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The role of writing in the indigenous society

By: Victor Hugo Mamani Yapura

In many civilizations writing has always been an important way to control and to develop their societies. The Egyptian, Chinese and Inkas have established their own manner of writing. For example, Inkas have used kipus to communicate within the group. Each human group has created linguistics signs to express its intentions or purposes. Thus, writing has become a symbol of power, because the people who can control it also control social and political activities. In this paper we are going to talk about the dark side of the writing. The purpose is to show the role of writing in the society and how it has been used in different policy periods of Bolivia.

Since the Spanish colonialists arrived in 1492 many things have changed in the indigenous societies: they destroyed the indigenous social system by using their writing to establish a new society. They used alphabetic writing to control and to dominate the new conquered territories. During the colonial time writing was established in policy spaces. The new State started to use writing as an instrument to control the different political activities. For example, under the republic the nation-state created the relationship between people and the State using alphabetic writing. Thus to be recognized as a citizen with political right, it was necessary to write and read, the State needed literate people. As a consequence the people who weren't able to read and write weren't considered as citizens. Therefore the indigenous people didn't have the right to participate in the democracy. According to Wolf (2003) Simon Bolivar wrote in his first constitution: "*it is a citizen who writes and reads*"; obviously this point of view wasn't democratic because many people were excluded from political participation. In the republic period writing was thus used as requisite to become a citizen. The literate people started to control many types of social, economic and political events.

In society writing, rather than the spoken language, acquired power. The spoken language and illiterate people were ignored, because according erudite people; they had stayed in the past. In other words, they were associated with underdeveloped cultures. This idea was spread in all corners of society; in Bolivia many indigenous communities accepted their inferiority as a natural situation. Likewise this idea was forced in academic places: schools and universities impelled by this imaginary. Schools that were settled in rural areas spread the State's ideology, and the teachers said that the students' only way to get out of poverty was to be literate people. According to school it was also necessary to acquire linguistic skills, if we want to be a modern society, the role of school was to create modernity through linguistic activities. These perspectives quickly diminished indigenous languages; and in addition, speech was seen as inferior in our society.

Today this belief hasn't changed; writing still has the highest value everywhere. For example if you want to buy a house, you need writing, however in the rural area (where



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only some can write) especially in the Ayllu Sikuya in North Potosi speech is more important than writing. If you want to invite someone to your party; you don't need an invitation card. Many cultural and social activities in their communities are spread by speech, but it doesn't mean that they don't care about learning how to write. Their purpose of writing differs from literate people instead of looking for prestige; they wish to prevent cheating by people from cities or the State.

In the indigenous communities schools play an important role in building literacy, the students are taught to write and to speak Spanish very well. According to the indigenous people this will be useful, because it will allow them to understand the national language which is used for political purposes. Since ancient times writing has been used to take indigenous land away. Due to this historical precedent indigenous people want to know more about writing. However, the State's objective to create literacy is an approach for creating a modern society. The State has accepted that, one of the ways to be a modern people is to write and read. According to this point of view speech is considered as a primitive form of communication in the social creation.

In conclusion, writing has been associated with power and prestige; in our society writing was important to get control. States have used writing to conquer new territories. This situation reveals that writing isn't only used to communicate but also to achieve political objectives. According to this political objective a person who has acquired this linguistic system is then capable of controlling all the mechanisms of social life.

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