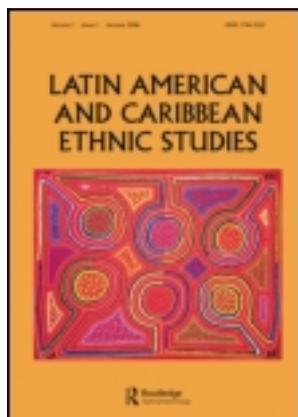


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Nicole Fabricant ^a

^a Department of Anthropology, Towson University, 8000 York Road, LI 318 E., Towson, MD 21252, USA

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Symbols in Motion: Katari as Traveling Image in Landless Movement Politics in Bolivia

Nicole Fabricant

This case study of the Landless Peasant Movement (MST-Bolivia) looks at the contemporary use and value of the image of Tupac Katari, an anti-colonial hero who led a regional insurgency in 1780. The symbol of Katari as resurrected spirit in political tale-telling and on flags and posters mixes with more contemporary icons of landless peasant politics to serve political and economic purposes: redistributing land and resources to displaced peoples. This essay argues that as this symbol travels through time – from a popular sign of Andean politics to a critical emblem of multiculturalism in the 1990s – it takes on new meanings as indigenous peoples make critical links between ethnic/racial identity, uneven resource distribution, and structural inequality. As people move across geographic space – from MST communities to urban centers, from Santa Cruz to La Paz – their symbols stand against new forms of violence and discrimination and infuse regional spaces with hybrid political identities. However, when an image or symbol, once tethered to concrete demands and embodied performances at a local level, moves across scales and turns into a mere symbol of the state, abstracted from material shifts, it loses its capacity to mobilize.

Keywords: Indigenous politics; culture and political economy; *Inkarrí* myth; land and territory

As many contemporary ethnographers have noted, indigenous peoples and social movements across Latin America have been organizing for decades, seeking cultural and political recognition and incorporation into the nation-state, which long excluded them (Goldstein, 2004; Postero, 2007b; Gustafson, 2009a). Evo Morales's election was a watershed victory for indigenous peoples in the Americas and represented the culmination of a long history of new forms of activism in places like Bolivia. While Nancy Postero (2007b) describes this new kind of activism as 'post multicultural citizenship' – focusing on language of citizenship and expectations of rights – I am interested in the creative use of symbolic culture for respatializing and reimagining communal relations. The following questions have informed this analysis: Why and how does symbolic culture become a political vehicle for imagining change at local, regional, and national level? To what extent do people reinvent, reshape, and re-create cultural forms, traditions, and narratives

in order to address localized problems of poverty and inequality? Finally, how have these movement strategies informed state-making in the contemporary era, as cultural and symbolic performances have been critical to ‘decolonizing’ and refounding the Bolivian state?

One critical intervention emerging out of these questions centers on the materiality of Andean symbols in motion, when older forms of life, communal and social relations, and productive engines have been transformed; symbols take on new significance and meaning as people move across space and scales. Researchers working in the Andes have long noted that Andean social life is best grasped in its dynamism and through the idiom of movement. Consider Zuidema’s (1964) Inca ritual and statecraft in terms of travels through representation of social space, or Murra’s (1972, 1978, 1985) development of a model of Andean subsistence. New ethnographic work like Stuart Rockefeller’s *Starting from Quirpini* (2010) theorizes physical movement as critical to the construction of meaning, home, community, and national identity. Places are intertwined via circuits constituted by travels. Rockefeller argues that people who move play a creative role in shaping the places they move through. While much transnational migration work in anthropology (Rouse, 1991, 1995; Perez, 2004; Pribilisky, 2007; Peña, 2010) has looked at meaning-making across and between communities, it has been unable to capture the interactions and dynamism of meaning across scales. Rockefeller, rather, captures the space of an Andean community in its multiscalar and dynamic complexity. He says: ‘People cannot help but be creative – in their actions, their movement and their imaginations.¹ But they do not always control, or understand, what it is they are creating’ (Rockefeller, 2010, p. 219). I borrow from Rockefeller in order to understand the shifting meaning of a traveling symbol across space, the dynamism across and between communities, and emergent tensions, as local understandings of cultural forms might differ radically from state-making initiatives.

In order to more sufficiently explore the question of mobile symbols and meaning across scales, I hone in on one indigenous social movement, the Landless Peasant Movement (MST-Bolivia), which borrows its name from the well-known Brazilian movement. The MST has led the fight over land in the eastern region of Bolivia, a region where more than 90 percent of the productive land is owned by seven percent of the population. Members seize or occupy unproductive land in the Bolivian Oriente and organize themselves into farming collectives in order to work the land in an ecologically sustainable manner. Borrowing from the strategies of other social movements in Latin America, the MST creatively selects and reconstructs fragments of regional history, manipulating and utilizing strategic symbols and cultural resources in order to claim rights to land and territory. In this paper, I explore the contemporary use, material value, and mobility of one symbol in particular – that of Tupac Katari, an anti-colonial hero who led a regional insurgency in 1780. The reconstruction of classic myths, such as *Inkarri*² – the resurrection of the ancient Andean anti-colonial hero – provide a rich historic and cultural repertoire and, along with other invented traditions, such as the imagined *ayllu*,³ serve a political and economic purpose in the contemporary period. The MST’s use of rich indigenous and cultural history and symbols does not emerge in a vacuum,

but rather has been part of broader coalition-building across diverse communities for rights to resources in Bolivia since the late 1980s and early 1990s.

The symbol of Katari, as it moves from the local to the national level, takes on new meaning as it is used to promote Morales's Agrarian Revolution. MST members, while at times critical of the administration, have also been some of Morales's greatest supporters, rallying rural workers to support a president that they describe as 'One of us.' Since Morales emerged out of the social movement scene, in particular the coca-grower movement, he has mobilized similar cultural and political strategies for reshaping the state, a state that has long imposed a racialized, racist, cultural, and legal practice. In his efforts to 'decolonize' Bolivia, he has relied upon similar Andean signs of struggle and victory. The symbol of Katari, as deployed by Morales, can at times equally motivate and mobilize groups of *campesinos* to action to defend and support new policy. Symbolic uses of historic memory, as articulated by Bolivian movement activists, if not tethered to highly localized and grassroots change agenda, are 'simply un show politico.'

In order to conceptualize this creative use of culture and symbolic forms, we must understand the material deterritorializing effects of neoliberal reforms and the 'creative' resource-based movements that emerged out of such economic readjustments. These movements, rather than focusing on the long history of extractive industries and battles over natural resources in Bolivia, have mobilized symbolic culture as a political vehicle for what needs to be reclaimed post-neoliberalism. Culture talk and performance did not emerge in a vacuum, but rather were a direct result of 'multicultural reforms' in the 1990s.

New Cultural Politics of Resource Redistribution

Victor Paz Estensorro initiated the first round of neoliberal reforms, which emerged in the 1980s when Bolivia, like other countries in the global South, was deeply in debt as a result of a series of military dictators who had squandered money and resources and accepted loans from the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank. These loans came with particular conditions or prescriptions for their economy, liberalizing trade and opening Bolivia's borders, privatizing all state-owned industries, deregulating production, and encouraging foreign investment in natural resource extraction and exportation. A second round of neoliberal reforms came in the 1990s, which gave cultural and political rights to Bolivia's indigenous populations (Warren, 1998; Gustafson, 2002; Warren & Jackson, 2002; Sieder, 2002; Rappaport, 2005; Postero, 2007b). As many analysts have noted, however, interculturalism was merely a gesture that offered some recognition to indigenous peoples (Hale, 2006; Postero, 2007b; Gustafson, 2009a) but served primarily as a form of symbolic incorporation and did little to ameliorate the dislocation of rural peoples into urban peripheries and informal economies (Gustafson, 2009a). Charles Hale (2002) has argued that neoliberal multiculturalism included a cultural project that encouraged individualism and urged groups to take on the roles of governing themselves. Indians who govern themselves within a particular 'neoliberal logic' become *indios permitidos* [authorized Indians]. Postero (2007b), in response to Hale, has asserted that in

Bolivia indigenous citizens have taken advantage of political openings offered by neoliberal reforms such as the Law of Popular Participation and use new legal framings to pose challenges to the workings of global capitalism (Postero, 2007b, p. 17). What are interesting in my work with the Landless Peasant Movement, however, are the ways in which new social movements have taken symbolic culture out of the multicultural discussions of the 1990s and have reappropriated an imagined Andean identity, transformed it, and made it malleable as a political discourse for what needs to be reclaimed, reinvented, and reimagined after the shocks of neoliberal reforms (Albro, 2005a; Hale, 2006; Postero, 2007b).

MST's use of culture is not abstracted from that of other social movements, but rather emerges out of new kinds of coalitional politics⁴ centered on resource struggles, where social movements redefined history and identity as a tool for reclaiming municipal water as a 'collective right,' gas as part of national sovereignty, and land/territory as a reproduction of Andean or peasant farming culture. The first of a series of protests to reclaim the commons was the Water Wars in Cochabamba. After the privatization of the public water supply, distinct groups of people came together to effectively mobilize a discourse centering on the defense of the 'traditional use and distribution of water' as a collective cultural right based on *usos y costumbres* [indigenous uses and customs] (Albro, 2005a). This use of the imagined pre-Andean *ayllu* resembles Joanne Rappaport's work (1994), which looks at the legend of Cumbe (a chief who ruled the Columbian community of Cumbal during the Spanish invasion). There is no documentation of his existence, yet *Cumbales* use him as ancestral link to the past, and his image appears in popular music, theater, and community organizing to reinvigorate indigenous heritage and reclaim lands. In this case, Andean cultural and communal identities became a critical frame of reference for reclaiming water as part of a wider trans-Andean commons. Similarly, what might be called the 'coca' wars, waged against the US-backed plans to eradicate coca in the 1990s – which effectively threatened to dispossess peoples already displaced from their prior labor as miners – had mobilized the symbolism of a 'millenarian leaf' against imperialism (Gustafson & Fabricant, 2011). Lastly, the Gas Wars exploded in El Alto after an attempt by then-President Gonzalo Sanchez de Lozada, who proposed to export Bolivia's gas in a pipeline through Chile. Distinct groups came together to recover control over a resource that was seen as the country's national patrimony (Kohl & Farthing, 2006; Arbona, 2006; Gustafson & Fabricant, 2011). Indigenous movements – within this broader frame of reclaiming gas for national sovereignty – also called for the refounding of the country, greater democratization based on new forms of social organization, greater indigenous representation, and the rewriting of the constitution (Gustafson & Fabricant, 2011).

The Land Wars in the East were a daily backdrop to resource politics occurring across the country. Landed inequality is not new – it has been a problem since the colonial period. As Herbert Klein, the Bolivian historian, once stated:

Bolivia is, and has been since the sixteenth century Spanish conquest, a capitalist Western class-organized society in which the Indians were for many centuries the exploited class of workers. The government, which extracted the surplus from the

peasants and workers, was traditionally run for and by the 'white' Spanish-speaking and Western oriented elites.

(Klein, 2003, p. xii)

The wealth of the large landowning class was built with the labor of poor peasants. The Spaniards systematically fragmented indigenous communities in the highlands and replaced them with large, modern plantations (Klein, 2003; Dangl, 2007). While the 1952 National Revolution promised a radical redistribution of *latifundio* [large-scale landowner] land to peasants, such reforms never reached the East. The intense expansion and economic development in the 1950s, coupled with large-scale land holding patterns, created problems for highlanders and lowland indigenous groups alike.

Land Problems in the East and the Birth of the Landless Movement

Andean peasants from highland farming and mining communities were encouraged to migrate to Santa Cruz in the 1950s as part of the state-based plan to populate the lowland region. Colonization programs were put into place to the north of Montero (primarily in the Obispo Santiesteban region), and highlanders were relocated to agricultural colonies such as Warnes, Mineros, and Sagrado Corazon with the promise of land, loans, food, and tools for farming. They encountered a very different reality, however, and agribusiness elites quickly turned highland migrants into wage laborers on the expanding sugarcane plantations. In order to deal with problems in the northern region of Santa Cruz, migrants formed local syndicate structures in these 'colonized' zones.⁵ Historically, these agrarian unions were the only peasant organizational structure capable of redistributing lands and resources to poor farmers. They directed and participated in a wide range of activities, including the distribution of land, the initiation of infrastructural development, and the resolution of internal disputes (Gill, 1987).

While there were historic tensions between highland migrants and lowland indigenous⁶ groups, and the two had rather distinct forms of organizing, they came together politically as *indigenas y originarios* in the 1990s and 2000s to defend indigenous rights to land and stand against the agribusiness threat. The first march that brought together their interests occurred in 1990, the 'Marcha por el Territorio y la Dignidad,' which was initiated by the *Mojeño* in the Beni region and arrived in La Paz in order to pass the Decreto Supremo, recognize the existence of the first *territorios indigenas* [indigenous lands], and seek respect for the national and international existence of the *pueblos de las tierras bajas* [indigenous communities of the lowlands].⁷ These heterogeneous and hybrid marches began to redefine land issues; rather than label them solely as a highland migrant or lowland problem, the groups incorporated under the umbrella of *tierra y territorio* [land and territory]. As Marquez describes it:

When we speak of land, we are referring completely to something productive. The call for territory has a much more open definition. Territory is not just about geographic space or where someone was born, but rather it is a space where human actors practice and reproduce their communal life. It establishes a balanced relationship between man,

biodiversity, and nature. The perception of territory for indigenous people of the West has much to do with a space that is lived and felt. For them, land is part of territory and it reproduces the life of a community, their culture, rituals, and economic forms of production, their political and social organization and their relationship with their cosmovision.

(Marquez, 2010, p. 3)

The cultural politics of land, then, was imagined through a new kind of multicultural indigenous politics. Land rights, for pan-indigenous peoples, became not just about geographic space. Instead, land and territory were seen as the reproduction of indigenous culture and a particular model of peasant agriculture.

While marches marked the beginning of inter-ethnic forms of organizing for land rights at the national level, the dire situation of *campesinos* without land, particularly highland migrants, worsened as *latifundios* controlled most of the productive areas and put the peasants to work under slave-labor conditions. As a result of the global shifts in agriculture that had created this highly mobile, fragmented labor force, agrarian unions, which had once created an effective political structure for negotiating rights to land and resources, proved incapable of organizing the workers. At the same time, unions failed to present a real alternative to an agro-industrial model of development that had left productive resources in the hands of a few (Fabricant, 2010).

New agrarian movements were born within this rather difficult political climate. The MST emerged in 2000 in the Gran Chaco Region,⁸ where more than 80 percent of the area's *campesinos* have no title or rights to land, as an effort to draw attention to the problem of the *latifundio* in the Oriente and the slow pace of INRA [National Institute of Agrarian Reform]⁹ to address problems of landed inequality. At the base of the movement lies the land occupation, whereby hundreds of landless cut the wire fences of a *hacienda* and squat on 'private land' in order to bring attention to the problem of landed inequality in the region. Once the government surveys the land and declares it unproductive, title and rights can be transferred over to the movement. Therefore, each successful occupation leads to an MST land reform settlement. This provides a springboard for further occupations and new land reform settlements or encampments, and hence the territorialization of a movement. MST's organizational structure can be thought of as a series of nested dolls: distinct groups come together locally and scale demands up to the national level. In order to organize democratically within settlements and at a regional level, the movement borrows from and relies upon Andean ideals of democracy, which include principles of rotating leadership, extensive consultation with their base, and a horizontal form of governance.

The first occupation took place on 23 June 2000 and received international attention. In the Gran Chaco region, 200 migrants occupied the unused 16,000-acre *hacienda* owned by the sister-in-law of President Gonzalo Sanchez de Lozada. MST members squatted on her plot, constructed makeshift huts, worked the land collectively, raised animals, and even built a school for the children. Subsequently, they were violently attacked by paramilitaries, who entered the encampment one evening, killing six peasants and wounding 21. Instead of dismantling the fragile organization, this incident led to the consolidation of a broad-based social movement whose members refused to allow this kind of violence and displacement to continue

to define their lives. They organized a group of *campesinos* and marched to La Paz to pressure the government into holding the perpetrators responsible for their criminal acts and create a platform for fair and adequate land reform.

This first occupation became a springboard for other occupations in the region. The two most well-known occupations in the Santa Cruz area, following Pananti, were *El Cuchiron* and Yuquises. *El Cuchiron* took place in the Ichilo region of Santa Cruz, and 500 families squatted on a plot of land that had been sold to Brazilian businessmen interested in investing in the illegal timber trade. After six years of squatting in difficult conditions, the movement still had not been granted title, due to the fact that the *Cuchiron* occupation is considered 'protected forest reserve,' not government or state land, which cannot be redistributed under the Communal Redirection Act. The second occupation was that of Yuquises, located 170 miles outside the City of Santa Cruz in the Obispo Santiesteban, or northern region. Five hundred *campesinos* took over thousands of acres of land in the summer of 2004, but only received official title in September 2007. This occupied site was the first official plot of land to be titled under Evo Morales's Communal Redirection Act of the New Agrarian Reform Law.

I spent most of my time observing and participating in local meetings, events, festivals, and fairs in various communities or MST *nucleos* [base community] in the Obispo Santiesteban region, mainly among those who comprised the Yuquises occupation and now live in the land reform settlement called Pueblos Unidos [United Peoples]. In many ways, my methodological approach of studying a movement in motion happened by accident, as I mainly followed several key informants from these regions, traveling on the backs of trucks, in buses, in taxis, and on motorcycles. This is not the typical long-term anthropological study of a single community or of political organizing within one particular locale, but rather an attempt to capture the dynamism of new forms of indigenous politicking that cross urban/rural, regional/territorial, and national/international divides. Yet, being in motion with the MST also informed my understanding of how cultural forms and symbols like Tupac Katari are not static, but vibrant, active, constantly shifting, and gaining new meaning as people traverse these spaces on their daily rounds and in their political and social lives.

Reassembling Inkarrí in MST Community Meeting Spaces

On a cool day in mid-April, Pablo Mamani, President of MST-Santa Cruz, traveled from Santa Cruz to San Pedro to gather hundreds of *campesinos* for a meeting in the northern region to discuss the possibility of a new land occupation. He sat behind a makeshift metal podium in a large school auditorium and looked down at the audience of approximately 200 MST workers sitting on splintered wooden benches. Most of the rank-and-file were men, dressed in ripped cotton clothing, second-hand American t-shirts, lightweight pants, and *abarcas* (leather sandals used by farm workers). Some looked directly at Mamani, while others, primarily women, appeared distracted by the needs of their children running into and out of the meeting space. Mamani jumped out of his seat and began speaking in Quechua, the language of his parents and grandparents.¹⁰ His choice of this language instead of Spanish was

calculated and precise: the use of Quechua at political events effectively marks the space as indigenous territory. Most migrant laborers speak to one another informally in Quechua, but they quickly shift to Spanish to communicate with their children, land officials, and non-governmental organization (NGO) workers. Forced to learn Spanish when they relocated to the lowlands, Andean migrants now speak a form of mixed Quechua–Spanish at home. This political choice to move from private to public use of language can be thought of as a critical communicative strategy, giving weight and historical importance to his public and performative speech. Mamani cleared his throat, and continued in Spanish with an intense and steady cadence:

Our battle today and the violence we face is that of Tupac Amaru and [Tupac] Katari. Amaru¹¹ was condemned to death by the Spanish for fighting for justice. He declared, ‘Campesinos! Your poverty shall no longer feed the master.’ And then his revolutionary brother, Tupac Katari, took over this struggle. He, too, was executed, his body dismembered and sent to various regions. But he declared, ‘I will come back and I will be in millions.’

Today, we are his millions fighting to reclaim our land, our wealth, and our natural resources from international and transnational corporations. We have been kicked off our land, our members have been violently attacked in the city, and our leaders tortured in prison . . . but we must not give up the struggle. We must continue to fight for our great-grandparents, grandparents, and in some cases, our parents, who were slaves. They, too, fought in historic battles, defending their right to land and territory, and now it is our turn to do the same, to stand up to the landowners and multinationals.

In a call and response, which is characteristic of popular theater,¹² several audience members shared their experiences of displacement, landlessness, and poverty. Silverio Quispe, who had migrated from the Potosí region to work as a sugarcane cutter, expressed sadness over his loss of work and inability to sustain his family. Rosa Sanchez, a young single mother who had migrated from La Paz, told the group that she was unable to provide for her children, as the small plot of land she once owned had been absorbed by soy producers. Audience members like Daniel Arauz layered migrant tales onto references of Guaraní displacement and the breakup of their traditional and communal lands of origin. Braulio Condori spoke of the region as a kind of ‘military zone’ that had been ‘invaded’ by soy corporations. He described the new corporate wealth and power in the region as ‘eating away’ at their lands and communal spaces, slowly destroying any possibility for small-scale cultivation and for healthy and sustainable living.

Mamani’s opening reference to Tupac Katari, an Andean anti-colonial hero, has become commonplace, as President Morales has repeatedly used the *Inkarrí* myth as a symbol of a new pluriethnic Bolivia, or the invention of a state apparatus that includes distinct groups of indigenous peoples and incorporates their demands for territorial autonomy into the constitution. Katari, who took his name from Tomás Katari, an Aymara-speaking peasant who led an armed regional insurgency in 1780 near Potosí, and Tupac Amaru II, leader of the indigenous uprising in 1780 against the Spanish in Peru, is widely recognized in the Bolivian public imagination for his anti-colonial uprising and tragic death. In 1781, Katari, whose name in Aymara signifies ‘resplendent serpent,’ raised an army of some 40,000 troops and laid siege to

the city of La Paz, which lasted 184 days. Only with difficulty did the counterinsurgency troops sent from Buenos Aires manage to lift the siege and subdue the main insurgent force. Katari was eventually captured by the Spaniards and quartered in a brutal ceremony (Thomson, 2002; Hylton & Thomson, 2007).

The hope of the return of anti-colonial figures has occupied much scholarly attention. Historians have found Andean resurrection myths – the concept of Incan recovery through the reappearance of a messiah¹³ – throughout the mid-18th century (Wachtel, 1976; Ossio, 1973; Campbell, 1987; Stern, 1987). The myth unfolds in the following way: since the Inca had been decapitated by the Spanish, the messiah's body had been regenerating underground, leaving open the possibility of eternal reincorporation. Katari and Amaru reappear as messiahs following a preordained course of behavior with respect to their followers, including the association of their surnames with the *Inkarrí* myth, the abandonment of their world (Tinta, Chayant) for the outside worlds of Spanish America (Lima, Buenos Aires), and their triumphant return with creative powers that increase their capacity to change the world (Szeminski, 1987). As Flores-Galindo (1987) illustrates, the return or restoration of the Inca implied an alternative to the colonial order, a rupture with the prevailing conditions. This utopia, then, was a peculiar interpretation of history, rather than an original invention. The point, Szeminski (1987) notes, is that the restoration of the Inca did not mean the repetition of pre-Spanish times or ways. Their victory and the extermination of the Spaniards would create equilibrium in the relationship of This World with the Higher World and the Lower World alike. For the next two centuries, the myth, expressed in clandestine dances and performances, kept the hope of this reversal alive (Ossio, 1973; Postero, 2007a).

This myth gained much contemporary significance and traction through organizations like the Andean Oral History Workshop (THOA), founded in 1983 by students from the sociology department of the University of San Andrés in La Paz. THOA co-founder Silvia Rivera Cusicanqui's (1987) *Oppressed But Not Defeated: Peasant Struggles Among the Aymara and Quechua in Bolivia, 1900–1980* has become a critical *Katarista*¹⁴ text, laying out the history of indigenous struggle in the 20th century as well as the power of long-term and short-term political memory in the present. Yet the question of how and why such Andean anti-colonial narratives traveled from the highlands to the lowlands, particularly to places like Santa Cruz, and now serve as a central symbol for landless movement politics proves critical. In part, the mobility of such tales has to do with new alliances that developed in the late 1980s and early 1990s, which linked diverse groups in a struggle over land and productive resources, as mentioned previously. NGO figures and lowland organizations created critical networks of communication, which served as vehicles for the transportability and reinvention of these myths.¹⁵ Within this new structure, confederations like CIDOB joined with grassroots movements like MST, while Bartolina Sisa (the Federation of Peasant Women) and critical NGOs such as CEJIS engaged in research on land and indigenous rights; all came together to pressure the state for broader agrarian reform. Although land issues are radically different in the lowlands (primarily focused on TCOs or indigenous communal lands and elimination of the *latifundio*) and the highlands (where there are no *latifundios*, but

rather *minifundios*, which represent much smaller landholding patterns generally used for production), these organizations effectively created an intercultural, interethnic symbol for reclaiming rights to land and territory, and many different indigenous groups fit under this new paradigm. While NGOs might have been the stimulant for such ‘culture discourses,’ movements and indigenous actors have claimed such symbols as their own, mixing interpretations with their individual experiences of labor and hardship, violence and abuse in city centers. This use of the symbol for land rights resembles Nancy Postero’s (2007b) post-multicultural citizenship model, but as we will see, when Andean migrants move, the meaning of the image might transcend formal citizenship claims, and stand in for new ideas regarding indigenous independence and autonomy.

While the myth of *Inkarrí* might travel geographically from highland to lowland, from indigenous communities to NGO offices, it also can be rearranged and reassembled to reconstruct notions of time as overlapping and cyclical. For example, Pablo Mamani began at the MST meeting by noting the present conditions faced by *campesinos* – ‘Our battles today and the violence we face’ – then quickly transitioned into the past – ‘are the same battles as those of Tupac Amaru and Katari.’ Throughout this initial monologue, he constantly shifted between current and historic conditions of inequality and those of the Andean ancestors. Some of the now commonplace discussions about Andean indigeneity in Bolivia have come to argue that the past and future are envisioned differently in Andean language and cosmologies than they are in western norms of time and space (Hylton & Thomson, 2007; Kohl & Farthing, 2006). While perhaps exaggerated, it is argued that Andeans, rather than view the past being ‘behind’ and the future ‘ahead,’ see the past as in one’s front, since we have already witnessed the events that have taken place. This suggests – without arguing for a conservative traditionalism – that we may return to the past as a means of moving forward, or, perhaps more accurately, that we may move forward while looking back.

In such political performances, then, this suggests a strategic use of a return to a known past as a means of moving forward (Hylton & Thomson, 2007). This back and forth between the past, present, and future was mobilized as an instrument of change again in 2007 at the Aymara cultural event ‘Machaq Pachax Kutt’anxiwa,’ which means ‘The new time is already returning.’ Such a frame can make memory a demanding taskmaster, as its centrality can overdetermine present struggles, keeping them beholden to ancient unsatisfied demands that in some cases may no longer resonate. Linda Farthing and Benjamin Kohl (2007) described how Aymara leader Felipe Quispe articulated this dilemma: ‘We are no longer living in the 16th or 17th century. With Tupac Katari and Tupac Amaru. We need to use the story to “adjust ourselves to the contemporary period”’ (Farthing & Kohl, 2007, p. 12).

This form of strategic essentialism has become particularly popular among resource-based movements in Bolivia. The conceptualization of overlapping time has been an essential part of the political practice of MST activists, who must make sense of their own migrations and forced labor conditions, build an alternative political ideology, and convince others to participate in militant actions. Movement

intellectuals also select particular parts of the story, extracting fragments that serve a specific purpose for their actions in the present. These stories can often appear planned and scripted to other generations of MST militants.

Rebirth of Katari through the Landless Peasant Body

Performing Katari as embodied and resurrected in the millions of landless peasants, MST organizers resignify and reconnect bodies in space – not as broken, beaten up, and fragmented, but rather as collective tools of resistance. In the tradition of Augusto Boal, a famous Brazilian theater scholar, director, and activist,¹⁶ this tale, performed in and through MST workers, forces peasants to take apart their own lives, to study and to analyze their situation, and then to rebuild or reconnect, as illustrated by the feverish telling and retelling of their personal stories of labor and migration. The stories performed through the *campesino* body force MST organizers to see, feel, and understand how they have been controlled by others, marked by *hacendados*, and alienated from city spaces by white elites. The resurrected body of Katari, or that of a contemporary MST organizer, becomes a powerful text, a way of knowing, remembering, and transmitting information to others. As Performance Studies scholars Diana Taylor (2003) and Dwight Conquergood (1985, 2002) remind us, information and knowledge can be passed on not only through written texts, but also through expressive culture, ultimately understood and interpreted through these embodied practices.

It is no coincidence, then, that the peasant body becomes the tool for the reawakening of Katari as sign and symbol of the Agrarian Revolution in Santa Cruz. After all, Andean migrant bodies are powerful symbols of the depositories of the new global economy, which puts indigenous bodies to work, makes them flexible and malleable, and eventually disposes of them.¹⁷ MST organizers constantly referenced their bodies in everyday conversations as ‘hurting’ or ‘swollen,’ and some pointed to calloused hands or feet as the end result of their days toiling in the fields. As mentioned previously, many Andean migrants worked on the sugarcane plantations that expanded in the 1960s and 1970s. But as sugar production turned rapidly into soy, these laborers were no longer needed, for machines did most of the work, and many subsequently lost their jobs. They have had to find jobs working for the *grandes empresarios* [big transnationals] or for construction companies, which is equally damaging to their bodies.

Silverio Quispe, who articulated his sadness over the loss of work at the initial meeting, was one of the many MST *militantes* [militants] recruited to work in the expanding sugarcane industry in the 1960s. I sat down with him to ask about the use of Katari in MST political spaces, but before I had a chance to finish, he interjected with: ‘Katari, like us . . . was from humble origins and had to work many jobs to survive.’ Here, unlike the public meeting space, he did not use the image of Katari to illustrate the power of the millions of displaced peasants, nor did he use it to negotiate new political space, but rather he used this symbol to quickly index

his personal understanding of a ‘humble origin.’ He continued with his own migration history:

I first came to Santa Cruz from Potosí, working on the side of San Julian, and from there I went to Guabirá on the side of Chane. I worked as an employee for Guabirá, and they contracted me to carry sugarcane, especially when there was an excess in supplies. We stacked and loaded piles of sugarcane onto flatbeds and transported it to processing plants . . . That was some of the toughest labor, chopping cane with a machete. Sometimes, we carried 40–50 kilos on our shoulders, up a ladder, and dropped it on the growing pile of cane lying on the flatbed . . . It was carried out in extreme temperatures, and physical pain and exhaustion were the norm.

Quispe’s tale details the difficult conditions of work, as well as the pain and exhaustion that consumed him physically. Often, MST members layered memories of physical pain with the overarching press of capitalists, or *latifundios*, as a primary oppressive force. In this process of labor exchange, capitalists set the conditions and speed of work, thereby controlling workers’ daily activity and maximizing their own profits. Quispe stated:

Before, I used to work for the agribusiness corporations . . . They controlled our every move, we had to work hard and fast . . . it was like we were little machines. They didn’t pay us well . . . Sometimes, they even withheld our pay.

Through these recollections, MST members come to articulate and question divisions among workers produced by an intensifying exploitation of labor as part and parcel of a capitalist system. Their indexical use of Katari can, on occasion, lead to their imaginative linking of their displacement, relocation, and harsh labor conditions to that of their ancestors.

In rural areas, these migrants represented the backbone of the agro-industrial laboring force, and Katari stood for a shared ‘humble background/ancestry.’ Robert Albro (2010), in a new ethnography on provincial politicking and problem-solving networks in contemporary Bolivia, argues that the idea of the ‘humble’ has been manipulated in 21st-century politics for purely selfish reasons. While he points toward the dangers of the circulation of discourses of ‘humbleness,’ he also recognizes that the term has the possibility to cut across class, ethnic, and political party differences. He states:

It provides a basis to claim the commonalities of indigenous and popular heritage, but also of social mobility, as one’s own, and in the process widens the possibilities of inclusion, and potential working relationships, in ways comparable to the horizontal decision making associated with the grassroots and indigenous and social movements since 2000.

(Albro, 2010, p. 199)

In this case, ‘humble’ seems to be a way of linking self and individual history of difficult laboring lives to a political movement that attempts to transform ideas about agriculture and production.

Yet as Andean migrants moved toward city centers and reshaped urban areas, this image of Katari stood for ancestral protection from violent threats of right-wing elites. Andean migrants were described as invading ‘regional elite’ spaces of

consumption, such as the *Casco Viejo* [Old City], and in order to quell these new threats, as elites described it, regionalists adopted new forms of surveillance, control, and monitoring of key locations; they even hired paramilitary youth groups, who mark both the bounds and bodies of anyone who transgresses these new borderlands between urban and rural, peri-urban and *Casco Viejo*.

When I asked right-wing youth groups how they identified these ‘threats to the city spaces,’ they described physical appearances, the clothes Indians wear, their calloused and bruised hands, and their distinctive rural smells.¹⁸ These marks, then, or symbols of rural work and labor distinguish poor Indians from middle-class and upper-middle-class *Collas* in places like Santa Cruz and make them incredibly vulnerable as they transgress urban spaces. These landless bodies – their ripped cotton clothes, their dirty feet, their worn and calloused hands – are the bold illustration of this agrarian class, who must move through city centers to survive, but also become the object of violence and abuse. As Rockefeller mentioned, ‘One of the central tools of power is to take control of what people create, and one important way to do this is to control the context in which actions take place’ (Rockefeller, 2010, p. 219). Elites in Santa Cruz mark geographic space and bodies through regimes of violence and control, reproducing old colonial forms of subjugation (Gustafson, 2009b).

From Rural to Urban Spaces: Katari as Protection from Violence

Physical violence against Indians and the symbolic discourse of *colla de mierda* [Indian piece of shit] has always existed in the Santa Cruz region. Violence maintained a low-wage labor force and suppressed any forms of real leftist organizing in the rural peripheries. With the resurgence of a populist movement at the end of the 1990s and the election of Morales in 2005, however, violence against Andean migrants reached new explosive levels. Young boys carrying bats and beating indigenous women dressed *de pollera* became commonplace in the early 2000s, and stories of truckloads of youngsters provoking migrants on the outskirts of the city in neighborhoods like El Plan Tres Mil were reported nearly every evening on the news.

Despite daily threats of violence, MST laborers and organizers constantly travel into and around the city of Santa Cruz. They must traverse the racialized divides of rural and urban in order to plan land occupations, meet with NGO officials, and gain access to resources. Their lives are in motion, and this means that they represent a moving target for regionalist violence, as was the case with Pablo Mamani.

One day in mid-May 2005, he crossed the Plaza 24 de Septiembre, attempting to denounce ‘*soyeros*’ [soy producers] in the region who continued to exploit and abuse laborers, when a paramilitary youth group attempted to lynch him.¹⁹ Later, he began to talk about his ‘*golpiza*’ [‘beating’] to a group of new MST *militants*, a few NGO workers, and myself in a karaoke bar on the outskirts of the city. Despite the fact that this bar was in a migrant neighborhood, Mamani had picked up on the racialized signs of discontent from a second-generation or third-generation group of rowdy Andean migrants, who now claim to be *Cambas*.²⁰ They were hissing and pointing at us from a nearby table and jumped up to change the jukebox from Mamani’s *huayno* music of the highlands to the sounds of meringue and cumbia. One even mumbled:

'We listen to *this* kind of music in Santa Cruz.' This ethnic and racial tension between highland and lowland, rural worker and second-generation city dweller sparked Mamani to relay his experiences of violence to the group:

I was just walking through the plaza . . . when all of a sudden, these kids start beating the shit out of me. They were screaming, 'So you are the *machito* [macho man] who is stopping traffic and organizing people. You are the big guy, heh? You're nothing more than a *colla de mierda* [Indian piece of shit]. Your life is worthless.' And they continued to beat me. I said to them, 'Why don't you just take my life . . . why torture me? It's better to just kill me. That way I will die fighting for what I believe in, like Tupac Katari, I will die fighting for justice.'

Mamani recalled another incident of violence against Indians who were resisting the practices of agro-industrial elites in the lowlands. In 2005, when groups of organizers marched from peripheral regions of Santa Cruz to the central plaza to support the nationalization of hydrocarbons and the formation of a constituent assembly, they were intercepted by members of a paramilitary youth group with whips and chains in hand. The youths beat the protestors and kicked their wounded legs as part of the climax to this intensifying violent encounter.²¹

The Indian body, then, becomes a stage, a space in which to make historic claims to productive resources and regional territory. The acts of whipping, beating, and attempted lynchings become theatric and performative spectacles (Goldstein, 2004; Krupa, 2009; Fabricant, 2009). Such carnivals of violence not only impose order upon and domination over the 'resistant indigenous body,' but also reinforce elites' control of the city.

Yet while Mamani could not physically fight the rightist youth, he used the power of memory and martyrdom as a cultural and historic weapon or tool. Mamani's immediate weapon was simply the memory of Katari's death as a force to be reckoned with in the present moment. His statement 'Just kill me so that I can die fighting for justice' implies the power of dying only to return as a martyr. His death, then, would not be the end of his struggle but, as their interpretation of the *Inkarri* myth goes, his spirit would be resurrected and would guide future generations of landless to occupy.

This belief represents the individual uses of Katari's image: how and in what ways he stands in for migration, low-wage labor, and physical abuse in city centers. After all, battles over land are not merely about obtaining a plot, but also about undoing the colonial hierarchy in which resources and power remain in the hands of a few elite families. Santa Cruz, in many ways, is the stronghold of these agrarian elites, who came to power through military alliances in the 1970s and remember that MST *militantes* were once their peons. But as regional and national power structures have shifted, so, too, have their lives, livelihoods, and forms of cultural production. Images that once carried much weight in rural Andean communities now mark vibrant urban spaces, as people travel across new geographic terrain defined by an elite *mestizo* presence, where fancy restaurants and coffee shops represent the cornucopia of consumerist capitalism. These stories, then, did not travel as wholly intact myths, but rather as images or fragments of a history that gives people meaning and value in the contemporary moment, in this particular regional and spatial

context. Tupac Katari in the form of sticker, poster, and symbol – at least for a fleeting moment – stands against the highly westernized and inaccessible consumerist culture of Santa Cruz. While some might analyze this lexical use of Katari as symbolic capital with no material value, there is something more at stake in contemporary Bolivia. The image might be fragmented, but it is not abstracted from indigenous people's daily struggles to survive, to maneuver through racialized and violent city structures. Further, the image takes on new political meaning as people link it to new forms of living, producing, and providing for one another.

Urban to Rural Periphery: Katari as Sign and Symbol of the New Andean Migrant Politic

Daily rounds take organizers from city centers, where they negotiate with NGO workers, land reform officials, and local politicians, back to rural areas, where they organize regional events, fairs, and festivals to promote their model of production and reinforce a commitment to one another and to the broader movement.

MST leaders, before the start of a regional meeting, display images on the walls of Tupac Katari and sometimes Bartolina Sisa, his female counterpart. Just as Morales and others at the national level have used Katari in speeches to forge new social and political spaces for indigenous peoples, MST organizers also display the image of Katari to mark the new hybrid and mobile regional space that they are creating in the middle of the woods and with distinct groups of displaced peoples. Obviously, everyone in the room is not of Aymara or Quechua descent – some are *mestizos*, while others are of Chiquitano or Guaraní descent. And yet, just as broad-based discourses of intercultural rights and plurinationalism have become popular post-neoliberal reforms, symbols of Katari now stand in for a multiethnic politics of reclamation and redemption.

This image has been resurrected as sign and symbol of the new agrarian revolution. The illustration of two modern Aymara men holding the *wiphala*, the flag of the multiple indigenous nations, and framing the spirit of Katari rising from the mountains visually illuminates Katari's present use and manipulation for strategic purposes.



Figure 1. Tupaj Katari picture (courtesy of the MST).

Katari is not alone, however, but rather one of many symbols utilized by MST. Another flag, often placed next to similar flags of the movement, is the banner of *Madre Tierra*, made by members from Gran Chaco. The juxtaposition of symbols and text indicates the power of the banner to convey greater meaning, and possibly to rearticulate and invert old meanings. The text reads:

Our mother earth and the martyrs have called upon us to fight, we are without land, without a boss, we are enemies of the powerful landowners who have made this pueblo suffer and bleed. They will not stop us. We are a pueblo in movement, prepared to die if this is the price of our liberty.

This text on the flag represents the overarching idea of the movement: one must be prepared to use their body in an occupation, to place that body at risk for a broader goal of agrarian reform. The indigenous body, then, turns from site of disgust and object of violence to a powerful tool,²² which, when placed squarely in rural areas, disrupts notions of individual property rights and capitalist production. These MST bodies will not move until they receive government intervention, redistribution of resources, and eventual title to land.

Tupac Katari, as force and spirit, represents the slew of Andean anti-colonial figures who call upon the contemporary landless to take this kind of political action. The second image on the flag is another powerful Andean cultural symbol, the Yatiri [medicine men], who have always practiced alternative forms of healing. They use symbols such as coca leaves to read into a person's future and prescribe remedies for ailments. Yatiri are a special subclass of the Quilliri, traditional Aymara healers, and this cultural symbol stands for the flexibility and mobility of such practices in city centers. Lastly, the image of the llama can be thought of as a powerful symbol of the rural Andes, territorial independence, and small-scale agricultural communities.

All three symbols come together as a story of the importance of history, alternative cultures, and social and political organizations. These kinds of flags indicate the power of symbols for displaced Andean peoples, but also the flexibility and malleability that was brought to life textually in their flag: 'We are a community in motion.' While such traditional symbols were once grounded in rural Andean ways of life, they no longer represent small-scale agricultural communities. These symbols now float around urban areas and paper the walls of MST meetings in the rural periphery; the images of Katari hang as paraphernalia in the offices of powerful NGO technocrats next to posters of groups of Aymara men in city centers on bicycles reading: 'Politics is everywhere.' This, then, is about moving rural politics forward, not simply through occupying land and reconstructing farming settlements, but also through spreading this ideology to city centers and across national space.

Lastly, the MST flag is ever present at meetings and during parades, fairs, and festivals as a critical symbol of the new agrarian revolution. It is a bright red flag, sign and symbol of the blood that must be shed in the battles over land. On the flag is a symbol of two rural laborers, a man and woman, representing the peasant family. The man has a machete in his left hand, raised high above the head of the woman,

illustrating the tools of their labor. Machetes, hoes, and other agricultural tools often come into theatrical shows, parades, and MST marches. These tools of members' labor represent their identity as rural landless workers and the struggle to reclaim territory. Behind the two laborers on the flag is the map of Bolivia, signifying that the struggle for land reform should involve the entire country. This could also graphically exemplify a rethinking of how these two people fit within this larger outline of the Bolivian State.

Symbols across Scales: Marching and Demanding Agrarian Reform in La Paz

Images of Andean anti-colonial figures have traveled across geographic space, as was the case during the Fifth Indigenous March for Land and Territory. Distinct indigenous groups, social movements, and NGOs came together to take part in an historic 28-day march from Santa Cruz to La Paz to push for agrarian reform.²³ These kinds of spectacular and 'sacrificial' protest marches have been quite successful in pressuring government officials to pass important land legislation. Here, I am interested in not just how these symbols travel, but also how they become weathered and worn in motion, how others viewed them along their journeys, and eventually how they point to the dangers of abstracted symbols without material benefits.

Katari chants and cheers prevailed on the Fifth March for Land and Territory. The flags gained new meanings as they traversed space and as they were put into motion by protestors, who once again used their bodies as symbolic vehicles of protest. These kinds of enormous protest marches are common in Bolivia, where relationships are built through the strategic and spatialized construction of *columnas*, which are lines of two or three people across and many deep, creating an orderly demonstration. This choreographed precision, like dances during Carnival and Gran Poder, has been described by Barragán (1992) and Guss (2000) as enforcing a kind of discipline, the importance of maintaining a permanent position in space, and a semi-synchronized step pattern.

Protestors carried *wiphala* flags along with images of Katari and MST signs and symbols. During the march, the symbols on the flags faded from the sun and rain, but people held on to these emblems of their movement as they made their way across the diverse landscapes of Bolivia. As they walked with these images, the symbols comforted people when they grew tired and hungry. The aches and pains, the calloused and cracked feet, and the red burns between people's legs represented the physical markings of this sacrificial march to the capital. Just as the Katari myth provided comfort to an organizer who was beaten and abused, these signs seemed to work in a similar way, reviving and revitalizing broken and bruised bodies as they pushed themselves beyond their individual limits. These walks, not unlike the religious rituals and pilgrimages that many anthropologists have written about in the Latin American context (Peña, 2010), can be thought of as a kind of spiritual-political sacrifice. Protestors need one another to make it through this grueling exercise, and songs, spirituals, rituals, chants, cheers, and even memories of Katari's battle keep people moving, despite their physical exhaustion.

The march is one of the few illustrations of MST politics in action, where the indigenous body again is put on display as a sign of reclamation and redemption. While there are tensions and frictions along the way, as there are at the occupations and encampment sites, members put their bodies through this grueling exercise to redefine power and rethink agricultural structures. These, then, are the snapshots of a moment where we see the illustration of a collective politics, a politics that does not create divisions and self-interested individuals. Rather, the struggle of walking and protesting and the importance of maintaining bodies in space through *columnas* forces people to connect to one another, to connect to their pain, and to assist one another in this collective sacrifice.

One chant represented some of the most popular jingles along the way: '*Tupac Katari vuelve! Somos millones de pie! Vence al colonialismo! Y expulsa de nuestras tierras!*' [Tupac Katari return! We are millions on foot! End colonialism and give back our lands!] This cry to Tupac Katari mixed with others, like: '*MST, esta lucha es para vencer! MST, esta lucha es para vencer! Cuando, Ahora! Cuando, Ahora!*' [MST, we must overcome this struggle! MST, we must overcome this struggle! When? Now! When? Now!] More popular and transnational chants included the *gritos* [screams] of: '*El Pueblo Unido, Jamas Será Vencido!*' [The community united will never be defeated!] These chants kept people moving during long days and restless nights as they remapped with their feet the territorial bounds of an all-inclusive and social-democratic Bolivia.

Protestors passed through parts of the Chaparé, the *cocalero* [coca-grower movement] spaces of organizing, where flags of Katari linked with the powerful symbol of the coca leaf. These new hybrid political spaces were forged in motion as symbols, once used to talk about displacement and violence, now stood for a broader struggle to push for agrarian reform. But these spaces were also built as organizers shared stories across regional and territorial divides about struggles over resources, realizing the commonalities of their distinctive regional battles. Rural farmers from the Chaparé embraced the protestors, often supplying food and shelter, and providing a place for protestors to rest and gather for afternoon games of soccer.

Yet after a day of rest, the long chain of protestors gathered its strength and once again rallied the bases to continue their march. They exploded into and onto centers of power, such as the Plaza 14 de Septiembre in Cochabamba. They infused the square with rural highland cultural forms and practices, and the sounds of high-pitched *charango* music and traditional *haynos* marked this space. Further, they placed their signs of Katari and MST flags alongside a podium for speakers who articulated the needs of this group of people.

Not everyone welcomed these symbols in their plaza. One *mestizo* Cochabambino said to me: 'These are not our symbols, they don't represent our history, and we are tired of the constant references to Katari. These symbols are *un avasallamiento cultural* [a cultural invasion]. We have our own history. This is not OUR Bolivia.' There has been explosive reaction in places like Santa Cruz, Cochabamba, and even La Paz from white, middle-class *mestizos* who feel that these images and symbols stand against their way of life and disrupt their norms and values.

Katari as a Symbol of Morales's Agrarian Revolution and State-making in Peñas

Approximately 15 days into the March, Morales organized his own spectacular symbolic illustration of support for the Agrarian Revolution. In what many have described as one of his cultural and political 'shows,' Morales organized groups of *campesinos* and social movement activists in the city of Peñas, about 97 kilometers from the city of La Paz, the symbolic site of the brutal death of Aymara leader Tupac Katari. Standing before 10,000 *campesinos* who had congregated to hear about the Agrarian Revolution, the Bolivian President declared:

This father, this grandfather . . . he gave life for our culture, our identity, and our natural resources, and more than 225 years ago, he was brutally executed as a criminal for the indigenous peoples of the Andes of South America.

(La Republica, 2006)

Morales continued to read the historic death sentence ordered by the *Corregidor criollo* [Creole] who was at the service of Madrid, and stated:

I stand before you today . . . at the same site where Julian Tupac Katari, one of the few literate Indian slaves, was *descuartizado* [quartered] [. . .] We are here to liberate our country, and Katari is the principal reference point of the *luchas indigenas* in Bolivia and a constant reminder of the obligation to decolonize Bolivia.

(La Republica, 2006)

Morales, through this symbolic and performative event, embodied the spirit of Tupac Katari as the leader of a movement liberating the country from a colonial and racist history. While he said 'I stand before you today and elevate Katari as the symbol of the collective *luchas indigenas*,' Morales, by occupying the same site of Julian Tupac Katari, turned himself into a revolutionary hero fighting against *latifundios* to implement a wholly new Agrarian Revolution. Many organizers in El Alto have referred to Morales as 'larger than life.' One community organizer described him as follows:

He has successfully made himself the leader of these popular and cultural/material struggles. He always becomes the protagonist of *our* story, when the truth is . . . it is really the *campesinos*, the street vendors, and the housewives who put their lives on the line. They used their bodies to stop the military from firing on them in 2005 . . . and where was Morales during all of this?

(Mamani, 12 November 2010)

In this particular scene, Morales creatively linked the site of Tupac's death to indigenous struggles to reclaim land and territory in the present. All the while, he connected land rights and indigenous autonomy to national sovereignty. Morales continued:

We would give our life for this land . . . until the day that Bolivia is free, the day that Bolivia will be freed.

(El Pais, 2006)

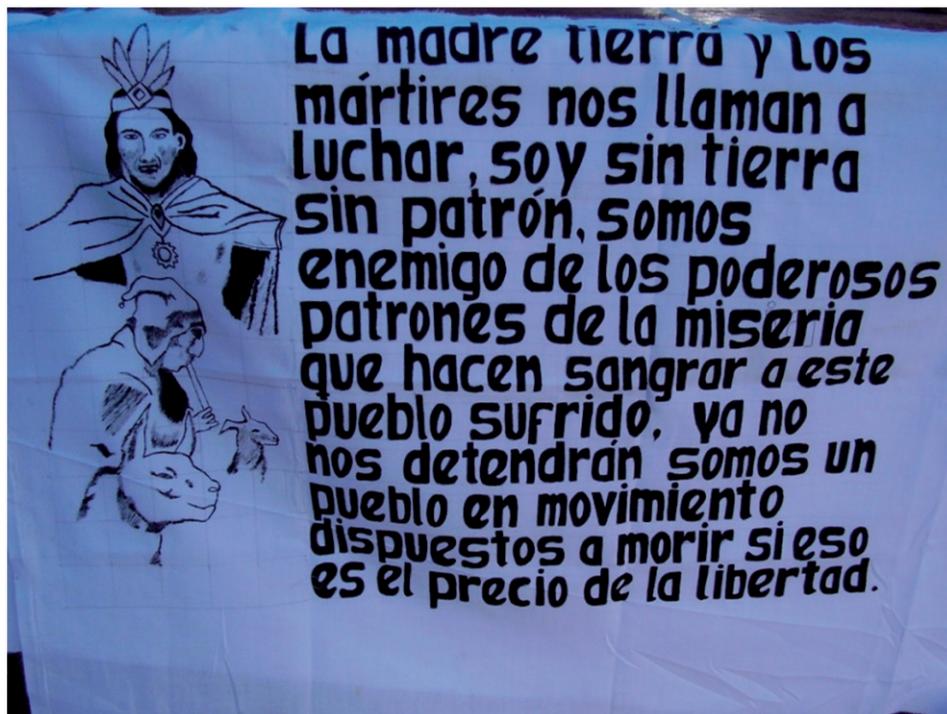


Figure 2. Madre Tierra flag (photograph taken by author). **Translation:** Mother Earth and the martyrs call upon us to fight, I am without land, without a patron, we are enemies of the powerful land-owners and of the misery that has made this poor town bleed, they will not be able to stop us, we are a town in motion willing to die if this is the price of liberty.

This statement reinforced the idea that individual lives remain less important than the overarching goal of his broad-based political program to ‘decolonize the state.’ Before he concluded this event, he handed out 150 tractors to the municipal rural department of La Paz, with the cooperation of the Venezuelan government:

We have come here in order to salute and honor Tupac Katari with the gift of tractors. Any one of you can use these tractors, all you have to do is put in the gasoline.

He ended with:

The theme of mechanization is one of the proposals of the new agrarian revolution, with the mechanization and the support of production, access to credit for the municipalities so that *campesino* communities can truly obtain true food security... This is the process that we will initiate with the gift of 150 tractors to the municipalities of the department of La Paz.

(El País, 2006)

The large poster of Tupac Katari reading: ‘I will Return, I will Return and I will be in Millions’ hung over the head of Morales as he delivered his speech. He even appeared to be pointing to the picture of his hero in this picture as he explained the Agrarian Revolution to the crowd. If these images of Katari alongside Morales do not clearly illustrate his ‘protagonist tendency’ in all of this, then the following picture clearly

illustrates how Evo Morales embodies the spirit of Tupac Katari, as posters reading ‘Katari lead a rebellion, Evo the Revolution’ hang across urban and rural space, in government and municipal offices in la Paz and El Alto. Morales stands high above the image of Tupac Katari with his left fist in the air, representing his ‘cultural and democratic revolution,’ and Katari is merely the legacy of these anti-colonial rebellions, guiding his contemporary struggles.

More dangerous, perhaps, than Morales’s protagonistic tendencies is the use of these kinds of historic and cultural symbols for state-making agendas, which have left social movements feeling as though this is simply a part of the ‘new symbolic politics’ without material rewards or benefits. The following questions inform this last part of the analysis: What happens when symbols like those of Katari move from embodied and engaged political action and struggle to a politics of state-making? How do movement actors feel about the use and reappropriation of this symbol at the national level? In what ways do such abstracted symbols with compromised results create new tensions between left-leaning states and social movements?

Movement Response to Morales’s Symbolic Politics

The response of one social movement to this ‘cultural show’ outlines some of the grassroots response to the reappropriation of cultural symbol by the state. As a leader of a well-known movement declared:

At the same time as the March of the *Indigenas*, MAS takes off the indigenous mask that it used to obtain votes and shows its true face: that which is subservient to the powerful *latifundistas* and the imperialist transnationals. The heroic struggle of indigenous peoples for auto-determination, who stand against the dominant classes who took away indigenous lands . . . there lives the real blood of the indigenous . . . not the traitors who in 1952, due to the promises of MNR, *militantes* abandoned the seizing of lands in order to support the agrarian reform, which only parcelized land and created unproductive *minifundios* and preserved the *latifundios* in the East. With the military pact of the *campesinos* and the dictator of Barrientos, *campesinos* were cheated once again with the promise of liberating themselves from 500 years of oppression, only to be able to write their names into the constitution. The reality of capitalist Bolivia is different than the little ‘cuentitos’ [little tales] of Evo and Linera. These political parties that continue to defend private property, as in the case of MAS, have created alliances with great property owners or *latifundios*, bankers, transnationals, etc., who continue to exploit and dispossess the small-scale farmers. Evo might have arrived at the Presidential palace, might have rewritten the Constitution of the New Plurinational State, that talks about the *Wiphala* and the 36 indigenous nations. Indigenous peoples have limits too . . . especially when MAS continues to dialogue and negotiate with transnational corporations that continue to exploit and destroy our land and natural resources. Return the lands to *Campesinos!*

(Condori, November 2006).

While this might represent a radical response to such deployments of indigenous symbols by the state, it also points toward some of the new tensions emerging between movements and the Morales administration, which claims to represent the interests of indigenous peoples. As many authors are beginning to note, while Morales was elected on the platform of the 2003 Gas Wars to radically redistribute

resources and nationalize key industries, he has been unable to follow through on many of his promises. Resource policies, in regards to land, gas, and oil, have not reflected the kinds of demands that movements brought to the table in 2003–2005. As Nancy Postero (2010) asserts, despite Morales's rhetoric of 'decolonization' and the use of indigenous epistemologies to redefine economic relations and production, Bolivia is facing an age-old dilemma of how to develop and live well, how to find a path for more sustainable industrialization and share the benefits and burdens fairly and justly. Linda Farthing follows this up with:

No past government has ever resolved this dilemma, nor even seriously considered it. Given this history, and despite the pressures from its support base, if the Morales government can move beyond rhetoric to significant action in favor of the environment, it will be an impressive accomplishment indeed.

(Farthing, 2009, p. 29)

This is not distinctive of Bolivia. Many scholars of Ecuador and Ecuadorian social movements have noted similar kinds of frictions between Rafael Correa and grassroots movements. Despite Correa's rhetoric of his 'citizen's revolution,' his speeches in Quechua replete with outfits covered in native symbols and his ritualistic performances in indigenous highland communities, symbols only go so far. Commentators have noted how his continued commitment to extractive industries sparked and deepened rifts between this left-leaning administration and movements. While Correa described his vision as 'socially responsible mining,' he approved a law in 2008 that gave free reign to transnational corporations and basically allowed any business to liberally prospect for mineral substances on community and indigenous lands. When indigenous communities mobilized against the passing of such legislation, Correa called those who opposed his mining law 'childish,' 'nobodies,' and 'allies of the right.' He continued with: 'It is absurd that some want to force us to remain like beggars sitting on top of a bag of gold' (Dosh & Kligerman, 2009, p. 23). So while Correa deploys publicly symbols of deep respect for indigenous rights and commitment to communal autonomy and sovereignty, the purchase price or value of these performances goes only so far, as his actions support legislation that continues the legacy of extractive industries and the destruction of eco-systems and indigenous communal spaces.

Conclusion

The rebirth of Katari in the bodies of contemporary MST organizers represents one of the many performative and creative elements of movement building of the 21st century. Katari, no longer solely tethered to highland indigenous organizations, has become a mobile symbol, informing landless movement politics in the Eastern lowlands. The symbol of Katari's mangled body, deeply signifying individual labor histories of abuse and subjugation, can quickly turn into a symbol of collective reclamation and redemption, as he is birthed a new in the bodies of the landless, stimulating dispossessed peoples to action. Yet the symbol is not just about a hope of reversal – it also can serve as an individual tool of survival as Indians maneuver their way through highly racialized and violent urban worlds where youth lash

out with sticks, baseball bats, and whips. These symbolic revivals, whether individual or collective, are deeply linked to people's material lives of low-wage and exploitative labor regimes, displacement, and new forms of violence and abuse. Uneven geographical divides and terrains of racialized inequality provide a ripe material and symbolic environment for the rebirth of such ancient Andean tales and figures, providing a compass for redefining and rethinking ways of living and modes of production.

But what happens when this symbol becomes detached, no longer tethered to displacement and stories of labor and struggles with violence, no longer used to define and impel migrants to occupy land? What happens when the symbol is used in public and in the political speeches of Morales to forge a new social and democratic state? Does it hold the same material value? Does it become abstracted from people's daily and material lives? Although Morales emerged directly out of this cultural resource politics, this symbol loses value at the national and political level. As the image of Katari appears on posters with the subscript, 'Katari led the rebellion, Evo the Revolution,' it elevates Morales as the protagonist of these kinds of popular movements, erasing the long history of anti-colonial and now neo-colonial collective action, and of the use of indigenous bodies, often placed in highly dangerous situations in which many were killed and sacrificed for the greater good. This protagonist tendency of Morales often alienates movement activists from seeing themselves as a part of this new state. Bolivian activists are often critical of such highly charged actions and performances, as Morales – more often than not – has not followed through on his promises. While movement organizers realize that Morales might be hard-pressed in terms of dependency on foreign capital, they also feel as though he has made too many negotiations. As one MST member declared:

You cannot say we are launching an Agrarian Revolution . . . when Morales continues to negotiate with the *latifundios*, supports the export-oriented industries, and even considers the use of food crops for energy as bio-diesel. This does not represent a Revolution, but rather an extension of the same kinds of policies and politics.

Notes

- [1] These questions build off of the work of more recent scholarship like that of Arturo Escobar (2010) and Bret Gustafson (2009a), who examine and interrogate the socioeconomic, political, and cultural/epistemological transformations that have been taking place in South America, not merely as battles over citizenship rights, but rather as complex responses to the failures of neoliberal reforms and creative efforts to constitute alternative forms of modernization.
- [2] The *Inkarrí* (or *Inkari*) myth is one of the most well-known Pre-Andean legends where a famous ruler, named Atahualpa, was killed by the Spaniards. They buried his body in several places around the kingdom. As legend has it, the body will grow, until one day, Atahualpa will rise out of the earth, and take back his kingdom. This reincarnation will restore harmony between mother earth and her children.
- [3] *Ayllus* were the fundamental unit of social organization of ancient Andean communities, based on kinship groups and communally-held territory.
- [4] See Albro (2005a, 2005b) for more on coalitional politics.

- [5] These local structures are built into a pyramidal hierarchy of local, regional, and departmental union organizations. Many of them emerged from the land reforms after the 1952 Revolution and now make periodic demands on the state (Gustafson, 2002).
- [6] As Nancy Postero (2007b) notes, the 1970s began a period of massive land invasions, and lands that had been too remote or too difficult to farm suddenly began to be invaded by government colonization programs. In order to defend these lands, lowland groups began organizing in the 1980s with the help of NGOs like Apoyo Para el Campesino – Indígena del Oriente Boliviano (APCOB), which was run by a German anthropologist. In 1982, these distinct groups founded the Confederación Indígena del Oriente del Bolivia (CIDOB), which was a regional federation of Guarani, Guarayo, and Mataco Indians. The purpose was to unite distinct lowland indigenous groups in a common battle to ‘defend the rights of the “pueblos *indígenas*” of the lowlands of Bolivia, through an organizational structure that receives public and private funds, to strengthen representative organizations and to search for effective incorporation and participation into the political, social, economic, and cultural decision-making of the country’ (<http://www.cidob-bo.org>).
- [7] There have been a series of these marches since the first march of 1990. The second march of 1996 was the ‘March for Territory, Development, and Political Participation of the Pueblos *Indígenas*.’ This march included the participation of all the pueblos that are members of CIDOB. It was initiated in Samaipata and had two overarching goals: the passing of the Ley INRA and the recognition of 33 TCOs (Tierras Comunitarias de Origen) [Communal Lands of Origin]. The third march occurred in 2000, and was called the ‘March for Land, Territory, and Natural Resources’; it was protagonized by CPESC and the pueblos Mojenos of Beni and other pueblos of the Amazon. This march called for the Modification for the Ley INRA and a decree that would officially recognize the indigenous languages of the *tierras bajas*. The fourth march occurred in 2002, the ‘March for Popular Sovereignty, Territory and Natural Resources,’ which included both *campesino* movements and indigenous peoples of the lowland regions, numbering more than 50 social organizations present in the march from Santa Cruz to La Paz. This march called for the Constituent Assembly and a new constitution.
- [8] Like other indigenous organizations, MST is supported by a broad network of NGOs, both national and international, which provide financial assistance, *talleres* [workshops], and legal advice. El Centro de Estudios Jurídicos e Investigación Social (CEJIS), or the Center for Legal Studies and Research, provides financial support and legal advice to the movement. CEJIS is a national-level non-governmental organization with local offices in Santa Cruz, Cochabamba, and La Paz, and was founded in 1978, when Bolivia suffered under a repressive military dictatorship. Funded by the European Union, CEJIS works in the field of human rights, which centers on ‘the individual and collective human rights of women and men, in a democratic Bolivian state, with a focus on social justice and respect for diversity.’ MST-Bolivia is also part of the transnational peasant coalition called the Via Campesina, which promotes social justice in fair economic relations and the preservation of land, water, seeds, and other natural resources.
- [9] The Ley INRA was intended to protect *campesino* and indigenous landholdings while promoting the redistribution of agricultural land through the creation of ‘efficient land markets’ (Kohl, 2003).
- [10] Quechua remains a vital language. Nevertheless, it has been an oppressed language throughout the five centuries since the Spanish arrived in the New World. Assimilation has been the dominant political ideology in the Andes and patterns of language use have reflected that ideology; census records and sociolinguistic studies document that high rates of Quechua–Spanish bilingualism only mask a continuous cross-generational shift from Quechua to Spanish monolingualism (see Garcia, 2005).
- [11] Tupac Amaru led an indigenous uprising in 1780 against the Spanish in Peru; Tupac Katari laid siege to the city of La Paz in 1781 and set up a court in El Alto. He maintained the siege for 184 days until he was killed and quartered by Spanish forces.

- [12] Popular theater is a particular genre of performance, written by community residents and performed for large concentrations of workers in union meetings and in the streets and squares.
- [13] Scholars have noted that there is a clear influence from Christian theology and its emphasis on the corporeal resurrection of Jesus. This resulted in a syncretism between local beliefs about recuperation and about the subterranean as a space of the ancestors (see Flores Galindo, 1987; Postero, 2007b).
- [14] The Movimiento Revolucionario Tupac Katari shared with other groups the idea that the conventional political parties did not have a program that really responded to the needs of the peasantry, and that it was therefore necessary to form a party that would do this. It has emphasized more the sociopolitical problems, reflected by its 'R' for 'revolution' instead of an 'I' for 'Indian.' It does not exclude, but rather gives a certain priority to class analysis.
- [15] Perhaps some part of the culture discourses emerged out of these critical NGO networks, whereby NGOs institutionalized ethno-development and the creation of indigenous experts through social movements engaged in political training, with an emphasis on indigenous knowledge. However, in the tradition of Gustafson (2009a), I view these interactions not solely as top-down knowledge inculcation or a form of 'neoliberal governmentality,' which can be highly deterministic and lead to a 'pessimistic view of all knowledge politics' (Gustafson, 2009a), but rather as part of the new circuits of power dynamics and global/local interconnections.
- [16] Augusto Boal (1979) took Paulo Freire's (1993) ideas regarding transformative educational philosophy and applied them to the realm of popular theater in Brazil. His theatrical vocabulary of the use and manipulation of the human body very much resembles Freire's ideas about recalling the past in order to free oneself from the oppression of poverty and inequality. Boal argues that once the actor takes control of his body, knows his body, and makes it more expressive, then he will be transformed into a free actor.
- [17] Much work in anthropology, particularly feminist anthropological work, has turned toward how broad-based political economic shifts mark geographic space and indigenous bodies through new regimes of labor control and violence (see Wright, 1999; Salzinger, 1997, 2000; Wilson, 2004). Gender studies scholars like Ara Wilson (2004) coined the term 'intimate economies' in order to trace the impact of the global economy on Thai sex/gender systems. I query whether the embodied effects of expansive agro-industrial capital and ever-greater and harsher methods of work have influenced a new kind of resource politics, which uses the indigenous body as part of symbolic performances.
- [18] Mary Weismantel (2001) wrote about the strong smells of *Cholas* as 'matter out of place' and argues that such disruptive smells are part of a much broader capitalist structure of estrangement in which bodies and odor become the primary symbols of white discomfort. Sex and race, she argues, exceed and exacerbate alienation produced by class (Weismantel, 2001, p. 263).
- [19] Daniel Goldstein (2004) argues that 'spectacular lynchings' of suspected criminals in a peripheral area of Cochabamba are attempts of marginalized residents to make demands upon the state. Lynchings are intended to call attention to the predicament of insecurity and the lack of police presence in their neighborhoods. Chris Krupa (2009) follows up on Goldstein's work by refocusing attention on the indigenous body in Ecuadorian lynchings and the significance attached to it. He suggests that this 'lynched body' comes to symbolize public opposition to the country's indigenous movement and the potential transformations it proposes.
- [20] This illustrates the fluidity of racial identity in Santa Cruz (see Cannessa, 2005). Many second-generation and third-generation Andeans speak like '*Cambas*,' act and dress like them, and have become some of the Civic Committee's strongest allies in this regional campaign for autonomy.
- [21] More spectacular forms of violence followed these incidents. On 11 September 2008, right-wing groups opened fire on indigenous farmers in the northern Amazonian Pando.

- Wounded peasants who were being transported to the local hospital for treatment were dragged from ambulances and publicly beaten in the main plaza of Cobija, tortured with whips, and lashed with barbed wire (see Gustafson, 2009b).
- [22] These kinds of embodied performances of politics have been common in Bolivia: from hunger strikes, which sacrificed bodies publicly and put them on display in order to stand against during the brutal military dictatorships in the 1970s, to more recent and creative use of women's bodies in the resource wars, where protestors used their stout bodies to form human chains as the military opened fire on road blocks during the Gas Wars.
- [23] In October 2006, the draft of the bill was still sitting on the floor of the Senate, but the right-wing members of the political party Podemos had refused to pass the new law. The MST and other *campesino* organizations decided to take matters into their own hands in order to defend the position that land should belong to those who work it and pressure the government to pass the Modification to the Ley INRA, which included four critical pillars: land redistribution, mechanization, credit to small-scale farmers, and development of eco-markets.

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Nicole Fabricant is at the Department of Anthropology, Towson University, 8000 York Road, LI 318 E., Towson, MD 21252, USA (Email: nfabricant@towson.edu).
