

UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA SAN DIEGO

The 1952 Bolivian National Revolution and the Re-coding of Colonial Dynamics

A Thesis submitted in partial satisfaction of the requirements
for the degree Master of Arts

in

Latin American Studies

by

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2024

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University of California San Diego

2024

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ABSTRACT OF THE THESIS

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This thesis examines the literary works of Fausto Reinaga and Silvia Rivera Cusicanqui, two prominent Indigenous writers, intellectuals and political activists from Bolivia, and their critiques of Bolivia's 1952 National Revolution. Reinaga and Rivera Cusicanqui argue that the *Movimiento Nacional Revolucionario* (MNR) political party, which held office during the Bolivian post-revolutionary era, sought to assimilate Bolivia's mostly Indigenous population in order to create a new, homogeneous Bolivia of *campesinos* estranged from their cultural Indigenous identities. Based on Reinaga and Rivera Cusicanqui's findings, I argue that the 1952 revolution extended Bolivia's colonial legacy through new codes that marketed the revolution as a "radical" break from the previous political order and as "liberatory" for the exploited Bolivian working-class. I identify three of these codes as the following government-led policies: the universal suffrage reform, agrarian reform and unionization. Ultimately, these three policies formed a part of the Bolivian state's attempt to *campesinizar* and de-indigenize Indigenous groups. Through my discursive analysis, I find that Reinaga and Rivera Cusicanqui differ in their theorization of the racialization processes that occurred after the 1952 revolution. Nonetheless, Reinaga's framework of *indianismo* and Rivera Cusicanqui's conceptualization of the *ch'ixi* provide a critical analysis on the implementation of what they both interpret as a Westernizing political agenda in Bolivia following the 1952 revolution.

Chapter 1 INTRODUCTION

In 2006, Bolivia made history by electing Evo Morales, from the Movimiento al Socialismo (MAS) political party, as Bolivia's first Indigenous president. For many, this election represented a turning point for Bolivia's majority Indigenous population, which has faced past and ongoing violences of colonization, subjugation and capitalist exploitation of land, resources and people. Evo Morales and the MAS party promised a revolutionary agenda that would uplift Bolivia's most marginalized and vulnerable Indigenous communities through a "cultural democratic revolution" that would decolonize Bolivia (Postero, *The Indigenous State*). To do this, Evo Morales convened the Constituent Assembly over the next couple of years to rewrite Bolivia's constitution to grant more power and autonomy to Bolivia's Indigenous majority.

Nonetheless, over the course of their terms in office, Evo Morales and the MAS party have received growing critiques on their clientelism, corporatism, and patriarchal authoritarianism. According to Silvia Rivera Cusicanqui, Evo Morales and the MAS party face "a structural inertia within the colonial state, which in recent years has been rearticulated in neocolonial forms" (Farthing & Rivera Cusicanqui). As Rivera Cusicanqui and other critical intellectuals point out, the MAS party's rearticulation of a colonial state is demonstrated with the continuation of colonial dynamics operating under newly codified policies, legislations and political structures (i.e. the push to eradicate coca, the Bolivian state's control of Indigeneity, and the extraction of Bolivia's natural resources). This critical analysis of Bolivia's MAS party challenges the notion of a linearly progressive history. Furthermore, such an analysis cautions against the idea that the procurement of ethnic and ideological representation in national politics will automatically lead to the improvement of a nation's sociopolitical inequalities. Despite some

obvious differences and contexts, the radically optimistic promises of Evo Morales' election victory were reminiscent of those made by the leaders of Bolivia's national revolution in 1952.

Similarly to Evo Morales' election, Bolivia's 1952 revolution was lauded as a radical break from the colonial rule that plagued Bolivia since the Spanish conquest of the 1500s. Hegemonic historical accounts often portray the 1952 Bolivian national revolution as a pivotal event that dismantled the power of the Bolivian oligarchy, introduced comprehensive reforms in land ownership, voting rights and education, and ultimately improved the living conditions of the Bolivian people. In 1952, Bolivia reached an historic revolutionary moment when diverse groups of miners, MNR party militants and Indigenous and rural communities mobilized for labor and land rights and overthrew Bolivia's oligarchical government (Gotkowitz 268). The revolution was leftist-led by the Movimiento Nacionalista Revolucionario (MNR) party which was elected into power and set forth new and "democratizing" political changes in Bolivian society.

Tracing the intellectual history of Fausto Reinaga and Rivera Cusicanqui, two prominent Indigenous writers, intellectuals and political activists, I explore how they read and interpret the 1952 Bolivian revolution. In their work, Fausto Reinaga and Silvia Rivera Cusicanqui illuminate how the Bolivian post-revolutionary government (the MNR) sought to de-indigenize Bolivia's mostly Indigenous population in an attempt to create a new, homogeneous Bolivia of *campesinos* estranged from their cultural Indigenous identities. I argue that the 1952 revolution in fact extended Bolivia's colonial legacy through new codes that marketed the revolution as a "radical" break from the previous political order and as "liberatory" for the exploited Bolivian working-class. These codes came in the form of government-led policies such as: the universal suffrage reform, agrarian reform and unionization. Such efforts followed a eurocentric and westernizing agenda codified under the guise of revolutionary and democratizing politics. As long standing

colonial dynamics began to operate under the new leftist leadership of the MNR, the revolution and its subsequent reforms began to show their failed promises.

My research will explore the following questions: How did the leftist-led Bolivian national revolution become a de-indigenizing force amidst its many reforms? How do writers like Silvia Rivera Cusicanqui and Fausto Reinaga read the 1952 Bolivian national revolution? What do their critiques about the MNR's application of Marxist concepts to Bolivian Indigenous society show us about the real effects of the MNR's political approach? In what sense did the MNR's application of these concepts ultimately end up acting as an obstacle to true decolonization for Bolivia's Indigenous communities? How do Reinaga and Rivera Cusicanqui analyze the change in Bolivia's racialization processes after the 1952 revolution? And finally, how are their conclusions relevant to today's political realities?

Through a discursive analysis of the works of Rivera Cusicanqui and Reinaga, which span the period 1969-2010, I detail some of the major assertions that these two writers share in their critical analyses of the Bolivian national revolution and its lasting impacts on Indigenous communities in Bolivia. I begin by providing a brief history of the political processes in Bolivia that led to its 1952 revolution. Next, I examine some of the most prominent impacts the revolution had on Bolivian society. I then focus on the perspectives of Fausto Reinaga in his text *La revolución india* and Silvia Rivera Cusicanqui in her multiple works¹. I conclude by offering some of my own thoughts on how reading Reinaga's and Rivera Cusicanqui's work together highlights the importance of centering Indigenous liberation in "revolutionary" movements. By

¹ In this paper I utilize the following texts by Rivera Cusicanqui: *Ayllus y proyectos de desarrollo en el norte de Potosí* (1992), *Oprimidos pero no vencidos: luchas del campesinado aymara y quechwa de Bolivia* (1984), *Un mundo ch'ixi es posible. Memoria, mercado y colonialismo* (2018), *Violencias (re) encubiertas en Bolivia* (2010) and "Liberal Democracy and Ayllu Democracy in Bolivia: The Case of Northern Potosí" (1990).

tracing the intellectual contributions of Reinaga and Rivera Cusicanqui on Bolivia's 1952 revolution, my work contributes to the fields of intellectual history, Indigenous studies and race relations in Bolivia and Latin America.

Chapter 2 HISTORICAL CONTEXT

Since the Spanish conquest of what is now Bolivia, in the 1500s, Bolivia's Indigenous peoples have experienced human, cultural and ecological destruction, all amounting to a sustained genocide², upheld by land dispossession and a tumultuous political history. This history of pillage has and continues to mark Bolivia's Indigenous communities. As a consequence of global capitalism, Bolivia has endured constant yet distinct cycles of exploitation of its natural and finite resources: first silver, then tin, gas and oil and now lithium. Over the course of centuries, the commodification of these natural resources funneled substantial wealth to the Spanish crown, the Bolivian oligarchy and the global capitalist class, thereby structuring the Bolivian national economy to heavily depend on the capitalist world economy. Subsequent systemic inequalities in Bolivia have been met with considerable Indigenous and anti-capitalist resistance. In this section, I trace Bolivia's particular history with socialist movements and Indigenous struggles and the convergence and contention of the two.

The period following the 1952 revolution can be situated in the historical context of the Cold War, during which hard-line anticommunism was vehemently spread all over the world by capitalist and imperialist countries like the United States. As a response to the global and local context of capitalist accumulation and exploitation, revolutionary nationalism grew in Bolivia. It is important to note that in the period before the revolution, Bolivia was already economically

² I use the term "genocide" to describe the centuries-long intentional killing of Indigenous communities in Bolivia with the goal of eliminating these groups. Although Indigenous communities continue to live, struggle and resist colonial violence today (Indigenous people continue to make up the majority of Bolivia's population), Indigeneity continues to be subjugated despite the growing rhetoric of multiculturalism and politics of representation. Claudia Zapata Silva explains this phenomenon in her book, *Crisis del multiculturalismo en América Latina: Conflictividad social y respuestas críticas desde el pensamiento político indígena* (2019).

unstable in the wake of the Great Depression and its loss of land in the Chaco War (1932-1935) with Paraguay. This war resulted in over 80,000 deaths and around 215,000 square kilometers of land lost for Bolivia (Volk, *Class, union, party Part 1* 39). Such a great loss of people and land resulted in irreparable deprivation for Bolivia's residents and created a general yet profound distrust in the Bolivian government felt by its people.

In the first half of the 20th century, members of the Bolivian oligarchy perceived themselves as owners and managers of Bolivia yet despised the country for its inability to coherently "modernize" into the global capitalist economy (Rivera Cusicanqui, *Oprimidos pero no vencidos* 17). The Bolivian oligarchy at the time were a land-owning elite who controlled vast amounts of land and owned many of the land mines. They were desperate to modernize the country in ways that would emulate Western industrialized societies. As frustration grew among the Bolivian oligarchy regarding the country's financial distress, so did the high discontent among Indigenous communities, miners, intellectuals and other groups, towards the Bolivian government. All these structural factors, taken together, formed the impetus for the 1952 revolution.

The 1952 Revolution

The failure of the Bolivian government to provide for its people resulted in vast political mobilization including the organizing of general strikes, public demonstrations and the formation of political parties and alliances. It is in this historical moment that the MNR party officially formed in 1941, first as a political party with fascist orientations but that later adopted a strong pro-labor, economic nationalist stance, and would ultimately act as a major force behind the 1952 revolution. The MNR's objectives on the eve of the revolution were to "liberate Bolivia economically and, thereby, to create a truly self-defining nation. Its watchwords were nation,

state and development. The state would be used to foment development, thereby liberating and consolidating the nation” (Malloy, *Beyond the revolution* 115). Due to Bolivia’s mounting inequalities and financial challenges, this rhetoric of economic nationalism garnered support from upper-class intellectuals, middle-class moderates and Indigenous and working-class people. As such, a diverse voter base of liberals, communists and conservatives all casted ballots for Victor Paz Estenssoro of the MNR in the 1951 presidential election. It was in the wake of this election victory that a military junta from the previous Bolivian government was created to prevent the MNR from taking power, setting off a three day revolution that would culminate in the restoration of the MNR government that ruled Bolivia from 1952 until the 1964 coup d’etat.

Although the 1952 revolution was officially led by the MNR, the forces that sustained the revolution were made up of alliances between liberal, communist, Indigenous and some mestizo groups, all of which held the objective of overthrowing the Bolivian oligarchy. These people on the ground hailed from distinct ethnic groups, social classes and regional homelands, and encompassed miners, peasants, politicians and intellectuals. These distinct individuals and communities did not form a seamless, horizontal assortment. In fact, leading up to the revolution, the MNR had minimal organizational contact with Indigenous campesinos who remained marginal to the political process of the MNR, especially as the MNR-led revolution “remained a movement of the urban-oriented, tin-dominated sector of Bolivian life” (Malloy, *Beyond the revolution* 117). Clearly, the MNR’s motives to secure political power did not prioritize the needs of Bolivia’s Indigenous communities. Notably, the MNR party leaders were what Rivera Cusicanqui refers to as the “poor relatives of the oligarchy” who attempted to champion a national project that created a respectable, sovereign and “developed” nation (Rivera Cusicanqui, *Oprimidos pero no vencidos* 87-88). Nevertheless, it is important to note that Indigenous rural

campesinos were integral to the victory of the revolution despite their Indigeneity being pushed to the sidelines to make room for the MNR's political agenda.

After the revolution

The Bolivian revolution undeniably brought about changes that would permeate Bolivian society for many years to come. In the first two years of government, the MNR set forth *three* major reforms: nationalization of the tin industry, universal suffrage and agrarian reform. Indeed, the revolutionary period following 1952 was one of profound contradictions. On the one hand, these seemingly beneficial reforms were supposed to bring about urgent and positive change to a very stratified society. Bolivia's Indigenous communities had endured centuries of oppression and tumultuous political instability, and needed urgent democratization of power relations, especially within the country's government. However, the new system of governance that replaced the old one did not completely break with its centuries-long colonial legacy and, arguably, even continued its old patterns of racial and economic stratification which structured systemic Indigenous subjugation. For this reason, it is crucial to ask: to what degree did these purportedly "revolutionary" reforms respect Indigenous autonomy and to what degree did these reforms simply serve to uphold the state's hegemonic agenda?

Tin nationalization

In October of 1952, the Bolivian government nationalized the three largest tin-mining companies in Bolivia. Mining had been the backbone of the Bolivian economy since the discovery of the Potosí silver mines in the sixteenth century, in which silver was extracted from Potosí's "Cerro Rico" and became perhaps the single most important financial source of support for Hapsburg, Spain (Volk, *Class, union, party Part I* 28). Over time, the silver market began to fall and tin replaced silver in the global market as all the major industrialized nations began to

utilize tin. As the Western world's demand for tin grew, tin became Bolivia's primary export, continuing the economic dependency on the West and further inciting the exploitation and export of Bolivia's natural resources. Meanwhile, Bolivia's tin mines were bustling with discontent. As the mine-owning elite got wealthier, miners did not see profits of the metal's mining reflected in their salaries. Because of the historically exploitative working conditions of miners, there is an extensive labor organizing history among Bolivia's mine workers that led up to the 1952 revolution.

In the advent of the revolution, the MNR took to the mines to build up their support base among mine workers. Indigenous mine workers played a central military and political role in the 1952 revolution, to such a degree that the regional impact of this revolution owed much to the political prominence of Indigenous miners and peasants who worked to see the destruction of the old order (Sándor 1). Nonetheless, the MNR acted in its best interests and utilized the mine workers for their own political organizing as they launched their nation-building project of a new Bolivia. In this way, the MNR garnered support from the mine workers to push forward their own self-serving political agenda.

One of these items on the MNR's political wishlist was tin nationalization. The new MNR-controlled government nationalized Bolivia's three largest mine companies with the objective of keeping the revenue within the domestic economy and reducing the amount of money leaving Bolivia and going into the pockets of foreign investors. The MNR believed that "the reason for the stagnant and truncated growth of Bolivia was the failure of mine profits to be reinvested in the country. The cause of this failure, in turn, was monopolization and an elevation of liberal international market principles over the principle of national development" (Malloy,

Bolivia 173). Therefore, the MNR advocated for state control of the mines as a better alternative to the existing organization, which served to concentrate the wealth of the mine-owning elite.

Although some may argue that this was a form of state socialism, it is important to note that the goal of the MNR was never to achieve socialism through state nationalization, as they refused to challenge the principle of private property itself (Malloy, *Bolivia* 173). Indeed, the official decree of tin nationalization omits any mention of nationalization in general (that is to say, outside the tin mines) or of a socialist direction in Bolivia's political economy (Malloy, *Bolivia* 177). This is because although the MNR was a national political party, it was composed of different factions with two opposing political ideologies: the left and the right. Ultimately, the tin nationalization decree

represented a consciously engineered compromise between two conflicting positions in the MNR: the rightist position, which was concerned primarily with state control of dollar profits and reinvestment and the leftist position, which was concerned mainly with property relations and a new social distribution of economic and political power (Malloy, *Bolivia* 175).

With such opposing political principles competing within the MNR, conflict was bound to arise. Nonetheless, tin nationalization was "an expression of pragmatic nationalism measured in terms of the wealth and power of the state, which is seen as the locus and expression of the nation" (Malloy, *Bolivia* 177). This pragmatic nationalism indispensably formed part of the MNR's rhetoric in the formation of a new Bolivia.

The concrete deployment of the immense project of tin nationalization was, of course, cumbersome. Although the majority of Bolivia's population highly supported tin nationalization, they disagreed amongst themselves over its specific methods. The question of whether the mines should be expropriated or confiscated from the firms, for example, was hotly debated by the general public. When President Estenssoro chose to expropriate and not confiscate the mines

from the firms, he was viewed as lukewarm by the leftist factions of the party. Additionally, although the former holdings of the three tin companies were placed in the hands of the Corporación Minera de Bolivia (COMIBOL), a government-owned corporation, in actuality the firms refused to accept the terms and negotiations and continued operating as before for more than four years (Alexander 102-103).

Furthermore, the extraction of Bolivia's natural resources further entangled Bolivia in global capitalist affairs as "the attempt at capitalist modernization undertaken by the nationalist regimes that emerged from the 1952 revolution ended up being frustrated by the incapacity of these to transcend that ideology" (Vargas, "The Perverse Effects of Globalization in Bolivia" 252). Indeed, the reform project of tin nationalization accelerated a process of submitting to the global capitalist economy.

Universal suffrage

Another major reform that followed the Bolivian revolution was the establishment of universal suffrage that extended voting rights to Indigenous communities, its majority illiterate population and women, officially granting them access to formal political participation. Universal suffrage had a significant numerical impact as the Bolivian electorate substantially increased from about 200,000 (approximately 6.6 percent of the population) to over 1 million people (33.8 percent) (Gotkowitz 276-277). Nonetheless, as Gotkowitz writes, "the revolution did not make a radical break with the political culture of the past. Few laws were changed, and the party dreamed up no new civic ceremonies" (Gotkowitz 276-277). This inclusion of Bolivia's complete population in its voting rights seemed like an obvious step towards a more equitable society. This is because, historically, the West has lauded the democratic electoral processes and the right to vote as ultimate bastions of a truly representative democracy. As follows, the

Bolivian government's granting of universal suffrage followed in line with the West's requirements for a just democracy. However, as I will observe later on in this paper, although Bolivia began to technically include all of its population within the voting citizenry, this so-called freedom resulted in a limiting configuration of "citizenship" that continued subjugating Indigenous people and their traditional political processes by elevating the political structures of the West.

Agrarian reform

The third reform that the MNR government enacted was the long-awaited agrarian reform. Prior to the revolution, Bolivia's agricultural system was defined by severely unequal land ownership and dehumanizing working conditions for mostly Indigenous laborers. The mismanagement of land and agriculture can be traced back to the period following Bolivia's independence from Spain in 1829, when land privatization started to enact a stranglehold on communal land management. Through European conquest, bourgeois "independence" and uneven revolution, Bolivia's agricultural system endured and was left marked by centuries of land dispossession, human, cultural and ecological genocide and Indigenous subjugation. To quantify, sell, buy and exploit land are all Western capitalist concepts that foundationally clashed with Indigenous land stewardship that had long existed in Bolivia prior to colonization. Indigenous management of land in Bolivia had dramatically decreased so much that in the first half of the nineteenth century, Indigenous communities controlled two-thirds of Bolivia's cultivable land, and yet by the 1950s Indigenous communities held only 26 percent of the land (Soliz 19). After Bolivia's independence, Bolivia's majority Indigenous population was no longer required to pay tribute to Bolivia's royalty. Nonetheless, they were now required to pay tribute to the Bolivian oligarchical government, continuing on the colonial power dynamics.

Subsequently, some scholars argue that the republican regimes which succeeded the Spaniards caused much more damage to Indigenous communities with the impetus of the evolving concepts of economic liberalism and private property (Alexander 12-13).

In this time before the revolution, Bolivia operated under a latifundist hacienda system in which large estates were owned by a few wealthy landowners who had Indigenous laborers work the land (Alexander 14). The working conditions were horrible given such stark power dynamics between the landowners and the Indigenous peoples who labored. Indigenous people were reduced to sharecropping tenants on land owned by white/mestizos masters who forced the Indigenous people to work the masters' land and even provide personal services to the master in exchange for a small plot of land to house and feed the Indigenous family (Alexander 13-14). Because of these extreme conditions, Bolivia's Agrarian Reform of 1953 sought to abolish Indigenous peasant servitude and redistribute land. The historiography on the MNR's agrarian reform is very polarized. Although some literature perfunctorily applauds the "revolutionary" successes of the 1953 agrarian reform, other literature from more conservative viewpoints focuses on just the failures of an incomplete reform, even going so far as to racistly blame them on the "fiesta culture" of Bolivians (Erasmus 165).

As we can see, these three reforms (agrarian, tin nationalization and universal suffrage) were enacted during a time of revolutionary fervor. The stark disparities in the quality of life between the Bolivian elite and the rest of the population made the 1950's in Bolivia a setting ripe for revolution. However, as we will see, these reforms followed a liberal configuration within a neo-colonial imagination. Because liberalism structures land-ownership, political participation and self-identification around the idea of being a free individual, there was no complete rupture from the colonial dynamics of caste (Rivera Cusicanqui, *Ayllus* 26). Additionally, these reforms

were in many ways incompatible with traditional forms of Andean Indigenous cosmovision (Rivera Cusicanqui, *Violencias Re-encubiertas en Bolivia* 51).³ In the following section, I examine how the de-indigenizing processes of *campesinización* were integral to the project of cultural homogenization after the revolution. I bring to light some of the sharp and critical analyses of the revolution and its homogenizing agenda.

Campesinización, Nation-building & Identity

As Bolivia entered a period of political change following its 1952 revolution, “the most immediate change in the pattern of control and rule after 1952 was the dramatic emergence of labor as a key power group” (Malloy, *Bolivia* 183). Suddenly, labor and the category of “the worker” took precedence over other categories of group- and self-identification. But how was this achieved, exactly? Indeed, through a multi-tiered process of *campesinización*, the MNR-controlled national government replaced the widely used term *indio*⁴ with *campesino* in the official language. This process of *campesinización*, of legally defining Indigenous groups as peasants and farmers, and thus of taking away or lessening the importance of their Indigenous identity formed a crucial part of the process of de-indigenization. In an attempt to adopt and apply the Marxist concept of the “working class” to Bolivian society, the Bolivian government purposefully obfuscated Indigenous self-identification and communal belonging to Indigeneity. In order for this project to work, the Bolivian government had to convince its residents that they

³ Cosmovision refers to the worldview that an Indigenous group or person collectively holds that informs how they interact with their surrounding spiritual and physical worlds.

⁴ In *Dialéctica del colonialismo interno*, Luis Tapia writes that the term *indio* historically comes from a colonial context which has served to establish a hierarchy among people with privileged European origin and those who do not and thus are deemed as inferior. Nonetheless, Tapia recognizes that many subaltern Indigenous societies have reclaimed the term *indio* to describe and question their continued oppressed status under contemporary internal colonialism (Tapia 79).

were living in a color-blind canvas where new futures could be painted with the flick of a paintbrush. The issue was that this blank canvas did not exist, nor could it ever be created.

Crucial to the nation-(re)building project of post-revolution Bolivia was the discourse on nationalism, *campesinización* and *mestizaje*⁵. This discourse had existed prior to the revolution as the MNR rallied around class alliances that completely ignored the Bolivian reality, which was marked by a structural inequality, overdetermined in ethnic terms, and resulted in the vertical domination by the elite of Indigenous cultures (Murillo 44). By prioritizing the category of “the worker”, the Bolivian state promulgated the denial of self, community and ancestral ties with Indigeneity. In this way, although the Bolivian citizenry was granted certain rights and freedoms by the MNR government after the revolution, they were also directly and indirectly chastised for maintaining their Indigenous ancestral traditions and connections.

Thus, although the MNR government and its reforms brought about serious political changes, they were managed by Bolivian *criollos*⁶ and leftist elite, aspiring to attain the power and status of the Bolivian elite. By attempting to conflate and universalize the objective of building a “new” and “united” Bolivia, the *criollos* and leftist elite prioritized the project of cultural homogenization over the concrete needs of Indigenous communities. Ultimately, the attempt by the lauded leaders of the Bolivian revolution to maintain class solidarity was built at the expense of Indigenous identity.

⁵ The term *mestizaje* refers to the process of interracial mixing, often of Indigenous and non-Indigenous people and particularly in the Americas. *Mestizaje* has historically been and continues to be used to exclude and subjugate non-white populations who renounce assimilation into white culture.

⁶ In the context of this paper, *criollo* is used to describe the Bolivian political elite in power and in alignment with Western values.

From *ayllu* to the *sindicato*

Campesinización was a process that extended beyond the semantics of the official government's lexical replacement of *indio* with *campesino*. The process of *campesinización* necessitated a rupture in traditional forms of Indigenous communal organizing (ie. the *ayllu*). The *ayllu* is a traditional form of rural communal organization that has existed in the Andes among Quechua and Aymara Indigenous communities dating back to before the Incan empire. Traditionally, *ayllus* have regulated farming, labor, political and social matters in a given particular community. This complex internal organization manages the communal distribution of resources, mediates and settles disputes and conflict among families and periodically renews the community's bonds with nature and with the mountain deities through ceremonial and ritual cycles (Rivera Cusicanqui, "Liberal democracy" 102). The *ayllu* is fundamentally based on the principle of reciprocity, in which members are responsible to one another and are assigned different tasks to take care of the land and each other communally. This reciprocity exists outside of human relations as the *ayllu* is inextricably linked to the management of the agricultural calendar (Rivera Cusicanqui, "Liberal democracy" 101-102). Thus, both the people and the land (made up of other living things such as animals, plants, etc.) provide each other with resources necessary to live.

Although *ayllus* continue to exist today, they have undergone many changes and transformations with colonization, "modernization" and socio-political transitions. One key factor of these changes has been unionization. Bolivia has a long history of organized labor movements dating back to the early twentieth century, when miners from the silver and tin mines organized for living wages and humane working conditions. One of the labor unions that formed before the revolution was the *Confederación Sindical de Trabajadores de Bolivia* (CSTB), the

largest and most prominent trade union confederation in Bolivia from 1936 to 1952. As propaganda was spread about the promises of unionization, and dissatisfaction with the oppressive hacienda-like systems rose among Indigenous peasants, many joined the union movement. However, the unionization that occurred after the revolution was coupled with a strong nationalist identity-making current under the newly reformed Bolivian state. In this way, citizenship and unionization worked together to create a sense of belonging and responsibility to defend Bolivia's political interests at a local union level.

Of course, each of the regions of the Cochabamba valley, the Altiplano and Norte de Potosí had their own distinct experiences with the implementation of unions following the revolution. According to Rivera Cusicanqui, the Cochabamba region developed a union system early on to fight against the hacienda system while the Altiplano and Norte de Potosí regions maintained their own traditional communal forms of organization (Rivera Cusicanqui, *Oprimidos pero no vencidos* 108). With the revolution, these Indigenous communities had to decide on how to deal with the surge of unionization and the particular political processes it entailed, which were quite distinct from their own modes of communal governance (i.e. the *ayllú*).

Of course, this is not to say that all Indigenous people in Bolivia welcomed the politics of unionization. In fact, in 1963 when the anti-communist residents of the Bolivian *puna*, the highlands, learned about the government's plan to use the union apparatus to gain support from the Indigenous peasantry and their communal lands, they refused to recognize official union leaders (Platt 1982, 162-4) (Rivera Cusicanqui, "Liberal democracy" 106). Thus, Bolivia's Indigenous communities were neither docile nor helpless as unionization spread across the country. These communities sought to understand the complexities and contradictions of

unionization under a capitalist and neo-colonial context, in order to make informed decisions on whether or not to join unionization and, if they did, in what ways to do so. During the fervor for unionization following the revolution, Bolivia's Indigenous peoples emerged as diverse and autonomous agents, navigating interlocking systems of oppression. They were both overtly and subtly compelled to decide which political processes they would engage in. This was done disparately and was, in each case, steeped in the complex layers of respective geopolitical contexts.

NGOs & Unionization

Since the 1980s, leftist parties and NGOs have continued to dismantle and devalue the organizational structures of the *ayllu* (Rivera Cusicanqui, "Liberal democracy" 99). In Norte de Potosí, NGOs have acquired large sums of emergency relief funds to promote the formation of unions on an unprecedented scale (Rivera Cusicanqui, "Liberal democracy" 109). Thus, we see the marginalization of the *ayllu* as it is not equally funded or supported as the unions are by these NGO actors. Additionally, an internal crisis within the *ayllus* was produced by the erosion of Indigenous identity of *ayllu* members and the trust in the capacity of the *ayllus* to resolve its problems and defend its collectivity (Rivera Cusicanqui, *Ayllus* 17). The legitimacy of the *ayllu* as an organized form of living was brought into question as it operates distinctively from Western modes of sociopolitical organization. Consequently, this internal crisis has had some serious repercussions for the future of the *ayllu* and its place in Indigenous society. Thus, waves of unionization after the 1952 Revolution not only attempted to erase Indigenous identity, but also attempted to eradicate Indigenous power by destroying the traditional structures of reciprocity and redistribution of the *ayllu*. The intentional disempowerment of the *ayllu* by the

Bolivian national government portends a cautionary tale of the government's power to squash Indigenous modes of organization.

Bolivian political leaders have loudly and publicly expressed their disparaging perspectives on the *ayllus*. In a 1985 Oxfam América survey conducted in Norte de Potosí, politicians and NGO administrators shared:

That ayllus and ayllu leadership are corruptible, manipulatable by the state; that they do not know anything about economic modernization projects; that they do not understand the political economic issues of contemporary Bolivia; that they are not democratic; that they only like to party and drink chicha; that they are not capable of allyship with mining federations; and that they are folkloric relics of a dead civilization (Rivera Cusicanqui, *Ayllus* 17-18).

In unabashedly spewing this anti-Indigenous rhetoric, these politicians and NGO administrators proved that they stood for the racial, intellectual and political subjugation of Indigenous life.

Both the public and private sectors in Bolivia and across the world are committed to their objective of continuing to de-indigenize the Bolivian population by tearing down the *ayllú*.

These words reflect the neocolonial pact among the Bolivian state, international civil society and the private sector that extends centuries-long modes of colonial domination.

Despite such anti-Indigenous rhetoric stated by Bolivian politicians and international NGOs, *ayllus* are not dead and continue to live and change today. Certainly, we must be careful not to idealize *ayllus* as a pure, perfectly harmonious organization, as such logic is detrimental to our understanding of the incredibly complex interlocking systems of the *ayllu*. Far from remaining in a stagnant and “pure” state, *ayllus* are made up of living people who are a part of a dynamic Bolivian society and thus both the people and the *ayllu* are deeply affected by their outer contexts as they change over time. Nonetheless, it is important to note that many of these socio-political changes experienced in the *ayllu* are influenced by oppressive factors like intellectual imperialism and the political subjugation of Indigenous traditions, to name a few.

All in all, the waves of unionization after the 1952 revolution advanced the monumental task of organizing to resist global capitalist exploitation and expansion. Union organizers and members faced numerous challenges and complexities as they struggled to resist the wrath of surviving, dealing with, and resisting the wrath of capitalism. However, although these unions set out to fight oppression under capitalist domination, they mistakenly tried to ignore the racial, cultural and ethnic specificities of Indigeneity in order to create a “polished” category of workers, thereby continuing to replicate colonial systems of domination. Herein lies the metamorphosis of colonial rule.

The rise of Katarismo in the 1970s

Following Bolivia’s 1964 coup d’etat, and throughout the 1970s, 1980s and 1990s, waves of Indigenous mobilization centered around ethnic and racial struggles largely informed by Katarismo. Katarismo is a socio-political movement named after Indigenous Aymara and anticolonial leader Túpac Katari who led the Indigenous insurrection against the Spanish in what is now Bolivia, in the 1780s. Beginning in the 1970s, Katarismo re-surfaced the importance and relevance of the ethnic and political identities of Indigenous Aymara people in contemporary Bolivian society. Kataristas recognized the ongoing oppression that Indigenous Bolivians endured under contemporary neo-colonial structures. The two great pillars of Katarismo were, “first, to perceive the continuity of colonialism that marks the other side of modernity, and second, to see that politically the Indians formed a national ethnic majority” (Sanjinés 15). By linking their current oppression and resistance with that of their Indigenous ancestors, Kataristas were able to mobilize and create literature, art and political programs for themselves and their communities. It was during Katarismo’s early emergence that Fausto Reinaga wrote *La revolución india* in 1972.

Katarismo mobilization also resulted in the founding of the Confederación Sindical Única de Trabajadores Campesinos de Bolivia (CSUTCB) in 1979, and the founding of the Taller de Historia Oral Andina (THOA) in 1983. Unfortunately, along with these important laboral and cultural advancements also came political infiltration from outside political interests. For example, in order to operate in the national political environment, leaders in both the CSUTCB and THOA began to depend heavily on NGO advisors and ended up being co-opted by political parties. This co-optation, when placed in historical context, reflects the broader neoliberal turn of the 1980s and 1990s, as we will see in the following section.

The neoliberal turn of 1980s & 1990s

Neoliberalism, and free-market capitalism, are rooted in the belief that national and global financial markets can regulate themselves without the interference of a state government. Neoliberal governments “make drastic cuts in state spending while privatizing state-run enterprises and encouraging foreign capital investments, positing the market as an efficient bearer of liberty for responsible individual citizens, and citizenship is increasingly understood as individual integration into the market” (Postero, *Now We Are Citizens* 15). In Bolivia, the year 1985 was largely defined by the drastic fall of the world market price of tin and the rush of neoliberal policy makers to use this to their advantage and break up the power of the tin miners’ union. This resulted in the firing of at least 20,000 workers and their relocation to rural areas (Sándor 7). This sent devastating aftershocks to all sectors of Bolivian society. As Bolivia battled the economic destruction of the tin market crash, Sánchez de Lozada won his first presidential election in 1993 running on a platform of continuing and deepening neoliberal reforms and “making a U-turn away from the state capitalism that the party itself had instituted in 1952 with its National Revolution” (Sanjinés 2). Meanwhile, Bolivia’s neoliberalism began to gain

prominence as the government authorized the free-market to autoregulate its national economy while drastically cutting state funding for public enterprises (Postero, *Now We Are Citizens* 15).

How did Bolivia fall from its revolutionary period after 1952 into the depths of neoliberal capitalism four decades later? Thus far in my paper, I have traced the historical events that led up to Bolivia's neoliberal turn. In the following sections, I will use the works of Fausto Reinaga and Silvia Rivera Cusicanqui, which provide profound critical analysis, to think through how the lasting shortcomings of the 1952 revolution reverberate through Bolivian society today.

Chapter 3 REINAGA ANALYSIS

Fausto Reinaga (1906-1994), the great Quechua-Aymara intellectual and founder of *indianismo*⁷, is one of the most important intellectuals and contributors to Indigenous political thought in Bolivia. Reinaga was born in the Macha *ayllu* in Norte de Potosí, Bolivia and endured the brutal realities of growing up poor, Indigenous and illiterate in such a starkly stratified society. Such dire circumstances politicized Reinaga at an early age. Throughout his life, Reinaga went through various stages as a socialist and Marxist (1930-1944), revolutionary nationalist (1944-1960), *Indianista* (1960-1974) and finally *Amautista* or *Reinaguista*⁸ (1974-1994) (Escárzaga, “Comunidad indígena y revolución en Bolivia” 147). Throughout his life, Reinaga wrote important texts including *La revolución india* (1970), *Manifiesto del Partido Indio de Bolivia* (1970) and *La tesis india* (1971) which would become integral to the ongoing construction of Indigenous consciousness inside and outside of Bolivia.

Reinaga’s own political journey is a remarkable one. He was a founding member of the communist party, *Partido Izquierdo Revolucionario* (PIR) and was also involved with the *Partido Republicano* and the MNR (Escárzaga, *La comunidad indígena insurgente* 142). Nonetheless, as we see in *La revolución india*, Reinaga began to create his own *Indianista* analysis that centered the Indigenous subject in the Indigenous struggle for liberation and rejected the importation of Marxism in Bolivia. The self-reflection, development and changes in his postulations on Marxism demonstrate a remarkable insightfulness in Reinaga’s political,

⁷ *Indianismo* refers to the anticolonial ideological current that centers Indigenous liberation, autonomy and struggles for power while critiquing the adoption of Western thought, philosophy and political structures in Bolivia’s Indigenous communities (Aguilar 32). *Indianismo* gained prominence in Bolivia during the 1960s and 1970s.

⁸ *Amautismo* or *Reinaguismo* is another ideological current produced by Reinaga that differs from *Indianismo* as it proposes the creation of a cosmic philosophy for Indigenous peoples in Bolivia to follow (Aguilar Enriquez 37).

theoretical and personal journey. By tracing Reinaga's major shifts in his intellectual and political positionings, we may question, expand and deepen our own convictions about the interweaving of racialization and radicalization in the Bolivian context.

In *La revolución india*, published in 1970, Reinaga astutely addresses the centrality of Indigeneity in Bolivia's anti-colonial struggles. Through a sharp analysis of the coloniality of Bolivian society, Reinaga shares his stinging critiques of the white-mestizo Bolivian elite, the educational system, the Catholic Church, hegemonic epistemology, Marxism and other imports from the Western world. Throughout *La revolución india*, Reinaga focalizes the Indigenous peoples' seizure of power in the political, literary, cultural, epistemological realms and beyond. Reinaga reaffirms, with great honor and dignity, his collective and political identity of being Indigenous, writing, "No soy escritor ni literato mestizo. Yo soy indio. Un indio que piensa; que hace ideas; que crea ideas. Mi ambición es forjar una ideología india; una ideología de mi raza" (Reinaga 45-24). By explicitly rejecting any association with being a *mestizo* writer, Reinaga upholds his Indigeneity as *the* defining characteristic of his being. In recognizing the Indigenous person as an essential creator of knowledge, Reinaga makes the Indigenous subject the locus of enunciation in his anti-colonial discussions on Indigenous racialization, ideology and epistemology.

For Reinaga, Marxist theory was terribly inept at explaining the Indigenous context in Bolivia. According to Reinaga, "el 'comunismo boliviano' de nuestro tiempo, que va desde la 'convivencia pacífica', el 'marxismo sin, revolución' hasta el 'foquismo' de 'la guerrilla es el partido', soslayan, ignoran y pasan por encima de la realidad india" (Reinaga 122). For Reinaga, "Bolivian communism" is an oxymoron that negates itself as communist theory fails to describe the Indigenous realities in Bolivia. This means that any attempt to apply a Western theory (i.e.,

Marxism), even by the Bolivian *cholaje*⁹, is futile. Instead, Reinaga proposes that Indigenous reality must be analyzed and understood principally from the Indigenous perspective. Thus, it is necessary to cultivate the ideological and intellectual formations of the Indian revolution.

Reinaga writes: “Por eso la tarea previa de nuestra Revolución es la promoción de un movimiento ideológico. Un intenso movimiento ideológico; un enfrentamiento impetuoso de la ideología india con la cultura occidental. Opondremos a la hispanidad nuestra indianidad” (Reinaga 77/40). Reinaga, the father of *Indianismo*, carefully separates Indigenous consciousness and identity from that of his assimilationist Hispanic counterparts. It is through *Indianismo* that Reinaga believes a real and effective social and ideological movement can begin to materialize in Bolivia. Reinaga’s focus on recognizing the Indigenous person as an intellectual is key to understanding his formulations of *Indianismo*. Exposing the falsity of the “revolutionary” character that Reinaga himself experienced through his participation in communist organizations, Reinaga warns against a revolution not led by Indigenous communities or guided by Indigenous epistemology. For Reinaga, the revolution that Bolivia needs to destroy its colonial pacts must be Indigenous or will not be anything at all.

On de-indigenization

For Reinaga, a primary obstacle to Indigenous liberation in Bolivia was the Bolivian left’s political agenda to de-indigenize Bolivia’s Indigenous communities and assimilate them into a color-blind category of the “working class”. Reinaga fiercely critiqued the MNR and other white, leftist Bolivian elites for their de-Indigenization projects after the revolution. In “Mi Palabra” of *La revolución india*, Reinaga emphatically distinguishes the category of *indios* from

⁹ The term *cholaje* is used to describe and critique the assimilationist class of Bolivian (Indigenous, white and mestizo) people who seek to attain the culture and respect of the dominant white middle class and elite social groups.

the category of “workers,” stating the following: “Y en verdad, en la suprema verdad ni somos ‘hermanos’ del putrefacto cholaje blanco-mestizo ni somos ‘campesinos’; somos INDIOS” (Reinaga). By drawing clear distinctions between the identity-based categories of Indigenous people and “workers,” Reinaga shows the limits of using a category solely based on socio-economic class in the Indigenous Bolivian context. Reinaga goes on to write: “Burguesía, proletariado, campesinado, son las clásicas clases sociales de Occidente, de Europa; que en Indoamérica, concretamente en Bolivia, no son más que una superestructura grosera y ridícula” (Reinaga). In explicitly showing his clear disgust with the terms “bourgeoisie”, “proletariat” and “peasantry”, Reinaga identifies that these theories and categories are purely Western terms that are entirely incompatible with Bolivian Indigenous societies. For Reinaga, the implementation of Marxist theory in Bolivia’s Indigenous communities required a variety of assimilation technologies to erase any possibility of Indigenous resistance or rebellion.

For Reinaga, Western reasoning is so essentially rooted in its European colonial legacy that it cannot disentangle, justify, or apply liberation theories created by the West in colonized contexts. Thus, Reinaga flatly throws out the possibility of using Western political philosophy (like Marxism) in Bolivia’s Indigenous communities.

In *La revolución india*, Reinaga particularly examines the role of the Bolivian *cholaje* in supporting the implementation of Marxism in Bolivian society. Marxism, according to Reinaga, is unforgivably an imported product from the detestable West. Concerned about the adoption of a Marxist theoretical framework in Indigenous Bolivia, Reinaga presents the following provocative questions to his readers: “¿Qué puede el indio imitar del cholaje? ¿Su nacionalismo, sin nación? ¿Su lucha de clases, sin clases? ¿Su fariseo antimperialismo, sostenido por el dólar yanqui? ¿Su utópica revolución comunista?” (Reinaga 75). For Reinaga, the application of

Marxist theory in Indigenous Bolivia presents a threat to Indigenous modes of political organization, as Marxism fails to explain itself outside of the context of Western societies. Thus, Reinaga urges his readers to question the perceived “benefits” of imitating the West.

Furthermore, Reinaga rejects any political party formation from the *cholaje*, going so far as to state that the “human nature” of the *cholaje* makes it impossible to work together with Indigenous people (Reinaga 60). Indeed, Reinaga clarifies that: “El indio no puede marchar del brazo de sus opresores esclavistas. Esto es antinatural, antisocial, antieconómico, antipolítico, antiracial, antinacional y anticientífico” (Reinaga 60). Reinaga urges Bolivia’s Indigenous peoples to reject following the steps of their oppressors who only seek to Westernize and keep Bolivia under neocolonial rule.

Throughout *La revolución india*, Reinaga is steadfast on centering Indigeneity as the guiding element for Indigenous peoples around which to organize in their resistance to the violences of the Bolivian neo-colonial government. With his scathing critiques of the Bolivian left, Reinaga deconstructs the hegemonizing role of the Bolivian left in order to (re-)construct Indigenous-centered possibilities for Indigenous peoples to create their own futures full of life, reciprocity and knowledge. For Reinaga, the solution to Indigenous people’s struggles lies within them. The reclamation of Indigeneity in epistemological, political, social, economic and all other matters will guide Indigenous resistance. Thus, Reinaga admirably commits himself to a collective and decidedly political project that will use already developed—and continuously developing—resistance technologies for Indigenous communities. These technologies that Reinaga refers to include: Indigenous-centered education, Indigenous-led forms of political organization and the production of Indigenous political theory. For Reinaga, Indigenous sovereignty will not need the Western world’s support since Indigenous liberation is, and always

has been, in the hands of Indigenous communities. In all its complexities and frankness, Reinaga's contributions continue to be relevant and should be studied in anticolonial liberation spaces throughout Bolivia, Latin America and the rest of the world.

Reinaga's *La revolución india* primes us for Rivera Cusicanqui's elaboration on the harms of the forceful implementation of a rigid and eurocentric theory in the period following the Bolivian revolution. Keeping in mind what Reinaga stresses as the centrality of Indigenous identity formation in Indigenous liberation, we may better understand the failures of the political events that unfolded after the revolution. In the following section, I include Rivera Cusicanqui's analysis of the 1952 revolution that extends and adds to Reinaga's analysis of the recodification of neocolonial dynamics in post-revolution Bolivia.

Chapter 4 RIVERA CUSICANQUI ANALYSIS

Silvia Rivera Cusicanqui is an Aymara sociologist and historian from Bolivia who was a founding member of the *Taller de Historia Oral Andina* (Andean Oral History Workshop) which researches Indigenous participation in the colonial era. For over 20 years, Rivera has studied and written extensively on oral forms of Indigenous history, the coca growers movement, multiculturalism, neoliberalism, Western epistemology and the political economy of knowledge. Some of her most notable works include: *Las fronteras de la coca: epistemologías coloniales y circuitos alternativos de la hoja de coca: el caso de la frontera boliviano-argentina* (2003), *Sociología de la imagen: miradas ch'ixi desde la historia andina* (2010) and *Violencias (re)encubiertas en Bolivia* (2012). In reading her work, we can see the ways in which Rivera Cusicanqui herself was heavily influenced by the movements of *Indianismo* and *Katarismo* and thinkers like Fausto Reinaga. Nonetheless, Rivera Cusicanqui expands upon Reinaga's critiques of the neocolonial order and modernization to add her critiques of the patriarchy, her philosophy of *sociología de la imagen* (sociology of the image) and the *ch'ixi*¹⁰.

For the purposes of this paper, I use Rivera Cusicanqui's specific critiques of the homogenizing agenda of the 1952 revolution and its subsequent reforms. Rivera Cusicanqui argues that despite the legal change of government in 1952, the colonial order continued on at the hands of the white leftist elite that controlled the MNR. In several of her works, Rivera Cusicanqui thoroughly analyzes the major reforms of the 1952 revolution and finds that these

¹⁰ As opposed to *mestizaje*, the concept of *ch'ixi* recognizes the political reality of Bolivia's racialization processes outside of official government recognition. According to Rivera Cusicanqui, the *ch'ixi* is a fissured and tense space that operates under the coexistence of antagonistic and complementary characteristics of colonial racial dynamics. As we will see later in this paper, Rivera Cusicanqui's theorization of the *ch'ixi* is different from Reinaga's conceptualization of the *indio*.

reforms ultimately served to reinforce Western ideas of democracy, nationalism, commodification of land and individualization of people. Ultimately, for Rivera Cusicanqui, these seemingly “revolutionary” reforms further cemented white colonial rule. In the following sections, I will present Rivera Cusicanqui’s specific critiques on how the Bolivian government’s projects of *campesinización* and de-indigenization were aided by the universal suffrage reform, the agrarian reform and unionization.

Rivera Cusicanqui on the MNR’s *campesinización* plan as a tool for de-indigenization

Following the 1952 revolution, the MNR government set off on a quest to reconstruct a “new” Bolivia by implementing various reforms and promoting political changes in creating a nation of *campesinos*. As Rivera Cusicanqui points out, this process of *campesinización* required the Bolivian government to attempt to de-indigenize its Indigenous communities by: promoting mestizaje, implementing Western and non-Indigenous curriculum in the schools, increasing rural to urban migration and even intentionally removing the word *indio* from the official language (Rivera Cusicanqui, *Oprimidos pero no vencidos* 19). Schools were used as an integral site for institutionalizing this de-indigenization as they violently enforced *castellanización* (the forced acquisition of the Spanish language for the sake of “integrating” Indigenous people into society) in the schooling systems, resulting in permanent effects of ethnocide and cultural displacement (Rivera Cusicanqui, *Violencias reencubiertas* 96).

Through these methods, the MNR government attempted to erase Indigeneity from its majority Indigenous population in exchange for creating a new category of an imagined and de-Indigenized “working class”. Unfortunately, the MNR’s commitment to creating a “working class” required pledging allegiance to Western *criollo* values, epistemology, the Spanish language, and excluded any form of multiculturalism or multilingualism (Rivera Cusicanqui,

Oprimidos pero no vencidos 75). In promoting the concept of “the working class”, the MNR produced a particular type of language and discourse that framed class oppression as the primary and ultimate type of oppression that Bolivia’s Indigenous populations faced. In doing so, the MNR neglected to recognize the particularities of Indigenous identity and struggles in Bolivia.

For Rivera Cusicanqui, the unquestioned acceptance of Marxist concepts and their application to Bolivian Indigenous society formed part of the MNR’s plan to achieve Indigenous self-denial and continue with their nation-building project. In Rivera Cusicanqui’s critical analysis of the MNR’s actions, we can hear Reinaga’s *Indianista* theories and repudiation for the de-indigenizing aspect of Marxist implementation echo through Rivera Cusicanqui’s work.

Rivera Cusicanqui writes that:

Las nociones de “pueblo”, “alianza de clases” y “lucha de clases” fueron perfectamente funcionales a estos propósitos, y de este modo, tanto partido de gobierno como partidos de oposición, acabaron construyendo, concertadamente, un sistema en el cual la inclusión excluía, pues sólo valía para aquellos que aceptasen—autonegándose—las normas de comportamiento “racional” y ciudadano a todas las otras formas de convivencia y comportamiento al ámbito amorfo de la naturaleza o lo presocial. El vehículo para esta singular dialéctica fue la construcción de un sistema político articulado en dos pilares: el voto universal y el clientelismo (Rivera Cusicanqui, *Violencias reencubiertas* 97-98).

Similar to Reinaga, Rivera Cusicanqui rejects the application of Marxist terminology like “the working class”, “class alliance” and “class struggle” within the context of Indigenous Bolivia. For Rivera Cusicanqui, the adoption of terms like “the working class” to describe Indigenous communities negates the Indigenous individual’s and community’s identity. Rivera Cusicanqui explains that these terms were utilized by the MNR as a tool to replace Indigenous collective identity with this new category of “the working class” and thus, the acceptance of these Marxist terms in Bolivian society inevitably came with the renunciation of Indigeneity.

Creating a homogeneous “working class” out of Bolivia’s complex and heterogeneous majority Indigenous population formed part of the MNR’s larger objective to create a new *bolivianidad*. This *bolivianidad*, however, could only be achieved through Bolivia’s government initiatives that ultimately articulated Western homogenization. Thus, the seemingly “progressive” national government failed to understand and thus continued to aid in the oppression of the actual lived local realities of Bolivia’s Indigenous communities. As the young *criollo* leaders of the revolutionary movement ended up imposing a bourgeois influence on a heterogeneous movement, Western forms of domination, even from the “left”, fused together to create Bolivia’s neocolonial dynamics and order (*Oprimidos pero no vencidos* 88).

Race: MNR & Mestizaje

While Reinaga’s *La revolución india* postulates Indigenous consciousness as the liberating force for Bolivia’s oppressed Indigenous populations, Rivera Cusicanqui’s work further explores, expands and, in certain ways, complicates Reinaga’s conceptualization of Indigeneity in Bolivia. In *Violencias reencubiertas*, Rivera Cusicanqui takes a deeper look at the particular processes of racialization in Bolivia that have historically and contemporarily sustained old colonial power dynamics under the guise of “new” categories of racial caste. For Rivera Cusicanqui, the misunderstanding of the *ch’ixi* and the subsequent state and cultural embrace of *mestizaje* and neoliberal multiculturalism impedes greater efforts for decolonization.

Rivera Cusicanqui is highly critical of the Bolivian government’s promotion of the imaginary and de-Indigenizing concept of *mestizaje*. For *mestizaje* to function as a category of identity, the MNR took on the role of deciding who fit into this *mestizo* category and who did not. Rivera Cusicanqui writes about how the MNR utilized the politics of belonging to ultimately exclude Bolivia’s majority Indigenous population:

La fuerza hegemónica que este imaginario colectivo llegó a tener, se debe tanto a la reserva de legitimidad que le brindaba el hecho revolucionario, como al deseo de articular—a través del poder—un sentido de pertenencia para las capas medias protagonistas de las reformas, quizás como compensación al desarraigo e inseguridad que trajo consigo su tránsito deculturador por los eslabones indio-cholo-mestizo. En los hechos, esta imagen de la “bolivianidad” excluía a más de la mitad de la población y se imponía sobre ella como un paquete cultural amparado tan sólo en la coacción y en la eficacia pedagógica (también coactiva) estatal (Rivera Cusicanqui, *Violencias reencubiertas* 97-98).

Indeed, the national and local efforts to achieve a non-Indigenous *bolivianidad* stems directly from the deeply ingrained colonial mentality of assimilation into white/mestizo culture. Here, we see how *mestizaje* was strategically imposed on a collective level in order to eradicate self and group identification with Indigeneity. Interestingly, *mestizaje* was exclusive of Indigenous people who identified with their Indigeneity, and seemingly inclusive of anyone who was willing to renounce their Indigeneity. Nonetheless, even with the assimilation processes into whiteness, Indigenous people were not automatically granted all of the white privileges. Ultimately, the MNR’s embrace of *mestizaje* created a system in which the so-called “inclusion” was used to exclude Indigenous peoples (Rivera Cusicanqui, *Violencias reencubiertas* 97-98). In this way, both the exclusivity and inclusivity of *mestizaje* worked in tandem with each other to create a seemingly attainable—yet actually difficult to achieve—sense of belonging. This formed an “inclusion that excludes”; an oxymoron that nullifies its own self.

The MNR’s plan to achieve their new *bolivianidad* was enforced through a series of reforms under the post-revolution MNR government. In the following sections, I will include some of Rivera Cusicanqui’s specific critiques of the MNR’s reforms and unionization implementation. Rivera Cusicanqui’s critical analysis demonstrates how *campesinización* was instrumentalized to de-indigenize all sectors of Bolivian society.

On universal suffrage

The implementation of universal suffrage in Bolivia is still regarded by many scholars as a major win for the democratization of Bolivia's political processes after the 1952 revolution. The expansion of the right to vote to explicitly include women and Indigenous communities professedly signaled a more just and democratic political system in Bolivia. However, this political inclusion of women and Indigenous communities largely remained a *de jure* enactment, as Indigenous communities continued to be excluded from political power outside of voting. Rivera Cusicanqui explains how universal suffrage served to further patronize Indigenous communities writing that:

“Prior to the extension of universal suffrage, Indians were excluded from political participation because the mestizo/creole elite placed them towards the bottom of the positivist scale of human evolution. With universal suffrage, they remained second-class citizens, viewed as incapable of exercising their own civil rights, and in need of mestizo leadership and protection until they achieved “maturity” (that is, assimilation)” (Rivera Cusicanqui, “Liberal democracy” 106).

Indeed, although Indigenous people were no longer technically excluded from Bolivia's democratic political processes, the universal suffrage reform was enacted within an already existing political system rooted in colonialism that was now governed by a new leftist elite. Ultimately, these new modes of democratic political processes in Bolivia were created by and based on eurocentric tradition. Moreover, traditional Indigenous processes were disregarded and replaced by more “legitimate” forms of political participation. In this way, universal suffrage cemented the illusion of democracy at the expense of recognizing Indigenous forms of political participation.

Evidently, the promulgation of universal suffrage served to ordain and implement Western political theory and systems in the Bolivian Indigenous context. Rivera Cusicanqui writes that:

“universal suffrage, like the promotion of unions, was part of a long-standing project aimed at eliminating communitarian forms of land ownership and political behavior. As such, the electoral project of the post-revolutionary state served to reinforce the colonial forms of domination exercised by the mestizo urban minority over the indigenous peasant majority, renewing the rationale and legitimation of such domination” (Rivera Cusicanqui, “Liberal democracy” 106).

Indeed, the lasting effects of universal suffrage included severing communitarian forms of land relations and changing the sociopolitical ontologies these relations entailed. By legally and formally valuing universal suffrage over pre-existing political processes that belonged to Bolivia’s Indigenous communities, the Bolivian government (led by the mestizo urban minority) solely legitimized its own political process. In this way, Indigenous forms of political participation were excluded from this “democratizing” project. Furthermore, the electoral project of universal suffrage acted as an attempt to quiet and even stifle Bolivia’s Indigenous people’s political desire for liberation. In an effort to contain the political imaginary under the guise of a “radical” opportunity to participate in a “true democracy”, the MNR manufactured the electoral process to ultimately serve the political interests of the MNR. The legitimacy and value of the political process of electoral voting came from the already existent Western political structures. Universal suffrage thus became another tool of rationalization and legitimization of the actions of the ruling elite (*Violencias reencubiertas* 149).

Rivera Cusicanqui also points out that Bolivia’s universal suffrage, along with unionization also necessitated the creation of a Bolivian citizenry (Rivera Cusicanqui, *Violencias reencubiertas*). As the revolutionary “advance” of universal suffrage was loudly broadcast in Bolivia’s post-revolutionary period, citizenship became an imperative element in the nation-making process of post-revolution Bolivia. This fabrication of a political democracy *dream-come-true* served the nation-building project of Bolivia, since the establishment of a liberal democracy requires building an uncompromising and unwavering faith in the Nation. Belonging

to the Bolivian citizenry thus required pledging a perfunctory patriotic trust in the Bolivian government. Any forms of questioning this patriotism resulted in exclusion from the citizenry.

And thus, political participation under the liberal state is contingent on a citizenship that unquestionably supports a nationalism that decenters Indigenous struggle for the sake of the State. This means that although (some of) Indigenous people's human and political rights are recognized by the Bolivian government, it is only done so when the Indigenous person decenters their Indigeneity to take on the characteristics of the Western citizen who is:

propietario, escolarizado, mestizo, productor y consumidor mercantil, etc. Todo extremo de violencia y de negación es tolerable en el espacio pre-social del mundo indio, mientras no se cumpla este proceso de *ciudadanía forzada* como imposición del modelo civilizatorio occidental (*Violencias reencubiertas* 58).

Subsequently, those who are not property-owners, formally educated, mestizo, mercantile producers or consumers are left outside the category of "citizen". Worse even, these excluded communities are left to defend for themselves when their government actively chooses not to. Thus, achieving the status of "citizen" in Bolivia became based on one's racial and ethnic identity.

And so, in adopting Rivera Cusicanqui's critical lens of the universal suffrage reform, we might ask: what good is a "democracy" that necessitates the erasure of Indigeneity for the sake of a limited right to vote? What good is the right to vote in a political system that makes its own rules to continue to subjugate an oppressed Indigenous majority? Rivera Cusicanqui draws out how the MNR's promises of Western universal suffrage, combined with its other reforms, ultimately worked as an apparatus of containment, assimilation and individualization, as we will see in the following section on Bolivia's agrarian reform.

Rivera Cusicanqui on agrarian reform

In many of her works, Rivera Cusicanqui centers the effects of Bolivia's 1953 agrarian reform on the changes in traditional Indigenous land stewardship. The history of Indigenous land stewardship in Bolivia dates back to pre-colonial times and, since then, has undergone massive changes reflecting that of its own society under colonial and neo-colonial rule. While colonization and its aftermath had already significantly altered the makeup of land and people relations, the 1953 agrarian reform broadened the liberal concept of the individual to that of the owner, parceling land and communities and transforming them into productive "peasant" family units (*Violencias reencubiertas* 58). Thus, Bolivia's agrarian reform further pushed forward the concept of individualizing the land that had traditionally been held and cared for communally. Additionally, the reform limited the liberation of Bolivia's Indigenous land and people to that of land ownership. This individualization and quantification of land solidified the political process of marking land as property that can be owned, bought and sold. The traditional forms of relating to, and caring for, the land had long been fractured, and continued to be severed under liberal "democracy" and "progress". This rupture in relationship to the land represented a reverberation of colonial violence.

As the agrarian reform furtively hid under the guise of redistributing land in a more fair and equal way, it also formed part of a broader liberal project of Western modernization. Rivera Cusicanqui describes the MNR's motivations behind the agrarian reform in the following passage:

La imposición por el MNR de una reforma agraria, diseñada dentro de un esquema liberal que busca convertir a indígenas y sus recursos organizados comunitariamente en pequeños campesinos dueños de sus lotes individuales, agrupados en sindicatos, subvertir la doble estrategia del ayllu del control vertical y colectivo sobre sus recursos productivos. Vista desde esta perspectiva, la reforma agraria fue una entre varias tentativas del sector criollo de poner en marcha el viejo sueño bolivariano de liberalizar a las repúblicas andinas. Pero, como demuestra el texto, los ayllus se acomodaron a las

nuevas exigencias, y aunque debilitados y cada vez más divididos, sobrevivieron (Rivera Cusicanqui, *Ayllús* 16-17).

Indeed, the agrarian reform was created and brought to fruition within this “liberal scheme” to redistribute land by using Western notions of land *ownership* as opposed to Indigenous traditions of land *stewardship*. Through the reform, the Bolivian government parceled out individual plots of land to individual people actively choosing to ignore existing Indigenous modes of social, political and land organization (i.e. the *ayllus*). Subsequently, Rivera Cusicanqui views this restructuration of the land as a *criollo* project whose eurocentric objective is to expand liberal concepts and values onto Bolivia’s Indigenous communities. The *criollo* modes of administering land relations bring to light the neocolonial dynamics that the Bolivian government extended past the 1952 revolution.

Furthermore, the agrarian reform was yet another post-revolution method of isolating the Indigenous person from their collective community to create the Western concept of the “free” individual (this was also seen with the granting of universal suffrage). Rivera Cusicanqui points out how the agrarian reform formed a part of a conglomerate of political actions to “modernize” by following Western standards:

En efecto, el desconocimiento de las demandas autónomas del movimiento comunario, la imposición del sindicato como forma universal de representación de la población rural, el enfoque individualista y parcelario de la reforma agraria, la castellanización forzada y muchas otras medidas pueden enmarcarse en un nuevo proyecto “civilizador” y homogeneizador de la sociedad q’ara que buscaba destruir la identidad propia de los comunarios indios para construir una sociedad “moderna” inspirada en modelos occidentales (Rivera Cusicanqui, *Ayllus* 26).

Indeed, the Bolivian government’s repudiation of Indigenous communal relations and Indigenous cosmovision aided the “civilizing” project of homogenization. The agrarian reform accompanied the forceful imposition of the Spanish language and other de-Indigenizing mechanisms to abandon Indigeneity as a whole and instead adopt Western modes of thinking and

being. This formed part of the MNR's nation-building project of creating a new Bolivia, that is a Bolivia which recognized *campesinos*, but failed to recognize their Indigeneity.

Through this homogenizing project, the 1952 revolution and the agrarian reform “generated an unprecedented organizational, ideological, and identity crisis” (Rivera Cusicanqui, *Liberal democracy* 99). This crisis was felt in all sectors of Indigenous society. After the 1952 revolution, the Bolivian government took advantage of this moment of imposed cultural confusion to promulgate the project of *campesinización* and break cultural ties with Indigeneity. This is why Rivera Cusicanqui refers to this period (from 1952 and the years after) as a time of “*pacificación revolucionaria*” of Indigenous peasants (Rivera Cusicanqui, *Oprimidos pero no vencidos* 18). Effectively, *campesinización* had serious repercussions on the sociopolitical structuring of Indigenous life. In the next section, I will include some of Rivera Cusicanqui's explicit critiques of the MNR's process of *campesinización* in Bolivia's Indigenous communities.

Rivera Cusicanqui on unionization

As waves of unionization spread all over Bolivia after the 1952 revolution, the MNR government recognized the union as the most important form of socio-political organization, completely ignoring the preexisting Indigenous traditional organization of the *ayllu*. Rivera Cusicanqui's extensive research on the implementation of unions, specifically in Norte de Potosí, provides a wide range of critiques of unionization and its impacts on the *ayllus*. Rivera Cusicanqui points out that the *ayllus* in Bolivia experienced the post-revolution waves of unionization in disparate ways. For example, in Norte de Potosí, union leaders took advantage of already existing weaknesses and cracks in the *ayllu* structure to implement unions and subjugate

the *ayllus*, thus functioning as a form of colonial domination (Rivera Cusicanqui, *Oprimidos pero no vencidos* 109).

Meanwhile, the unions that were implemented in the Bolivian valleys were heavily based on clientelism, and the union leadership maintained power with an armed militia and state control over resources (Rivera Cusicanqui, “Liberal democracy” 104-105). Unfortunately, this power became easily co-opted by urban elites and the union movement “quickly degenerated into factionalism and caudillismo, once its sole objective of land redistribution in the valleys was attained” (Rivera Cusicanqui, “Liberal democracy” 104-105). Moreover, in the valleys of Bolivia and Norte de Potosí, unions took center stage in communal organization despite the regions’ long integral histories of the *ayllu*.

For many rural Indigenous communities, unions represented a possible avenue to dismantle the oppressive hacienda system that had kept Bolivia’s Indigenous people under intense laboral and land subjugation. However, in the end, unions continued reproducing the cultural and political hegemony of the *criollo-mestizo* urban elite (Rivera Cusicanqui, “Liberal democracy” 105). Rivera Cusicanqui points out that although some Indigenous people formed part of union leadership, the replication of caste dynamics within the union did not save these intermediary union leaders from being discriminated against by the *criollo-mestizo* elite (i.e. national MNR leadership) (Rivera Cusicanqui, “Liberal democracy” 105). Thus, the unionization’s internal replication of colonial dynamics served to maintain power hierarchies among the Bolivian castes even among those who actively formed part of the unionization process. In the end, although unions promised liberation for those who joined to fight the oppression of “the working class”, the unions maintained a class-only analysis of societal

oppression, failing to recognize the particularities of the neocolonial oppression Indigenous communities faced.

After the revolution, the new leftist leadership reduced the communal needs of Bolivia's Indigenous communities to the proletarian interests of "the worker", completely dismissing the Indigenous communities' pre-existing cultural traditions and political structures. Thus, for Rivera Cusicanqui, the union represented another step in the chain of homogenizing and civilizing proposals that Bolivia's dominant *criollo* caste formulated to solve the so-called "Indian problem" (Rivera Cusicanqui, *Oprimidos pero no vencidos* 106). In separating Indigenous labor from ethnic and cultural identity, unions created an incomplete image of "the worker" that is solely based on laboral and economic exploitation, again passing through an adopted (Western) Marxist lens. In doing so, this new national rhetoric of "the worker" distorted the meaning of "work" for Indigenous people, who had long followed the Andean cosmovision of communal and reciprocal relationships with people, the land and ecosystems. Now that "work" only referred to labor and not the cultural or even spiritual connection with the land, Indigenous people were deprived of ethnic identification at both the national and local level.

It is important to note that Rivera Cusicanqui recognizes that Andean Indigenous societies have been traditionally very hierarchical, but that their vertical structures have always been accompanied with strong collective participation in local decision-making regarding elections of decision-makers and distribution of resources (Rivera Cusicanqui, *Ayllus* 19). This is a key point where unions and *ayllus* contrast as the Andean concept of reciprocity is not practiced in the unions, especially under the manipulation of political parties and NGOs (Rivera Cusicanqui, *Ayllus* 19). While *ayllus* were founded upon this principle of reciprocity, unions were made to fit the conditions of Western society's markets and capitalism. Under the Western

notions of “progress” and “development”, NGOs today continue in their attempt to “update” the *ayllu* structure to fit a more mercantile (capitalist) rationality to benefit the West at the cost of Indigenous sociopolitical organization (Rivera Cuciscanqui, *Ayllus* 7).

Additionally, in the act of separating the mines (labor) from the ethnic Indigenous communities, the universalized application of the union in the context of a heterogenous Bolivia acted as a “civilizing” project that promoted the status of Bolivian citizenship conceived through elite and Western culture (Rivera Cusicanqui, *Oprimidos pero no vencidos* 106). The civilizing project of unions has recently been further cemented through the unions’ financial support by NGOs. Under the guise of Western “development”, NGO influence on unionization continues to marginalize the power and legitimacy of the *ayllu* in Bolivian society. Analyzing this relationship between NGOs and unions, Rivera Cusicanqui warns against the evangelizing agenda that NGOs carry out with a Western and Christian vision that is incompatible with Indigenous Andean spirituality and that, according to Rivera Cusicanqui, will continue to persist and live on (Rivera Cusicanqui, *Ayllus* 9).

Despite these challenges, Rivera Cusicanqui recognizes the importance and relevance of the *ayllus* in Bolivia’s contemporary society, stating that: “la ética de los ayllus puede brindar, no solo modelos de organización y comportamiento sino también estructuras de autogobierno local que pueden nutrir una auténtica refundación del sistema democrático sobre bases descentralizadas y pluriétnicas” (Rivera Cuciscanqui, *Ayllus* 9). Indeed, Rivera Cusicanqui continues to view the *ayllu* system as an alternative to the Western modes of sociopolitical organization that Bolivia’s governing powers have imported. For Rivera Cusicanqui, the *ayllus* form part of an Indigenous futurity in the ever evolving Andean society.

Chapter 5 INTERPRETING REINAGA AND RIVERA CUSICANQUI'S WORK

Herein lie some necessary questions: how can a liberation struggle fighting multiple oppressions take form in a heterogenous neo-colonial context like Bolivia? How can we ensure that Indigenous autonomy and cultural identity is not obscured by the category of workers? Both Reinaga and Rivera Cusicanqui bring up Indigeneity as a key category of analysis and point out how Indigeneity (and its subsequent racialization processes) has profound associations with socioeconomic class in regard to how colonial dynamics have structured Bolivia's political economy, specifically keeping poor Indigenous people in poverty. Reinaga and Rivera Cusicanqui come to understand that although the Bolivian elite has both historically and contemporarily exploited poor Indigenous people, a solely class-based analysis does not suffice when examining the oppressions of Bolivian society. This is because, for both Reinaga and Rivera Cusicanqui, although Indigeneity and class are profoundly interlocked, they do not function in the same ways. A color-blind class analysis completely ignores the inherent colonial dynamics that formed Bolivia's capitalist and neoliberal political economy in the first place.

Furthemore, both writers share their deep concern with the many government-led processes of de-indigenization in Bolivia, especially after the 1952 revolution. Reinaga and Rivera Cusicanqui view a literal Marxist implementation in Bolivian society as an assimilationist tactic in the nation-building project of constructing a homogeneous *bolivianidad*. This *bolivianidad* poses a direct threat to Indigenous autonomy as it seeks to create a *mestizo* nation aligned with the Western pillars of "Progress" and "Democracy".

While Reinaga and Rivera Cusicanqui share many similar postulations on neocolonial Bolivia, they also each bring their own particular contributions to the discussion. For example, Reinaga's *La revolución india* provides a broader Indigenous-centered theoretical framework to

study Bolivian society through an anti-colonial lens, which examines the colonial formations of race. In this way, Reinaga's *La revolución india* provides a base for understanding systemic colonialism and colonial power dynamics in Bolivian society. On the other hand, Rivera Cusicanqui adds more specific critiques of the Bolivian revolution's failures. In her work, Rivera Cusicanqui uncovers the deceptive character of the MNR and peels away the unscrupulous facade of their "revolutionary" politics, layer by layer. By delving into detailed examinations of the Bolivian post-revolutionary government's reforms, Rivera Cusicanqui exposes the Bolivian government's continuation of colonial structures in the contemporary era.

Furthermore, Reinaga and Rivera Cusicanqui differ in their examinations of race relations after the 1952 revolution. Reinaga centers Indigenous autonomy and Indigenous identity-making as he promotes *Indianismo*. Reinaga steadfastly believed in creating a united front among Indigenous communities to create and achieve their own political power. At the time that he wrote *La revolución india*, Reinaga's theorization viewed Indigenous peoples in Bolivia as pure and "uncontaminated". We can see this perspective formulate Reinaga's demands for the self-emancipation of el *pueblo indio*.

Rivera Cusicanqui on the *ch'ixi*

Contrastingly, Rivera Cusicanqui, theorizes Bolivia's racialization processes after the 1952 revolution differently than Reinaga's theorization of the self-emancipating *indio*. Rivera Cusicanqui expands on the late Bolivian philosopher and sociologist René Zavaleta's theorization of the *sociedad abigarrada*¹¹ to describe the complex particularities of the sociopolitical structuration of Bolivia under capitalism and colonialism (*Lo nacional-popular en*

¹¹ In Spanish, the term *abigarrado* is used to describe something that is colorful, vivid, messy, confusing or unorganized.

Bolivia, Zavaleta). In *Un mundo ch'ixi es posible*, Rivera Cusicanqui writes of the *ch'ixi* as a fissured, tensioned yet operative space where coexistence of antagonistic identities and histories complement each other. Rivera Cusicanqui presents the *ch'ixi* as a form of *abigarramiento* to reject the mestizophilic¹² reductionism and eurocentrism. Understanding the complex and violent history of miscegenation in Bolivia, Rivera Cusicanqui refuses to accept the de-Indigenizing notion that “we are all mixed/*mestizos*” which was promoted by the MNR government, along with many other sectors of society, after the 1952 revolution.

Instead of adopting Reinaga's dichotomous divide between *indio* and the white-mestizo, Rivera Cusicanqui writes that the *ch'ixi* is a more appropriate concept used to describe these intricate racialization processes in Bolivia. On the *ch'ixi*, Rivera Cusicanqui writes:

Esta franja intermedia no es, por lo tanto, una simbiosis o fusión de contrarios; tampoco es una hibridación. Y ni siquiera es una identidad. Sólo la angustia del deculturado, de aquel que tiene miedo a su propix *indix* interior, puede llevarlo a la búsqueda de identificación con lo homogéneo, a gozar de la hibridez. Podría ser “ni chicha ni limoná”, ese espacio sin personalidad; podría ser la otra versión del mestizaje, el mestizaje colonizado (*Un mundo ch'ixi es posible*, Rivera Cusicanqui 63).

The *ch'ixi* contrasts Reinaga's conceptualization of a pure *indio*. For Rivera Cusicanqui, the *ch'ixi* cannot be reduced to a cultural identity. Instead, it is an intermediary space of hybridization and symbiosis of opposites, where new liberating energies are born (*Un mundo ch'ixi es posible*, Rivera Cusicanqui 44). The *ch'ixi* is a place of possibility where those who have faced centuries worth of systematic de-Indigenization come to find answers in this space that breeds unresolved contradictions. With her elaboration of the *ch'ixi*, Rivera Cusicanqui

¹² Mestizophilia refers to the glorification of racial intermixing. This glorification often results in the further subjugation of Indigeneity and the unquestioned exaltation of whiteness.

provides more possibilities for identity formation that expand past the binary categorization of *indio* and non-*indio*.

Furthermore, Rivera Cusicanqui's work expands on many other integral aspects of Bolivian society, like gender and the patriarchy, that are yet to be examined in a paper like this one. Rivera Cusicanqui has written extensively on the role of gender and gender roles in Indigenous liberation struggles in Bolivia as can be seen in her works *La Mujer andina en la historia* (1990) and *Bircholas: trabajo de mujeres: explotación capitalista o opresión colonial entre las migrantes aymaras de La Paz y El Alto* (2002). This essay provides a limited scope of the anti-colonial movements, discussions and projects that continue to grow in Bolivia. While this essay does not explicitly focus on gender or sexuality, there is a growing amount of literature on important critiques that many feminist, sexually dissident groups and individuals in Bolivia have contributed to the anti-colonial struggle.¹³

Reading Reinaga and Rivera Cusicanqui together

When read together, Reinaga and Rivera Cusicanqui's works elucidate the neocolonial structures that continue to exist in Bolivia today despite, and due to, the 1952 revolution. Reinaga and Rivera Cusicanqui warn against the false promises of a white left whose purpose is to homogenize a heterogeneous society of Indigenous communities in order to achieve their political agenda. Although they may advertise their political agenda as a liberatory one, it is important to pay crucial attention to the direct threats they present to Indigenous autonomy.

¹³ A great example is *Mujeres Creando*, a Bolivian anarco-feminist social movement created in 1992 by María Galindo, María Mendoza, Julieta Paredes and other feminists. *Mujeres creando* puts on a wide variety of cultural productions (i.e. graffiti, performances and the takeover of public spaces to make sharp critiques of the Bolivian government's embracement of capitalism, globalization, extraction and westernization).

Both Reinaga and Rivera Cusicanqui warn us against the nature of “progressive” politics that in the end only continue the legacy of colonialism, co-opt Indigenous organizational structures (i.e. the *ayllu*) and de-Indigenize Bolivia’s Indigenous communities. Rivera Cusicanqui has gone on to write about the dangers of *ONG-ización*, multiculturalism and neoliberalism that contemporary Bolivian society faces today. The works of Reinaga and Rivera Cusicanqui bring us a critical understanding of the extension of colonial dynamics to today’s society, not just in Bolivia but also in the rest of the world. Indeed, as the words “decolonize” and “decolonization” increasingly gain popularity and co-optation within academia, non-governmental and nonprofit organizations and even the private sector, I believe it to be fundamental to carefully consider the meaning of these words. Reinaga and Rivera Cusicanqui’s work leads us to really consider what decolonization means in action. What specific actions lead to decolonization efforts that counter de-Indigenization? How do seemingly “progressive” spaces continue to reproduce neocolonial dynamics today? Which of Reinaga’s and Rivera Cusicanqui’s critiques can be applied to Bolivia’s current government under the Movimiento al Socialismo (MAS) political party?

On a more personal note, reading Reinaga and Rivera Cusicanqui challenged my own politics and worldviews. The writers’ critiques of a socialist-led revolution in an Indigenous context surprised me and made me want to keep reading, as I asked myself how the Bolivian National Revolution came to extend colonialism under a leftist government. I can say that now, I think more critically about the importance of centering Indigeneity, race and culture among seemingly “progressive” projects.

Additionally, I find Reinaga and Rivera Cusicanqui’s discussions on unionization to be particularly instrumental especially within the contemporary context of increasing

monopolization, neoliberalism and anti-capitalist suppression. For these writers, Bolivia's unionization and its hyperfocus on class necessitated the occlusion of Indigeneity, causing a staggering disequilibrium of valued political and ethnic identities. The union was used as a force that devalued the *ayllu* by discrediting traditional Indigenous forms of organization and prioritizing those of the West. I recognize that the importation of political theory, strategies and systems previously foreign to Bolivia is not inherently bad solely on the grounds of its foreignness. In fact, it is important to note that although Reinaga and Rivera Cusicanqui provide scathing critiques on the use of unions to Westernize and "modernize" Indigenous societies, these writers do not throw out the use of unions as a whole.

However, as Rivera Cusicanqui shows us, when this importation of knowledge and political structures from the West expels Indigenous epistemology and communal relations, then it must be thoroughly examined with the following questions: How much are we willing to give up for the purpose of "modernizing"? What does this concept of "modernization" look like in practice and from the Indigenous perspective? For whom is the logic of modernization logical?

Chapter 6 CONCLUSION

The works of Reinaga and Rivera Cusicanqui are integral to today's complex, epistemological and practical debates on what tangible and theoretical vehicles might be used for the decolonization of the land, people and cultures of Bolivia. Although Bolivia has its own particular history and racial formation processes, the lessons learned from the national revolution can be studied and applied to analyses across the world. Through their work, we can learn from the long-existing and continually-evolving forms of collective and communal living that oppose the necropolitical projects of extraction, exploitation and cultural and human genocide. As Rivera Cusicanqui points out, in this era of the increasingly convergent crises of neoliberalism, globalization and imperialism, it is imperative to unmask the colonial continuations cloaked under the guises of Progress and Modernity.

Reading Reinaga's and Rivera Cusicanqui's work together, we see the urgency of centering Indigenous autonomy in the political, social, economic and epistemological spheres. Reinaga and Rivera Cusicanqui seek to preserve Indigenous cultural identity and use it for collective liberation purposes, and question and disagree with the universalization of class struggle, particularly where Indigeneity is not made a central pillar in so-called "liberation" movements. Both writers look for an analysis that centers the lived particularities of Indigenous experiences in Bolivia over the course of centuries. Because they do not find this type of analysis in Marxism, they join others in creating one that is alive and dynamic just like their own Indigenous communities.

As Reinaga and Rivera Cusicanqui show us, the tools for liberation lie within these very communities that face the utmost violence and oppression. They expand our imaginations to include modes of living outside of the Western systems that have been ingrained into our

colonized minds. Reflecting on the futility of keeping discussions on decolonization in purely theoretical and academic spheres, Rivera Cusicanqui writes:

Pero es bien difícil pensar que se pueda lograr espacios descolonizados en el interior de la academia, desde la individualidad de la cátedra, o en la soledad de la producción teórica. Considero que hay que formar colectivos múltiples de pensamiento y acción, *corazonar* y pensar en común, para poder enfrentar lo que se nos viene (Rivera Cusicanqui, *Un mundo ch'ixi es posible* 72).

Here, Rivera Cusicanqui presents the act of *corazonar* (derived from the Mayan concept of *ch'ulel* and the Aymara concept of *chuyma*) that describes a place where one thinks with the heart and memory. I believe that all of what Reinaga and Rivera Cusicanqui write about is rooted in love for their Indigenous ancestors, present communities and future descendants.

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