

***“Justice with my own hands”:***  
**The serious play of piracy in Bolivian indigenous music videos**

Henry Stobart

The sense of injustice surrounding the use of copyright legislation to control the circulation of knowledge and culture, especially by large transnational media corporations in the global south, has been well documented by scholars and is the target of considerable activism (Story, Darch and Halbert 2006). In this context, ‘piracy’ sometimes emerges as a means to confront powerful and greedy transnational corporations associated with capitalism and colonialism. For example, in a blog entry entitled *La Descolonización de la piratería* (“Decolonization through piracy”)<sup>1</sup> the Bolivian blogger Dario Manuel (from El Alto, La Paz, Bolivia), presents piracy as a political strategy to weaken the structures of economic and epistemological domination, so that – as it were - the colonial capitalist monster bleeds to death. He entreats his readers to:

... keep photocopying books and buying pirated VCDs and DVDs in order to devalue the colonial culture industries who make themselves rich from our trees and the apocryphal ignorance lumbered upon us, according to the logic of taking away our light in order to replace it with an adulterated light. Negating this colonial strategy of domestication requires us to pirate (read ‘to decolonize’) this modern Western mode of thought which is a parasite on our cultures (dariomanuel.blogspot.com 13.11.2007).

Even when not approached from such a strong ideological perspective, it is clear that media piracy is almost inevitable in emerging economies where incomes are low, media products are expensive (sometimes identical in price to advanced economies), and digital technologies are cheap (Karganis 2011). In addition, pirate distribution networks are immensely more efficient than formal ones in such economies, allowing access to a far greater variety of knowledge and cultural products than otherwise available. Accordingly, it is common to hear piracy justified, in terms of global justice. For example, in the words of a Bolivian student from a lower middle class family: ‘We’re all pirates, but it is necessary. It is made necessary when you take into account the social environment in which we live, and the poor country into which we have been born’ (my translation). More generally, the acceptability or even celebration of music piracy is often supported by the argument that artists usually acquire little benefit from the sale of recordings or from royalty payments, as rights are customarily signed over to the record label or media corporations. Accordingly, the common claim by (industry motivated) anti-piracy campaigns that media piracy causes direct material harm to artists and individual creators is often presented as fallacious. Instead, such discourse highlights how unfettered circulation of

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<sup>1</sup> This summarizes four key points from an essay of the same name by Victor Hugo Quintanilla Coro (source not cited).

recordings often increases artists' visibility, fan base, and opportunities for the economic mainstay of live performance (Yar 2008:616). The free and informal circulation of recordings may indeed prove an effective business model for certain genres with lucrative live performance opportunities (Lee 2012, Lemos 2007). But to over-generalise this model or celebrate it as the way out of the current crisis in copyright would be naive. For example, for studio-created music without a live equivalent, or genres involving small audiences or large musical forces, this model is likely to be economically disastrous (Lebrecht 2008). As the case study below will demonstrate, pirating music in the global south may represent the justice of decolonization, but it can also pose enormous challenges for low-income music creators and entrepreneurs. It is the strategies adopted by a Bolivian indigenous musician to seek 'justice' and confront the challenge of piracy which forms the focus of this chapter. Yet, in this artist's music video productions, the serious message of anti-piracy becomes a focus of creativity, humour and entertainment.

### **Bolivia: a pirate ecology?**

Arguably, the relative affluence and strict copyright enforcement of certain regions of the global north permits piracy – when not directly identified with criminality – the luxury of assuming an aura of subversive romance, connected with notions of free culture and opposition to privatised monopolies (Dawdry and Bonni 2012). Yet, in parts of the global south where access to full price recordings is beyond the budget of the majority, piracy may carry rather different connotations, often connected with necessity and postcolonial resentment rather than romance or idealism. Such is the case in Bolivia, the focus of this chapter, which counts among the poorest, least developed and most economically informal countries of Latin America, and where I estimate that levels of optical disc (VCD, DVD, CD) piracy approximate 90-95%.<sup>2</sup> As domestic internet penetration in Bolivia remains among the lowest in South America, with online access largely restricted to public internet cafés, the music piracy in question mainly takes the form of optical disc copying rather than digital downloads.

A policy that confronts international copyright norms, in favour of access to knowledge and culture, might seem a logical path for Bolivia's current – at the time of writing - MAS ('Movement Towards Socialism') government. This is headed by the country's first indigenous president, Evo Morales, who entered office in 2006 following a landslide election victory and was re-elected, by an even larger margin, for a second term in 2009. As he came to power, Morales presented himself as Washington's 'worst nightmare' and he has continued to espouse a project of Cultural Revolution and decolonization, whilst being explicitly opposed to global capitalism and neo-liberalism. However, from a cultural perspective, there is little revolutionary about Bolivia's Intellectual Property policy: it is a signatory to TRIPS (1995), maintains a

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<sup>2</sup> CIA The World Factbook, Bolivia. <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/bl.html> (Accessed 15.7.13).

National Intellectual Property Service (SENAPI), its music copyright law dates from 1991 (*ley 1322, derecho de autor*), and the only notable departure in the new Constitution (ratified in 2009) is the recognition of 'collective' creation.

Rather than explicit policy, Bolivia's high levels of piracy reflect lack of enforcement by successive governments. Alongside the political unpopularity of aggressive anti-piracy campaigns, many of Bolivia's key institutions (including government departments and universities) would find it almost impossible to operate without pirated software and photocopied books. Several costly campaigns were mounted by the large-scale phonographic industries in the late 1990s and early 2000s, but police corruption, legal loopholes and lack of state support rendered these largely ineffective. Also, major civil unrest in 2001 and 2003, largely targeted against multinational interests in the country, would have ensured that anti-piracy was both a low priority and that it may have been interpreted as collaboration with the foreign powers (c.f. Wang 2003:149). By 2003 all the major international record companies had closed down operations in Bolivia and only *Discolandia*, of the three major established national record labels, was still producing recordings, albeit with a greatly reduced staff (Stobart 2010). Nonetheless, I estimate that the quantity of recordings produced in Bolivia - especially in the form of the VCD music video - has increased since this time, in part reflecting the emergence of new low income markets and the greater affordability of production and playback equipment. Most such production, which varies considerably in quality, is undertaken in small-scale digital studios and is financed by the artists rather than the studio. Little of this work is registered for copyright and the informal nature of certain studios means that counterfeit copying sometimes supplements production work or serves as a source of start-up capital. How, then, do musicians and small-scale musician-producers fare in Bolivia's ecology of predominant piracy?

### **Gregorio Mamani: confronting piracy and reducing prices**

This chapter focuses on the anti-piracy strategies of the Bolivian *originario* ('indigenous')<sup>3</sup> *charango*-playing singer-songwriter Gregorio Mamani Villacorta (1960-2011). It builds on eleven months of ethnographic research (2007-08) based in the city of Sucre, where Gregorio Mamani lived with his family, during which I participated as an unskilled assistant in the production of three VCD (Video Compact Disc) music videos. To reflect our close personal interaction and friendship, hereafter I will refer to Mamani using his first name, 'Gregorio'. (He died suddenly and unexpectedly at a tragically young age in 2011). Gregorio was brought up, and lived until he was nearly thirty, in the *originario* ('indigenous') community of Tomaykuri in the Macha region of northern Potosi, moving permanently to Sucre in the 1990s. His trajectory as a recording artist dated back to the late 1980s and included dozens of audio cassette releases of *charango* songs and of rural music (under the group name *Zura zura*) produced by

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<sup>3</sup> *Originario* is the term of choice used by many highland Bolivians, to reflect

the *Borda* label in Cochabamba. In around 2000 he created his own label CEMBOL ('Centre for Bolivian Music') and from the proceeds of a successful tour of Peru, Argentina and Bolivia in around 2005 he created a digital home studio dedicated to making VCD music videos and largely consisting of cheap second-hand digital equipment. Close involvement in politics, which included his production a widely circulated cassette and VCD of campaign songs for the election of Evo Morales, indirectly led to his employment in 2006 by the Prefecture for the Department of Chuquisaca, based in Sucre. However, after only one year – and just before I commenced research in Sucre - he resigned from this post and returned to his career as a musician. Gregorio was a forceful, idiosyncratic and pioneering character, and a particularly outspoken opponent of music piracy. This outspoken opposition to music piracy led me to research this phenomenon in depth and to appreciate both its social benefits and its wider impact on the Bolivian music industry (Stobart 2010).

Arguably the most significant measures adopted by Gregorio to confront piracy were (a) reducing the retail price of VCDs to match pirate prices, (b) personal and family distribution to key regional markets, and (c) screen printing VCD discs with the CEMBOL logo alongside a short video clip on certain productions informing consumers how to distinguish between (screen-printed) original and (blank) pirated discs. As I wish to focus on more creative and psychological aspects of Gregorio's campaign here, I will reserve detailed discussion of these two latter themes for other publications. Nonetheless, it is important to highlight how personal distribution to market stalls by artists (or family members) can create mutually dependent relationships or friendships with vendors and offer opportunities to police the sale of their work. Aware that overpricing is a key ingredient of music piracy, low-income *originario* artists, such as Gregorio, have competed with piracy through price reduction; radically decreasing or even removing the price differential between an original VCD and a counterfeit copy. In part this can be seen as a pragmatic response to price cuts resulting from exponential growth and competition within the pirate market. Nonetheless, major national and international labels have often chosen to make few concessions on price, partly due to their reliance on international sales – partially explaining their collapse in Bolivia (Stobart 2010).<sup>4</sup> Despite his outspoken opposition to music piracy and the fact that price reductions limited his profits, Gregorio recognized the need for his work to be affordable for his low-income audience and was critical of the "excuses" given by larger labels for failing to drop their prices. The challenge was to achieve a sustainable balance, where on the one hand prices were low enough for consumers to have access to his work and, on the other, artists and producers could recoup and make a modest profit from their investment.

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<sup>4</sup> Parallel import, where authorised low price media destined for particular low-income regional markets is sold in full price high-income markets, has been a major disincentive for the price reduction (Wang 2003:181).

In the 1990s the CD was largely restricted to the middle classes and it was common for originals to retail for around 100Bs (c. £7.00) each. When the VCD (Video Compact Disc) appeared on the popular low income market in around 2003,<sup>5</sup> accompanied by affordable playback equipment - usually made in China or Taiwan - each disc retailed for around 30Bs (c. £2.10). Considerable profits were possible at this time, both for producers and pirates, leading to an explosion in the market, but also rapid decline in prices. By 2007 the typical retail price for an original VCD was 10Bs (c. 70p) and counterfeit discs, when offered in plastic presentation boxes were typically sold at the same price. However, when these same discs were sold in small plastic bags, alongside their printed colour paper labels (*laminas*), their typical retail price was three discs for 10Bs (c. 70p) – approximately 33 centavos (c. 23p) each. Most low price counterfeit discs of this kind, featuring music originally produced in Bolivia, were mass produced in Peru and shipped into Bolivia via the frontier town of Desaguadero (Stobart 2010). In April 2008, I encountered Bolivian distributors in Desaguadero paying a wholesale price of 1.20Bs (c.9p) per unit, and then selling these discs on to local vendors in various part of Bolivia for 2Bs (c.14p) each. Among the wholesale discs on sale in Desaguadero I came across pirated copies of several of Gregorio’s VCD productions, including one on which I had collaborated as an unskilled assistant a few months earlier.

**Price reduction of original discs/cassettes (typical prices)**

1998 retail price of CD = 100Bs (c. £7.00)

2003 retail price of VCD = 30Bs (c. £2.10)

2008 retail price of VCD/cassette = 10Bs (c. 70p)

- wholesale price (in case) = 6Bs (c. 42p)

**Typical prices of counterfeit discs (2008)**

Retail price of **pirated** VCD (in case) = 10Bs (c. 70p)

Retail price of **3 pirated** discs (in bags) = 10Bs (c. 70p)

**Typical prices of counterfeit discs (2008) - price per disc**

Bulk-buy (100+) wholesale price in Desaguadero market, Peru = 1.20Bs (c.9p)

Wholesale price paid by local Bolivian vendors to distributors = 2Bs (c.14p)

Retail price per disc (when 3 purchased together) = 0.33Bs (c. 23p)

**Table 1: Overview of disc pricing over time and wholesale/retail**

Clearly, *originario* artist-producers have no chance of competing with the prices of Peruvian mass-produced counterfeit discs. Indeed, the raw material costs paid by Gregorio exceeded these prices: in Sucre he paid around 1Bs (c. 7p) per blank CD disc and 1Bs (c. 7p) for the printing of each colour printed cover sheet (*lamina*). Nonetheless, as many vendors sold discs in

<sup>5</sup> Some consultants estimated the arrival of the VCD on the Bolivian market as somewhat earlier; in one case 1997. This suggests that at first VCDs were limited to an exclusive and expensive niche market. They did not arrive on the low income *originario* market until several years later. For example, in 2002 the stalls from which I regularly purchased *originario* music only offered audio cassettes. When I returned to Bolivia in 2004 these same stalls were dominated by VCDs, which had eclipsed the cassette.

plastic display cases for 10Bs, he was able to compete with this price by selling his VCDs to vendors for 6Bs (c. 42p) in a display case (or for 5Bs without). Even if the price of 10Bs was the same for consumers, vendors could potentially increase their profit margins considerably by using cheap counterfeit discs from Peru (or copied locally) rather than those purchased from Gregorio. I will examine some of Gregorio's strategies for confronting this problem below.

### **Psychological campaign: appealing to consumer sentiment**

Alongside educating consumers about piracy, Gregorio used psychological pressure to dissuade them from purchasing counterfeit recordings. The below text, taken from the insert of an audio cassette released in 2001, emphasizes that that piracy was already a major concern before the explosion of the *originario* VCD on to the market in around 2003. Whilst the VCD's arrival undoubtedly escalated the scale of counterfeit copying, audio-cassette piracy was already well established in Bolivia - as in many other part of the world (Manuel 1993). Compared to anti-piracy notices elsewhere, Gregorio's text is striking poetic, melodramatic and nostalgic, as if an art form in itself. It draws powerfully on metaphor and appeals directly to the sympathies and sentiments of his audience; pricking the reader's moral conscience. It is also remarkable how the text identifies the promotional potential of piracy and its origins in the over-pricing of original recordings. At this time, such points were rarely admitted by major media corporations, let alone openly stated in their anti-piracy campaign literature. These references, alongside addressing the reader as 'brother/sister', highlight Gregorio's attempts to appeal to the empathy, understanding and good nature of his audience as fellow Bolivians. In this way, he milks a popular national discourse which presents Bolivians as honest and generous, despite their poverty which is seen to result from other nations' greed.

No to piracy, of this humble music, he who falsifies copying the colours and forms of this work may be called moths to music.

The case is against the violence of piracy, which kills and harms drinking the blood from the lungs of artists and composers, losing them their merits and honours.

Because of pirates our Bolivian artists have been devalued by musical sound production industries.

Because of piracy, no longer is the work and sacrifice of songwriters and composers recognized economically and with income for those to whom it belongs, as it was in the past.

But on the other hand, due to piracy artists achieve greater promotion and fame whilst, nonetheless, becoming poorer than ever and without benefits; singing whatever for a pittance or nothing.

All those of us who live from the music business place our hands on our chests and speak to your heart in silence and remind you of Bolivian artists.

Nonetheless piracy has also appeared due to the high price of productions in this country of original sound [recordings]

With thanks from your friend: Gregorio Mamani Villacorta

**Selection translated from Spanish from audio cassette insert: *Gregorio Mamani con su cancionero* ("Gregorio Mamani with his songbook"), 2000 (dated 2001).**

Gregorio appeals to national sentiment even more explicitly in the presentation clip which opens the first edition of his VCD of the 'First GPFONPO Festival' in 2004 (which I discuss in more detail below). The scene opens to the sounds of Gregorio's song *Celosa Celosay* and a man arriving at the door of an office, presumably to start work. Gregorio is seated at a desk in the office and playing his *charango* along with the song and on seeing the man greets him as 'director' and invites him to enter. The 'director' asks Gregorio what 'rubbish' he is listening to and Gregorio retorts that it is 'our' (i.e. Bolivian) music. The director then replaces Gregorio's cassette of Bolivian folk music with a recording of North American pop music, asserting that '*this is music*' and highlighting his status as a 'high level director'. Gregorio angrily exits with his instruments and in the next scene is shown in a state of deep despondency, lamenting his compatriots' low esteem for the nation's music. Looking directly into the camera, he appeals to his Bolivian 'brothers' and 'sisters' to value national music by not purchasing pirated recordings. See <http://youtu.be/FMDbWSRz4vk>

- D. Good morning Gregorio.
- G. Good morning director. Come in.
- D. What rubbish are you listening to?
- G. This is our [Bolivian] music!

[The director removes the audio cassette Gregorio was listening from the machine and replaces it with his own. We hear the chorus 'shake it, shake it like a polaroid picture' from the 2003 song Hey Ya! by the US group *OutKast*]

- D. THIS is music. I'm a high level director. Good grief!

[While the director dances, with rather undignified moves, to the song. Gregorio walks out carrying his instruments with an annoyed expression. He is then shown in a different location in close up playing the *charango* and with a forlorn expression. He stops playing and speaks directly to camera]

- G. Ahhh... What is to become of our country? We are rich, but we don't know how to make the best of it. But, esteemed Bolivian brothers; if you truly love our music, first look at this original VCD [showing a VCD in a display case]. The only concrete way you can help singer-songwriters of our music is by not buying pirate discs. Now, when you buy pirated you help the antisocial usurpers. Like that you help enrich the traffickers of our music at the cost of our [the artists'] sacrifice. Do this for us to inaugurate the first national festival of GPFONPO of music, of our folklore, and autochthonous, cultural and native [styles]. In the hope of a better level of understanding from all Bolivian brothers/sisters. Thank you.

Through this video clip Gregorio plays on national anxieties about the powerful influence and preponderance of mass mediated popular culture, especially as purveyed by large US multinational media corporations. Such allusions are likely to have struck a chord with the dynamic social movements of Bolivia's largely low income and indigenous population which by 2004 had gathered huge momentum. Fundamental to this discontent was widespread

opposition to foreign and multinational exploitation of national resources which had crystallized in major civil conflict around the so-called Water Wars (2001) and the Gas War (2003). These movements ousted president Gonzalo Sánchez de Lozada in 2003 and were to lead to the landslide election victory of Bolivia's first indigenous president, Evo Morales, in 2005. Gregorio became an increasingly active and outspoken supporter of the Morales campaign; indeed, his recordings of campaign songs were widely circulated and probably very significant to the growth of popular support for Morales.<sup>6</sup> While Gregorio's anti-piracy video clip may be seen to identify with the low income popular indigenous classes, it also critiques the failure of educated middle class Bolivians to value and support national culture. Indeed, it remains common for educated middle class people to disparage the kind of charango songs Gregorio played as 'rubbish' (*basura*), favouring instead international music and artists, that carry far greater cultural capital within Bolivia's hierarchical society.<sup>7</sup> In the clip, Gregorio casts the 'director' as ridiculous and undignified. He is seen to flaunt class status but is ignorant and uncaring about his nation's culture; in short the director is 'unpatriotic'. Through this juxtaposition, Gregorio identifies himself with his humble low-income audience of Bolivian 'brothers' and 'sisters', who express their patriotism and regional identity through supporting regional artists and by not buying pirated discs. This already potent message was undoubtedly heightened and shaped by the dynamic social movements of the time and by the escalating campaign for the election of an indigenous president. Let us now turn to another aspect of this GPFONPO video compilation which further highlights the link between anti-piracy and indigenous social movements.

### **Promoting solidarity among *originario* artists**

The VCD, from which the above video clip was taken, presents itself as the first festival of GPFONPO - *Gran Peña Folklórica Nacional de los Pueblos Originarios* ('The Great Assembly of National Folklore of *Originario* Peoples'). It features a selection of regional performers of varying renown, and the cover of the first edition declares that the VCD is dedicated 'to the best interpreters of the *charango* in the procession of artists'.<sup>8</sup> The following text appears on both editions of the VCD, its rhetoric merging the struggle against piracy with wider revolutionary mobilizations:

**DE TODOS PARA TODOS**  
MOVIMIENTO DE LUCHA

**FROM ALL TO ALL**  
THE MOVEMENT OF STRUGGLE

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<sup>6</sup> These campaign songs were released first as an audio cassette in 2004 and then as a VCD music video in 2005.

<sup>7</sup> This was very evident from the tastes of children in the private schools in Sucre that my children attended. Interest in national music was largely restricted to dancing in folklore parades and a few major national groups, such as Los Kjarkas. To have expressed interest in regional folk musics would have attracted ridicule. For similar examples of the way that particular musics are constructed as 'bad' or 'trash', see Washburn and Derno 2004.

<sup>8</sup> Intriguingly, on the label of this first edition of the VCD, the photograph and name of Bonny Alberto Terán – arguably the most famous artist of the genre – is covered over using a white correction pen and the word *Protesta* ('Protest') appears hand written in red pen, suggesting that the enterprise was surrounded by controversy.

ALTO LA PIRATERIA Y  
CORRUPCION EN EL PAIS

HALT PIRACY AND  
CORRUPTION IN THE COUNTRY

**CENTRO CULTURAL DE LA MU[S]ICA BOLIVIANA**  
**CEMBOL** es una producción originario  
Lucha por el bienestar del Pais

**CULTURAL CENTRE OF BOLIVIAN MUSIC**  
**CEMBOL** is an *originario* production  
Struggle for the wellbeing of the country

Si nuestros Gobiernos, si nuestros Padres, no lograron forjar Nuestra independencia, soberanía Social, económica y cultural como artistas cantando y gritando nosotros lo forjaremos. Por qué somos la fuerza y la semilla de donde nació Bolivia, por Patria libre que siempre sonamos.	If our Governments, if our Parents, do not manage to attain Our independence, [and our] Social, economic and cultural sovereignty as artists; [then] singing and shouting we will accomplish it ourselves. This is because we are the force and the seed from which Bolivia was born, as a free homeland which we will always make heard.
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It is notable that no reference to Evo Morales appears on this VCD, except spoken by Gregorio's ten year old son David in the introduction to his song *No bebas papcito* ('Don't drink dad'). David was hugely popular as the child star *Vichito Mamani* and the spoken words – which were clearly scripted for him by Gregorio - simply express support for Morales, gratitude to Gregorio for organizing the festival, and opposition to piracy. What I wish to highlight about this VCD production (and the Festival that it purports to document), is its initiative to create solidarity among *originario* artists. As Gregorio emphasized to me on many occasions, *originario* artists needed to work together to counter piracy, but also to improve their social conditions, and to protest against their marginalization by the national music rights society, SOBODAYCOM (Bolivian Society of Music Authors and Composers). This need for artist solidarity was also explicitly expressed in a pamphlet published by Gregorio that outlined the effects of music piracy and the lack of state protection for the country's 'millenarian musical culture'. Asserting that it was 'time to call for justice', the pamphlet called for the urgent convening of 'a first national meeting of *originario* artist composers of the Bolivian nation'.

In short, Gregorio's outspoken position was fundamental to provoking debate among *originario* artists and to catalyzing solidarity. Over subsequent years, associations of charango singer-songwriters gradually emerged in the cities of Cochabamba and Sucre, and in 2007 the umbrella organization ASCARIOBOL ('Cultural Association of Indigenous *Originario* Artists of Bolivia') was founded. Although, by this time, piracy was only one of the issues on artists' agenda, ASCARIOBOL made national news with its first 'Day of the Artist' on 27<sup>th</sup> April 2008, when an estimated 10,000 musicians and dancers processed through the streets of La Paz to the presidential palace. Although a pioneer, Gregorio's idiosyncratic and irascible nature, his inability to compromise, and his insistence on only participating in the organization as

president, ultimately meant that he remained largely isolated from ASCARIOBOL. Nonetheless, several members openly acknowledged that Gregorio had been the spark which had brought ASCARIOBOL into being and some even campaigned for him to become Bolivia's Minister of Culture. In this light of this history, the VCD of the First – and only - GPFONPO Festival in 2004, would appear to be one of the first concrete manifestations of *originario* artist solidarity in the face of piracy.

### **Provoking resentments**

In the previous examples I examined how Gregorio confronted piracy by appealing to the loyalty, good nature and patriotism of his audience and through motivating solidarity among *originario* artists. Nonetheless, feelings of loyalty and group solidarity are often accompanied by antipathy to others, and in the following example we see how resentment is provoked and redirected against music piracy. In the song *A la Mar* ('To the Sea'), from his 2008 VCD *30,000 Chanchos* ('30,000 Pigs'), Gregorio explicitly invokes the 'War of the Sea' - a reference that almost any Bolivian will instantly relate to the War of the Pacific (1879-1883). In this disastrous conflict with Chile, Bolivia lost its access to the sea; a loss that remains a deep and painful scar in the Bolivian psyche. The most decisive battle in the conflict - in which the war hero Eduardo Albaroa was shot dead - took place at Calama on the 23<sup>rd</sup> March (1879). This date continues to be commemorated each year, with flag-lined streets and parades, in many parts of the country. At the same time as provoking resentment over Bolivia's lost access to the sea, the video images in *A la Mar* feature the violence of ritual fighting (*tinku*). The tradition of *tinku* fighting during religious festivals is found in many parts of the Northern Potosi region, but the largest and best known takes place in the town of Macha during the feast of the Holy Cross in early May. Numerous groups of warriors playing *jula jula* panpipes and singing charango songs in the *cruz* style - as heard in this recording - converge on the town from surrounding rural communities (Stobart 2006). This includes groups from the village of Tomaykuri, some three hours walk from Macha, where Gregorio grew up and lived until he was nearly thirty. In other words, *tinku* fighting and its associated music were very much part of Gregorio's culture and in the video he approaches *tinku* as an insider, juxtaposing its violence with comic elements. Since at least the 1980s, *tinku* fighting has been the object of much – often exoticist - outsider fascination, attracting a stream of national and international tourists, photojournalists and filmmakers. *Tinku* has also given rise to a national folkloric dance, found in urban folklore processions throughout the country, which imitates regional dress and parodies fighting to invented music and choreography (Goldstein 1998). In contrast, Gregorio was one of the first regional artists to commercialise, celebrate and champion the rural song style associated with *tinku*, which is quite distinct in style and sonority from that of the nationally ubiquitous urban *tinku* genre.

The song, *A la Mar*, not only stirs up resentment over Bolivia's loss of maritime access to Chile, but also invokes conflict through its numerous video clips of *tinku* fighting and seething crowds filmed during the feast itself. The music and video images are dynamic and arresting from the outset; Gregorio's slow motion leap transitions into the energetic synchronised jumping and stamping (*zapateo*) dance characteristic of the *crúz* song genre (Stobart 2006:89-90). We see combat between pairs of women, pairs of men, and neighbouring villages (Churikala and Colquechaka) and there is sometimes a sense of complete mayhem. Against this visual bombardment, the song is heard sung in Spanish; an exception for this VCD on which most songs are in the indigenous language Quechua. This detail suggests that Gregorio's anti-piracy message was aimed at a more urban audience who would be less familiar with Quechua. The song is divided into three verses: the first links going to the sea with lovemaking, pleasure, and sensuality; flowers and lips tasting of pomegranate. These sensory pleasures vanish in the second verse to be replaced by a sense of loss and nostalgia: "why do you sing no more?" The culprits, we are told, who have taken away this source of pleasure – just as the Chileans 'stole' Bolivia's access to the sea - are those who dishonestly sell and buy counterfeit recordings, leading artists to live in poverty. In the final verse Gregorio appeals to the president (Evo Morales) for 'justice', but as copyright law is not enforced he threatens to take the law into his own hands, using *tinku* tactics.

**Song: A la Mar ("To the Sea")** Track 4 from VCD *30,000 Chanchos* (June 2008)

Ujuyyy, tengo 80 hijos en 10 mujeres,  
Listo para la guerra del mar.

Ahoy! I have 80 children from 10 women  
Ready for the war of the sea

Ijayyyy, t'akan t'akan t'akan,  
qhari qhari pura, warmí warmi pura,  
Uqlla karaju.

Look out, [the fighting is] scattered all around  
Men against men, women against women  
Altogether now dammit!

**Verse 1 – invocation of lovemaking sensuality**

A la mar a la mar, te voy a llevar  
Para ver para ver, si sabes amar  
La vida es pa[ra] gozar, no para guardar  
La vida es pa[ra] reír, no para llorar  
Cholita kusquiña vamos por espinar  
Flor de tañí tani, color granadita  
Dame tu boquita, sabor granadita.

To the sea, to the sea, I'll take you  
To see, so see if you know how to love  
Life is to enjoy, not to store away  
Life is for laughter, not for tears  
Girl from Cuzco, let's go to Espinar (province)  
Tañí tani flower, colour of pomegranate  
Give me your mouth, flavour of pomegranate

**Verse 2 – invocation of nostalgia, blame, sympathy for artists**

Por mi preguntan, ¿por qué ya no cantas?  
Sabes cual [el] razón, porque ya no canto,  
El que compra falsos, ellos son culpables.  
El que vende falsos, ellos son culpable.  
Los canta autores, extrema pobreza,  
Sin ningún respaldo, ni seguro social.  
En mi propia tierra, no hay la justicia.

They ask me "why do you sing no more?"  
Do you know the reason why I sing no more?  
Those who buy fakes, they are to blame.  
Those who sell fakes, they are the culprits.  
Singer songwriters [live in] extreme poverty,  
Without any support, nor social security.  
In my own country, there is no justice

### Verse 3 – from justice to threats and retaliation

Señor presidente, te pido justicia,  
La piratería, tanto hace daño,  
Si no hay justicia ¡ya saben quién soy!  
Con mis propias manos, me haré justicia.  
Si quieres puñetes, si quieres patadas.  
Si quieres con piedra, sé tú me haces daño

Mister president, I ask you for justice,  
Piracy causes such harm,  
If there's no justice; they now know who I am!  
With my own hands, I will reap justice.  
If you want fists, if you want kicks.  
If you want it with stones, I know you harm me.

Through the course of the song the anti-piracy message is further emphasized using screen text (in Spanish). The words ‘Halt piracy dammit... He who damages this work will pay dearly. Justice will be done with my own hand’<sup>9</sup> gradually move across the screen during the first verse and into the instrumental. Similarly, during verse two we are cautioned: ‘Halt falsifying CDs. Say No to piracy.’<sup>10</sup> During the instrumental between verses two and three, video images of *tinku* fighting with stones (*rumi tinku*) are shown; a particularly dangerous practice which regularly results in fatalities, despite the authorities’ attempts to outlaw it. During this stone fighting episode text appears on the screen warning the viewer that ‘this fight is Deadly’, thereby setting up the action that is played out through the course of the final verse. In this sequence, Gregorio is shown thumping his *tinku* opponent - speeded up for comic effect – and then hurling a stone at him. His adversary then appears prostrate on the ground - blood dripping from his mouth, as if vanquished in mortal combat. Gregorio performs a victory dance beside the body and, as a final flourish, disdainfully kicks away his opponent’s fighting helmet (*montera*). Meanwhile the screen text reads: ‘Gregorio Mamani is not looking for problems. He’s looking for those who fake his work and for counterfeit buyers [*compradores truchos*]’.<sup>11</sup> [http://youtu.be/TpcgAhUt1\\_U](http://youtu.be/TpcgAhUt1_U)

The resulting music video is both threatening and hilarious; it is serious and playful. Viewers can scarcely miss the Gregorio’s message: he will not hesitate to use violent means, if necessary, to protect his work from piracy. However, the communication of this message is, at the same time, highly entertaining – a kind of anti-piracy art form, which conveys meaning at a multiplicity of levels. Much humour also surrounded the production and filming of this track, several sequences of which I filmed under close instruction from Gregorio. At his request, my ten and eight year old sons (dressed in *tinku* outfits) appear alongside him in the opening sequence and much was made of the bull’s blood collected from an abattoir shortly before filming. This anti-piracy entertainment clearly went down well with local viewers; indeed one

<sup>9</sup> Alto [sic] la piratería carajoo... El que hace daño este trabajo pagara caro. La justicia será con mi propio mano.

<sup>10</sup> Alto [sic] la falsificación de CDs. Dile no a la pirateria carajo.

<sup>11</sup> Gregorio Mamani no busca problemas, buscaron los que hacen falsificaciones este trabajo y los compradores truchos.

urban Bolivian friend described it as *brutal* – a Spanish expression which conveys the sense of “awesome” (as well as “brutal”).

### **Violent acts: ‘Justice with my own hands’**

In the previous example, Gregorio exploited his *originario* (indigenous) identity as a ‘noble savage’; honest and moral, whilst potentially fierce and mortally dangerous. This is supported by the reality of *rumi tinku* – stone fighting – which results in fatalities almost every year. But the spoof fatality that ends the video, and Gregorio’s play acting, is calculated to provoke laughter; it is light-hearted and playful, even of the underlying message is serious. As noted above, having radically reduced prices to make the retail cost of original and pirated VCDs identical (when sold in a presentation case), the primary target of Gregorio’s anti-piracy message was not so much consumers as vendors. By purchasing Peruvian mass-pirated disks or making copies themselves and placing these in presentation cases, vendors could potentially make a profit of around 7Bs (49p) per disc, compared to 4Bs (28p) from an original supplied by Gregorio. Established market vendors in the main areas where Gregorio’s VCDs were sold were sure to know that Gregorio’s threats, albeit clothed in humour in Gregorio’s 2008 *A la Mar* music video, were entirely serious. His scandalous actions were infamous and stallholders would have been familiar with his first VCD dedicated to music of the Macha *tinku* (*Capital Tinkuy de Macha* 2005). In this video, Gregorio documents his retaliation for a vendors’ repeated piracy of his music in a shocking and concrete way, expressing his identity as a violent Macha warrior.

This notorious sequence occurs in the first song on the disc, entitled *Miski Imilla* (‘Tasty Lass’) – the pseudonym by which Gregorio’s wife is presented on various recordings. In both the video and Quechua/Spanish song text, Gregorio strategically essentialises himself as brutal and ‘detested’ – abandoning any sense of nobility or humour. He appears as bellicose, bullying, sexually crude, and chauvinist; brimming with unrestrained Macha masculinity. The first spoken words and sung verses are full of crude sexual references, with musical instruments - the *pinkillu* flute (an obvious phallic reference) and the charango - presented as the actors in sexual interactions and violence to women. The video shows a cockfight and images from the actual feast in Macha, where Gregorio is seen to knock over a girl in the crowd (probably originally unintentionally) and comment “that’s how I am”. After entreating Mach warriors to go into battle, he is shown with blood around his mouth singing the classic lines from this song genre: *Somos, somos, Macheñitos somos. Hijos de la patria, bolivianos somos* (“We are, we are, Machas is what we are. Children of the nation, we are Bolivians”). But rather than finishing these well-known couplets in the usual way, he sings ‘Kicks and punches, we are slaughterers. When there are pirates, we’re sackers’. At this point the video images move from the context of *tinku* fighting in Northern Potosi to a street in the city of Cochabamba. Decked out in *tinku*

battle dress, including a *montera* ox-hide fighting helmet, Gregorio is seen to stride up to a shop selling pirated VCD discs and to tear discs from the display rack while the female vendor vainly tries to stop him. He then throws a rock through the screen of a television set, and attempts to smash a stool before strutting away. The remaining verses are variants of well-known *Cruz* genre song texts, that evoke *tinku* fighting and which are often heard sung by men during the Feast of the Holy Cross in the town of Macha.

### ***Miski Imilla ("Tasty Lass")***

(Spoken text in italics)

*Ijayyy misk'i pinkillu,  
Misk'i imillaq waynan karaju,  
wanka tusuchi,  
q'upa viguti karaju.  
Ijyyyy, patanta patanta  
Ulla, ulla, ulla karaju.*

*Hey! Sweet pinkillu flute,  
He's the lover of Tasty Lass dammit!  
The rebel who makes you dance,  
Filthy whiskers dammit,  
Go for it! Up with those feet [jump in dance]  
Ulla, ulla, ulla dammit!*

Charanguituyata, llik'i wasa sutin,  
Chulitanpatataq, misk'i imilla sutin,  
Chutasta chulasta, jisp'ayta sut'uchin.  
Pitaq nuqa jina, tukuy imán quchin,  
Machamán chulasta astakipan quchin.

My charango's called "back breaker",  
And its girl is called "Tasty Lass".  
In dress, in *pollera* skirt, makes urine drip.  
Who, like me, gives her the works?  
Kidnaps and gives it to the Macha girls.

*Así suy  
Alistarse yuqallas, warak'as*

*That's how I am!  
Get ready with your slings lads,*

Somos, somos, Macheñitos somos,  
Hijos de la patria, bolivianos somos.  
Patada y puñetes, matadores somos,  
Vamos haber piratas, saqueadores somos.

We are, we are, Machas is what we are  
Children of the nation, we are Bolivians.  
Kick and punches, we are slaughterers,  
When there are pirates, we're sackers

*Bruirrrrr. Ni supaypis manchachikunchu.  
Ahora sí piratas, asesinos, granputas karaju  
Saqueo, saqueo karajuuuu.*

*Brrrrr! And not scared of the devil.  
Now you've had it pirates, assassins, whores  
Sack and spoil damitttt!*

Macha plasamanta, pitaq presidente,  
Elujituaq wawan, chaymá presidente.  
Tumaykurimanta, aquí estoy presente,  
Chiqnisqa yuqalla, chulantin presente.

From the square in Macha, who's president?  
I'm Eulogio's son, that's who is president.  
From Tomaykuri, here I am present,  
Detested lad, present with his girl.

*Jaku karaju. Arrrrr, chakis karaju, chakis  
karaju.  
Ufhayyy, kallinta kallinta turri plasaman,  
karaju  
Haber maytaq Phichichuwa karaju.*

*Let's go dammit. Arrrrr, move those feet  
dammit.  
Running, through the streets, the square with  
the church tower dammit!  
Where are Phichichua community's dancers?*

Esta callecito, otra callecito,  
Capital del tinku, Macha callesitu,  
Jinamá nuqayku, takiq tusuq kayku.  
Rumi parapipis, sayaq pichu kayku,  
Jayt'a patadita muchu pichu kayku.

This street, another street,  
Capital of *tinku*, the streets of Macha,  
That's what we are, singers and dancers.  
Even in the stone fighting we hold firm,  
With all the kicking our chests are firm.

*Ahora si karaju, takay a karaju, takay a karaku.*

*Now go for it dammit! , hit dammit, hit dammit!*

*Jayyy ulla, ulla karaju. Uqhariy, uqhariy rumiwan, rumiwan wasaykuy karaju.*

*Look out "ulla, ulla" dammit! Pick 'em up, pick 'em up, duck the stones dammit.*

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nTeN\\_8\\_IGns](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nTeN_8_IGns)

There is no humour in the video images of Gregorio smashing up an actual shop. Rather, this footage, filmed for him by his son, was designed to shock, provoke fear and provide evidence that - as a Macha warrior - he was ready to undertake "justice with my own hands". This example – intentionally captured on video - was by no means the only time Gregorio smashed up the stall of somebody who repeatedly pirated his work. He told me how, when distributing his recordings to market stalls - especially in the lowland Chapare region - some vendors would purchase multiple copies of his discs ("some took five units from me, some twenty or twenty-five, up to a maximum of thirty") whereas others would buy a single disc. When he returned several months later, those who had previously bought a large batch would typically request more. However, vendors who had purchased a single disc almost never wanted more, and their stalls would often display many pirated copies of his work. In these cases, he told me that he would politely ask the stallholder to refrain from pirating his work. If on his next visit the vendor still did not buy original discs and persisted in pirating his work, Gregorio would issue a much more serious warning. When vendors continued to ignore his warnings, he would take far more drastic action:

On the third time I went armed, loaded with stones in my rucksack and wearing my *montera* fighting helmet. [I thought] "I'm going to scare the hell out of these bastards. Now I'm really angry". It really pained me all this work, all I'd had to invest, all the sacrifice I had made...

[So, I would ask] "Why do you do this to me? Why? You should buy originals from me. You just bought one from me, and now there's all this lot you are selling – nothing but piracy" - and still they weren't bothered. Right away I'd put [a stone] *kak!* through their television, and go off shouting. Some hit me or took me off to the police, but the police didn't know what to do when we arrived at their office (Interview: Gregorio Mamani, December 2007).

On these occasions, Gregorio ensured that he carried with him a copy of the Copyright Law (*Ley 1322 – Derecho de Autor*). If taken to the police station by angry vendors, he would present this document to the officers, stating that his legal rights had been infringed. Whilst admitting he had also "committed an error" by damaging the vendor's property he would ask how he was to

protect his rights if the police did not uphold the law. This usually led the police to accept the vendor's wrongdoing and to send Gregorio away without penalty or requirement for compensation, albeit reproaching him for his 'delinquency'. Smashing up stalls was very unpopular among vendors - who sometimes responded by throwing stones at Gregorio to create a kind of Macha-style *rumi tinku* battle in the markets of Chapare – but it powerfully communicated the message, as does the video, that Gregorio was not afraid of resorting to violent means to protect his interests. In such action, he capitalized on his indigenous (*originario*) identity as a fearsome warrior of *ayllu* Macha, playing on deeply held urban fears about the imagined violence and unpredictability of indigenous people (Harris 2000:141). This dauntless self-presentation contrasts vividly with the sense of powerlessness expressed to me by Carmelo Gutiérrez, the (urban, non-indigenous) owner of *GC Records*, a Cochabamba-based label dedicated to producing music videos of *originario* music:

On one occasion I stumbled across [a vendor selling fake copies of my recordings], right? It made me really furious that this guy, right there next door to my business, was selling pirated recordings. So I got really angry; grabbed and tore up all that was mine. I smashed, snatched and smashed, right? I said "You guys just don't know how much it costs to produce this material, do you? It doesn't cost you anything, does it? So at least show some respect, when you are right next door to me".

Well, they said to me, "we didn't make these, we bought them. Go off and control the border [with Peru]. That's where they bring them from, don't they?" So, what happened? Ten people turned up, just like that, and instead of me doing it to them, they wanted to beat me up! ... All I could do was grab [my stuff] and escape (Interview: Carmelo Gutiérrez; CG Records, Cochabamba)

This example not only highlights Gregorio's boldness of character and his exploitation of indigenous identity, but also elucidates some of the ways that within piracy ecologies self-justification and the defence of personal interests are played out in local day-to-day contexts, with 'wrongdoing' often deferred to others. I often heard stallholders identify the criminality of piracy with Peruvian mass-producers, even though nationally-produced VCDs were actively selected and despatched to Peru for copying by Bolivian vendors.

During my research with Gregorio in 2007-08 he did not undertake further destruction of market stalls. However, the three VCDs on which we worked together all included anti-piracy screen text warnings that the piracy of his work would result in 'justice with my own hands'. Gregorio was a strong and determined personality who was not afraid of making enemies or of causing an outrage; indeed he spoke with pride of how his attacks on the stalls of pirate vendors had provoked a 'scandal' that was even reported in the newspapers of the Bolivian capital, La Paz.<sup>12</sup> Perhaps, having proved to vendors that his warnings were not empty threats, he could afford in his later work to approach his anti-piracy campaign in a more creative, light-hearted and entertaining way.

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<sup>12</sup> Nonetheless, he could not provide specific dates and I have been unable to track down these newspaper reports.

## Conclusion

We might expect original DVD and VCD discs to be more widely available in the shops and market stalls of Sucre's beautiful colonial city centre, frequented by the city's middle classes and tourists. Although such surrounding might promise the 'secure zones of authorized consumption' dreamed of by the media industries (Sundaram 2010:135), in reality original recordings were almost entirely absent. By contrast, many original recordings were available in the less affluent and sprawling *Mercado Campesino* ('peasant market') in the city's periphery. Such a pattern clearly contests any simple correlation between piracy and poverty. However, in contrasting these two retail environments, it is important to point out that the purely pirated discs of the city centre offered a much greater variety of musical genres; a large proportion being of mainstream national or international origin. Almost entirely absent from such stalls was the work of regional *originario* musicians, and my requests for the recordings of Gregorio Mamani were usually met by blank expressions, highlighting the strong class-based associations of particular genres. While a good number of stalls in the *Mercado Campesino* - as in the city centre - only offered pirated recordings, a considerable number stocked original recordings of regional *originario* genres, sometimes alongside a selection of pirated international music. Almost every such stall offered a variety of recordings by Gregorio, mostly originals; it was evident that here, unlike the city centre, he was a household name.

A number of factors, relating back to the various anti-piracy strategies described above, might help explain why original recordings were so widely available in the less affluent *Mercado Campesino*, but almost entirely absent from Sucre's city centre. Firstly, the policy of small-scale regional producers, like Gregorio, to drastically reduce wholesale prices to make recordings affordable for low income consumers was critical, even if ultimately unable to compete with the rock-bottom levels of pirates. Larger-scale national and international labels or rights holders have usually been unable or unwilling to reduce their prices to locally affordable rates, meaning that piracy has become the only option for city centre vendors. The Bolivian middle classes, who frequent Sucre's city centre markets, may be relatively affluent compared Gregorio's low-income *originario* audience, but average incomes are still probably five to ten times lower than in Europe or the USA (c.f. Karganis 2011). In addition, the piracy networks that supply city centre vendors are hugely more efficient than official distribution channels, offering a diversity of musical genres and films previously unimaginable for most Bolivians. As one highly-educated published author enthused to me: piracy 'permits anybody to acquire works which cannot be accessed through formal means'.

Secondly, a much greater sense of 'social intimacy' and interaction is found between the artists, vendors and audiences of regional *originario* music than is usually possible in the marketing of mainstream national and international genres. This 'sense of participation in a shared community' (Condry 2004:358) may involve feelings of loyalty and concern that musicians

receive the economic recognition they deserve. Personal participation in the distribution process by regional *originario* artists often entails relationships of mutual interdependence, trust, or even kinship with vendors. Such close interaction, alongside strategies such as flooding the market on the release day and screen printing discs, also enables artists to police the sale of their work and to protest against its unauthorized replication. City centre vendors, by contrast, are less likely to have direct contact with the artists whose work they sell, especially in the case of international recordings. During my research, consumers and vendors in Sucre's city centre were subject to very little anti-piracy discourse or pressure. Although aware of its illegality, most consumers to whom I spoke considered piracy as a huge 'boon' or 'benefit' (*ventaja*) in their lives.<sup>13</sup> Nonetheless, one middle-class Sucre-based musician, who regularly travels to Europe to perform, described piracy as 'the cancer of music'. He told me that his group's work was regularly pirated in the city centre and, as they could not even recoup production costs, they had abandoned making recordings to sell in Bolivia. However, with their experience of European tours and CD prices, there was little sense that the group had considered radically lowering prices or working with the vendors, or were particularly concerned to grow their national audience and attract (relatively low paid) engagements at home.

Thirdly, we might wonder how much Gregorio's consciousness raising and psychological campaign - with its poetry, appeals to patriotism or resentment, ludic threats and brutal actions - impacted on vendor and consumer attitudes and practices in the *Mercado Campesino*. In many respects, Gregorio's anti-piracy campaigning was unique as regards creativity, relentlessness and variety in approach. No other artist went to such extremes, nor turned the 'play of piracy' into the focus of such interest and entertainment; indeed the creative richness he employed might be seen to transform anti-piracy into an art form. His approach certainly seems a great deal more creative and entertaining than, for example, the UK's 'Knock off Nigel' anti-piracy videos (c. 2007) which aimed to shame viewers into buying originals, or the many other industry funded campaigns which spuriously connect media piracy with organized crime, drug-trafficking or terrorism (Govil 2004). By contrast, Gregorio's discourse and strategies - albeit highly melodramatic - were for the most part culturally relevant and accurate. He dropped prices to the absolute minimum, he informed and identified with his low-income audience, and he targeted the sharp end of his campaign precisely at those vendors who chose to maximise profit at the expense of artist-producers. It is hard to be sure how much Gregorio's campaigning contributed to the existence of several groups of stalls in Sucre's *Mercado Campesino* selling original VCDs of regional *originario* music. Ultimately, reduction in price and

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<sup>13</sup> To my knowledge, no anti-piracy campaigns or raids took place in Sucre's city centre during my field research. If they had, they would probably have been undertaken by third-party employees hired by recording companies. Actions of this type mounted in earlier years elsewhere in Bolivia were largely ineffective and tended to provoke resentment rather than sympathy for the music industries.

personal distribution to vendors by the artists and their families may have been much more significant.

During my eleven months of research with Gregorio, based in Sucre, I participated in the production of three of his VCD productions. The first, entitled *Zura zura*, featured rural Carnival music, and had both a limited potential audience and short market window of around one month in the run up to Carnival (Stobart 2011). A pirated 'special edition', produced in Peru, was in circulation around two weeks after this VCD's release (Stobart 2010:44). Gregorio estimated that he sold around 2,000 VCDs before it was pirated, and that his total profits (after direct costs) for his two months of production work amounted to approximately 4,000Bs or £260 (calculated at 2Bs or 13p per disc). Even though this was disappointing for Gregorio, other producers of *originario* music told me that they rarely sold more than 1000 originals. For the second production on which we worked together, *Exitos de Ayer y Hoy* ('Hits of Yesterday and Today'), which mainly featured old recordings of Gregorio's classic *huayño* songs to which he added video, estimated sales were around 4,000 (i.e. profits of around 8,000Bs or £520). For our final production, *30,000 Chanchos* ('30,000 Pigs'), which featured the music of the Macha *tinku*, and on which the song *A la Mar* appears (see above), Gregorio estimated that 6,000 copies had been sold by the time I left Bolivia around one month after its release (i.e. profits of around 12,000Bs or £780). To my knowledge, neither Gregorio's second nor his final production was pirated over the main post-release sales period. Even if he exaggerated the numbers of VCDs sold, the figures hugely exceed those given to me by other artists and studios. It must be remembered that each production involved several months of constant work and that many other indirect costs were involved. Whilst the return from his best-selling VCD was considerably more than the earnings of most other rural migrants in Sucre, it was by no means a fortune; indeed his family's lifestyle was extremely modest and money was a constant worry. As Gregorio pointed out, live engagements tended to pay much better. For example, a typical fee was 2,000Bs (£130); half this would be shared with the two accompanying guitarists (500Bs each), while he would take 1,000Bs (£65) as leader, soloist and songwriter. Nonetheless, such booking for live performances were few and far between; around five in my eleven months of research. In this context, viewing recordings purely as a form of promotion, rather than as a significant source of income, presents a very bleak picture for musician-producers such as Gregorio.

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