

## TWO HUNDRED YEARS OF GENDERED NATION-MAKING IN BOLIVIA

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One morning in September 2009, looking for female municipal councilors to interview for a project about the constraints of political participation in terms of gender, I and a fellow researcher were waiting for the vice mayor of El Alto in Bolivia to give us an interview. The ordinary mayor was out of town. Since the vice mayor was difficult to catch we waited for ‚La Honorable’ (the honorable), as she was called by her colleagues, in her office at the municipality. We wondered who she was, as none of us had met her before. We imagined that she would be a typical middle-aged well-educated mestizo woman, but Antonia Rodríguez turned out to be a woman of Aymara background with experience from Bolivian social movements who lived in one of El Alto’s more established barrios called 10 de Mayo. When she finally turned up, in order to accommodate us to her strict schedule, she invited us to go with her in her car to a meeting at the headquarter of the Bolivian Air Force in El Alto, to interview her in the car and possibly later on be able to get back to the mayor’s office for eventually continuing our interview. When we arrived at the meeting it had already started.

Back at the mayor’s office, when I asked her about the possibilities and constraints that she experience when trying to develop her office, she referred to the meeting we just witnessed:

Well [...] they treat us a bit as if they are simulating our participation, but the men are not convinced that we have the same value [as them] [...] so it has been very, very hard. When you talk in public they silence you [...] Today, I don’t know if you noticed that I don’t have the same value as the ordinary mayor.

If it had been the mayor that had entered, the chairman [of the municipal committee] would have invited him to sit down beside him. In my case, it was the women [who invited me] and he [the chairman] didn’t even see me. Besides, instead of being the first one to speak, he would have invited the mayor. I was present, but for him I was invisible.

My general interest concerns women's possibilities to participate in the political sphere, in a broad sense, in Bolivia today, possibilities that are affected by all sorts of things. The small snap-shot above about Antonia Rodriguez's everyday reality shows that a woman (even of indigenous background) may become a vice mayor today, but it doesn't mean that she is participating on equal foot with the men or exercising the same influence. Participation in the Bolivian nation-state is highly gendered. There are many different factors that influence the way women and men may participate and one of them has to do with the relation between nation, state and gender relations.

My inquiries are related to the analysis of

[...] the ways the relations between women and men affect and are affected by various nationalist projects and processes, as well as the ways notions of femininity and masculinity are constructed within nationalist discourses (Yuval-Davis 1997:4).

In this essay I will explore how nationalist ideologies and the state influenced gender relations during the last two hundred years in Bolivia.

Gendered processes of nation-making have been studied by feminist scholars, especially in the 1990s, representing a topic that is not new but still interesting and dynamic especially in light of the bicentennial celebrations and the current processes of nation-making in Bolivia. In this essay I will discuss the following issues: How can we study the relations between gender, state and nation? How were women addressed in nation-building movements and discourses from the beginning of the 1800s and onwards? How did the different institutions of the state address and affect women's possibilities? What differences may be identified in relation to different groups and statuses? This essay is based on a limited number of historical sources, the ones I have had access to during the time period in which the essay had to be completed. My aim has been to sketch a general idea of the relations between nation, state and gender leaving the context specific details to another time.

In Bolivia the bicentennial was commemorated in 2009 with reference to the first cry of independence which was heard in 1809 with the uprising in the city of La Plata (today Sucre). The

country's independence will be commemorated in 2025. As commented on in *Los Tiempos*<sup>1</sup> in May 2009, it was a “free but divided Bolivia” that celebrated independence with one celebration taking place in the city of Sucre and another “bicentennial of the peoples” (*bicentenario de los pueblos*) in a community outside of the city. This “division” or prevalence of difference, hierarchy and enduring conflicts between different sectors of Bolivian society is something that is also reflected in the way gender relations develop among and between different sectors. As E. Dore (2000) rightly remarks there is a need to reassess the view that the long nineteenth century was a period of progress for women. We need to remember that there is no linear development towards improvement and there are differential developments for different groups. Conditions change to the better or to the worse depending on economic, political and social factors. We cannot generalize about women because their conditions may vary greatly depending on status, class, age, ethnicity/‘race’, and so on. In the case of Bolivia, the intersections between gender, class and ethnicity has been crucial for structuring gender relations.

### **Economic restructuring**

In my inquiries during the last couple of years about female political participation, I have talked to several female leaders of self-proclaimed indigenous background. When we discussed the reasons for gender inequality and female subordination among Bolivia's popular sectors they often referred to colonialism and practices imposed by the Spaniards during the colonial rule. “Women were supposed to lower their eyes, they were not allowed to look a Spaniard in the eyes”, said Eleonora, former leader of the female branch of the peasant union “Bartolina Sisa”. Notions of colonialism among Aymara in Bolivia have already been studied by A. Burman (2009a; 2009 n.d.). There is no doubt that Spanish colonialism represented a tremendous assault on indigenous ways of lives which produced changes in gender relations, most likely towards less gender equality. “Colonialism” and “de-colonization” represent powerful frameworks within which indigenous peoples frame their struggle towards a more just Bolivian society. Within this

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<sup>1</sup> One of the country's larger newspapers seated in Cochabamba.

struggle, I would argue, it is the complex post-colonial history of Bolivia that have had most influence on the situation of gender relations today, which makes it more important, but not less difficult, to analyze.

Before moving into the review of nation-making discourses and institutions I want to make a few remarks about the effects on gender relations of the economic restructuring that took place during the early republican era. Several authors comment on the fact that one of the long-term results of independence was that rights and privileges of indigenous peoples disappeared (e.g. Larson 2004; Barragán 1997). For instance, B. Larson (2004) shows the tremendous effects that the late nineteenth century liberal restructuring had on indigenous forms of subsistence and community. During the colonial rule in

[...] the late sixteenth century, the crown elevated the Amerindians to the legal, albeit subordinated, status of native vassals and endowed them with a separate corpus of rights and responsibilities under the *„república de indios‘*. This colonized *„republic of Indians‘*, with its separate laws and tribunals, juxtaposed to the dominant *„republics of Spaniards,‘* became the juridical basis of caste (Larson 2004, 40).

Despite the difficulties in upholding a an Indian-Spanish divide, indigenous peoples was granted certain rights and obligations.

The colonial policy of legal-political segregation [...] provided a legal-discursive medium through which Indians might negotiate or contest colonial policy or transgressions (Larson 2004, 40).

This system of differentiation was inherited by the former Spanish colonies with independence.

[...] The various groups of castas still suffered from legal and social restriction in education, government, and taxation; and Indian communities still belonged to a separate *„republic‘* under their own body of law and local government, in exchange for the ethnic head tax they paid to the state (Larson 2004, 41).

The status of indigenous peoples and specifically the status of communal land rights was eventually questioned based on the ideology of liberalism (Larson 2004, 42).

In many cases indigenous authorities fought to retain, or reassemble, some semblance of their inherited colonial lands, rights and protections – even if it meant restoring their tribute obligations to the republican state”. In Bolivia indigenous communities held half of the land as late as 1880 (Larson 2004, 206).

If, as indigenous women today and some scholars claim (see e.g. Leacock 1978), the Andean vision of gender complementarity, *chachawarmi*, was closer to reality in the pre-colonial era than today, women would have gained from maintaining indigenous independence and traditional forms of subsistence, egalitarian systems in which they would have been able to act as “female persons, with their own rights, duties and responsibilities, which were complementary to and in no way secondary to those of men” (Leacock 1978:252). Whether we agree or not with Leacock in relation to whether there have existed societies where women were not subordinated, she argued convincingly that the change in economic system from communal style to capitalistic one brought important changes for gender relations.

Larson (2004) calls the 1850s a benchmark for the Andean republics:

Around the middle of the nineteenth century, European and North American demand for raw materials, markets, and knowledge began to pull the Andes out of its state of stagnation, neglect and obscurity. From the late 1850s on, foreign capital poured into South America in the form of loans to build railways and roads, modernize ports and mines, and develop new industries (Larson 2004, 46).

Indigenous peoples’ land and labor became very valuable for creole<sup>2</sup> entrepreneurs and politicians in their struggle for economic modernization. Capitalism entered a new territorial phase of expansion, which required access to land controlled by indigenous peoples.

Liberalism, postulating its ideas of equality and liberty, was invoked against any restriction or privilege, particularly the inherited corporate privileges of indigenous communities and the Church (Larson 2004, 47).

The processes of restructuring were particularly dramatic in the South Andes, where thousands of communal peasants lost their land to the latifundios and were pushed into the rural proletariat (Larson 2004, 48).

There are numerous examples of how rural women have lost autonomy and access to land through economic transformations towards export driven capitalism. The economic

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<sup>2</sup> Creole in the same meaning that the Spanish term *criollo* (Editor’s note).

exigencies of modernization required the ideological work of nation making – which meant finding new ways of reordering the internal hierarchies based on race and ethnicity (Larson 2004, 48-9). The problems that faced the ruling white elite in their quest for a successful and unified nation or “imagined community” in the light of their heterogeneous, indigenous populations. One of the biggest challenges of the new Latin American republics of the 1820s was to create a feeling for the “imagined community” of each country. All of the Andean countries went through “trials of nation-making” in different ways.

How finally to solve the Indian problem – interpreted by creole discourses as the main impediment to order, progress, civilization, and modernity (Larson 2004, 51).

These ideological movements had differential impact not only on different groups and categories of the population, but also on women and men.

### **Nationalist ideologies and movements**

Nira Yuval-Davis (1997, 1) argues that “constructions of nationhood usually involve specific notions of both ‘manhood’ and ‘womanhood’”. The author promotes a gendered understanding of nations and nationalism, and suggests a systematic analysis of the contribution of gender relations into crucial dimensions of nationalist projects: national reproduction, national culture and national citizenship (1997, 3). Yuval-Davis also distinguishes between three dimensions of nationalist projects: constructions of nations based on notions of origin, culture, and citizenship of states. Different aspects of gender relations play an important role in each of these dimensions of nationalist projects. The idea that the nation was to be created on the idea of a common origin or shared blood/genes was hardly an option in the Bolivian case. Nationalist projects have been appealed by the idea of a shared culture and traditions as well as basing nationalism on the citizenship of the state.

Nationalist projects tried to create unity around certain ideals. During the nineteenth century, as indicated by Dore (2000, 5), in general Latin American states worked to normalize elite, predominantly male, ideals of femininity and masculinity. This

normalization provided the opportunity for national, regional, and local officials to exert pressure on men and women to conform to what the elite regarded as “proper” behavior. “Proper” was a highly fluid notion that varied by sex, class, race, marital status, age, and so on (Dore 2000, 5). Dore also gives an example of how the courts attempted to impose upper-class marriage ideal that normalized the roles of male bread-winner and female homemaker. This way of differentiating gender roles was new to the lower classes that had other ways of dividing labor according to gender. It was not in accordance with the poorer sectors of society, because it de-legitimated a whole range of women’s traditional economic activities that took place outside the home (Dore 2000, 24).

The anthropologist Rossana Barragán asserts that even though the idea of the “nation” that emerged in Europe in the late 18<sup>th</sup> century referred to a secular egalitarian community, the nation-making project was transformed when adapted to colonial conditions in Latin America. By analyzing the legislation of the new republic of Bolivia, she shows that the juridical equality, the basis of modernity and political independence in Latin American countries, was not equal. With the exception of the rights for the male elite, the essential structure of the nation continued to be difference and hierarchy, a fact that was perceived of as perfectly logical and consistent for the authors (Barragán 1997, PE-58). A dilemma for the ruling elites, even in Bolivia, was how to promote economic progress (through the formation of a rural labor force) and at the same time maintain distinctions based on race, class and gender (Larson 2005, 38). After the 1952 revolution the Bolivian state intended to create a national identity without ethnic distinctions, but patterns of class differentiation and reassertion of local identities undermined the construction of a unified national culture and social, cultural and economic distinctions between women remained resulting in ambiguous images of femininity (Gill 1993, 72).

“Authenticity” is a debated phenomenon in relation to politics of ethnic identity where it can become a political and economic resource. But it can also be the source of what Mercer (1990 cit. in Yuval-Davis 1997, 45) has called “the burden of representation” or “forced identities” (Chhachhi 1991 cit. in Yuval-Davis 1997, 45). It is typical that women are required to carry this “burden of representation”, being constructed as the

symbolic bearers or carriers of the collectivity's identity and honor (Yuval-Davis 1997, 45). In the Andes women carries the notions of "Indianness" to a greater extent than men do. A. Zulawski (2000) points to this fact in her analysis of the different ways two medical doctors confront the "Indian problem", i.e. the issue of integration of the native population into the new nation-state in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. In this example, one of the doctors perceives the "Indian problem" as one of culture (a common view at that time) while the other doctor comes into the category of social class in order to explain the miners health problems. This second doctor perceived the miners as working-class, by definition not "Indians", and therefore not to blame for their diseases. But the women, who he perceived as "Indians", had customs that could lead to the spreading of disease and death (Zulawski 2000, 122). Whereas one of the doctors viewed Andean culture as producing health problems for the public, the other one viewed the women as being the main carriers of that culture (Zulawski 2000, 126).

This way of thinking, although in very different contexts, resembles the reports of Radcliffe (2001, 161) that women are positioned as the core of indigenous society and are expected to remain as guardians of indigenous culture also within indigenous movements of Peru. Even Marisol de la Cadena (1995), observed in the Peruvian *sierra* that women were seen as "more Indian" than the men from the same village, and these perceptions seemed to be based on ideas of division of labor and qualities achieved through migration. In the case of Bolivia, the same tendency was reported by A. Canessa (2005) as a social inclination to perceive indigenous men as "more feminine" by association, because of the intersections of the gender and ethnic hierarchies.

The unity of national "imagined communities" is a mythical unity that has to be maintained and ideologically reproduced, which according to Armstrong (1982 cit. in Yuval-Davis 1997, 23) requires a system of symbolic "border guards". The task of these "border guards" is to identify people as members or non-members of the collectivity. They are closely linked to specific cultural codes of style of dress and behavior as to more elaborate bodies of customs.



A particularly significant role is played by gender symbols (Yuval-Davis 1997, 23). The idea that the collectivity's identity and future destiny is carried by women has also brought about "the construction of women as the bearer's of the collectivity's honour" (Yuval-Davis 1997, 45). Thus, women embody in their "proper" behavior and their "proper" clothing the boundaries of the collectivity. Radcliffe argues likewise that national identities are embodied "through racialized and gendered experiences of corporeality (corporeality referring to the bodily interface between material relations and self-identity)" (1999, 213). In Bolivia, what has been considered "proper" behavior and clothing has been different for different groups of women. The ideal *señora* or "lady" of the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century had certain characteristics such as submissiveness, religious devotion and devotion to her family. Female virginity at marriage and chastity thereafter were highly valued and the sexuality of women was guarded by both women and men. The ladies of the creole upper class followed a style fashion emanating from Europe. This group of women did not value hard work as an end in itself and they did not work outside of the home (Gill 1993, 74). This could be contradicted by the modern urban Aymara speaking women, who may be valued within their own group for their hard working capacities, and are expected to contribute to the economy of the household. These Aymara women wearing the traditional *pollera*<sup>3</sup> are living signs of dignity (Widmark 2003).

### **Institutions and policies of the state**

State politics affect gender relations through institutions and policies through which national, regional and local officials influence women and men. Influential institutions are for example the Catholic Church, the juridical institutions, the school, the military and the healthcare system.

Dore (2000) analyzed how state politics affected gender relations and how gender conditioned state formation in Latin America from the late colony to the twenty-first century. Dore has showed in her work a special interest in the legal regulation

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<sup>3</sup> *Pollera* is an outfit probably created in its current form by the *cholas paceñas* in the mid 20<sup>th</sup> century.

of gender, especially topics related to changes in family and property law. This author (Dore 2000) refers to the fact that Latin American historians have tended to view the long nineteenth century as an era in which major structural inequalities in gender relations gradually dismantled by the state. Contrary to a common view, in which historians have stressed the emancipatory effects of secularization, arguing that the diminishing rights of the church and the rising powers of the state generally resulted in an expansion of women's rights, Dore argues that, on balance, state policy in the long nineteenth century had more negative than positive consequences for gender equality. She assessed the implications of legal reforms and secularization for women, taking into account that their effects varied along lines of nation, class and race (2000).

State politics play an important role in normalizing a variety of gender relations through its governmental, juridical, cultural, and coercive institutions. What is considered acceptable and unacceptable ways of being female and male may vary, depending on class and race. States take part in the establishment of a certain gender regime by regulating as many aspects of life as they can reach, for example, sexual practices, prostitution, contraception, abortion, marriage, and the family (Dore 2000:8).

Within the limits of the autocratic state, consent of the governed was fostered by a patriarchal system in which senior males exercised authority in the home, community and the polity (Dore 2000, 9).

In the new Latin American republics the old ideology of divine right and hereditary privilege was rejected, in favor of the liberal ideology which claimed that the social superiority of elite males gave them the right to rule. In line with these practices, in most liberal states representation was restricted to males with money or a profession. Other members of society had limited political rights and lacked the right to vote. For the majority of the population their lack of economic means legitimated their exclusion from the political sphere (Dore 2000, 9-10).

### **Patriarchy and Church**

Increased patriarchal control had implications for women. Dore refers to the "myth of women without rights in the late colony"

(2000, 12). Important ways in which the late colonial states in Latin America constructed gender was to guarantee to women equal inheritance and property rights. As Dore points out, the Ibero-American legal tradition profoundly circumscribed women's rights. Only widows and unmarried adult females (if legally emancipated by fathers) were entitled to rights of contract and property. Fathers or husbands controlled married women and minors and their juridical persona, including administration of property:

Women were not permitted to govern another person. Unlike men, who exercised patriarchal authority (*patria potestad*) over their wives and children, women had absolutely no legal authority over their children (Dore 2000, 12).

The authority of the family patriarch was only restricted by religious doctrine and practice, thus, the transition from ecclesiastical to secular governance tended to strengthen patriarchal authority. The sacramental nature of marriage guided the judges of the Church which upheld the principle of free will regarding choice of marriage partner (Dore 2000, 13). Thus, a fundamental right for women could no longer be taken for granted.

The transition from colony to the "imagined community" of modern nation-states required new symbols to represent the nation and new ideologies to legitimate and support new forms of state power. Dore points out that in the case of Latin America the "imagined communities" of the young republics largely reworked old symbols and traditional ideologies and Latin America's republican leaders guarded the patriarchalism they inherited in order to maintain stability. As a consequence, family patriarchy possibly acquired a greater political significance in the new society than it had had in the old one (Dore 2000, 16). There seems to be a tendency that wives' subordination to patriarchal authority was reinforced by secularization. States reformulated juridical frameworks that restricted and protected women, weakened women's historic rights to property and the church's official protection of sexual equality within marriage. At the same time, women's personal rights, especially to control male violence were strengthened by new laws (Dore 2000, 17).

After independence, there was a wave of reform that reduced patriarchal authority over children. In many countries, changes

to the civil codes released unmarried adults from parental authority and lowered the age of majority, but patriarchal authority was not reduced over married women. Wives were excluded from the general expansion in personal rights, an order of things legitimated to maintain the order and tranquility of families on which the state in large part depends (Dore 2000, 19). Women's legal authority over their children increased slowly over the course of the long nineteenth century. Dore tells that in the end of the nineteenth century, in most countries all except married women had the right to govern their children. Wives did not achieve parental authority over their children until the beginning of the twentieth century when reform of *patria potestad* became the aim of women's organizations (Dore 2000, 23). It was not until the end of the nineteenth century that organizations of and for women emerged in Latin America. State policy was not framed in response to female mobilization until these associations began to emerge. Female protagonists in the first decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century demanded political rights, right to vote, improved working conditions, and changes to family and property law (Dore 2000, 25).

### **Legislation and the criminal code**

To Barragán the clearest expression of the new republic of Bolivia after independence was its legislation. The body of 19<sup>th</sup> century legislation is an expression of the interaction of social, cultural and political forces, a power that established rules and marked the limits of what was permitted and what was forbidden. In this way, the legislation played an active role in reorganizing and structuring society, it ranked and classified social groups and legitimized the way power was exerted. The legislation had implications for social and ethnic dynamics (Barragán 1997, PE-59).

When Barragán analyzes the Bolivian criminal code from 1831, is evident that different "classes of people" were treated differently, i.e. social condition had a bearing on the outcome in court. Theoretically, people were equal, but in practice there were "lower and intermediate social groups, including women" suffering discrimination (Barragán 1997, PE-60). Differentiation within society was also based on gender and age. Women were excluded from citizenship, and they were not allowed to file

accusations “except in cases in which they were directly and personally involved” because of their gender (Barragán 1997, PE-61). Paternal authority was also practiced in the republic, which meant that children were not allowed to behave disrespectfully and leave home without authorization.

That same authority exerted by mothers and fathers over their children, was exerted by husbands over their wives [...]. The authority of parents over children, of husbands over wives and that of landlords over their servants also included legalized violence [...]. (Barragán 1997, PE-61).

Another aspect of the 1831 criminal code was that it distinguished between

[...] „uncorrupted women, those with good reputation’, and those of bad reputation or prostitutes. Punishment for sexual offences committed against a prostitute was half that of a crime against women of good reputation (Barragán 1997, PE-61).

Barragán also gives examples of the difference it made to belong to groups with authority and social power, which means that in spite of the ideas of equality people of indigenous background, was in a completely different and subordinated situation.

Barragán also discusses the way vertical relations that were typical of the interrelations between different social groups. Illegitimate children had no rights of inheritance from their father’s side because they were considered to have been “conceived against law and natural reason” (1997, 61). In the city of La Paz illegitimacy was closely related to relationships outside marriage and adultery. Men usually committed adultery with women from lower classes. The new Bolivian republic was a hierarchical society, with a small female elite of good reputation and the rest considered a mass of dishonorable women. With the prevailing cult of virginity and the conception of marriage women as wives and mothers were separated from the figure of the mistress. Based on these notions husbands were allowed to “have access” to other women, and many wives were obliged to accept these extra-marital relations. As Dore (2000) indicates adultery by husbands and wives is equally sinful in Catholic doctrine, and there is evidence that ecclesiastical courts in Latin America tended to judge male and female adulterers similarly. When the regulation of marriage

and adultery passed from the church to the state, things changed.

In the nineteenth century Latin America's civil codes virtually legalized adultery for males and made it a capital offence for females. It is significant that male adultery remained legal and female adultery remained criminal in most countries of the region well into the twentieth century (Dore 2000, 23).

As mentioned by Barragán, to “have access” to other women is an expression of power, an authority that confirms social distinction and hierarchy (1997, PE-61-62). Children born out of wedlock were characterized as “infamous” and despised by dominant groups because they expressed dishonor and often unlawful interclass and inter-ethnic unions. of the interclass relations were very important as interrelations between different social groups. There was no base for women to be united, rather a rigid separation between women of different social groups was an integral part of society's hierarchies and divisions. Bolivian society was conceived of as being formed by unequal and hierarchical groups (Barragán 1997, PE-62).

Barragán thus concludes that a new system was inaugurated,

[...] where 1) social stratification was not recognized but continued to exist; 2) the rights and so-called „privileges’ of indigenous peoples disappeared; and 3) the stigma of belonging to certain groups and categories, and the ambiguity involved in making these distinctions, became a social battlefield (1997., PE-62).

Citizenship concerns the relation between individuals or groups and the nation-state, i.e. the rights and duties that members of a society have visavi the state. It concerns the development of discourses and practices by which Latin American societies organize political participation, as well as inclusion and exclusion from citizenship rights. Bolivian women and men have always had differing positionings as citizens and thus different abilities to achieve and enlarge their rights and potentials. The main difference is not only between women and men, but between women and men of different social groups. In Barragán's account of early 19<sup>th</sup> century Bolivia,

[...] the elite's purpose was to establish citizenship for honourable and highly reputable men, as opposed to infamous, illiterate men, and to privilege women of good reputation versus those of bad or „unknown’ reputation (1997, PE-62).

Dore (2000) reminds us that the category “women” –insofar as it does not differentiate women according to status, class etc.- is of limited analytical value if we want to understand how states affected gender and vice versa during the nineteenth century. The effect of legal changes was different and often contradictory for single, widowed, and married women, and class, ethnicity and race conditioned how women were affected by the law.

It is also important to look into local and regional practices that sometimes diverged with state policy. Dore (2000) points out, for example, to different effects of liberal reforms on women’s access to land depending on local, regional and national experiences. There was a big difference between the conditions for indigenous women who lived in communities where communal property was expropriated and other women who had access to ownership and private property since long (Dore 2000, 21).

### **Domestic service, military service and schooling**

Differences between different social groups could be found in relation to the ways gender relations were structured and how hierarchical relations are expressed in gendered ways. Similar patterns continue into the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Gill (1990) studied domestic service and the actors involved and states that “prior to the 1952 national revolution, domestic service was a complex system that reflected the heterogeneity of La Paz society” (Gill 1990, 121). It was in homes of the creole or *criollo* upper class where most household workers were found. The wealth of these families derived from large landholdings or mines and the male members often worked in professions like law and medicine. The main tasks of the adult women of these households were to care for the family members and manage the home and the servants. In order for a woman to be considered a “lady” in the fullest sense it was necessary to have servants in the home. These upper-class women did not engage in salaried employment outside the home if it could be avoided because it was considered improper for women of their social standing (Gill 1990, 121).

It was not only the members of the upper class who employed servants. Servants could also be found in the homes and businesses of e.g. bakers, butchers, owners of small shops, and tailors, i.e. families with considerably less social prestige and economic power. These families would express their sense of belonging to an urban Aymara culture. The servants of these female employers were often used both in domestic and non-domestic tasks such as engaging in the employers small family business, sell goods in the markets, or assist in travels between the city and the surrounding altiplano to buy and sell goods (Gill 1990, 121). Servants came from both urban and rural areas, but due to the expansion of the haciendas during the first half of the twentieth century most of the servants had rural background. The hacienda expansion put pressure on the subsistence base of indigenous communities and forced women as well as men to migrate in search of work (Gill 1990, 121).

Class relations separated upper-class employers from employees who had very different situations and unequal duties and obligations. Mistresses and servants were divided by class divisions and ethnic differences but both groups were affected by prevailing gender conventions, albeit in different ways. Most women answered ultimately to a male household head, which had the power to intervene in domestic affairs and contradict the orders of the mistress. The legal system confirmed that he had final authority over servants (Gill 1990, 122-123).

Male involvement in domestic affairs became most problematic for household workers when the husbands and sons of the mistress sexually harassed and abused them, behavior that was very common [...] such treatment of servants violated the rules of appropriate behavior that men upheld toward women of their own class...a distinction that constantly reminded household workers that they did not enjoy the same „protection' as their mistresses (Gill 1990, 123).

Bolivia went through important transformations of society following the 1952 national revolution and the subsequent agrarian reform but these changes did not affect much the nature of domestic service in La Paz.

Following the popular revolution and its agrarian reform in 1953, the destruction of the hacienda system and the abolition of serfdom, the urban oligarchy lost many of its former privileges. Female members of the former oligarchy had fewer servants to manage were in many cases obliged to seek work outside the



home. For low-income females the urban labor market did not change much in spite of the revolution, and domestic service continued to be their main possibilities (Gill 1990, 124). In the late 1980s domestic service changes from a long-term occupation to a sporadically pursued job. This new form implied greater independence than earlier generations of household workers, but many of the material benefits of paternalism from bourgeois employers were lost without being replaced by any job security or protection from the state (Gill 1990, 126-127).

Gill (1990) has also demonstrated how class, gender and ethnic relationships structured the interactions between employer and servant and condition their involvement in the labor force. The way house workers have been treated varies over time and after the personalities and socioeconomic backgrounds of their employers. Transformations that led to a drastic decrease in multiservant households and the downward mobility of some employers generated changes for the household workers, but various enduring practices continued to shape the relationship between mistress and female servant.

They include deference rituals, uncertainty of work, virtual obligation to accept degrading treatment, and invisibility of the household worker. Through these practices, relations of inequality are created and recreated (Gill 1990, 133).

Other important gendering institutions of the state in Bolivia after the revolution have been the military and the school. Gill (1997) explores the role of the military service in creating a positive sense of masculine identity among subaltern men, which, at the same time, is linked to their own subordination and reinforces other gendered patterns that degrade women and non-military men. In a later work, Larson (2005) shows how politics of rural schooling (connected to the republic's nation-building project in the early 1900s) was formulated in order to enter the "bodies, hearths and minds" of the rural population to transform women and men into productive peasants. These reforms focused, among other things, on the Indian woman to be the one to cultivate new habits of hygiene, work and consumption necessary for the nation to prosper. The role of schooling for cultural production has also been analyzed by Luykx (1999) showing the intersections of gender, race and class that influence the formation of rural schoolteachers and

their transformations into Bolivian citizens in the twentieth century.

### **Gender, difference and hierarchy**

Reviewing the historical sources at hand about nation, state and gender relations in Bolivia and Latin America it is clear that gender relations have been organized according to difference and hierarchy. The main problem seems to have been how to maintain differentiation within the idea of a unified nation. One aspect of nation-making took the form of normalization of elite ideals of masculinity and femininity, ideas that did not work well with the practices of the majority. What was considered “proper” behavior and clothing was considered different for different social categories but they were also mutually dependant. For example, to be able to fulfill elite ideals of the “lady” it was necessary to have access to servants. A person representing the male elite could show his power by “having access” to other “not honorable” women.

Another theme concerns legislation and how patriarchal authority is maintained during the nineteenth century in combination with notions of difference. Patriarchal authority remained after independence and was guarded by the representatives of the new nation. Secularization even reinforced wives subordination to their men. It is also in legislation that differences based on gender, class and ethnicity are maintained expressed through different treatment of different “classes of people”. Differences between different classes are also upheld through different institutions, here given by the example of domestic service, military service and schooling. This short review of some aspects of the relations between gender, state and nation confirms the notion that in the case of Bolivia the intersections between gender, class, and ethnicity has been crucial for structuring gender relations, and even if the basic premises of the state are currently being reworked it will most likely continue to be so for some time yet to come.

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