Returning as Millions: Visual Memory, Indigenous Politics, and the Reinterpretation of Tupaq Katari and Bartolina Sisa in 20th-Century Bolivia

Sven Cozijnsen – S1106571

Supervisor: Nino Vallen

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Abstract:

This thesis examines how the legacies of colonial-era rebels Tupaq Katari and Bartolina Sisa were reinterpreted through visual culture by Indigenous movements in Bolivia during the second half of the twentieth century. Drawing on posters, murals, pamphlets, educational materials, statues, and political ephemera, it analyses how these figures were mobilised across Katarist, Indianist, unionist, and feminist contexts as living, contested symbols of resistance. Using Astrid Erll's concepts of premediation and remediation alongside Silvia Rivera Cusicanqui's framework of memoria larga and memoria corta, the study demonstrates how visual representations bridged colonial-era struggles with contemporary political agendas. These visual reinterpretations not only preserved historical memory but actively reshaped it, transforming Katari and Sisa into lieux de mémoire that legitimised competing visions of Indigenous identity, sovereignty, and political strategy in post-1952 Bolivia.

Keywords
Tupaq Katari; Bartolina Sisa; Bolivia; Indigenous movements; visual culture; Katarism; Indianism; memoria larga; memoria corta; convergence; remediation; premediation; cultural memory.

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I. Introduction

Throughout Bolivian history, the memory of Indigenous resistance has played a crucial role in shaping the country's national identity and political struggles. Central to this narrative are the figures of Tupaq Katari and Bartolina Sisa, who led the 1781 siege of La Paz against Spanish colonial forces. Their brutal executions marked them as powerful symbols of Indigenous defiance and collective suffering. However, their legacies did not remain static. In the second half of the 20th century, Indigenous movements in Bolivia began to reclaim and reinterpret these figures in ways that served their evolving political, cultural, and ideological goals.

The 1781 siege, which is often referred to as the Great Rebellion, is one of the most prominent examples of the pan-Andean uprisings. The uprising started in March of that year, with its main battle being the siege on the city of La Paz. Between March and October, Indigenous rebels commanded by Julián Apaza (Tupaq Katari) surrounded the city. The uprisings had been going on for a decade at that point, but the siege of 1781 was perhaps the biggest reaction to the Bourbon reforms, which had taken place prior to 1771.[1] Some 40,000 Indian men and women surrounded the city, and instead of attacking it directly, they planned to cut off all supply routes to the city in an attempt to starve the population. The siege lasted a long 109 days, in which more than 10,000 people lost their lives in the city. This siege marked the most devastating attack on the Spanish population in the Andes, and it would not lose that title.[2]

Unlike other Bolivian colonial-era rebellion heroes, Tupaq Katari's arrival in the historical records is a sudden one. Tupaq Amaru and Tomás Katari, for example, were already found in sources dating back years before their breakthroughs as Indigenous leaders. Julián Apaza took on the title of Tupaq Katari to honour two contemporary Indigenous leaders who resisted Spanish colonial rule: Túpac Amaru II, who led the uprising in Cuzco, and Thomás Katari, who headed the rebellion in Chayanta (Potosí).[3] His name also combines the Inca royal title 'Tupaq' with the Aymara term 'Katari', which refers to a great mythic serpent connected to Lake Titicaca. The extraordinary legacy of Tupaq Katari is a direct result of his leadership and involvement in the siege on La Paz. Originally from Sicasica, Apaza was an Aymara-speaking petty merchant who mainly traded in coca. Unlike Tupaq Amaru, Tupaq Katari was nothing more than a commoner before the rebellion and by electing to go by this new name, he distanced himself from his humble background and placed himself within a larger symbolic and political tradition. He had never been politically involved and did not come from a background of

[1] Silvia Rivera Cusicanqui, *Ch'ixinakax Utxiwa: On Decolonising Practices and Discourses* (Polity, 2020).
[2] Sergio Serulnikov, *Revolution in the Andes: The Age of Túpac Amaru* (Duke University Press Books, 2013), 116
[3] R. Stock, "Túpac Katari (ca. 1750–1781)," in *The International Encyclopedia of Revolution and Protest*, ed. Immanuel Ness (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2009), https://doi.org/10.1002/9781405198073.wbierp1482.

wealth or a prestigious lineage.[4]

The insurgent forces were made up of thousands of Aymara families, to the point where describing them as an army may not be completely accurate. Tupaq Katari himself was joined by his wife, Bartolina Sisa, and his sister, Gregoria Apaza. Sisa, born in Q'ara Qhatu, was a young child when she moved to Sicasica, where she would go on to marry Julian Apaza. Similarly to her husband, she also travelled along the Altiplano, selling goods and trading in coca. It was during her early adulthood when she initially encountered the many injustices which were forced upon the Indigenous communities by the Spanish ruler. Sisa's involvement in the siege should not be underestimated; she was organising military camps and commanded some of the Indigenous forces.[5]

Starting in early August of 1781, a second siege would commence under the leadership of Tupaq Katari. The siege was very comparable to the first one, with many casualties on both sides and constant harassment from the Indigenous rebels. It was during one of the skirmishes that Bartolina Sisa was captured in the city, forcing Tupaq Katari to demand her safe return during various negotiations. On the 17th of October, when a Spanish army of around 8000 men arrived, the insurgent forces were forced to abandon their post immediately. Tupaq Katari was forced to flee, searching refuge in a church in a village called Peñas. After being betrayed by a collaborator, he was imprisoned in the Peñas church, which he had initially sought refuge in. He was sentenced to quartering for the crimes he had committed, according to Judge Tadeo Diez de Medina.[6]

This is where Tupaq Katari's life ends, yet his story is far from over. What follows his death can only be described as a long and complex reception history, in which his figure is gradually transformed into a symbol, a sign, and eventually a contested political icon. The history of the Kataris and Amarus, and more specifically that of Tupaq Katari is an example of Indigenous modernity, a retaking of their own historicity. This decolonial project, in turn, shows how all Indigenous people are contemporary beings who share the same struggles. This phenomenon can be explained only when looking at the unique way in which the Andean communities perceive their own history. Rather than seeing history as a linear process, they see it as a cycle, which will always return to the same point. To quote Silvia Rivera Cusicanqui: *'The contemporary experience commits us to the present, aka pacha, which in turn contains within it the seeds of the future that emerge from the depths of the past (qhip nayr uiitasis sarnaqapxanani).'*[7]

Memories of Katari always remained in the Aymara and Quechua societies, however it was in the wake of the 1952 revolution that Tupaq Katari's legacy saw a true resurgence into the public conscience. The 1952 revolution in Bolivia was a popular

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[4] Serulnikov, *Revolution in the Andes,* 116-117

[5] Aitor Iraegi Balenziaga and Nilda Cuentas Yanez, *Ausentes Pero No Perdidas: Mujeres de la Historia de Bolivia*, 2019, 15

[6] Serulnikov, *Revolution in the Andes,* 131-133

[7] Cusicanqui, *Ch'ixinakax Utxiwa,* 60-70

uprising led by the Movimiento Nacionalista Revolucionario (MNR) alongside armed miners and urban workers, who seized arsenals and forced the army's surrender, toppling the oligarchic '*Rosca*' of mining elites. It ushered in a new social order by nationalizing the country's tin mines, redistributing land to peasant communities, and extending universal suffrage, while integrating Indigenous peasants into a state-led corporatist framework that mixed empowerment with paternalistic control.

Despite these promises, the MNR and its leaders ultimately weren't able to keep their promises and in a reaction to this a new Indigenous ideological movement emerges in Bolivia: Katarism. Katarism, as defined by Cécile Casen, is a Bolivian socio-political movement that emerged in the 1970s, politicizing Indian identity to challenge both economic exploitation and 'cultural' oppression of indigenous peoples, particularly Aymara and Quechua, within a framework critical of state assimilationist and integrationist policies. Most prominently, this ideology was being spread and developed by Marking a paradigm shift from class-based to ethnicity-based struggle, Katarism arose from the deterioration of peasant-state relations and the urban-rural experiences of Andean migrants, combining demands for economic justice, cultural recognition, and indigenous self-determination. Central to its ideology is the *Tiwanaku Manifesto*, which articulates the synthesis of ethnic and class categories and posits Indian identity as a locus of resistance, political agency, and anti-colonial struggle in the face of enduring structural racism and unfulfilled promises of the 1952 Revolution.[8]

This thesis investigates how the symbolic and political memory of Tupaq Katari and Bartolina Sisa was reshaped through various forms of visual culture including posters, murals, educational materials, political manifestos, and monuments. This was done by Indigenous movements such as the Katarists, the Indianists and trade union confederations. By examining these reinterpretations, this study seeks to answer the question: How has the legacy of colonial-era rebels Tupaq Katari and Bartolina Sisa been reinterpreted in visual culture by Indigenous movements in the second half of the 20th century in Bolivia? The thesis will argue that Indigenous movements in Bolivia during the second half of the 20th century reinterpreted the legacies of Tupaq Katari and Bartolina Sisa through visual culture as living, contested symbols, strategically mobilised to legitimise diverse political agendas. Drawing on both ancestral memoria larga and post-revolutionary memoria corta, these visual representations bridged colonial-era resistance with contemporary struggles, allowing Katarist, Indianist, unionist, and feminist currents to claim their figures as lieux de mémoire for competing visions of Indigenous identity and sovereignty.

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[8] Cécile Casen and Ethan Rundell, "Bolivian Katarism: The Emergence of an Indian Challenge to the Social Order," Critique Internationale 57, no. 4 (2012): 23–30

II. Literature review and Methodology

Literature review

Scholars and political figures have consistently contested the meaning of Katarism throughout its history. This constant debate about its meaning, its goals and its ideology as a whole is also reflected in scholarship about the topic. In its core, Katarism is a popular Indigenous movement, mainly consisting of Quechua and Aymara people from Bolivia as well as some other Indigenous minorities. Rather than reflecting a single, unified movement, the historiography of Katarism reveals sharp debates over its ideological boundaries, its relationship to Indianism, and the symbolic uses of figures like Tupac Katari. The core ideal of Katarism is to liberate these Indigenous people from the colonial chains which have held them captive ever since the Spanish colonisers first arrived in South America. The coloniser may be gone, but the colonial character is still deeply rooted within the state apparatus.

In *El Katarismo,* Javier Hurtado defines Katarism as a cultural movement and an Aymara peasant movement.[9] Within this definition, Hurtado describes two currents: Indianism and union Katarism. It is precisely this distinction that has led to debate between historians, as well as between Indigenous politicians. To Hurtado, Indianism can be seen as an internal variation within a larger Katarist movement. Similarly, Silvia Rivera Cusicanqui describes the movement as a broad ideological movement with multiple institutional and organisational manifestations in La Paz and Oruro. The movement concerned itself with a vindication of Indian culture (*la cultura Indio*) as well as its past, awareness of the powerlessness and poor living conditions of the peasants (*campesinos*) and their rejection of the degradation of their trade unions.[10] It is important to note that Rivera, throughout her work titled '*Oprimidos pero no vencidos',* speaks particularly about Union Katarism.

Unlike Rivera and Hurtado, scholars such as Pablo Mamani Ramírez see Indianism as a separate ideology from Katarism. Mamani, in his article '*¿Descolonización real o falsa?',* traces Katarism's origins to the 1970s, emphasising its Aymara intellectual roots. Mamani also argues that Indianism preceded Katarism and represents a more radical tradition. He argues that Katarism can be described as moderate, reformist and seeking shared governance, while Indianism can be described as radical, separatist and rooted in the desire for a reconstitution of Qullasuyu (one of

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[9] Javier Hurtado, *El Katarismo* (La Paz: Hisbol, 1986).

[10] Silvia Rivera Cusicanqui, *Oprimidos Pero No Vencidos : Luchas Del Campesinado Aymara Y Qhechwa De Bolivia, 1900-1980*, 3rd ed. (Ginebra: Instituto de Investigaciones de las Naciones Unidas para el Desarrollo Social, 1986), 181-182 https://enriquedussel.com/txt/Textos_200_Obras/Giro_descolonizador/Oprimidos_vencidos-Silvia_Cusicanqui.pdf

the four regions of the Inca state).[11] Mamani clearly distinguishes between these two political trends; however, he still uses terminology such as 'I-K' (*Indianismo-Katarismo*) when describing the broader peasant movement.

It is important to take into account the diverse ideological-political perspectives in the interpretations that are made about Katarism, specifically also when it comes to the use of the name Tupac Katari as a symbol of struggle.[12] For example, it is important to be aware of the plurality of some of the terms which are often used by authors, for example Rivera and Mamani both use the term 'katarismo-indianismo', but their political positions are very different. *Valeria Durán presents this argument in her essay, 'Diferentes interpretaciones sobre el katarismo'.* Her main aim is to critically analyse certain historical interpretations from an Indianist perspective. In particular, she is critical of both Rivera and Hurtado, who are actively subsuming Indianism under a broader 'Katarism' or seeing it merely as a faction within it. She calls for greater recognition of the conflicts and divergences between the Katarist (reformist, often unionist) and Indianist (radical, separatist or sovereigntist) projects.[13]

These different interpretations of Katarism, Indianism and the Indigenous struggle show how fractured the movement is. The tension between reformist and separatist visions, between Katarism as a union-based political strategy and Indianism as a project of cultural and territorial sovereignty, shows the contested nature of Indigenous political identity in Bolivia. I will approach Katarism in this thesis as a constantly contested movement and ideology, actively reconfiguring historical memory, identity and resistance. This complexity is particularly visible in the appropriation of symbolic figures like Tupac Katari, whose legacy is invoked across the spectrum.

The history of the Kataris and Amarus goes hand in hand with the history of the Andean revolutions of the 18th and 19th centuries in modern-day Peru and Bolivia as well as earlier revolutionary and anti-colonial movements and opposition. Among the first historians to research the topic were Jorge Bouroncle and Daniel Valcárcel. The general consensus in this era was that there was a close bond between the indigenous insurrection of 1780 and the Creole independence movement. Sergio Serulnikov, in his book Revolution in the Andes explains that it was not until the 1970s and 1980s that the Tupamarista revolution had acquired a new image and a new destiny. Rather than a broader creole cause, the new belief became that the only way to define their cause was through a uniquely Andean worldview.[14] In this worldview, the Amarus and Kataris became something more than just charismatic leaders. People described them as bearers of divine powers, making their project one striving for a utopian ideal rather than

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[11] Pablo Mamani Ramírez, "¿Descolonización Real O Falsa Descolonización En Bolivia? Corrientes De Pensamiento," *Bolivian Studies Journal/Revista De Estudios Bolivianos* 21 (March 17, 2016): 25–38, https://doi.org/10.5195/bsj.2015.145.

[12] Valeria Duran, "Diferentes Interpretaciones Sobre El Katarismo. Discusiones Desde Una Perspectiva Indianista," *Pelícano* 4 (August 28, 2018): 044, https://doi.org/10.22529/p.2018.4.03.

[13] Duran, *Diferentes Interpretaciones Sobre El Katarismo*, 52-54

[14] Serulnikov, *Revolution in the Andes,* 116

mere emancipation.

The first Katarist organisations and unions originated within the same climate of ideas which also gave birth to this new view of the Amarus and Kataris. To the historians of this era, the struggle of the Aymara and Quechua people could not be reduced to a class struggle or a notion of populist nationalism. Rather, Tupac Katari perfectly embodied the colonial and ethnic conflict.[15] This shift in the way that the Amarus and Kataris were perceived is also central to Eva Fischer's argument in her article titled *'From rebellion to democracy: The many lives of Túpac Katari'.* Fischer argues that we should consider the transformation of the memory of Tupac Katari as a three-stage process. In this process, the first step describes Katari being remembered as the eighteenth-century Aymara leader who laid siege to La Paz in 1781 as part of the Great Rebellion. In the second stage, Tupac Katari is reimagined within cultural memory, particularly by indigenous movements and intellectuals. His figure becomes detached from historical exactitude and instead serves as a symbol of ongoing colonial resistance, ancestral memory, and indigenous identity. His famous prophetic statement, 'I will return and be millions', becomes a rallying cry. In the third stage, Tupac Katari becomes incorporated into state discourse and public nationalism, especially under Evo Morales and the Plurinational State. He becomes institutionalised as a unifying icon and is incorporated into public and political memory, though often at the cost of flattening his radical legacy.[16]

While the life and rebellion of Tupaq Katari can be situated within the broader context of late colonial Indigenous uprisings, his legacy extends far beyond the events of 1781. The symbolic power of his struggle, embodied in his dismemberment, prophetic last words, and fusion of Andean and colonial imagery, has made him a contested and enduring figure in Bolivian political memory. Rather than remaining a static historical actor, Katari has been continuously reimagined to serve the ideological needs of successive movements. His image has been central to the development of Katarist thought and has been repeatedly remediated through visual and political culture. This transformation from rebel to symbol reflects not only a reinterpretation of the past but also a strategic use of memory in the present.

Memory is not a neutral recollection of the past but a socially and culturally constructed process shaped by present needs and mediated through symbols, language, and media. Foundational to the field, Maurice Halbwachs introduced the concept of collective memory, arguing that memory is embedded in social frameworks and distinct from official history. His work has been pivotal in showing how groups remember selectively to maintain identity and cohesion.[17]

Building on and expanding this idea, Silvia Rivera Cusicanqui provides a

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[15] Serulnikov, *Revolution in the Andes,* 8-9

[16] Eva Fischer, "From Rebellion to Democracy: The Many Lives of Túpac Katari," *History and Anthropology* 29, no. 4 (November 20, 2017): 493–516, https://doi.org/10.1080/02757206.2017.1401536.

[17] Maurice Halbwachs, *On Collective Memory* (University of Chicago Press, 1992), 50-55 78-79

decolonial lens to memory by distinguishing between long and short memory in Indigenous Andean communities. She argues that long memory refers to ancestral forms of resistance and symbols, such as Tupaq Katari, that are cyclically reactivated in contemporary struggles. This perspective contrasts with short memory, which is more recent and institutional, like the legacy of the 1952 revolution. For Rivera, memory is not nostalgic but actively political, used to shape future-orientated Indigenous projects.[18]

Astrid Erll offers a complementary, yet distinct, framework focused on the role of media in shaping memory. In *Remembering across Time, Space, and Cultures*, she introduces the concepts of premediation and remediation to explain how existing cultural narratives shape new ones and how memory is continually restructured across different media. Erll emphasises that memory is inherently mediated, and thus visual and symbolic representations, such as murals, posters, and monuments, are not merely reflections of memory but active constructors of it.[19]

Methodology

This chapter outlines the theoretical and methodological approach used to examine how murals, posters, and flyers have reinterpreted the legacies of Tupaq Katari and Bartolina Sisa in the context of Bolivia's Indigenous movements during the second half of the 20th century. Central to the argument I make in this thesis will be the theory of memory culture and Lieux de Mémoire by Astrid Erll and Rivera's concept of long and short memory in Andean Indigenous history. I will argue that memory is not a passive storage of the past but a dynamic and performative process shaped by representation, circulation, and repetition across media. For this argument I will extend Erll's theory about media to a broader range of visual culture. Central to Erll's framework are three interrelated concepts: premediation, remediation, and convergence. Premediation refers to how cultural producers draw on existing narrative templates, genres, or visual codes to give new representations their intelligibility and affective force. For example, images of Katari often borrow from heroic-revolutionary iconography. Remediation, by contrast, involves the repetition and transformation of earlier representations across media and time. Visual memory, in this light, becomes layered. Finally, convergence describes how different memory practices, historical periods, and political agendas become invested in a shared site of memory (*Lieux de Mémoire*). Figures like Katari serve as multi-temporal symbols, mobilised by diverse groups (unionists, feminists, Kataristas, political parties) for overlapping but often distinct ideological purposes.[20]

Building on Astrid Erll's theory of cultural memory, particularly her concepts of premediation and remediation, this analysis extends her framework to Bolivian visual culture. While Erll's case study centers on British and Indian media representations of

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[18] Rivera Cusicanqui, *Oprimidos Pero No Vencidos,* 100-105, 212-218

[19] Astrid Erll, "Remembering Across Time, Space, and Cultures: Premediation, Remediation and the 'Indian Mutiny,'" in *De Gruyter eBooks*, 2009, 109–38, https://doi.org/10.1515/9783110217384.2.109.

[20] Erll, *Remembering Across Time, Space, and Cultures*, 109-112

the 1857 uprising, her theoretical model is explicitly transmedial and transcultural. Transmedial means the circulation and representation of cultural memory across different media forms while transcultural refers to the movement and transformation of memory across distinct cultural contexts and communities. By examining flyers, a statue, murals, and booklets, this study explores how Bolivian memory culture constructs lieux de mémoire within local visual culture. These objects not only reflect existing cultural schemata (premediation) but also participate in the ongoing re-narration of historical events (remediation), thereby shaping collective memory across time and space.

This thesis draws on a diverse corpus of twentieth-century Bolivian visual materials, including political posters, murals, booklets, statues, pamphlets, and promotional media produced by Indigenous movements, trade unions, feminist organisations, and individual artists. These items were accessed through digitised microfilm collections from Princeton University Library's Latin American Ephemera series, the International Institute of Social History in Amsterdam, and the Fundación Solón website, supplemented by publicly available museum and artist resources. Provenance information is provided for each figure in the thesis, ensuring that all sources can be traced to their institutional holdings or creators.

To situate these processes within the specific historical and cultural context of the Bolivian Andes, I integrate Silvia Rivera Cusicanqui's conceptual model of *memoria larga* (long memory) and *memoria corta* (short memory). Memoria corta refers to post-1952 political memory, centred on agrarian reform, campesino unions, and the revolutionary state. Memoria larga, by contrast, invokes deeper, anticolonial genealogies tied to Indigenous identity, territoriality, and resistance to the colonial-republican order. This dual framework helps interpret how visual materials code historical time: some images anchor themselves in short-term revolutionary syndicalism, while others invoke the ethical depth and ancestral legitimacy of Indigenous memory and myth.[21]

These visual materials are not isolated artistic expressions but integral components of a broader Indigenous visual culture that developed in direct relation to the political agendas of Bolivia's Indigenous movements in the second half of the twentieth century. Murals, posters, and flyers served as vehicles for communicating collective memory, mobilising support, and articulating political demands in public space. By embedding the figures of Tupaq Katari and Bartolina Sisa within recognisable visual codes, these works both reflected and reinforced the ideological priorities of the movements that produced them, whether advancing Katarist calls for cultural recognition within the Bolivian state, Indianist assertions of autonomous Indigenous nationhood, or feminist interventions into Indigenous historical narratives and Indigenous politics. Analysing these materials as part of an active political visual culture

[21] Rivera Cusicanqui, *Oprimidos Pero No Vencidos,* 100-105, 212-218

allows for a deeper understanding of how memory was not only preserved but also strategically reconfigured to meet the needs of contemporary struggles.

III. The national Revolution and the Birth of a New Indigenous Politics

A National Revolution: Bolivia's political landscape at the beginning of the second half of the 20th century

On the 9th of April in 1952the Movimiento Nacionalista Revolucionario (MNR), the main political movement representing the working class in the country, initiated an uprising in La Paz by capturing arsenals and distributing weapons to civilians. Armed miners advanced toward the capital, intercepting and halting military reinforcements. The army surrendered fully after three days of intense fighting and the loss of approximately 600 lives.[22] The morning after, at 2am, when the gunfire had barely faded, Juan Lechín Oquendo, miner and union leader, took to the airwaves. Broadcasting from Radio Illimani, his voice rang out in the still-dark city, announcing the victory of Bolivia's popular revolution and declaring a new era for the nation's working class.

"Today the people have taken command of their own destiny and have given America a lesson for all time... A brotherly and sincere embrace has united the working people, the vanguard of the MNR, the patriotic national army, and the police corps, categorically demonstrating that over and above the power of money... there is the clear vision of the people..."[23]

Juan Lechín Oquendo, 1952

The speech was triumphant, its language echoing decades of class struggle and nationalist hope. For Lechín and many others, April 1952 marked the final defeat of the mining oligarchy and the beginning of a Bolivia governed by and for its people. Yet, behind this euphoric rhetoric lay deeper questions: Who were the people of Bolivia as mentioned by Lechín? And what place did Indigenous peasants, the majority of the population, truly hold in this vision of the nation?

At the mid-century, Bolivia was among the poorest and most unequal countries within the hemisphere, only leaving Haiti behind. Over 72% of the population were active in the agricultural sector, but they produced merely 33% of the gross domestic product (GDP). The mining sector had long sustained the wealth of a small elite while excluding the majority of Bolivians, making up around 25% of the country's GDP while only accounting for around 3.2% of Bolivia's working population. The National Revolution of 1952 significantly altered the political trajectory of Bolivia. For the first time, broad alliances of urban workers, miners and reformist military sectors were

[22] Rex A. Hudson and Dennis Michael Hanratty, Bolivia : A Country Study, 1991, 35

[23] Sinclair Thomson et al., The Bolivia Reader: History, Culture, Politics (Duke University Press Books, 2018), 387 388

aligned as they tried to overthrow the oligarchic order that had long dominated the country. This oligarchic order, consisting mostly of the mining elite, was most commonly known as the 'Rosca'. There were three family firms that owned 80% of an industry which made up 80% of the country's exports and was the only safe source of tax revenue for the government. The Rosca had significant political influence; they were able to shape the state policies to serve their interests on many occasions. Meanwhile, they were excluding the country's indigenous majority from both economic opportunities and economic representation.[24]

With the rise of the MNR, workers aimed to implement reforms which would nationalise the mining industry, encourage change in the agrarian sector and extend universal suffrage. In particular, the MNR aimed to integrate previously marginalised sectors and people within society into the national framework. When the MNR seized control after the revolution, they initially delivered on many of the promises that had made them popular. The state took control of the tin mines, redistributed land to peasant communities, and broadened the electorate. New forms of political participation were established, including the creation of a peasant-military alliance and a national labour confederation. These institutional innovations helped stabilise the post-revolutionary state but also introduced new forms of centralisation and control.[25]

The new government introduced a state-owned bank which was designed to control the newly nationalised mines, while promising to leave medium-sized mines untouched. In 1953 the Agrarian Reform Commission abolished forced labour and introduced a programme to expropriate and redistribute rural land owned by traditional landlords to Indigenous peasants. An important development under the new MNR-led government was the emergence of rural labour unions. These unions became one of the main vehicles for the organisation of the campesinos (peasants).[26]

The aforementioned peasant-military act of the 1960s meant that campesinos were finally included into national politics through a system of clientelist relationships with the ruling party. This new system, in theory, meant more political recognition, access to resources, an improved educational system and a focus on integration of all people. Although some of these changes were positive and well-received, they also raised concerns among Indigenous people. An example of this is the new direction of educational programmes, which were now focused on the Spanish language and a national history. Silvia Rivera describes how this inclusionary rhetoric was mostly used to create a positive image of the new leadership. Despite the positive changes that were highlighted before, the post-revolutionary state's project of mestizaje (racial cultural blending) aimed to include indigenous peoples only by erasing their distinctiveness.

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[24] James Dunkerley, *Rebellion in the Veins: Political Struggle in Bolivia, 1952-82* (National Geographic Books, 1984), 5-10

[25] Dunkerley, Rebellion in the Veins, 6-25

[26] Hudson and Hanratty, Bolivia : A Country Study, 36

Indigenous identity and expression were permitted, so long as they were able to be absorbed into the homogenous national framework. In practice, these developments meant that indigenous political traditions, communal structures, and alternative epistemologies were often sidelined in favour of a centralising state vision. The revolutionary state created mechanisms of containment and control, rather than empowerment.[27][28]

Throughout the 1950s and early 60s, Bolivia's political scene remained quite turbulent. The MNR was able to remain the dominant political force for around a decade after the Revolution. Despite its promises, the MNR failed to make significant changes to the economic instability and reliance on the mining sector. With people starting to have doubts about the MNR and increasingly frequent strikes and protests, the tension also saw the cohesion within the party starting to fray. As the ties with labour organisations and miners were weakening, so was the party's corporatist model as a whole.[29]

In 1964, General René Barrientos, a former vice president of the MNR, staged a military coup. Barrientos received support from more conservative members of the MNR and conservative sectors of the military. With this coup, Bolivia entered a new phase of military-led authoritarianism. Barrientos main goal was not to erase the changes made by the MNR, rather he wanted to restore general order and crack down on labour activism. Despite this, he was in favour of continuing the state support for rural unions. the regime also expanded heavily on repressive measures against striking workers and urban dissenters. Among these measures were political arrests, military action against strikers and specifically targeting mining centres.[30][31]

The Bolivian Revolution of 1952 marked a watershed moment in the nation's political history, offering promises of inclusion, reform, and national renewal. Yet, as this chapter has shown, the post-revolutionary state's efforts to integrate Indigenous populations often relied on mechanisms of control rather than genuine empowerment. While the MNR succeeded in dismantling the oligarchic Rosca and broadening political. participation, its vision of mestizaje ultimately marginalised Indigenous identities under the guise of unity. This contradiction, between rhetorical inclusion and structural exclusion, would lay the groundwork for new forms of Indigenous political thought. The emergence of Katarism in the decades that followed must be understood in this context: as both a response to the failures of the revolutionary state and a reassertion of Indigenous autonomy. In the following section of this chapter, the rise of Katarism, a powerful ideological and political Indigenous current within Bolivia's political landscape, will be explored.

[27] Dunkerley, Rebellion in the Veins, 65-81
[28] Rivera Cusicanqui, Oprimidos Pero No Vencidos, 77-78
[29] Dunkerley, Rebellion in the Veins, 43–49, 61–67
[30] Dunkerley, Rebellion in the Veins, 82-103
[31] Hudson and Hanratty, Bolivia: A Country Study, 39-42

The emergence of Katarism as an ideology during times of authoritarian regimes

Because the Bolivian governments still promoted the peasant-military act, unions were still around and making progress. Despite this, it was clear that the movement still lacked direction and guidance from ideological leaders.[32] At the end of the 60s and the beginning of the 70s, however, some Aymara and Quechua intellectuals started making waves in the political landscape. One of the most important intellectuals within the early Katarist movement was Jenaro Flores. He was among the first to start promoting Katarism, as he was rapidly climbing the ranks, starting out as head of his community in the district of La Paz. Within two years, he managed to become the executive secretary of the National Confederation of Peasant Workers of Bolivia. Along with the arrival of Flores, the name Tupáj Katari was added to the name of the confederation.[33][34] Because of its strong ties to the workers' unions, the development of the Katarist movement became intertwined with organising peasant workers, making it easier to remain in contact with the peasant base. It was only a few days after Flores had been named the executive secretary when, yet another the coup d'état was staged in Bolivia. The new dictator permanently broke with the political ideology of the MNR, as he and his compatriots were convinced that the peasants were responsible for the state of the country.[35]

The new dictator also truly hammered down on the Katarist movement, even going as far as banning the trade unions. He attempted to completely stop the independent peasant organisations, while leaders such as Flores were forced to flee the country.[36] Despite Banzer's continued attempts at crushing these movements and intellectuals like Flores being in exile, other like-minded Quechua and Aymara people were able to keep promoting the ideology. This ideology, according to one of its early leaders Victor Hugo Cardenas, can be described as follows: 'The ideas of Katarism were developed by Aymara and Quechua intellectuals ... to the end of transforming the internal colonial conditions of the country.'[37] This was the core idea which was spread in one of the movement's formative and basic texts, the Tiwanaku Manifesto. The goal of the document was primarily to inspire a national movement, and because of this, the location of the launch of this document was in this symbolic location. The document represents what is most important for the Indian currents, and it was seen as the centre of the Andean world.[38] Central to Katarist thought was a revalorisation of Indigenous

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[32] Rivera Cusicanqui, Oprimidos Pero No Vencidos, 175
[33] Pilar García Jordán and Miquel Izard, *Conquista y Resistencia en la Historia de América* (Barcelona: Edicions Universitat de Barcelona, 1992).
[34]Casen and Rundell, Bolivian Katarism, 23–36
[35] Casen and Rundell, Bolivian Katarism, 6
[36] Sandra Jean Salt, "Towards Hegemony: The Rise of Bolivia's Indigenous Movements" (PhD diss., University of California, Riverside, 2006), 49
[37] Josep María Barnadas et al., eds., Diccionario Histórico de Bolivia, vol. 1 (Sucre: Grupo de Estudios Históricos, [2002])
[38] Hurtado, El Katarismo, 58

history, particularly the figure of Tupaq Katari, whose violent execution in 1781 became both a rallying cry and a metaphor. His dismemberment, which symbolised the literal and symbolic fragmentation of Indigenous communities, was countered by the enduring power of oral tradition, which preserved his final words as a prophecy of collective resurgence: 'I die, but I shall return tomorrow as millions.'[39]

The manifest was co-signed by many organisations, such as the Tupaq Katari Peasant Centre, the MINK'A centre and the Association of Peasant Students of Bolivia, to name a few. The manifest consisted of 10 pages, which were spread in both Spanish, Quechua and Aymara. The document, considered an ideological compromise, included ideas about the economic, political and social organisation of Bolivia. In doing so, it criticised the age-old oppression of the Indigenous people and also criticised the current political situation in the country.[40] Above all, the leaders called for a vindication of Indian culture and the past, an awareness of the conditions and the exploitation of the peasants and the rejection of their trade unions from the current leadership in the country. Cárdenas said that the Katarist movement evokes the memory of the struggle of Tupaq Katari.[41] The manifest mentions Katari, among other historical figures who embodied the struggle of the Quechua and Aymara people.[42]

It is important to mention that the dissatisfaction with the MNR's modernisation project was not as strongly felt everywhere in the country. The dissatisfaction was strongest in the Aymara highlands, where Katarism was also most prominent. This event is one of the examples which show that, despite the Tiwanaku manifesto being seen as a document of compromise, the Katarist movement was far from coherent. The movement did not have as much traction outside of the highlands, and even within the highlands, the movement was internally contested. Rather than forming a unified doctrine, Katarismo emerged as a space of political discourse shaped by multiple and often competing currents. These ranged from Marxist-influenced syndicalists to more ethnically grounded autonomists. These tensions became particularly prominent in the movement during the latter half of the 70s, when debates about the extent to which Indigenous liberation required a complete break from the structures of the Bolivian state were taking place within the movement. These internal debates also resulted in the emergence of multiple Katarist political parties and organisations, showing the movement was all but united.[43]

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[39] Andrew Canessa, "Contesting Hybridity: Evangelistas and Kataristas in Highland Bolivia," Journal of Latin American Studies 32, no. 1 (February 1, 2000): 115–44, https://doi.org/10.1017/s0022216x99005489.
[40] Casen and Rundell, Bolivian Katarism, 7
[41] Salt, Towards Hegemony, 49
[42] Rivera Cusicanqui, Oprimidos Pero No Vencidos,183
[43] Javier Sanjinés, Embers of the Past: Essays in Times of Decolonization (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2013).

IV. Tupaq Katari and Bartolina Sisa in Bolivian visual culture: an analysis

The development of Katarist political parties

While many Indigenous people felt that their age-old struggles of anti-colonialism and anti-fiscal struggles were finally vindicated after the revolution of '52, the Tiwanaku manifesto made it clear that the movement was in desperate need of a political organisation of its own as well as a renewed trade unionism. The aforementioned debates, when the tensions between the movement's leaders reached their climax, ended up resulting in a split. In March 1978, at a trade union congress, leaders such as Jenaro Flores and Luciano Tapia were unable to agree on the legacy of the 1952. revolution and the Katarist movement's political engagement. By April, the two camps definitively split, and this resulted in the formation of two political parties: the MRTK (Movimiento Revolucionario Tupaq Katari) and the MITKA (Movimiento Indio Tupaq Katari).[44]

The MRTK can be described as a more moderate and pragmatic party, willing to work together with established leftist parties in Bolivia. The party was founded by leaders such as Jenaro Flores and Víctor Hugo Cárdenas. They acknowledged the importance of the 1952 revolution, especially its agrarian reforms and expansion of suffrage, as legitimate steps toward Indigenous emancipation. The MRTK had a deeper connection with rural trade unionism. While the MRTK remained nationally focused, seeking influence within Bolivia's union and political structures, MITKA projected itself globally, finding support among Indigenous movements across Latin America and beyond.[45]

The MITKA was founded by leaders like Constantino Lima and Luciano Tapia. Their general political stance was much more radical and explicitly Indianist. Importantly, Indianists are more separatist and sovereigntist in their core ideals. Because of this, they were not willing to compromise for an alliance. Frequent encounters with exile, imprisonment and urban racism left them highly suspicious of both Creole political elites and the mestizo-led left. The two parties formed as a result of a deeper ideological bifurcation between two distinct traditions that both vindicated the image of Aymara leader Tupaq Katari as a representation of their struggles: Katarism and Indianism. Indianism, then, can be defined as a political ideology that centres the Indian as a subject of self-determination. It also envisions a break from the colonial and republican state, an aim which is more radical in nature than the reformist inclinations of Katarism.[46]

The result of the split and the two ideologically differing parties becomes clear during the National Elections of 1978 and 1979. Figure 1 displays the parties in the general election of 1979, with the MITKA being one of the parties on the ballot. Notably

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[44] Rivera Cusicanqui, Oprimidos Pero No Vencidos,175-197
[45] Rivera Cusicanqui, Oprimidos Pero No Vencidos,175-197
[46] Duran, Diferentes Interpretaciones Sobre El Katarismo, 48-51

the MRTK is missing from the ballot. This is because the MRTK, among other parties, joined an alliance with the Unidad Democrática y Popular (UDP) for the elections of 1978 and 1979.[47] This alliance formed by the MRTK is a good example of the practical differences between the Indianist MITKA and the Katarist MRTK.

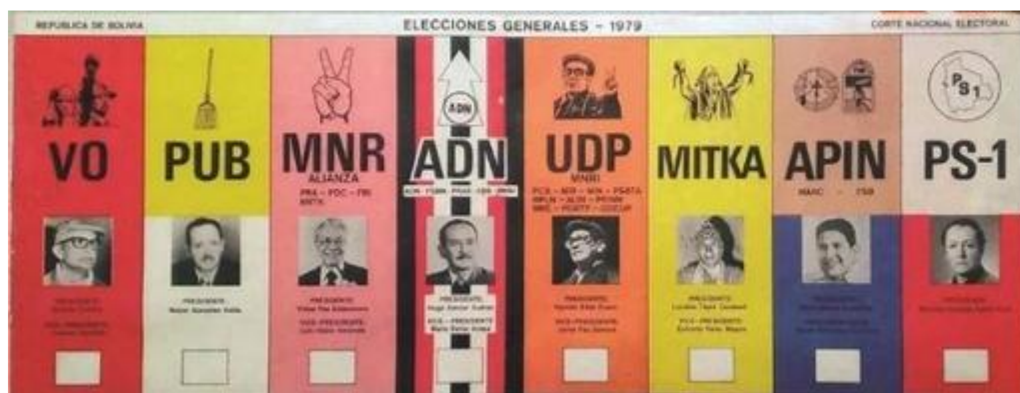

Figure 1 The multi-coloured and multi-sign ballot first used in the 1979 general elections. Wikimedia Commons, accessed August 15, 2025, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/1979_Bolivian_general_election#/media/File:Bolvian_Multicolor_Ballot_-_1979.jpg.

Ahead of the elections of 1979 the MITKA released a document, either a poster or a page in a newsletter, which is found in the Princeton University's digitized microfilm set on the Elections of 1979. This document, figure 2, mostly contains text and displays three images. The page describes the goals and the ideology of the MITKA, which are mostly Indianist principles such as the formation of a separate Indian state, the liberation of the 'Indios' and the total separation from the colonial institutions which govern the country. The top left of the document displays a picture which is also found in **figure 1**, which is the party logo of the MITKA. The logo displays an Indigenous figure, who has chains around his arms but has broken free from them. In the middle of the page, Constantino Lima can be seen in front of a big image of Tupaq Katari. Katari, facing forward with one arm and holding a horn triumphantly, is standing in front of the Andean mountains. The target audience of this document is the Indigenous population of Bolivia, whose votes the MITKA is trying to win over with their distinct Indianist ideology.

Figure 2 exemplifies convergence, functioning as a symbolic site where multiple temporalities intersect. The memoria larga, as described by Rivera Cusicanqui, is clearly visible in the image in the middle of the document where the 1781 anti-colonial uprising led by Túpac Katari is invoked. Simultaneously there is a memoria corta, grounded in the post-1952 political landscape of Indigenous unionism and the separatist goals of MITKA. The broken chains represent a separation from the current political landscape in Bolivia, the colonial past which still influences Indigenous people

[47] Dieter Nohlen, ed., *Elections in the Americas: A Data Handbook, Volume I: North America, Central America, and the Caribbean* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005; online ed., Oxford Academic, October 31, 2023), 138, https://doi.org/10.1093/oso/9780199283576.001.0001.

to this day and a separation from the Katarist movement and the MRTK.

Visually, the image behind Lima presents Katari in a heroic, defiant stance, his gaze fixed outward in a way that confronts the viewer. The surrounding elements , from the horn in his hand to the stylised mountains, premediate earlier depictions of the 1781 rebellion, ensuring that his figure is immediately recognisable as a symbol of resistance. At the same time, its specific framing of Katari within MITKA's separatist programme remediates older nationalist uses of his figure, stripping away mestizo or integrationist readings and replacing them with an explicitly Indigenous, anti-state message. In this way, the poster does not merely recall the past; it fuses distinct layers of historical memory and political meaning into a single visual.

(VIII) PLANTEAMIENTOS POLITICOS A LA JUVENTUD:

EXPONE:

MOVIMIENTO INDIO TUPAC KATARI

La presente nota ha sido elaborada en base a las declaraciones de:

CONSTANTINO LIMA

KARA CHOQUEHUANCA Representante de la Juventud India

MITKA

Es una realización de la AGENCIA ¡¡AHORA!! con exclusividad para PRESENCIA JUVENIL

Figure 2 Movimiento Indio Tupaj Katari newsletter. In Bolivian National Elections, 1979, Latin American Ephemera: Digitized Microfilm Sets from the Princeton Library, reel 1, page 17.https://catalog.princeton.edu/catalog/995083723506421.

Felipe Quispe Huanca, one of the founders of MITKA, referred to their movement as 'tupakatarismo'. It is similar to Katarism insofar as it invokes the memory of Tupaq Katari. However, in essence, tupakatarismo is more similar to Indianism when it comes to the political views attached to it. Some scholars have defined it as a more radicalised, sometimes militant variant of Katarism. For Quispe, however, it was a continuation and intensification of the Indianist political tradition that emerged independently and prior to Katarism. In short, the goal of Quispe's MITKA was to form an Indian nation. It rejects the goal of reforming the Bolivian state and instead seeks to reconstitute the Qullasuyu, a sovereign Indian state, based on *ayllu*-based communitarian governance. Tupakatarismo can be seen as a continuation of Indianism as originally described by Fausto Reinaga. Quispe offered a sustained critique of Katarism for what he saw as its symbolic appropriation of Indigenous identity while still participating in the colonial state. He insisted on naming the subject of struggle as the

'Indian', not the 'peasant'. [48] His argument clearly shows how the MRTK was focused not only on a liberation of the Indigenous people but also on the class struggle in Bolivia. The MITKA, on the other hand, believed that by doing so, true liberation would never be achieved.

Peasant Unionism: The rise of the CSUTCB and other peasant social movements

As briefly mentioned earlier, Katarism was closely linked to peasant and unionist movements in the country. Peasants were directly incorporated into a corporatist alliance with the state through para-state unions when the MNR first came to power in Bolivia. These unions were meant to politically control and co-opt the rural Indigenous population. However, in the late 70s, as Bolivia was returning toward a more democratic state after Banzer's coup d'état earlier in the decade, this alliance had started to deteriorate. Many Indigenous peasants, disillusioned with state paternalism and political manipulation, defected from these official state-linked union structures. Peasant unions offered a platform for Indigenous leaders to contest both the paternalism of the mestizo left and the co-optation of Indigenous identity by the Bolivian state.[49]

The CNTCB (Confederación Nacional de Trabajadores Campesinos de Bolivia) and the Confederación Sindical Única de Trabajadores Campesinos de Bolivia (CSUTCB) are, perhaps, the best examples of such trade unions. The CNTCB is the workers' union, which was active under the governance of the MNR. On August 2, 1971, Jenaro Flores was elected Executive Secretary of the CNTCB. It was the military-peasant pact which was introduced under the MNR that initially made local CNTCB leaders question the government's intentions. This, in turn, led to increasing amounts of interactions between Katarist intellectuals and members of the CNTCB. A final nail in the coffin for the CNTCB's legitimacy was the 1974 massacre in Cochabamba, which took the lives of many Quechua people who were demanding a fairer price for their agricultural produce.[50] By the late 70s, there seemed to be no way for the CNTCB to recover in its para-state form. The union was now mostly active under the leadership of autonomists who were adhering to the Katarist ideology. The new faction, the CNTCB-TK (Confederación Nacional de Trabajadores Campesinos de Bolivia - Tupaj Katari), took shape most clearly during the 1978 Congress, in which a political commission was established**.** This moment marks a significant shift toward explicit political engagement by the Kataristas within the union structure, which aligns with the emergence of the first Katarist political parties, which have been discussed earlier in this chapter. [51]

This change also signified an important step towards the eventual formation of

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[48] Duran, Diferentes Interpretaciones Sobre El Katarismo, 54-58
[49] Rivera Cusicanqui, *Oprimidos Pero No Vencidos,* 192-195
[50] Tanya Korovkin, "Indigenous Movements in the Central Andes," *Latin American and Caribbean Ethnic Studies* 1, no. 2 (September 1, 2006): 143–63, https://doi.org/10.1080/17442220600859221.
[51] Rivera Cusicanqui, *Oprimidos Pero No Vencidos,*202

the CSUTCB. At the Congress of the *Central Workers Department of La Paz (COD)*, the Katarists were officially acknowledged, as parts of the *Central Obrera Boliviana (COB)* organisation began favouring the Katarist ideology. In 1979, at the *First Congress of Peasant Unity (El Primer Congreso de Unidad Campesina)*, Jenaro Flores was unanimously elected as the Executive Secretary of the CSUTCB. This new organisation brought together various political and trade union currents. The name of Tupaq Katari was left out of the name of the new organisation, a hotly contested topic at the time. This, however, did not take away from the massive Katarist influence within the organisation. In doing so, the CSUTCB advanced the Katarists' ethnic demands while also aligning itself with the independent national trade union movement represented by the COB. The outcome was a synthesis of class-based and ethnic discourse within the COB, along with a heightened engagement by its leadership in fostering coordination with Amazonian Indigenous organisations.[52][53]

Much like the political parties, the workers unions also invoked the image of Katari as a powerful symbol to inspire a generation of Indigenous workers and the union movement as a whole. **Figure 3** displays a poster produced by the CSUTCB in 1981, celebrating the bicentennial of Tupaq Katari's revolution. This poster, aimed at members of the CSUTCB who are invited to celebrate the bicentennial of the revolution, is a clear example of premediation: it reactivates established visual codes of heroic revolutionary imagery to make Katari's figure instantly legible and emotionally powerful. The muscular, monumental body, the raised fist, and the defeated colonial armour echo both socialist-realist and anti-colonial iconography familiar in the Indigenous Bolivian movements. At the same time, the Wiphala and Indigenous clothing reframe these tropes within a specifically Andean register, signalling the poster's embeddedness in local cultural memory. Remediation is also at play: the image shifts earlier historical representations of Katari, rooted in oral traditions, nationalist histories, and earlier artistic depictions, into a late-20th-century political medium, transforming him from an 18th-century rebel leader into a contemporary rallying symbol for Indigenous syndicalism. The poster functions as a lieu de mémoire as described by Erll: a shared symbolic site where disparate strands of Indigenous resistance, anti-colonial struggle,

[52] Rivera Cusicanqui, *Oprimidos Pero No Vencidos,* 203-204
[53] Korovkin, *Indigenous Movements in the Central Andes*,

and modern political organisation converge.

Figure 3 CSUTCB poster commemorating the bicentenary of the 1781 uprising, 1981. Bolivia Social and Political Developments Collection, International Institute of Social History (IISH), Amsterdam.

The poster has aspects of a memoria larga and corta. Its commemoration of the 1781 uprising invokes memoria larga, a deep, anticolonial genealogy of Indigenous resistance that predates the republican state and reaches back to ancestral struggles against colonial domination. At the same time, its production by the CSUTCB in 1981 roots it in memoria corta, connected to the post-1952 cycle of agrarian reform, and CSUTCB unionist activism. The CSUTCB not only brought Indigenous identity to the forefront of syndicalist discourse but also reshaped the aesthetic and ideological culture of the labour movement itself, with union congresses increasingly conducted in Aymara and Quechua and marked by visible markers of Indigenous cultural resurgence. Despite this, the CSUTCB suffered a similar fate as the Katarist movement in an ideological regard. The organisation experienced significant internal debate regarding the topics that had been most contested within the Katarist movement. Many members and leaders either prioritised class struggles within existing institutional frameworks or called for a more radical restructuring of the state along Indigenous lines.

Besides the CSUTCB, being the main peasant union, other peasant organisation were also concerned with the history of the Bolivian workers. **Figure 4** shows a page from a booklet which details the history of the workers movement in Bolivia. This booklet was produced by Centro de Educación Popular “Qhana,” an autonomous NGO born in the early 1980s out of the ECORA radio-education project. It combined print, radio, cassette-forum, photonovel and participatory video to train and empower peasant and indigenous union cadres, working hand-in-hand with local ‘promotores campesinos’. Qhana helped communities recover their histories, develop

organisational leadership and build intercommunity communication networks. [54]

This Qhana booklet actively remediates by recontextualising the 1781 siege within the narrative of Bolivia's 20th-century workers' movement. The illustrated scenes feature armed Indigenous rebels carrying the Wiphala and a father passing on the history of Indigenous rebels such as Katari and Sisa to his children. This booklet actively premediates through recognisable storytelling templates highlighting a heroic collective resistance and intergenerational transmission of memory. As with much of Qhana's work, the medium itself (a participatory, community-oriented booklet) is central to its role as a *lieu de mémoire*. The booklet enables the convergence of rural education, political organising, and historical remembrance. By explicitly linking Katari and Sisa's rebellion and the colonial legacy to the post-1952 syndicalist and union movements that Qhana sought to strengthen. In doing so, it mobilises a cyclical Andean sense of time where ancestral struggles remain active reference points for present-day political formation.

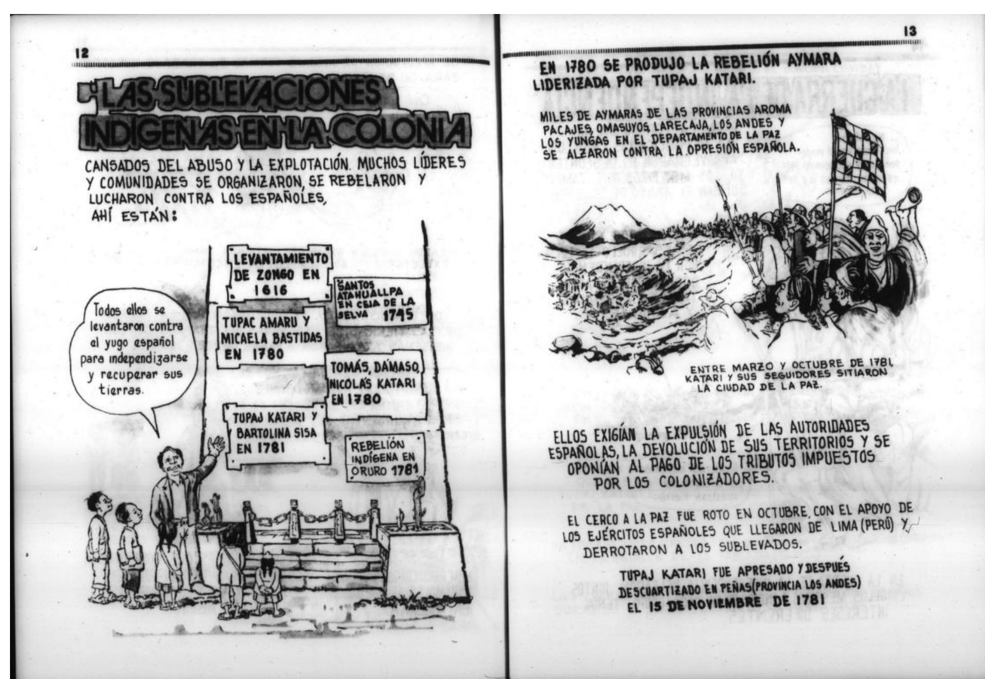

Figure 4 Centro de Educación Popular Qhana. Sindicalismo Campesino (1977–1987 10 Años con los Campesinos). In Labor Unions in Bolivia, 1984-1988: Pamphlets, Latin American Ephemera: Digitized Microfilm Sets from the Princeton Library, reel 1, page 343. https://c

In figure 5, a promotional poster for a documentary about the 1952 revolution can be seen. The documentary, produced by Pablo Solón, was released in November of 1998. The documentary, titled 'La Otra Cara de La Historia', is divided into four parts:

[54] María Aimaretti, "Democratización Social y Video Participativo: El (Olvidado) Aporte de Qhana a la Historia del Audiovisual Boliviano de los Ochenta," *Revista de Ciencias Sociales y Culturales* 22, no. 41 (2018): 81–104, accessed August 12, 2025, http://www.scielo.org.bo/scielo.php?script=sci_arttext&pid=S2077-33232018000200005&lng=es&nrm=iso.

'The first peasant unions,' 'From the agrarian revolution to political servitude,' 'Katarism' and 'The CSUTCB'. The target audience is Bolivian people, especially those who may not have been alive during parts of this history, and the objective of this poster is to make them aware of the release of this documentary. The four chapters of the documentary, which are all around 20 minutes long, give a detailed history of the Indigenous struggle as well as the history of Bolivia leading up to and past the 1952 revolution. It features a lot of historical footage, accompanied by narration which lays out the story of the Indigenous workers.[55] The poster centres Tupaq Katari and Bartolina Sisa, both wearing traditional clothing. Sisa is carrying a Wiphala flag, and Katari is holding something which resembles a slingshot.

This poster is a clear example of premediation by placing Tupaq Katari and Bartolina Sisa, figures deeply embedded in Bolivia's revolutionary iconography, at the visual and symbolic centre of a narrative about the 1952 revolution and its aftermath. Simultaneously, the poster remediates by translating historical portraits, oral traditions, and past political art into the promotional visual language of late-20th-century media. In doing so the work fuses memoria larga, evoking the ancestral struggle embodied by Katari and Sisa, with memoria corta, connecting their legacies to the post-1952 trajectory of unionism, agrarian reform, and the Katarista movement.

Figure 5 Fundación Solón. La otra cara de La Historia poster. In Indigenous Peoples, Peasants, and Ethnic Minorities in Bolivia, I, 1970-2005, Latin American Ephemera: Digitized Microfilm Sets from the Princeton Library, reel 9, page 267. https://catalog.princeton.edu/catalog/9952672813506421.

Figures 3, 4 and 5 all feature a Wiphala, an emblem with a long history in the central Andes. the Wiphala emerged as a geometric textile emblem long before Spanish

[55] Pablo Solón, *La Otra Cara de la Historia: La Historia de Bolivia desde la Perspectiva de los Movimientos Campesinos Aymaras y Quechuas*, documentary, accessed August 15, 2025, https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLCAml0zEo-g_CdFwzoPQsXqolsDWMJxKj.

contact, with archaeological evidence from Tiwanaku and Wari sites demonstrating the use of multi-coloured checkerboard motifs as markers of social identity and cosmological order. These woven designs embodied the symbiotic bond between Andean communities and their natural environment under Inca rule. Despite colonial efforts to erase indigenous iconography, they survived intact within remote rural *ayllus*. In the latter half of the twentieth century, Aymara and Quechua activists revived the Wiphala as a unifying banner of indigenous resurgence, standardizing a 7×7 grid of seven colours to represent the diversity of Andean nations. This resurgence eventually led to the adoption by Bolivian social movements in the 1970s and its enshrinement as an official second National flag alongside the tricolour in Bolivia in 2009.[56]

The recurring presence of the Wiphala alongside Tupaq Katari and Bartolina Sisa within the Bolivian visual culture in the 1970s as a shared site of memory, wherein different historical moments, political movements, and cultural meanings converge. Its deep precolonial origins and survival through centuries of suppression anchor it firmly within the concept of memoria larga by connecting contemporary Indigenous activism to an ancestral cosmology and social order that predates the colonial rupture. When deployed in late-20th-century visual culture, the Wiphala functions not merely as a decorative motif but as a political and mnemonic device, signalling the endurance of Indigenous identity and the reclamation of historical agency.

Bartolina Sisa and the Indigenous women's movement

In 1980, the *Confederación Nacional de Mujeres Campesinas Indígenas Originarias de Bolivia 'Bartolina Sisa'* was founded. This confederation and its members, referred to as the Bartolinas, emerged from a strategic initiative by peasant leaders to strengthen their fragmented movement while also encouraging grassroots women's own resistance and economic participation. Named after Indigenous heroine Bartolina Sisa, wife to Tupaq Katari, the organisation symbolised both the Indigenous struggle of the Aymara and Quechua and the gender struggle of the women of these ethnic groups. Women had already been participating in various protests in the 1970s, but it wasn't until 1980 that their formal organisation was founded during a congress with over 1000 delegates in attendance. From its inception, the movement was particularly divided about whether or not they should remain autonomous or if they should affiliate themselves with the CSUTCB. Some members feared that not affiliating with the CSUTCB would fragment peasant unity, while others thought that affiliating directly with the COB would help their organisation remain autonomous.[57]

Invoking Bartolina Sisa wasn't just branding for these women, it was a deliberate act of memory and mandate. By taking her name, the women anchored their federation

[56] Franco Limber, *Breve Historia Real de la Wiphala* (2015), 19–51, 93–146.
[57] Claudia Cecilia Arce Cuadros, "Tensiones Entre El Movimiento Indígena Y El Estado a La Luz De La Trayectoria De Las Bartolinas En Bolivia," *Sociologias* 24, no. 60 (August 1, 2022): 330–60, https://doi.org/10.1590/18070337-113970.

in the unfinished business of the 1781 siege of La Paz led by Sisa and Tupaq Katari. Irma García, one of the founders of the federation, recount how people in the rural areas surrounding La Paz would describe members of the federation as the second coming of Bartolina Sisa. She recalls that this is what the Indigenous people in the countryside also liked to hear about the most.[58] When elevating the federation to a national confederation that still bore Sisa's name, 'indígenas originarias' was added to the organisation's official title. This reaffirmed that her figure welded ethnic pride to women's leadership, a banner under which Aymara, Quechua, and other pueblos could recognise themselves and their rights.[59]

The first pamphlet of the movement in **figure 6** was designed by a Dutch artist, Gezien van Riet, who closely collaborated with the Bolivian women. The target audience of this pamphlet, originally, were Bolivian peasant women. The poster dates from 1985, five years after the foundation of the organisation. This pamphlet and the federation display convergence by gathering together Sisa's 18th-century leadership during the siege of La Paz with the late-20th-century mobilisation of Indigenous women. this visual invocation of Sisa channels memoria larga, rooting the federation's identity in the enduring, anticolonial genealogy of Indigenous women's leadership. Simultaneously, a memoria corta is also present, connecting that legacy to the contemporary political struggle for gender equality and peasant rights in post-1952 Bolivia.

Figure 6 Primer folleto de la Federación Nacional de Campesinos de Bolivia 'Bartolina Sisa', 1985. Accessed via Gezien van de Riet. https://www.gezienvanderiet.nl/blog-17-gezien-van-de-riet-dona-arte-a-bolivia/.

[58] N. Padilla Poveda and M. E. Fernández Navarro, *¡Jallalla Bartolina Sisa!: Etnia y Género en la Federación Departamental de Mujeres Campesinas Indígenas Originarias de La Paz-Bartolina Sisa: Bolivia 2006–2010* (licenciatura thesis, Universidad de Chile, 2011), 116, accessed August 8, 2025, https://repositorio.uchile.cl/tesis/uchile/2011/fi-padilla_n/html/index-frames.html.
[59] Padilla Poveda and Fernández Navarro, *¡Jallalla Bartolina Sisa!*, 120–122.

Katari and Sisa in alternative forms of visual culture

With the rise of Katarism and an increasingly frequent invocation of Katari and Sisa's legacies, late twentieth century not only reshaped political discourse in Bolivia but also inspired a renewed wave of artistic production that placed Indigenous historical figures at its centre. Among the most prominent of these cultural expressions is the work of muralist Walter Solón, whose paintings and public artworks consistently engaged with the legacies of Tupaq Katari and Bartolina Sisa. Solón's artistic career, shaped by mid-century revolutionary currents and the influence of Mexican muralism, reveals a sustained commitment to historical memory as a means of political intervention. As Sinclair Thomson observes, Solón's art cannot be separated from his political activism: his work was inseparable from the cause of social justice, shaped by personal tragedies, political exile, and solidarity with the labour and Indigenous movements of his time. His depictions of Katari, in particular, diverged from earlier nationalist iconography by refusing to portray him as a dismembered martyr. instead, Solón rendered him as a living, conscious figure, often stripped to the taparrabo to emphasise his origins as an indio del común, whose resistance resonated with contemporary struggles for Indigenous autonomy. In doing so, his work bridged socialist-nationalist and Indigenous political traditions, illustrating how visual culture outside explicitly movement-produced propaganda could nonetheless advance Katarista historical consciousness. [60]

In Solón's work, the recurring reappearance of Katari's image across different historical moments reflects what Silvia Rivera Cusicanqui describes as the cyclical and layered nature of memoria larga. Thomson, in his article about Solón, explains how this cyclical approach to history can be observed within the history of Katari. In moments of transformation, the actors themselves refer to the past to place themselves in the present and project themselves into the future. For example, in **figure 7**, features a large mural painted by Solón in the wake of the coup d'état of 1964. Solón's vision of a reconstituted Katari embodies the return of the past into a projected future, a hallmark of memoria larga. The imagery does not merely commemorate Katari's resistance but actively situates him at the centre of Bolivia's imagined post-revolutionary horizon, where the gains of 1952 are safeguarded by a coalition of workers, peasants, students, and women. By surrounding Katari with symbols of progress and sovereignty, from agriculture and education to the fallen colonial armour at his feet, Solón transforms the memory of his struggle into a living political programme. This cyclical invocation ensures that Katari's defiance against colonial domination remains a guiding force in confronting the uncertainties of Bolivia's future, as suggested by the soldier's contemplative pose. In this way, Solón's mural premediates future struggles while

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[60] Sinclair Thomson. "Solón, Katari y la imaginación histórica." *Fundación Solón*, 8 July 2009. https://solonart.org/2009/07/08/solon-katari-y-la-imaginacion-historica. Accessed 7 August 2025.

remediating the historical Katari, merging the memory of past uprisings with the aspirations of a nation still in the process of defining itself.

Figure 7 Solón Romero, Walter. El futuro de la revolución nacional. Accessed via Fundación Solón. https://solonart.org/portfolio/el-futuro-de-la-revolucion-nacional/.

Figure 8 features another artwork by Solón, in particular a large concept of a mural which he wanted to paint. He created this concept in 1963, when he was commissioned by the MNR government. The artwork was intended to be a part of the Monument to the National Revolution in La Paz; therefore, its audience would have included urban Bolivians visiting this state monument, particularly those engaged in or sympathetic to the revolutionary project. In this mural concept, Solón's decision to place the execution of Tupaj Katari at the compositional centre establishes the colonial oppression of Indigenous peoples as the historical root from which Bolivia's revolutionary narrative must be understood. The quartering scene, while incomplete in its depiction of the horses, evokes the violence of colonial retribution and the resilience of Indigenous resistance, reinforcing Katari's role as both martyr and catalyst. By integrating this moment into a broader visual programme of the 1952 Revolution, Solón collapses temporal boundaries, allowing past and present struggles to coexist on the same plane. This interplay can be described as memoria larga, in which the seeds of the future emerge from the depths of the past, and with the concept of remediation, as the colonial image of subjugation is reframed through a contemporary lens.

Figure 8 Solón Romero, Walter. El pasado de la Revolución de 1952. Proyecto de mural para el Monumento a la Revolución Nacional. Accessed via Fundación Solón. https://solonart.org/portfolio/el-futuro-de-la-revolucion-nacional/.

Erected in 1969 by Kataristas, the statue of Tupaq Katari in **figure 9**, captured here by Diego Pacheco for the Museum of Folklore presents the rebel leader in a pose of

triumphant defiance, standing atop a stone pedestal between the Bolivian tricolour and the Wiphala. In one hand, he raises broken shackles, in the other a torch, symbols that speak to liberation from oppression and the illumination of a just future. His muscular form, partially draped in cloth reminiscent of Andean dress, elevates him from his humble origins. By standing between the tricolour and the Wiphala, the monument enacts a convergence of historical layers: the memoria larga of deep, anti-colonial Indigenous resistance anchored in Ayo Ayo, Katari's place of origin, and the memoria corta of post-1952 unionist and Katarista activism that sought to reclaim this legacy for present struggles.

Figure 9 Statue of Túpac Katari constructed in Ayo-Ayo, Bolivia by Kataristas in 1969. Photograph by Diego Pacheco. Courtesy of the Archivo Central del Museo Nacional de Etnografía y Folklore.

V. Conclusion

The reinterpretation of Tupaq Katari and Bartolina Sisa in the visual culture of Bolivia's Indigenous movements during the second half of the twentieth century confirms that their legacies are not fixed historical facts but living, contested symbols. Across political and artistic contexts, their figures have been rearticulated to express shifting ideological agendas, from radical separatism to reformist unionism, and from community-based struggles to national projects. This confirms the central contention in the literature that Katarism is not a monolithic ideology but a broad, internally divided movement whose boundaries with Indianism are constantly negotiated. The diversity of these reinterpretations reflects the tensions identified by scholars such as Hurtado, Rivera, Mamani, and Durán: between inclusive reformist strategies and separatist visions, between integrating Indigenous struggle into national frameworks and maintaining a project of cultural and territorial sovereignty.

This thesis also engages with the historiographical shift identified by Fischer and Serulnikov, in which Katari and Sisa move from historical actors in the colonial era to transhistorical symbols. This transformation aligns with Rivera's concept of memoria

larga and memoria corta. In the visual culture I examined, memoria corta is evoked in representations that tie Katari and Sisa to the post-1952 revolutionary order, land reform, and syndicalist politics. Memoria larga, in contrast, is activated in depictions that place them within a continuous, cyclical history of anticolonial struggle, in which the past is inseparable from the present and the seeds of the future. This cyclical, future-oriented engagement with the past also resonates with Erll's theories of premediation and remediation, where familiar revolutionary iconography and historical narratives are reactivated, transformed, and integrated into new media and political contexts.

By applying these theoretical frameworks to a range of twentieth-century visual sources, my research shows that the reinterpretation of Katari and Sisa is not merely a matter of historical memory but an active, strategic process of identity-making and political mobilisation. The convergence of long-term cultural memory with immediate political needs ensures that these figures remain relevant across ideological divides, allowing them to function as lieux de mémoire, shared symbolic spaces invested with multiple, sometimes competing, meanings. A good example of this is the evocation of Tupaq Katari by the Katarist party MRTK and the Indianist party MITKA. These parties have very different interpretations of the requirements for Indigenous justice, as discussed by Valeria Durán, yet both turn to the figure of Tupaq Katari as a common reference point in the historical memory of the country through which to legitimise their claims.

Ultimately, this thesis has shown that the reinterpretation of Katari's and Sisa's legacies in visual culture is not a passive reflection of history but an active intervention in the ongoing struggle over the meaning of Indigenous resistance in Bolivia. By engaging with murals, posters, and other forms of visual media, Indigenous movements in the second half of the twentieth century have reactivated long memory in ways that challenge colonial narratives, bridge historical cycles of resistance, and project alternative futures. These acts of cultural production demonstrate that memory is not merely inherited but is continually reworked, contested, and mobilised for political ends. The legacy of colonial-era rebels thus remains a living force, one that is constantly renegotiated in visual culture.

VI. Bibliography

Figures

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Figure 3: Solón Romero, Walter. El pasado de la Revolución de 1952. Proyecto de mural para el Monumento a la Revolución Nacional. Accessed via Fundación Solón. https://solonart.org/portfolio/el-futuro-de-la-revolucion-nacional/.

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Figure 9: Statue of Túpac Katari constructed in Ayo-Ayo, Bolivia by Kataristas in 1969. Photograph by Diego Pacheco. Courtesy of the Archivo Central del Museo Nacional de Etnografía y Folklore.

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