

Bloody Roots: Indigeneity and Decolonization in the Latin American Metal Scene

by

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Abstract

There is a strong heavy metal scene across Latin America, and within this scene Extreme metal bands incorporate and fuse regional indigenous sounds, images, and lyrics in the music. The central question and concern: how are decolonization expressed and carried out by the incorporation of local indigenous elements into the Heavy Metal genre in Mexico and El Salvador's heavy metal music scene? How can Extreme Metal be used as a viable tool towards decolonization and education? Music is an important form of art that enables a space for dialogue that can challenge dominant narratives, or to bridge an indigenous root that colonization has historically undermined. Colonial experiences in Latin America do not go unchallenged. The concern is to understand this decentralization of cultural diffusion and how it is a mechanism for decolonization. Indigenous sounds and culture are incorporated in fusion with American Heavy Metal framework that can become an educational tool for indigeneity and resistance towards colonial histories.

Keywords: Decolonization; Latin America; Extreme Metal; Indigeneity; Colonization; Music

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Glossary

Aborigenes	Spanish word for Aboriginal. The band uses its name as a moniker to represent indigenous peoples in El Salvador
Araña	Spanish for Spider
Cemican	Cemican means “the duality of life and death” “All the Life” in Náhuatl. The Náhuatl are members of a group of people’s natives to southern Mexico and Central America, including the Aztecs.
In Ohtli Teoyohtica In Miquiztli	Translates to “The Mystical Course Of Death” in Náhuatl
Teotl	An indigenous word from the native language Nawat. Nawat was the dialect spoken by the Pipil and Maya people of El Salvador. The word is the literal translation of God.

Chapter 1. Introduction

What is the first thing that comes into mind when you hear, or rather listen, to the genre of Heavy Metal? Satanic music? Or rather anti-religious, screaming vocals mixed with loud and obnoxious guitars. It would be difficult to refute this, as these are all true. But for a moment lets reconceptualize the notion of heavy metal. Let us think about this genre outside the sphere of popular music and critical studies. The music from its inception in the 1970s was built on an industrial backdrop of Birmingham England where poverty struck the working class during the economic downturn of the 1970s. The lyrics of metal primarily speak resistance and dark themes that other genres do not touch upon.

Whether it is death, philosophies of life, corruption, heavy metal is primarily known within its audience as a genre built on critical analysis of the world; whether that be governmental corruption, environmental issues, anti-war. Now let's fast forward to the year of 1996. Metal has greatly benefited from globalization, and its reach goes beyond the West. A lesser-known band from Brazil called Sepultura reimagined what artists can configure with this genre. The album *Roots* released in 1996 combined Death Metal - a sub-genre of metal- with instruments not associated with this extreme genre. Wind instruments, drums, and chants were part of the composition, a collaboration from the indigenous Xavante tribe in Brazil. Sepultura's goal, according to lead singer Max Calavera, was to combine Brazilianess into metal music to show audiences around the world the beauty Brazil offers; a lyrical difference from their previous album that drew on critiques of the Brazilian Government. Brazil, a country with a colonial history, was the central component for Sepultura as their artistic goal was to ensure Brazilians that indigenous heritage should be celebrated and remembered – considering that since its release the country continues to displace many of its indigenous populations.

Scholars such as Keith Harris noted this interesting relationship between the global and the local within the music scene of Extreme Metal (2007). His article researches music malleability as facilitation of its exports and imports from one location and to another- more specifically how Brazilian metal band Sepultura was able to incorporate both the framework of traditional American metal into a global ecumene of

Brazilian indigeneity in the album *Roots* (Harris, 2000). Many other non-western musicians have followed this framework; to synthesize and create hybridity of western influence music into the cultural, indigenous locality, but extend it beyond just cultural heritage. In Latin America, where this work is situated, colonial histories primarily go unchallenged. By unchallenged I refer to the lack of space created to discuss historical Spaniard colonization, genocide, and ongoing displacements of indigenous peoples. While there has been a resurgence in some countries, conversations still need to be facilitated. This type of conversation, one that Sepultura took, can be and has been, enacted through music.

Resistance in music as a decolonial channel can be understood in areas where is both a colonial history and a strong heavy metal scene, such as Latin America. What is interesting in this scene is how some bands incorporate indigenous sounds, images, and lyrics into extreme metal. In this thesis I intend to investigate and reflect on the musical process metal bands Cemican (from Mexico) and Araña (from El Salvador) have undergone, where the context, while both social and cultural, presents a live rediscovery and education from the bands' indigenous backgrounds. The overarching goal is to investigate how decolonization is expressed (carried out/realized) by the incorporation of local indigenous elements in the Mexican and El Salvadoran heavy metal scene. At the same time, I want to examine how these musical productions in the band's discography become a means for understanding how indigeneity in Latin America shapes heavy metal, creating a space for education as well.

The work is situated in an analysis of how decolonization is expressed and carried out by the incorporation of local indigenous elements in the Heavy Metal genre in Mexico and El Salvador's heavy metal music scene. My work is situated in the methodology of decolonization studies and furthers this approach through a study of music. As some countries in Latin America are seeing a resurgence of indigenous practices, this work argues that music is a form of decolonization and that metal, a genre built on resistance, creates a space to discuss and infuse indigeneity with the music. A result is a form of music that is a part of this indigenous resurgence and offers a space for

the artist to express cultural heritage and education. Ultimately how extreme metal framework can become an education tool for indigeneity.

The interest in studying both these bands mentioned is based on the idea that indigeneity is carried through metal but in a pragmatic avenue. For example, Cemican integrates Aztec practices and insurgence symbolism in this musical genre. This creates a unique form of listening, understanding the music, and not simply determining it as "entertainmen.t" The use of Aztec imagery has a goal, an imaginative goal by Cemican to create metal music beyond musicality, becoming a sense of indigenous superiority, education, and critique of the effects of the colonial system that remain a part of Mexico.

This infusion permitted the practice of heavy metal as a form of resistance and as an avenue to unpackage cultural histories, colonial pasts, indigenous themes, and counter-hegemonic systems created under colonial powers. The discourse created is to construct a subjective ideology of indigeneity in social and historical contexts.

We also need to consider that this cultural domination and hegemony as an important factor that the bands choose to counter. This idea can be understood by Guerrero as

An efficient form of oppression that while sustaining the permanence of the system, prevents or at least hinders the existence of human beings who are not able to efficiently articulate with the market. This marginalizes at first and then expels people from all walks of life, preventing them from being, which in the long run makes them find ways of being and social recognition in other values, probably closer to their imaginary.¹

The possibility of domination and hegemony is what drives many Latin American bands to rediscover cultural roots and bring them back in some form or another. It becomes a part of a type of resurgence of indigenous practices that are a form of resistance, and decolonization. Decolonization is constructed as an external effect that the bands create through dialogue in music. Therefore, music is seen as a force of decolonial art as music can address such issues and foster a liberating sense of indigeneity while

¹ Ogaz 2010, 109

dismantling the hegemonic frameworks of conquest and inferiority. Metal appears to be the choice for such politically infused dialogue because it is a musical genre commonly used to discuss dark themes, taboo ideas, and subjects' other genres choose not to talk about. The sounds used to fight for indigeneity created an epistemological dimension that enters the social, political, and cultural dimensions within the music.

The work here will be constructed in three different parts that will complement each other. First, I will present each band as a separate entity concerning their overarching region of Latin America, notably Mexico and El Salvador. Each band will be analyzed first through their music from their released records including lyrics, album artwork, and thematic messages. Secondly, an investigation of the performative attributes, music videos, and concert performance as both bands focus on a different culture, Cemican, focusing on Aztec, and Araña on Pipil-Mayan. Third, interviews will be a key component in the investigation, and they will affirm the presented arguments and give more detailed explanations from the artist's perspectives, their ultimate goals, and narration.

Using the approach of two metal bands from different regions enables me to discuss the research question at a pragmatic level without the paper sounding too theoretical or broad. It will enable me to focus in detail on these bands' lyrics, history, imagery, and incorporation of their indigenous side in hopes to influence other researchers to focus on different regions. Each region is unique and homogenizing the metal scene as though it were one is problematic. Each Latin American experienced colonialism differently and each has unique indigenous backgrounds that bands use. Using 2 bands paints a narrow picture of how indignity is infused in their region, but enough that it the framework can be implemented in other regions as well such as Peru, Argentina, Puerto Rico, etc.

These metal bands ultimately construct perspectives and narratives that reflect on societal problems and construct forms to feel, think, and be and be a part of the ongoing struggles of indigenous people. And all of this is done through the creation of music as a practice to manifest these emotions.

Ultimately, choosing the genre of metal fits in the colonial histories of Latin America, for it is a genre that evokes dark images and that requires a dark subject matter. It is also understudied in popular music in many forms from music in relation to geography, Christian metal and religion, masculinity, gender representation and decolonization (Makkonen 2013; James & Walsh, 2019; Savigny & Schaap, 2018; Varas-Rodriguez, 2019). Metal has been diffused in many parts of the world, and it is not surprising that Latin Americans embraced this as an avenue to express indigeneity. Choosing the bands from different geographic areas permits an understanding of the different forms of indigeneity expressed in the formation of the bands in metal, and how the practices determine the expression of the message. As decolonization is not simply a one-way process it is important to examine counter-hegemonic practices such as popular music.

Taking into account everything mentioned above, my investigation of the political power of music in the context of decolonization will serve as an introduction to future works on how metal specifically is glocalized and morphed across all Latin and South America to address colonial histories, and used as a decolonial tool through cultural infusion as each country has their unique indigenous population and histories.

Chapter 2. Music as Resistance: Heavy Metal and Glocalization

2.1. The Global and the Local

Hybridity in the context of communication theory is a widely used concept that encompasses the intercultural and international communication influence from globalization. It describes the local reception of global media texts as a site for a cultural mixture. Hybridity creates two areas of study, one that is ontological where a descriptive approach sees hybridity as a clear product, and the other where hybridity is a marker for economic and political interactions. Understanding hybridity as a practice involves transcultural relations and dynamics, especially when discussing mass media. These cultural interactions are transformed and hybridized into forms of what is coined glocalization. Scholars who study communication tend to focus on glocalization when investigating cultural interactions. Pil Ho Kim and Hyunjoon Shin discuss this alternative approach to global modernization in the focus of the local end of the process. In their

case study, they studied how Korean mass media was influenced by American music and jazz and incorporating this sound into their local culture created western-inspired Korean “Rok” music (2010). There were over thirty bands that flooded the recording industry by providing Korean inspired instruments, culture, and language glocally, into the global context of western rock music. This is an important concept to highlight when discussing metal in Latin America as the genre itself is originally from the west, but hybridity enables the genre to glocalize with local cultural styles and genres. Hybridity will be used to examine Cemican and Araña as both influenced metal in different ways.

Rather than resisting the global constructs, glocalization recreates set standardized models and contributes to the diversification of the local- the local being anywhere that global markets have influenced. An example of the works of glocalization in the study of popular music is Younes Nourbaksh and Mohamad Mahdi's article on “Glocalization and Iranian Rap” (2012). Using glocalization as an alternative form of globalization, they

discussed how rap music has been localized to explore religious themes in Iranian Rap. While Iranian Rap has musical characteristics and tonality influenced by the global (Westerners), Iranian rappers are inspired by their local cultures creating a new contemporary form of Rap situated in their culture. This model has been explored in only a few genres, -primarily hard rock, hip/hop, and rap, as these genres rely heavily on western sounds in order to achieve global appeal out, but are also influenced by intercultural dimensions once globalized. Furthermore, Stokes describes how creativity in the market of music is furthered through globalization and the interconnectedness of cultures and the shareability of their sounds (2014). Musical genres benefit from both globalization and glocalization as these two terms are used in cultural diffusion and hybridity.

2.2. Cultural Hybridity in Music

In Popular culture studies, cultural hybridity is a type of critical theory that explores the import and export of culture as a type of transnational communication, rather than strictly cultural imperialism (Fejes, 1981; Mohammadi, 1997. Not simply adhering to western culture, hybridity consists of cultural dynamics, mixtures, and to an extent resistance, towards imported cultures introduced by globalization. For example, Keith Harris explores the relationship between the global and the local within the music scene of Extreme Metal (2007). His article researches music malleability as a facilitation of cultural hybridity by exploring how Brazilian metal band Sepultura was able to incorporate the sounds of American metal, introduced in Brazil through globalization, into a unique subgenre of metal using Brazilian indigeneity in the album *Roots* (Harris, 2000). Sepultura's *Roots* was a case study on how non-western musicians can synthesize and create hybridity of western influence music into the cultural locality.

Cultural hybridity creates a newer form of subcultural capital that Thornton discusses using Sepultura as their case study. Sepultura's status within the metal scene, before embarking on their Brazilian inspired album *Roots*, helped them create a convertible prestige that brought institutional support. Sepultura dominated a particular

scene and stepping into the local scene of Brazil felt natural due to the increase of globalization (Thornton, 1995; Cited by Harris, 2000).

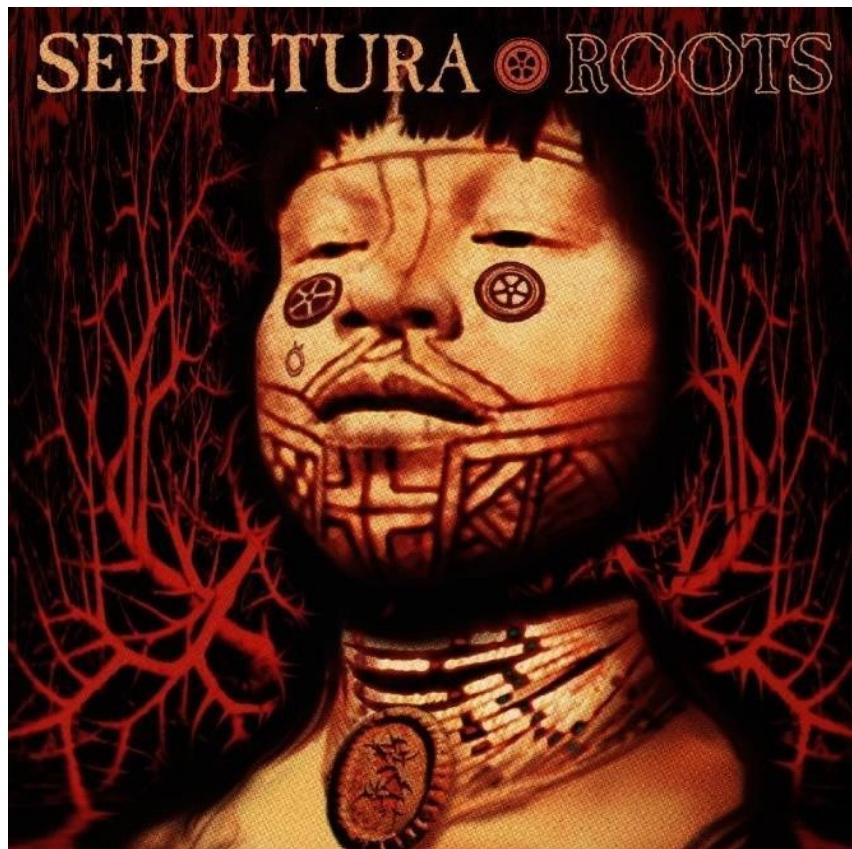


Figure 1. Roots' album cover depicts an indigenous woman taken from a discontinued Brazilian cruzeiro currency, reflecting the extinction of cultural education. The only details added were Sepultura's Tribal S Logo and tree roots in the background. *From Roots Cover Art by Sepultura, 1996, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Sepultura_-_Roots.jpg#filelinks. Copyright 1996 by Roadrunner Records*

Roots (see Figure 1) challenged the Wests' hegemony of Heavy Metal by appropriating their style of death metal and implementing a geographical specific social space, namely, Brazilian culture. Sepultura's album presented a unique response to the globalization in Brazil by creating an indigeneity concept that represented Brazilian Extreme Metal style incorporating the musicality of the Xavante indigenous peoples, and percussionist instrumentation by Salvadoran, Carlinhos Brown. The album concerned an attempt to deconstruct Brazil by moving away from their previous albums' themes of oppression, and instead offer a symbolic resource for Brazilianess. Max Calavera, the

lead singer, and founder stated, “I wanted to show some parts of Brazil that were artistic, rather than just songs about street kids and government corruption’ (Harris, 2000;1998).

Calavera’s goal was to create an album that reflected the concerns of Brazil’s cultural identity construction. Insofar as *Roots* incorporates the chants, instruments, and language of the Xavante peoples, it brings to the listener the complexities of extreme death metal mixed with the colorfulness and indigeneity. Consequently, what was created was a reconstruction of the mythos in metal music – the retributions, urban retaliation, and darkness – into one where the urban setting is transformed for rural tribal-like fruition. *Roots* opened the doors within Extreme Metal to provide a model for a global musical practice that incorporates geographical spatial influence that accompanies a construction of nationhood, identity, and resilience. During the 1990s, music malleability gradually progressed, and, in the case of Extreme Metal, cultural hybridity became a practice and production that attended to place, cultural origin, and nationhood (Harris, 2007). An important factor in the rise of the genre Black Metal in the 1990s was predominately from Scandinavian bands constructing powerful myths of nationhood from Paganism, Viking ancestry, and anti-Christian sentiments (Sellheim, 2016). The hybridity included the incorporation of folk instrumentation into the western constructs of Heavy Metal creating a more authentic sound (Moynihan and Sodelind, 1998). While extreme metal bands from diverse sets of locations made music drawing from local instrumentation and construction of place, most cultural studies primarily explore the genres Hip-Hop/ Rap and Punk as a globally and locally influential form of music of resistance.

2.3. Resistance in Popular Music

Music as a form of resistance is an important concept to which many scholars have contributed. While the notions of globalization and glocalization are important when discussing the literature surrounding music and metal studies, the resistance aspect of music is just as important. As my work is focused on decolonization and culture, it is pertinent to discuss this in the general framework of resistance and cultural diffusion in places where exclusion is inscribed in struggles. Most contemporary communication

scholars who focus on music and resistance do not cover Heavy Metal; rather they focus on Hip-Hop and Punk as these were the dominant musical genres during the emergence of music in cultural studies.

Scholars use the term resistance to describe a wide variety of actions and all levels in social life (Brown, 1996; Hollander and Einwohner, 2004). This decentralization – which in music primarily focuses on anti-establishment and anti-authority perspectives – can translate to conventional social movements and political participation of marginalized groups (Bayat, 2010). For example, Punk was one of the first genres that discussed fighting against the status quo in a general view, by trying to find meaning in a world operating on capitalist principles. Hebdidge's work focuses on Punk as an ideological common sense that disrupts the transparency of meaning, becoming an anti-aesthetic and a mocking assault on dominant social norms (Hebdige, 2002). Ultimately, scholars that focus on the resistance of music tend to lean on the discussion of politics and distortion of sub-cultures in the global dominant hegemonic system.

Resistance is important to consider when discussing the ongoing indigenous resurgence in Latin America. The type of resurgence has drawn on a multitude of ways that indigenous groups denounce the environmental destruction of their territories. For example, The Zapatista movement in Mexico has focused on civil resistance against the Mexican state and against neoliberalism that has negatively affected the rural indigenous people such as the Oaxaca, Chiapas, and Yucatan peoples. Pipil-Mayan resistance in El Salvador denounces the ongoing displacement as the Salvadoran government continues to build infrastructure without consent in the Pipil territory. Although indigenous perspectives on the land traditionally correspond to a biocentric philosophy, such as all life is valued equally, in the west, that dialogue does not carry the same weight. Spiritual and environmental issues become factors in resistance for indigenous peoples and many continue to seek political mobilization and activism. However, movements and mobilization can go beyond the articulation of violence. Cultural productions can also manifest in ways that emphasize orality and performance; Cemican with the Aztec resurgence, in another case in Chile the “mapushusization” in metal that mixes with Mapuche sounds and instruments, most quintessentially the truka truka (horn) and the

kultrün (drum). Sandra Collins (2014) views this music as poetry that captures ritualistic aspects of Mapuche peoples that have been erased through historical and contemporary colonization primarily from religion.

In *Decolonizing the Mind*, Ngugíwa Thiong'o argues that mental colonization can be resisted when musicians are able to retain indigenous music practices by incorporating indigenous practices in their compositions. Songwriters can push a narrative of indigeneity that allows for newer limits and newer cultural expressions (1981:23)

Ultimately, musicians have used music as a tool for sustaining indigenous culture and preserving practices, customs, and reviving languages. In the Latin American metal scene, many bands have followed this trend by incorporating their own indigenous culture mixed with the hybridity of extreme metal. Metal music in many places in Latin America has been critical of this process, considering that the genre, created in the UK and USA, was introduced in this region through globalization. The chart below (see Figure 2) is a brief glimpse of various Latin American bands that integrate indigenous themes in Metal music (Varas-Diaz, 2019).

Table 1 Sample of bands that challenge coloniality through the integration of indigenous themes from Latin American and the Caribbean.

Country	Band	Subgenre	Mechanism
Argentina	Werken	Power Metal	Use of indigenous imagery and lyrical content in defense of these populations.
Bolivia	Oscuro Mito	Black/Folk Metal	Use of lyrical content in defense of indigenous populations. Addresses specifically Inca culture.
Brazil	Tierramystica	Folk Metal	Use of indigenous imagery and lyrical content in defense of these populations. Use of imagery depicting battles between European conquistadores and local people.
Chile	Folkheim	Folk Metal	Use of indigenous imagery and regional instrumentation.
Colombia	ThunDarkma	Folk Metal	Use of indigenous imagery and lyrical content in defense of these populations. Use of regional instrumentation.
Cuba	Tendencia	Thrash/Groove Metal	Use of Afro-Caribbean instrumentation (i.e. batá) linked to non-Christian religious practices.
Ecuador	Aztra	Folk/Heavy Metal	Use of indigenous imagery and overtly political lyrical content in defense of these populations.
El Salvador	Indezoquixtia	Thrash Metal	Use of lyrical content in defense of indigenous populations.
Mexico	Cemican	Progressive/Power/Folk Metal	Use of indigenous imagery and lyrical content in defense of these populations. The band engages in onstage rituals reproducing indigenous religious practices.
Panama	Spirit of the Deep Waters	Black/Doom Metal	Use of indigenous instrumentation, specifically the rain stick that is characteristic of the Mapuches in South America.
Paraguay	Kuazar	Thrash	Sings some songs in Guarani, one of the main local indigenous languages in the country.
Peru	Chaska	Folk/Death Metal	Use of indigenous imagery and lyrical content in defense of these populations.
Puerto Rico	Argyle	Black Metal	Use of indigenous imagery and overtly anti-Christian messages.
Uruguay	Pecho e' Fierro	Folk/Heavy Metal	Use of indigenous imagery and lyrical content in defense of these populations. Critical of religion in general.
Venezuela	Gillman	Heavy Metal	Use of indigenous imagery and lyrical content in defense of these populations. The band uses the figure of "Guaica" as a representation of leaders of the region's indigenous tribes.

Figure 2. A table of Metal bands that use some indigenous themes in the music

2.4. Globalization and International Headbangers

The book, *Metal Rules the Globe*, a collection of scholarly essays and journal articles that focus on the Globalization of Metal, Harris M. Berger, Jeremy Wallach, and Paul D. Greene conceptualizes Heavy Metal as a genre of geographical dissemination both economically and culturally (2011). The process of Heavy Metal globalization occurred through diffusion separated in 2 distinctive phases: i) ending in the 1980s, Metal gradually spread outward from its original sites in Britain and the United States and into peripheral countries. The worldwide metal scene during this phase saw an influx of Anglo-Metal bands that bred a culture-like resistance towards traditional repressive forces such as work class resistance and anti-Christianity (Weinsten, 2012). ii) the second phase is the increased international reach of the genre penetrating other parts of the world such as Asia, Latin America, and secular sectors in the Middle East. Scholars note that, unlike other forms of globalized music, Heavy Metal's globalization was not influenced by diasporic movements; rather metal diffuses through efforts of musicians, fans and mediators (Wallach, Berger, & Greene, 2011). As Guilbault argues, the globalization of Heavy Metal becomes a community where fans listen to the music and create their forms through cultural diffusions within the genre (1996).

The second phase of Heavy Metals' globalization gave a slight rise in the studies of cultural diffusions and cultural hybridity as Sepultura's brought a made-in Brazil extreme metal to non-western areas. The band came from a peripheral country that resonated with audiences outside of the West, showcasing both how it can be appropriated locally and made by people in peripheral areas. A practical example of this is the glocalization of metal and how areas, such as the Global South, received and reinterpreted the sounds of the music to fit their national and cultural perspectives. While Heavy Metal is examined as a form of resistance and cultural diffusion, these diffusions can be narrowed down to glocalization influence in decolonial studies. Subgenres such as Viking Metal focus on the upbringing of culture in their image, sound, and lyrics that can be argued as a form of resistance towards religious practices in Scandinavian countries. Decolonial studies in music, however, are rarely researched and only a select few scholars discuss its permeability.

Chapter 3. Decolonization Through Metal

3.1. Introduction to Decolonization

Popular music sometimes has a direct role in fostering anti-colonial cultural resistance and organizational communication, as well as decolonizing the mind. While several postcolonial theorists, such as Edward Said, Frantz Fanon, and C. L. R. James, developed an interest in music and/or popular culture, postcolonial studies have often ignored popular culture and particular popular music, along with its often noted deafness to the material realities of colonial oppression.

Decolonization engages a process where artists must bring the repatriation of indigenous land, life, and ancestral ties from colonized lands (Tuck & Yang 2012). Research notes that decolonization is a process that involves ideological work for both the colonizer and the colonized that is self-determining and seeks to return the cultural acquisitions once lost by cultural genocide (Tuck & Yang 2012). In some ways, music is seen as a force of decolonial art as music can address such issues and resurge a liberating sense of indigeneity while dismantling the hegemonic frameworks of genocide and conquest. Nelson Varas-Díaz and Eric Morales are two of the few scholars that have researched the notions of decolonization through Metal Music in Latin American countries. In their article, they explored how metal music in Latin America has been used to challenge the colonial history of the region through the implications of religious colonialism. Insofar as colonialism has had implications and consequences politically, economically, and environmentally, they focused on the challenges towards religion as a strategy to critically assess the colonial legacies in Latin America (2018)

This work is theoretical, and the methodological approach was based on decolonial reflections. Nelson Varas Dias work examined coloniality through the lens of metal music but based on colonialism fueled by religion. Since Latin America heavily centers its religion on Catholicism, a religion introduced by the Spaniards during the conquistadores, many countries have dropped indigenous spirituality for this religion. Consequently, many images and monuments in Latin American countries are centered

around Christianity, a reminder of a colonial history that continues in contemporary times. Nelson offers a way in which metal is used as a critical assessment of coloniality analyzing lyrics, imagery, and musicality from a variety of bands across Latin America

I will be using Nelson theoretical approach of metal used as a decolonial expression, but I will be situating it instead as a viable tool for education in Latin America to decolonize the mind. The idea of coloniality will go beyond religion, as colonialism is not mutually exclusive to this. Rather, the focal point will be on indigeneity. Cemican and Araña do not offer songs critical of religion and instead offer songs that rely on cultural indigenous heritage and resurgence. Cemican uses Extreme Metal as a form of storytelling, highlighted Aztec mythology and culture to decolonize their audience. For Araña, to reconnect Pip-Mayan ancestry that has been forgotten in El Salvador, creating a space for indigenous pride. Both bands' approaches differ in terms of materials and process, but the goal remains the same: an expression for decolonization. The next section will follow both my methods and methodology towards this analysis.

3.2. Methodology and Method

I will primarily use Critical Discourse as my methodological approach. This approach is defined as

A type of discourse analytical research that primarily studies the way social power abuse, dominance, and inequality are enacted, reproduced, and resisted by text and talk in the social and political context. With such dissident research, critical discourse analysts take an explicit position, and thus want to understand, expose, and ultimately resist social inequality. (Van Dijk, 1994)

However, instead of using music to research how social power and dominance is enacted and reproduced in these media texts and used to understand the underlying issues of social inequality, I will invert the process of critical discourse to locate instances that deconstruct expressions of power. With my project, Heavy metal will be used as an overarching case study as to how the metal scenes in Latin America are using the genre to deconstruct colonial history and contemporary western influence. The location of the source of oppression stems from a colonial history that is not discussed at large in Latin

American popular culture and contemporary issues such as westernization that need to be discussed. Heavy metal bands in Latin America are pushing back on this and try to subvert the expression through the infusions of indigeneity in heavy metal music. Metal bands frame this as giving power to their fans to understand their indigenous roots and to an extent educate and empower. By removing a largely absent discussion of colonial history, the metal scene in Latin America creates a unique cultural fusion of music that incorporates indigenous elements, sounds, images, and lyrics in a genre created from the west.

The approach I am using is a decolonial methodology mixed with critical discourse theory as the method for analysis. Linda Tuhiwai Smith's book, *Decolonizing Methodologies: Research and Indigenous Peoples*, is the text I am referencing when discussing decolonization. It is describing as “[Decolonization] must offer a language of possibility, a way out of colonialism.”. In a decolonizing framework, deconstruction is part of a much larger intent. Taking apart the story, revealing underlying texts, and giving voice to things that are often known intuitively. I used a critical discourse approach with decolonization to analyze the lyrics, imagery, performance, and mythos of bands that carry out indigeneity in extreme metal. At the first look, I chose two Metal bands to work with, Cemican from Mexico and Araña from El Salvador, analyzing and interpreting their approaches on Extreme Metal. Secondly, I explored how these artists use Extreme Metal to explore indigenous themes in both the musical and the performative. In addition, interviews are vital to the methodology and the analysis in further chapters as the band's confirmation and explanation will ground the theoretical approach and analysis. Interviews are a key component in the overarching story of how and why metal is used, as a platform for bands to discuss, educate, create a space, and narrate indigeneity.

As Linda Tuhiwai Smith (1999) has pointed out, Indigenous critique of the colonizing mission is twofold and must revert to both colonized and pre-colonized time, in a search to find what is authentically Indigenous, and what was imposed or taken away by the colonizer; a difficult almost impossible task given the unreliability of texts and records bent toward assimilation that continues to prioritize European/Western worldviews. The texts that I will be using on the historical account of colonization range

from different authors with different perspectives, giving a broader account that does not strictly adhere to European viewpoints.

Understanding the role of metal music in decolonization, one must start with the most evident ways in which this is done. In the case of Latin American Extreme Metal, it entails the prominent inclusion of indigenous populations in the music's imagery, lyrical content and, instrumentation. It is important to note that this use of indigeneity is not a new phenomenon and can be traced to bands that both engaged in regional political discourse or cultural diffusions. Many Metal bands in Latin America have called attention to the plight of the indigenous populations who have predominantly carried the burden of colonialism. The strategies that these bands use range from instrumentation, performance, imagery, and, counter hegemonic lyrics.

To do this, I will focus on two metal bands from different Latin American regions, one from Mexico, which incorporates Aztec culture in the music, and one from El Salvador, who focuses on Mayan/ Pipil-Maya culture. I am focusing on these two bands based for several reasons. For one Cemican, the Mexican band, have quite a following and is known for using strong Aztec imagery in their performance, music, and appearance. It will strongly highlight the indigenous parameters I am working with, and the decolonial process, as they do discuss education in the interview. Aborigenes (or Araña after 2000s) is a band I chose simply due to the fact I am from El Salvador and have a background in El Salvador's indigenous history. Using the approach of two metal bands from different regions enables me to discuss the research question at a pragmatic level without the paper sounding too theoretical or broad. It will enable me to focus in detail on these bands' lyrics, history, imagery, and infusion of their indigenous side in hopes to influence other researchers to focus on different regions. Each region is unique and homogenizing the metal scene as one is problematic. In Latin America, countries experienced colonialism differently, and each has unique indigenous backgrounds that bands use. Using two bands paints a narrow picture of how indigeneity is infused in their region, but enough that it the framework can be implemented in other regions as well such as Peru, Argentina, Puerto Rico, etc. To focus on the bands' artistry, I will

investigate the following using the same theoretical approach Nelson Varas Dias worked with:

Lyrical content — Other bands have created lyrical content that is descriptive of the injustice committed against the indigenous populations of the Americas. One important example is the El Salvadoran band Aborigenes (2010) who frequently sing about the extermination of the indigenous population in Central America

Instrumentation — Heavy Metal Musicians have infused and integrated unique instrumentation that is characteristic of their region and is linked to an indigenous background. Bands like Cemican (2009) in Mexico and Spirit of the Deep Waters in Panama have integrated wind instruments and drums alongside the metal instrumentation such as blast beats, fast guitars melodies, and death growling vocals.

Stage practices — Bands have incorporated ceremonies, or unique performances inspired by traditional ceremonies of indigenous populations into their stage performances to both entertain and educate people. The Mexican band Cemican (2012) which will be discussed in detail, use body paint and recreate sacrificial Aztec rituals during their performances, most notably in Wacken Festival to a wide range of audiences.

Language — Finally, some bands have integrated their indigenous languages into their songs. One example is Kuazar (2009) from Paraguay, who sing some of their songs in Guarani. Another is Araña from El Salvador who has album titles in Nawat, the language of the Mayan-Pipil peoples. This process serves as recognition that the colonial experience also used the imposition of language as a strategy of control

Lastly, it is important to note that there is a process and struggle with using decolonization and coloniality in academic research. As Linda Smith mentions the words “Research” and “Data” have a negative connotation for indigenous communities given their colonial history. This language continues to be used in our western academic sphere, which is where, when discussing indigeneity, it is important to be careful about the type of words used. For that, I will not be using the terms “data” or “research” when discussing the work of Cemicans and Araña, rather I am working with the texts to create

a story that allows me to explore and understand the different ways decolonizing through the mind can work with music. Linda Smith, in addition, explains the term ‘indigenous’ is problematic in that it appears to collectivize many distinct populations whose experiences under imperialism have been vastly different. Other collective terms also in use refer to ‘First Peoples’ or ‘Native Peoples’, ‘First Nations’ or ‘People of the Land’, ‘Aboriginals’ or ‘Fourth World Peoples’. While not denying the powerful worldviews embedded in such terms, within my framework as within others, they are terms that will be used sparsely, however contextualizing this is important when working with indigenous texts. While I will be using the term indigenous to discuss the population when discussing Mexico and El Salvador's indigenous population I will be using specific communities' names.

Chapter 4. Welcome to the Pit: Latin American and Extreme Metal

4.1. What is Extreme Metal?

Heavy Metal origins can be traced back to the industrial working-class neighborhood of Birmingham England, where in the late 1960s, the most notable bands were Black Sabbath and Judas Priest. They drew upon the industrial geography of the city and working-class background, as the city was surrounded by factories. In the book *Music and Urban Geography*, Adam Krim, examines how the geography of urban spaces influences the ways music is experienced, created, and performed within the city. The result of a heavy industrial area such as Birmingham still recovering from the war and modernization, there emerged a dark and heavy sound built around subjects that dealt with the realities of war and death (Harrison, 2010). The following is a stanza from War Pigs by Black Sabbath

In the fields, the bodies burning/as the war machine keeps turning Death
and hatred to mankind/poisoning their brain-washed minds Politicians hide
themselves away/they only started the war Why should they go out to
fight/they leave that role to the poor. (War Pigs, Paranoid, 1970, Tony
Iommi, Ozzy Osbourne, Geezer Butler, and Bill Ward)

War Pigs is a quintessential Heavy Metal song, a spitting image of the horrors of war that end in an apocalyptic ending, but most importantly is the distinctive sound: thick basslines, accompanied by a thunderous distorted guitar melody known as a “riff,” and loud drumbeats. The riff of Heavy Metal is what drives the aggression and energy of the genre and that served as the core engine when other subgenres developed; in this case Extreme Metal.

Extreme Metal is a sub-genre of Metal that had its roots in the mid-1980s. It emerged out of the interconnected and musical rejection of traditional Heavy Metal music. Traditional Heavy Metal is defined by clean vocals with the likes of Iron Maiden, Van Halen, and the emergence of bands from the Sunset Strip such as Motley Crue, Poison, and WASP. In the 1980s Heavy Metal became a very successful music genre and

according to Weinstein, dominated in small venues (Walser, 1991;1993). However, under the influence of hardcore punk and bands such as Venom who use Satanic imagery for shock value, radicalized forms of metal developed further. These forms, including Thrash, Death, Black, and Doom metal combined the edginess, speed, and intensity of punk with the heavy, thicker, and darker sounds of Metal creating musicality that favours speed, down-tuned guitars, and growled or screamed vocals. This became a very distinct feature within the Metal subculture with fans and musicians and eventually became known as “Extreme Metal”. Fans also segregated into distinct audiences, including Heavy Metal Maniacs, Black Metalheads, and Thrashers, among others. This development was in part fueled by fans and music tapes were circulated on small labels that reached many countries outside the west.

Extreme Metal departs from the Black Sabbath sound of the horrors of war, away from the protagonist's views of “who am I? The Devil is never a maker” instead, told that “I'm in league with Satan.” Extreme metal music conveys an air of evil with chaos surrounding every note. Fast double kick bass drums became a staple, tremolo picking (a modulation where a single note is repeated extremely rapidly), and guttural vocals. Notable bands that began this trend were Venom, Slayer, Sodom, Destruction, Bathory, and Celtic Frost who forged a sound that took a raw chaotic approach that helped create the sub-genres of Black, Death, and other styles of Extreme Metal.

Extreme Metal essentially is an umbrella term that relates to other sub-genres of metal that are more abrasive, harsher, and faster. Keith Harris defines it as a transgressive: the "extreme" traits noted above are all intended to violate or transgress given cultural, artistic, social, or aesthetic boundaries. Kahn-Harris states that extreme metal can be "close to being ... formless noise", at least it might seem so to the uninitiated listener (2000). Given the many the sub-genres of heavy metal, I do not expect all my readers to grasps all the differences and nuances. Nonetheless, it is important that I indicate these nuances as it provides an important context for my later discussion of Cemican and Araña as examples of Extreme Metal. Using this style of metal effects the way the message is conveyed. The fusion of guttural vocals and fast music is a style that fits with the indigenous elements of these bands particularly as Extreme Metal is also

affected by Kirms' notion of urban geography. Using a dark sound and dark imagery from the origins of extreme metal, the darker subject matter is easier to touch upon, and with an underground scene, it is more malleable and acceptable when infused with other elements.

Mark Olson argues that particular scenes such as extreme metal create "territorializing machines" that produce interesting relationships to geographic locations. Sepultura's album, *Roots*, is a quasi-autonomous sound that is unique to both the extreme metal scene and to metal listeners in Brazil as well. The album that infused the culture of the Xavante tribe with the abrasive sound of Extreme Metal created a hybrid unique sound that strayed from the standardized sounds of western metal with the likes of Metallica and Megadeth. This musical construction allows for a diverse set of Extreme Metal music that draws on local instrumentation and construction of place in various ways. Thus, Cemican defines their extreme metal as "Pre-Hispanic metal" and Araña refers to their sound as "Tribal Metal".

4.2. Coloniality in Latin American: Cemican and Araña

One of the most famous cathedrals in Mexico is the Virgen de Guadalupe in Guadalajara, where the enormous architecture is visited by thousands of locals and tourists alike. A key piece of the Cathedral is a statue of the Virgin of Guadalupe that, as Varas-Diaz explains, is unavoidable. It depicts the Virgin as an apparition surrounded by a priest and a group indigenous people kneeling in reverence while bringing offerings to her. The statue is one of many across Mexico, a predominantly Christian nation-state. But Christianity is not native to Mexico, having been brought by the Spaniards during the Spanish Conquistadores during the Aztec conquest. These Christian symbols like the virgin of the Guadalupe are symbols of Spanish colonization and the role of imperialism that formed Latin America. Although colonialism is an event of the past, it continues to be alive in contemporary times and continues to shape and influence many lives. For instance, the Zapatista movement led by indigenous peoples who sought to assert their sovereignty in Mexico was motivated by an anti-colonial ideology. On other words, the

consequences of historical colonialism continue to be challenged. Where does contemporary music find a place in the discourse of decolonization?"

In El Salvador, remnants of the Mayan Empire can be found in Tazumal, an archeological location that is made up of series of buildings built by the Mayans. A country that is predominately catholic Christian, El Salvador has more Christian symbols than Mayan or Mayan-Pipil symbols. The biggest cathedral of El Salvador is the Catedral Metropolitana de San Salvador where Pope John Paul II welcomed over 7000 pilgrims, a monumental moment in the country's history. While the Christian teachings brought over from Spain continue to play an important role in the cultural life of El Salvador, the teachings of the Mayan-Pipil, the country's most active indigenous group, are kept alive through a culture of oral transmission. The influence of these teachings is limited to members of the Mayan-Pipil communities due to colonization and oppression that superseded Spanish Conquest, mainly colonization by the government. Despite their ostracization, there has been a reclamation of the language Nawat and cultural resurgence of these indigenous communities.

The indigenous resurgence is important in unpacking a myth that indigenous people easily succumbed to the conquistadores; many challenged this and resisted imperialism. However, now there is a new type of resurgence, a decolonial movement that aims to educate and unpack a colonial history. Extreme metal is used to create this educational space where musically and visually, Mayan-Pipil, Mixteco and Aztec indigeneity is expressed. Examining coloniality through extreme metal becomes a decolonial process for bands as Latin American metal has always reflected its historical context by addressing these political issues (Scaricaciottoli 2016; Sánchez 2014; Varas-Díaz & Mendoza 2015). Not that metal music is always intersecting with politics, but the discussion amongst musicians and fans about indigeneity is ever-present and fosters a movement of solidarity within its communities. Let's begin by briefly introducing both Cemican and Araña and examine their take on indigenous heritage

Cemican is an Extreme Death Metal band from Guadalajara, Jalisco Mexico and consists of six members: Tlipoca on drums, wind instruments; Tecuhtli, vocals, guitars,

wind instruments; Mazatecpatl, wind instruments; Xaman-ek. Vocals, wind instruments; Yei Tchtli wind instruments, and vocals; and Ocelotl on bass. Cemican- the name meaning “The duality of life and death” in Nahuatl, take their main inspiration from pre-Hispanic culture and Aztec mythology, creating a form of Metal they refer to as “Pre-Hispanic Metal” (Cemican, 2017). Their music incorporates wind and percussion instruments that are created with the help of the Nahuas peoples of Mexico. The use of this instrumentation is not simply a set-piece, but a core compositional element that works in conjunction with the image of the band. The band's performance is the highlight, they hone the stage in face and body paint, a feather and bone headdress inspired by Aztec Shamans, armor, and traditional clothes that honor Aztec traditions and customs. As Tecuhlti discuses in an interview, mixing in pre-Hispanic music with metal is a visual form because “[the audience] not just hears the sounds of our culture, but also seeing us visually our clothing is placed “la epoca ancestral” (the era of our ancestors) before we existed.” (2018) Ancestral is a key theme for Cemican and it’s not just about the music but to mix Aztec and Mixteco culture through metal.

An education that needs to be discussed. While it is difficult to condense the colonial history of Mexico, it is important to highlight one myth that Federico Navarrete Linares debunks: the Spaniards did not simply step in and conquer the Aztecs as is read in the histories written by Europeans (Navarrete Linares, 2019). The relationship between the many indigenous peoples in Mexico and Cortez is one that was multifaceted. But to simplify the long historical account, it is essential to know that during the Aztec empire, many nations were at war with each other. The Aztec empire, comprised of city-states Tenochtitlan, Texcoco, and Tlacopan, often fought with other groups such as the Tepanec peoples, who ultimately aligned with the Spaniard during the Spaniard conquest. In this perspective, the Spanish conquest does not come across as a single event that had exceptional circumstances; rather the fall of Meso America in Mexico is nuanced one (Navarette Linares, 2019). The history of the original peoples of Mexico usually shows a chronological event by Spanish conquest that led to decimation in population, however, the conquest is just as complex due to the inner conflicts between the indigenous peoples.

The Spanish would have been easily crushed by the greater number of the Aztecs or starved to death had they not worked with other indigenous allies. But much of the historical discussion now asks why the Tlaxcalans sided with the Spaniards after briefly battling them. I mention this as it is important to discuss the colonial backgrounds of Mexico when discussing decolonial practices as addressing the power relationship is imperative to the method. To address power relationships is just as complex when put in historical context on internal rivalries and conquest, however, the Aztec traditions, no matter the inter fighting, was a prominent force in Mexico. A cultural background that continues to be an identity for Mexicans, and for the Nahuas peoples who continue some of the practices. Cemican's choice of using Aztec culture continues the traditions and encourages the resurgence of indigeneity traditions seen in Mexico, by telling stories, myths, and ideologies of the Aztec. An example that will be a commonality throughout the analysis is the Aztecs' development of timekeeping and its relationship with their beliefs. The calendar system (see Figure 3) was taught to nobles and to sons who were destined for the priesthood (Aztec book on timekeeping) and the calendar comprised multiple interrelated periodicities that relied on the Aztecs conception that history cyclical. Each of these interlocking sets and cycles have specific names that Cemican draws upon in their songs.

Table I-I. The 13 day numbers and the associated 13 Lords of the Day.

1. Xiuhteuctli	Turquoise-lord
2. Tlalteuctli	Lord-of-the-land
3. Chalchihuitl-Icue	Her-skirt Is Jade
4. Tonatiuh	He-goes-becoming-warm
5. Tlazolteotl	Filth-goddess
6. Mictlan-Teuctli	Lord-in-Mictlan
7. Centeotl	Ear-of-maize-god
8. Tlaloc	Land-lier
9. Quetzalcoatl	Plumed-serpent
10. Tezcatlipoca	Smoking Mirror
11. Chalmecateuctli	Lord-who-is-a-resident-in Chalman
12. Tlahuizcalpan-Teuctli	Lord-at-the-Dawn
13. Citlalli-Icue	Her-skirt Is Stars

Figure 3. The name of each day of the calendar is associated with one the 13 Lords from Aztec Culture. From *Time History and Belief*, by Ross Hassig 2001, <https://ebookcentral-proquest-com.proxy.lib.sfu.ca/lib/sfu-ebooks/reader.action?docID=3443081>.

The chart above goes through the various names of Gods that are associated with the Mesoamerican calendar which accumulates to a 52- year calendar round. What is important about this chart is that it indicates some of the references Cemican make in their music as they name these gods and their importance in Aztec and Nahua traditions. Another brief example is Aztec Human sacrifice as expiation, death being a prominent theme in both Aztec culture and extreme metal as well. Humans were usually put to death not only by excision of the heart but decapitation as well and offered to the sun and earth gods the Taloques (Aztec Human sacrifice, 2020). The use of sacrificial ceremonies and ideology are prominent in both Cemicans lyrics and stage performances. These themes will be unpackaged in the following sections, but it is important to highlight the importance of Aztec colonialism and traditions and its aspects as a whole.

Similarly, Araña (formerly known as Aborigenes) borrow and use Mayan-Pipil culture and incorporate it into their music primarily as a form of resistance and education. Based in San Salvador, Aborigenes was formed in 1998 by Eduardo “Conjejo” Rodriguez and often used the catchphrase “por la sangre, las raíces y el metal” (for our blood, our roots, and metal”) Apart from their musical influence in the Extreme Metal genre with the likes of Sepultura and Slayer, part of the music is the substance the group made in their symbolic material: praising indigenous heritage that’s in Salvadoran blood, pointing out the social injustices Mayan-Pipil people faced and current Pipil oppression, and other problems that stem from colonialism.

While the music does incorporate some forms of indigenous instrumentation such as wind and percussions, most notably in the song “Viven Aborigene” the lyrics shape the message and talk about social problems through the point of view of the race, Salvadoran culture, and folklore. Some of the most notable songs are “Sentenciados por La Ignorancia” and “Viven Aborigene” which discuss Spaniard colonialism and Pipil pride. Aborigenes separated at the beginning of the 21st century but Eduardo “El Conejo” Rodriguez continued with his vision and formed a new band, Araña. Araña continues the sound and the message of Aborigenes though they incorporate more Mayan themes and imagery. Releasing the album *Teotl*- God in Nawat- the songs touch upon the same core themes of Pipil pride, and Mayan mythology as well as continuous indigenous oppression by the Salvadoran government.

Much like the Aztecs in Mexico, El Salvador was affected by the Spanish Conquest in the 16th century where colonization began as early as 1524 with the arrival of Pedro de Alvarado. The Spanish troops were met with a determined Nahua tribe, the Pipil, who occupied much of the western region of the Lempa River. However, the Spaniards were able to push into the Pipil capital of Cuscatlan but the Pipil warriors were able to force the Spanish settlers to withdraw. Numerous invasions occurred and the community resettled several times before being established in 1528, creating the capital San Salvador. Colonialism in El Salvador is particularly different compared to Mexico, while the Pipil were not able to withhold the Spanish conquest, the Spanish did challenge the Nuaha institutions but did not obliterate them. On the contrary, many Pipil cultural

practices, such as the production of Cacao, presented economic opportunities to the Spanish (Sampeck, 2010).

This post-contact became important in the 17th century and the regions of Izalcos created a magnet of wealth and influence for Spaniard merchants. This did not mean that the Spanish lived in harmony with Pipil communities; there were conflicts amongst them that led to a new colonial system that changed how the Pipil lived. In short, Spanish Conquest had overturned the Izalcos – Pipil settlement. Records indicate population size was decreasing due to disease, warfare, and difficult living conditions associated with conquest. The spaces between Spanish settlements and Pipil communities began to expand politically and socially through the imposition of borders, and the Spanish continue to appropriate the Izalco lands until the gap was nonexistent and the Pipil population was marginalized. (Sampeck, 2010).

One key theme to think about in Salvadoran indigeneity and colonialism is the historical oppression and violence against the indigenous populations; Pipil and Lenca. Many Salvadorans, including those that live outside the country, do not believe that indigenous people still exist in the country (Gellman, 2016). In a country where over 80% of the population is Mestizo, a mix of indigenous and European, El Salvador's colonial violent history remains a topic of little interest. While the country continues to re-build amidst a civil war (1980-1992), new official sites and questions of national culture, history, and identity are drawing attention. Most notable, before the civil war, an early atrocity against indigenous peoples took place in 1932 called “La Matanza” (the Slaughter). It was an infamous period of state-sanctioned violence against the Lempa and Pipil people where 6000-40,000 indigenous peoples were killed. (Anderson, 1982).

It is a history with the most notorious case of state-sanctioned repression in Latin American that heavily diminished indigenous populations and oppression of their cultural tradition. La Matanza was due to the struggle for land rights and land distribution policies between criollos, Spanish born people, and indigenous peoples. The 1930s oligarchy used the military repression against Nahuas, and tensions rose from the economic recession that drove marginalized peoples further into poverty (Gomez, 2003). Led by local Nahua

leader Jose Ama, the rebellion against the state saw a violent suppression that turned into a large-scale assassination of anyone who appeared to be either indigenous or aligned politically with them (Gellman, 2016). La Matanza is characterized as a genocide because of its explicit targeting of Nahuas peoples and arguments about why the Salvadoran indigenous today is so small stem from the legacy of 1932; most notably survival assimilation.

As of today, the exact size of El Salvador's indigenous population is not known, and this is due to the state refusing to recognize the nation's ethnic minorities. This loss of recognition began after La Matanza of 1932, and during this time newer generations actively avoided discrimination by forced assimilation, so they stopped speaking the language and wearing ceremonial dresses in public (Gould and Lauria-Santiago, 2008). While there has been a resurgence recently in Pipil and Lempa traditions amongst the communities, the Salvadoran government has continued to ignore the violent history and resort to tokenistic cultural initiatives such as committees that advocate for indigenous education but do not force them in schools. In addition, American soft power and influence in Latin America has shifted governmental strategies towards economic goals that is no less destructive of indigenous communities than were the Spanish conquistadores. Destructive in term of the cultural identities of Salvadorans who are influenced to act, look, and become more “westernized” by consuming American popular culture, foods or style of living, and the constant displacement of Pipil land for infrastructure.

The repression of Pipil continues today, and the theme of history, cultural roots, and repression of heritage are the central themes concerning Arañas music. Pipil communities continue to face political and cultural repression, and while state actions towards cooperation is seen as mere tokenism, artists such as Araña try to bridge education with indigenous cultural appreciation. This cultural appreciation is important for Araña; While many of El Salvador’s population has indigenous ancestry, there continues to be prejudice and discrimination to those who identify as Pipil. If people were to accept their heritage, there would be greater sympathy and support to the Pipil

communities that live outside the metropolitan areas according to their lead singer Eduardo Rodriguez.

4.2.1. The Power of Lyrics

Storytelling and oral literature are important avenues in decolonial processes and education, as it provides missing chapters, histories, experiences, and histories of oppressed peoples. Spoken words are not given the same high authority that written work has, however, according to Linda Tuhiwai Smith, “[w]e have often allowed our histories’ to be told and have then become outsiders as we heard them being told. Schooling is directly implicated in this process”. Education through storytelling and lyrics is an important valid form of knowledge that attempts to tell stories of Latin American indigeneity and history through the Latinx eye, mind, and heart.

As Chilisa argues “[s]ongs, dance, and poems are an integral part of the oral literature that communicates historical information on events, public experience, and practice, especially experiences of the formerly colonized” (2010). Let’s first look into Cemican and their songs which should not necessarily be looked at as musical pieces, but rather how the lyrics form a sense of storytelling that carries out important messages of heritage, education, and decolonial to the mind.

In an interview with Tipolti, the lead singer and founder of Cemican, he says “The lyrics talk about evidence and personalities of Mexican pre-Hispanic culture, for example, our songs talk about an array of Aztec stories and gods, from Xipe Totec, to Quetzalcoatl to Tezcatlipoca. The point for our songs is to touch upon moments, stories in hope to bring education of the Mesoamerican Era, our Pre-Hispanic culture”

One of their most polished albums, In Ohtli Teoyohtica In Miquiztli (“the mystical path of the dead”), is a concept album with an array of tracks such as “Ritual” that blend a variety of wind instruments, including one that sounds a bit like a didgeridoo, with traditional percussion, group chants, and grinding bass and guitar solos. But let’s look into the lyrics of the song “Mixteco” off their first release “Estamos en La Valle De Los Muertos (We are In the Valley of the Dead)

Mixteco	Mixteco
Creado por el Aguila Azul Cingo Lagarto Semen sagrado Sol de lluvia A tu espalda y sombra El Jaguar sangriento Incitador! Conquistador!	Creado por el Aguila Azul Cingo Lagarto Semen sagrado Sol de lluvia A tu espalda y sombra El Jaguar sangriento Incitador! Conquistador!
Cambias vida por magia Soberana de muerte Del lugar del Craneo, Cara pintada Punzon de hueso Sagrado, Rey Tututepec Venerado y visitado, Forjas la alianza	Cambias vida por magia Soberana de muerte Del lugar del Craneo, Cara pintada Punzon de hueso Sagrado, Rey Tututepec Venerado y visitado, Forjas la alianza
Cruzas el mar con tus dos aliados Donde el cielo es de Fuego, Abres los portales Destrozan Deidades y ciudades miticas La conquista de la tierra Sagrada	Cruzas el mar con tus dos aliados Donde el cielo es de Fuego, Abres los portales Destrozan Deidades y ciudades miticas La conquista de la tierra Sagrada
Palacio de Turquesa, Morada del Sol Aturrido! Musica de Huehuecoyotl Espantos! del Señor de la Muerte Enfrentas y sacas su corazon	Palacio de Turquesa, Morada del Sol Aturrido! Musica de Huehuecoyotl Espantos! del Señor de la Muerte Enfrentas y sacas su corazon
Subes al Cielo con los primeros Ancestros Reconocido por Dioses de mil Imperios Conquistador! Ocho Venado! Mixteco! Garra Jaguar.	Subes al Cielo con los primeros Ancestros Reconocido por Dioses de mil Imperios Conquistador! Ocho Venado! Mixteco! Garra Jaguar.

Mixteco is a song that contextualizes the images and understanding of Mixteco peoples and some key Aztec cultural presentations that are not distorted through a colonial lens. This song's title refers to the Mixteco people of Mexico through lyrics "The conquest of the sacred land". There are many references in the song about Mexico Aztec colonialism throughout such as "Destrozan Deidades y ciudades miticas, La conquista de la tierra Sagrada" (They destroyed Deities and mythical cities, The conquest of the sacred land). This imagery of sacred land is furthered expressed through the choice of Aztec cultural points. Tutupec is a Mesoamerican archeological site that is located in Oaxaca- the central city of the Mixtec state before the Spanish conquest. Its name in Mixtecan language is Yuca Dza, and the people, the Mixtecos still live in this region. The warrior of the Mixteco is a theme in the song, while it both hints at moments of

colonization from the Spanish Conquest, the main theme of the song discusses a battle and the life and death of a Mixteco warrior.

The lyrics “Aturdido! Musica de Huehuecoyotl” is a link to the Aztec god of the same name. Huehuecoyotl is an old Coyote known as the Ancient Drum, but also known as the god of storytelling, music, dance, and merriment. The band consistently discusses how interrelated Aztec culture is with the prehispanic culture; working both in the music helps show the intelligence and vision of the world that their ancestors had with their discussions of culture, myth, and legends. Cemican includes the imagery and names of gods to “create and motivate our audiences to get educated, to make them feel deeply rooted in our culture” (2019)

In the song, Cemican continues to affirm pride of heritage and stories by their choices of words; for instance, El Jaguar is a prominent symbol in Aztec culture. A fierce warrior that is direct with Quetzalcoatl, the Sun God. Those that went to war were blessed with Quatzacoatl and given the power to fight; In this instance against the colonial power that the Aztec faced which the song discusses. These types of lyrics challenge colonial narratives that assume the Aztec were quick to fall, and restore a sense of belonging and truth, a path that defines them as fierce and strong. Cemican states that this song “is to show the world our ancestral cultural pride, and to those that continue to support the [indigenous] peoples. We are all warriors of Mexico”.

Warriors, Azteca pride, and indigeneity are common themes that spread throughout Cemican discography. They tend to chant the names of Aztecs gods, rituals, and ceremonies to showcase the indigenous roots of the community, in hopes of contributing to the re-emergence of indigeneity in Mexico. For example, the song Azteca Soy (I am Aztec) relies on these themes to invoke this sense of pride and education. Numerous associations are made with Aztec gods and mythology, accompanied by a mixture of traditional wind instruments. The Gods Ometeotl, Yolotl, Tecoyoliztli, and Acoyaliztli are discussed in Azteca Soy that ultimately relates to the songs' message of being Aztec; remembering and being proud of this culture. This is similar to another song from the same album, In Ohtli Teoyohtica In Miquiztli, titled Itlach in Mictlantecuhtli

(valley of the dead in Nahuatl) which offers a similar structure; a song about the Aztec's fascination with life and death, bringing in a myriad of terms and gods to uplift the culture. Ultimately, a contemporary approach to oral traditions.

Ometeotl – Creador de todo	Ometeotl - Creator of everything
Yolotl – Rodeado de sombras	Yolotl - Surrounded by Shadows
Tecoyoliztli – Aullando en mi mente	Tecoyoliztli - Howling in my mind
Acoyaliztli – Cantos y plegarias	Acoyaliztli - Songs and prayers
Centiliztli ica ome cemanahueh (Unión con dos mundos)	Centiliztli ica ome cemanahueh (Union with two worlds)
Yolilistlin copalnahuac (Espíritus junto al copal)	Yolilistlin copalnahuac (Spirits next to the copal)
Azteca soy, Cosmovisión – Azteca soy, Cosmovisión	Azteca soy, Cosmovisión - Azteca soy, Cosmovisión
Rodeado de tinieblas, He visto mis dioses En luces de vida, Gente sin rostro	Surrounded by darkness, I have seen my gods In lights of life, Faceless people
Dejando legados de mil batallas Energía liberada, Conexión con dos mundos Convicción de cultos, Sacrificio terrenal Evaporando sentimientos, Con sangre derramada Flechas consagradas, Entrando a Omeyocan	Leaving legacies of a thousand battles Energy released, Connection with two worlds Conviction of cults, earthly sacrifice Evaporating feelings, with blood spilled Consecrated arrows, Entering Omeyocan
Universo etéreo, Sobrenatural Centiliztli ica ome cemanahueh (Unión con dos mundos)	Ethereal Universe, Supernatural Centiliztli ica ome cemanahueh (Union with two worlds)
Universo etéreo, Sobrenatural Yolilistlin copalnahuac, masehua (Espíritus junto al copal danzan)	Ethereal Universe, Supernatural Yolilistlin copalnahuac, masehua (Spirits next to the copal dance)
Azteca soy, Cosmovisión – Azteca soy, Cosmovisión Unión con dos mundos, Espíritus junto al copal	Azteca soy, Cosmovisión - Azteca soy, Cosmovisión Union with two worlds, Spirits next to the copal

Itlach in Mictlantecuhtli lyrics is one of the few songs that mix both the language of Nahuatl and Spanish as a narrative tool. Towards the end of the song, a chant is used that reads:

“Oquihti ye noyol, can niquittoa ya, Onehcyayahualco in itecococcayo miquiztli Choquitzli ehuatiuh i cuicachocoa. Can comoni, with comoni, huehuetl”

“I intoxicate only my heart, I only say now, the smell of death has surrounded me. The crying rises, it cries with songs, they sound, the drums sound”

It's a fitting end to a song that tells the story of the Valley of the Dead, and how death is honored through various offerings to the gods. Moreover, how a ceremony is enacted for those that move on to the afterlife, as the songs detail the sounds of drums, the smell of flowers, the cries that send the spirit, the cries of the songs that will bring the body back to the spirit world. Many songs follow the same pattern storytelling in Cemican's work: whether it is a story about a specific god, a warrior battle, a ritual or fight against colonialism, each song talks about [Cemicans] ancestors and bridge education within the music. According to the band, the lyrics talk about evidence and personalities of Mexican pre-Hispanic culture, such as a song that talks about various Aztec gods, their stories and mythology. The point is “for our songs is touch upon moments, stories and education of pre-Hispanic culture, a Mesoamerican time. Although Cemican's album titles and stage names are in Nahuatl, most of Cemican's lyrics are growled in Spanish. “At the end of the day, Nahuatl is spoken by a small percentage of people, and only in the center of the country,” explains Tecutli. “If you make an album fully in Nahuatl without knowing what people will understand, it will probably not have the same impact as if you put it in Spanish.”

In the case of Aborigenes (Araña), lyrics are not necessarily used as a form of storytelling, rather the lyrics become a social context that is used as a window of reflection; to figure out Salvadoran identity. While some songs do use storytelling as the literacy device to talk about certain historical events, it is expressed as a story of the atrocity, not cultural heritage. Instead of the lyrics used to highlight culture, the band focuses on resilience, and resistance of indigenous oppression. As the leader singer Eduardo, describes “the lyrics talk about the one that is very problematic in our country for many decades: the invisibility and disappearance of our ancestors and our indigenous roots”.

Understanding the importance of Salvadoran identity, its ancestral roots of Pipil culture and decolonial ways of thinking about identity are the key messages in their

lyrics. Insofar as *Aborigene* employs revolutionary like musicianship with cultural themes to highlight the frustration the band feels regarding the path El Salvador was following, frustration with the government's failure to provide adequate education about the Pipil and Mayan people became a recurrent theme in their songs. The second song, *Vive Aborigen*, becomes a critical piece to the album, an intricate composition that compares the historically violent history of the treatment of indigenous people in El Salvador. While many know the Spaniard's conquests and colonization of Central America, what is not often discussed is the relationship indigenous peoples have with those disenfranchised through poverty. Discussed in the chapter on Coloniality, in the 1930s, a revolution occurred in El Salvador that resulted in a genocide of thousands of indigenous people; those that looked indigenous were killed in fear of a peasant uprising that would have resulted in an economical and cultural shift during a time of meritocracy (McCreery, 2009).

ABORIGENES VIVE ABORIGEN	LONG LIVE ABORIGINALS
Aborigen es tu sangre, El llamado se acerca ya Tus raíces sepultadas Con el tiempo van a estallar	Aboriginal is your blood, the call is now approaching, and Your roots are buried but In time they will shine
Corre, corre, corre Aborien Corre, corre, corre Aborigen	Run Run Run Aboriginal Run Run Run Aboriginal
El respeto hace al hombre, La cultura lo hace crecer, Pieles santas sepultadas Por un ser que no supo creer	Respect makes the man, the culture makes him grow, holy skin is buried For being themselves and didn't want to believe
Corre, corre, corre Aborigen Corre, corre, corre Aborigen	Run Run Run Aboriginal Run Run Run Aboriginal
Es una historia de muerte que el destino ha sepultado a los indios que mataron por buscar su libertad destruyeron sus raíces Sus creencias y sus dioses	It's a history of death that destiny has buried to the Indians who killed for seeking their freedom they destroyed their roots His beliefs and his gods
Bajo un sol que ya no alumbría En el cielo aun están.... Sigue ardiendo	Under a sun that no longer shines In heaven they are still ... Still burning
Caminando por las noches Con el miedo te van a encontrar Sigiloso a cien metros Ni tu sombra se puede escapar	Walking at night With fear they will find you Stealthy one hundred meters Not even your shadow can escape
Corre, corre, corre Aborigen Corre, corre, corre Aborigen	Run Run Run Aboriginal Run Run Run Aboriginal

Vive Aborigen discusses the similarities of both atrocities, detailing how there is a history of death concerning indigenous peoples in pursuit of freedom that killed the roots of a nation. This song particularly reflects on these histories, trying to educate listeners about both the atrocities to end a culture, and resistance to completely forget aboriginal

roots. As the title suggests, despite the history, aboriginality will live on as “aborigen es en tu sangre” (aboriginal is in your blood).

The title track, *Sentenciados Por La Ignorancia* is a well-known track [song] in Aborigene’s catalog and represents the cultural backlash of a Post War El Salvador, and the reintroduction of Pipil culture. The song discusses the colonial system El Salvador continues to operate under and how American influence undermines its ancestry. During the 1990s, the country experienced westernization through the political effects of international trade agreements and globalization, creating an external infringement on this forgotten indigeneity. This song is specifically important as the message exposes the lack of indigenous celebration; the chorus chants a slogan that reads “We are indigenous, our skin reflects our land. Our race is aboriginal and with the sun we paint our backs”. In context, the Pipil people of El Salvador were one of three tribes that stem from the Mayan dynasty. Their beliefs included the sun as the central god, breathing life, and giving natural riches to the land. Consequently, the song reflects the indigenous ties El Salvador should be celebrating instead of seemingly neglecting and growing weaker with globalization.

Eduardo says that the song talks about historical oppression and no form of rescuing our ancestors. How “the Spanish took advantage of the Pipil, creating a system of oppression that continues today, the song is a protest, and I want to call upon young people, as a message to educate and open your mind. We cannot alienate ourselves from our people not anymore”. And we can see that theme throughout the lyrics, “Indios somos, nuestra piel se refleja en nuestra tierra” (We are Indians and our skin reflects our land). By using the words “indios somos”. As one of their most played songs live, audiences sing along to these lyrics, and becomes an act of solidarity; understanding Mayan-Pipil roots, remembering in hopes to decolonize oneself, and be mindful of the ongoing repression of indigenous groups, notably the Pipil peoples. Their way of life, mythology, and devotion to Quetzacoatl were judged before, but now a future can be built without this colonial thinking; through proper education.

ABORÍGENES SENTENCIADOS POR LA IGNORANCIA	ABORIGENES JUDGED BY OUR IGNORANCE
Nuestra lucha ha comenzado, La opresion no ha terminado Por la raza que ha peleado y el racismo no ha acabado Llego el momento de emprender una lucha por saber Aborigenes pipiles, la ignorancia fue su juez...	Our fight has begun, the oppression is not over For the race that has fought and racism has not yet ended The time has come to undertake a struggle to know Aboriginal Pipiles, ignorance was their judge
Indios somos, nuestra piel se refleja en nuestra tierra Aborigenes de raza con el sol pintan su espalda... Indios somos, nuestra piel se refleja en nuestra tierra Aborigenes de raza con el sol pintan su espalda... Aborigen	Indians is what we are, our skin reflects our land Aboriginal is our race, with the sun we paint our back ... Indians is what we are, our skin reflects our land Aboriginal is our race, with the sun we paint our back ... Aboriginal
Cuesta tanto comprender que tu sangre esta mezclada Invadida por un ser, de guerrero no tiene nada Es la hora de hacer el llamado a tus raices De pararte y comprender que tu raza asi lo dice	It is so hard to understand that your blood is mixed Invaded by a being, the warrior has nothing It's time to make the call to your roots Stop and understand that your race says so Giving death in the past, Our Indians we supported
Dando la muerte en el pasado, Nuestros indios apoyaron Aquellos hombres que lucharon por su tierra y sus hermanos, almas puras ya se ven, van pintadas en el cielo emprendiendo un largo vuelo, se renace sin saber	We've given death in the past, now we support our Indians For those men who fought for their lands And their brother, pure spirits Who will paint the sky To be reborn
Indios somos, nuestra piel se refleja en nuestra tierra Aborigenes de raza con el sol pintan su espalda... Indios somos, nuestra piel se refleja en nuestra tierra Aborigenes de raza con el sol pintan su espalda...	Indians is what we are, our skin reflects our land Aboriginal is our race, with the sun we paint our back Indians is what we are, our skin reflects our land Aboriginal is our race, with the sun we paint our back

Aborigenes never reached that milestone globally, but locally they were considered innovators and pioneers of “tribal metal” in El Salvador. Following the breakup of Aborigenes, two members of the band decided to form a new incarnation of Aborigenes called “Araña”. Araña’ debut album *Teotl* is notably interesting as the idea of decolonization and education becomes more prominent than *Sentenciados Por La Ignorancia*. The title itself *Teotl* is the Nawat word for god (a language that continues to be spoken in El Salvador’s indigenous communities) and constructs the message for their audiences of the importance of indigeneity. Its message is clearly stated by the album artwork, depicting indigenous artistic styles borrowed from Maya and Pipil art and culture.

Teotl’s opening track, Repression, articulates this message through lyrics and musicality by cohesively combining traditional music with metal creating a poetic illustration to deconstruct Salvadoran identity. The themes in the song discuss the repression of indigenous voices and rights, and the need to express such rights in a country that refuses to believe it is guilty of oppression. Consider the following lyrics:

Siendo un pueblo desterrado Retomamos lo robado Y vigilando a nuestro paso. La discriminacion. (Being an exiled people, we will take back what was stolen, and watching our way of life, The discrimination)

The song concludes with the image of an idealistic future of freedom of speech and the end of Mayan-Pipil repression. Araña concept in *Teotl* calls for resistance against Spanish roots and awareness of American soft power in Latin America and the need for El Salvador to decolonize itself. Indigeneity becomes the central component in the upbringing of Araña, songs such as Cenizas, Quemados Por El Sol highlight Araña’s goal to connect back to the roots of Pipil culture and away from colonial systems with lyrics such as “Pieles roja, Ira Azteca. Lágrimas que nunca secan. Voz Andina, Ojos Mayas, Almas negras que no callarán, No callarán (Red Skins, like Azteca. Tears that never dry, Andean voice, Mayan Eyes, Black souls that won’t shut up. They will not be silent). Araña expresses frustration with the lack of education about indigenous cultures and and the failure of the Salvadoran government to halt the destructive policies of repression against indigenous people.

This is what makes Araña a popular band within the metal community in El Salvador: they're paying homage to ancestry and educating their listeners concerning the importance of indigeneity in the roots of Salvadoran identity. The band frontman, Eduardo Rodriguez, says that he feels he has an internal need to focus Araña's sound and musicality on an indigenous Pipil perspective (Resonancia, 2017). Drawing upon the histories of the Pipil and Maya civilization enables the band to educate listeners about the tragedies of the past, but also about the resilience of peoples (2017). More importantly, it's a platform for him to show his, and many others, disagreements and discomforts with western influence in El Salvador, as he says "wake up and see the problems we're facing, how every day we're becoming America. To not forget our colonial past and American colonialism" (2017).

4.2.2. Resurging Instrumentation

Integrating instrumentation that is a characteristic of the region embeds and links indigeneity within the musicality. The instrumentation and choice to use a variety of instruments from the region are purposefully done in many bands, thus creating cultural hybridity in extreme metal. As mentioned earlier in the paper, glocalizing metal music in specific regions forms unique sounds and music in the genre as the incorporation of indigenous elements creates a relationship between geography and music development. In this specific example, however, there is an end goal; using instrumentation allows Cemican and Araña to reflect on a pre-colonial past, to recover a form of musicality that reflects their respective indigenous legacies. And the music demands special attention that opens up greater opportunity for cultural openness; making indigenous music more accessible and blend with contemporary genres. Blending indigenous instruments with extreme is foundational and becomes a tool to sustain indigenous culture for those listening.

Perhaps you could clarify how it is different in the cases mentioned here with Cemican and Araña. Perhaps something about the political impulse that is foundational to their musical aspirations, their desire to use cultural hybridity to make overt references to

the tragic legacy of colonialism and how this can be achieved by recovering elements of that pre-colonial past in their choice of instrumentation.

In another instance, it is also a pragmatic example of geomusicology, the study of geography and music that draws on the relationship of music and its reflectivity in the region. In the context of this paper, music can be used as a decolonial cultural practice aimed at both education and cultural pride. This integration of regional instruments from the local communities serves to make the music more regional than global and highlights indigenous contributions, culture, and sounds.

Cemican in the Mexican metal scene is known for combining different wind instruments and percussions with instruments normally used in Extreme Metal which become a focal point in the compositions. There are many instances in Cemican's discography that this sound is prevalent: the opening track *Yaotecatl* from the album *Ticateh Ipan Miquixtlahuac* begins with a minute of instrumental music that ranges wind instruments, Mayan tubes, flamboyant pods. The song sets a tone for the album; you do not need to be from the region to understand where the sounds originate. It a familiar sound that feels Pre-Hispanic, and that is the main goal for Cemican, saving a culture from the forces of colonization and globalization that might otherwise have been forgotten. Ocelot from Cemican is the member that oversees combining this instrumentation with metal. He is an archeologist by studies and tries to try out different instruments that fit well with the song. On the other Yei Tochtli studies music and participates in excavations on archeological sites to discover new instruments that he creates replicas of.

Combining ancient and modern instruments presents unexpected technical challenges for Cemican. "Most of the pre-Hispanic instruments were specific to each song because it's very hard to find the correct notes on a hand-crafted instrument," Ocelotl explains. "So sometimes they were out of tune and we had to find the exact flute that worked for those tones in that song." But the results are a mixture of Aztec inspired sound with extreme metal: blast beats, heavy riffs and growling vocals accompanied by these intricate wind instruments that harmonize with the guitars. These harmonies are

across many songs: Mixteco, Itlach In Mictlanecuhtli, Ritual, and are even central components in instrumental songs. The use of this regional cultural hybridity works symbiotically with the lyrical contents of the songs. As mentioned above, the song Azteca Soy paints a story of warriors, Azteca pride, and indigeneity that are themes that spread throughout Cemican lyrical discography. They tend to utter names of Aztecs gods, rituals, and ceremonies to showcase the indigenous roots of the community, in hopes to contribute to the re-emergence of indigeneity in Mexico.

Indigenous themes are heightened when the lyrics are accompanied by indigenous instruments, most notably the Aztec wind instrument. It is a complete package for Cemican and an experimental approach as well; the expression of cultural artifacts is used to inspire and sustain indigeneity in the case of Mexico. The ongoing process of decolonization is recognized by the geomusicality in Cemican, the process is to encompass indigenous experiences through music, and then challenge colonial paradigms by describing myth, superiority, and pride through storytelling. Distinguishing the balance of metal and wind instruments is to recognize a synthetic sound of hybridized music, while extreme metal is not native to Mexico, there is a direct role in fostering decolonial, and anticolonial resistance through heavy metals tight knit community in Mexico by decolonizing the mind. Cemican uses these instruments to heighten the experience of their music: why only talk about Aztec, Mixteco culture through lyrics when incorporating instrument can increase this experience? Musicians have used the tool of music and instruments to sustain indigenous culture, and to an extend revitalize it. Ocelot explains that

Sometimes we [Cemican] try an instrument to know how it sounds. Then we add the rest of the instruments. When we already have guitar riffs, Mazatecpatl tries out different instruments to find the one that fits best. In addition to the whistles, we have Mayan tubes, flamboyant pods, nuts ... We have in the group an archaeologist, a professor, an ethnomusicologist. Mazatecpatl has traveled all over Mexico to discover instruments. He met Mayans who sold or offered him instruments. We also have replicas of ancient instruments exhibited in museums. We rebuilt them to try to figure out how to use them. There are no instruments from the Aztec era, so we try and bring that in our era. (Guichet, 2019)

Reviving as many traditions possible is Cemican's goal, to create a cultural impact by encouraging indigeneity through the songs. It is expressive freedom that conveys a decolonial mindset that reflects and embraces it: Several songs do this in Cemican's catalog: *Luna Desmembrada* a song about Coyoxuahqui, the Aztec goddess of the moon who butchers her brother Huitzilopochtli the god of war and her effect on Aztec people when the moon is bright. *Luna Desembrada* (The butchered moon), begins with a guitar melody that is harmonized with a wind instrument, and then follows with percussion to add dissonance. The type of harmonization is heard throughout the song and heard on its own with the vocals. The vocals are especially interesting, they had a guest singer by the name of Karina Del Desierto who plays the “role” of Coyoxuahqui, chanting in Nahuatl the story of her brother’s murder with the sounds of indigenous instruments being played. Combining instruments, vocals with lyrics are part of Cemican and play an important role in their expression of indigeneity as it allows them to highlight their regional ancestry, a symbol of local culture with the heaviness and progressing arrangements of metal music.

4.2.3. Visualize La Epoca Ancestral

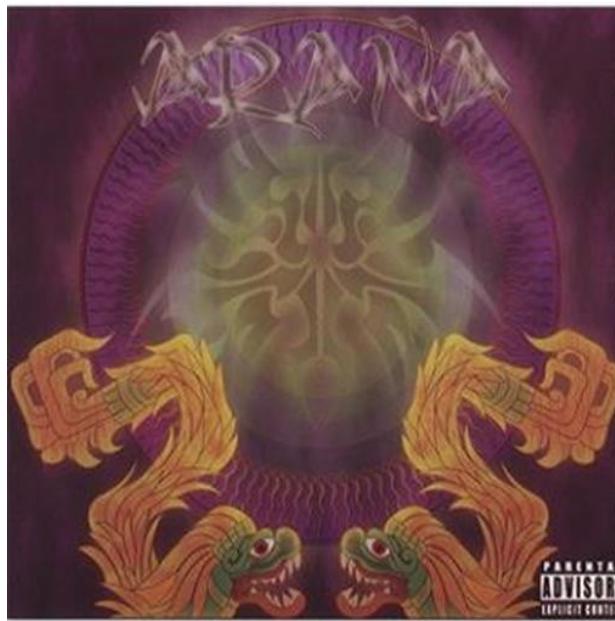


Figure 4. Teotl’s album cover was inspired by Mayan religion and artistic interpretations. This is also prominent in their music video “Teotl”, where the band is depicted in tribal-like war paint.

The above examples are an important part of understanding how bands are increasing the inclusion of regional cultural artifacts into metal music's visual aesthetics. But the visual aesthetics goes beyond the conventional images of death, Satan, and darkness to include the figures of Aztec and Mayan gods- most prominently Quetzalcoatl. The artwork for *Teotl* (see Figure 4) above shows the posture of Quetzacoatl facing each other following with the symbol of Araña, a tribal design inspired by Mayan hieroglyphics. Eduardo Rodriquez says that their decision to use the image is a way to link their local presence with the representation of the local culture that fits well with metal aesthetics. Lyrics such as Cenizas, Quemados Por El Sol, highlight Araña goal to connect back to the roots of Pipil culture and promoting resistance to the continuing influence of colonialism and American soft power influence. Frustrated that Salvadoran identity is structured by colonial mindset and Americanization of culture, indigeneity is used to resist this mindset and becomes the central component in the imagery selected of the Album artwork and their performances. The music video for Diente Por Diente was filmed in an abandoned church and Mayan temple. While the band is playing, there are a couple of other performances happening, men doing a torch dance with a ceremonial flame, an interesting image of flame dancers resembling a Pipil-Salvadoran ceremony.



Figure 5. A shot from Araña's music video for *Diente Por Diente*, filmed in El Salvador. From *Araña - Diente por Diente Video Oficial*, E Amaya 2013, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=h0DVD03nIFE>. Copyright 2013 by RadicalesTv,

Diente Por Diente (see Figure 5) serves as a conduit for a critical analysis of Salvadoran identity and possibly Araña's ongoing critique of the state's failure to provide adequate education about indigenous cultural heritage. Although this might be interpreted as a commonality in metal music, against the system, doing so through the lens of the local culture shows that metal fans are reflective about their roots, the setting, and engage in efforts to challenge societal problems, the inaction of the governments to support Pipil people- playing in a Mayan historical ground is a reminder and recognition for indigenous heritage.

The second example shows images from Cemican's stage practices: just as the music videos tell a visual story of the lyrics, during concerts the band incorporates traditional ceremonies of indigenous populations to both entertain and educate people. Cemican uses body paint, traditional clothes, and headdresses to recreate rituals during their performances (see Figures 6 and 7). These recreations also include traditional dances and chants.



Figure 6. A member of Cemican dressed in Aztec clothes while performing live. From *Cemican Live at Wacken Open Air* by Andreas Lawn, 2018, https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Cemican_-_Wacken_Open_Air_2018-2731.jpg. Copyright 2018 by Sa 4.0



Figure 7. A member of Cemican dressed in Aztec clothes while performing a sacrifice onstage. From *Cemican Live at Wacken Open Air* by Andreas Lawn, 2018, <https://www.spirit-of-metal.com/en/band/Cemican.jpg>. Copyright 2018 by Sa 4.0

Mixing pre-Hispanic music with metal but with a more visual form is what Cemican ultimately aims to do in their live performance, as this is where the band truly shines in representing indigeneity. Having the audiences not just hear the sounds of the culture being played, but seeing it visually, the clothing, the rituals, is to be placed “la epoca ancestral” (in the era of the ancestors). In an interview, Cemican explains their reasoning and process behind their stage presence

“We [Cemican] have a lot of friends who are part of the Mixtecan community, being into the dance, the Mixtecan dance, and they started to take us, and we started going to spiritual ceremonies, and discover, to learn about the temascal, our indigenous side (such as los huicholes) and thought how, mentally first, to do this right, and ask for permission by these same people. Because the reality is we know a lot of people who know way more than we do, and have some doubt on how to do a ritual on stage (without opening the four points to the other dimension), how to open these portals

given the small amount of time we have on stage, so that is why we have their blessings to take those rules bend them a bit for the performance but stay respectful. [Metal Mexico, 2019]

The ancestral is a key theme to this band, and when talking about Aztec gods, touching upon moments in mythology, stories, and visual education of pre-Hispanic culture, a Mesoamerican time is important for Cemican. Mysticism and death are close to Mexican culture and works well together with metal to show the intelligence, the glory, and the vision of the world the Aztecs had. Cemican not only talks about the culture of the stories but shows it by portraying rituals in their live events to create and motivate the audience to get educated, to make them feel deeply rooted in their culture. For example, when playing the song Yaotecatl live, the band enters the stage and the shaman goes towards Techcatl to begin the sacrifice for Huitzilopochtli. These rituals, where death is followed by excision of the heart, were enacted to help the cosmos function by re-enacting the creation of the world and birth of Maize; a story where the sun vanquished the forces of darkness and bringing the dry and rainy seasons, the Sun and the Earth (Graulich, 2000).

All the band members on stage are in traditional clothing to a certain extent and resemble Aztec warriors and high priests, in face paint, shirtless, and with long hair. As the Shaman “Sacrifices” the man, the word “Yaotecatl (god in Nahuatl) is chanted. The performance is an homage to the type of sacrificial ceremonies the Aztecs were known for, and to worships the gods. It is not simply a performance, with the blessings of the Mixteco community, the ceremony in the concert becomes an educational and visual tool for audiences. As Teculti states “And for them [Mixtecos], it is like we have an obligation to them! And permission, these people are super into and in the indigenous side of Mexico, and their blessings to do what we do, to create this fusion of metal that is education and respectful.”

This use of such imagery is not limited to their live performances, for many of Araña’s and Cemican’s music videos use images of their ancestry and culture as central themes in their music videos. With lyrics that describe either resistance, repression and cultural remembrances such as Araña, or storytelling, mythology, and culture such as

Cemican, visual representations are key. In Cemican's music video for Mixteco, there are many images that rely on these pre-Hispanic visuals (see Figures 8 and 9).



Figure 8. A shot from Cemican music video for Mixteco, filmed in Mexico. From *Cemica - Mixteco (Official Video)*, J, Panteras, 2015.
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=k1Pn4 jit4DI> Copyright 2015 by CemicanMex



Figure 9. A shot from Cemican music video for Mixteco, filmed in Mexico. From *Cemica - Mixteco (Official Video)*, J, Panteras, 2015.
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=k1Pn4 jit4DI> Copyright 2015 by CemicanMex

The above images are taken from Cemican's music video for Mixteco, a song about the Mixteco tribe and their battles against neighboring tribes and colonization. With references of Tututepec, the location of the Mixteco people; Huehuecoyotl; and El Jaguar, a warrior, the music video expresses the story of the song: a battle between the Jaguar warrior and the Mixteco people that ends with his heart being sacrificed to the Aztec gods. These images are ways Cemican integrate indigenous culture, beliefs and mythologies with the music, and present Aztec as symbols of local culture. Similarly, with Araña, the inclusion of Mayan sites and an abandoned church are aimed towards a counter-narrative on coloniality in El Salvador, a reflection on Christianity as a source of colonialism, its repression, and the ongoing fight for Pipil resurgence.



Figure 10. A shot from Araña music video for Teotl. From *Araña - Teotl*. Pix, 2011 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eF0Q9lUIV5w> Copyright 2011 by Trípode Audiovisual

In the music video Teotl (see Figure 10), Araña is playing in a dark room with fluorescent lighting, covered in face painting that resembles the Gods of death. Teotl is a Nawat term that is often transcribed as “god”, and in Pipil beliefs, Teut is known as the creator and father of life. The nature of Teotl in the song is the “real god” for Araña, and how it is in your own hands to discover the power, the education of Pipil heritage. The message can be heard in the lyrics “En tus manos se encuentra el poder Tu decisión es

retomar la fé (it is in your hands to discover the power; you decide to take back the original faith) and furthered through the imagery of music video. Shots of the band honing death-like face paint, close-ups, and their tribal inspired symbol. It is an aggressive style of imagery to invoke resistance but remains an important part of understanding decolonial reflections and challenging coloniality.

Visuals and imagery can play important roles in how decolonization can be represented and enacted for two reasons. First, the use of indigenous elements, rituals, ceremonies, and representations of gods has served as an interpretation of indigenous iconography and activities that link to both regions and cultural heritage during Pre-Hispanic eras. This process helps shed light on underlying historical meanings such as seeing ceremonies during concerts or playing in a Mayan site. This is particularly the case in El Salvador where Pipil culture is still widely ignored due to government interference. Where most people see celebratory representations in festivals, such as in Mexico, metal fans are given a darker sense of meaning that link the origins of colonialism, but foster participation for education about their indigenous roots. Secondly, the use of imagery in their music videos, album covers, and the promotional materials show how Araña's and Cemican's music serves as a conduit for a critical analysis of their region's actions in regard to promoting indigeneity and local culture. This includes celebrating, highlighting, and understanding indigenous culture, and in the case of Arana, an ongoing critique of Pipil repression.

4.2.4. Language and its role in Education

For Cemican in particular, singing in their native language of Nahuatl is more than just a creative avenue and expression. It is a reclamation of indigenous identity, culture, and pride. In Decolonizing the mind Thiong, argue that musicians can resist mental colonization by retaining indigenous musical practices while creating newer innovations such as singing and composing songs that push languages to newer limits; this renews the language and creates expressions that help sustain indigenous culture, including preserving language (1981). While Mexico emerged from colonization, one of the effects of it was the replacement of Nahuatl by Spanish. I am not suggesting that

Nahuatl is a lost language, on the contrary, many still speak the language, but only in pockets of Mexico. In the compositional writings of Cemican, singing in Nahuatl is an active choice that becomes an avenue for the band to showcase the language in the local and the global. The choice of using language is often one that is a cultural identity formation (see Figure 11), seen in the chart below from the article Decolonizing the Mind through Song (Carter-Enyi & Carter Enyi, 2019)

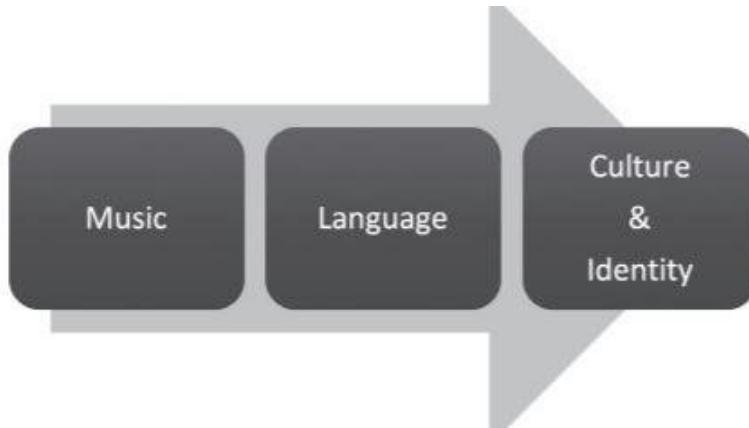


Figure 11. Carter-Enyi & Carter Enyi explanation on how music can form culture and identity.

This chart shows that music and language can play an active role in achieving a specific communication goal, and in this case, the concept of culture and identity. Cemican often uses Nahuatl in their song and album titles, with a minimal amount in Spanish. It is a different approach than Araña, which primarily sing in Spanish, but this different approach in the language for Cemican is a necessary activity that helps provide more context in their goal for Aztec indigeneity.

The use of Nahuatl helps prime and frame the audience to engage in a focal element that packages the composition with a grounded interpretation of Aztec and Mixteco culture. Ocelet explains that they mix singing in Spanish and Nahuatl so that they don't forget their roots; they try to revive everything that has been forgotten. But mixing both is purposefully done, according to Xaman-ek and Ocelet, as "Everyone speaks Spanish in Mexico. Our goal was not to speak exclusively to the Mexicans and that it's a massive disrespect singing in English and Nahuatl. With us singing in Spanish and Nahuatl, it's to give a voice to our audience, our history with the blessings of the

Mixteco community.” (MB Live, 2019). While Thiong’o’s vision for decolonization does not align with Cemicans, their music has the advantage of giving the audience a quicker way to understand the stories. While Thiong’o’s vision is somewhat extreme in that it sets limits to the accessibility of music, decolonizing the mind through song goes beyond just singing in one language. Cemican’s choice of Spanish increases the size of the audience who will find the music enjoyable. It also makes the music easier for the band’s fans to digest. It’s a balance of accessibility and cultural consolidation, however, when they sing in Nahuatl, it a powerful motif in the composition.

For example, songs such as Ritual, Nahualli, and Luna Desmembrada that have Nahuatl lyrics when played live allow the audiences to sing along in their indigenous language whether they are completely familiar or unfamiliar with it. Singing in their native language is a powerful live moment to see. It becomes an avenue for education, a way of resisting colonialism, and in a literal sense, a chance to decolonize the mind through singing. Generating awareness of indigeneity can be as simple as incorporating the indigenous language through lyrics and can even be a technique for teaching that language. Singing in one’s indigenous language is an important step, and for Cemican (as well as Araña) who attended Wacken Festival (the biggest Heavy Metal festival that garners 70,000 fans from over 100 different countries which attract the biggest acts in the genre), playing these songs in Nahuatl is an important role in decolonization.²

² Cemican were also used as the promotional band for the 30th anniversary 2020 Wacken Festival that was supposed to be Aztec themed. The video shows Cemican approaching the stage in their clothes, with an Aztec backdrop that highlight the civilizations art style. The YouTube video has garnered over 100,000 views.

Chapter 5. Extreme Metal as Indigenous Education?

5.1. Decolonizing the Mind through Music

As Linda Tuhiwai Smith (1999) has pointed out, Indigenous critique of the colonizing mission is twofold and must revert to both colonized and pre-colonized time, in a search to find what is authentically Indigenous, and what was imposed or taken away by the colonizer. This thesis has explored the ways indigenous reclamation can be expressed in Latin America with the use of Extreme Metal, and how it can promote decolonial motives. In a context where Extreme Metal has been glocalized in El Salvador and Mexico, it has become an avenue where indigeneity Mayan-Pipil, Mixteco, and Aztec indigeneity is expressed both musically and visually. Examining coloniality through Extreme Metal becomes a decolonial process for bands as metal in Latin America usually is situated in political or societal issues and disenfranchisement. This is similar to *Decolonizing the Mind*, Ngugíwa Thiong'o where music and language can be an effective way to combat colonial ways of thinking. Now in the case of Ngugíwa Thiong'o, this persuasion was used in African Literature and how language creates unity, a unity of people that can never be defeated. In this case, it is the notion of music as an effective tool to create unity and fuel a sense of indigenous pride for the listener.

Musicians can resist mental colonization by retaining indigenous musical practices while creating newer innovations such as singing and composing songs that push languages to newer limits; this renews the language and creates expressions that help sustain indigenous culture, including preserving the language. This thesis showed how decolonizing the mind can be canonized as a tool for decolonial practices in Latin America. In the first chapter, we looked into the theoretical aspects of Music as Resistance, how music, Metal, can diffuse into local scenes, and create a hybrid sound. Cultural hybridity approach to Extreme Metal explained the initial movement of Extreme Metal with Sepultura's *Roots* and the albums' global influence. We have also seen how metal scenes vary throughout the world and take influences from geographical locations. In the case of Scandinavia, it was Viking and Black Metal that pushed cultural aspects of Norse Mythology, a critical analysis of Christianity in this scene. Metalheads celebrated

this cultural hybridity and saw the globalization of metal as an invitation to appropriate and use this abrasive genre as a tool for critical analysis.

Yet this thesis has argued how Extreme Metal can be used more than just a critical analysis and a counterculture of religion; specifically how Cemican and Araña use Extreme metal to highlight indigeneity and use Extreme Metal as a platform for education and cultural appreciation. The narratives of indigenous culture, whether it is Cemican using music to as a story-telling device, a performative recognition of indigenous rituals and practices, or Araña who discuss positive Pipil heritage and reclamation of an ancestral root, they diverse on how to interpret decolonization. Thus, bands such as Cemican and Araña should not be discussed as simply Metal bands in the scene; this limits the viewpoint of the bands' goals with their artistry and what their media can provoke. For by its nature, Cemican and Araña give listeners a scope of indigeneity in a variety of interpretative strategies. It is a reclamation of indigenous identity, culture, and pride through lyrics, music, instrumentation, and visuals.

These elements we saw, help generate awareness of indigeneity and increase the enjoyability of music listening. It's a balance of accessibility and cultural consolidation. When Cemican sings in Nahuatl, it a powerful motif in the composition, it's the repackaging and process of oral tradition, the storytelling of buried Aztec mythologies, the resurgence of Mixteco pride, a form of solidarity to Mexico indigenous community, Araña singing about Pipil pride, the historical oppression, and resurging a broken and forgotten root.

We need to look beyond (and expand) the aspects of popular music, in this case, Extreme Meal as a contribution towards studies in decolonization. This thesis examined four elements that have been little explored: Lyrics, Instrumentation, Visuals, and Language as contributions in the realm of Extreme Metal and avenues for decolonial education. It then traced two different bands approaches to use these elements in association with Extreme Metal and their regional indigenous heritage. Thus, this thesis study attempted to bridge contemporary Metal bands and show how their artistry was not simply just music to listen as a fan but also consists of decolonial methodologies at the

same time. For example, singing in their native language, writing about indigenous history, resurgence, and roots, is a powerful live moment to see, and when audiences, metalheads, live sing these songs, whether in Araña concerts chanting “idio somos nuestra piel, se relfeja nuestra, aborigine es Pipil” or Cemican fans, who sing along in Nahuatl, it becomes a literal definition of decolonizing the mind through song.

For Cemican, they are narrators of media texts that describe Aztec and Mixteco culture, stories, and mythologies. A type of oral tradition that continues the legacies of these communities. Araña texts describe social unrest and oppressions of Pipil communities, inevitably adding a Salvadoran identity dimension in their music. Listening to this type of song infusion with abrasive loud sounds of extreme metal helps create a newer avenue for this indigeneity to blossom.

5.2. Beyond Cemican and Araña

The type of decolonial narratives Cemican and Araña do can also be seen across Central America. Many Metal bands, from Extreme Metal, to Heavy Metal, to Thrash, Death, and Power Metal use similar indigenous elements that are found in their band's ethos. Above all, they emphasize indigeneity through a variety of issues from colonialism, anti- Christianity, resistance, cultural pride, which are all interpretive differently (see Appendix A). This shows that the elements found in this thesis exist across Latin America as well, that is isn't a one-off situation. Therefore, decolonization can be explored in a variety of musical approaches in the genre of Metal. This type of success seen in Cemican and Araña has promoted indigeneity in their respective regions.

Take for example the comments from the bands' respective YouTube videos and Facebook posts:

Anonymous from Cemican music video *Guerreros De Cemican*: Los instrumentos de viento unidos al sonido del metal generan un sentimiento que permite recordar la conexión que tenemos con el universo a través de las culturas ancestrales y la lucha interminable del hombre en esta su tierra. Buen tema

“The wind instruments together with the sound of metal generate a feeling that allows us to remember the connection we have with the universe through ancestral cultures and the endless struggle of man in his [colonized] land. Good theme for metal”

Anonymous: no necesitamos MITOLOGIA ESCANDINAVA aqui en america
somos la RAZA QUE SOBREVIVE

“We do not need Viking Metal, here in Central America we are the indigenous people that continue to live on!”

Anonymous from Abogenes video *Sentenciados por La Ignorancia*: no olvidar nuestro origen

“Never forget our roots”

Reading these comments points towards the impact this type of Metal has amongst its fan, and towards continuity of research of Decolonization and Music. While I have pointed out a theoretical approach to Metal as a decolonial tool, using specific elements, including ethnographies from the bands themselves and the fans would greatly diversify this area of study. As in Chapter Four, I argued how Cemican uses visuals and performances to heighten the music's experiences for the audience, the incorporation of testimonies from audiences would bring in a pragmatic component to the work. However, this is another type of work in the field of ethnography, and while it is imperative to include it, this thesis focused on the creative approach's Latin American use in their creative works for decolonial purposes. Future work should focus on ethnography as it would be beneficial to alternatively explore the effects of this type of Extreme Metal amongst the communities, fans, and other bands in addition to exploring other Latin American counties (or other countries whom experienced colonization).

This study demonstrates the connections between Extreme Metal, and how common concerns of colonialism and indigeneity are highlighted in Cemican and Araña. Whether that be in terms of storytelling literacy devices, lyrics comprised of resistance and remembrance, or performances of cultural resurgence. The similarities are seen in the forms of Indigeneity resurgence and willingness to have an open dialogue on indigenous

histories and education. I have shown how bands can use Extreme Metal and appropriated it with regional influence towards decolonial motives and challenge dominant colonial narratives but flexible enough to adapt in different contexts, traditions, and varied musical perspectives. But there are many Metal bands in Latin America and many countries with unique indigenous cultures and colonial backgrounds. The way that bands approach will differ, but the goal is the same, decolonization through the mind, and music, Extreme Metal, can open doors for dialogue, education, and ultimately indigenous solidarity.

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Appendix. Indigenous Influenced Metal Bands in Latin America

This is a list (same list as depicted in Figure 2 in Chapter 2) of Extreme Metal bands across Latin American that engage in decolonial processes by challenging coloniality using indigenous themes. The indigenous themes integrated differ in approaches across both the sub-genre of metal and countries in Latin America. Nelson Varas-Díaz created this list for the article “Decolonial Reflection in Latin America” using the online website <https://www.metal-archives.com/>. This website has an extensive list of Metal bands across the world and you can search up indigenous inspired Metal bands.

Country	Band	Subgenre	Mechanism
Argentina	Werken	Power Metal	Use of indigenous imagery and lyrical content in defense of these populations.
Bolivia	Oscuro Mito	Black/Folk Metal	Use of lyrical content in defense of indigenous populations. Addresses specifically Inca culture.
Brazil	Tierramystica	Folk Metal	Use of indigenous imagery and lyrical content in defense of these populations. Use of imagery depicting battles between European conquistadores and local people.
Chile	Folkheim	Folk Metal	Use of indigenous imagery and regional instrumentation.
Colombia	ThunDarkma	Folk Metal	Use of indigenous imagery and lyrical content in defense of these populations. Use of regional instrumentation.
Cuba	Tendencia	Thrash/Groove Metal	Use of Afro-Caribbean instrumentation (i.e. batá) linked to non-Christian religious practices.
Ecuador	Aztra	Folk/Heavy Metal	Use of indigenous imagery and overtly political lyrical content in defense of these populations.
El Salvador	Indezoquixtia	Thrash Metal	Use of lyrical content in defense of indigenous populations.
Mexico	Cemican	Progressive/Power/Folk Metal	Use of indigenous imagery and lyrical content in defense of these populations. The band engages in onstage rituals reproducing indigenous religious practices.
Panama	Spirit of the Deep Waters	Black/Doom Metal	Use of indigenous instrumentation, specifically the rain stick that is characteristic of the Mapuches in South America.
Paraguay	Kuazar	Thrash	Sings some songs in Guarani, one of the main local indigenous languages in the country.
Peru	Chaska	Folk/Death Metal	Use of indigenous imagery and lyrical content in defense of these populations.
Puerto Rico	Argyle	Black Metal	Use of indigenous imagery and overtly anti-Christian messages.
Uruguay	Pecho e' Fierro	Folk/Heavy Metal	Use of indigenous imagery and lyrical content in defense of these populations. Critical of religion in general.
Venezuela	Gillman	Heavy Metal	Use of indigenous imagery and lyrical content in defense of these populations. The band uses the figure of “Guaica” as a representation of leaders of the region’s indigenous tribes.

Sample of bands that challenge coloniality through the integration of indigenous themes from Latin American and the Caribbean.