

PEASANT WARS IN BOLIVIA: MAKING, THINKING, AND LIVING THE REVOLUTION IN COCHABAMBA (1952-64)

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Cochabamba: Bolivia's Breadbasket

Popular wisdom claims that bad luck never arrives alone. Simultaneous to the initial combats of the War of the Pacific (1879–83)—which pitted an alliance of Bolivia and Peru against Chile—a severe drought decimated the Bolivian population; war and famine raged against the livelihood of the popular classes. Coincidentally, world market prices for silver soared, initiating a mining boom in Bolivia that spanned three decades. However, what was excellent news for the Bolivian government and the mine owners, was a bad omen for the Indian communities of the *altiplano* or highlands. The main source of government revenue shifted from Indian tributes to taxes in the mining industry. Therefore, the fate of Indian communities was sealed—at least from the liberal elite's perspective—and the government initiated a process of forced privatization of communal lands.

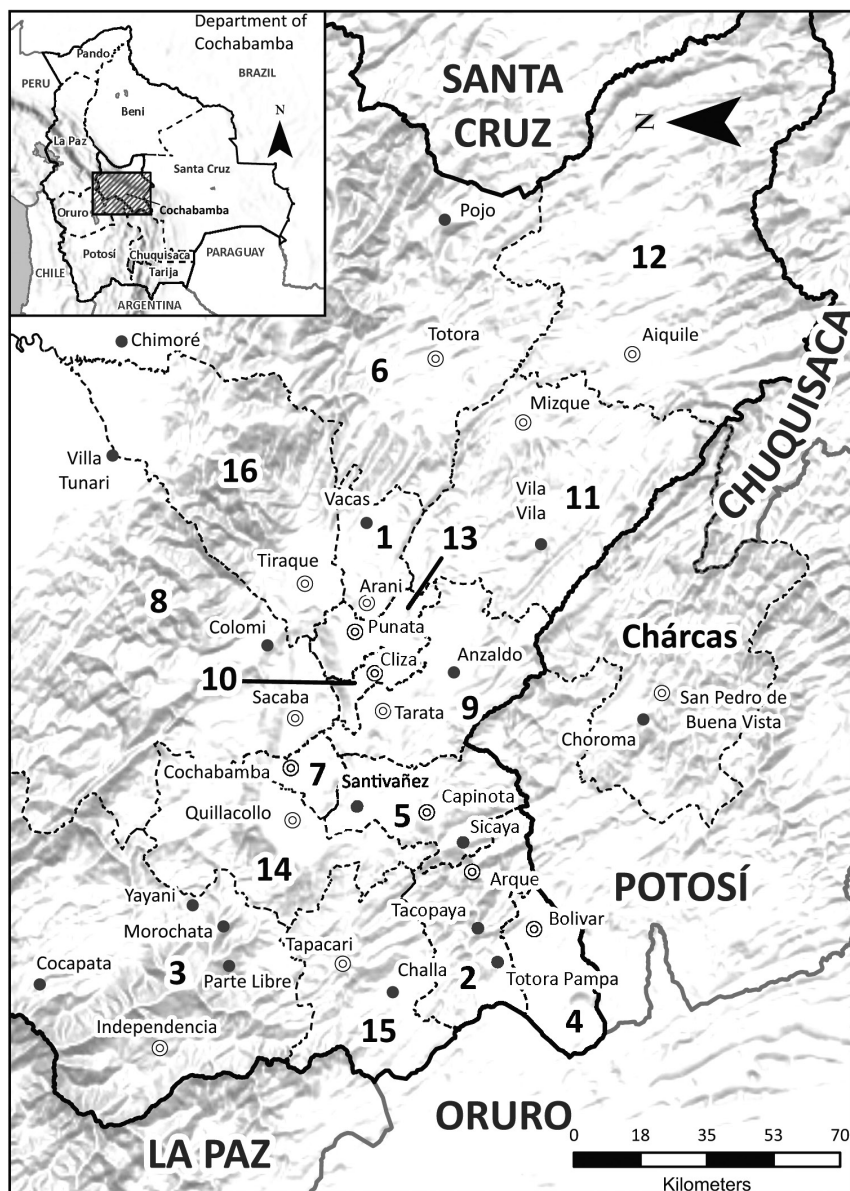
Indian *comunarios* (indigenous community members), in the highlands, fiercely resisted the redistribution of their territories, but the final result of the government effort for privatization was the expansion of the haciendas at the expense of communally held lands. In the Cochabamba valley, however, both Indian communities as well as haciendas owners partitioned their lands, and put-up plots for sale on the land market. Thus, while highland *comunarios*—led by their ethnic representatives or *caciques apoderados*—launched a judicial campaign to recover their lands during the first half of the twentieth century; the Cochabamba valley smallholders or *piqueros*—together with the hacienda *colonos* or tenants—organized peasant's unions to instead negotiate with the state for public education and social integration into national society. Leading up to the 1952 revolution, political cultures in the *altiplano* and the valley were strikingly distinct: an ethnic Indian *comunario* identity persisted in



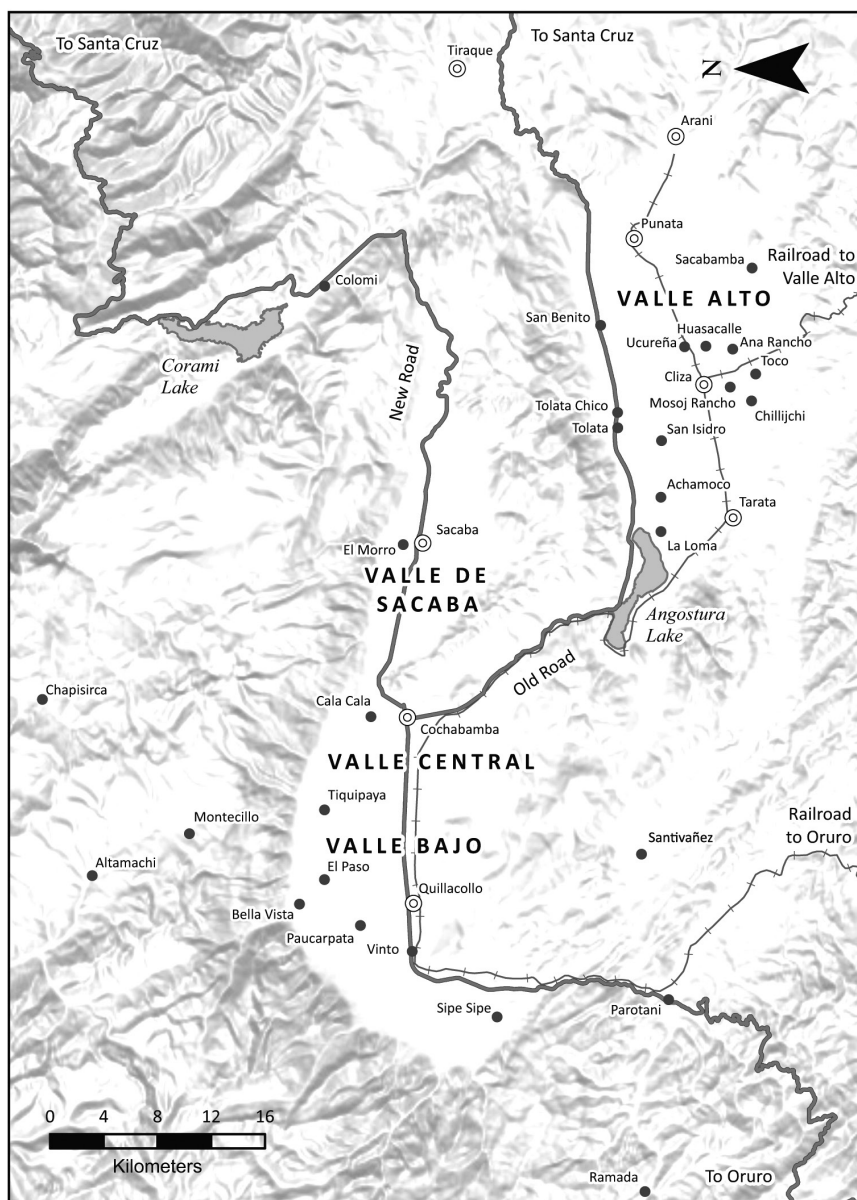
MAP 1.1 Bolivia: Departments & Capitals.

the highlands, while in the valley an ethnically defined class based (peasant *mestizo* or *campesino*) identity emerged.

How did a peasant-based society come to emerge in the Cochabamba valley? What long-term historical characteristics of the valley dwellers produced a smallholding *campesino* society? Why was this peasant society in the Cochabamba valley so different from the *comunario* society of the highlands? What role did market forces play in shaping Cochabamba's peasant society? How were ethnic and class identities forged alongside the historical development of a *campesino* identity in the Cochabamba



MAP 1.2 Department of Cochabamba: Provinces & Capitals. Provinces: 1. Arani; 2. Arque; 3. Ayopaya; 4. Bolívar; 5. Capinota; 6. Carrasco; 7. Cercado; 8. Chapare; 9. Esteban Arze; 10. Germán Jordán; 11. Mizque; 12. Narciso Campero; 13. Punata; 14. Quillacollo; 15. Tapacari; 16. Tiraque.



MAP 1.3 Cochabamba Valleys.

valley? As a sort of preamble, before jumping right into historical analysis aiming to answer these queries, let us first sketch a territorial profile of Cochabamba as it sits in Bolivia today. Geography and population mobility have always defined regional social structures and cultural differences in the Andes, and any historical account of Andean people must have its foundation in these two factors.

Cochabamba is at the center of Bolivia (see map 1.1). From this privileged geographical position, Cochabamba has direct access to four ecological niches: the western Andean highlands or *altiplano*; the central inter Andean valleys; the northeastern Amazonian basin; and the southeastern subtropical lowlands or *yungas*. In the western departments of La Paz, Oruro, and Potosí, the altitude of the *altiplano* averages 3,750 meters (12,300 feet). Meanwhile, the altitudes of the inter Andean valleys of Cochabamba, Chuquisaca, and Tarija averages 2,094 meters (6,872 feet). In the lowland, eastern departments of Beni and Santa Cruz, the altitude averages 285 meters or 937 feet. Historically, people from the highlands were forced to temporarily colonize territories in the valleys and lowlands in order to cultivate some specific products to complement their diets, for example, maize in the valleys, and coca leaves in the *yungas* (see map 1.2).

Although the Cochabamba valley is relatively small compared to the department's total territory, it has always played an important economic role in the region due to the fertility of its land. The capital city of Cochabamba is located in the Central Valley (*Valle Central*). West of the city, the Lower Valley (*Valle Bajo*) contains the most fertile land, as it is irrigated by mountain streams. To the east, the Sacaba valley is also an irrigated area, but the soil is rocky and less fertile. To the southeast, the Upper Valley (*Valle Alto*) has limited natural irrigation and agriculture depends mainly on seasonal rains (see map 1.3).

Inca Rule and European Expansion

Historically, the Andean population living in what is now Bolivia was concentrated in the *altiplano* area. In the late pre-colonial era (early sixteenth century), the *altiplano* population was multiethnic and multilingual. Several autonomous ethnic kingdoms or *señoríos* (i.e., Lupacas, Collas, Pacajes, Soras, Carangas, Charcas, Quillacas, Cara Caras, Chichas, Urus) occupied highland territories and used different languages (e.g., Puquina,

Uru, Aymara). The basic social unit of each ethnically based kingdom was the *ayllu* or extended kin group. Each señorío was ruled through a sophisticated dual system of power based upon two opposed ayllus; one ayllu more prestigious (*anansaya*) and the other less so (*urinsaya*). Altiplano societies at that historical moment were sedentary and people practiced agriculture under harsh environmental conditions. The most important staples grown to support the large pre-colonial highland population were potatoes and quinoa. However, some altiplano colonizers or *mitimaes* also cultivated maize in the inter Andean valleys and coca leaves on the mountain slopes of the oriental yungas, in order to complement the highland's population diet.¹

In contrast to the densely occupied highlands, the pre-colonial population in the Cochabamba valley was scarce. Only a few local ethnic groups (Sipe Sipes, Cotas, Cavis) subsisted in the Valle Bajo, while others (Cotas and Chuis) occupied lands in the Valle Alto, together with small groups of temporary colonizers coming from the altiplano. In the late fifteenth century, Inca Tupac Yupanqui expanded his Cuzco-based empire to encompass the Cochabamba valley, and redistributed plots of land to his allies. He allowed the Sipe Sipes to stay in the Valle Bajo, but uprooted the Cotas and Cavis to the Sacaba valley and also to areas bordering the lowland jungle region to the east, intending to have them protect the valleys from incursions of the "barbaric" yungas people. It was Tupac Yupanqui's heir, Inca Wayna Capac, however, who transformed the valley society in the early sixteenth century, organizing a maize enclave only a few decades before the Spanish conquistador Francisco Pizarro arrived in Peru, in 1532.²

Inca Wayna Capac negotiated with the altiplano ethnic lords the amount of tribute they owed to the Inca state, as part of the administrative process involved in that area's incorporation into his empire. As the Andean economy was not mercantile, tributes in the form of labor, goods, and services were required for the fulfillment of this duty to the state. The Inca channeled a portion of the surplus production of the altiplano into his imperial state; surplus that had previously gone to ethnic lords because of their ancestral levy, drawn from the altiplano population, now went to him. Wayna Capac, thus, simply adapted the preexisting tribute system into his wider imperial apparatus. For instance, the *mit'a* (a Quechua word for a required contribution of labor to the state, e.g., community

labor, or rendering services or goods to the ethnic lords) was readapted to benefit the Inca state. When Wayna Capac required the altiplano ethnic lords to send 14,000 *mitimaes* or highland colonizers to Cochabamba, he redistributed lands in the Valle Bajo based on *ayllus*. He ordered these colonizers to begin cultivating maize, and in doing so, Wayna Capac was, in fact, extending to a larger number of señoríos a pre-Inca practice that some of them (like the Soras in Capinota) already applied and maintained in Cochabamba. The señorío's strategy of exploiting multiple ecological zones to produce a variety of agricultural products and thus complement the diet of the altiplano population, was transformed into an Inca state-controlled project that multiplied production and mobilized people on a significantly larger scale. Cochabamba's maize enclave became, in fact, an integral part of the Inca's campaign to conquer the Quito kingdom to the north, as the fecund maize surplus of the valley was used to feed the Inca army.

Due to the strategic importance of the agricultural production of Cochabamba the Incas mobilized Quechua-speaking people from Cuzco to perform some specialized tasks there. For instance, close to the Inca's personal lands in Cala Cala (Central Valley)—which were cultivated by his own *yanaconas* or servants—an *acllahuasi* (a selected women's house) was built. The *acllahuasi* was a highly symbolic place ruled by *mamaconas* (Inca's wives), where young *acllas* (virgins) chosen from the local population performed rituals to greet the warriors when they camped in the garrisons at Cochabamba. Periodically, high-ranking officials granted some *acllas* as wives for Cuzco noble men, altiplano ethnic lords, and military commanders, as a means to reinforce loyalties and network links to the state. Thus, a few years before the Spaniards arrived in the Andes, the Incas organized a complex and powerful economic, military, and religious agricultural enclave in the valley of Cochabamba. As a result, a multiethnic and multilingual population settled (where Quechua speakers were clearly a minority) and grew there, producing a large number of artisans, agriculturalists, and warriors, who circulated periodically to fulfill their duties to the Inca state.³

The Colonial Order

After the execution of the sitting Inca Atahualpa by the Spaniards in 1533, the Inca elites were divided on the best response; Paullu Inca allied with the invaders, while Manco Inca resisted the invasion⁴. Thus, when Gonzalo Pizarro (conquistador Francisco Pizarro's brother) marched south of Cuzco in 1538, he found a weak resistance in Cochabamba as Paullu's had ordered Coysara (the garrison commander) to allow Pizarro to enter. The Spanish presence in the valley of Cochabamba initiated a power realignment process, both at the state and regional levels. As the strong pre-European invasion Inca state was weakened by the Spaniards' power, the altiplano ethnic lords started to directly negotiate power with the invaders, bypassing Inca authority. Similarly, as the power networks between the altiplano lords and the local *curacas*, or ayllu authorities, in the valleys were broken, the *curacas* also engage in direct negotiations with the Spaniards, bypassing the altiplano lords. The incursion of Spaniards into Cochabamba triggered a massive exodus of mitimaes to their original territories. Based on the remaining population, in the 1540s colonial authorities granted three *encomiendas* in the Valle Bajo: Sipe Sipe, Passo, and Tiquipaya. In contrast, no *encomiendas* were granted in the Valle Central, the Valle Alto, nor the Sacaba valley, due to their scarce population.⁵

The discovery of silver mines in Potosi (1545) precipitated the first mining industry cycle in the colonial era, which lasted until the 1560s. As a consequence, the demand for labor and food supplies sharply increased, resulting in the overexploitation of native laborers and an increase in prices of agricultural products and lands. The members of the *encomendero* class (people granted with an *encomienda* by the crown) were among the social groups that benefited the most from the silver boom, as they controlled labor and had invested in both the mining and agricultural sectors. In fact, *encomenderos* were so powerful that they dared to challenge the crown by demanding the perpetuity of their *encomiendas*. Civil war erupted in the Andes in 1542, and as a result of long negotiations between the crown and the *encomenderos* that lasted until 1568, the crown finally decided to end the *encomienda* system and take direct control of the colonies.⁶

Once the encomendero class was defeated, the crown sent Viceroy Francisco de Toledo (1569–81) to reorganize the colonial system in the viceroyalty of Peru. Toledo dissolved the encomienda institution, to begin after the next generation of encomenderos, ruling that all the 614 newly created *reducciones*, or Indian territories, would be state-controlled and that the people of each *reducción* would be granted with a common possession title of their land.⁷ Only territories external to the *reducciones* could be traded on the land market through the exchange of private land property titles. In 1573, three *reducciones* were constituted in the Valle Bajo of Cochabamba, based upon the previous *encomiendas*' population and territories. The *reducción* of Sipe Sipe was granted to Hernando de Silva, with a total population of 3,591 individuals and 819 *tributarios* or tributaries (abled men of 18 to 50 years of age). The *reducción* of Passo was granted to Polo de Ondegardo, with 3,298 individuals and 684 tributaries. Finally, the *reducción* of Tiquipaya was granted to Francisco de Orellana, with 2,573 individuals and 504 tributaries.⁸ All these three valley *reducciones* were multiethnic with *ayllus* belonging to different altiplano señoríos, local ethnic groups, and also some *ayllus* from the Cuzco area.⁹ Despite the reclamation of valley real estate property by altiplano lords in 1582, colonial authorities were unwilling to accept their request, dismissing an argument that Incas had gifted the lands to the altiplano ethnic lords. Spaniards instead reinforced political bonds with the local curacas by choosing the curacas who would be in charge of the new *reducciones*, thus further diluting the previous power networks of traditional altiplano and valley ethnic authorities.¹⁰

Once the total of 614 *reducciones* had been created across the Andean region and the number of people and tributaries was established, Toledo ruled that each year one of seven tributaries must comply the *mita* or forced labor draft in Potosi. Therefore, some 14,000 *mitayos* (Indian workers serving in the Potosi *mita*) were mobilized from their highland *reducciones* to serve for one year in the mines. The only three valley-based *reducciones* of the entire Andean region required to send *mitayos* to the Potosi mines were Sipe Sipe, Passo, and Tiquipaya of Cochabamba.¹¹ Viceroy Toledo's policy triggered a new silver cycle in Potosi, because it forced the native *reducciones* to subsidize the mining sector. In 1600, when the cycle reached its zenith, Potosi created a three decades long of bonanza for the

mine-owners, but also for the valley hacendados in Cochabamba that provided the market with maize and wheat at profitable, higher prices, as they now supplied a population estimated at 160,000 persons.¹²

In contrast to the people of the altiplano reducciones—who suffered under the harshness of the mita in this initial bonanza period—the people of the Valle Bajo reducciones were thriving. In 1593, the bishop of Quito, fray Luis López de Solís, made a *visita y composición de tierras* (visit and land titles composition) to the Cochabamba valley. He confirmed the validity of the Sipe Sipe, Passo, and Tiquipaya reducciones land titles, with no change regarding the extension of their territories. Which meant that the valley reducciones could share with the mine-owners and hacendados the blessings of the bonanza period. For instance, as Sipe Sipe's *caja de comunidad* (community treasury) overflowed with profits from agriculture, curacas and local authorities decided to invest the money in the community by extending credit (*censos*) to private individuals to buy their hacienda lands—with the property as collateral—at a fixed annual interest rate.¹³ This operation of employing Indian-owned capital to finance Spaniard's land transactions was not only illegal, but also a risky business. More than a century later, in 1717, Sipe Sipe curacas were still asking local authorities to compel ten local hacendados to make payment on 6,194 pesos owed to the caja de comunidad for loans they received between 1577 and 1586.¹⁴ The valley reducciones' good fortune, however, changed after the period of initial boom. In 1645, Joséph de la Vega Alvarado delivered a second *visita y composición de tierras* in Cochabamba. In this *visita*, landowners secured the titles to 870 hectares (2,471 acres) of Sipe Sipe communal lands; 435 hectares (1,075 acres) of Passo lands; and, 683 hectares (1,687 acres) of Tiquipaya lands. As a result of the long-term declining trend that the mining industry at Potosi faced from 1600 to 1750, communities became impoverished while landlords and mine-owners took advantage of colonial state policies and subsidies to consolidate their power and wealth.

Once Villa de Oropesa (Cochabamba city) was founded in the Central Valley in 1571 and the territories of Valle Bajo reducciones were delimited, it was clear what territory remained that could be sold to private landowners. Although landowners had already purchased lands in the valleys, it was only with the royal grants beginning in the 1570s and the *visitas y*

composición de tierras of 1593 and 1645, that private land titles in the valleys were finally legitimized. In 1692, there were twenty-eight registered haciendas in Valle Bajo, eleven in Sacaba valley, and twenty-four in Valle Alto.¹⁵

The extension of hacienda lands varied depending on land fertility, location, water access, and labor supplies. Valley haciendas were generally smaller—but more productive—than haciendas in the highlands. Valley haciendas were also better connected to the road network and closer to the most important local and regional markets, mainly the mining town markets of Oruro and Potosí. For example, hacienda Paucarpata in the Valle Bajo stands as one of the valley's most successful and long-lasting haciendas. This hacienda originally belonged to Polo de Ondegardo, the encomendero of Passo. In the 1540s, he purchased the land next to his encomienda—at the skirt of the Tunari mountain range—in order to organize his own hacienda. In 1593, his son Gerónimo regularized land titles through a *composición de tierras*; the hacienda at that moment had a surface area of 629 hectares (1,554 acres) of land. In the 1880s, hacienda Paucarpata had already been partitioned into smaller lots and the main proprietors in the area were the members of the Salamanca family, who owned multiple plots of land with a total extension of 749 hectares (1,850 acres).¹⁶

After the territories of the reducciones were demarcated, Toledo ruled that the people living within their boundaries should be called “Indians,” disregarding their previous ethnic identities. In other words, the colonial state invented the identity of Indian by subsuming all local ethnicities into one that was officially defined. Similarly, people living outside the reducciones had to be called “Spaniards,” disregarding their original Iberian ethnic identities. Indians and Spaniards were geographically segregated and Spaniards were specifically banned from living within the boundaries of the reducciones. Toledo believed that both Indians and Spaniards should live separately, and not mix genetically, but in the event of a biological mixture, the offspring would be called *mestizo* or a mixed-blood person. In practice, mestizos were defined by exclusion (neither Indian nor Spaniard), but as they were half-Spaniards, they were exempted from rendering tributes to the colonial state.

Toledo's Potosi mita was not replicated in the agrarian sector, instead, hacendados were allowed to register *yanaconas* or hacienda servants in their *padrones* (demographic records in the haciendas) in order to capture rural laborers. Although *yanaconas* were charged with an annual tribute to the crown, labor was so scarce in the Cochabamba valley at that moment that hacendados offered to pay the tributes for the *yanaconas*, only if they declared to the authorities that their ancestors and themselves had been serving the hacienda for time immemorial. It was an alluring proposal, indeed. Many Indians fled from their *reducciones* and registered as *yanaconas* in the haciendas. On the one hand, hacendados were eager to shelter *yanaconas*, as with more *yanaconas* registered in the hacienda *padrón*, the more valuable the hacienda was. On the other hand, however, the migration flow to the haciendas meant a declining number of tributaries in the *reducciones*. Curacas (and mine-owners in Potosi) became outraged over this situation and began pleading their case to the crown.

The declining Indian population and shrinking silver mining profits further exacerbated the struggle for access to a reliable, cheap labor force between curacas, miners, and hacendados. Several new fiscal identities related to reduced tributes emerged in order to conceal migrant Indians' ethnic status, such as *forastero* (foreigner who rented land to the hacienda or the *reducción*), *arrimante* (subtenant who rented land to the temporary tenant or *arrendero* in the hacienda), and *agregado* (subtenant who rented land to a tributary Indian in the *reducción*). In the late seventeenth century, *forasteros* already outnumbered Indians in the Cochabamba *reducciones* by four to one, and a century later by six to one. In 1786, the total Indian tributaries in Cochabamba was just four percent, meanwhile, the rest (96%) were *forasteros*. According to Larson, "as the *forasteros* assimilated themselves into the lower ranks of Spanish society, the socio-cultural distance between 'indio *forastero*' and 'mestizo' ('cholo') was diminished, and as reforms in the tribute and mita systems advanced, those boundaries were increasingly crossed."¹⁷

This long-term process of shifting ethnic and fiscal identities in the Cochabamba valley occurred side-by-side with the biological as well as the cultural mixing of the population, which is known as *mestizaje*. Mestizos, were usually excoriated by colonial (and later on by republican) elites, who felt that mestizos endangered their interests by their unruly

social behavior. In 1730, for instance, Viceroy Castelfuerte ordered a tax on people who were unable to prove that they really had mixed biological ancestry, for he “believed that the ‘alleged mestizos’ of Cochabamba were simply Indians and cholos who had exchanged their indigenous cultural garb for western clothing and identity.”¹⁸ Peasants, artisans, and laborers rebelled against the Castelfuerte policy under the leadership of Alejo Calatayud (a mestizo silversmith), but they were defeated by the colonial power in 1730. In 1788, *Intendente* (Intendant) Francisco de Viedma delivered his detailed description of the intendancy of Santa Cruz de la Sierra (which included the province of Cochabamba).¹⁹ Although impressed by the Cochabamba valley’s exuberance and fertility, Viedma believed that the abundance in the region was to be blamed for the people’s apathy and laziness. He reported that the Cochabamba valley had a population of 94,471 inhabitants; two of ten were Spaniards, four mestizos, and the other four Indians.²⁰ It was the ethnic composition of the population that disturbed Viedma the most, for in contrast to his perception of Indians as “the most skillful, industrious, and loyal vassals the king has in his domains,” mestizos were thought to “spend their lives in laziness, they are satisfied with a short harvest that barely allows them to survive, and they are prone to the excessive consumption of *chicha* [maize beer].”²¹ Although, in that historical moment, mestizos did not have access to land property yet, Viedma was worried that proliferation of the mestizo population was in fact imperiling the Spaniards’ authority and power in the region. How was that possible? According to Viedma’s socioeconomic diagnosis, the valley was immersed in an overproduction crisis. He argued that traditional markets in the mines were shrinking and there was a surplus of maize yields in Cochabamba that circulated in local markets, the profits of which were in the hands of mestizo traders and chicha brewers. Moreover, unemployed mestizos employed themselves as cotton weavers and a family industry sector of *tocuyo* (homespun cotton cloth) producers was emerging. Both of the above economic activities provided extra income to mestizo families, allowing them to gradually reach towards economic autonomy, in detriment to the landlords’ economic power and the local authorities’ political control. Before it was too late—Viedma urged local authorities—the regional elites must expand the valley’s ecological

borders towards the oriental lowlands, where landlords and entrepreneurs could create jobs and regain control over the mestizo labor force.²²

The Colonial Legacy in Early Bolivia

Although colonial Bourbon reformers began their attacks on corporate-owned rural properties in the late eighteenth century, this issue remained at the core of debates amongst Latin American elites into the nineteenth century. In Bolivia, the first President Simón Bolívar (1825) and the second, Antonio José de Sucre (1825–28), were both fervent liberals. Bolívar attempted to end the colonial tribute and replace it with an individual tax, as the initial step towards the abolition of the Indian communities. As he faced resistance from the native curacas, he ended up maintaining the old tributes under the new name of *contribuciones* (contributions). In this case, reality proved to be tougher than ideology: the Potosi silver mines were devastated after the War of Independence (1814–25) and the basic source of revenue for the early Bolivian government was now the Indian's *contribuciones*. In contrast to other Latin American nations that rapidly dismantled their colonial communities, in Bolivia, Indian communities—as a remnant of the colonial territorial redistribution—survived until the 1870s, essentially because they financially sustained the Bolivian government with their *contribuciones*.

In the 1870s, however, prosperity returned to the mining industry and *contribuciones* from the Indians were no longer indispensable. Thus, the *Ex-vinculación* law was passed by the Bolivian Congress in 1874, legislating that community members must hold individual titles for their lands. In contrast to the altiplano region—where hacendados plundered community lands to increase the size of their own properties—haciendas in the Cochabamba valley did not expand at the expense of former community lands. On the contrary, the privatization of communal lands in the valley favored landless peasants, artisans, and former community members, which led to a growth in the numbers of independent smallholders, who were called *piqueros*.²³ A consequence of the 1870s liberal attacks on communal properties was the preservation of smaller, resilient communities in the highlands and the dissolution of the communities of the valleys because of the partitioning of land into individually owned plots.

Liberalism at the Turn of the Twentieth Century

In 1900, the first Bolivian census was taken.²⁴ Bolivia had a total population of 1,633,610 inhabitants; 326,163 (20%) lived in the department of Cochabamba and more than half of them (184,111) were concentrated in the densely populated valley area. The ethnic composition of the Bolivian people showed a preponderance of Indians (48.5%) over mestizos (29.6%) and whites (14.1%). In the department of Cochabamba, things were different, as mestizos were the majority (51.8%), followed by Indians (22.5%), and whites (18.5%). Unfortunately, the second Bolivian 1951 census did not include variable ethnicity in order to make a comparison. It can be assumed that the trajectory of the growth of the number of mestizos, relative to the numbers of Indians and whites continued at pace, at least in Cochabamba. What is certain, however, when comparing the 1900 and 1951 censuses, is that rural property fragmentation in Cochabamba was an unstoppable process.²⁵

At the turn of the twentieth century, formidable market forces were at play in the valley of Cochabamba, which reinforced the ongoing process of partition of hacienda lands. Land fragmentation was the basis for social change, which started in the valley but later expanded to the *latifundia*, the large unproductive states that dominated the highlands. The main forces triggering the valley hacienda's partitioning between the 1870s to the 1940s, were economic crisis, debt, and inheritance. Essentially, the hacendado class was financially bankrupt. Thus, when the valley communities simultaneously dissolved, landless peasants, former comunarios, colonos, petty traders, and others took advantage of the growing land market to buy land and accumulate capital. It was through this emerging market that a new class of peasant landowners or piqueros flourished in the Cochabamba valley, at the expense of the weakened hacendado class.

In the late nineteenth century, silver mining production had again decreased and agricultural prices in the mining town markets became unstable. In the early twentieth century silver mining was replaced by tin production, but neither the silver nor the tin mining cycles were helpful to the landowner's interests in the valley of Cochabamba. On the contrary, the construction of railroads between Antofagasta-Oruro in 1892 and Arica-La Paz in 1913, favored the miner's interests, for railroad transport

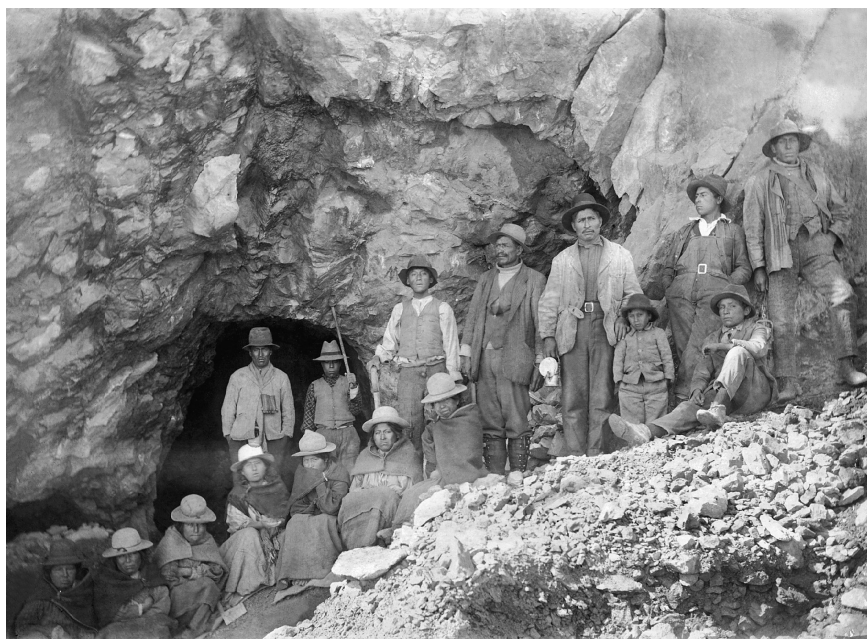


FIGURE 1.1 Peasant-Miners. Sinforoso Rivas, at five years of age, next to his father in the entrance to the tin mine “Bajadería” (La Paz, Inquisivi, 1925).

lowered the cost of exporting minerals to the world market. Landlords in the valleys suffered because of the railroads, as they were unable to compete with the prices of agricultural goods now easily imported.²⁶ Within this economic context, it was difficult for landlords to keep or sell their entire haciendas intact, thus they began dividing their properties amongst family members. However, even the smaller haciendas were not profitable enough for landlords to continue working directly on them; thus, they started leasing their lands to a growing number of tenant or hacienda administrators. As defined by Jackson, the hacienda administrators were “a class of *arrendadores*, individuals with money to invest in agriculture, but who were unable to break into the ranks of the landed elite.”²⁷ By leasing their haciendas, landlords were able to partially transfer the risks involved with agricultural production to their tenants, although tenants were already risking their capitals by investing into labor-saturated markets that undervalued agricultural prices. Under these tough circumstances, the

small hacienda-owning elite and the emerging hacienda-administrators class found no incentive to modernize agriculture. Instead, both of these economic agents continued practicing traditional *colonaje* or service tenantry in the hacienda, in order to further deflate the cost of production. *Colonos* or service tenants, in exchange for a hacienda subsistence plot, supplied labor for agricultural production on the *demesne* (hacienda lands worked for the direct benefit of the hacienda owner), and in many instances, also paid a modest rent.²⁸

Gradually, former colonos transformed themselves into piqueros or smallholders. Other scholars have analyzed the sources of the income that allowed the Cochabamba mestizo peasants to purchase small plots of land from the fragmented haciendas.²⁹ In general, they have concluded that wage employment in the Antofagasta copper mines, the Potosi silver mines, and the Oruro and La Paz tin mines provided the mobile valley peasantry enough financial resources to afford their own plots of land, thus transcending their servitude to the hacienda and becoming private landholders (see figure 1.1).

Populism at Mid-Twentieth Century

The Chaco War (1932–35) between Bolivia and Paraguay, had a profound impact on Bolivia's society and politics. The defeated Bolivian army was a microcosm of the segregated Bolivian society on that era. A small and corrupt cadre of ethnically white officials controlled the higher ranks of the army, barely interacting with their troops. An intermediate rank of white and mestizo officers and non-commissioned officers commanded the troops on the battlefield, while a large number of Indians, middle-class city dwellers, and urban workers, comprised the soldiery. The majority of Quechua and Aymara-speaking Indian soldiers faced a sort of social paradox, as they were defending a nation that segregated them into second-class citizens.³⁰ In the post-war era, nationalistic military governments ran the country and new political parties emerged, parties which challenged the segregation-based policies that had kept the indigenous population marginalized.³¹

The post-war era nationalist military regimes—known as the military socialists—advocated for social inclusion and government control of natural resources. This younger generation of military leaders aimed

to reform Bolivia from the top down. Colonel David Toro (1936–37) seized power through a military coup. He nationalized the Standard Oil Company holdings and created the national oil company, Yacimientos Petrolíferos Fiscales Bolivianos (YPFB). Colonel Germán Bush (1937–39) ousted Toro and enshrined a new constitution in 1938, which legitimized the legal status of the Indian communities and included a labor code. These military governments were politically weak, but their social policies profoundly impacted the Bolivian society. The urban middle-class was mobilized after the war, demanding the actual implementation of a nationalist agenda and this contributed to the growth of left-wing oriented political parties.

Among the important post-war era political parties was the Movimiento Nacionalista Revolucionario (Nationalist Revolutionary Movement, MNR), which had a nationalist multi-class-based populist agenda. It was founded in 1942 by a group of intellectuals—among them Víctor Paz Estenssoro, Hernán Siles Zuazo, and Walter Guevara Arze—who became important political figures in Bolivian history. The Partido de Izquierda Revolucionaria (Revolutionary Left Party, PIR) was founded in 1940 by a group of Marxist intellectuals, including José Antonio Arze and Ricardo Anaya. The PIR had a Stalinist, pro-Soviet Union international orientation, and had advocated for a democratic revolution prior to the emergence of socialism in Bolivia. The Partido Obrero Revolucionario (Revolutionary Worker's Party, POR) was founded in 1935 by the Marxist intellectuals Gustavo Adolfo Navarro (Tristán Marof) and José Aguirre Gainsborg. The POR was affiliated with Leon Trotsky's International Left Opposition that advocated for a permanent proletarian revolution. Finally, the Falange Socialista Boliviana (Bolivian Socialist Phalanx, FSB) was founded in 1937 by a group of nationalist intellectuals led by Oscar Únzaga de la Vega. The FSB principles were inspired by the Spanish Phalanx, although the FSB claimed to be opposed to capitalism and Marxism, as well as fascism.

Regarding the so-called "Indian question," all the new political parties were in favor of integrating Indians into the nation by educating them in specially created rural schools for the indigenous population.³² However, differences existed on each political party's particular approach towards agrarian reform. The MNR proposed the expropriation of unused

land on large and unproductive *latifundia*, and the elimination of serfdom on the haciendas by introducing an Agrarian Code or Statute to regulate labor relations in the countryside. The PIR aimed for an agrarian reform designed to liquidate the unproductive feudal estates, to abolish the servitude of the Indian and to convert indigenous communities into agricultural cooperatives. The POR also took part in the agrarian debate and the proselytization in the countryside; it reinforced ties between miners' unions and the peasantry in certain regions.³³

In 1943, a military coup brought Colonel Gualberto Villarroel and the MNR to power. Villarroel sponsored a National Indigenous Congress, which was held in La Paz in May 1945, with an attendance of nearly a thousand peasant delegates from all over Bolivia. In accordance with the then co-governing MNR's agrarian policy, most of the debate topics and the resolutions passed by the congress focused not on the problem of land and property, but rather on labor relations and servitude.³⁴ At the recommendation of the indigenous congress, the government issued a decree abolishing *pongueaje* (personal services rendered by colonos to their landlords) and regulating personal services in the haciendas. In the following years, until the 1952 national revolution, peasants, comunarios, and landlords, engaged one another in violent confrontations centered around differing interpretations of the aforementioned decree.

Comunarios and Campesinos as Dynamic Political Actors

Agrarian conflict in the Cochabamba pre-revolutionary era (1930s and 1940s) followed two different paths, each related to the geographical areas where conflict occurred. One area was the Cochabamba altiplano region—next to the departments of La Paz and Oruro in the west and to Potosí in the south—where *latifundia* coexisted with Indian communities (see map 1.2). In this location—mainly in the provinces of Ayopaya, Tapacaré, Arque, and Mizque—community members or *comunarios* confronted the state in legal terms claiming to abolish *pongueaje*, recover their communal lands, and preserve their culture. The long-term legal and political dynamics—which regulated the Indian's relationship with colonial and national states—were at the core of often-violent negotiations between ethnic representatives and government agents.³⁵ The second area was the Cochabamba valley region, encompassing the Central Valley, Valle Bajo,

Valle Alto, and the Sacaba Valley (see map 1.3). In this location, as previously discussed, Indian communities did not exist anymore and hacienda lands had been partitioned into small, privately held plots. It was, therefore, an emergent smallholder class that confronted the landlord's and local elite's interests. Initially led by piqueros and hacienda colonos, the Valle Bajo and the Valle Alto peasants organized the first pre-revolutionary peasant unions in Bolivia. Although the Valle Bajo peasants' leitmotif for organizing their rural unions was a demand for access to water sources, while the Valle Alto's was their demand for public education and access to land, the final goal of both peasantries was to insert themselves into the modern nation of Bolivia as citizens, with equal rights and duties vis-à-vis the state. The smallholder, mestizo population of the valleys had emerged in response to long-term market forces and had seized the opportunity to become private landholders, but by the middle of the twentieth century, the time had come for them to achieve true political representation.

During the pre-revolutionary era, a new generation of comunario and peasant leaders arose within the post-Chaco War populist political environment. Both comunario leaders in the altiplano and peasant leaders in the valley, started building new personal and political networks with urban intellectuals, worker's unions cadres, and activists in the nationalist political parties. At this point in time, however, the comunario and the peasant cadres' political experience and cultural backgrounds were completely different, as the former was based on the development of long-term political forces and the latter on the evolution of long-term market forces. The comunario leaders were born in a context of already established *ayllus* and these were an integral part of the political networks that related long-standing altiplano communities to their landlords and the national state. In contrast, peasant leaders in the valley were born in a context centered on the logic of transitory communities formed within the limits of the haciendas, and which were composed of a mobile population of rural workers. Besides the hacienda curacas or *mayordomos*—who controlled the hacienda labor force on behalf of the landlord's interests—peasants did not have any previous access to political networks that linked them as a social group to the political establishment of broader Bolivia. Whatever the context of emergence, the comunario and the peasant leadership did not surge spontaneously or at random, but rather, as Gotkowitz put it: “the

large-scale struggles for land and justice that Indians and peasants pursued at key historical junctures were not isolated movements. Like their Mexican counterparts, Bolivian peasants intervened decisively in national political upheavals, usually in pursuit of autonomous agendas.³⁶

Rural conflicts in the pre-revolutionary era were numerous and varied in the degree of violence they reached, ranging from isolated murders and assaults at manor houses, to labor strikes broadly interrupting hacienda agricultural production, to judicial trials against abusive landlords. To illustrate the prevalent political environment during the pre-revolutionary era and the active political role that the comunario and peasant leadership played, two study cases in the altiplano (Ayopaya) and the valley (Ucureña) areas of Cochabamba are discussed below.

Altiplano Uprisings: Ayopaya

The Ayopaya rebellion has been documented by scholars from both historical as well as anthropological perspectives.³⁷ Thus, this synopsis focuses instead on the political experience resulting from the rebellion. The Ayopaya upheaval lasted from 4 to 10 February 1947, and affected many estates in the Ayopaya province (see map 1.2), resulting in several wounded peasants and the death of two landlords. Sources documenting the rebellion include statements from witnesses that were registered in the records of the criminal trials held against the rebels, which were conducted in the judicial courts of Oruro and Cochabamba.³⁸

Peasants at that era were mostly illiterate and their direct voices can rarely be found when analyzing political struggles. Although judicial courts records provide us with direct statements made by peasant witnesses, some precautionary measures are required when interpreting their voices. In this specific case, we must be aware of how language and power structures affect a direct reading and understanding of the peasants' assertions. Firstly, peasants in Ayopaya provided declarations in the Quechua or Aymara language. Police agents then translated the witness' statements into written Spanish; and, then, those statements were translated for an English-speaking reader. Secondly, the peasants made their statements with the implicit intention of avoiding self-incrimination for the crimes. The judicial courts agents' transcriptions were influenced by the political environment of that moment and so they sometimes "put words" into the

peasants' mouths. The translator sometimes altered the peasants' statements to fit in within the most acceptable political codes that are used in the English language. Therefore, only after surmounting all these filters, could peasants' voices (or murmurs) be audible and comprehensible enough to allow reflection upon them.

There were three main ringleaders in the Ayopaya rebellion: Hilarión Grágeda (a Yayani hacienda colono); Antonio Ramos (a colono from the Parte Libre hacienda); and Gabriel "the Miner" Muñoz (a political activist and MNR militant). Hilarión Grágeda, like many other peasant leaders in that era, started his political career litigating against abusive landlords. The first time he travelled to Cochabamba city in 1940 was to defend his brother, who was imprisoned after filing a suit against the landowner and the hacienda overseer, based around a labor-related incident. Hilarión Grágeda and other colonos presented a formal complaint against the Yayani hacienda owner at the Ayopaya court; later on, they arranged to carry out the lawsuit both in Ayopaya and Cochabamba city. The trial ended in 1946, and during that period Grágeda made contact with lawyers, workers, and peasant leaders, including Luís Ramos Quevedo, the general secretary and principal agent of the National Indigenous Committee, who was in charge of preparing the 1945 National Indigenous Congress.³⁹

In January 1947, the Yayani comunarios delegated a mission to Hilarión Grágeda, sending him to La Paz for the purpose of making a request to the state authorities to set up a school in the area. Once in Oruro—on his way to La Paz—Grágeda met Antonio Ramos, who took him to Gabriel "the Miner" Muñoz's house. According to the Miner's police record, he was a 24-year-old man, a miner by occupation, and a former employee of the Potosí's United Mining Company. The police record identified him as an "active MNR militant and amply dangerous for agitating the native elements."⁴⁰ Hilarión Grágeda's initial statement in the trial—which started in late February 1947, immediately after the upheaval—asserts that he and Antonio Ramos were annoyed at the time they met the Miner, because the government had shut down the free defense office which had supported the natives during Colonel Gualberto Villarroel's regime (1943–46). They both listened to the Miner who—while pretending to read some papers—let them know deceptively that,

Juan Lechín, as vice-president, had decreed and ordered that there be a civil war in the nation between landlords and labor tenants, so that the Indians should declare a strike and within sixty days they could kill all the landlords and if they did not do so, the landlords were going to kill the Indians ... the three of us agreed to bring the whole Indian mass together and attack the hacienda houses to avoid the landlords killing us.⁴¹

Clearly, the Miner's story was factually inaccurate and was told with the intention of misleading Grágeda and Ramos into taking revolutionary political action. The fact that both peasants were illiterate and thus unable to read the Miner's documents facilitated the Miner's intention to agitate the peasantry in Ayopaya through these men. Antonio Ramos, for his part, declared that in the days before this meeting, he had already talked with the Miner, complaining about the absence of the state's support for the Indians and protesting that he personally had been pursued and threatened with death by his landlord. This was the reason why Ramos had decided to join the Miner in buying dynamite, "to put to death my landlord Germán Garnica, for having been badly abused by him and his wife." When both peasants met the Miner at his house,

He said to us that, in the press and by the authorities, civil war had been declared in the country, and that an order had come out to kill all the landlords, and that after that they were going to hand out all the land among the Indians, and that he as an informed person was going to make all the Indians understand the orders the authorities had given, and to that end it was necessary that Hilarión Grágeda and I should collaborate with him with all efficacy to take on this task, so that afterwards we would be the highest people among the Indians.⁴²

The three ringleaders immediately returned to Ayopaya and mobilized the peasants. The Miner's harangues to the crowds in Ayopaya insisted that civil war had been declared between landlords and peasants.

Meanwhile, Hilarión Grágeda's discourse focused on the idea of reclaiming land for the natives. Both discourses were engraved in the peasants' minds as different, but nonetheless complementary, for their legitimacy was not contested until the peasants felt the weight of the state's repression. For instance, a peasant woman witness, Hilaria Silvestre, declared in the trial that one day, "a strange man who called himself 'the Miner' appeared in my house, without telling his name, with his wife as well, who indicated that an order to sack, attack, and kill all the landlords had arrived."⁴³ Another witness, Ángel Chambilla, stated that, "we rose up advised by Hilarión Grágeda who made us believe that we were going to be the owners of the land and that we would become community members [*comunarios*]." ⁴⁴

After attacking the Yayani hacienda, the crowd headed for Parte Libre hacienda, and the peasants led by the Miner shouted political slogans which livened up their march. As Martín Zenzano, a peasant witness, declared: "on the night of the attack on the house [in Yayani, the peasants] shouted 'vivas' to Bolivia and communism and said that the PIR had won and will share out land to us."⁴⁵ Another witness, Macario Luna asserted that, "the Miner said: 'well, our comrades are waiting for us in Parte Libre, anyone who stays behind will be hacked up [killed].' Facing these threats, we all went to Parte Libre shouting 'vivas' to the PIR and down to the 'rosca' (clique, an exclusive group of powerful people)." ⁴⁶

Once the peasants had assaulted all the local manor houses—leaving two people dead and many wounded—the Miner decided to return to Oruro with the aim of contacting his comrades before continuing the uprising. However, on his way to Oruro, the Miner tried in vain to get the nearby ayllus to join the upheaval. As stated by Hilarión Grágeda in his declaration:

After these sacking and murders, the Miner said that we should go to Oruro with the aim of collecting arms from the worker comrades. He also said to us that on the way to Oruro, we would consult other community members about the measures we had taken. Effectively, in Andacaba he asked the community members for their support, but they

did not support him and refused to help, so then the Miner said that these community members were against us.⁴⁷

The Miner may have intended to set up a meeting with Juan Lechín in Oruro. Lechín was the head of the Federación Sindical de Trabajadores Mineros de Bolivia (Federation of Bolivian Mine Workers, FSTMB) and an important MNR leader. Nevertheless, according to Grágeda's testimony, when the Miner could not find Lechín, he gathered the peasants, who had followed him from Ayopaya, and told them that everything was going well and that in a short time another new law to carry on sacking would come out. However, since the police forces were after them, the Miner suggested to peasants go home and wait until Carnival to return. The only peasant who stayed in Oruro was Hilarión Grágeda, and together with the Miner, they consulted a young single woman in a black dress who said she was a doctor,⁴⁸ and who advised them "to visit the Federation [of Bolivian Mine Workers], where we immediately presented ourselves. There they indicated to us that the measure we had taken was very well done, that Lechín also agreed with us and that he would support us at all times."⁴⁹

Finally, exhausted by the events, both rebels decided to send a letter to Lechín explaining the urgency of the situation they were in. The original letter, which may have been written by the Miner, was attached to the judicial case file:

Oruro, 12 February 1947. Mr. Vice-President Juan Lechín. My much-respected father: Comrade, your children salute you, that is to say the peasant comrades. According to the law, last week we asked authorization in the press on the fatal slavery [sic] and assault (*saltío*) and that the decrees are never complied with nothing, it was carrying on personal service and mule service and a portion of sales (*vendinas*), and giving cheese and eggs and tax land surveys and fines without any reason and mistreatment to death. They [landlords] are content with nothing, they make us cry a lot over everything, they have gone too far, there is no patience anymore, and luckily there was a public decree for there to be a revolution against exploitation and against misery. And

for the reason that they committed abuses we have made a revolution for our rights and the truth we don't abuse anybody without order ... while we were advancing, attacking against the settled farmers (*afincados*), fifty and more soldiers have entered our territory to commit abuses ... we are ready to struggle, but let there be help. We beg you that you give an order to the miner comrades for them to help us and to carry on struggling against the oligarchy ... we don't want exploitation any more, nor do we want to suffer all our lives. We are united and they have full armament. ... Please do us the favor of providing us with armed people ... I ask the favor of sending us support. ... I await your answer from hour to hour, I am the comrade from the Ayopaya Province and the Ayllu Yayani. (Signed) Gabriel Barrios. (Signed) Hilarión Grágeda.⁵⁰

What is striking in this letter is the asymmetrical political position between the MNR politician and miner leader, Juan Lechín, in relation to the Ayopaya peasantry and its leader, Hilarión Grágeda. In ideological terms, both nationalist as well as left-wing pre-revolutionary Bolivian politicians shared the assumption that the mine workers were the political vanguard that would lead the people towards a revolution. Peasants, in general, were not considered as a revolutionary class, if a social class at all. However, the peasant's political situation in Bolivia was even more biased in the eyes of revolutionary politicians and intellectuals, for both were influenced by negative ethnic perceptions regarding the peasantry. Certainly, the abject social conditions of the peasants in that era contributed to the paternalistic postures towards peasants from the urban elites, especially their self-appointed role as saviors in their efforts to redeem the peasantry from misery.

After President Gualberto Villarroel's murder in 21 July 1946, the political right and the new (PIR backed) regime clashed with the MNR and the political left for the next six years (*sexenio*). The subversives not only agitated the political environment but also launched several attempts at a general uprising, the unrest reaching a climax in April 1952. Whether the Ayopaya rebellion was part of a greater planned insurrection,

or whether the subversive political context had led its leaders to launch a disconnected political action is a question still under debate. However, a few weeks after the uprising, three important peasant leaders associated with the MNR, Francisco Chipana Ramos, Antonio Mamani Álvarez, and Antonio Loza, caused agitation in the area of Uchu Uchu (Ayopaya). They were introduced to the peasantry by N. Soto from Yayani, who supposedly was Hilarión Grágeda's heir. A peasant witness to the gathering, Modesto Mamani, recalled the discourses of the activists:

Telling us that they are the lawyers (*doctores*) and that the government had sent them, so that we would join up and form a union. This union, they said to us, would have the mission of making a great mass or making a unity of the laboring tenants, and we will all be **indigenous workers**. Once we were united, within a little while we would all be **communists**, and then we would be free, without depending on anybody, and the land would belong to all of us ... You will have to face the landlords and the troops of the army as well—that's what they said to us. They would direct the movement, and would send us arms, guns and abundant ammunition from the city of Oruro ... And, for this uprising the day of Palm Sunday was chosen, the date which we should wait for, to strike all the troops who were to be found on different estates ... You will have support from soldiers in grey colored (*ocre*) uniforms who would come from Argentina, they told us.⁵¹

In contrast to Oruro, Cochabamba's judicial authorities took a different approach to the trial. While the latter characterized it as a criminal case emphasizing the landlords' murders, those in Oruro picked out its political and subversive character and tried to link peasant leaders with the opposition parties. For example, when they asked Hilarión Grágeda if he knew any MNR leaders, and what his relations with that party were, Grágeda replied:

I do not know any, nor do I have relations with any, but I must state that I continually heard the miner Gabriel Muñoz say that within a short while Víctor Paz Estenssoro would be president of the republic and [Juan] Lechín would be president of the supreme court. All the weapons, that is to say, rifles, machine gun, bombs, grenades, and airplanes, will be sent from Argentina by Paz Estenssoro to arm the natives and the miners.⁵²

It is important to point out that all rebellious peasant leaders in Ayopaya were illiterate. This fact of illiteracy in the comunario and peasant revolutionary cadres is not emphasized enough when scholars write about and discuss the origins and evolution of peasant consciousness in Cochabamba, although there is evidence that points to its importance.⁵³ The aim here is not to reproduce the prejudice of considering the literate person as civilized and the illiterate as primitive, but rather to stress the importance of what it means to be illiterate from a historical, social, and political point of view. Theoretical positions aside, peasant leaders interviewed in this study (see chapter five), always highlighted the importance of reading and writing to reach political autonomy. They were convinced that literate peasant leaders did not need intermediaries to negotiate with the state or any other political actors. In other words, they understood that the capacity of reading information and writing their own ideas were both vital activities to attain political independence, either as leaders of a social class or an ethnic group.

After the April 1952 revolution, everything changed rapidly in rural politics. On 22 July 1952, the MNR's revolutionary regime issued a decree, which granted total amnesty to all persons who had been involved in strikes, uprisings, or other acts of social protest during the "*sexenio*" (1946–52).⁵⁴ The Federación Departamental de Trabajadores Campesinos de Cochabamba (Union Federation of Peasant Workers of Cochabamba, FSTCC), was founded on the 6 August 1952, in the town of Sipe Sipe (Valle Bajo), next to the Ayopaya province. Hilarión Grágeda and Miguel Carrasco—among other peasant leaders—were released from prison on 14 September 1952, and continued organizing peasant unions in the area (see figure 1.2).⁵⁵

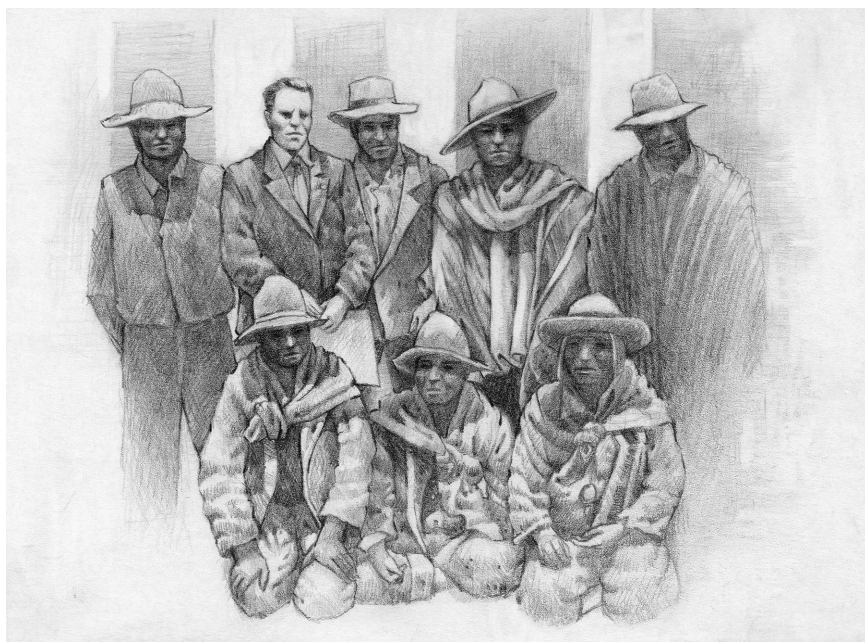


FIGURE 1.2 Peasants Released from Prison. Peasants accused of rebellion and murder released from the San Sebastian Penitentiary in Cochabamba. Peasant leader Hilarión Grágeda—with his hat lopsided—is standing up at the center of the second row. To his right is Miguel Carrasco, another released peasant leader. (Cochabamba, September 14, 1952).

Valley Political Struggles: Ucureña

The Chaco War (1932–35) was the catalyst that allowed the Cochabamba mestizo rural population to start building its campesino identity, by initially organizing their own pre-revolutionary peasant unions and—after the 1952 revolution—actively participating in the agrarian reform process.⁵⁶ Although the valley peasantry already had access to small plots of land and the group of smallholders was steadily increasing its numbers, pre-revolutionary piqueros did not have any political representation. The valley rural society—much more open than rural society in the altiplano—was nonetheless segregating; rural workers were the despised Indians, while vecinos or town dwellers were the decent people (*gente decente*). The valley mestizos enlisted in the army in relatively larger numbers than the

highland Indians, who were tightly controlled by the landlords. Mestizo soldiers on the battlefield got in touch with political activists and urban dwellers, who transmitted their political ideas to the soldiers.⁵⁷ Thus, veterans returning to Valle Alto became the change-makers in the late 1930s. They started building their own power networks with urban workers, politicians, and intellectuals, and helped to organize the peasant union and the construction of a school center in the hamlet of Ucuireña in the late 1930s (see map 1.3).

In the late nineteenth century, the hacienda Cliza was owned by the Santa Clara convent. The hacienda extension owned by the convent was estimated at 2,700 hectares (6,672 acres), however, some 1,974 hectares (4,878 acres), or 71 percent of the area of hacienda Cliza, were sold between 1891 and 1940.⁵⁸ The remaining land in the property was leased every five years to a group of wealthy tenants, who colluded to keep rent prices low. During the Chaco War, the most important tenant was a priest, Juan de Dios Gamboa, who mistreated the hacienda colonos. After the war, many colonos returned to work in their hacienda plots hoping to be respected as veterans, but they found even harder working conditions imposed by the tenant. In 1935, the lease contract expired and had to be renovated for the next five years; Gamboa was ready to apply for the tenancy. However, a group of colonos from Ana Rancho (a colonos' hamlet in the Cliza hacienda), led by Francisco Delgadillo and other war veterans, opposed the return of the previous hacienda tenant.⁵⁹

The colonos' logic was simple: if the tenant was to pay a lower rent for the hacienda leasing, why not lease the land themselves as a colono group by paying a higher rent? After all, the colonos' had been living in their usufruct plots for generations and fulfilling their personal services to the hacienda owner. Moreover, many of them were also piqueros and had fought in the war as loyal soldiers, which demonstrated their responsibility as hard-working citizens. From their war experience, veterans knew that help was needed in building their own power network to confront their enemies, mainly the rural elites who believed that the Indians were lazy, liars, mean, and nobody could trust them.⁶⁰ In June 1936, at the initiative of the colonos, they met with a Cliza teacher, a Cliza lawyer, and Antonio Revuelta—the son of a landowner and brother of Walter Revuelta, a MNR militant and future Cochabamba prefect—to discuss

the possibility of organizing a union and leasing the hacienda lands. The colonos were advised to meet with Eduardo Arze Loureiro, the secretary of the Department of Peasants Affairs in the Ministry of Labor and Social Welfare, in La Paz. Eduardo Arze was the son of a Valle Alto landowner and the cousin of two important politicians: José Antonio Arze (the PIR founder), and Wálter Guevara Arze (an MNR co-founder). Additionally, he was close to Elizardo Pérez and a group of *indigenista* intellectuals, that were working to find a positive solution for the natives' problems and education.⁶¹ Eduardo Arze was a POR militant and—together with Alipio Valencia—they were the only Bolivian revolutionaries who ever met Leon Trotsky, at his house in Michoacán, Mexico, in 1940.⁶²

Initially, the Ana Rancho colonos organized their union based on a decree of mandatory unionization issued in August 1936 by Colonel David Toro's government (1936–37).⁶³ A commission of three union representatives went to La Paz to meet secretary Eduardo Arze, who introduced the unionists to President Toro. The colonos explained that the union was willing to lease the convent land in 80,000 Bolivianos, while the previous tenant's offer was only 50,000 Bolivianos. President Toro was so impressed that he issued a decree officially recognizing the Ana Rancho union and instructing municipalities and religious orders with rural properties to give preference to the unions of colonos when leasing their lands. Once recognized as a legal peasant union by the government, the Ana Rancho union won the bid for the land tenancy and signed the new lease contract for 40 hectares (99 acres), accommodating fifty families in plots of 0.8 hectares (2 acres) extension per family. The plots were assigned to each family individually.

The following year, the Ana Rancho union decided to focus on its school building program. Once again, Eduardo Arze—now the inspector general of rural education in the newly created General Direction of Indigenous and Peasant Education headed by Elizardo Pérez—advised the colonos to widen their goal towards the organization of a central school (*escuela central*) which was to be connected to a group of sectional schools (*escuelas seccionales*) in the neighboring hamlets (*ranchos*). The purpose was to teach first grade in the sectional schools, and the next grades in the central school, until completing the elementary cycle. This experiment was already in progress in Warisata, a central school program in the altiplano

region, and it was the purpose of the government to expand the program to other rural areas. The project was approved by the government in May 1937 and the first school director was a renowned *indigenista* teacher, Leónidas Calvimontes, who had already collaborated with Elizardo Pérez in Warisata. Colonos from the nearby La Loma hamlet decided to join the Ana Rancho project and began working together with the common aim of building the school. In order to construct the Ucureña Central School building, the Santa Clara convent donated a 3 hectares (7.5 acres) plot in a place named Ucureña. Other local landowners also contributed by donating plots of land to build the sectional schools, and colonos bought one plot for that purpose. In the late 1937, one third of the central school was built, while sectional schools began provisionally functioning in private colonos' homes. The construction of the buildings was partially funded by the government and colonos paid the rest.

These were alarming developments for the landowners, who bitterly reacted. The Federación Rural de Cochabamba (Rural Federation of Cochabamba, FRC) did not attend the landowners' national congress protesting the government's support to the Santa Clara convent colonos. A group of local tenants and hacienda administrators lobbied at the department of indigenous education to form an administrative board for the Ucureña program, with representatives of the landowners, the Cliza subprefect, and the school's director sitting on it—the program was certainly unfavorable to the colonos interests. In 1939, the local hacienda tenants accused the director of embezzling school funds and threatened their colonos with eviction if they sent their children to school. The government sent an inspector to verify the accusation against the director and found no evidence of mismanagement. As the Ana Rancho lease had a two-year term—instead of the five-year normal term—colonos started to discuss the conditions for renewing the lease. A proposition arose to buy the land, for the school director and teachers explained to the colonos that they had the preference for purchasing the land they worked on for generations. This debate triggered an immediate response employing repressive methods by regional authorities. The police arrested the union committee members and put them in jail. The chief of police warned the school director to avoid interfering in extracurricular matters or otherwise he would be detained under the charge of subversion. Only the intervention of the

prefect temporarily calmed down the tense political atmosphere in Valle Alto. Once again, Antonio Revuelta, Eduardo Arze and other union allies supported the colonos by persuading President Germán Bush to issue a decree authorizing Santa Clara convent to sell its land to their colonos, exclusively. Landlords opposed and later managed to modify the decree, limiting the land transference to colonos to 217 hectares (536 acres) and selling the rest to prominent landowners. After taking possession of their newly acquired lands, landlords changed the status of colono to *pegujalero* (a colono who occupied a pegujal in the hacienda lands), but kept intact personal services to the patrón. Colonos resisted, but police imprisoned some and fined others, finally scaling repression up to a level of terror when two leaders were deported to Chimoré (the penal colony for common criminals in Chapare) accused of plotting against the government (see map 1.2). In 1943, the land transference process culminated when 216 colonos from Ana Rancho (51) and La Loma (165) became the new landowners. Colonos from both hamlets were now piqueros, they were independent smallholders with no obligations whatsoever regarding the hacendado class.

As previously mentioned, the colonos' union was originally founded in Ana Rancho in 1936. The colonos from La Loma were included in 1939, but due to the leaders' persecution, the union was in recess between 1940–41. The school director, Juan Guerra, helped colonos to reactivate their union by strengthening its ties with the school. On 5 June 1941, the Sindicato de Campesinos de Ucureña (Ucureña Peasant Union) committee was elected and, after this, the relationship between the union and the school became much closer.⁶⁴ The Santa Clara and neighboring hacienda colonos began a protest movement demanding the end of personal services owed to the haciendas. The Ucureña union and the school sent a commission of colonos to La Paz to support the movement with no positive results, for pongueaje was still not suppressed. However, landowners and local elites were alarmed, for their suspicion that Ucureña was transforming itself into an agitation center in Valle Alto was now apparently confirmed. To protect the Ucureña union from the attacks of the elites, it was reorganized in 1942 under the name of Sindicato de Agricultores y Educadores de Cliza (Cliza Farmers and Educators Union). The newly created union was led by a committee council, whose executive members

were the school director Juan Guerra, two school teachers, and peasant leaders of the previous Ucureña union. In 1946, the Ucureña school center had forty-one sectional schools, sixty-two teachers, and 2,100 students. It was the most important school center in Valle Alto and one of the biggest in the country.⁶⁵

In 1946, José Rojas—a former hacienda colono—was elected for the first time as head of the Ucureña union. During the revolutionary period, Rojas would be one of the most powerful peasant leaders in Bolivia and two times the minister of peasant affairs. José Rojas was born in Ucureña in 1917, he attended elementary school until the fourth grade, but dropped out of school when his father passed away, for he was the oldest son and had to take charge of the family's plot of land or *pegujal*. He was the Ucureña school's gatekeeper between 1939–40 and was in touch with the school director Juan Guerra, who informed him regarding the PIR and its political agenda. He observed Guerra's political role, the emergence of the union, and the long legal process for purchasing the Cliza hacienda's land. He affiliated with the union in 1940.⁶⁶

Rojas and the Ucureña union actively supported the PIR's political campaign in the 1947 national election race. The PIR's platform in Cliza was the expropriation of Santa Clara's hacienda lands to allow colonos the purchase of their *pegujales* and the creation of an agrarian reform institute to plan an agrarian reform in the country, but both projects failed to gain congressional approval. In 1949, Vice-President Mamerto Urriolagoitia visited the Ucureña school center to donate a banner. He was coldly received by the Cliza peasantry, and PIR militants together with Ucureña unionists publicly rejected his presence. The following day, the donated banner was found hanging upside-down in a tree and Rojas was accused by the authorities as the perpetrator of the offence. To avoid reprisal for this act, José Rojas fled to Argentina and returned to Valle Alto just before the eruption of the 1952 revolution.⁶⁷

Through consideration of the Ayopaya and the Ucureña case studies, the difference between the highland and the valley pre-revolutionary experience is highlighted. In Ayopaya, Hilarión Grágeda's iconic image emerged as product of a rural society where community links still persisted and mediated the political relationships among *comunarios*, landlords, and the state. In Ucureña, José Rojas' public image represented a

rural society where the peasant union functioned as the binding body of the individualistic *pegujaleros* or smallholders.

Conclusion

Regional long-term history ratifies the characterization of the Cochabamba valley as a dynamic agricultural society, where the relationships of rural workers with landowners and the state have always been permeated by their geographical mobility and ethnic fluidity. Since precolonial times—when the Inca state colonized the valley to establish a maize enclave in support of its expansionist projects—a multiethnic flow of temporary migrants coming from the altiplano to the valley put rural workers from disparate backgrounds in contact with one another, making for novel cultural exchange.

The Spaniard's arrival to Cochabamba in 1538 destroyed the previous Inca order and forced the return of many *mitimaes* or temporary migrants to their original ayllu territories in the altiplano. However, those who remained in the valley went through a different but nonetheless striking experience: they witnessed the construction of a new colonial order. They observed how their ayllu curacas—who were previously subordinated to the altiplano ethnic lords—were now directly negotiating power with the Spanish authorities in the valley. They also perceived that the power of the valley encomenderos depended on the deals they could reach with the ayllu curacas to mobilize the labor force. They also noted that the curacas were open to negotiating the ayllu worker's labor force with the local hacendados, who were eager to recruit workers for their haciendas. Therefore, when the Potosí mine mita was imposed in the 1560s, they realized that real power was in the hands of their curacas. Curacas who had the ability to allocate the scarce ayllu labor force in the hands of their three demanding clients; the encomenderos, the miners, and the hacendados.

However, when observing the transformation of the power structure in the colonial valley society, rural workers became aware that they could also bypass the curacas' authority and negotiate the use of their labor force with local hacendados on their own. As the Spanish crown allowed hacendados to retain possession of their *yanaconas* or hacienda servants, who were registered in the hacienda records, rural workers found it convenient for their interests to flee from their ayllus and reappear as *yanaconas* in

neighboring haciendas. It was a good deal for both workers and hacendados. From the worker's perspective, yanaconas avoided paying ayllu tributes to the crown. From the hacendado's perspective, larger numbers of yanaconas increased the hacienda value in the land market, for yanaconas were ascribed to the hacienda land. Curacas and miners were not happy at all with this situation, but the power of local hacendados was the shield that temporarily protected the valley rural workers' interests.

Under similar labor market logic, during the colonial era rural workers went back and forth from their ayllus to the haciendas, switching both their fiscal identities (i.e., tributario, forastero, agregado, arrimante) as well as their ethnic identities (i.e., Indio, Español, mestizo, cholo). Curacas lost control over the ayllu workers' labor force and, gradually, comunarios in the reducciones—as well as rural workers in the haciendas—inserted themselves into the regional labor market as maize traders, cotton weavers, and chicha producers. These alternative economic activities opened opportunities for the creation of new market networks, that competed with the elite's regional markets monopoly. Valley rural workers, however, did not circulate only within the agricultural framework. From the early colonial period, the Potosí mines attracted forced and free labor contingents from the Cochabamba valley. However, beginning in the late nineteenth century, the nitrate-rich Atacama Desert became an additional magnet for the valley labor force. The salaries earned by rural workers in the mining sector proved to be crucial for increasing their purchasing capacity.

At the turn of the twentieth century liberal governments in Bolivia attacked the remnants of Indian communities and privatized their lands; comunarios in the altiplano reacted differently than comunarios in the valley. In the altiplano, comunarios resisted communal land privatization and defended their ayllus. Led by their ethnic authorities or *caciques apoderados*, comunarios fiercely (although generally unsuccessfully) fought to defend themselves from the hacendados' intention to usurp their communal lands. Meanwhile, in the valley, most comunarios favored communal land privatization and put their lands for sale in the land market. Simultaneously, the valley hacendado class—which was confronting a crisis due to declining agricultural prices in their traditional mine markets—was forced to partition their hacienda lands in order to survive. This was a special moment in the valley land market, when the land supply

from communities and haciendas matched the demand created by thousands of former comunarios, petty traders, landless peasants, artisans, and others, who held an effective purchase capacity.

Therefore, in contrast to the altiplano area, where haciendas expanded at the expense of community lands, in the valley both community and hacienda lands were split in favor of a large number of smallholders or *piqueros*. These structural transformations shaped the altiplano and valley societies' political cultures differently. In the altiplano, communal power networks and ethnic authorities remained intact and comunario leaders continued the struggle against the state and the hacendado class, claiming for the restitution of their communal lands. Meanwhile, in the valley, *piqueros* and landless peasants coexisted on an individual basis. *Colonos* or hacienda permanent tenants were organized in the haciendas as separate units or production groups. In the pre-revolutionary period—between the end of the Chaco War in 1935 and the beginning of the revolution in 1952—returning colonos veterans politically mobilized the peasantry in the valley haciendas.

In the late 1940s, unrest was widespread in the Cochabamba rural area. For instance, the violent Ayopaya upheaval in the Cochabamba highlands (1947) and the more negotiated process of organizing the first peasant union and a rural school center in Ucureña, Valle Alto, (1946). In any event, in both the altiplano and the valley, pre-revolutionary comunarios, as well as peasants, were dynamic actors fighting for their rights in the political arena.

