

**The Postcolonial Frontier:
Addressing the Domestication
of *Andean* Pastoralism**

**Advances towards a
Postcolonial Geography of Bolivia**

(Summary)

Burkhard Schwarz

Tübingen - 2004

This dissertation constitutes a holistic attempt to remove the notes from the “others” - including the social scientists’ and particularly the geographers’ - eyes and to contribute to a “different” social-geographical, political-geographical and cultural-geographical perspective that no longer excludes the interpretational potential of a qualitative approach on ethnogeographic themes. It aims to make the herder societies of the (Southern) Central Andes both more “visible” and intelligible as creative actors in their “regional” contextuality of day-to-day life. The research has focused on the “territorial” indexicality of the complex (post)colonial dialectics of strategic hegemonic and tactical counter-hegemonic articulations (in the sense of de Certeau). A “postcolonial geography” of this kind requires, on the one hand, an interactionistic approach sufficiently sensitive to deal with “differences” produced by “structuration” processes (Giddens) and, on the other hand, a dynamical cultural approach sufficiently sensitive to handle the “différance” (Derrida) produced by contrasting orientations of “(inter)textual” relevance systems on the side of both the (post)colonisators and the (post)colonized.

This is a “cultural geographical” approach, which takes into account concepts of “social memorizing”, “ethnicity” and “ambiguity”/“hybridity” (in the sense of authors as Comaroff, Bhabha and Young) and attempts to hold a critical distance toward reifying conceptions of (time)-“space” (in the sense of authors as Said, Fabian and Hard). In consequence, it holds an open definition of the “field” and as such considers not only the herders but also those who study the herders: the pastorologists. During the initiating “field” work in the Northern *Altiplano* it became noticeable that especially geographers have failed to seriously take into account the phenomena of Andean pastoralism. This was also one of the reasons why the focus of this research changed towards the Central *Altiplano* and, more specifically, to the *Aymara*-speaking pastoral *markas/ayllus* of *Carangas/Karankas (Oruro/Bolivia)*, where pastoralism-practitioners still are very active and pastoralism phenomena offer an excellent opportunity to profile them.

One of the findings of this thesis is the conditioning of “field” research by the presence of the “postcolonial frontier”, that is: by recent dominating rules and structural contradictions. This study has noted that there are no, or very limited, possibilities to scientifically escape from the current hegemonic situation, since it is produced by a deep-seated postcolonial colonialism that conditions the local reproduction of both interaction and texts.

The first part (part A) of this research presents a heterodox perspective of the “others” construction of the “Andes”. This can hopefully lead to a broader understanding of “regional”/“territorial” phenomena of “Othering” (Said) - the construction of alterity/“otherness” - and to question much of what defined the “Andeans” as “Indians” and defines them as “*campesinos*”. It is an attempt to decentralize the hegemonic perspective and to de-decentralize the *carangueros*’ - contrasting the herders’ and the non-herders’ views and challenging the Western anti-pastoral “epistemic” complexes (in the sense of Foucault). This part addresses “textual” modes of “Andeanizing the Andeans”, which have led to persistent Eurocentric forms of “Agriculturalizing the Pastoral”, that is: to explicate “pastoralism” and “pastoral resource constellations” away by filtering them through external perceptions of Andean systems of complementarity/reciprocity with an agrocentric Western vision of “transhumance” and “camelids”. Instead, this thesis suggests to emphasize alternative research themes such as the historical complexity of “pastoral” (“allocative” and “authoritative”) “resource compensations” and the long-termed *aymara*-tactics typically articulated at the heart of the *puna*’s pastoral production systems. The view of the herders - here the *carangueros* - is analysed in detail in other parts of the study (parts B and C).

This deconstructionist operation has developed and defined terminologies with the aim to more adequately and clearly address the discussed and analysed themes. It attempts to show the cultural/ideological affinities in terms of structural contradictions between the social and the scientific level of system integration (in the sense of Giddens) and the differences between the general social scientists' and the special social geographers' view and their respective ideological embeddedness. The study demonstrates that even the extra-disciplinary "regional" social sciences are still far from decolonizing themselves efficiently, and that geography channels radicalized techniques of "Othering" conditioned not only by the essentializing/reifying "geographical suggestion" in general, but also by a geographical congruence with "elitist" and "research" related "biases" (Webster) in particular. This study addresses this fusion of "geopolitical" and "geoideological biases" and the special geographical disciplina(tory) politics, that is "geo-power" (O Tuathail). The German social/cultural geography unfortunately ignores the quality of "ethnicity" and that of "pastoralism" in the (Southern) Central Andes (in terms of recent theoretical advances of social sciences in general). Furthermore it is actively participating with the non-reflexive reproduction of ethnic labels.

The thesis demonstrates the biased and biasing tendencies "in" the (rhetorics on the) (Southern) Central Andes/*puna*/*Altiplano*. This is a subjected "region"/"territory", on various discursive levels - the assumptions of the *Altiplano*'s ecological deterioration and the "tragedy of the commons" (in the sense of Hardin) in the *puna*; the suggestions referring to "ethnicity" and "pastoralism" in the *Karankas*-context; the anti-pastoral Agrarian Reforms in the Central Andean states and the contra-pastoral "Orient"-ations of recent development politics in Bolivia; the discriminatory politics of "camelid"-classification and lama-holding and the persistent ethnic structure of the "distinction" (Bourdieu) in meat consumption.

The methodology applied in this study transcends the analogies between the dominant social and scientific discursive formations. It identifies the "ethnic frontier" or "postcolonial frontier" (at this level of analysis) as a "pastoral frontier", that is: as a specific form of concretising of the consequences of particularly deep-seated colonization-/postcolonization-phenomena. The study emphasizes the historically constructed structural parallels between "imagined communities" (Anderson) and "imaginative geographies" (Gregory) and the conceptual analogies between "colonial" and "developmental" German geography, by addressing the geographers' active (discursive) participation in recent colonizing processes and postcolonizing practices. It states that there is a tendency of continuity and of a superficial substitution of colonial categorical terminology. These kinds of postcolonial features also trespass the supposed demarcations between formally different approaches. The thesis states further that this phenomenon is facilitated by a kind of profound "allochronistic" ground stream (Fabian) which, in the manner of "re-presenting" and making "re-presentable" the *Aymara*-herders, even holds a similarity to semi-geographic texts formulated during the early colonial period. This "epistemic" geographical "civilization"-discourse is labeled "allogoism" or "allospatialism". The research also highlights that the recent geographical "frontier"- "con-cepts" are reproductive forms of ideologically influenced "pre-cepts", which are firmly rooted in ancient notions (and dreams) of "living space" ("Lebensraum"), conquest and colonization. Accordingly, they hold stereotyping inclinations and ignore the social and cultural complexity associated with "frontier"-phenomena, that is the dialectic "inter-cultural"/"inter-textual" relations between hegemonic narratives and counter-hegemonic social memorizing transcended by authors such as Taussig, Comaroff, Comaroff/Comaroff and Abercrombie.

This study has consciously not only trespassed, but violated the "disciplinary frontier" between

social/cultural geography and social/cultural sciences in an attempt to prove the persistent levels of parallelism between, on the one hand, “Orientalism” and “Andeanism” and, on the other, “Orientalistic” and “Andeanistic”/“Latin Americanistic” geography in terms of inherent conceptual premises. The study analyses - in a sort of genealogical perspective - the rhetoric contributions to the discursive formation/construction of the “Andes” made by geographers like Hettner and Troll. It also disentangles some sequences of re-inscribed “traces” in the “Andeanistic” “geographical” “texts” produced by later German scholars, “placing” “places” of scientific amnesia and “localizing” “locales” of scientific forgetting as - institutionally organized - tendencies of “epistemic” distortions. In this thesis, these aspects are labelled “pastoralism-episteme of Berlin”, “Orientalism-episteme of Erlangen” and “(Southern Central) Andes-episteme of Aachen” or “Bolivia-episteme of Aachen”. German “Orient geographers” criticize the “Orientalism” critique and do not object clearly to “Orientalism” itself. Instead, has the debate of geographers focusing on the “Andes” or “Latin America” about phenomena like “Andeanism” and “Latin Americanism” so far been completely avoided. These facets of “regional(izing)” reductionism demonstrate the exclusion of the problematization of “ontological violence” (Derrida) in recent German political geographical and cultural geographical scholarly production. Furthermore, concepts like “hybridity” are still discussed in disciplina(to)ry and “territorial” isolation and there is a general tendency to deny the “hybridity’s” ethnic/ideological notions.

By establishing some heterodox perceptions of the caranguenos’ view as a potential point of departure for further alternative research options, this study claims that there is an emergent need to question the social/cultural geographers reception of concepts such as “culture”, “region”, “territory”, “frontier”, “living space” (“Lebensraum”), “nomadism”, “pastoralism”, “Altiplano”, “Andes”/“Andeanism”, “Latin America(nism)”, “Orient(alism)”, “development”, “integration”, “modernity”, “postmodernity”, “hybridity”, “ethnicity”, “territoriality”, “colonialism”, “postcolonialism” - presenting, instead, a “different” theoretical perspective (to be) systematically disentangled from unilaterally reinforcing “geographic suggestions”. This could make an important contribution to an alternative understanding of both “modern”/“colonial” and “postmodern”/“postcolonial” geographical theory and practice in general. If the dynamics and creative “frontier practitioning” of the *Aymara*-speaking *comunarios*-herders of *Karankas* could be made explicit, one could argue that similar articulations probably will be found in other indigenous and/or pastoral contexts. This could simply has been overseen by “Orientalistic” scholars like Wirth and Scholz and those influenced by their reductionistic conceptual paradigms. “Regional” social sciences in general, and “regional” social geography in particular, seem to be heavily conditioned by a pre-established and instrumentalized gaze associated with explicit/implicit (Western) interventional projections and desires. In other words: they appear to be profoundly “epistemically”/“geoideologically” biased. Correspondingly, this thesis claims that essential problems concerning standardized postulations of direct research-“applicability” in postcolonial “field”-“con-texts” have been extra-disciplinarily understated and infra-disciplinarily hardly perceived . This also exhibits the structural similarity to former problematic (multidimensional) interplays between the “Lebensraum”-concept and “Lebensraum”-praxis, which have recently been addressed by authors as Schultz and Rössler.

Hereby, this study not only opens a “space” for a “forgotten” ethnogeography (to be) constituted beyond the colonial geographical heritage, but also challenges basic theoretical assumptions of conventional geographical discourses about themes in fashion such as “development” and “sustainability” including their “practical” functionality - and this inevitably means: their

inherent “interventionalistic” features.