

The unintelligibility of the Cholo in Bolivia¹

Ximena Soruco Sologuren²

ABSTRACT

The author reflects on the theoretical possibilities of the category of the *cholo* for postcolonial criticism and the actuality of Bolivia. Beyond that she argues that the economic and cultural rise of the *cholo* and the national projects against him are a fissure in the dichotomous logic of white-Indian power which reveals a capitalist-ethnic economic model.

A few years ago, I began working on the issue of the *mestizo-cholo* in Bolivia as a reply – it is now clear to me – to the difficulty in understanding the transformations between the nineteenth and twentieth centuries under the neo/post colonial approach. Thus, why were a Darwinian discourse of the nation and more efficient mechanisms of *criollo* economic and bureaucratic control installed in a period of capitalist insertion? Why has the colonial contradiction *criollo-indigenous* become the foundation of the project of liberal modernity? There have been internal

¹ Article published in *T'inkazos*, number 21, December , 2006. This essay arose from reflections contained in my doctoral thesis “The City of the *cholos*. Economy and Culture in nineteenth and twentieth centuries, Bolivia”, University of Michigan, 2006; and an attempt at a dialog with the actual situation in the country.

² Ximena Soruco Sologuren is a communicator and a graduate in Sociology from the Universidad Mayor de San Andrés, La Paz, Bolivia. She did her doctorate in literature (University of Michigan, 2006).

reasons such as the constitution of the first elite with pretensions to national hegemony (the liberal *paceños*) and the mining profit which allowed the state to forego indigenous tribute and create a policy of expanding estates. Finally one is talking about a project, so post-colonial criticism tells, of the perpetuation of colonialism, based on the exploitation of the colonizers (Spanish and later *criollos*) over the colonized (indigenous) covered up in the discourse of racial and moral superiority of the whites. The liberal elite supported this argument with the theory of evolution and race in vogue in Europe since the mid nineteenth century and ended up with the creation of totalitarian states and ethnic cleansing a century later (Arendt, 1985). Race was a great “discover” for the Europeans since it eliminated Jewish control of financial capital, reinforced local nationalism and thus fragmented the serious Socialist challenge of this era; the workers identified better with the Aryan civilization, with the Italian or Spanish nation than with their economic exploitation. Under this same idea, Balibar y Wallerstein (1991) propose that the modern notion of race is not a vice of the past, but rather that which makes capitalism more efficient in the modern social division of work and disarticulates, through these nationalisms, the possibilities of global resistance. My argument shares this view, in that it considers the liberal project of 1900 actualizes the racial hierarchy not as an attempt for continuity of the colonial and early republican state that was built on a protectionist policy but rather as the first state project to insert itself in the world market. In this sense, I believe the postcolonial gaze – and the part of Evo Morales’ government that wagers on this – should recover the category of class together with identity if they wish to build a deeper horizon of freedom.

What is the role of the *mestizo-cholo* in this debate? My research concentrates on, firstly, the lettered debate over the *cholos* that was not tackled by the elites until 1900. Thus the ethnic silence of the nineteenth century (with the notable exception of the novel *Juan de la Rosa*), is transformed into an important literary trend by the twentieth century. In this period and starting with narratives tied to mining centers, appear novels on *cholos*, which condemn *mestizaje* – in the tendency of Alcides Arguedas– as a national sickness in two senses; as the cause of

“backwardness” and exploitation of the indigenous, but also as the degeneration in *criollo* families, that facing bankruptcy enter into marriage and politics with the *cholos*³. How was it possible to talk of economic *mestizo-cholo* power groups in an era of *criollo* monopoly? This question led me to leave literature for the archives to investigate processes of subaltern economic emergency, where I argue that the nineteenth century creates ideal conditions for economic *mestizo-cholo* accumulation. This is to say that this intermediate sector makes up an emerging commercial bourgeoisie which should be detained to guarantee the *criollo*-liberal monopoly of the economy.

Under these two conclusions, a Darwinian discourse which joins an ethnic capitalist economy is how I organize this essay, whose aim is not to present empirical evidence of my claims, but to reflect on the theoretical possibilities of the category of the *cholo* for the postcolonial criticism and the current situation. But, why would it be relevant to talk of the *cholo*, if today the death of *mestizaje*, as the possibility of national unification, is decreed? I wish to leave clear my distance from any posture that seeks in the *mestizo* (or *mestizo* with an Aymara base), or in this case with the *cholo*, the interpellation to the collective “we”; I am not trying to vindicate one ethnic term before others. Rather the objective is to argue that the economic and cultural rise of *cholos* and the national projects against it are a fissure on the logic of the White-Indian power dichotomy that discloses a capitalist-ethnic economic model. In this task, the first part I present a historical revision of the *mestizo-cholo* in Bolivia, to concentrate in the second section in the more theoretical discussion of the issue.

The *mestizo-cholo* is characterized by being an unintelligible category for the state colonial and republican logic. In 1612 Ludovico Bertonio defined in his *Aymara Vocabulary*, the *mestizo* as “ni bien español ni bien indio” (“neither truly Spaniard nor truly Indian”) or “unintelligible or

³ This is more evident in 1920, when the Republican Party allies itself with *mestizo-cholo* artisans and merchants of the cities, against the Liberal party. The novel which in my opinion sums up this *cholo* rejection is *El cholo Portales* (1926), written by the historian Enrique Finot.

that he contradicts himself” because he was exempt from the indigenous tribute but for the same fact was excluded from the definition of “Indian” and thus from the juridical protection that the Spanish Crown offered. *Mestizos* do not fit in the census or parochial registers at the start of the colony. The proliferation of fiscal categories such as “*originarios*”, “*forasteros*”, “*indios agregados*” or the ambiguous terms of “Indians disguised as Spaniards” or “*mestizos* in Indian costume” talk of the difficulty in classifying the contradictory *mestizo* presence in a society founded on ethnic separation.

What occurs in the Republic? The work of Rossana Barragán (1997) shows that at the turn of the eighteenth century, this intermediate space (“liberated” from the *ayllu* form, but still incorporated into the urban guilds) ceased to mimic the Spanish fashion and becomes an economic and culturally differentiated group from the republics of Indians and Spaniards. And this tendency is accentuated in the nineteenth century.

Bolivian official historiography has tended to see the nineteenth century, between 1825 and 1880, as a period of chaos and political instability, with governments of “barbarian leaders” succeeded by revolts. One of the causes of *caudillismo* was the existence of weak local elites competing between themselves for national power (the seat of government was nomadic until 1899) and without hegemony (Mendoza, 1997). However a central consequence of *caudillismo*, little analyzed, was the possibility of social and economic mobility of *mestizos* and *cholos*⁴: the soldiers of low and middle rank, for the worth of combat, could ascend to elevated posts of power and from there benefit their economic businesses. The rise of the silver economy and then of tin and the business in its midst (transport and sale of coca, chicha, manufactured goods) also gave dynamism to the *cholo* economy at least in the first phase, before the liberal *criollo* monopoly.

⁴ By which time and until the beginning of the twentieth century, both terms have the same meaning, and are used indistinctly.

But the greatest advantage of this sector appears in the reconfiguration of the relationship between *criollos* and the indigenous, produced during the nineteenth century. The new republic, inherited from the colonial Bourbon state, the persecution of the indigenous nobility after the uprisings of Tupac Amaru, Tupac Katari and Tomás Katari at the end of the eighteenth century. The displacement of this privileged indigenous group, in its role of intermediary between state, market and indigenous communities, favored *mestizos* and/or *cholos*. Thus many *caciques* and *curacas* (ethnic authorities) were obliged to “mix their blood” (marry or mimize to *mestizos*) to maintain their status and riches (Harris, 1995). The economic possibilities of this intermediate function also grew for the constitution of the new bureaucratic republic: *mestizos* acceded to state professions such as teachers, priests, soldiers, and public employees and constituted an identity, with a *cholo* aesthetic and codes of belonging.

We are, then, in an economic process, in which the deterioration of life conditions for the indigenous, their homogenization as ‘poor’, without an intermediary nobility and a colonial pact ever more fragile for the pretensions of the landed estates, not only benefits the *criollos* but also *mestizos*, who by the beginning of the twentieth century become visible as an emerging elite.

My research precisely argues that this *cholo* economic and social rise is fundamental for understanding the Darwinian social discourse of 1900. So, the national Bolivian discourse is constructed over the indigenous other because its identity is opposed to the *criollo*, it is its alter-ego, and this otherness is intelligible, and in discursive terms, more secure. The indigenous could be thought of as inhabiting a symbolic far space and time (pre-Spanish, rural, refractive to civilization, etc.) and their rebellion implies – to a *criollo* reading and in the radical indigenous vision of today – a complete and frontal antagonism: the rhetoric of racial war, destruction of the Whites, the inversion of Western time and space. The *cholo* is not. He inhabits the imaginary urban *criollo*, his presence dissolves the frontiers of this society of castes, he is neither completely *criollo* nor Indian, urban nor rural, western nor Andean, hegemonic nor subaltern. “Riding

between two worlds” (Albó *et. al.*, 1983) interrupts the colonial logic of power which requires polarization to exist.

Thus, the indistinctness of the terms *mestizo* and *cholo* is cut with the nationalist project of the twentieth century and also the possibilities of economic and social rise which contained years before. The curious thing of this rupture is that it is not done by Alcides Arguedas, the intellectual most representative of liberal *criollo* racism, for he considers the *cholo* “the worst representative of the *mestizo* caste”. The distinction between the terms *cholo* and *mestizo* only appears when Franz Tamayo (1910) postulates miscegenation as the national ideal, a discourse that decisively influences the popular national project initiated in the Chaco War and crystallized in the 1952 Revolution. It is from these discourses on *mestizaje* as a national solution, and not before, that the categories of *mestizo* and *cholo* definitively part company. In this sense, ‘*mestizo*’ denotes the search for western assimilation and the negation of any indigenous or *cholo* past and soon it mimics the *criollo*. That is why the term “*criollo-mestizo*” today identifies the dominant pole of Bolivian society. Meanwhile the *cholo* maintains the racial stigma of inferiority in front of the *mestizo*, and also superiority over the Indian; the *cholo* will be in the twentieth century, the one who has left the countryside and agricultural work to migrate to the city and take up artisan work or commerce, and who appears in the social spectrum which goes from liberalized manual labor in the majority of cases to middle-sized merchants and wholesalers who use their knowledge over both worlds, the urban and the rural, to accumulate capital⁵. Nevertheless, in this new century the reinvention of indigenous identity in Bolivia obscures this term, because it is more probable that someone declares himself/herself an Indian than a *cholo*. But we move too fast.

⁵ From here, the first generation of migrants to the city maintains their indigenous cultural codes, at least until its economic activity ceases to depend on the countryside-city interaction. When there are possibilities to avoid this, the next generation whitens its skin to follow the next route of social ascent.

In the decade of the '70s, and with even greater vigor in the '80s, the inhabitants of La Paz took account of the city having changed drastically; the *cholo* economic dynamic had transformed marginal and popular zones of urban space into privileged commercial settings for business in all the society. Chijini's neighborhood, today Gran Poder, hosts not only the traditional *tambos*, markets and small-scale businesses of coca and other items of the internal market, but it had also become the "shopping" zone of La Paz. That is to say that part of the import business that was always monopolized by elites, Spanish during the Colony, *criollo* since Independence, passes to the hands of *cholo* sectors, generally in the contraband economy, that is, beyond the economic rationality of the state.

But the emerging economy added to the cultural. The Gran Poder festival invaded the *criollo* center displaying an intricate hierarchy of the *cholo* sector. From the newly rich, "the *cholo* Faustus" (Nusenovich, 2001) in which the devil-dancers and the *morenos* make a pact with the 3-headed Lord (the lord of Great Power) of their devotion in exchange for success in business and fight amongst their equals for prestige, in ostentatious luxury and power, up to the diverse range of craftsmen, small businessmen and recent migrants who dance or participate as observers in this festival searching for (self) recognition as successful urban inhabitants.

The conflicts for their social and economic climbing, the stigma of being "*cholos*" or "Indians" that the? *mestizo-criollos* use to exclude them, the context of neo-liberal impoverishment and the lack of credibility of the party system accelerated their presence in the political arena. In the '80s, Carlos Palenque, firstly through his talkshow "Tribuna Libre del Pueblo" and then through his political party, Condepa (Conciencia de Patria), appealed to this middle group through the vertical reconstitution of a metropolitan *ayllu* (Archondo, 1991). From this leader followed Max Fernández, who used his image of migrant, worker and then entrepreneur to enter successfully into politics. Both of these, identified as neo-populists and systemic of the fragile neo-liberal democracy, created wide public and academic interest.

But if the emergence of a “*cholo* bourgeoisie” motivated the visibility of this phenomenon, the other side of the coin was its invisibility. The ’52 Revolution did not only intensify the *cholo* economic accumulation – already present since the nineteenth century – but also thrust indigenous agricultural workers on the route to migration, for small land holdings (*minifundio*) and the consequent deterioration of living conditions in the rural area.

These new migrants inundated the outskirts of La Paz to build in 1986, an independent city, El Alto, with the highest population growth in the country, the highest indices of poverty and a bi-lingual Aymara-Spanish speaking population that mainly identifies with the indigenous.

The extreme poverty of this city, the incapacity of the neo-liberal model instigated in 1985 to resolve the needs of basic survival and the violence to maintain it in power have eclipsed the issue of the *cholo* in the public and academic debate from 2000, with the same speed and intensity with which it appeared in 1980.

And it is that we are living in one of the most profound transformations in Bolivia. An indigenous state proposes to create hegemony with an Aymara nucleus on one side, and regional demands in the East points to a neo-liberal, modernizing model, threatening their separation from the nation, on the other. In this manner, a debate on the most critical component of society, the definition of its economic-ethnic structure tends to be co-opted into the discourse that takes up again the racial Darwinism of the beginning of the twentieth century. Thus the simplification of a dominant pole, *q’hara (criollo)*, neoliberal and cruceño that projects a (new) modern nation-state faces the dominated pole of indigenous, nationalist and Andean which it is tending to reproduce uncritically the modern nation-state, inverting the *criollo* head for an Indian one and displacing any interest in an intermediate space; the *cholo*, then, is converted into an illegible category, outside contemporary political time, outside dichotomous identities that are being reinvented and outside the hegemonic model of the nation-state.

Is this essay about the return of the *cholo*? No. If being indigenous creates better possibilities of social mobility, *cholos* will certainly identify with the indigenous, while this term

denotes as much the Andean cultural matrix as the aspirations of modernity to which they aspire. What I deal with, instead, is that the ethnic contradiction (*criollo*, *mestizo*, *cholo*, and indigenous) does not eliminate the discussion of class contradiction.

The *cholo* “out of place” in the academy.

As already mentioned, *cholos* are encrusted in relations of colonial domination established by the *criollos* as against the indigenous, which, indeed, is beneficial to them but their economic growth and social rise does not guarantee space or recognition in the dominant pole, rather they suffer the discrimination and exclusion that the indigenous suffer. In this sense, are they part of the dominant or subaltern pole of Bolivian society? Are they linked to the indigenous as Albó indicates when talking of them as “urban Aymara residents” or their aspirations of social mobility and projection of an “identity” which seems to be seated in nothing more secure than not being Indian (Harris, 1995) makes them “traitors” to the indigenous and the subaltern?

The colonial matrix, understood as a link with many rings (Rivera 1993), allows us to think of the *cholo* in an articulated chain, hegemonic as against those below and subordinate to those above, but above all showing those “below” and “above” are not fixed, immovable positions in this caste society but there exist displacements from below upwards and the reverse that are based on access to economic and symbolic resources. Market logic, in this sense, crosses the ethnic spectrum, in that *cholos* who attains sufficient capital to invest for the next generation, become *criollo*, acquiring education, a new surname and a “whitened” circle of friends. Perhaps this “metamorphosis”, always incomplete and violent, contains “retreats” and “advances” and lasts several generations according to the historic possibilities of accumulation. Equally, impoverished *criollo* families undertake matrimonial, economic or political alliances with *cholos* and descend in the ethnic chain, a preoccupation reflected in novels on *cholos*, at the beginning of the twentieth century.

Precisely, current national economy is blocking the channels of social mobility of indigenous and *cholo* emigrants in La Paz, El Alto and other Bolivian cities and pressuring middle class *criollos*, *mestizos* and *cholos* towards impoverishment. This situation updates racial dichotomies of *q'hara* and Indian and the vanishing of intermediate categories. To prolong the racial rhetoric that covers up the economic policy and its link to the world capitalist system we would have a more conservative scene than at present; two or more nation-states reproducing the modern utopia of national sovereignty according to the fiction of a racially homogeneous community. Nevertheless, this is also a fundamental moment for thinking about other horizons in life; unfortunately, current state discourse is only pointed at overcoming “colonial faults” (García Linera in Seleme, 2006), and not in going beyond the logic of capitalism and modernity (even in the Andean version).

And this affirmation leads me to question the “out of place” *cholo* in academic circles. In 1992, Thérèse Bouysse-Cassagne and Thierry Saignes wrote an essay with the suggestive title of “*El cholo, el gran ausente de la historia andina*” to signal that Andean historiography is marked by the colonial dichotomy of Indian- Spanish. This has created a low academic interest in the categories of *mestizo* and *cholo*, whose intermediate position questions the “original dichotomy”. Silvia Rivera questions Bouysse-Cassagne and Saignes for the exclusion of important studies on the issue. Even though I agree with Rivera in so far as the issue has been investigated, my own search has confronted me with a literature which despite working on this phenomenon, dissolves it into the indigenous world or claims it only for women (*cholas*). For another part, I believe that Bouysse-Cassagne and Saignes do not refer to the absence of studies on the theme, but to their tendency on identifying, in a static and univocal manner, *criollos* as hegemonic and indigenous as subaltern, which has to do with what Marta Irurozqui terms, “the Indian (has been thought of) as the redeemer of the Bolivian nation because he carries in his genes the solution to ethnic and political inequality on the basis of what seems to be his communal organization” (1992: 16).

And the historical simplification of a privileged caste against a dispossessed one is reproduced in the analysis of the “*cholo*”. So, there were three premises in this debate on the discovery of “the cholo”⁶. The first was to consider the power of the so-called “*cholo* bourgeois” a paradoxical product of the ’52 National Revolution, a project of state capitalism, which instead of generating a solid *criollo* bourgeoisie created a *cholo* commercial group for the decade of the ’70s (Toranzo y Arrieta, 1989). Nevertheless, my research and that of others (Larson, 1998; Rodríguez y Solares, 1990; Laura, 1988) show that this process of *cholo* economic accumulation already appears at the end of the nineteenth century.

Also in the ’80s decade, there appears a series of studies interested in the imaginary on the *chola* woman⁷. Despite these studies showing union movements of women in traditional dress (*polleras*) that reclaim public recognition of their identity, manual work and citizenship, the absence of an analysis- although there are some mentions- of “power cholas” who confront the unionists, presents a homogeneous image of the *cholo*, a compact group essentially subaltern, in constant conflict with the aspirations of *criollo* modernity, but without internal conflicts nor

⁶ The studies on identity, social ascent and the political participation of the *cholos* began in the ’80s, after the rise of their presence in La Paz. Thus we have the pioneering book *Chukiyawu. La cara aymara de La Paz*, by Xavier Albó, Thomas Greaves y Godofredo Sandoval, who published in several volumes an approximation of country-city migration and the conflicts to adjust to the city. After this research, Xavier Albó and Matías Preiswerk published *Los señores del Gran Poder* (1986), a precursory study of Gran Poder. Finally the visibility of the *cholo* translated into politics left us three works that questioned this new electoral and cultural phenomenon: Rafael Archondo, *Compadres al micrófono. La resurrección metropolitana del ayllu* (1991), Hugo San Martín, *Palenquismo: movimiento social, populismo, informalidad política* (1991), Joaquín Saravia and Godofredo Sandoval, *Jach’a uru: ¿La esperanza de un pueblo?* (1991).

⁷ This interest in the union and the environment of the market began in the pioneering study of Zulema Lehm and Silvia Rivera (1988) who reconstruct the history of the first anarchist syndicates of La Paz between 1900 and 1950, with a strong female worker presence. From this study followed *Polleras libertarias: Federación obrera femenina, 1927-1964* (1986), *Agitadoras de buen gusto: Historia del sindicato de culinarias, 1935-1958* (1989), by Wadsworth y Dibbits. , *Recoveras de los andes. La identidad de la chola del mercado: Una aproximación psicosocial* (1992) of Elizabeth Peredo, and later there followed *Gender and Modernity in Andean Bolivia* (1999) of Marcia Stephenson, and at the level of Perú and Ecuador, the work of Mary Weinsmantel, *Cholas and Pishtacos. Histories of Race and Sex in the Andes* (2001) which continues the analysis of the “working class chola”, discourse of cleanness and hygiene that these women with stigmatized clothing (*polleras*) suffer and their struggle against the gender definitions (woman-mother) that are imposed on them.

hierarchical levels, which securely has conditioned the way of being (or not being) *cholo* in Bolivia⁸.

The third supposition was the privilege given to the survival and reproduction of indigenous forms of relationship of *cholos* against their aspirations of assimilating into the *criollo* world or the constitution of an intermediate space, differentiated from both poles. This tendency to emphasize the indigenous cultural matrix of this group silenced the term “*cholo*” in academic discourse, calling them “urban Aymara residents” (Albó, 1976; Albó *et. al.*, 1982; Albó *et al.*, 1986) and the phenomenon expressed as “metropolitan resurrection of the ayllu” (Archondo, 1991).

Although I am taking merit from these works by mentioning them so briefly, I want to state that my research starts from a questioning of these views that privilege the indigenous or Aymara aspect of the *cholos*, above their search for assimilating into the *criollo* world or to the existence as an intermediate culture, between Indian and *criollo*, but distinct from either. Although the emphasis on the indigenous is never explained in these works, Xavier Albó vaguely explains his selection because the negative connotation that the masculine term “*cholo*” has and the persistence of Andean cultural patrons (bilingual, links to the rural area). In one of the few moments when Albó assumes this discussion justifies his distrust of the term *cholo*, he says:

⁸ I cannot finish this revisión of literature on the issue without mentioning certain works. Despite the “shortage of studies on cycles of accumulation of popular sectors” (Rodríguez y Solares), I should emphasize the support of recent research that has deepened work on the mestizo economic sphere. One of the first was *Sociedad oligárquica, chicha y cultura popular* (1992) by Gustavo Rodríguez and Humberto Solares, which investigated the economic axis of chicha-maíz in Cochabamba. To this we add the collective study *Ethnicity, Markets and Migration in the Andes. At the Crossroads of History and Anthropology* (Larson y Harris, ed.) which created an important epistemological break in questioning the relationship between the market-*criollos* and the indigenous-economy of subsistence, and shows how *mestizos* and indigenous successfully and creatively inserted themselves into the early colonial and republican markets. A work inspired by this search is Jane Mangan’s *Trading Roles. Gender, Ethnicity and Urban Commerce in Colonial Potosí* (2005), which analyzes the link between indigenous and *mestizos* in the colonial market of a mining center.

Even thinkers such as Aníbal Quijano, who in Peru had placed his political hopes on the process of cholification, later abandoned the idea on seeing the fundamental contradiction of not passing above but below the cholo layer (1976:17).

We could waste much ink and effort in arguing if the fundamental contradiction came from the *criollo*, *mestizo*, *cholo* or indigenous, or even the *criollo*-indigenous, or the *criollo-mestizo* as against the *cholo*-indigenous. And it is precisely this nuance in the ethnic discussion, a never-ending circle, giving the same arguments who knows how to use them, which is why the indigenous movement of today as well as the more conservative Eastern elite appeal to the ethnic identity. Equally, I believe that in the current circumstances, it is vital to reorient our gaze on the fundamental neocolonial indigenous contradiction towards that on access and distribution of riches in a capitalist society, that is to say, reinsert the category of class, since postcolonial theory has criticized Marxism for its ethnic blindness (as in gender) and it is now time to claim this approach a reading of the material conditions of life.

The Andean academic canon in its different disciplines, which my generation has inherited and been educated has planned and successfully carried out a new historiography which reveals the survival and reproduction of colonial domination (economic, political and ethnic) in the newly born Republics. This writing began from the criticism of Marxist theory which up until the '80s saw the situation of Andean underdevelopment as part of the impossibility of constructing an "organic" capitalism, the weakness of state and national bourgeoisies to induce the formation of a dynamic internal, non-dependent economy. The emphasis on the economic axis, modern researchers tell us, left in silence other forms of domination which linked the social structure: the existence of internal colonialism through the continuity of the caste structure. The approximation for what is full of blends according to the researchers, shares a basic premise: the survival of the colonial mode of extracting wealth in the Andes, based on the hierarchy of castes.

Even do I am very well aware of the importance of this current that has denounced through its research the discourse of the official republican history (which postulated colonial emancipation and liberal progress) showing us the dynamic not only of ethnic economy, but also of the ethnic rationality of the state bureaucracy, for a long time I have a feeling of not being able to account for social, political and economic processes from the postcolonial approach.

The breaking of the pact between state and the ayllus, by the derogation of indigenous tributes (in Bolivia 1874, Ecuador 1857, Peru 1853) that in the long term created a degradation of colonial guidelines and coincided with the moment that these nation-states allied themselves more firmly to the world capitalist market through the export of raw materials and the beginning of original accumulation (for Ecuador cacao, for Bolivia silver and tin, Peru, guano fertilizer) produces deep transformations that the horizon of colonial continuity is unable to explain. Nevertheless, the transformation, or at least the remaking of the guidelines of colonial domination did not mean an improvement for the indigenous populations, but greater exploitation as a product of deeper capitalist relations. So, the (slow, incomplete but anyway carried out) transition to capitalism did not imply the “application” of its political institutions (“universal citizenship” and democracy) which were the ideologies sustained by the bourgeois revolutions in the world. Thus the unequal access to wealth and citizenship is not a phenomenon restricted to societies we now know as postcolonial but also – and now expressed in a way familiar with international migration – in the “first world”. In this sense, I fear that to construct a discourse around of colonial difference runs the risk of assuming the fiction of that of modernity with its values of abstract equality under the law, was successful for capitalist nations, annulling racial classifications, “delivering” political participation and access to wealth equitably, or at least exclusively in function of the meritocracy. This fallacy, for example, does not explain how in the depths of the process of capitalist formation a biological discourse of race came up and with it the display of a totalitarian state apparatus for racial cleansing and extermination in the Nazi concentration camps, or how the victims of this extermination and empire today take on an

inverse “ethnic” cleansing: the persecution of the Arabs. Is it that Europe and neither the United States has not been able to produce a finished version of modernity? A central element in the constitution of capitalism and its ideological base, modernity, was the creation of the superiority of the “white race” in opposition to the rest. This racial criterion was not only dragged as a feudal “vice” (or colonial in the case of the Andes) but also garlanded in all the new scientific discourse of the mid twentieth century. Before such a panorama, one has to ask, in what lies the colonial difference. And secondly, is it possible to maintain the argument that if all the forms of colonial dominion have been “overcome” (as is the intention of the present government) by capitalism, whether racial criteria as a structural axis for social hierarchy and access to wealth would not exist or rather, up to what point do we assume the “humanitarian” promises from the South, citizenship, and capitalist democracy that globalization, imposed by the North, offers?

And what remains pending; from United States and European academia, studies of postcolonial societies have assumed (me too) the role of deconstructing the discourse and formation of nation-states. This interest, also sustained by local academia, runs the risk of having exclusively limited the understanding of the forms of modern dominion, whilst the imperial stage of capitalism has been so profoundly transformed. If the nation-state and its exclusive and homogeneous logic were the historical possibility of capitalist construction, this stage of capitalism has overcome the national context. And this situation became visible through new masses of the proletariat displaced towards the margins of the third world: international migration. The break-up of the state paradigm as legal guarantor of the expansion of local bourgeoisie and enforcer of the work force, has been replaced by the globalization of capital and the proletariat displaced without juridical rights. Today millions of migrants and refugees, not belonging to any state, are excluded from the legal category of citizens, masses who under illegality sell the force of their work at cost and suffer realignment of their racial classifications. In this context the exhaustion of the state logic of control of capital no longer points to a monolithic identity but to difference.

Already various decades ago, we have witnessed the management of ethnic differences, from public policy (the recognition of plurinational and multi-ethnic states) the development of NGOs (which to obtain finance should include gender, generational and ethnic policies) and also marketing, which in the desegregation of markets points to consume (mass) difference. What is the critical force of postcolonial studies when ethnic differences are hung out from Empire? If the policies of interculturality assumed by the indigenous movements in the Andes have been co-opted, what direction to take? I consider that the emphasis on colonial continuity –in the rigid categories of “Indian”, Aymara or *cholo* as essentially subaltern– runs the risk of diluting the criticism of internal, capitalist development, its link to the world economy and globalization, by reducing all of the contradictions to the colonial one. The political agenda in this academic current has been so concentrated on decolonization that its criticism of the Republican state is reduced to the impossibility of creating a new (non-colonial) social pact. That is, it is reduced to the internal contradiction of the state (the liberal capitalist state reproducing its *criollo* caste) rather than to its constitutive authoritarian logic. From this, one of the replies in the specific context of Bolivia is to press the internal colonialism to its ultimate consequences, that is, assume that if it is not possible to have an intercultural living together, it is necessary to create an autonomous Aymara nationalist movement. Even this position is legitimate in terms of the exclusion and violence of the state and *criollo* bureaucracy, though I have my doubts as to the possibilities of liberation in the constitution of a new nation-state that inverts the logic of the state without questioning it. Colonialism is not the only cause of inequality, but our insertion into the capitalist machine, and I do not see how the creation of a new state can avoid it.

In this essay, I have tried to approach the *cholo* as a subversive device to these premises, but I acknowledge it is provisional, lacking other language and under the possibility of the canonizing/reification it already always contains, according to the historical moment and in the same action of writing from an academy. In this sense, I do not believe necessary a history of the

cholo, as Bouysse-Cassagne and Saignes suggest, but to the contrary, I believe it fundamental in emphasizing the interruption in colonial and modern history that the *cholo* generates.

Bibliography

Albó, Xavier

1976 *Khitipxtansa? ¿Quiénes somos? Identidad localista, étnica y clasista en los aymaras de hoy*. La Paz: Cipca.

Albó, Xavier; Thomas Greaves and Godofredo Sandoval

1983 *Chuqui yawu. La cara aymara de La Paz. III. Cabalgando entre dos mundos* Research notebooks. Cipca, No. 24. La Paz: Cipca.

Albó, Xavier and Matías Preiswerk

1986 *Los señores del gran poder*. La Paz: Alentar.

Aguirre, Nataniel

1996 (1984) *Juan de la Rosa*. La Paz: Juventud.

Archondo, Rafael

1991 *Compadres al micrófono. La resurrección metropolitana del ayllu*. La Paz: Hisbol.

Arendt, Ana

1985 *The Origins of Totalitarianism*. Harcourt.

Arguedas, Alcides

1979 (1909) *Pueblo enfermo*. La Paz: Puerta del Sol.

Balibar, Etienne and Wallerstein, Emmanuel.

1991 *Race, Nation, Class. Ambiguous Identities*. London: Verso.

Barragán, Rossana.

1997 “Entre polleras, ñañacas y lliqllas. Los mestizos y las cholos en la conformación de la ‘Tercera República’”. En: Urbano, Enrique (Comp.). *Tradición y modernidad en los Andes*. Cuzco: Centro Bartolomé de las Casas.

Bouysse-Cassagne, Thérèse and Thierry Saignes

1992 “El cholo: Actor olvidado de la historia”. En: S. Arce *et al.* *Etnicidad, economía y simbolismo en los andes*. La Paz: Hisbol-IFEASB-ASUR.

Contreras, Carlos.

2004 *El aprendizaje del capitalismo. Estudio de historia económica y social del Perú republicano*. Lima: Instituto de Estudios Peruanos.

Dibbits, Ineke, *et al.*

- 1989 *Polleras libertarias. Federación Obrera Femenina 1927-1965*. La Paz: Hisbol.
- Espinosa, Manuel
2003 *Mestizaje, cholificación y blanqueamiento en Quito, primera mitad del siglo XX*. Quito: Universidad Andina Simón Bolívar-Abya Yala.
- Finot, Enrique
1993 (1926) *El cholo Portales*. La Paz: Juventud.
- Hardt, Michael y Antonio Negri.
2000 *Empire*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.
- Harris, Olivia
1995 "Ethnic Identity and Market Relations: Indians and Mestizos in the Andes". En: Larson, Brooke, Olivia Harris y Enrique Tandeter (Eds.). *Ethnicity, Markets, and Migration in the Andes. At the Crossroads of History and Anthropology*. Durham: Duke University Press.
- Irurozqui, Marta
1994 *La armonía de las desigualdades. Elites y conflictos de poder en Bolivia, 1880-1920*. Madrid: CSIC-CBC.
- Larson, Brooke
1998 *Cochabamba, 1550-1900: Colonialism and Agrarian Transformation in Bolivia*. Durham: Duke University Press.
- Laura, Roberto
1988 "La oligarquía de La Paz, 1870-1900". Tesis Universidad Mayor de San Andrés.
- Lehm, Zulema and Silvia Rivera
1988 *Los artesanos libertarios y la ética del trabajo*. La Paz: THOA.
- Mangan, Jane
2005 *Trading Roles. Gender, Ethnicity and Urban Commerce in Colonial Potosí*. Durham: Duke University Press.
- Medinaceli, Ximena
1989 *Alterando la rutina. Mujeres en las ciudades de Bolivia, 1920-1930*. La Paz: CIDEM.
- Mendoza, Javier
1997 *La mesa coja*. La Paz: PIEB.
- Nusenovich, Marcelo
2001 "Between Iconography and Demonology: The Faces at the Fiesta of the Señor del Gran Poder". En: Durán-Cogán, Mercedes y Antonio Gómez-Moriana (Eds.). *National Identities and Sociopolitical Changes in Latin America*. New York: Routledge.
- Peredo B., Elizabeth
1992 *Recoveras de los andes. La identidad de la chola del mercado: Una aproximación psicosocial*. La Paz: ILDIS-TAHIPAMU.
- Rivera, Silvia

s.f. *Bircholas. Trabajo de mujeres: Explotación capitalista y opresión colonial entre las migrantes aymaras de La Paz y El Alto.* La Paz: Mama Huaco.

1993 “La raíz, colonizadores y colonizados”. En: Rivera, Silvia y Barrios (Coords.). *Violencias encubiertas en Bolivia.* La Paz: Cipca-Aruwiyiri.

Rodríguez, Gustavo and Humberto Solares
1990 *Sociedad oligárquica, chicha y cultura popular.* Cochabamba: Serrano.

Saignes, Thierry
1990 “¿Es posible una historia ‘chola’ del Perú? (Acerca del nacimiento de una utopía de Manuel Burga). En: *Allpanchis* 35/36, Vol. I. Instituto de Pastoral Andina. Cusco.

Sanjinés, Javier
2005 *El espejismo del mestizaje.* La Paz: IFEA-PIEB.

San Martín, Hugo
1991 *Palenquismo: Movimiento social, populismo, informalidad de la política.* La Paz: Amigos del Libro.

Saravia, Joaquín and Godofredo Sandoval
1991 *Jach'a uru: ¿La esperanza de un pueblo? Carlos Palenque, RTP y los sectores populares urbanos en La Paz.* La Paz: Instituto Latinoamericano de Investigaciones Sociales y Centro de Estudios & Proyectos.

Seleme, Susana
2006 “Mesa redonda: Derechos indígenas y autonomías departamentales”. En: *T'inkazos* 21. La Paz: PIEB.

Stephenson, Marcia
1999 *Gender and Modernity in Andean Bolivia.* Austin: University of Texas Press.

Tamayo, Franz
1975 *Creación de la pedagogía nacional.* La Paz: Biblioteca del Sesquicentenario de la República.

Toranzo, Carlos and Mario Arrieta
1989 *Nueva derecha y desproletarización en Bolivia.* . La Paz: Unitas-ILDIS.

Wadsworth, Ana Cecilia and Ineke Dibbits
1989 *Agitadoras de buen gusto. Historia del Sindicato de Culinarias (1935-1958).* La Paz: Tahipamu-Hisbol.

Weismantel, Mary
2001 *Cholas and Pishtacos. Histories of Race and Sex in the Andes.* Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Translated by Robert Finestone Berkson

Translation from *Tinkazos* [on line]. Dec. 2006, n °. 21. ISSN 1990-7451.