more antagonistic relationship (Cusicanqui, 1990). However, these

are generalisations and the way *sindicatos* became adopted would have differed from place to place.

While Kirkiawi is located within Cochabamba, unlike much of the rest of the department, it had not previously been *hacienda* and therefore did not adopt the peasant union as its sole form of civic political authority. In this sense, the impact of the agrarian reform was likely closer to that of other *ayllu* communities in nearby Northern Potosi and Oruro (Ibid.). In Kirkiawi the majority of the *comunidades* would have gained peasant union leaders following the national revolution in addition to the existing traditional authorities of *jilanku*, who were still responsible for organising the rotation of land, festive and ritual events and adjudicating over matters of justice. Union *dirigentes* would have assumed some of these functions in addition to acting as external representatives and intermediaries with the state.

The peasant unions were powerful allies of the government and in many cases became organisations that served to control the peasantry and turn them into a passive instrument of state support. The generation of rural peoples who had lived through the national revolution and agrarian reform prioritised holding onto their lands and newly acquired rights to education and political enfranchisement. For this reason, they were generally willing to uncritically support governments who promised to preserve this new status quo. Union leaders became brokers who were able to ‘deliver’ the votes of their communities in exchange for promised cash or investments. These sorts of practices, alongside the insertion at the regional and national level of ‘pseudo-leaders’ who were motivated by ambitions of political office, with links to the MNR or other parties, resulted in a culture of political clientelism and prebendalism within many peasant unions. Following the end of MNR government in 1964, Bolivia entered an eighteen-year period of predominantly military governments. The bulk of the Quechua and Aymara peasantry continued to lend their support to the dictator General Rene Barrientos, an intelligent political operator who made sure to declare his unswerving support for the agrarian reform and increased the distribution of land titles and investment in rural education, while simultaneously waging a hostile battle against the organised left and wider trade union movement. This alliance was recognised as a ‘pact’ between the military dictatorship and the indigenous peasantry. For this reason, among others, the peasantry was regarded by the left and workers movement during this period as a deeply conservative force within Bolivian society (Dunkerley, 1984).

ii. Katarismo and the struggle against clientelism

Nevertheless, during the dictatorships of the 1970s there emerged a cultural and political movement of indigenous revindication which changed the course not only of peasant unionism but wider political consciousness and the relationship of rural peoples with the state. Moreover, as an ideology it continues to exert influence on national and local politics in contemporary Bolivia. The general name given to this movement is *Katarismo*, although it was a diverse tendency made up of peasants, students and urban intellectuals of mainly Aymara descent. Influenced heavily by the 'Indianism' of Fausto Reinaga (1970) it provided a counterpoint to the class reductionism of Marxism as the dominant ideology of the Bolivian left. While acknowledging both class and ethnicity as categories of social analysis, *Katarismo* objected to processes of cultural homogenisation and the disarticulation of rural ways of life, seeking the revalidation of 'Indianess' and what is native or *lo propio*. Central to this is the perception of a continuation of a colonial society imposed oppressively over a civilisation that was originally free and which embodied a distinct ethical order (Cusicanqui, 2010a). The heroic struggle against this colonial system and the possibility of a return to a free society is exemplified by the figure of Túpak Katari, whose claim at his execution to one day 'return as millions', is interpreted to mean the eventual awakening of the sleeping giant of the Bolivian ethnic majority (Tiwanaku Manifesto, 1973).

In its dimension as a cultural movement in the cities, *Katarismo* was a product of the increase in rural-urban migration that had taken place in the years following the national revolution. The revolution had caused the breakdown in the sociocultural barrier between countryside and city that had maintained the separation of the two republics following Bolivia's independence. Moreover, the fact that the agrarian reform was slow to be implemented encouraged the migration of individuals from *ex-hacienda* areas to the cities. It was during the early 1960s that individuals from Bolívar began to migrate to urban areas to pursue higher levels of education than were available in the rural schools, including a key informant of mine, Severino Condori, who was later elected as MAS congressman for the provinces of Bolívar and Arque. By the late 1960s, a significant proportion of the urban population of La Paz were Aymara speakers who retained cultural and economic links with their communities of origin in the *altiplano*. For these indigenous urban residents, the reality of their exclusion by white urban society was made clear to them in countless daily acts of discrimination. Access to

higher education led to the emergence of an Aymara intellectual class, who participated in the creation of *Katarista* student movements and cultural and political centres.

In the countryside a new generation of peasant union leaders decided to bring an end to the culture of clientelism and political cronyism that was common at the time. Unlike their parents they had grown up after the 1952 revolution, with the benefits of schooling and bilingualism and the notion that they were free and equal citizens within the Bolivian nation. This relative privilege allowed them to more fully perceive the hypocrisy behind the claims of formal equality of the national revolution, as they continued to experience the reality of being a culturally and socially subordinated group. The clientelist domination of the peasant unions by the government and established parties they identified as part of *ponguaje politico* or political serfdom, from which they had to free themselves. A key figure within the rural movement was Jenaro Flores, who helped establish the United Union Federation of Peasant Workers of Bolivia (CSUTCB) to replace the moribund and discredited National Peasant Workers Union (CNTCB). The CSUTCB became formally affiliated with the COB, leading to Flores election as the leader of Bolivia's union movement.

In the late 1970s there emerged a split in *Katarismo* between two tendencies: The Revolutionary Movement Túpak Katari (MRTK), which came from a rural union tradition, emphasising a class-based analysis and the Indian Movement Túpak Katari (MITKA), that prioritised indigenous ethnic revindication. In her classic work on the history of highland peasant politics, Silvia Rivera Cusicanqui viewed this as the political expression of different dimensions of the experience of highland rural peoples (Cusicanqui, 2010a). She claimed that there exist two aspects of collective historical memory among highland indigenous peoples: the 'distant' memory related to the struggle for autonomy against the colonial and post-colonial state, often experienced more acutely by rural-urban migrants brought into contact with white-*mestizo* society and made to feel 'like foreigners in their own country' and the 'recent memory', related to the 'historic point of rupture' of the 1952 revolution and the acquisition of political and social rights. The political expression of these differences articulates itself in a process of struggle over the definition of the collective indigenous subject: conceived of as either an oppressed and excluded class that must gain control of the state and its resources or as the heir to the great Aymara and Quechua nations of the past.

iii. The neoliberal era and new forms of politics

Bolivia finally returned to the current period of stable democracy in 1982. This followed a four-year period that contained three general elections and six military coups. A coalition of leftist parties, the UDP, was elected into power and was faced with an inflationary and sovereign debt crisis that severely weakened the conventional left as an electoral force and initiated a twenty-year period of neoliberal governments. In 1985 the MNR returned to power with Victor Paz Estenssoro re-elected as President, who then proceeded to carry out a series of structural adjustment reforms to the Bolivian economy in line with the directives of the World Bank and International Monetary Fund. These measures, which were known as the New Economic Policy or NPE, were designed to stabilise the Bolivian economy by 'shock therapy'. In exchange for a stabilisation loan and credit from the IMF and World Bank, Paz Estenssoro signed into a law a reform that devalued the national currency, slashed public spending, liberalised the economy and dismissed the majority of the employees in the government owned oil and mining companies. Following the failure to reverse the mass layoffs of mine workers in the 1986 'March for Life', the FTSMB, described as the *columna vertebral* or 'backbone' of the COB for being its most highly organised, ideologically radical and militant element, was routed as a political force. This marked a major defeat and the start of a prolonged period of relative quiescence for the labour movement and the traditional left. Moreover, it also led to further waves of migration, this time from the mining centres, to the major cities and increased the pace of urban expansion that had been taking place since the national revolution (Gill, 2002).

It was not only the left and labour movement that suffered defeat and fragmentation during this period. In the 1980s there emerged a complex process of further division within the *Katarista* movement. One tendency became involved with pursuing the sorts of multiculturalist reforms that allow for the formal recognition of indigenous groups within the liberal state and was largely co-opted by the neoliberal governments of the 1990s, the ultimate example of this being the decision of *Katarista* leader Víctor Hugo Cárdenas to run for Vice-President alongside Sánchez de Lozada and the MNR. Nevertheless, a second wave of indigenist political movements began to develop at the same time that *Katarismo* became increasingly fragmented and discredited (Albó, 1989; Yashar, 2005). The first of these movements emerged in the tropical region of El Chapare in the department of Cochabamba. A combination of highland and valley rural

migrants and ‘relocalised’ miners began to settle in large numbers in El Chapare during the 1980s and many of them started to cultivate coca leaf for sale on the national market, a large proportion of which would have been used for the processing of cocaine paste. Combining the unionism of the miners and the native forms of organisation of rural migrants, the coca producers organised themselves in unions, which like the peasant unions in the highlands and valleys, were effectively forms of local government based on communitarian notions of direct democracy (Grisaffi, 2013). Evo Morales was elected in the early 1990s as the leader of the nascent movement which affiliated itself to the CSUTCB and sought to valorise the coca leaf and legalise its production and consumption (Yashar, 2005). The *cocaleros* claimed to be defending an Indian culture, tradition and worldview, symbolised by the ‘sacred leaf’, from the racist and unjust neoliberal governments and foreign imperialism. They were able to construct an ethnic discourse about culture, rights and autonomy that mixed *Katarista* ideas with the traditional left’s hostility towards the US as an oppressive imperialist power, neatly expressed in popular Quechua slogans such as *Coca kawsachun, Yanki wañuchun!* (Long live coca, death to the Yankees!). While the *cocaleros* followed the rhetoric of the *Kataristas*, they were less concerned with regional autonomy than promoting the interests of their members and with economic goals (Ibid.). During the 1990s, they began to influence the CSTUCB while converting themselves into an electoral force. The *cocaleros* first had success in the local elections of 1995 and later came to dominate the Sovereign Peoples Assembly or ASP: a project launched by a coalition of peasant union organisations to create a ‘political instrument’ for the direct representation of rural peoples and to end the domination of peasant unions by establishment political parties.

While the *cocaleros* were becoming a major force in Bolivian politics, other organisations devoted to promoting the rights of indigenous peoples began to emerge in both the lowlands and highlands. The diverse populations of different indigenous groups in the tropical lowlands started to organise themselves into a larger federation which eventually became known as the Indigenous Peoples Federation of Bolivia or CIDOB (Yashar, 2005; Van Cott, 2005). In 1990, CIDOB organised the ‘March for Territory and Dignity’ in which thousands of lowland indigenous peoples walked from the capital of the Beni department to La Paz, demanding the recognition of their territories by the state but also their status as citizens of the Bolivian nation. This march brought the plight of lowland indigenous peoples to national attention and forged links with

highland groups as well as helping to popularise the idea of creating constitutional changes to truly include indigenous peoples within the nation, an idea that had been proposed by the CSUTCB in their 1983 Agrarian Reform Proposal, which suggested the recognition of communal lands by the state alongside the existence of indigenous authority structures, customary law and economic production on the basis of cultural pluralism (Yashar, 2005).

These demands by indigenous organisations helped bring about reforms in which their cultural identity and communal land were formally recognised by the state. This took place at the same time that changes occurred in the manner in which international human rights law conceived of indigenous peoples. These perspectival transformations in international law reflect ideas of multiculturalism which had emerged in Europe and North America in the 1980s and were embodied in documents such as ILO convention 169 concerning the rights of indigenous peoples, in turn influencing both national governments throughout Latin America and NGOs that worked among populations considered indigenous. In the context of these developments, highland *ayllu* federations emerged with the goal of ‘reconstituting the *ayllu*’: a process which included both reaffirming ancestral values and forms of social life and reconstituting the pre-colonial territories and their governing structures that had become fragmented and lost during centuries of colonisation. These federations eventually become consolidated in 1997 in the national level *ayllu* organisation CONAMAQ. CONAMAQ reproduced much of the *Katarista* discourse and symbols but emphasised local autonomy and a process of cultural revindication that began with rediscovering lost practices and values in their everyday lives and local communities (Escobar, 2010; Schavelzon, 2012). The processes which led to the formation of CONAMAQ were undoubtedly influenced by foreign NGOs, who facilitated workshops on leadership and recovering customs as well as publications and radio programmes made by organisations such as the Andean Oral History Workshop (THOA). Those involved in this project included younger people who were critical of the tactics and orientations of the CSUTCB and wanted to build something that was more locally rooted and ‘organic’ (Yashar, 2005). As mentioned earlier, many former and current traditional authorities of *Kirkiawi*, such as Mallku Gregorio and Tata Sabino Veizaga were involved in this process as part of the regional Cochabamba *ayllu* federation, COAMAC, an involvement that Tata Sabino Veizaga claimed ‘woke him up’ and allowed him to understand who he really was.

In the 1990s the government of Gonzalo Sanchez de Lozada carried out a series of reforms ostensibly aimed at including rural indigenous peoples within the nation and widening their ability to participate in local governance. This period has been described by some commentators (Postero, 2011; Albro, 2005b) as one of ‘neoliberal multiculturalism’, since its purpose was arguably to ease the implementation of neoliberal economic policies. While limited recognition and legal rights were granted to subaltern groups, this came at the expense of the state co-opting indigenist discourse and parts of the indigenous movement, furthering governmental decentralisation and the dismantling of social rights. In Bolívar province two laws passed in this period initiated processes that revitalized both the peasant union and the traditional authorities and led to the idea that they form parallel and complementary governing structures. At the time, communities would have possessed both *jilankus* and peasant union leaders, but the larger structures of the *ayllu* had atrophied, in part explained by the fact that by the 1970s the head tax or *contribución territorial* was no longer tributed, its collection having represented one of the major responsibilities of the *Kuraj Tatas*. Meanwhile, the peasant union was neither organised at the level of the province nor lacked an ‘organic’ role in which it served a clear purpose.

The first of these laws was the Popular Participation Law or LPP and the second was the INRA law, designed to bring about a new wave of agrarian reform, which among other things legally recognized the collective land rights of indigenous communities as Native Communal Lands or TCOs. The LPP brought about the ‘municipalisation’ of government funds, meaning that local governments and community organisations would receive a small fraction of the national state budget to invest in basic infrastructure and other public works. As a result of the LPP and municipalisation not only did local government take on a new importance, but within the *comunidades* the *sindicato* adopted the role of negotiator to gain access to money for local development projects. At the same time as the *sindicato* was becoming revitalised in its new role as financial mediator the traditional authorities embarked on a process of cultural revindication whilst seeking the *saneamiento* or collective titling of their territory under the INRA law and working towards the creation of CONAMAQ. The *ayllu* authorities were able to mobilise many people behind the task of gaining recognition of nearly all the land in Bolívar as a TCO. These new-found roles both legitimised the respective organisations

while helping to reinforce the idea that they serve separate but complementary functions.

During this period, the *ayllu* and *sindicato* saw each other as allies against the oppressive neoliberal state and together they were able to wrest control of the provincial government from the MNR and ADN parties that had traditionally denied direct political representation to the *gente humilde* from the countryside. Following the national revolution, the traditional parties had exercised a clientelist form of politics in the Bolivian countryside, often going to the extent of offering to supply specific projects or resources in exchange for the leaders 'delivering' the votes of their community to their party. Through ensuring the election of *originarios* from the *comunidades* to the municipal government, the *ayllu* and *sindicato* together were able to assume direct control over the state resources available through the LPP. This 'indigenous takeover' was part of a wider process of organised resistance which emerged out of the contradictions of neoliberal reforms. While rolling back the state through mass privatisation, freezing wages and deregulating the economy resulted in a widening of poverty and the massive increase in migration to the major cities, the government of Sanchez de Lozada effectively offered civil and political rights in exchange for the social rights that were being taken away. As a result of the decision to formally acknowledge the multi-ethnic nature of Bolivia and promote 'neoliberal multicultural' reforms, indigenous groups began to articulate their demands within the framework of civil rights, while social movements began to increasingly present themselves as indigenous in character (Albro, 2005a). Although the LPP and INRA laws were intended to increase 'governability' as a means of boosting foreign direct investment, they ultimately provided the basis for civil society organisations to demand social rights and to undermine the neoliberal state. In Bolívar province the reforms shaped not only the nature of local government but the perspectives of the different authority leaders, as shall be detailed further in chapters 4 and 7.

The election of an 'indigenous president' in Evo Morales can partly be understood as a reaction to the way these neoliberal reforms created new forms of representation and claimed to respect the cultural rights of distinct groups while simultaneously undermining the means for their material existence and social reproduction (Postero, 2005). This can be seen in the cycle of popular protests which took place between 2000 and 2005 centred around the 'resource wars' in the departments of Cochabamba and La

Paz. This began with the ‘water war’ in Cochabamba, when the privatisation of the public water company SEMAPA gave rise to civic revolt. As a result of the ‘water law’, *ley 2029*, all systems of water provision were made property of a subsidiary of the multinational Bechtel corporation, while alternative systems of distribution were outlawed. Yet in peri-urban Cochabamba and its rural hinterlands water is collected and distributed through communal wells and irrigation systems and maintained by cooperatives. A broad coalition comprised of peri-urban residents, farmers and the urban middle classes organised opposition to the law through the newly created *Coordinadora por la defensa del agua y la vida* (Coalition for the Defence of Water and Life), denouncing the *gobierno vendepatrias* (sell-out government) (Albro, 2005a; Perrault, 2006). The coalition united around a belief that the state that had lost its moral legitimacy in the context of years of privatisation and the undoing of the former corporatist model, alongside the notion that water forms an inalienable public resource managed by and for the benefit of the people (Albro, 2005a). This was expressed through a discourse of Andean identity as involving pre-Colombian indigenous traditions and traditional customary rights or *usos y costumbres* (Perrault, 2008, Goldstein, 2004). The *cocaleros* in the nearby province of Chapare, under the direction of Evo Morales, played a prominent role in the protests and added their demands of an end to US sponsored coca-eradication policies. The water war marked the first major public victory against the neoliberal reforms of the previous 15 years, as the waves of demonstrations and increasingly violent confrontations with the police and army led to the repeal of the water law and the renationalisation of public resources.

Three years later the focus of public dissent and protest shifted to the department of La Paz. This took place in the context of unpopular tax reforms and further budget cuts that affected the salaries of public employees, including the police. This time the cause that united protestors was the decision to sell Bolivia’s gas reserves to an international consortium that would pipe them to Chile to be exported via tanker, a decision that had huge negative symbolism given Bolivia’s defeat and loss of its coastline to Chile in the 1879 War of the Pacific. Bolivia’s highland peasants, led by the CSUTCB leader Felipe Quispe, participated in roadblocks throughout the country but particularly in the department of La Paz. Indignation and protest spread to the largely Aymara city of El Alto (Lazar, 2008) when the government attempted to use the army to take control of the situation, resulting in the massacre of at least 80 civilians. A coalition of diverse

social organisations and members of the public turned out to protest the violence *en masse* and president Sanchez de Lozada was forced to flee the country. The demands of the various social organisations that came together to oppose the government were crystallised in the ‘October Agenda’: a list of demands which included an immediate stop to gas exports to Chile, the nationalisation and public control of natural resources and a constituent assembly to found a new state with a new vision of the nation.

Bolivia had reached a crisis of near-revolutionary proportions and a diverse array of citizenry had been united in opposition to the government through a popular discourse which combined notions of indigenous identity with control of natural resources and the restoration of a just social and moral order based on the communitarian practices of the popular classes, alongside traditional Latin American leftist notions and discursive terminologies of imperialism, dependency and foreign exploitation. This combined ideological elements of *Katarismo* with left popular nationalism and conceptions of ethnic identity and the rights of indigenous peoples from international human rights law and NGO discourse: seemingly unrelated and even contradictory currents whose convergence can only be understood in the light of Bolivia’s unique history of political syncretism. The reproduction and widespread assimilation of *Katarista* ideas, legal changes in international law and the introduction of multiculturalist reforms, alongside the decline of the traditional left, had provided the discursive space for the idea of refounding the Bolivian nation, of fundamentally altering the Bolivian state so that it truly represents and is responsive to its population, instead of continuing to reproduce colonial divisions of race and class. A range of social constituencies and organisations were therefore unified in their use of notions of ethnicity and indigeneity to mobilise and legitimise themselves, alongside commitment to a project of redefining the state and citizenship.

Nevertheless, what is concretely understood by ethnic identity and the refounding of the state is subject to wide-ranging debate. In December 2005 the MAS-IPSP, the party that had been adopted by Evo Morales, won the national elections with 53 per cent of the vote. With Morales’ victory the period of crisis came to an end, as the MAS stepped into the power vacuum created by the total collapse of the neoliberal order, espousing a discourse which reproduced the key ideological elements that had united people during the cycle of protest described above. Yet as we shall see, the ambiguous definition of these ideological elements provided the subsequent space for conflict. The indigenous

takeover of Bolívar's local government in 2004, one year before Morales' election as president, was part of the general movement that led up to Morales' election, as the local social organisations together sought to gain real power and political representation for the people of the *comunidades*. During this time, the term *originario* would have served to unify both *ayllu* and *sindicato* behind their common goal of opposing the excesses of the neoliberal government and ending the political control of their province by outsiders. Yet gaining long sought-after political representation would only raise the question of how to define the process of change that had been brought about and the collective subject that this was presumed to serve, both nationally and at the local level.

III. The Election of 'Tata Evo' and Bolivia's 'Post-neoliberal' Era

i. Evo's new Bolivia

After his official inauguration in January 2006 President Morales took part in an indigenous inauguration ceremony in front of the Tiwanaku archaeological complex. This took place before a crowd of thousands of mainly highland peoples who had travelled to see him. In a ceremony which evoked the ritual transfer of authority between *ayllu* members Morales was handed a *baston de mando* to demonstrate his assumption of power as leader of the nation, while the crowds of supporters waved the *wiphala* flag, said to represent the former Inca confederation of *Qollasuyu*, and blew the traditional *phututu* bull horns still used to summon meetings in the highlands. As a symbolic act this event resonated nationally and internationally. It is difficult to underestimate the impact that Morales' arrival to power has had in generating a sense of pride among large sections of the population who had suffered discrimination because of their forms of dress, speech and ethnic appearance. Moreover, this moment was interpreted by many activists to mark a decisive change in Bolivian history. For some within the ranks of the peasant union movement it represented a *pachakuti*: an epochal time of return in which there exists the possibility of tremendous change, while for others it was the realisation of Túpak Katari's promise to one day 'return as millions'. Thomas Grisaffi (2013) describes how among the *cocaleros* with whom he carried out fieldwork it meant that they too 'were presidents', implying that their communitarian forms of direct democracy would be extended to the highest levels of the state. Outside of Bolivia much was made of Morales' indigenous ancestry, while the new MAS government was associated with the more radical end of the spectrum of 'pink tide'

democratically elected leftist governments alongside Venezuela and Ecuador. In this vein he was enthusiastically embraced by the international left as a socialist and anti-imperialist.

In his public discourse Morales made clear that his presidency would carry out a decisive break with neoliberalism and refound the state to include the nation's indigenous majority (Postero, 2016), a transformation that became referred to as *el proceso de cambio*. Nevertheless, various Western academics and journalists have questioned the extent to which there has occurred a genuinely transformative 'process of change' in Bolivia (Webber, 2011; Postero and Goodale eds., 2013; Farthing and Kohl, 2014). While ostensibly implementing the main points of the October Agenda it has been observed that Morales' government is a 'hybrid' economic regime that retains numerous continuities with the policies of its neoliberal predecessors (Webber, 2011; Postero in Postero and Goodale eds., 2013). What Pablo Stefanoni (2009) refers to as Evo's 'discursive ambivalence' is evident in the radical nature of much of his rhetoric and the relatively modest or even seemingly inconsistent nature of the government's concrete policies. Morales presents himself as a defender of environmentalism, a political radical and a defender of indigenous rights, neatly expressed in moments of rhetoric such as his declaration at the 2010 World People's Summit on Climate Change in Cochabamba, 'Pachamama or death!...Long live the rights of the mother earth! Death to capitalism!' (Goodman, 2010). In contrast to this rhetoric the Bolivian economy continues to rely on extractive industry, promoting policies which actively damage the environment alongside relatively modest social reforms, while entering into direct conflict with indigenous communities and social movements. The most significant reforms the Morales administration has carried out have been largely through legal means and attempts at redefining citizenship rather than structural social or economic change. As Nancy Postero (2016) has pointed out, this places Bolivia in the company of other pink tide governments such as Venezuela and Ecuador which emulate the revolutionary rhetoric of the older left while aspiring to bring about radical change through constitutional reform and redefining citizenship, thereby engaging in a form of liberal state-building.

It is clear that the MAS government has taken seriously the idea of redefining citizenship so as to include the nation's 'indigenous majority' that had previously suffered exclusion and attempts at cultural extermination and assimilation. The problem

for the diverse elements that made up the coalition of social movement who supported the MAS both nationally and regionally is precisely how this indigenous subject is to be understood and what is really meant by reform and *el proceso de cambio*. In trying to explain the development of a rift between the MAS and the indigenous movements that initially supported them this section will concentrate on describing two key events: the debates that occurred surrounding the constituent assembly process in 2006-7 and the consequences of the decision to build a road through the TIPNIS national park in 2011. These two events mark crucial points of tension between the CONAMAQ federation, the CSUTCB and the MAS nationally and in the local politics of Bolívar province. It will then analyse how indigeneity has come to be understood in contemporary Bolivia and how this explains the way the term *originario* is used by the different authorities in Bolívar province to articulate competing views of the ethical life of their community.

ii. From the constituent assembly to the TIPNIS protests

In government the MAS immediately sought to institute a process that would lead to a new constitution, passing a law in March 2006 to convoke a national constituent assembly. This law was itself a compromise that took into account the concerns of various right-wing social forces and included a selection procedure for the 255 deputies which privileged smaller right-wing local parties, a stipulation of a two-thirds majority among the assembly for the terms of the constitution to pass and a national referendum on the final document (Webber, 2011). However, when the assembly eventually met in Sucre in August 2006 there was a great sense of elation among large sections of the population at the improbable sight of groups of *chola* women dressed in *pollera* skirts and indigenous peoples meeting to decide the basic legal framework of the nation (Schavelzon, 2012). Yet the process was beset by various problems, including civil unrest in Sucre that placed the safety of the assembly in jeopardy, motivating its relocation to the mining city of Oruro. Given the selection procedure that denied the MAS an absolute two-thirds majority, the final document was necessarily a work of consensus which took into account the views of the political right as well as being shaped by extra-legal pressure from protests in the eastern lowlands and in Sucre itself. In addition, in the course of the debates that took place in Sucre and elsewhere there emerged a considerable ideological schism between the delegates of the various popular social organisations representing the MAS and the major indigenous and peasant bodies. Two 'blocks' developed: on one side the CSUTCB, the *Bartolina Sisas* peasant

women's union and the 'intercultural colonists', representing Andean tropical migrants such as the *cocaleros*, and on the other an 'indigenous block' composed of CONAMAQ and CIDOB (Albó, 2011; Schavelzon, 2012).

It is in these debates that the ideological tensions between the MAS and the peasant unions, represented at the national level by the CSTUCB federation and the *ayllus*, represented by CONAMAQ, initially manifested themselves. Disputes emerged concerning the nature of indigenous autonomy, collective rights, legal pluralism, the ownership of natural resources and the definition of 'the people' used in the constitution. In all these debates there appeared opposing tendencies towards greater centralisation or decentralisation of state power and the meaning of indigeneity (Schavelzon, 2012). Defining the Bolivian nation meant formally delineating the popular collective subject around which the new society was to be built in the process of change, in contrast to the traditional republican state, political parties and elites that had always governed. Yet this implied elucidating a diffuse concept that encompassed diverse and sometimes contradictory identities. Despite privileging indigenous identity in the definition of the Bolivian nation, the *ayllu* and union organisations disagreed over whether to use the term inclusively, allowing it to stand for peasant communities with individual private property, or exclusively, with reference to communitarian ways of life and identity within a specific territory (Ibid.). These differences in conceptions of indigenous identity also played a role in discussions concerning the issue of indigenous autonomies and control of natural resources. The peasant unions did not support the 'indigenous block' over rights to non-renewable natural resources found within indigenous territories. They were less concerned about the issue of local autonomy than ensuring the use of hydrocarbon and mineral resources to fund social programs and national infrastructure projects. In this sense they recognised themselves as indigenous but in discussions over national resources thought of themselves as Bolivians and supported the economic programs of the traditional left (Ibid.). While the goal of the peasant unions had been to win demands and gain political representation within the institutions of the liberal state for the benefit of the nation's 'indigenous majority', CONAMAQ was wedded to the idea of reconstructing the *Gran Qollasuyu*, of ultimately re-establishing the pre-colonial structures of the *gran ayllu*.

In February 2009, Evo Morales, joined by the Nobel Prize-winning Guatemalan indigenous activist Rigoberta Menchu, gave the official promulgation of the new

constitution in the largely Aymara city of El Alto. The members of the constituent assembly joined a parade which included representatives of every Bolivian ethnic group, while in front of the main stage a group of highland indigenous ritual specialists or *yatiris* performed a *ch'alla* or blessing of copies of the new constitution (Ibid.). In his speech Evo described the moment as a 'democratic cultural revolution' and the culmination of centuries of struggle by Bolivia's poor and indigenous majority, making special reference to the rebellion of Túpak Katari. He described how Bolivia was now a nation that stood against colonialism, imperialism and neoliberalism while guaranteeing social rights and which incorporated the ethical principles of its indigenous peoples, ending with the rhetorical flourish '*Kawasachun Bolivia Digna!*' (Long live a dignified Bolivia!). Yet in reality, the final document, shaped by various pressures and compromises both within and outside of the MAS coalition, was an ambiguous mixture of *Katarista*, multiculturalist, left-nationalist and standard liberal-democratic understandings of the nation, justice, pluralism and social rights. While its purpose had been to include all the Bolivian nation within a 'plurinational state', by not resolving these ambiguities the constitution provided the discursive space for continued disagreements over the nature of the process of change that would divide the nation's social movements.

In 2011 these differences came dramatically into the open when the government gave the green light to the construction of a road through the TIPNIS indigenous territory and national park that would link Villa Tunari in Cochabamba department with San Ignacio de Moxos in Beni. As a result, the lowland indigenous federation CIDOB organised a series of protests including a march to La Paz. CONAMAQ and various representatives of *ayllus* around Bolivia, notably among them Kirkiawi, joined in the march. This breakdown in the MAS-supporting coalition of social organisations, known as the *pacto de unidad*, resulted in a prolonged political crisis that saw the MAS, which referred to itself as 'the government of social movements', attempting to violently repress popular protest. While the COB trade union federation also initially supported the protests, calling for a general strike in the wake of violence against unarmed protestors, the peasant unions sided with the government. The construction of the highway had been motivated by two factors. Firstly, the plan to open a trade corridor between Brazil and Chile, allowing the movement of goods to ports in the pacific, furthering Bolivia's integration with its neighbouring economic giant, while creating transport links for the

large-scale producers of agroindustrial mono-crops in the country's eastern tropical lowlands with whom the MAS had formed a tacit alliance (Webber, 2012). Secondly, the need to provide transport routes and access to domestic markets for Aymara and Quechua migrants to the tropical lowlands with small and medium-sized commercial interests in the production of coca leaf or other crops. This group represents the political base of the MAS as many are rank and file activists within the tropical *cocalero* federations that exert influence over the wider CSUTCB. Despite the continued support of this political base, the government was forced to back down on its plans in the face of an escalating crisis that saw Evo's approval rating drop to 30% (Ibid.).

The split between CONAMAQ and the CSUTCB over this issue is revealing of their differences in outlook and political allegiance. Roberto Coraite, the president of the CSUTCB caused outrage by referring to the lowland indigenous protestors as 'savages', while the leaders of CONAMAQ responded to the call to support their 'lowland brothers' (Ibid.). While the CSUTCB leadership emphasised national economic interests, many traditional authorities in places such as Kirkiawi and elsewhere saw in the demands of the lowland indigenous groups the shared value placed on local autonomy and traditional ways of life. However, the aftermath of this public split in the *pacto de unidad* was government repression of the national indigenous federations. The offices of CONAMAQ in La Paz were raided and seized by the police and a new CONAMAQ leadership loyal to the government were installed. This resulted in the existence of two parallel national-level *ayllu* federations: CONAMAQ *oficial*, supporting the government and CONAMAQ *orgánica*, consisting of the original leadership. The result was widespread disorganisation between different *ayllus* and sometimes disunity within them between those who supported the 'official' and the 'organic' leaderships. In the case of Bolívar province the *ayllu* authorities were particularly closely allied to the CONAMAQ *orgánica* and were strongly opposed to the direction of government policy, including the intensification of extractive industry and legal changes that allowed state access to subsoil resources in indigenous territories, limitations to the juridical autonomy of indigenous communities as well as the presence of right-wing technocrats in the midst of the MAS government. Consequently, the division in Bolívar was experienced as a deepening rift between *ayllu* and *sindicato*, with the union actively campaigning on behalf of the MAS government and the traditional authorities equating the union with its worst excesses. Sabino Veizaga, a

former leader of Kirkiawi and full-time staff member of COAMAC, told me that following the events of 2011 he and others who had supported CIDOB had been *tachados*: marked so as to be kept out of any positions of influence in local government or in the peasant union movement and he concluded that despite the possibilities offered by Evo's election they had been 'deceived and manipulated' from the time of the constituent assembly.

iii. Ethnicity and class in Kirkiawi and Bolivia

In contemporary Bolivia the notion of indigenous identity enters virtually every area of political debate and has arguably become a national ideology (Canessa, 2008; Postero, 2016). As discussed in the opening chapter of this thesis, in Bolívar province the term *originario* rather than *indígena* (which implies lowland indigenous peoples) is used in much the same fashion as 'indigenous' or 'first-nations people' by those who choose to identify themselves in this way, despite being a word with multiple complex meanings and connotations. However, it is important to distinguish this idea of being indigenous from local notions of identity. In Bolívar and in other communities in the Andean highlands individuals normally identify themselves in contrast to local and national *mestizo* society. What it means to be a member of an *ayllu comunidad*, in contrast to the local townsfolk of the provincial capital or urban city-dwellers, has to do with having land within a *comunidad* and engaging in agricultural labour and the responsibilities that come with membership of the community. Miranda Shield-Johannson (2014), who carried out long-term fieldwork in Bolívar in the isolated and predominantly Evangelical Baptist hamlet of P'iya Qayma describes how her informants sense of being *runa* (the Quechua word for person) as opposed to a *q'ara* or outsider is linked to local understandings of *llamk'ay* or agricultural labour and the way this defines the relationships between people and the land they inhabit, reflecting particular moral values and conceptions of personhood.

Historically, people living in rural communities like Bolívar province have lived in a relationship with the state that has determined the identity they must assume in order to negotiate some degree of autonomy and collective rights. From the time of the Spanish colony, ethnic difference was reproduced by the interaction between coloniser and colonised, as highland people needed to act as 'Indians' to be granted certain rights, considered a separate category of person for the state to collect taxes and labour

obligations (Platt, 1986; Stern, 1992; Abercrombie, 1998). The fact that terms of ethnic identity in contemporary Bolivia derive from categories that were formed in the process of a colonial encounter explains why they still function primarily as exonyms, a phenomenon that has been observed by numerous anthropologists throughout the Andes (Van den Bergh, 1967; De la Cadena, 1995, 2000). As Mary Weismantel (2001) has observed, terms such as *indio*, *cholo*, *misti* or *q'ara* frequently express a binary divide between in-group and out-group along a vertical axis of power: for an upper-class person from the city, a *cholo* or *indio* could include educated middle-class *mestizos* they see as their social inferiors, whereas highland Indians will use the term *q'ara* to describe a wide variety of outsiders who do not share their values and identity.

This reality also explains how what it means to be Indian has been shaped by the historical interaction between rural peoples and the state: how the category of Indian has been reproduced despite successive reforms and attempts to 'civilise' highland indigenous people and eradicate the *ayllu* and how elements of European culture have been adopted and hybridised (Abercrombie, 1998). Evocations of successive struggles for independence and autonomy form, to a greater or lesser extent depending on the individual, a further component of the local identity of many people in Bolívar and inform their sense of belonging to the territory they inhabit. Moreover, this long history of interaction and negotiation indicates that rural peoples have for a long time seen themselves as in some sense located within the nation state. Tristan Platt (1993) describes how following the wars of independence, the inhabitants of Chayanta Province in contemporary Northern Potosí developed their own vision of the new nation in which they would remain as 'tributary citizens' and be granted recognition of their usurped lands, while also assimilating many of the symbols and invented traditions of the nascent fatherland and using them to express their own notion of a just social order. Throughout Bolivian history rural peoples have represented themselves within the prevailing citizenship regimes (Yashar, 2005) of national society; that is the social and legal frameworks that establish how persons are included within the nation state, the rights they possess and the institutional mechanisms that allow access to them.

While both class and ethnic identity have been used by highland peoples to organise resistance and legitimise claims throughout at least most of the 20th century, this has been inflected by the dominant modes of representation available to them. Following the national revolution in 1952, class became the primary framework through which

individuals could seek recognition from governing institutions and make claims to rights. While movements such as *Katarismo* sought to oppose the class reductionism of the left and revindicate highland indigenous culture, this included a Marxian reading of exploitation that viewed class and ethnicity as complementary analytic categories, expressed in the notion that ‘the poor of Bolivia are Indians and the Indians are the poor’ (Schavelzon, 2012). However, by the 1990s this situation was reversed, as ethnic rather than class identity became the basis upon which social movements and political parties organised and legitimised themselves. Groups and individuals who would have previously identified as *mestizos* or expressed their political claims in the language of class began to reclaim their rights as indigenous peoples. The ‘intercultural colonists’ of the tropics, from whom President Morales draws his strongest support are a clear example of this phenomenon. Predominantly Quechua speakers drawn from a wide range of backgrounds they would have in the past been considered *mestizos* or *cholos*, as would Morales himself. Yet they use the term *originario* to organise and legitimise themselves, despite not being the original inhabitants of the areas they settle in and distancing themselves from being ‘too indigenous’ (Grisaffi, 2010). It was this broad and inclusive use of the notion of indigeneity that facilitated political mobilisation in opposition to the neoliberal state and brought Morales to power, explaining the importance of presenting his presidency as indigenous and using indigenous symbols as a unifying discourse, bringing together diverse social constituencies with distinct histories, needs and values. Whilst during the neoliberal period indigenous terms of identification such as *originario* allowed different movements to overcome disunity in opposition to a common enemy, it has now become the territory in which competition for ideological legitimacy is fought.

In this context, criticisms of groups and individuals that come into conflict with the government are made in terms of their lack of authenticity as indigenous persons or as representatives of indigenous communities. During the TIPNIS crisis, Vice President Álvaro García Linera denounced the ‘fake environmentalism’ of the leaders of CIDOB and CONAMAQ and claimed that they were the pawns of NGOs representing foreign interests. This idea was echoed by a government minister I spoke with, who claimed that many of the *ayllu* leaders in the highland communities he has worked in were representing a romantic essentialised view of indigenous identity that was not consistent with reality and resulted from the influence of foreign NGOs. Moreover, in Bolívar

province technical staff from the *alcaldía* and union figures had claimed the *ayllu* leaders were *ongeizados*: unduly influenced by foreign NGOs and in their pay. These claims of inauthenticity were met by the contention that the *ayllu* figures are the true *originarios*, representing the territory and ways of life that have existed prior to the Spanish conquest, unlike the peasant union that is a ‘political’ organisation with no ‘organic’ connection to the communities it seeks to represent.

Broadly speaking, two different visions of indigeneity have emerged as part of national discourse. One is an inclusive conception of indigenous identity that includes the diverse marginalised groups that make up most of Bolivia’s population within a single subaltern indigenous subject, while the other is exclusive and conceives of indigenous groups in terms of rootedness within a particular place and culture. What Salvador Schavelzon (2014) refers to as ‘ecumenical indigeneity’ has become the official discourse of the MAS, which identifies itself in its political constitution as the expression of all marginalised sectors of society (Postero, 2013). While the person of Evo Morales can be said to represent a sort of ‘pan-indigenism’ (Canessa, 2006), some figures, such as the peasant union leader Gualberto Choque, have gone as far as to claim that all the peoples of Bolivia, including those of white European descent, who are poor, practice communitarian forms of resource sharing and are united in common struggle are indigenous (Ibid.). The populist nationalism of the present period, inflected with indigenous symbols and rhetoric concerning native values, bears definite similarities to the unifying national project of *mestizaje* following the 1952 revolution, forging a common identity through a single national subject. Yet while *mestizaje* sought to unite the nation through a notion of a culturally and racially mixed identity while privileging whiteness and European culture (Wade, 2001), the reverse is arguably the case in contemporary Bolivia. The Morales administration and the 2009 constitution have created a new citizenship regime, one which privileges indigenous identity in the definition of the nation and in making rights claims.

While the CSUTCB tends to support the ecumenical indigeneity of the MAS, the indigenous block of CONAMAQ and CIDOB defend an exclusive conception of indigeneity linked to territory and communitarian practices. CONAMAQ developed a position that arguably expands upon the indigenous revindicationism of *Katarismo*, while incorporating many of its ideas and symbols. It is therefore worth enquiring why ideological differences expressed around different versions of indigeneity have emerged

in the post-neoliberal period between an organisation such as CONAMAQ and the CSUTCB, which was created by the *Kataristas* and moved away from the assimilationist project of *mestizaje* that followed the national revolution. Salvador Schavelzon (2012) has argued that, despite its origins in *Katarismo*, the CSUTCB as a national organisation still incorporates much of the mentality of *mestizaje* because of the historical trajectory of the peasant union as an organisation directed towards the incorporation of rural peoples within the nation state as ‘modern’ citizens. In analysing the TIPNIS conflict, Andrew Canessa (2014) distinguishes between a conception of indigeneity that is closer to the sense of ‘authochthony’ used by the Africanist Peter Geschiere (2009), of a native majority fighting against marginalisation, and indigeneity for minority groups that need protection *from* the state. He claims the divide in these two conceptions falls between territorialised and de-territorialised groups: for the former indigeneity is largely about land and autonomy while for the latter it is a national identity which promotes the use of natural resources for the benefit of the majority. However, Canessa does not consider that this divide can take place *within* indigenous communities, between those individuals and social organisations who emphasise autonomy and regional identity and those who prioritise inclusion within the nation.

The traditional authorities and peasant union leaders in Bolívar province are the local representatives of larger national federations that share links with wider networks of international political, indigenous rights and environmental organisations and are influenced by a range of discourses that operate through these channels. Moreover, as will be explored in subsequent chapters, their present organisational form within the province has been shaped by local processes that were set forth by the neoliberal reforms of the 1990s and the way the two organisations have engaged in parallel projects which represent different dimensions of the aspirations of marginalised rural peoples. As Deborah Yashar (2005) has contested, through links with wider organisations and discourses, individuals form a sense of being indigenous that goes beyond their more local notions of self and identity, rooted in the everyday practices of their communities and concepts of personhood. The peasant union, alongside the MAS controlled *alcaldía* in Bolívar, accept a view of being *originario* which is strongly influenced by the ecumenical indigeneity of the MAS, while many of the traditional authorities emphasise the importance of local identity and communitarian practices. Within the spaces of political discourse of the province these respective ideas of

indigeneity have been articulated in ways that engage with more specific local understandings of identity, history and values, while also renegotiating their contents and meaning. In this way the local political rift between *ayllu* and *sindicato* represents what has been described by Habermas (1983, 1991) as an ethical discourse: a dispute in which different sides attempt to alternatively define the basic symbolic constituents of the culture they belong to and in doing so make competing claims to authenticity. For the two sets of authorities, the term *originario* denotes what it means to be an authentic member of their community, it is what I refer to as the ethical-political subject: the idealised notion of a good person to which people aspire, used as a referent against which standards of behaviour may be judged.

Conclusion

Communities like Kirkiawi have existed within larger state structures for many centuries. The history of *ayllu* communities since the time of the colony has been one of collaboration and co-evolution *with* and resistance *against* a colonial and post-colonial state that has helped to reproduce the ethnic divisions of Bolivian society while simultaneously seeing this as a problem for the development of the nation towards modernity, attempting in various ways to break up, reform or assimilate Indian communities. This interaction has helped shape both the local identities and conceptions of personhood of rural peoples (Abercrombie, 1998) as well as the forms of collective identity and action available to them in seeking recognition of their rights and autonomy. The latter, which I have referred to as ‘citizenship regimes’ (Yashar, 2005), have varied considerably over time. During the colony and the early years of the republic, highland rural peoples would have been granted autonomy while effectively inhabiting a separate socio-legal realm, before the liberal governments of the late nineteenth broke ‘the pact’ and attempted to bring about the end of the free Indian communities. This was followed by the corporate assimilationist regime of the mid-twentieth century, the neoliberal multiculturalism of the turn of the century and finally the contemporary period which has seen the creation of a new citizenship regime which privileges indigeneity while leaving its definition ambiguous. Indigeneity has become not only the way popular social movements tend to define and legitimise themselves but the prevailing expression of citizenship and is multiply contested by various social actors. The MAS promotes a form of ‘ecumenical indigeneity’ that has similarities with the notion of *mestizaje*, while other social organisations such as CIDOB and

CONAMAQ contest a less inclusive notion of indigenous identity closer to that contained in international human rights law and NGO discourse. These differences were expressed during the period of the constituent assembly and were brought into sharp relief following the TIPNIS protests in 2011.

The territory which constitutes the province of Bolívar has undergone tremendous changes while retaining a sense of identity and this is in large measure the result of successive struggles for autonomy and recognition. The historical interaction between its inhabitants and the state has helped form not only a sense of identity linked to a specific territory but has shaped the institutions through which the territory governs itself internally and represents itself to wider society. The existence of multiple forms of political authority within this relatively small area and the differing positions they take on issues including land tenancy, development, regional autonomy and the administration of justice are the result of this process. The traditional authorities and the peasant union representatives alongside the MAS local government partly derive these views from the larger national-level organisations they are linked to and articulate them in a way which engages with more specific local understandings of history and identity. Moreover, their longer history as social organisations explains how they embody different aspirations of rural peoples and their relationship with the state and wider society. In this manner, despite the disputes that took place during my fieldwork representing an attempt to define the common values, collective narrative and identity of a small and isolated locality, they were linked to ideological conflict taking place throughout Bolivia. The contents of these disputes will form the basis of the subsequent chapters of this thesis.

Chapter 4. Autonomy, Leadership and Governance

Introduction

One of the centrepieces of the incipient plurinational state is the provision for indigenous peasant communities to become quasi-independent entities with their own forms of internal administration based on traditional customs. Since 2009, indigenous communities have been able to apply, subject to a somewhat labyrinthine bureaucratic legal process, for their conversion into an *Autonomia Independiente Originaria Campesina* or AIOC. Nevertheless, the long-term consequences of this reform are uncertain. The national MAS government has displayed a certain ambivalence over the issue, while the details of the law have become an item of debate between national indigenous and peasant social organisations. A major issue with the concept of indigenous autonomy as it currently stands is how to define the competencies of local authorities within a majority indigenous community, alongside what constitutes their traditional customs, norms and procedures.

This chapter will examine how the possibility of becoming an autonomous indigenous community divided the traditional authorities and the peasant union and MAS municipal government in Bolívar province during the time of my fieldwork. The form the dispute took resulted in part from the nature of the territorial and governmental structure of the province and in some measure represented a power struggle over what institutional reform would mean for the different authorities and who would stand to win or lose from different arrangements. Nevertheless, it quickly transposed into a debate concerning questions of political legitimacy, governance and the values of leadership. Recent commentators have remarked that the present legal and institutional framework for conversion to an AIOC produces a hybrid system with an inherent tension between the forms of governance native to indigenous communities and the ‘liberal democracy’ of municipal governments (Tockman, 2014, 2017; Tockman and Cameron, 2014; Postero 2016). Moreover, classic anthropological commentaries have maintained that the *ayllu* and peasant union represent different versions of democracy: one liberal-democratic and the other communitarian (Platt, 1986; Cusicanqui, 1990). In contrast, this chapter will argue that in Bolívar province the different forms of authority are already hybridised to a significant degree and have been held together in a complementary tension in which they are commonly regarded as a single system of

authority. Despite differences in outlook, ‘communitarian’ and ‘representative’ practices of democracy exist alongside each other and various figures accommodate values and logics normally attributed to the Andean *ayllu*. It has been the constitutional reforms of the MAS government, alongside national-level disputes regarding the direction of policy, that have destabilised the balance of forces in Bolívar and produced the current ethical discourse in which the different authorities seek to define the meanings and limits of their respective roles.

The first section of this chapter will describe the details of a meeting in Cochabamba regarding indigenous autonomy attended by representatives of the social organisations of Bolívar province, before explaining the details of the AIOC reform and the debates surrounding it. It will then outline how the possibility of converting to an AIOC developed into a dispute concerning the internal forms of governance of Bolívar and the putative authenticity of the respective authorities. The chapter will then examine the validity of the claim frequently made by union figures and local MAS politicians that the different social organisations are really ‘mixed’ and should not be considered separate and bounded institutions.

I. Indigenous Autonomy: National and Local Conflict

In September 2015 I attended a meeting near the bustling central square of the city of Cochabamba. The site of famous demonstrations during the Water Wars, it today serves a function analogous to Hyde Park’s Speaker’s Corner, as groups of people will congregate to discuss matters of social and political import underneath the shade of the trees that line the centre of the plaza. However, that day the discussion I witnessed took place entirely indoors, within a large meeting hall on the second story of the Cochabamba departmental government building. The meeting had been organised by functionaries of the Ministry of Indigenous Autonomies to explain the details of the process of converting to an AIOC and to share thoughts and experiences among different indigenous groups in the department. Representatives of four communities had been invited to participate. These included the Yuracaré, a lowland indigenous group who inhabit a section of territory along the Chapare river which they have successfully consolidated as a Native Communal Land or TCO, two highland communities, Ch’alla from Tapacari province and Kirkiawi, alongside Raqaypampa from the region of Mizque. Nearly all the representatives wore some form of traditional clothing. The

Yuracaré were dressed in white robes and headdresses that clearly marked them out as a lowland indigenous people while the representatives of Raqaypampa wore identical white stovepipe hats, the men dressed in woollen trousers and waistcoats and the women in *pollera* skirts. The representatives of Ch'alla dressed in nearly identical fashion to those from Kirkiawi, with traditional *ch'ullu* hats topped with white wide-brimmed *sombreros* decorated with black bands and colourful woven textiles.

Unlike the representatives from other communities, the various dignitaries from Bolívar province were conspicuously seated apart from each other in two groups. The representatives of the MAS municipal government of Bolívar alongside several peasant union figures, including the departmental union leader, Severina Wayatola, were seated next to me, while Mallku Gregorio, his wife Dominga and some of the *Kuraj Tatas* sat in a different group near the front of the room. The latter were dressed in their long, woven ponchos, while the union and municipal government figures wore jeans and jackets underneath their traditional *ch'ullus* and *sombreros*, some of them bearing the insignia of the departmental government. Vicente Condori, the local council leader, was sat next to me and while we waited for the meeting to start, he amused himself by asking me to translate simple sentences from Spanish to Quechua, the cause of his mirth being the improbability of hearing Quechua phrases spoken with a 'gringo accent'.

The chair of the meeting was a young woman in her twenties who provided us with a PowerPoint presentation on the necessary bureaucratic steps for a community to gain status as an AIOC. She explained that what they were doing today was an important part of the process of change and the decolonisation of Bolivia and that through sharing experiences and knowledge they could find solutions to their common problems. She then acted as a translator for the speaker from Raqaypampa, *Sub-Alcalde* (Sub-Mayor) Don Aran Salazar, who shared in Quechua their experiences of having completed the initial steps of the conversion process. Raqaypampa is a community that was previously *hacienda* land and which governs itself through a peasant union that has been recognised as a *central* of the FSUTCC since 1997. They had a strong sense of shared identity and culture that had been reinforced through struggles over bilingual education in the 1980s and 1990s and this had led to them titling their territory as a TCO before becoming one of the first communities to begin the process of converting to an autonomous indigenous community in 2009. Following this, figures from the other three communities introduced themselves and explained their local forms of government,

history and their reasons for wanting to pursue indigenous autonomy. The representatives of the Yuracaré explained to us in Spanish that their situation as a relatively small group whose territory, consolidated in three separate TCOs, was spread through different municipalities and provinces compelled them to pursue indigenous autonomy. The representatives of Ch'alla stated that in their case they represented one district of the municipality of Tapacari but within the district they governed themselves as three *ayllus* that represent 27 *comunidades*. There was broad agreement among the *comunidades* and *ayllus* that the district should become an AIOC, partly because of the hope that it would bring more investment in projects to improve agricultural production. However, the fact that the land had been titled as 11 separate TCOs made the process of reaching consensus slow.

Kirkiawi was the last community to make a contribution, which was by far the longest. Mallku Gregorio addressed the rest of the room in Spanish and acknowledged the presence of the other authorities from Bolívar province, including Mayor Francisco, the councillors and the provincial and departmental peasant union leaders. However, he claimed, 'as an *organización originaria* we remember the history of what came before'. In this history they still remember that it was thanks to the traditional authorities, the leaders of three families who marched to Lima Peru and bought the ancestral title of their land from the Spanish crown with seven mules loaded with bushels of gold and silver, that their territory still exists today. It is for this reason that until now only individuals from families with the surnames Mamani, Apaza and Jacinto may assume the highest *cargo* within the structure of the *ayllu*. It was thanks to the efforts of these *ancestros apoderados* that the *patrones* never took control of their land. Today Kirkiawi has been recognised as a TCO that occupies the entire territory of the province of Bolívar minus some areas of *ex-hacienda* land and the provincial capital. Within this territory the role of *jilanku* has always existed and has been responsible alongside his wife for ensuring the production of crops and resolving all the problems that occur within the *comunidad*. Gregorio then outlined the larger structures of *jap'iy*, *pirañu* and *ayllu*, with their corresponding authorities. They were, he pronounced, trying to reconstitute these authorities, which meant not only reconstructing the larger structures within which the authorities operated but also their function, for example in resolving questions of justice according to the ways of their ancestors. It was for this reason that he and others had helped found POKUY as their political instrument. The traditional

authorities did not involve themselves in politics and POKUY was not a political party but rather a means by which they could progress things at a local level. He concluded by stating that the integrity of their territory as a TCO and the hierarchy of authorities provided a clear basis for conversion to an AIOC.

Following Gregorio's contribution, Mayor Francisco asked to speak and gave his greetings to the various communities and figures present. 'Our brother Gregorio has spoken about history, about what has taken place in our province before,' he stated, 'but the truth is that nowadays we are very mixed and our *Kuraj Tatas* are not the same as in the past' ('*ya estamos muy mezclados y los Kuraj Tatas no son los de antes*'). He explained that in Bolívar there not only exist the traditional authorities but three sets of authority at every level: the *ayllu*, peasant union and the *Bartolina Sisas*, who together coordinate with the municipal government. It is normal for people to pass through all these different *cargos* and they really form one organisation. When it came to the possibility of becoming an AIOC, he claimed that people he spoke with in the province were concerned about what this would mean and were far from enthusiastic about the idea. For one thing, they were happy with how the municipal government was working to provide them with projects and investment along with the support of the national government and it was unclear whether indigenous autonomy would improve the matter. Moreover, many people already felt that the collective titling of land as a TCO had been a mistake because of problems resulting from it. Converting the TCO to an AIOC was a step further in a direction that a lot of the residents of the province were not comfortable with. Moreover, as the TCO did not include the whole province, if it were to become an AIOC, a number of *comunidades* would be excluded and it is uncertain what would happen to them. The whole issue was divisive and Gregorio had been slightly dishonest in claiming that the traditional authorities were not involved in politics. After all, he pointed out, they have a councillor within the municipal government. This last comment elicited objections from some of the *Kuraj Tatas* who insisted that this was unfair and that they only wanted to defend their *usos y costumbres* and what was written in their ancestral documents.

At this point the atmosphere had become rather tense and the chair of the meeting acknowledged that there was obviously a conflict in Bolívar but that this was no one's fault. Rather, she declared, it was the consequence of how colonisation had divided them all. She suggested the different communities break up into working groups and

report back. The various authorities from Bolívar province formed a circle in one corner of the room and discussed how indigenous autonomy could come about. It was agreed that the possibility would be made public through the various levels of local government of the province, starting with the *ampliado general* and then through the *sub-centrales* in order to gauge what people felt about it. They agreed upon the need to find a single approach for administering justice and defining the roles of the different authorities. However, Mayor Francisco and the representatives of the municipal government and peasant union all maintained that whatever happened the TCO should not be converted into an AIOC. Instead the way forward would be to convert the province and municipality of Bolívar into an autonomous indigenous community. Following this meeting in Cochabamba the same issue was discussed in several meetings of the provincial *ampliado general* and continued to publicly divide the traditional authorities and the peasant union and MAS local government. In order to understand why, it is first necessary to outline the legal framework of indigenous autonomy established since 2009 and the wider political dispute over its contents and implementation.

The 2009 constitution recognised the right of indigenous communities to establish self-governance and provided basic guidelines for the creation of AIOCs, while the 2010 Autonomies and Decentralisation Law or LMAD specified in greater detail the requirements for the creation and operation of an autonomous indigenous community. As small-scale political units recognised by the state and afforded autonomy over the allocation of resources they are similar to the municipalities already created by the 1994 Popular Participation Law (LPP), although the communities are permitted to design their own institutions in accordance with traditional customs, including those responsible for the administration of indigenous justice. There exist three routes to indigenous autonomy: through the conversion of an existing municipality, through the conversion of a TCO and through the joining together of various municipalities that have already converted to form a regional autonomy. Subject to limits regarding population and the viability of the proposed AIOC set forth in the LMAD law, indigenous communities may start the process of conversion by first holding a consultative referendum. Should the population vote in the affirmative they are then required to hold an autonomy assembly to draft a statute of autonomy to be approved by the constitutional court. This then begins a further lengthy bureaucratic legal process to determine finally whether the conversion process should take place and the nature of the

final administrative details. Raqaypampa, one of the first communities to initiate the process in 2009, only began to operate as an AIOC in January of this year (Flores and Villagomez, 2018).

As noted in the previous chapter, from the time of the constituent assembly there existed a considerable difference between the ‘indigenous block’ and the various peasant union organisations on the issue of autonomy, with the final nature of the AIOCs falling far short of what CIDOB or CONAMAQ leaders would have wanted. Meanwhile, the peasant unions were less concerned with local autonomy than with increasing the central power of the state in order to guarantee positive social rights. A significant problem for the leaders of CONAMAQ had been that the administrative-legal jurisdiction of AIOCs does not include control over nonrenewable natural resources. This was an issue that was frequently brought up in meetings of the traditional authorities during my time in Bolívar and was described as a betrayal of the indigenous movement by Evo and the MAS, in addition to a 2013 mining law that further undermines the right of prior consultation of indigenous communities over the exploitation of subsoil resources within their territories. Moreover, further legislation since 2009 has placed limits on the forms of legal pluralism indigenous communities may practice, an issue that will be explored in more detail in chapter 6. While individuals involved in the original ‘organic’ CONAMAQ leadership have been strongly critical of these developments, the peasant unions have been largely indifferent to them (Tockman, 2014, 2017). These issues point to the more fundamental ideological difference between organisations such as CONAMAQ and the CSUTCB regarding the meaning of autonomy and their relationship with the state. That is, between a project of gaining representation and power within the structures of liberal democracy or of replacing the liberal state and its system of laws in a process of decolonisation. For this reason, various highland leaders have expressed their disapproval of the fact that the law recognises small political units that are essentially similar to municipalities and not the *suyus* or *markas* that were the territorial units that made up the *Gran Qollasuyu* (Ibid.). This has been further compounded by the fact that the 2010 LMAD law specifies that TCOs that are not continuous territories cannot be converted into AIOCs. It is the view of such leaders that while purportedly recognising the autonomy of indigenous communities, the AIOCs represent an attempt on the part of the state to make indigenous communities legible within territorial and administrative frameworks that

are the product of colonisation, a process that has countless precedents in Bolivian history (Platt, 1982).

While the MAS government has introduced AIOCs as a centrepiece of the new plurinational state it has been slow and at times obstructionist in supporting their implementation (Schilling-Vacaflor, 2012; Tockman, 2017). There are two principal factors that explain this somewhat paradoxical attitude. Firstly, as has been explained in the previous chapter and will be dealt with more fully in chapter 7, the national MAS government is committed to funding social programs and growing the economy and must do so to appease its key political bases. This commits it to the expansion of extractive industry and makes it opposed to measures that could restrict its ability to exploit subsoil resources. The second factor is a general tendency on the part of the MAS to hold on to and centralise power (Schilling-Vacaflor, 2012; Postero, 2016). This can be observed both locally and nationally. At the national level the construction of a plurinational state with a genuinely federated structure would mean a reduction of the powers of the central government. The national government therefore shows somewhat contradictory impulses in on the one hand creating a Ministry for Indigenous Autonomies and promoting AIOCs as part of the process of change while simultaneously failing to invest sufficiently in the process and placing bureaucratic procedures in the way of conversion. At the local level, a number of MAS leaders are generally hostile to indigenous autonomy because they wish to retain political control over municipal governments and view conversion to an AIOC as a threat to this.

These differences at the level of national politics between organisations that continue to support the MAS government and echo its populist nationalist discourse and position of progressive extractivism is reproduced locally. The traditional authorities are linked to the 'organic' CONAMAQ leadership and publicly state many of the concerns outlined above, while the peasant union and MAS are the beneficiaries of the increased investment of national hydrocarbon revenues (this will be dealt with in greater detail in Chapter 7). However, in Bolívar province the dispute that arose over the possibility of conversion to an AIOC was in large measure the result of the nature of the territorial and governmental structure of the province as well as the local histories of the different social organisations involved. The impact of the legal changes that allow for conversion to an AIOC are felt differently throughout the many local communities in Bolivia that have a majority indigenous population. Even the very brief description at the start of

this section of the communities in Cochabamba department who are considering or have already started the process of conversion to an AIOC should illustrate the specificity of territorial and political structures, histories and identities and the way these shape local interaction with the new law, generating conflict or consensus and particular challenges for defining their internal structures of governance and traditional norms.

In the case of Bolívar, the province, TCO, municipality and peasant union *central* are roughly coterminous and considered part of the same historic territory and community. Moreover, recent history helped consolidate the union, traditional authorities and *alcaldía* as a hybrid governmental structure. The institutional changes offered by conversion to AIOC status have created the basis for a power struggle between these different elements, who stand to win or lose depending upon if and how the conversion process was to take place. In negotiating their position, they are forced to define and justify their respective roles, leading to disputes over what constitutes authenticity in regard to the internal forms of governance and the values of leadership and public service of their community.

II. The Paths to Indigenous Autonomy and the Virtues of Leadership

Following the meeting in Cochabamba the issue of whether the different *comunidades* of Bolívar province should begin the process of becoming an autonomous indigenous community was broached in the *ampliado general*. The *ampliado general* was normally held on the second Saturday of every second month in the town of Bolívar in a large adobe brick building and was attended by more than a hundred people representing the *ayllu* authorities, peasant union, the *Bartolinas* and the local municipal government. The mayor, members of the council, the union leaders, the *Kuraj Mallku* and the two *Pirañus* (the representatives of *Urinsaya* and *Arinsaya*) would sit behind a large table at one end of the room. The rest of the union and *ayllu* representatives and members of the public would sit on rows of plastic chairs or on the floor. Attendance would be registered by the *secretaria de actas*, a local schoolteacher from the town of Bolívar, and an enormous twenty-pound sack of coca leaves would be hauled in front of the table and distributed in fistfuls to everyone present. The *Kuraj Tatas* and *jilankus* tended to sit in one corner of the room.



Figure 17: Picture of the *dirigente provincial* addressing the *ampliado general*

A major concern among all present was how indigenous autonomy would affect money available for public works that had previously been available through municipal funds as well as national level programs such as *Bolivia Cambia: Evo Cumple*. Alongside the members of the municipal government and the union and traditional authorities were a number of *técnicos*: technical and administrative staff who helped run the various branches of local government. One of these was Jesus Aguayo, a man in his early thirties from Pampajasi who had studied in Oruro before returning to work in his home province and who was often present and made contributions to public meetings. Jesus echoed earlier points made by Mayor Francisco and the *dirigente provincial*, Olker Nina, that the municipal government was functioning well to provide them with investment and that conversion to an AIOC had risks. Most crucially was the choice between the two different routes open to them in the legislation: through conversion of the TCO or of the municipality. Should they opt for ‘vía TCO’ over ‘vía municipal’, this would mean the traditional authorities would take control of the province and become a ruling caste (*‘una casta aparte’*) who dominated everyone else without their consent. He pointed to the fact that only individuals from certain families were able to assume the role of *Kuraj Mallku* and that this would hand power to a small group who would not be accountable. ‘After all,’ he stated emphatically, ‘All of us are *originarios*,

comrades!’ (*‘Tukuyninchis kanchis originarios, hermanos!’*). Moreover, an important point was that should they convert by ‘vía TCO’ then the collective ownership of the land would be part of the make-up of the AIOC and it would be impossible to revoke the TCO and create individual land titling.

Concerning this last point Olker Nina agreed that many individuals were unhappy with the TCO and that they were going to consult their bases over the issue. As shall be explored in greater detail in the following chapter, several figures within the municipal government and peasant union had argued for replacing the collective titling of the TCO with individual land titles. Mayor Francisco also agreed that if they were to pursue indigenous autonomy then ‘vía municipal’ was the only workable option that would represent everyone in the province. At this point Mallku Gregorio responded by stating that all they were doing was looking after the *usos y costumbres* and what was written in their ancestral documents. They had not defined the nature of any future AIOC but they were the only social organisation that possessed a collective land title and could prove they existed before the colony. As the meeting wore on the atmosphere became increasingly hostile and Gregorio’s claims were met with the argument that they did not have a monopoly on what it meant to be *originario*. At one point a peasant union *dirigente* shouted angrily, ‘I am tired of these *gentlemen* who think they represent us when they do not!’. After the meeting I spoke with Gregorio about the issue and he claimed that the Mayor and the peasant union, in as much as they supported indigenous autonomy, simply wanted to ‘put a poncho on the municipality’ (*‘poner un poncho sobre la municipalidad’*). He told me that while individuals like the Mayor wore traditional clothing at meetings and claimed to be *originarios* they really considered themselves *criollos* and didn’t care about creating an AIOC based on the *usos y costumbres* that reflected the ways of their ancestors.

The fact that the political geography of Bolívar province allowed for two routes to conversion to an AIOC meant this became a central point of division between the different forms of authority. The peasant union and local MAS politicians claimed that they would potentially endorse conversion by ‘vía municipal’ if their bases supported it, while the traditional authorities argued for ‘vía TCO’. On one level this represented a straightforward struggle over power as each of the two routes embodied potentially more favourable outcomes concerning the degree of control over the administration of any future autonomous indigenous community. Should the TCO be converted to an

AIOC, then the traditional authorities would exert greater influence over the definition of the internal forms of governance in their statute of autonomy. Meanwhile, conversion of the municipality would result in a hybrid system of government which would define procedures over the administration of indigenous justice, while retaining the election of a mayor and council members alongside the union and traditional authorities.

Nevertheless, this situation meant that both sides sought to define the nature and limits of their respective roles within the overall system of governance of the province. The claim made by the *técnico*, Jesus Aguayo, that in creating an autonomy by ‘via TCO’ the traditional authorities would become a ‘caste’ that only represents the ancestral families of the *ayllu* I heard repeated a number of times. Moreover, it was maintained that they had no right do to so because all of them were *originarios* and played a role in governing the province. These debates continued during my remaining time in Bolívar and focused on the supposed authenticity of the different authorities and the principles of leadership and public service.

‘All of us are *originarios* but we're divided by politics. Whether the *Kuraj Tatas* like it or not they have become politicians. They got involved in politics with the POKUY party...I'm a politician too with the MAS, but as people we are all *originarios*. For example, the very same persons that make up the peasant union, they fulfil the roles of *jilanku* and *Kuraj Tata*...But the *Kuraj Tatas* and some leaders now...we're confronting each other for various motives. Above all over the issue of autonomy. This is what we're fighting over, right?...They say 'we want to go by *via TCO*'...But for me it doesn't work because first they would leave behind the part of the province that is not titled...and they [the traditional authorities] want to govern on their own. They say 'we have ancestral documents' but the truth is we are all of us *originario* authorities. I'm *originario* and I've assumed the role of authority of the municipality.’ (S)

- Francisco Delgado, Mayor of Bolívar

‘[Mayor] Francisco is calling us politicians, but the *originario* authorities are not politicians. Bolívar has only been around for barely thirty years as a province while the traditional authorities have fought for over five hundred years. There was no government here until Victor Paz Estenssoro...The *ayllu* is from before the Spanish. Our ancestors bought it with gold and silver...For that reason there exist authorities such as *Kuraj Tatas*.’ (S)

- Juan Apaza, former *Mallku* and POKUY councillor

The question of the limits of the roles of the different social organisations in the province was often referred to as *la parte orgánica*. The term *orgánica* in Bolívar province is used to refer to a sort of idealised structure, set of procedures and division of labour within the forms of local government. An organisation functions ‘organically’ in as much as it is natural, reciprocal and serves the community and its interests, operating outside of the sphere of external political control and in accordance with values of

leadership and public service. *La parte orgánica* was often brought up in the meetings of the *ampliado general* by representatives of the peasant union in reference to the fact that the traditional authorities were acting outside of their legitimate function by involving themselves in politics. For them, the formation of a political party in POKUY was not a legitimate role for the traditional authorities to occupy. While they recognised the importance of the traditional authorities, they pointed out that the *Kuraj Tatas* of their fathers' generation were never involved in politics and simply looked after the *usos y costumbres*, which they took to mean primarily matters related to the land and the resolution of conflicts, agricultural production and associated rituals. Sabino Veizaga, a former Mallku and administrator of the regional COAMAC federation in Cochabamba told me 'those of the peasant union and the MAS, they want to consign us to nothing more than wearing the poncho, *baston de mando* and all that...they say all this about meddling in politics but I'm not a politician nor have I ever wanted to be one. I only want to defend what it says in the documents, our *usos y costumbres*.' Gregorio commented to me in private that it was impossible to defend the *usos y costumbres* without creating a political instrument to represent them in local government, otherwise they would be 'just sat there barking like a dog' (*'sentado ladrando como un perro'*).

'According to their *usos y costumbres*, they can't become tainted by politics. They can lend their support to whichever government that arrives, but they cannot form political organisations. Only we can do that here and it is for this reason that people are getting a little annoyed...because they are becoming involved with politics with POKUY. They should only take care of their territory, of justice and the *usos y costumbres*. But unfortunately, it is no longer like that, it's the other way around: we are seeking to look after the *usos y costumbres* and they are moving towards the level of politics.' (S)

- Olker Nina, *Dirigente Provincial*

In addition, the *Kuraj Tatas* were often not present in the *comunidades*, meaning the union had been forced to assume their role. According to the *sindicato* leaders there was a problem with *la parte orgánica* in the province as the different meetings were not being attended by authorities from all the social organisations. According to the commonly understood hybrid notion of the political organisation of the province shown in Figure 7, the *ayllu* and *sindicato* correspond to each other at different levels of hierarchy in such a way that a *jilanku* is at the level of a *dirigente*, a *Kuraj Tata* at the level of a *dirigente sub-central* and so forth. Consequently, the monthly meetings of the *comunidades*, *sub-centrales* and the province should include representatives from the *ayllu*, the *sindicato* and the women's union. In addition to the *ampliado general* there is

a monthly meeting of the Municipal Development Committee or CDM, charged with auditing the different development projects being carried out in the province and guiding overall policy. Not only were the peasant union leaders displeased with the fact there was not a full set of representatives in all the local and provincial meetings, but they claimed that the fact the *ayllu* organised its own separate meetings was illegitimate and ‘discriminatory’. The collective meetings of the *ayllu*, many of which I had attended, had their origins in the process of seeking the collective titling of the TCO. Now that this process had come to a completion they were being attended in fewer numbers, something that was complained about by individuals associated with the *ayllu* and used by *sindicato* leaders to demonstrate the relative weakness of organisation among the traditional authorities.

The lack of presence of leaders in communities owing to high levels of double residence was one of the criticisms often made of the traditional authorities and it was claimed that for this reason they no longer command the respect they had in the past. Before, the *Kuraj Tatas* would never remove their ponchos or go anywhere without their *tata santísimo*. According to the union leaders the current *Kuraj Tatas* were playing at make-believe, dressing up in their traditional costumes to attend meetings only to later return to Oruro or Cochabamba the same day where they would take off their *ponchos* and put on urban clothing. Moreover, according to union leader critics, the principle of *chachawarmi*, meaning that the *cargo* of an authority is in fact held by the married couple no longer exists in practice. Although the *Kuraj Tatas* would occasionally appear in public with their wives, this, claimed the union leaders, was just to pretend, as in reality their wives had nothing to do with the decisions they made and in most of the meetings the traditional authorities attended they appeared ‘as if they were single men’ (*‘como solteros’*). This phrase was often repeated in the presence of the *ayllu* leaders with an air of mockery, to point out that they were not practicing the traditions they claimed to embody. These criticisms of the traditional authorities were intended to undermine their claim to more fully represent the *usos y costumbres* in the light of the changes brought about primarily through migration and double residence. In reality, they claimed, the union was increasingly assuming responsibility for the *usos y costumbres* by resolving the problems which come from the land.

Part of the traditional political norms spoken about in the province are the concepts of *muyu* and *thaki*, also referred to in Spanish as *el turno* and *el paso*: the turn and the step.

These concepts refer to the virtues of disinterested leadership. Within the traditional *cargo* system, *muyu* or *el turno* refers to the rotative nature of leadership roles in which no one person or family is allowed to dominate. The *cargos* of *jilanku* and *Kuraj Tata* are rotated every year and the new authority is chosen by the community, often following discussion in a public assembly, rather than through voting for candidates who nominate themselves. I was told that in some cases individuals will be hesitant to assume the role, despite the great prestige it brings, as it implies sacrifice and responsibility. *Muyu* therefore also refers to the fact that assuming a *cargo* is an act of disinterested public service. *Thaki* or *el paso* refers to the path an individual takes through the different *cargos* in becoming a valued and respected member of the community. An individual must follow the correct path, serving their community and passing first through the lower *cargos* before reaching a higher level of authority. *Ayllu* figures will typically maintain that serving as a traditional authority such as *jilanku* or *Kuraj Tata* is about developing as a complete person, while serving the needs of their *ayllu*.

‘The union is not about being a whole person. For example, anyone can become a *dirigente*, you do not have to be married. They don't follow the *usos y costumbres* because they are a European invention. We are pre-existent to the colony. To be a leader of the *ayllu* is to follow the *cargos*. You cannot leave the path [*descarillarse*].’ (S)

- Gregorio Jacinto, *Kuraj Mallku*

However, the union leaders claim that in practice they embody these principles as much as the traditional authorities and are equally engaged in public service. Meanwhile, the traditional authorities maintain that the union, being a European institution imposed on them by the 1953 agrarian reform, does not follow the same norms of organisation and leadership. The union elects the leaders of its *sub-centrales* by popular vote, who have to declare their intention to run for office, unlike the traditional authorities who are in theory chosen to serve by the community. There is no theoretical limit on the number of times a union leader may seek re-election and it is not necessary to have passed through the lower levels of authority to seek a higher post. Several traditional authorities I spoke with emphasised the fact that their manner of taking decisions was by consensus in assemblies and not through ‘European’ forms of voting, as were practiced by the union. Moreover, the fact that the union is a ‘political’ organisation with the responsibility of representing the community and soliciting funds from NGO and government sources

means union leaders are almost automatically caught up in external political alliances which undermine their neutrality.

Against this claim, the union leaders and MAS politicians pointed out that Gregorio Jacinto, the *Kuraj Mallku* at the time of my fieldwork, had not passed through all the lower *cargos* and was relatively young at the age of thirty-three when he assumed the role. Gregorio became the leader of the *ayllu* in part because of his fluency in the Spanish language (unlike the previous *Mallku*, Juan Apaza, whose Spanish was more limited) which made him a more effective representative of the *ayllu* authorities outside of the province. More importantly, it was maintained that the *ayllu* and union were hybrid organisations that operated together in a complementary way through shared values, together with the local municipal government. They were all *originarios* and each form of authority had roles in representing their community and defending their interests. The final section of this chapter will consider the extent to which this claim is valid.

III. ‘Liberal’ and ‘Ayllu’ Democracy in the Political Authorities of Bolívar Province

The discourse espoused by the traditional authorities suggests that they embody different values when they take on their roles as *jilankus* or *Kuraj Mallkus* compared to the peasant union leaders or members of the municipal government. This is a puzzling claim when one considers the fact that at the level of the village *comunidad* the peasant union *dirigente* and *jilanku* fulfil similar roles. In a highly influential (1990) paper ‘Liberal Democracy and Ayllu Democracy: The Case of Northern Potosí’ Silvia Rivera Cusicanqui made the claim that peasant union and *ayllu* organisations represent two distinct forms of democracy with different notions of citizenship. She contrasts the ‘direct democracy’ of the *ayllu* with the ‘representative democracy’ of the peasant union and suggests that unions represent an attempt to ‘modernise’ highland indigenous populations which only serves to reproduce forms of colonial oppression. Moreover, she argues that peasant unions are the natural allies of development organisations and that the entrance of NGOs into the Bolivian countryside during the 1980s undermined the traditional *ayllu* authorities and fostered a culture of dependency. This last point is interesting considering that since the neoliberal multiculturalist reforms of the 1990s, *ayllu* authorities became strongly associated with and received funds from various

international NGOs, leading to the contemporary accusation in Bolívar province and elsewhere that they are ‘*ongeizados*’: unduly influenced by the foreign development organisations which provide them with money and training.

While Rivera Cusicanqui’s analysis of the ideological divide between *ayllu* and union is useful, it represents them as fundamentally separate organisations locked in an internecine struggle. Miranda Shield Johannson, who carried out long-term fieldwork in the isolated community of P’iya Qayma in Bolívar province, has argued that this picture is at odds with the reality of relations between union *dirigente* and *jilanku* at the local level and the perceptions of her informants (Shield Johannson, 2014). She maintains that the division between the *ayllu* and *sindicato* leaders was not an issue in the everyday life of P’iya Qayma and that many of her informants conflated the different sets of authorities as they both participate in the material and symbolic reproduction of the *ayllu*, understood in the broad sense of their shared territory and community. Shield Johannson’s description of the close working relationship between *dirigente* and *jilanku* and the ultimate similarity of their roles was reflected in my own experience of Vilaycayma, where I saw people seek out the advice of both the *jilanku* Tata Maximo and *dirigente* Don Severino in equal measure. Moreover, the two leaders worked together to organise events, such as their participation in the *fiesta* of Tata Santiago or the coordination of *trabajo communal*.

Nevertheless, I believe it is important to distinguish between the different levels at which the authorities operate and how these generate collective identity. As illustrated in figure 7, above the level of the *comunidad* is the union *sub-central* and *jap’iy* and above this the *ayllu*, provincial *central* and the municipal government. While the distinctions between the roles are not absolute, at the higher levels of organisation the traditional authorities such as the *Kuraj Tatas* are more focused on the mediation of conflicts regarding lands and the peasant union is more directed towards dealing with the municipal government and securing funds for public works. Moreover, as is common with grass roots social organisations in Bolivia (Nash, 1979; Lazar, 2008) both the traditional authorities and the peasant union serve as a ‘school’ in which individuals have access to and engage with wider discourses. This happens both through the organisation of training or *capacitaciones* by NGOs or through the wider national and international networks in which they are embedded. It is quite normal in meetings of NGOs, *sub-centrales* and the *ampliado general* to hear reference to ILO Convention

169, the 1952 revolution and the uprising of Túpak Katari. These wider discourses and the fact that the authorities have different focuses at the higher levels of organisation produce ideological differences that do sometimes impact at the local level. In the case of Vilaycayma, the politics of the province and the rift between *ayllu* and *sindicato* was an issue that was discussed in meetings of the *comunidad*. This was primarily because Vilaycayma had a long history as an important *comunidad* within Kirkiawi and was the location where the ancestral documents of the *ayllu* were kept. It was believed they were being punished by the municipal government for their close association with the traditional authorities by not being granted public works.

In February 2016 I was staying in the home of Severino Condori in Vilaycayma to attend the final meeting of the traditional authorities before Gregorio ended his term as *Kuraj Mallku*. The meeting took place in the *sede sindical* of the *comunidad* and Gregorio had printed a timetable of the event on headed paper with his official seal as *Mallku* and those of his *Kuraj Tatas*. The timetable included a lunch and a *miskichina* or *cuarto intermedio*: a moment of rest in which they would play musical instruments and fill themselves with cheer while celebrating their traditional customs. Sadly, the meeting was not especially full of cheer because of the failure of a number of members to attend and a lack of funds. The first hour or two of the meeting was dominated by a discussion concerning the failure to attend of POKUY's one councillor, Augustina Condori. As she was a salaried public servant it was expected that she should pay for the sheep that would be slaughtered and turned into *kanka de oveja*. Eventually someone was sent on foot to the town of Bolívar to demand that she be held accountable. Once this matter was concluded discussion turned to the details of their internal constitution as an *ayllu*. This had originally been defined in 1997 in a conference organised with help from CONAMAQ but a number of details were out of date and it was suggested needed revision. One of these was the fact that the leader of the *ayllu* was referred to as the *Cacique* rather than the *Kuraj Mallku*. It was argued that this was a colonial Spanish word that was an inappropriate way to refer to the highest *cargo* within their *ayllu* and they had stopped using the term many years ago. This led onto a discussion concerning how only certain families were able to ascend to the *cargo* of *Kuraj Mallku* and the procedure for selecting Gregorio's replacement. Gregorio suggested that the fact the role was semi-hereditary was a problem as it limited the potential candidates, was unpopular with a lot of people and was frequently used to criticise them. What was surprising to

me was that despite not taking a decision on making this constitutional change, no one present raised any strong objections to Gregorio's suggestion and there was some degree of support for the idea.

The details of the meeting described above illustrate several points that are relevant when considering the claims made by the different authorities of the province and the extent to which they are hybridised. Firstly, the fact they were calmly discussing the possibility of altering the rules on the selection of the *Kuraj Mallku* shows the degree to which their practices are 'invented traditions' (Hobsbawm and Ranger, 1983) and not the timeless *usos y costumbres* which endow them with authenticity. In addition, much of the organisational form and protocols of the traditional authorities are similar to the *sindicato* and clearly owe their origins to peasant unionism. Meetings follow an agenda and minutes are taken in Spanish (despite discussions being carried out largely in Quechua) as this is the only language in which anyone is literate. Attendance is recorded and those who are not present are called to account (sometimes through being issued a fine). Decisions that are arrived at are issued in decrees signed by those present, who then provide their official seals. The *sello*, the official stamp used to verify the signatures on documents, is a ubiquitous accessory of individuals involved in peasant unionism in Bolivia, while among the traditional authorities it has become every bit as much a symbol of authority as the *tata santísimo*.

Most importantly, the form in which decisions are arrived at is essentially the same for the peasant union and traditional authorities. Taking decisions in popular assemblies is something I observed not only in meetings of the traditional authorities but also in the communal assembly of Vilaycayma, the OTB of Copacabana and the *ampliado general* of Bolívar. In all cases, rather than taking a vote, issues are spoken about for as long as necessary by whoever wishes to speak, until consensus has been arrived at as to the course of action to be taken. This is despite the fact that leaders like Sabino Veizaga and Gregorio Jacinto emphasised the 'assemblistic' character of the *ayllu*, referring both to how decisions are arrived at and the fact that participation is a right and duty of membership. However, the existence of regular meetings and the duty to attend them is the result of both the traditions of peasant unionism and the reforms of the 1990s which provided the traditional authorities with a reason to meet regularly in pursuing the collective titling of the TCO. This happened at the same time that organisations such as CONAMAQ began to formally document the customs and authority structures of

highland peoples (Mendoza et. al, 2002) and encouraged individual communities to do the same as part of the process of ‘reconstituting the *ayllu*’. Traditionally, meetings would have been of a festive or ritual character and authorities such as the *Kuraj Tatas* would have communicated with their bases not through public assemblies but by walking among the *comunidades* they represent and visiting individual families, much in the manner described by Roger Rasnake in his classic (1988) ethnography of the *ayllu* authorities of Yura in Northern Potosí. It would appear that the ‘assemblistic democracy’, commented on by a number of writers (Linera, 2004; Lazar, 2007; Postero, 2007), which embodies notions of citizenship and democratic procedures closer to the tradition of civic republicanism, is not a unique characteristic of the *ayllu*. As was outlined in Chapter 2, it is a feature of both peasant unions and the social organisations of urban migrants. Moreover, the fact that the leaders of *Ayllu Kirkiawi* would consider reforming their processes for electing authorities to more closely reflect the ‘European’ protocols of the union and local government illustrates the extent to which there is both similarity and movement of ideas between them.

While the traditional authorities have absorbed much of the organisational form and procedures of peasant unions, the *sindicato* and elected politicians also understand their roles in terms of logics and values that are more commonly attributed to the social organisation of the Andean *ayllu*. The Bolivian anthropologist, Nelson Antequera, with whom I met and conversed with on a number of occasions, had studied the political organisation of Bolívar province in the early 2000s. In his (2013) PhD thesis he suggested that the path of *thaki* could be observed in the life histories of various individuals who served as authorities in the peasant union, *ayllu* and government, illustrating the extent to which they overlap and form a single system of authority (Antequera, 2013). One of my key informants, Don Severino Condori, had by his own admission always worked on ‘the side of the union’ but described his political career using the notions of *thaki* and *muyu*. Severino had served as secretary of the *sub-central* of Vilaje during the 1980s, before being elected as MAS congressman in 2002 and later returning to work as union *dirigente* in his home *comunidad* of Vilaycayma, the role he was exercising during my fieldwork. Nevertheless, his description of what it meant to be a political leader echoes the ideals espoused by traditional authorities in several ways. Severino frequently referred to the importance of *el turno* and the fact that working as a politician is an act of public service that represents a personal burden. He

described how it was the understanding of the bases within the union that his salary as an elected official should be used to pay for costs associated with official union business such as transport and food, which meant he was unable to save anything. Another burden had been the frustration of having to work within a national government dominated by right wing parties. In his own words, a good *dirigente* or elected official must ‘leave something for the community’ (*‘dejar algo a la comunidad’*), meaning a public work of some kind. The fact that he was elected in 2002 during the national government of Sanchez de Lozada meant that it was difficult to secure investment for the province and failure to do so reflected badly on him. That a public official has these expectations placed upon them illustrates how in Bolívar province power can be understood as service to the community, regardless of whether this refers to *cargos* within the union, *ayllu* or government.

When I asked Severino to provide a definition of *la orgánica*, a term used frequently in union settings, including in urban unions (Lazar, 2008) he provided the following description:

‘Before, the traditional parties always placed people from the town in the political positions. They didn’t follow the ‘organic’ path...*la orgánica* means that our *dirigente* or elected representative should be chosen by consensus...But more than that *la orgánica* has more to do with the organisational structure, right? We always organise ourselves from above to below, from this side to that side. Things complement each other. One day it is your turn to be authority and the next it is mine. So, this is *la parte orgánica*. It isn’t going to just be you because I’ll resent it. It’s your turn, then mine, then someone else’s, right? This is *el turno* in the ‘organic’ way.’ (S)

It is noteworthy that, despite being a self-described union figure who has never occupied a *cargo* of the traditional authorities, Severino’s comments regarding the structure of the social organisations of the province and their norms and procedures includes many of the key ideas of rotation of authority, public service and complementarity that are described as defining elements of the *ayllu* (Rasnake, 1988; Cusicanqui, 1990; Albó, 1977, 2011). Yet in Bolívar province they are espoused in equal measure among local peasant union and MAS political figures. Rather than being bounded institutions that maintain a rigorous ideological and organisational division between each other, people and ideas flow between these forms of authority. If this were not the case, then the debates that take place would not be possible. The fact that terms such as *la orgánica*, *muyu*, *thaki* and *originario* are argued over is the result of shared ideas concerning what it means to accept a role of public service and to become a good

person in one's path through life. The differences expressed between the different authorities concerning governance and leadership are therefore a matter of degree and emphasis rather than of kind. These differences can be explained largely by their institutional roles, the larger networks in which they are embedded and, as shall be explored in greater detail in the subsequent chapters, the extent to which the different authorities embody separate dimensions of the aspirations of highland rural peoples.

Conclusion

Legal and institutional changes that purport to further the decolonisation of Bolivian society through recognising indigenous forms of governance have served to further intra-community conflict among the inhabitants of the highland indigenous community of Bolívar province. At the national level, the details of these reforms are the subject of fierce debate amongst indigenous and peasant social organisations and turn on questions to do with the meaning of decolonisation and the process of change. Meanwhile, the dispute in Bolívar has much to do with the particular history of the region and its territorial and governmental structure. While the neoliberal multiculturalist reforms of the 1990s served to establish the notion that the different forms of authority of the province are a hybrid structure, the possibility of converting to an AIOC has helped destabilise the balance of power and obliged the different authorities to define the meanings and limits of their respective roles. A discussion over the possibility of conversion to autonomous indigenous community and the technical details of this process therefore transposed into a debate concerning the values of leadership and the authenticity and legitimacy of the different authorities. Nonetheless, contrary to the picture that has been painted by classic anthropological accounts of *ayllu* and *sindicato*, the different sides are not separate and bounded entities and share certain protocols and values. The traditional authorities in their current form owe much of their procedures and decision-making processes to peasant unionism, while logics and values traditionally attributed to the Andean *ayllu* form part of the understandings of leadership and public service of union leaders and MAS politicians. While differences do exist between them, these are explained in part by the different roles they assume as institutions at the higher levels of organisation and the wider networks in which they are embedded.

As will be explored in subsequent chapters, the different outlooks of the authorities are to a large extent the result of projects they have engaged in that represent different

dimensions of the aspirations of highland rural peoples. For the last twenty years, the traditional authorities have sought the revindication of their traditional culture and the defence of their historic territory. While their greatest success has been the collective titling of their ancestral territory as a TCO, some of the leaders of the peasant union at the time of my fieldwork supported the idea of individual land titling. This debate, more than the question of leadership and democracy, explains some of the core disagreements between *ayllu* and *sindicato*.

Chapter 5. *Jallp'a*: Territory and Identity

Introduction

During my fieldwork the ongoing legal status of people's lands, or in Quechua *jallp'as*, became an issue that was aired in numerous meetings of the *ampliado general* in Bolívar. The fact that most of the territory of the province has been collectively titled as a TCO or Native Communal Land means that the arable fields corresponding to individual families are legally the property of the entire community and their management and use subject to traditional customary law or the *usos y costumbres*. This has a number of consequences and not everyone was happy with them. The peasant union leader, Olker Nina, had declared it the intention of the *sindicato* to replace the collective titling of the TCO with individual land titles for all families. This was met with considerable hostility by Mallku Gregorio and other traditional authorities and the subject was one that divided people, with some supporting the position of the peasant union and others that of the traditional authorities. Of all the issues I heard debated during my fieldwork this was the one which elicited the strongest reaction. For Gregorio and other traditional authorities, it was proof that the peasant union and local MAS politicians did not truly consider themselves *originarios* and were determined to '*desaparecer el ayllu*': meaning to get rid of the traditional system of territorial organisation and management of land alongside its system of customary law and political authority. Meanwhile, the union leaders claimed they simply wanted to provide a solution to the problems resulting from migration to the city and internecine conflicts over lands.

On the one hand, dissolving the collective titling of the TCO would represent a shift in the balance of power between the different authorities. As was shown in the previous chapter, the TCO may potentially provide the legal basis for the traditional authorities to exercise greater control over the province in the event of its conversion to an AIOC and is a source of prestige and legitimacy for them. Nevertheless, this chapter will argue that the dispute over the status of the land also reflects deeper differences among prominent local social leaders regarding how they conceive of belonging to their community, expressed in the contemporary ethical discourse of what it means to be *originario*. This raises the question of how two forms of authority may express different understandings of identity when they are commonly regarded as being all part of a single governmental

structure with complementary roles and are from the same *comunidades* and families of the tiny province of Bolívar.

The first section of this chapter will describe the traditional system of land tenancy within the *comunidades* of Bolívar province, the way families make a living and the forms of social obligation through which access to land is granted. It will then explain the nature of the TCO before providing a brief account of the process which led to Kirkiawi gaining its collective land title and how this project shaped the role and outlook of the traditional authorities. The second section will describe how this issue was talked about in a meeting of the *ampliado general* in which interaction with the new plurinational Bolivian state provoked its discussion. It will then further detail the perspectives of both sides before considering the role of rural-urban migration and double residence as a factor in the debate. The final section will look at how this dispute ultimately illustrates different understandings on the part of prominent members of the peasant union and traditional authorities of what it means to belong to their community, expressed in terms of what it means to be *originario*.

I. Access to Land and the TCO

i. *Jallp'a* and the *usos y costumbres*

In many ways land or *jallp'a* is the centrally important feature of social life and cultural identity amongst the communities that form Bolívar province. For many people in Bolívar their historical identity as a community is linked to the land and their struggle to maintain autonomy over their territory from the colonial and post-colonial state. For those who were involved in the process of titling *Ayllu Kirkiawi* as a TCO the formal recognition of their ancestral lands was one battle in a long and constant war to preserve their independence. They would often recount the story of how the territory of Kirkiawi had been purchased in exchange for seven mule-loads of gold and silver by the *soqta achichilas* and express pride in the fact that the *q'ara runas* had never taken control of their lands. Land is the most important resource someone can have access to and it is a source of bitter jealousy and acrimonious disputes surrounding its ownership.

Agricultural land is divided by *qanipus*, lines of stones which mark the boundaries between one family's parcel of land and another's. Such is the intensity of feeling that people are willing to physically fight each other over the incursion of a few meters beyond the perceived boundary of their land by a neighbouring family.

Moreover, the traditional social and cultural institutions of the communities of Bolívar province are to a large extent built around the relationship people have with the land and the way it is communally managed. In most of the province the traditional authorities or *jilankus* are still responsible for resolving disputes surrounding land and managing the system of communal land tenancy. According to the *usos y costumbres*, land in the *comunidades* is collectively owned and managed. While families enjoy access to individual plots of land, this is a form of usufruct right rather than full legal ownership. As a result of the collective titling of the majority of the territory of Bolívar province as a TCO this traditional practice is legally enforced, meaning land cannot be sold, rented or mortgaged and using it is dependent on fulfilling social obligations and the collective assent of the community.

Within each settlement or *comunidad* land is divided into areas with different purposes and rights of access. These include small plots of individually owned land or *canchones* near peoples' homes (typically used for the cultivation of alfalfa to feed livestock) and areas of pasture in the hills where families have second homes where they stay while pasturing their flocks of sheep and llamas. These lands are communal and all have the right to use them. Meanwhile, the *mantas* or *ayonoqas* are large areas of arable land in which individual plots corresponding to particular families are contained. The right to use them is dependent upon their ongoing membership of the community. Should a family definitively abandon their home community and fail to return to work the land, to assume responsibility for *cargos* or take part in communal work, then the community as a whole may determine that their lands should be redistributed to other families who need them. Until recently the lands of each *comunidad* were recognised in title deeds granted to the families who lived in the *comunidades* at the time of a census carried out in 1881. The areas of land recognised by these title deeds are referred to as the *urigen* and they have been divided into much smaller plots over time because of the custom of equal division of inheritance among offspring.

Only some of the *ayonoqas* pertaining to a community are used for cultivation in a given year. The others are left fallow, described as being allowed 'to rest'. One *ayonoqa* will typically be cultivated for three years consecutively and will then be left fallow for 6-8 years. The successive 'opening' of each *ayonoqa* takes place in a rightward direction, so the rotation of land follows a circular pattern. The system of land rotation or *muyu* symbolically mirrors the rotative nature of the *cargo* system and is referred to

with the same word. It is the *jilanku* who is responsible for administering this whole system and the associated rituals. The system is highly logical given the fact that the earth in Bolívar province lacks a layer of natural humus topsoil and would quickly become sterile if cultivated in consecutive periods. The parcels of land belonging to families and the *ayonoqas* themselves do not consist of neat wholes but are rather divided into smaller non-contiguous units. The ecology of the highlands leads to fluctuations in agricultural production and as frosts, hails, droughts and floods may destroy entire areas of crops, if a family were to cultivate only one large contiguous plot of land, they could risk losing everything.

Only families with the status of *originario* have automatic access to the *ayonoqa* land, while those who do not are known as *forasteros* or *arimakis* and are given access to land by mutual agreement with *originario* families. Theoretically, the *originarios* are those descended from individuals categorised as such during the 1881 census and who would have been charged a higher rate of the head tax or *contribución territorial*. In reality, and as has been discussed in classic literature on this topic (Platt, 1986; Harris, 1978), these categories are not fixed and over time it is common for individuals to pass from one to the other by marriage or other means. In the *comunidad* of Vilaycayma nearly all the families permanently resident at the time of my fieldwork had *originario* status and I understand this situation was common in the province. In Vilaycayma, as in other *comunidades*, many more families were permanently resident in the city or tropics and returned during times of sowing and harvest and to celebrate cultural events. However, many of these families, some of whom I knew from the Baptist church of Yuraq Rumi in Cochabamba, had not lost usufruct rights over their *ayonoqa* lands.

While the main social obligations necessary to enjoy usufruct are continued employment of the land for productive purposes alongside participation in communal work and civic politics, it is unclear precisely how these are met. Some individuals told me that it is only necessary to be available to assume a *cargo* such as *jilanku* within the village should the time come that it is their family's turn to take the responsibility. I was present in the communal assembly of Vilaycayma in January 2016 when a new *jilanku* was chosen to replace the outgoing Tata Maximo. While Maximo had a house in Oruro and lived between the countryside and city, his replacement was a young man called Elker who had spent most of his life in Cochabamba. Elker was quite open with me that his appointment had been '*a la fuerza*' or imposed upon him and that he did not want

the job. Don Enrique explained to me that while Elker was '*nada más que un chango*' or just a young man it had been difficult to find a replacement this year and they thought it important to have someone of the younger generation take the *cargo*. Elker pointed out that he would face a fine of 120 *bolivianos* (or about £10 sterling) for every meeting he failed to attend and the ultimate sanction of having his family's lands taken from them if he refused. This event contrasted with the description I had heard from others about the pride and dignity bestowed upon an individual assuming a *cargo* and suggested that at least for some of the younger generation resident in the cities this is not the case.

Other urban residents in Cochabamba, such as the Baptist pastor Don Victor, explained that they still had their lands in Vilaycayma but usually made arrangements with relatives to cultivate and harvest it in exchange for a share of the crop. While Don Victor had not carried out agricultural work in more than a decade, he had assumed the role of *jilanku* in Vilaycayma only a few years prior to the time of my fieldwork. Moreover, while participation in communal work by urban residents was common, it was unclear as to what extent it was expected. Don Pancho, a former artisanal gold miner who worked as a hospital orderly in Cochabamba and who lived near Yuraq Rumi, was the foreman of several communal works, most notably an irrigation system or *microriego* in some of the *ayonoqa* fields. In sum, while in Vilaycayma the conditions of land access were participation in civic politics and a sustained link with the *comunidad* through agricultural and communal work, the requirements were never precisely defined.

The traditional system of land management in the *comunidades* of Bolívar regulates agricultural production and therefore forms part of the traditional internal economic organisation of the territory. Much has been written about the internal economy of the Andean *ayllu*, with early ethnographic work (Platt, 1982; Harris, 1982; Bouysse-Cassagne, 1978) emphasising the separateness of the *ayllu* from the market economy. Olivia Harris (1982) coined the term 'the ethnic economy' to describe how among the Laymi of Northern Potosí the exchange of goods and labour takes place according to a logic of 'ecological complementarity' in which distant areas are connected via links of reciprocity and kinship and exchange agricultural goods for their mutual subsistence. This work was heavily influenced by the writings of John Murra (1956, 2002) and the notion of a unique Andean logic of economic organisation, in turn influenced by Karl Polanyi's notion of economic embeddedness (Polanyi, 1944). More recently, there has

been some debate as to how resistant Andean indigenous communities are to participating in wider markets and the extent to which highland peoples have historically acted in networks of trade and moved between communities (Larson, Harris and Tandeter, 1995; Platt, 1982). Others have critiqued the idealisation of Andean communities and the *ayllu* as a pre-modern institution holding continuity with a romanticised past (Starn, 1991; Weismantel, 2006). This body of literature in turn fits into both the Marxian anthropological analyses of the partial integration of peasant economies into capitalist markets (Wolf, 1982; Bloch, 1975; Nash, 1981; Taussig, 1980) and their subsequent critique (Kearney, 1996) as well as the wider formalist-substantivist debate in economic anthropology (Firth, 1946; Bohannon, 1968; Popkin, 1979).

In contemporary Bolívar province the way land is rotated and divided in non-contiguous *ayonoqa* parcels could be observed as a 'logic of vertical control' following Murra (2002) as well as a 'hedging strategy' which, given the ecological conditions of the highlands, prioritises production for subsistence over the maximisation of yields to ensure the survival of the family unit, something which may also be viewed through the anthropological typology of the 'peasant economy' (Scott, 1976; Chayanov, 1986; Wolf, 1966). Nevertheless, in Bolívar people enter into market forms of exchange at the same time as practising forms of non-market reciprocity. Among these non-market methods of regulating exchange and organising production are the barter of goods or *trueque* and different forms of mutual obligation and labour exchange known as *ayni*, *mink'a* and *choqu*. Until recently it was common for individuals to take long journeys with donkeys or llama caravans to neighbouring valley lands in Arque and Cliza to exchange potatoes and *ch'uño* for valley products such as squash, tomatoes and corn. Additionally, a Sunday barter market or *feria de trueque* had been held regularly in the town of Bolívar in which townsfolk would trade products such as coca leaves, fruit, bread, sweets, cigarettes and alcohol for fixed equivalences of potatoes, *ch'uño* and other goods. This form of barter was essentially a form of petty merchant capitalism which was viewed as exploitative by people from the *comunidades*. The ease of direct access to the cities to buy goods in the market economy has led to the decline of the latter form of *trueque* and the complete disappearance of the llama caravans which are now spoken about with nostalgia. Individuals will more often journey directly by bus to Oruro to sell agricultural produce and use the money to buy necessary items.

‘They always went to the valley. For example, in Pampajasi they didn’t produce corn or broad beans. Now they are doing so, but before they didn’t make corn or wheat, anything. So, with *trueque* they would walk with donkeys, with llamas to the valley, to exchange with potatoes or *ch’uño*. In the valley there are no potatoes or *ch’uño*. There was *qañawa*. I myself did this...no this exchange no longer exists. It’s over. Because before there were no cars or buses to go to the valleys or the city.’ (S)

- Don Eucenio Tola, *jilanku* of Pampajasi *comunidad*

In the *comunidades* it is necessary to mobilise large quantities of labour during periods of intensive agricultural activity, principally sowing and harvesting; *ayni*, *mink’a* and *chuqu* may each refer to different forms of labour exchange or service which facilitate this. While *ayni* is a Quechua term that signals a notion of generalised reciprocity it can refer to help given in agricultural labour by family, neighbours and fictive kin or *compadres*. *Chuqu* refers to a traditional work party in which someone will invite neighbours to participate in sowing or harvesting while providing a feast of roast mutton, potatoes and *chicha* corn beer for all who help out. *Mink’a* can be a form of contracting individuals to work on a plot of land, either by promising to repay this favour at a later date or through sharing a proportion of the land’s harvest. In the course of my fieldwork I found it difficult to obtain unambiguous definitions of these terms. It seemed they were used interchangeably at times, as *mink’a* was used to refer to a work party ostensibly similar to a *chuqu*. Moreover, *mink’a* was also used to refer to communal work which benefited the entire community and required the obligatory lending of labour.

‘Before in the *comunidades* they exercised more *ayni*, *mink’a*, *choqu*...*Ayni* is, let’s say, today for me, tomorrow for you. Today we’re going to work for him and the next day for ourselves and the day after for him and in this way between the whole *comunidad*...they lived in a lovelier way before...*Mink’a* was always done with coca. Things were always announced or requested with coca. *Mink’a* means I’m going to ask you with coca. *Mink’ay* in Quechua is to request or to notify...*Choqu* is considered group work, communal work. It is still practised among some families, in order to crop barley or dig up potatoes or to sow the fields just the same. Also, to build homes they carry out *ayni* and *mink’a*.’ (S)

- Gregorio Jacinto, *Kuraj Mallku*

The use of traditional forms of labour exchange has also declined according to various informants I spoke with. It was claimed that instead of receiving crop sharing or participating in communal harvesting individuals prefer to be paid for work on others’ fields. As Don Eucenio Tola from Pampajasi put it succinctly, ‘*Ya quieren pago nomás. Quieren su jornal. No quieren dar gratis.*’ (Now they just want payment. They want their salary. They don’t want to give for free). However, the extent to which these

practices have really been lost is unclear. *Mink'a* can mean both a form of contracting people to work through offering a share of the crop and the organisation of communal labour for public works. I saw *mink'a* in the latter sense being carried out on several occasions in Vilaycayma. Among the families I knew, including that of Mallku Gregorio, I saw them carry out work on the fields of family members and fictive kin or *compadres* free of charge, referring to this as *ayni*. This sort of reciprocal labour exchange took place in Vilaycayma in the weeks around the *Todos Santos* festival, as people were anxious to prepare their fields ahead of the rainy season.

Beyond the individual *comunidad* there exists an organisation of lands into *jap'iy*s and *piraños*. In some of these areas, for example in *jap'iy vilaje*, various *ayonoqas* are inter-communal, meaning that they belong not just to one *comunidad* but are managed at the level of the entire *jap'iy*. The term *ayllu* refers to these forms of territorial organisation in addition to the authorities associated with them. It means the territory where people live, their customs and ways of life. Even individuals I knew who were strictly involved in peasant unionism, such as Don Severino, used the term in this way. Severino commented to me once, while we were drinking hot chocolate during a recess in the meeting of the *ampliado general*, '*Estoy siempre orgulloso de mis origines, de mi ayllu. El ayllu es la gente, las tierras, los usos y costumbres, todo.*' (I've always been proud of where I come from, of my *ayllu*. The *ayllu* is the people, the land, the *usos y costumbres*, everything). While the *usos y costumbres* may refer to customary law, it is a broad term that can mean all the customs and ways of life that are representative of a particular *comunidad* or the *ayllu* as a whole. These can include ways of managing land and the economic practices of exchange and reciprocity described above. As the traditional authorities' role is largely centred around administering access to land and facilitating agricultural production within this form of territorial organisation with its associated economic practices, their validity as a social organisation depends to a large extent on its continued recognition. The titling of their territory as a TCO is seen to support these structures and practices which provide them with a function and source of legitimacy.

ii. The TCO

The ability for indigenous communities to create Native Communal Lands or TCOs dates to the implementation of Law 1715, or as it came to be known, the INRA law,

named after the acronym of the newly created National Institute of Agrarian Reform. The INRA law was passed in 1996 under the government of Gonzalo Sanchez de Lozada with the aim of resolving the unfinished business of titling lands which had begun with the 1953 agrarian reform. While the legal and institutional mechanisms of the agrarian reform had provided tens of thousands of individual title deeds to peasant smallholders, mainly from former *hacienda* lands which had been occupied by peasant militias, the legal status of huge areas of land was uncertain: many families had never resolved their situation and indigenous groups in the Eastern lowlands felt their territories under threat from highland and valley colonists and large-scale agrobusiness. While the INRA law was an attempt to complete the process of the agrarian reform and theoretically followed one of its central tenets (that land should perform a ‘social function’ to be granted title), it used the word *saneamiento* rather than ‘restitution’ to describe this process: a term which refers to regularising the status of agricultural land within a formal register for a diverse set of constituencies, including not only peasant smallholders and indigenous groups but medium and large-scale commercial landowners.

The figure of the TCO had been created with indigenous groups in mind and the impetus for it came partly from lowland indigenous organisations such as CIDOB (Postero, 2006). It was also undoubtedly influenced, as were other laws regarding land reform in the Americas, by ILO convention 169 on the rights of indigenous peoples (Colque, Tinta and Sanjines, 2016) which expressed the notion of demarcating territories as habitats for indigenous and minority ethnic groups, linked to the goals of biodiversity conservation (Anthias and Radcliffe, 2013; Davis et. al., 1998). Following this concept, TCOs were defined as spaces that form the habitat of indigenous and *originario* people in which they practice traditional cultural and subsistence economic activities which assure their survival (INRA, 2002). In addition to the requirements for the *saneamiento* of individual lands, such as public notification, the measurement of the land and assessment of its ‘social function’, the *saneamiento* of a TCO has to include a certification of the ‘ethnic character’ of the indigenous people and how their particular needs and way of life relates to the land they inhabit (Ibid.). This meant that the territory was not only recognised as collective property but also as the basis for the economic and cultural reproduction of a people and as a way of guaranteeing cultural rights and the ‘ways of life’ of the group.

For this reason, although the INRA law can be understood as part of a ‘neoliberal multicultural’ agenda of granting cultural rights to ease the implementation of economic restructuring (Hale, 2002, 2004), it was given a more radical interpretation by certain indigenous groups and regarded as the potential future basis for an independent or autonomous territory. Among certain highland indigenous organisations, it was seen as the first step towards the ‘reconstitution of the *ayllu*’ (described briefly in Chapter 3). This movement was driven by national-level organisations such as CONAMAQ who were pursuing a project of cultural revindication and of reconstructing from the bottom up the traditional pre-conquest polities, to the point of eventually recreating the 14 Aymara kingdoms of the *Gran Qollasuyo*. Their project includes a specific view of history in which there is a continuity of struggle and resistance from the time of the Spanish invasion until now and in which the common denominator is the fight between the *originarios* and the *q’ara runas*, alongside a vision of Andean culture as supremely virtuous in its practices of reciprocity, justice and governance.

In Bolívar province the *saneamiento* of the TCO and the reconstitution of their traditions and political authorities were linked processes⁵. The opportunity to gain recognition of their territory in this way was understood as a continuation of the long history of fighting to defend their territory, autonomy and *usos y costumbres* from outsiders via legal means. At the same time, they were, with help from organisations such as CONAMAQ and NGOs such as PROSANA, engaged in re-establishing their ancestral customs and the higher authorities of the *ayllu* through workshops and public meetings. Tata Sabino explained to me that while they had been ‘woken up’ by this process, the structure of the territory and authorities had always existed in Bolívar province. He, Gregorio and Dominga were reminiscing about titling the TCO in the kitchen of Gregorio’s home when he made clear to me, ‘*aquí siempre nos organizamos aransaya-urinsaya, de arriba a abajo, así es. Jilanku siempre había, organizamos según usos y costumbres*’ (here we have always organised ourselves from above to below, *aransaya-urinsaya*. There was always a *jilanku* and we organised things according to the *usos y costumbres*). He then stated that by the 1990s there had been a process of fragmentation of the larger *ayllu* structures and higher authorities. Nevertheless, in 1998

⁵ I gained an understanding of this from speaking with various actors involved in the process such as former *ayllu* authorities Juan Apaza and Sabino Veizaga, the former technical and legal adviser to COAMAC, Toribia Lero Quispe, and the anthropologist Nelson Antequera, alongside documents provided to me by Mallku Gregorio detailing the reconstitution and titling of the TCO.

the decision was made by various local authorities. including *jilankus* and union *dirigentes* such as the former *dirigente provincial*, Justiniano Cunurana, to re-instate the position of leader of the *ayllu* at the level of the entire province, subsequently installing Tata Marcos Mamani as *Kuraj Mallku*.

We analysed little by little and in '98 we also began to recover the *autoridades originarias*...we wanted to value and improve the traditional authorities because they have to be above me, shall we say, like an even higher *cargo*...we must always walk together...unfortunately from that point they have almost been unable to agree or coordinate. There is always a disagreement...perhaps [because] the *sindicato* is, let's say, not of this place.' (S)

- Don Justiniano Cunurana, former *Dirigente Provincial*

From this point on the traditional authorities in Bolívar were very much involved in the formation of CONAMAQ and in the regional *ayllu* organisation of COAMAC, being instrumental in the organisation of the first council of *ayllus* of Cochabamba in 2003. At the same time, they continued organising workshops and consultative meetings throughout the province concerning the TCO, in which it was highlighted that it expressed the desire of many people to defend their land and territory. Juan Apaza explained to me that they believed the TCO would allow them to defend their lands and resources, particularly the communal lands and shared resources from incursion by private landlords and mining companies, '*Con saneamiento simple soy dueño nomás de mi parcelita pero con TCO somos dueños de todo, de los rios, los arboles las piedras, de todo el ayllu.*' (With individual titling I own just my own tiny plot of land but with the TCO we are the owners of everything, the rivers, the trees, the rocks, the entire *ayllu*).

In 2003, after preparing the documents which demonstrated the requirements of 'ancestrality' and 'territoriality' as an indigenous group, they began the difficult bureaucratic procedure of marking the borders of the TCO and the limits between departments and non-TCO areas in coordination with figures from the INRA institute. Here the TCO process proved to be a source of conflict between and within *comunidades*. Alongside the problem of determining the limits of the territory, not all the *comunidades* in the province wanted their lands to be included in the TCO, such as the area known as Comuna. This area had formerly been *hacienda* land and many individuals did not consider themselves part of the *ayllu*. The problem, according to Gregorio, was that they were '*medio q'aras*' or half outsiders, due to having existed

outside of the *ayllu* for a significant period. Additionally, not all individuals within *comunidades* were in agreement with the process. Gregorio had been a young man when there was a confrontation in his home *comunidad* of Palca between those, like Gregorio, who were in favour of the TCO and others who wished to keep their individual land titles. Despite these problems, the TCO was eventually formalised in two separate titles in 2008 and 2009 and was celebrated as a substantial achievement with an official ceremony in the town of Bolívar.

Given the above history, the TCO can be attributed at least three meanings. Firstly, it represents the recognition of their land as an indigenous people, according to the notion of indigeneity implicit within international human rights law, in which indigenous groups live within bounded territories or habitats and have a special relationship with the land involving traditional cultural and economic subsistence activities. This is of course inconsistent with the contemporary and historical reality of Bolívar province and other highland communities where individuals engage in both market exchange and non-market subsistence economic activities and do not live within a well-defined and bounded territory but rather practice various forms of seasonal migration and double residence. Secondly, for organisations such as CONAMAQ, the TCO is given a more radical interpretation: as the basis for autonomy and the reconstruction of their ancestral customs and polities. Finally, among the local traditional leaders I came to know, many of whom were influenced by the project of ‘reconstituting the *ayllu*’, it became part of their history and the narrative of what it means to belong to their community. The project of the TCO was viewed as the continuation of defending their territory, autonomy and customs via legal means, going back to the efforts of the *soqta achichilas*. It was regarded as a vindication of their struggle, a legitimisation of the traditional authorities and as a way of defending not just their territory but the *usos y costumbres* related to the cultivation, access to and management of land. Moreover, the project they became involved with made their role clear as being those who ‘*velan por los usos y costumbres*’ (who defend the *usos y costumbres*), something which was stated repeatedly in public meetings of the province, as opposed to the peasant union which serves as a mediator with outside institutions. The TCO itself became another revered document, like the map of the land purchase or the ancestral book of their history, *awilachachay*, kept in a leather sack in the *sede sindical* of Vilaycayma. Many of these documents were displayed together by Juan Apaza when he discussed the history of

Kirkiawi with me, stating that with the TCO they could prevent outsiders from destroying the *ayllu* by taking control of the land and preserve the *usos y costumbres*. The TCO is therefore regarded as a way of defending the integrity of their vision of their community and its customs.



Figure 17: Picture of Kuraj Tatas examining the documents of the TCO

Consequently, while the dispute over the TCO is a political issue about power in the sense that it confers legitimacy and potentially greater control to the traditional authorities in the event of creating an AIOC, it is also about different understandings of what it means to belong to their community. It represents what was described in the opening of this thesis as an ethical-political discourse: the attempt to define their shared values and collective identity. Before analysing the details of these differences one instance of how the dispute over the TCO and the legal status of individuals' lands emerged during the time of my fieldwork will be described, alongside the views of different figures involved within it.

II. The dispute over the TCO

i. The plurinational state, land and conflict

In November 2015 a *técnico* or legal functionary from the constitutional capital in Sucre appeared in the *ampliado general* in the town of Bolívar. The meeting was attended by at least a hundred representatives of the different social organisations of the province, seated on plastic chairs or the floor, while the local government and senior peasant union figures sat at one end facing the rest of the room behind large wooden tables. I was sat opposite Don Severino, who had travelled from Cochabamba to attend the meeting. Reports were presented, minutes were followed and coca leaves were distributed in vast quantities to all present. By the time the *técnico* from Sucre spoke the meeting had been running for some hours and the coca was necessary to hold off fatigue and maintain concentration in the freezing hall.

The *técnico* was the assistant of the lawyer Juan Sanchez, who had been present at the meeting held in Vilaycayma some months earlier concerning the *Tribunal Agroambiental* or Agro-environmental Tribunal. This would implement a new branch of law pertaining to environmental and agricultural matters and create regional judges to help adjudicate over local issues; as such it represents the decentralisation of judicial power as part of the ‘process of change’ and the direct presence of the state in previously isolated communities. He expounded in Spanish that in the department of Cochabamba there would be 8 judges distributed across the different provinces to receive claims from groups or individuals with land that has been titled either individually or collectively and to adjudicate over cases relating to the environment, subsoil resources and the disputed use and ownership of agricultural land. He then explained that in Bolivian law the right of usucaption does not apply in rural areas and that the judges could determine the rightful owner of agricultural land in the case of its unlawful occupation. Moreover, more individuals would return to Bolívar the following year to organise workshops about the new law and explain how to seek the help of the judges over these matters. He would speak with Mayor Francisco and this would be carried out at some point in 2016.

Olker Nina, the union *dirigente provincial*, greeted the *técnico* with the Spanish title of *doctor*, an honorific used in Latin America, usually to address politicians or individuals

working in the legal professions. Afterwards he stated the following to all present in the meeting:

So brothers let there be some questions because it is a very important topic...these *doctors* know how we can solve problems...because as we know here our lands are in tiny parcels...so with these parcels there are seizures of land and sometimes we pass over each other's limits, with this there are, shall we say, problems...we know that within the TCO it is not possible to have individual land titles...the *doctor* knows that asking for the report from INRA...perhaps a revocation of the TCO may be called for and we can enter with individual title...we don't have great extensions of land in this municipality...each of us has divided into little parts at the most a hectare...so I would like to ask if we could title these little parcels for each person.' (Q)

The *técnico* responded that it may indeed be possible to change the nature of land ownership but first it would be necessary to look at all the relevant documents. In any case, he added, they would have to coordinate with INRA first and only after they organised workshops next year. Jesus Aguayo, part of the technical team from the municipal government and an *originario* from Pampajasi, asked about the problem of securing loans from institutions such as the BDP or Productive Development Bank: an agency created under the MAS government in 2007 to provide loans to small and medium-sized enterprises, including farmers. Jesus claimed that due to the collective titling of the TCO it was difficult to secure large loans because they could not use their lands as collateral, despite the fact that many in the *comunidades* wanted to improve their production for commercial sale. The *técnico* responded that he knew of a similar case in Cliza in which it was established that the family living on an area of land were the true owners through interviewing witnesses such as neighbours to authenticate that they had always lived on and used the land. In this way they were able to establish legal title. He then stated that one must have a title because without it '*no son los dueños de nada*' ('they are the owners of nothing'). Following this, Olker spoke enthusiastically about the presence of the *técnico* in the meeting and possibilities this offered them, including that of creating individual land titles:

'These judges they take actions and analyse the information and coordinate with INRA. In some places they have individual titles, right? Each family, for example, in all the upper valley of Cochabamba, each family has one. But we haven't arrived at this point yet, and the individuals from the tribunal are assigned for this purpose as well...And the judges, for example, if you cross over into my land while sowing crops they say they can solve this sort of thing...A little while ago we spoke about the question of limits: so that they too can pronounce with the law and convoke and analyse...But before *técnicos* did not come to visit us like this. This is the first time that a *doctor* has appeared in this hall, at least in our great meeting [the *ampliado general*], and in this way perhaps more will come, which would be a wonderful thing for us. Also, the use of subsoil resources, they are responsible for dealing with these issues and we could ask them about that.

Brothers, look it's the first time that one of them has appeared here among us!...what is taking place with the lands over in the East of the country...and also how things are being fulfilled or not and how they are advancing. There are many of our comrades [*runa masinchik*] from the *altiplano* in these hot lands [the eastern tropics], isn't that right? So, we will analyse this topic and how things are progressing. Perhaps there will be lands and what is more we could adjudicate in this area, or if there exists the possibility of sowing rice or whatever we want because here, brothers, we suffer a great deal, and for all of this there now exists this state and through its *técnicos*, its departments it is now reaching each and every community, each and every village, reaching the local government and the municipalities and this was something that we never saw before.' (Q)

Olker's emphasis on the presence of the state and its administrative functionaries as a great blessing and in contrast to the past when this was never seen is interesting to note. For him and other figures within the union and for the local MAS politicians this is part of the process of change in which the new state has emerged to support previously marginalised social groups, a view which places more importance on the increased power of government and its penetration into previously unreached areas than on local autonomy. He also used the opportunity to discuss the possibility of individually titling the agricultural lands in the *ayonoqas* 'divided into little parts' and suggested that in the upper valley of Cochabamba they were better able to solve problems due to individual titling. In addition, he mentioned the ongoing land reform voted through in the 2009 constitutional referendum, that formally defined the limits on private land ownership and which was hoped by many within highland peasant organisations would provide the possibility of lands in the eastern tropical lowlands, a site of migration where it is easier to cultivate than in the poor soils of the highlands. Following Olker's speech, it was suggested by Jesus that they finally resolve the issue of the legal status of the lands in the province once and for all. As was explained earlier, the *saneamiento* of the TCO had not been carried out in all the province and support for it had never been universal, either at the level of the entire territory or within individual *comunidades*. The documents establishing the TCO, including all the survey work carried out in collaboration with INRA, were in the possession of the traditional authorities. Some of these documents were in the home of Juan Apaza in Oruro and others in the *sede sindical* of Vilaycayma, where they were kept alongside the various ancestral documents. He claimed that the traditional authorities had no right to hold onto these documents as they belonged to everyone and they needed to be taken to the municipal government buildings to be examined. He then proposed that a meeting be held at some point the following year to consider the issue.

A number of the traditional authorities were visibly upset with Jesus' attitude and Gregorio called for calm. A man from Palca *comunidad* who identified himself as Don Jose explained that it was incorrect of Olker to claim that this was the first time such *técnicos* had visited them because this had been the case some ten or fifteen years ago when the traditional authorities had worked with INRA to establish the TCO and that only a matter of months ago they had organised the *tantachawi* in Vilaycayma where representatives from the Tribunal Agroambiental had also been present. It was fine to do as Jesus suggested and dig up the documents, '*Nuqapis hermanos niyman, waliq kanman ya nomás presentana como nin Jesus, ajinata chaymantataq urqhukusunman, no?*' if only so they could value their land and ancestors, '*juk chhika valorasqa kananpaq kay jallp'anchik achachilachik*'. Another speaker commented that it caused him great pain, '*sunquy nanawan*', to know the sacrifice that had been made by generations of authorities to defend their land and territory when this was not appreciated by the peasant union figures.

The atmosphere in the room began to turn more hostile as tensions rose. Numerous figures spoke, mainly from the peasant union, and in the ensuing discourse the issue of resolving the problem of the status of the land and the supposed problem of the multiple overlapping authorities became mixed up. The issue of *la parte orgánica* was mentioned and it was stated that the traditional authorities were operating outside of their role and in opposition to the other social organisations. For example, a union representative, Don Julian, stated the following:

This document of the TCO should be left with the municipal government or if not with the provincial office [of the peasant union]... We'll look at everything and where things fall and whether these six old people, the Mamanis, Fernandez, Apazas, will keep holding on forever. To me those documents signed in the little sack no longer matter: what matters now is the TCO and these have to be in the provincial office and be examined... We are no longer going to serve as a ladder for these Mamanis and Jacintos. So brothers, I want to say this as a suggestion and that it end in this: let's name new *mallkus* and *kuraj tatas* so they don't go in a different direction which is what is making us protest: that either [the traditional authorities] stay put or disappear.' (Q)

Don Julian makes reference to the 'six old people' or *soqta achichilas*: the ancestral heads of the families who were said to have purchased the land of the *ayllu* for seven bushels or mule-loads of gold and silver and speaks of the ancestral documents as 'those signed in the little sack [which no longer matter]'. The role of *Kuraj Mallku* is partly hereditary, as only individuals with certain surnames said to descend from the *soqta achichilas* can occupy it. By suggesting that they were 'serving as a ladder' he was

employing an expression commonly used in Bolivia to refer to the use of the ‘bases’ by social leaders for their personal benefit or to gain power, which is associated with the political clientelism of the recent past. Gregorio needed to tell them like a man, ‘*qharijina*’, when he could deliver the documents and resolve the problem. This speech caused more consternation and the objection that as a form of organisation pre-existent to the colony the traditional authorities were recognised by the 2009 plurinational constitution. The peasant union authorities and the local MAS politicians were trying to make them disappear and this was something they had no right to do. In response Olker Nina stated the following:

‘Well brothers, they have spoken about the constitution. Clearly in the constitution it recognises pre-existing persons but if we get rid of the peasant union or get rid of the traditional authorities, *mallku* and all that, well that depends on us, on the organisation. But the constitution does not oblige us to maintain either the *autoridades originarios* or the unions, that is our [collective] decision and it depends on us alone.’ (Q)

Following this intervention, Gregorio stated calmly that his *gestion* or term as *Kuraj Mallku* would be concluding soon and that his replacement and other ‘organic’ matters would be discussed at a *tantachawi* in Vilaycayma in early January, coinciding with the change of authorities at the local level. He stated that people should be familiar with Don Julian’s way of expressing himself and that he should not be taken seriously. He then maintained that there was no problem with presenting the documents and holding a meeting to discuss the legal status of the land and that they had nothing to hide. The atmosphere became somewhat calmer and friendlier. However, Dominga, Gregorio’s wife and the sister of the POKUY candidate for Mayor in the previous local elections, gave the last word. According to the principle of *chachawarmi* it is the married couple and not the individual who assume the *cargo* and it is in this capacity that she spoke directly and vehemently, about the bad feeling in the room and how pointlessly they fought with each other. You almost seem inhuman, she stated, ‘*mana yawarniyuq runasina parlankichik kaypiqa*’ (literally: ‘you speak here as if you were people without blood’). What angered her the most seemed to be the implication that in assuming the *cargo* they were trying to take advantage of others or to profit when this was disinterested public service which implied sacrifice, ‘*nitaq nuqaykup gustuykuchu yaykuyku, chayraykuchus tata dios astawancha phinachinkichik qamkunaqa*’ (we did not even assume this *cargo* because we wanted to and that means you are angering *tata dios* even more). They received no salary and any money they gained they would only

leave for the community and they went out just the same way as they came into the *cargo*, ‘*nuqaykuqa llusqayku maypichus yaykuyku*’.

ii. Land, the TCO and double residence

Some months after the meeting of the *ampliado general* discussed above I spoke with the provincial union leader, Olker Nina, about the issue of land and individual titling. We sat in the courtyard of his house on the edge of the town of Bolívar while his wife was butchering a pig in preparation for New Years’ eve. He gave many reasons for supporting the revocation of the TCO, including the claim that it would provide a solution for the violence occurring in some *comunidades* over the limits of plots of *ayonoqa* land, as was the case in the *comunidad* of Piruani. The individual plots of arable land are very small as they are divided into non-contiguous parcels which shrink further over time due to the custom of multigeniture. Olker had commented on this in the meeting in Vilaycayma described in the opening chapter of the thesis when he stated ‘*chaypi achka en las comunidades, parcelitas tiyan, dividisqa dividisqa chaywan problemas tiyan*’ (there is much of this in the *comunidades*, there are little parcels which become divided over time and with this there are problems’). Moreover, he explained, for individuals in the city it is not only difficult to use the land productively but without title deeds its ownership remains insecure:

‘Here unfortunately no one is owner of the land with the titling of the TCO. So, whoever abandons the land for five years, does not fulfil social obligations or payments to the *comunidad*, communal work or anything then the *comunidad* is who decides who should no longer belong: this person for this, that or other motive. And the law says too that the land is for he who works it...but with individual titling you are owner: you can sell, obtain credit from the bank with your title for your economic development and all that.’
(S)

Olker’s claim that ‘no one is the owner of the land’ because of the TCO reveals a distinct understanding of ownership on the basis of the individual or family unit rather than the community taken as a whole. It also demonstrates a particular problem for individuals with their main residence in the city or the tropics: namely that their lands in their home *comunidades* are not necessarily secure while they are living in another area. Should someone fail to meet the necessary social obligations they may lose their lands. Moreover, as was explained above, while use of the land for productive purposes, engagement in agricultural labour, communal work and the responsibilities of civic politics are generally counted as requirements for the enjoyment of *ayonoqa* land, what

precisely defines continued membership of the *comunidad* and access to land remains essentially unclear. The MAS councillor and former union *dirigente* Vincente Condori claimed that a small number of traditional authorities under the influence of CONAMAQ had gone through with the titling of the TCO and in doing so had annulled previously valid individual land titles, without properly consulting the affected parties. He pointed out that in his case an implication of the TCO was that only he could inherit the *ayonoqa* land in his home *comunidad* and not his four brothers who were resident in Oruro and Cochabamba and therefore did not meet the requirements set by the *usos y costumbres*. The attitude of both Olker and Vincente was matter of fact: there exist problems related to the scarcity of land and migration to the city which need solutions and they were responding to them. Neither claimed to be strongly against the TCO, but rather were open to its revocation if people so wished, as they claimed many individuals disliked the fact that it offered no recourse against trespass and security in the case of their residence elsewhere.

When I spoke with Mallku Gregorio about the meeting and the comments of union figures, he claimed that people were being misled by the peasant union, whose real motive was to '*hacer desaparecer el ayllu*': not only to get rid of the system of land tenancy but also the whole way of life connected to it and the traditional authorities themselves. He claimed this was obvious from the way they spoke in the *ampliado general* and other meetings. Some of the figures in the municipal government were ignorant as to how the *usos y costumbres* worked and the system of land tenancy because they had left for the city to attend school at a young age. In other cases, they were being deliberately misleading. He pointed out that many of the documents showing individual titling correspond to the *urigen*, areas of family land that were granted according to the 1881 census. Gregorio argued that this was simply the way of legally securing the lands during the time of the former Bolivian republic when there were no legal mechanisms available to recognise collective ancestral land; yet this has nothing to do with the internal norms regarding land ownership and rights. Gregorio maintained that the land had always been managed collectively according to the *usos y costumbres* and by bringing up the existence of these documents the union and local MAS politicians were deceiving people about their own history.

Moreover, he contested that individuals who supported individual titling had been influenced by the fact they spent time in the cities and as migrant workers in the valleys.

He explained that in the valley regions of Cochabamba, such as Cliza, land has been individually owned since it was redistributed from the *haciendas* in the 1953 agrarian reform. As a result of high levels of transnational migration to Argentina and Spain, a substantial portion of the inhabitants of the valleys rent their agricultural lands, in many cases to people from the nearby highlands, while they spend extended periods of time working abroad. Having witnessed this, it is only logical that people from Bolívar province may wish to do the same. If they are in the city and the lands are not being used, then they believe they should be able to rent them to obtain income. However, as their family *ayonoqa* lands are granted to them in the form of a usufruct right, this option is not legally available. Gregorio's attitude towards the Quechua-speaking peasantry of the Cochabamba valleys was that they are not *originarios* but instead '*nada más que los descendientes de los peones de hacienda*' (nothing more than the descendants of the *hacienda* farmhands') having lost their own land and culture. It was clear that for him they were not an example to follow.

While I do not have copious data to support Gregorio's claim, one of my informants in the city, Don Fermin, confirmed that some urban residents tend to be more strongly in favour of revoking the TCO in exchange for simple individual titling. I had met Don Fermin through the Baptist Union church in Yuraq Rumi where my wife and I gave weekly English classes to local children and teenagers. I had spoken with him about this topic one Sunday afternoon in January 2016 in the period after the rains had fallen and the normally dry landscape of peri-urban Cochabamba had become relatively green and pleasant. Despite living in the city, Don Fermin still travelled with his wife to Vilaycayma to sow and harvest crops and to visit relatives, especially their elderly parents and aunts and uncles. Don Fermin had been *jilanku* a number of times while still living mostly in the city, travelling back to attend meetings in the countryside and to adjudicate over problems related to the land. He explained that some individuals complained that they should not have to carry out social obligations to keep their land and that only gaining individual title deeds provided them with security and allowed for the economic development of their families. Moreover, he had heard some people talk about the idea of redrawing the boundaries of family plots of land, so the scattered parcels can be placed together in one or several larger plots, in the process replacing the *muyu* system with something closer to the division of land in the valleys. The *muyu* system of land rotation and the subdivision of plots at different altitudes means that the

actual plots of land cultivated at any one time are tiny, sometimes of only a few hundred square metres, thereby limiting crop yields to subsistence levels. It had been argued that changing this would better allow for the implementation of systems of small-scale irrigation or *microriego* and the commercialisation of production. Don Fermin was sceptical about this, however, as it would mean some families having privileged access to water resources. He was also clear that he had no problem with assuming the necessary social obligations to retain access to land and that he would do so until he died, although he confessed that his children no longer knew how to perform agricultural work and were therefore ‘of the city’.

What these comments suggest is that the predominance of rural-urban double residence is a factor exerting significant influence over the debate between the *ayllu* and *sindicato* authorities regarding the future legal status of their lands and the way it should be administered. Among residents in the city, the worry they may lose their family lands is a major motivating factor in wishing to secure individual legal title. Moreover, I would suggest that the experience of living in the city changes how individuals regard the lands in their home *comunidades* in two ways. Firstly, the legal frameworks which define how urban residents may gain inclusion in the city and be recognised as citizens generate a sense of precarity which can only be overcome through the acquisition of official title deeds to the plots of urban land they inhabit. This influences individuals to view rural lands in their home *comunidades* in the same way and to see individual titling as key to security and proper ownership. Secondly, the fact of earning a living primarily in the money economy of the city may lead to the re-evaluation of how agricultural land should be used in favour of maximising production for commercial sale.

Concerning the first point it is important to understand that, unlike in the countryside, to be regarded as fully part of the city it is necessary for persons to go through bureaucratic processes which allow for their juridical legibility as citizens. The legalisation of land bought as *lotes*, firstly as a collective titling and OTB and then as individual plots with title deeds, is the main form this takes. The OTB, as the basic urban mechanism of association and recognition, is organised on the basis of the individual ownership of urban land, which becomes the key condition of belonging to the OTB as a community. This means that in the city the individual or family and their property are the essential unit of community and development. The long and arduous bureaucratic process

described in chapter 2 causes people to live in a state of constant uncertainty as to their formal inclusion in the urban space. Yet those who have gained title deeds for their *lotes* have been able to apply for commercial loans which they have then invested in buying vehicles to use as taxis or minibuses, as they gradually improve their social position; as was the case with Don Fermin who had purchased a 1995 Toyota transit van with the intention of using it to sell agricultural supplies to people around the Andean region of the department of Cochabamba. The idea in Bolívar province of using land as collateral for loans, as was discussed in the meeting of the *ampliado general* outlined above, clearly mirrors the way urban *lotes* have recently become a resource against which families borrow to start small businesses or to purchase large value items.

Regarding the second point, it is worth recalling that, as was briefly detailed in chapter 2, the exigencies of the money economy of the city lead to a change in thinking about the need to maximise productivity or profit. Residents in the city often describe their lands in the countryside as a form of insurance against economic uncertainty. If they are no longer able to find work or their small businesses fail, they always have the option of returning to their family lands. Meanwhile, through returning periodically to sow and harvest in their home communities they can supplement the income they gain from working in informal commerce or as day labourers, providing food for their families or in some cases produce to sell or exchange. Yet seen from this perspective, the need to hedge against the possible loss of crops to frosts and hails by subdividing plots of lands at different levels of altitude is no longer so urgent. Being resident in the city means that the agricultural production from their lands is a complement to their incomes and not their primary means of subsistence. While improving crop yields would allow them the possibility of a cash crop income to supplement what they earn in the city, the traditional management of lands in the communities of Bolívar province makes it difficult to use technology to increase yields or to carry out commercial farming. This explains why some individuals have proposed reorganising the tiny scattered plots of land, progressively fractioned over time by inheritance, in more concentrated patterns and suggested that individual titling would be the most efficient way of doing so. Most importantly, people are encouraged to view the lands of their home *comunidades* as a resource through which income can be generated rather than as a territory they inhabit and exist in a living relationship with. This latter meaning of land as territory, as the place people inhabit and the totality of social relationships organised around it, is crucial

to the perspective of prominent *ayllu* figures and their notion of what it means to be *originario*. This will be explored in the final section of this chapter.

III. 'We're not *campesinos* but the *pueblo originario*': Land, the *usos y costumbres* and *originario* identity

In their public discourse and in interviews various *ayllu* figures emphasise a primordial connection with their land and ancestral territory as one of the key aspects of what it means to be *originario*. They would often repeat the story of how the land was purchased with seven mule-loads of gold and silver by the *soqta achichilas*. These *ancestros apoderados*, their ancestors who represented them legally, had marched to Lima Peru in order to make their case to the relevant authorities and had bought the right to hold the lands of the *ayllu*. Both the documents which record these historic events and the ancestors themselves are venerated every year in *misa mast'ay*. In the *sede sindical* of Vilaycayma the ancestral documents are spread over a table and ritual libations are made to them. When telling the story of the land purchase, individuals would emphasise the fact that the *q'ara runas* had never entered their territory and that they had always existed as an *ayllu*. Alongside the story of their historic land purchase there exists another legend of the origin of Kirkiawi which speaks of a time before, when the land was inhabited by different people and of an ancient lost city from which the present territory derives its name. I heard this story from various figures, including Tata Apolonio Guitierrez, the *Kuraj Tata* of Eximo *jap'iy* during the time of my fieldwork. Tata Apolonio told me the following in the courtyard of his house in the town of Bolívar:

'Bolívar, where we are now it is said that before it was Kirkiawi. The lost city that was left below by the earthquake. According to what is said, in Kirkiawi there was a great celebration and an old man arrived and this old man was in rags, filthy, and they wanted to throw him out. There was a woman and she offered him charity. '*Hoy qam ripunki kunan kaymanta*' (leave here now this day) he had told her and that she should not look behind...and the old man stayed behind while the woman left towards Sacaca. A voice had said '*anda ripunki, qam salvasqa kanki*' (go now and you will be saved) and this voice was *Tata Dios*. And the woman, because of her curiosity, had looked behind. In that moment the city was boiling, it had become liquid...and it is said the woman was carrying her child. And there in that very spot she turned to stone...and this stone is still there on the road towards Sacaca.' (S)

By the side of the road towards the town of Sacaca, just across the nearby border of the department with Northern Potosí, there is an unusual stone pillar standing in the middle of the strange deserted landscape which resembles a figure with its arms outstretched. According to the legend (which is strikingly similar to the biblical story of Sodom and Gomorrah) the original inhabitants were wiped out entirely because they had angered *Tata Dios* for refusing to show hospitality and charity to the old man. In this sense it resembles other myths among Andean highland peoples which speak of a time before the arrival of the Christian god and of previous inhabitants who were killed or fled (Harris, 2006; Canessa, 2008). According to the story, the present occupants are not the original inhabitants of the land but instead came from other places to settle in what was once the ancient city of Kirkiawi. This contrasts with the story of the *soqta achichilas* in as much as it does not emphasise a primordial connection to the land they occupy and suggests the impermanence of their habitation of it. Curiously, when I spoke with the anthropologist Miranda Sheild Johansson who had lived for an entire year in the remote *comunidad* of P'iya Q'ayma in Bolívar province, she was not familiar with the story of the land purchase, while she had heard the legend of Kirkiawi's demise from numerous sources. The extent to which this story is an invented tradition is unclear, although it is mentioned in the documents of a (2014) case study carried out by the NGO Fundación Tierra, in which Tata Sabino Veizaga, Mallku Gregorio and his wife Dominga were interviewed. What it does suggest is the extent to which histories are interpreted in the present. In other words, the myths and stories which form the collective narrative of their community are symbolic artefacts open to interpretation and multiply contested by different groups and actors. Whether a timeless connection with the land can be demonstrated through them is a matter of reading and emphasis. As David Kertzer (1988), following Victor Turner's (1967) analysis of symbols has pointed out, the multivocality and ambiguity of symbolic cultural elements, including myths and stories, is what gives them political power and allows them to become the basis of both group solidarity and political discourse. As shall be explored more fully in chapter 7, while some peasant union figures are aware of the story of the land purchase and the historical documents of the *ayllu*, they place greater importance within their view of history on the 1952 revolution and the need to fulfil its promises. Meanwhile, the traditional authorities involved in the process of titling the TCO and the reconstitution of the *ayllu* emphasise how their identity is connected to the land and the complex of customs and practices through which it is managed.

Therefore, for these figures land is central to what it means to be *originario* due to its connection with their ancestral past and to the *usos y costumbres*. Figures from the *sindicato* and from the MAS *alcaldía* seemed to alternate between stating that they support the *usos y costumbres* and are themselves assuming responsibility for them and claiming them to be incompatible with new technology, progress and the passage of time. For example, Mayor Francisco and Vincente Condori both stated that the values of *ayni* and *mink'a* were present in the way they administered the municipality. In contrast, Olker Nina maintained that the *usos y costumbres* were gradually disappearing:

'The *usos y costumbres* with the passing of time and with technology will be lost...All that of the *mink'a* is very uncommon, not like it was before when I was a child. I saw all of these, *choqus*, *choqus* they're called. Many people, all of us would come together to dig up potatoes and they butchered a llama, a sheep just like that...but now it's with money, it isn't like that anymore, you know? Even the very clothing, as we're linked with technology it is possible that the children will no longer adopt the *usos y costumbres* despite the fact they know them. Only the old people are practising them. The *usos y costumbres* are becoming a story. They don't observe them out in many places.' (S)

For Olker there is no great emphasis placed on traditional customs, particularly the non-market forms of exchange and reciprocity linked to agrarian production. In stark contrast, the *ayllu* leaders place enormous value on them and legitimise themselves in terms of their unique connection with these practices. They are at pains to point out that it is their role to look after and administer the *usos y costumbres* and that unlike the *sindicato* they do not use money. They regulate access to the land, resolve disputes surrounding it and represent the ways of their ancestors. References to this role, its age-old nature and the fact that money was not involved were made countless times by Gregorio and others in public speeches.

The lack of attachment by the peasant union and municipal government figures to certain traditional customs is also expressed in their attitude of pragmatism. For the *sindicato*, changing the nature of land tenancy and creating individual titling is a logical solution to the problems faced by individuals as a result of social change. Nevertheless, this attitude emerges from a difference in the role of the peasant union compared with that of the traditional authorities. While the peasant union in Bolivia should not be understood as a body for agricultural workers similar to a trade union but rather as a civil society organisation which acts as a form of local government, compared to the traditional authorities in Bolívar it is closer in function and ideology to a labour union. They represent the needs and interests of their members, in this case individual families

who wish to improve their economic conditions and gain resources from the state. This in turn implies a vision of the individual family as the unit of development and the basis of community. Land is therefore a resource which belongs to the individual family who may dispose of it so as, in the words of Olker and Vincente, ‘to improve their economic development’. It is worth emphasising the similarity between the peasant union and the peri-urban OTB in this respect. The OTB largely focuses on ensuring that its members may gain legal title of their *lote*. In peri-urban neighbourhoods where this process has been completed and infrastructure is in place the OTB tends to become less important and meets only once or twice a year, as was the case in the miner’s neighbourhood I stayed in during my first few months in Cochabamba. Being individual private owners of the *lotes* upon which they live is the basis of membership of the community and of long-term physical and economic security in the city. The OTB represents its constituent members in both securing the legal title of their *lote* and in mediating with government and outside agencies for projects and material improvements. This role and the implicit understanding of community membership is closer to that of peasant union leaders.

The views of Sabino Veizaga, former *Kuraj Mallku*, COAMAC regional secretary and founder of the *ayllu*’s ‘political instrument’, POKUY, concerning the meaning of land and territory were strikingly different. When I interviewed him over several hours in his home in Oruro in February 2016, he spoke about how colonial administrative divisions impose an alien logic on *originario* people. For example, the canton, the most basic colonial division, ‘*es como cortar los raizes de un arbol*’ (it is like cutting the roots of a tree): referring to how it fails to acknowledge the way territory and communities are spatially organised in the Andes and cuts across the native divisions of *jap’iy*, *pirañu* and *ayllu* (and beyond that the *marka* and *suyu*). Changing the organisation of the land, dividing it into parts or selling it is like dissecting a living thing of which they form a part. When I asked Sabino about the tendency for individuals to prefer the idea of individual land titling in Bolívar province over the traditional communitarian system of tenancy he provided the following response:

This way of thinking they have too. They want to own like in the city...it’s urban...like a *lote* you have to pay your tax, well everything you own you have to pay for. That’s more or less how the people in the countryside have come to think. But it isn’t like that. Everything is free. We share according to the *usos y costumbres*. We do rotation as well: we cultivate the earth and make it rest. If it’s individual from just their entitlement they have to pasture their sheep, from just their entitlement they have to fetch their firewood. Simple land titling is really a bit of trouble...They keep thinking of selling and going somewhere else. So as nothing more than a *campesino*, a settler we want to be now. But

for that reason as well I really regret this ‘we’re *campesinos*’: that pretty name that those of us from the countryside have taken hold of. We’re not *campesinos* but rather the *pueblo originario*. We are what was formerly *tawintinsuyu*, the *ayllu*, *marka*. That’s what we really are...Now I regret that the *sindicato* is making a simple land titling. Now just as a *campesino*. We’re no longer the owners of anything. This seems to be what the people understand...if they understood properly the *ayllu* that was bought with seven mule-loads of gold and silver, well, then we could be *originarios*. From there we can be not just tenants but owners...If we can understand properly what we are, from where we come...I always say that if we are the *ayllu*, *marka*, *suyu*, if we are the *pueblo originario* then we are owners of all that we live where we dwell. But if we want to be a simple titling, as nothing more than a *sindicato*, well, then we’re nothing but tenants or workers. You have to earn nothing more than your daily wage for yourself, not as an owner...’ (S)

In the above passage Sabino outlines the process of what could be described in Marxian terms as proleterianisation or depeasantisation (Brass, 2011): the transformation of rural peoples with a partially autonomous communitarian economy, what is described by Olivia Harris and others in the Bolivian context as ‘the ethnic economy’ (Harris, 2000; Cusicanqui, 1990), into individuals wholly integrated into the market and dependent upon wage labour or some form of petty capitalist enterprise to meet their needs. This is his perception of what is happening as a result of migration from Bolívar to the cities and the tropical lowlands and he claims that it is partly for this reason the people have lost the sense of what it means to be *originario* and are at risk of losing their identity. He also contrasts being *originario* with being *campesino*. While this term has become widely adopted in the countryside it owes its existence to the 1952 revolution and the formation of the peasant unions and has been argued to be part of the attempt to reimagine highland indigenous peoples as *mestizo* peasant small-holders, integrated into the wider national society and economy (Platt, 1986; Cusicanqui, 1990, 2010). Sabino takes *campesino* to mean a de-indigenised subject who no longer chooses to live according to the *usos y costumbres* and does not recognise or understand his heritage. This primordial connection with their territory is what links a person to their neighbours, their community, to their *ayllu* and to the past.

Sabino’s comments about how being *originario* means being the ‘true owners of the land’ directly contrast with remarks from Olker and other union figures that ‘*desafortunadamente aquí en Bolívar, gracias al TCO nadie es dueño de la tierra*’ (unfortunately, thanks to the TCO, nobody in Bolívar province is the owner of the land). For Olker, ownership means that an individual possesses land as a legally saleable commodity, while for Sabino truly owning the land means maintaining their collective ancestral territory and the traditions and norms that are linked to its organisation. I was

with Mallku Gregorio at the home of his friend Javier in Pampajasi in January 2016 and while we were drinking *singani* spirit and sprite, chewing coca and playing music I asked him about the scenes in the *ampliado general*. He was about to come to the end of his term as *Kuraj Mallku* and he said that at times he regretted assuming the responsibility. The *cargo* had been a financial sacrifice because he had stopped working full-time as a tractor driver, but what had been worse was the personal cost of the acrimonious rift between authorities. What saddened him was that in listening to the union and local MAS politicians talk about the TCO, people were forgetting who they were. If they were to properly understand, they would realise that they *are* the *ayllu*:

‘We are the *pueblo originario*, the *ayllu Kirkiawi*. The rocks, the rivers, the sources of water, all of this is the *ayllu* and you can’t divide it up and sell it. The TCO is what guarantees that our children will be the legitimate heirs to the land and not tenants.’ (S)

Here is expressed the notion of land as territory, meaning the totality of a system of relationships, rather than as a commodity or factor of production: as a political, organisational and symbolic form perceived as possessing historical continuity with their way of life prior to the Spanish colony. As was explained earlier, the term *ayllu* may refer simply to the territory where people live alongside their customs and ways of life. This sense of their land as a territory and the desire to defend it have always been a part of the experience and aspirations of people in Bolívar and other highland communities. However, the INRA reform in the 1990s, along with new institutional expressions of highland indigenous identity such as CONAMAQ, combined to re-vitalise and organise the traditional authorities and provide them the role of expressing this common aspiration. The influence of this process, along with their role in administering the *usos y costumbres*, explains to a large extent why they value this understanding of the land and the fight to preserve it. It is for this reason that the TCO has acquired a symbolic value for various figures I spoke with. It is another ancestral document like those kept in the *sede sindical* of Vilaycayma which represent the struggle by the *ancestros apoderados* to maintain the integrity and autonomy of their territory and preserve the *usos y costumbres*. As will be detailed further in chapter 7, the LPP process exercised a similar function for the peasant union: providing it with an institutional role as a mediator for development funds; as an outward-facing representative which looks after the needs and interests of its constituent members, in turn influencing the perspective of those involved in its local organisation. Consequently, alongside the local MAS government they express the aspiration to

improve the material conditions of their lives and those of their children and to gain inclusion and power within the wider state and society.

For individuals like Juan Apaza, Mallku Gregorio and Tata Sabino, who have all exercised high *cargos* and were involved in the titling of the TCO and the reconstitution of the *ayllu*, to be *originario* means to be connected to the land as territory. This connection with the land as a complex of social relationships and practices, especially the forms of exchange and reciprocity involved in agrarian productive activity means that breaking up the territory is like tearing a living thing of which they are a part. For them, the TCO guarantees its integrity, while revoking it in favour of individual title will make them nothing more than tenants or settlers and not the heirs to the historic *ayllu*. Meanwhile, the peasant union are more concerned with what they view as practical solutions to problems resulting from social change and out-migration. Yet this pragmatism is channelled through the lens of a different view of belonging to their community: one which emphasises the individual and their family, the material improvement of their lives and their inclusion within the state.

Conclusion

In Bolívar province land is traditionally managed according to a system in which access to it is a form of usufruct right. This organisation of land is part of traditional practices which facilitate agricultural production and the supply of resources in a partially non-market economy. These practices, often referred to as *usos y costumbres*, also mediate social relationships and the relationship between individuals and the land. Much of their administration in the *comunidades* of Bolívar is still in the hands of the *jilankus*, the traditional authorities at the local level. Access to land is determined by the continued participation of individuals in the life of the community and through engaging in agricultural work. The collective titling of the TCO is believed to have legally enshrined this practice and helped legitimate and define the role of the traditional authorities, in part as the guardians of the *usos y costumbres*. Despite being an element of neoliberal multicultural reforms of the 1990s, it took on a distinct meaning for new indigenous organisations such as CONAMAQ as part of the project of ‘reconstituting the *ayllu*’. For those involved in the titling of the TCO in Bolívar, the recovery of their ancestral practices and the titling of the land were the same process, one which shaped their view of what it means to belong to their community.

As the previous chapter made clear, much of their organisational concepts and form of the local authorities are shared and they are generally regarded along with the municipal government as a single hybrid system. Because they were involved in different projects furnished by the reforms of the 1990s, they were able for a time, in the words of some leaders, 'to walk together'. Ironically, it has been interaction with the new plurinational Bolivian state that has provided the grounds for conflict, in this case over the issue of land and the TCO. In the last chapter it was shown how the possibility of becoming an AIOC under the new constitution supplied the basis for a dispute over the meaning of leadership and governance. This chapter has described how the presence of a minor legal functionary in a public meeting and the possibility of access to legal representation as part of the national programme of reform provoked a discussion over the status of their land and the future of the TCO. Some of the issues mentioned, such as the interpretation of the constitution in privileging indigenous or 'pre-existent' peoples and the problem of solving violence over land will be explored in the following chapter.

The question of how land should be owned and managed most clearly expresses the differences between the different authorities as to what it means to belong to their community, expressed frequently through use of the term *originario*. Here the term *originario* stands for the ethical-political subject: the 'collective 'we' that defines group identity as a contested object of discourse. For the peasant union, individual land titling is a practical solution to various problems, not least that of double residence; it seems arguably the case that this is a factor influencing the debate as individuals living in the cities may change their attitude towards the lands of their home *comunidad* for the reasons speculated above. However, this attitude of pragmatism belies a view of being *originario* premised on the individual family as the basis of the community, a view influenced by their role in materially improving peoples' lives and seeking their recognition and inclusion within the state. Meanwhile, traditional leaders have expressed the notion of land as territory: as part of a social system possessing historical continuity with their way of life prior to the Spanish colony. For them, being *originario* means to be part of this complex of social relationships and practices, connecting them to their history and ancestors. While these disagreements reveal two different understandings of what it means to belong to their community, this is due to how they embody different dimensions of the common aspirations of highland peoples, a theme which will be expanded on in chapters 7 and 8. However, for now this thesis will return

to the issue of violence in the *comunidad* of Piruani and how this highlights contested understandings of justice and the constitution.

Chapter 6. The Case of Piruani: Justice, Legal Pluralism and Indigenous Identity

Introduction

As was explained in the previous chapter, replacing the communal form of the TCO with individual titling had been heralded by figures within the peasant union and the MAS *alcaldía* as a solution to violent conflict between families over land. During the time of my fieldwork in Bolívar province the major ongoing example of violence between families was what was commonly referred to as ‘the case of Piruani’. The ‘case’ had become an object of contention between the two sides and it was frequently brought up in public meetings in relation to the land question and other issues. Piruani is a *comunidad* in which a bitter series of quarrels over the ownership of land had resulted in physical fights, with some individuals having to be hospitalized for stab wounds. The dispute had been taken to the courts in Oruro and the *ayllu* and peasant union authorities had separately attempted to resolve the matter. Consequently, a conflict between families over land had converted itself into a dispute between the local authorities of the province, who argued over the precise events of the case, the morality and constitutional legality of each other’s actions and the root causes of the problem.

The ‘case of Piruani’, therefore, is a legal case tried by the ordinary civil courts and by two different forms of local authority within an indigenous community. Yet it is tempting to view it as a ‘case’ in the sense generally used by the Manchester school of anthropologists of the 1950s, whereby a particular social situation or series of events can be used to illustrate the larger context and structures in which it takes place (Gluckman, 1961; Mitchell, 1983). Nevertheless, figures such as Gluckman and Mitchell were interested in the interaction between the state and indigenous custom and law primarily in the context of the colonised societies of Africa, in which the colonial authorities operated alongside native systems of governance and conflict resolution. This case takes place in a self-acknowledged ‘post-colonial’ and ‘post-neoliberal’ state, complete with its own ‘Ministry for Decolonisation’. According to the 2009 constitution the Bolivian state formally recognises the existence of legal pluralism: indigenous communities are allowed to exercise their own ‘customary law’ within the jurisdiction of the *justicia indígena*, which is constitutionally recognised as having equal legal hierarchy with the ordinary civil and criminal courts or *justicia ordinaria*. In other words, indigenous practices concerning the adjudication of transgressions and their

punishment are not only legally permitted, they are treated as separate and equal forms of legal authority within the plurinational state.

The fact that the issue of justice should divide an indigenous community in the midst of this new postcolonial era may seem initially rather puzzling. This chapter will examine how the case of Piruani serves to illustrate not only the different understandings of territorial organisation and justice held by the authorities of the province but the internal contradictions within both the 2009 constitution and the overall project of political reform carried out by the MAS government. It will argue that there exists a tension within the Bolivian constitution between different conceptions of legal pluralism, resulting from the fact that the document is a compromise between the visions of different parts of the *pacto de unidad* and other social constituencies (Schavelzon, 2012). The *ayllu* authorities, the *sindicato* and the MAS *alcaldía* in Bolívar province are themselves the local bases of some of the same social organisations who debated the wording of the constitution during the constituent assembly process in the years 2007-2009. Rather than settling their disagreements, the ambiguous nature of many the constitution's elements leaves a wide space for disagreement over its interpretation. Two of the principal areas of ambiguity within the constitution concern the meaning of legal pluralism and the definition of indigeneity. The case of Piruani brings into sharp focus how the different authorities conceive of indigenous justice, political and legal reform and their identity as *originarios*.

This chapter will consist of three sections. The first will provide a brief history of legal pluralism within Latin America and Bolivia and the broader social and legal changes leading up to the present and will serve to illustrate the wider context in which the case takes place. It will then examine the accounts of the case of Piruani offered by the different authorities of the province before examining in detail the substantive disagreements between them resulting from it and what this says about the current period in Bolivia and 'the process of change'.

I. A brief history of Legal Pluralism in Latin America, Bolivia and Kirkiawi

If legal pluralism is to be understood as the existence of multiple legal systems within one society (Pospisil, 1967) and their formal recognition by the state as separate legal orders then Bolivia and other countries in Latin America can be said to have exhibited a weak form of it during the colonial and post-colonial periods. This form of legal

pluralism consisted of the recognition by the state of forms of pre-existing indigenous customary law among groups defined as 'Indians' (Griffiths, 1986). With the colonisation of the Americas, the Spanish and indigenous populations were divided into separate legal categories, referred to as the Indian and Spanish 'Republics' (Wade, 1997). This classification of the population facilitated the pattern of colonialism exhibited in the early years of the Spanish Americas in which Indian communities provided *corvée* labour and state revenue through a head tax known as *la tasa* (Platt, 1982). In Bolívar the head tax was collected in some form well into the twentieth century and was one of the principal responsibilities of the *Kuraj Tatas*.

In Bolivia this situation continued for some time during the post-colonial era, partly due to reliance on the Indian head tax for state revenue (Platt, 1982; Klein, 2003). As was explored in Chapter 3, throughout the Americas there existed a continuity of colonial institutions and economic structures in the transition to independence, along with associated ethnic social divisions. At the same time, the newly independent states in the Americas had to reconcile their identity as modern nations with the reality of diverse populations of indigenous, mixed-race and Afro-american ethnic groups (Wade, 2001). In countries like Bolivia, where the majority of the population were of highland indigenous descent, the 'Indian Question' began to emerge within the discourse of educated urban society towards the second half of the twentieth century (Gotkowitz, 2008). Bolivia and other emergent states attempted to conceive of themselves as possessing a unitary national identity, while remaining societies in which the indigenous majority were constituted as a separate and inferior human group that could not be integrated into the dominant culture.

Since the 19th Century the various attempts to resolve the Indian Question have followed different constitutional models that broadly corresponded to different modes of economic organisation which reflected changes in the global political economy (Knight, 2014). Towards the end of the 19th Century, as American states developed their economies towards the export of commodities on the global market, they adopted classical liberal political models and began to view the continued existence of Indian ways of life as a barrier to the economic and cultural development of the nation, favouring a centralised state and a *laissez-faire* economy. In *Kirkiawi* and throughout Bolivia this period was characterised by conflict between the *ayllu* communities and the state, as the 1874 disentailment act sought to transfer huge quantities of collective

indigenous land into the hands of private landowners, provoking mass struggles to prevent this from happening (Platt, 1982; Izko, 1992). Towards the middle of the twentieth century Latin American states began to adopt import-substitution models of development under ‘populist’ governments, who moved to an ‘assimilationist constitutional model’ (Knight, 2014) in dealing with their indigenous populations. In Bolivia, the 1952 revolution and subsequent agrarian reform established a constitutional model in which highland indigenous peoples gained social and economic rights while being forced to adopt a new identity as peasants or workers as part of the ideology of *mestizaje*. Highland peoples were encouraged to form peasant unions as civil society organisations aimed at integrating rural populations into the nation under the new identity of *campesino*. As with the liberal constitutional model, the state was conceived of as the centralised source of normative authority, with a monopoly over legal processes. Nevertheless, while in *Kirkiawi* the peasant union would have established a presence by the 1960s the traditional authorities, such as the *jilankus*, would have continued to be responsible for adjudicating various matters of justice in compliance with the *usos y costumbres*. As is the case with *Kirkiawi*, it is arguable that a form of *de facto* legal pluralism has existed throughout Bolivia’s history as a result of the uneven distribution of the state within its territory, with parallel systems of law and governance filling the gaps in its discontinuous presence (Barrantes-Reynolds, 2016).

During the 1980s, following the post-1978 ‘wave of democratisation’ in Latin America and as countries began to undergo widespread neoliberal economic reforms, multiculturalism emerged as a new constitutional model. This happened at the same time as a multiculturalist discourse of human rights appeared as part of debates concerning the treatment of minority groups in European countries. According to the definition of multiculturalism given by the philosopher Will Kymlicka (1995) minority groups may be granted autonomy and distinct rights in order to preserve their cultural identity and allow individuals the chance to flourish as members of such groups. Minorities are therefore granted rights and tolerated by the state to the extent to which these rights do not interfere with universal human rights and the liberal good. Ethno-cultural groups are legally recognised for their possession of specific cultural traits and culture becomes a right because it is what allows persons to have the resources to make choices about the good life.

The liberal notion of multiculturalism, understood as a way of incorporating national minorities within liberal nation states, became applied to the treatment of indigenous minorities. This shift in international law was crystallised in the 1989 convention 169 of the International Labour Organisation (ILO) which was subsequently ratified by nearly every government in Latin America. While this new framework, which moved away from the previous model of 'integration and assimilation', treated indigenous groups in a similar fashion to minority ethnic groups there are two differences in how groups are classified as 'indigenous'. Firstly, to be indigenous is understood to mean having a special relationship with a land or territory, which in turn confers rights over its occupation and use, leading to the need for groups who wish to be recognised as indigenous to prove 'ancestrality' via documents or to show how the land they occupy is essential to their culturally specific way of life. Secondly, indigenous identity is conceived of in highly essentialist terms, according to which 'authentic' indigenous peoples exhibit pre-colonial traits in their culture and social institutions and conform to an idealised Rousseauian picture of the 'ecological noble savage' (Kuper, 2003). This leads to the phenomenon of individuals 'performing' this 'hyperreal' version of indigeneity towards governments, NGOs and international institutions in order to gain recognition (Ramos, 1994).

As was mentioned in chapter 3, various authors (Postero, 2011; Albro, 2005b) have described the period of multicultural reform in Bolivia as 'neoliberal multiculturalism', since its purpose was largely to ease the implementation of neoliberal economic policies. While limited recognition and legal rights were granted to subaltern groups this came at the expense of the state co-opting indigenist discourse and parts of the indigenous movement, furthering governmental decentralisation and the dismantling of social rights. While the liberal multiculturalist model seeks to accommodate national minorities, when applied in the context of a country like Bolivia this ignores the historical reality of colonialism: that individuals who may be categorised as indigenous are not simply national minorities but colonised peoples who continue to live under social relations resulting from a colonial system of racialised inequality. Moreover, ethnic identity in Bolivia is considerably more complex, fluid and ambiguous than the essentialist Rousseauian notions implicit within multiculturalist reforms. Even among ethnic political movements such as *Katarismo*, the language of class is used alongside

that of indigeneity: the two understood as complementary and indivisible elements of the lived reality of being Indian (Reinaga, 1970; Tiwanaku Manifesto, 1973).

As was explained earlier, the main manifestation of these reforms in Bolívar province came in the form of the INRA and LPP laws, which helped to legitimise both the *ayllu* and *sindicato* and provide them with separate but apparently complementary roles as social organisations, reinforcing the notion that they form a hybrid governmental structure in the province. While aimed at pursuing the World Bank's goal of 'good governance', the reforms provided new ways for the *gente humilde* from the *comunidades* of the province to make demands of the state and mobilise politically. The local elections of 2004, which saw the 'indigenous takeover' of the local government by representatives of MAS and POKUY, were a prequel to the later election of Morales as president in 2005.

The current self-acknowledged post-neoliberal and post-colonial period in Bolivia takes place in the wider context of what has been described as the 'new constitutionalist era' in Latin America (Schilling-Vacaflor, 2012), as a number of countries in the region have passed new constitutions (in particular, several states belonging to the 'pink-tide' of democratically elected left-wing populist governments, notably Bolivia, Ecuador and Venezuela). These governments exhibit much of the radical discourse and symbols of the revolutionary Latin American left while remaining committed to democratic process and the rule of law. They mix radical structural demands for social transformation with the language of human rights and liberal ideas of citizenship. This results in the attempt to bring about a transformative political project through constitutional and legal reform and redefining of citizenship in order to provide recognition and confer rights on oppressed groups. Consequently, it can be posited that these regimes are constructing 'post-neoliberal subjects': individuals who conform to the notions of citizenship and personhood defined by their new constitutions and political projects (Goodale and Postero, 2013). Nancy Postero (2016) has argued that in Bolivia the MAS government is engaged in a form of liberal state-building that privileges an indigenous subject. Nevertheless, this indigenous subject is ambiguously defined and remains open to interpretation. This has to do with how the 2009 constitution emerged as a compromise between the various social movements that made up the *pacto de unidad*.

The Bolivian constitution acknowledges the equal judicial hierarchy of the *justicia ordinaria* and *justicia indígena* and establishes that the authorities of *pueblos indígenas originarios campesinos* shall exercise the role of judicial authorities over all legal matters internal to their communities in agreement with their own norms and principles, provided the plaintiff and accused in each case are members of said community. However, the constitution also states that a law of judicial demarcation between the different jurisdictions will determine their respective limits and mode of coordination. The fact that the constitution first posits an apparently strong form of indigenous judicial autonomy before then establishing the legal basis for its limitation and separation from the state courts reflects a tension between two different visions of legal pluralism implicit within it. In broad terms these visions can be described as multiculturalism and plurinationalism (Barrantes-Reynolds, 2016). The first is the same approach taken in the multiculturalist constitutional model of the neoliberal period, in which limited autonomy is granted to minority groups on the basis of their right to culture, while the second views the Bolivian constitution as part of a project of decolonisation, allowing for the possibility of an alternative to the liberal state model while taking seriously the notion that indigenous groups are peoples with the right to self-determination.

As mentioned previously, this tension reflects the distinct needs and visions of the different social organisations who negotiated during the constituent assembly process. The *cocaleros* and peasant unions represented by the CSTUCB were less concerned with issues related to indigenous rights and legal decolonisation (Postero, 2016; Schavelzon, 2014), instead favouring economic development, state control of the economy and natural resources and the creation of positive social rights. The majority of the MAS and peasant union organisations therefore favored a strengthening and centralisation of the state over the autonomy of indigenous communities and a strong program of legal pluralism. The peasant unions saw the legitimacy of indigenous judicial autonomy as deriving from the state, while the lowland and highland indigenous organisations saw indigenous rights as preceding the state by virtue of their right to self-determination as peoples (Schavelzon, 2012). As a result of the compromise nature of the drafting of the constitution there exists a degree of ambiguity as to which of these two visions it inclines towards. At some points the constitution justifies legal pluralism

in terms of the right of self-determination of colonised peoples and at others it is said to be derived from the judicial function of the state (Barrantes-Reynolds, 2016).

Moreover, the unwieldy phrase *pueblos indígenas originarios campesinos* or indigenous native peasant peoples, which defines the scope of indigenous legal jurisdiction, also reflects a somewhat awkward compromise. The Bolivian constitution unequivocally privileges being indigenous, granting special rights and the free determination of native peoples in its second article, without offering a coherent definition of indigeneity. The term *pueblos indígenas originarios campesinos* came about as union and *cocalero* leaders wanted their social organisations to be recognised as indigenous in order to be eligible for corresponding rights and benefits (Schavelzon, 2012). As discussed earlier, these groups had deployed a limited and strategic notion of indigenous identity during the period prior to Morales' election as president (Grisaffi, 2010). What can be described as 'ecumenical indigeneity' (Schavelzon 2014) has become the basis of the populist ethnic nationalism of Morales and the MAS, joining multiple ethnic groups and social sectors together into a single subaltern subject as part of an ethnic discourse with broad similarities to the project of *mestizaje* of the social assimilationist period (Canessa, 2012, 2014).

Therefore, in addition to containing a tension between an understanding of legal pluralism as a form of cultural recognition or decolonisation, the constitution also vacillates between a strict and inclusive definition of indigeneity. Nevertheless, particularly in the period since 2011, the MAS has increasingly promoted the inclusive notion of indigeneity in which the indigenous subject stands in for *gente humilde* or humble folk, the oppressed or *los de abajo*. At the same time, its official discourse has progressively represented plurinationalism, indigenous autonomy and legal pluralism as equality of rights before the law and equated decolonisation with equitable economic development (Schavelzon, 2014; Postero 2016). The unresolved conflict between the different elements of the *pacto de unidad* concerning these issues and others came to a head in the protests surrounding the proposed highway through the TIPNIS national park. They remain present, however, in the local politics and everyday experiences of numerous communities throughout Bolivia, including those of Bolívar province.

II. Accounts of the case of Piruani

Piruani is a small *comunidad* of approximately thirty families. Within the emic conceptualisation of the province's geography it is considered part of the higher and more arid *zona puna*, although it is in fact located at approximately 3800 metres of altitude and has suitable land for growing tubers, barley and other crops. Like many other communities in Bolívar, Piruani manages the land collectively and the issue of ownership of respective family parcels is determined communally with the help of the *jilanku* and with only the stone boundaries or *qanipus* marking the division between one area and another. According to the territorial division of the *ayllu* it is part of Warawarani *jap'iy* and it also corresponds to a *sub-central* of the peasant union. However, due to high levels of migration and double residence, both the *jilanku* and peasant union *dirigente* are not ordinarily resident within the community and only attend the monthly meetings and cultural events or travel from their homes in Cochabamba and Oruro when requested for extraordinary meetings. While Piruani is one of many communities that have been affected by migration in this way the lack of an ongoing presence of community leaders has exacerbated the conflict surrounding the case. The affected parties directly sought the assistance of higher-level leaders of the *ayllu* and *sindicato* as well as the ordinary civil courts instead of following the normal 'organic' channels of consulting their local leaders in the first instance. I received various accounts of how the case of Piruani had developed from different sources but was not present in the community at the time the events took place and have not interviewed the affected parties in the dispute. I cannot pretend to know the truth of the case but simply present the different accounts offered by various members of the *ayllu*, *sindicato* and *alcaldía* and the public discourse concerning the case in local political meetings.

One of the individuals who provided me with an account of how events unfolded was Francisco Larico. Francisco was a Quechua-speaking indigenous rights activist and paralegal, studying for his law degree in Cochabamba, who had grown up in the countryside in Oruro. He was married to Dominga's sister Victoria, who had been the POKUY candidate for Mayor of Bolívar province in the 2015 local elections. I had met him through Gregorio at a conference on indigenous justice in La Paz organised by various Quechua and Aymara leaders and activists and he had later agreed to meet for an

interview in Cochabamba. We met on a sunny afternoon in a cafe in El Prado, a long tree-lined Boulevard filled with up-scale bars and restaurants just north of the city centre. Francisco, a young man in his early thirties, was critical of Evo and the MAS but was still enthusiastic about the possibility of indigenous peoples gaining autonomy over matters of justice. He had helped Mallku Gregorio make a presentation to the constitutional court in Sucre concerning the case of Piruani and how its eventual resolution represented a sound example of customary law.

According to Francisco, everything began when one of the families from the *comunidad* had appropriated lands belonging to neighboring families. The problem with the case, he claimed, began with the failure to respect the proper channels in dealing with a dispute of this nature. Instead of approaching the *ayllu* authorities to resolve the matter, the families whose lands had been encroached upon spoke directly with the *central provincial*, the division of the peasant union at the level of the province. At this point, the union leaders should have involved Gregorio as the maximum representative of the traditional authorities and head of the *ayllu*. Yet instead of doing so, the peasant union leaders passed the matter up to the *central departamental*, the leadership of the peasant union at the level of the whole of Cochabamba department. The departmental level of the union, the FSUTCC, thereupon issued a resolution declaring the ‘real victims’ (the families whose lands had been appropriated) guilty of aggression against the very family who had encroached upon their lands and issued them a fine of 20 thousand *bolivianos* (approximately 2000 pounds sterling). At the same time as the peasant union were carrying out their judgment on the case, the ‘ringleader’ of the family who had encroached upon the land attempted to prosecute the other families for presumed acts of violence in a separate legal case. This took place within the ambit of the *justicia ordinaria*, in the courts of Oruro. Eventually the case was thrown out by the judge, but the ‘ringleader’ was able to obtain legal documents showing that the case had been taken to court and with these he returned to Piruani and attempted to use them to intimidate the other families into not pursuing the matter further.

Gregorio, the *Kuraj Mallku* at the time of my fieldwork, only became involved in the case some fifteen weeks after the families whose lands had been encroached upon had taken it to the *central provincial*. According to Francisco, Gregorio and his *Kuraj Tatas* took some time to analyse the case before raising an objection with the resolution issued by the *central departamental*:

‘They object to this resolution, indicating that it is unconstitutional. First because it didn’t go through the correct procedures, second because it infringes upon the constitutional rights, of self-government and the principles of the *usos y costumbres*.’ (S)

According to Francisco, Gregorio and other *ayllu* authorities, the actions of the *central departamental* contradict the 2009 Bolivian constitution. Indigenous communities have the right to resolve disputes internally according to their ‘customary law’. Therefore, in making a decision without involving the leaders of an indigenous community their constitutional rights are violated. In Bolívar the term *usos y costumbres* is used to mean something similar to the human rights term ‘customary law’ although it has a far broader meaning, encompassing local forms of governance, customs and traditions internal to the *ayllu* as well as historically, referring to the right to internal autonomy under the *de facto* weak legal pluralism of the colonial and post-colonial state. According to the understanding of the *usos y costumbres* favoured by Gregorio and other traditional leaders, the nature of the judgement carried out by the *central departamental* goes directly against their principles. For Gregorio, the peasant union is ‘infected with the mentality of the *justicia ordinaria*’. When I pressed him as to what this meant he claimed that this was in part to do with the use of money. The *sindicato*, like the civil courts resolves disputes through placing fines. He claimed that Olker, the provincial union leader, had demanded two thousand *bolivianos* from all the parties involved as a ‘guarantee’ in order to resolve it, an action he considered antithetical to the *usos y costumbres*.

When Gregorio finally judged the case, he went to Piruani and carried out a ceremony in which the different factions symbolically resolved their differences through the exchange of cattle. The solution had been witnessed by all the members of the community and the *ayllu* and union leaders. Later, Gregorio had presented the details of the case to a meeting of the constitutional court in Sucre. Francisco describes it in the following way:

‘When they arrived there, they saw all this scene, right? They didn’t solve anything. Later, at the last moment, there is the solution. The people say, sanction already with everything. And he asks, right? He recognises his mistakes, that he’s infringed on rights. I’ll pay two llamas, he says. He pays two llamas. They butcher them right there and eat them...What is more this gentleman cannot exercise any *cargo* as an authority for five years.’ (S)

For Gregorio, the form in which the dispute had been resolved had been in agreement with the *usos y costumbres* and was qualitatively different in character to that offered by

either the ordinary courts or by the peasant union. Instead of punishing the respective parties for on the one hand illegitimately appropriating land or on the other for inflicting violence in retaliation, he had carried out a symbolic reparation between the warring families which involved the transfer of cattle. Following this, they had slaughtered a sheep and made *kanka de oveja* and *papa wathiya*, traditional delicacies of salted sheep meat and potatoes baked in the earth, sitting down together as a community to feast. Gregorio was at pains to point out that the resolution to the conflict had been carried out without money, unlike the solutions offered by the *sindicato*, which involve fines and offer the opportunity for corrupt union leaders to profit. Even worse, he claimed, is the *justicia ordinaria* that is inherently corrupt and would judge a ruling on behalf of whichever party is able to offer a larger bribe.

When I spoke with the provincial union leader and equivalent to the *Kuraj Mallku* in the hierarchy of Bolívar, Olker Nina, about the case, his account was rather different. We sat on low wooden benches in the courtyard of his house and, while his wife prepared us some tea in the kitchen, he laid out his view of the matter. In the first place, the judgement by the departmental level of the CSTUCB had sided with the individual who Gregorio claimed to be the genuine offender. Olker viewed this judgement to be correct and he pointed out that it had been made in the light of violence suffered by the family of the individual. He maintained that the violence exhibited in Piruani was worrying and symptomatic of problems throughout the province. In the first place, the custom of multigeniture had led to the successive fractioning of family lands and the intensification of competition between multiple families over an increasingly scarce resource. This was the case despite the fact that many communities appeared abandoned, as the majority of *originario* residents with land spent most of their time in the cities or tropical lowlands and returned periodically to cultivate it or left this responsibility to a relative or neighbour. Being absent from the community meant that it was difficult to be aware of incursions upon one's land or of its precise boundaries. Moreover, the *jilankus* and union leaders responsible for adjudicating these matters were often themselves mainly resident elsewhere and only returned for monthly community meetings. He claimed Piruani to be an exemplary case of all these factors and indicative of the problems faced by the province in a time of change.

Moreover, Olker stated that he did not believe that Gregorio had resolved the conflict in any way. He describes the situation in the following terms:

‘What is it to give a solution? If they are in a problem to do with a territory...we said because before we went with the mayor, everyone. We said that we’re going to inspect the land and according to that we’ll give a simple [individual] titling to everyone involved in the conflict, in equal parts. But I’ve heard that this one, Gregorio, hasn’t done it that way. He’s just placed sanctions and not given a solution.’ (S)

For Olker, the only way to resolve the conflict and to stop the violence occurring between families was to establish clear boundaries between the respective lands through providing individual title deeds. While the land remained communally managed, he maintained, the violence would continue. He seemed to view Gregorio’s claim to have provided a resolution as somewhat irresponsible as it did nothing to bring about an end to the conflict or unambiguously define the boundaries between plots of land. For him, the exchange of cattle and the ceremony carried out by Gregorio was merely a ‘sanction’ for the violence carried out and not a definitive judgment. This sentiment was echoed by a number of local MAS politicians in the *alcaldía*, including the Mayor Francisco Delgado and the councillor Vincente Condori.

Because the different local authorities had not only offered alternative solutions but had effectively sided with different parties, the conflict in Piruani had spilled over from a conflict between families to a conflict between the peasant union and MAS municipal government on one side and the traditional authorities on the other. The case served to amplify disagreement and intensify feeling over points of contention that had already existed between the authorities and the case became emblematic of them. When the matter came up in public meetings it was clear that both sides believed the other to be going beyond the limits of their role, both using the expression *la parte orgánica* to refer to the idealised structure of the different social organisations and the division of labour between them. For the *ayllu* leaders, it is not legitimate for the union to resolve questions of justice relating to the *usos y costumbres*, as their role is to act as the external political representatives of the community and to solicit funds for development. The union leaders argue that in reality they are dealing with many of the problems which result from conflicts over land and that this is a responsibility they routinely assume at the level of the *comunidad* and beyond. They also objected to the fact that Gregorio and a number of *Kuraj Tatas* and *jilankus* had been going to meetings in the constitutional capital in Sucre as part of a consultation process regarding the implementation of the new *tribunal agroambiental* and that Gregorio had taken his putative resolution of the case of Piruani to a meeting of the constitutional court,

designed to showcase examples of indigenous legal practices and customary law. These meetings were attended by numerous representatives of highland and lowland indigenous communities and were meant to be forums in which the nature of indigenous justice could be explained, illustrated and debated. Given the hybrid nature of government in Bolívar province in which there exists both *ayllu* and *sindicato* leaders in each *comunidad* and at every subsequent level of social organisation, the *sindicato* viewed the fact that Gregorio and others had attended these meetings without them as illegitimate: they were presenting themselves as the ‘true *originarios*’ when they had no right to do so. In response, various *ayllu* leaders claimed they had every right to do so given the fact they were uniquely responsible for maintaining the *usos y costumbres* and that they had existed as a form of authority prior to the colonisation of the Americas. At this point it becomes clear that the dispute over the case of Piruani and the legitimacy of the actions of both forms of authority in adjudicating it turns not only on what is understood by justice, but on the meaning of being indigenous or *originario* and how the use of this term within the Bolivian constitution is interpreted.

III. Justice and *originario* identity

Part of the substantive difference between the *ayllu* and *sindicato* leaders concerning the resolution of the case pertains to the way land should be owned and managed, with the case of Piruani frequently cited as an example to justify individual titling. A number of the traditional authorities I spoke with claimed that in saying this, the *sindicato* were deliberately misleading people about the way land is managed according to the *muyu* system. The point was made repeatedly that the real motivation of the *sindicato* and local MAS politicians in advocating individual titling was as a way of revoking the TCO in order to ‘*desaparecer al ayllu*’: to vanish the *ayllu* as a form of territorial organisation and thereby also eliminate the traditional authorities as a rival source of power. The union and *alcaldía* figures were either deliberately misrepresenting the way the land and conflicts resulting from it were traditionally managed or, in the case of some of the MAS *alcaldía*, were genuinely ignorant of these matters as a result of having left their communities at an early age to receive education in the city. They were, it was claimed ‘*ignorantes en su propia casa*’ (‘ignorant in their own home’). This charge was leveled especially towards the Mayor of the province, Francisco Delgado, who Gregorio described as profoundly ignorant about the *usos y costumbres* and ‘anti-indigenous’.

It is a phenomenon that has been observed by scholars of Bolivian Andean communities (Albó, 1977) that conflict over land between families, communities and entire *ayllus* is an endemic and seemingly unavoidable feature of traditional land tenancy systems in the highlands. Without precise boundaries it is inevitable that individuals will encroach upon each other's plots and the *jilankus* or other authorities will not always be able to determine who is the victim and the offender. Nevertheless, the cyclical rotation of the land in *ayonoqas* means that these feuds are often resolved automatically as the land is never cultivated consecutively for more than a few years. Once a particular *ayonoqa* is left fallow a new one has to be 'opened' in an official ceremony in preparation for its cultivation ahead of the rainy season, which includes *el reparto* or parceling out of the new land among families by the *jilanku*. With the opening of the new *ayonoqa* the slate is effectively wiped clean and feuds will normally come to an end. Curiously, the same word used to describe the leveling of earth to prepare it for cultivation which follows the *reparto* of lands with the opening of new *ayonoqas* is often used in Quechua to mean 'forgive': the verb *pampachay* meaning literally 'to flatten out' or 'to level out' is used alongside the hispanicism *perdonay*. The term implies a notion of justice and conflict resolution focused on the restoration of balance within a community rather than identifying the guilty party and the aggressor. This does not mean that there does not exist a concept of blame or guilt, which was described to me with the Spanish *culpa* or the Quechua *juch'a*. I was given a number of examples of justice carried out in the past in which the *jilanku* would give a beating to all of the parties involved with his *chicote* rope whip, so they could experience shame and all learn their blame and the mistakes they had made before resolving the differences between them.

Part of Gregorio's solution to the case of Piruani, which he believed distinguished it from that of the peasant union, was that it had not involved money. The resolution between the different parties had been achieved with non-monetary reparations and without precisely quantifying damages. In part, this reflects how the *ayllu* authorities legitimise themselves in terms of their connection to the traditional agrarian subsistence economy with its non-monetary forms of exchange. He claimed that it represented an important difference in principle between the two forms of authority. According to Gregorio, the most important thing for an *originario* living in the highlands is his sense of dignity, resulting from his standing in the community and the public image he projects. Paying a fine allows the offender to absolve himself of the debt he owes to the

victim in the manner of a monetary transaction, with no loss of face. On the other hand, the exchange of cattle and the sort of ceremonial reparation he had carried out made the offender publicly admit his guilt and beg forgiveness in front of the whole community. This, he maintained, represented a more lasting solution, as the aggressor had to swear to not repeat his mistakes in the presence of all his neighbours.

Gregorio maintained that making a declaration of intent in front of the community to be the most effective method of preventing further transgressions. He stated that public declarations or *juramentos* had been a common way of dealing with individuals who had committed serious crimes in the past. During the meeting narrated in the opening chapter of this thesis, the septuagenarian *Vilaycaymense*, Don Enrique Tola, had made an intervention in which he accused the present leaders of the *comunidad* of being mistaken about how justice should be carried out. They had lost their customs and instead settled things with money. He described how when he was a young man it had been normal to make someone swear a *juramento*:

‘If you don’t do this then you will be dead right here...you would make the oath, we would place a little salt and crossed blades. And this is what you would shout. Shouting this, in making the oath you would swear, lord in my heart, that this and that...’ (Q)

The person making the oath would walk over the crossed blades while they shouted that they should die if they didn’t keep their word. If they didn’t, then *Tata Dios* would strike them down. In this way the community could be sure that the offender would not repeat their crime and would comply with the sanctions they were obliged to make in order to repair the damages they had caused their neighbors and to the social contract of the community. Former *Mallku* and COAMAC leader Sabino Veizaga had seized on this as an example of the sort of ancestral practices they had to recover in order to get past the problems that were taking place in communities like Piruani.

Tata Sabino had given one of the more considered interventions during that meeting. Unlike some of the angrier speeches made by *ayllu* and union figures, his was calm and measured but clearly articulated a particular vision of *justicia indígena*. Tata Sabino is a quietly dignified and intelligent man and he explained in a polite and somewhat mild-mannered fashion how he believed the meeting to be very important given the fact that *Kirkiawi*, as an ‘ancestral territory’, had traditionally administered its own forms of justice with no recognition or oversight by the state. With the new plurinational constitution this sort of space provided the possibility to go forward ‘*ñawpaqman*

rinananchispaq' towards a greater understanding between the state and their community. Yet at the same time, he reflected, it was making them a little sad that some of the judicial competencies of the traditional authorities were being taken away from them '*un chicito llakichiwanichis chiqa qichuwanchis, jerarquias de la justicia ordinaria*'. Here Sabino was referring to the judicial demarcation law or *Ley de Deslinde Jurisdiccional* that attempts to establish clear boundaries between the competencies of indigenous and ordinary jurisdictions. While he recognised the existence of problems in *comunidades* such as Piruani, '*wakin comunidadesmanta achkata pantashanku, problemas tiyan*' ('among some communities they are making a lot of mistakes, there are problems'), they had to assume the responsibility themselves for resolving these issues. They needed to follow the *usos y costumbres* and recover their ancestral knowledge and practices. In the past, he claimed, time was not wasted on lawyers and written documents but rather problems were resolved by the traditional authorities in the manner described by Don Enrique, using *juramentos* or through summary punishments. This, he stated emphatically as the conclusion to his speech, was the key to overcoming the problems they were witnessing, '*Entonces chay astawan nuqanchis mejorananchis tiyan, hermanos...kayta astawan practicananchis tiyan!*' ('So, that is what we have to improve on, brothers...it is more of this that we need to practice!').

The notion of recovering practices and creating an alternative to the liberal state and its system of laws, based on the collective experience and 'ancestral knowledge' of their community, is very much part of the understanding of legal pluralism as a project of decolonisation shared by CONAMAQ and various prominent *ayllu* leaders within Bolívar province. In contrast, the *Ley de Deslinde Jurisdiccional*, which defines the limits between the *justicia ordinaria* of the civil and criminal courts and the *justicia indígena*, goes very much against any serious idea of plurinationalism or legal decolonisation. It reinforces the subordination of the *justicia indígena* to the state, while limiting the competency of indigenous jurisdictions to those areas which are 'traditionally dealt with' by indigenous authorities, excluding them from judging major criminal offenses and interfering with any of the key functions of the centralised state. While the *sindicato* leadership and local MAS politicians did not raise objections to it, many of the traditional authorities believe the *Ley de Deslinde Jurisdiccional* to be anti-constitutional, as it places limits on the ability of indigenous communities to manage their own justice. They do so because they interpret the constitution to be in favour of a

plurinationalist version of legal pluralism as part of a decolonial endeavour of refounding the Bolivian nation.

The *Ley de Deslinde Jurisdiccional* also restates the right of peasant unions to be involved in matters of *justicia indígena* as recognised social organisations within ‘indigenous native peasant’ communities. Much of the *ayllu* leadership reject this entirely and believe the inclusion of unions as a recognised indigenous organisation to be a mistake. They point to the wording of articles 2 and 30 of the constitution that state that indigenous communities and by extension their authorities are those which existed prior to the Spanish colonial invasion. This supports the view that the traditional authorities are the true *originarios*, predating the colonisation of the Americas and therefore uniquely responsible for defending and reconstituting the practices and principles of the *usos y costumbres*, unlike the peasant union which is a European institution imposed as part of the post-1952 assimilationist project of the MNR government. When Gregorio made this point in a meeting of the *ampliado general* in the town of Bolívar, he was met with the familiar reply that ‘all of us are *originarios*’ and the assertion that union leaders routinely dealt with such matters in the *comunidades*.

The debate over the constitutionality of the peasant union acting as judicial authorities within the jurisdiction of the *justicia indígena* illustrates the consequence of two points of ambiguity within the constitution. The first of these is the previously outlined matter of what it means to be indigenous, or in the case of Bolívar province *originario*, while the second concerns *who* is deemed responsible for exercising indigenous customary law within a community such as Bolívar. The law treats indigenous communities as homogeneous entities: there is no distinction made between the different authorities and institutions that may exist in parallel and the constitution provides no guidance on this issue. Concurrently, the constitution vacillates between strict and inclusive notions of indigenous identity. At times it comes close to the ‘ecumenical indigeneity’ increasingly favoured by the MAS while also containing elements of the view implicit in international human rights law and even that of the *Katarista* political movement.

Meanwhile, within highland communities like Bolívar individuals employ the language of class and ethnic identity in an almost interchangeable fashion. Despite their differences, both the traditional and union authorities conceive of themselves in class

and ethnic terms. One evening, while chewing coca and smoking cigarettes with Gregorio, the conversation turned to what it meant for him to be indigenous or *originario* and he replied ‘we are an oppressed people within the bourgeois state and have been for centuries’ (*‘Somos un pueblo oprimido dentro del estado burgués. Así ha sido por siglos’*). As the *Katarista* phrase puts, it class and race for highland peoples are ‘the two eyes with which to see the world’ and ‘the two legs with which to walk on it’ (Albó, 2009): they are complementary analytic categories that are not reducible to each other but together express the lived experience of being Indian and offer the path to overcoming their position of oppression.

The difference in how the traditional and union authorities conceive of *originario* identity is therefore not as clear as their current political opposition to each other would suggest. As was established in Chapter 4, being from the same communities and working alongside each other the different forms of authority do function to an extent as a hybrid governmental structure in the province. However, the case of Piruani provides an example of where the respective authorities make their differences clear, since a significant part of the dispute turns on the definition of indigeneity contained in the Bolivian constitution. From the public discourse of the meetings in the province it was clear at the time of my fieldwork that the union leaders broadly followed the discourse of inclusive indigeneity of the national MAS government. This was also echoed when I conducted interviews with local MAS politicians such as the Mayor Francisco Delgado or the councillor Vincente Condori or union leaders such as Olker Nina or Severina Wayatola as well as in countless conversations with Severino Condori. They justified the constitutional legitimacy of the union as a judicial authority within the jurisdiction of the *justicia indígena* on the basis of an inclusive view of the indigenous subject, which includes echoes of class and the assimilationist notion of *mestizaje*. Meanwhile, the traditional authorities interpret the constitution to follow a strict definition of indigenous identity which is closer to how they articulate what it means to be *originario*. This is similar to the definition of indigeneity that Andrew Canessa (2014) describes as that of a minority group that needs protection from the state, namely one in which being indigenous refers to qualities of territoriality, ancestrality and a continuity of pre-colonial practices and social institutions.

Conclusion

This chapter has shown how ‘the case of Piruani’ illustrates the different understandings of justice, territorial organisation and indigenous or *originario* identity among the respective forms of local authority in Bolívar. A land dispute between families in an isolated rural hamlet converted itself into a discussion between the provincial government and peasant union and the traditional *ayllu* authorities over how to resolve conflicts and to interpret the legal pluralism guaranteed by the 2009 constitution. The fact that intra-community conflict has intensified in a new ‘post-colonial’ era, following the implementation of a ‘plurinational’ constitution that claims to refound the Bolivian state for the benefit of the previously ignored indigenous population reveals the ongoing tensions and contradictions within the project of social and political reform or *el proceso de cambio* being carried out by the MAS government.

The constitution itself is a compromise document which reflects the distinct needs and visions of the various elements of the *pacto de unidad* involved in the constituent assembly process. As a result, the final document contains various tensions and ambiguities. In respect of legal pluralism, it vacillates between a strict and inclusive definition of indigeneity and between viewing indigenous justice as a right of cultural recognition granted by the liberal state or derived from the right to self-determination of formerly colonised peoples. This equivocation stems from separate understandings of *el proceso de cambio*: of building a more inclusive centralised state with equitable economic development and social rights or as a more radical project of decolonisation. This is similar to the characterisation made by Arturo Escobar (2010) concerning the choice faced by new leftist states in Latin America between ‘alternative modernisations’ and ‘decolonial projects’.

In the case of Piruani the different authorities of the province dispute the constitutional legitimacy of each other’s actions based on rival conceptions of what it means to be *originario*. In broad terms it can be said that the union and local MAS politicians view being *originario* in a manner closer to the ‘ecumenical indigeneity’ that has progressively become part of the official discourse of the national government. Meanwhile, the traditional authorities employ something closer to a strict definition of indigeneity, which includes notions of ancestrality, territoriality and the continuity of pre-colonial practices. Individuals involved in this dispute were obliged to articulate

these differences because the 2009 constitution makes explicit reference to indigenous or *originario* peoples while defining these terms ambiguously. This process of contesting the meanings of shared elements of their culture and of making claims to authenticity, particularly regarding their collective identity, has been described in this thesis as an ethical-political discourse. The debates described in this chapter illustrate how the national project of reform of the MAS government has helped to produce an ethical discourse within a local community and how notions of indigeneity that circulate within wider networks of political, indigenous rights and environmental organisations have been articulated in ways that engage with more specific local understandings of identity, history and values. The following chapter will explore how local debates over development relate to distinct views of their common identity as *originarios*, expressed in different accounts of historic struggle.

Chapter 7. Living Well: The Meanings of Development

Introduction

In early October 2015 I attended the World People's conference on climate change in the town of Tiquipaya just outside of Cochabamba. The purpose of the event was ostensibly to draft a document representing the views of the peoples of the global south to be presented at the G20 climate summit held in Paris later that year. I took part in a workshop concerning *el vivir bien*: a concept included in the Bolivian constitution as one of the fundamental ethical principles of the state that serves to guide national economic development. During the workshop, the Bolivian foreign minister, David Choquehuanca, invited us to '*cosmo-ver*' and '*cosmo-ser*': Spanish portmanteau words that refer to the process of coming to terms with the unique worldview of highland indigenous peoples that transcends the limitations of material consumption and western notions of progress. The following week I attended the *ampliado general* of Bolívar province and heard the women's union leader, Severina Wayatola, speak about the importance of voting in the affirmative in the impending referendum on amending the constitution to allow for Evo Morales' re-election. Thanks to 'Tata Evo' and 'the process of change', she stated emphatically, we have football pitches, sports halls and electrification. Only Tata Evo could deliver more development for their municipality.

In Bolívar province development policy has become a focus of debate among local leaders. Meanwhile, the national MAS government claims to have made a decisive break with neoliberalism and capitalist development and to have found an alternative in concepts such as *el vivir bien* (Morales, 2007). Yet the direction of national policy has divided elements of the *Pacto de Unidad*, as well as the national MAS movement. In recent years there has been a shift in both the nature of government discourse and substantive policy regarding economic development (Postero, 2014; Schavelzon, 2014). The effect of this in Bolívar province has been to reinforce the alliance between the *sindicato*, local MAS politicians and the national government, while undermining the traditional authorities and exacerbating tensions.

The very idea of development is new in Bolívar and owes its existence to the neoliberal reforms of the 1990s that fundamentally altered local power relations. A further result of this process was the creation of a site of struggle between the various forms of local authority. This is both a site of political struggle over control of the municipal

government and its resources and of ideological struggle to orient and define the process of change taking place. I argue that this ideological struggle represents what is described in chapter 1 as an ‘ethical discourse’: the attempt to articulate what is authentic to a sociocultural group in terms of its collective narrative, identity and ends. As it is during the self-proclaimed post-neoliberal period that relations between the different authorities have deteriorated, terms such as *el vivir bien* and other elements of national discourse form part of this debate. The present chapter aims to show how these concepts are being articulated and contested at the local level and the relationship between this parochial dispute and the debates and developments taking place nationally. It will be argued that tensions between the different local authorities regarding development that have existed since the neoliberal period have worsened because of the actions of the national MAS government to centralise power and to pursue a development policy based largely on delivering projects funded by the expansion of extractive industry. Moreover, despite the fact that terms of national discourse gain different meanings when appropriated by local actors, what unites the division between elements of national-level social organisations and the MAS with the discussions taking place in Bolívar province is that they share broadly similar understandings of what it means to be indigenous or *originario*. In addition, the debate between the different local authorities concerning development and the nature of *el vivir bien* relates especially to how they conceive of their common narrative.

This chapter is divided into three sections. The first section will provide an analysis of current public discourse surrounding development in Bolivia and particularly the notion of *el vivir bien* and its intellectual genealogy. This will be followed by a history of development in Bolívar, describing how the implementation of the Popular Participation Law or LPP initially united the different forms of local authority, while also providing an arena for conflict between them. The second section will detail the status of development policy within Bolívar province at the time of my fieldwork and the discussions surrounding it. The final section will provide an analysis of the substantive differences between the different authorities regarding the matter and will explore how these are shaped by different historical narratives of struggle.

I. Development and *El Vivir Bien*

i. Development policy and living well in the New Bolivia

The terms *el vivir bien* or *el buen vivir* form part of international discussion on development as well as national ideological debate in Bolivia. The notion of *el vivir bien* represents perhaps the strongest possibility available to the MAS government to put forward an intellectually coherent programme that is simultaneously post-neoliberal, anti-capitalist and de-colonial, combining the disparate ideological threads that make up its political discourse. Throughout Latin America these terms have been enthusiastically adopted by social movements, left-wing intellectuals and populist governments (Gudynas, 2011; Acosta, 2017). It has been advocated as a possible platform for constructing an alternative to capitalist development, based on common features of the ethical views of indigenous peoples and peasants regarding communal existence and the relationship between humans and nature, in contrast to those of the Europeanised elites who have traditionally dominated them (Albó, 2009; Gudynas, 2011). However, in Bolivia it has a particular intellectual genealogy and is rooted in the cultural and political movement of indigenous revindication which emerged nationally towards the end of the 1960s.

As was described in detail in chapter 3, this movement was termed *Katarismo* and was a diverse cultural and political tendency composed of peasants, students and urban intellectuals of mainly Aymara descent which took as their emblem the figure of Túpak Katari. What was central to *Katarismo* as an ideological movement was the view of colonial society having been imposed oppressively over a civilisation that was originally free and which embodied a distinct social and ethical order (Cusicanqui, 2010a). During the period of fragmentation and dissolution which took place within the *Katarista* movement and the massive irruption of NGOs into Bolivia in the 1980s and 1990s a new discourse materialised surrounding development. The works of a number of Aymara intellectuals such as Simon Yampara (2001, 2010), Felix Patzi Paco (2004) and the MAS politician David Choquehuanca (2010) exhibit continuities with the earlier intellectual and cultural aspects of *Katarismo*, while distancing themselves from its Marxian theoretical orientation, moving away from a focus on the state and towards the practice of development as the site of struggle between social and ethical orders. Meaning approximately ‘the good life’ or ‘to live well’, the term *el vivir bien* is itself a

translation of the Aymara *suma qamaña*. It claims to refer to a notion of the common good or of well-being within the *cosmovisión* or worldview of highland indigenous peoples. This is a holistic sense of well-being embodied in the communitarian practices of the *ayllu*, in which there does not exist a separation within the totality of social relationships between people and the land they inhabit, thereby running counter to some of the core assumptions of western modernity and expressing a possible response to the substantive criticisms of post-development. For this reason, scholars such as Arturo Escobar have enthusiastically posited the concept as a potential platform to construct alternatives to the ‘civilizational crisis’ of capitalist modernity (Escobar, 2010, 2011; Gudynas, 2011).

During the early years of the MAS national government the term *el vivir bien* became part of its official discourse and found its way into the 2009 constitution. The term *el vivir bien* appears in article 8 of the constitution as a ‘fundamental ethical principle of the state’ as well as in the fourth section which deals with the state’s economic objectives. Here it refers to achieving *el vivir bien* in the context of reducing poverty and social exclusion and states that to achieve this goal it will be necessary to fairly distribute the proceeds of economic growth and promote equal access to resources within a framework that respects individual and collective rights. It does not mention the notion of the people and their environment being fundamentally bound together or of an alternative to the notion of linear progress in economic planning. Therefore, even within the constitution it is codified essentially as a conventional notion of development, couched in left/social democratic terms. This reflects the relative weakness of Aymara intellectuals and representatives of CONAMAQ within the constituent assembly, as opposed to conventional leftists and union figures who were more concerned with ensuring state control of resources, positive social rights and increased investment in rural development and infrastructure (Schavelzon, 2012; Postero, 2014).

In the current period, the MAS party is internally divided between old-fashioned leftists, union representatives and those who take seriously the idea of an alternative indigenous worldview as the basis for decolonising and refounding the Bolivian nation. Broadly speaking, leftist intellectuals such as the Vice President Alvaro Garcia Linera and union representatives, particularly those of the ‘inter-cultural colonists’ of the tropics, converge around the idea of utilising extractive industry to pursue an increase in GDP

growth to allow for higher family incomes and to fund social programmes (Postero, 2016). Intellectuals who put forward the idea of *el vivir bien* in the sense described above have become marginalised and are sometimes depreciatively referred to as *pachamamánicos*, portrayed as romantics with nothing of substance to offer in debates about national development (Stefanoni, 2010). In the years since Morales' original election there has been a marked change in both the tone of official discourse surrounding development and actual policy. Writing in 2010, Arturo Escobar eulogised about the possibility of Bolivia leading the world into a post-developmental moment (2010). However, it is arguably the case that rather than exemplifying a new post-neoliberal or post-capitalist reality Bolivia is practising a new form of developmentalism based on extractive industry and commercialised agriculture (Postero, 2016). Some have argued that the MAS has adopted 'neostucturalism', a sort-of Latin American 'third way' (Giddens, 1998) which mirrors many of the economic aspects of neoliberalism while seeking to share somewhat more equitably the benefits of growth and fostering social institutions to allow for the inclusion and participation of the population (Leiva, 2008; Webber, 2011). Those critical of neostucturalism claim that it does not offer a genuine alternative to neoliberalism and maintains an unequal relationship with foreign capital and reliance on extractive industry (Webber, 2011; Leiva, 2008).

The (2014) government document *Agenda Patriótica 2025* outlines Bolivia's present long-term development goals. It describes the importance of eradicating poverty through the provision of basic infrastructure and ensuring that all Bolivians have access to health care, education and sports facilities. This will be achieved through a 'diversified economy' that will focus heavily on resource extraction and commercial agriculture as well as the building of hydroelectric projects which will convert Bolivia into a net exporter of electricity. While the term *vivir bien* is used throughout the document, it is precisely this deployment of it, in relation to oil exploration and hydroelectric construction, that is regarded by some as a meaningless trivialisation of the concept (Cusicanqui, 2015). What Eduardo Gudynas (2015) labels 'progressive extractivism' has effectively become the national discourse of the government, within which notions such as *el vivir bien* and decolonisation are equated with equitable use of the profits of extractive industry and relatively conventional notions of development, progress and modernity. This progressive extractivism fits with the discourse of

‘ecumenical indigeneity’ discussed in chapters 3 and 5: the populist ethnic nationalism of Morales and the MAS which unites distinct ethnic groups and social sectors together into a single subaltern subject. Extractive wealth facilitates the policy of delivering projects through national development programmes that bear the President’s name and allows for public performances which celebrate the positive change brought through Evo’s presidency for the benefit of the formerly marginalised and impoverished Bolivian people. Costly high-technology mega-projects such as the nuclear power plant currently being constructed in El Alto or the telecommunications satellite named after Túpak Katari have become symbols of Bolivia’s new modernity as it finally emerges from centuries of poverty and dependence. In a public address, Morales stated that with the Túpak Katari satellite they would go beyond Bolivia to ‘decolonise space’ (Celis and Arce, 2014).

The breakdown in the *Pacto de Unidad* that took place over the proposed highway through the TIPNIS national park reflects the dissatisfaction of the highland and lowland indigenous organisations, CONAMAQ and CIDOB, over this direction of policy. The 2015 World People’s climate conference in Tiquipaya I attended represented one space where this ideological division was publicly manifested. The final document that emerged from the conference emphasised the importance of ‘transitioning towards a civilisational model of *el vivir bien*’ (CMPCC, 2015) and the speeches of the opening and closing ceremonies (which featured the highlight of presidents Evo Morales, Nicolas Maduro and Rafael Correa dancing together in highland indigenous costume) referred extensively to ‘the rights of the mother earth’. Concurrently, a number of figures from the CONAMAQ *orgánica* came to publicly protest and attend the alternative conference, *Mesa 18*. Among those present were Mallku Gregorio and the indigenous rights lawyer Edwin Prada, who acted as the official legal advisor to *Ayllu Kirkiawi*. The chief grievances raised at this event concerned the state mining law and mining practices that do not properly afford indigenous communities their right to prior consultation, while allowing transnational companies to eschew their environmental responsibilities through sub-contracting to miners’ co-operatives; extensive deforestation of the eastern lowlands linked to commercial agriculture and a general increase in extractive industry and the penetration of foreign capital. Those present felt that the MAS government did not take their environmental commitments seriously in any way. While they had appropriated many of the terms of the indigenous movement,

what was taking place in Tiquipaya was political theatre principally directed towards the outside world, including their socialist allies in Venezuela and Ecuador and international organisations such as the United Nations. In reality, they claimed, the MAS cared nothing for the rights of indigenous people and the principles of *el vivir bien*.

ii. A history of development in Bolívar Province

As was mentioned previously, Bolivia has adopted different models of economic organisation throughout its history which have affected the relationship between indigenous communities and the state (Knight, 2014) and this has formed part of the local history of the residents of Bolívar province. Since the national revolution and the corporatist period, communities within the territory of *Kirkiawi* would have had access to education through the construction of village schools and would occasionally have been able to secure projects for water or the improvement of roads. Nevertheless, the notion of development, understood broadly as the possibility of systematically planning the material transformation of their communities, only became widely accepted within the province during the neoliberal period, following the implementation of the Popular Participation Law or LPP.

As was described earlier, the LPP brought about the ‘municipalisation’ of government funds, meaning that local governments would receive a small fraction of the national state budget to grant to local community organisations for investment in basic infrastructure and other public works. While the LPP was part of a series of neoliberal economic reforms designed to decentralise government and transfer responsibility for the provision of basic services away from the state, a key element of it was the creation of instances of ‘citizen participation’ in the processes of planning and auditing of local development. The structure of the reform was such that this participation was limited to administering the fairly meagre resources allocated to a local municipal government, in this way helping to ensure Bolivia complied with the World Bank development goal of ‘good governance’ (World Bank, 1992). However, in Bolívar province, as in much of the rest of Bolivia (Postero, 2007), this limited inclusion and recognition had profound effects that went beyond the modest ambitions of the initial reform. It provided the people of the *comunidades* of Bolívar with a way of resisting the clientelist form of political relations that had existed since the time of the national revolution and helped legitimate and revitalise the local authorities. It provided them with a common cause to

unite against the neoliberal government and a site of political struggle and ideological contention⁶.

While the purpose of the LPP was ostensibly the inclusion of local people in decision making, it was introduced in a remarkably sudden and top-down fashion. The local government, based in the small town of Bolívar, suddenly became responsible for administering funds from the LPP, identifying needs and organising a development plan in consultation with the approximately 60 *comunidades* of the province. Until this point the local government would have effectively encompassed the former canton capital of Bolívar, while the position of mayor was *ad honorem*, dependent for funding entirely on taxes and fines, collected mainly in the town from the local producers of *chicha*. The elaboration of the first Municipal Development Plan (PDM) was therefore subcontracted to an NGO, PROSANA, who completed the process in less than three months (Antequera, 2013). To do so, they enlisted the help of rural schoolteachers, whose mission was to create a ‘communal file’ in which each *comunidad* would identify their needs, create a map and census and list their demands. In reality, the local schoolteachers became adept at filling out the paperwork and the actions of the NGO became limited to distributing and recollecting these documents, which in most instances prioritised the construction or extension of local schools (Ibid.).

At the same time, it was necessary to create the legally constituted community organisations who would negotiate for funds and projects with the municipal government. The LPP encouraged the legal recognition of small community organisations as *Organizaciones Territoriales de Base* (OTBs). However, rather than creating OTBs, the local *comunidades* were legally recognised as peasant unions, as this had been an existing form of social organisation since the time of the agrarian reform. According to the Bolivian anthropologist Nelson Antequera (2013) it was the involvement of local schoolteachers and *mestizo* townsfolk as privileged intermediaries between the state and the *comunidades* in the initial implementation of the law that led to the recognition of the *sindicato campesino*, rather than the traditional authorities, as the interlocutor with the local government. This is because teachers and *llaqta runas*, despite often being of rural origin themselves, tend to identify with a national white-

⁶ My understanding of this process comes in part from conversing with the Bolivian anthropologist Nelson Antequera who has written on the topic and carried out fieldwork in Bolívar in the early 2000s and with individuals who were involved in it, particularly Justiniano Cunurana, Severino Condori and Vincente Condori.

mestizo culture and viewed the *sindicato* as civilised and modern. While the *sindicato campesino* had existed in the province in some form since the agrarian reform and it was normal for *comunidades* to have *dirigentes* alongside *jilankus*, it was relatively disorganised and lacked a strong institutional purpose. Moreover, it was associated with the clientelist politics of the corporatist-assimilationist period, during which time union leaders would often ‘sell’ the votes of their communities at the time of national elections to the established parties, such as the ADN or MNR, in the hope of gaining food subsidies or money. In contrast, the LPP served to legitimise the peasant union by providing it with a role as mediator for municipal funds.

The top-down nature of the LPP’s implementation meant that it was treated with distrust both locally and by national-level peasant union organisations. Don Enrique from Vilaycayma informed me that there existed the widespread suspicion that the process was a pretext for the *q’ara runas* to tax or appropriate their lands. However, as the first modest projects began to enter with the small amount of money provided through the LPP, they were greeted with great excitement. With the entrance of funds for small-scale projects the idea of carrying out improvements to infrastructure, building public works and employing technology to improve agricultural production became commonplace. Vincente Condori and the former provincial union leader, Justiniano Cunurana, both explained to me that prior to this, the idea of constructing projects with the ongoing investment of resources from the municipal government, permitting them to decide as a *comunidad* or at the level of the province what they should prioritise, did not exist. To continue to manage the process it became necessary to properly organise the *sindicato*, as Don Justiniano explained to me:

‘In ‘97 they chose me as union leader of Bolívar province and I accepted this and afterwards began to organise. And the truth is they were not organised well but rather...the political parties would come and offer to the unions and they would manipulate them...there was no coordination...from there we began to organise, to first of all create a general meeting...after that we made workshops in order to be well-trained and to understand the new laws...Here in Bolívar province, in all of Bolivia in the countryside we were very discriminated against, very marginalised. With the Popular Participation Law being created we knew how we had to handle things. On that basis I organised...more than anything else in order to better manage the resources...’ (S)

According to Justiniano this led to a change in the relationship between the peasant union and the political parties as they were no longer beholden to them in the same way:

‘Before when there were presidential elections, of course they controlled us, they used the peasant unions...they looked for a leader and like that they entered...in that way they

handled us...they brought coca...sometimes money...they offered me political posts, money, but I didn't want it...with the LPP things changed...before the whole thing was totally controlled by political parties...' (S)

In Bolívar the ADN and MNR were the two parties who had dominated local politics prior to the late 1990s. While the MNR was ostensibly a left-populist or socialist party and the ADN a fascist party, they were described to me by Tata Sabino, Gregorio and Justinano as essentially different sides of the same thing, representing the control over the *comunidades* by white and *mestizo* outsiders. However, Justinano explained how this changed as the *sindicato* became organised throughout the entire province with regular meetings and coordination between the different levels of *central*, *sub-central* and *comunidad*. At around the same time that Justinano was elected to the *alcaldía* of Bolívar the traditional authorities were engaged in the process (described in greater detail in chapter 5) of titling their land under the INRA law, which in turn helped revitalise and legitimate the *ayllu* authorities. During Justiniano's term as provincial union leader the notion that the traditional and union authorities form a hybrid structure in which the different levels of authority each have their complement became widespread. 'We became aware,' Justinano told me 'that we must always walk together,' (*tenemos que siempre caminar juntos*) although he later concluded that they had unfortunately been unable to coordinate or come to an agreement in the subsequent years.

Eventually it became evident that in order to fully manage the resources available through the LPP, it was necessary to take control of the local government directly. As local politics in Bolívar had been traditionally dominated by the established parties, positions of power were always occupied by party outsiders from the cities or local *mestizo* townsfolk. Justinano was the first indigenous councillor elected in the 1999 elections as a candidate of the Communist Party (PC), adopting its *personería jurídica* or juridical personhood as a political party to run. In the 2004 elections the *sindicato* and *ayllu* authorities disagreed over the process of selecting candidates, this time under the *personería jurídica* of the MAS party. The traditional authorities had the legal recourse of using the *personería* obtained through the recently approved TCO and so stood for election separately under the title of POKUY (flourishing in Quechua). However, the two sides agreed on a common slogan of 'vote MAS or POKUY but not for the *q'aras*'. The result was to wipe out the traditional parties and establish an 'indigenous takeover' of the local government, with MAS and POKUY agreeing a 'pact'

to work together for the good of the entire province. This pact was helped by the fact that in this period the *sindicato* and the *autoridades originarias*, as well as the national-level organisations they belong to, the CSTUCB and CONAMAQ, were united against the deeply unpopular neoliberal government.

The modest aims and initiatives of the LPP had transformed the way people saw their relationship with the state, providing a means to overthrow the clientelist political relationships established by the 1952 revolution. Meanwhile, it embedded the notion of development within the discourse of local social organisations and created a site of political and ideological contention between them. While the LPP helped instil the notion of the peasant union and *ayllu* authorities as complementary, it also brought them into conflict over control of the municipal government and the orientation of its policies, the sources of funding for development projects and the form they would take. While it introduced the concept of development, understood broadly as the possibility of systematically planning the material transformation of their communities, in doing so it also introduced a space for ethical discourse over what this process means and how it relates to their common goals, history and identity.

II. Development and *El Vivir Bien* in Bolívar Province

i. The local politics of development

While Bolívar remains one of the poorest areas of the department of Cochabamba it has changed substantially in the twenty years since the LPP was implemented. In the early 1990s not even the provincial capital was connected to the national electric grid, there was not a single phone line in the province and public works were virtually non-existent. Despite the fact that the funds mobilised through the LPP were largely inadequate to meet the needs and demands of all the inhabitants of the province, the changes to their lives have been tangible. In the years since the indigenous takeover of 2004, the municipal government of Bolívar has produced three municipal development plans or PDMs. In each of the three PDMs from 2002-2016 *el vivir bien* is described as one of the guiding principles behind municipal development strategy, based on a ‘cosmo-centric vision that shall overcome the ethnocentric contents of development’ (PDM Bolívar Province, 2011). In addition to the PDM, the local government produces a POA or annual operative plan and the representatives of the local social organisations

participate in the steering of policy in both the monthly *ampliado general* and the bi-monthly municipal development committee or CDM.

At the same time, the budget of the municipal government has increased tremendously in the years since the 2005 election of the national MAS government and the number of technical staff has grown prodigiously. From 1994 to 1999 the money available for investment through the LPP had increased from approximately ten thousand to several hundred thousand US dollars (Arratia, 2002) and this has grown to over a million US dollars in the current period (PDM Bolívar Province, 2011). Once the municipal funds are added to the potential funding sources from government ministries, NGOs and national development programs the total budget theoretically available is several times this figure (Ibid.). These changes are reflected in the architecture of the town of Bolívar. The Bolivian anthropologist, Nelson Antequera, told me how in the late 1990s the figure of the Mayor would have attended people in a small adobe building that consisted of a waiting room that housed both the electricity generator of the town and the Mayor's office: a dimly lit space with wooden chairs, a mechanical typewriter for official correspondence and a desk, behind which hung the national coat of arms and pictures of Simon Bolívar and Antonio Jose de Sucre, together establishing the presence of the Bolivian state. At the time I carried out fieldwork, the offices of the Mayor, councillors and some technical advisors were housed in the municipal administrative centre: a two-storey building complete with meeting rooms and a tiny public library which included a payphone and two computers. Nevertheless, the administrative centre was no longer adequate to house the growing number of staff and the municipal government had begun the construction of new offices which were completed by the end of 2015. The finished *casa municipal* is an enormous conspicuously modern four-storey office building finished in gleaming white concrete, that dwarfs the one and two-storey adobe brick houses of the central square of the town. The new building vigorously establishes the presence of the Bolivian state and the power of the local government, functioning as the focal point for public assemblies carried out by the MAS controlled *alcaldía* and visiting politicians.

The source of this increase in funding in the 'post-neoliberal' period has been the nationalisation by the MAS government of hydrocarbon resources, coupled with historically high oil and gas prices. While the amount of money available for rural development projects has increased substantially, this money enters through various

sources, including the per capita municipal funds established by the LPP, grants from government ministries and the *fondo indígena*: a development fund established for the benefit of indigenous communities. More controversial is *Bolivia Cambia: Evo Cumple* (Bolivia changes: Evo delivers): a programme of direct grants from the central government for large public works. Thanks to *Bolivia Cambia: Evo Cumple*, the town of Bolívar has a sports centre and a football stadium, a synthetic football pitch and the aforementioned *casa municipal*. The works themselves are accompanied by giant billboards showing a smiling picture of the president and details of the precise cost of the project, indicating the amount of money Evo has ‘delivered’ to the community. The construction of synthetic football pitches and other large-scale public works have featured among the signature acts of the Morales presidency. Normally, when a large public work is constructed through *Evo Cumple*, the president appears in person to officially deliver it to the community, while the major social organisations organise an assembly in front of the president and local provincial and departmental political leaders.

It is precisely during this ‘post-neoliberal’ period that the issue of development had become a major point of contention between the different authorities in the province. When I spoke with several current and former *ayllu* leaders, they maintained that the local and national MAS government and the *sindicato* did not understand the concept of *el vivir bien* and were in essence the same as the government of Sanchez de Lozada, carrying out ‘neoliberalism with an indigenous face’, or more informally that they were ‘*la misma cholita con otra pollera*’ (the same young woman with a different skirt). At the same time, members of the *alcaldía* and peasant union were critical of the *autoridades originarias* for being resistant to change and not acknowledging the tangible material improvements brought about through the government of Evo Morales and *el proceso de cambio*.

Some of the publicly stated concerns of the *autoridades originarias* in Bolívar province echo those made by national level indigenous leaders and in forums such as the *Mesa 18* alternative climate summit. As mentioned earlier, the major deterioration of local relations between the union and traditional authorities dates to the national-level split of the *pacto de unidad* over the proposed highway through the TIPNIS national park, partly because of the close relationship of the traditional leaders with the CONAMAQ and COAMAC highland indigenous organisations. *Ayllu* leaders had publicly stated

their discontent with the lack of consultation of indigenous communities over roads and mining projects in the meetings of the *ampliado general* and during one meeting of the *autoridades originarias* Mallku Gregorio had shown us a film about the environmental dangers of extractive industry and invited a speaker from Northern Potosí to explain how their right to prior consultation was not being properly granted.

Nevertheless, many of the arguments that took place in public meetings and the grievances I heard privately expressed concerned the mismanagement of funds and misuse of resources, accusations of corruption and clientelism and the inappropriate and unsound nature of many of the large and costly projects. The accusation that the current government is really 'neoliberal' and '*la misma cholita con otra pollera*' refers not so much to its extractivist or anti-environmental policies but to the perception of the re-emergence of political clientelism and prebendalism. Mallku Gregorio described to me how during the years following the 1952 revolution, political parties, whether ostensibly from the right or left, kept rural people excluded from power and controlled them through the *sindicatos*. While they fought between each other, he claimed, 'all of them ate from the same plate' ('*todos comían del mismo plato*') as they were simply 'doing *pasanaku*⁷': exchanging positions of office while keeping things the same. White and *mestizo* politicians maintained power over the countryside and treated state revenue as their own, rewarding political cronies and providing crumbs to rural communities who would support them electorally upon the request of the union leaders. The accusation levelled at the *sindicato* and local MAS government is that this situation has repeated itself in a new form. This is related to the fact that they criticise the national MAS government for retaining functionaries and government ministers who are *q'aras*: part of the white elite who have always held power, such as the Presidential Minister Juan Ramón Quintana, who formed part of previous neoliberal governments. They claim the national MAS government, like the governments before it, attempts to use the unions to stay in power and does so by rewarding cronies with jobs and money and using projects as a way of buying votes. This is not a reading that is exclusive to *ayllu* figures: Justinano Cunurana, now retired from political life and living in Cochabamba, confessed to me that, while the *sindicato* had freed itself from being subject to political parties in the years following the implementation of the LPP, things have returned to the

⁷ The Quechua suffix '*naku*' indicates a reciprocal action. '*Pasanaku*' is to pass around between individuals.

ways of the past. Before, he told me, ‘the parties moved the unions. We changed that, but now the MAS moves the unions.’ *Sindicato* figures are accused of being *buscapegas*: self-interested individuals who see their *cargo* not as a position of public service but as a ‘ladder’ to a cushy political or administrative role. Moreover, the apparently inflated figures of various projects are attributed to embezzlement on the part of municipal government politicians and staff, an accusation made not just by *ayllu* leaders but by some of the townsfolk of Bolívar and individuals I spoke with in Vilaycayma.

I am unable to corroborate the extent to which the accusations of corruption, embezzlement, clientelism and cronyism are true. However, there are a number of points worth making about how local development and political power have co-evolved during the ‘post-neoliberal’ period. Firstly, as described in the previous section, from the start of the process of implementing the LPP the *sindicato* was favoured as the natural interlocutor for development money, a role it readily assumed and in which it was legally instituted. In part, this was due to the role of the *mestizo* townsfolk, rural teachers and traditional politicians in the process, but also because of the union’s more outward-facing role as a civil society organisation which provides a link between rural communities and the state. With the 2004 indigenous takeover of the municipal government and the failure to agree a single electoral slate for both the union and traditional authorities, a mutually supportive relationship was established between the *sindicato* and the MAS. In the municipal government the Mayor is not directly elected but appointed by the five-person *consejería municipal*, whose task is to audit the projects enacted by the executive. The local MAS party, largely composed of *sindicato* figures, has consistently won a narrow majority of the council seats in every election since 2004, meaning they control the municipal funds and development policy and direct these towards projects initiated by the unions.

At the same time, the change in both the overall quantity and sources of funding coming into the province only serves to reinforce this mutually supportive relationship, as more money has become available through per capita municipal funds and even more via direct grants such as *Bolivia Cambia: Evo Cumple*. Huge projects, such as the *casa municipal* or the local football stadium are attributed to Tata Evo and the MAS and show the power of the national and local MAS party and the *sindicato* to ‘deliver development’. During the time of my fieldwork, figures in the local government and

sindicato were declaring their intention to build a three-storey provincial headquarters for the peasant union in the town of Bolívar alongside the *casa municipal*. Mallku Gregorio described this as nothing more than a display of power, designed to ‘disappear the *ayllu*’. Although the *ayllu* authorities have never been as involved in acquiring and administering projects, the fact that large numbers of NGOs have left the country or in some cases been expelled, described by President Morales as ‘pawns of foreign interests’ (Postero, 2016), alongside the freezing of money from the *fondo indígena*, has denuded them of potential funding sources. At the time of my fieldwork the *fondo indígena* had been suspended while an investigation took place into numerous allegations of corruption by senior figures within both the CSTUCB and CONAMAQ. Despite this, the traditional authorities complained that the case of the *fondo indígena* was ‘politicised’, as the freezing of funds affected *ayllu* organisations more than the unions, while the corruption allegations were allegedly being used to target high-level CONAMAQ figures critical of the government, such as its former president, Felix Becerra.

ii. The local meanings of development

In January 2016 I attended the official celebrations of the anniversary of the province in the town of Bolívar. People had arrived from as far away as Argentina to attend a party in the main square of the town and the following morning Evo Morales was due to arrive in his Presidential helicopter to officially deliver the *casa municipal*. The event took place shortly before the national referendum on changing the constitution to allow for Morales’ third term. Individuals from every *comunidad* in the province poured into the square with placards indicating that they represented a particular *comunidad* or *sub-central*. Some of them held placards with specific demands addressed to ‘Tata Evo’, such as a clean water programme, a new *sede sindical*, electrification or irrigation. After several hours of waiting it was announced that due to bad weather in El Chapare the President would not arrive and the event took place without him. The Mayor of Bolívar, provincial and departmental union leaders and various politicians from the departmental congress stood on a platform in front of the newly built *casa municipal*, dressed in highland indigenous clothing of sheep hide *sombreros* and homespun jackets and in fluent *Quechëñol* extolled the progress that had been made in the province thanks to the nationalisation of hydrocarbons and the development programmes of the national government. The new *casa municipal*, stated Mayor Francisco Delgado, did not belong

to the municipal government but to all of them. Before, he emphasised, no one represented the *gente humilde*, the people of the *comunidades*, but thanks to the last ten years of investment they had increased access to electrical power, clean water and health care.

How should the performative nature of this event be interpreted? For the *ayllu* figures I spoke with, it exemplified the MAS government's building of financially costly white elephants as a way of publicly demonstrating their power and instituting a new form of *caudillismo* in which the peasant unions organise support for the MAS and President Morales. Nevertheless, it is clear from talking with the local MAS politicians and figures within the union that for them it represents more than a cynical exercise of power. Displaying the diacritical markers of *originario* identity while delivering the project exhibits the progress made in Bolivia towards inclusion and recognition of the *gente humilde*. Projects such as the synthetic football pitch and the *casa municipal*, with their conspicuous size and modern appearance, perform at a local level (as the Túpak Katari communications satellite and other public works do nationally) the emergence of the nation's 'indigenous majority' from centuries of poverty, exclusion and dependence. This was emphasised to me in conversations with various members of the MAS *alcaldía*, including Mayor Francisco and Vincente Condori and by union figures who were proud of the level of development they had brought to the province and who felt this would only improve in the future.

For example, Severina Wayatola, the women's union leader at the departmental level spoke with me in the offices of the FSUTCC in Cochabamba. Severina had begun a long trajectory in peasant unionism in the late 1990s as *secretaria de actas* or minutes secretary in her *comunidad* of Challviri in Bolívar. Severina is mentioned at the start of this chapter for her intervention in the *ampliado general*, praising the fact that only 'Tata Evo' could 'bring development' to the province. I spoke with her at some length about the history of local politics in Bolívar and current developments. She told me the following about the indigenous takeover and the changes that have occurred locally thanks to 'the process of change':

'Some comrades were saying, 'and why don't you all stand as *campesinos*?' They [the local government representatives] are all still in the city. They are not going to govern well...After this we began to see change...Before there weren't many resources and afterwards with [Mayor] Francisco there has been change. There are projects, agricultural production, education, health as well. All of this is thanks to the process of

change at the national level. The nationalisation of hydrocarbons...this has been distributed and that's why there are results in Bolívar...We are aware that the *campesino originario* doesn't have money to live well...he just lives from the same potatoes and *ch'uño* that he produces...now it says *el vivir bien* in the constitution because everyone has to have good employment or if not businesses. That's what it says. That everyone lives equally.' (S)

Her reading of the constitution and *el vivir bien* is clearly at odds with that of local traditional authorities such as Mallku Gregorio but not completely inconsistent with the notions expressed by the Vice President Alvaro Garcia Linera and his brother Raul, with whom I had the chance to speak, while working at the Casa del ALBA in Cochabamba. Raul explained to me that the distribution of hydrocarbon resources is what would allow individuals in the countryside and urban periphery to create economic development, including cooperative businesses, based on their own 'communitarian models', without providing any definition of what this communitarianism consisted of. Severina informed me that the commercialisation of crops and investment in inputs and transportation for cooperative peasant businesses would allow them to be the equals of people in the cities. Moreover, she displayed an optimism about the possibility of bringing more projects and material improvements to the province, an optimism that was shared by others. One evening in Vilaycayma I was staying at the house of Don Severino and we were fetching water from the well to make tea. The night was cold and clear and as we gazed out at the nearby hills and the adobe houses of the *comunidad* Severino asked me if a village the same size as Vilaycayma in my country would have its own airport. I explained to him that this would be an absurdly costly investment even in the UK for a village of several hundred people but that it is possible it could have a small train station. Severino considered this for a moment and replied that, although they were still very undeveloped in Bolivia, with the process of change he hoped one day to bring these sorts of services to his home *comunidad*.

Mayor Francisco would often claim that changes brought about through development and technology have changed the province such that it is impossible to 'go back to the past', stating that this was what Mallku Gregorio and other *ayllu* figures wanted. More generally, it was suggested that the *ayllu* leadership were opposed to the progress brought through *el proceso de cambio*. Moreover, while they were critical of local and national mega-projects, they did not offer concrete proposals or deliver their own alternatives. On a couple of occasions during meetings I attended of the *ampliado general* and *Comité de Desarrollo Municipal* (CDM), Mallku Gregorio was, following

the union leaders, asked to report on the projects he had managed in the previous month and was unable to do so, precisely because the traditional authorities at the time did not have access to funds or the same relationship with the municipal government as the *sindicato*. This seemed like a deliberate attempt to publicly undermine Gregorio, but it served to underline the accusation against him of empty criticism.



Figure 19: Picture of the new *Casa Municipal*

When I asked Mallku Gregorio about these comments, he claimed the problem he and his *Kuraj Tatas* objected to was not the use of technology or with projects to improve people's lives but simply with the way they were being delivered without proper consideration of people's needs or the traditions of their communities. The projects were not just a misuse of resources but showed a complete misunderstanding of the concept of *el vivir bien*, which means to live in equilibrium with one's neighbours and with the land. Gregorio added that the peasant union authorities were following an idea of development that was wasteful while simply reinforcing their power and that of the national government. He showed me a PowerPoint presentation he had made with help from his friend Piter Fuentes, an indigenous rights lawyer resident in Oruro, and Toribia Lero Quispe from the NGO Fundación Tierra. This featured schematic drawings showing the development they wanted to pursue that allowed for improvements in their lives but took into account their relationships with other people and the environment.

He maintained that for the MAS and the union to live well means nothing more than to ‘have a full belly’, when what it really meant was to live in accordance with ‘who they really are’, referring to the past of their ancestors. Moreover, the reason they were unable to carry out projects that reflected their views was because the peasant union and municipal government controlled and monopolised sources of funding.

One example of a relatively modest development project administered under Gregorio’s term as *Mallku* was the *Proyecto de Papas Nativas* or ‘native potatoes project’, that had been financed with money secured from the *fondo indígena*. The project was carried out in the *comunidad* of Vilaycayma and aimed to diversify the production of species of potatoes native to the *altiplano* and to use a method of companion planting of different species of native tuber to increase yields and minimise the loss of crops to *gorgojo* worms. This was an alternative to the use of chemical fertilisers and pesticides which were generally opposed by the leaders of all the local social organisations because they are believed to sterilise the land. I attended the *control social* or official audit of the project in September 2015. A *técnico* from Cochabamba had arrived and sat next to Mallku Gregorio and some of the Kuraj Tatas in the *sede sindical* of Vilaycayma, while a number of the mainly elderly residents sat on benches or on the floor, the women dressed in their black embroidered *almillas*. Don Pancho, the larger-than-life hospital orderly and one of the supervisors of the project, had traveled from Cochabamba to be present. The *técnico* made inquiries as to where the money had been spent and a total was written on a flipchart in the corner of the room. During the public audit Mallku Gregorio was at pains to point out that the resources for the project, which included the seeds and hoes, were bought collectively and then managed and distributed by a committee rather than in the form of direct cash grants to families, as is sometimes the case. The project was designed to increase production for commercial sale while not prejudicing their food security and sovereignty and would recreate traditional practices. Individuals described how they had benefited from workshops where they discussed with individuals from the AGRUCO agrarian research institute the use of companion planting methods that had been used in the past but were becoming lost and had drawn on their own memories and ‘ancestral knowledge’. They had then purchased varieties of potato seeds and materials to initiate the project.

Traditional authorities I spoke with during a recess in the meeting claimed the *Proyecto de Papas Nativas* to be an example of a project in line with their values as *originarios*,

both in the form of its administration and in its aim to re-introduce the way their ancestors had cultivated. Not only did it incorporate local understandings and values, its goal was to rediscover knowledge and practices that were in the process of being lost. Don Pancho participated enthusiastically in the audit and afterwards explained to me that while they had been able to produce more, this method meant they did not have to spend money in the future on agricultural inputs such as artificial fertilisers and pesticides. Don Enrique stated that as they were changing their ways and being influenced by urban living this explained both why their land was becoming less productive and that people were also suffering health problems which were uncommon in the past. As people were consuming processed food from outside and drinking things like Coca-Cola it meant they were becoming contaminated and no longer lived as long as they did in the time of his father. These sorts of projects meant they could repair the damage that was being done. These remarks were also echoed by Tata Sabino when I spoke with him in Oruro:

‘Well before we sowed the earth very naturally. Now chemical fertilisers have appeared and it seems we are mistreating the land. The land has its hormones just like people and we are mistreating it, right? Now they are using inorganic fertilisers...they’ve learnt it, I don’t know where, over there in the Chapare. Before potatoes were not harvested until [the fiesta of] San Juan [June 23rd], because the longer it is in the earth, the sweeter it is. When we dug up those potatoes and made *wathiya* [earth baked potatoes], wow, it was delicious. But now worms appear and they become infested easily. And before the *ch’uño* lasted, it kept for years. But it doesn’t last the same way...In this way little by little we are contaminating everything. Before it is said that people would live longer than 80 but now we’re lucky to live 70 years. Perhaps from now on a good age to live will be no more than 50. Before we used only clay or earthen pots. Now everything is aluminium or plastic, so we are even contaminating ourselves...the weather is destroying itself and become tired. We are not looking after things properly as Bolivians. We are not dealing properly with plastic, nylon, with the waste that we generate. For this reason, many animals no longer exist. The toads here before in the countryside in these times of rain, so many would be crossing your path...things are no longer the same.’ (S)

Tata Sabino’s reference to the weather becoming tired was of relevance to the fact that the year I was in Bolívar the seasonal rainfall had been delayed, a phenomenon that people commented had become increasingly frequent in recent years. The relatively fragile climate of the *altiplano* was clearly experiencing changes and the problems in Bolívar had meant that the municipal government had to provide emergency food supplies for individuals in a number of *comunidades*. In Sabino’s speech the notion of the past and the time of their ancestors as representing a superior ethical and social order is mixed with ideas of moral and physical pollution, as both modern practices and substances are regarded as contaminating; a representation that was repeated to me by

several individuals from Vilaycayma and by Mallku Gregorio. The way the land is treated, the way food is obtained, prepared and eaten all form part of the complex of social practices which maintain balance between people and the land. It is the past of the historic *ayllu*, understood to represent a more harmonious state of social relations between the land and the people, which informs the choices to be made in development programs. This contrasts markedly with the way in which *sindicato* leaders and the MAS *alcaldía* look to the future brought by *el proceso de cambio*, a term they interpret to mean a relatively conventional notion of development rather than decolonisation or cultural revindication. As will be described in the final section of this chapter, the contrast in how figures view history and their place within it underlies the differences expressed over the meaning of development.

III. Development as an Ethical Discourse and Narratives of Struggle

'El vivir bien means that we must have everything within our grasp. It means we must have everything so as to live well. We must have, let's say, if we have a programme of agricultural development, we have to be able to produce well, to have a good capital. To have the resources to live well through the programs that president Evo carries out.' (S)

- Olker Nina, Provincial union leader of Bolívar

'El vivir bien, doesn't mean to eat well but to live as we did before.' (S)

- Sabino Veizaga, ex-Kuraj Mallku and founder of POKUY

While development has become the site of a political struggle between the different forms of authority in the province over the resources of the municipal government and the orientation of its policies, their discourse reflects distinct ideas about their identity and the goals of their community. These differences have to do with the historical trajectory of the two sets of authorities, not least during the period of the last twenty years. In the 1990s the *sindicato* became the recognised community-level organisation for the LPP and the traditional authorities initiated the process of collectively titling the land as a TCO. Yet these two projects represent different aspirations: one to become part of the Bolivian nation and to gain representation through the state and the other to defend their land, autonomy and identity. Both emerge from the marginalised condition in which people in areas of the Bolivian highlands such as Bolívar have found themselves: denied power or participation within the colonial and post-colonial state while finding their autonomy and very existence threatened. However, one set of authorities responds to this condition through a project that tacitly embraces a version of progress, while the other is a project of revindication linked to historic struggles. This is

expressed in different evocations of history, in distinct readings of the collective historical narrative of their community and interpretations of the category of *originario*.

When I spoke with former *Mallku*, Juan Apaza, about the political situation in Bolívar he told me it was absurd to accuse them of being politicians when they were only continuing the struggle that had been fought for centuries, '*Bolívar tiene apenas treinta años como provincia pero los autoridades originarias estamos luchando desde hace quientos años!*' (Bolívar is barely thirty years old as a province but the traditional authorities we have been fighting for five hundred years!). As was explained in chapter 2, when a *Kuraj Tata* assumes the *cargo* he is referred to in meetings according to the mountain summit of his *jap'iy*, not by his given name. In a sense he is no longer himself but simply embodies the *cargo*. This ritualised use of language, along with clothing such as the *poncho*, which should not be taken off in public by the individual who has assumed the *cargo*, represent what is sacred and eternal: the permanence of the *ayllu* over time as a form of social and territorial organisation and as a system of authorities. The same may be said of the other symbols of authority, such as the *tata santísimo* or *baston de mando*. This is not only passed down through the generations and carried by the *Kuraj Tata* but is treated with reverence when placed in a ritual pyramid at the start of meetings and offered coca leaves and alcohol, as are the ancestral documents of the *ayllu* which are venerated in the ceremony of *misa mast'ay*. The past is ritually evoked and the traditional authority is not only identified with it but becomes part of it in the moment of ritual. It is for this reason that the notion that they are 'politicians' is treated with derision. The term 'politician' is identified with the clientelism of the recent past and is seen as fundamentally alien to the traditional authorities who are a natural and neutral part of the social order.

In contemporary discourse the past is identified with the struggle of their ancestors and especially the past authorities to defend the *ayllu* as territory and as a symbolic referent against which the present may be judged. It is for this reason that only individuals with certain surnames, descended from the *ancestros apoderados*, may ascend to the highest *cargos*. It was repeated to me by numerous individuals, including Mallku Gregorio, Juan Apaza, Don Enrique and the former leader Don Celestino among others, that their struggle for centuries as an *ayllu* had always been led by the *autoridades originarias* against the *q'ara runas* or *patrones*. One evening, Gregorio explained to me the meaning of the clothing worn by the authorities. Each part means something, he told

me, from the *chicote* rope whip that meant the power to punish infringements of the *usos y costumbres* to the *chalina* scarf which was like the mountain peaks of the *apus*. When he spoke about the authorities of the past his eyes lit up with romantic enthusiasm. Although these ways were becoming lost, they were fighting to recover them, like his ancestors who had fought to preserve the *ayllu*. This was why he had accepted the *cargo* of *Kuraj Mallku* and would keep defending the *usos y costumbres*, even though there were many in the province ‘who were still asleep’ (*‘que siguen dormidos’*).



Figure 20: Picture of Gregorio and Dominga offering coca to the *tata santísimo*

This view of the past as a perfect social and ethical order and of the traditional authorities involved in a fight between the *originarios* and the *q'ara runas* is likely owed in part to the processes of the 1990s, such as the project of titling the TCO, their involvement with CONAMAQ and the broader undertaking of reconstituting the *ayllu*. It is not possible to determine the extent to which certain symbolic cultural elements referred to by the traditional authorities, including their clothing and rituals, are invented traditions. What seems more likely is that they have been reinterpreted in the light of the wider social and political changes of the last twenty years. There are clear similarities in their perspective with elements of *Katarismo*, and by extension the way certain ideas from it were recreated as a discourse about development by Aymara intellectuals. Nevertheless, it is a fact that individuals in Bolívar, as in many other parts of the Bolivian highlands, fought by legal and other means to preserve their lands and autonomy, an experience which involved an evolving struggle and negotiation with the

colonial and post-colonial state and the landlord class. In this regard, the discourse of the traditional authorities, along with their practices and symbols, which together evoke an idealised past and ancestral struggle, are an expression of the historical experience of their community and its common aspirations. This is no less true, however, of the peasant union.

One of my informants, Severino Condori, as well as being union *dirigente* in Vilaycayma during my fieldwork had been involved in the political project that eventually became the MAS as well as serving one term as a national congressman between 2002 and 2005. He had been involved from the 1990s in the project of seeking political representation for the people of the *comunidades* in the municipal government and had been the first person from Vilaycayma to finish high school and attend university in Oruro. This was a source of great pride for him but had also been deeply traumatic because of the discrimination he faced from teachers and the sons of miners and the urban middle class. At the time I met him he had been living in the neighbourhood of *Villa Pagador* in Cochabamba for the last fifteen years, while regularly visiting his home community and acting as a local *dirigente*. When I asked him why he became involved as a union leader and continued participating in the politics of his home community he gave the following response:

‘The principle that, let’s say, to incline myself to it is because of the people who have always been, that we’ve always been marginalised, right? We’ve been marginalised...from the city. That hurt me then because I couldn’t fight for the people for equality, to have at least, to run our own municipality...because before it was *they* who ran it. This has, the experience of the community, of the city has motivated me to involve myself in politics...that motivated me to carry on fighting in order to carry on, let’s say, helping the organisations and to not abandon my community.’ (S)

Severino’s views exhibit greater similarity with class solidarity and he makes a strong distinction between the landlord class or *patrones* and ‘those from the city’ and the *originarios* from the countryside such as himself, who are united because of their economic and political exclusion by the dominant classes. For him, the purpose of political organisation is to end the many indignities suffered by the *gente humilde* and what he describes as ‘political serfdom’ (*ponguaje politico*), a feat that was made possible but not achieved through the 1952 revolution:

‘There was revolution. The *originarios* in ‘52 raised arms and threw out the *patrones* because there was revolution with the *originarios* against the *patrones*. So, they rose up with arms, with rifles. It lasted a year, two years that revolution and the *originarios* won, right?...and there wasn’t a leader from the *originarios* to assume the presidency. We

handed it over like a well-cooked dish, like a well-prepared dish to Victor Paz Estenssoro who was the son of a *patrón*. He was an oligarch, from the bourgeoisie...So at that time the *sindicatos* were born here. Where there had been *hacienda* land, land of the *patrones*. In that way, the federations became organised at the departmental level.' (S)

For Severino the national revolution failed to free the *originarios* because they lacked the technical expertise and organisational ability to take control of the government following the revolution. For him, the political project that at the local level led to the 'indigenous takeover' of the Provincial government in 2004 and the election at the national level of an 'indigenous president' a year later represent a completion of the process started in 1952. For the *ayllu* figures I spoke with, the takeover of the municipality and the election of Evo Morales were seen as important steps towards the end of internal colonialism but not the ultimate goal of their struggle. This in large measure accounts for the ideological content of the split in the *pacto de unidad* at the level of the province, as both sides had previously been able to unite to end the clientelist politics that were prevalent in Bolívar province following the 1952 revolution, but within different long-term narratives of struggle. Once they had achieved this common goal the differences between them had space to surface.

For the *sindicato*, the revolution of 1952 and the agrarian reform were the defining moment in Bolivia which allowed the possibility for the nation's rural majority to gain control of the state. This feat was not achieved at the time, they claim, because the peasantry had not developed the organisational strength to represent themselves and were therefore betrayed by the white ruling class who took control of the revolution in its interests. The *ayllu* tends to see the national revolution as less important in the much longer history of struggle for autonomy dating back to the Spanish colony. For this reason, they believe in the need to more radically transform the neo-colonial structures of the state and 'rediscover who they are'. Each organisation therefore legitimises itself through reference to different readings of history. The *sindicato* plants its legitimacy in the national revolution and agrarian reform, while the traditional authorities do so through an idealised past. The traditional authorities emphasise the economic ethos of the *ayllu*, based on traditional forms of reciprocal exchange and communal work such as *ayni*, *mink'a* and *choqu*, which is partly why they place a great deal of importance on money not being involved as a form of reparation in the administration of justice.

Meanwhile, the *sindicato* emphasises the improvements delivered through the projects of Tata Evo and the ability of families to improve their material base and productivity.

The *sindicato* leaders and local MAS politicians therefore enthusiastically embrace large projects as emblems of the emergence of their community from a state of political, economic and cultural marginalisation. Their evocation of history, with its emphasis on the 1952 revolution, results in a collective narrative that looks forward to the full realisation of the promises of social rights, equality and the inclusion of rural peoples within the national state and economy, that comfortably fits with the idea of linear progress and conventional notions of development. While placing great importance on their identity as *originarios* during the official openings of public works, the local *sindicato* and MAS figures do not emphasise their relationship to the past and to the land as a form of life and community. Rather, they evoke the terrible poverty and marginalisation that they, the *gente humilde*, have suffered until the current period of political and social transformation. This is why they view both large-scale projects and the limited but tangible material improvements in people's lives as a result of increased government investment as a sign of their emergence from poverty and of their attainment of dignity. For the *ayllu* leaders, the defining moment in history is the colonisation, the long history of struggle following it and what they were as a people before it. Therefore, the fact that the traditional authorities view these developments more cynically is not simply because they do not benefit from them politically but because they do not attach the same symbolic importance to large public works and wish to use technology and investment in a way that is compatible with the *usos y costumbres*.

As was discussed in chapter 5, the traditional authorities are concerned not merely with defending the tenancy of their land but defending the land as territory, meaning the totality of a system of relationships, rather than as a commodity or factor of production and as an entity they perceive as possessing historical continuity with their way of life prior to the Spanish colony. This is in contrast to many of the *sindicato* leaders and the MAS *alcaldía*, who support individual titling precisely because it means the land *can* be treated as a commodity. It is for this reason too that their view of development centres around the improvement in material well-being of individuals or families and that they conceive of what it means to be *originario* in terms that we would identify as being closer to class, i.e., economic condition, occupational category and social position. In

contrast, *ayllu* figures believe in orienting municipal policy and development projects in a way that is compatible with re-establishing the social and ethical order of their ancestors, as was the case with the modest native potatoes project in Vilaycayma.

Conclusion

The issue of development is one that emerged repeatedly in public debates between the traditional authorities, the peasant union and MAS representatives of the municipal government during my fieldwork. Nonetheless, the very concept of development, understood to mean the possibility of planning the systematic material transformation of their community, is itself new to Bolívar province. It was only in the 1990s, following the implementation of the LPP that local social organisations became involved in using the resources of the municipal government and national agencies to fund infrastructure and development projects. The LPP was a reform intended to decentralise government and achieve the World Bank objective of ‘good governance’ and was arguably designed to provide a limited form of representation without challenging the status quo. Yet in Bolívar province it provided the *gente humilde* of the *comunidades* with a means of organising themselves against the prevailing forms of clientelism that had kept them excluded from political power. This process helped legitimise both the *sindicato* and *ayllu* authorities and united them in opposition to the white-*mestizo* political hegemony, leading to control of the local government by people from the *comunidades*. At the same time, it provided a site of political and ideological contention over the control of resources for development and the right to define the meaning of this process for their community. It was during the post-neoliberal period that the tensions between the different local authorities put into place by these changes erupted into open conflict. This is partly to do with the worsening of relations due to the national breakdown of the *Pacto de Unidad*, but also because of the way national development policy has created a mutually supportive relationship at the local level between the *sindicato*, local MAS politicians and the national government. This has been described as a return to the clientelism of the past, with the key difference that the chief political actors are no longer outsiders and *mestizo* townsfolk but individuals from the *comunidades* who publicly profess their identity as *originarios*.

This thesis has argued that the rift between the *ayllu* and *sindicato* represents not only a struggle for power but an ethical discourse in a sense similar to that used by the

philosopher Jürgen Habermas (1991). In the case of ‘ethical-political’ discourse (Ibid.) this is concerned with the collective identity and narrative of a community. While this has been expressed in a dispute over development and the authentic meaning of *el vivir bien*, it ultimately relates to the different evocations of their history and collective struggle. As Alasdair Macintyre has observed, the fact that ‘man is a storytelling animal’ (1981, p.216) means that the question of what one is to do can only be answered in terms of the stories one finds oneself part of. Human action directed towards a range of possible alternatives is only intelligible insofar as there exists a narrative understanding which links the present to both the past and the future (Ibid.). This is also true at the social level, as the stories we tell will inevitably shape the common goals or ends of the communities we belong to. The question of who we are and where we are going must be explained in terms of where we are coming from. When development, broadly understood as the possibility of planning the material transformation of their community, emerged as a concept through the LPP, this presented the different local authorities with a choice over what ends to pursue and the meaning of the process. It therefore became an ineluctable site of struggle, not only over power, but more fundamentally, over the question of who they really are.

Meanwhile, similar ideological differences are present in national divisions over development policy and the meaning of *el vivir bien*; the national government favours ‘progressive extractivism’ linked to an inclusive notion of indigeneity while other elements of the MAS and *Pacto de Unidad* search for an alternative to conventional notions of development in the communitarian forms of the *ayllu* and the ethical order of the past. While the *sindicato* looks forward to the full realisation of political and social rights and material well-being promised by the 1952 revolution, many of the *ayllu* leaders hope to recreate the social and ethical order of their ancestors. While the union leaders and local politicians, echoing the ‘ecumenical indigeneity’ of the national MAS party (Schavelzon, 2014), speak of being *originario* in terms more redolent of class, various traditional authorities emphasise the primordial connection to their land as territory. For this reason, union leaders and local MAS politicians express a notion of development and use the term *el vivir bien* in a similar fashion to the national government. The traditional authorities attempt to challenge this at the same time that their power and legitimacy is undermined by the mutually supportive relationship between the peasant union and the MAS.

Chapter 8. Conclusion: The New Bolivia and the Politics of Identity

When Evo Morales came to power in 2006, he was greeted with enthusiasm both locally and internationally and identified as part of the more radical end of the ‘pink tide’ democratically elected leftist governments which had emerged to challenge the prevailing neoliberal hegemony. Academics, such as the anthropologist and development scholar, Arturo Escobar, had viewed the appearance of new left governments brought to power by popular social movements as allowing for the potential construction of alternatives to capitalism and western modernity (Acosta, 2017; Gudynas, 2011; Escobar, 2010). Escobar, writing in 2010, identified the similarities between the governments of Ecuador, Venezuela and Bolivia and suggested the region was at a ‘crossroads’ in terms of the possible futures that would emerge (Escobar, 2010). Yet in the following eight years the pink tide seems to have retreated, as parties of the right have taken power in Argentina, Paraguay and Brazil and the ‘Bolívarian revolution’ in Venezuela has descended into chaos and tragedy.

Moreover, a number of commentators have questioned the extent to which the pink tide genuinely represented a decisive turn away from neoliberalism (Kohl and Farthing, 2014; Merino, 2011; Postero, 2013; Fernandes, 2013). One area of contradiction between rhetoric and reality concerns the fact that there has been limited structural change, particularly to the economy, where extractivism, path dependency and foreign ownership have not been seriously challenged (Leiva, 2008; Webber, 2011). Governments such as Bolivia, Ecuador and Venezuela, while mirroring much of the symbolism of the older Latin American left, remain committed to a project of reform centred primarily around constitutional and legal-institutional changes. As Nancy Postero (2016) has observed, a common feature of these governments is a radical discourse that speaks of change or revolution, of the transformation of their societies through bringing an end to historic inequalities which are the sequelae of the colonial and post-colonial state. Yet this is attempted through an enterprise that is essentially about the construction of a new state and a more inclusive form of citizenship, which may include notions of positive social rights and incorporate ideas or language from popular social movements (Ibid.). Accounting for the multiple complex reasons which may explain the development of this new left reformism at the level of the region is beyond the purview of this thesis, which has limited itself to exploring the

consequences of reforms on a local political conflict within a small community and the points of contention and transformations provoked by it. However, they likely include the re-emergence of left-wing and popular social forces into the political domain following the return to democracy of countries throughout the region, which in the process underwent a transformation from the more Marxist ‘old left’, becoming influenced particularly by human rights discourse and developing a greater respect for liberal democracy and the state as a vehicle for change.

In the case of Bolivia, the new state established in the 2009 constitution, privileges an ‘indigenous’ popular subject, constructed so as to include diverse social constituencies, and creates forms of participation and interaction with government agencies and the law. This has seen the increased penetration of the state into communities which had previously maintained a more indirect relationship with it. This presence is witnessed not only through interaction with local government, national agencies and legal reforms but in the physical construction of buildings and infrastructure projects, such as the gleaming four-storey *casa municipal* in the town of Bolívar. The increased power and importance of the state and the promotion of a model of mass citizenship privileges some groups and communities while excluding others (Canessa, 2012, 2014; Postero, 2016). In the case of Bolívar province certain elements *within* an indigenous community have benefited over others from the state-building project of the national government and support it politically and ideologically, while various aspects of the new state and instances of interaction with it have contributed to internal conflict.

The historical interaction between the colonial and post-colonial state and the inhabitants of the area which today comprises Bolívar province has helped form a sense of identity linked to a specific territory and shaped the institutions through which this territory governs itself and represents itself to wider society. As was explained in chapter 3, the relationship between communities like Bolívar and the state has gone through distinct stages which have helped define the strategies available to persons for negotiating autonomy and improvements in their lives and their internal forms of governance. The history of the last twenty years in particular explains both why Bolívar today is distinguished by a hybrid form of local government with three sets of overlapping authority and how the current ‘post-neoliberal’ period has contributed to the intensification of conflict between them.

Prior to the early 1990s, both the peasant union and traditional authorities were fragmented and lacking in organisational strength. The reforms of this period represented a fundamental reorganisation of the relationship between rural peoples and the state, comparable to the Toledo reforms or the agrarian reform following the national revolution. While the effect of these has varied from place to place, in Bolívar they served to revitalise and legitimate the traditional and union authorities by providing them with distinct but complementary projects: on the one hand of seeking representation from the state and material improvements in their lives through the Popular Participation Law or LPP and on the other of defending their historic territory, autonomy and *usos y costumbres* by titling their collective lands as a TCO through the INRA law. The implementation of the LPP and its effects were outlined in detail in chapter 7 and the INRA law in chapter 5. In both cases, these reforms, as part of what has been described as ‘neoliberal multiculturalism’ (Hale, 2002; Postero, 2006), had relatively modest aims and were arguably intended to grant limited cultural rights while decentralising government and allowing for the limited participation of local people in administering municipal budgets. However, they developed into more radical and transformative undertakings, leading to the electoral project of seizing control of the municipal government in the indigenous takeover of 2004 and the more general revindication of their cultural identity as *originarios*.

The more radical understandings which became attached to these processes developed principally for two reasons. Firstly, those involved became linked to wider ideological currents and discourses, in part through their increased interaction with larger parent organisations or *organizaciones matrices*: in the case of the peasant union, the CSTUCB and the evolving project which became the MAS and in the case of the *ayllu* authorities with CONAMAQ. Secondly, involvement in these struggles acted as a formative and consciousness-raising experience which helped shape the perspectives held by prominent figures within the different sets of authority today. While the peasant union has always functioned as a civil society organisation to represent rural communities, in Bolívar in the early 1990s it was associated with the clientelist politics of the post-1952 corporatist period and lacked a distinct role, given the presence of traditional authorities such as *jilanku*. Furthermore, the traditional authorities, while involved in administering various social practices centred around the land and agricultural work, had become fragmented and the higher levels of the *ayllu* were hardly recognised. The processes of

the 1990s and early 2000s not only strengthened both sets of organisations but provided an evolving understanding of their roles. In the words of Tata Sabino Veizaga, this served to ‘wake him up to who he really was’ and for Don Severino Condori it represented the fulfillment of the goals of unionism, through not only gaining control of their local government and resources but achieving dignity for *originarios* from the *comunidades* like himself.

At the time of my fieldwork, the peasant union authorities and the local MAS councillors, several of whom had served as union *dirigentes*, were more concerned with the aims of inclusion and representation within the Bolivian state alongside access to positive social rights and material improvements to people’s lives. The traditional authorities, on the other hand, tended to emphasise the defence of their territory and the ways of life linked to it. These are all things for which people from communities like Bolívar province have fought for during many years but which at times may conflict with each other. Silvia Rivera Cusicanqui (2010) talks about different ideological tendencies within the movement for highland indigenous revindication that came to be known as *Katarismo*, distinguishing between the project for inclusion and rights of the 1952 revolution and the longer struggle for autonomy and territorial control of the *ayllu* against the landlord class and colonial state. While the 1952 revolution is certainly a point of reference in the discourse between the different authorities of Bolívar province, it was the reforms of the 1990s which allowed them to acquire different roles and pursue projects that truly embody these dual aspirations: on the one hand of becoming part of the Bolivian nation and gaining representation through the state and on the other of defending one’s territory, autonomy and identity.

With the 2004 election of MAS and POKUY candidates to the local municipal government, all the forms of authority were effectively united into a single governmental structure. This hybrid system, in which the *ayllu* authorities, union and municipal government function together is understood to be complementary and referred to in terms of *la parte orgánica*. Furthermore, much of the organisational form and protocols of the different local organisations are shared, owing to the fact that people and ideas move between them, meaning also that notions of leadership, public service and democracy are shared between individuals occupying *cargos* in the peasant union and as MAS politicians or traditional authorities. Seen in the way, each form of authority gives institutional expression to the different dimensions of the common

aspirations of their community. Yet while the peasant union and *ayllu*, may be viewed as hybrid, they exist in a state of complementary tension. The notion of complementary tension I am employing follows the logic of the Aymara concept of *ch'ixi*, described by Silvia Rivera Cusicanqui: the quality of juxtaposing traits which may seem to be in opposition but can be held together as one without ever resolving into each other (Cusicanqui, 2010b). This notion accounts for the nature of much of the cultural syncretism of Bolivia that has resulted from centuries of colonisation and the common experience of highland peoples, who are used to living with different and seemingly contradictory meanings, customs and forms of life; negotiating the collectivism of rural communities and mines and markets or the teachings of the church and the rituals of the *ayllu*. The case of the different forms of local authority in Bolívar province is but one example of how individuals are able to combine seemingly opposing ideas and aspirations, without assimilating one into the other.

Nevertheless, there are moments when opposing traits can no longer be held together. The aspiration to defend one's land as territory and the aspiration to improve material conditions and gain inclusion and power within the wider state and society can and do conflict with each other and so do their institutionalised expressions. It is this which explains the fact that, although the province is small and that individuals occupying the roles of *dirigente* and *autoridad originaria* are all *originarios* from the same places and families, they express ideological differences and clash with each other. It has been the reforms of the national MAS government and interaction with the new Bolivian state that has destabilised this hybrid system of government and the complementary tension in which it was held together. As was described in chapter 3, the notion of refounding the Bolivian state to include those marginalised by centuries of colonisation has created a new 'citizenship regime' based around the notion of a popular indigenous subject, whose definition is left ambiguous. Meanwhile, the implementation of new laws and institutions designed to give autonomy to rural communities, privilege indigenous custom and effect the decentralisation of judicial power have generated instances of interaction with the state that have had the effect in Bolívar of obliging the different authorities to define their customs, values and identity. As a consequence, it becomes increasingly difficult to hold together the perspectives of those involved in the peasant union and the traditional authorities. At the same time, the national government has increasingly begun to promote a particular notion of a popular indigenous subject that

justifies its expansion of the power of the central state and extractive industry to fund social programs and infrastructure development. While the peasant union and local MAS municipal government figures broadly support the ‘ecumenical indigeneity’ promoted by the national government and do not publicly express opposition to its centralisation of authority, the traditional authorities of the province strongly object to this direction of national policy. This has been the case especially since the 2011 protests against the construction of the TIPNIS highway, in which figures like Tata Sabino and Juan Apaza were involved.

In many ways, the project of reform of the national MAS government has forced the local authorities of Bolívar province to choose one understanding of what it means to belong to their community. This has compelled them to articulate this identity and much of the common symbolic elements of their shared social reality. I describe this process as an ethical discourse: as a particular type of reflexive communication in which the meanings of utterances are made salient and contested (Habermas, 1991). Moreover, what Habermas terms ‘ethical-political discourse’ is fundamentally about making a claim to authenticity: about determining what values are germane to the particular tradition of a sociocultural group, its collective identity and common ends (Ibid.). For this reason, much of what is contested concerns what constitutes the collective ‘we’ that defines group identity, which as an object of discourse I refer to as the ‘ethical-political subject’.

It is the fact that this contestation takes place in the context of a community seeking to establish how it should govern itself by determining its collective identity, shared goals and values which distinguishes it as a *political* phenomenon. This approach represents an original contribution to theory in political anthropology. In much of political anthropology from the mid-twentieth century onwards, politics and political conflict have been understood in terms of a struggle for power between groups (Gledhill, 2000) or the analysis of domination and resistance and the discrete operation of power through ideology, discourse and other processes (Scott, 1990; Ong, 1987). Yet the term politics in the writings of classical political philosophy refers to the institutions and practices through which a community governs itself (Aristotle, 2000; Cicero, 2009). If politics can refer to self-government, political conflict may also be understood as an attempt on the part of groups and persons to shape their community and offer different perspectives of the common good and their shared identity. This thesis has examined how the

political conflict which took place in Bolívar province during my fieldwork was centred around making salient and contesting the norms, values and elements of the collective identity of a community which determine its goals and actions. These include the institutions and forms of leadership through which they govern themselves (Chapter 4), what it means to be an authentic member of their community and how this is related to a complex of social practices centred around the land they inhabit and their relationship to it (Chapter 5), the administration of justice (Chapter 6) and their common narrative and shared goals (Chapter 7).

Nevertheless, understanding how groups and actors contest elements of their social morality and analysing conflict in terms of distinct moral understandings can illuminate political processes more widely and relates to various bodies of scholarship within and beyond anthropology. For example, anthropologists working in Britain have explored the changes in the forms of identity available to people to organise and seek representation and the breakdown of the complex of social practices which formerly constituted ideas of personhood and community membership among the industrial working class (Evans, 2012; 2017; Koch, 2016). This has led to a shift towards expressing collective identity in terms of ethnicity and cultural nationalism rather than class, and local and national politics has in turn become increasingly defined by the multiple contestation of British identity and values (Evans, 2012; Balthazar, 2017; Standing, 2012). Meanwhile, a growing body of research in social psychology and the cognitive sciences has sought to understand contemporary political conflict in terms of disagreement over morality and collective identity (Greene, 2012; Haidt, 2012; Lakoff, 2010). This scholarship has primarily addressed the divided nature of national politics in the United States, through exploring how political disagreements are reflective of different moral outlooks which emphasise distinct foundational values (Haidt, 2012; Greene, 2013) or collective symbolic referents that express contrasting notions of moral personhood, justice and authority (Lakoff, 2010).

While this psychological research offers valuable analysis, it lacks the insights of thick description, of a detailed account of the cultural meanings which guide action and imbue it with significance, observed *in situ* by an embedded researcher. It also fails to detail the social factors which explain why differences in ethical outlook have emerged and become heightened at the present. This thesis has provided just such an account of

ethical-political contestation, through the ethnographic study of the political spaces of one community at a moment in time. Yet ethical-political discourse, the process of a community determining which values are germane to its traditions, its collective identity and common ends, is likely a universal feature of politics. Human communities, regardless of the nature of their political institutions, cooperate on the basis of a social morality which comprises much of the symbolic meanings of a culture (Tomasello, 2016). What I describe as ethical-political discourse may often take place in moments of rupture, when social change leads to a collective re-evaluation of these symbolic meanings and when persons struggle to articulate their own interpretations of them.

This thesis has analysed how disputes which took place during my fieldwork between 2015 and 2016 reflect these different understandings of what it means to belong to the community of Bolívar or *Ayllu Kirkiawi* and how they are connected to changes which have taken place since the election of Evo Morales in 2005. Chapter 4 detailed the consequences of the possibility of converting to an autonomous indigenous community or AIOC under the 2009 constitution. The issue of indigenous autonomy has divided social movements at the national level and the ambivalence of the MAS government over its meaning and implementation reveal something of the internal contradictions of 'the process of change'. Meanwhile, in Bolívar province it has led to intra-community conflict, revealing the problematic ambiguity of how the law defines the competencies of local authorities within a majority indigenous community, alongside what constitutes their traditional customs, norms and procedures. The history of the province, the nature of its local government and collective titling as a TCO mean that the form in which conversion to an AIOC may take place became an object of contention between the different authorities. However, this dispute quickly transposed into a discussion over what constitutes authentic leadership, governance and public service. Nonetheless, these debates reveal the extent to which the different authorities are hybridised and share certain concepts, protocols and values. What divides them is not so much the nature of leadership assumed by *jilankus* and *Kuraj Tatas* or *dirigentes*, but their expression of the common and at times conflicting aspirations of their community.

This difference has been consistently expressed in the long-standing debate over whether the land in Bolívar should be collectively or individually titled, dealt with in chapter 5. This chapter explained the nature of the land tenancy system in the *comunidades* of the province and how this is linked to traditional forms of agrarian

economic activity, understood to be part of the *usos y costumbres* that are maintained and defended by the traditional authorities. The presence of a minor legal functionary within a meeting of the *ampliado general* as part of an effort by the Bolivian state to decentralise judicial power led to the airing of this long-standing quarrel. The reasons given for defending or revoking the collective titling of their lands ultimately reflect different views of what it means to belong to their community: understood as being imbricated within a complex of social practices that are organised around the land and connect individuals with it, or as a collection of individuals and their families, united by a common condition of poverty and marginalisation, who seek ways of improving their material circumstances and inclusion within wider society. The comments of some informants suggest that the growth in double residence is a factor in the desire of certain individuals to seek individual title for their lands. Various aspects of the experiences of rural-urban migrants in peri-urban Bolivia tend to motivate them to not only change the way they view their lands and aspirations but how they understand and practice citizenship. This phenomenon is not only reflected in some of the discourse of the peasant union but directly influences the perspectives of its leaders.

Chapter 6 examined how a conflict over the inheritance of lands in a *comunidad* converted into an altercation between the authorities of the province over its resolution. This revealed differences in understandings of justice and its administration (for example, whether this is linked to the complex of social practices of the land as territory, such as cyclical rotation of *ayonoqa* plots) as well as interpretation of the constitution. The vacillation in the constitution between an inclusive and exclusive definition of indigeneity and over who counts as the authorities of an indigenous community provided the discursive space in which the dispute took place. Viewing indigeneity as exclusive, linked to a specific territory, customs and notions of ancestrality or as inclusive, reflective of the ‘ecumenical indigeneity’ of national MAS discourse, indicates to a certain extent the differences in how union and traditional authorities in Bolívar understand what it means to be *originario*.

Finally, chapter 7 considered how development has provided space for contention as it materialised as a concept within Bolívar. This took place because of the way the LPP made it possible for people in the *comunidades* to imagine the material transformation of their community through their involvement in administering municipal funds. In the current period, the direction of national development has divided the MAS and social

movements, an issue which has entered public debates in Bolívar. Meanwhile, the fact that the government speaks of development in terms of concepts such as *el vivir bien*, presumed to offer an alternative to Western development based on the worldview of indigenous peoples, has meant that such terms and the interpretation of their meanings have also entered local political discourse. Yet much of the substance of the allegations made by local *ayllu* leaders concerning the actions of the national MAS government and the local municipal authorities and peasant union are in reality to do with the perceived re-emergence of forms of clientelism and prebendalism against which they had previously fought. It is the mutually supportive relationship between the peasant union, local MAS figures and the central government that has motivated these accusations and brought the issue of development and its meanings to the fore. The differences expressed by local authorities over the direction and meaning of development ultimately rest on different evocations of history and representations of the collective narrative of struggle in which they locate their community and identity as social leaders. As Alasdair Macintyre has observed, the nature of human beings as animals who structure their lives and selves around stories means that action directed towards possible futures is only meaningful in terms of a narrative understanding which links the present to the past and the future (Macintyre, 1981, 1988). It is for this reason that the concept and practice of development, by presenting the different local authorities with a choice over what ends to pursue, became an ineluctable site of struggle, not only over power, but more fundamentally over who they really are. While the traditional authorities make reference to the idealised social and ethical order of their ancestors and the fight to defend their land as territory, the union look to the completion of the struggle to free the *originarios* from poverty, exclusion and political serfdom.

In all these disputes the term *originario* has been used by various figures to denote the ethical-political subject, the collective ‘we’ that defines group identity and underlies their disagreements. The fact that the word *originario* is a multivocal term is precisely what allows for its use in this way. While in national discourse it is often used to mean something akin to indigenous, it can also refer to a category of *ayllu* membership or simply connote one who is the original inhabitant of a place, as well as the ordinary people of the *comunidades* who have been denied power and dignity, in this sense used almost interchangeably with the term *gente humilde* or ‘humble folk’. Depending on the emphasis placed on these different meanings, it can stand for a class of individuals from

the countryside united by their exclusion and poverty or for the authentic heirs to a historic pre-colonial polity.

What it means to be *originario* for a number of the traditional authorities I spoke with is in reference to a past that is immanent in the present. This past is evoked and made real in moments of ritual, such as the placing of the *tata santísimo* together to be offered ritual libation and coca or in the veneration of the *soqta achichilas* and ancestral documents in the ceremony of *misa mast'ay*. For them, their identity as *originarios* is inseparable from the complex of social practices that mediate relationships between individuals and the land they inhabit and the living past which imbues this with significance. 'To understand who they really are' and 'to be *originarios*' is in reference to the historic *ayllu* and the struggles of their ancestors. Meanwhile, the rhetorical claim on the part of local peasant union and MAS figures that 'we are all *originarios*' is more than simply an affirmation of their common origins. Rather, it is the endorsement of a view of their identity which echoes the substance and rhetoric of the ecumenical indigeneity of the national MAS party. This is a broader and more inclusive understanding in which individuals are united by their humble rural origins as a marginalised group. What makes someone an *originario* is not their connection with the land and its past but simply the fact that they were born in one of the *comunidades*, including if they have left for the city at an early age and do not practice agricultural work. Displaying pride in one's origins through the diacritical markers of indigenous ethnic identity shows the progress made by *originarios* and their solidarity with their fellows. Those from humble origins who have been denied dignity and full inclusion within the state, educational system and wider culture are now in power and thanks to the process of change will see the benefits of development and opportunity for themselves and their children.

These different perspectives do not result from the objective characteristics of their community but from how the community chooses to view itself depending on what it aspires to be. These aspirations have emerged from separate attempts to organise themselves to address their condition of poverty and marginalisation and position of cultural and political subordination by a wider state and society which has successively threatened their autonomy and existence. This was given full expression through the manner in which the neoliberal reforms of the 1990s provided distinct but complementary political projects and roles to the peasant union and traditional

authorities. Yet while the peasant union has sought the possibility of better lives and inclusion within the state and nation and the traditional authorities the preservation of their territory and with it the integrity of custom, these two dimensions of the common aspirations of their community were held together in balance. It has been the emergence of the MAS government and the effects of its state-building project that have contributed to the conflict witnessed at the time of my fieldwork. Despite aiming to create a 'plurinational state' that respects the diversity and autonomy of Bolivian ethnic groups and seeks the decolonisation of government and society, this remains essentially a project of liberal state-building which attempts to construct a nation around a unifying concept of citizenship, while increasing the bureaucratic power and presence of the state (Postero, 2016). In seeking the inclusion of previously marginalised peoples, the Bolivian government not only excludes certain constituencies (Canessa, 2012, 2014; Postero, 2016) but also obliges groups to make their identities legible to it, a development which this thesis has demonstrated can have the consequence of unbalancing one of the characteristic features of highland indigenous societies: that of holding together seemingly contradictory ideas and aspirations.

List of key informants

Mallku Gregorio: Gregorio was the *Kuraj Mallku* of *Ayllu Kirkiawi* during the time of my fieldwork and lived in a house built on the edge of the village of Bolívar where I stayed for extended periods with his wife Dominga and their three children. I accompanied him and others, including his friend Javier, to meetings in Sucre, Cochabamba and La Paz. He taught me how to play the *charango* guitar.

Tata Sabino Veizaga: A former *ayllu* leader and full-time functionary of the COAMAC regional *ayllu* federation. Sabino was also one of the founders of *Ayllu Kirkiawi's* political instrument, POKUY. Although resident in the city of Oruro he was often present in meetings of the traditional authorities, NGOs and the *ampliado general*.

Tata Juan Apaza: A native of Vilaycayma and former *ayllu* leader resident in Oruro who also attended all meetings of the traditional authorities. Like Tata Sabino he had also helped found POKUY and had been very involved in the process of titling the TCO.

Tata Apolonio Guitierrez: The *Kuraj Tata* of Eximo *jap'iy* during my fieldwork, who lived in the town of Bolívar.

Alcalde Francisco: The Mayor of Bolívar was from Tanqaleque *comunidad* but had moved to Oruro while relatively young to study. An agronomic engineer, he had worked prior to his election as Mayor as a *técnico* in the municipal government.

Olker Nina: The provincial peasant union leader or *Tata Provincial*.

Don Justiniano Cunurana: A former provincial union leader and elected councillor who lived in Cochabamba at the time of my fieldwork. He had been a key figure in organising the peasant union during the LPP process. He was also a member of the Baptist Union church.

Vincente Condori: A local MAS council leader and former provincial union leader.

Severina Wayatola: A departmental union leader who was often present in meetings of the *ampliado general*.

Don Preksy: The owner of the shop in the central square of the town of Bolívar.

Don Severino: Former MAS congressman who lived in Cochabamba but served as the local union *dirigente* in his native *comunidad* of Vilaycayma. I would stay with him in his house in Vilaycayma and we met many times in Bolívar and Cochabamba.

Tata Maximo: The *jilanku* in Vilaycayma during my fieldwork.

Don Enrique Tola: A septuagenarian candidate for POKUY who lived with his wife in Vilaycayma, while his sons lived in the neighbourhood of Copacabana where they ran a printing business.

Don Pancho: A hospital orderly who worked in Cochabamba and lived near Yuraq Rumi. He was a native of Vilaycayma and organised communal work and attended many political meetings. A larger-than-life character full of stories and dreams, he had worked for many years as an artisanal gold miner in various parts of Bolivia. While an outspoken critic of the peasant union and the MAS party, he and Don Severino were childhood friends.

Don Victor Ari: The local pastor of the Baptist Union congregation in Yuraq Rumi who also occasionally served as pastor in his home *comunidad* of Vilaycayma when he would visit.

Don Fermin: A member of the Baptist union congregation. Originally from Palca *comunidad* in Bolívar while his wife was from Vilaycayma.

Don Francisco: The president of the OTB of Copacabana who spoke with me and allowed me to attend meetings.

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