

Rethinking “*sincretismo*” in Mexico: Between the sacred and the profane

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Abstract. Syncretism constantly occupies a standpoint based upon double critique that generates clashes and perplexity between different worlds. On such a basis, I intend to reinterpret some doubts regarding the artwork *Sincretismo* by the Mexican artist Ismael Vargas through pointing up current paradigms and significant ideologies across popular discourses in Mexico recently. This article traces the sudden change in conception towards Syncretism that may contribute to the need of re-signifying considerable cultural elements, which confer ethnic, and identity issues in particular. With such practices and models of domination, a new socio-cultural and even economic structure emerged via an ontological vision of politics that looks towards a *crisis of identity*. Therefore, it explores the need to rearticulate such elements, especially with a new sociopolitical and philosophical yield where the Indigenous and the European converge.

Keywords. Syncretism; Antonio Gramsci; De-colonialism; Luis Villoro; Capitalism.

Repensar “*sincretismo*” en México: entre lo sagrado y lo profano

Resumen. El Sincretismo ocupa constantemente una posición basada en una doble crítica que genera choques y perplejidades entre mundos distintos. Sobre esa base, me propongo responder a algunas dudas respecto a la obra *Sincretismo* del artista mexicano Ismael Vargas a través de señalar paradigmas e ideologías significativas actuales en los discursos populares en México recientemente. Este artículo rastrea el repentino cambio de concepción hacia el Sincretismo que puede contribuir a la necesidad de resignificar elementos culturales considerables que confieren cuestiones étnicas e identitarias en particular. Con tales prácticas y modelos de dominación, surgió una nueva estructura sociocultural e incluso económica vía una visión ontológica de política que apunta hacia una *crisis de identidad*. Por tanto, se explora la necesidad de replantear dichos elementos, especialmente con un nuevo rendimiento sociopolítico y filosófico donde confluyen lo Indígena y lo Europeo.

Palabras clave: Sincretismo; Antonio Gramsci; De-colonialismo; Luis Villoro; Capitalismo.

Summary: Introduction; “*Sincretismo*” and other perspectives; Neoliberalism VS De-colonialism and the Gramscian hegemony: a keynote address towards an identity in Mexico; References; Annexes: Images of “*Sincretismo*” and other incidents.

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INTRODUCTION

Since the Spanish conquest, Syncretism in Mexico has caused increased awareness, reappearing with diverse social, cultural, and even religious struggles, and a clash that gradually shifted between very different Worlds. Trying to crystallize many modes and forms of communication and living. It understands new positions through

a set of conclusions that allow certain cultural elements that affect how people act towards life, its adversities, and even their human coexistence. Syncretism reflects the most effective reference to this fusion of the European and the Indigenous elements and vital manifestations for the Mexicans through knowledge, arts, values, beliefs, etc. Therefore, this cultural heritage, left by Syncretism, was first created over the centuries, contrasting complicated geography and environment, as it expounded a unique culture that highlighted the originality and accumulation of knowledge along with specific and hybrid techniques between two cultures, the European and the Native. Philosophers such as Aguirre Beltrán, Marzal, Verger, or Montiel, among others, identify the process as a cultural element associated with another foreign element through forms, symbols, images, religious beliefs, sacred idols, etc. Syncretism in Mexico has still left its imprints, especially in terms of ideological streams, continuing to play a role of enormous impact between new generations, the European and Catholic presences on the one hand, and the Indigenous communities on the other. Since this colonial era of Mexico-Tenochtitlán and over time, Syncretism, according to many thinkers, was renowned as a “*harmonious mestizaje*”. However, according to Ismael Vargas, “*Sincretismo*” does not seek what it manifests and interprets in different discourses, where the majority gets to be “*muted*”. Moreover, in my view, this would examine “the distinction that Antonio Gramsci’s Marxism establishes between the formal and the real subsumption [...] the intersectionality of social struggles against the abstraction of capitalism” (Barria-Asenjo et al., 2023, p. 201).

Before analyzing, we should look back at what happened about this incident. The Mexican artist Maestro Ismael Vargas, with a highly recognized career, inaugurated his sculpture piece of art, “*Sincretismo*”, as part of the public art program “*Arte en Guadalajara*”, supervised, financed, and promoted by the ex-mayor of Guadalajara, Enrique Alfaro Ramírez, back then. It represents an artwork that rethinks the modalities and terms that tended to depict two great cultural and religious symbols, through two different worlds, that embodied great symbolism between the Colonial and Christian canon and the original Pre-Hispanic doctrine; the Virgin Mary of Guadalupe and the Mexican Mother Coatlicue, respectively. Indeed, Vargas materialized certain aspects of Pre-Hispanic figures, specifically from Aztec culture, such as the six skulls and serpents, as well as the Mexican goddess Coatlicue, the venerated mother of the gods of Indigenous and Ancient Mexico, well accompanied by the Virgin of Guadalupe, the venerated mother of the Contemporary Mexico. Therefore, the incident represents a sculpture that has recently opened widely a debate that imposes a strategy through which the ecclesiastical cupola categorically has rejected. Considering it a blasphemous sculpture or a sacrilege towards the most sacred and worthy symbol of the Catholic Church. However, the criticisms of the Catholics, Intellectuals, and Defenders of arts in Mexico expressed their great satisfaction, total approval and admiration towards “*Sincretismo*”. Ismael declared that he sought to harmonize and mix ideas to depict beliefs of two great cultures with such symbiosis between the Novo-Hispanic and Pre-Columbian dogmas, and even Iconography. Syncretism in the scope of this article questions these preliminary insights on the concepts of this hybridization process through the Gramscian hegemony. It outlined conflicts where the discrepancies continue to accentuate in a tense tone, recalling *la leyenda negra*, which has been a critical debate between Mexico and the Spanish Monarchy, recently. Such an incident will engage with several concepts from Luis Violloro’s philosophy that aspires to end the decisive importance of the intersectionality of struggles against Capitalism (Barria-Asenjo et al., 2023) of all social relations, and that will represent the starting point of my analysis.

“*SINCRETISMO*” AND OTHER PERSPECTIVES

Since the 1970s, Mexico has experienced structural changes of unfolding strategies of a hegemonic project of Neoliberalism, such as some essential problems and the impact of a “*Savage Capitalism*”² as the great Mexican thinker Carlos Fuentes denoted above the people of Mexico (Rénique, 2005, p. 3). According to him, “the problem of globalization is that it is only interested in merchandise [...] and the unlimited movement of Capital [...] with no productive purpose whatsoever” (David Morton, 2003, p. 632). Hence, his perspective was to develop an accumulation strategy to dwindle this Neoliberalism hegemony, trying to untangle its complexity and contradictions. A shift has occurred since 1970, especially with the social basis of the hegemony of the Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI)³. Therefore, the victory of Vicente Fox in the 2000 elections would tackle some issues towards a second generation of neoliberal capitalist development, heralding an underlying

¹ Mestizaje refers to racial and cultural mixing of Amerindians with Europeans, but the literal connotation of the word was a significant factor that continues to have aesthetic and spiritual dimensions in its theoretical transformation and application in the social standing.

² “Neoliberalism, dubbed Capitalismo Salvaje (Savage Capitalism), reached its peak during the so-called “lost decade” of the 1980s, when the privatization of public services and national resources devastated the already highly polarized societies and economies of Latin America”. More details see: (Rénique, 2005, p.3).

³ Since establishing the first declaration of principles of the Party of the Revolution on March 4, 1929, along with General Plutarco Elías Calles, Jorge Pinto Mazal, and the creator of the National Revolutionary Party (PNR) points out in “Political Parties in Mexico” the need to move from the “era of the caudillos to the era of institutions.” The proposal creates a revolutionary popular front capable of providing solid institutions to Mexico and bringing together the leaders of that time. In less than ten years, the party renewed and gained greater strength, first with the transformation of the National Revolutionary Party into the Party of the Mexican Revolution (PRM) on March 30, 1938, under the government of General Lázaro Cárdenas Del Río. In January 1946, the name changed to the Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI), with the motto “Democracy and Social Justice.” In its early stages, the PRI (more precisely, PNR and PRM) showed a nationalist ideology until the 2000s, reflected in the oil expropriation, the formation of a national electrical industry, the expansion of state companies, and the creation of Health and Food systems, etcetera. With President Vicente Fox, the party slowly gets to promote a specific political agenda for the economic, political, social, and cultural development that maintains an ideological tendency that links it to Centralism, Technocracy, Corporatism, and Neoliberalism.

continuity regarding politics in Mexico (David Morton, 2003). Therefore, it challenges the established political order by restructuring a theory of the survival and reorganization of a second generation of Capitalism where new forms would lead to the furtherance of crucial reproduction towards a period of crisis. "*Sincretismo*" draws attention to what Mexico has gained since the 1980s and 1990s. Through those years, the promotion of Neoliberalism and the consequent struggle between social forces proceeded in a particular way in Mexico, more attuned to specific sociopolitical conditions. Here, "*Sincretismo*" still shows the keyword "*development*" since that period of constant renegotiation to curb that authored neoliberal restricting not only "by promoting business-labor relations but also by interventionist projects designed to harness social mobilization" (David Morton, 2003, p. 633).

From my point of view, this sculpture redefines the common causes of social struggles, by demonstrating intersectionality and interdependence of the Indigenous culture and its remnants. With such an explanation, a number of concepts from Marx's philosophy will engage towards the incident of "*Sincretismo*" in Mexico. It was revisiting and re-historicizing the superiority of the Aztec culture above the Christian/Imperial thought. Nevertheless, it symbolizes real concerns; seeks to convey something new. Rather, leaving the possibility of such a marked and profound rupture in society, in particular, with the imposition of a new way of thinking, which would seek to fight not only against modern coloniality but also against the coloniality of knowledge and even the coloniality of being. Despite the denials of any political or religious involvement, "*Sincretismo*" generated a discourse that still reveals a reality or a certain tension well perceived towards a new beginning of an era. The artistic piece represents a recourse that experiences a new way of thinking, a new critique of being, or a denial of everything that modern and global colonialism symbolizes. Particularly against the European and the Imperial legacy, through a thought that has such a strong impact socially, politically, above all, culturally or, simply, even artistically. "*Sincretismo*" manifests a "*cultural re-functionalism*" in different discourses, where the majority seeks to be "*silenced*", especially after a recreated contrast, which, later, would begin to synthesize an environment in which would still be the possibility of remaking this religious culture or rather reestablishing it. In other words, it would be a "*reinterpretation*" almost with a political ideology that seeks the Nationalism, or rather Populismo/Populism that vividly evokes quick and contradictory changes, regarding *lo Mexicano*, the social, economic, and the technical, by adopting certain philosophies that promote national or patriot mindset and form.

As I mentioned earlier, the left-wing politician Enrique Alfaro, ex-mayor of Guadalajara, financed and supervised "*Sincretismo*", during the presidential period of Enrique Peña Nieto, the former Mexican president and former candidate of the PRI that drifted towards Neoliberalism, in alliance with the Partido Acción Nacional (PAN)⁴, with an ultra-conservative political doctrine, related to the ideas of Christian democracy. This background could serve as a sole basis of a hegemony as Gramsci addressed. According to him, "it is linking the reality of class rule and class power with the equally real amalgam of practices and ideal principles of behavior, conformity, and law" (Valeriano Ramos, 1982). Probably, that hint could be, in this article, a keyword of this trajectory of "*Sincretismo*" or, relatively, an ideology that promotes a de-colonial system that shed light onto the dominion of Capitalism since his arrival at the Jalisco Office. Therefore, this defeated some debates against Syncretism as a contemporary phenomenon. Does this incident represent such a game changer or simply a lack of culture on the part of society? The "*De-colonial turn*" resides in a philosophy that reveals the traces of liberation by a theoretical discourse capable of providing "its fullest significance within the historical frame, which takes into account not only the history of Latin American thought but also dialogues and sources for decolonization that emerge elsewhere" (Maldonado Torres, 2011b, p. 3). Among its gamut of thinkers are the Mexicans Leopoldo Zea and Enrique Dussel, and the Peruvian Augusto Salazar Bondy. The usage of the term "*de-colonial*" means "*a change of direction*". It would dictate the term for a shift in global power dynamics and in epistemic perspective, which has taken place since the Second World War (Maldonado Torres, 2011b, p. 1). In other words, it was considered a thought that is understood as a change of direction in the understanding of Modernity (Rodríguez Reyes, 2016). A thought that seeks certain practices that underline resistance to coloniality and the regime imposed since the arrival of Europe to the Latin American continent. Referring to the de-colonial turn, it fiercely opened paths to practices and connotations of racial resistance which were then implemented, as a global model, since 1492 (Rodríguez Reyes, 2016). As a result, this criticism recently appeared as a new global model based on exploitation/conflict, which became globalized in 1492 and continues today with considerable variations but with the same context (Rodríguez Reyes, 2016).

With those forms of Eurocentric knowledge, specifically, of what Dussel calls the "*myth of Modernity, and its praxis of liberation*" (Maldonado Torres, 2011b, p. 2), among its contributions, was to carry out a project of intercultural discourse, which, according to him, would be essential in today's contemporary history. Therefore, it is a dialogue characterized by its fierce criticism of the modern, violent, and Eurocentric mentality and that highlighted by "*trans-modern*" rationality that is considered to be a starting point to recognize and affirm "*the excluded other*". The de-colonial ideology is a transformation modified by this critique, beyond that valuing

⁴ "Partido Acción Nacional" or "National Action Party" was founded in 1939, by Manuel Gómez Morin, Luis Calderón Vega, Efraín González Luna, Aquiles Elorduy, Alejandro Ruiz Villaloz, Francisco Fernández Cueto, and Juan Gutiérrez Lascuráin, among others. National Action defines its ideology as "political humanism". Based on the right social conservatism, liberal conservatism, Christian democracy, and Christian humanism ideology. However, it is considered a secular political party with a humanist ideology related to liberal ideas, Thomists, and Christian democracy. At an international level, their institutional partner in Spain is considered the Popular Party; both are part of the Centrist Democratic International (IDC), the global organization of center and center-right parties.

Nationalism, amid this confrontation, that Dussel developed between these two worlds, the Amerindian world and Eurocentric. According to Maldonado Torres (2011):

a particular importance today for exploring the de-colonial potential of those cultural forms originating in Latin America, Mexico, and in the borderlands between Mexico and the United States, among other “frontier” territories both to the north and south of this border. (Maldonado Torres, 2011b, pp. 1-2)

“*Sincretismo*” reflects a discourse that has managed to shake the rules with the Euro-centrist aesthetics for that asymmetrical confrontation and for that invalid culture through the lens of the West. In other words, after the Second World War, “the “de-colonial turn” itself, is then characterized by a widespread disenchantment with Eurocentrism and a renewed affirmation of decolonization as a project” (Maldonado Torres, 2011b). So one of its intentions is to question the “*Rico-euran model*”⁵ in some way, according to him, trying to discover this submission and domination by the colonizer and the Rich North and try to turn it into claims that later are elucidated in their original cultural spheres of aesthetics, science, and morality. As a result, it represents a module that does not try to stigmatize that “other”, nor control *el Indio*, defeating him. Precisely, this could interpret what aims to occur between two cultures, one dominant and one dominated, rearticulating a project that must insist on freeing that *Indio* from this Eurocentrism or against the Modernity of the West and its capitalist system. It is a project where he must already be a “guaranteed figure” and aims to clarify answers and solutions to that “*identity crisis*” that Luis Villoro pointed out (Villoro, 1950).

He offered an alternative in his novel “*The Great Moments of Indigenism in Mexico*”; to solve the problem of the Amerindian or Indigenous culture, through the so-called concept of such a phenomenon “*Indigenism*”, by two forms emphasizing an identity of authenticity and inequality. In addition, he adds the fact that how *Indigenism* has been understood through researching for identity and continues to occupy an essential role in the mentality and thinking of the Indigenous people themselves (Villoro, 1950). His thought transmits a discourse that forces them to seek and formalize a project in which, once again, their liberation would be reconsidered from these foreign cultural forms (Villoro, 1950). One of its principal axes is to create authentic projects or resolve this “*identity crisis*” that could be a renaissance of Nationalism in these centuries, in addition to generating inequalities and a great void in terms of their identity, primarily their culture, values, beliefs, etc. The philosopher denoted that for such a universal and authentic identity to exist among these Indigenous people, it is not simply enough to represent their identity symbol. Hence, one community could not discern nor distinguish from the other. However, they share many similarities through traditions, customs, language, geographical location, etc.; therefore, it causes this “*loss of identity*” (Martínez Gómez, 2016).

Therefore, I broadly focus as well, on what Dussel, Aníbal Quijano and Walter Mignolo so as they are giving more weight to the discourse of Modernity and Decolonization that even extended to the Renaissance era. Thus, over time, for the Indian, the most significant is attempting to establish bridges through his community, to preserve his self-identification, trying to differentiate and distinguish himself from others, besides his needs to be recognized nationally and internationally. Moreover, to prevent this loss of identity due to the destruction of his ideology and ancestral heritage. In other words, the Indigenous problem, as a general premise, resides in the cultural realm where their heritage and legacy, from a Western perspective, has been manipulated. Villoro points out that “the goal of this new identity during this century is to eliminate this vision imposed by the West for many years (Martínez Gómez, 2016). According to Dussel (1990):

the theologies of Juan Ginés de Sepúlveda (in Spain) or Fr Antonio Vieira (in Brazil) that are real ‘theologies of domination’ - they justify the subjugation of the Indians, the slaves, and regard the ‘conquest’ and ‘slavery’ as ‘civilizing’ - today we would say ‘modern’ – processes. (Dussel, 1990, p. 38)

This sort of thinking/theology justifies the motivations of the ‘conquistadores, especially, since the beginning of the sixteenth century, when “the Crown had begun to see that the encomenderos and Spanish Elites in the Indies were reducing the power of the King in these territories” (Dussel, 1990, p. 38). As a result, “the prophetic missionaries had space to criticize these claims to domination and possession of slaves - with the support of the Crown” (Dussel, 1990, p. 38). Therefore, as Dussel conceptualizes it, the Westerns considered the Indians as illiterate, barbaric, useless, and inferior, in addition to other offensive connotations. According to Villoro, not only for the *Indio*, searching for his own identity presents an alternative here, but also for returning to his traditions, the refuge and refusal of change at the same time, the renewal of ancient values; the rejection of “*Modernity*”; this is the solution of those fundamentalist nationalisms (Bosque et al., 1992). His perspective consists of abandoning this vision of the West that they have imposed since the conquest of the New World to recreate a new realistic and more acceptable vision of the modern Indian and to leave behind his disfigured and marginalized identity (Villoro, 1950). The Mexican philosopher elucidates that the Indians will progress under specific premises, such as the emergence of real projects that respond to their needs and their expectations. Thus, this identity can conflate with resistance to not just his oppressive culture but also to the Mestizo Mexican and, at the same time, as an enhancement and reaffirmation of their traditions, customs, and cultural beliefs (Villoro, 1998). This discovery would let the Indian continue to exist, researching his own authentic culture, which has never responded to his real needs and desires (Villoro, 1998). Precisely, that is paving the way for a sort of thought that curbs a systemized hegemony that entails a strategy with not

⁵ “*Rico-Euran model*” is a concept that the philosopher and sociologist Enrique Dussel adapted and developed to contemporary decolonial thinking. Dussel is considered to be an influential figure in showing critiques, responsible for turning colonial subjects into victims in terms of the coloniality of being, which refers to the lived experiences of colonized people in Third World Countries against the Rich North; Europe, and Western Civilization.

only an ethical-political or just economic leadership but also focusing as well on intellectual levels, coupled with a theory that unraveled the social basis of a fundamental discourse embodied in Gramsci's theory of hegemony. In addition, it recovers this "loss of identity" among these common stereotypes through his concept of power, which inevitably would help us understand this complex and profound process and what is happening towards the concept of Syncretism as a process in Mexico.

NEOLIBERALISM VS DE-COLONIALISM AND THE GRAMSCIAN HEGEMONY: A KEYNOTE ADDRESS TOWARDS AN IDENTITY IN MEXICO

José Carlos Mariátegui pointed out that Latin American Marxist thought began to discover the problem of the Indian (Saladino García, 2016). Its contribution was to bring together all the elements that contribute to any change or transformation, primarily through the Marxist critique that remarked on the possibility of overcoming the obstacles of the Indians in the capitalist World, such as antagonistic and ethnic classism. Under these circumstances, the Indians found a void to continue after many years of being oppressed and marginalized. From their point of view, they succeeded in seeking this dignity in their thought and practice, confronting all these feelings and anchors that did not help in their progress, particularly regarding their economic issues dealing with economic monopoly based on primitive techniques such as hunting, fishing, etc. As a result, they began to find themselves trapped in misery and fear, more and more involved in the distortion of their development and immersed in Mexican society, such as the dispossession or destruction of their belief system and their culture and legacy, by imposing new foreign elements on them. Some are calling it an "*invasion*" to their World where they became later "*excluded*", and "*while discovery and conquest were a single movement*" (Dussel, 1990, p. 42). From their perspective, Capitalism today continues to use its mechanisms to keep involving Indigenous people in oppression, especially, regarding their integration into this civilizational project. Therefore, *Indigenism* emerged for two main reasons: trying to conclude this distortion of development, in addition to fighting against those conditions and circumstances. This project provides a strategy to seek realistic alternatives to demolish their cultural and intellectual mentality, especially with the new economic, political, and social capitalist regime, which includes the total refusal of any social or cultural progress and development different from it or from what is usual. However, Capitalism has tried to change their way of thinking to embrace that imposition, rather than rejecting their problems, worries, and anxieties, etc.

"*Sincretismo*" presume that conditions of such hegemony contributed to this Marxist theory, that examines an enduring "*social society*" that must be won over a "*political society*", against the emblematic reorganization and the survival of Capitalism through some essential elements. It is a hegemony that transforms into a fundamental class that "sacrifices a corporativism for a coercive imperative" (Valeriano Ramos, 1982), with a notion that embodies as well the concept of power based upon "these two moments of power relations-Dominio (or coercion) and Direzione (or consensus)" (Valeriano Ramos, 1982). According to Antonio Gramsci's definition of the hegemony that came in his prison notebooks (1971[1926]) that the hegemonic rule characterized by the predominance of consensus over coercion, represents in broad terms a balance, an equilibrium between that "*political society*" and "*civil society*" (Gramsci, 1971). Hence, this incident of Vargas's "*Sincretismo*" was exempt from this balance or equilibrium between both societies. That civil/ social society denotes a discourse of criticism against that political capitalist system, represented in the Neoliberalism socioeconomic modernization that seeks a global model that implemented to possess practices and connotations of racism since 1492 that has a lot to do with the criticism of coloniality and its power due to Enrique Dussel's words. This criticism does not only mean this feeling against the conquerors and their colonies, but also its use as a new global model based on exploitation/conflict which became globalized from 1492 and continues today with considerable variations, but with the same context (Rodríguez Reyes, 2016). Furthermore, this incident seeks to search for the rights of the Indigenous community and the attempt to open paths towards their liberation, configuring their ethnic identity and reintegration into society, but this time with their new and different image through "*a change of direction*" especially among real concerns to understand the contemporary Marxist theories. Therefore, the philosophy of liberation, among its contributions, is to carry out a project of intercultural discourse, which, according to Dussel, would be essential in today's contemporary history. Therefore, a dialogue characterized by its fierce criticism of the modern, violent, and Eurocentric mentality.

Following what I mentioned previously, it is a theory focusing on "*that project of intercultural discourse*" that outlined a change in that "*civil society*" against the "*political society*" of Neoliberalism—reconsidering the concept of power in the modern history of Mexico towards the Indigenous community that draws attention to this constant confrontation between the Native American World and Eurocentric Modernity. Therefore, it was working against traits of hegemony that have constituted conditions based on a revolutionary change coupled with the ideological transformation of a system that frames an ultimate implication for a capitalist society. According to Gramsci, this fundamental class of "*political society*" exercises a political, intellectual, and moral leadership within a hegemonic system cemented by a common worldview or "*organic ideology*" (Valeriano Ramos, 1982). He mentioned an organic new ideology that adopts an articulated figure or principle to unify these elements into a new collective consciousness and will. What reflected "*Sincretismo*" is an internal dispute against a thought or hegemony that has a strong impact, socially, politically, and culturally, for a capitalist mindset, as well as acting as a cornerstone to stimulate the contemporary consciousness of the modern Mexican reflected in this "*civil society*". Therefore, this opens the door to numerous questions with uncertainty about this phenomenon that has come out with such a particular identity trait. This critique

modified, in one way or another, the contemporary concept of Syncretism in Mexico as a phenomenon. It is something beyond valuing national heritage amid this confrontation that Dussel appointed between these two worlds, the Amerindian world and Eurocentrism, recalling the scene, memories from the Mexico-Tenochtitlan and those sorts of thoughts and perceived experiences that exceed the lived experience in this process. In other words, according to E.P. Thompson, it should always be given the attention to the notion of experience arising from tradition and developed custom/tradition (González Calleja, 2013). These experiences outline an essential role in the process of collective consciousness that "*Sincretismo*" reflected. Meanwhile, the lived experience is the social knowledge accumulated by individuals or social groups through unifying these historical moments. On the other hand, a perceived experience helps us understand those social, cultural, and historical elements more than the same individuals or certain social groups (González Calleja, 2013) by reviewing the accumulated elements and products of well-formalized knowledge, religious, political, or philosophical dogmas, texts, or, quite simply, different cultural messages such as this incident. Consequently, remembering is located at the intersection of varied currents of collective thought, in which memory is a significant barrier, thus limiting this collective mentality, whether collective memory or historical memory. Moreover, by repeating this process, Hutton emphasizes the evolution of memory consciousness that is composed of two moments: repetition, which involves the presence of the past, and memory (González Calleja, 2013). Such an example is the present case of study in which this controversy investigated interpretations to redefine this phenomenon in the contemporary context.

According to these statistics of memories to revive experiences, "*Sincretismo*" was considered an alarm in Mexico throughout its contemporary history of what could trace the definition of Syncretism in the Mestizo Country. From my point of view, this historical memory has paved the path for this de-colonial mentality or thinking so as to adapt to these new aspirations of the Indigenous communities or "*the excluded*". To develop a philosophy that serves the development of the liberation of "*the oppressed*", "*the excluded*", and "*the other*" against Eurocentrism and Neoliberal Western Capitalism. In addition, this, in turn, requires us to examine the concept of De-colonialism in this hegemony, which has taken a primordial direction towards this commitment to the emancipation of human beings where the Indio has always excluded through that development of an unbalanced and dominated culture (Andrade Guevara, 2019). This colonial domination symbolized his earlier philosophy, or rather a need to free the Indigenous communities from precarious and inferior conditions. According to Castro-Gómez & Gosfoguel (2007), on the other hand, the Indigenous community demonstrated in this de-colonial thought that always tends to serve more internationally as an ethno-racial hierarchy of problems formed over several centuries of European colonization and expansion (Rodríguez Reyes, 2016). However, this transformation has moved from modern colonialism to global coloniality (Rodríguez Reyes, 2016). Therefore, what this thought intended to propose was to fight primarily against poverty, skin color, or rather the hierarchy or classification among people, against growing prejudices and inequalities, particularly with the 1% who represent the wealth of humanity. Firstly, to show the Indian's struggles to exist and participate, as well as his ontological character, thus reflected in his reality and his insufficient way of being. In simple terms, we could emphasize the importance of the rediscovery of "*lo indigena*" regarding "*Sincretismo*", which displays a new reality through fewer "*European*" or rather "*Imperialist*" elements and forms to put an end to this "*domination*" and "*racism*" to get out of that plight. The rediscovery of the Indian, nowadays, has remarked on its advocacy for the validation of marginalized forms against the Colonial/Imperial legacy, reinforcing narratives of Iconoclasm and even of indirect mechanisms through culture or politics, even religion and society, which sometimes seek to be understated. For Mexico today, certainty resides in the word "*transformation*", which might have to reshuffle De-colonialism as an inseparable part of a new game-changer of regime and hegemony.

According to Guillermo Hurtado, this transformation must fit its philosophy, based on the credit of the three intellectuals: Antonio Caso, Leopoldo Zea, and Luis Villoro (2018). It inquires about the conflict against Neoliberalism, which emphasizes the social reality not only of the Indian but also of the modern Mexican, of abandonment, and of social security, etc. We can translate this into the economic situations taken by the Mexican government, led by former President López Obrador, through taking measures against specifically Spanish companies; the oil company Iberdrola, in the renewable energy sector, among others, until many accused them of attacking their investments. In fact, in Mexico, with the ex-president López Obrador, there are still attempts to entail a "political strategy based on the concentration of power in his hands, dismantling many of the checks and balances that Mexico had struggled to construct over three decades" (Dresser, 2019, p. 9). López Obrador envisions that the Fourth Transformation could cease the institutions "that created during the "*neoliberal*" period of the past 30 years, which constitute an obstacle to the Fourth Transformation" (Dresser, 2019, p. 9). Contributing a philosophy in which one of the objectives is to maintain a permanent critical attitude towards power. In addition that it seems "to be headed toward a restoration of what Mexico experienced for more than 50 years under the Partido Revolucionario Institutional (PRI, Institutional Revolutionary Party): dominant party rule headed by an omnipresent, all-powerful president who governs with few restraints" (Dresser, 2019, p. 10). Its philosophy has taken various movements, especially since 2018 when Morena⁶ had

⁶ Morena represents a major political party that was founded back in 2014; its platform remarked with left-wing ideologies, especially with the association of the populist leader the ex-president Andres Manuel Lopez Obrador, adopting an anti-corruption agenda and advocating that national doctrine, gaining the support of politicians across different spectrums in Mexico. In 2024 Morena's presidential candidate, Claudia Sheinbaum, was elected as Mexico's first female president, and still under the Morena's banner "*Juntos Haremos Historia*"-Together we make History- with the left-wing Labor Party (Partido del Trabajo; PT) and the Christian conservative Social Encounter Party (Partido Encuentro Social; PES).

accepted to take the pursuit of change to rollback Neoliberalism through that battle that has to continue. This battle has formed back since 1989 facing struggles and obstacles against the neoliberal projects and plans. One of those movements were

the Zapatista uprising in (1994); the El Barzón movement against the plan to rescue twelve private banks that formed the Banking Fund for the Protection of Savings (Fondo Bancario de Protección al Ahorro); higher education that gave rise to the General Strike Council (Consejo General de Huelga) at the UNAM in 1999; the resistance to a new airport by the residents of Atenco (2001-2006); the defence of teachers' labour rights during the 2006 education reform waged by the Popular Association of the Peoples of Oaxaca (Asociación Popular de los Pueblos de Oaxaca, APPO); the #YoSoy132 (#IAM132) student movement (2012); and the mass movement against the disappearance of forty-three student teachers in Ayotzinapa (2014). (Tricontinental: Institute for Social Research, 2025, p. 19)⁷.

López Obrador, during that time, became a point of national reference, working for the Indigenous communities to fight against their social exclusion (Tricontinental: Institute for Social Research, 2025). Representing an anti-capitalist and anti-systemic, transformed him into a national symbol of resistance against Neoliberalism, especially, after succeeding "in channeling the people's discontent and indignation into the creation of a new electoral vehicle: Morena, which in 2018 won the presidency with a popular, grassroots, and nationalist project" (Tricontinental: Institute for Social Research, 2025, p. 20). As the current Secretary for Women's Affairs and former General Secretary of Morena Citlalli Hernández, denotes that the Fourth Transformation is a project "that seeks to forge a new nation by transforming its political and economic structures" (Tricontinental: Institute for Social Research, 2025, p. 20). Since his 2019-2024 electoral won, while presenting "the National Development Plan (Plan Nacional de Desarrollo, PND), López Obrador – whose 2018-2024 presidential term inaugurated the 4T – declared that Neoliberalism in Mexico had been definitively overcome and would no longer guide the country's economic policy" (Tricontinental: Institute for Social Research, 2025, p. 22). The Fourth Transformation is considered as "one of successive transformations, namely the War of Independence (1810-1821), the War of Reform (1858-1861), and the Mexican Revolution (1910-1917)" (Tricontinental: Institute for Social Research, 2025, p. 8). It is worth noting that before Morena's historic plan of the Fourth Transformation, Mexico has traversed a turbulent path, searching for its social justice and sovereignty over almost the last two centuries.

As a result, this investigation into Dussel, Quijano, and Mignolo's thinking outlined, explicitly, the process of change of the Fourth Transformation that rely upon an unfinished project of Modernity, explaining it as a turning point and redefining it as a change of direction in order to interpret and understand what is happening at different times in the World. According to Maldonado Torres (2011a), this new thinking remarked on the concepts of De-colonialism and the meaning of forms of thought that are, simultaneously, inspired by the crisis of thought and the European civilizational project. On the other hand, he stresses the affirmation of possibilities of being, of power, and of knowledge that goes beyond the constitutive limits of Eurocentric Modernity. Precisely, that will lead us to what he backed up:

the idea of an unfinished project of decolonization can be seen as a response – from the perspective of that form of thought that inaugurates the ethico-political decolonial turn – to the idea of an unfinished project of Modernity, as proposed by German philosopher Jürgen Habermas. (Maldonado Torres, 2011b, p. 4)

According to one of these critics, Quijano denotes it as "a criticism that questions social classification and power relations, highlighting domination or conflicts mainly within society and precisely against racial differences" (Quijano, 2000). In practical terms, it could also contribute, according to Gramsci's insights, to the idea of power, which "civil society" has broad appeal, showing up a public sphere of those struggles and contestations over political and social norms and ideas. Therefore, contesting those hegemony norms that strengthen a neoliberal sense of holding and building civic institutions and capacities to complement or even account for states and markets. In my view, his insights presupposed that coloniality would have the dimensions of domination to which that hegemony's norms will attempt to hinder it in the 21st century.

In other words, during the second 4T government, newly elected president Claudia Sheinbaum (2024-2030) clearly expressed her opposition to economic colonialism; unleashing a cold war against Canadian companies that maintain and dominate nearly 60% of gold mines. The same as the water companies that dominate almost the entire market, such as Coca-Cola, PepsiCo, Kimberly Clark, and Herder, among others, therefore, the authorities granted large amounts of water concessions underground and even closed areas. Meanwhile, in other states, nearly 16 states are at risk of completely depleting these basic resources in their lifetime. Now Mexico's natural resources must recover, because the country's strategic resources must be for Mexicans, according to the Mexican ex-cabinet López Obrador. In addition, another "gamble on "re-patronizing" the economy by turning Pemex, once again, into an engine for growth. That explains the massive investment in

⁷ "This dossier, Mexico and the Fourth Transformation, examines the changes that have taken place since the National Regeneration Movement (Movimiento de Regeneración Nacional, Morena) came to power. To better understand these changes, we situate them within Mexico's long processes of democratisation since its independence". More details see: (Tricontinental: Institute for Social Research, 2025, p. 19).

the state oil company and the refinery in Dos Bocas”⁸ (Dresser, 2019, p. 6). This strategy according to Denise Dresser “turns back the clock, trapping Mexico in a paradigm of the past, before the country had turned into a manufacturing powerhouse before the world started gravitating towards renewable energy” (Dresser, 2019, p. 6). In addition, “to jeopardize economic stability by injecting scarce resources into refining oil” (Dresser, 2019, p. 6). Therefore, we can say that these strategies are considered a big step towards the decolonization of the national economy. Thus, it is clear that Mexico is almost releasing itself from this global coloniality, belonging to a capitalist hegemony of all these dimensions of domination, whether culturally, politically, or even economically.

Recently, López Obrador’s ex-government tried to recover the state control, but this time culturally with so much attention to Indigenous people and their communities, remembering the national identity and the true worth of being Indigenous or even Mestizo, in addition to recognizing their great ancestral past. Mexico continues to bring the Indians closer along with Mestizos, Whites, and Criollos. A faithful example was Mexico’s most cultural festival, “La Guelaguetza”, in Oaxaca State. Regarding the organization of some of its competitions, it is worth clarifying the exclusion of certain delegations and certain ethnic groups and communities for considering them similar or derived from the practices and customs of another community, as well as injustices speaking economically, politically, etc. (Montes García, 2005). A fair few Oaxacans have recently expressed their rejection due to racism, manifesting for a dignified and authentic representation for their traditions and recognizing their customs, clothings, dances, etc. (Montes García, 2005). These models continue to give signals with the insistence on exporting such a passive image of the natives without any recognizable participation or transformation. According to them, prejudices and inequality continue to prevail in Mexico, still prioritizing the White Elite, which many believe is not showing up as an authentic representative of the “real Mexico”, but rather the “forgotten Mexico” (Montes García, 2005). Nowadays, unfortunately, these types and modes of thinking manage to transcend through the Whites, who are still minorities and remain the most dominant social group. According to many Mexican thinkers, they continue to impose their ideology, depicting a false image of Indigenous women as submissive and obedient due to the state and economic conditions of the country, in addition to their exploitation by society that signals a tool for taking a political position recalling that colonial era.

Meanwhile, adopting that thinking, since colonial times, Mexico’s economic resources, as well as the domination of power, have always been in the hands of Elites and Whites, thus paving the way for social inequality for the Natives, not only Indigenous communities but also Mestizo people are still left behind, despite the stereotypes reproduced to improve their living conditions. Therefore, racism probably would indicate a dominant social order in Mexican society, particularly against ethnic groups and their communities, under the control of the White Elite. In addition to working alongside the capitalist market, which currently dominates the scene with its most remarkable attitudes. That process, thus, would imply a great demand on thinkers and philosophers other than the theory of De-colonialism as a thought not only in the Aztec lands but also in different parts of Latin America. Precisely, due to the coloniality of knowledge and power, and then to the coloniality of being, that Dussel appointed out, which are articulated to legitimize any form of domination and oppress any attempt for liberation. Moreover, what reflected in the country’s politics internally through De-colonialism seeks to criticize the coloniality of knowledge, or rather, these general beliefs that emerged with the arrival of liberals in modern times, almost around the 18th century, due to the science and academics, with universal validity (Rodríguez Reyes, 2016). Although, it responds to the industrialization process of emerging Central Europe and not necessarily to the World in general. Nowadays, the political ex-regime has rightly promised, since 2020, to create more universities, almost in all regions of the country, dedicated to the teaching of Indigenous languages. Furthermore, a few years ago, ex-president Lopez Obrador insisted that teaching Native languages should be compulsory in schools to revive and preserve autochthonous languages. Therefore, the ex-government started building universities that exclusively provide Indigenous language courses like Nahuatl, Zapotec, and Mayan, considering those languages are the most spoken in some parts of the country nowadays.

According to him, these projects could succeed in reinforcing original and ancestral traditions and, consequently, the social organization, in addition to strengthening the Mexican national identity. He added that, in neoliberal cycles, racist policies were made and adopted against the Indigenous communities without obtaining any advantage or privilege in terms of development, customs, uses, services, etc. Thus, he clearly intended to pay tribute to the Indigenous people and their autochthonous languages and cultural heritage, emphasizing the revitalization of the Indigenous languages for future generations. It is also worth noting that this is the first time that Mexico has joined UNESCO in its almost 75-year history; the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization and Mexico signed an agreement on Indigenous languages, in which it stressed that the rich diversity of these languages is essential for the future. In addition, its recognition aimed to reaffirm this diversity and the capacity to integrate these communities into society.

Still questioning if this fact denotes a new cultural policy that will focus attention on the critique of current liberal knowledge, giving priority to the original and Indigenous language as a first step that will assure the

⁸ But this strategy is probably a bad bet: it turns back the clock, trapping Mexico in a paradigm of the past, before the country had turned into a manufacturing powerhouse, before the world started gravitating towards renewable energy. In this context, it is probably not a good idea to jeopardize economic stability by injecting scarce resources into refining oil, an expensive and not particularly lucrative proposition. It is not a good idea to assign contracts in a discretionary and opaque fashion in the energy sector again. Markets are wary because this strategy does not seem to be rooted in reality, budgetary constraints, evidence, or best practices. See: (Dresser, 2019, p. 8).

process towards the De-colonialism as a theory that recently imposed against Neoliberalism era for almost more than 30 years there. According to Dussel, pedagogy should be concerned with teaching, and the transmission of knowledge does not suit that thought particularly. On the contrary, "a new pedagogy should be reinvented for new eras, starting from "that other", and "that oppressed"; who was trying to seek his liberation (Dussel, 1980). According to Bautista (2012), the pedagogy of De-colonialism tends to undertake a long journey between both Social Sciences and Philosophy. For both critics, the alternative must reverse this condition with a change in pedagogical orientation towards a more active, engaged and reciprocal relationship between theoretical reflection and practice. The theory of "De-colonialism" would always seek to criticize this coloniality among its priorities, being in life, knowledge and the transversality of race, social class, and gender (Dussel, 1980). In addition to criticizing the coloniality of being, that links with the political and practical implications of Gramsci's ideas. His ideas have reflected in popular education practices and many approaches to popular media, communication, and cultural action, including the consciousness-raising methods of Paulo Freire in his *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (1970), liberation theology, methods of participatory action research (PAR),⁹ etc. (Macedo, 2005).

"*Sincretismo*" reminds us of the "civil society" of Gramsci, especially regarding the developing policy, as well as, thinking differently to articulate new norms and visions even through challenging assumptions regarding the Indigenous people. It is a reconsidered piece of art to rescue that "memory" of the idolatry patrimony of the ancestral past. In addition, those norms do not achieve paradigms that, in turn, help to reject their existence. Therefore, the Indian's ability to create a new pattern can begin, so as his approach will be more adapted to his needs and reality, ending being marginalized or excluded with his disfigured self-esteem in an attempt to depict, once again, his image. Syncretism, as a contemporary process, could go through some concerns and even testing an identity between the cultural and the religious pending issues on the one hand and two regimes of opposing ideologies on the other. Therefore, the conscience of the Indian and his historical memory oscillate, especially amid hurdling toward that voice of liberation, trying to discover this submission and domination by the colonizer and the Rich North, without stigmatizing that "other". Precisely, "*Sincretismo*" has been trying to reshape a discourse that highlights a tribute to the resilient spirit of the "*Indigenism*" and reviews the situation of the Pre-Hispanic cultures of Mexico, reducing that unequal confrontation conforming to Dussel. It reflected a thought that has managed to shake the rules with Eurocentric aesthetics for that asymmetrical confrontation and for that invalid and unfair culture through the lens of the West. So one of its intentions is to question the "*Rico-euran model*" in some way and how it could contribute to a social construct that serves to legitimate social structure (Heywood, 1994, p. 101).

To conclude, this resurgence of the Indigenous identity in this investigation forced us to look back at this paradigmatic world, which performed according to a transcendental transformation in its spheres due to this awareness and self-value. In addition, it tried to help in breaking these chains of domination, racism, and slavery. From my point of view, this controversy is an attempt to distort this intercultural and conceptual discourse, especially with the reinvention of national traditions. Hence, this process is, not only, a meeting point between two different worlds, but also, reacts as an intermediate by offering a negotiation between the political and the historical and even the religious, due to these de-colonial practices. Those practices help, in some way, in accelerating desires and aspirations, which used to be secondary. However, this time, they will be a priority without looking back again. This phenomenon of Syncretism, in this incidence, belongs to a new concept and a new model that aims to change those paradigms and redefine specific criteria regarding Indigenous cultures, among its folds, with standards that manage to carry out irrefutable thoughts and philosophies, which help to rebuild other alternatives and paths. Moreover, they could unforeseen reversal changes, subsequently, upon its conceptual framework, form, and reception, navigating those perils of their contemporary context.

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⁹ "PAR" is a framework for generating knowledge and conducting research centered on the lead in framing questions, design, methods, and the modes of analysis of such research projects that are rooted in the belief of a value that traditionally recognized knowledge, such as scholarship generated by university-based researchers, and historically delegitimized knowledge, and knowledge generated within marginalized communities. It is a concept that has been well explained as a practice of freedom through theory of anti dialogical and theory of dialogical action and its characteristics according to Freire's strategy and methods. See: (Macedo, 2005).

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ANNEXES

IMAGES OF “SINCRETISMO” AND OTHER INCIDENTS



Fig. (1): The Aztec Goddess Coatlicue and the Virgin Mary of Guadalupe Source: Informador MX and Laminas y Aceros. <https://blog.laminasyaceros.com/blog/canales-de-acero>

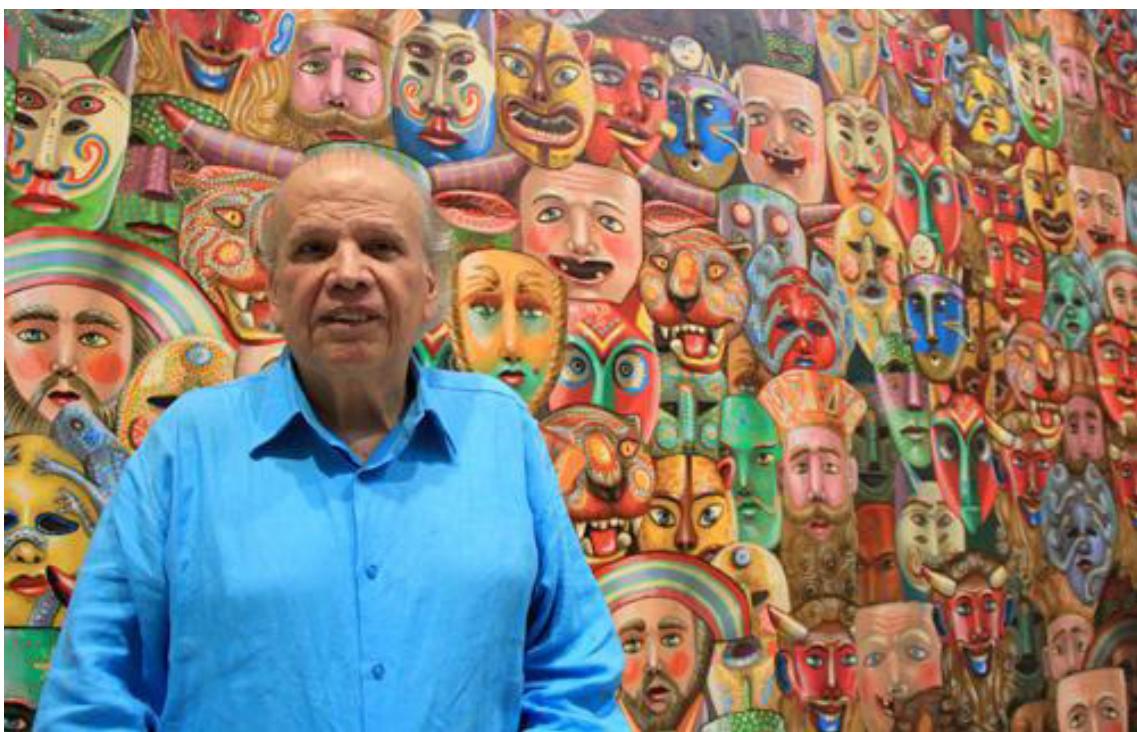


Fig. (2): Ismael Vargas. Source: Foto Mas por Mas GDL. <https://www.museocjv.com/ismaelvargas.htm>



Fig. (3): Ismael Vargas and Enrique Alfaro were inaugurating his artistic sculpture "Sincretismo" in Jalisco, Guadalajara
Source: Informador MX and Laminas y Aceros. <https://blog.laminasyaceros.com/blog/canales-de-acero>

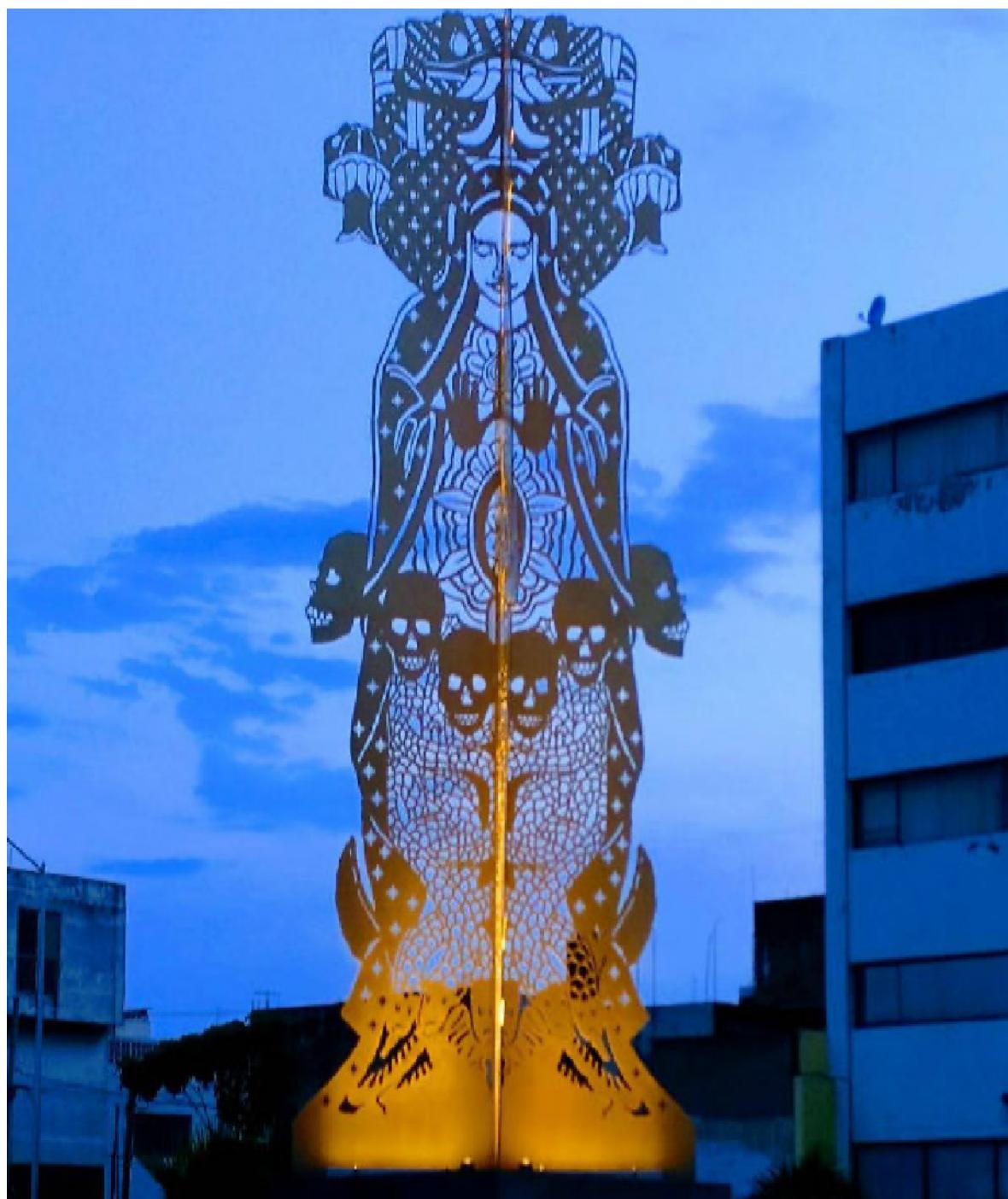


Fig. (4): "Sincretismo".
Source: Crónica Jalisco, <https://www.cronicajalisco.com/notas/2017/79822.html>



Fig. (5): Pro-Catholic groups protest against "Sincrismo".

Source: EL INFORMADOR MX-a <https://www.informador.mx/Jalisco/Grupos-católicos-se-manifiestan-contra-la-obra-Sincrismo-20170826-0025.htm>



Fig. (6): Demonstrating against the sculpture.

Source: EL INFORMADOR MX-b/ M. Vargas. <https://www.informador.mx/jalisco/Grupos-católicos-insisten-en-retiro-de-escultura-Sincrismo-20171007-0103.html>



Fig. (7): Catholic groups and the insisting on the removal of "Sincretismo".

Source: EL INFORMADOR MX-b/ M. Vargas. <https://www.informador.mx/jalisco/Grupos-catolicos-insisten-en-retiro-de-escultura-Sincretismo-20171007-0103.html>



Fig. (8): Claudia Sheinbaum, Governor of Guadalajara, Enrique Alfaro, and AMLO

Source: sdpnoticias/captured video. <https://www.sdpnoticias.com/estados/jalisco/video/enrique-alfaro-fue-abucheado-en-evento-con-amlo-y-claudia-sheinbaum-y-asi-respundo-la-presidenta-electa/>