

Local Histories/Global Designs

By Walter D. Mignolo

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This book is an extended argument on the "coloniality" of power by one of the most innovative scholars of Latin American studies. In a shrinking world where sharp dichotomies, such as East/West and developing/developed, blur and shift, Walter Mignolo points to the inadequacy of current practice in the social sciences and area studies. He introduces the crucial notion of "colonial difference" into study of the modern colonial world. He also traces the emergence of new forms of knowledge, which he calls "border thinking."

Further, he expands the horizons of those debates already under way in postcolonial studies of Asia and Africa by dwelling in the genealogy of thoughts of South/Central America, the Caribbean, and Latino/as in the United States. His concept of "border gnosis," or what is known from the perspective of an empire's borderlands, counters the tendency of occidentalist perspectives to dominate, and thus limit, understanding.

The book is divided into three parts: the first chapter deals with epistemology and postcoloniality; the next three chapters deal with the geopolitics of knowledge; the last three deal with the languages and cultures of scholarship. Here the author reintroduces the analysis of civilization from the perspective of globalization and argues that, rather than one "civilizing" process dominated by the West, the continually emerging subaltern voices break down the dichotomies characteristic of any cultural imperialism. By underscoring the fractures between globalization and *mundializacion*, Mignolo shows the locations of emerging border epistemologies, and of post-occidental reason.

In a new preface that discusses *Local Histories/Global Designs* as a dialogue with Hegel's *Philosophy of History*, Mignolo connects his argument with the unfolding of history in the first decade of the twenty-first century.

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