

## CHAPTER 7

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# Intermediation, Ethnogenesis and Landscape Transformation at the Intersection of the Andes and the Amazon: the Historical Ecology of the Lecos of Apolo, Bolivia

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### Introduction

Strategically located at the intersection of the Andes and the Amazon, the piedmont region of Apolo, Bolivia, is an interactive frontier in which indigenous communities have long been transformed by the movement of persons, resources and cultural practices between the *altiplano* (Andean high plateau) and the tropical lowlands. Drawing on recent ethnographic research, I shall discuss the history of the Lecos people indigenous to this region, changes to Lecos identity and mobility and resulting transformation of ecological relations. Different forms of mobility that have affected the Lecos include locally situated seasonal movements associated with subsistence activities, as well as involvement in inter-regional intermediation routes that traversed the piedmont. Inhabiting a region of high mobility and shifting ethnic territories, piedmont groups played a historic role as mediators of exchange, or intermediation, between adjacent highland and lowland regions (Saignes 1985; Renard-Casevitz et al. 1988; Meyers 2002).

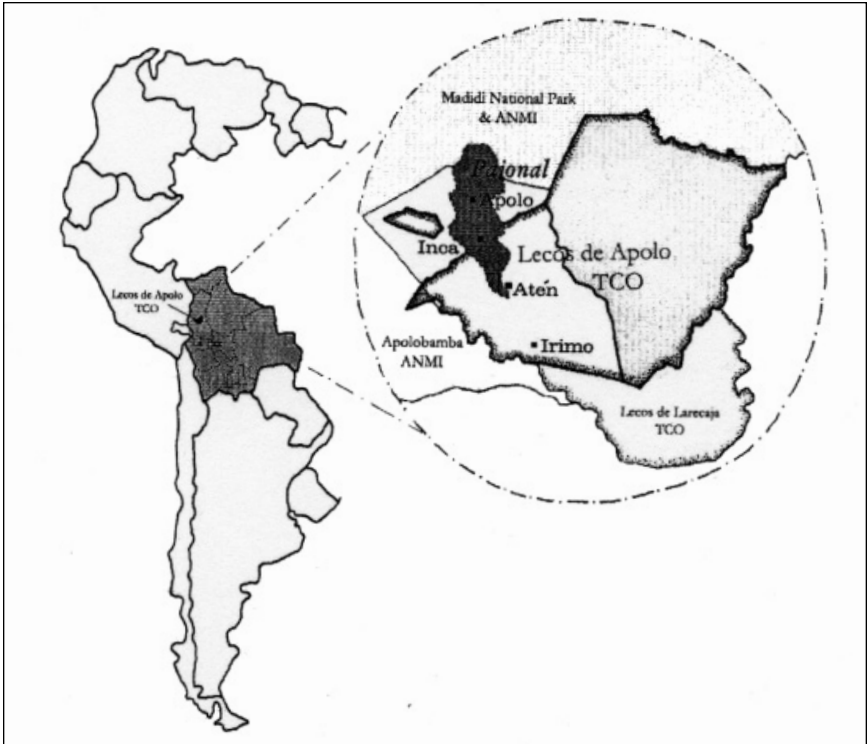
Dynamic routes of intermediation are analysed using Nuñez and Dillehay's (1995) concept of *movilidad giratoria* ('revolving mobility'), in which interactive frontiers expand and contract in response to historical restructurings of space and power. The most important restructuring took place during the colonial encounter, which resulted in a disarticulation of

Andean and Amazonian spheres of interaction, and the subsequent marginalisation of ethnic groups indigenous to the intermediary region (Saignes 1985; Renard-Casevitz et al. 1988). The theme of this volume takes up the challenge of incorporating historical sensitivity into investigations of human–environmental interactions in lowland South America. In the introduction to this volume, Miguel Alexiades recognises that ‘not infrequently, indigenous societies have become decreasingly mobile and yet increasingly dislocated’. This statement captures the situation of the Lecos, which contributes to the current discussion of migration, displacement and dislocation by introducing the themes of Andean-Amazonian intermediation, ethnogenesis and historical ecology.

After being displaced from primary circuits of intermediation along the eastern slopes of the Andes, the Lecos became increasingly dislocated from both Andean and Amazonian spheres of interaction. Historical changes to Lecos mobility affected both the cultural identity and territory of the Lecos, leading to novel processes of ethnogenesis and landscape transformation. Challenging traditional notions of indigenous peoples as essential givens, the concept of ethnogenesis acknowledges the ways in which social groups are historically constructed through a ‘continuous cultural process that is simultaneously reproductive and transformative’ (Powers 1995: 9; see also Alexiades and Peluso and Zent, this volume). Transformations to Lecos society occurred during the Inca empire, the mission period, extractive booms, post-revolutionary agrarian reform, and the recent movement to recuperate Lecos indigenous identity. The contemporary Lecos of Apolo are the consequence of transculturation and change that took place during these time periods.

Historical events likewise initiated environmental changes to the contracting physical territory of the Lecos. The most profound transformation included the expansion of anthropogenic grasslands and recession of tropical forest patches that mediate locally situated seasonal movements tied to subsistence activities. Investigations into the current knowledge, use, and management of natural resources must therefore take into account anthropogenic transformations to the landscape and the ways in which these are linked to changes in cultural practices and identities. The historical ecology of the Lecos of Apolo, by definition, is an investigation into these changes (Crumley 1994; Balée 1998). Linked to the broader field of ethnobiology, historical ecology is a research programme ‘concerned with interactions through time between societies and environments and the consequences of these interactions for understanding the formation of contemporary and past cultures and landscapes’ (Balée 2005).<sup>1</sup>

1. William Balée (2005) clarifies the relationship between historical ecology and ethnobiology by stating that, whereas ethnobiology is a field involving the description and analysis of human–biotic interactions, historical ecology is a research programme with a set of interdependent postulates regarding the nature of human–biotic interactions through time.



**Figure 7.1. Location of the Lecos of Apolo, Bolivia.** Inset: Approximate location of the *Lecos de Apolo* TCO, Lecos communities, and surrounding natural protected areas and indigenous territories (TCOs).

This chapter traces the history of Lecos mobility, outlines subsequent changes to the identity and territory of the Lecos and provides a brief comparison of the differential effect of ethnogenesis and landscape transformation in the communities of Inca and Irimo. Finally, I shall comment on how historical ecology research relates to the current movement to recuperate Lecos identity and territory, and can inform similar land-based indigenous movements throughout lowland South America.

## The Bolivian Piedmont and Apolobamba

As a zone of transition between the Andes and the Amazon, the Bolivian piedmont encompasses a diverse range of ecological habitats, and was formerly characterised by high cultural diversity and contact. Due to its strategic location and geographical conditions, Apolobamba served as a particularly important setting for cultural encounter and exchange.

### *Biogeographical Setting*

Located in northern La Paz, Bolivia, Apolo is situated along the eastern slopes of the Andes between the *yungas* and the interior lowlands to the north and east (Figure 7.1).<sup>2</sup> This piedmont region was historically referred to as Apolobamba, a combination of the terms ‘Apolo’, which may derive from the Lecos word for puma/jaguar (*polo*), and a Spanish corruption of the Quechua word *pampa*, meaning flat plain (Machicao Gámez 1990). Andean and Amazonian bioregions overlap in Apolobamba, which contains diverse habitats, including cloud forest, tropical dry and wet forest and tropical savannah, or llanos (MACPIO 2001). The llanos of Apolo are flanked by undulating hills and tropical forests (*monte*), and contrast with the precipitous slopes of the adjacent *yungas*. The climate is tropical with a marked dry season, while heat and humidity are mitigated by temperate breezes (Hilari 1991). European explorers often commented on the scenic beauty of Apolobamba (e.g. Bolivar 1906 [1621]); yet the broad open plains of Apolo also supplied an optimal space for cultural encounters and trade (see Steward 1948).

### *The Chunchos Tribes*

The central Andean piedmont was inhabited during the late pre-Hispanic and early colonial periods by a diversity of ethnic groups generically referred to as the *chunchos* (Steward 1948).<sup>3</sup> Ethnic composition before Spanish entry can only be reconstructed through the documentary accounts of Inca chroniclers and early Spanish explorers, which, while ambiguous, provide a general picture of the different people who inhabited Apolobamba at the time of contact. Early European explorers produced the first documentary records that explicitly named the *chunchos* tribes, and described the Lecos as inhabiting the llanos of Apolo and the humid forests to the south (Métraux 1948: 505; Machicao Gámez

2. The term *montaña* is used in Peru to indicate the forested slopes between 400 and 1,800 metres above sea level, whereas the term *yungas* is often substituted in Bolivia (Renard-Casevitz et al. 1988: 43). However, the *yungas* generally refer to the steep slopes immediately adjacent to the Andes and specific Bolivian provinces. To clarify, the term piedmont is used to refer to the elevation range in which Apolo falls (900 to 1,500 metres) (Hilari 1991).
3. The Inca distinguished between the *chunchos* and the *antis*, who inhabited the upper Madre de Dios basin, and the *sacharuna*, or ‘forest people’, of the Amazonian interior (Saignes 1985; Renard-Casevitz et al. 1988). The term *chuncho* also differentiated between the feared Chiriguano to the south and the indigenous nations of eastern Bolivia, particularly the Mojos of the Mamoré basin (Quiroga Gismondi 1991: 21).

2000: 9).<sup>4</sup> Located along the western frontier of *chunchos* territory, the Lecos were often one of the first tribes encountered by Spanish expeditions (Saignes 1985; Meyers 2002).<sup>5</sup>

The Lecos were generally mentioned together with the Aguachile, a neighbouring tribe that occupied the north-eastern section of Apolobamba. Both the Lecos language, Rik'a, and the Aguachile language are linguistic isolates, unrelated to each other and to the languages of the Tacana family, widely spoken in the tropical lowlands to the north (Montaño Aragón 1987, 1989; see Alexiades and Peluso, this volume).<sup>6</sup> To the south-east, the Lecos were bordered by the Mosetene, who likewise speak a linguistically unclassified language (Métraux 1948).

Like other piedmont groups, the Lecos practised swidden horticulture and seasonally dispersed to hunt and gather. The Lecos were renowned navigators of lightweight rafts (*balsas*) and relied heavily on fishing (Métraux 1948). Due to their subsistence strategies, Steward (1948) classified the Lecos and other piedmont tribes as 'tropical forest cultures', although they appear to have shared many characteristics of both Andean and Amazonian influence.<sup>7</sup> Furthermore, these groups were not as isolated

4. The following *chunchos* tribes were recorded in 1678: Lecos, Aguachile, Arionas, Uchupiamonas, Pasaracionas, Antonios/Pasaimos, Maises, Araonas, Pacanaguas, Sarionas, Saparunas, Chumanos, Suquitunas, Ubamonas, Yuvamonas and Toromas (Chávez Suárez 1986: 14). Most of the groups listed after the Lecos and Aguachile are Tacana-speaking peoples, considered by Saignes (1985) to comprise the *chuncho* classification *sensu stricto*. Saignes (1985) admits that less is known about the situation of Lecos, Aguachile and other independent language groups in the region who were less sedentary and more warlike than neighbouring Tacana peoples.
5. The first documentary reference to the Lecos was recorded in 1594 by P. Miguel Cabello de Balboa, who encountered Lecos Indians in the town of Camata and travelled from there into the valley of 'Apolopampa', recognised as the land of the Lecos (Cabello de Balboa 1906 [1594]).
6. The Leco language, also referred to as 'Leca' or 'Lapalapa', is called Rik'a in the Apolo region and Dialecto in the neighbouring province of Larecaja. The Leco language is recognised as a linguistic isolate (Ibarra Grasso 1985; Van de Kerke 2000). Although no longer spoken, word lists were documented by Weddell (1853) and Cardús (1886) and a grammatical sketch was published by Lafone Quevado (1905) and Van de Kerke (2000). No studies exist of the Aguachile language, although some scholars suggest that *Lapacho* or *Apolista* was spoken by the ancestral Aguachile (D'Orbigny 1944, Métraux 1948) (see note 9).
7. For instance, the Lecos lacked vertical looms, hammocks and other 'typical' Amazonian traits, while utilising garments (*tipoyos*) and ornamental styles more commonly associated with the highlands (Steward 1948). Bolívar (1906 [1621]) also recorded the existence of specialised roundhouses that served in a regional ceremonial complex, as well as alliances between supra-local political leaders called *maranis*.

from one another as much as Steward (1948) presumed. In fact, the Lecos and other *chunchos* tribes were long transformed by historical engagements with neighbouring Andean and Amazonian peoples, making attempts to provide a static, pre-contact ethnographic picture futile.

## Lecos History

The history of the Lecos people must be understood as a part of the movement of persons and resources along the eastern slopes of the Andes, and the ways in which this interactive frontier expanded and contrasted according to historical restructurings of space and power.

### *Kallawaya Intermediation*

A long history of inter-regional contacts characterises the piedmont region. Different production zones along the eastern cordillera were historically connected by exchange networks that provided ecological complementarity (Murra 1972). This adaptive strategy was well established in the central highlands and significant to the intermediation strategies of the Kallawaya kingdom that emerged prior to the expansion of the Inca empire (AD 900 to 1300) (Moseley 1993). Four vertical environmental zones yielded ecological complementarity in Kallawaya territory: (1) glacial peaks that provided abundant, year-round water; (2) high, humid pastures (*pumas*) for camelids; (3) temperate valleys for tuber and cereal cultivation; and (4) semitropical *yungas*, in which tropical products were gathered or grown (Meyers 2002). The llanos of Apolo were situated immediately interior to the Kallawaya *yungas*, and marked the fluctuating frontier of direct influence by the famed medicine men and merchants that spoke Puquina, an Arawak-affiliated language.<sup>8</sup> The *chunchos* played a collaborative role in securing trade goods from the lowlands, particularly medicinal and dye plants that were vital to Andean liturgical practices (Saignes 1985; Meyers 2002).

The late historian Thierry Saignes (1993) contrasted the situation of the highly visible and yet historically unnamed Kallawaya Indians with the seemingly invisible and yet named *chunchos* Indians that occupied adjacent downhill territories. In her ethnohistorical examination of Kallawaya intermediation, Rodica Meyers (2002) explores the mystery of Kallawaya ethnicity. According to Meyers (2002), interactions between the ‘mobile-sedentary’ agro-pastoralists of the highlands and the ‘mobile-sedentary’

8. The ritualistic language currently employed by Kallawaya herbalists is a professional jargon that combines Quechua morphology with a Puquina lexicon (Renard-Casevitz et al. 1988; Adelaar 2004).

horticulturalists/ hunter-gatherers of the *yungas* resulted in a slow process of ethnogenesis, ultimately culminating in the recognition of a group of people called the Kallawayaya. As the intermediation sphere of the Kallawayaya expanded and contracted in accordance with the concept of *movilidad giratoria*, so did the number of ethnic groups that participated in this ethnogenetic continuum. At its ultimate phase of expansion, Kallawayaya control extended into the llanos of Apolo and included the *chunchos* who lived in this region, most probably involving the Lecos, given their territorial position at the time of European contact (Meyers 2002). The Lecos were clearly involved as key players in the movement of resources at that time, and were recorded by Cabello de Balboa ([1594] 1906) as trading goods from Apolobamba in the Kallawayaya town of Camata. In other words, the ethnogenesis of both the Lecos and the Kallawayaya may be a product of intermediation, and, as a result, there are many – even if poorly understood – mutual influences between these two groups.

### *Inca Empire*

Kallawayaya trade routes were considered vital to the lowland expansion of the Inca empire; as such, the Inca employed the Kallawayaya as intermediaries in their efforts to annex the central piedmont. The military campaign south-east of Cuzco began during the second half of the fifteenth century, and was consolidated through more diplomatic methods due to the resistance of *chunchos* tribes (Renard-Casevitz et al. 1988; Julien 2000; Meyers 2002). Once integrated into a single continuum of interaction, the eastern slopes of the Andes were bifurcated into two administrative divisions, a Carabaya province and a Chunchos province, which extended from the heart of Lecos territory into the interior lowlands. The Chunchos provincial capital was Ayaviri Zama, an ancient ceremonial centre located north-east of Apolo (Saignes 1985; Meyers 2002). The Inca built overland roads through Apolobamba to connect these regions (Armentia 1897, 1905; Maúrtua 1907).

The most important trade good secured from the piedmont was coca, which was cultivated for tribute in Apolobamba (Meyers 2002). Regional production systems were also restructured around imperial mines near Apolo, including Chipilusani ('silver hill' in Aguachile) (Saignes 1985; Montaña Aragón 1989). In order to fulfil labour demands and stabilise this important frontier, the Inca established *mitmaqunas*, or colonies of persons from other regions loyal to the empire. New processes of ethnogenesis emerged as a result of Inca social engineering, especially through the introduction of Quechua language and culture. By choice or circumstance, some Quechua-speaking colonists remained in the region after the fateful arrival of the Spanish (Renard-Casevitz et al. 1988).

### *Colonial Encounter*

Territorial and administrative restructurings of the early colonial period eventually led to the disarticulation of Andean and Amazonian realms of interaction, although this divide was never as absolute as later ethnographers (for example, Steward 1948) assumed (Lyon 1981; Saignes 1985). During the first century of colonial rule (AD 1530 to 1630), the administrative limits of the *Audencia de Charcas* extended to Ayaviri Zama in Apolobamba (Saignes 1985). Subsequently abandoned, this site was encountered by some of the first Spanish *conquistadores* who descended the eastern slopes in search of fame and gold (Quiroga Gismondi 1991). The mythic gold city of Paititi inspired early expeditions, which utilised Inca roads to penetrate the Provincia de Chunchos (Saignes 1985; Renard-Casevitz et al. 1988). These expeditions failed, however, due to the resistance of local populations. During this time, the Lecos and Aguachile were referred to as '*indios de guerra*' ('war Indians') and gained fierce reputations for their overt hostility towards territorial incursions (Machicao Gámez 1990). As a result, the limits of colonial administrative jurisdiction retreated to the *yungas* town of Camata in the Provincia de Carabaya, as the Provincia de Chunchos slipped out of direct Andean control (Saignes 1985; Renard-Casevitz et al. 1988).

The region between the previous limit of Inca authority and Spanish colonial jurisdiction coincides almost exactly with the extent of Lecos and Aguachile territories in Apolobamba. In the process of administrative disarticulation, the intermediate territory of the Lecos lost its former strategic significance and became increasingly unfamiliar to adjacent centres of power in the highlands and lowlands. The transformation of Apolo from a dynamic zone of interaction to a more static and dislocated region had important consequences for the ecological and cultural strategies of the Lecos in the following centuries.

### *Missions of Apolobamba*

Although no longer embedded in primary intermediation networks, or maintained under direct administrative control, Apolobamba remained important to missionaries that wished to establish lowland conversion routes. After numerous failed attempts the Augustinian and Franciscan orders finally reduced Lecos and Aguachile populations into multi-ethnic missions by the end of the seventeenth century.

In 1615, the Augustinians established the first mission of Apolo, Nuestra Señora de Guadalupe, at the base of Chipilusani (Torres 1972). The mission was twice abandoned due to the hostility of its Lecos and Aguachile inhabitants. Rather than simply accepting or resisting the missionaries, indigenous groups actively positioned themselves to



compete for favours. In response to missionary incursions, the Lecos, Aguachile and other *chunchos* nations convened a grand assembly to decide the future of indigenous–missionary relations (Quiroga Gismondi 1991). The principal outcome was a stated desire to establish reciprocal trade and ensure continued possession of tribal lands. When promises were not met or advantages not forthcoming, indigenous groups rebelled. Unable to secure enough support to prevent rebellions, Augustinian missionaries withdrew (Machicao Gámez 1990; Quiroga Gismondi 1991).

Franciscan missionaries entered Apolobamba at this time and incorporated native populations under Spanish authority (Ballivián 1898; Armentia 1905; Maúrtua 1907). In 1696, the Franciscans reoccupied the former mission of Apolo and moved it to its present location. The mission of La Inmaculada Concepción de Apolobamba was reconstituted with Lecos and Aguachile as well as Pamainos Indians recruited from the north. Apolo became the regional centre of the expansive ‘Missions of Apolobamba’ and a place of embarkation for lowland expeditions (Quiroga Gismondi 1991; Machicao Gámez 2002).

In this multi-ethnic mission centre, a slow process of ethnogenesis resulted in the creation of a new ethnic category – Apolistas. Although treated by D’Orbigny (1944, 1946) as a distinct ethnic group, the Apolistas appeared in the documentary record at the same time as accounts of Aguachile and Pamainos disappeared. Certain scholars (e.g. D’Orbigny 1944; Métraux 1948) believe that the Apolistas are the ancestral Aguachile, whereas Montaña Aragón (1987: 81) concludes that they are the descendants of the Pamainos. Given complex processes of ethnogenesis in the missions, a one-to-one correlation is probably not realistic. The term Apolista clearly derives from the name for this multi-ethnic mission centre, and was associated with the Lapacho language, which has been classified as an Arawak language and which may have functioned as an indigenous trade or ritual language, similar to that of the contemporary Kallawayá (Créqui-Montfort and Rivet 1913; Montaña Aragón 1987).<sup>9</sup> Distinctions among the different ethnic groups continued to blur due to mission practices that negated rules of endogamy and promoted Quechua as a common language (Armentia 1905). Established prior to Spanish arrival, Quechua influence intensified during the mission era (MACPIO 2001).

9. Although Chamberlain (1910) defined Lapacho as a linguistic isolate, other linguists have classified Lapacho as an Arawak language (Marcou 1913; Rivet 1913; Créqui-Montfort and Rivet 1913; Greenberg 1960). Given the propensity of Arawak peoples to be involved in long-distance trade, an Arawak substrate to the Lapacho language is not surprising, nor is its potential historical function as a trade language in the mission centre of Apolo.

Missionaries also implemented a concentrated settlement pattern and more sedentary lifestyle, in which indigenous production was divided between meeting subsistence needs and producing a mission surplus. Trade routes were re-established connecting Apolo to the highlands in order to sell native-produced coca (Quiroga Gismondi 1991: 62). While Apolobamba once again functioned to connect lowland and highland regions, the Lecos neither controlled nor were empowered by mission trade. Furthermore, while coca cultivation pre-dated the Spanish, the llanos were not previously managed for grazing large animals.<sup>10</sup> Spanish missionaries considered the open savannahs of Apolo optimal for the introduction of European livestock, and this new form of production initiated profound environmental transformations (Armentia 1905; D'Orbigny 1946). While the llanos may have been partially anthropogenic in origin, the balance between savannah and forest ecosystems shifted as more grasslands were cleared and burned at the expense of surrounding *monte*.

Processes of ethnogenesis and landscape transformation, however, were not uniform among the Lecos.<sup>11</sup> The mission of Atén (1699) constituted a secondary pole of activity south of Apolo. Although established as a multi-ethnic mission, Lecos heritage and the Rik'a language remained prominent in Atén (D'Orbigny 1946; Quiroga Gismondi 1991). Furthermore, the forested environs played a strategic role in the guerrilla strategies of the Lecos during the Wars of Independence (1809–25). Beginning with local protests against indigenous tribute demands, the Lecos *Aaviomarani* Santos Pariamo organised an army of archers from Atén to defeat the Spanish royalists in Apolo and offer resistance throughout the piedmont (Oblitas Fernandez 1970). Hunted down and killed by Spanish colonial forces in 1816, Santos Pariamo remains a venerated martyr and cultural symbol for the region of Apolo and the Lecos (MACPIO 2001; Machicao Gámez 2003). Yet despite this reverence, the condition of indigenous people changed little with the creation of the Bolivian republic.

10. Native camelids, such as llamas, are unable to thrive in the tropical climate of Apolo. Camelid caravans travelled only as far as the *yungas* town of Camata (Meyers 2002).
11. A large segment of the Lecos population migrated south and became incorporated in the mission system of Guanay. The Lecos in the province of Larecaja have their own indigenous organisation, PILCOL (Indigenous Lecos People and Original Communities of Larecaja), and have experienced radically different pressures affecting their identity and environment. Having retained the Lecos language, which they call *Dialecto*, and a riverine lifestyle distinct from that of neighbouring Aymara colonists, the Lecos of Larecaja have received more treatment by scholars, and will not be addressed in this chapter (Zalles Cueto 1993; Hilaquita Marca 2002).

### The Republic Period

The Republic Period (1826–1952) initiated the first significant penetration of non-indigenous society in Apolobamba, with profound consequences for the Lecos and their environment. Immediately prior to independence, Franciscan missions were converted into secular parishes as native inhabitants retreated back to ancestral lands. The creation of the Caupolicán Province in 1826 coincided with international demand for quinine to treat malaria, and the Bolivian government granted *Cinchona* tree concessions to attract Bolivian criollos (of European descent) and foreigners (Jimenez 1991; Luisa Soux 1991).<sup>12</sup> Apolo, the provincial capital, and Atén, located in the heart of extractive forests to the south, emerged as exportation centres. Trade routes linking these regions, however, were as ephemeral as the quinine boom itself, which declined after 1860. Indigenous communities that reorganised to take advantage of the economy, particularly the Lecos near Atén, were hard hit by tribute demands in the wake of the bust (Armentia 1905; Jimenez 1991; Luisa Soux 1991).

By 1880, international demand for rubber again changed productive and power relations in the province as the first hacienda estates were established and a powerful elite (*vecinos*) emerged (Luisa Soux 1991). By the twentieth century, numerous haciendas were dedicated to rubber extraction, sugar cane and coca production and cattle ranching, which rapidly expanded to feed the growing population of indentured indigenous workers. Although the Lecos did not experience the large population displacements imposed on interior tribes (see Alexiades and Peluso, this volume), the indigenous peoples of Apolo were gravely exploited by a hacienda system located on the periphery of state control (Luisa Soux 1991: 120–24).

Indigenous subsistence strategies existed along with *hacendado*-controlled market activities, although the wealth generated neither compensated indigenous peoples, bound by debt peonage, nor led to the development of the province. As with the quinine boom, the rubber boom collapsed abruptly in 1912 and left the region isolated and impoverished. The extractive cycles of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries tentatively linked Apolobamba to the *altiplano* and adjacent lowlands, although under conditions that created a situation of dependency rather than development (Jimenez 1991). Indigenous peoples, whose identities became buried in the politics of subordination, bore the brunt of the region's economic isolation and remained dependent upon the haciendas, which continued to encroach on traditional lands and resources (MACPIO 2002).

12. To honour the indigenous people who fought for independence, the province was named after the Araucano war leader Caupolicán. Renamed Franz Tamayo in 1967, the territorial boundaries of the province approximate the former mission system of Apolobamba (Machicao Gámez 1990).

### *Revolution and Agrarian Reform*

The 1952 Bolivian revolution and subsequent agrarian reform brought sweeping changes to the region. The most important was the dissolution of the hacienda system and the acquisition of communal land titles for indigenous households that organised in accordance with the national union model. Newly formed communities affiliated with the National Peasant Union (CSTUB), which reinforced a generic identity as *campesinos*, or peasants, as the mestizo ideology of the state promoted policies of assimilation (Ströebele-Gregor 1994; Healy and Paulson 2000). Moreover, the revolution valorised a *campesino* identity as an alternative to the ongoing discrimination confronting indigenous peoples and the negative stereotypes affiliated with being an *indio*, or Indian.

In the post-revolutionary decades, the Bolivian government simultaneously sought to promote lowland economic development, ease political pressures in the highlands and reintegrate highland and lowland regions through programmes of Andean colonists. These development programmes did not have a significant impact on the renamed province of Franz Tamayo. Circumvented by national currents, Apolo remained isolated and economically stagnant throughout the second half of the twentieth century (Hilari 1991). This had particularly adverse consequences for indigenous *campesinos*, who, without sufficient access to economic markets, struggled to make a subsistence living under increasingly degraded environmental conditions.

Conversion to pastureland accelerated in the post-revolutionary decades and became near total in the valleys and hills surrounding Apolo. Unfortunately, local grasses are ill-suited to sustaining introduced livestock, which suffer from malnutrition and disease, and the exposed soil is vulnerable to erosion. On the ecological maps of Bolivia, the region appears as a swathe of degraded grasslands surrounded by tropical forests; the conversion to pasture is even noticeable in satellite images from space (Martínez 2000; Erickson, personal communication, December 2005). These changes to the environment created an acute scarcity of available *monte* suitable for traditional cultivation of subsistence food crops. Furthermore, the disappearance of nearby forests limited opportunities to gather forest resources or hunt wild game, which had an impact on nutrition, material culture and ecological knowledge among a people once associated with both forests and savannahs.

### *Lecos Indigenous Movement*

The current movement to recuperate Lecos ethnic identity arose from concerns about land and resources, as well as the desire to recover a sense of cultural pride in the wake of historical repression. In 1994, the

Indigenous Centre of the Original Peoples of Apolobamba (CIDEPOA) was created and helped organise the Planning Committee of the Lecos and Aguachile Peoples (MACPIO 2001). The organisation positioned itself in relation to all autochthonous peoples of Apolobamba, recognising the importance of regional identity while giving particular attention to the mutual and overlapping strands of Lecos and Aguachile heritage. Interestingly, Pamainos heritage is not overtly recognised, although the Lapacho language is, reinforcing the complex historical relationship between language and identity in the region.

Furthermore, the incipient movement encountered resistance due to unwillingness to acknowledge indigenous identity in a region where the majority of individuals strongly identify as *campesinos*. The local peasant union also organised strong opposition to the indigenous organisation, which was perceived as a challenge to political hegemony. In 1997, the indigenous movement reorganised and formed the Indigenous Centre of the Lecos People of Apolo (CIPLA), which focused on recuperating the most salient strand of indigenous heritage (MACPIO 2001).

The movement to recuperate Lecos identity and territory must be understood in the context of broader trends related to neoliberalism and the rise of ethnic-based political organisation during the late twentieth century (Alexiades 2003; Zent, this volume). The movement must also be situated among the different trajectories of highland and lowland indigenous mobilisation in Bolivia. According to Giordani (1995: xi), 'explorations of the political links between Lowland and Andean South America are critical for an understanding of contemporary ethnogenesis in these two broad, yet historically connected, geographical regions'. In contrast to the long history of mobilisation in the Andes, indigenous peoples of the tropical lowlands did not effectively mobilise until the 1980s (Albó 1994; Gamarra 1996; Healy and Paulson 2000). Lowland indigenous groups formed the Confederation of Indigenous Peoples of Bolivia (CIDOB) and organised the famous 'march for territory and dignity' that captured national and international attention in 1990 (Brysk 1994; Ströebele-Gregor 1994; Albó 1995). International concern for the environment in general, and the Amazon in particular, drew further attention to the movement (Brysk 1994).

Central demands for territory and autonomy were addressed in constitutional and policy reforms carried out as a means to enhance state legitimacy (Betancur 2000; Van Cott 2000). The Agrarian Reform Law (Article 276 of the 1997 regulation) specifically recognised rights to territory by establishing the ability of indigenous groups to solicit a demand for a Communal Land of Origin (*Tierras Comunitarias de Origen*, TCO), provided that the soliciting groups establish markers of indigenous 'authenticity' (Martínez 2000). In September of 1999, CIPLA presented a demand for a Lecos of Apolo TCO, which was recently approved by the Morales administration (MACPIO 2002; Dudley 2005).

Despite legal recognition, the Lecos of Apolo TCO remains a source of active conflict with the both the local *campesino* federation and the Apolo civic committee (*vecinos*), which are attempting to annul the TCO (Bolivia.com, 24 September 2007). Unfortunately, the primary strategy of the opposing parties is to attack the ‘authenticity’ of the indigenous organisation CIPLA and its members. In addressing this struggle, it is important to realise that neither the lands being claimed nor the social actors involved represent bounded, static entities. Instead, Lecos territory and ethnic identity have been actively shaped through historical interactions that must be taken into account in order to understand contemporary social and environmental relations.

## Comparative Historical Ecology of Two Lecos Communities

A multi-sited ethnographic study among the Lecos of Apolo revealed that processes of landscape transformation and ethnogenesis were neither uniform over the region nor consistent among the group. Different historical trajectories led to distinct interactions with and impacts on local environments and identities, with attendant differences in environmental knowledge and material practices. The most salient contrast exists between communities located in the *pajonal* close to Apolo and those situated in the *monte* periphery near Atén. Important subsistence activities in the *pajonal* regions include the pasturing of sheep and cattle and the maintenance of *huertas*, or small agroforestry plots intensively cultivated using animal dung. Due to the declining availability of nearby *monte*, individuals must walk great distances to reach swidden horticultural plots, *chacras*, and even further to hunt and gather. Involvement in and knowledge of these activities in *pajonal* communities are declining as a result. *Pajonal* regions, however, are more closely linked to intermediation routes, and proximity to Apolo provides greater economic opportunities based on limited income from coca, coffee and citrus production.

Located further from the provincial capital, communities in the *monte* are surrounded by a rich patchwork of *chacras* and forest in different stages of succession. Rice is intensively cultivated along riverbanks and provides the primary source of income, although access to markets is more difficult given the lack of infrastructure. Livestock and *huertas*, if present at all, are less important to production, whereas hunting, gathering, and fishing remain central components of subsistence and identity.

The communities of Inca, situated in the *pajonal*, and Irimo, located in the *monte*, are representative of these two general types of community. A brief comparison illustrates locally situated variance that should be taken into account when addressing land-based needs of contemporary indigenous

populations. There are sixteen communities affiliated with CIPLA and listed as beneficiaries of the Lecos of Apolo TCO (MACPIO 2001, 2002).<sup>13</sup> While all indigenous *campesino* communities in the Apolo region share similar histories of ethnic interaction, approximately twenty-one remain affiliated with the *campesino* syndicate rather than the indigenous organisation CIPLA. Quechua is the principal language spoken throughout the region, although both Rik'a and Lapacho were formerly present.

The political structure of indigenous communities roughly parallels that of the *campesino* communities, although with different titles for elected positions and different national affiliations (e.g. CIDOB).<sup>14</sup> Communities are small, ranging from ninety to 350 individuals, generally semi-dispersed and usually a day's walking distance from nearby communities (MACPIO 2001, 2002). Most have a small primary school, a football field and access to potable water through collaboration with the only locally operating NGO, CARE-Bolivia. Outside the provincial capital of Apolo, there is no electricity and limited phone service. Dirt roads are poorly maintained and further isolate rural communities.

### *The Community of Inca*

The community of Inca is located twelve kilometres from Apolo along the principal road to La Paz, and has been greatly influenced by its strategic location along vital trade routes (Hilari 1991). As the name indicates, Inca was reportedly founded near a former *tambo*, or waypoint, along the Inca road to Apolo (MACPIO 2001). Inca imperial, Spanish missionary and hacienda presence was particularly strong along this major artery of intermediation. Resulting processes of ethnogenesis appear to have reinforced a Quechua-*campesino* identity and a strong pride in being native to Apolo. Local inhabitants are conscious of their links to Inca ancestry and proud of their Quechua heritage. The primary language spoken in the community is Quechua, even though both Rik'a and Lapacho were spoken until two generations ago.

13. Membership of CIPLA has oscillated over the years, with sixteen communities in 2003, consisting of Mulihuara, Correo, Inca, Chirimayo, Ilipana Yuyo, Yuyo Franz Tamayo, Trinidad, Santo Domingo, Irimo, Pucasucho, Muiri, Munaypata, San Juan de Yanaloma, Sarayoc, Tupili and Cauli. Several communities not affiliated with CIPLA also maintain a strong sense of Lecos heritage. The distinction between indigenous and *campesino* affiliated communities appears to be more political than ethnic; or, rather, political identities are organised according to different criteria.
14. In 2003, the CIPLA leadership changed the name of the president to *Capitán Grande* and the vice-president to *Baba Vitaka*, in order to represent traditional Lecos political titles. Local community leadership titles were changed to *cacique* and *Segundo cacique*, while various secretary positions remained the same.

The location of the community has exposed Inca to greater forces of assimilation and discrimination, on the one hand, and provided greater access to economic and political opportunities, on the other. Inca is one of the larger communities in the region, with a population of approximately 350 adults. Not unexpectedly, many leaders of CIPLA have come from Inca, which remains of strategic importance to the indigenous movement, despite local ambivalence about what it means to be 'indigenous' in an increasingly cosmopolitan community.

Inca has also experienced profound environmental transformations, which affect cultural identity and the material ability to make a living from the land. Sheep and cattle pasturing has been the principal productive activity affecting human–environmental interactions in the community. Communal lands are frequently burned to stimulate new growth preferred by livestock, although the region's grasses generally provide insufficient nutrients to maintain healthy herds. The conversion of forests to grasslands in the vicinity of Inca is virtually complete, and has created an acute crisis in forested land suitable for swidden horticulture and traditional hunting, gathering and fishing activities (MACPIO 2002). A desire to gain access to the *monte* drives local interest in the TCO, as well as dissatisfaction with the nearby Madidi National Park.

In contrast to communal pastures, swidden plots are owned by families who generally travel one to two hours to reach their *chacras*. As fertility in these plots rapidly declines and the length of adequate fallow time increases, community members are frustrated in their attempts to locate new productive lands. Many families have abandoned distant *chacras* to focus production in nearby *huertas*, where animal dung from livestock pens can be used as a natural fertiliser to provide continuous cultivation of fruits, vegetables, tubers and herbs. Managed trees within these agroforestry systems provide a source of shade as well as food, medicine, firewood and construction materials, which have become increasingly important as access to wild *monte* resources declines. Fenced-in *huertas* also function as islands of biodiversity within open expanses of grasslands, and serve as a refuge for birds and other wild animals that community members are most familiar with. *Huertas* are generally located adjacent to homes and closer to roads, facilitating the sale of coffee, coca and citrus, although the income generated from this surplus production is rarely sufficient, given the stagnant economy of the region. The shifting productive importance of *huertas* in relation to traditional swidden plots may be reflected in the greater knowledge that community members have about these agroforestry systems and account for the greater variety of plant resources that are commonly managed in these local plots versus the distantly located *chacras*.

Individuals must travel even greater distances to hunt or gather wild products, leading to the virtual abandonment of these activities, particularly among younger generations and families that have relocated



along central transportation corridors. The majority of adult men in Inca no longer engage in hunting due to the distance required to travel to the *monte*. Only a small number of potential game animals are commonly recognised, and more sophisticated trapping techniques, as well as rituals to encourage hunting success, are no longer practised. Plant and animal resources formerly gathered from the *monte* are now harvested from *huertas* or substituted by market purchases. These substitutions have led to the abandonment of artisanal activities in the community. The most important gathered resources are currently located in the *pajonal*, including *paja* or *ichu* grasses for roof fabrication of traditional adobe homes. Yet *paja* roofs are being increasingly replaced by corrugated tin roofs, which symbolise modernity and access to the market. Even fishing productivity has declined due to soil erosion from surrounding grasslands and the use of dynamite and broadcast fish poisons. As a result, many community members no longer engage in fishing, and a growing number of adult men and women claim to no longer know how to perform the activity.

The abandonment of former subsistence activities has led to a concomitant decline in associated cultural practices, knowledge and identification with the *monte*. Not only is knowledge of plant and animal species less comprehensive in terms of numbers of wild species recognised and named (as compared with Irimo), ethnobiological terms are exclusively in Quechua or Spanish rather than Rik'a or Lapacho. Children in particular have little knowledge of the plants and animals of the distant *monte*, given their greater exposure to the *pajonal* and nearby *huertas*. Knowledge about mystical attributes and folklore surrounding the *monte* is no longer embedded in daily activities, nor are rituals associated with agricultural production, such as ceremonial offerings of coca, tobacco and alcohol (*ch'alla*).

The most robust domain of ecological knowledge involves natural medicine, which remains extremely important in a region with limited access to formal health care. The majority of commonly used and shared-knowledge medicinal plants are grown in *huertas* or located in disturbed areas along the road. Several *curanderos* retain knowledge of how to utilise and locate more specialised medicinal plants in patches of *monte* set aside by the community for this purpose. *Curanderos* also trade medicinal plants that grow in entirely different ecological zones, indicating the lingering importance of Apolo's intermediation routes in the exchange of medicinal plants between the lowlands and the highlands. Most importantly, coca from Apolo, principally from Inca and surrounding *pajonal* communities, is preferred by Kallawayaya herbal specialists and is actively traded in Charazani. Yet, while herbal medicines are commonly employed to treat 'physical ailments' in Inca, Christian sects have cast suspicion on the use of *curandero* practices to treat 'spiritual ailments', which have become associated with witchcraft, the 'primitive past' and the *monte*.

Rather than identifying with the *monte*, daily interactions with *pajonal* landscapes inform cultural identity in Inca. Livestock not only translate into material and social capital, but open grasslands are associated with cleanliness and civilisation, sources of pride and indicators of the ‘modern’ status of the community. The *pajonal* zones are contrasted with those of the *monte*, which, while imbued with greater ‘authenticity’ due to their association with Lecos history, are also associated with primitiveness. Similar to lowland Quichua conceptions of tropical forests and ‘*Auca* savagery’ in Ecuador (e.g. Whitten 1976; Reeve 1985), the ambivalence towards the *monte* in Inca may reflect ambivalence towards indigenous identity and the past. *Curanderos* from Inca even explicitly link the origins of medicinal plant knowledge to past Lecos shamans from the *monte* community of Irimo, which remains endowed with both positive qualities of spiritual potency and cultural heritage and negative assumptions of ‘backwardness’ and witchcraft. These contrasting images of identity and landscape must be understood in their historical context and addressed by contemporary efforts to examine the use, knowledge and transformation of natural resources by Lecos communities that inhabit the *pajonal*.

### *The Community of Irimo*

Located deep in the *monte*, the community of Irimo represents the other end of the savannah–forest continuum. Furthermore, the association with the *monte* and the unique history of the community has established it as a marker of Lecos heritage in the region. In the early nineteenth century, relatives of the Lecos war hero Santos Pariamo fled Atén to avoid Spanish persecution and retreated into the forest, where they established the community of Irimo near an important ceremonial site of the Lecos people (Mollinedo et al. 2000). Processes of ethnogenesis and landscape transformation in this refuge community differed greatly from those experienced by communities more directly tied to intermediation routes in the llanos of Apolo.

Many ‘traditional’ cultural and material practices were maintained in this community, including aspects of Lecos religion, still evident in ritual practices performed at the ceremonial site. Yet the rich cultural traditions evident in Irimo are not remnants of an unchanged past, but the living expressions of an equally rich history of transformation. Having come from the former mission of Atén, the founders of Irimo brought a Lecos cultural heritage long influenced by Quechua and neighbouring lowland tribes. Furthermore, Irimo never remained completely isolated, but maintained overland trade north with Apolo and riverine trade south with the Lecos of Larecaja, with whom they share a dialect. Trade with Apolo peaked during the quinine and rubber booms, while southern transportation routes remained important until the completion of the La Paz–Apolo road in the 1980s.

Irimo's mixed lowland and highland heritage is expressed in folklore and ritual practices reflective of Amazonian influence, along with beliefs and practices derived from the highlands (*ch'allas*). Community members are conscious of their historical links to the Inca and with pride speak Quechua, a marker of identification with the Apolo region. Yet, unlike the community of Inca, inhabitants of Irimo also explicitly identify with their Lecos ancestry, and until very recently most members were bilingual in Rik'a.

Irimo encompasses a vast forested territory between the Yuyo and Atén rivers, and is located atop a series of ridges near their confluence. A poorly maintained dirt road connects the community to Atén during the dry season, although it becomes impassable once the rains begin. During the wet season, riverine transport via *balsas* connects Irimo to the adjacent province of Larecaja. The large expanse of community territory is cognitively carved into different named and historically recognised sectors. Knowledge about the ecology, history and cultural importance of different ecological and productive sectors is literally mapped across community territory through a complex indigenous cartography employed to describe the surrounding landscape (see also Micarelli, this volume). Ethnoecological terms employed in Irimo reflect the community's multiple heritages. For instance, the riverine sector *yemo yamo* refers in Rik'a to the abundance of *surubí* catfish, while the *ubito pampa* sector refers in Quechua to the abundance of *motacú* palms. Other aspects of community history and culture are more directly encoded in the cultural geography of Irimo. For instance, the sector *chinkana yuyo* ('hidden' in Quechua) refers to the river valley where the community hid during the Chaco war. The *incara* sector refers to the presence of presumed Inca ruins, which also function as an important ceremonial site for the practice of Lecos religion.

Even mythological beliefs are encoded in the landscape. The *ahuari* sector refers to a forbidden section of forest where a malicious folkloric animal by the same name was buried in the ground by a powerful shaman. Not only is information encoded in the naming of ecological sectors, but locals are also knowledgeable about the environmental characteristics, biological species and productive activities appropriate to each. Furthermore, Irimo families have traditional ties to one or several sectors where their *chacras* are located.

Swidden horticulture is the most important subsistence activity in Irimo, and, with ample land, each family manages five to ten *chacras* in various stages of succession. Monoculture plots are located to take advantage of different micro-environmental conditions optimal for the growth of plantains (*platanal*), sugar cane (*cañaverál*), rice (*arrozal*), manioc (*yucal*), peanuts, maize and beans, although the latter are often intercropped with secondary cultivars. Rice is the most important cash crop and is intensively cultivated along riverbanks, where families

maintain a secondary shelter for storage and use during harvesting. While mules and asses are used to transport rice to town, other livestock are no longer maintained in the community in order to mitigate damage to crops. Animal husbandry focuses on pigs, chickens, ducks and guinea pigs, which often fall prey to small cats and other predators from the *monte*. Likewise, few households maintain *huertas*, which tend to be smaller and for personal consumption.

The abundant presence of *monte* underscores the continued importance of complementary subsistence activities such as hunting, fishing and gathering of forest resources. Irimo inhabitants are extremely knowledgeable about locally abundant wildlife and can name species in Quechua, Spanish and even Rik'a. Charismatic species, such as Andean bears, jaguars and monkeys, play prominent roles in local stories that encode social and ecological information. Familiarity with animal behaviour and the location of salt licks and dens enhances hunting success, considered an important masculine attribute. Men hunt alone or in pairs, and do so both opportunistically and during planned, overnight outings to strategic locations. A variety of techniques are employed, including traps, machetes, shotguns, slingshots, hunting dogs and daily rituals to ensure hunting success. Both men and women fish over twenty species found in local rivers, and employ a range of techniques appropriate for wet or dry seasons, including hooks, nets (*lleka*), traps (*chapapa*), weirs and *barbasco* fish poison. At certain times of the year, locally caught fish and bush meat provide important sources of staple protein.

Individuals also travel seasonally to different sectors in order to gather forest products. Palms and other fruit trees are particularly important in providing a variety of subsistence needs, as are trees for firewood, construction and timber. The community considers its reserve of valuable hardwoods to be an important resource for future development. Many adult males excel at carpentry activities and continue to practise basket-weaving and musical instrument fabrication, while women still weave objects of daily and ritual importance. An impressive array of medicinal plants and animal parts are also commonly collected and employed by households and local *curanderos*. While most herbal preparations address routine physical ailments, spiritual beliefs and fears of sorcery continue to guide curing rituals, and community visits to the ceremonial site may be employed in dire situations. Several medicinal plants found deep in the high forest (*monte alto*, or *poroma*) are traded with other parts of the region, while coca is generally imported from *pajonal* communities.

While access to productive land is less problematic in Irimo, isolation and lack of infrastructural development present important challenges to the social, economic and political integration of this community. Even so, the community's connection to Santos Pariamo, the Lecos ceremonial site, and the *monte* serves as a symbol of indigenous 'authenticity' and is

considered important to the current movement to recuperate Lecos identity. Although the remote location of Irimo makes coordination with CIPLA difficult, its conception as a 'refuge' community underscores perceptions that link authenticity to cultural 'purity' and the presumed absence of change. At the same time, the community's location deep in the *monte* adds symbolic potency of a 'primitive past' considered at odds with the currents of history and modernity. Such essentialist notions of authenticity are ironic since the contemporary Lecos of Apolo are the product of a rich history of ethnic interaction, and the experience of Irimo represents one type of transformation, rather than the lack thereof. Throughout their territory, the Lecos embody a range of ethnogenetic processes, as they have interacted with landscape transformation and environmental interactions across the savannah–forest interface.

Nevertheless, essentialist notions of 'authenticity' continue to guide popular discourse and policy decisions in Bolivia, and are used by social sectors that seek to discredit Lecos claims to land, resources and ethnic identity. On the other hand, members of the Lecos indigenous movement likewise draw on these images in their effort to recuperate identity and territory. This situation highlights the challenge of reconciling anthropological critiques of cultural essentialism with the uses of those notions as employed by both indigenous organisations and their opponents. Perhaps by providing more nuanced representations of ethnic identity, anthropologists may be able to assist indigenous peoples in their struggles for justice by helping shape narratives in ways that are more attuned to situated histories and thus less vulnerable to deconstruction and strategic manipulation.

## **Movement to Recuperate Lecos Territory and Ethnic Identity**

Understanding historical transformations to identity and territory is crucial for the establishment and protection of policies that allow indigenous people to live and prosper off of the land. Essentialist stereotypes not only distort interpretation of ethnobiological data; they also affect the ability of people with whom ethnobiologists collaborate to implement projects and gain legal recognition for land and resources. Unfortunately, the 'politics of authenticity' that inform policy and funding priorities continue to assume a static relationship between indigenous people and places (Balza 2001). These assumptions present challenges to the Lecos of Apolo as they struggle to define their relationship to other peoples and places.

According to anthropologist Roberto Balza (2001: 4; my translation), 'territorial demands include a fundamental justification ... a historical-anthropological argumentation that references the indigenous character

of the solicitants and the relations they maintained with the Western world, which resulted in the progressive reduction of their spaces'. Balza (2001) points out that the logic underpinning TCO legislation is flawed in its assumption of an ahistorical relationship between people and their land. The situation of the Lecos of Apolo likewise challenges this assumption. The diverse cultural heritage of the Lecos of Apolo defies presumptions that 'indigenous character' is something static and essentialist, without agency or historical change, as Amazonian peoples are often portrayed (Peluso 1993; Zent, this volume). If the Lecos of Apolo are in the process of 'recuperating' and reconstituting their ethnic identity, they do so with historical precedent, whose meaning is continuously negotiated in accordance with contemporary needs, the most pressing of which relate to land and natural resources.

Balza (2001) concludes that territorial demands should take into account the present needs of indigenous peoples, as based on past realities, rather than assuming a one-to-one correlation between the two. Balza critiques the concept of a static relationship between indigenous peoples and places since territorial boundaries were not fixed but shifted over time – similar to the concept of *movilidad giratoria*. The situation of the Lecos also challenges the notion of static territory, since geographical boundaries of interaction expanded and contracted along the frontier of the Andes and the Amazon, leaving the Lecos increasingly dislocated. Furthermore, the reduction of productive space in Apolo resulted from both incursions into indigenous territory and corollary environmental transformations. The conversion of forests to grasslands and the concentration of these lands in private *estancias* (ranches) by former hacienda families have had important health, economic and cultural consequences for communities with diminishing access to *monte*. On the other hand, communities isolated in the *monte* lack access to goods and services critical for the self-determination of a people long defined by their role in intermediation routes.

These are some of the difficult realities that provide the social and territorial justification for the Lecos of Apolo TCO, which remains a highly contested space. Hopefully, situated analyses of historical transformations to landscape and cultural identity can contribute to an understanding of similar local conflicts that emerge in larger spaces of ethnic reconstitution and resource competition.

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