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9. ABSTRACT

The several Bolivian highland regions may be separated by noting the degree to which the general agrarian reform goal of a national integration of the peasantry has been achieved. The Cochabamba and yungas regions are both noteworthy for the degree to which their rural populations economically and politically participate in national affairs. In both areas the hacienda system, in adaptation to local conditions, provided a base for this participation prior to agrarian reform. There was significantly less rigidity in the old social heirarchy than in Sucre-Tarija or on the altiplano. In combination with this was a strong pattern of participation by peasants in marketing and trade, and through local syndicates (Cochabamba) or community office structures (yungas), in haciends administration itself. In these areas, then, the agrarian reform program found a rather beneficial foundation already established under the old social order.

The altiplano ranks next with an expansion of marketing and the establishment of locally effective syndicate organizations. In this case, the hacienda system provided a base conducive to post-reform development in that is incorporated the ecological necessity of trade and marketing and provided a foundation for successful syndicates in its use of the free community office structure. In contrast to that of Cochabamba or the yungas however, the altiplano hacienda system was subsistence oriented in its production, and thus did not involve peasants as actively in external economic and social contexts. This would account for the internal focus and consequent lesser national participation of post-reform altiplano communities.

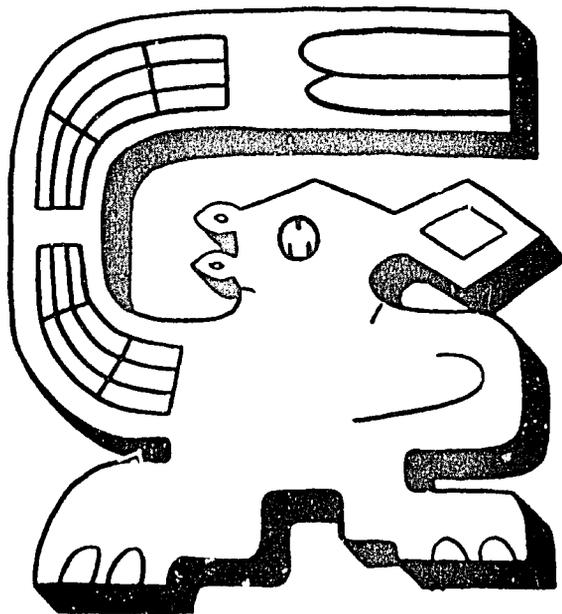
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The Hacienda System and  
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A Re-Evaluation

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## The Hacienda System and Agrarian Reform in Highland Bolivia: A Re-Evaluation<sup>1</sup>

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The continuing analysis of the now twenty year old Bolivian agrarian reform has revealed in recent years patterns of both nationwide regularity and regional difference in post-reform social process. Heath (Heath *et al* 1969) has pointed to several of the regularities in the process of reform and the emerging organization of rural communities, while several specific regional studies (Albó n.d. 1970; Buechler 1969, 1971; Burke 1968; Carter 1963, 1965; Erasmus 1967, 1969; Ezeli 1966; Flores 1955; Goins 1954; Heath 1960, 1966, 1969, 1970, 1973; Heyduk 1971; Léons 1967, 1970) have indicated significant differences in the post-reform social order.

It is the purpose of this paper to survey both the regularities and differences in the operation of the Bolivian agrarian reform program and to account for them by reference to similarities and dissimilarities in a pervasive and dominant pre-reform institution: the hacienda system. The point to be made is that the hacienda system has had an important influence on the post-reform social order which has followed it in Bolivia's several geographical regions. In this view rural organization has not so much undergone a revolution as a transformation in which the old social order continues to provide an influential substratum for the new.

The regions of the country relevant to the topic are those in which the agrarian reform program had its original focus and correspondingly its greatest effect. They are the regions into which the highland area of the country is naturally divided by physical factors: the *altiplano*, or western plateau, the *jungas*, a series of valleys lying north and east of the *altiplano*, and the mountain and valley regions surrounding the cities of Cochabamba, Sucre, and Tarija, which lie due east of the *altiplano*.<sup>2</sup> Together these regions also comprise the area formerly dominated by the hacienda system. Essentially, the hacienda system involved a specific combination of the elements of land and labor. Rights of usufruct in land were granted in return for the payment of a material and/or labor rent. This economic strategy, institutionalized among landowners throughout the highlands, was the basis of hacienda organization.

The general highland nature of this area, together with the predominance

of hacienda organization within it, provides a base for the regularity of social process that has been noted, and more often taken for granted, by analysts of the agrarian reform. However, important differences in the regional physical base and in the local adaptation of the hacienda complex give a perspective, heretofore largely neglected, on some of the dissimilarities in the nature and results of the agrarian reform program. A consideration of each region and the nature of the hacienda adaptation and the experience with reform in each area provide material to demonstrate the point.

#### THE *Altiplano*

The most important of the highland regions, with 60 percent of the national population in 1950 is the western plateau, or *altiplano*, ranging in altitude from 12,000 feet (3,600 meters) to 13,500 feet (4,090 meters) and extending for approximately 500 miles (800 kilometers) from north to south and 100 miles (160 kilometers) from east to west. Agriculture and settlement on the plateau are concentrated in the north, in the area around Lake Titicaca, where rainfall is most abundant.

Agriculture on the *altiplano* is limited by the altitude, and by a lack of the climatic variety that attends a more broken topography. Consequently, native crops are predominantly cold-adapted tubers and grains. Other products must be brought in from outside the region. The limited production on the *altiplano* has traditionally been complemented by a participation in markets and in long-range trade by the Aymara-speaking residents.

While the hacienda system dominated rural settlement on the *altiplano*, free peasant communities, the members of which held common title to a tract of land, were important to hacienda organization. Carter (1965: 9) cites the estimate that approximately one-third of the land of the *altiplano* was controlled by free communities at the time of the reform. As noted by Buechler (1969: 169-170, 1971: 50-67) and Carter (1963, 1965: 36, 43, 57, 72) these communities are rather highly integrated without being truly communal in either an economic or a social sense. They are characterized by a high degree of endogamy and by community organizations consisting of civil-religious hierarchies of offices in which almost all community members play a part.

It is significant that *altiplano* haciendas had administrative organizations rather closely paralleling those of free communities. That is, the haciendas integrated the offices of the free community civil-religious hierarchy into their organizational structure (Buechler *ibid*; Carter *ibid*). The parallelism in organization between free communities and haciendas is related to the growth of hacienda control on the *altiplano*. Notably, hacienda expansion was a relatively recent phenomenon. Most haciendas had existed only since the time of independence or later (Carter 1965: 8-9). The process by which the hacienda system expanded at the expense of free communities has been documented by Buechler (1969, 1971: 5-6) and Flores (1955). Through the nature of its growth by absorption of these communities, the hacienda of the *altiplano* became closely related structurally to free community social organization.

*Altiplano* haciendas were in large part self-administering due to the utilization with minor modification of community offices to serve hacienda purposes. The landowner rarely dealt at any depth with the organization of his estate, usually leaving that function to local overseers who in turn utilized the office structure of the peasant community for administration. Little, if any of the land of an hacienda was directly utilized by the owner, but rather was portioned out among the peasants or left under their control after absorption (Burke 1968: 114; Carter 1965: 71, 74-75).

Rent obligations of the tenants included both material and labor taxes, which varied with the size of the tenant plot and which served to divide the tenants into several classes. Material rent was usually in the form of a proportion of the tenant's harvest and of the natural increase of his animals. Labor service was performed not only on the estate but at the landowner's city or town residence and included as well the transport of hacienda produce.

The payment of rent provided the only major distinction between free community peasants and hacienda peasants. Subsistence activities, trade and marketing, socio-political organization, and religious activities were otherwise generally the same in both types of communities.

The agrarian reform of 1953 changed few items of substance in the basic level function of *altiplano* hacienda communities. The absentee owner, marginal to the conduct of everyday life on his property, was removed from ultimate control and the rent in material or labor which was due him was cancelled. Since the great bulk of arable land was already distributed among the tenants, their effective resource base was modified only by the elimination of rent obligations. In so far as such rents had been due in labor, little real benefit resulted to the tenant, since the vast surplus of that commodity meant that in most activities labor was already used to its full productive potential.

Nor was the status of the tenants relative to one another changed to any significant degree by the agrarian reform. The great inequality in landholdings among various classes of tenants was retained through the granting of title to the plots that the peasants had held under the hacienda, regardless of the size of such parcels (Carter 1965: 75-76).

The elimination of rents, especially those in material, acted in many cases to stimulate participation in trade and markets (Buechler 1971), but this participation represented an extension of pre-reform practice rather than a real innovation. Under the old social order in *altiplano* haciendas, as in free communities, it had been a practice conditioned by ecological necessity for the peasantry to engage in trade and market activities.

A notable factor in the reform was the establishment of peasant syndicates as administrative agencies in rural communities. These have been in general quite effective as a means of local government, serving to operationalize directives from higher levels and yet individualized by community as well (Buechler 1969: 227-237; Burke 1968: 54; Carter 1965: 57-59). *Altiplano* syndicates, however, benefited from the presence of a peasant administrative organization and a prior development of local leadership through hacienda adaptation of the free community office structure. Local

level administration cannot be said to have been created by the agrarian reform program.

Despite the organization of peasant syndicates, the agrarian reform has not produced any sweeping change in this area. While the syndicates function efficiently to channel communication into peasant communities, they do not channel peasant interest out. Carter (1965: 86) states:

In spite of such involvement in the state mechanisms, however, the peasant's concern is still almost invariably with local and not supracommunity phenomena. Natural resources are important only inasmuch as they are contained within one's small, almost private world. Tragedy to a neighboring community is looked upon with complete indifference. And the most important supernatural beings are place spirits; the Christian God and saints occupy only a secondary status.

Not only has there been a significant lack of change on the *altiplano* between pre- and post-reform social orders but those changes produced by the reform can be seen to be emergent from and closely related to former hacienda patterns. The agrarian reform has maintained some aspects of hacienda social organization virtually unchanged, and has modified others in greater or lesser degree, but has not produced any radical innovations. It has developed possibilities inherent in the old social system, but has not been able to exceed them.

#### THE *Yungas*

Closely related to the *altiplano* culturally, but a distinct region physically is the *yungas*, a series of valleys extending along the upper eastern front of the Andes in a sector north and east of the *altiplano*. Being fertile, temperate to subtropical in climate, and receiving ample rainfall, the *yungas* region was developed as an area in which cash crops such as *coca*, coffee, and citrus fruits were grown for sale in nearby highland markets. The *yungas* region is one of fairly recent settlement by *altiplano* landowners or freemen. Here there was an abundance of land and a relative scarcity of labor as opposed to the inverse of that condition on the western plateau (Buechler 1969: 185-188; Heath 1969: 180; Léons 1967: 1-40).

As a consequence of this distinct local situation, the hacienda system of the *yungas* developed differently from that on the *altiplano*. Tenants on *yungas* haciendas were offered already productive plantings of cash crops to attract them to these properties. They were also able to clear other plots for their own use, and as their children reached majority, they too found it easy to obtain land (Buechler 1969).

Most tenants devoted a good portion of their resources to the production of cash crops, limited their subsistence accordingly, and came to depend on markets to supplement their subsistence output. Many also employed wage laborers from *altiplano* free communities in the working of their lands (Léons 1967: 39-43).

Otherwise, the hacienda organization of the *yungas* followed more generalized patterns. As on the *altiplano*, community officers were selected to supervise the fulfillment of rent obligations, although neither the offices

nor the obligations were as numerous as in haciendas on the plateau (Buechler 1969: 207-208; Heath 1969: 180-182; Léons 1967: 39-43).

The process of agrarian reform was similar to that on the *altiplano*, and as in that area, landlords were separated from tenant rents. Peons received or were promised title to the lands they were working at the time of reform, regardless of the size of such holdings (Léons 1967: 44). Landowners have lost relatively little of the land they had directly utilized prior to the reform, while peasants control as much or somewhat less land as they had previously (Burke 1968: 124; Heath 1969: 204; Léons 1967: 44-46).

Peasant syndicates on former *yungas* haciendas receive strong support, are well led, and are highly effective. *Yungas* syndicates have independently undertaken such programs as reform of the local system of weights and measures and the drawing up of contingency plans for armed defense or mobilization (Heath 1966: 37-38, 1969: 189-191), and Léons (1967: 47) was told by peasants that the syndicate "almost owns the land."

As in the case of the *altiplano*, it seems that peasant participation in the pre-reform office structure was transferred usefully to the syndicate organization. Léons (1967: 53) notes that the sons of the highest ranking community officers under the hacienda system are now syndicate leaders.

The *yungas* region has experienced rapid social change in the post-reform period. Especially conspicuous are new settlements, populated by former hacienda tenants who are adopting a pattern of dual residence (Buechler 1969: 198; Léons 1967: 75-79). The social structure has generally increased in fluidity (Léons 1967: 91-92, 1970). Concurrent with these changes is a growing emphasis on the conspicuous consumption of prestige manufactured items (Léons 1967: 112-117).

As in the case of the *altiplano*, these developments, although notable in scope, are not inconsistent with pre-reform hacienda patterns. Rather than transforming peasant agriculture, the reform merely provided the *yungas* peasant with a greater potential for an already established pattern of commercial production. The production of cash crops and the consequent dependence on markets by hacienda tenants in turn provided the base for an increase in the level of consumption following reform. The social structure, significantly more open than on the *altiplano* in the post-reform period, was also significantly more open under the pre-reform hacienda system. Hacienda use of the traditional community office structure, as on the *altiplano*, led to effective post-reform syndicate organizations. Consistent with these points is Heath's (1973) recent demonstration that a significant portion of the former social structure remains virtually unchanged, with syndicates replacing landlords, or with ex-landlords retaining many specific functions with regard to their former tenants.

#### СОЧИВАМБА

The third physical region of highland Bolivia, the mountain and valley region lying east of the *altiplano*, must be subdivided into two components: the area surrounding the city of Cochabamba, and the more southerly area surrounding the cities of Sucre and Tarija.

Cochabamba is a broad intermontane valley located east and slightly south of the fertile northern *altiplano*. At an altitude of some 8,440 feet (2,558 meters) the fertile agricultural land of the area is devoted to the production of a wide variety of temperate zone crops. The Cochabamba valley, with its city of the same name containing 160,000 people, is well integrated with the nation's other major urban centers. Its strategic location on the main route from La Paz, Oruro, and the *altiplano* to Santa Cruz and the eastern lowlands has made it an important part of the integrated heart of the country.

Cochabamba has a high density of rural residents in relation to arable land, and is an area with a large rural Quechua-speaking population. The valley was dominated by an hacienda system essentially like that of the *altiplano*. It has long been an area characterized by extensive movement of the rural population, especially in the context of market activity, and has been notable, even in pre-reform times, for the fluidity of its social class structure (Goins 1954).

Cochabamba is distinguished from other agricultural regions of highland Bolivia by having anticipated, and in part precipitated, the national agrarian reform program. Patch (1960: 120) has described the situation as follows:

In the large interior valley of Cochabamba . . . the *campesinos* had long been in close contact with the town-dwelling *mestizos*. They had become familiar with the norms of *mestizo* culture. As early as 1936, almost immediately after the close of the Chaco War, *campesinos* of one province, Cliza, in the department of Cochabamba, had established an agrarian "syndicate" (*sindicato*) with the aim of freeing themselves from the feudal obligations of service to the latifundium owners and advancing their status toward that of the *mestizo*.

Whatever may have been the motivating factor in this activity, the result was the growth of a strong syndicate movement in Cochabamba, the role of which was recognized by the national government when the agrarian reform decree was signed in the syndicate headquarters village of Ucureña on August 2, 1953.<sup>1</sup>

Given the significance of the valley of Cochabamba in a consideration of social change in the highlands, it is unfortunate that specific data on haciendas or ex-haciendas, even in the extensive sense, are less available than for other areas. Nonetheless, broad treatments such as that of Patch (1956, 1960) furnish an outline of the situation.

Perhaps more than in other highland areas, former landowners have been separated from their rural properties, in some cases as a result of initial violence. Nonetheless, it is doubtful that the land so freed for redistribution among the peasants was of greater scale than that redistributed elsewhere. In fact, given the high density of rural population and consequent high pressure on land and marginal value of labor, Cochabamba peasants may have benefited less in substance from the reform than peasants in other highland regions.

The peasant syndicate organization is strong in Cochabamba. Among other activities, the syndicate members function as an armed rural militia (Burke 1968: 128).

Fluidity continues to characterize the social class structure. Patch (1960: 143) found a general broad-spectrum acculturation occurring among peasants throughout the valley in a 1955 survey. Albó (1970: 63-79) characterizes the class structure as one of three increasingly indistinct social groups, which even in the pre-reform era were not definable with total clarity.

The Cochabamba valley is especially notable for continuities between pre- and post-reform social process. The region has been one of fluidity and flux at least since the time of the Chaco War. Notably, Goins (1954) writing of pre-reform Cochabamba, declined to characterize the social situation in terms of class categories. Rural syndicate organizations in this area predate the agrarian reform.

Owing to the lack of specific data on haciendas or ex-haciendas in the Cochabamba valley, the role of the hacienda system in the continuity of social process cannot be specifically defined. However, it is significant that the hacienda system in this region, perhaps even more than in the *yungas* or on the *altiplano*, did not operate to isolate the peasantry. Rather, it furnished the context within which potent social and ideological change was fostered. The sources of change probably can be traced to the relation between the hacienda system and the "pass city" nature of the Cochabamba area, a situation which provided a receptive peasantry with a broad spectrum of information concerning conditions beyond the valley.

#### SUCRE AND TARIJA

Compared with the Cochabamba area, the historical experience and current situation of the southeastern mountain and valley region surrounding Sucre and Tarija are quite distinct. Perhaps because of their mutual isolation from other areas of Bolivia, or because of the general uniformity of the overall southeastern highland region, Sucre and Tarija share a generally similar history and current condition. The hacienda system and the experience with agrarian reform seem to have been similar in both areas (Erasmus 1967: 356-361, 1969).

Probably the most detailed case of continuity in hacienda patterns was encountered by the writer in the mountain and valley region surrounding the city of Sucre (Heyduk 1971). Here the rugged topography is responsible for the juxtaposition within small areas of several microclimatic zones, enabling the rural population to obtain access to a wide variety of subsistence goods locally and substantially reducing the importance of markets and long distance trade.

Hacienda properties which thoroughly dominated the region before the agrarian reform often took the form of economically self-contained and inwardly focused communities. A rule of primogeniture in inheritance guaranteed that those who remained on the land were ensured of an adequate subsistence without seeking external resources, while population pressure had not reached the point at which emigration had become significant.

Hacienda organization was somewhat more complex than elsewhere in the highlands. Notably, tenant populations themselves partook of the prin-

principle of hierarchy inherent in the hacienda system. The application of the principle of granting rights in land in return for a material and/or labor rent was utilized, as elsewhere, by the absentee landowner with regard to his tenants. Tenants obtaining such grants in turn made grants to their own subtenants or employed landless laborers who would in time become subtenants, placing these in a relation to the tenant which paralleled the relation of tenant to landlord. In this way the peasants themselves utilized the hacienda system strategy, producing a complex rural hierarchy of tenant, subtenant, and landless dependent.<sup>4</sup> As elsewhere in the highlands, absentee landlords often divided the whole of their holdings among the tenantry, or retained only a small portion for themselves. The further subdivision of a tenant grant was not the concern of the landlord. Tenants, therefore, managed their own hacienda grants and subtenants.

With the advent of agrarian reform, landlords were denied their tenant rents and often separated from any land they had held for themselves. As elsewhere, the amount of land available for redistribution was very small and tenants gained in most cases only in the cancellation of their rent obligations. Tenants received or were promised title to the lands they had worked, regardless of large differences in the size of such parcels. Notably, subtenants and landless dependents were not affected by the reform and remained obligated to the former tenant for the payment of rent. They also remained without secure possession of the lands they worked.

Peasant syndicates were established, but have not notably prospered. The continuity of the hacienda system among tenants, subtenants, and landless dependents and with it of the peasant hierarchy is in large part responsible for the lack of effectiveness of syndicate organizations. In awarding titles to the tenants for the land they had held under the hacienda system the reform program guaranteed the security of their subsistence, removing any necessity for cooperation or the development of external socio-economic ties. A tendency to focus on their own lands and on the management of subtenant obligations has been the result.

The region has changed little from its pre-reform condition. It continues to be composed of unintegrated and isolated subsistence-oriented Quechua-speaking communities. The Sucre-Tarija region has been noted for the ineffectiveness of rural syndicates and their leaders, and the inadequacy of rural administration in general (Erasmus 1969: 82; Heyduk 1971: 32-35, 204-209). The area is further characterized by a marked avoidance of nationally popular consumer goods and a falling off in cooperative activities such as fiesta sponsorship (Erasmus 1967: 363).

The relationship of the regional adaptation of the hacienda system to the contemporary social order is direct and strong in the Sucre-Tarija area. Such is also the case, if to a lesser degree, in the other Bolivian highland regions, where regional adaptations of the hacienda system have had important and distinguishing influences on post-agrarian reform developments.

#### CONCLUSION

The several Bolivian highland regions may be separated by noting the degree to which the general agrarian reform goal of a national integra-

tion of the peasantry has been achieved. The Cochabamba and *yungas* regions are both noteworthy for the degree to which their rural populations economically and politically participate in national affairs. In both areas the hacienda system, in adaptation to local conditions, provided a base for this participation prior to agrarian reform. There was significantly less rigidity in the old social hierarchy than in Sucre-Tarija or on the *altiplano*. In combination with this was a strong pattern of participation by peasants in marketing and trade, and through local syndicates (Cochabamba) or community office structures (*yungas*), in hacienda administration itself. In these areas, then, the agrarian reform program found a rather beneficial foundation already established under the old social order.

The *altiplano* ranks next with an expansion of marketing and the establishment of locally effective syndicate organizations. In this case, the hacienda system provided a base conducive to post-reform development in that it incorporated the ecological necessity of trade and marketing and provided a foundation for successful syndicates in its use of the free community office structure. In contrast to that of Cochabamba or the *yungas* however, the *altiplano* hacienda system was subsistence oriented in its production, and thus did not involve peasants as actively in external economic and social contexts. This would account for the internal focus and consequent lesser national participation of post-reform *altiplano* communities.

Sucre-Tarija is the region of least national participation by the peasantry. In this region the hacienda system, in adaptation to the physical base, tended to isolate hacienda communities more than in any other area. Market and trade activity were low. Instead of making use of community offices among a generalized tenantry, the hacienda system was built upon a complex peasant hierarchy which in its preservation effectively prevented the post-reform integration of ex-hacienda communities into national life. Segmentation and isolation characterize the new social order as much as they did the old.

The several regions of highland Bolivia are similar in having been dominated by hacienda systems employing the same strategy and in having been affected by an agrarian reform program antagonistic to that strategy. They differ, however, in the degree to which the local adaptation of the hacienda system provided a base for the realization of reform goals. In those regions in which the agrarian reform program has been most successful, it was also the case that the pre-existing hacienda system included patterns which foreshadowed reform objectives. In regions in which the reform has had less impact, a hacienda system less amenable to reform goals seems to be responsible.

#### NOTES

1. This paper is based on research conducted in Chuquisaca, Bolivia during July and August, 1968 and from June, 1969 to April, 1970. Grants in support of this research came from the National Institute of Mental Health (MH 12044-01) and the Cornell University Latin American Studies Program.

2. The eastern lowland area is excluded from consideration. As noted by Burke (1968: 130-134) and Heath (1959, 1960; Heath *et al* 1969: 314-356) it was not an

area on which the reform was primarily focused and was not strongly affected by the reform program, which was designed rather specifically for the highlands.

3. This discussion does not take up the question of the relative importance of the Cochabamba peasant syndicate movement versus that of national governmental resolve in the genesis of the agrarian reform program. Patch (1956, 1960) has emphasized the role of the Ucareña syndicate movement, while Heath (1959; Heath *et al* 1969: 37-49) has emphasized the role of the national government in this issue. Albo (n.d.) has recently demonstrated the complementary role that each played in the matter.

4. The hacienda system of highland Bolivia was everywhere characterized by the distinction of different categories of tenants defined by differing obligations to the landowner, but a socio-economic hierarchy in which peasants themselves utilized the strategy of the hacienda system seems to be a relatively distinct trait of the Sucre-Tarija area. A related pattern on the *altiplano* (Buechler 1971: 40-42) was that under which *utawawas* (landless dependents of tenant households) might inherit usufruct rights in hacienda parcels. A hierarchy of peasants relative to each other, rather than relative to the landowner, does not seem to have emerged in this case, however. For the *yungas* Heath (1973: 81ftn) reports a tenant-subtenant relationship pattern, but it seems to have been of relatively little significance in either the pre- or post-reform era.

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## Society for Cross-Cultural Research

The third annual meeting of the Society for Cross-Cultural Research will be held in Boston, Friday thru Sunday, February 22-24, 1974. The meeting site will be the Boston University Sherman Union, on Commonwealth Avenue. The program will feature symposia on "The Meaning and History of Cross-Cultural Research: Views from the Disciplines," "The Comparative Study of Friendship" jointly with the International Society for the Comparative Study of Civilizations, "Responses to Psychocultural Stress," "Cross-Cultural Perspectives on Power and Conflict," and "The Effects of Modernization on Socialization."

Further information may be obtained from the Secretary-Treasurer of the Society: James M. Schaefer, Department of Anthropology, University of Montana, Missoula, Montana 59801.

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