

Tupac in their Veins: Hip-Hop *Alteño* and the Semiotics of Urban Indigeneity

Karl Swinehart is a Collegiate Assistant Professor in the Humanities and Harper-Schmidt Fellow at the University of Chicago.

On June 16, 1971 in east Harlem a young leader of the Black Panther Party, Afeni Shakur, gave birth to a baby boy who later in his life would become known to millions across the globe, as a performer, a rapper, a poet and a martyr. Tupac Shakur remains the hip-hop artist with the most albums sold world wide, more than 74 million—making his very name emblematic of hip-hop on a global scale. For Afeni Shakur, the name Tupac was also an emblem, a sign of antiracist, anticolonial resistance recognized by millions of Indigenous people across the Andes as the name of two anticolonial martyrs from the eighteenth century who led insurrections against Spanish colonialism—the Quechua Tupac Amaru the Second and the Aymara Tupac Katari (Hoye and Ali).

On that summer day in 1971, when this young revolutionary named her son Tupac, could she have imagined that within decades the descendents of her son's namesake, the descendents of the Tupacs, in cities like El Alto, Bolivia, would look to her son for inspiration? In Hoye and Ali's 2003 biography of Shakur, they quote him as having said, "I was named after this Inca chief whose name was Tupac Amaru . . . He was a deep dude. If I go to South America, they gonna love me. I'm telling you. They know Tupac" (Hoye and Ali 8). He wasn't wrong.

One place where there is tremendous love for Tupac is El Alto, Bolivia. El Alto is one of Bolivia's largest and youngest cities and home to a vibrant hip-hop scene. The panorama of *Hip-Hop Alteño*, or "El Alto Hip-Hop," includes MCs who rhyme not only in Spanish, but also in the Aymara and Quechua languages, among which the Wayna Rap collective has occupied a prominent role.

Located on the Andean high plain at nearly four thousand meters above sea level, El Alto is a city populated by migrants from the surrounding countryside, primarily indigenous Aymara agriculturalists, making it home to the largest concentration of ethnically Aymara Bolivians (Albó; Arbona). This population includes nearly half of all Aymara speakers, the total population being nearly two and a half million people residing throughout the region surrounding Lake Titicaca and its adjacent valleys (Hardman; Albó). El Alto forms part of the larger El Alto-La Paz metropolitan area as a working-class bedroom community for its many residents who work in La Paz.

It is not strange that many of the children of Indigenous migrants to El Alto would identify with an African-American cultural expression given the shared social conditions of poverty, racism and discrimination faced by both groups. Despite forming the majority population of the La Paz region, Aymaras have faced political, economic, and cultural exclusion from the times of Spanish colonialism, through the republican period, and into the 21st century. While advances have been made in recent years, anti-Aymara discrimination persists on the basis of phenotype, family name, and language, among other markers of ethnicity. Spanish spoken with traces of Aymara phonology (particularly the alternating of the vowels u and o, or e and i), for example, is

highly stigmatized (Swinehart, "Enregisterment"). While the Aymara language can be heard in various public spaces in the city of El Alto, many Bolivians, Aymara or not, often typify the language and its speakers as rural and poor. A general trend has been for Aymara speakers to abandon Aymara for Spanish upon moving to the city, or for many males following military service, as a mark of linguistic upward mobility. It is against the backdrop of this multilingual social context so stratified along ethno-linguistic lines that these artists' language choice is so striking. In this society where speech and language choice has long served as a widely scrutinized emblem of group affiliation, these masters of verbal art place the spoken word at the center of their work.

Hip-hop in Bolivia is a relatively recent phenomenon, having arrived through the introduction of pirated U.S. rap cassettes into local music markets during the late 90s and the success of what many recognize as the first Bolivian MC, 'El Cholo', Marcelo Yáñez in the early 2000s (Ávila et al). Members of Wayna Rap themselves played an active role in the popularization of hip-hop in Bolivia through their running of a pirate radio broadcast during the late 90s and early 2000s. In 2003, the cultural center and radio station Wayna Tambo made a call for rappers and hip-hop enthusiasts to attend a series of workshops out of which, among other groups, the Wayna Rap collective was formed. The circulation of pirated U.S. hip-hop recordings, their promotion on the airwaves, and their role in orienting artists at the early stages of this hip-hop scene could be considered a case of what feminist scholar Inderpal Grewal has called transnational-connectivity, here between U.S. cities and El Alto.

Much of Wayna Rap's aesthetics and affect are legible in the now transnational

idiom of hip-hop—the graffiti, the clothing, the sampling of tracks and beats. These aspects of their work produce confusion, and sometimes even hostility, when they assert their status as Indigenous artists. Yet, their aesthetic is also highly local, not only for how they incorporate Andean musical forms, reintroduce Indigenous fashions, and use Indigenous languages, but also for how these are mobilized in response to Bolivia's social and linguistic conditions. In many ways, Wayna Rap's Aymara hip-hop confirms applied linguist Alistair Pennycook's assertion that, "Much of hip-hop challenges ortholinguistic practices and ideologies, relocating language in new ways, both reflecting and producing local language practices" (112). With Wayna Rap's Aymara Hip-hop we hear a relocation of language; Aymara, a language that in Bolivia has indexed the rural and traditional, is relocated within a frame, the musical genre of hip-hop, that is decidedly urban and cosmopolitan. We also find, moreover, a relocation of emblems of Aymara nationalism including the very name Tupac. My discussion of these artists and their work opened with the naming of Tupac Shakur to highlight a moment anticipating the transnational connectivity established through this name today. In what follows, we find a cultural politics in which the legacies of Tupac Amaru, Tupac Katari, and Tupac Shakur converge. Emblems of Aymara identity and narratives, and lived experiences of Aymara history, including the very name and words of Tupac Katari, are articulated within a genre introduced to Andean youth through artists like Tupac Shakur. These artists have themselves been active protagonists in recent Aymara history, having participated actively in the last decade's turbulent social movements. The following examination of Wayna Rap's

work and the sociocultural milieu from which they emerge and, in turn, actively reshape, draws on interviews with these artists and analyses of their lyrics and videos to illuminate the changing conditions of indigeneity in this corner of contemporary Bolivian society.

Illegible indigeneity?

I first met the members of Wayna Rap during time in Bolivia spent mostly working in teacher training programs as an applied linguistics instructor during 2007. Discussing the linguistic situation facing urban Aymara youth with a former leader within the *Consejo Educativo Aymara* (Aymara Education Council), I referenced Wayna Rap as a positive example of Aymara intergenerational vitality. It seemed to be a very different example for him. Mention of "raperos Aymaras" served as a cue to begin a lament of the younger generation's cultural loss, confusion and delinquency. Like any cultural phenomenon, hip-hop *Alteño* is complex and comprises multiple semiotic layers, each serving as different cues to different audiences. If different from what Erving Goffman (1974, 1981) described as role alignments between interlocutors in face-to-face interactions in terms of scale and possibilities for mutual monitoring, mass-mediatised cultural forms, like hip-hop, similarly enable varied role alignments through their semiotic fractions (Swinehart 294). In the case of hip-hop *Alteño*, this educator established a meaningful link between hip-hop and what he perceived to be the deterioration of Aymara culture among the youth of El Alto and, more generally, the social conditions in the city. Any Aymara fraction of this music was obscured to him by other signs that resonate with

his anxieties of continued encroachment of Aymara society by foreign influence and accompanying social problems.

The elder educator's concerns are not groundless – there is plenty to lament regarding the social conditions of El Alto. Poverty and violence are daily realities for thousands of youth in the city, and the hip-hop community of El Alto has had more than its share of tragedy in recent years. During a brief visit in 2008, for example, I attended a memorial and fundraiser for the funeral of a young MC, Lil Dennis, who had been murdered earlier that year in a violent robbery. In figure one, at right, we can see the flyer announcing the memorial, in which he is pictured in a photo standing under a street light, baseball cap tipped to one side and holding a skateboard. Lil Dennis' image is surrounded by the names of twenty-three hip-hop groups performing in his honor hailing from La Paz, El Alto and other Bolivian cities including Sucre, Oruro, and Cochabamba. His name, written in graffiti script, is placed in the center of the flyer, and the top border announces *descansa en paz my homie*. Lil Dennis performed in *Real Kalle*, together with his sister María José Tapia, also known as Mary J. She has continued to perform as *Real Kalle* since her brother's death with the conviction that she carries on his legacy and desire for that project to continue.

The year following Lil Dennis's death brought more tragedy with a tremendous loss for the Bolivian hip-hop community when Abraham Bojórquez, the MC behind one of hip-hop Alteño's most successful projects, *Ukamau Y Ké*, and a founding member of Wayna Rap, died in what many suspect to have also been a violent robbery. At the time of his death he was working on an album that has since been released, the proceeds from which benefit the radio

station and youth cultural center Wayna Tambo that has been and continues to be central to the El Alto hip-hop scene.

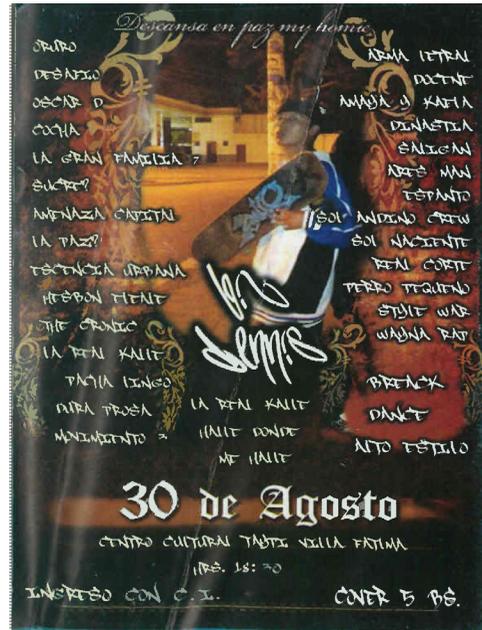


Fig. 1 Flyer for concert in honor of Lil Dennis.

These deaths seem to confirm the anxieties expressed by the Aymara educator above associating hip-hop with delinquency and social decay. While the educator's lament included a concern with the social conditions of youth in El Alto, it was not limited to this. Crucially, his lament regarded a presumed alienation from one's "own" culture. The evident cosmopolitanism of these artists may cue this for him – groups like Wayna Rap engage with transnational networks that are completely alien to an Aymara elder. These youth read Spanish language hip-hop magazines, received from friends and family abroad, and circulate them among friends (see Fig. 2). They maintain Myspace, Facebook, YouTube and other social media and networking accounts

through which they remain informed of developments in other hip-hop scenes and maintain correspondence with fans and other musicians. They post videos on YouTube to promote their music in Bolivia and internationally, and are generally tech savvy. Wayna Rap has traveled to Venezuela, for example, to participate in an international hip-hop congress and has performed in Buenos Aires and across northern Europe. At the invitation of Danish and Finnish MCs and with the support of the Danish organization *Rapolitics* they traveled to both those countries to perform in 2010.

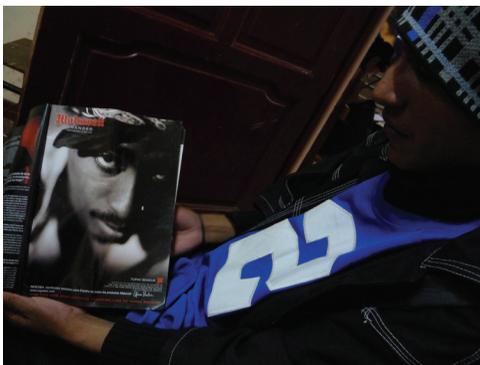


Fig. 2 A member of Wyna Rap holds a Spanish language hip-hop magazine from the U.S. with a photo of Tupac Shakur. Photo by Karl Swinehart.

Perhaps the educator was responding to their register of Spanish, a Bolivian variety of what scholar H. Samy Alim calls a hip-hop Nation Language Variety, one that is peppered with English with terms like *broder* (brother), *homie*, *flow*, *break*, *crew*. These terms can be found on the flyer for the *Homage to Lil Dennis* (see Fig. 1) where, in addition to *Descansa en Paz My Homie*, we find the terms *cover* (for a cover charge), *The Cronic*, and *break dance*. On the second flyer (see Fig. 3) we also find “English” words in the names of groups

performing, like *Street Loco* and *Camari Flow*. This last group’s name includes the term that MCs, their fans and critics use to assess lyrical skill. Like their counterparts in the U.S. and elsewhere, they refer to “flow” as, “the ability to exploit the rhythm, rhyme around the rhythm, and yet be able to faithfully return to the rhythm on time” (Alim 96). As Juan Eber Quisbert Quispe, a member of Wayna Rap explained in an interview in 2008, “si un rapero tiene buen *flo* o no es lo que cuenta” (“Juan Eber Quisbert Quispe”). Beyond the lexical aspects of this hip-hop language variety, we could look to a broader semiotic register (Agha 1999) recognizing the importance of visual signs, including transnationally legible diachritics of hip-hop culture like graffiti script, the clothing, embodied posture and affect displayed in the accompanying images.

If much of what we find in these flyers is transnationally legible within the realm of hip-hop cultural expressions, there remain Andean elements throughout them. The performances I discuss here take place at spaces with Aymara names *Taypi* (the center, the middle), *Utasa* (our home), and many of the groups listed have Aymara and Andean names: *Sol Andino*, *Proyect Amaru* (Amaru Project), *Pacha Lingo* (Language of the Earth), *Wayna Rap* (Youth Rap). The first group’s name invokes a recurrent image in Andean iconography, the sun, and the second returns us to Tupac Shakur’s namesake, Tupac Amaru. *Pacha Lingo* combines a Quechua and Aymara word for earth (and also timespace), *pacha*, with a Latin term for language, *lingo*. *Wayna Rap* combines the Quechua and Aymara word for youth, *wayna*, and the linguistically ambiguous (Spanish? English?) word “rap.” This practice of mixing languages in groups’ naming is something also true of the late Abraham Bojorquez’s project *Ukamau y Ké*

ukamau (ukhamaw) meaning, “that’s how it is,” in Aymara followed by the Spanish *y ké* (y qué) meaning “and what?,” reflecting the defiant stance Bojórquez expressed through his music.



Fig. 3 An event flyer from 2008.

The code mixing encountered in these groups’ names is echoed in the production of the musical tracks that accompany these artists’ rhymes. These tracks often mix samples, and some times live recordings, of traditional Andean music together with beats created on sound editing software like Fruity Loops. This mix of Andean instrumentation and digital beats can be heard, for example, on one of Wayna Rap’s most widely circulated tracks, *Chamakat Sartasiry* (Coming out of the Darkness).¹ The music for this track draws from recordings of Andean flutes (*t’arkas* and *zampoñas*), digital beats, and heavy piano chords remixed together into a loop.

The fluid mixing of musical genres is paralleled visually in the video for *Chamakat Sartasiry* both in the selection of images and the performers’ dress. Visually, the video juxtaposes black and white video clips of rural life taken from films of the Bolivian neorealist director Jorge Sanjinés with images of the artists rapping, often with a low camera angle, in a style reminiscent of 90s hip-hop videos. The artists’ dress combines *lluch’us* (the knit wool cap used among Quechuas and Aymaras in the Andes) with baggy t-shirts and pants that could be found on rappers in New York, London or Tokyo. The mixing of traditional Andean with hip-hop clothing is not limited to performance in a video, but is a fashion of dress that forms part of this register in the daily presentation of self among youth within this subculture.

The fashion that has emerged within this musical subculture should be understood within the broader political and social context of Bolivia’s recent history. Elena Ampara Tapia (b. 1976), a hip-hop performer and radio host who performs as Nina Uma (Aymara: Fire Water), commented in a 2011 interview with me that just ten years ago the only young people who might be seen wearing ponchos or *lluch’us* would be conspicuous (and definitely unfashionable) foreign tourists and backpackers. Interestingly, she brought up this introduction of traditional clothing within the local hip-hop fashion repertoire when responding to a question about Aymara language use in the course of our interview:

Karl Swinehart: ¿Has visto cambios entre los jóvenes alteños ante el aymara?

Nina Uma: Mira, yo creo que ahoritita tenemos un contexto boliviano bien interesante que hace diez años no había. Hace diez años difícilmente vas a ver a un joven con un lluch'u en la ciudad, algún gringuito—¡Aaa! ¡Qué chistoso que va a poner eso!—Es así. Pero a partir de, principalmente aquí en El Alto, a partir de 2003, la subida de Evo Morales a la presidencia y todo eso, hay un tema de búsqueda de varias, digamos, de varias generaciones, incluso de este contexto urbano. Comienzan a decir, “Tenemos alguien allí.” Nosotros hemos hecho esto. Tenemos este poder. Además de que cuando nos organizamos, nos reunimos, podemos sacar un presidente. Darse cuenta de esa capacidad que tienes, como aymara, como andino, y además haciendo respetar lo que tú eres que difícilmente ahora que te digan indio. Ahora, soy indio y ¿qué putas dice alguien [*se ríe*]? ¿No ve? Es así.

KS: Ukhamaw ¿y qué?

NU: Entiendes. Ukhamaw ¿y qué? Así es ¿y qué? ¿No ve? Entonces esta búsqueda y una revalorización de todas los saberes que antes estaban medio escondidos pero estaban allí presentes. Entonces por eso ahora se visibiliza más esto porque muchas personas digamos como que han ido perdiendo el miedo.²

In a conversation about youth linguistic practices in multilingual El Alto, Nina Uma makes a leap from a question about speaking Aymara to make a comment about fashion and its relation to political power and a confrontational attitude about cultural expression. On the one hand, the ease with which she makes this leap underscores the centrality of non-linguistic signs to regis-

ter formations, but also, when Nina Uma characterizes the current cultural milieu of El Alto, she situates the adoption of clothing by urban youth as part of a broader politicization and anti-racist reaffirmation of indigenous identity. The politicization of youth during this period provided the milieu from which this hip-hop culture emerges. Nina Uma identifies 2003 as an important turning point in this process where people, particularly Aymara people in Bolivia, began to feel powerful. Why does she refer to this date in particular?

Tupac's Return

October of 2003 saw a militant uprising by the residents of the City of El Alto and the Aymara communities of the surrounding high plain demanding the nationalization of the nation's most valuable natural resource – the natural gas that provides power to neighboring Brazil, Argentina and Chile. In the city, the protests were organized primarily through the neighborhood councils of the *Federación de Juntas Vecinales* (FEJUVE) which became conduits for large-scale mobilizations of the urban population. This conflict, known now as ‘The Gas War,’ involved mass meetings, road blockades, and citizens fighting police and the national army with improvised weapons. The Gas War that ultimately resulted in the ouster of then president ‘Goni’ Sánchez de Lozada was a crucial precedent in the subsequent election of Evo Morales in 2005, the nation's first Indigenous president. Like Nina Uma above, Grover Canaviri, Rolo Quispe, and Juan Eber Quisbert Quispe, members of Wayna Rap, described the Gas War as an awakening for the city of El Alto and as an inspiration for their music in an interview I conducted in 2007:

Rolando: El dos mil tres ha sido el despertar de todos los Alteños. Cada quien, todos estábamos no sé deprimidos diciendo—qué pena, qué triste nuestra realidad y todo esto. Pero ése ha sido el instante en que todos los vecinos, todos nos hemos unido, cada quien cargaba una piedra, sino protestando, sino huyéndonos, en cada esquina, cada vecino, cada junta vecinal se organizaba así bien. Los jóvenes salían y todo eso. Ha habido muertos. La gente iba. Incluso ha muerto uno de nuestros amigos, baleado (*a Grover*) tú has visto (*G: Sí*) personalmente. Ha sido una gran pena, el cual ha sido el despertar de la rebeldía de todo el pueblo.

Grover: Octubre ha sido como el despertar y pues muchos vecinos cuando se organizaban hablaban de que, porque también nuestros papás habían luchado en la dictadura de Banzer y toda esa época entonces tenían sus experiencias como jóvenes y comentaban entre ellos y decían siempre hemos sido marginados. Ya esa onda así hablaban.

Juan Eber: En el 2003 se ha iniciado un poco para mí. Se ha ido Goni y esa onda. Salí a la calle, chequeaba todo lo que pasaba, y allí chequeaba como la gente ha muerto y esa realidad he empezado a contar, a rapear esa realidad.³ (“Wayna Rap”)

Rolando describes a general malaise and resignation that shifts through the events of 2003 into a state of open rebellion in which other youth like him and the members of his group participated and even sacrificed their lives. Grover underscores these sacrifices made by his peers as analogous to his parents’ generation’s resistance to the Banzer dictatorship and as a just response to having “always been marginalized.” If Grover considers this the “people’s waking up,” Juan agrees, point-

ing out that 2003 was his initiation not only to political consciousness but also to hip-hop and “rapping that reality.”

Speaking with a Finnish radio journalist in 2011 for an interview in which I served as interpreter, Quisbert Quispe again explained the role of the events of October 2003 in both his personal life and, similar to Grover above, within the larger arc of Aymara history, but goes even further than Grover in recognizing its cultural impact:

Bueno, yo empecé el año 2003 que fue el año de la Guerra del Gas y todos esos momentos históricos de guerra, de lucha me inspiraron para hacer el rap . . . el 2003 se ha ido construyendo desde antes con las luchas de Tupac Katari, desde la dictadura, desde otras luchas, la Guerra del Agua, la Guerra de Febrero [en La Paz] . . . toda esa carga de tantos años y época reventó el año 2003—¡Pau!—una explosión de lucha, explosión ideológica, explosión de cultura y música. De ahí nació el hip hop yo pienso para mí. El hip hop de El Alto. (“Mårten Wallendahl”)⁴

Like the dynamite typically set off at Bolivian demonstrations, Quisbert Quispe characterizes this moment as one of explosion, a charge produced from years, centuries even, of oppression and injustice. The result is not only fire and destruction, however, but struggle, ideology, culture, music, and hip-hop. For him, Aymara hip-hop is born from an explosive moment of struggle, a moment situated within a longer trajectory of historic struggles reaching back to the days of Tupac Katari.

It would be hard to overstate the significance of this name, Tupac Katari, among Aymaras. In any Aymara cultural institution—educational, religious, labor, peasant—somewhere one will encounter the

portraits of Tupac Katari, often together with his wife and comrade, Bartolina Sisa. Tupac Katari led an insurrection two and a half centuries ago, in 1780, laying siege to the city of La Paz, crippling colonial powers for months. A contemporary of George Washington and Toussaint L'Ouverture, Tupac Katari's movement was part of a coordinated pan Andean insurrection in which Tupac Amaru the Second also played a crucial part. Tupac Katari was publicly executed by being torn apart by four horses, the pieces of his mutilated corpse distributed across the towns of the Upper Peru (now Bolivia). His heart was buried in El Alto (Thomson). Tupac Katari's last words have been repeated among Aymaras for generations since his execution by Spanish authorities—*Nayasaparukiw jiwayapxista, waranqa waranqanakaw kutt'anipxani* (You only kill me, but I will return and I will be millions).

If the institution of Bolivian hip-hop has no walls for hanging portraits of Tupac Katari, Wayna Rap pay tribute to him through their rhymes. In the song *Chamakat Sartasiry* (Coming out from the Darkness), the song for the video mentioned above, they lyrically reanimate Tupac's last words:

waranqa waranqa waranqanakawa
 There are millions,-
waranqa waranqa waranqanakawa
 There are millions,
Aymar markaxa
 My Aymara nation
wilampí Tupac Katari
 with the blood of Tupac Katari,
Uka sutinak pirqan qhillqañani
 That name we'll write on the walls
Aymara Qhichwa sart'asiwa
 The Aymara, the Quechua rises up
Ch'amampi, ch'amampi
 with power, with power
Jutaskiwa
 They're coming

Writing metaphorically in blood, in this verse they invoke both Tupac Katari's martyrdom and tag the public graffiti writing that forms part of these artists' repertoire of hip-hop cultural practice. Who will write his name? Not simply the artists, but the millions of the "Aymara nation" will do the writing (*qhillqañani* is inflected in the future tense of an "inclusive" we, more on this below). For these artists and others in Bolivia, the events of 2003 and the years since have been understood as a fulfillment of Tupac's prophecy of the return of the millions.

As artist Quisbert Quispe alluded in his 2011 interview above, 2003 marks a crucial year for the Aymara people and Bolivia, but also for Aymara hip-hop. In the months leading up to the Gas War the Wayna Rap collective came together out of a series of Hip-hop workshops organized by the youth center and radio station Wayna Tambo. Members of Wayna Rap credit Quisbert Quispe as composing the first track of Aymara language hip-hop during that year. The first track he wrote to express his experience during 2003, his first step to "re-appear esa realidad,"²⁵ is titled *Ch'ama* (Power). This track merits particular attention for its historical significance and also because of certain challenges it may pose to some listeners. Unlike other songs by Wayna Rap, like *Ch'amakat Sartasiry* discussed above, *Ch'ama's* denotational text is vague and not immediately recognizable as "political," yet both the poetic organization of meaning and the sonic organization of the track's production configure meaning in ways that can be understood as politically consequential, and even reminiscent of Tupac Katari's prophetic, final words. In addition to the denotational text of what Quisbert Quispe is "saying" with the lyrics, are crucial layers of semi-otic function, namely, the sonic qualities of production and the metrical organization of structural sense and reference in the lyrics.

The first verse provides a frame for subsequent verses, acknowledging something commonplace on the one hand, that everyone dies, and, on the other hand, also establishes specificity and urgency through verbal inflection regarding *who* dies one day—the performing MC and the listening audience:

- | | | |
|---|------------------------|----------------------|
| 1 | <i>Jiwañaru</i> | To death |
| 2 | <i>Puriñani mä uru</i> | we'll arrive one day |
| 3 | <i>Lak'aru</i> | to the earth |
| 4 | <i>Puriñani mä uru</i> | we'll arrive one day |

In lines two and four the verb *puriña* (to arrive) is inflected in the inclusive “we.” Like many American languages, Aymara has a greater level of specificity with regard to participant roles within the verb than Indo-European languages, through grammatically distinguishing between an exclusive *we* (+speaker, - addressee) and an inclusive *we* (+speaker, +addressee). The verbal inflection in lines two and four is inclusive, *puriñani*, emphasizing that *you* (the audience) and *I* (the MC) share a common fate.

It is against this backdrop that the second line of the second verse *jan axsaramti* (don't be afraid) introduces an element of fear, of facing the *saxranaka* (the evil ones) alone. The sequential placement of this imperative advances a developing theme within the verse—the unity between the performer and his audience. The reflexive ‘si’ in *nuwasinani* (line 7) may also underscore that this is a collaboration—we'll beat them ourselves.

The final verse consists of the lexeme *ch'ama* (power) in nominal case and the deictic *aka* (here) verbalized into the third person present tense—*akankaskiwa* (it's here)—with the only other nominal subject together with third person present tense appearing in line five *saxranaka jutt'apxi* (the evil ones are coming). These lines' parallelism set “power, here it is” in opposition to the coming of “the evil ones are coming.” But what is *power* and

where is *here*? The way that the denotational text of the verse has diagrammed the interactional text up to this point can help us answer these questions. “Here” is anchored in mutual orientation between the MC and his audience. The morphological richness of the Aymara language provides additional layers of semiotic function in the final two lines. These lines are not only *akankaski* but *akankaskiwa*, with the final morpheme ‘-wa’ as the evidential marker of first hand, experiential knowledge, indexically invoking the speaker's presence (Hardman; Adelaar). So, *here* is wherever the speaker and addressee are united—whether at a Hip-hop show, a demonstration or a *cabildo* (mass meeting), listening on the radio or performing for friends.

Ch'ama is a short verse that can be easily learned and repeated. In the recording it is repeated multiple times—as the song advances, additional layers of Quispe's voice rapping are layered over the initial loop. The result of this aspect of the song's production is something between a round and complete cacophony. Richard Bauman and Charles Briggs have said that, “Performance provides a frame that invites critical reflection on communicative processes. A given performance is tied to a number of speech events that precede and succeed it (past performances, readings of texts, negotiations, rehearsals, gossip, reports, critiques, challenges, subsequent performances and the like).” (“Poetics” 60-61). This recording models the rhyme's future repetition and, in a way, provides instructions on “how to use it”—the internal organization models the repetition and amplification of many voices joining together. Where *Chamakak Sartasiry* recontextualizes Tupac Katari's famous last words, *Ch'ama* provides a sonic model of how the return of the millions will sound and the reason for this coming together—the defeat of a common enemy.

Metrical organization of reference in Ch'ama⁶*i* = speaker*j* = addressee*k, l* = not speaker, not addressee

1	Jiwa-ña-ru <i>die.nom.DAT</i>		to death
2	Puri-ñani <i>arrive. 4→3 FUT</i>	mä uru <i>one day</i>	we'll arrive one day <i>i + j</i>
3	lak'a-ru <i>earth.DAT</i>		to the earth
4	puri-ñani <i>arrive. 4→3 FUT</i>	mä uru <i>one day</i>	we'll arrive one day <i>i + j</i>

5	saxra-naka <i>evil.PL</i>	jut-t'a-px-i <i>come.INST.PL.3</i>	the evil ones are coming <i>k</i>
6	jan <i>neg.voc</i>	axsara-am-ti <i>fear.imp2.neg</i>	don't be afraid <i>j</i>
7	wali ch'ama-mpi <i>good power.with</i>	nuwa-si-ñani <i>beat.REFL.4→3 FUT</i>	with strength we'll beat them ourselves <i>l i + j</i>
8	atipa-ñani <i>win.4→3 FUT</i>		we'll win <i>i + j</i>
9	khuchhi saxra-naka-ru <i>pig/dirty evil.PL.DAT</i>	jiwa-ya-ñani <i>dead.CAUS.4→3 FUT</i>	we'll kill the dirty, evil ones <i>i + j</i>

10	ch'ama <i>power</i>		power <i>l</i>
11	aka-n-ka-s-k-i-wa <i>here.LOC. Verb. CONT.DELIM.3.EVID</i>		here it is <i>l</i>
12	aka-n-ka-s-k-i-wa <i>here.LOC. Verb. CONT.DELIM.3.EVID</i>		here it is <i>l</i>

Metric organization of structural sense in Ch'ama

1	a	Jiwa-ñā-ru <i>die.NOM.DAT</i> to death		
2	b	Puri-ñani <i>arrive. 4→3 FUT</i> we'll arrive	c	mā uru <i>one day</i> one day
3	a	lak'a-ru <i>earth.DAT</i> to the earth		
4	b	puri-ñani <i>Arrive. 4→3 FUT</i> we'll arrive	c	mā uru <i>one day</i> one day
<hr/>				
5	d	saxra-naka <i>evil.PL</i> the evil ones	e	jut-t'a-px.i <i>come.INST.PL.3</i> are coming
6	f	jan <i>NEG.VOC</i> don't be afraid		axsara.am.ti <i>fear.IMP2.neg</i>
7	a'	wali ch'ama-mpi <i>good power.with</i> with strength	b'	nuwa-si-ñani <i>beat. REFL.4→3 FUT</i> we'll beat them ourselves
8	b'	atipa-ñani <i>win. 4→3 FUT</i> we'll win		
9	a'	khuchhi saxra-naka-ru <i>dirty evil.PL.DAT</i> we'll kill the dirty, evil ones	b'	jiwa-ya-ñani <i>dead.CAUS.4→3 FUT</i>
<hr/>				
10	d'	ch'ama <i>power</i>		
11	e'	aka-n-ka-s-k-i-wa <i>here.LOC. Verb. CONT.DELIM.3.EVID</i> Here it is.		
12	e'	aka-n-ka-s-k-i-wa <i>here.LOC. Verb. CONT.DELIM.3.EVID</i> Here it is.		

Ch'ama was composed during the Gas War and, as mentioned earlier, the fear of death was real for these performers and their audiences. While the particular context of this song's composition provides important context, like much effective protest music, it is also highly extractable from this context and transportable to other situations where calls for strength in unity against an advancing foe would be in order. Like much protest music emerging from moments of social upheaval, it draws on themes of solidarity, strength in numbers, reassurance and courage in the face of repression and violence, but it is also vague enough to be recontextualized within different social conflicts. It emerges from the Gas war, but would be relevant within the context of many political struggles—of which there have been many since 2003.

Unintelligible Code or Legible Emblem?

Here, we might reconsider Pennycook's assertion concerning hip-hop's challenges to "ortholinguistic practices," that, wherever they emerge, transnational hip-hop cultures disrupt purist language ideologies. There is a certain sense in which Wayna Rap's music presents us with a new version of "ortholinguistic" practice. The radical hybridity so evident in much of Wayna Rap's work bifurcates when we come to the lyrical content of songs like *Ch'ama*. Far from hybrid, these lyrics are exclusively in Aymara. The verse analysis outlined earlier presupposes audiences' access to Aymara as a denotational code—but this is not the case in any uniform way, particularly not for their many fans across Latin America and Europe but not even, perhaps more crucially, for the many Aymara-descended

Bolivian fans who have little or no fluency in the language. For these audiences, does this "lack of intelligibility" of lyrical content make their rapping in Aymara any less important? Here we encounter a challenge to lyrical analysis not only for Wayna Rap, but for our understanding of hip-hop in the world more broadly: when we consider that millions of fans of U.S. hip-hop do not understand English, how can we understand the meaningfulness of this music? Are its lyrics "unintelligible"? Does this make any orientation to lyrics pointless? Rather than a barrier to analysis, this recognition could simply temper impulses towards narrowly referential lyrical analyses, encouraging more attention to sonic elements of the music, broader semiotic features of its performance, and, even for "unintelligible" lyrics, to formal poetics.

But when a grammatical system is washed out of referential meaning, poetics is unlikely all that remains. An "unintelligible" language can still hold symbolic value as a recognizable, audible icon, if not as a parsable grammatical system. Furthermore, lyrics are not encountered in isolation from other the other aspects of music and its performance. Even as an impenetrable code, the Aymara language in this musical context figures into a larger diagram of hip-hop subjectivity legible by the other transnationally recognized signs of hip-hop—clothing, embodied stance and gesture, and the sonic quality of recordings (beat and rhythm)—examined above. The cadence of the voice, whether accessible as a denotational code, or "language," is another material (if sonic) sign within the larger diagram of social personhood communicated by these performers.

When denotationally opaque, their language moves from being a symbolic system to an emblem, or an iconic index in

the Peircean sense, not just of indigeneity in general, but also of a politically combative, contemporary, indigenous subject operating within transnational circuits of hip-hop performance. Their music remains intelligible to audiences beyond El Alto and the Bolivian high plain, in ways similar to how hip hop was meaningful to them when they first began listening to U.S. artists—just because they did not speak English does not mean they did not understand the music. When Tupac Shakur insisted, “Holla if ya hear me!” they answered.

Mediatization, Music and Cultural Movement

The emergence of hip-hop among the descendants of Tupac Amaru and Tupac Katari marks a double return. Not only the return as foretold by Tupac Katari at his execution, but also a return in the surprising orbit of the very name Tupac that began with Afeni Shakur’s naming of her son in 1971. Where so often the flow of signs today is imagined as emanating from hegemonic centers of power, particularly when examining phenomena like global hip-hop, we find the source domain for Tupac Shakur’s baptismal event high in the Andes. The unexpected circulation of this name through time and space, its differential valences among distinct demographics, and their venn-diagrammatic intersections are more than simply interesting coincidences or multivalent homophony. This process of imbuing new meanings on signs as they pass through successive moments of recycling, recontextualization and recursivity is the story of semiosis in general, of language in social life more broadly, and also one way of understanding of hip-hop’s meteoric rise as a transnational cultural phenomenon.

More than just the circulation of signs, however, the transnational rise of hip-hop represents the expansion of a model for typifying signs, a metasemiotic framework, a metasign/sign relationship that allows for the recognition of these artists’ work as pertaining to a *genre*—hip-hop. What has driven the expansion of this transnational metasemiotic interpretive framework?

That the rise of hip-hop across the globe has accompanied processes of global capitalist expansion is not lost on these artists. On the contrary, they have a nuanced understanding of the paradoxes involved in this process. For example, in his 2011 Finnish public radio interview, Quisbert Quispe spoke to the dialectic nature of the capitalist underpinnings of hip-hop’s expansion across the globe:

El rap en los Estados Unidos nació con ese pensamiento de revolución, contestatario desde los guetos de los barrios latinos, afroamericanos. Poco a poco se fue transformando ¿no? Pienso que llegó a un punto que ha sido tan popular la música rap que lo han agarrado las industrias . . . para poderlo comercializar como agarrarlo como un objeto y poder ser vendible, poder vender en todo lado. Y pienso que no es malo porque si no hubiera sido por el rap llegara a un punto que sea rap comercial, no hubiera llegado a todas partes del mundo. Y yo nunca hubiera sido rapero. Nunca hubiera tenido un grupo (“Mårten Wallendahl”).⁷

His remarks resonate with recent discussions of mediatization, or the ubiquitous embedding of communicative practices within commodity structures in contemporary society (Agha, “Meet”). Hip-hop, while embedded within the

circulation of commodities, provided a framework for new imaginings of how to engage and even transform Quisbert Quispe's world. Rather than understanding hip-hop's commodification as uniformly a stage of corruption, he reflects on how the circulation of commodities provided access to new forms of expression and engagement with his world.

Quisbert Quispe's insight also points to the circulation of hip-hop as an object. We might also extend this to the circulation of the Aymara language through Wayna Rap's performances, where it undergoes a process of objectification in which it is formulated both as a diachronic emblem of Aymara-ness (and indigeneity more broadly) and simultaneously a political stance central to their understanding of hip-hop as a genre. This process is not uniform, but bifurcated and asymmetrical. The perceptual materiality of a language may be uniform, but how it is formulated as a sign varies according to audiences' differential access to Aymara as a denotational code, i.e. "language," and also their exposure to discourses typifying the language as a sign. Language, and music for that matter, is not just behavior but meaningful behavior—how this music is received by an elderly Aymara educator, other Aymara youth, or non-Aymara speakers watching a YouTube clip will vary radically, but perhaps not randomly.

Considering Wayna Rap's Aymara speaking audience might bring us to reflect on other moments in which Andean music has established transnational links. Wayna Rap's music might be understood as an inversion of what earlier Indigenous musicians' have done with more traditional "Andean music" within a framework of "world music." If groups like *Kjarkas* popu-

larized Indigenous music styles among international audiences through a "world music" market (Bigenho), for some segments of their audience a different order of transnational connectivity appears to be operating, in which Aymara youth reformat the urban, cosmopolitan genre of hip-hop for rural and peri-urban Aymara-language audiences.

I would be remiss if the only representative of Aymara elders included in this paper was the educator who dismissed Wayna Rap as a sign of cultural decay. More than anything, Wayna Rap is celebrated by their community. They have performed at meetings of FEJUVE and before an audience of nearly a million during a general strike and mass meeting in La Paz/El Alto in 2007. In 2010 they won an award from El Alto's city council. They have even produced a video against air pollution with the state run television station. When I played their music for the founder of the Instituto de Lengua y Cultura Aymara (ILCA), the renowned Aymara linguist Juan de Dios Yapita, his response was an enthusiastic, "¡Hay que felicitar a esos jóvenes!"⁸ Rather than the rupture, deviance, or degeneration feared by the Aymara educator, or predicted by other critics of the commodifying processes of globalization, Wayna Rap and the other rappers in the El Alto hip-hop scene appear to demonstrate the persistence, reproduction, and even the expansion of Aymara language, culture and historical memory. With hip-hop *Alteño*, this memory now includes an historical homophony that links the 18th and 20th centuries, Black America and the Aymara. Hip-hop's circulation as an "object," in Quisbert Quispe's words, has returned the name Tupac to the Andes.⁹

Appendix 1: Lyrics to Ch'ama

Wayna Rap 2003

(Written by Juan Ever "Johnny" Quisbert Quispe)

Jiwañaru

To death

Puriñani mä uru.

we'll arrive one day

Lak'aru

to the earth

Puriñani mä uru.

we'll arrive one day

Saxranaka jutt'apxi.

The evil ones are coming

Jan axsaramti.

don't be afraid

Wali ch'amampi nuwasiñani.

with strength we'll beat them ourselves

Atipañani

we'll win

Khuchhi saxranakaru jiwayañani.

we'll kill the dirty, evil ones

Ch'ama

Power

Akankaskiwa

Here it is

Akankaskiwa

Here it is

Notes

¹ The song's video is available both on YouTube (<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nbNKIsBkE9E>) and on Wayna Rap's Myspace page (<http://www.myspace.com/waynarap>).

² Karl Swineheart: Have you seen changes among the youth in El Alto concerning Aymara?

Nina Uma: Look, I think that right now we have a very interesting Bolivian context

that ten years ago didn't exist. Ten years ago it would be difficult for you to see a young person with a *lluch'u* in the city. Some gringo, like, "How funny that he's going to wear that! That's what Indians wear." That's how it is. But beginning, principally here in El Alto, beginning in 2003, the rise of Evo Morales to the presidency and all that, there's a search among many generations including in the urban context. They begin to say, "We have someone there. We've done this. We have this power." And furthermore when we organize, come together, we can remove a president. To realize that capacity you have as an Aymara, as an Andean, and furthermore to respect what you are, it's difficult now for them to call you "Indian." Now it's, "I'm an Indian and what the fuck does anyone have to say about it." You see? That's how it is.

KS: Ukhamaw ¿y qué?

NU: You understand. Ukhamaw ¿y qué? That's how it is and what? Don't you see? That search and that revalorization of all the knowledge that was half hidden before but was present there. Then that's why now that becomes more visible, because many people, let's say it's like they've been losing their fear.

³ Rolando: Two thousand three was the awakening of all the people of El Alto. Each one, everyone, we were, I don't know, depressed, saying—what a shame, our reality is so sad and all that. But that was the instant that all the neighbors, we all united, everyone carried a rock, or was protesting, or escaping (the armed forces) on every corner, each neighbor, each neighborhood council was very organized. The youth came out and everything. There were deaths. The people were going. Even one of our friends died, shot down (to Grover) you saw it (Grover: Yeah) personally. It was a great shame, which was the

awakening of the rebellion of the people.

Grover: October was like the awakening and, well, a lot of neighbors when organizing talked about, because our parents had struggled during the Banzer dictatorship and that whole era, so they had their experiences as young people and commented among themselves that we've always been marginalized. And that was the way they were talking.

Juan Eber: In 2003 it started a little bit for me. Goni left and all that. I hit the street, checked out everything that was happening, I saw how people had died and that reality I began to tell, to rap that reality.

⁴ Well, I began in the year 2003 that was the year of the Gas War and all those historic moments of war, of struggle inspired me to do rap . . . 2003 had been constructed since the struggles of Tupac Katari, since the dictatorship, since other struggles, the water war, the war of February [in La Paz]... all that weight of so many years and epochs exploded in the year 2003. Pow. A big explosion. An explosion of struggle. An ideological struggle. An explosion of culture and music. From there hip-hop was born I think for me. Hip-hop from El Alto. Aymara hip-hop.

⁵ "rapping that reality"

⁶ Interlineal Gloss Conventions

1	First person
2	Second person
3	Third person
4	Fourth person (Speaker + Addressee)
ABL	ablative
IMP	imperative
CAUS	causative
INST	instantaneous aspect
CONT	continuous aspect
LOC	locative
DAT	dative
NEG	negator
DELIM	delimitative

PL	plural
EVID	evidential
REFL	reflexive
FUT	future
VOC	vocative

⁷ Rap in the United States was born with that thinking of revolution, protest from the ghettos of Latino and Black neighborhoods. Little by little it has been transforming, no? I think it has arrived at a point where rap music has become so popular that industries have grabbed it in order to commercialize it, like grabbing it like an object to make it be marketable, to sell it everywhere. I don't think that is bad because if it wouldn't have been for rap getting to that point that there was commercial rap, it wouldn't have arrived to all parts of the world and I never would have become a rapper. I never would have had a group.

⁸ These kids must be congratulated!

⁹ I would like to thank the members of Wayna Rap for their enthusiasm for and patience with my research. I also thank the Fulbright Institute for International Education, Penn's Center for Native American Studies, and the Fulbright-Hays Dissertation Research Abroad Fellowship that all supported my work in Bolivia, as well as Dr. Pamela Calla and the Universidad de la Cordillera, and Prof. Juan de Dios Yapita and the Institute of Aymara Language and Culture (ILCA) for their crucial support during my time in La Paz and El Alto. Of course, many thanks to the participants in the 2010 Tepoztlán Institute for their input on an earlier version of this essay, to David Kazanjian's generous organizing of graduate student participation in the Institute, and to Lessie Jo Frazier, Gladys Tzul, and Araceli Masterson for their invitation to participate in this volume.

Works Cited

Adelaar, Wilhelm (with Pieter Muysken). *Languages of the Andes*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2004. Print.

- Agha, Asif. "Register." *Journal of Linguistic Anthropology* 9.1/2 (1999): 216-219. Print.
- . "Meet Mediatization." *Language & Communication* 31.2 (2011): 163-170. Print.
- Albó, Xavier. "El Alto, la vorágine de una ciudad única." *Journal of Latin American and Caribbean Anthropology* 11.2 (2006): 329-50. Print.
- Alim, H. Samy, Awad, Ibrahim & Pennycook, Alastair, eds. *Global Linguistic Flows: Hip-Hop cultures, Youth Identities & the Politics of Language*. New York: Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group, 2008. Print.
- . *Roc the Mic Right: The Language of Hip Hop Culture*. New York: Routledge, 2006. Print.
- Arbona, Juan Manuel. "Reading the City as (Social) Movement: El Alto, Bolivia—October, 2003." *Delaware Review of Latin American Studies* 6.1 (2005). Print.
- Ávila, Jiovanny, Samanau, Cárdenas Plaza, Cleverth & Prieto, Patricia. *Jóvenes y política en El Alto*. La Paz: PIEB, 2007. Print.
- Bauman, Richard and Briggs, Charles. "Poetics and Performance as Critical Perspectives on Language and Social Life." *Annual Review of Anthropology* 19 (1990): 58-88. Print.
- Bigenho, Michelle. *Sounding Indigenous: Authenticity in Bolivian Music Performance*. New York: Palgrave, 2002. Print.
- Goffman, Erving. *Frame Analysis*. New York: Harper & Row, 1974. Print.
- . *Forms of Talk*. New York: Harper & Row, 1981. Print.
- Grewal, Inderpal. *Transnational America: Feminisms, Diasporas, Neoliberalisms*. Durham: Duke UP. Print.
- Hardman, Martha. *Aymara*. Munich: LINCOM Europa, 2001. Print.
- Hoye, Jacob & Ali, Karolyn (Eds.) *Tupac: Resurrection 1971-1996/ Original concept by Afeni Shakur*. New York: Atria Books, 2003. Print.
- Instituto Nacional de Estadística (INE). *Bolivia Características de la Población*. La Paz: INE, 2001. Print.
- "Juan Eber Quisbert Quispe." Personal Interview. 12 August 2008.
- "Nina Uma." Personal Interview. 8 Aug. 2011.
- "Ojo del Alma" August 20, 2011.
- Pennycook, Alistair. "Language, Localization, and the Real: Hip-Hop and the Global Spread of Authenticity." *Journal of Language, Identity, and Education* 6.2 (2007): 101-15. Print.
- Swinehart, Karl F. "The Mass Mediated Chronotope, Radical Counterpublics and Dialect in 1970s Norway: The Case of Vømmøl Spellmanslag." *Journal of Linguistic Anthropology* 18.2 (2008): 290-301. Print.
- . "The Enregisterment of Colla in a Bolivian (Camba) Comedy." *Social Text* 113 (2012): 81-102. Print.
- Thomson, Sinclair. *We Alone Shall Rule: Native Andean Politics in the Age of Insurgency*. Madison: U of Wisconsin P, 2004. Print.
- "Mårten Wallendahl and Juan Eber Quisbert Quispe" n.p. Interview. 10 July 2011.
- Wayna Rap. Chamakat Sartasiry. *Calor Glocal: Hip Hop from a Hidden World*. Sony, 2009.
- "Wayna Rap." Personal Interview. 17 July 2007.