

Invoking the Earth Mother:

Gender Equity, Land Rights and Media Activism Among the Aymara of Highland Peru

By

Kellie Cavagnaro

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Approved:

Dr. Carwil Bjork-James, Chair

Dr. Madeline Casad, Co-Chair

Dr. Beth A. Conklin

Dr. Katherine B. Crawford

Dr. Tom D. Dillehay

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*This work is dedicated to my earth mother, Anne St. Onge.*

*Your grace has inspired me to honor the feminine divine, Mom.*

*Thank you for making my life possible. You are loved.*

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## INTRODUCTION: AYMARA WOMEN & MEDIA ACTIVISM IN ANDEAN PERÚ

During the 2010s, Andean state leaders passed legislation containing distinct references to the *Pachamama*, a transcolonial<sup>1</sup> Andean deity regarded as sentient, earthen, female, and vast. Former Bolivian President Evo Morales and former Ecuadorian President Rafael Correa both publicly declared their respect for the Pachamama within the context of announcing mining and extraction projects on indigenous landscapes— projects which are in direct violation of International Labor Organization-169 and community rights to free, prior and informed consent.

Pachamama, the sentient landscape sacred to Aymara Oral History since before the Inka civilization arrived in the Lake Titicaca basin, has also been invoked during Andean state political announcements of mineral concessions, such as to suggest that the earth mother's riches could 'provide for her people' (Fidler 2013). In Peru, former President Toledo came closest to fitting this mold but did not compare in his offerings or references to Pachamama. In all of these nations, open-pit mining is increasing, and protest movements against mining concessions are expanding.

The number of indigenous peoples across the globe who are harnessing radio and social media to mobilize resistance against the coerced development of their territories is growing. While they constitute only 5% of the global population, indigenous peoples represent nearly one-third of the rural and extremely poor. These rural communities are experiencing accelerating rates

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<sup>1</sup> Following Harrison, 2023: "To describe [cultural elements and events] as transcolonial is also to acknowledge that Euro-colonial modernity continues to shape the purportedly postcolonial present. The prefix *trans* is temporal as much as it is geographic and political" Harrison, Olivia 2023. "Transcolonial Studies". Oxford Online. <https://doi.org/10.1093/acrefore/9780190201098.013.1303>

of land dispossession as a result of mining and resource extraction, and local leaders are risking incarceration with the growing criminalization of protest (UN 2010).

Indigenous women, specifically, are taking advantage of emerging opportunities for leadership within indigenous radio programs and on new media platforms. Global funding sources for indigenous language revitalization and community programming are recently more readily available to women, who, in the case of the Aymara, are more likely to be fluent indigenous language speakers because of their longstanding relative lack of seasonal migration for work in monolingual Spanish-speaking regions.

### **Radio, Land dispossession and Aymara Protests**

In the South American Andes, radio remains the primary form of political communication in indigenous communities and between rural and urban networks, while the emerging local use of social media is facilitating the dissemination of messaging to international sympathizers. Much existing scholarship since 2011 addresses the role of social media in protest movements (Castells 2012, Jenkins et al. 2016, Nekmat et al. 2015, Rosato 2014), but radio remains the medium least studied by anthropologists, despite the fact that it remains the most common source of communication in the world (Bessire and Fisher 2013). Ziegler-Otero's study of Radio in the Amazon is a notable exception (Ziegler-Otero 2004).

My research in Aymara communities of the Puno region shows that indigenous leaders here rely on a contiguous set of relations with global institutions, regional radio and, recently, expanding social media access to grow their political bases and organize protest movements aimed at land defense. Women identify with the Pachamama and other earth beings within

Aymara resistance movements, resisting oppression and forming new governance, asking other women in their communities what they seek, specifically, as a platform for reimagined community politics. The Union of Aymara Women of Abya Yala, or UMA, was my primary affiliation during my Fulbright research, and my ethnographic analysis centers on their organization and its activities. UMA received funding from Cultural Survival and other like-NGOs to fund things like airtime at the Puno-based *Pachamama Radio*, as well as equipment to enable them to produce internet streaming casts from their organization's base in Chanu Chanu, at the southern outskirts of Puno city.

Due to the gender-specific and youth-focused biases of many funding sources for indigenous language revitalization, Aymara women are able to access political fora in ways previously unavailable to them while voting at Andean *asambleas*, or community meetings, where they are traditionally seated along the ground, perpendicular to the action, and silent (field notes).

This ethnographic consideration of Aymara *comunicadoras* engages Pierre Bourdieu's conceptualization of *radio fields*, defined as the "networks of cultural, political and socioeconomic relations of force" (Bourdieu 1993) drawn together by radio media. As spaces for ongoing identity formation and political strategizing, radio fields are critical sites of inquiry for understanding indigenous resistance movements, particularly in rural communities (Stone 2009). I consider Aymara radio fields as zones of discursive struggle for sociopolitical legitimacy, where political leaders emerge by cultivating a social voice via media more than *asamblea*.

In considering Rosa Palomino's phenomenological *radio field*—her lived experiences of networking, organizing and producing Aymara radio broadcasts— I contextualize the politically-charged founding of *Pachamama Radio*, the Puno- based station where Rosa and her cohort

broadcast community programs. While the station reaches communities on both sides of the national border, and participation in the 2011 protests was international, I am focusing specifically on the Aymara Lupaqa communities Rosa most often spoke of, and to, with her radio content and regional women's workshops. These communities were active in the 2011 *Aymarazo*.

The Aymara Lupaqa dwell along the shore of Lake Titicaca, above 3600m in a highly vulnerable watershed embattled in constant territory and usage disputes. Chucuito is the pre-colonial center of the former Lupaqa kingdom. The nearby village of Plateria is home to Rosa Palomino and several other leaders within her organization, the Union of Aymara *Comunicadoras*, or UMA. Huacullani community is the site of the Santa Ana protest that spurred the 2011 *Aymarazo* protests that frame the beginning of my analysis period, and among the rare examples of activist communities that have successfully halted a major industrial extraction project in Peru. Rosa Palomino's kinship network extends to Huacullani, and she frequently attended their weekly *feria*, or market, to conduct interviews among the community on topics ranging from community land defense to the fetching price of quinoa.

Culturally, the Aymara radio field is animate, universally accorded an agentive presence, known as Pachamama, who is both embedded in the landscape and transcendent. Within communities, many other *Earth Beings* reside (De La Cadena 2015); most frequently, the two highest peaks within a community landscape are considered the *Achachilas*, or ancestor peaks, of the place. The highest peak is considered male, and the second highest, his female *compliment*. In Huacullani, the community's feminine Achachila sits atop a silver reserve projected to be one of the largest in South America. This is the animate landscape that supports Aymara radio fields.

## Contributions to the discipline

This dissertation contributes to anthropological studies of indigenous social movements, spiritual ecologies and studies of women finding voice. My research traces Aymara media activism beginning from the 2011 *El Aymarazo* uprising in Puno region.<sup>2</sup> Reflecting on extensive participant observation, interviews and audiovisual data, I analyze how activists leverage social media and pan-colonial identities within their ongoing struggles for land- and bodily rights. Indigenous communicator networks, including my partner organizations UMA and REDCIRP, serve as sites for training and content production, collaboration and epistemic resistance.

There are thousands of Andean citizens who are ontologically authentic in their veneration for the Pachamama, and in their espousal of environmental ethics in relation to her. However, extraction firms across the Andes and Amazon practice increasingly destructive models of open-pit mining and damming of vulnerable watersheds that violate ethical responsibilities while wreaking havoc on public health and the Pachamama (Li 2015).

Yet other indigenous Andeans invoke Pachamama legitimately, as an ancestor, as a protector, as a battle rallying cry. A Facebook post showed a blazing green post that read: ‘Pachamama, Si! Pachamamismo, No!’<sup>3</sup>—in other words, ‘Land rights, Yes! Extraction, No!’ Indigenous women advocating pro-environmental policy in public fora have been mocked by

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<sup>2</sup> *El Aymarazo* was a pivotal resistance effort organized by Aymara communities near Huacullani, Peru near the Bolivian border, and joined by Quechuas from Puno and Cusco Regions. I cover this in Chapter Three.

<sup>3</sup> An aumage to the slogan “Coca, Sí! Cocaína No!”, which was popularized during the cocalero movement in Bolivia’s Chapare region during the 1980s and 1990s. Evo Morale led the Cocaleros in protest against the mass-destruction of coca crops during the US-sponsored War on Drugs. He is being invited to consider his hypocrisy: once he advocated for the cultural integrity of coca over state attempts to reify its consumption as a drug to be eradicated; now he leads a state that is reifying the consumption of mother earth for minerals to power cellphones and car batteries.

mainstream Peruvian press as “Pachamamas”. In southern Peru, Andean women report a lack of political voice despite the gender parity framework of *chachawarmi*, and the social moral reverence for *Pachamama*. What are the forces that silence these women? What is at stake?

## **Research Questions**

Treating indigenous media channels (radio, Facebook, WhatsApp, YouTube) as the independent variables that liaise between individual Aymara actors and their communities, and between communities and their global audiences, I asked four research questions:

- *How and why had women’s voices come to be so marginalized in this space? (Ch.4)*
- *What do they seek to change? (Ch.5)*
- *How are women leveraging emerging forms of media to affect access to power? (Ch.6)*
- *Are they gaining clear influence in local governance or national decision-making? (Ch.7)*

## **Research Design and Summary of Findings**

My research took place in three socially connected but geographically distinct realms:

- The United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues (UNPFII), in Manhattan
- The III International Cumbres of Indigenous Communication, in Cochabamba Bolivia
- In southern Peru, in Puno and Cusco region, based at a research apartment in Chucuito.

I conducted eighteen months of fieldwork between 2015 and 2020 in all three research realms: At the UNPFII, at multi-site, pan-Indigenous media summits across the Andes, in-cabin during live Pachamama Radio broadcasts and at Andean community meetings in Aymara and Quechua *ayllus* of Puno and Cusco regions, Peru. Within that timeframe, as measured through life-histories and extensive fieldwork, I found that there is an emerging, hemisphere-wide generation of

indigenous environmental struggles that are increasingly fronted by female spokespersons, as well as younger leaders in lieu of traditional elders. Among these are North American water defenders, prominent leading figures of the Sarayacu, Huaorani, U'wa, Kofan, and others.

Reflecting on the data, I find that Aymara women's expanding presence on emerging media platforms and within transnational indigenous media networks is allowing them to leverage their shared transcolonial narratives with men in their community to communicate transcolonial grievances about the interpersonal violence and marginalization that they face at the hands of men in their own communities and families. Women are using the space that emerges from the social rupture of their broad-based peasant revolt, coupled with the spaces they co-create on emerging media platforms, to reframing the explosive political conversations presently taking place within their home communities, and take their place at the mic.

While many social movements scholars note the enduring legacy of the Zapatistas in Chiapas (Mexico 1994) and the WTO summit in Seattle (USA 1999) as critical muses for emerging social justice movements, my research specifically engages with Icaza and Vasquez' analysis that rebellions such as the indigenous + campesino Zapatista Uprising in Chiapas are *challenging modern epistemic knowledge frameworks' emphasis on Western chronology*. Icaza and Vasquez, along with Biekart and Fowler, find that social movements like that of the EZLN are not "modern reactions" to capitalism; they are "decolonial reactions" that have found new grounds: "The rebellions can be analyzed as beginnings in which the voices of the excluded and oppressed can be heard in a (new) public realm, offering them political visibility and the opportunity to demonstrate alternative political practices" (Biekart and Fowler 2013).



The 'new grounds' in question herein are that of the rapidly expanding digital and radial commons. A main thrust of women's participation in the 1994 Zapatista movement and the ongoing resistance by Aymara *comunicadoras* in Peru is that in both movements, in addition to their coed activism for land and territory rights, women used the opportunity of social rupture, and their framing within *transcolonial narratives*, to air *transcolonial grievances*, in Peruvian women's cases, about their being silenced in community *asambleas*, where community political decisions are made, and about their suffering of interpersonal violence within the ayllu.

These 'new grounds' emerge as the global expanse of social media platforms meets my research participants' expanding access to equipment and training in media production skills, and their increased awareness of, and successful application to, funding for language revitalization and community media from the United Nations, Cultural Survival and NGOs.

### **Decoloniality and Fieldwork: Ethnographer's Presence in Indigenous Communities**

Berry et. Al (2017) discuss how women in the field analyze, encounter, and even reproduce racial, sexual and gendered violence. In their call for a "fugitive anthropology", they describe a methodological approach to politically engaged research that accounts for the ways researchers' bodies and embodiment shape the collection and production of ethnographies.

My whiteness came to the field with me. My embodied representation of a foreign, privileged academic who was present in-community for the sake of social analysis, not social revolution, shaped my interaction with my community partners, even as I got to know them carefully across five years of returns to Chucuito. I took Aymara classes with them at the Universidad Nacional del Altiplano in Puno, and travelled on endless break-of-dawn, brink-of-

death combi rides across the 3S, a road notorious for claiming lives. I drove the campaign vehicle on New Year's Eve as we went stumping across the plains towards Bolivia with painting rollers to mark the walls with Rosa's name and political party. I rolled chuño under foot with them in the frozen predawn, and learned to see constellations in the negative spaces, between the stars.

Nevertheless, my perspectives and sense of urgency and meaning in interpretations is occluded by the fact that I would inherently leave at the end of each field season. Even now, as I sit and finalize this dissertation, checking the news daily to see who the President of Peru is this morning, I watch drone footage and stills posted by my community partners and I hear their labored breathing, their desiccated voices cutting sharply through the hypoxic air, and I hear in their guttural, rhythmic chants and see in their shadowed eyes the conviction of a people who have run out of all non-violent means for survival.

Participant observation of the "small spaces of everyday life" (Canessa 2012) in Chucuito gave me the insights of "hidden transcripts" (Scott 1990), as "each social class or antagonistic group has a public statement of what it considers itself to be doing and a private one that only circulates within the group" (Scott 1990:11). To this effect, I spent countless hours with UMA's core leadership, recording broader group meetings and notating the post-meeting, small group chat among Rosa, Yeny and Sumita, Judith, Irma, Marta and Angel, UMA's then-leadership core. We often stayed well after midnight at Yeny's home in Chanu Chanu, a suburb of Puno, where UMA had its meeting headquarters and satellite recording booth. I travelled with them to multiple rural *huatias*, which for sake of sociopolitical function, can be likened to an Andean backyard cookout party, but centered around earthen potato roasts instead of charcoaled beef on the grill.

My access to the inside baseball was often chance luck: Over three years, I rented a room from an Aymara *misti* family who ran an international horse farm, with regular tourist-volunteers. The family owns one of the larger land tracts in Chucuito, and was descended from landowning Aymara elite. His guests were infrequent, but high octane in local circles. In 2017, on the grounds of the rumor-drenched Taypikala hotel across the 3S from Chucuito's arches, I met Julio Guzman at a huatia launch of his Partido Morado, before realizing that these were motive-laden tubers, and that he was building a grassroots political base. At the time I had simply passed him the bowl of huancaína sauce, thinking that he was just a chatty man who practiced intense eye contact. Across almost two years of Chucuito-based fieldwork, over Santiago's well-chosen wines and accordion music in the *misti* family's stonework pub, I was privy to extensive small talk conversations about town politics, interpersonal conflicts and gossip, reflective discussions of the Sendero Luminoso and anticipatory conspiracy theories about extant regional leaders, including Walter Aduviri, who made my landlords nervous.

Out in the town square, I would pop a squat at the edge of the sidewalk with town folk during the frequent weddings and festivals and sip temperate cerveza from glass bottles while we shat the shit. The awkwardness of my white solo female presence in town, clad in baggy flannel lined work jeans and a men's fleeced LL Bean chore jacket, with waist length curly hair and strange blue eyes meant that I could kind of write my own gender ticket, while fitting none. Gender is iterative in the Andes (Canessa 2011), as was I.

Over time, I felt like the kind of small town oddity that most everyone would chat with while the chicha flowed, and I found that by operating as though immune to shock value, and making the men laugh, I would be increasingly invited to listen in at later events. Awesomely,

this small-talk bonding also meant that *yatiri* (ritual specialists) were gracious as I joined with the 3-4 Aymara university students who typically buzzed around at rituals, ceremonies and dances, angling the camera at times wildly intimately within the ritual scene.

I would wake at 4 am once or twice each week to accompany Rosa Palomino, often one-on-one, for hours in combi vans across the Peruvian altiplano while she collected interviews and stories for her radio program and, later, presented her political platforms in the remote Aymara communities that she considered to be her “bah-sey” (her base). These efforts resulted in my ability to collect a rich and unique data set of rural indigenous grassroots organizing that led successfully from community scale to national stage during the 2020s Peruvian National crisis. It is my intention that these observations and data sets of the cultural phenomenon in process may inform the research of future generations of scholars who may study Peru’s 21<sup>st</sup> century political turmoil from within its aftermath.

## A DISPATCH AMID THE 2023 PERUVIAN NATIONAL CRISIS

It is 2023. The Peruvian State under Dina Boluarte is carrying out deadly repression of a mass protest movement led by indigenous communities of the Southeastern Highlands. The catalyst was the impeachment of President Pedro Castillo, a rural school teacher of humble means from Cajamarca. Castillo, who represented the ‘voice of the people’ to millions of highland indigenous had attempted a self-coup in December with the stated goal of dissolving the Peruvian National Congress and issuing in a Constitutional Assembly. Castillo has since become a metaphor. Citizens’ broad-based demand for a constitutional assembly is starkly real.

During the Juliaca Massacre on January 9, 2023, 18 Aymara and Quechua activists from the majority-indigenous Puno region were killed by the Peruvian National Police. The NPs had been authorized by President Boluarte to use bullets and tear gas against the agro-pastoral highlanders who were mostly armed with rocks and hand tools. On January 15, Boluarte’s forces claimed ten more lives during the Ayacucho Massacre, wherein the Peruvian Army gunned down protesters who were attempting to disrupt the operations of Manco Capác Airport<sup>4</sup>.

Calling for Boluarte’s resignation amid the killing of their community members, an estimated 30,000 Aymaras and Quechuas joined the caravan that began in Ilave, at the shores of Lake Titicaca, in the predawn hours of January 17, 2023. The uprising has been called a veritable “referendum on democracy” in the region. What began as a demand for Castillo’s reinstatement

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<sup>4</sup> In Andean oral history, Manco Cápac is the male progenitor of Inka Civilization, said in some origin stories to have emerged from the waters of Lake Titicaca along with Mama Ocllo. Together, they were First Father and First Mother.

has evolved into a quest by indigenous Andeans to dissolve the Peruvian state and “refound a new nation”<sup>5</sup>. Undeterred by lethal state repression, protesters’ demands are clear:

- ✓ Boluarte resigns,
- ✓ Congress is dissolved, triggering new general elections, and
- ✓ Fujimori’s 1993 Constitution—symbolic of genocide—will know a *Pachakuteq*.

Near Manco Capác airport, amid piles of rubble in downtown Juliaca, a wall tagged during the post-massacre protests now reads, “*El Pueblo Manda*.”<sup>6</sup> What the Aymara and Quechua people demand is their dignity in the form of land sovereignty and political representation. They seek to live within their cultural landscapes with the resources for adequate nourishment. They want bodily autonomy and reproductive health, and they want the self-determining right to cultivate community cohesion without manipulation by mining corporations or state agents. They want to engage in celebration and educate children in their language and cultural traditions (field notes, also, *La Declaración de Qorikancha*, 2019).

Over the airwaves of Pachamama Radio, Aymara and Quechua activists demand the cessation of mining concessions and their resultant unbridled ore extraction and deadly environmental contamination. The hundreds of indigenous road blockades currently restricting mining activity and tourism along the southern route of Peru’s ancient Inka highway are an

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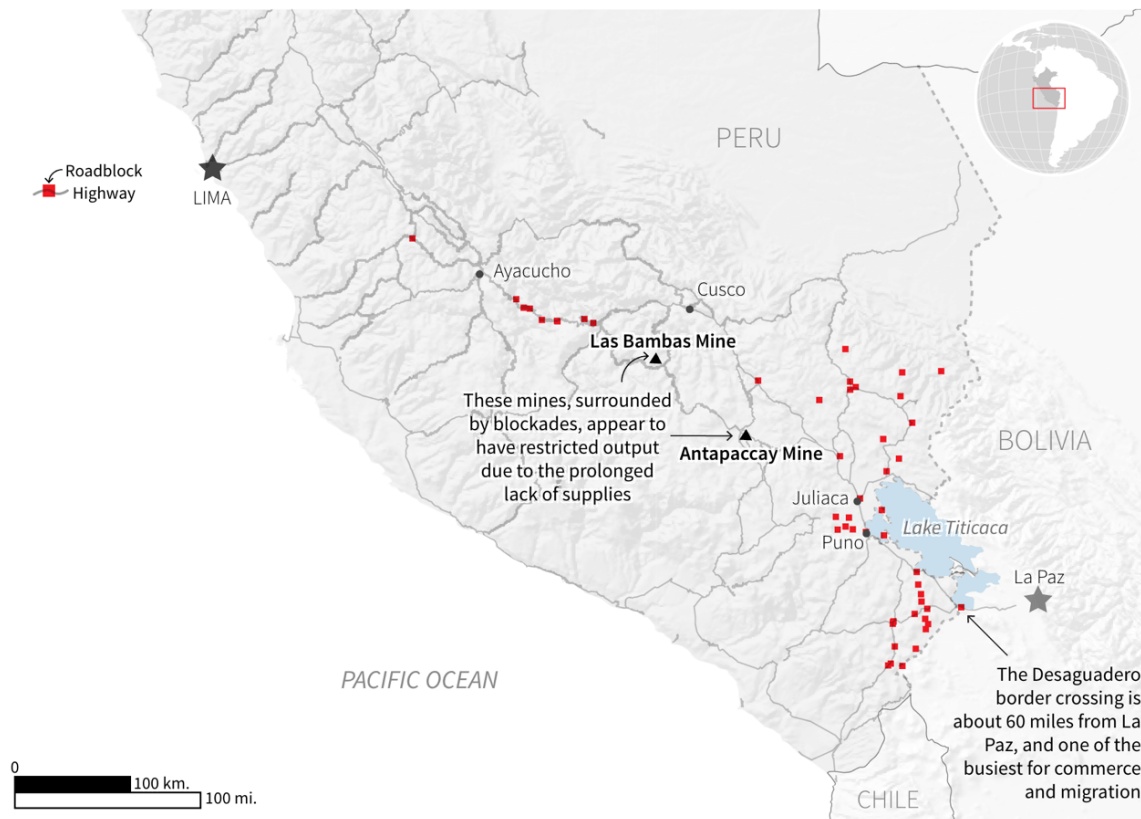
<sup>5</sup> Turkewitz, Julie and F. Rios. 2023. With 50 Dead in Peru, a Referendum on Democracy. NYT Online: January 19.

<sup>6</sup> Phillips, T. 2023. “My city is destroying itself” —Juliaca under siege as death toll rises in Peru’s uprising. Guardian Online: February 5.

expression of Aymara and Quechua resistance to the ills of a colonial extraction project that has never ceased (Galeano 1973).

For the Aymara, time is not unilinear. It is cyclical by nature. A longstanding legend, the Inkarrí, tells that the Inka will return to avenge their losses to the Spanish and reclaim their lands in a time of dynamic transformation—a Pachakutiq. Traveling hundreds of miles along the 3 S, a route that traces the gravelly, mountainous and mostly paved remnants of the 15<sup>th</sup> century Inka Highway down to the shores of Lake Titicaca, the protesters climb the spine of the Andean cordillera through the Sacred Valley and on toward the capital. The vertebrae of the 3 Sur end at La Oroya, a century-old mining town considered to be one of the most contaminated places on the planet.

**Fig 1: Geographic distribution of indigenous road blockades across Peru, 2023. Image credit: Reuters.**



For two days they surge north, organizing *ollas comuneras*, or outdoor community kitchens, for sustenance. The caravan of Aymara protesters passes through one mining-decimated community after another<sup>7</sup>. They pause to record video clips and share their posts across Facebook and WhatsApp. Drone cameras fly above, navigated by university students. This, the *Second March of the Four Suyus*, aims to dissolve the Peruvian Congress shadow-governed by Keiko Fujimori, daughter of the former President and ousted dictator who had provoked the original *March of the Four Suyus* in July 2000. He, Alberto Fujimori had been attempting to elect himself president for a third term. His administration had responded to international concerns of human rights violations by emphasizing Fujimori's efficacy in quelling the Shining Path violence that had plagued Peru throughout the 1990s. Fujimori was pro-mining, open to international investment, and promised a continued crackdown on coca production, 40% of which fed the peak years of the North American cocaine demand (UN World Drug Report 2010). During that time, the Shining Path bombed radio towers in the altiplano, making communication among non-combatant indigenous folks increasingly dangerous with time.

Now in 2023, however, the decentralized nature of social media has equipped each protester with their own digital megaphone. As they march to Lima, some Aymara and Quechua *comunicadoras* are armed with tiny digital recorders, lapel mics and drone cameras, accounting for and broadcasting these earliest moments of Pachakuteq from a first person view. More than a dozen of my community partners are among them, and their stories are the heart of this research.

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<sup>7</sup> Montoya, Angeline and A. Chaparro. 2023. In Peru, the large demonstration that began in the Andes reaches Lima. Le Monde Online: January 19.



They chant and sing as they move, they share and chew coca leaf from brightly embroidered pouches as they met up with affines, and from far above the earth their collective serpentine form can be seen coiling up the spine of the Andes with a slow, wretched anger that has been 531 years in the making—*Pisi pisi manta* (One step at a time; Quechua).



**Fig 2: Aymara woman sorts coca leaf into her manta.** President Boluarte reacts to their arrival in Lima by openly accusing the protesters of terrorism, by implying that foreign nationals must have been inciting the violence, and by ordering NPs to use teargas on the people that she

has just come to govern.

In February, Boluarte declares a state of emergency ranging from Lake Titicaca's indigenous communities north to the Amazon and west over the Andes through Ayacucho, Apurimac and Cuzco regions to the suburban neighborhoods of the coastal elite. Military and National Police are filmed using AK-47s to threaten unarmed citizens. In the weeks since, Aymaras and Quechuas from along the cordilleras have launched a series of strategically routed highway blockades to disrupt economic and political activities in Lima<sup>8</sup>. Mining stocks have fallen, Machu Picchu was purported to have been closed 'indefinitely'<sup>9</sup> and tourists have been

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<sup>8</sup> Politi, Daniel. 2023. Peru's protest deactivators run toward tear gas to stop it. AP Online: January 29.

<sup>9</sup> It has since re-opened.

helicoptered out of the Sacred Valley as the Inka's descendants blockade the tracks of Hiram Bingham's Luxury Train. As protesters continue to risk assassination by military police, other nations of the region openly condemn the Peruvian state.

Despite the deadly violence of state repression, protesters remain undeterred<sup>10</sup>. Over the past decade, the United Nations and the IACHR have documented and decried the increasing criminalization of protest across Latin America, and in Peru in particular<sup>11</sup>. The reason, explains Judith, an Aymara *comunicadora* from Puno, comes down to communal landscape defense:

Many international contracts on our natural resources end this year, and now they want to renew them That's why, no matter what, this woman who says she's president has to renounce. It's the only solution.

-Judith, comunicadora Aymara (Interpersonal communication January 2023)

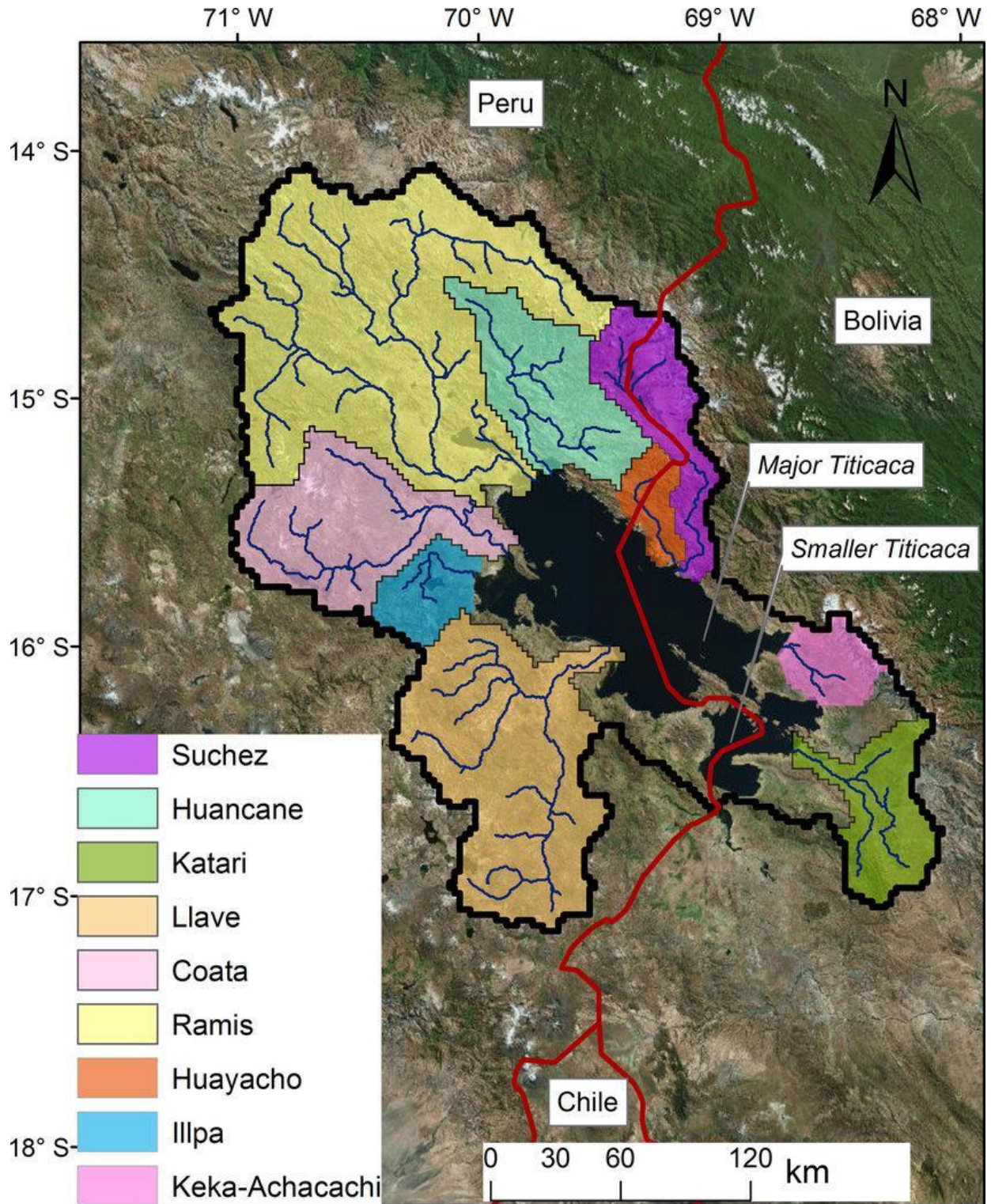
Land is life for the Aymara. Without shared territory, the social fabric of the *ayllu*, meaning the community, comes undone (Yapita 1981, Apaza 2016). Across Peru's vast Andean and Amazonian regions, scores of international mining concessions and land development contracts are constantly being granted and coming up for renewal. Despite state policy that gives indigenous communities the right to "Free, Prior and Informed Consent", and Peru's ratification of ILO-169, the veins of Latin America remain open to foreign extraction firms (Galeano 1973). Struggling against the increasing precarity of communal land legislation and their desiccating and diverted water sources, Aymara citizens of the *pampa*—or high plains— are losing capacity to maintain the complementary practices that have long been essential to Aymara and Quechua communal agrarianism in highland moieties.

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<sup>10</sup> See Carwil Bjork-James 2023, [When does lethal repression fail?](#)

<sup>11</sup> Crabtree, John. 2018. Walter Aduviri- hero or criminal? New Internationalist Online: July 23.

Fig 3: The Ilave sub-basin river system of Titicaca, shaded in light coral, closely maps the geographic distribution of extant Lupaqa-identifying communities. Image credit: Wikimedia Commons.



Many Aymara and Quechua see themselves as descended from a renowned cradle of Inka civilization whose progenitors worked for centuries to curate a “vertical archipelago” of trade relationships across the Altiplano either to safeguard against times of resource scarcity or ecological unpredictability (Murra 1969), or to produce luxury goods in times of plenty (Van Buren 1996). It is less significant to the present research whether historical vertical archipelago frameworks were consistently applicable across the Andean region, or whether the same could be said for resistance movements such as Taqui Onqoy (Norman 2019). Instead, following Mohanty (1984) and Spivak (1988), of critical interest to this research is *why* and *how* these transcolonial narratives still galvanize collective resistance among Andeans today.

On February 24, 2023, the Boluarte Administration offered a payoff restitution to all families who lost a relative or were gravely injured in the protests over these past two months; s/50,000, roughly \$13,000 USD, was the offer per death, and half the amount, 25,000 nuevo soles, if the person were injured, according to decree<sup>12</sup> (Vasquez 2023). This may be in no small part due to the success of the national strike led by Quechua and Aymaras from the southern Andes. Their strikes and blockades continue to meaningfully disrupt economic and administrative “progress” across the southeast as of the time of my dissertation defense. Cited as “the worst violence in Peru in two decades” some mourn, this “threatens to destabilize one of the region’s most investor-friendly economies.”<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> Rebaza, Claudia. 2023. Peru offers \$13,000 to families who lost loved ones in protests. CNN Online: February 23.

<sup>13</sup> Hartman, Travis & A. Villegas. 2023. BLOQUEOS PERÚ. Manifestantes han bloqueado carreteras en el sur de Perú para interrumpir el comercio y el turismo como forma de expresar su descontento. Reuters: February 23.

Writing back in 2015, Emma McDonnell reflected that “most scholars agree that Peru is characterized by a strange paucity of indigenous activism” in comparison to its Andean neighbors (McDonnell 2015). McDonnell cautioned that “paying attention to regional-level trends helps us see a nascent presence [of indigenous activism], and pushes us to see spatial unevenness in the development of a mining-related indigenous movement” emanating out of the Southeast. There is certainly no mistaking that indigenous movement now.

Across social and mass media, protesters post warnings with echoes of pre-Colombian Andean legends. One man from the Apurimac region shouts, “Dina ay viene los Chankas!<sup>14</sup>” His comment is an exemplar of the transcolonial complaint discourse at the center of my research, which asks how this 21<sup>st</sup> century invocation of ancient and enduring pre-colonial Andean social identities help Aymara and Quechua activists, men and women, to achieve their stated aims, or, where they fail, what purpose is served, and what subtle contradictions persist?

Whipping through president after president—seven in as many years— the crumbling Peruvian republic is torn between a pro-extractivist congress whose political leader, Keiko Fujimori, is marred by the legacy of her father’s 1990s eugenics programs, and ex-President Pedro Castillo, an ousted Quechua educator from the foothills of Cajamarca who failed to unite enough factions to achieve a coalition government. Complicating this, some argue, is US-backed intervention amid Castillo’s overthrow. Some highlight the visit between US Ambassador to Peru

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<sup>14</sup> —Dina the Chankas are coming! —A pre-colombian reference to the Quechua-speaking Chanka people of Apurimac.

and the Peruvian cabinet, while others highlight the link between Canadian mineral interests and support of the coup:

The reality is that Canada never wanted Pedro Castillo in power to begin with and saw better allies in his neoliberal opponents. With CAD \$9.9 billion in assets, Canadian companies are Peru's largest investors in mineral exploration. The country's mining and resource extraction firms are always attentive to political shifts in Latin America because of the direct effect of policy changes on their ability to operate and secure contracts.<sup>15 & 16</sup>

Rising to prominence in the Andean region for his virulent opposition to the state during the 2017 Teacher Strikes, Pedro Castillo represented a rejection of *Limeñismo* and a commitment to indigenous landscape defense. regional theatre for the national political stage, however, Castillo's relative social conservatism failed to inspire many urban and middle class leftists. His evangelism alienated many<sup>17</sup>. Castillo's statements frequently belied homophobia and cis-heteronormative ideals. Weeks into his term, he "reassured" LGBTQ Peruvians that though he opposed gay marriage, he did not consider ending those rights to be an immediate priority<sup>18</sup>. Squalled by congressional opposition, Castillo attempted a too little, too late approach to coalition building, promoting sociologist Anahí Durand as Minister of Women and Vulnerable Populations.

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<sup>15</sup> Whitney, Jr., W.T. Peru coup government opens the door for entry of U.S. troops. January 26, 2023. *also* Seeking relief from oppression, Peruvians resist Castillo removal...and wait. December 28, 2022. People's World Online.

<sup>16</sup> Escalante, Camila. 2023. Canada Props Up Peru's Coup Government and Helps Canadian Mining Companies Exploit Crisis. *Toward Freedom* (Online) February 16.

<sup>17</sup> Phillips, Tom. 2023. "My city is destroying itself"—Juliaca under siege as death toll rises in Peru's uprising. *The Observer*, Peru. *The Guardian Online*: February 5.

<sup>18</sup> 2021. Lavers, M. Peru LGBTQ activists express concern over country's new government. *Washington Blade*: 3 Aug.

Durand, who prepared workshops about gender identity and equality to teach to her own colleagues within Castillo's cabinet, labored to repair public opinion among the Left, to no avail. Following Castillo's botched attempt to commit an "self-coup" that would dissolve the Peruvian Congress and trigger a redrafting of the Constitution, Vice President Dina Boluarte immediately outraged Castillo's supporters by assuming the presidency and, in the eyes of my community partners, acquiescing to the coastal elite.

Having just suffered three years of extreme state abandonment, unprecedented famine and immeasurable social memory loss from the Covid-related deaths of countless elderly *sabios andinos*, or community ritual specialists, the Aymara and Quechua of the rural altiplano are left with their willingness to risk individual deaths for the chance of cultural survival. They have disrupted military and police forces, effectively shut down regional and national airports, ended rail transport of goods and fossil fuels, and even succeeded in shutting down the iconic Machu Picchu—the most prominent of World Heritage sites on Earth, for weeks, causing extensive losses to the tourism sector. Copper and other ore mining projects are stymied, unable to receive materials from the capital in order to continue building the infrastructure for mining operations.

Dispatching the Army and National Police to the most heavily indigenous-populated regions of the country, Boluarte has labelled the protesters as "terrorists", suggesting that their resistance was antagonized by external actors.

### **Outline of Remaining Chapters**

The following, **Chapter One**, demonstrates the ways that Aymara activists invoke transcolonial narratives—as in, origin stories and identity categories which persist in continuous

iterations through waves of historical oppression. I introduce the United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues, the concept of gender essentialism, and prior research on women's relationality to the environment, as well as tropes of indigenous peoples' environmental views. Amid extensive academic discussion of "culture, genuine and spurious"<sup>19</sup> I will clarify here that my research does not question Aymara and Quechua women's ontological veracity when they invoke the Pachamama. I do not measure their indigeneity, nor the degree to which their narratives are a compilation of oral historical tradition and learned anthropology about *lo Andino*. Instead, I show what these narratives *do in social practice*, when they hurt, and who they heal.

**Chapter Two** provides broader cultural context about the Aymara of the Andean highlands, situates their present land conflicts within the long arc of resource extraction and conquest in Latin America, and provides an account of the 2011 El Aymarazo protest that catalyzed my community partners into social media action. I then discuss the nature and significance of Aymara and Quechua resistance movements, alliances and identity formation

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<sup>19</sup> See especially Jean Jackson's "Culture, Genuine and Spurious: The Politics of Indianness in the Vaupés, Colombia", (1995) *American Ethnologist* (22) 1: 3-27. Jackson's is an excellent discussion. In my case study of Aymara and Quechuas in Puno region, however, no one hinted at being cadjoled into wearing their *polleras* for the camera. Rosa wouldn't be caught dead without hers, yet I never saw her daughters Judith or Yeny in anything but jeans. They are not monoliths. They said Pachamama's name as infrequently, but meaningfully, for the radio as for the camera as for the dusk-lit earth receiving her first *traigo* during a toast. Yet, distinctly unlike my findings from fieldwork work with Maya Daykeepers and para-Zapatista communities in Chiapas (Cavagnaro 2014), this was not a case of folks strategically "reclaiming" their Cosmovision. However, many women younger than 40 who had grown up in urban or suburban settings were actively learning Aymara as heritage speakers, but not native speakers. In my case study, the force of UN language revitalization rhetoric—and its related funding opportunities—was more likely to re-shape or rephrase activists' self-presentation. I came to this conclusion after spending 4 years volunteering as a grants translator with UMA and REDCIRP as they sought NGO funds. What I do question, significantly throughout, is why and how the third-gender social categories of precolonial social organization are missing from Aymara and Quechua Cosmovisions and community practices, today.



over that period. **Chapter Three** briefly contextualizes and clarifies my methodology in direct relation to my research questions.

**Chapter Four** takes place in Chucuito community, and introduces the social construction of gender roles within Aymara and Quechua communities of the highlands, including extant, **transcolonial** perspectives on indigenous gender hierarchies.

**Chapter Five** examines *comunicadoras'* broadcasting efforts in international, pan-indigenous contexts at the Continental Indigenous Media Summits. Examining data from fieldwork conducted in Cochabamba, Bolivia, and Cuzco, Peru from 2016 – 2019, this chapter describes their identity-based pedagogies of resistance and responds to my research question related to what women seek to change within and beyond their communities.

**Chapter Six** follows *comunicadoras'* activism into their home communities of the Puno region and former Lupaqa kingdom, tracing connections between activists, Andean community radio, and women's grassroots organizing in the altiplano. I focus closely on my affiliates at the Union of Aymara Women of Abya Yala, whose weekly radio broadcasts on Pachamama Radio and sporadic women's workshops across Puno region serve as incubation points for future political bases. This chapter situates my research amid the broader study of women finding voice, presenting a thorough examination of feminist ethnography since the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century, explaining gender essentialism, its virtues and shortcomings vis-a-vis social justice, and Aymara *comunicadoras'* participation in the *#NiUnaMenos* movement that swept Peru in 2016-2017.

My 2019 – 2020 fieldwork with UMA and Aymara Rosa Palomino as she campaigned for Congress is described in **Chapter Seven**, in the lead-up to, and following Rosa's 2019 -2020 Congressional Run. I then recount some of the successes and opportunities that Aymara

comunicadoras in UMA and REDCIRP have achieved based on their activism and participation. This chapter responds to research question of whether women's media activism expands their community leadership.

My **Conclusion** discusses Aymara women's interpretations of their social standing in Andean communities as evidenced by my fieldwork data. Discussion also highlights a significant ideological pitfall—rooted in postcolonial heteronormative and homophobic Aymara gender constructs—that is actively impeding a broader Peruvian leftist coalition from being built in to support Castillo's would-be administration.

## Aymara Terms

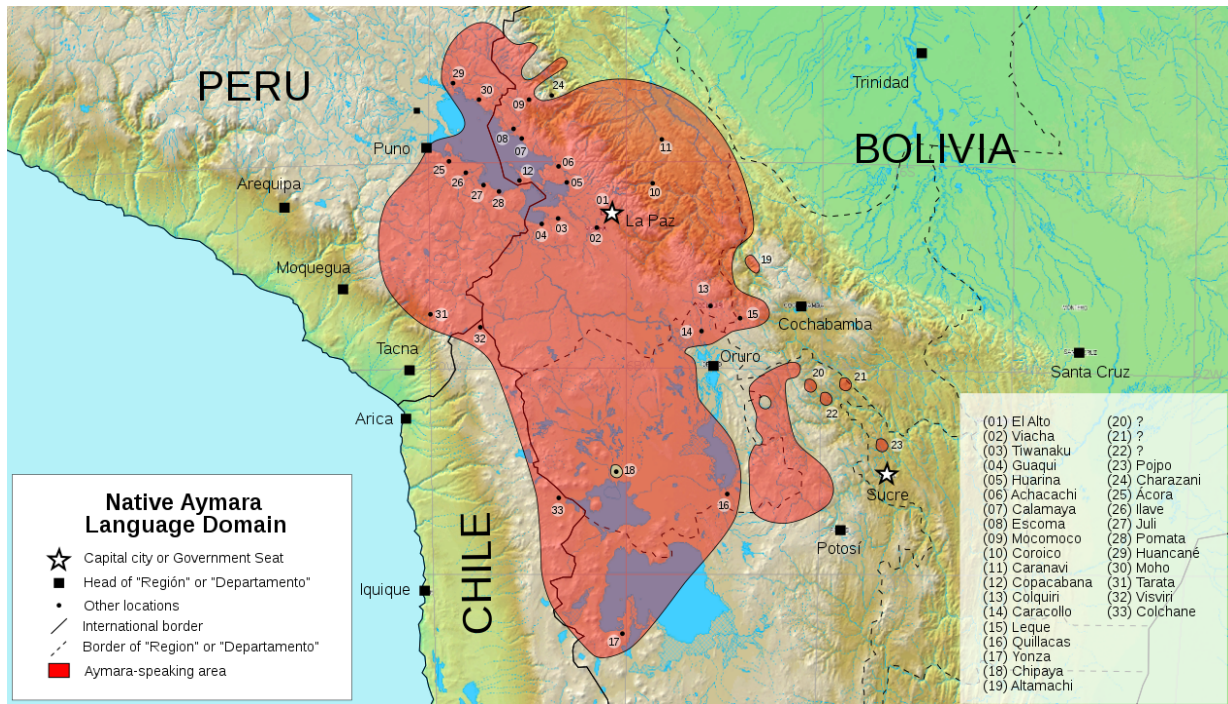


Fig 4: Distribution of Aymara speaking population in the Titicaca basin, 1984. Image credit: Haylli, Aymara Language Domain, 1984. CC BY-SA 3.0, 2008 Wikimedia Commons.

## Aymara

Aymara is a language, a linguistic group, an ethnic identity and a shared oral history tradition autochthonous to the Andean highlands. Aymara was most likely a language of the administrative class during Inka Empire. We first see the written word *Aymara* in the 16<sup>th</sup> century as a fiscal category in the Spanish Colonial tribute system; the reference encompassed the eastern and western shores of Lake Titicaca, c. 1571 (Eschevarria & Tumi 2008).

## Lupaqa; Lupaqa Kingdom

A social organization of Aymara ancestors who lived along the shores of Titicaca, origin date unknown, though estimated at 1100 CE. Their royal palace was likely at Cutimbo, and at

their height, they numbered in the hundreds of thousands. The Lupaqa kingdom included seven provinces which coalesced into seven present day cities which bear their Lupaqa provincial names: Chucuito, Ácora, Ilave, Juli, Pomata, Yunguyo and Zepita.

The Lupaqa kingdom is also an extant social reality. I conducted fieldwork in all of these seven communities, and heard Aymara *comunicadoras* reference *el reino Lupaqa* (the Lupaqa kingdom) and *la Nación Aymara* (the Aymara Nation) within the context of their identity politics. In Ilave, a cerulean arc above the 3S highway through town reads “Welcome to Ilave, Center of the Aymara Kingdom”.

While neither *Lupaqa Kingdom* nor *Aymara Nation* are recognized on current geopolitical maps, they are inexorably mappable within the sociopolitical landscapes of my study participants. A *quipu*, or string sequenced historical record, notes that in Inka times, Aymara agro-pastoralists and Uru-speaking fishermen populated the seven provinces, which were each subdivided into *Alasaa* (upper) and *Maasaa* (lower) moieties, with Qari (upper) and Kusi (lower) moiety leaders at each level of governance. Aymara speakers outnumbered Uru speakers roughly 3:1 across the region. The Qari and Kusi leaders (one of each moiety) at the time of Spanish arrival in the region were each descended from pre-Inka moiety leaders that arose after the fall of Tiwanaku.

At the time of Spanish conquest, the Lupaqa paid tribute directly to the crown, as they had never been consolidated into an *encomienda* under the Viceroyalty of Peru. Murra writes that other indigenous Andean communities “aspired to what they felt to be the privileged position of the Lupaqa”, and were willing to be collectively taxed to avoid the *encomendados* (Murra 1968:116 - 119).

## **Chucuito**

Seat of the royal purse of the Lupaqa Kingdom. See *Visita de Chucuito, 1565* by Garci Diez de San Miguel. Town on the shores of Lake Titicaca, located on the 3S headed south from Puno toward Ácora, Ilave, and the rest of the Lupaqa Kingdom. Central community of study and the author's research base from 2017 – 2020.

## **Quechua**

Quechua is a language, a linguistic group, an ethnic identity and a shared oral history autochthonous to South America. Quechua was most likely the lingua franca of the Inka Empire. In the Puno region of Peru, Quechua and Aymara communities mix along the shores of Lake Titicaca; the north shore is majority Quechua, and the south shore Aymara.

## **Pachamama; Pachamamismo**

A critique of misapplied political rhetoric within discourse common in Andean nations during the 2010s wherein the offending politicians involve Andean cosmology in policy discussions, emphasize a moral obligation to an animate Mother Earth, or Pachamama, yet simultaneously advocate for pro-extraction policies. In these cases, the Pachamama is often said to be “providing for” or “feeding” her people. It is worth noting that legitimate *Pachamamistas* who oppose mineral extraction will often be active alongside those espousing this rhetoric while pursuing state extraction, such as Rafael Correa of Ecuador (Yasuni-ITT cancellation, 2013), Evo Morales of Bolivia's MAS party, and to a lesser extent, Peru's Pedro Castillo. This self-contradicting rhetoric was imbricated in *El Aymarazo*, the ongoing Peruvian constitutional crisis, and extraction conflicts and protests taking place in Bolivia (see Bjork-James 2022).

## Sumaq Kawsay

Also call “Buen vivir”, Sumaq Kawsay is an inter-related, and at times conflicting, set of Andean political and social discourses. The social philosophy of Buen Vivir is rooted in Andean indigenous concepts of integrated and holistic community ecologies that value “good living” in the context of locally governed and ecologically balanced pursuits. Proponents of Buen Vivir describe gender complementarity as central to both leadership and decision-making processes. While indigenous communities are not easily reducible to state nationality designations in the South American Andes, Buen Vivir is most prominent among Kichwa-, Quechua- and Aymara-speaking indigenous communities, and features in 21<sup>st</sup> century state discourses in Ecuador and Bolivia, under the administrations of Presidents Rafael Correa and Evo Morales, respectively (see CONAIE 2007, Morales 2010).

Buen Vivir is referenced to a lesser extent in Peru, usually by its Quechua term Sumaq Kawsay, and at smaller (regional and local) scales of discourse and dispute. There is no one established and mutually agreed-upon definition, and thus use of the term requires careful consideration within local and cultural contexts and across social, economic, political, spiritual and environmental concerns.

*Buen Vivir* recognizes “good living” in community interdependence, and describes gender complementarity as central to both leadership and decision-making processes. Feminist I theorists regard *buen vivir* as emphasizing a plurinationality that recognizes difference between ethnic cultures without addressing power relations within these groups, particularly those that intersectionally affect indigenous women.

## Chachawarmi

The Andean male/female complementarity concept aforementioned by Cochrane. In Andean cosmology, gender is understood as a dualistic notion of “complementarity” referred to as *chachawarmi*, or “*manwoman*” (Burman 2011, MacLean 2014). This concept is often essentialized in myths: a popular Andean origin story tells of the mother and father of the Andean people, Mama Ocllo and Manco Capac, who rescue humanity from a time of ignorance, before *culture*. Manco Capac teaches the boys how to hunt, grow food and build houses while Mama Ocllo shows the girls how to cook, clean, and weave. He readies them for leadership and battle. She readies them for childbirth. Andean cosmology also encompasses a deeper relational holism with all beings and bodies in their community. Andean animism heavily negates any notion of a dualist divide between body and spirit; furthermore, recognition of *gender complementarity* implies not only that men and women balance one another, but also that both are required in order to validate, or fully form, each other.

Complementarity does not imply that genders are *equal*. Stobart notes that, “in Andean cultures, gender is often used as a kind of symbolic discourse to organize different types of relations (e.g. older/younger, upper/lower, or right/left)” (Stobart 2008: 72); these ‘complements’ of male and female often specifically describe dominant-submissive relationships of power. Cochrane and Paredes (2009) eloquently argue that *gender injustice did not originate with colonialism*. In my field work, I find countless examples of *Pachamama* lifting women and men up, whether they were partnered or unpartnered, but that *chachawarmi*’s gender essentialism does not help queer youth.

**Pachakuteq**

A time of bombastic revolution, transformation, or renewal.



## CHAPTER ONE: Invoking the Earth Mother

“It is us, as women, who are closer to her, who understand what is happening to her. We lead in defending the Pachamama because she suffers as we do.”

-Aymara comunicadora



**Fig 5: Aymara comunicadora Yeny Paucar addresses the Mesa Rebelde at the III International Cumbre of Indigenous Media in Cochabamba, Bolivia in November 2016. These activists created a counter-public sphere outside the main event to protest Evo Morales' cooption of the events for his own state political purposes. Image Credit: Cavagnaro**

### **The Global Environmental Movement and its focus on women and indigeneity**

There are some who claim that women are *closer* to Nature than men. That indigenous people are *closer* to Nature than non. And thus, that indigenous women are *closest* to her. Following this longstanding logic, shouldn't indigenous women get to speak on Nature's behalf? Like the misguided notion that "Gen Z Will Save Us" from climate change (Hess 2021), this is an escapist narrative, one that pins unrelenting hope on the wisdom of autochthonous land-managing collectives to fix what late Capitalism refuses to bear ethical responsibility for having

broken. Yet we are far more likely to respond positively to a youth-faced environmental campaign<sup>1</sup>, or a particularly *indigenous* bit of wisdom about ecological balance, or if neither, any earth-motherly type will do. We thrust the most herculean of tasks at the social groups that we least empower. The Aymara women in my study live their cosmology, and act from an animist perspective. I found no reason to doubt their ontology, across years of close fieldwork. Many are syncretic Catholics and Adventists. Most are bilingual. They also, just like an academic wording a successful grant application to a funding donor, can figure out which aspects of their cultural projects and intellectual motivations are most palatable to a global audience with climate anxiety. And funding to place. These women can curate towards the narrative. So first, let's examine the global roots of that narrative.

The 1970s global Environmental Movement leveraged essentialist symbols like Mother Earth and The 'Crying Indian', furthering global tropes associating womanhood and indigeneity with innate environmentalism. The iconic image, *Earth Rise* (1972) showed us a view of our planet from space in a whole new perspective. In *Mother Earth*, Gill wrestles with the implications of environmental activists' tendency to write about Mother Earth as a Goddess figure and to attribute her origins to a pan-tribal feature of Native American cultures. He unpacks the perception that "Native Americans" worship "Mother Earth" and shows this as a gross generalization of a diverse continent of distinct tribes with differing cosmological views. Gill

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<sup>1</sup> Ballew, M., Marlon, J., Rosenthal, S., Gustafson, A., Kotcher, J., Maibach, E., & Leiserowitz, A. (2019). *Do younger generations care more about global warming?* Yale University and George Mason University. New Haven, CT: Yale Program on Climate Change Communication.

argues that the concept of “Mother Earth” is at least as young as the 20<sup>th</sup> century, and certainly a post-contact concept developed after forced migration to reservation, and after much Christian influence. According to Gill, there aren’t many other native cosmology statements to reference until the early 1970s, when they ‘begin to emerge with great abundance’.

Krech documents how the Environmental Movement of the 1970s utilized the image of the *Noble Savage* in such a way that the resulting dialogue reified the complex natures of myriad Native American cultures into a single image that Krech calls the “Ecological Indian.” As cultural critics linked global environmental issues to industrialization, and Christianity was panned as anthropocentric, the Ecological Indian concept provided both a pre-technical and pre-Christian cultural narrative to serve as the backdrop for the *happenings*. Pop-culture of the movement involved the re-discovery of Neillhard’s *Black Elk Speaks*, lyrical DDT pesticide and pollution protests led by music icons like Joni Mitchell and Kansas, poetry by Gary Snyder and the Earth Day activities of 1970 which involved 15 million people who ironically caused extensive land damage and littering in the parks they embodied for the cause.

Grace Black Elk, writing during the ’73 oil crisis, spoke of Mother Earth and Father Sun in more anthropomorphic terms, quite distinctly from the metaphorical comparisons made by Eastman: “One day soon, the white man will come to us, and say: Help us! We have used up the energy of Mother Earth! We have wasted the energy of Father Sun!” (Gill 1987:136). There is clear prophetic rhetoric in her public admonishing of Caucasian wrongdoings:

Now what is this ‘energy crisis’ the white man has? It is *his* ‘energy crisis’. The white man created it, because he does not respect Mother Earth; he has to consume the energy of his Mother the Earth, for his electric toothbrushes... Mother Earth

has no 'energy crisis.' Father Sun has no 'energy crisis.' Who does: It is the white man, who has broken the Sacred Circle of Life.

To foretell an *era of change*, a *Pachakuteq*, is a powerful prophetic discourse. Naomi Klein describes a marked change in national indigenous rights rhetoric in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. After 1999, when the *Marshall Decision* affirmed that the defendants, several First Nations tribes, who had never signed their land over to the British Crown, indigenous people were left to "assert their rights", unaided by law officials (Klein 2014). In 2004, when she is conducting fieldwork in British Columbia, Klein noticed a pattern of discussion surrounding indigenous legal battles for damages and hopes for judicial attention to ongoing human rights violations. In 2013, Mi'kmaq Warrior Society members teamed up with the Elsipotog First Nation to "fend off the Texas company at the center of the province's fracking showdown" (373). By 2014, what Klein describes is an *emerging solidarity* between indigenous and eco-activists.

Non-native people, it seems, have 'caught on' that indigenous environmental struggles are an excellent marketing strategy for environmental campaigns. The same can certainly be said of the 1970s Environmental Movement/Native American Movement in the US; optimistically, however, there is new hope for a more symbiotic exchange between non-native activists and indigenous peoples. To that effect, Klein makes a *call to action* directed at the Global North: "if non-Native people are going to ask some of the poorest, most systematically disenfranchised people on the planet to be humanity's climate saviors, then, to put it crassly, what are we going to do for them?" (387). Klein cautions that pressure continues to build in indigenous communities for individuals to take contract work from extraction companies.

In the 1980s ILO-169 granted free, prior and informed consent to indigenous communities faced with mining concession contracts, but most nation states have critically failed to implement policy. During the same era, the Guatemalan Civil War Peace Accords guaranteed the right to indigenous community media, while in the Andes, Shining Path violence was increasing both the precariousness and import of local media networks. This conflation of events prompted the United Nations to focus specifically on indigenous language revitalization efforts as well as continuing their work on women's rights.



**Fig 6: Aymaras and Quechuas at a gender taller hosted by UMA in Ilave, 2017. Image: Cavagnaro.**

## The UN & Women's Rights

In 1980, members of the World Conference on Women outlined barriers to wellbeing that “women” face, at the hands of “men” and their state and religious institutions. Women of color, and from colonized nations, called out the US, Canada, Israel & Australia for creating the conditions that perpetuated their disenfranchisement, and asked how the US, Canada, et al. intended to protect the women of the global south from the women and men of the global north. The 1990s saw a shift towards UN “Women and Development” rhetoric. In 1993, under intense international pressures from the United Nations and incentivized by promises of foreign aid from the United States, Peru ratified ILO Convention 169, committing to recognition of the rights of indigenous peoples to Free, Prior, and Informed Consent (FPIC) regarding all land use and development decisions within their territories. The subsequent Peruvian administration, under President Ollanta Humala, recognized collective rights of indigenous peoples in name, while disputing these rights through policy and restricting them through the practice of concessioning territories to international extraction firms:

The indigenous communities’ historical frustration is a result of the state’s failure to acknowledge their legal rights and demands and has incentivized acts of violence that can be identified as last resort tactics of survival to counteract projects adversely affecting their livelihood and subsistence. In response, the private sector and the state have branded indigenous peoples as extremists (Salmon 2013).

This branding effectively undermined the legitimacy of Aymaras who advocated for communal landholdings and protested the extraction of minerals from their lands. Agrawal (2005) asserts that the distinct *environmentality* of indigenous peoples today is rooted in their place-based struggles for sovereignty and survival.

## United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues: Meeting Key Community Partners

My ethnographic research into these questions began at the United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues in April of 2015, and continued June through August of that year among communities of the Andean highlands. I conducted participant observation at the UNPFII that year, and met Aymara and Quechua activists, including *comunicadora* Rosa Palomino from Puno, who invited me to visit her community. **Chapter three** is a detailed methods description.

The UN Declaration of the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, Article 16 declared that “Indigenous peoples have the right to establish their own media in their own language.” At this point, major Peruvian cities such as Lima, Arequipa and Trujillo had their FM dials full. Since 1990, most of these stations had been acquired by large radio corporations in order to monopolize the dial. The Peruvian government does not currently give licenses for new frequencies.

Since the late 1990s, pirate radios and Internet radios have appeared, and are increasing faster than in neighboring Andean states with more accessible state radio stations. This has led many Peruvian indigenous comunicadoras to seek international funding for community radio programming, from sources at the United Nations and at NGOs like Cultural Survival, which set up indigenous broadcasting stations each year during the UNPFII.



**Fig 7: REDCIRP logo (Network of Indigenous Communicators of Puno Region)**

In their own interactions with UN and NGO funding bodies, indigenous communities often find their projects “gendered” by donors. The next sections provide background for different ways that Aymara and Quechuas conceptualize and practice gender categories in the Andes, as well as a consideration of global tropes that liken indigenous peoples and women, particularly, as closer to “nature”. In chapter three, I respond fully to the first of my four research questions: *How it is that these women have come to be silenced in the first place?*

The next section contextualizes the 20<sup>th</sup> century emergence of anthropological studies of women’s oppression and ethnographic studies of women finding voice, to locate my research within its broader intellectual lineage and project.

### **Women are closer to ‘Nature’?**

Marilyn Strathern writes that “gender systems... permeate... our perception of the natural world, the social order, and structures of prestige and power” (Strathern 2016: xxvii). This chapter discusses the hegemonic *gender essentialism* within global environmental discourses and the decision-making frameworks of UN funding bodies. Though a discursive arc connecting the Andean Pachamama to the Western Mother Earth, indigenous media ecologies leverage the place-based nature of their defensive positions to resist neocolonial land grabs and environmental racism — in the intelligent parlé of indigenous peoples with the global discourses of development, human rights, and climate change that shape 21st century lifeways on Earth.

At the same time, women within indigenous communities suffer higher rates of interpersonal and domestic violence than any other ethnic group. For this reason, women’s ability to produce and curate their own narratives and political commentary within these communities



is paramount. Gender parity in Aymara communications is critical in an area where gendered violence is sharply increasing along with environmental degradation (Jenkins 2014).

Along the Andean Cordillera, increasing mining and extraction projects appropriate and desiccate indigenous land while contaminating soil and watersheds far beyond corporate concession boundaries (Li 2014). These activities destroy sacred spaces within Aymara landscapes. In the Andes where landscape is animate and mountain peaks are gendered, sentient agents (Allen 2002, De la Cadena 2015), interpersonal and public commentary about mining often involve tropes of sexual violation. One miner noted, “We have to get under the *Achachila*’s skirts to get the silver” (field notes).

The resistance activities conducted at the III EICI illustrated three salient tactics of social movements that I continued to analyze within Aymara radio activism: First, participants utilized the space to decry state sanctioned racialized and gender-based violence in the form of *complaint discourse* (Mamani Ramirez 2005). Second, participants exerted their rightful claim to the space by claiming the *legitimacy* of their political arena, exemplifying the political tensions between community and state within indigenous communication networks (Auyero 2003). Third, participants unified over experiences of injustice, creating *collective resistance* space and reaffirming shared *identities* (Juris 2008).

Women-focused ethnographies first emerged amid pivotal mid-20<sup>th</sup> Century approaches to studies of sex and gender. These frameworks work within Aymara gender constructs: First, that gender is a *relational* force, not a physical or biological property. Second, that because gender is bound up within relations of power, gender relations are inherently political, and power

imbalances vary greatly across cultures and temporalities. Third, that since racist and classist ideologies presuppose gendered oppressions, the gender-specific studies of the resistance efforts of those at intersecting disadvantages are instrumental to the understanding of social change.

### **The emergence of women's voices in ethnography**

Anthropology coalesced into a discipline within a liberal humanist ontology that universalized women's positionality as 'other', defined difference between women and men as a 'natural fact', and privileged the influence of biology over that of society and culture. These biases permeated early ethnographic and archaeological practices (MacCormack and Strathern 1980, Blackmore 2011). Women's silence in early ethnographies stemmed from applications of multiple male filters to female perspectives: male anthropologists asked questions emanating from western patriarchal perspectives, posing these questions in western patriarchal terms to the men of other societies, who then answered from ethnocentric, patriarchal points-of-view (Moore 2007).

Perhaps it was Sapir (1921) who first theorized the effect of language on individual thought and action. Sapir insisted that there is no unbiased knowledge, that instead all *knowing* is conditioned by language, culture, history, and context. This was also true of ethnographic practice. Until Mead (1935) questioned the effect of European expansion on male-female relations in non-European cultures, there was no one asking whether Western concepts of men and women were universal in application. Her research was foundational for establishing the categorical independence of gender from sex—a core claim of feminist anthropology.

Ruth Landes, in her analysis of Ojibwa women's struggles for social and economic autonomy (1938), was among the first ethnographers to focus on women's testimonies in the field.

Her studies, along with Phyllis Kaberry's *Aboriginal Woman, Sacred and Profane* (1939), are early representations of women's voices in ethnography. With the publishing of *Le Deuxième Sexe* in 1949, de Beauvoir's theoretical assertion that "one is not born, but rather becomes, a woman" caused broader recognition of gender identity as a construct capable of being changed.

Sapir's and de Saussure's work on language and cognition created a precedent for Edwin and Shirley Ardener's 'muted groups theory' (1975), which posited the effect of language control on social expression, and theorized women as essentially analogous to *nature*, and a universally 'muted group'. As Henrietta Moore describes, "women... remain muted because their model of reality, their view of the world, cannot be realized or expressed using the terms of the dominant male model" (Moore 1988:3). In Puno region, women are silenced within the model of the community *asamblea*, or town meeting. Chapter Five explores women's creation of counter-public spheres for the purpose of sharing their political views on weekly radio programs, which grants them a far broader audience than the pithily-attended weekly town meetings, where men speak to men and women sit along the sidelines, in the grass, and rarely address the crowd.

In 1967, an anthropological conference on 'Man, Culture and Society' was organized in the United States, without inviting any women speakers. In response, Rosaldo and Lamphere organized a conference of women anthropologists at Stanford, and subsequently published *Women, Culture and Society* (1974) —a landmark text whose essayists theorized gender as both a social fact (a la Durkheim), and a labor relation (vis-à-vis Marx). Contributors were principally concerned with understanding patriarchy across time and space—was it related to capitalism? (Sacks 1974), or a human universal?

Among the most widely cited essays was Ortner's, which sought to explain the universal gender asymmetry of humankind. Ortner's theory located gender inequality within human thought, relying on the 'invisible' mental structures often assumed by Levi-Strauss' students. Despite this assumption, Ortner and other feminist ethnographers successfully evidenced the fact that anthropology, for all its concern with power relations and human universals, had yet to delve deeper into that which substantiates and transforms power most universally and cross-culturally—gender.

### **Gender is relational**

Firestone argued that the dichotomous understanding of biological sex and the sexual division of labor in human reproduction were the root cause of women's universal subordination. She also credited these as the causal origin of classism, racism, imperialism and ecological destruction (Firestone 1971). Though Firestone regarded sexual inequality as primordial and inevitable, she advocated reproductive technological innovations and collective parenting strategies to end these oppressions. Cixous advocated that "Woman must write herself...Woman must put herself into the text—as into the world and into history—by her own movement" (Cixous 1976:875). As anti-essentialist, Cixous refused "to confuse the biological and the cultural" while "speaking of woman in her inevitable struggle against conventional man".

In feminist anthropology, there has been a distinct focus on women's coming to voice; in the 1970s, this focus diversified as feminist Marxists, women of color, and lesbians began to dismantle the hegemonic capitalocentrism, anglocentrism, and heteronormativity of extant understandings of gender and sexuality. With the rise of Black feminist thought (Bambara 1970,

Combahee River Collective 1977, Lorde 1979, Moraga & Anzaldua 1981) myriad theorists began to broadly deconstruct the axiomatic whiteness of mainstream feminism. These early influences remain strong in ethnographic practice (see Tuhiwai Smith 1999, Davis and Craven 2016).

The transition from an 'anthropology of women' toward an 'anthropology of gender' (Reiter Rapp 1975) sought to challenge the biological determinism of earlier ethnographies: Ortner's analyses did not take into account the oppression of some women by others, non-Western variance of gender categories beyond male-female dichotomies, or the effects of class, sexuality, and race on gender relations. Ortner's measure of motherhood as the cause of female subjugation was debunked when compared to cultures that do not limit gender and parenting roles to binary Western 20<sup>th</sup> century categories. Eleanor Leacock offered a feminist Marxist intervention: she argues that it was western colonial intervention that inscribed patriarchy in native societies (Leacock 1981). Her influence appears in ethnographies today (Burman 2011).

My data provide ethnographic evidence that compulsory heterosexuality is practiced in many rural communities of the Puno region (Chapter Five and Chapter Six). Rubin noted a broad social attention to, and heightened policing of, sexuality during times of greater social stress. Writing against heteronormativity, Gayle Rubin worked to uncover the socio-historical basis of gender binaries and compulsory heterosexuality (1975). Later, Rubin demonstrated that hypervigilance of sexual attitudes and practices increase under certain broader societal conditions, and argues that "sexuality should be treated with special respect in times of great social stress" (Rubin 1984:143).

Rubin advocated for a renewed radical theory of sex that eschews “sexual essentialism” (that sex is a natural force a priori to social life and institutions) and avoids thinking of sex as a property of individual psyches. She credited work in the then-emergent field of gay history (Walkowitz 1980, Foucault 1978) that emphasized the dynamism and plasticity of human sexualities and sexual practices over time. Her work inspired a generation of queer theorists (Butler 1990, Sedgwick 1990, de Lauretis 1991, Halberstam 1998), who critiqued the postulation that definitions of ‘man’ and ‘woman’ were stable and knowable, that gender was dichotomous, and even that gender was connected to biological sex.

MacCormack & Strathern (1980) compiled cross-cultural analyses to effectively show that gender is not a physical or biological property. In later work, Marilyn Strathern discusses gender as a *mechanism*, demonstrating how, in everyday life, gender functions as a verb masquerading as a noun (Butler 1990). Strathern took this further to argue that gender is inherently relational; outside of power relations, gender would not exist (Strathern 2016).

### **Gender relations across time and space**

Gender relations are bound up within power structures, and are inherently political (Millett 1970). Describing the Aztec transformation from kinship-based society to class structured empire, Nash (1978) highlights militarism, unequal wealth distribution and empirical state expansion as parallel features of gender oppression: “In their licentious conduct with the women of conquered tribes and in the disparities in their redistribution of tribute, they seemed to have subverted the basic solidarity of men and women... in their own society...The emergence of a

public sphere dominated by a male elite among the Aztecs parallels the development of the state in Rome and in medieval Europe” (Nash 1978: 362).

Feminist efforts laid the foundations for vast new perspectives across the four fields, including queries into gendered linguistics, ethnographies of masculinities and queer archaeology: “Recent research on ancient gender shows gender categories in the New World were often both more fluid and more diverse than normative Western gender categories of the modern era” (Ardren 2008:3) Because gender relations and power imbalances vary across human cultures and temporalities, the study of women and other marginalized groups fighting for voice helps anthropologists to understand power relationships within a given cultural context.

### **Gender imbues race, class, and all other power relations**

Gender, as a relation of power imbalances, is multiscalar: As Strathern notes, “mainstream social science has been challenged by those whom dominant theory excluded as marginal and whom Western society defined as ‘other’...Gender systems... overflow male and female identities...they permeate...our perception of the natural world, the social order, and structures of prestige and power” (Strathern 2016: xxvii).

Because gendered oppressions predate racist ideologies (following Silverblatt work on the origins of racialized categories in 16th century state building projects [2004], and the gender oppressions that were a vibrant feature of Inka rule [1987]), and because gender is political, anthropological studies of the disempowered-coming-to-voice reveal elements of gender in *all powered relationships*. This show how race and class are compounded from primordial power imbalances within the primary household unit. A primordial understanding of gender

oppression illuminates why racial and class differentials are so often imbued by the oppressor with distinctly gendered constructs of relationality (Silverblatt 1987, Weismantel 2001, Povinelli 2006).

June Nash elucidated the way that postcolonial capitalist labor relations produce in Aymara male miners a sense of being threatened by Aymara women who work as *palliris* pulverizing ore (Nash 1979:13), while Leslie Gill demonstrated the construction of specific masculinities in relation to state-making projects and military service (Gill 1997). Joyce notes that “archaeological materials and settings were the media and stages for gendered performances” (Joyce 2000:7).

Canessa’s analysis of gender relations in the Andes shows the degree to which identities are iterative (Moore 2007); Canessa observes that “people can be more or less indian, more or less female...depending on the context in which they find themselves” (Canessa 2012: 26), however, he is careful to note such iterable identities “as the products of a large number of small, often unconscious acts...rather than an exaggerated sense of agency that might be suggested by ‘performance’ (Ibid.). Ethnographic study of gendered silencing in a given cultural context has consistently helped anthropologists to discern the broader power structures therein.

Brodkin-Sacks contributed analytical methods towards a unified theory of class, race and gender. An inherent controversy frames two goals of anthropological theory: namely, that presenting culturally relativistic gender role analyses often flies in the face of the overarching anthropological quest to develop universal unifying theories that can be used to explain cross-



cultural phenomena. This quandary parallels conflicting Marxist and feminist attempts to theorize the intersection of race, class and gender (evident throughout Nash 1979).

At the center of this conflict is the question of whether gender oppression is the primordial hierarchical division, caused by the division of labor within a household unit, or whether issues of class predate this and cause the household hierarchy via demands of differentiated and specialized labor, and thus labor classes, as the commons is enclosed (see also Firestone 1971). According to Brodtkin-Sacks' developed frameworks for analysis, race, class and gender should be regarded as parts of a single, specific and historically created system (Brodtkin-Sacks 1989).

Intersectionality (Crenshaw 1991) insists that we understand how race, class and other oppressions complicate and compound one another, but does not suggest which oppression came first or carries more significance. Instead, Crenshaw's work engenders the understanding that race, class and sex oppressions occur at myriad-- and mutable-- scales of power.

Beginning in the late 1980s, Spivak challenged western feminism's totalizing claim to be able to speak for all women. She and other postcolonial theorists (notably, Mohanty and Narayan) noted that much of earlier feminist thought served to erase the power differentials *among* women. In particular, Spivak highlighted the unequal power relations affecting women's labor rights, arguing that in the era of neoliberalism, "women are the new source of cheap labor and super-exploitation by multinational corporations, based in the 'Third World'" (Spivak 1981, in Morton 2003:72).

Postcolonial ethnographies of gender continue to examine the way oppressions are iterated at various scales of human interaction, from the interpersonal to the laboral, the political,

and the international. In the Andes, Ardren notes that “refinements of archaeological research techniques have resulted from a greater awareness of native conceptualizations and gendered practices” (Ardren 2008:2). Studies of the resistance efforts and tactics of those at intersecting power disadvantages are thus instrumental to the anthropological understanding of social change.

## Some Noted and Notable Events in Aymara Oral and Written History<sup>2</sup>

**11<sup>th</sup> century** *“Manco Capac and Mama Ocllo emerged from Lake Titicaca...”* Aymara agropastoralists overrun Uru fishing communities in the Titicaca basin.

1050 – 1450 Aymara Kingdoms form (*Senioríos*); the seven Lupaqa provinces coalesce. Was ayllu formation an essential part of Andean statecraft (Janusek 2004)? Or did ayllus “emerge from innovative strategies of local communities resisting expansionist states” (Isbell 1997)? Dr. Bjork-James asked me during review why this dissertation contained such little reference to the ayllu. I reflected for a while, calling to mind radio broadcasts, community meetings, backroom conversations. I heard the term “hatha” more from my community partners, or “marka”, but ayllu was used in mixed company with Quechua activists.

**15<sup>th</sup> century** The Quechua of Cusco region over run the Lupaqa, establish Tawantinsuyo, subsuming both cultures and earlier ones<sup>3</sup>. Inka colonial rule. Mita.

1450 – 1530 Quechua immigration/ Inka Colonialism. Highly structured L-R moieties to foster productive competition (Wernke 2007).

### **16<sup>th</sup> century**

1530 – 1570 Spanish Colonization; resistance and chaos. The Spanish of Europe overrun the Inka Empire of Tawantinsuyo and establish the Viceroyalty of Peru, subsuming both cultures and earlier ones. *“Brave leaders emerged from the highlands near Ayacucho...”* (Tupac & Micaela)

1530 - 1571 Toledo’s Reducciones. Aymara markas and Quechua ayllus are socially ruptured and reorganized into grid-shaped communities surrounding a central church, which was often built atop pre-Columbian ritual sites (Wernke 2007). 1<sup>st</sup> written use of Aymara as a fiscal tribute group to the Viceroyalty. Spanish chroniclers describe communities of eastern and western shores of Titicaca basin and relative geographical distribution of Aymara and Quechua linguistic groups. Indigenous communities revolt against land grabs and labor abuses; during the *Taqui Onqoy* resistance, Inka and Wari gods were invoked as allies (Norman 2019).

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<sup>2</sup> As referenced to me by participants in my or others’ prior anthropological research in the Lupaqa Kingdom.

<sup>3</sup> Including the Uru, the Puqará and the Puquina, among others.

- 17<sup>th</sup> century** a society stratified into *hacendados* and landless peasants coalesces at Titicaca.
- 18<sup>th</sup> century** Guano, Copper, Gold, Silver, Tin Extractivism all increase across South America.
- 19<sup>th</sup> century** Simon Bolivar & independence from Spain; *gamonalismo* persists in the highlands. Rubber Boom foments increasing development waves in the Amazonian regions.
- 20<sup>th</sup> century**
- 1910s *Nueva Patria*; Adventist schools established throughout the *altiplano*.
- 1920s – 30s pro-state *indigenismo*. formation of socialist and communist parties.
- 1940s – 50s center-to-periphery state cultural programming, community radio established.
- 1960s Land Reforms. Gradual replacement of autonomous ayllus with modern community structure. 10% of Adventist Aymaras = the protestant elite.
- 1970s – 80s construction boom on the pacific coast. Men worked as migratory laborers.
- 1984 The Emergency. Rains due in November of '83 don't show up until March of '84, so everything is desiccate. Then it pours, floods, and soils wash away. Many Aymaras sell off animals and herds. Prices are low. Estimated that they have never economically recovered. Increased dependence on wage labor and government programs. A university man from Ayacucho rises to prominence with Maoist-inspired political aims.
- 1980s – 90s Shining Path violence is rampant across the Altiplano, Fujimori admin establishes *rondas campesinas* against them. In Bolivia, Evo Morales is increasing in national visibility as a community organizer among the cocaleros, famers who are adversely affected by the US-led 'War on Drugs' in the Chaparé and surrounding regions.
- 1985 Rosa Palomino joins the *Red de Comunicadores Indígenas de Peru* (REDCIP), and later establishes the Union of Aymara Women (UMA) with the aim of starting a community radio program focused on women's stories and women's views.
- 1990s Fujimorismo, drafting of the extant (1993) Constitution, neoliberal reforms, forced sterilization of thousands of Aymara and Quechua women and men.

*21<sup>st</sup> century*

- 2007 Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples: US no/ then yes in 2010
- 2009 *El Baguazo*: protest against the Peruvian state's decision to concession indigenous lands to foreign mining companies (Peruvian Constitution Art. 89).
- 2010s Peruvian sells Aymara and Quechua land to foreign firms as mining concessions.
- 2011 *El Aymarazo* uprising of Aymara and Quechua strikes across southeastern Peru.

## CHAPTER TWO: W'ila Jistarata Abya Yala (Open Veins of Latin America)

This research lies at the intersection of multinational extractive development and local indigenous political defense of sacred, animate landscapes. At stake is the very cultural survival of indigenous nations and their cultural lands. For the Aymara, land defense and the destructive environmental consequences of proposed and ongoing extraction projects motivate and mitigate political media use. At the same time, gender roles are changing as women increasingly become “the voices of the media” in Aymara communities.

Across the Andes, extraction industries appropriate indigenous territories and destroy sacred landscapes. Resistance to mining is growing, and land rights are a central focus of everyday indigenous radio programs and the sporadic global media coverage of Andean communities. In Peru, the most common social mediums during research were Facebook, widely available as of 2010 in the region, and Whatsapp.



**Fig 8: Statue of Mama Ocllo first mother of the Aymara, according to legend. Image credit: Cavagnaro**

## Aymara Communities and Landscapes through Centuries of Extraction

Settlement patterns in the Titicaca basin show that, even before Tiwanaku, myriad ethnic and linguistic groups settled along the shore of the lake and on the islands (Strecker 2007). As early as 400 BCE, they practiced myriad forms of a religious tradition that Andeanists have grouped as “Yayamama”, or Father-Mother. Trapezoidal courts marked ritual sites along the high plains, most notably at Tiwanaku. Ceremonies involved blowing shell horns that reverberated across the cordillera, in a sonic invocation of the “chthonic, generative, and animistic forces of the earth” (Janusek 2008:83) that later Aymara call *wak’as* (sacred beings/ features marked in the landscape), *achachilas* (ancestor mountain peaks), and the *Pachamama*.



**Fig 9: Iñaq Uyu, Aymara meaning ‘enclosure of women’ is a ruin on the Isla de la Luna, Lake Titicaca, thought to be a fortress for housing—or burying— dozens of ñaka, or noble women of the Empire.**

The Puno region, communities-based phase of my research (described in chapters four and five) followed Aymara activists, who were men and women aged 19 - 72, as they participated in radio production and broadcasting, organized protest events and marched in strikes about labor wage issues, gender violence, and environmental racism, and participated in regular community events, rituals and political fora.

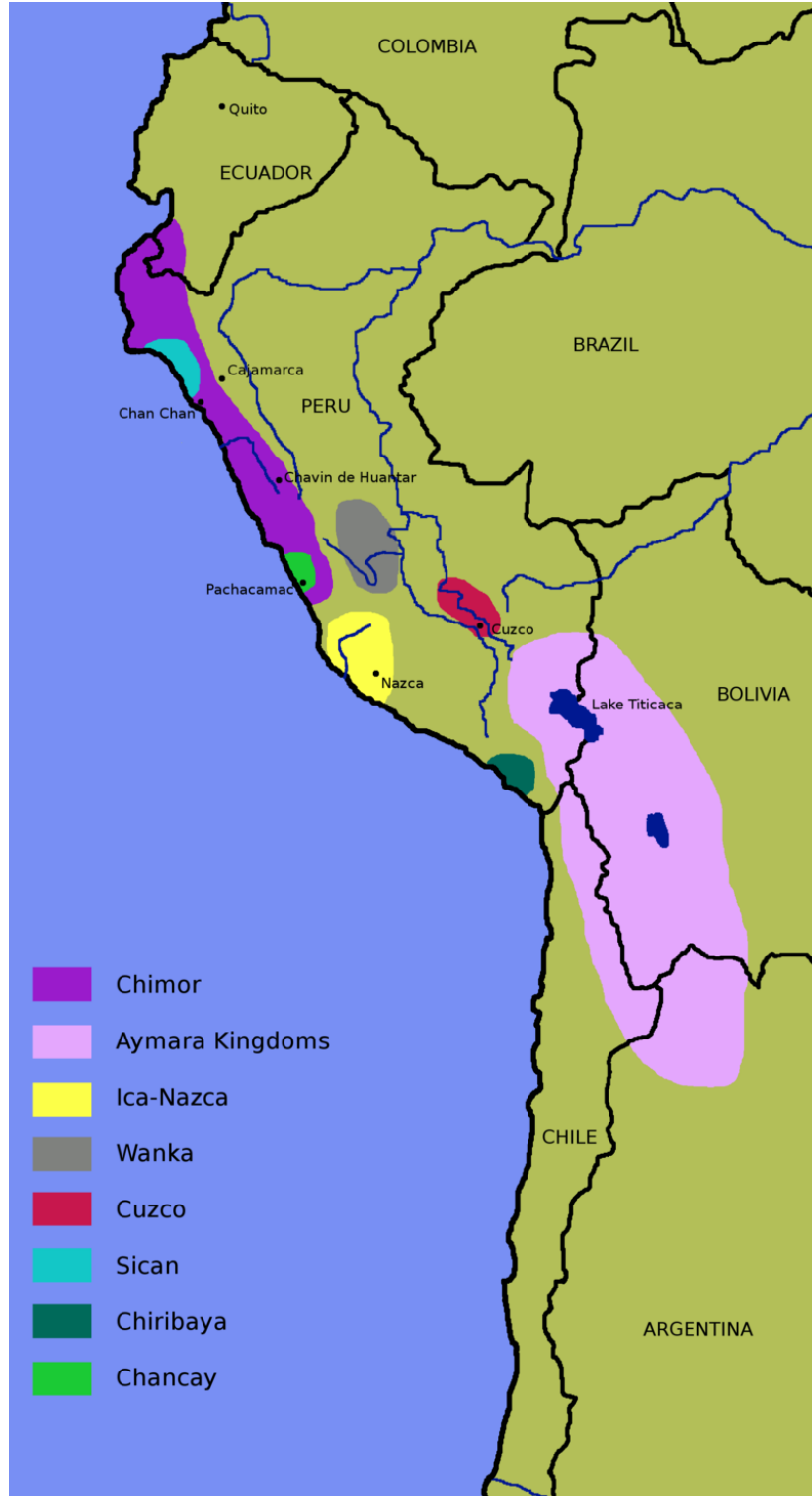


Fig 10: Rosa, Irma and Yeny broadcasting a live episode of *Wiñay Pankara* in 2017.

At the community-scale, I measured the effect of their activism and participation in gender rights workshops on their sway in decision making by taking quantitative field notes about gendered speakers at decision-making events, their relative air time, the yes/no audience agreeableness to their ideas, and qualitative notes about men's and women's engagement with and attention to male and female speakers within decision fora. I also conducted life histories with 9 of these Aymara media personalities, who are known as *comunicadores*. I conducted diachronic analysis of their increased vocality within *asambleas* as they trained in media.



Fig 11: Geographic distribution of Andean cultures c. 1000 – 1400 CE  
Circa 1438, Aymara Kingdoms are the most geographically extensive group in the Andes.



Credit: Zenyu~commonswiki,  
Major Cultures of the Late Intermediate Period, Peru. 2004 Wikimedia Commons.

## The Aymara before the Inka Expansion

Tiwanaku civilization flourished in Titicaca basin from around 500 – 1000 CE. The earliest Tiwanaku-associated settlement patterns are evidenced by red-slipped pottery shards and intensified farming (raised terracing field evidence) and herding (camelid bone shards) throughout the region (Janusek 2008). Marriage exchange practices with lowland groups ensured access to a variety of foodstuffs that weren't cultivatable in the hypoxic altiplano climates (Murra 1972). Tiwanaku governance over peripheral groups was indirect and based on multigenerational trade relationships. Uhle, Janusek, Stanish and the majority of Andean archaeologists agree that modern Aymara communities are descendants of the ancient Tiwanaku, for whom "change was not masterminded by elites" (Janusek 2008).

Tiwanaku declined by 1000 CE. During the subsequent Intermediate Period, the Aymara *Señoríos* culture rose from the wake and extended across the northwest shores of Lake Titicaca. By 1100, Aymara walled towns were being constructed along the slopes above the lake, Chucuito and pastoral activity intensifies, with reliance on camelids (Hyslop 1976). Several Aymara cultural origin stories exist, though the most popular tells of first father and first mother Manco Capac & Mama Oclo emerging from the waters of Lake Titicaca (see Fig 11). They taught the people fishing, weaving, agriculture and herding. This epoch saw the rise of ayllu social organization, moiety divisions, and *chullpa* (burial tower) construction (Isbell 1997).

Fig 12: Geographic distribution of cultures of the Late Horizon/ Inka Empire c. 1450 – 1550 CE  
 Circa 1463, Lupaqa Aymara communities are distinctly impacted by the expanding Inka Empire.



Image credit: Zenyu-commonswiki, Initial Expansion of Kingdom of Cuzco. 2004: [Wikimedia Commons](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Initial_Expansion_of_Kingdom_of_Cuzco.jpg). See also *The Inkas and their Ancestors* by M. Moseley (1992).

## The Aymara under Tawantinsuyo

The Aymara polities of the Late Intermediate were subdivided into Colla, Lupaqa, and Pacajes kingdoms. Extant intragroup conflicts existed as the Inka state expanded. The Inka crafted allegiances with the Lupaqa moieties and collectively overran the Colla (Janusek 2008).

Archaeologists and ethnohistorians note intentional convergence of Inka deities with pre-Inka deities for ease of conquest (Hyslop 1976, Silverblatt 1987, Emlen 2017). The Inka, after they expanded into and subsumed the Aymara Lupaqa kingdom, “considered Tiwanaku their place of cosmic and ethnic genesis... It appears that the Inca had merely claimed ancestry to the ancient kings of Tiwanaku to legitimize their rule, by proclaiming the site a sacred place of cosmic origin and by emulating its impeccably crafted monuments” (Janusek 2008: 3-5).

By the 15<sup>th</sup> century, the Lupaqa Kingdom was distinctly impacted by the expanding Inka Empire, particularly along the western shores of Lake Titicaca. By the mid-16<sup>th</sup> century, language distribution in the Andean region “was a mosaic produced by Inka resettlement policy, earlier migrations, and pre-Inka conflict and alliance patterns” (Emlen 2017, quoting Bauer & Stanish 2001: 32). El Camino Inka was the most extensive road network in the pre-Colombian Americas, with over 14,000 miles of trail.

The Inka established a complex labor tribute system called the *mita*, and ushered in an era of mining and extraction that would later mutate violently under Spanish colonial rule. The *mita*, or Inka labor tribute system, imbricated all the men of the region into a period of indentured service to the empire, and a nomadic *cargo*, or social responsibility, that would require years away from home. To avoid stressing individual households, replacement laborers stood in for men on

mita. By the time of Spanish conquest, Tiwanaku's giant, regal ancestor effigies had long been destroyed—likely as a form of Andean peasant revenge against the dying Tiwanaku elite.<sup>4</sup> By the mid 1400s, the Lupaqa had relocated their cultural center to Chucuito.

### **The Aymara Lupaqa under the Viceroyalty of Peru**

In the 1500s, the Spanish under Toldedo expanded *mita* demands and suppressed waves of indigenous resistance, most notably the rebellion led by Tupac Amaru in the 1570s.

“Francisco de Toledo, a newly arrived viceroy in 1572, interviewed Don Diego Gualpa, an Andean man claiming to be from the Chumbivilcas Province, on his deathbed at nearly 70-years old. He recounted the discovery of the mine. Gualpa and a friend had been sent to the mountain in search of a huaca (wak'a in Quechua), which is a sacred monument dedicated to a resident spirit. After finding an offering to the spirit, Gualpa and his friend removed it but they became separated in the process. It was then that Gualpa claimed a powerful gust of wind hit him and knocked him from his feet. As he rose, he noticed that the dirt on his hands was rich in ore...”<sup>5</sup>

During Reducciones under Viceroy Toledo, the Lupaqa kingdom had been put to work under Spanish extensions of the *mita*, which lacked many of the pacifying elements of Inka rule: labor terms were extended, taxes increased, work was deadly in the mines, no replacement laborer was sent to help individual families to maintain household economies during mita service, and communal land holdings were parceled and granted away to Spanish lords and their kin.

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<sup>4</sup> Janusek argues that this must be the case, as both Inka rulers *and* Spanish conquistadors wrote Tiwanaku's gods into their social memory, and used these ancestors to solidify their divine rule; these colonial rulers would sometimes ritually bury icons or build over them in opportunistic, low-hanging-fruit-plucking fashion, but the ritualistic beheading of the colossal ancestor statues at Tiwanaku “would have required a monumental effort on the part of highly motivated” people (Janusek 2008). This suggests an act of “memory theater” (Yaeger and Lopez 2004, cited by Janusek).

<sup>5</sup> Padilla, Pamela. 2022. A short story about Potosi—the largest South American silver mine—in the Library's Collections (Part 1). Blogpost. Library of Congress (Online), Posted August 22.

Fig 13: The Transconquest perspective in Andean Archaeology  
 Diachronic map shows imposition of Spanish colonies over Inka cities within modern borders.



Manco Capac, Map of Inca Empire Road System. 2008: [Wikimedia Commons](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Manco_Capac_Map_of_Inca_Empire_Road_System.jpg). lic. CC BY-SA 3.0 See also: Hyslop, John. Inka Road System.

## **Extraction in the post- Land Reform Era**

Decline in profits from post-War industrial development projects in the US and other World War II-allied nations caused many large corporations to restructure by the 1970s, moving their labor production to the periphery. Through this “neoliberal turn”, movement of labor to international sites with flexible labor laws carried with it further consequences— “a new form of subordination—economic, political, and cultural—of the nation to the dynamic of transnational capital.”. To shed light on spatial conflicts in extractivist regions, the authors consider neoliberal globalization as “the production of spaces for capital” (Lopez and Vertiz 2014:3). Dominant classes from later-industrializing nations cooperated with the imperialist power of the United States to occupy privileged economic and political positions linked to corporations (Svampa 2015).

The shift in emphasis on core-peripheral economic relations had reverberating effects on dominant-subaltern political positionings at inter- and intra-national levels of state. In Latin America, the neoliberal turn crippled state-led development models (which were in varying degrees of disrepair at the time), roping many of these “late developing” nations into servile roles as producers of foodstuffs and raw materials. The late 1980s and 1990s was the peak era of neoliberalism with US-based corporations leading the pack. In the late 1990s “crisis period” of neoliberalism, Asian, Brazilian, and Russian corporations established fiscal domain in Latin America while world markets dropped precipitously. Around this time, in 1985, Peru significantly pivoted its economy toward the primacy and privatization of mining.

## 500 Years of Resistance: Aymara rebellion from Taqui Onqoy to El Aymarazo

Pachamama-centered, Andean ecological rhetoric implicitly argues that the Earth is a not a private good, but a public good. As Lopez and Vertiz noted, “The particularities of the Peruvian development model have made it the country of transnational mega-mining par excellence” (2014:9). Large open-pit mining, especially of gold, had been a central focal point of President Ollanta Humala’s development plan. Under Humala’s administration, socio-environmental conflicts involving civilian protests in mining communities are suppressed with security forces that are hired to protect the sanctity of extractive production processes. Using a carrot-and-stick approach, transnational corporations also buy public favor through “material and symbolic strategies to counteract resistance generated at the local level” (ibid.)

These firms finance public projects and recreational activities in extraction zones under development, taking “appropriate cautions...with minimal risk to workers, the environment, and the community.” Such rhetoric is reminiscent of “Clean Coal” campaigns in the United States, which obfuscate working conditions of coal miners in West Virginia (Ghabra 2014).

**Fig 14: The city of Puno, with a view of Lake Titicaca, as seen from the west ridge, 2015.**



Recent conflicts in Cajamarca, Peru, surrounding mining efforts by the Yanacocha corporation highlight the entanglements between dominant actors and subaltern resistance in the



context of the Peruvian, neoliberal model. In 2011, Yanacocha began the Conga gold mining mega-project, which directly threatens principle water sources in the region. Tensions between regional and national governments flared, with local leaders supporting their communities' demands while receiving direct pressure from dominant actors. Conflicts surrounding mining resulted in deaths of 5 local people, and dozens wounded. In the aftermath, Yanacocha promised that, after prospecting, they would pursue mining only if they could do so in a "socially responsible way" with returns that "justify future investments".

In the 1560s, during the Taqui Onqoy, or dancing sickness rebellion, abused workers would suddenly animate with a frantic, jerking dance and be unable to work. While the Spanish were destroying the Wak'as and other sacred Aymara power sites, they say that an Aymara-speaking Chanka named Juan Chocne spiraled open with his eyes shot wide, and he swallowed down the energy of a Wak'a, whole. The Spanish had toppled the stone, but the energy of the Wak'a could not be destroyed, and so it lived in Juan Cochne. From the center of his being, the Wak'a wriggled and jumped and made his power known through a feverish dance, using Juan Chocne's limbs to terrify the Spanish into thinking that their devil had come from Europe to haunt them<sup>6</sup>. In 1571, the word Aymara appeared for the first time in colonial documents, re-classifying the Lupaqa, Chanka, Collao and other kingdoms under one language.

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<sup>6</sup> I often read that during Taqui Onqoy, indigenous Andeans were "possessed" by the spirits of the Wak'as. This sounds pretty Christian. Santiago's brother-in-law, who identifies as a descendant of the Chankas, told me about it in words a little closer to this way. It was a contrast that seemed notable.

### **2011 Spatial Protest: *El Aymarazo***

In May of 2011, on the eve of a national presidential election, 25,000 Aymara and Quechua from around the region gathered in the principal city of Puno to protest the Santa Ana mining project managed by Canada's Bear Creek Mining Company. Aymara men and women along the border between Peru and Bolivia successfully halted the Santa Ana silver extraction project in its prospecting phase using local radio and social media networks to communicate the initiative. After weeks of police brutality amid sustained protest, during which protesters were joined by thousands of supporters and covered by global outlets including CNN, Al Jazeera and Fox News, the Peruvian state halted the mine's operations in the remote Aymara community of Huacullani.

While social media activism and the resultant attention were paramount in achieving a critical mass of public complaint discourse concerning the violation of indigenous land rights, native activists and on-the-ground organizers maintain that the most crucial forms of organized resistance and protest action took place at the local level, via radio and by word-of-mouth (field notes 2015) as networked among activists at the site of protest and via their kin and "strong-tie" social networks.

This community mobilization-turned-region-wide uprising, known as *El Aymarazo*, paralyzed a number of mining projects and led to a legal moratorium on drilling in the region. Throughout the protest, anti-extraction activists emphasized the Aymaras' ecological positioning as defenders of Pachamama. Despite men and women's widespread discussion about the need to defend Pachamama, and their association between respect for Pachamama and respect for gender complementarity, or *chachawarmi*, the economic and social fallout from open-pit mining appears

to be exacerbating rates of spousal abuse and other forms of interpersonal violence against women in Andean communities (Jenkins 2014).

The context surrounding mining development proposed in indigenous communities often pits men's and women's interests against one another. The small, community-scale meetings (*asambleas*) and broader, pan-indigenous media summits (*encuentros*) that I observed are crucial sites for decision-making about future land use, whether or not to consent to extraction projects, and how to protest and resist unwanted appropriation of water and land resources.

Tensions between Peru's regional and national government actors came to a rolling boil in 2011. More than half, 117, of Peru's 227 ongoing social conflicts in mid-2011, for example, were socio-environmental (Defensoría, Reporte de Conflictos Sociales No. 87, 6). In attempts to "nationalize the struggle" for rights to resources, emerging organizations such as the National Assembly of Peruvian and Tawantinsuyu Peoples and the People's Brigades in Defense of Water and Life organized marches and protests. The proliferation of subaltern resistance in the region prompted Santos Guerrero, of Cajamarca's regional government, to ultimately take a public stance against Yanacocha's Conga Project. Still, this local positioning confronted the Humala administration's alignments with extraction firms—in a public statement, Humala declared that informed and prior consent of communities in prospective mining regions should be merely "an instrument that allows one to legitimize an investment, and not an obstacle" (Lopez and Vertiz 2014: 11)

In 2012, after declaring an end to transnational monopoly and pharmaceutical industry in the region, Bolivian President Morales delivered the Isla del Sol Manifesto, a bold declaration

against intervention and neoliberal capitalism in South America and in support of the *Buen Vivir* ethic. Contained within the tenets of the declaration are assertions that economic development must be in equilibrium with Pachamama (10). Furthermore, the Manifiesto encourages a return to the knowledge and codes of ancient global cultures to strengthen the awareness of all human societies: “This is the century of the battle for universal recognition of the rights of Mother Earth in all legislation, national and international treaties and agreements so that humans begin to live in harmony and balance with Mother Earth” (14).

The Morales Administrations’ subsequent, fervent pursuit of the TIPNIS highway initiative demonstrated that the paradigm of extraction for development outweighs the moral obligation to Pachamama suggested by these Andean state ecological manifestos. While moderate socio-economic improvements have resulted from investments of extraction funds into public programs, these improvements clearly hinge upon mining, drilling and prospecting incomes, and environmental destruction has accelerated. Morales’ administration’s approach to extractivist policies as a bolster for state services and programs belie the basic truth that extraction, and *not* “alternatives to development” are central to Bolivia’s indigenous state socialism.

In Southeastern Peru, this has fomented extant divisions within Aymara identity politics, as the people in my study community all live in the border region, and identify more ethnically than nationally. Some praised Morales’ state-led socialist projects, and others fervently denounced his administration’s falsified claims and abuses. The next section parses the intricacies of Aymara identity politics in relation to the state, beginning with the rise of the 20<sup>th</sup> century *indigenismo* intellectual class.

## Aymara Identity, Social Movements and the Peruvian State

Fig 15: Aymara women in Ácora wearing *pollera* skirts with tied *mantas*, cargo bundles, headed back from market.



### The Nueva Patria and *indigenismo* 1910s – 1930s

In the early 1900s, the emerging Cusco intellectual class, or *indigenistas*, established the Institute for Andean Studies in collaboration with American anthropologists and archaeologists, subsuming Quechua and Aymara indigenous intellectuals into state-sponsored academic projects. A close alliance between the Adventists educational efforts and the indigenist intellectuals gives Aymara protestant elite an advantage in defining the narrative over other religious groups the highlands. In 1915, Adventists open schools in rural Peru. By the land reform

era, Adventist schools had a three generation influential advantage over Catholic missions who had stayed closer to the cities, and had not established strongholds in rural communities.

Peruvian Marxist ideologue Jose Mariátegui defined Aymara and Quechua agropastoralists in terms of their social landscape and collective territory when he wrote in the 1920s that to remove the *indio* from the land was to erase their ancestral practices, and that the *ayllu* is a living organism that propels cooperation and social cohesion (de la Cadena 1998:38).

Juan de Dios Yapita, renowned Aymara linguist and educator and Director of the Aymara Culture and Language Institute, wrote in the 1980s that land was of extreme importance to the Aymaras, constituting a fundamental category of their self-conceptualization (Yapita 1981).

Mariátegui and Valcárcel advocated that race is socially constructed and thus the pure *indio* is superior to the *misti* who has been adulterated by Limeño elitism and removed from the landscape that incubates his identity. According to Mariátegui, to “retire [the indian] from the land is to alter profoundly and possibly dangerously the race’s ancestral tendencies...the indigenous question begins in our economy. It has its roots in the ownership of land” (Mariátegui 1968:30, as quoted in de la Cadena 1998:37).

The *ayllu*, according to the new Andean Marxists, was a living organism that must be understood from emic perspectives, and was the incubator of an indigenous Andean communism that had its ties in subsistence cooperatives. As Marisol de la Cadena notes, “The ayllu... a key building block of indigenous identity...is now conceptualized by anthropologists... as a flexible referent for indigenous groupings that claim descent from a common ancestor... The larger group identity is held together by a sense of metaphorical kinship within and between ayllus” 1998:38).

For Mariátegui and his followers, class consciousness as peasants and ethnic consciousness as indios were one and the same, and both were a natural extension of the ayllu cooperative in practice. If a person left the ayllu, they would lose their ethnic consciousness.

After Mariátegui's death, the soviet-affiliated Peruvian Communist Party was established and Eduardo Quispe Quispe of Puno was their candidate. Hildebrande Castro Pozo and Luciano Castillo formed the Socialist Party with an air of "Paternalism towards the Indian as a symbol of *hombria*" [manliness] and de la Torre formalized the American Popular Revolutionary Alliance (APRA), pivoting away from *indigenismo* toward a celebration of the mestizo as the natural leader of the *indio* who had been transformed by class consciousness and university education (de la Cadena 1998:40).

During Augusto Leguía's *oncenio* dictatorship, state *indigenismo* equated university education with political legitimacy in a way that paved a tenuous path to leadership for some of the better-resourced indigenous leaders of highland communities surrounding Cuzco (de la Cadena 1998). In essence, the Peruvian state sought to quell indigenous resistance in the highlands by drawing highland intellectuals into national and regional universities, employing them in the social sciences, and inviting them to the table.

The *indigenismo* of Leguía's era was meant to assuage indigenous peasant revolt in the mountains by designating a place for Quechua voices within the state, while maintaining urban middle class support for his administration. He made use of extensive Quechua-language state propaganda, more than any other Peruvian head of state until Juan Velasco Alvarado's dictatorship in 1968 (Durstun 2012).

As many linguistic anthropologists studying the role of state use of indigenous languages within national identity building projects of the 20<sup>th</sup> century have come to agree, “seemingly arcane linguistic debates reveal strategic contests over national, regional, ethnic, and class identities and power relations” (Coronel-Molina et al. 2012, n.pag). In particular, “Leguía’s Quechua” of the 1920s served to establish a satellite stronghold of Limeño centrism amid the Cuzqueños collaborating on state-building projects, especially in archaeology, ethnology and linguistics. The erasure of Aymara voices from Cusco regionalist intellectual projects still persists, and is lamented by my community partners (fieldnotes).

#### **Center-to-periphery state cultural programming, community radio established 1940s – 1950s**

In the 1940s the establishment of the High Academy of Quechua Language created classist divisions among Quechua speakers of the rural highlands and those who had adapted to Limeño lifeways (Coronel-Molina 2012). Salomon and others have analyzed how non-governmental organizations such as US-based mission, Summer Institute of Linguistics, aligned their indigenous language literacy agenda with civilizing projects across Latin America in the 1940s and 1950s:

Indigenous languages became a key area of state intervention, and of conflict and negotiation between governments and non-governmental institutions and movements, in twentieth-century Latin America. As national governments sought to extend and deepen their influence among the population...Governments sponsored the study and codification of indigenous languages and their orthographies, developed indigenous-language literacy programs, and produced political propaganda and educational materials in indigenous languages. Government interest gave rise to, and was shaped by, new movements and organizations that used indigenous-language expertise to make rival claims on the state seeking influence, recognition, and resources.

-Frank Salomon, AHA 126<sup>th</sup> Conference on Latin American History, 2012



Onda Azul was the first Andean radio station in Puno, established in the early 1950s as a Catholic Church initiative. In particular, the *radios telefónicas*, or radio schools, were church-orchestrated curricula delivered over the air waves in Aymara and Quechua communities, where missionaries would often oversee the lessons. By the midcentury, the Peruvian State has succeeded in disrupting many territories of Aymara and Quechua, dividing community lands into individual parcels and dragging *originarios* of the Andean highlands more fully into the market economy.

Described as “a regional practice of power built on landed property, literacy, and a geography... of insurmountable racial difference” (69), *gamonalismo* governance in the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century empowered landowning, literate elites to manage haciendas that capitalized on enclosure of highland commons to indenture Quechua *campesinos* into repressive labor roles. Beginning in the 1940s, proto- *comunicadores* assumed the burden of “carrying the grievance” (de la Cadena 2015) of their community against hacienda elites, and over the next quarter century they invested extensive time into seeking reforms.

### **Land Reforms and the Shining Path Era 1960s – 1980s**

The 1969 Law of Agrarian Reform dissolved the hacienda system. An emerging peasant class was now working for state-run agrarian cooperatives. However, mismanagement and corruption by local agrarian leaders spiraled into communities’ further isolation from state resources, eventually resulting in state abandonment in the region.

During the post-land reform era, the Catholic Church-run Puno station *Radio Onda Azul* broadcast in Quechua, Aymara and Spanish. “The radio’s public debate spaces in the 1980s were

crucial in organizing rural land transfers of close to four million acres of idle hacienda land to small farmers” (Stone 2009). *Radio Onda Azul* quickly became known as the only station where native farmers could speak, on local and political issues, in their native language. However, at the height of *Sendero Luminoso*,

“this creative upwelling was challenged from all sides. Peru’s Shining Path guerrillas violently murdered local organizers across Peru in the 1980s and early 1990s. On the other side...government officials ordered explosions of *Radio Onda Azul* antennas” (ibid).

The station persisted amid the chaos. The local Bishop Calderon, of Puno, was a liberation theologian who supported Quechua and Aymara communities in their use of local radio as a regional message service. Calderon supported radio debates between government officials and local constituents, promoted traditional live concerts, played socio-dramas about family relations, and resourced educational programs with guest experts in law, medicine, agriculture. Bishop Calderon retired in 1997, and his replacement phased out Andean language use and free expression over the church-owned radio, challenging the presence of non-Catholic religious elements in Aymara speech and communications; meanwhile, “returning to their origins, former ROA staff managed to form a new station with a wider reach and international funders: *Pachamama Radio*” (Stone 2009:51).

*Pachamama Radio* was thus founded in response to the new, conservative Bishop’s challenge to Aymara *legitimacy* within the ROA radio field. Aymara language, social class, and animate spirituality were all implicitly illegitimated by the erasure of Aymaras from *Radio Onda Azul*. Reaction against the Church’s attempt to quash Aymara spiritual practices was clear—evident in the naming of the new station. Meanwhile, the Shining Path “provoke[d] a sense of

imminent government and social collapse in Lima by 1992...for Sendero's supporters and sympathizers, the political party's mystique and intimidation lay precisely in its self-projection as a force uniquely brutal, effective, and accurate in reading the march of historical destiny" (Stern 1998:2). A national desperation to control the Sendero initially deterred opposition to Fujimori.

### **Fujimorismo**

Land dispossession in Aymara and Quechua communities has increased significantly as a result of increased neoliberal reforms and free trade agreements since the 1994 signing of NAFTA and establishment of the World Trade Organization. They are not alone in this experience—it is a defining element of panindigeneity. Speed (2019) demonstrates a causal relationship between NAFTA and increased abuses of indigenous women across Latin America, as well as causal relationship between free trade policies and the rise of drug, gun and trafficking rings in Latin American states. Spears Rico shows how hashtag movements and other forms of digital resistance in Mexico help to collectivize indigenous resistance messaging against GMO policies and maize importation (Spears Rico 2019).

In the Andes, femicides, forced sterilizations, and intimate partner violence intersect with the social and environmental fallout from increased open-pit mining, widespread pollution of water resources and unsanctioned development on communal lands. Myriad intersectional oppressions face Aymara women in their positionality as rural, indigenous subsistence farmers. Aymara communal territories sit atop vast mineral deposits simultaneously under federal environmental protection *and* at risk of mining concession by the same state. The complex history of indigenous women's suffering at state hands in Peru saturates the current extraction-

dependent scene, one of many waves of extractivism marring the history and landscapes of Latin America (Galeano 1979).

In the post-Fujimori era, an extensive influx of international tourists poked and prodded at the intimate relationships between Aymaras and Quechuas and the wakas, achachilas and other earth beings who inhabited their social world (de la Cadena 2015). An expansive spiritual tourism industry found new ways to profit from indigenous practices, as tourists seeking Ayahuasca ceremonies trampled rainforest communities and rainbow mountains to deleterious effect. From President Alejandro Toledo's Quechua costuming and flirting with indigeneity in 2001, to Alan Garcia's rebuke of "shameful pre-modern superstitions" in 2009, to Ollanta Humala's present developmental focus on neoliberalism-as-usual, state equivocation on matters of Andean cosmological practice continuously marked issues of governance and resource use at local and national scales.

Cancellation of the Santa Ana mining concession violated the Canada-Peru Free Trade Act, and prompted an international arbitration lawsuit with the World Bank that is still pending resolution (Simson 2016). Following this rare, if precarious, victory, Aymara women are increasingly becoming the backbone of various anti-extraction campaigns in the region as defenders of an animate landscape that they call Pachamama—Earth Mother.

Even before the 2011 protests, as early as 2009, Aymara community radio activists (comunicadoras) have been training at international indigenous communications conferences where presenters claim that using "media power" will help advance gender equality in communities and support the tactical defense of Pachamama. The protesters at Santa Ana

represented indigenous communities whose rights to informed consent, according to the International Labor Organization's Convention on Indigenous and Tribal Peoples (or ILO-169), were being violated by the Peruvian state and the Canadian corporation's mining exploration. Indigenous activists at Santa Ana argued that the proposed mine would contaminate local water sources, including the sacred lake, Titicaca, and demanded that the Peruvian government recognize the legitimacy of Aymara communities and the sanctity of Pachamama, the animate Earth Mother who pervades every level of social meaning in the Aymara sense of place (Stone 2009).

#### **Pachamama Radio and the Trials of Walter Aduviri**



**Fig 16: Palacio de Justicia surrounded by Aymara activists waving the Andean wiphala**

*“Peru convicts Walter Aduviri, acquits seventeen others in Aymarazo verdict, July 7<sup>th</sup> 2017.*

As of Thursday afternoon, the fates of eighteen indigenous activists who were indicted for their leadership in the 2011 anti-mining protests in Puno region, Peru, have been decided. Sixteen men and one woman of the Aymara Nation have been acquitted today for their involvement in organizing and leading a region-wide uprising—known as El Aymarazo—against the Santa Ana silver mining project (Wikipedia) owned by Vancouver-based Bear Creek Mining. Only the movement’s widely-recognized leader, Walter Aduviri, stands convicted on a count of inspiring destruction of state and corporate property. (All 18 defendants were acquitted of the charge of extortion.) He left court in high spirits nonetheless, surrounded by loyal supporters who marched behind him through the urban center of Puno, the capital city of the region.

Aduviri faces the likelihood of seven years in prison and a fine of two million Peruvian Nuevo Soles (about \$575,000 USD). His final sentencing is scheduled for July 18th, 2017, but today’s provisional sentencing carries heavy consequences for the political future of this region’s indigenous citizens. As a result of the court’s decision, Aduviri, who held political ambitions for 2018 regional governance in Puno, may lose his lands and campaign financing in attempt to pay the exorbitant fees, and be ineligible for public service once his sentence is finalized. Aduviri runs on a stringently anti-mining campaign platform, and his political symbol, a blue gotita (droplet) of water with a winking face, is painted along myriad houses and community buildings all along the highway tracing the southern shores of Titicaca.

The politically-charged consequences of these financial sanctions have incensed many of Aduviri’s Aymara and Quechua supporters, who demonstrated en masse, braving the cold and

waving wiphala flags in support of “Hermano Walter”. Discussion and planning is already underway for a new wave of Aymara protests, road blocks, and regional strikes, though citizens are awaiting the final sentencing in a few weeks. Just after the decision was announced, I raced north across the city to the recording studio at Pachamama Radio with Aymara communicator and women’s rights activist Rosa Palomino. She and her communications team broadcasted their weekly Aymara language news and culture show, *Wiñay Pankara* (Always Blooming), with a focus on the day’s legal proceedings. On the air were Palomino and her associates from the Union of Aymara Women of Abya Yala, or UMA, and invited guest Lucio Ramos, a local yatiri, or Aymara spiritual leader and educator, who encouraged listeners to take charge of their indigenous communities’ bienestar (wellbeing) and “train-up” to be indigenous sociologists, anthropologists, and community reporters. Central to the program’s discussion was the theme of representation; from the state’s refusal to address collective land rights issues, to the mainstream media’s avoidance of indigenous rights violations and neglect of Aymara perspectives on illegal land concessions and corporate manipulation of local governors.

The proposed Santa Ana mine at the center of the conflict is located in the Aymara village of Huacullani, an Andean community of the altiplano, the arid high-altitude plain that traverses the Peru-Bolivia border along the shores of Lake Titicaca. Back in 2011, the conflict over unwanted mining infiltration at Huacullani ignited the El Aymarazo uprising, which quickly spread to protests and demonstrations against various extraction projects throughout the region, all of which were operating against the United Nations’ ILO 169, which guarantees indigenous communities the right to free, prior, and informed consent on all extraction and development

projects on their territories. It remains to be seen if a second wave of El Aymarazo will retain the same strength in numbers as the 2011 movement that successfully halted state and municipal roadways, and shut down the center of Puno for days on end. But after Thursday's momentous court decision, across the radio fields of the altiplano, cries for a new "Quechuazo y Aymarazo" echoed into the night"<sup>7</sup>.

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<sup>7</sup> This was originally published as a guest post on Carwil Bjork-James' blog. Citation: Cavagnaro, Kellie. 2017. Peru convicts Walter Aduviri, acquits seventeen others in Aymarazo verdict. Blogpost: Carwil Without Borders. July 7.



## CHAPTER THREE: Field Sites, Methodology, Research Design

### Research Design and Participants

Using participant observation, semi-structured interviewing, and participatory podcasting, I collected data to evaluate how women were leveraging international media grants funding to circumvent and challenge longstanding community norms within the *asambleas* that tended to marginalize their voices in the public sphere.

My study included more than a dozen activists who supported the 2011 *El Aymarazo* uprising in Huacullani, the site of the Bear Creek Mining's intended *Santa Ana* mining operations. UMA now conducts women's rights workshops in communities across Puno district. My data collection focused on experiential measure of Aymara women's vocality in regular spheres of community-level political decision making: at *asambleas*, or community meetings (which were sporadic, but held often, as influenced by community need), at religious rituals (which take place during Lent, on Solstices, and on August 1, among other occasions), and during protest events (which were emergent), as media coverage became increasingly central to territory defense.

The research also involved working with Puno region members of the Indigenous Communicators Network of Peru (REDCIP), a vast national organization with hundreds of members, whereas the local Union of Aymara Women Communicators of Abya Yala (UMA) is a group of 25-30 mostly women radio activists from Puno and the southern shores of Lake Titicaca.

Together, UMA and REDCIRP activists attend the pan-indigenous communication summits, or *cumbres*, hold women's rights workshops in the district, and generate community media content intended to further social aims. UMA produces a weekly show, *Wiñay Panqara*, or

Always Blooming, for *Pachamama Radio* in Puno. In 2019, UMA “birthed”, in Rosa’s words, a baby organization for young men and women comunicadores of Puno region, and they organized a youth-led radio program called *Wila Jistarata Abya Yala*, the Aymara for Open Veins of Latin America—an homage to Eduardo Galeano’s widely read word on extractivism in the Americas. Rosa was often my guide and host in the district at community meetings and UMA events, and at media summits.

Considering the perspectives of Aymaras and UMA activists across three generations, I evaluated: *To what extent does Aymara women’s media activism expand, or reorganize, their engagement in community decision making?* Furthermore, as they became more audible (radio) and visible (international media), *What effect does women’s media activism have towards their efforts at land defense?*

### **Field Entry Methods, Beginning at the United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues**

I then spent summer 2015 studying Quechua in Cusco and conducting pilot studies, networking with Aymara and Quechua radio and social media activists who were advocating for gender equality and land rights across the Puno and Cusco regions. I conducted site surveys over the course of 11 weeks and went to Quillabamba Radio (Cusco region) and Rosa Palomino’s local *Pachamama Radio* (Puno region) to gather preliminary research, talk to media activists and visit community meetings, gathering data for longitudinal use to later track whether and how women’s involvement in *redes de comunicadores* (indigenous communicator networks) would increase their participation and/or leadership within the community governance of whichever pilot community was to become my eventual field site.

I conducted participant observation for ten days each at the United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues (hereafter, UNPFII) in New York City in 2015, 2016 and 2017, at the Inter-American Council on Human Rights (hereafter, IACHR) in Washington, D.C., in 2016 and 2017, at the III Encuentro Internacional de Comunicadores Indígenas (hereafter, III EICI) in Cochabamba, Bolivia, in 2016 and the IV EICI in Cusco, in 2019. I also interviewed *comunicadora* activists in the #NiUnaMenos campaign, which resulted in a joint publication with colleague Jamie Shenton, now at Centre College. Our comparative study looked at indigenous women’s activism in US and Peruvian contexts. I contextualized Aymara women in the #NiUnaMenos March in Peru, while Shenton analyzed indigenous women’s participation in the US #WomensMarch. Sections of this article appear in Chapters 5 of this text with all permissions.

Through my work at the UNPFII, I came to understand that transnational funding networks give women an edge over men, and youth an edge over other age groups in terms of accessing funding lines from NGOs for the sake of indigenous language programming.

### **Field Work in the Andean Region**

This multimodal investigation next involved community-based research in Aymara communities in the Puno district of Peru, along the Peru-Bolivia border, located above 3600 m in a highly vulnerable watershed area embattled in constant territory and resource use disputes. These communities are home to UMA president Rosa Palomino and several other leaders within her organization, and offered the best site for conducting participant observation of radio activists in their roles as communicators in “the small spaces of everyday life” (Canessa 2012). Huacullani

is the site of the 2011 *El Aymarazo*, and among the rare examples of activist communities that have successfully halted a major industrial extraction project in Peru. Participant observation and ethnographic interviewing took place at protests and media summits in the region, as these arose.

I observed and recorded Aymara *asambleas*, or rural town meetings, and gathered quantitative data about men's and women's embodied participation, vocal access to the "mic", and relative length of time addressing the town on critical issues of land sovereignty. I attended urban Puno and interstitial Puno region strikes and road blockades against unwanted land development and civil rights abuses across the Southeast, and asked men and women about their motives for participation, often annotating their responses by hand as opposed to live recording in these more politically sensitive settings.

I also partnered with REDCIRP (Red de Comunicadores Indígenas del Region Puno, or Network of Indigenous Journalists of Puno Region) during my year of Fulbright-funded research in the Peruvian Andes, and participated and observed at their internal organizational practices, which focused on using radio and social media streaming to communicate two specific aspects of activism—one focused on indigenous women's issues, and the other on indigenous language revitalization. I even spoke in Aymara live on radio a few times.

Aside from interviewing, I spent dozens of hours observing REDCIRP and UMA affiliates as they conducted interviews with more than two dozen indigenous journalists and activists in various settings—at the United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues in Manhattan, the Continental Summit of Indigenous Journalists in Cochabamba, and most especially, in the

majority Aymara communities of Chucuito, Ácora, Ilave, Juli, Pomata, Yunguyo and Zepita that trace their social memory through the pre-Inkaic Lupaqa Kingdom.

I talked to indigenous media producers to ask whether they felt represented in traditional community meetings, whether their participation in media production changed their sense of representation, what their political goals involved at the local and regional levels, and what their experiences were forming alliances and coalitions with other leftist factions of Peruvian society in their efforts to ensure representation within national governance. In terms of accessibility, I am fluent in Spanish. Most (~95%) of the women I worked with are fluent Spanish speakers. A few (~5%) are monolingual Aymara speakers. Roughly half are bilingual in Aymara and Spanish, and advanced age is positively correlated with Aymara fluency, though younger generations are beginning to study Aymara as heritage speakers.

I took Intensive Basic Aymara during the Spring of 2019, learning Aymara alongside Rosa's daughter and other heritage speakers at the Universidad del Altiplano in Puno. I used this opportunity to build rapport and ask questions about particular terms and symbols often invoked in community radio broadcasts. My research engages their media ecology to build on ethnographic studies of the silencing of minority groups within public spheres. I studied Quechua in Cusco with funding from the Foreign Language Area Studies (FLAS). A Summer 2016 fellowship from the Social Science Research Council that allowed me to collect data and interviews and expand my network. A Vanderbilt Research Award supported my study in Puno in 2017. The longer phase of my research was supported with a Fulbright Research Scholar Award by the Peruvian government. PEO International grant-funded my write up phase.

## Relationship between Research Questions, Data Forms, and Subsequent Analysis

*Q1. How have Aymara women's voices come to be so marginalized in these spaces?*

R1. In order to understand women's grievances and motives for seeking leadership, I:

- *Conducted participant observation at UMA activism trainings*
- *Conducted life histories with women who are-- and are not—comunicadoras*
- *Conducted long term fieldwork in intimate daily settings*

I conducted digital interviews with 6 UMA members (aged 19–67), collecting views on the progress of women's mobilization and media activism during their lifetimes, and their experience with silencing in community meetings and regional politics. I included 2 participants from each of the three communities, and 2 in each of these age categories:

- 1) 18–29, those coming of age amid Pachamamismo and anti-extraction campaigns.
- 2) 30s–49, came of age during Shining Path era, among first to hear women on radio.
- 3) 50–60+, directly affected by forced sterilizations during Fujimori's administration.

*Example questions from the survey, translated:*

*What is your experience as a woman in community meetings?*

*How has working as a comunicadora affected your role in the community/your household?*

*Why did you take this role?*

*How has this changed your participation in anti-mining issues?*

*How have other women reacted to your role?*

**Q2. What do Aymara men and women activists seek to change?**

R2. To analyze how Aymara women's media activism reorganizes their engagement in land rights-related decision-making practices at meetings, ecological rituals and protest actions, I:

- *Observed meetings, rituals and protests, noting forms and rates of participation by gender*

I collected data on increases/decreases in attendance, on women's forms of participation (passive listening, posing questions, offering personal narratives), and themes of questions.

- *Reviewed women's and men's social media posts about events to code their reflections*
- *Conducted life histories with women who are-- and are not—comunicadoras*
- *Conducted long term fieldwork in intimate daily settings*

**Q3. How are women leveraging emerging forms of media to affect their access to power?**

R3. To evaluate whether women's participation in radio production and listening serves to circumvent their exclusion from face-to-face forms of Aymara political life, I conducted:

- *Participant observation and data collection in Aymara public life and political protest*

In order to observe gender within "the small spaces of everyday life" (Canessa 2012), I lived in close community with Aymara activists, and kept residence in Chucuito at an apartment above a business owned by an Aymara family. I engaged daily at the market and square. Analysis of women's diachronic participation in Andean *public life* involved collecting observational data on changes in their participation in community meetings, land rights protests, and ritual events for comparison with data from my interviews and others' prior studies (Paredes 2006, Pape 2008).

- *Data collection on gender participation at community meetings and ritual events*

*Community meetings (asambleas)* are weekly sessions of administrative decision making for the Aymara. To determine whether women's participation was increasing over time, I compared 2019's quantitative observations on women's participation at three asambleas in Plateria, Chucuito and Ácora to my pilot data from two earlier meetings in 2015. I compared the number of women speaking and the length of time they speak, whether they are listened to (are other men/women facing them? Are they talking to others, whispering or laughing?) to my preliminary data. I also coded my life history interviews with UMA activists for qualitative references about women's historical participation in the asamblea, putting this data into conversation with ISR Pape's *This Is Not a Meeting for Women*.

*Ritual events* include informal benedictions at community meetings, and more formal celebrations of June 21<sup>st</sup> and December 21<sup>st</sup> solstices, and on August 1<sup>st</sup>. I also collected data at other smaller feast days, capturing videography of these events for analysis of gender participation. Aggregate data from community interactions enables me to describe the degree and behavioral patterns of gendered ritual and political participation, as these realms converge.

➤ *Attended the United Nations' UNPFII annually from 2015 to 2018 to analyze Aymara women's communications and strategies within pan-indigenous and transnational spaces.*

**Q4. *Are Aymara comunicadoras increasing their influence within local / national politics?***

R4. To assess how the chachawarmi gender binary affect non-cis/het identifying Andeans, I

➤ asked a subset of 3 semi-structured and one open-ended interview questions about queer identity and same-sex sexual encounters to those interview participants who indicated that they were willing to respond on this subject.



➤ Attended, recorded and analyzed a meeting between UMA members and a visiting, potential political coalition partner organization from Lima. The organization focused on Queer identity and gay marriage rights in Peru.

To assess whether women's vocalicity in community public fora is bolstered or hindered by their political leveraging of *Pachamama* and *chachawarmi* discourses, I:

➤ *Filmed and analyzed indigenous radio productions at Pachamama Radio*

I videoed UMA broadcasts and interviews with *Wiñay Pankara* guests, gathering summaries of their radio participation by asking questions in Spanish. Based on summaries, I selected 8 radio broadcasts that featured *chachawarmi*, gender rights, *Pachamama*, and territory defense, to further discuss in Spanish with my research partners, post-production. I coded transcriptions, analyzing for particular framing of identity (in terms of both community and gender), relationship to the territory in question, particular stakes in the development conflict and chosen tactics.

➤ *Analyzed women's political conversations on the radio and their listeners' reactions*

I observed and recorded reactions to women on the radio, at meetings and at workshops. Were listeners embarrassed for the speaker, encouraged to speak up, nervous that UMA activists are stirring trouble, inattentive, etc.? I interviewed 12 of UMA's listeners, aiming for equal representation across age categories (see Q1). Using semi-structured interviews about their experiences listening to UMA's programs, I cross-referenced this data with women's behaviors at meetings to determine effects of women's activism on their participation in political life and whether such activism provokes broader shifts in local gender relations.

## CHAPTER FOUR: Political Economies of Gender in Aymara Lupaqa Communities<sup>8</sup>

Fig 17: A view of lower Chucuito, 2016. Image credit: Cavagnaro



Chucuito is a village of about 8,000 Aymaras, located above 13,000 feet at the edge of Lake Titicaca. The central town is thought to be the oldest site in the region, and was the Seat of the Royal Purse of the Incan Empire. Large lettering across Chucuito's municipal building proudly boasts the same. On the hillsides surrounding Chucuito live several community landowning collectives, or *markas*, each traditionally governed by a married couple who serve as community

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<sup>8</sup> Sections of this chapter and Chapter 6 reprinted here with permissions, and were previously published in Cavagnaro, K. and Shenton, J. 2019. Territories of Contested Womanhood: Pussyhats, the Pachamama, and Embodying Resistance in the Era of Hashtag Feminism, *Journal of Cultural Analysis and Social Change*, 4(1).

presidents. Town meetings, or *asambleas*, are held for the purpose of voting on community interests. The town is mildly popular with tourists as a pass-through, though most stay only a night or two unless engaged in some sort of exchange or work-stay on a local farm.

I conducted pilot studies across Southeastern Peru during the summer of 2015, networking with comunicadores as far afield as those at Pachamama Radio in Puno and at Quillabamba Radio, north of Cuzco region. I finalized my pilot study and secured fieldwork support from the Social Science Research Council to begin this community research phase in July of 2016. When I arrived at my research base apartment in Chucuito for my third season in 2017, Rosa Palomino and her daughter, Yeny, took me to *dar la vuelta*, take a spin, of the region.

Rosa described the way the locals envision the lake communities as three zones: *zona lago* where fishers and coastal agriculturalists dwell, *zona media* with its extensive agricultural fields, and the *zona alta*, where alpaca and vicuña graze carefully around the potato terraces.



**Fig 18: Aymara communities surrounding Lake Titicaca. Image credit: Cavagnaro**

We veered left off the 3South at Platería, and wound our way along Chucuito peninsula, hopping across the inlet on a loose gravel road before hooking back up to the 126 that connects Chucuito peninsula and many coastal Aymara towns of the Lupaqa ethnic region. As we drove along, Rosa pointed out different communities and features of the landscape while we peeled

oranges and munched on *p'asan kalla*, or gigantic popcorn kernels sweetened with honey. We cross a bridge built on a sacred part of the lake, against local custom. Rosa told me that there are many accidents there, *because the government built a bridge they weren't supposed to*, and Pachamama was angered.

**“We come from within Pachamama, Live on Her, and Return to Her” (Stone 2009).**

Despite Pachamama’s prevalence in Andean oral tradition and colonial historical records, only one, long-term ethnographic study has analyzed her discursive meaning among Andeans:

“Pachamama permeates Andean lives in three life stages and in three worlds: Humans originate from interconnected cosmic energy and enter the earth plane through sacred sites of communion with spiritual powers. Human women and their nourishing activities on Earth—where men participate in balanced energy—carry Pachamama’s abundance. Transformative experiences, including death, intertwine with Pachamama’s energy of renewal” (Stone 2009:62).

The archeological and ethnographic records contain dozens of Lake emergence stories in this region; the most widely told come to be embedded in the landscape through repeated telling, becoming “sacred emergence sites” known by Aymara as *wakas*, or magic portals between worlds, where the first mother and first father of each allyu emerged from.

The ethnohistorical record shows a historical continuity to the Aymara’s self-identification as autochthonous inhabitants who emerged from Lake Titicaca after being created in the realm of *Manqa pacha*, the underworld, place of transformation, death and reemergence (Silverblatt 1987). The Aymara live and dwell and have their being in the realm of *taypi*, meaning center place, or navel. The land of human dwelling is also known as *Aka pacha*, the Center world. The word *Pacha* means ‘everything that exists’ ‘totality’ or ‘holism’. It means both “time” and

“place”, embedded, as one. Adding to *Pacha* the modifier, *mama*, genders her. She is the *landscape* of Aymara Radio.

The next sections examine Andean *comunicadoras*’ efforts to decolonize womanhood at scales ranging from the interpersonal (the gendered body) to the ecopolitical (the extracted landscape), and considers the potential erasure of those who fall outside the heteronormative constructs inherent in Andean cultural understandings of gender ‘complementarity’—a binary opposition of man and woman colloquially referred to as *chachawarmi*. Gender scholars refer to this as a form of gender essentialism, where the inherent or innate qualities of what constitutes manhood and womanhood are seen as biological or even spiritual, but not as culturally constructed and contingent.

### **The Aymara of Chucuito: Magic<sup>9</sup> (What the Men Are Doing)**

On the June Solstice each year, people come to town from all of the surrounding communities of Chucuito Province to hold a ritual *Wilancha*—blood sacrifice—to recognize the god of Sun, Inti. At the first breach of dawn across the altiplano, a llama’s heart was sacrificed to the sun. Janusek writes that the *wilancha* tradition practiced on the now-called “Aymara New Year” on the June 21<sup>st</sup> solstice is rooted in a millennium-old ritual held by both Tiwanaku and Wari cultures, and later by the Lupaqa Kingdom and the Inka Empire. (See Janusek 2008: 39 –

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<sup>9</sup> An aumage to Harry Tschopik, Jr.’s provocative dissertation in the region, which was the last ethnographic source that I could find based in the community where I worked. My upcoming podcast will revisit his work, putting his coverage of Aymara ritual practices and cosmovision into conversation with some of my data archive of extant ritual practices in Chucuito (see Tschopik, Jr. *The Aymara of Chucuito, 1: Magic*, 1951, Harvard University).

40). During this ritual in 2016, the practitioners call on the *achachilas* to protect the land from foreign investment.

**Fig 19: Llama waits with gringos.**



#### **Aymara women reflect on the male-only ritual acts**

After the ritual, I asked UMA about what they had seen, and whether they had ever conducted these rituals. There was a disagreement about women's participation within pago rituals, among a group of all women speakers. Niyelly, a young Aymara in her 30s who was a highly accomplished *comunicadora*, complained:

We can't touch certain things that they [the men] can touch. When they do a pago to the Pachamama, when it's an important ritual, they always say that the *varon* [male] has to carry these things, not the woman. And they say no, that's bad luck.

To this, Rosa quickly replied:

That depends on your region, I think. For example, in my zona, everything is in pairs. The *mujer* has to do everything on the left side, and the *varon* has to do everything on the right. Everything is complementarity.

The conversation continues, and several other women respond that they've never met a female *yatiri*, or a *sabia*, as they call her. Not in Peru. Rosa says perhaps not, but the women are doing things, too. And *sabias*, they must have them in Bolivia. Everyone agrees that this must be so. Yeny recounts two female ritual specialists, very specifically, that she remembers by name and circumstance because of their rarity. One was a Mexican indigenous woman that she met during a cultural exchange program:'

And this woman was very, I mean very knowledgeable. And she shared so many rituals with us. One for each day of the [weeklong] workshop. One with stones and we had to go inside ourselves and reflect. Another with drums and one had to raise their voice. And everything was so, so profound. She was very capable, this woman.

Rosa also reflects that there isn't the same parity in ritual, and makes a point of saying that they should address this in the next women's workshop.

### **Gender complementarity**

Gender complementarity is the general idea, usually rooted in a culturally shared understanding of a greater cosmological order, that "men" and "women"<sup>10</sup> have different roles

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<sup>10</sup> Unfortunately, *complementarianism* in Judeo-Christian and Andean applications is binary, imagining a two-gender system and idealizing cisgendered, heterosexual normativity and production of offspring between two opposite-sex/gendered partners. Discussion here of these concepts thus plays along with, and troubles, the concepts of gender and sex as conflated within these notions of "man"/"woman" complementarity. For a proper treatment of queer rights and excellent anarcho-feminist critique, see Paredes 2006, and for queer rights in everyday practices and artistic expressions, Daly 2010.

and responsibilities in work, family life and community. Judeo-Christian complementarianism is regarded as having biblical roots in the Book of Genesis, and is an accepted cosmological ordering of divinely assigned gender roles that are essentialized and strictly associated with biological sex, such that Judeo-Christian complementarianism recognizes no distinction between socially constructed gender roles and biological sex markings. Some religious followers of Christianity, Judaism, and Islam accept and operationalize these gender teachings within the wider canon of their faith—and some do not.

**Fig 20: Aymara sabios andinos sort coca into quintus, or geometric offerings of three leaves.**







Fig 21: Aymara ritual practitioners (all men) prepare a solstice ritual in Chucuito. Image: Cavagnaro

Given the extreme glacial melting of the Andean Cordillera (Rasmussen 2015) highland Peru is one of the most notable exemplars of the consequences of rapid climate change, typifying the *Anthropocene*, a term coined to describe the present geological age in which human activity dominates global ecological dynamics (Latour 2014). Peru exercises control over vast ecological territories, including key sectors of the Amazon, an extremely bio-diverse, temperature-regulating and CO<sub>2</sub>-absorbing rainforest that represents a large portion of the Earth's remaining forestlands. In the Andean Highlands, mining and gas extraction operations threaten to further

pollute Lake Titicaca, a watershed considered vital, sacred and alive by the Aymara. The *Puna* ecological zone has an average elevation of 4000m above sea.

Alpine alluvial plains covered by ichu reeds extend from all shores of Lake Titicaca. Here in the Peruvian *altiplano*, or high plains desert, indigenous radio fields comprise both the social and geospatial networks of people and places where community radio content is created, produced, listened to and discussed. When imbricated in social movements, these Andean radio fields become site of identity formation and political strategy, where legitimacy is contested between Aymara communities and the Peruvian state.

This section draws on my fieldwork conducted in the Aymara communities of and around Chucuito, Ácora, Juli, Ilave, Pomata and the surrounding region between June 2016 and March 2020. For the Aymara, land defense and the destructive environmental consequences of proposed and ongoing extraction projects motivate and mitigate political media use. At the same time, gender roles are changing as women increasingly become “*the voices of the media*” in Aymara communities.

### ***Power and Decision-Making Practices in the Altiplano***

Valerie Alia coined the term *New Media Nation* in 2003 to describe the international cooperation and pan-indigenous identity emanating from these Indigenous New Media networks: “The New Media Nation uses a form of what...Gayatri Spivak (1990; 1987) has called ‘strategic essentialism,’ in which particularities and differences are set aside, in the interest of constructing an essentialized pan- indigeneity. Cultural action, the making and remaking of

identities, takes place ‘in the contact zones, along the policed and transgressive intercultural frontiers of nations, peoples, and locales’ (Alia 2010:8).

While the essentialism of pan-indigenous movements has been documented, there is clear need for an examination of *gender* essentialism within the context of identifying with, and defending, an increasingly exploited Mother Earth. As indigenous women’s bodies suffer correlated increases in abuse and environmental contamination, their identification with Mother Earth, personally, and as perceived by international interlocutors, becomes a rich ground for analyzing discursive resistance and identity politics.

Gender is thus a critical phenomenological factor for analysis within these radio fields among communicators and among listeners. Ethnographers of Andean radio must consider the ways these politicized identities change situationally, under external threat to community landscape, and within networks of indigenous communication. By taking to radio and social media as defenders of *Pachamama*, Aymara men and women employ essentializing notions of women’s relational nature with the environment (Haraway 1991), as well as women’s social and biological roles as mothers (Alaimo 2000).

With the increase in land concessions and extraction prospecting throughout the Highlands, Andeans are making use of new opportunities for to create community-focused media content and engage broader anti-extraction sympathies and the power of international witness, and the concept of *Pachamama* has been a constant discursive presence in radio broadcasting and social media posts (field notes 2015 and preliminary data 2016).

And none too soon—at one *asamblea* in 2016, a woman stood up to be handed the microphone, and there was an awkward pause. She addressed the crowd, with slight hesitation but equal parts determination, and I noticed the nervous giggles of many Aymara women in the room. Men's body language towards her was disappointing, to say the least. There was a repeated, highly dismissive hand gesture, like a fly-swat. This was specifically performed by men, towards women speakers. I asked Rosa later about the many women giggling at the one woman who had stood up to speak. She said:

They are nervous for her mostly, I think, yes. It is not custom. But it is not wrong.

### **Women's suffering within Aymara Communities**

Among the Aymara, women's grassroots political activism harnesses *Pachamama* as a panoply of symbolic representations of indigenous women's struggles in contemporary Andean society. Transforming this grassroots activism into region-wide resistance networks that can sustain mining and development moratoriums are among the next battles facing Yeny Paucar and Rosa Palomino. Though the moratorium on extraction in Puno stands today, the issue is by no means resolved. Residents increasingly fear incarceration and state violence in response to their protests: At one 2016 UMA meeting, Rosa and her associates lamented the incarceration of *hermano* Walter, "*encarcelado por ser dirigente*"; in other words, among 40 others to be recently jailed for protesting mining in the Puno region. As Yeny observed, "they're looking for us to be afraid of resisting in the future... these little planted fears can cause us to disunite ourselves."

During this time in 2016 I was a guest in Rosa's community, learning the names of the local *Achachila*, or male and female ancestors who preside as mountain spirits, while in turn

discussing some of the grittier realities of spousal abuse and reproductive injustices as suffered by Aymara women in the region. As we stopped to take photographs of *Arco Punku*, an *earth being* who resides at the shores of Lake Titicaca, Yeny told me how she used to work in this area, talking with rural Aymara women about domestic violence. *Women are hit in bed for being too exhausted for sex*, she says, sadly. *They tell me, 'he assumes I was with someone else'.*

One woman told about being abused by her husband for using contraception; though the woman had chosen a copper-T IUD, her partner could 'feel the strings' and thus he beat her, claiming that she had chosen this 'secret birth control method' to facilitate intercourse with multiple partners. These forms of misogyny are pervasive here.

Yeny places herself in the context of being, intersectionally, a *divorced Aymara chola* or indigenous woman with urban ties and ways of dress. She says her husband would not stand for her talk of feminism, and that she was *lucky* her mother was Rosa Palomino, *Comunicadora Aymara*. She said, *most women, if they tell their moms about their abusive or domineering husbands, are shamed into staying. Being hit is normal, Kellie*, she told me. *But how would it shame her family if a woman left?*

The Andean women I work with discuss gender in decidedly essentialist ways, and express extreme social guilt at the idea of separating from even the most abusive husbands, while at the same time framing the patriarchal violence and misogynistic treatment of the holywomanbodylandscape and the cooption of Pachamama by the Bolivian state apparatus as abusive interpolation. To frame this in feminist theoretical terms that Butler might support, these Andean women's discourses and actions suggest that Pachamama is not a lost-cause signifier.

Resignification can happen. Even if they can't re-write the world they live in, these women are claiming and directing this Pachakuti, this coming of change to their reality in ways meaningful to them. This is a way to interpret what Andean women are doing when they protest, and to understand what they are saying about gender relations in the highlands, through Pachamama, that Andean states are not.

My research on Aymara radio fields, to date, suggests that *comunicadoras* like Rosa and Yeny face two, competing motivations within the context of their activism. First, they struggle on an interpersonal and gendered level, for physical safety and for representational voice within their local communities. Activism related to these issues of gender justice thus focuses both internally, at the community itself, to identify and protest local violence, and externally, at systemic issues of misogyny affecting Peruvian society as a whole.

And second, *comunicadoras* struggle for the collective, political and ethnic legitimacy of the Aymara nation, while international supporters and NGOs focus particularly on the image and voice of women as environmental defenders, playing on longstanding social tropes of women's relational nature to the environment. At the time it did not occur to me to ask, but I wonder specifically about how Rosa's role as *comunicadora* affords a greater *legitimacy* to Yeny's denouncement of her husband's abuse, and her decision to divorce her abuser. What is the relationship between legitimacy and radio in these communities, and how does gender mitigate perceptions of legitimacy in this space?

## Silencing of Women: The Gendered Geometry of Community Asambleas

While many of the gendered discursive structures of the traditional Aymara *asamblea*—a hundreds of years old community meeting format wherein men address men arranged parallel to, and in front of, them, while women listen actively from their perpendicular arrangement along the sidelines, and communicate amid one another, but rarely aloud—were physically repeated during UMA’s meetings and regional assemblies, the amount of *airtime* granted to women was significantly shifted in women-organized contexts.

Aymara and Quechua speaking women have long been verbally and spatially muted in community meetings (Pape 2008), though the details of their historical marginalization are contentious among Andeanists. Leacock (1981) claimed that patriarchy was introduced to indigenous communities via Western colonial expansion, which was in turn rooted in capitalist enterprises. An alternative understanding, that of gender as the primeval social oppression, helps to illuminate why racial and class differentials are so often imbued by the oppressor with gendered constructs of relationality, such as with the ‘feminization’ of indigenous people—men and women—by the Spanish (Silverblatt 1987, Weismantel 2001, Povinelli 2006).

Aymara women’s talk radio has become a subaltern mode of political communication and authoritative knowledge construction in rural Andean communities that women produce to correct for their lack of voice in the *asamblea*. This section synthesizes the diachronic ethnographic research on gender relations and power imbalances within the *asamblea*. Several ethnographic studies document that Aymara women’s participation in traditional public decision-making fora and religious rituals has been verbally and physically marginalized by longstanding social

practices including the spatial segregation and sidelining of women during community meetings (I.S.R. Pape 2008, *This is not a meeting for women*--study of Aymara community meetings, Babel 2010).

While many of the gendered discursive structures of the traditional Aymara *asamblea*—a hundreds of years old community meeting format wherein men address men arranged parallel to, and in front of, them, while women listen actively from their perpendicular arrangement along the sidelines, and communicate amid one another, but rarely aloud—were physically repeated during UMA's meetings and regional assemblies, the amount of *airtime* granted to women has shifted.

Gender essentialism is neutral until wielded—For example: Aymara women who identify closely with the Pachamama are gender essentialist in their claims to be closer to her, or understand her more, due to their biological role as mothers: quote. In practice, this self-identification can be empowering interpersonally, by tapping into a global, social clout granted to indigenous women as defenders of the environment, or Pachamama can be empowering more personally to women, through the solidarity and hope created from prayer.

Through my background research and annual fieldwork at the United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues from 2015 – 2019, I came to understand how this trope— of indigenous womanhood equating to mothernaturehood— came to be not only globally theorized, but also, specifically operationalized within the daily lives of Aymara *comunicadoras* in Peru. Gender complementarity in the Andes, expressed as the concept of *chachawarmi*, is also applied unevenly, across varied scales of political and interpersonal discourse. The absence of formal



separation between “church” and “state” in Andean nations means that social values considered central to Andean cosmovision are often employed rhetorically in local and national political contexts. Strategically, chachawarmi as an ideal for gender cooperation and division of labor is juxtaposed against the patriarchal violence of neoliberal political and developmental institutions characteristic of present, globalized coloniality (Escobar 2010).

The revisiting of certain Western and Enlightenment assumptions reveals that in the Andes, gender is oftentimes experienced as prescribed action rather than described subject (Choque Quispe 2007, Maclean 2014), suggesting that in context, one “performs” gender rather than “having” it. This creates space for a consideration of difference between biological sex and social actions, or performativity, according to gender ideals (see West and Zimmerman 1987).

However, in application, Andean social use of chachawarmi tends to produce more gender essentialism and conflation of gender-roles-as-biological-sex-characteristics, while often belying patriarchal abuse at household, community, and national scales (Paredes 2006).

Masculinity studies showing the effects and expectations of military service on rural and indigenous Andean men [who are much more likely to serve than mestizo or urban men] converge on their emphasis that this cargo to serve in the military amplifies gendered abuse and reproduces urban forms of patriarchy in rural societies (Gill 1997, Maclean 2014).

In Andean rhetoric, collective subjectivity is prioritized over individual ego. As Marisol de la Cadena observes, such collective understandings of community are hardly limited to the realm of human beings, but are extended to the tirakuna, or earth beings, embodied as features of the landscape (De la Cadena 2015). Thus, if beings are in-community before they are

individuals, then to understand chachawarmi within these relational spheres of being, we must also ask, what are women—in the Andean imaginary?

### **A History of Gender in the Andes, and Summary of Current Legal Frameworks in Peru**

In Peru, same sex marriage is not legally recognized and same sex couples may not adopt together, though LGBTQ persons may serve openly in the military, trans persons may legally change gender identity on formal documents without surgical prerequisite, and homoerotic activity stopped being criminally punished in 1924.



**Fig 22: The Chankana, three-level Andean cross, symbolizes upper middle and lower worlds.**

Both the Moche (100-700 CE) and Chimu (900 – 1470) archaeological records contain wide evidence of same sex erotic activity on ceramics. In Kichwa lowland communities today, Quariwarmi cross-dressing shamans still perform the Jaguar dual-gender god ritual, “Chuqui Chinchay” (Horswell 2006). Much of what we know about women’s social roles during the Inka Empire is heavily skewed by European perspectives. In his *Comentarios Reales*, Inka Garcilaso de la Vega presented indigenous women of the 1500s in a variety of subordinate and dependent roles that seem to blur Andean and Iberian gender constructs (Regalado de Hurtado 2010).

The Pampayruna or mitawarmi (“rural woman” or “public woman”) was a sex worker of the Inka Empire; she lived tangentially to town under royal guidelines, and her enslavement has been heavily theorized but debated. During the reign of Pachakuteq, royal stipulation required a *trueque*, or exchange of foodstuff or material goods between client and sex worker, as payment for the mitawarmi’s services.

*Haciendo trueque*, or bartering with foodstuffs instead of currency, is still practiced between people of town and women of rural altiplano communities. I remember, while Rosa and I were near Ilave in the Camicachi market, she showed me the practice of trueque between rural cholas and urban mistis, and watched for a while to see how often the mestizos would trade abusively. She seemed galvanized by this.

This research investigation considers Aymara women’s talk radio as a subaltern mode of political communication and authoritative knowledge construction in rural Andean communities. The context surrounding mining development proposed in indigenous communities often pits men’s and women’s interests against one another. These small,

community-scale meetings and broader, pan-indigenous media summits study are crucial sites for decision-making about future land use, and whether or not to consent to extraction projects based on feedback exchanged with other communities who have done so.

Ethnographic studies document that Aymara women's participation in traditional public decision-making fora and religious rituals has been verbally and physically marginalized by long standing social practices including the spatial segregation and sidelining of women during community meetings (Pape 2008). During community ritual and feast day celebrations as well, male leaders act as ritual specialists and spokespeople—*comunicadores*—of the community, and women usually sustain passive roles, or observe. My project explores Aymara on-air discourses and on-the-ground women's rights workshops as potential sites of resistance and recourse against their silencing in the Aymara public sphere, as women stake their claim in community mobilization efforts against the nonconsensual development of their landscapes.

A palpable practice of queer erasure in rural Aymara and Quechua communities has been exacerbated by frequent recent waves of the Limeño/ Andino ideological divide that accompany ruptures in regional and national politics. When seemingly pro-ayllu centrist politicians begin echoing the *indigenismo* of 20<sup>th</sup> century intellectual *mistis*, espousing Pachamamismo rhetoric while simultaneously engendering extraction-friendly policies— there is a resurgence of regionalism, and a renouncing of those *campesinos* who have been coopted by the elite.

Association of university-educated Lima elite with “effemininity” is rooted in early 20<sup>th</sup> century Andean Marxist ideology via Jose Mariátegui, who countered the pro-state *indigenismo* of the 1930s with a nativist platform that equated the pre-Conquest Quechua and Aymara ayllu

with a proto-communist, egalitarian state. Jose Mariátegui, ideologue of an emerging Peruvian communism, pejoratively warned followers that “from the Limeñismo of these ‘Costeño fags’...those champions of a false suicidal provincialism...have much to learn” (de la Cadena 1998: 32). This homophobia reified gender binaries within Aymara and Quechua social organization—namely, the chachawarmi married couple who formed the base of each household voting unit.

Prior to Spanish colonialism, however, communities had recognized and revered third gender citizens, who included the qariwarmi and the ipa or orua, a bard-like ritual specialist who incubated and performed the oral histories of the community and occupied neither male nor female traditional social roles within the ayllu (Horswell 2005:3). This social recognition of androgyny supported egalitarian treatment of non-heteronormative community members.

During the *indigenismo* of the 1930s, the *Patria Nueva* sought to glorify the Inka past within their reforming Peruvian national identity. Scientific politics meant a rejection of biological notions of race in favor of social constructivist understandings which meant that culture—in particular, university education—could change one’s racial logics. Through state-sponsored Quechua language propaganda (Durston 2012), For indigenistas, Andean *hombria*, or manliness, became associated with social change and revolution as opposed to its earlier association with resisting state and Limeño “effeminate” intellectualism. Now that university education was seen as the enculturating force that could transform *raza*, ideologues needed to build a bridge between university intelligentsia and indigenous community ideals.

Early Andean Marxists resisted this pro-mestizaje rhetoric. While they ideologically concurred with the ‘scientific politics’ of the indigenistas, and the socially constructed—as opposed to biologically determinate—nature of *raza*, they were also racial purists—believing in the superiority of the intellectual *indio* over the intellectual *mestizo*—as the *indio* comes from a “natural”, proto-communist social framework by virtue of his belonging in-*ayllu*.

In chapter 5, I’ll discuss the possibility that present day rhetoric and social practices of queer erasure among Andean highland communities have their roots in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century formative period of Peruvian Marxism, wherein Aymara and Quechua men of the highlands shaped their masculine sense of identity in contrast to a coastal, overly perfumed and hyper-educated elite. Meanwhile their embodied relationship to the landscape through agropastoral subsistence, oral history and *ayllu* social organization supports the ideological framing of Marxism as a natural extension of *ayllu* relationality, and Aymara and Quechua pre-colonial social organization as an idealized proto-communist state (Mariátegui 1929, in de la Cadena 1998).

Data from my interviews, media analyses and field notes with Aymara gender rights activists in Puno from 2015–2020 suggest that regionalist divides between heteronormative Andean leftists and gender progressive Limeño leftists persists and weakens the potentiality for effective political coalitions. A prominent exemplar is that of Pedro Castillo’s anti-gay and anti-trans comments during his 2021 presidency, and the overwhelming lack of support for him even among those middle class Limeños who had supported earlier Andean leftist administrations, which left Castillo factionless against the right-wing, pro-Fujimori congress.

Surveyed descriptions of chachawarmi agree on its central importance as an Andean concept of gender complementarity wherein femininity and masculinity are associated with values, actions, and responsibilities. Furthermore, male-female partners in rural Andean towns are intrinsically bound to one another as a condition of full community belonging. As single men are unable to serve in leadership, some advocates of chachawarmi insist that both genders are valued equally in the community. But who “values” these roles equally, and what does that valorization mean? Do Andean men value these roles so equally that they would perform either set of responsibilities and corresponding realms of authority and expression? In which contexts?

Canessa’s work shows that in the Andes, men and women are differentiated according to their activities and occupations, rather than their innate nature (Canessa 2012). Ethnographic research in the Andes since the early 1980s shows consistent association of femininity with “the idea of being conquered and dominated (by men)” (Harvey 1994). Kathryn Forstner’s case study in the Peruvian Andes supports continued valorization of patience, primary responsibility for household wellbeing, humility, passivity, and care of children as marks of idealized womanhood. Silverblatt’s work on gender relations in Inka and colonial times reports a similar set of femininity characteristics (1987). When women were asked specifically about what they hoped to gain from chachawarmi gender equality, they expressed wanting “the ability to limit the number of children they give birth to or ... the timing of a pregnancy...” as well as hoping that gender training for their male partners<sup>11</sup> might further influence men’s behavior and self-awareness, resulting in less

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<sup>11</sup> At the time of research, no such parallel program of men’s rights training was offered.

domestic violence. Indeed, the few men Forstner interviewed who had attended ReproSalud women's meetings reported a new regard for gender relations in the aftermath, and some wives reported improved relations or decreased abuse (Forstner 2013).

Historically discussed as giving "order to the cosmos", chachawarmi principles are rooted in historical kinship practices as well as land use and inheritance patterns (Maclean 2014). Kathrin Forstner's work on 21<sup>st</sup> century rural gender relations and economic opportunities in the Puno region of Peru shows that the exposure of Andean people to mainstream market culture is negatively correlated with women's access to program entitlements and household income, and positively correlated with moderate increases in reported incidents of domestic violence and abuse (Forstner 2013). As financing is increasingly required to take advantage of economic programs, women's difficulty in obtaining credit without a husband-figure is a distinct disadvantage (Radcliffe et. Al. 2004). But what might gender relations, according to chachawarmi values, look like in the absence of neoliberal coloniality?

Silverblatt evidences that in colonial times, "Spanish chroniclers of Inka life looked at Indians (a predominantly colonial creation) and women in much the same light: both were dependent, childlike, incapable of autonomous, responsible action" (Silverblatt 1987: xxvi). Thus "Indians" were treated, in relation to Spaniards, as "feminine". Conquistador-indio hierarchies of dominance thus influenced intra-community and intra-household gender relations, but this was not new. In the pre-Spanish era, under Inka rule, Silverblatt found that "the Inkas manipulated popular structures of gender complementarity and parallelism to coax the unprivileged into acquiescing in their loss of autonomy" (ibid).



I had a conversation recently with a South Americanist colleague of mine about considerations of chachawarmi and western patriarchies—and their alternatives—from the perspective of extreme cultural relativism. My feminist colleague argued, to my surprise, for the dedicated use of absolute cultural relativity as a research framework, and asked, “in absolute terms, regarding women’s health and wellbeing, is localized patriarchy better than the alternative— neoliberal patriarchal norms, or the gendered abuse of a bloody revolution?”

For one comparative measure, at the household level, Kate Maclean shows that “the tropes of male headship in the family are marked out much more strongly in evangelical households than in those that reflect more closely the chachawarmi ideal” Maclean 2014:86). Maclean’s project is to analyze the various political mobilizations of chachawarmi, and the influence these have on gendered power. She finds that “claims based on gender, ethnicity and class may not coincide, and the dynamics involved in exclusion by these categories are different” (Maclean 2014: 78). She presents ethnographic evidence for Aymara women’s understandings of machismo as exacerbated by urban society and colonialism (ibid), and show how prior military service, religion, work, education and money access act as intersecting axes of power within rural Andean groups. Therefore, in responding to the question of how women fare better, we first have to ask, which women?

For those indigenous campesinas of the Andean highlands, the intersectional oppressions of race, class, gender, rural/urban proximity, education and literacy status, linguistic identity and age, must all be addressed, unearthed, and approached from local logics in order for chachawarmi to have a chance to mean anything liberating. “Between women and men, we are

similarly different, we can diminish our different visions and, learning from woman, guide ourselves more by the right hemisphere of the brain, which is the creative one, seeing the whole, larger picture, and predominating in woman”<sup>12</sup> (Ministerio de Relaciones Exteriores 2010: 166).

In the past decade, the Bolivian Movimiento al Socialismo (MAS) has used chachawarmi “in the context of resistance against neoliberalism”, essentializing Andean gender representations in relation to the Western notions that they are not (Maclean 2014). According to Maclean, chachawarmi, as rhetorically harnessed to argue for women’s equal rights and representation within the Movimiento al Socialismo (MAS) in Bolivia, has to some degree achieved these goals. Maclean notes women’s unprecedented rates of representation in political positions, and credits chachawarmi discourses for these advances.

In 2010, Evo Morales appointed a Cabinet of 50% female ministers, and in a public statement acknowledging this achievement, Morales “stressed that this was achieved in the name of chachawarmi, ‘or, as the mestizos say, gender equality’ (Maclean 2014: 77)—showing his eagerness to engage gender equality in national rhetoric. Nevertheless, in many contexts, chachawarmi has also essentialized and pigeonholed women’s roles (Maclean 2014). For one, Morales’ Cabinet appointments failed to represent indigenous women’s voices, or indeed address the intersecting issues of race, ethnicity and class that accompany the gendered oppression of past and present political systems in the Andes (Silverblatt 1987). As in the days of the Inka, the

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<sup>12</sup> Suffice it to say that as a phenomenon, creativity has been shown by more recent Western neuropsychologists to be profoundly more complex and “gender” and “hemisphere”-ignorant than here indicated. For a thoughtful discussion, see *Imagine: How Creativity Works* by Jonah Lehrer (2012).

cultural source of these rhetorical schemes, the state wields gender as a weapon by “encrusting traditional [Andean] gender values and institutions... to cloak imperial demands in accustomed phrases and practice” (ibid).

In a repugnant display of public misogyny, Evo Morales linked the commodification of Mother Earth with a sexualized encouragement for Morales’ young, male supporters to go and convince indigenous women to follow suit in championing road-building through indigenous lands, along with other pro-extraction development projects: In Carwil Bjork-James’ translation, Morales said “‘you, comrades, have to explain, to orient the indigenous comrades...to convince them that they must not oppose [the road]...If I had the time, I would go seduce the Yuracaré female comrades; so then, youth, you have instructions from the president to [sexually] conquer the Trinitario and Yuracaré female comrades so that they do not oppose the construction of the road.’ Then he asked, ‘Approved?’ and applause could be heard from the crowd”.

While many women I spoke with in the highlands identify with and bemoan the ravaging and abuses of the Earth Mother by multinational mining developers, the Bolivian indigenous state under Evo Morales promotes a simultaneous *reverence* and *reaping* of her resources in a gendered development rhetoric that pronounces itself in defense of the feminine while endeavoring to silence rural and indigenous women’s resistance from the margins. This rhetoric paints *Pachamama* as the ultimate, self-sacrificing provider, and Andean politicians often couch mineral extraction projects as the results of her “providing” for her children (Radcliffe, Laurie & Andolina 2004).

Another feature of Morales' use of chachawarmi was to contrast the patriarchal, unmarried-priest leadership of the Catholic church with MAS' advocacy of Andean marriage. In 2011, Morales oversaw an indigenous marriage of 355 couples in joint ceremony overseen by male-female pairs of yatiri, Aymara priests. The implied/imposed cisgendered heterosexual normativity of this ideology was little critiqued in Bolivian national press (Daly 2010). Clearly, essentialized notions of gender as conceived of and advocated within chachawarmi discourse are exclusionary, sexist, and homophobic on principle. But the potential success subtle advocacy requires more than mere rejection of a notion so deeply embedded in Andean culture.

Evidence for gender essentialism within the application of chachawarmi as social discourse abound. As Paredes quips, "the woman cooks and the man eats—what lovely complementarity" (Paredes 2006). However, not all Andean indigenous women agree with the assertion that patriarchy precedes colonial influence, and continue to wonder what gender relations, according to chachawarmi values, might look like in the absence of coloniality.

Burman's analysis outlines five general positions among indigenous women, anarcho-feminists, and Western or urban mestiza feminists, regarding the benevolence of chachawarmi ideology and whether or not patriarchy existed before colonialism. First, some (including many rural men and few women) hold that chachawarmi is "a cosmic order, a social reality and a sociopolitical practice that is alive and well today...colonialism has not affected chachawarmi, only...turned it into a more clandestine indigenous practice" (Burman 2011:88). Therefore, according to the logic, no "decolonization" of Aymara gender practice is needed, only that of Andean society.

The second position, a variant of the first (espoused by more rural women), argues for colonialism at the root of gender inequality as well, but finds that chachawarmi has been eroded and interspersed with Western patriarchal norms, and thus decolonization (ridding neoliberal economic forces, development paradigms and social influences) would automatically restore a benevolent chachawarmi ethic. The third position claims, as the first two, that chachawarmi ideals are historically continuous and predate colonialism, but that they are no longer widely practiced, save sporadically, in remote traditional households. Western colonization is the problem, but ridding it won't restore a lost phenomenon. Therefore, decolonization aimed at women's liberation needs to address and deconstruct the general machismo of wider society.

The fourth position, held by communitarian feminists, critiques chachawarmi as "an ideological notion...[that] serves the indigenous 'patriarchy' and deceives indigenous women" (ibid). This position doubts the historicity of chachawarmi in the Andes, considering it a modern notion, and focuses on the primacy of patriarchy as an institution that predates coloniality. For these women, "there is no decolonization without depatriarchalization" (Burman 2011:89). However, there is room to reclaim chachawarmi as a millenarian ideal engendered with new purpose. Finally, the Bolivian anarcho-feminist movement sees no prospect for liberation in chachawarmi discourse, which cements essentialized notions of gender, belying bias.

Burman notes that chachawarmi is problematic to middle class feminists and radical indigenous feminists alike. According to those who link patriarchy with European colonization, "thinking that the man is superior, it's, como se dice, a colonial idea" (Burman 2011:66). Taken another way, gender oppression is an absolute colonial legacy, not in terms of 15<sup>th</sup> century

transatlantic European expansion, but rather, in the truest senses of the word “colonial” – including the sense that social gender norms psychologically colonize (Forstner 2013). The reason for this is the extent to which Andean cosmology is based on a notion of chachawarmi balance, and imbedded in social relations and ecological understandings among my research participants. To affect positive social change in their lifetimes, it may take a reclaiming of sacred gender notions, rather than a dismantling of cosmological orders, to move swiftly. Furthermore, my community partners embrace and engage their cosmology, and its feminine aspects (especially Pachamama), to give order and meaning to their own lived experiences, and to inspire their resistance against their oppressors.

In short, chachawarmi in practice today may as well be an expression of greater-lesser, in the sense that it essentializes women’s roles, devalues their social positioning and isolates them in their responsibilities for reproductive labor, household chores, and childrearing (Ministerio de Relaciones Exteriores 2010) while silencing them in public meetings, denying them access to credit and financing, and normalizing their subjection to physical domination by male partners or community members (Burman 2011). The extent to which these gendered abuses existed before colonial institutions of patriarchy is debated, though ethnohistorical research by Silverblatt confirms that patriarchal institutions were a vibrant feature of Inka rule (Silverblatt 1987).

In pointing to ways that chachawarmi gender role ideals marginalize women-headed households, single mothers, and those without children, Maclean argues that the decolonizing project of chachawarmi ideals should nevertheless be pursued, and she observed: “there is an important place for empirical research that brings out the diversity and complexity of everyday

life without losing sight of decolonial resistance” (Maclean 2014, see also Lugones, 2010). Perhaps chachawarmi is appropriate contextually in representing an idealized opposition to Western forms of male gender dominance, but the cisgendered heteronormativity of these ideals must be addressed by Andean voices and supported by international activists. Ultimately, the question remains as to whether women fare better, and have greater agency in matters they express as most important (control over reproduction, safety from domestic and larger-scale misogynistic violence, access to political voice and rights to local and family leadership) within broader chachawarmi discourses.

The immense project for women in my research community is to decolonize their gender from local and non-local oppression, whether in the form of chachawarmi, Christianity, or the State. Indigenous women in the Andes are engaged in myriad intersecting battles of decolonization—from the gendered oppressions of Western neoliberalism that isolate them financially, to the ethnic and racial prejudices that isolate them socially, to the gendered rhetoric of pachamamismo that abuses the sacred feminine landscape- claiming the interests of social equality while subordinating la tierra to el financiero.

## **CHAPTER FIVE:           The Acoustemology of Andean Politics**

This transnational phase of my research took place during the III and IV Pan-Indigenous *Cumbres* that took place in Cochabamba, Bolivia and Cusco, Peru in 2016 and 2019, respectively. At these events, Aymara communities increasingly rely on international media attention—leaning into an aged trope that heaps gendered focus onto indigenous women as “environmental defenders” (see discussion of gendered tropes of women/ nature/ indigeneity in chapter three)—to influence regional resource politics. This is evidenced by women’s new and expanding media networks (Alia 2010), women activists’ increased personal resource allocation to digital media production and drone videography (field notes 2020), expanded indigenous media presence at the United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues (even during the Trump administration, despite declining indigenous attendance) and increased earmarked funding for women and media by NGOs, including Cultural Survival.

### **International Cumbres and Media Summits**

Beginning in 2010, media activists from across the Americas have gathered for indigenous media *Cumbres*, or summits, to share strategies in digital communications and radio production. These *Cumbres* create an indigenous counter-public forum where diverse comunicadores report on their local socio-environmental conflicts, hear one another’s grievances, and develop cooperative objectives for land defense, before returning to their communities with ‘the word’.

In 2016, hundreds of indigenous communicators from across the Americas gathered in the suburbs of Cochabamba, Bolivia for the III Continental Indigenous Media Summit. Wielding



digital cameras and portable sound mixers, activists convened to discuss ongoing threats to their landscapes, communities, and bodies. Speaking to diverse media producers from across the hemisphere, Aymaras contextually framed their efforts to address human rights abuses in the Andean social value of *chachawarmi* (gender complementarity), and in their substantive dependence upon the landscape they revere as animate, sentient, and actively involved in how community events unfold (De La Cadena 2015). Aymaras and Quechuas leaned into reporter’s microphones as they invoked the name of their landscape—*Pachamama*.



**Fig 33: Aymara women lead a women’s rights workshop in Puno Region, Peru.**

## **Buen Vivir**

Two general positions seem to emerge describing the various entanglements between Andean states and transnational mining interests. First, there are state-led and regulated extractivism approaches that harnesses industry profits for limited social programs and cautious attempts at wealth distribution (such as in the cases of Ecuador and Bolivia in the 2000s and 2010s). Second, there are export-oriented neoliberal extractivist nations that deregulate industry and pave the way for transnational corporate interest (as in Peru).

Describing the wider dependence of Latin American countries on transnational extractive-rentier capital accumulation, Lopez and Vertiz contextualize the current economic inequalities of nation states within a historical discussion of unequal geographic development (Lopez and Vertiz 2014). Their historical approach categorizes neoliberal globalization as a process that produces new loci for investment of over-accumulated capital, building on Harvey's discussion of spatial solutions as inherent in capitalism (Harvey 2004).

Increasingly over the past two decades, radio broadcasting and web-facing indigenous media activists have been developing broad, transnational and pan-indigenous networks whose social ties are reinforced through large-scale, in-person plenaries and conference activities at multiple sites across Latin America each year, as well as at side events of the UNPFII, where indigenous community broadcasting studios are constructed for *comunicadores*. Post-Cumbre ethnographic research in community settings suggests that these emerging networks, and their media posts, are affecting not only regional politics, but interpersonal gender relations within communities.

### **The III EICI Cumbre in Cochabamba, Bolivia—November 2016**

Beginning in 2010, community media activists from ethnic groups across the Americas have been holding “Indigenous Communicators of Abya Yala3” summits—international gatherings of indigenous radio broadcasters and community journalists from across Latin America— to train one another in radio communication skills and digital activism. These summits also become discursive spaces for political strategizing, where communicators from myriad indigenous groups report on the ongoing socio-environmental conflicts in their territories, and cooperatively develop international strategies and objectives regarding communal land defense and resistance to gas and mineral extraction projects. Thus, indigenous radio fields become both physical and discursive spaces for cultivating pan-indigenous political concerns that center on conflicts with state actors regarding land rights, environmental degradation and physical security. Importantly, the organizers of these gatherings have consistently declared summit space as autonomous, separate from state controlled messaging.

In 2016, the III Continental Summit of Indigenous Communicators was *supposed* to take place in Cochabamba, Bolivia. Instead, as international delegations of communicators arrived from Ecuador, Colombia, Mexico and across Latin America, the university grounds dedicated to the summit were occupied by pro-state factions of Bolivian leadership organizations in a surprise attempt to transform the autonomous space into a support campaign for President Evo Morales, who was seeking another referendum for additional terms as head-of-state I was there with partners from UMA and other indigenous organizations of Peru. Morales was accompanied by several of his Andean spiritual practitioners who performed ceremonies to consecrate summit

activities in both Morales' name and in the name of *Pachamama*, tying political legitimacy to spiritual legitimacy— and embedding this meaning in the landscape through public ritual. This coopting of summit space resulted in broad resistance from activists, who demonstrated unwavering commitment to the autonomy of radio networks as spaces for political strategizing. As the second scheduled day of the summit passed, nearly a third of the international radio communicators organized an “Autonomous Summit” outside the doors of the scheduled event, conducting an open forum and ritualized space-claiming protest session, during which they specifically declared the state co-opted event “illegitimate”.

The gathering of the Autonomous Summit was further prompted by a series of violent attacks perpetrated against international delegates by local Bolivian police the night before: in particular, multiple attempted sexual assaults of female delegates had been reported, and one of the indigenous communicators who had been assaulted presented a public denouncement of her attacker within the context of the Autonomous Summit. During the subsequent sessions of the Autonomous Summit, delegates from myriad indigenous and ethnic groups reported on the ongoing land defense and extraction resistance efforts in their communities, while discussing strategies for pan-indigenous organizing at future events. By way of conclusion, the Autonomous Summit prepared and co-produced statements to be broadcast to each of their home communities in both Spanish and local native languages. Participation in the Autonomous Summit was dominated by delegates from Andean states, including radio communicators from UMA.

Gender parity in Aymara communications is critical in an area where gendered violence is sharply increasing along with environmental degradation (Jenkins 2014). Along the Andean

Cordillera, increasing mining and extraction projects appropriate and desiccate indigenous land while contaminating soil and watersheds far beyond corporate concession boundaries (Li 2014). These activities destroy sacred spaces within Aymara landscapes.

**Fig 23: Bolivian Ritual Specialists of both genders raise quintus of coca leaf at the EICI in Bolivia**



In the Andes where landscape is animate and mountain peaks are gendered, sentient agents (Allen 2002, De la Cadena 2015), interpersonal and public commentary about mining often involve tropes of sexual violation. One miner noted, “We have to get under the *Achachila*'s skirts to get the silver” (field notes).

The resistance activities conducted at the III EICI illustrated three salient tactics of social movements that I continued to analyze within Aymara radio activism through 2020:

- First, participants utilized the space to decry state sanctioned racialized and gender-based violence in the form of *complaint discourse* (Mamani Ramirez 2005).
- Second, participants exerted their rightful claim to the space by claiming the *legitimacy* of their political arena, exemplifying the political tensions between community and state within indigenous communication networks (Auyero 2003).
- Third, participants unified over experiences of injustice, creating *collective resistance* space and reaffirming shared *identities* (Juris 2008).

Building on their experiences at these pan-indigenous, international events, women in UMA have bolstered their use of strategic essentialist notions of women's relational connection to Pachamama as they call attention to, and challenge, the gendered abuses and interpersonal violence in their communities and integrate their concerns into broader campaigns of gender activism. The *mesa rebelde* of the III EICI in Cochabamba concluded with a broad declaration countering Morales' moves, and a setting of plan and agenda for the 2019 EICI.

This chapter examined *comunicadoras'* broadcasting efforts in pan-indigenous contexts at the = III and IV *Cumbres Continentales de Comunicadoras Indigenas*. The relationship between NGO funding and indigenous media activism changed post- UNDRIP (2007), granting broad gravitas to global funding resources for indigenous media production due to the UN's Decade focus on indigenous language revitalization. Upon analysis of *comunicadoras'* participation in these realms and amid the #NiUnaMenos movement that swept Peru in 2016 and 2017, I find that within

international contexts, specifically at the UNPFII, the IACHR, and the *Cumbres* my community partners and their pan-indigenous activist colleagues have four main activities:

- Separate, group production and broadcasting of news segments for their respective community media at home, facilitated by UN- and NGO-funded on-site recording booths.
- Granting of individual interviews to mass media sources, lobbyists, legal advocates and, occasionally academics like yours truly, about the unsanctioned development projects and land rights violations in their communities that are occurring at the hands of US, Canadian, Chinese, and other international extraction firms, in conjunction with the permeable FPIC policies and ILO-169 violating negligence of the Peruvian state.
- Collective, pan-indigenous writing of working papers, declarations and decrees that stem from round-table plenaries and collective action side events at the UNPFII, the IACHR and at the III *Cumbre's mesa alternativa* that formed in situ just outside of the physical gates of the original cumbre, where Evo Morales and a broad team of his administrators consumed the original *mesas* with their own, pre-determined agenda.
- Pursuit of funding lines for media activism and development of indigenous studios.

***“The concept of indigenous peoples emerged from the colonial experience” (UN 2009:6).***

The United Nations has long acknowledged the causal relationship between international free trade agreements and large-scale land grabs on indigenous territories, citing the link between neoliberal market policies, free trade agreements, IMF reforms imposed on heavily indebted nations and indigenous land dispossession in resource rich states:

Traditional modes of livelihood, such as fishing, hunting and gathering, livestock cultivation or small scale agriculture are under a great amount of stress from phenomena such as neo-liberalism and commodification, privatization, climate change and conflict. (UN 2009:7).

Indigenous activists often engage with UN bodies in the hopes of affecting direct change in their community's plight for land security, only to find that their true political gains come from media campaigning and expanding public opinion in Europe and the United States. This has been true now for 100 years, to date. In 1923, Cayuga Chief Deskaheh carried the grievance of the Iroquois Six Nations Confederacy to the League of Nations' annual assembly in Geneva. Though he waited to present his case for a year, he was not received by the delegations in Switzerland, and he returned to America without ever speaking on the floor. However,

Although he was not granted an audience by the League, he did sustain a remarkable, successful PR campaign in Europe, where he found a much more receptive audience in the media and general public than he did amongst the delegations in the League (UN 2009:2).

The United Nations' Department of Economic and Social Affairs (DESA) considers itself to be the think tank for the UN. Its 2009 report, *State of the World's Indigenous Peoples*, identified the endangerment of 90% of the world's indigenous languages by the end of this century. Since that time, a distinct focus on indigenous language revitalization efforts has been at the center of policy development within the United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues, to match the extant focus on indigenous land rights frameworks. This funding focus on language has meant a vast expansion of community radio programs and Aymara television network programming, where discussants often cover land rights and bodily rights. Aymara women, especially but not only those of older generations, are more likely to be fluent in Aymara, thus better situated to



secure these funding opportunities and/or get hired to newly created Aymara and Quechua broadcaster jobs opportunities that arise from state and NGO language preservation funds. For these indirect reasons, the global UN focus on indigenous language revitalization has been pivotal in funding indigenous women's work on gender rights issues.

### **The United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues: funding for comunicadoras**

Back in April 2015, when Rosa and I had first stood together on the floor of the UNPFII, listening to translations in Spanish through official U.N. ear pieces, we heard report after report from delegation after state delegation self-congratulating their progress on issues of Free Prior and Informed Consent and other indigenous- state affairs. Meanwhile, Peru had gridded the majority of its forests and reserves for prospecting concessions, and Bolivian leaders under president Morales were hosting multinational corporations at the Four Seasons in New York, inviting them to "Invest in the New Bolivia" while development continued across indigenous territories and Amazonian biomass. Indigenous communities had little hope that their FPIC rights will be acknowledged by corrupt state agents who will accidentally "double book" concession blocks to multiple foreign investors. All along the cordillera, Andean states persisted in *building bridges they aren't supposed to*.

The next June, before I flew to Chcuito I checked in with Yeny for the first time since the prior field season. She got straight to the business of funding. UMA wanted a radio cabinet in-house for internet streaming broadcasts, the latest and greatest. I had last seen her in November the year before in Cochabamba, Bolivia at the III Cumbre, where Evo Morales had hijacked the summit to launch a reinvigorated 'write-me-back-in' campaign. Talking about her pan-

indigenous work with K'iche' Maya Avexnim Cojti, Director of Programs with Cultural Survival, and her sister Dr. Iyaxel Cojti Ren, a Maya classical archaeologist, Yeny said:

“I spoke with the sisters in Cochabamba [at the III Cumbre of Indigenous *Comunicadores* in November of 2016] and they talked about the possibility of paying our rent at the radio station, and the funding to have a radio cabinet... they have since helped us with our little own radio cabinet here... and so you know this has been our dream, to have our own recording studio with our own microphones and equipment, and so the sisters of Cultural Survival are helping us in this regard...but the microphones we still need to fund.”

She then asked me to secure Shure microphones, model SM58, which they were trying to buy internationally given the exorbitant taxes on imported *electrodomésticos*. One of the sisters with Amazon Frontlines had told her they were the best.

### *Summary*

In this chapter I've analyzed the ways that my community partners engaged in pan-indigenous international communication summits to share best practices, network with activists facing similar issues in their communities, and train each other in media techniques, while sharing resources and creating community media broadcasts to update their folks back home about the happenings during these cumbres. In the Bolivian cumbre covered in this chapter, there was slippage between Bolivian national political messaging (by Evo Morales in this instance), and the non-state messaging of indigenous activists who had come to critique the state. This resulted in activists' spontaneous creation of a *Mesa Rebelde*, or “Rebel Table”, wherein they recreated their originally intended counter-public sphere despite Morales' state interference.

## CHAPTER SIX: “No Little Men in the Radio”

In 1985, when she first became interested in indigenous communication, Rosa’s very introduction to the viscera of radio was recounted to me as a moment imbued with women’s empowerment. For the women of UMA, their early listening experiences involved a consistent, if disembodied, male vocal presence in the radio fields, with no female voices heard. Several members concluded that the animate energies governing the radio must be male, and they set out to “negotiate”, in order to have their concerns as women addressed. Rosa describes how, with a few other interested women in her community, she gathered around the table at her home with an old radio and a screwdriver. The group was intent on discovering the animate power within the device, in order to figure out how media was made. Rosa told me the story like she was audio storytelling for the radio. Assuming that the vital energies governing the radio must be male, she said, she and other UMA members gathered to “negotiate” with the radio spirits, wanting to hear their own concerns addressed on-air. With a wink, and dual meanings, Rosa said:

We wanted to get to know the little men in the machine—you know, the voices in the radio... When we saw for ourselves that there were no men inside, it dawned on me. *Women, too, could be the voices of the media.*

For the majority of the world’s indigenous peoples, radio remains the primary form of political communication in communities, while the emerging use of social media is facilitating media streaming to international sympathizers. Several studies since 2011 address the role of In media in protest movements (Castells 2012, Jenkins et Al. 2016, Nekmat et Al. 2015, Rosato 2014), but

radio remains the medium least studied by anthropologists, despite the fact that it remains the most common source of communication in the world (Bessire and Fisher 2013).

My ethnographic consideration of indigenous media networks thus begins with the centrality and import of radio as the primary source of news, entertainment, and grassroots organizing. Analyses of indigenous radio benefit from Bourdieu's conceptualization of *radio fields*, defined as the "networks of cultural, political and socioeconomic relations of force" (Bourdieu 1993) drawn together by radio media. As spaces for ongoing identity formation and political strategizing, radio fields are critical sites of inquiry for understanding indigenous resistance movements, particularly in rural communities (Stone 2009).



**Fig 24: Rosa, Irma and Yeny broadcasting at Pachamama Radio June 2017. Image credit: Cavagnaro**

Indigenous radio fields comprise the social, geographic and financial networks of people and places where community radio content is created, produced, listened to and discussed. When imbricated in social movements, these radio fields become site of identity formation and political strategy, where legitimacy is contested between communities and the state. Bessire and Fisher have examined recent renewal in anthropological concern with radio fields, noting that “radio’s rugged and inexpensive materialities have become invested with new import in the many places where topography, poverty, or political oppression limits access to web connectivity, computers, or electricity” (Bessire and Fisher 2013:364).



**Fig 25: Rosa and Irma broadcasting at Pachamama Radio June 2017. Image credit: Cavagnaro**

Although women are not synonymous with gender, they have long been marginalized as such, as evidenced by generations of ethnographic inquiries into women finding voice. Felski's *feminist public sphere* helps to exemplify why such studies are key to not only understanding society, but changing it: by re-imagining the "master's tools" (Lorde 1984), feminist anthropology "seeks to convince society as a whole of the validity of women's claims, challenging existing structures of authority through political activity and theoretical critique" (Felski 1989:168).

Women operationalize a heteronormative correlation with the Pachamama as they simultaneously resist the patriarchal colonization of their bodies and the neocolonial destruction of their landscapes by mega-mining firms. The Andean concept of *chachawarmi*, or 'man-woman', often accompanies political leveraging of Pachamama as part of a broader political argument that Aymaras espouse a gender complementarity, a 'chachawarmi', in all social aspects of the community, and are thus egalitarian. Further subtleties of this narrative deploy the argument that post-conquest influence is responsible for the patriarchy within indigenous communities.

These narratives bely a history of complex intersecting abuses faced by indigenous women in the Andes, and for their part, women in these communities hold a variety of opinions regarding the autochthonous versus inherited origins of patriarchy, as Anders Burman (2011) discusses. It is within this broader sociopolitical context that the *#NiUnaMenos* movement spread through Andean communities from earlier iterations in Argentina.

*#NiUnaMenos* participants that I interviewed in the Puno region, Aymara and Quechua of the Andean highlands, ranged in age from 21 to 67. I interviewed 12 activists associated with

UMA about their participation in the march. UMA hosts a feminist talk radio station in the Puno Region, which airs internationally across Lake Titicaca, reaching the Bolivian shores and connecting highland Aymara and Quechua women of both nations. In addition to their radio programming, UMA functions as a women's rights organization, holding gender rights workshops in small Aymara communities south of Puno. During the 2016 March, UMA activists struggled against neo-colonizing mass media narratives about their womanhood. As one Aymara respondent recalled:

I had always heard that there were so many cases of forced sterilization, but since I didn't know anyone this had happened to (...) I thought, it seemed far away. I was wrong. The idea, the cultural idea here, was that the women that this had happened to, they must have been 'easy' women. This is what so many of the women victims [later] told (...) that they had been treated in this way by their families. So, they decided to shut up and to abandon the [legal] process (...) But on the news they are not talking about this very much and so the youth doesn't know very much about it, and it seems like it doesn't interest us, because we didn't live it.

The Aymara and Quechua the *altiplano*, or Andean high plains, inhabit a landscape that they recognize as animate. Through enactment of neoliberal extractive policies, these landscapes have been claimed, occupied, and brutalized by mining companies, development firms and mountaintop removal, leaving them scarred with open-pit mines and poisoned with cyanide. The Quechua and Aymara women who live within these landscapes suffer the worst extents of oppressive state health programs.

Through enactment of Fujimori-era eugenics policy, these women's reproductive rights have been claimed, their bodies colonized, and their uteruses brutalized by coercive state health ministries tasked with of numbers of sterilizations to perform, leaving them barren, socially

marked, physically scarred and psychologically afflicted. These women are engaged in an ongoing battle to decolonize self and community. And yet, a further daunting challenge afflicts their resistance efforts: the need to first decolonize the broad propagandist narratives that claim to work towards population control in the hopes of reducing 'rural poverty'. This strawman population argument has served to disunite generations of indigenous women. Intracommunity women's radio programming and gender rights training workshops are helping to counteract these patriarchal narratives. A young Aymara woman from a rural community who went to school in Puno recalled:

Before I went and I listened at the reunions, I was convinced that the sterilizations were a good thing. Because, I thought, there are so many children. And the parents don't have the economic means to care for them. I thought that it would be good for the birth rates in Peru. When I went to the meetings, I was so surprised that it was such a negative process for the men as well as the women. (...) Later, we learned that those medical professionals who performed more sterilizations actually earned more money.

Rural women's language barriers, educational differentials and economic limitations made these highlanders soft targets for state workers who were threatened with unemployment if they did not fill their quotas. However, their intersectional experience of violence as rural Aymara women means that state campaigns aimed at reducing indigenous populations not only colonize women's bodies to facilitate the future colonization of their territories, they also exacerbate women's experience of violence *within* their communities by triggering cultural conflict rooted in Aymara notions of womanhood and manhood— *chachawarmi*.

Another young UMA activist recalled:



ONAMIAP [The National Organization of Andean and Amazonian Indigenous Women of Peru], they held meetings for survivors of this, and we heard about it from men and women who went through it. One man -- he was talking about what they did to him, the vasectomy -- and he said that he is now 'not like a man' (...) He said this, and said others talk this way about [the procedure] (...) that it stops what makes you a man. And now he can't work. He is dark (...) and the women, too, now they can't work, they feel so heavy and burdened all the time, depressed.

Centuries of racism and neocolonial governance disempowered indigenous Andeans' sense of resistance against the medical staff, who the intimidated rural men and women recognized as 'educated', *mestizo* agents of the state. A young Quechua man, the only current male member of UMA, in whose community dozens of women were targeted, reflects with a hoarse whisper:

There were so many Quechua women from this area that had this happen to them and didn't even know it was happening, and also to the Aymara in Puno region but more so to the Quechua. They would go to the Health Centers for some reason, for some malady, and the nurses would ask them things like, "You, how many children do you have?" And they would answer, 'Oh, I have five', or 'I have three', or 'I have four' (...) and the nurses would say, "Oh, but this is so many, it is for this reason that you are feeling like this, that you are sick this way. You should not have any more children." And the women would stay quiet. They would not speak back to the medical professional. They were timid, and then the doctor or the nurse would say, "Here, come on up on the table, we will examine you, to see what is wrong," and so on. And it was there that they would put things in them, or sterilize them; there were different methods: a *cobre* [copper-T IUD], or *ligadora* [colloquial reference to tubal ligation](...) They did these things to men, too, the vasectomies. They didn't tell them why.

In post-march interviews, many Aymara and Quechua women in the highlands reported their motivations for participating as a simultaneous resistance against the patriarchal colonization of their beings and the neocolonial destruction of their landscapes by mega-mining projects. Likening her body to Pachamama, and her roles as mother, nurturer and tender of the soil to Pachamama's function as material provider for the people, one Aymara leader reflected:

It is us, as women, who are closer to her, who understand what is happening to her. We lead in defending the Pachamama because she suffers as we do. Western academics call this strategically associative closeness of 'woman' to 'nature' *ecofeminism*. In its analysis of parallels between the patriarchal treatment of women and the consumerist development of landscapes, ecofeminism is inherently gender essentialist, rooting 'womanhood' in the physicality of the body and what the body can produce. The downside to ecofeminist discourse is its biological determinism, and in particular for Andeans, the cis-gendered, heteronormativity of the 'gender complementarity', as described by chachawarmi, that informs Pachamama rhetoric.

Across cultural frameworks and national borders, for decades, women have been discussed as more environmentalist and 'closer to nature' (Shiva 1989, Haraway 1991, Gaard 2015). A review of 20 years of research on gender and the environment reveals, "the idea has persisted that women are inherently closer to nature than men are... thinking that gave rise to images of women as Earth mothers" [Meinzen-Dick, Kovarik and Quisumbing 2014:32].

This trope infuses international development and Human Rights discourses, affecting UN funding and project distribution in indigenous communities across Latin America. And though numerous studies demonstrate that nothing *a priori* about women equates to closeness with nature, there is some evidence that women actually do carry out more ecologically protective and sustainable activities. Studying participation in forestry projects, Agarwal finds,

Although there is little to suggest that women are inherently more conservationist than men, the distinctness of women's social networks embodying prior experience of successful cooperation, their higher dependence on these networks (as also on the commons in general), and their potentially greater group homogeneity relative to men, could provide an important (and largely ignored)

basis for organizing sustainable environmental collective action [Agarwal 2000:283, see also Arora-Jonsson 2011].

Regardless of veracity, Western ideologies associating both women and the indigenous as closer to 'nature' are engaged by indigenous movements seeking autonomy and resources, both at local and national scales. The importance of such rhetoric cannot be overstated; Andrew Canessa (2012:2-4) notes the distinct global currency of *indigeneity*, while Orin Starn lambasts anthropologists who neglect to focus on the broader global power relations affecting indigenous movements (in Canessa 2012:10).

Andean state leaders now grant citizenship rights to Pachamama in Ecuador and in Bolivia, while engaging tropes of sacred feminine landscapes (Cochrane 2014), and appealing to UN funding foci on climate change and women, despite their extraction-dependent economies and continuous, broad-scale open-pit mining. That this may be funding-inspired rhetoric at the state level neither negates nor assures the actual betterment of environmental conditions or women's rights within these communities; instead, it evidences the undeniable dialectic between globalized dialogues and localized social change.

While the biological determinism of Andean gender complementarity serves to reinforce cultural heteronormativity and women's disempowerment as mothers and producers, the upside, or utility, of Andean ecofeminism is that Mother Earth tropes are globally intelligible—they tap into a broad, international complaint discourse stemming from mid-20<sup>th</sup> century Human Rights dialogue and the global Environmental Movement. Indeed, indigenous women's

stereotype as ‘environmental defenders’ carries international currency, drawing dedicated funding lines from UN and NGO sources.

On a local level, Pachamama and chachawarmi keep surfacing in Aymara resistance because of the temporary efficacy of gender essentialism in these three ways: First, gender essentialist notions of women’s relationality to Pachamama serve to bring indigenous women and their allies together and provide an organizing principle rooted in Andean cosmology that helps to rhetorically shape and promote their defense of the landscape. An expanding feminist talk radio network in the region supports this effort. Referring to her radio activism on *Radio Pachamama*, in Puno, one UMA activist noted:

Everybody listens to our participation and our words. Our sons and daughters also listen. We tell them about the situation of Mother Earth.

Second, as communities of Aymara women came together for the march, they shared experiences across generations that decolonized the younger women’s understanding of the state’s claim that Fujimori-era sterilizations were geared towards a pro-environmental, anti-poverty program, helping the younger generation toward the realization that these policies were neocolonial acts of gender violence propagated by the state.

Third, these essential notions of womanhood, rooted in Pachamama and chachawarmi rhetoric, borrow cosmic authority in revalorizing women’s roles in Andean society—though in doing so, fail to deconstruct the reductive gender norms that contribute the erasure of women who love women in these communities. When asked about Aymara women who love other women, one respondent illustrated:

Aymara culture is still so repressed about sexuality. If women love women, they hide it -- they have children anyway, or they move to Lima (...) It brings shame on their family; sometimes the family is accused of wrongdoings or evil.

To wrest their rights to self-definition back from mass media stereotypes that portray sterilized women as having been sexually overactive over-populators, Andean activists' leveraging of essentialized symbolic connections serves to lay claim to women's forms of power and authority, toward the defense of their bodies and territories. Once brought together by these shared symbolic affinities, these women shared testimonies that helped to decolonize their understandings of social memory, which had been polluted by state propaganda. But this tactic breaks down for women who love women.

When Pachamama goes global, leveraged by Andean activists on the radio, social media, and in the streets blockading, she does so as a single woman, leaving behind her implicit male counterpart who is rooted in the intimate binaries implicit in *chachawarmi*. However, in the everyday lived experiences of women in the Andes, the rhetoric of complementarity reinforces heteronormativity and erases the experience of same-sex love in rural indigenous communities, where individuals who stray from the heterosexual binary implicit in the Andean notion of *chachawarmi* find themselves homeless if they do not conform, punished through ostracism and physical and verbal abuse that often extends to their families.

A generation of feminist scholars have argued about whether accepting women's place as 'closer to nature' hinders or helps women's empowerment (Hiltebeitel and Erndl 2000; Ortner 1972, Shiva 1989). Helene Cixous advocated that "woman must write herself... Woman must put herself into the text—as into the world and into history—by her own movement" [Cixous

1976:875]. Positioning herself as anti-essentialist, Cixous refused 'to confuse the biological and the cultural' while 'speaking of woman in her inevitable struggle against conventional man' (ibid). In feminist anthropology, there has been a distinct focus on women's coming to voice; in the 1970s, this focus diversified as feminist Marxists, women of color, and lesbians began to dismantle the hegemonic capitalocentrism, anglocentrism, and heteronormativity of social understandings of gender and sexuality.

Among the Aymara, women's grassroots political activism now harnesses *Pachamama* on the radio, and on social media, to expand their representation of indigenous women's struggles in contemporary Andean society, and scale-up their complaint discourse to a pan-indigenous and international audience of sympathizers. This multimedia Aymara ecofeminism, in addressing relationships between capitalist domination of nature and men's domination of women, has been a useful communication strategy for Aymara women leveraging the *Pachamama* to simultaneously address multiple forms of male domination in their communities. A grassroots media commentary by Andean women circulates on Facebook, captioned '*Pachamama Si, Pachamamismo No!*' evidencing women's dissent against the neoextractive policies of plurinational Ecuador and Bolivia<sup>13</sup>.

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<sup>13</sup> Evo Morales emerged as a leader of the *cocalero* movement in the 1980s during the U.S.-funded eradication of coca fields across the Andes. His political party, MAS, has been heavily dependent on rural women voters since this time; MAS' new Bolivian constitution requires that women comprise 50% of governance, and plurinational policies extended agrarian reform to the Guarani of the Bolivian Amazon. In 2010, the Law of the Rights of Mother Earth granted human rights to *Pachamama*, piggy-backing on the 2008 Ecuadorian Constitution under Rafael Correa's administration, which grants citizenship to *Pachamama*. However, the continuous evocation of *Pachamama* to support state mining and extraction sectors in both nations is widely panned by indigenous women, and has become colloquially referred to as *Pachamamismo*.

In the Amazon, the Women against TIPNIS are protesting the construction of a superhighway through vast expanses of rainforest. Global media strategies and localized media ecologies are fundamental: to combat the 'menace of multiculturalism' (Hale 2002), grassroots movements lean-into their place-basedness to establish visibility and presence schemas focused heavily on globalized complaint discourse and localized actions, Escobar suggests that now,

place-based struggles might be seen as multi-scale, network-oriented subaltern strategies of localization (...) Cultural anthropologists have begun to...show the extent to which local people's engagement with the landscape, in some Andean communities for instance, reveals that the landscape is endowed with agency and personhood (...) Even when social movements originate transnational networks, these might be operational strategies for the defense of place. [Escobar 2001:142, see also Radcliff 1998, and De la Cadena 2015].

Aymaras leverage emerging media opportunities, as a dependent variable, amid burgeoning transnational indigenous media networks that produce multimedia and multilingual reportage on the rising socioenvironmental conflicts in indigenous communities across Latin America. Examining the gendered symbolism, ritual practices and community discourses most commonly overlapping with the activities of the Aymara women's organization central to my research, I found that the symbolic invocation of the *Pachamama*—the Andean divine presence within the landscape, as described in Chapter one— emerged as an independent variable that correlated with three kinds of events within indigenous media networks:

- 1) Pachamama invoked as a feminine gendered inspirational figure, confidant and exemplar within women's specific gatherings and during co-gendered ceremonial rites

2) Pachamama invoked as an abused mother earth figure, in need of protection, within co-gendered political discussions wherein participants positioned themselves as against environmental destruction of their landscapes by extractive and agro-extractive industries

3) Pachamama leveraged as a “mother” and a “provider” within Andean state discourses that support the nationalization of extraction projects and/or state-influenced control over extraction profits for social programs and public works.

Rural Aymara women of the Peruvian altiplano are using radio to establish a counter-public sphere within traditionally male-dominated community governance and leadership discourses. In so doing, women gain access to new *authoritative knowledge* via their emerging media savvy —and unique access to UN and NGO funding lines— in an increasingly multimodal landscape. Rosa, and the generations of women that she has trained in UMA, are actively creating a feminist counter-public sphere (Felski 1989) for themselves and the other women in their communities through their production of local talk radio and their participation in pan-indigenous media summits. Ultimately, Rosa didn’t just become one of the preeminent voices of *el radio surandino*— she ran for congress.

In January of 2020, in a completely unexpected emergence that took this ethnographer by surprise about halfway through my long term fieldwork residence during a 2020 Fulbright funded year in Chucuito, Rosa was tapped by leaders of the *Democracia Directa* political party to run for her district. This Chapter traces Aymara comunicadora within their expanding access to political voice as they network with Quechua activists and produce digital and radial talk shows where they discuss the gender relations, land rights, and community decision-making practices



that they are seeking to change within—and far beyond— their communities. I collected audiovisual data, written field notes, still images, radio show archives and publicity materials as well as screenshots of community partners' Facebook, WhatsApp and YouTube activity for a total of 18 months spanning June 2015 – March 2020. I worked primarily with the Union of Aymara Women (UMA)

To understand how and to what extent these globalized media discourses are affecting local gender dynamics as pertaining to political agency, I conducted 18 months of community-based ethnographic fieldwork in Aymara communities of the altiplano between June 2015 and March 2020, at multiple sites across the Puno and Cusco regions of Peru, and at weekly radio broadcasts of *Wiñay Panqara* on Pachamama Radio.

The Union of Aymara Women of Abya Yala (UMA), is the women's rights and community media organization that Rosa established in the Puno region of Peru. They create, perform and produce the weekly Aymara Cultural show *Wiñay Panq'ara* on Puno's Pachamama Radio. UMA was active during the 2011 El Aymarazo uprising, and now also conducts women's rights and anti-gender abuse workshops in communities across Puno district. They helped organize Puno region's *#NiUnaMenos* March Against Femicide in 2016 and 2017.

What anthropologists can learn from studying indigenous media significantly depends on how we define the "field." In his case study of indigenous radio's role in the struggle for social justice in Colombia, Mario Alfonso Murillo notes:

Indigenous communication includes the ongoing dialogue with the natural world of all that is living and the spiritual world of the ancestors. It also includes traditional assemblies, working congresses, and mobilizations of the

communities...to the regional and national gatherings where tens of thousands of people unite. (Murillo 2010: 240).

Taking this to heart, my field site boundaries included the UNPFII, the IACHR, international cumbres where pan-indigenous actors met, communities of reporters and producers, the comments of listeners, the nearby cities that acted as network 'hubs', the activist meetings and political agendas of indigenous communicators, and the meeting spaces of their international, pan-indigenous media summits (see chapter four).

I took into account their funding sources, production costs, reporters-on-the-ground and the often animate landscapes central to community concern. I coded UMA radio transcripts for insights into their *sense of place* (Basso and Feld 1996), revealing motivational and explanatory frameworks contributing to, and imbuing, shared identity constructions.

In summation, my study design for this chapter's research angle focused on both material and cultural considerations of space:

- I conducted a *multi-scalar analysis*, taking into account funding sources, production staff, broader sociopolitical contexts, and the vibrant local landscapes under defense;
- Second, my *broad field site boundaries* included the communities of reporters and producers, the social media comments of listeners, the political agendas of indigenous communicators, and their pan-indigenous media summits;
- Third, I collected life histories to gauge the underlying fabrics of social memory that imbue indigenous media strategies.

Participatory methods, including photo elicitation and participatory broadcasting with local media producers, helped to encourage my community partners to generate the categories of meaning.

### **Life History: Rosa Palomino, Comunicadora Aymara**

When we met, Rosa Palomino was a grandmother in her 60s whose indigenous feminism segment on *Pachamama Radio* airs internationally across Lake Titicaca from Peru to Bolivia every Thursday night. Rosa had been an Aymara *comunicadora*, or community spokesperson, for almost 30 years. I met Rosa Palomino, of all places, on a busy Manhattan street just outside the United Nations headquarters. It was April, 2015.

As I got off public transportation, headed to the UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues (UNPFII), an international tourist with limited English and no knowledge of Spanish or Aymara was attempting to take Rosa's photograph, intrigued by the layered *pollera* skirt, bowler hat, bound braids and other visual elements of Rosa's traditional, female Andean highlander attire. Fluent in both English and Spanish, I helped Rosa in her efforts to politely decline the tourist's request for images, and noticed her immediate questioning of the purpose and potential of the desired media—*who would see my picture? Why do you want it?*

She winked at me from under her bowler hat, pollera skirts aswish, and told me that I looked like I must be headed to the UN (for laughs, I was a pony-tailed white lady in jeans, amid dozens of similar). Rosa and I connected over our first visit to the UNPFII and our sense of the strange enormity that was New York City. Over deli at the end of a long day of UN sessions,

Rosa told me more about her organization and why she had come to New York in the first place. For starters, a Rutgers professor had sponsored her flight, and wanted to write about her.

In the 1980s, Rosa and the Aymara women of Peru experienced a radio culture dominated by male voices. Feld's concept of 'acoustemology' argues that the phenomenology of hearing is shaped by culturally specific acoustic epistemologies (Feld 1996). Aymara listeners often anthropomorphize their acoustemological experience of radio, and they are among many cultures to regard the radio with sentience:

Radio's materiality is multifaceted and complexly overlaid— interpreted in various parts of the world and at different times— as a box that magically speaks, a technology that can be carried, and even, a commodity with social status. This materiality crisscrosses the ideological, moral, and affective resonances of radio fields (Bessire & Fisher 2013).

I learned about her work, and she told me about becoming a *Comunicadora Aymara* in the 1980s, during the peak of post-land reform chaos in the Peruvian Andes, as the *Sendero Luminoso*, or Shining Path, was beginning to infiltrate the Puno region. Amid the violent era of Sendero Luminoso chaos in the Peruvian highlands, radio had been a critical mode of communication. Rosa told me, quite frankly, that she and other women were sick of only hearing men's voices presenting men's opinions, in times where in-person gatherings were incredibly risky.

### **Gender Talleres, or Encuentros de Mujeres (women's encounters, workshops)**

Rosa and the women of UMA organize rural women's talleres centered around three themes: communal land rights and FPIC, women's bodily rights including within the home, and the importance of Aymara self-identification on the Peruvian Census.

At an *encuentro de mujeres*, UMA activists educate Andean women about both their gender rights under Peruvian law, which guarantees their right to bodily sovereignty, and their land rights under ILO-169, which guarantees the right to free, prior and informed consultation regarding the development or sale of their territories. Participants in gender rights workshops compared themselves, as Aymara and Quechua *warmikuna*, to the Pachamama, linking gender rights to land rights both symbolically via their bodies, and also visually, on activity boards to support consciousness raising.

**Fig 26: Quechua participants at an Encuentro de Mujeres in Sicuani. Image Credit: Cavagnaro.**



Aymara women attending these workshops are entreated to listen to UMA’s weekly broadcast, and encouraged to develop their own “voice” within community politics. I attended six of these women’s talleres and encuentros between 2016 – 2020, and with the exception of one Aymara-Quechua joint event in Sicuani, Cuzco region in 2019, all of the talleres were conducted in Aymara towns of the historical Lupaqa

kingdom. These towns came to eventually form the voting base for Rosa Palomino, who ran on a platform of protecting land rights, indigenous language revitalization and women's health initiatives. UMA was responsible for organizing several of the more ritual components, and I noticed Yeny using and sharing two of the techniques that she had learned from the Mexican *sabia* Maya.



**Fig 27:** At an altar in the center of the *encuentro*, flowers and gifts to the Pachamama are interspersed with grim statistics about women's inequality and suffered abuses in Peru.

Despite being shut out of ritual celebrations with yatiri in Chucuito, the women of UMA designed and organized their own ritual involving many elements from the pago ceremonies that they handle been allowed to touch in other contexts. Most especially, the shaping of quintus of coca leaves, and the ritual preparations of the altar spaces and cloths, were labored over carefully,

and joyously, on the morning of the Sicuani ritual. I think UMA women were most interested in designing this ritual for sharing because they were meeting with Quechua activists in Sicuani that they hadn't met before, and the meeting would, in all cases, be a syncretic blending of customs. This allowed for a joyous, creative opening for the Aymara women organizing to plan a ritual that women would entirely conduct and participate in. They were encouraged repeatedly to touch and hold objects, and most especially, to beat the drums and sing.

### **The #NiUnaMenos March, Peru**

A vehemently body-political presidential election rollicked the Peruvian nation in 2016. Thousands of Aymara women and other Peruvians who had endured forced sterilization at the hands of the 90s-era Fujimori administration organized to protest the potential June election of Keiko Fujimori. Following, a collective action movement, *#NiUnaMenos*, united Peruvian women of all races and ethnicities in a national, multi-city declaration against femicide and gender violence. On August 13, 2016, hundreds of thousands of women gathered in Lima and in cities across Peru to protest femicide and intimate partner violence, in the largest march in the nation's history.<sup>14</sup> The multi-sited march against gendered abuse involved a panoply of symbolic representations: women strode through Lima in cut-offs with blood red paint dripping down their thighs, in a visceral reference to forced sterilizations. In Arequipa, men supported the movement carrying signs that read: 'careful, *machismo* kills'.

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<sup>14</sup> As reported by Peruvian news outlets, see for example *La República* (in Spanish), August 14, 2016, "[La màs grande de la historia](#)".

In the majority-indigenous Puno region of Peru, Aymara women marched with banners that operationalized their relationship to Pachamama, an Andean deity, emphasizing an explicit connection between bodily sovereignty and land sovereignty. The demonstration was cited as the largest public protest in Peruvian history. UMA participation in *#NiUnaMenos* was high, and planning sessions to organize women and attend the multi-city march spawned intensive conversations concerned the lack of gender parity in interpersonal relationships and governance.

*'No More Silencing!'* *'Not One More Death!'* and *'My Body, My Territory!'* were shouted by thousands of women as they marched through the streets of cities across Peru. Baring images of a bloody hand with a heart etched in the center, some with bright red paint like blood dripping down their thighs, protesters pushed banners that said, *'Ni Una Menos'*, Not One Less, declaring that *"To touch one of us is to touch all of us."* Images of women's bodies lacerated by intimate partner violence were deployed across the country in a multi-city march.

The *#NiUnaMenos* hashtag movement, which had begun in Argentina the year before, sparked in Peru in reaction to multiple high-profile incidents of intimate partner violence, including the widely publicized physical abuse of musical performer Lady Guillen by her equally famous male partner. Peruvians had just endured a presidential election wherein one candidate, the daughter of former president Alberto Fujimori, had ignited social memory of her father's era of forced sterilizations, which were largely perpetrated against indigenous communities.

In a speech at Harvard University, Keiko Fujimori blamed the cruel surgeries on doctors, despite the fact that medical professionals had been compelled by the national health ministry quotas set by her father's administration. Nationwide, women took to the streets to protest



against the visceral realities facing women in Peru. In Puno, indigenous women spoke of the *Pachamama*, or Mother Earth, seeing the birth of every child in their communities as a victory—a sign that they can bring life, and they could again, if they decided to.



Fig 28: activist's sign reads "My Body, My Territory" in Spanish with the Quechua for "we are the ones with power" underneath. Carried during the #NiUnaMenos Puno regional March in 2016.

In Latin America, 40% of women experience physical violence over the course of their lives; in Peru, among rural and indigenous women of the Puno region, more than 75% suffer some form of violence (Human and Environmental Rights Puno 2017). The adverse impacts of increased mineral extraction in the region, and the corresponding loss of resources and rights to self-determination, appear to be compounding rates of interpersonal abuse in indigenous communities (Jenkins 2014). These industries are destroying the animate landscape that the Aymara consider to be sacred. They call her Pachamama.

For rural indigenous women in this Andean context, the violent plunder of a goddess-imbued landscape intersects with women's experiences of violence at the hands of men, medics, and the state. Cases of violence against women increased by 18% from 2015; femicides increased by a third from 2015 (Human and Environmental Rights Puno 2017). In July of that same year, Alberto Fujimori and his ministers of health were exonerated of criminal responsibility for the wave of forced sterilizations in the 1990s that targeted poor, rural women. The ruling stated that 'the reproductive health and family planning program had not violated human rights as part of a state policy.'

Over the course of the last two years in Peru, women have been openly defined by those in power as rapeable, sterilizable, sub-human beings. The *#NiUnaMenos* movement, which has reemerged each year since its beginning—digitally incubating as a social media hashtag in between manifestations—evidences the need for renewed consideration of gender identity and gendered symbolism in studies of social protest.

## Digital Media Activism following the #NiUnaMenos Campaign

In 2016, Peruvian then-presidential candidate Keiko Fujimori refused to acknowledge her father's administration's responsibility for establishing coercive long-term birth control quotas in the 1990s that targeted citizens in poor and rural regions. The younger Fujimori insisted that administration of birth control had been in the hands of individual medics, thus obscuring the structural and racial dimensions of these programs established during the elder Fujimori's tenure. These quotas, in turn, were influenced by broader global financial regimes -- including the World Bank, which, since the 1970s, as Galeano writes, has been giving 'priority in its loans to countries that implement birth control plans' (Galeano 1979)—plans which are directed at racialized population control.



Fig 29: Rosa Palomino, featured in a women's rights social media campaign after #NiUnaMenos  
Image: ONAMIAP.

Highland Andean's bodies thus became sites for neocolonial Malthusian praxis, and the politics of birth control rhetoric took on vastly different implications for indigenous citizens than for their non-indigenous compatriots. Andrea Smith calls for academics to consider the racialized and environmental aspects of gender oppression in order to reveal the structural and neocolonial aspects of present-day patriarchal governments. Smith writes,

An examination of how sexual violence serves the goals of colonialism forces us to reconsider how we define sexual violence (...) gender violence is not simply a tool of patriarchal control, but also serves as a tool of racism and colonialism (...) Putting Native women at center of analysis compels us to look at the role of the state in perpetrating both race-based and gender-based violence. [Smith 2005:2]

In Peru, the Fujimori administration's programs were advertised as a way of reducing poverty through population control. To appreciate why centering birth control as the unifying cause for a broad-based women's mobilization is problematic, it is important to understand the neocolonial eugenics of many state reproduction mandates affecting indigenous communities across the globe. Smith, quoting Ines Hernandez-Avila, notes,

it is because of a Native American woman's sex that she is hunted down and slaughtered, in fact, singled out, because she has the potential through childbirth to assure the continuance of the people. [Smith 2005:79]

Indigenous women in the Puno region of Peru are continuously at work to decolonize their bodies amid radical attempts at recolonization by political and corporate entities, who develop indigenous land without consent in the present (Jenkins 2014), and work to reduce indigenous populations without consent in the long-term. In Peru, women in the *#NiUnaMenos* March in Lima symbolically leveraged the bloodied uterus to react against the forced sterilization of women and the threat to their reproductive freedoms. But what this does symbolize to women in

Peru who have been written out of heteronormative women's rights conversations by virtue of their sexual identities?

In the Peruvian Andes, Aymara and Quechua women in the *#NiUnaMenos* March invoked the Earth Mother, Pachamama, operationalizing the trope that 'women are to nature as men are to culture' (Ortner 1972), where 'nature' is the fecund body or landscape under attack, and 'culture' is the Western medic performing surgery, or the mining corporation's extraction crew. Based on interviews with Aymara women and analysis of their mobilization, I observed that as Andean women continue to face threats to their bodies on a broad scale, their strategies often deploy these reductive gender stereotypes that may further marginalize the most vulnerable: women who love other women in rural indigenous communities, thus violating the 'gender complementarity' of Andean cosmopolitics (De La Cadena 2015) as invoked through the Pachamama. So, what do we do when the symbols that make the strongest statement are at the same time reductionist, conforming to, and perhaps even serving to reinforce, the damaging gender stereotypes that define women by their genitalia, the relationality of that genitalia to a male "counterpart," and the social reproduction their genitalia promise?

While essentialism risks inadequacy and exclusion, its 'unavoidable usefulness,' to quote Spivak, is key to its persistence in the toolkit of social change. Aymara and Quechua women in the Puno region emphasize a relationship between their gendered bodies and the Geo body of Mother Earth; both are under attack, mutilated by masculinist regimes.

## Women comunicadoras are making distinct gains in leadership

Women of varying age groups who participate in radio production networks and women-led, women-focused workshops are gaining regional name recognition, scholarship and grant funding, they are starring in independent film projects, anchoring Puno's indigenous tv programs, more women are speaking up for increasing lengths of time in community decision plenaries relative to their age groups, and in one remarkable case, one Aymara grandmother became a somewhat under-expected national Peruvian congressional candidate in 2019.

**Fig 30: Aymara *comunicadoras* campaigning with Rosa Palomino in Huacullani, 2020.**



In this chapter I've analyzed the ways that Aymara women work within their radio and media networks to increase their social positioning and respond to gender abuses at the interpersonal level. I then considered the ways that these women are using these channels to increase their broader regional leadership.

Ultimately, a majority of women reported feeling muted or muffled to varying degrees in the traditional *asamblea*. For many, access to increased leadership and scholarship opportunities was an explicitly stated motivation: 16 of the 23 of the Aymara and Quechua journalists asked this question, regardless of gender, discussed newfound access to funding and opportunities for leadership that they had gleaned from participation in indigenous media networks and broadcasting.



**Figure 31:** *Rosemary, Sulma and Virginia are three of the youngest UMA comunicadoras. In the span of my fieldwork years, they have starred in Quechua-language films, presented national Aymara poetry performances for public broadcasting, and served as anchor for Aymara-language national morning news, respectively. Image credit: Cavagnaro*

Several comunicadoras have received grant funding opportunities from international NGOs including Cultural Survival. Five of my study participants, the youngest cohort, were brand new to community journalism when I began my study in 2015; by 2020, three of these participants had been funded to travel and produce indigenous media internationally, one had become an anchor on a Quechua television station, and two had lost their lives.

Seven of my study participants had been active in community journalism for decades. One of these participants, Rosa Palomino, suddenly became a candidate for the Peruvian National Congress during the November 2019 Congressional Crisis and its subsequent special elections in January 2020. My trailing a congressional candidate was, to put it mildly, unanticipated when I began this fieldwork with Rosa back in 2015. However, analysis of her rise to political possibility from relative obscurity (chapter five) is helpful in elucidating the broader sociopolitical arena that led to Castillo's unlikely election, the coup against Castillo, and the 2023 Peruvian Crisis.



## CHAPTER SEVEN: Pachamamas of the Pachacutec

When my plane landed in Juliaca in September of 2019, there was already talk of revolt in Puno. Leo, who collects me each season for the hour drive to Chucuito, filled me in on the latest: that Walter Aduviri was in jail, that Sonya had lost her baby to a premature birth the altiplano clinics didn't have the resources to address, that the season was still unseasonably cold despite coming rains, that huelgas y paros (blockades and strikes) were on the horizon.



**Fig 31: Rosa Palomino with town leaders of Huacullani.**

The day of huelgas and paros has come, and sooner than I expected. At 5 am, everything stirred. Announced on local and municipal radio, spread by word of mouth and Whatsapp, the Aymara of the Lupaqa kingdom have taken to the city streets, the airport and the ingress

highways from Lima, Bolivia, and Cusco. By 6 am, I was jogging along the gravel. I nodded to two men on the street, one walking with a small slingshot in his hand, and explained that I worked with the comunicadoras Aymaras, and they told me where to find them.

There was panic when I arrived. A colleague had been arrested for protest a few days before, and all were just processing the news. Yeny tells me that on August 19<sup>th</sup>, 2019, Edwin Llano “was filming at a huelga for REDCIRP, with a press badge and everything, and Walter Aduviri’s policemen arrested him and incarcerated him, and he’s still in legal trouble”. Puno is now divided in terms of their support for Walter. Many are disillusioned. Yeny tells me that Walter does not listen to her, despite her having been to the UN floor in New York representing Aymaras of Puno in front of the special rapporteur on indigenous issues. She shows me her Facebook messenger chat history with Aduviri, “See? As dirigente, he responded. Now? As governor? Nothing.”

The theme on that week’s UMA radio broadcast is the International day of Indigenous Women. According to Josefa, REDCIRP (A new organization that is a Puno region branch of the national organization of indigenous communicators, or REDCIP), is growing and expanding. Quechuas are joining and almost outnumbering the Aymara. They discuss, “how important is the participation of women?”

Nelly talks on the radio about qariwarmi, or chachawarmi... she speaks with well-informed pride and about the sisters of Bartolomeas, and ILO-169, and why Aymara women have the responsibility to care for the land. Yeny talks about a new city-level law that mandates 50%

participation of women in local politics... she says, "but what about national presidencies? How are men going to accompany us?" (No space for chachawarmi in the capital).

Nelly talks about the Zapatistas, and their numbers of women in leadership compared to Peru... In 2019, there are 130 congresistas, very few indigenous women, only 1, from Ayacucho. However, indigenous women are the majority of the population! She's fired up. The conversation turns to cosmovision, to equilibrio de pareja, or equality between partners. She and Judith share a summary of the history of Mama Bartolina, who was decapitated as she fought alongside her husband in war.

When the broadcast is finished, informal chatter returns to the idea of Aymara women as president. Sonqo asks her how that would be possible. Yeny says, merrily, "we should just hide the microphones, and lock the radio cabinet...have the men shut up for a year. Then we'll have a chance to get our ideas all the way out, to all of the people." Her faith in the amplifying power of women's media has clearly grown.

### **Stumping in the Andes**

On December 31st 2019, I woke up to the clacking of my flip phone as it vibrated across the tiny brown tiles of the countertop. Yeny was on the line. She needed a favor, but wouldn't quite voice it yet. She told me how much they appreciated me, my help last week with translating the grants, and that I should have my coffee first and then call her back. This was sympathy, not empathy; most of my Aymara friends did not share my morning coffee routine. It was also the first part of a favor being asked. There was a very specific rhythm to favor-asking in Chucuito.

I layered a fleece-lined chore jacket over the alpaca sweater and double-layered jeans that I had slept in. My shoulders were hunched up into my ears. Despite this being midsummer, predawn on the altiplano was always raw. When you live at high altitude, without indoor heat or insulated walls, you'll carry the cold around in your bones like the gutta-percha after a root canal. Diurnal rhythms will become much stronger autonomic catalysts in your body. You'll adapt your sleep to leverage every hour of sunlight.

I lit one gas flame of the two-burner camp stove and prepped espresso in a battered steel Moka. Over the other flame, I parboiled raw milk from Doña Josefa's cow, careful to just-simmer it for five minutes, with a cinnamon stick, for antimicrobial affect. It's a bit of a precious process, admittedly, but wandering around town with a steel canteen and a shit-eating grin, making small talk in Aymara-ish while finding someone who will sell you milk before they bring it to weekly market has proven to be a nice social re-entry strategy, and linguistic warm-up, each field season.

The ritual preparations worked their magic, and I roused properly, looking southeast through the daring tryptic of single-paned glass windows that clung to the concrete exterior of my apartment with epoxy and metal prongs. The two-floor, one-room stone loft that I was renting was the first and only apartment to have been finished in this building so far. This was not an unusual practice in Chucuito; families would often construct houses one smallish level at a time, adding additional levels years into the future as timing and resources allowed. As you look straight out across the rooftops, angular shoots of steel rebar wriggle upwards like fingers reaching toward those future resources, that future time.

Below these windows and beyond the horse stalls and garden walls of Santiago's estate, a rough cobble road led the few blocks to Chucuito's main square. The plaza was crosshatched by three cobbled avenidas inlaid with precolonial aqueducts that drained under the 3S highway and into Lake Titicaca. The high plains wind had not yet begun its whoosh this morning, reminding me of why this was the prized hour for plane landings and takeoffs from the regional airfields. It was also, critically, the perfect timing for acts of civil disobedience to shut down Juliaca airport: a few well-placed piles of burning tires on the runway, a few busted runway lights, and you could effectively shut off air transport to the altiplano.<sup>15</sup> I was suddenly apprehensive about this favor.

As I watched, a molten gleam of sun breached the surface of the massive lake and exploded horizontally, instantly reflected across the whole of the desert. Inti rising. It's an arid beauty, treacherous in its fragility.

I called Yeny back. I didn't understand the word she kept using after *vamos a*, but essentially, we were going campaign stumping for Rosa down the 3 South toward Yunguyo... in a bondo-seamed and mirrorless 1992 Nissan Sentra stick-shift that none of the family members currently in the area were able to drive. Could I possibly do it?

I listened thoroughly, paused meaningfully, said yes. I was terrified of this road, its weekly fatal crashes, its horrible rep. But I figured that the air was so unrelentingly dehydrating

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<sup>15</sup> And they did, twice during my fieldwork: in 2017 during the Teacher Strikes that brought Pedro Castillo notoriety, and again in 2023, during what the Taller de Historia Oral Andina will remember as The Juliaca Massacre.

in the Andes, it'd be unlikely that I would shit myself with nerves. I also hadn't operated a standard since 2006, when I drove a friend across southern Spain and Portugal in his rented Fiat, which, also due to the stick shift, he couldn't drive. But the opportunity to participate in, and observe, this formative part of Aymara indigenous political practice was too good. The consequence of negating a humbly-worded favor, too heavy. I packed my Tascam, camera, spare batteries, and journal in a small bag, and slipped on a protective amulet for travelers that I wear on scary drives.

I walked through Chucuito's plaza towards the main road to catch a combi to where the car was stationed. On the way, I stopped at the larger of the general stores, where a group of 6-10 women always gathered on Thursday afternoons for games of *paro*, a local betting practice that required a bookie. That bookie was Marta, the dueña of this store, and though it was too early to be open, she was out on her tiny stone balcony perch above the storefront, in her second-story apartment. *Kamisaraki, kullaka!* I greeted her. *How are you doing, sister?*

*Waliki*, she rasped with a half-smile, eyebrow raised, *jumasti? And you? Pa'dónde vas?! Where are you going?!* I laughed as she codeswitched quickly from Aymara to Spanish, eager to get her question answered more than to tutor my clumsy language skills at 6am. She lived to know the goss. I answered her, aiming to be respectfully vague but interesting, because I needed a favor, and she already knew this. It was habitual for Yeny and Sumita to bring oranges, little triangle shaped breads, maybe olives, and some coca tea in a thermos. I hoped to bring a wedge of farmer cheese and some avocados, the luxe stuff. Assuring that people are well-fed is my love language.

I asked Marta, humbly, *entonces, si usted sería tan linda, pues, me gustaría traerles a mis amigas algunas paltitas o un quesito, no más... If you would be so kind, ma'am, well I would like to maybe bring my friends some little avocados, or a bit of cheese, that's all...* Regardless of language choice, a dedicated practice of verbal humility marks almost all Aymara interpersonal favor-asks that I've witnessed. The person being asked almost universally becomes gruff-toned and pauses, contemplatively, for effect, always hard-pressed to say no. It doesn't matter what the favor is, or what the relationship is between the Aymaras engaged in it. There is gravity, and social clout, that comes from the *cargo* (burden/ responsibility) of granting favors here. The conversational ritual around favor-asking gives everyone the time to acknowledge this.

After a proper moment, Marta disappeared from her balcony and shuffled into a back store room, returning eventually with the cheese, which I wrapped in a beeswaxed cloth that I kept in my kit. The soft, oblong avocados she handed me would have been passed over at Whole Foods, but here they were a treasure. I walked down at the road and flagged the combi headed towards Puno, the wrong direction for stumping, but I needed to meet up with everyone in Kamakani where Yeny lived with Sumita, at UMA's headquarters. The maroon Sentra was waiting for me outside when I arrived.

I eyed the car sideways as I rang the bell. I didn't get performance anxiety in the classroom, or at a conference, but I fucking had it then. We piled into the car, loading the trunk with paint rollers and cans, turpentine and pans and brushes.

Those of my readers from North America and Europe who have traveled through rural parts of Latin America may have noticed the frequency and repetition of propaganda-painted

walls along highways and main village streets. Those paying particular attention will notice that the colors and symbols of these murals often change by neighborhood, and by region. These are in fact campaign murals, and in southeastern Peru, the majority of candidates will canvas rural regions and communities by sending their staffers with painting teams to whitewash the sides of abandoned houses and properties belonging to the party's supporters and/ or paid volunteers with desirable real estate.

When Andean citizens go to their local municipality to vote, they will be voting on paper ballots with mostly symbols, numbers and pictures, but not words. It is therefore critical for each candidate to imprint their party's logo, and their candidate number, into the minds of their supporters, and they do this by painting it on every wall they can get access to. That day we were tagging along the highway from Chucuito south to Yunguyo, knowing that the Aymara peasants traveling the 3S between the Bolivian border and Puno, commuting in combi vans to work along the shore at trout farms or in quinoa fields, would regularly see Rosa's name, the red, black and yellow house symbol of her party, *Democracia Directa*, and her candidate number, 4.

All day, I drove us cautiously through the Lupaqa Aymara towns most familiar with Rosa's voice, and most representative of her voting base. Hundreds of people that wouldn't recognize her face would know that voice, and the name Rosa Palomino, from her decades of radio broadcasting. Her main vehicle for circulating her political platform to voters was UMA's weekly radio show, *Wiñay Panqara*, and through UMA's social media on Facebook and Whatsapp



Fig 32: Stumping for Rosa, New Year's Eve, 2019 – 2020



On January 12, I got an early 'ding' via Whatsapp and opened the message to find Rosa's entire political platform, presented in a rushing series of text messages: In essence, she invoked the 1993 Fujimori constitution as a departure point of grievance central to her platform. The platform calls out the racialized economics of prior and extant Peruvian constitutions and advocates for the dissolution of Congress and the drafting of a new constitution. This was months before Pedro Castillo became president and tried to leverage a similar coup.

On the 13<sup>th</sup>, her campaign video released, circulated principally via Facebook. Filmed by Ximena Malaga Sabogal at Yeny's house/ the UMA headquarters in Kamakani, the video was

titled in Spanish, *And You? Why are you voting for Mama Rosa?* I noted the use of the informal register (*Y tú, por qué votas por Mama Rosa?*), and thought to myself that I almost never heard my community partners using this informal register with one another, unless they were in a family setting or drinking among friends. I kept thinking, in terms of media studies, about the *affordances* of radio and podcasting as a medium, and about the intimacy, trust and connection that emanates from the practice of regularly whispering in someone's ear as they have their hands busy with the tasks of the day. *Mama Rosa*, that's who was campaigning for land rights and labor rights, with her radio-megaphone-brigade. The Mother Jones of the Andes.

For those too young to have learned, Mary "Mother" Jones and her "pot-and-pan brigade" of women helped Pennsylvania miners and silk millworkers in their efforts to seek safer working conditions and a living wage. An organizer for the United Mine Workers, Jones was once called "the most dangerous woman in America." In 1903 she organized a youth march from Philadelphia to New York City, to President Roosevelt's front steps, banging on pots and pans in protest of child labor conditions.

Mother Jones, like Rosa Palomino, was the child of tenant farmers and renowned as an orator, and the timber of Jones' Irish brogue was as recognizable as her slightly-antiquated Irish provincial black dresses. The parallel here, too, is a keen one, as Rosa's bound braids, pollera skirts and undersized black bowler hat are as iconic as an Hermès scarf, to the proper public. Each coordinated major regional strike efforts, stylized themselves as mothers of the people, fought for workers' rights, and marched their complaint discourses over veritable mountain ranges to speak truth to urban-dwelling powers.

Despite Jones' pro-social activism, and just like Mama Rosa Palomino, Mother Jones had her issues with feminism. In Jones' case, she openly opposed women's suffrage in America, fearing that women's broad involvement in politics would mean a lack of nurturing for their children, and lead to the degradation of society. Jones' entire family had died during the Chicago fires, and she thus found herself to be an exception. Rosa Palomino, of course, stove endlessly for women to vote, to speak up at assemblies, to run for office and to lead. However, just like Mother Jones, Rosa brought a provincially-informed gender essentialism to her socialist politics, championing women's roles particularly as mothers, as one half of the chachawarmi, or man-woman social binary of the Andean ayllu, and as defenders of the environment, the Pachamama.

From November 2019 through January 2020, like any other political campaign, her camp developed a cultish, but temporary set of behaviors, including for example the exhaustive repetition of key, short-handing phrases that sum up an entire info set that members of the campaign are all able to easily unpack from the jargon, and just as alienating for non-insiders to overhear: *"Hay que aumentar al base en Yunguyo"*, *"le escucha bien, su base en Ilave"* *"Parece baja la base Quechua"*, etc. *Gotta up the base in Yunguyo. They hear her well, her Ilave base. They seem low/short, her Quechua base etc.* Her main vehicle for circulating her political platform to voters was UMA's weekly radio show, *Wiñay Panqara*, and through UMA's social media channels on Facebook and Whatsapp.

Ultimately, Rosa didn't win the election; she was a minority candidate in many senses of the word. However, the expansion in membership of her organizations, UMA and REDCIRP, in the aftermath of the campaign, were a testament of radio's power to galvanize the oppressed.

The month after the campaign, as members were still recovering from their extreme energetic outputs, Covid-19 exploded onto the world stage. My fieldwork ended abruptly, as all Fulbrighters were recalled to the United States by national decree on March 15, 2020. I left Lima at 11 p.m. on March 16, 2019, as the nation shut its borders for what would become months of pandemic lockdown and quarantine. During the Covid-19 epidemic, Peru has suffered the world's highest death rate<sup>16</sup>. Pregnant people in the Andean regions of Peru already experienced astounding rates of miscarriage and postnatal complications long before the pandemic<sup>17</sup>. Since March 2020, when the coronavirus began pressuring already lacking health services in rural regions of the Andes and Amazon, death tolls in indigenous communities have soared, in evidence of state abandonment.

In 2022, while Rosa Palomino and her husband were driving through Chucuito peninsula and along the 3 S in that maroon Nissan, they were in a fatal car accident.

I can't be sure, but NGO Cultural Survival remembers Rosa as the first ever Aymara woman radio personality<sup>18</sup>. In a remembrance to Rosa Palomino following her death in 2022, Avexnim Cojti Ren of Cultural Survival had this to say:

Her energy and enthusiasm for communicating, revitalizing culture and promoting *women's participation in accordance with Aymara cosmovision* was admirable.

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<sup>16</sup> Beaubien, Jason. 2021. Peru has the world's highest COVID death rate. Here's why. Radio Broadcast: National Public Radio, Morning Edition: November 27.

<sup>17</sup> 2009. Peru: Fatal Flaws – Barriers to Maternal Health in Peru. Report: Amnesty International.

<sup>18</sup> <https://www.culturalsurvival.org/news/en-memoria-de-rosa-mama-rosa-palomino-chahuares>

Ren's colleague, Rosy Sul Gonzales, shared,

I also clearly remember her words during an interview with her once: "We women have to work *together with our husbands, we have to be equitable*, because together we can achieve many things, *we must not divide ourselves, nor fight*".

There is enduring, and excellent, scholarship that discusses the ways that ethnic and racialized subjectivities pressure [especially heterosexual] minority women to privilege solidarity with men of their own culture over solidarity with women who are outside of their identity category or minority status (Morrison 1971, Crenshaw 1989, hooks 2001). I haven't, however, found much scholarship that examines how and why non-minority women come to be so confounded by this. It's relevant though, because here's what's at play in the Andean case: Rosa's politics are informed by an Andean cosmivision rooted in gender complementarity. The biological determinism of gender/sex categories implied by that cosmivision results in a culture of defacto marriage/parenthood expectations, and compulsory heterosexuality. To be a citizen is to be in a married pair. To be a woman is to be a mother. There is no gay.

### **Missed opportunity for coalition building: UMA meets with Lima-based Queer Rights Group**

Shortly after declaring her run for Congress, Rosa Palomino and the women of UMA arranged a meeting with a Lima-based feminist queer activist coalition, whose name and membership are anonymized herein as they were not direct participants in my research. The meeting took place at UMA's headquarters, and involved bilateral introductions, an exchange of group platforms and desired outcomes from the Congressional run, and a discussion of possible overlaps in interest between UMA, an Aymara women's media organization rooted in the

conceptual gender framework of *chachawarmi*, and the feminist queer coalition whose work promoted Marriage Equality (the right for lesbian and gay partners to marry same-sex spouses in Peru), as well as seeking legal rights for abortion care. While it was clear to me that the groups differed on several important philosophical foundations, these elements of conflict *were not discussed or broached during the meeting*. Instead, very generalizing language about “women”, “bodily rights”, and “having a voice” were brought to the fore. The meeting lasted for about an hour, and I found it curious that in the aftermath, no mention was ever again made of this group, their activities, or the potential for future collaborations therewith. My assessment here is that while the groups shared a concern for gender justice, they conflicted directly on their understandings of the sociality of gender roles vis-à-vis women and their kinship choices and practices. My future research will pick up these themes and intentionally seek to parse through some of these interesting, and unresolved, questions lingering from my observations of this event.

Peru, meanwhile, is a country full of minor political parties, and no one rules without building a coalition. The compulsory Democrat/ Republican binary does not exist in the Andes. (Yes, the US does have voters that don’t identify as either Democrat or Republican, but if they really want to live their truth, they move to a place where such fringe practices are possible on a small scale. Consider the Libertarians of New Hampshire, or the Democratic Socialists of Vermont). Rosa’s socialist politics are seemingly left of center, but in Lima and urban areas, leftist voters are increasingly supportive of same-sex marriage rights, abortion access and equal pay.

So when an indigenous candidate, whether Rosa Palomino or Pedro Castillo, rises to prominence through bric-a-brac campaigning efforts in an indigenous-majority region where social justice is about land and resource conflicts, maternal health programs and labor rights, they often quickly cause a PR nightmare for themselves on a national scale for failing to shift message. If they don't shift message, they won't build a coalition of support. Because in truth, just as much as many Aymaras and Quechuas seek to adhere to the kind of "conservative family politics" that result in queer erasure, most urban, non-indigenous Peruvian voters really want the 5G smartphones and electric cars that render Puno's copper and lithium deposits—Aymara and Quechua communal landscapes— so damn valuable in the first place.

### **The Gender Essentialism of Chachawarmi**

I coded through transcripts from my pilot study, and found dozens of mentions and indications that Aymara women in these communities are embracing a gender essentialist identity within their political and resistance activities at both local and regional levels. They identify with, and as closer than men to, the Pachamama. By engaging in media networks and training opportunities, they indirectly challenge community norms that traditionally center male leadership in public spheres and stress women's responsibilities to the homestead. Once on air, they directly call out the intimate partner violence committed against most indigenous women.

Their increasing vocal presence on the radio also actively challenged existing gender norms by shifting the balance of agricultural and household labor responsibilities and the relative public presence of husband (chacha) vs wife (warmi) in households where women became comunicadoras. Women are adopting new leadership roles—not simply in the *asambleas*, or

community meetings where they are sidelined, but at broader scale via radio, or local television. Suddenly, women who were cultured not to speak up at town meetings were reaching hundreds of households across the region with their radio broadcasts, discuss strategies for confronting state and industry. They are increasingly being recognized internationally in their roles as *comunicadoras*:

Everybody listens to our participation and our words. Our sons and daughters also listen. We tell them about the situation of Mother Earth.  
-UMA activist, Puno

### **Significance**

Gender and its social consequences affect every aspect of our lives. But we cannot agree whether there is, inherently, anything essential to womanhood or manhood, to masculinity or femininity, that isn't the result of social expectations worn by sexed bodies. Essentialist and anti-essentialist views of sex and gender are at the root of consequential legal policies on everything from marriage practices to identity laws to governance access and land rights. This project aims at the essential nature of gender: is it a practice, or series of practices? Is gender emergent, iterated by the moment, an identity category only made possible by the Hegelian dialectical exchange between lords and their bondswomen? Or do we women, by some primordial natural force or essence, find ourselves in this meaningful exchange<sup>19</sup>?

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<sup>19</sup> aumage to Margy Piercy's 1972 poem *The Meaningful Exchange*.



## Aymara-Lupaqa Soundscapes as proto- Radio Fields

In the Andes, soundscapes have long defined community boundaries. Kolar's research on conch shell horns—pututus— shows that they were used in the Andes to call the people to *asamblea* at least as early as Inka times, and were used as far back as 500 BCE at Chavin de Huantar, possibly to communicate with earth beings in in ritual context while engaged in some form of spiritual ecological practice: "In the ancient Andes, the Chavín pututus functioned as ritual technologies for humans asserting agency in ordering their cosmos" (Kolar 2019).

Steve Feld defines *acoustemology* as the "conjoin[ing of] 'acoustics' and 'epistemology' to theorize sound as a way of knowing" (Feld 2015). As a method, it intends to counter the bias of visual epistemology in Western cultural perceptions, and often, researcher foci. Feld fashioned 'acoustemology' after reflecting on his field work among the Kaluli of Papua New Guinea, where sound was "central to making sense, to knowing, to experiential truth" (Feld 1992: 97).

Not only were—and are— soundscapes a way to bind communities together, but the technological apparati used to communicate sound across the *altiplano* were and are regarded with animate agency, as political paraphernalia. Ceramic whistling vessels, well-known to Andean archaeologists, depict various animal and person forms, are found region wide, span thousands of years of production, and are used in sonic rituals to call the gods, similar to *pututus*.

Relating diverse forms of Chavín archaeological evidence with the sonic performance potential and multimodal materiality of these pututus suggests ritual uses that far exceed normative assumptions about conchshell horns in western scholarship. At Andean Formative Chavín, pututus were a specifically procured, crafted, and emplaced communication technology, transported far from the ocean to this remote highland site. These conch-shell horns were engineered and skill-requisite ritual instruments with social, religious, musical, and conceptual implications.

Today, across the landscapes of the Lupaqa Aymara, the acoustemology of radio fields have come to bind communities together, serving to curate various echo chambers of political thought in a way we have become all too familiar with in our own visually-biased social media feeds.

### **On Andean Women's Silencing**

Andeanist anthropologists offer varying interpretations of Quechua and Aymara women's political agency. Some say they make their thoughts clear at home, and send their husbands to meeting to voice it for them, and observe from the sidelines to comment beyond the conversation. We are cautioned not to interpret Andean gender dynamics with Western feminist eyes (2014). Some say Spanish conquest brought the patriarchy, some say that the Inka Empire thrust it upon the earlier-settled Aymaras and Urus (Tschopik 1951). Some say *chachawarmi* means "the woman cooks, the man eats. Such lovely gender complementarity" (source year: pp). A wise voice made it simple: "ask the women in these communities what they think" (Ana Mariella Bacigalupo, personal communication 2017).

I did this, and I found that many Aymara and Quechua women felt so boxed out of traditional community discussion fora that they were developing their own feminist talk radio programs as a work-around. They were holding community workshops to help one another overcome a fear of public speaking that was specific to their longstanding silencing in community fora. And they were finding their voices, supported by UN and NGO designated funds for indigenous language survival.

## The Positive Consequences of Women's Global Funding Initiatives- A Comparative Note

Regarding indigeneity Alia (2010:147) contests that a key shift in global funding focus during the 2010s has been to monetarily support the growth of indigenous community media:

Franz Fanon observed that “mastery of language affords remarkable power” because it results in possession of “the world expressed and implied by that language” (Fanon 1967:18). UNESCO has designated Indigenous and global networks urgent areas for study and policy development, and...Cultural Survival...has made media a top priority.

Whether or not one ascribes to media determinism, indigenous people worldwide are clearly making use of certain affordances that emerge with the spread of global communications that connect their communities to the radial and digital commons. Zapatista communities in the Mesoamerican highlands vocally promote gender parity, in part, to stand in contrast to the ‘*machista*’ Mexican State. Is the Zapatista ‘visibility and presence’ schema, as discussed by Jeffries (2010), expanding into Andean land sovereignty politics? Is such ‘visibility’ having the same effect on local scale gender parity in Andean communities using global media to resist assaults on their land sovereignty, in the way that Earle and Simonelli (2005) have found Zapatista public relations strategies to increase gender rights discourses within Zapatista communities?

Aymaras in the Andean highlands of Peru invoke *Pachamama* against nonconsensual State extraction projects, they espouse *chachawarmi* as a community value of gender equality, and they are engaging more and more with global media to protest assaults on their land sovereignty. Will these conflating factors increase intracommunity focus on gender rights for the Aymara the way it has for many Zapatista communities?

## The Negative Consequences of Chachawarmi

At the same time, I find that the post-colonial iteration of *chachawarmi* gender ideals that frames their activism is inherently gender essentialist, erasing gender identities and sexualities beyond the binary. The core male participant in UMA's leadership, Angel, quietly told me about what men who love men do in altiplano culture: there are "acts" that take place out in the chakra, which remain socially unspoken.

There is a five block stretch of a designated street in downtown Puno where men feel safe(r) cross-dressing after dark. People who fully identify as queer, and yearn to live fully this identity—they move to Lima. This is not to say that my community partners displayed anti-queer aggression or exclusion. In fact, due to the import of broad based coalition in Peruvian politics, where there is no two-party-dominant system, I observed two intentional coalition building meetings between Rosa Palomino's political team and a feminist queer activist coalition from Lima:

This study contributes to anthropological understandings of how gender mitigates indigenous resistance movements wherein communities increasingly rely on global media attention—with its disproportionate focus on women as environmental defenders—to pressure state actors. This study will also increase understanding of how social movements utilize radio fields as political spaces for identity formation and strategizing about land defense.

With its central focus on gender relations and access to power, this project contributes to a decades-long debate in anthropology regarding women's silencing in public life. My fieldwork

data documents how externally-focused processes of social mobilization also affect intragroup power dynamics.

My ethnography describes an emerging pan-indigenous network of community media producers from across Latin America, and will be useful to those researching environmental protest, land rights, community media, indigenous identity formation, and 21<sup>st</sup> century social justice movements. By elucidating Aymara women's use of media to organize against ongoing interpersonal and sexual violence in their communities, this study will increase understanding of how emerging forms of bilateral digital advocacy affect gender rights and policy in rural areas.

As feminist political ecologists have shown that culturally defined gender roles mitigate access to forms of knowledge and communication, it becomes "necessary to take a deeper look at what technologies might be needed to engage in specific natural resource management practices and what gendered associations those technologies have" (Meinzen-Dick, Kovarik, and Quisumbing 2014:40). Given indigenous women's centrality to language revitalization, and the pivotal function of community media within regional resistance movements, Aymara women's expanding media activism implies greater potential for community and territorial continuity.

## **Conclusion**

*La comunicacion es la columna vertebral de la sociedad, y por eso, lucho por involucrar a las mujeres en la radio, para que ellas pudieran estar de pie y caminar.*

*Communicaion is the spinal column of society, and therefore, I fight to involve women in the radio, so that they can stand up and move forward.*

**--Rosa Palomino**

The Inkas clearly knew the power of fusing social memory to a shared origin story, and reifying ancestral gods to bring broad expanses of people together in a collective offense. Like the Inka before them, the Lupaqa *Señorios* that preceded, and the mysterious ancients of Tiwanaku, the Aymaras and Quechuas of the Andes have kept their sense of identity alive across generations of conquest by imbuing the landscape with powerful repositories of memory through ritualized placemarking, animate storytelling and oral history. After all, what more powerful way is there to transcend seemingly-impossible mortal limitations, but through the invocation of gods?

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