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Ch'ixinakax utxiwa:

A Reflection on the Practices
and Discourses of Decolonization

The colonial condition obscures a number of paradoxes. Throughout history, the modernizing efforts of the Europeanized elites in the Andean region resulted in successive waves of recolonization. One example is the Bourbon reforms that both preceded and followed the great cycle of rebellion from 1771 to 1781. Although it is true that modern history meant slavery for the indigenous peoples of America, it was simultaneously an arena of resistance and conflict, a site for the development of sweeping counterhegemonic strategies, and a space for the creation of new indigenous languages and projects of modernity.¹ The condition of possibility for an indigenous hegemony is located in the territory of the modern nation—inserted into the contemporary world—and is once again able to take up the long memory of the internal colonial market, of the long-distance circulation of goods, of networks of productive communities (waged or unwaged), and of the multicultural and multicolored [*abigarrados*] urban centers. In Potosí, the large market of coca and silver was called El Gato (“the cat,”

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a Castilianization of the indigenous *qhatu*), and the *qhateras* (merchants) were emblematic of indigenous modernity. They were the last link in the production and sale of these goods that were fully modern and yet grounded in indigenous technologies and knowledges.² The bustling colonial space was also the site that linked indigenous leaders of Tupaq Amaru II, Tupaq Katari, and Tomás Katari to long-distance mercantile circulation.³ And it was the experience of the Spanish crown's commercial levying—not only the royal fifth, the checkpoints, and tithes or other tax burdens, but also the monopoly on coca, the forced distribution of goods, and the coercive recruitment of porters and shepherds [*llameras*]⁴—that unleashed the fury of rebellion. Against the financial and predatory forms of coercive taxation, the Katari-Amaru project was the expression of indigenous modernity in which religious and political self-determination signified a retaking of their own historicity—a decolonization of imaginaries and of the forms of representation.

Such actions demonstrate that we indigenous were and are, above all, contemporary beings and peers, and in this dimension [*aka pacha*], we perform and display our own commitment to modernity. Cultural postmodernism, imposed by the elites and reproduced by the state in a fragmented and subordinate way, is alien to us as a tactic.⁴ There is no *post* or *pre* in this vision of history that is not linear or teleological but rather moves in cycles and spirals and sets out on a course without neglecting to return to the same point. The indigenous world does not conceive of history as linear; the past-future is contained in the present. The regression or progression, the repetition or overcoming of the past is at play in each conjuncture and is dependent more on our acts than on our words. The project of indigenous modernity can emerge from the present in a spiral whose movement is a continuous feedback from the past to the future—a “principle of hope” or “anticipatory consciousness”—that both discerns and realizes decolonization at the same time.⁵

The contemporary experience commits us to the present—*aka pacha*—which in turn contains within it the seeds of the future that emerge from the depths of the past [*qhip nayr uñtasis sarnaqapxañani*]. The present is the setting for simultaneously modernizing and archaic impulses, of strategies to preserve the status quo and of others that signify revolt and renewal of the world: *Pachakuti*. The upside-down world created by colonialism will return to its feet as history only if it can defeat those who are determined to preserve the past, with its burden of ill-gotten privileges. But if the preservers of the past succeed, the past cannot escape the fury of the enemy, to paraphrase Walter Benjamin.⁶

Who really are the archaic and conservative groups and classes in Bolivia? What is decolonization, and what does it have to do with modernity? How can the exclusive, ethnocentric “we” be articulated with the inclusive “we”—a homeland for everyone—that envisions decolonization? How have we thought and problematized, in the here and now, the colonized present and its overturning?



In 1983, when Aníbal Quijano still spoke of the movements and uprisings of the Andean peasantry as “pre-political” (in a text that I fittingly criticized⁷), I was writing *Oppressed but Not Defeated*, which provided a radically different reading of the significance and relevance of the indigenous protests in the Andes to the struggles of the present. In this text, I argued that the Katarista-Indianista uprising of 1979 made clear for Bolivia the necessity of a “radical and profound decolonization” in its political, economic, and, above all, mental structures—that is, the country’s ways of conceiving the world.⁸

The book’s conclusion resulted from a detailed analysis of different historical moments of domination in our country: the colonial, liberal, and populist horizons that not only reversed the legal and constitutional orderings but also recycled old practices of exclusion and discrimination. Since the nineteenth century, liberal and modernizing reforms in Bolivia have given rise to a practice of conditional inclusion, a “mitigated and second class” citizenship.⁹ But the price of this false inclusion has been the archaism of the elites. Recolonization made the reproduction of feudal and rentier modes of domination possible, modes based on the privileged ascriptions granted by the colonial center of power. Today, the rhetoric of equality and citizenship is converted into a caricature that includes not only tacit political and cultural privileges but also notions of common sense that make incongruities tolerable and allow for the reproduction of the colonial structures of oppression.

Bolivian elites are a caricature of the West. In speaking of them, I refer not only to the political class and the state bureaucracy but also to the intelligentsia that strikes postmodern and even postcolonial poses, and to the US academy and its followers who built pyramidal structures of power and symbolic capital—baseless pyramids that vertically bind certain Latin American universities—and form clientalist networks with indigenous and black intellectuals.

The cultural studies departments of many North American universities have adopted “postcolonial studies” in their curricula with an academi-

cist and culturalist stamp devoid of the sense of political urgency that characterized the intellectual endeavors of their colleagues in India. Although the majority of the founders of the journal *Subaltern Studies* formed part of the Bengali elite in the 1970s and 1980s—many of them graduated from the University of Calcutta—their difference was located both in language, in the radical alterity that it represented to speak Bengali, Hindi, and other languages in India, and in a long tradition of written culture and philosophical reflection. Yet, without altering anything of the relations of force in the “palaces” of empire, the cultural studies departments of North American universities have adopted the ideas of subaltern studies and launched debates in Latin America, thus creating a jargon, a conceptual apparatus, and forms of reference and counterreference that have isolated academic treatises from any obligation to or dialogue with insurgent social forces. Walter Mignolo and company have built a small empire within an empire, strategically appropriating the contributions of the subaltern studies school of India and the various Latin American variants of critical reflection on colonization and decolonization.

Domestically, the Bolivian elites have adopted an official multiculturalism that is riddled with references to Will Kymlicka and anchored in the idea of indigenous people as minorities. Across Latin America, massive protests were triggered against neoliberal policies in Venezuela (1989), Mexico (1994), Bolivia (2000–2005), and Argentina (2002) that alerted the technocrats of the necessity to “humanize” structural adjustment. The immediate consequence of this was an ornamental and symbolic multiculturalism with prescriptions such as “ethno-tourism” and “eco-tourism,” which draw on a theatricalization of the “originary” condition of a people rooted in the past and unable to make their own destiny.

In 1994, in an effort to hide the business of “capitalization,” Bolivian president Gonzalo Sánchez de Lozada adopted the culturist agenda of indigeneity, through his symbolic vice president (Víctor Hugo Cárdenas), municipal decentralization, and constitutional reform. Whether it was for fear of the rabble or to follow the agenda of their financiers, the elites were sensitive to the demands for recognition and political participation of indigenous social movements and adopted a rhetorical and essentialist discourse centered on the notion of “original people.” This recognition—truncated, conditional, and reluctant—of indigenous cultural and territorial rights allowed for the recycling of the elites and the continuation of their monopoly on power. What did this reappropriation mean, and what were its consequences? The Kataristas and Indianistas, based in the

western Andes, had a schematic view of the eastern peoples and spoke of “Aymaras,” “Qhichwas,” and “Tupiguaraní” or simply of “Indians.” Simultaneously, the notion of origin refers us to a past imagined as quiet, static, and archaic, which allows us to see the strategic recuperation of indigenous demands and the neutralization of the decolonizing impulse. A discussion of these communities situated in the “origin” denies the contemporaneity of these populations and excludes them from the struggles of modernity. They are given a residual status that, in fact, converts them into minorities, ensnaring them in indigenist stereotypes of the noble savage and as guardians of nature.

And so, as the indigenous people of the east and west are imprisoned in their *tierras comunitarias de origen* (original communal lands) and are NGOized, essentialist and Orientalist notions become hegemonic, and the indigenous people are turned into multicultural adornment for neoliberalism.¹⁰ The new stereotype of the indigenous combines the idea of a continuous territorial occupation, invariably rural, with a range of ethnic and cultural traits, and classifies indigenous behavior and constructs scenarios for an almost theatrical display of alterity. Rossana Barragán calls this strategy cholo-indigenous ethnic self-affirmation, as an “emblematic identity.”¹¹

But the multicultural discourse also conceals a secret agenda to deny the ethnicity of the multicolored [*abigarradas*] and acculturated populations—the settlement areas, mining centers, indigenous commercial networks in the internal and black markets, the cities. This agenda allowed the elites and the technobureaucracy of the state and the NGOs to comply with the dictates of empire: “zero coca” forced eradication and closure of legal markets in the tropics of Cochabamba, intellectual property laws, tax reform, and the liquidation of contraband.¹² The term “original people” affirms and recognizes but at the same time obscures and excludes the large majority of the Aymara- and Qhichwa-speaking population of the subtropics, the mining centers, the cities, and the indigenous commercial networks of the internal and black markets. It is therefore a suitable term for the strategy of depriving indigenous peoples of their potentially hegemonic status and their capacity to affect the state.¹³



The official multiculturalism described above has been the concealing mechanism par excellence for new forms of colonization. The elites adopt a strategy of crossdressing and articulate new forms of cooptation and neu-

tralization. In this way, they reproduce a “conditional inclusion,” a mitigated and second-class citizenship that molds subaltern imaginaries and identities into the role of ornaments through which the anonymous masses play out the theatricality of their own identity.

What, then, is decolonization? Can it be understood as only a thought or a discourse? I think that this question is another central point that has been barely alluded to in contemporary debates. Modernizing discourse, such as that of the liberals at the end of the nineteenth century, could have existed only if it had been accompanied by liberal practices, by genuine operations of equality and coparticipation in the public sphere. By recognizing what was only an ill-intentioned and rhetorical equality for the Indians, the *Ley de Exvinculación* of October 5, 1874, canceled the liberal reforms and formalized, after the fact, an aggressive recolonization of indigenous territories throughout the country, resulting in a massive expansion of large estates through the expropriation of communal lands. Meanwhile, the elites were engaged in rent-seeking activities, long trips to Europe, and above all, speculative investment in land and mining concessions. The “illustrious” people at the time, such as the “scientists” of the Mexican Porfiriato [the much-hated rule of Mexican president Porfirio Díaz 1876–1911], constructed, with strong support of the state apparatus (the army, in particular) a rentier and aristocratic class that was not only more colonial than that of the Spanish aristocracy but also more archaic and precapitalist. In effect, the nineteenth-century oligarchy remained aloof from the commercial and industrial activities that characterized their sixteenth-century ancestors and was instead dedicated to the usurpation of land, speculation, and import-export trade. The exploitation of materials, primarily, under the control of foreign capital and long-distance internal markets (which includes very large cross-border spaces in all the neighboring countries) fell into the hands of indigenous and mestizo populations with large urban-rural networks and links to the expanded reproduction of capital. It was, therefore, the practice of the diverse productive collectives—including those who “produced” circulation—that defined the modern condition, while the modernizing discourse of the elites only served to mask their archaic processes of cultural and political conservatism, which reproduces and renews the colonial condition throughout society.

There can be no discourse of decolonization, no theory of decolonization, without a decolonizing practice. The discourse of multiculturalism and the discourse of hybridity are essentialist and historicist interpretations of the indigenous question. They do not address the fundamental

issues of decolonization but instead obscure and renew the effective practices of colonization and subalternization. Their function is to supplant the indigenous populations as historical subjects and to turn their struggles and demands into elements of a cultural reengineering and a state apparatus in order to subjugate them and neutralize their will. A “change so that everything remains the same” bestows rhetorical recognition and subordinates, through patronage, the Indians into purely emblematic and symbolic functions—that is, a sort of “cultural *pongueaje*” [a free domestic service required of indigenous tenants] in the service of the spectacle of the multicultural state and mass communication.



The *gatopardismo* [the policy of changing everything so that everything remains the same] of the political and economic elites is reproduced in miniature in the social sciences that study the Andean region. Here we find a typical structure of “internal colonialism” as defined by Pablo González Casanovas in 1969.¹⁴ The arboreal structure of internal colonialism is articulated with the centers of power of the Northern Hemisphere, whether they be universities, foundations, or international organizations. I refer to this crucial theme—the role of the intellectuals in the domination of empire—because I believe that it is our collective responsibility not to contribute to the reproduction of this domination. By participating in these forums and contributing to the exchange of ideas, we could be, unwittingly, providing the enemy with ammunition. And this enemy has multiple facets, both local and global, situated both in the small corners of “tiny power” in our universities and pauperized libraries and in the heights of prestige and privilege. It is from these “palaces” (the universities of the North) that, following [Gayatri Chakravorty] Spivak, dominant ideas emanate, and it is also there that the “think tanks” (suggestive of a war) of the imperial powers are located. The arboreal structure of internal-external colonialism has centers and subcenters, nodes and subnodes, which connect certain universities, disciplinary trends, and academic fashions of the North with their counterparts in the South.

Let us take the case of Duke University. Walter Mignolo, jointly appointed in romance studies and the Program in Literature, emigrated from Argentina in the 1980s and spent his Marxist youth in France and his postcolonial and culturalist maturity in the United States. At one point, Dr. Mignolo got the urge to praise me, perhaps putting in practice a saying we have in the south of Bolivia: “Praise the fool if you want to see [her]

work more.” Taking up my ideas about internal colonialism and the epistemology of oral history, he regurgitated them entangled in a discourse of alterity that was profoundly depoliticized.¹⁵ Careful to avoid more polemical texts such as “Andean Colonial *Mestizaje*,” he took on, out of context, ideas I had put forward in “The Epistemological and Theoretical Potential of Oral History,” when the Andean Oral History Workshop was in its infancy and had not yet passed through the severe crisis that we are overcoming only today.¹⁶ It was, therefore, an overly optimistic vision, which in many ways has been reworked in my most recent texts. But the North American academy does not follow the pace of our discussions; it does not interact with the Andean social sciences in any meaningful way (except by providing scholarships and invitations to seminars and symposia), and so Mignolo ignored these aspects of my thinking.

The fashion of oral history then spreads to the Universidad Andina Simon Bolivar in Quito, where the Department of Cultural Studies, led by Catherine Walsh, a disciple and friend of Mignolo’s, offers a course of graduate study completely based in the logocentric and nominalist version of decolonization. Neologisms such as *decolonial*, *transmodernity*, and *ecosi-mía* proliferate, and such language entangles and paralyzes their objects of study: the indigenous and African-descended people with whom these academics believe they are in dialogue. But they also create a new academic canon, using a world of references and counterreferences that establish hierarchies and adopt new gurus: Mignolo, Walsh, Enrique Dussel, Javier Sanjinés. Equipped with cultural and symbolic capital, thanks to the recognition and certification from the academic centers of the United States, this new structure of academic power is realized in practice through a network of guest lectureships and visiting professorships between universities and also through the flow—from the South to the North—of students of indigenous and African descent from Bolivia, Peru, and Ecuador, who are responsible for providing theoretical support for racialized and exoticized multiculturalism in the academies.

Therefore, instead of a “geopolitics of knowledge,” I propose the task of undertaking a “political economy” of knowledge.¹⁷ Not only because the “geopolitics of knowledge” in the decolonial sense is a notion that is not put into practice (it rather raises a contradiction through gestures that recolonize the imaginaries and minds of intellectuals of the South), but also because it is necessary to leave the sphere of the superstructures in order to analyze the economic strategies and material mechanisms that operate behind discourses. The postcolonial discourse of North America is not only an economy of ideas, but it is also an economy of salaries, perks, and privi-

leges that certifies value through the granting of diplomas, scholarships, and master's degrees and through teaching and publishing opportunities. For obvious reasons and as the crisis deepens in public universities in Latin America, this kind of structure is well suited to the exercise of patronage as a mode of colonial domination. Through the game of who cites whom, hierarchies are structured, and we end up having to consume, in a regurgitated form, the very ideas regarding decolonization that we indigenous people and intellectuals of Bolivia, Peru, and Ecuador have produced independently. And this process began in the 1970s—the rarely quoted work of Pablo González Casanovas on “internal colonialism” was published in 1969—when Mignolo and Quijano were still militants of a positivist Marxism and a linear vision of history.

Here is an anecdote. Some time ago I wrote a political critique of the Bolivian Left for a seminar organized by an academic foundation in Mexico. The article, titled “On the Problems of So-Called Leftists,” was meant to criticize the way that the elites of the Marxist Left in Bolivia, because of their enlightenment and positivist vision, had overlooked the issue of Indian identity and the problems of decolonization, applying instead a reductionist and formulaic analysis that allowed them to facily reproduce the cultural domination exercised by their class origin and by their proficiency in the legitimate language and Western thought. It was obvious that to do so, and to proclaim themselves spokespeople and interpreters of the demands of indigenous people, it was necessary to use obfuscating discourses. My article used the notion of “internal colonialism” extensively in order to analyze this superiority complex of middle-class intellectuals with respect to their indigenous peers and all the implications of this fact. The irony is that later the editors of an English-language journal suggested that I correct my sources. They indicated that I should cite Quijano's concept of “coloniality of knowledge” to make my text accessible to an audience completely unaware of the contributions of González Casanova and the Andean Oral History Workshop. I responded that I was not at fault if in 1983 Quijano had not read us—we had read him—and that my ideas about internal colonialism in terms of knowledge-power had come from a trajectory of thought that was entirely my own and had been illuminated by other readings, such as that of Maurice Halbwachs about collective memory, Frantz Fanon about the internalization of the enemy, Franco Ferraroti on life histories, and above all from the experience of having lived and participated in the reorganization of the Aymara movement and indigenous insurgency of the 1970s and 1980s.¹⁸

The vertical structure of this baseless pyramid that is produced by the

academies of the North in their relations with the universities and intellectuals of the South expresses itself in multiple ways. For example, Quijano formulated the idea of coloniality of power in the 1990s, and Mignolo in turn created the notion of “colonial difference,” thus reappropriating Quijano’s ideas and adding nuances. It is through these processes that the notions of the “coloniality of knowledge” and the “geopolitics of knowledge” arose. In his book about the communal system, Félix Patzi in turn relies extensively on Quijano and Mignolo, ignoring the Kataristas’ ideas regarding internal colonialism, which were formulated in the 1980s and had origins as far back as the late 1960s in the pioneering work of Fausto Reinaga.¹⁹

Ideas run, like rivers, from the south to the north and are transformed into tributaries in major waves of thought. But just as in the global market for material goods, ideas leave the country converted into raw material, which become regurgitated and jumbled in the final product. Thus, a canon is formed for a new field of social scientific discourse, postcolonial thinking. This canon makes visible certain themes and sources but leaves others in the shadows. Thus, Javier Sanjinés could write a whole book on *mestizaje* in Bolivia and completely disregard the entire Bolivian debate on this topic.²⁰ Thus we have cooptation and mimesis, the selective incorporation of ideas and selective approval of those that better nourish a fashionable, depoliticized, and comfortable multiculturalism that allows one to accumulate exotic masks in one’s living room and to engage in absurd discussions about the future of public sector reforms. Can you believe that even the names of the ministries in the government reform of the first government of Sánchez de Lozada—including his symbolic adoption of the indigenous vice president Cárdenas—emerged from the offices of the United Nations Development Programme and the gatherings organized by Fernando Calderón [the Bolivian “decolonial” sociologist]?

I believe that the multiculturalism of Mignolo and company neutralizes the practices of decolonization by enthroning within the academy a limited and illusory discussion regarding modernity and decolonization. Without paying attention to the internal dynamics of the subalterns, cooptations of this type neutralize. They capture the energy and availability of indigenous intellectuals—brothers and sisters who may be tempted to play the ventriloquist of a convoluted conceptualization that deprives them of their roots and their dialogues with the mobilized masses.



The title of this paper is “*Ch’ixinakax utxiwa*.” The world of *ch’ixi* also exists.²¹ Personally, I don’t consider myself *q’ara* (culturally stripped and usurped by others), because I recognize my fully double origin, Aymara and European, and because I live from my own efforts. Because of this, I consider myself *ch’ixi* and consider it the most appropriate translation of the motley mix that we, who are called *mestizas* and *mestizos*, are. The word *ch’ixi* has many connotations: it is a color that is the product of juxtaposition, in small points or spots, of opposed or contrasting colors: black and white, red and green, and so on. It is this heather gray that comes from the imperceptible mixing of black and white, which are confused by perception, without ever being completely mixed. The notion of *ch’ixi*, like many others (*allqa*, *ayni*), reflects the Aymara idea of something that is and is not at the same time. It is the logic of the included third. A *ch’ixi* color gray is white but is not white at the same time; it is both white and its opposite, black. The *ch’ixi* stone, therefore, is hidden in the bosom of mythical animals like the serpent, the lizard, the spider, or the frog; *ch’ixi* animals belong to time immemorial, to *jaya mara*, *aymara*, to times of differentiation, when animals spoke with humans. The potential of undifferentiation is what joins opposites. And so as *allqamari* combines black and white in symmetrical perfection, *ch’ixi* combines the Indian world and its opposite without ever mixing them. But *ch’ixi*’s heteronomy also alludes in turn to the idea of muddling, to a loss of sustenance and energy. *Ch’ixi* is firewood that burns very fast, that which is feeble and intermingled. It parallels, then, this fashionable notion of cultural hybridity lite conforming to contemporary cultural domination.

The notion of hybridity proposed by Néstor García Canclini is a genetic metaphor that connotes infertility.²² Yet, hybridity assumes the possibility that from the mixture of two different beings a third completely new one can emerge, a third race or social group with the capacity to merge the features of its ancestors in a harmonic and as yet unknown blend. But the mule is a hybrid that cannot reproduce. The notion of *ch’ixi*, on the contrary, amounts to the “motley” [*abigarrada*] society of René Zavaleta and expresses the parallel coexistence of multiple cultural differences that do not extinguish but instead antagonize and complement each other. Each one reproduces itself from the depths of the past and relates to others in a contentious way.

The possibility of a profound cultural reform in our society depends on the decolonization of our gestures and acts and the language with which

we name the world. The reappropriation of bilingualism as a decolonizing practice will allow for the creation of a “we” as producers of knowledge and interlocutors who can have discussions as equals with other centers of thought and currents in the academies of our region and also of the world. The metaphor of *ch'ixi* assumes a double and contentious ancestry, one that is denied by the processes of acculturation and the “colonization of the imaginary” but one that is also potentially harmonious and free if we liberate our half-Indian ancestry and develop dialogical forms for the construction of knowledges.

The metaphor of hybridity suggests that we can “enter and leave modernity,” as if it were a stadium or a theater, instead of a constructive process—simultaneously objective and subjective—of habits, gestures, modes of interaction, and ideas about the world. The Indian commitment to modernity centers itself on a notion of citizenship that does not look for homogeneity but rather for difference. But at the same time, as a project in pursuit of hegemony, it has the ability to translate, in practical terms, the fields of politics and of the state, supposing a capacity to organize society in our image and likeness, to build a lasting cultural fabric, and to set legitimate and stable norms of coexistence. This implies the construction of a homeland for everyone. Eduardo Nina Qhispi, linked to the *movimiento de caciques-apoderados* from the 1920s and 1930s, formulated his utopia of the “reinvention of Bolivia” in a context of the colonial deafness of the oligarchical elites and of ready warriors, who, on the internal front, dismantled the leadership of the communities. In this desirable society, *mestizos* and Indians could live together on equal terms, by adopting, from the beginning, legitimate modes of coexistence based in reciprocity, redistribution, and authority as a service. Further, in this society the Indians would expand and adopt their culturally patterned ideas of democratic coexistence and good government and admit new forms of community and mixed identities, or *ch'ixi*, and thus enter into a creative dialogue in a process of exchanging knowledges, aesthetics, and ethics.

In this vein, the notion of identity as territory is unique to men, and the forms of organization that were adopted by the indigenous people of Bolivia are still marked by the colonial seal of the exclusion of women. It is a project of reinvention in Bolivia that will overcome the official multiculturalism that confines and stereotypes us and that would also return us to the macho logocentrism that draws maps and establishes belonging. The notion of the identity of women, however, is similar to a fabric. Far from establishing the property and the jurisdiction of the authority of the

nation—or the people, the autonomous indigenous—the feminine practice weaves the fabric of the intercultural through women’s practices as producers, merchants, weavers, ritualists, and creators of languages and symbols capable of seducing the “other” and establishing pacts of reciprocity and coexistence among different groups. This seductive labor, acculturated and surrounding women, allows for the complementing of the territorial homeland with a dynamic cultural fabric that reproduces itself and spreads until it reaches the mixed and frontier areas—the *ch’ixi* areas—and there contributes its vision of personal responsibility, privacy, and individual rights associated with citizenship. The modernity that emerges from these motley relations and complex and mixed languages—Gamaliel Churata called them “a language with a homeland”²³—is what builds the Indian hegemony to be realized in spaces that were created by the cultural invader: the market, the state, the union. In doing so, we create our own project of modernity, a more organic one than that imposed by the elites, who live through ventriloquizing concepts and theories and through academic currents and visions of the world copied from the north or tributaries from the centers of hegemonic power.

Decolonizing thinking will allow us to create a different Bolivia that is genuinely multicultural and decolonized, and part of the affirmation of this is our bilingualism, multicolored and *ch’ixi*, which projects itself as culture, theory, epistemology, and state policy and also in new definitions of well-being and development. The challenge of this new autonomy is in constructing South-South links that will allow us to break the baseless pyramids of the politics and academies of the North and that will enable us to make our own science, in a dialogue among ourselves and with the sciences from our neighboring countries, by affirming our bonds with theoretical currents of Asia and Africa—that is, to confront the hegemonic projects of the North with the renewed strength of our ancestral convictions.

—Translated by Brenda Baletti

Notes

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- 1 Sinclair Thomson, *We Alone Will Rule: Native Andean Politics in the Age of Insurgency* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2003).
- 2 Paulina Numhauser, *Mujeres indias y señores de la coca. Potosí y Cuzco en el siglo XVI*

- (*Indian Women and the Men of Coca: Potosi and Cuzco in the 16th Century*) (Madrid: Ediciones Catedra, 2005).
- 3 These were the heroes and martyrs of indigenous resistance against colonialism. Tomás Katari was an Aymara appointed as cacique to the indigenous people of Potosí, Bolivia, by the Spanish crown. He advocated for peaceful resistance against the Spanish that could lead to a series of reforms and the establishment of a utopic Aymara society. Katari was eventually executed for his beliefs and for the actions of his followers. Tupac Amaru II (born José Gabriel Condorcanqui) was the leader of an indigenous/*mestizo* uprising against the Bourbon reforms of the Spanish in 1780 in and around Cuzco, Peru (he was executed shortly thereafter). By early 1781 news of Tupac Amaru's uprising had spread to what is now Bolivia, where Julian Apasa Nina (taking the name Tupac Katari in honor of Tomás Katari and Tupac Amaru II) along with his wife, Bartolina Sisa, and Tupac Amaru's brother, Diego, laid siege to the city of La Paz for nearly six months (after which he, too, was captured and executed). For a wonderful account of the scope and context of these uprisings, see Thomson, *We Alone Will Rule*. For an account of how these uprisings continue to influence contemporary Andean movements see Forrest Hylton and Sinclair Thomson, *Revolutionary Horizons: Past and Present in Bolivian Politics* (New York: Verso, 2007). —Ed.
 - 4 Partha Chatterjee, *Our Modernity* (Rotterdam: South-South Exchange Programme for Research on the History of Development, 2007).
 - 5 Ernst Bloch, *Principle of Hope* (Boston: MIT Press, 1995); and Bloch, "Nonsynchronism and the Obligation to Its Dialectics," trans. Mark Ritter, *New German Critique*, no. 11 (1977): 22–38.
 - 6 Walter Benjamin, "Thesis on the Philosophy of History," in *Illuminations* (New York: Schocken, 1969), 253–64.
 - 7 Silvia Rivera Cusicanqui, "Rebelión e ideología" ("Rebellion and Ideology"), *Historia Boliviana* 2 (1981): n.p.
 - 8 Silvia Rivera Cusicanqui, *Oppressed but Not Defeated: Peasant Struggles among the Aymara and Quechwa in Bolivia, 1900–1980* (Geneva: United Nations Research Institute for Social Development, 1987).
 - 9 Ranajit Guha, "The Prose of Counterinsurgency," in *Selected Subaltern Studies Reader* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988), 12–40.
 - 10 Edward Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Vintage, 1979).
 - 11 Rossana Barragán, "Entre polleras, lliqllas y ñañacas. Los mestizos y la emergencia de la tercera república" ("Between Chicken Farmers, *lliqllas* and *ñañacas*: The Mestizos and the Emergence of the Third Republic") in *Etnicidad, economía y simbolismo en los Andes*, vol. 2, *Congreso Internacional de Etnohistoria, Coroico* (*Ethnicity, Economy, and Symbolism in the Andes*, vol. 2, *International Ethnohistorical Conference, Coroico*), ed. Silvia Arze et al. (La Paz: Hisbol-IFEA-SBH/ASUR, 1992).
 - 12 *Zero coca* was a coca eradication program implemented under President Hugo Banzer Suárez.
 - 13 This lecture was given at a time when a rupture with the crisis of the state—such as the one produced on December 18, 2005, which ended with the triumph of Evo Morales's MAS [Movimiento al Socialismo]—and the formation of the first modern government in the Americas in the hands of an indigenous person was not even thought possible.
 - 14 Pablo González Casanovas, *Sociología de la explotación* (*The Sociology of Exploitation*)

- (Mexico City: Grijalbo, 1969). Although there is no existing translation of González Casanovas's book into English, an article in which he explores similar themes was published in English as "Internal Colonialism and National Development," *Studies in Comparative International Development* 1, no. 4 (1965): 27–37.
- 15 Walter Mignolo, "El potencial epistemológico de la historia oral: Algunas contribuciones de Silvia Rivera Cusicanqui" ("The Epistemological Potential of Oral History: Some Contributions by Silvia Rivera Cusicanqui"), in *Estudios e otras prácticas intelectuales Latinamericanas en cultura e poder (Studies and Other Latin American Intellectual Practices in Culture and Power)*, ed. Daniel Mato (Caracas: CLASCO, 2002), 201–12.
- 16 Silvia Rivera Cusicanqui, "El potencial epistemológico y teórico de la historia oral: De la lógica instrumental a la descolonización de la historia" ("The Epistemological and Theoretical Potential of Oral History: From Instrumental Logic to the Decolonization of History"), *Temas Sociales* 11 (1989): 49–75.
- 17 Walter Mignolo, "The Geopolitics of Knowledge and the Colonial Difference," *SAQ* 101, no. 1 (2002): 57–96.
- 18 See Maurice Halbwachs, *On Collective Memory* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992), Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth* (New York: Grove Press, 2004); and Franco Ferraroti, *Histoire et histoires de vie (History and Histories of Life)* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1982).
- 19 See Félix Patzi, *Sistema comunal. Una alternativa al sistema liberal (The Communal System: An Alternative to the Liberal System)* (La Paz: CEEA, 2004); and Fausto Reinaga, *La revolución India (The Indian Revolution)* (La Paz: Ediciones PIB, 1969).
- 20 Javier Sanjinés, *Mestizaje Upside Down: Aesthetic Politics in Modern Bolivia* (Pittsburgh, PA: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2004).
- 21 The next section of this paper was developed by Rivera from a conference presentation that she gave in Aymara. The lack of translation for Aymara words in the following paragraphs is accounted for by the fact that Rivera is attempting to give non-Aymara speakers a summary of the concepts that she develops. — Trans.
- 22 Néstor García Canclini, *Hybrid Cultures: Strategies for Entering and Leaving Modernity* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1995).
- 23 Gamaliel Churata, *El pez de Oro (The Golden Fish)* (Cochabamba: Editorial Canata, 1957), 14.