

Tradition and conflict in the organization of rural space in the Andes

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“Community Kitchen” in the process of land taking. Azángaro, 1986.

Brief Summary

The case we are presenting is a study of social conflict on the plateau of Collao, which encompasses the department of Puno, located in the macroregion of the south of Peru.

This reflection focuses on the analysis of productive systems that have begun to be established in the rural environment, the dynamic of structural transformations and the behavior of the social actors; concluding with the identification of the sources of conflict, the sociocultural bases of solutions and the consequences for rural altiplano society.

Direct sources of conflict are: Systems of land tenure and property that generate extreme social inequalities; "official right" bent on maintaining these inequalities exacerbating conflicts; political practices based on prebendary and patronage systems which increase social expectations; social relationships marked by ideological prejudices with a certain nuance of racism; and nonrecognition of the rights and cultures of Quechua and Aymara people.

In practicing solutions we find the historical memory and sociocultural tradition of Andean social organizations: cosmic vision and ethics based on harmony, respect and cooperation; day to day practice of social democracy and communal justice; community organizations that facilitated acceding to control and the organization of productive and social resources through equitable models of redistribution of land, etc.

Finally, among the most relevant consequences we identify: Radical transformations of systems of land tenure which convert the peasantry into property holders of 59% of the lands in the department of Puno and the peasant community into the most important organization in the rural environment; economic and sociopolitical democratization of rural society; retrogression of social prejudices and the mentality of paternalistic subjection to and of the peasantry; social relationships becoming more horizontal and the growing consciousness of citizenship and peasant dignity.

Tradition and Conflict in the Organization of Rural Andean Space

Pre-colonial Andean social history recounts that in the Latin American Andes, very advanced civilizations were established, which in their development achieved interzonal and vertical organization of the ecological and productive space (Murra: 1970) with the perspective of attaining alimentary self-sufficiency [1] and the rational handling of Andean climatic and ecological factors.

These processes essentially of an integration character, were not exempt from conflicts, principally interethnic, originating from eco-climatic crises [2] and the processes of expansion of Andean societies. However, in these processes generally the economy, society and culture of the conquered were not destructured, but integrated into larger ambits of control. As in the case of the Aymara of the altiplano, which, on being conquered by Tupac Yupanqui and Pachakutec, were allowed to continue, keeping their language, religion, and economic system.

The analysis of social conflicts in the Peruvian Andes leads us to identify the source that sustains them is linked to changes in the structure of land tenure; in which the State does not fulfill a mediative or ordaining function in the dynamic, but, through its legislative intervention with close links to royal interests, provokes the conflict between the actors of civil society. While on

the indigenous people's side, there is recourse to historical memory, traditions and culture to generate social cohesion and defend the right to the land.

Strained Relations Between "Official Right" and Andean tradition

The Iberian invasion of our continent implied the rupture of Andean social systems and the consequent undermining of Andean economy, technology and culture; on imposing an exportation-based mining system, which signified tribute in agricultural products and livestock, the mining and manufacturing "mita" [3]; and, later, when the mining industry enters into crisis, the "land grants" and the "encomienda" are consolidated, involved robbing the lands of the "ayllus", thanks to colonial law which permitted nobles and gentlemen of the conquest to be the proprietors of "land, trees and men as far as their eye could see".

This right to rob what was communal "ordered" rural Andean space, until the first decades of the second half of the XX century, with the recurrent consolidation of the oligarchic system of latifundium [large landed estates] and subjection of indigenous Andean populations to servitude.

This population of the high Andean mountains, made up of Quechuas and Aymaras, called the "Indian blot", has experienced 4 centuries of conflict, marked by the "right to the spoils" and the right to the defense and recovery of communal ownership of land. The history of forms and ideology of indigenous and peasant conflict is extensive and varied; ranging from feigned cultural confrontation and social criticism to the authoritarian attitude and extravagant life of the colonizer and the large landowner, like the movements of Taky Onqoy of the XVI century, the myths of the return of Pachakuty [4], the myths of the pistachos [slaughterers], sacaojos [eye removers] y karisiris [grease suckers] (malevolent personages of the white race) and the satirical dances like doctorcito, muchutusoq, chonguinada, diablada and rey caporal.

In another dimension, social politics, conflicts in the Andes have evolved from the anti-colonial ethnic perspective of the movements Tupac Amaru II, Manco Inca, Tupac Katari y Pedro Vilcapaza (the last two on the Andean plateau); bandoliers' protests against landowner abuse; and the guerillas of Javier Heraud, Luis de la Puente Uceda and Hugo Blanco Galdós which demanded "Land and Liberty" (60s of the past century).

As of the 50s of the last century, the crisis of the Peruvian oligarchic state begins to end, pushed somewhat by the modernizing tendency of world economy, which finds serious obstacles to expansion of its markets into Latin American economies (industrialization by substitution of imported goods), the reason why the "Alliance for Progress "and the "green revolution ", are promoted for Latin America as ways of attenuating the "center of social tension " and the growing peasant movement. The Peruvian government of Fernando

Belaunde Terry, responds with the Law of the Agrarian Reform 15037, which he is applied lukewarmly in the zone of Convención and Lares - Cuzco (the center of operations of the guerrilla movement of Hugo Blanco) and in Puno, eliminates 4 large haciendas that were beginning to compete with the textile industry of Arequipa [5].

After this event and the suppression of the guerillas, the Andes continue to be in conflict, a peasant union movement develops in a dispersed and spontaneous fashion, which principally demands better working conditions, access to education and ownership of the land; in the Peruvian altiplano this takes shape through the Frente Nacional de Trabajadores y Campesinos [National Front of Workers and Peasants] (FRENATRACA) and the departmental federation of workers of Puno. Simultaneously the area called the "Indian Blot" (Ayacucho, Apurimac, Puno y Cuzco) and without much echo of the social movement in official spheres, a slow silent struggle develops for legal recognition of the peasant community: the acquisition of the status of citizenship of the ancestral organization of indigenous Peruvians (the community) and the defense and acknowledgement of inalienable, imprescriptible and undeniable rights of its communal territories [6].

Agrarian Reform and Restructuration: Rights to Land and Citizenship

At the end of the 60s of the past century, social and productive systems installed in the rural zone of the national territory were debated in serious economic and social crisis; the untenable position makes the Peruvian military, inspired by the paradigms of modernization (Rostow), enter the scene, assume national power and, as part of one of its "revolutionary measures", decrees Law 17716 of Agrarian Reform, eliminating the large latifundium [large estate] and local powers and in their stead installing the associative model under state direction and for reconcentrating property.

In the altiplano, Agrarian Reform substantially modified the systems of land tenure and property, the man/land relation of which can be put on a graph in which farming units of less than 5 hectares [about 12.4 acres] made up 83.93 % of farming units but only possessed 3.32 % of the lands; while those with more than 500 hectares [about 1,235.5 acres] which made up 0.8 % held 79.88 % of the land suitable for livestock in the department of Puno (Censo [census], 1961). In Puno approximately 1300 farms belonging to more or less 950 families, were centralized and reconcentrated into 42 associative enterprises (Social Property Corporations, Agricultural Cooperatives and Corporations of Social Interest), while the large peasant population located in communities and dispersed settlements were kept at the margin of the process; but in the long run developed a spirit of frustration and disenchantment in the face of the nonfulfillment of the ideal of the reform "The land is for who works it ", "Peasant, the landowner will no longer feed from your poverty".

In the 20-year lapse that the associative model lasts, the productive units conforming to it debate in serious economic and social crisis that they show low levels of productive yields and productivity, deficient and conflictive management and labor disorder and indiscipline. On the other hand, the communal peasantry and feudatory partners pressured by direct access to the land, having consolidated a strong process of refunctioning of the peasant community and its organization, achieving legal recognition in 1993 of 1,250 communal organizations with delimited territories (Directorio de Comunidades Campesinas [Directory of Peasant Communities], Puno 1993).

In 1982 the Peruvian State (Government of Fernando Belaunde) promulgates D.S. [Executive Decree] 05 and 06 of "changing the dimensions of the associative enterprises" the same decrees that generate the possibility of the return of the former landowners. These legal provisions, instead of bringing peace to the rural environment, exacerbate the conflicts, sparking off peasant movements for "taking of lands" in order to "recuperate former communal lands" robbed by the large landholders, for which they dust off their ancient testamentary land titles. Onto this stage the Left enters to lead the conversation and, finally, Sendero Luminoso [The Shining Path] as an urban phenomenon that does not manage to legitimize itself with the peasantry, but does cause devastation to the peasant population and to Andean associative enterprises.

Into this dynamic of conflict in the rural altiplano environment, three important structural tendencies flow like the force of ideas:

1. The state legislating in the name of the peasants to favor the interests of the groups in power, but all in all only manage to create expectations and foment conflicts.
2. The peasant partners of associative enterprises demand the right to have a plot of land with the perspective of achieving family security and total freedom from servitude.
3. And the members of the community demand the return of their ancestral lands to achieve "progress and family well-being".

The slogans of the moment (first five years of the 80s) are elimination of the associative model, land for the peasantry and formation of communal enterprises with communal management. Alan Garcia, persuaded by the ungovernability and nonviability of the associative model, proclaims himself to be the " first communal President" setting the way with commissions of Agrarian Reconstruction in the Department of Puno, establishing this political decision with the definitive elimination of the associative model. The result of the restructuring process in the altiplano region, according to the 1993 Directory of Peasant Communities: to the peasant communities would have been adjudicated 1,278,777.04 hectares [about 3,159,858 acres] that added to old communal lands would amount to the sum of 2,138,447.36 hectares [about

5,284,103 acres] which corresponds to 59.9 % of the agricultural land surface of the department. To these it would be necessary to add the 689,978.24 hectares [about 1,704,936 acres] that remain in the power of the associative enterprises that in the end have been parceled out in their entirety among their associate members.

From the recount of the history of conflicts in the altiplano region, we can infer that the most important sources of conflict created the installation of systems of holding and owning land that generated extreme social inequalities; public exercise through "official right" persisted in maintaining these inequities and exacerbating conflicts; political practices based on prebendary and patronage systems which increase social expectations; social relationships marked by ideological prejudices with a certain nuance of racism; and not recognizing the rights, and technological and cultural contribution of the Quechua and Aymara.

We find the practice of conflict resolution in the historical memory and sociocultural tradition of Andean social organizations; a cosmic vision and ethic based on harmony, respect and cooperation; a daily exercise of social democracy and communal justice at the heart of its organizations (peasant night patrols in Cajamarca, communal organizations in the altiplano); communal organizations which facilitate acceding to control and organization of productive resources through equitable models of land redistribution, etc.

The Encuentro de Comunidades Campesinas [Meeting of Peasant Communities], that took place 15-16 July 1996, arrived at the following agreements on property and ownership of land:

- The titles which are granted in peasant communities concerning the proprietorship of land must be done in communal form; for which we reject the division into individual plots as private property;
- Guarantee the planned rotational use of the lands of the territory under the direction of the communal assembly;
- To take a census and register of lands in each one of the peasant communities;
- The community must grant titles and certificates of FAMILY POSESIÓN of the lands distributed according to a rules of usufruct of communal lands; and
- Defend the lands adjudicated by the process of restructuration (FDCCP-PUNO, 1996).

Finally, the valuation of the consequences of these social conflicts in the Andes, leads us to identify: Radical transformations in the systems of land tenure in the altiplano which convert the peasantry into the possessor of 59% of the lands of the department of Puno (through communal division into plots and private family division into plots); Economic and sociopolitical democratization

of rural society; retrocession of social prejudices and of the mentality of paternalistic subjection regarding and held by the peasantry; the flattening of social relationships and the consciousness of citizenship and peasant dignity.

New Image of Rural Altiplano Society

The presence of new rural social actors (community members, peasants with independently held plots of land, well-to-do peasants and holders of medium-sized properties), the reordering of rural markets (consolidation of weekly fairs and middlemen) and the growth of cities located in strategic zones for intercommunication and commercial distribution (Juliaca, Puno and Ilave); constitute relevant consequences of the structural changes which have occurred in the Andean altiplano, which configure two complementary sociocultural processes: urbanization of rural society and Andeanization of the city.

The new axes of social nucleation that give rural life its dynamic end up being peasant communities, associations of independent livestock producers, commissions of irrigators, associations of ambulatory and market vendors, neighborhood associations, associations of small and medium-sized handcraft industries, women's organizations, professional organizations and labor guilds of public institutions.

Having overcome the essential, peasant access to ownership of land, which for four centuries constituted the main source of conflict, still remaining is the definitive guarantee of property that has been causing peasant controversies in the face of the insecurity of actual possession. However, other factors are beginning to shape present dynamics of conflict in the Andes, among the most important is the exaction of peasant income by asymmetrical exchange relations in the markets that increase their quota of poverty.

ENDNOTES

1. Utilization of 83 zones of life and raising products of the highest protein, vitamin and curing powers: maca, quinoa, kiwicha, tarwi, kuchucho, llacon, cat's claw, sangre de grado (dragon's blood), guinea pigs, camelids. (Maybe they will become the foods of the third millennium?)
2. Eduardo Grillo. *Cosmovisión Andina de Siempre*, 1993.
3. Colonial system of labor, which obligated the indigenous population to contribute human contingents to work without remuneration in the mines and fabrication of weavings.
4. Pachakuty: Quechua word which signifies the return to original times, the complete overturning [of the present social order] and the transit to a state of greater wisdom.
5. Personal communication Ing. Hugo Rodríguez, Director PIWANDES.

6. The constitution of 1920 in article 58 establishes the imprescriptibility and limitations to the transfer of communal lands to protect them from being victims of robbery as they had been. The constitution of 1936 establishes the imprescriptibility, inembargability and inalienability of communal lands. The constitution of 1979 textually reproduces the models of the previous constitutions; this same spirit is maintained and made more profound in the General Law of Peasant Communities and the Law of Setting Boundaries and Granting Titles, promulgated in 1987.

Notes to readers

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