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Book Review/Reseña

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Thomas Ward. *The Formation of Latin American Nations: From Late Antiquity to Early Modernity.* University of Oklahoma Press, 2018.

In *The Formation of Latin American Nations*, Thomas Ward embarks on a necessary journey to the pre-Hispanic origins of Latin America nations. With a masterfully employed decolonial approach, Ward studies in detail the fundamental ingredients of Mesoamerican and Andean cultures from late antiquity until early modernity (approximately from the tenth to the sixteenth century). The author argues that these cultures and their sociopolitical organizations reveal a pre-Enlightenment concept of nation that was as complex as its contemporary counterpart across the Atlantic.

In Chapter 1 Ward intervenes in the debate about the meaning of nation and its competing perspectives—especially those held by Eric J. Hobsbawm, Anthony Smith, and Adrian Hastings—by bringing into account earlier conceptions of nation that counterbalance and inform their modern version and, in this way, create "a kind of heterogenous modernity" (20). Unlike post-Enlightenment perspectives, the pre-Hispanic conceptualizations of nation—as represented by the social organizations of the Nahua *altepetl,* the Mixtec *ñuu,* the Yucatec *cah,* the K'iche' *amaq'*, and the Qheswaphone *ayllu*—linked it with lineage, ethnicity, gender, and territory. During the colonial period, the terminology for indigenous social organizations was frequently rejected and replaced with terms such as "nation," "province," and "kingdom." Based on organizational patterns and practices of pre- and postcontact Amerindian cultures, as recounted in indigenous texts such as the *Popol Wuj,* the author defines the premodern nation as "liberated from the enduring colonialities of our time and place" through its essential elements (22). These elements are: a kingship group; a hierarchy organized by race (lineage and ethnicity), class, and gender; an association with a (real or claimed) territory; religious beliefs; a formation of armies; a construction of a national culture; and patriotic constructions (legends, history, and language). These ingredients and the notion of nation that they convey

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guide the decolonial assessments of the Mexica and the Inkakuna in the next chapters.

Engaging with what Matthew Restall has called "New Philology," Ward analyzes in Chapter 2 the ethnic nations formed in Mesoamerica up until the Spanish invasion. Making use of Nahuatl sources such as the *Florentine Codex,* written by Fray Bernardino de Sahagún with the assistance of his native informants from 1545 to 1590, and Spanish-language chronicles such as the Mestizo historian Diego Muñoz Camargo's *Historia de Tlaxcalteca* (c. 1585) and the Castizo historian Fernando de Alva Ixtlilxóchitl's *Historia de la nación chichimeca* (c. 1640)*,* the author investigates the ways in which Mesoamerican *altepeme* came to develop and move across both geographic and temporal borders, and how these Nahua sociopolitical systems were faithfully represented, undermined, or replaced by Spanish notions of political organization. Ward's assessments of the ethnicities of Anahuac, their border ontologies, and their transculturation processes take a careful look at the horizontal (political) and vertical (spiritual) movements that cultures such as the Tolteca, the Mexica, the Tlaxcalans, and the Chichimeca had to undergo in order to fortify themselves. While the Chichimeca adapted features of the Acolhuaque and the Tolteca, among others, and absorbed horizontally the ideal Toctecayotl (the essence of the Toltec mother culture), the Mexica and other ethnic nations looked vertically to their own historiographical and mythological past (both autochthonous and appropriated horizontally) and, in this way, supported their ethnic identity and pride.

In Chapter 3 Ward discusses the features of the premodern nations that spread in the Andes up until the colonial period. From a multidisciplinary perspective, the author brings to the foreground the qualities of nationness that characterized minor and advanced Andean polities and states. For him, northern polities such as the ones in Antioquia and Cauca in present-day Colombia shared several similarities to the ones that had been integrated into the Inkakuna's Tawantinsuyo. Although these northern polities lacked a culture as sophisticated as the Inkakuna or the Mexica, they were well-established ranked societies that prospered in urban settings. Ward exhorts us to recognize the nationness of these polities and decolonize their representations in Spanish chronicles, such as Cieza de León's *Crónica del Perú* (1553)*,* in which they were portrayed, for political reasons, as "behetrías" and tribes that belonged to the Caribs. Ward contends that it is precisely due to their complex forms of social organizations that these Andean polities were able to be conquered easily by the Spanish.

In his enlightening discussion of the Inkakuna, the author focuses on the horizontal and vertical movements of their culture and formulates a fascinating and historically plausible theory regarding their adoption of Qheswa. Since the Inkakuna's native language was not Qheswa (or the "General Language" as it used to be called in the

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colonial era), and Qheswa was the name of an ancient nation conquered by the Inkakuna in their imperial expansion, Ward argues that Qheswa was not only an ethnonym but also the name of the language spoken by the inhabitants of Qheswa before the Inkan conquest. Just as in Anahuac with the Chichimeca and their horizontal appropriations of more advanced cultures, in the Andes the Inkakuna migrated to the Qheswa-speaking territories in the north, conquered these lands, and possibly adopted their language. They did not openly acknowledge this adoption for reasons of prestige and/or the possibility that they had already made Qheswa cultural achievements part of their own past.

In Chapter 4 Ward explores how gender and ethnicity intersected in the formulation and strengthening of the nations of the Nahua, the Maya, the Moche, and the Inkakuna. He argues that the role of precontact women was crucial in the processes of horizontal and vertical cultural formation in which gender intersects with ethnicity, class, and power. These intersections would be seized, reconfigured, or overridden by Spanish colonialism. The author demonstrates that the Nahua and the Maya in their own areas of development partook in exogamic political maneuvering as a means to strengthen their interethnic bonds and thus expand their territories and power. The Mexica, for instance, united with culturally and politically powerful women from other nations during the early dynastic period, and they continued to practice interethnic connubiality after the fall of Tenochtitlan to hold on to their status in the colonial period. While the Inkakuna initially formed interethnic conjugal unions with elites from the towns of Sañu, Oma, and Taucaray, their marriages were characterized primarily by endogamic unions within their panakakuna. Ward also compares the pre-Hispanic process of *mestizaje* with the one that developed after the Conquest. Unlike the intraethnic *mestizaje* that was, in fact, the "political and spiritual policy" (196) for early Mexicatl rulership, the colonial racial counterpart in the Americas was devoid of political goals and was primarily the result of sexual violence committed by the conquistadors and their slaves against indigenous women—as energetically denounced by the *indio ladino* Felipe Guaman Poma de Ayala and more recently demonstrated in the DNA testing conducted by Gabriel Bedoya and his colleagues on Antioquian peoples.

Ward examines in Chapter 5 the migration and trade interactions between the indigenous nations of late antiquity and how they were transformed by their insertion into worldwide connections after the Conquest. In particular, the author discusses the Amazonian origins of Neolithic Cuban and Puerto Rican Taino peoples, salt as an international commodity, and the Spondylus seashells highly valued and commercialized in interethnic precontact networks in the Americas. Ward argues that if the commercial routes and interchanges between indigenous nations had not taken place by the time of the Spanish invasion, Spaniards would have been unable to plunder indigenous nations such as the Mexica and the Inkakuna. Drawing from a

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variety of anthropological studies, the author illustrates how commerce developed in varying degrees of intensity according to time and location throughout the Americas. There is evidence of trade transactions and routes in cultures of Mesoamerica such as the Mexica and the K'iche', and in cultures of the Andes such as the Wari.

Before the Conquest, the Mexica had participated in trade negotiation for quite some time, and the Inkakuna, on the contrary, had stayed away from it, supervising instead the movements of goods exclusively for tribute payments and for assistance to areas with crop failures in the Tawantinsuyo. Soon after the Spanish invasion, the world's trade routes became wholly connected for the first time, resulting in three economic strains that characterized the early modern system: monarchical tribute-gathering policies, early capitalism, and "the pillage/conquest" paradigm (276). Ward indicates that new maps and trade routes were superimposed over existing pre-Hispanic ones, and new pathways were forged, favoring Spaniards and dismantling ancient interethnic commercial negotiations. Colonial subjects such as the Amerindians and the people of mixed ancestry participated unevenly in the commercial enterprise of the Spanish colonies (such as in diverse guilds) due to a variety of impediments that included colonial hierarchies, royal intervention, and policies that aimed to suppress local pre-Hispanic forms of sociopolitical organizations.

Although the last chapter develops some of its arguments rather schematically, Thomas Ward's book is like an encyclopedia that masterfully puts into practice decolonial approaches to bring to the foreground the cultural accomplishments of indigenous cultures and the survival of several of them, against all odds, in today's world. Part of a trilogy that promises to be Ward's magnum opus, *The Formation of Latin American Nations* is a monumental contribution to studies of pre-Hispanic cultures; premodern nations; gender and ethnicity in the colonial period; and decolonial methodologies.

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