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Book Review

Para descolonizar el feminismo: 1492 – entronque patriarcal y FeminismoComunitario de Abya Yala

by Julieta Paredes Carvajal, La Paz, Editorial FeminismoComunitario de Abya Yala, 2020, 104 pp., R\$55 (paperback), ISBN: 978-9917-0-0306-9

Katuscia Moreno Galhera (they/them/their)

Federal University of Grande Dourados, Dourados City, Brazil
katuscia.mg1@gmail.com

Karina Pinhão (she/her/hers)

University of Coimbra, Coimbra, Portugal
karina.pinhao@ces.uc.pt

Thaís Vieira de Paula (she/her/hers)

Federal University of Goiás, Goiânia City, Brazil
thaisvieirari@gmail.com

Para descolonizar el feminismo is an important book that advances our feminist understanding of Latin America in many ways. The book is linked to Paredes' (2010) previous reflections on “community feminism” – a concept that informs political action promoting collective rights from a communal and ancestral identity. The book unites communities throughout Abya Yala (Central and South America)¹ and questions both colonial and internal/community-based patriarchies (Paredes 2016). The author is Aymara, so she gathers data for her reasoning – which is essentially theoretical and political – from her own experience as an Indigenous woman.²

The methodological approach is particularly important in Paredes' reasoning since it is relevant to the function of memory in building community feminism. For Paredes, memory is neglected in conventional and Western methodologies, whereas it remains crucial for community feminism, in which oral histories based on people's tales, chronicles, songs, paintings, rites, and rituals are central (55–56). Memory is constituted by cultural practices that contribute to the reconstruction of the former Qullasuyu territory – a large region of the Antisuyo, Cuntisuyu, Chinchaysuyo, and Qullasuyu territories, currently the Plurinational State of Bolivia. Paredes also employs a comparative ethnohistoric methodology – a non-colonial means of differentiating categories for the study of patriarchies: body, space, time, memory, and movement.³

However, as the book's title suggests, it is primarily concerned with the *entronque patriarcal* – the connection and articulation of an ancestral and precolonial patriarchy (the *incario*) to the European and colonial patriarchy in Qullasuyu/Bolivia. This describes the colonial, regional development of a system that continues to benefit men over women, although not in the same manner, with women subject to differential levels of oppression. For Paredes, Indigenous women are particularly affected by hierarchical, oppressive, exploitative, and controlling relations.

The book's six chapters begin with Paredes' conceptual framing of gender, patriarchy, and the body. The second chapter is dedicated to methodology. Paredes then explains colonial patriarchy (Chapter 3) and ancestral patriarchy (Chapter 4), arriving at the *entronque patriarcal* in Chapter 5. Finally, a “depatriarchalizing” (*despatriarcalizar*) proposal is discussed in the last chapter. In response to the *entronque patriarcal*, Paredes proposes a counter-hegemonic return to the history of the region's elderly Indigenous women (*retorno a la historia de las abuelas*). The connections of depatriarchalizing and decolonizing movements by FeminismoComunitario in Latin America invite us to reflect on the reinterpretation of women's bodies in the community and worldwide. As the Guatemalan community feminist Lorena Cabral states, “[d]efending land-territory and not defending women's body-territory is a political inconsistency” (Cabral 2019). Paredes connects decolonization and depatriarchalization, emphasizing that there can be no decolonization without a “return to women,” and a recovery of memory from the perspective of women, especially the older generations.⁴

Important elements of Paredes' analysis have parallels with those of other thinkers. Paredes' concept of *entronque patriarcal* is similar to Segato's (2018) concept of the “colonial-modern-capitalist pact”; however, while Segato's concept presupposes

a *rational* pact in an asymmetric relation of power, Paredes' concept conveys the idea of gender oppression as the result of a colonial social context. Paredes also critiques Quijano's (2014) concept of coloniality for not taking gender as a relevant social mark of difference – an issue previously pointed out by Lugones (2010). Furthermore, Paredes' reasoning on the shrinking of community spaces leading to devaluation of the social role of women has parallels with Federici's (2003) thesis of a sexual division of labor and a witch hunt due to primitive accumulation and the shrinking of the commons. Paredes' notion of *Pachakuti* as a process of recovering the past involves destroying the world, including a burdensome and precarious gender (im)balance, and creating a new one. However, this differs from Cusicanqui's (2021) concept of *Pachakuti*, which can be Chi'xi, a decolonial-historic-cultural revision of identities.

It is worth noting a number of issues that *Para descolonizar el feminismo* does not sufficiently address. It is unclear in the book whether or not the *entronque patriarcal* affects Aymara women from rural and urban areas in the same way. Similarly, Paredes focuses on a historical moment limited to the Bolivian *entronque patriarcal* and its consequences for Aymaran women from colonization to the present. As the book does clarify the relational differences between women and the Bolivian state, a leap of faith is necessary to move from this specific historical and geographical context to the proposal of depatriarchalizing the Plurinational State of Bolivia. In other words, the idea of decolonizing and depatriarchalizing a state is in itself challenging due to the colonial character of the modern nation-state: the recent coup in Bolivia illustrates this point. Struggles of ethnic groups worldwide show that the brief experience of Indigenous statehood in Bolivia is probably the exception rather than the rule; Indigenous society typically organizes *against* the state, as Clastres (1987) demonstrates. In this sense, alternative struggles for collective liberation abound: see, for example, the Mapuche struggles in Chile and southwestern Argentina; the Kurdish project spanning Syria, Turkey, Iraq, and Iran; the Zapatista autonomous region in Mexico; and the Palestinian resistance against the Israeli state.

Paredes' book is the result of a life of efforts to decolonize and depatriarchalize Abya Yala and we recommend it as a relevant source for popular educators, feminists, academics, militants, and anyone concerned with collective liberation in general.

Notes

1. According to Paredes, she wanted to move away from an avant-garde feminism detached from community relations (including men's): "we are half of each community, hope, and revolution" (94). By moving away from an anarchist and anti-institutional feminism, Paredes connected with the Plurinational State of Bolivia under Evo Morales' rule as a temporary stage of revolution or decolonization to enable the complete autonomy of ancestral communities. She argues further that the state should decolonize and depatriarchalize (see Chapter 6); this project is part of Paredes' public policy engagement in Bolivia, interrupted by the coup in 2019.

2. Paredes is a lesbian activist, writer, and feminist. In the early 1990s, she founded Mujeres Creando – an anarchist, critical, and anti-institutional feminist movement in Latin America – with María Galindo, Mônica Mendoza, and other women. By the 2000s, she had adopted a more assembly-like, community-based feminism: *Feminismo Comunitario* (Celentani 2014, 179).

3. In another work, Paredes points out ways of writing and other languages in ancestral cultures devalued by Eurocentric limitations (Paredes 2015, 102).

4. Paredes relies on terms that the community feminist movement has adopted from the regional Indigenous Aymaran and Quechuan languages, particularly the phrase "Without warmikuti there is no pachakuti" (98). *Warmikuti* is "the return of the women to the community" (98). *Pachakuti* is defined as a revolutionary reordering of the world that Paredes describes as "the recovery of space, time, and movement" (98), while "*warmi*" means woman and feminizes this term.

Notes on contributors

Katiuscia Moreno Galhera is Visiting Faculty at the Federal University of Grande Dourados, Brazil. They hold a PhD in Political Science from the University of Campinas, Brazil, and were a Visiting Scholar at Penn State University, USA, and a Postdoctoral Researcher in Sociology at Londrina State University, Brazil. Their most recent publication is *Labor Contestation in Walmart Brazil: Limits of Global Diffusion in Latin America*, co-authored with Scott Martin and João Paulo Veiga and published by Palgrave in 2021.

Karina Pinhão is a feminist, activist, and lawyer. She is a PhD student in the program "Democracy in the 21st Century" at the Center for Social Studies (CES) at the University of Coimbra, Portugal. She graduated in Law from the Pontifical Catholic University of

Rio de Janeiro (PUC-Rio), Brazil, and received a postgraduate degree in Civil-Constitutional Law from the State University of Rio de Janeiro (UERJ), Brazil. She holds a Master's in Constitutional Law from the University of Coimbra, Portugal. She is currently researching the relationship between Indigenous motherhood and the state based on the cases in which Guarani-Kaiowá Indigenous children are “stolen” by colonialist institutions such as the Judiciary Branch in the Southern Cone of Mato Grosso do Sul (MS), Brazil.

Thaís Vieira de Paula is a Temporary Professor of International Relations at the Federal University of Goiás, Brazil. She is a PhD candidate in Political Science at the Federal University of Rio Grande do Sul, Brazil. She holds Bachelor's and Master's degrees in International Relations from the Pontifical Catholic University of Minas Gerais, Brazil. She researches Indigenous peoples, religion, and human rights from the perspective of decolonial theory.

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