

civilization they have erected on the backs of every living creature on this planet. It's time to decolonize our minds and bodies, to build the bridges of trust and love with the indigenous communities that will accept us (those that will not can hardly be blamed), to leave this culture of death for good in order to gather in its shadows and at its frayed edges, and finally, to wage one last assault against Babylon and bring it down forever, together. Un-separated. Unconquered. Unbowed.

This article has barely scratched the surface of a deeply complex topic. I do not suppose to have offered all, or even any, of the answers, and I do dearly hope that this will continue to be discussed—on a clear, practical level as well as a theoretical one—amongst those who take liberation seriously.

I welcome any feedback and discussion at: itsalreadyhere@wild-mail.com

Stones Can Speak

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Bolivia and the Lulaization of South America

A year or so ago, as I was having a conversation with a Bolivian friend about the US culture and the modern industrial complex, he pointed out to me with surprise that there were people who believed that stones were not alive. He mentioned this as an example of alienation—because he knew that everything from this planet is a living creature, even a stone. And knowing that was not a big deal for him; on the contrary, it was just common sense.

The amazement produced by the realization that there are some people who don't see that stones are alive is a clear example of the crash between two cosmovisions. As Carolyn Merchant stated in the early 80's, European rationalism and Western science put nature to death in order to make supremacist ideology a prevailing one under the promise of progress (*The Death of Nature*, 1983). "Animism" was the name given to the non-Western, holistic, down-to-earth perspectives that view the earth as a living organism. The turmoil experienced in Latin America in the last decade is the overlap of these two

contemporary Weltanschauung[s] interacting openly. First World capitalist globalizers, Second World industrialist-Communists, and Third World developers are becoming unified—in spite of their own agendas—in their war against the Fourth World, which doesn't aim to clear-cut the ancestral trees, dam the rivers, poison the earth, enslave its people or sell out for cash. Stones are alive and there are spirits inhabiting them—people heat stones in sweat lodges because they represent the ancestors that come to us with answers. Then, we pledge to them, we get reconnected, and we get healed. There is no equivalent practice in the Western rationale. For the West, this is superstition.

Following George Manuel, Ward Churchill uses the notion of the Fourth World to refer to the indigenous nations, whose territories allow the existence of the industrialized First and Second Worlds and the industrializing Third World (“The New Face of Liberation”, 2004). Churchill states that in any territory where there is a nation-state there is a Fourth World suppressed by the masters and the industrial chimeras. Thus, any Fourth World liberation implies dismantling the state structure and its military territorialization. Indigenous liberation can sometimes be in opposition to the Third World liberationists—often centered on progressive-Socialist agendas with a preferential emphasis on the role of the state.

Walking through the Witches Market in La Paz—a day after the road barricades were cleared on January of this year—I realized how deep the Western view has been inoculated in my mind. I couldn't really understand the meaning of the various amulets and magical objects that people were offering in that peculiar market. I realized that my perception of reality has been modified and trained according to one model of interpretation, which standardizes the notion of the world in order to impose on us a set for socialization, in which the Hegelian master-slave dialectic is still in power. This is the logic of control, the realm of *La Politique*.

In the Andean world, everything is alive. The anima of living things is expressed in an uncanny and symbolic form to be interpreted. This symbolic world does not exist to serve a privileged caste but to clarify the meaning of life in the living web of the universe. The sun, the sky, the stars, the mountains, the clouds, all the elements of nature are symbols to be deciphered in the course of one's life. The planet is a natural garden—simultaneously wild and affected by our existence—where we grow and recover consciousness, while the social-petro-in-

dustrial urban complex is the scenario where we become absolutely lost *persecula seculorum*.

John Zerzan suggests, based on archaeological evidence, that there is a link between “ritual and the emergence of organized warfare” (“On the Origins of War”:2005). Symbolic culture derives from ritual, which apparently appeared in the Upper Paleolithic. Civilization, hierarchical division of labor and domestication appeared later on, around 10,000 years ago approximately, during the Neolithic. From that point on the “imperialism of the symbolic” has reached all human spheres of social life. Organized warfare epitomizes civilization and its practice of standardization. However, humans lived feral but with a symbolic dimension at least for 40,000 years. The oldest cave-paintings documented by anthropologists are dated from the Upper Paleolithic in Australia, circa 50,000 years ago.

The invasive symbolic thought of the West is based on the Logos, which shapes instrumental reason and is very different from the symbolism of Australian aboriginals and native peoples from other parts of the world. Shamans walk about the Amazon in tune with the jungle to find the right mushroom or liana or plant to treat a specific disease or for other purposes. The Mapuche Machi uses floripondio (*brugmansia sanguinea*) to induce dreams and visions in order to cure people. Dreams and visions are interpreted through symbolism. Amazonian peoples have a tradition of foraging. The Mapuche were hunters and nomads. They crossed the Andes from Argentina to Chile, and mixed with the horticulturists and fishers who had already been living in the region.

According to US Archeologist Tom Dillehay, and Chilean Geologist Mario Pino, the oldest human settlement on the continent was in Monte Verde II in the South of Chile. In 1976 they found medicinal plants, stones and artifacts in a location 35 kilometers—21 miles approximately—southwest of Puerto Montt, which are dated from 33,500 years ago. Although this discovery challenges the current theories about the continental population, it was confirmed in 1998 by the US Society for the Progress of Science based in Philadelphia.

Later on, one hundred years before the arrival of Pizarro and the conquistadors, the Incas used slaves and domesticated llamas and alpacas—vicuñas are still wild—to create their empire, which ended with the arrival of Europeans. Colonization and conquest imposed the Spanish empire in the Americas, initiating an early process of globalization.

Humans will either go extinct or will survive living according to the cycles of the earth. The symbol of summer is the harvest and the symbol of winter is hibernation and fire making. In the Andean cosmogony, symbols are not representations of reality that mediate direct experience but signs that allow the reading of the will of nature. More than a representation, the symbol is an interpretation of the force of life, which requires being in tune with nature itself and all the elements. For Andean symbolism, profit, efficiency, progress and acceleration are vacuum concepts. In this world, life is about something else. If you cannot hear the murmur of stones there is no way you can communicate with this secret world. Andean people were forced to speak Spanish, but they still speak their mother tongues (Aymara and Quechua, primarily). Understanding this vision is not a matter of learning the language and the culture, but to un-westernize and un-modernize yourself, producing a switch in the brain cortex and the personal mindset.

As UO professor and author Rob Proudfoot put it in an informal conversation with a graduate student, it is impossible to fit your sandal on the foot of an elephant. Circular perception of time of native cultures has no intersecting point with the linear perception of Western civilization. Both perceptions can coexist on different levels. When they touch each other there is conflict, and a lot of people usually get killed. That is what is going on in Bolivia.

According to Western standards, Bolivia is one of the poorest countries in Latin America. There is no governmental stability and the political interregnum is increasing. As in many other places in Latin America, modernity never took off.

Chilean Professor J. points out that the Bolivian political impasse is the consequence of conflicts of political power (“Bolivia: crónica de la revolución que no viene” and “Bolivia: el fin de la alternativa reforma o revolución” in www.pieldeleopardo.com). The sandal of political solutions is being enforced in the altiplano reality through the insurrectionist strategy of the main Bolivian Workers Union (COB), and the electoral strategy of the Trotskyist organization Movement Toward Socialism (MAS). Since the Bolivian people overthrew two presidents in two years (Gonzalo Sánchez de Losada in October 2003, and Carlos Mesa in June 2005), the Bolivian institutionality has been in crisis. The US man to carry out the Empire business is the neoliberal Jorge Tuto Quiroga—whose tactic to control the country would be repression. Sánchez de Losada tried the same tactic and it did not

work. People were killed but water wasn't privatized. Mesa was more decent. He didn't repress. In addition, balkanization is taking place in the country and the reactionary region of Santa Cruz is trying to get independence from the nation-state. Bolivia has water and gas, and multinational corporations cannot afford to lose control in the area. Strategically, a couple of months ago, US marines opened a new military base in Paraguay—another landlocked country, that borders Bolivia. However, coca farmers, local assemblies of various indigenous groups from El Alto and other sites, and campesinos keep fighting for autonomy and local power in the communities. These spontaneous and organic mobilizations have empowered the Bolivian people who fearlessly challenge any authority and feel proud of their indigeness. To save the nation-state, the Chief of the Justice Supreme Court, Eduardo Rodríguez, was appointed as an interim president. But the conflict does not go away. Solares, the leader of the Bolivian Workers Union, proposed the centralization of the conflict through UN support and Brazilian and Argentine assistance. Congressman and Trotskyist leader of MAS, Evo Morales, is urging an election in order to institutionalize the crisis. Meanwhile, the temporary autonomous zones—to quote Hakim Bey—are becoming stronger, more rooted and more permanent. This situation is certainly working in favor of local autonomy, liberating the imagination of people from the Eurocentric Logos and reinforcing a non-Western indigenous biorhythm.

The Bolivian movement for autonomy goes beyond institutional solutions and hierarchical and vertical decisions. It is setting a precedent for the liberation of the Fourth World, and is spreading rapidly. Amazonian people from the areas of Sucumbíos and Orellana in Ecuador have been protesting the militarization of the region, chemical fumigation, the Plan Colombia and the violence imported into their bioregion. This month (August 2005) the Mapuche people initiated a cavalcade from Temuco to Santiago in an attempt to be recognized as a nation and achieve national representation. People from Chiapas have been supporting and keeping alive the Zapatista Caracoles centers as a form of independence and self-government.

When the indigenous nations take the initiative and force the crash between their cosmovisions and the modern-standardized Western Logos, the whole institutional structure based on the nation-state trembles. Probably, what the elite will pursue in Bolivia will be to reaffirm the institutions and save the nation-state. Social-Democrats,

leftists and Socialist governments are taking office all along South America in order to serve as a social cushion and give an apparent face of stability to their countries, so the elite can keep its control and continue neoliberal business as usual: Lagos in Chile, Lula in Brazil, Kirchner in Argentina, Tabaré Vázquez in Uruguay, Palacio in Ecuador, and—to a certain extent—Chávez in Venezuela.

Last month, experts from the Lula administration met with Evo Morales. Apparently, the agenda for the new government has been laid out. What used to be a desire of the people to elect leftist governments during the period of the military regimes seems now to be a tactic from the neoliberals to Marxist-Socialists to stop the increasing pressure of the indigenous nations. Endurance of and resistance against the European—and now American—penetration have been taking place for more than 500 hundred years. Anti-Columbus day is rising all over the continent. The Maya predicted the end of the Fifth Sun by 2012, which could coincide with visible and everyday-life ecological disasters and the dramatic—if not total—reduction of the industrial energy supply. Nobody knows what the end of the Fifth Sun might mean, except for stones, which are murmuring in a symbolic language that we need to learn to hear.

Eugene, August 2005

Reclaiming the Myth-Time:

Finding Our Place through Story and Song

Scavenger

Several Years Have Passed Now Since I Saw One for the First Time.

In the oldest mountains on this continent I sat like a stone beneath an old Hemlock, silent and still. A shadow of flickering movement drew my attention and there she was, fluttering by my head, small as a tiny bird but certainly not at all avian in nature. As my head turned she paused in flight, backing away but turning, and in that short instant our eyes met, shock and wonder reflected simultaneously between two