



**BOLIVIAN KATARISM:  
THE EMERGENCE OF AN INDIAN CHALLENGE  
TO THE SOCIAL ORDER**

By Cécile Casen

*“Como indios nos explotaron, como indios nos liberaremos.”<sup>1</sup>*

The name of Túpac Katari is mentioned in all of Evo Morales’ major speeches. Often presented as Bolivia’s “first indigenous president”, Morales likes to think he embodies the prophesy of this Aymara chief, who was drawn and quartered at the end of the 18<sup>th</sup>-century: “I will return and there will be millions of us.” Túpac Katari is known for having laid siege to La Paz during the Great Rebellion of 1780.<sup>2</sup> His name is also associated with more recent political history, in particular the eponymous movement that, in the 1970s, made him a symbol of Indian resistance to Creole elite oppression and the

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<sup>1</sup> “Exploited as Indians, it is as Indians that we will free ourselves.” All Spanish-language citations in the present article are our translation.

<sup>2</sup> The siege lasted from March to October 1781. The Great Rebellion concerned the entire region of Upper Peru between 1780 and 1783. In this revolt against excessive taxes and the abuses of the *corregidores* – representatives of Spanish royal power – Túpac Amaru and Túpac Katari were leaders of the regions of Cuzco and La Paz, respectively. Scarlett O’Phelan Godoy, *Un siglo de rebeliones anticoloniales: Perú y Bolivia 1700-1783*, Cuzco, Centro de Estudios Regionales Andinos Bartolomé de Las Casas, 1988; Jean Piel, “¿Cómo interpretar la rebelión pan-andina de 1780-1783?”, in Jean Meyer (ed.), *Tres levantamientos populares: Pugachov, Túpac Amaru, Hidalgo*, Mexico, Centro de Estudios mexicanos y centroamericanos (CEMCA/CNCAM), 1992, pp. 71-80; Marie-Danielle Demélas, *La Invención política: Bolivia, Ecuador, Perú en el siglo XIX*, Lima, IFEA/IEP, 2003.

standard of Bolivian indigenous movements.<sup>3</sup> Twenty years after the 1952 Revolution put an end to the reign of the *Rosca* (the mining and estate-owning oligarchy), established universal suffrage, nationalized the mines and passed land reform,<sup>4</sup> Katarism denounced the persistent economic exploitation and “cultural” oppression suffered by Indians. The tenacity of Katarist theses is due to their opposition to the state’s indigenous policy. As Henri Favre has shown, this policy sought, as in other Latin American states, to modernize society and convert it into a nation with the aid of an integrationist model.<sup>5</sup> The Katarist peasant trade union movement, which was active all over the Andean Plateau area of the La Paz region, took part in the watershed moment that witnessed the transition from a class-based conception of society to an interpretation that also took ethnic group membership into account in the domain of social and political struggles. Understanding the conditions under which this oppositional movement emerged requires an examination of its specifically Indian dimension. What factors rendered the ethnic marker relevant in the eyes of Katarist activists and led them to “become” Indian?

The historical conditions of the emergence of Katarist organizations reflect the evolution of relations between peasants and the state since the Revolution and, in particular, the deterioration of these relations from the late 1960s. Yet, as a movement consisting of political, syndical and intellectual components, Katarism cannot be reduced to its rural dimension. To understand the conditions in which Katarist discourse was elaborated, it is essential to take the urban experience of Andean immigrants into account.

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<sup>3</sup> In the Latin-American context, the term “indigenous” is more neutral for designating the first-arrival populations. Much has been written about the Katarist movement. See in particular Diego Pacheco, *El indianismo y los indios contemporáneos en Bolivia*, La Paz, Instituto de la Historia Social de Bolivia, Hisbol/Museo Nacional de Etnografía y Folklore, 1992; Jean-Pierre Lavaud, “Identité et politique: le courant Túpac Katari en Bolivie”, ERSIPAL 24, IHEAL working paper, 1982; J.-P. Lavaud, “De l’indigénisme à l’indianisme: le cas de la Bolivie”, *Problèmes d’Amérique latine*, 7, 1992, pp. 63-82; Yvon Le Bot, *Violence de la modernité en Amérique latine: indianité, société et pouvoir*, Paris, Karthala, 1994, chap. 4.

<sup>4</sup> The main studies of the Bolivian Revolution are those of James Malloy, *Bolivia: The Uncompleted Revolution*, Pittsburgh, University of Pittsburgh Press, 1970; James Dunkerly, *Rebellion in the Veins: Political Struggle in Bolivia, 1952-1982*, London, Verso, 1984; Herbert S. Klein, *Orígenes de la Revolución Nacional boliviana. La crisis de la generación del Chaco*, La Paz, Juventud, 1968.

<sup>5</sup> Henri Favre, *L’indigénisme*, Paris, PUF, 1996, pp. 78-79.

## From Cooptation to Repression: The Deterioration of Relations between Peasants and the State

The 1952 Revolution rendered the peasant “class” the state’s main ally. From 1952 to 1964, the successive governments of the ruling party, the National Revolutionary Movement (Movimiento Nacionalista Revolucionario, MNR), did not hesitate to draw upon the peasants’ loyalty to counter the worker movement’s readiness to fight. This policy was continued under the military regime of General Barrientos (1964-1969).<sup>6</sup> Deteriorating relations between rulers and peasants over the course of the post-revolutionary period (1954-74) played a decisive role in the emergence of Katarism. Increasingly authoritarian governments watered down and finally abandoned revolutionary promises, feeding growing peasant opposition.

Until the Revolution, it can be said that most of the Indian population consisted of peasants or at least rural dwellers.<sup>7</sup> Schematically, it can be divided between indigenous communities,<sup>8</sup> whose lands had been constantly despoiled since Independence,<sup>9</sup> and the labor force of the *haciendas* subject to *pongueaje*, or the collection of obligations (domestic labor, tenant fees and personal services) owed by peasants to the *hacendados*. The Revolution condemned this system as semi-feudal and put an end to it by way of land reform in 1953. The MNR understood that the peasant “class” was an indispensable ally in establishing the legitimacy of the national-popular regime and used it – quite apart from any considerations of an ethnic nature – as its principal social base. The ideology of 1952 thus promoted the figure of the

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<sup>6</sup> Even before General Barrientos took power, the question of the political weight to accord to the Bolivian Worker Central (Central Obrera Boliviana, COB) divided the MNR between supporters of revolutionary radicalization and those who emphasized the need to supply the United States with evidence of moderation.

<sup>7</sup> In 1950, the cities of La Paz and Santa Cruz only counted for 12% of the national population. H.S. Klein, “The Historical Background to the Rise of the MAS, 1952-2005”, in Adrian J. Pearce (ed.), *Evo Morales and the Movimiento Al Socialismo in Bolivia: The First Term in Context, 2006-2010*, London, Institute for the Study of the Americas, 2011, p. 41.

<sup>8</sup> According to Jean-Pierre Bernard, in 1953, these communities represented around 39% of the agricultural population and occupied 22% of the land. Jean-Pierre Bernard, “Mouvements paysans et réforme agraire: réflexions sur les cas bolivien et péruvien”, *Revue française de science politique*, 19 (5), 1969, pp. 982-1017.

<sup>9</sup> As Christine Delfour reminds us, as soon as the country became independent, the Creoles established legal rules allowing community lands which had until then been recognized by the Law of the Indies to be legally despoiled. Christine Delfour, *L’invention nationaliste en Bolivie: une culture politique complexe*, Paris, L’Harmattan, 2005, pp. 170-71.

“peasant brother” (*hermano campesino*) and viewed universal citizenship as a necessary condition for ending discrimination against Indians. “There are no longer any Indians, there are only peasants,” Victor Paz Estenssoro<sup>10</sup> is said to have remarked at the time. In the Andes, the *ayllus*<sup>11</sup> were re-baptized “unions” and, more generally, all references to an ethnic dimension of inter-individual relations were banished from official political discourse. This was intended to promote small, private property holding producers within a “modern” society. The government decrees establishing land reform<sup>12</sup> essentially consisted of dividing the *haciendas* into small properties. The emancipation of the Indian was conceived in the framework of the construction of a mestizo nation in which Indians were expected to gradually lose their distinctive characteristics.

From 1952 to 1964, MNR governments created, oversaw and gave direction to peasant organizations. These were integrated into a trade union system whose leaders served as intermediaries for the Party in the communities and former *haciendas*. All requests for titles to property were contingent upon union membership. Even before the end of the government of Hernan Siles (1956-1960), peasant militias were intervening alongside the army to repress the worker movement in the mining centers. From 1964, the army’s rise to power was reflected in the establishment of General Barrientos’ dictatorship.<sup>13</sup> The latter continued to use the peasants’ loyalty towards the regime as a rampart against the worker’s movement. As a tool for control and mobilization, the

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<sup>10</sup> Co-founder of the MNR with Hernan Siles, Victor Paz Estenssoro became president following the victory of the MNR militias against the army on 9 April 1952.

<sup>11</sup> The *ayllu* is the pre-Columbian Andean social and territorial organization. A community institution grouping an agrarian collectivity united by ties of kinship, neighborhood, religion and language, it can be defined as a social and territorial unit tending to endogamy, though the latter phenomenon tended to diminish with the onset of migration to urban centers. Gilles Rivière, “Amtat jan amtata... Caciques et *Malku* dans les communautés aymaras du Carangas (Bolivie)”, in Anath Ariel de Vidas, Liliana Lewinski (eds.), *Pour une histoire souterraine des Amériques. Jeux de mémoires – Enjeux d’identités. Mélanges offerts à Nathan Wachtel*, Paris, L’Harmattan, 2008, pp. 71-100.

<sup>12</sup> These were government decrees no. 03464 and 03471, which were signed and issued on 2 August 1953 in Ucureña (Cochabamba) by Victor Paz Estenssoro in the presence of peasant labor unions.

<sup>13</sup> Elected Vice-President alongside Paz Estenssoro, Barrientos organized a coup d’état and established a military dictatorship in November 1964. He is called the “people’s general” due to his popularity with the peasants, particularly in the region of Cochabamba. He is also known for having had recourse to the services of war criminal Klaus Barbie and for having made the capture and subsequent assassination of Che Guevara possible.

“army-peasant” pact,<sup>14</sup> which was signed in 1966, replaced the party-union relationship established by the MNR. It thus became possible to preserve official trade unionism. Trade union activities were heavily bureaucratized and elections at the lower levels of the system were in large measure controlled by the authorities.

General Barrientos presented himself as the successor of the Revolution and the MNR governments that preceded him. His mastery of the Quechua language and his paternalist policy of “*plata, pisco y palo*” (“money, alcohol and the stick”) allowed him to keep the peasants under his thumb. Yet, his attempt at rural tax reform in 1968 triggered intense resistance.<sup>15</sup> While the region of Cochabamba remained calm, a revolt broke out on the high planes following a visit by the President to Achacachi. The Independent Peasant Bloc (Bloque Independiente Campesino, BIC), which emerged shortly thereafter, opposed the “army-peasant pact” by promoting an alliance against the military regime with the country’s main worker’s confederation, the COB.<sup>16</sup> While it remained a minority presence in the peasant world, the BIC constituted the first visible chink to appear in the universal consensus of a peasant trade unionist system that had been allied with the authorities since 1952.

The military governments of Alfredo Ovando (1969-1970) and Juan José Torres (1970-1971) to some degree tolerated the nascent Katarist movement. The trade union movement structured itself around the figure of its young leader, Genero Flores. First named to the head of his community in the district of La Paz, within two years Flores had climbed all rungs of the system and, in August 1971, became executive secretary of the National Confederation of Peasant Workers of Bolivia (Confederación Nacional de Trabajadores Campesinos de Bolivia, CNTCB).<sup>17</sup> Originating in the trade unionism of

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<sup>14</sup> In exchange for the armed forces’ direct aid to the peasants, the pact was to ensure the latter’s unconditional support for the military governments. Directed against the worker’s movement, respect for the gains made by the Revolution (agrarian reform, education, union law, etc.) was compensation for this alliance. On 24 June 1967, the Saint Jean massacre” was perpetrated by the army just when the National Congress of Miners was to take place in the country’s largest mining center (Catavi-Siglo XX).

<sup>15</sup> Silvia Rivera Cusicanqui, “*Oprimidos pero no vencidos.*” *Luchas del campesinado aymara y qhechwa de Bolivia (1900-1980)*, Geneva, Instituto de Investigaciones de las Naciones Unidas para el Desarrollo Social, 1986, p. 113.

<sup>16</sup> Created on 17 April 1952, the COB was intended to allow the Bolivian trade unionism to provide itself with national representation.

<sup>17</sup> This nomination took places several days before Banzer’s coup d’état, which subsequently obliged Flores to go into hiding.

the Andean Plateau, the Katarist movement thus developed within the official trade union system. This “entryism” allowed it to draw on the network created by the trade union system and enter into contact with the peasant base. On 15 November 1970, the anniversary of Túpac Katari’s ordeal, a sculpture representing the Aymara rebel was erected in Ayo Ayo, his native village, on the initiative of Genaro Flores and three other activists (Adolfo Salazar, Antonio Quispe and Tomas Santos).<sup>18</sup> The event, a sign of the stature assigned this historic figure within the peasant opposition, brought a large number of people to this La Paz region village of the Andean Plateau. The same day, one of the first Katarist organizations, the Julian Apaza University Movement (after the true name of Túpac Katari), was founded at the Universidad Mayor de San Andrés de La Paz (UMSA).<sup>19</sup>

In 1971, General Hugo Banzer’s military coup d’état brought an end to the rise of Katarism. It marked the authorities’ break with the ideology of the MNR and put an end to the relations that had united it with the peasants. Banzer incarnated the “other Bolivia”, that of the lowlands; he held the Andean regions in contempt and even more so the *collas*<sup>20</sup> peasants, who were responsible, in his view, for the country’s underdevelopment. From that point on, relations between the peasantry and the authorities could only deteriorate. The hardline taken by the regime silenced Katarist trade unionism, which was officially banned. Cultural organizations, for their part, were tolerated. These organizations broadcast radio programs in Aymara or Quechua giving pride of place to the cultural references of the groups in question.<sup>21</sup> It was also during this period that one of the basic texts of Katarism, the *Tiwanaku Manifesto*, began to secretly circulate, particularly in the highlands. The *Manifesto* was the result of an ideological compromise and, from 1973, was published in Spanish, Quechua and Aymara. In the space of roughly ten pages, it presented “the ideas that [the Katarist

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<sup>18</sup> According to Genaro Flores in remarks collected by Deborah J. Yashar in 1995 and 1997. Deborah J. Yashar, *Contesting Citizenship in Latin America: The Rise of Indigenous Movements and the Postliberal Challenge*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2005, p. 170. The sculpture of Túpac Katari was created by Emiliano Lujan, the author of a 1952 monument to the glory of Eduardo Avaroa, a national hero of the Pacific War (1879-1883).

<sup>19</sup> J.-P. Lavaud, “Identité et politique: le courant Túpac Katari en Bolivie”, *op. cit.*, p. 6.

<sup>20</sup> The adjective *collas* refers to the inhabitants of the highlands, in contrast to the *cambas* who live in the lowlands.

<sup>21</sup> Javier Hurtado Mercado, *El katarismo*, La Paz, HISBOL, 1986, pp. 52-54.

leaders] considered fundamental for the economic, political and social organization of the country”.<sup>22</sup> According to Esteban Ticona, Gonzalo Rojas and Xavier Albó, the *Manifiesto* was used during the dictatorship to train trade union officials.<sup>23</sup> Signed by professors and students, it denounced the age old oppression, both cultural and economic, to which Quechua and Aymara peasants had been subjected. The demands of these two cultures and the values associated with them supplied the foundations of the *Manifiesto*'s political project. An essential milestone in efforts to consolidate an Indianist political imaginary, its subversive character provoked strong hostility within official trade union organizations.

Misgivings in regards to the MNR's project of modernization were above all to be found in the Aymara highlands,<sup>24</sup> where a sort of passive resistance was expressed that consisted of maintaining the operation of traditional authorities under cover of the accepted term “union”. The highlands were in fact the most active center of Katarism. The more mestizo, predominantly Quechua peasant organizations of the valleys of Cochabamba, by contrast, tended to support the trade union apparatus of the MNR. This difference between the two regions is illustrated by the order in which peasant movements opposing the state appeared and the relative onset of criticism of state control of trade union organizations. Peasant opposition in the La Paz highlands first voiced itself in 1968, leading to the creation of the BIC; it spread to the region of Cochabamba in 1974. In that year, the Banzer government considered applying new economic measures. These were soon denounced by the peasants as “hunger decrees” (*“los decretos del hambre”*), as they resulted in an unacceptable rise in the price of food staples. The peasants mobilized, blocking all access roads to Cochabamba. But the

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<sup>22</sup> The text of the *Tiwanaku Manifiesto* is reproduced as an appendix to S. Rivera Cusicanqui's book, *“Oprimidos pero no vencidos.” Luchas del campesinado aymara y qhechwa de Bolivia (1900-1980)*, *op.cit.*, pp. 177-86.

<sup>23</sup> Esteban Ticona Alegjo, Gonzalo Rojas Ortuste, Xavier Albó, *Votos y Wiphaldas: campesinos y pueblos originarios en democracia*, La Paz, Centro de Investigación y Promoción del Campesinado (CIPCA), 1995, p. 44.

<sup>24</sup> E. Ticona Alejo, G. Rojas Ortuste and X. Albó suggest that the Aymara highlands had developed a more fundamental resistance than the region of Cochabamba to the project of national integration established by the Revolution. When referring to the massacre of the valley, they noted that it was the Aymaras “who drew the most radical conclusion from it” concerning the army-peasant pact: “Vaya pacto, que se impone a bala!” (“You call it a pact when it is imposed by gunfire!”), remarked an Achacachi leader (La Paz highlands). E. Ticona Alejo, G. Rojas Ortuste, X. Albó, *Votos y Wiphaldas: campesinos y pueblos originarios en democracia*, *op. cit.*, p. 41.

times had changed since Barrientos: the Banzer government was part of the regional context of Southern Cone military dictatorships and actively participated in Operation Condor.<sup>25</sup> Repression was now exerted in the name of the doctrine of national security and the restoration of order. Hundreds died as a result.<sup>26</sup>

In 1968 and then again in 1974, peasant opposition appeared in reaction to the adoption of what were seen as unjust fiscal measures. Their demands thus were not, properly speaking, Indianist but rather reflected growing anti-statism among peasants. By joining cultural demands to political opposition, Katarism participated in this movement to emancipate peasant trade unions from government tutelage. It is difficult to evaluate the influence of Katarist discourse on peasant perception of the state-as-enemy or measure the point to which this ideology fed anti-establishment discourse and gave it legitimacy. Yet recourse to Indian identity as an alternative to classist workers' identity surely helped rekindle the combativeness of the trade union movement. Indeed, challenges to the legitimacy of the official trade union system went hand in hand with opposition to the integrationist paradigm while simultaneously lending to the construction of an Indian identity associated with anti-colonial struggles and the resistance to oppression. As cooptation gave way to repression and the "pact" between peasants and the state crumbled, it seemed all the more legitimate to criticize the Revolution's broken promises.

Yet, while peasant trade unionism served to relay this new discourse and was the favorite tool of struggle among those who claimed to represent it, its emergence also reflected the post-revolutionary generation's experience of the city and, sometimes, the university. To better understand the conditions in which this discourse was elaborated and the various doctrinal options that accompanied it, the social experience of rural Andean migrants must be taken into account.

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<sup>25</sup> The Condor Plan referred to the campaign of assassinations and the anti-guerrilla struggle coordinated by the secret services of Chile, Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Paraguay and Uruguay in the mid-1970s. Individuals seen as "subversive" were specifically targeted, tortured, assassinated or disappeared. See Stéphane Boisard, Armelle Enders, Geneviève Verdo (eds.), "L'Amérique latine des régimes militaires", special number, *Vingtième Siècle. Revue d'histoire*, 105, January-March 2010.

<sup>26</sup> For an account of these events, see Andreu Viola Recasens, " 'La política del olvido' en un 'país sin memoria': la massacre del Valle (Cochabamba, 1974), veinte años después", in Pilar García Jordán (ed.), *Memoria, creación e historia: luchar contra el olvido*, Barcelona, Publicacions Universitat de Barcelona, 1994, pp. 387-398.



## **From the Social Experience of Andean Migrants to Its Theoretical “Translations”**

The Katarist politicization of Indian identity in the Andes is intrinsically tied to the social experience of rural migrants in the post-revolutionary context. Between 1950 and 1976, the population of La Paz tripled. Yet the emergence of an Aymara and Quechua urban culture<sup>27</sup> and the progress of bilingualism show that the migrants who established themselves continued to think of themselves as Aymara. Indianist discourse was produced and promoted by a new elite of rural origin who were the first to benefit from post-revolutionary educational reform and social openness. The 15 November Movement, for example, was created by Aymara students from the La Paz region influenced by readings of Fausto Reinaga, the sworn enemy of “mestizo and creole”<sup>28</sup> domination. The Julian Apaza University Movement, mentioned above, was inspired by the same author. One may also cite in this connection the creation, in 1969, of the Mink’a Center for Peasant Promotion and Coordination (Centro de Promoción y Coordinación Campesina Mink’a) and, in 1971, that of the Túpac Katari Peasant Center (Centro Campesino Túpac Katari). These organizations mainly engaged in cultural activities, promoting and defending Identity by broadcasting Aymara-language radio programs, organizing discussion groups and publishing political brochures. It is to be noted that the *Tiwanaku Manifesto* was co-signed by various groups belonging to this movement: the Unión Puma de Defensa Aymara, the Mink’a Center for Peasant Promotion and Coordination, the Túpac Katari Peasant Center, the Association of Peasant Students of Bolivia (Asociación de Estudiantes Campesinos de Bolivia) and the National Association of Peasant Teachers (Asociación Nacional de Profesores Campesinos).

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<sup>27</sup> X. Albó, *Khititipxtansa? ¿Quiénes somos? Identid localista, étnica y clasista en los aymaras de boy*, Cuadernos de Investigación 13, La Paz, CIPCA, 1977; Xavier Albó, Tomás Greaves, Godofredo Sandoval, *Chukiyawu. La cara aymara de La Paz, Bolivia*, Cuadernos de Investigación 20, La Paz, CIPCA, 1981-1982-1983-1987.

<sup>28</sup> The career of Fausto Reinaga (1906-1994) was marked by his renunciation of Marxism in the name of an Indianist ideology that led him to compare the West to a culture of death and the Indians to the “cosmic race”. His book, *La Revolución India*, published in 1969, can be considered as the foundational manifesto of Indianist thought. Moreover, the manifesto, the “Partido Indio de Bolivia”, constitutes its sixth chapter. Fausto Reinaga, *La Revolución India*, La Paz, Ediciones Partido Indio de Bolivia, 1969.

The context of the text's production is associated with the emergence of a politicized and activist elite reflecting the social changes at work since the Revolution. Yet the experience of these activists was also marked by discrimination and exclusion. Indeed, for highland migrants, arriving in the city involved a painful awakening. As Franck Poupeau and Hervé Do Alto explain: "[Their] insertion into an essentially 'creole' urban context tended to render their Aymara heritage a 'sub-culture' exposed to a dominant culture seen as colonial and racist."<sup>29</sup> Verushka Alvizuri thus notes that, in university circles, peasant students recognized one another by their black plastic shoes, commonplace in the countryside.<sup>30</sup> The foundation of a student organization like the MUJA reflected the defensive attitude of these activists. The glass ceiling was not an empty expression for these "peasant academics", who had great difficulty securing appointment to leading positions within student activist groups.<sup>31</sup>

In fact, the experience of Katarist activists in the La Paz region was ambiguous. Leaving the confined area of the community or the *hacienda* meant coming face to face with the limited possibilities on offer in their new environment. In my view, this experience determined the Katarists' ambivalent attitude with regards to the Revolution. To the degree that the discursive elaboration of Katarism depended on criticism of the Revolution, its supporters were unable to conceive of themselves as products of the social opening it had permitted. The Katarist interpretation thus tended to minimize the Revolution's impact. When they denounced the failure to make a clean break with colonialism and the persistence of exploitation, noting their condition as "foreigners in their own country",<sup>32</sup> they were pointing out the limits of the integrationist paradigm and denouncing a form of discrimination all the more intolerable because formally denied. Indeed, in a sign that this negation amounted to denial, the term "*campesino*" remained synonymous with "*indio*". It is clear that the historical conditions in which Katarism emerged were inseparable from the Revolution's liberal affirmation of political equality.

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<sup>29</sup> Franck Poupeau, Hervé Do Alto "L'indianisme est-il de gauche?", *Civilisations*, 58 (1), 2009 (<http://civilisations.revues.org/index1971.html>).

<sup>30</sup> Verushka Alvizuri, *La construcción de la aymaridad, una historia de la etnicidad en Bolivia (1952-2006)*, Santa Cruz de la Sierra, Editorial El País, 2009, p. 109.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 250.

<sup>32</sup> *Manifiesto de Tiwanaku* in S. Rivera Cusicanqui, "Oprimidos pero no vencidos." *Luchas del campesinado aymara y qhechwa de Bolivia (1900-1980)*, *op. cit.*, pp. 177-86.

Yet herein lies the movement's paradox, for it was precisely the Revolution's principles and achievements that made criticism of it possible. When Jean-Pierre Lavaud described Bolivian society of the 1970s as "post-racist", by contrast, he went too far in the opposite direction, over-estimating the effects of the Revolution.<sup>33</sup> Of course, since 1952, legal barriers no longer existed to separate Indians from non-Indians. But nevertheless racism remained at the heart of the shared experience of producers and enunciators of Katarist discourse. If one fails to take this reality into account, one cannot understand the emergence of an identity-based challenge to the experience of discrimination and the perpetuation of a "pigmentocentric" social order.

To analyze this challenge, one must identify the enunciator of this discourse as well as those he claims to address. The particularities of the Katarist challenge, which involves both the assignation of a status and identity-based demands, stem from its combination of ethnic and classist categories. The *Tiwanaku Manifesto* opposes an "us" – alternately identified as the peasant, the Indian, the Quechua, the Aymara and, finally, the people – to a "them", referring to politicians, seen as agents of corruption. One also encounters mixed expressions, such as "Quechua peasant" or "peasant student". This long list of denominations illustrates the difficulty of finding a generic term that might serve to collectively refer to all populations to be mobilized. Juan Condori, a student of philosophy in La Paz in the 1970s, expressed the contradictions at work in this way: "They presently call us 'peasants' and those of us who are Aymaras, workers, miners, professionals, we have been stripped of our personality as the Aymara people."<sup>34</sup> These remarks refer to the fact that, behind identifications such as "peasant", is ultimately that of "Indian", which refers to workers and professionals alike. Integrated into urban life, the Katarists continued to be perceived as peasants. Moreover, they themselves laid claim to this identification in reference to their fathers. In doing so, they were affirming themselves as peasants – that is, affirming their shared destiny as Indians – even though they lived in the city. The expression "peasant student" thus emphasizes a continuity, that of discrimination.

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<sup>33</sup> J.-P. Lavaud, *L'instabilité politique en Amérique latine. Le cas de la Bolivie*, Paris, L'Harmattan/IHEAL, 1991, p. 190.

<sup>34</sup> *Semana de Última Hora*, 4 June 1976 edition, cited by X. Albó, *Raíces de América: El mundo Aymara*, Madrid, Alianza, 1988, p. 34.

At the end of the *Manifiesto*, the call to “[our] brother miners, factory laborers, construction workers, transportation employees, impoverished members of the middle class...” reflected the ill-defined frontier between ethnic and class divisions. The close relationship between ethnicity and exploitation allowed this synthesis but it was also the product of the contradictions (or at least distinct sensibilities) to which the introduction of the ethnic dimension in formulations of social and political demands gave rise. Present from the outset, these ambiguities internal to Katarist discourse contributed to the movement’s fragmentation beginning in the 1980s. While the MRTK (Movimiento Revolucionario Túpac Katari) advocated an alliance with the workers’ movement, the MITKA (Movimiento Indio Túpac Katari) drew on an Indianist ideology and hoped for the resurrection of the Tawantinsuyu, or Inca, Empire. These contradictions appear inherent to the range of theoretical possibilities that were opened as a result of the shift from a classist to an ethnic paradigm. They echo the distinction between the ideological hybridity of the *Tiwanaku Manifiesto* and the radical Indianism of F. Reinaga, which stands at its clearly racist limits. The high priest of the “Indian revolution” categorically rejected assimilation and miscegenation and as a result condemned Marxism as a Western ideology. The prophetic accents of his writings conferred a liberating mission upon the Indian while simultaneously leading Reinaga to represent as absolute the differences between Indians and non-Indians. There are, according to him, two Bolivias to the degree that Indians constitute a nation and the “*cholaje blanco mestizo*” constitute another. Insofar as one is oppressed and the other oppressor, Indian and Western culture are incompatible. The Indian revolution is described as a racial revolution,<sup>35</sup> which amounts to reversing the usual hierarchy of races. Radical Indianism underscores the way in which one’s stance relative to the classist paradigm defined the various Katarist sensibilities. As Rafael Archondo summarized the phenomenon: “The most radical use the term Indian as a discursive element that privileges the national dimension over the classist dimension while moderates maintain their relations with the left by insisting on class preoccupations.”<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>35</sup> F. Reinaga, *La Revolución India*, *op. cit.*, p. 144.

<sup>36</sup> Rafael Archondo, “Comunidad y divergencia de miradas en el Katarismo”, *Revista Umbrales*, La Paz, CIDES-UMSA, 7, 2000, pp. 120-33.

This distinction thus separated those who believed that the oppression to which they were subjected was exclusively a matter of neo-colonialism and those who endeavored to look at reality “with both eyes”,<sup>37</sup> combining historical interpretation (the denunciation of colonial oppression) with the hermeneutics of class struggle. Where the Indianists saw an exclusive alternative, the Katarists conjoined classist and ethnic categories, stating that: “We feel economically exploited, culturally and politically oppressed.”<sup>38</sup> They thus went beyond a strictly ethnic vision while also overcoming the classist reductionism of most trade unions and leftwing parties.<sup>39</sup> Indeed, the classist discourse then hegemonic within worker trade unionism saw the working class as the protagonist of a proletarian revolution while the peasants continued to be seen as backwards and ignorant, vestiges of a society turned towards the past. In the *Tiwanaku Manifesto*, by contrast, the peasantry is presented as an “avant-garde” of the Indian liberation movement.

Paradoxically, the *Manifesto* severely criticized the rural education generalized by the Revolution.<sup>40</sup> The primacy of the cultural was reflected in a demand for teaching programs in keeping with what the authors called “[their] cultural values”.<sup>41</sup> Rural teacher training schools were accused of “brainwashing” future teachers. The “individualist West” was contrasted with the “cooperative system natural to a people who created modes of production based on mutual assistance”.<sup>42</sup> On the subject of the values proposed to define their community, the authors of the *Manifesto* specified: “The Indian is noble and just; he is sober and profoundly respectful; he is hard-working and

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<sup>37</sup> In reference to what the Katarists refer to as the “theory of two eyes” (teoría de “los dos ojos”), which precisely consists in combining these two types of interpretation. See Xavier Albó, “From MNRistas to Kataristas to Katari”, in Steve, J. Stern (Ed), *Resistance, Rebellion, and Consciousness in the Andean Peasant World*, Madison; The University of Wisconsin Press, p. 402.

<sup>38</sup> *Manifeste de Tiwanaku*, cited, p. 177.

<sup>39</sup> According to one of the leaders of the MITKA, “the crime of the Bolivian left towards the Indians is to divide them into social classes without respecting their condition as a people or nation”, *Collasuyo*, 2 June 1978.

<sup>40</sup> Article 120 of the Bolivian educational code of 1955 assigns rural schools the task of “preventing and eradicating alcoholism, coca use, the superstitions and prejudices dominant in the countryside by way of a scientific education”. R. Archondo, “Comunidad y divergencia de miradas en el Katarismo”, art. cited, p. 122.

<sup>41</sup> “Nuestros valores culturales”, *Manifeste de Tiwanaku*, cited.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*

profoundly religious.”<sup>43</sup> It is not the least of paradoxes that the demand for social change was based on an essentialist and conservative vision of the subject who was meant to bring it about.

In his work on Puno, in Peru, François Bourricaud remarks that the question of ethnicity emerges in a society where “the cultural barriers between groups had ben, if not torn down or overturned, at least eroded by a multitude of economic and non-economic transactions.”<sup>44</sup> He emphasizes the following paradox: the Indian identifies himself as such at the moment when peasant communities leave their isolation. In the Bolivian case, the Katarists expressed a cultural specificity upon leaving their community of origin. Consequently, it can be claimed that the reduction of real heterogeneity is a precondition for the politicization of identities. This is the idea set forth by Daniel Sabbagh: “Paradoxically, in many cases, the celebration of ‘diversity’ and the politicization of identities supposedly associated with a specific ‘culture’ occupy a growing place to the degree that cultural heterogeneity is in reality diminishing.”<sup>45</sup> J.-P. Lavaud, for his part, holds that “it is socio-cultural opening, the acceleration of exchange, which supplies the background for the expression of local racial and cultural specificity.”<sup>46</sup>

I have tried to show that the conditions that led Katarist activists to politically and as trade unionists position themselves as “Indians” reflects, on the one hand, the deterioration of the peasants’ relationship with the post-revolutionary state and, on the other, the urban experience of rural Andeans. The emergence of the ethnic paradigm is tied to the broken promises of the 1952 Revolution in the area of agrarian policy. While the peasant revolts of the 1960s and 70s were economic in origin, they contributed to the reception of a discourse that emphasized the flaws of the revolutionary paradigm. Alongside intellectuals like F. Reinaga, the main producers of Katarist discourse were

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<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>44</sup> François Bourricaud, “Indian, Mestizo and Cholo as Symbols in the Peruvian System of Stratification”, in Nathan Glazer, Daniel P. Moynihan (eds.), *Ethnicity, Theory and Experience*, London, Harvard University Press, 1975, pp. 350-387; J.-P. Lavaud, “Identité et politique: le courant Túpac Katari en Bolivie”, cited above, p. 32.

<sup>45</sup> Daniel Sabbagh, “Nationalisme et multiculturalisme”, *Critique internationale*, 23, April 2004, pp. 113-124. The author refers to Québécois demands vis-à-vis Canada to illustrate the alignment of life styles.

<sup>46</sup> J.-P. Lavaud, “Identité et politique: le courant Túpac Katari en Bolivie”, cited above, p. 23.

educated and generally bilingual activists. They were no longer rural but not yet entirely urban, no longer peasants but not yet proletarians. As H. Favre points out, “they defined themselves solely by what they had ceased to be.”<sup>47</sup> Of course, their trajectory was characterized by a period in the university but this was accompanied by continued identification with a traditional culture. From this point of view, the comparison proposed by Robert Albro with Peru’s Shining Path movement is enlightening, particularly his suggestion that, in contrast to *senderista* activists, the Katarists remained attached to their rural community of origin.<sup>48</sup>

R. Archondo underscores the novelty of this discourse at “a time when ethnic contradictions seem[ed] secondary in regards to the fundamental fight, whether with imperialism or with the dominant class.”<sup>49</sup> In fact, the emergence of Katarism in Bolivia was one of the first manifestations of a tendency that took hold starting in the 1980-90s. The decline of the worker’s movement contributed to the growing importance of the ethnic paradigm. Increasingly, the figure of the Indian appeared as the incarnation of a new revolutionary avant-garde. The acceleration of the phenomenon of urbanization and, in particular, the growth of the city of El Alto on the periphery of La Paz<sup>50</sup> led to comparable social dynamics. The maintenance of social, economic and symbolic ties with the rural environment reflected the shared identification of the peasants of the high planes and the inhabitants of El Alto. This shared identification created the opening for an alliance that has since 2000 greatly benefited social movements and the party of Evo Morales, the Movimiento al Socialismo (MAS). The fuzziness of the MASist challenge revives the Katarist combination of ethnic and classist categories. Since its arrival to power in 2005, the MAS government has pursued policies inspired by the desire for greater equality among citizens and the decolonization of the state. Its “cultural and democratic revolution” is based on an interpretation of colonization in terms of fundamental historical rupture; it is therefore sensitive to continuities between the

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<sup>47</sup> H. Favre, *L’indigénisme*, *op. cit.*

<sup>48</sup> Robert Albro, “Introduction: A New Time and Place for Bolivian Popular Politics”, *Ethnology*, 37 (2), 1998, pp. 99-115.

<sup>49</sup> R. Archondo, “Comunidad y divergencia de miradas en el Katarismo”, cited above, p. 124.

<sup>50</sup>

colonial state and its liberal successor. The questions raised by such a process are not foreign to those already raised in its time by Katarism.<sup>51</sup>

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