



Non-Western Epistemology and the Understanding of the *Pachamama* (Environment) Within the World(s) of the *Aymara* Identity

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Abstract

The purpose of this article is to understand, from the perspective of the Bolivian *Aymara* identity of Bolivia, the intrinsic relation these persons have with Nature. This task is developed through the study of what they call *Pachamama* (sacred Mother Earth), which is part of their identity as an 'all interrelated whole, the *Suma Qamaña* or *Good Living*', and which can be considered a non-Western epistemology. Their worldview breaks with the Western (anthropocentric) conception of environment that informs European and Anglo-Saxon continental law, and that is currently predominant in international standards of reference. Proponents of this perspective achieved a transformation in the international treatment of Nature, recognised by the United Nations (*Resolution 63/278* of 2009, promoted by the Bolivian State), gaining inspiration from the inclusion by Ecuador of *Pacha Mama* (Nature) as a subject of rights in its constitution (2008).

Keywords

Aymara from Bolivia; Mother Earth; nature; non-western epistemology, *Pachamama*, western epistemology.

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Introduction

It is Sunday. Elvira Mamani Challco takes the 6 am bus in the City of Alto, heading to Chiquipata—an *ayllu* (community) — located on the shores of Lake Titicaca in La Paz-Bolivia. She is happy because it is *Aymara* community meeting day; she will be reunited with her uncles, cousins and nephews, who—like her—had to migrate for work. She arrives in Chiquipata at approximately 9:30 am, steps off the bus and smiles. She is in the *ayllu*. She kneels, lowers her hat and solemnly but loudly greets the *akha pacha* (world here): '*Tierra wirjina, Pachamama, Santus Kuntur Mamani* [virgin land, sacred Mother Earth, holy father Condor and Falcon]'. She then rises and walks down the mountain inhabited by the *apus* —spirits of the mountains—and by the *achachilas* (spirits of the ancestors) towards the court in which the community is gathered. As she walks, she remembers that her ancestors, parents and husband were buried in this place and soon, she will also be there; she will meet them in the *alax pacha* (world above) because she is already 85 years old.

Being an *Aymara* is not the same as being an Indian, an Indigenous people, a peasant, an ethnic group or a nation,¹ all of which are abstract identities that anonymise. These terms have been used throughout a long historical journey of signifiers and are currently used as part of some international standards of reference such as *Convention No. 169* of the International Labor Organization (ILO) on Indigenous and Tribal Peoples. To be an *Aymara* is to speak of an identity—because it pre-dates the Spanish conquest—misunderstood and revindicated for centuries, and geographically transcending several Latin American states. They experience reality through the identity paradigm of *Suma Qamaña* or *Good Living*, which is an 'interrelated whole' because it encompasses the geographical, the political, the economic and the social. It is within the context of this paradigm that the *Pachamama* or sacred Mother Earth exists—exploring the *Suma Qamaña* and the *Pachamama* allows for the understanding of how the *Aymara* relate to Nature. As the *Aymara's* cultural vision is not unified but diverse, in this article I offer diverse approaches to the *Pachamama*—with the aid of authors like María Ester Grebe (1989–1990) and Jan van Kessel (1992) who has studied Chile's *Aymara*. However, I focus on the *Aymar*as of Lake Titicaca in La Paz-Bolivia, and more precisely on the *ayllu* of Chiquipata, to which I belong. I show, based on my family's and my own experiences—described in real stories—how we relate to the *Pachamama*. These narrations reveal that for us, the *Pachamama* is a living entity, where different worlds (physical and non-physical) converge in an interrelated fashion.

Following this, I highlight how the *Aymara* culture, through its form of relating to the *Pachamama*, has altered and influenced the world, transforming the definition of the environment from an anthropocentric to a biocentric perspective, leading the United Nations, via *Resolution 63/278* of 2009 to recognise the interdependence of the land and its ecosystems. Thus, the *Aymara* culture promoted the development of some related mechanisms to defend the rights of nature. Afterwards, I analyse the Bolivian legislation and show how the State of Bolivia interpreted the identity paradigm of the *Aymar*as in a manner that could be called a 'pseudo-truth' because it does not relate to the worldview of the *Aymar*as.

This pseudo-truth was dragged into a normative framework about Mother Earth that created a confusing and strange situation, because the characteristics of such a framework are more anthropocentric than biocentric, and it has been formulated within a system of economic development. Finally, I will show how an *Aymara* epistemology departs from the Western concept of the environment. This is its great contribution: a way of understanding Nature as an 'interrelated whole'.

Mother Earth from the *Aymara* perspective

Who are the Aymaras of Bolivia? An interrelated whole identity of the Suma Qamaña or Good Living

The *Aymaras* are the second largest population group in Bolivia, according to the National Population and Housing Census of 2012 (Instituto National Statistics Office of Bolivia 2018). It is an ancient culture (Yampara 2015) that pre-dates the founding of the Bolivian State. Territorially, the *Aymaras* inhabit several South American countries: (north west) Argentina, western Bolivia, southern Colombia, northern and central Chile, the highlands and Amazon region of Ecuador, and the southern deserts coast of Peru.

At the beginning of the Spanish conquest (1532–1570), they were mistakenly called ‘Indians’—a label that stigmatised and subjected them to others for centuries, since the term was then equated to ‘being a beast’. Later, in the colonial period (1570–1825), the term was related to the minority of age and disability. Successively, other denominations were used to describe the *Aymara*, such as ‘Indigenous’, when the Republican State of Bolivia was created (1825). During the period of the national State (1900–1980) that had a nationalist political system, the *Aymara* were considered a ‘human problem’ and labelled as peasants. During that time, peasants were considered a problem, since they were viewed as unproductive humans that hindered development and progress. Under the multiculturalism phase (1990–2008) the *Aymaras* were considered ethnic groups. At the current political-legal moment of plurinationality (2009–today), they are assimilated as an alien identity under the Western perspective of ‘nation’.

This brief historical account about the *Aymara* denomination shows that their identity has been historically constructed and deconstructed by the colonisers, priests, rulers, landlords and international institutions use of diverse signifiers and meanings. This is a ‘denomination paradigm’ that can lead them to lose their identity (Apaza 2018: 215–223). This paradigm has extended to international standards (see *ILO Convention 169*), which also create a false and distorted identity through a false concept, based on a postcolonial and neo-indigenist² language (Apaza 2016: 90–119).

The definition of the *Aymara* from the perspective of ‘other’ is dangerous for them because such a description can empty this ancient identity of all its contents. The *Aymara* live their identity (instead of defining it) as an ‘interrelated whole’, in which various worlds are involved in a harmonious pluriverse, encompassing the geographical, the political, the economic and the social, expressed through its identity paradigm the *Suma Qamaña* or *Good Living*, which is the harmonious combination of all these elements.

Understanding their identity paradigm is fundamental because it can take us closer to their vision about the environment—that is, to the relationship they have with Nature. It can also explain how the *Aymara* perceive themselves as part of Nature. This means that this exploration can help us understand the notion of *Pachamama*—a non-humanistic, dual and complementary way of thinking. In terms of sexuality, the *Aymara* identity paradigm manifests as feminine and masculine, whose convergence generates life. Thus, this ancient mode of thinking is essential for the production, reproduction and conservation of Nature. For the interpretation of the *Aymara* identity paradigm, we must consider their own language, their oral tradition, their symbolic universe and their ancient wisdom, to observe how the ‘relational whole’—their identity—is associated with the symbol of the *Chakana* or Andean Cross, the main emblem of the ‘relational of the whole’. The *Chakana* leads them to interpret life as an interconnected whole, in which everything works in a relationship through the spheres of their lives. There are diverse elements in this ‘everything’: entities, times and strata (Estermann 2013: 2–21). These elements are illustrated in the *Chakana* in Figure 1.



Figure 1: National Museum of Archaeology (MUNARQ) in La Paz-Bolivia, representation of the *Chakana*. Photography by Yaneth K. Apaza Huanca.

I provide here an interpretation of the *Chakana* that is useful to understand the notion of a 'relational whole'; my interpretation is inspired by: 1) the drawing of the *Altar Mayor de Korichancha* (Major Altar of *Korichancha*) by Joan Santa Cruz *Pachacuti*; and 2) the interpretation of the celestial coordinate system of Carlos and Zadir Milla (2014) (see Figure 2).

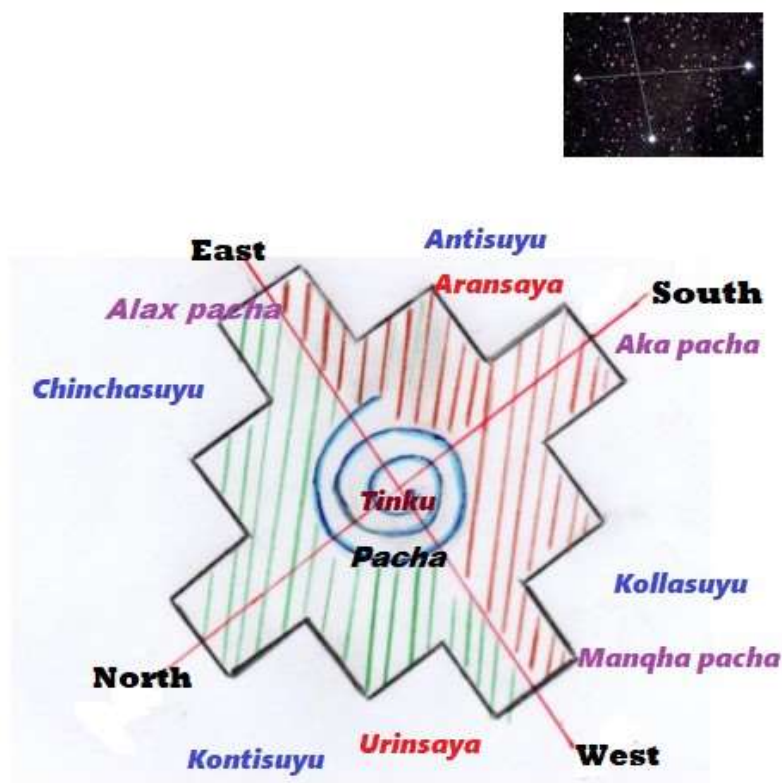


Figure 2: Interpretation of the *Chakana*. Elaboration by Yaneth K. Apaza Huanca.

The *Chakana* is related to the Southern Cross—a constellation located in the southern sky (Milla 2014); however, astronomer Erwin Salazar (2008, 2016) believes it is another constellation. Both interpretations, nevertheless, link it to the cosmos. The Andean cross structures and synthesises the *Aymara* thinking as a ‘relational whole’ because iconographically, it represents a structure and geographic organisation across space and time.³

The *Chakana* in image two is a crossing of non-perfect horizontal and vertical lines (Salazar 2008). It contains four divisions and a point of union called *tinku* (encounter), in which the *pacha* (space/time) has been drawn, showing how it acquires life as a spiral. The upper part of the *Chakana* relates to the *alax pacha* (world above), the middle part to the *aka pacha* (world below) and the lower part to the *manqha pacha* (world below).

The dividing lines also represent the principles of life of the *Aymara*: complementarity and duality, personified by the masculine (*aransaya*) and feminine (*urinsaya*). The dividing lines also can be interpreted geographically, so that the *Chakana* contains the four geographical spaces of the great *Tawantinsuyo*: *Antisuyo*, *Chinchasuyo*, *Kuntisuyo* and *Qullasuyo*. The word *Tawantinsuyo* is composed of the particles *Tawa* (four), *Inti* (sun) and *suyo* (set of *markas*)—meaning that the ancestral territory was divided into four cardinal points. Geographically, regarding the ‘relational whole’, one of those four spaces of the *Tawantinsuyo* was the *Qullasuyo* (where Bolivia is currently located). It survives tangibly in some rural areas of western Bolivia through the *ayllus* (communities), *markas* (a set of *ayllus*), *suyos* (sets of *markas*) and *señorios* (also sets of *markas*), that all form the ancestral territory known as *Qullasuyo*. Currently, the *Aymaras* have moved to several territories outside the Bolivian West, which means this identity is in a state of continuous expansion (Untoja 2018).

For this reason, the geographical characteristics of the Earth and of the *Aymara* territory are fundamental to understand the *Suma Qamaña* or *Good Living*. In this sense, the interpretation of the paradigm has three parts, although in reality, these coexist as a harmonious whole (Apaza 2016: 225–282):

- First, the restitution and consolidation of the ancestral territory composed of *ayllus*, *markas*, *suyus* and the *Aymara señorios* is organically fundamental, as these underpin the reconstitution of the *Qullasuyu* currently located in west Bolivian territory. The reconstitution of such territory breaks with the modern paradigm of the nation/state (Apaza 2016: 210–220). There has been a continuous struggle for reconstitution of this structure from the *Aymara* and the denomination of ‘nation’ is rejected by them, since such labelling from a Western perspective places them in an alien vision and within the state that has cut them off geographically.
- Second, after this goal of territorial reconstitution is achieved, the governing political administration would be based on the *ayllu*, *marka*, *suyu* and *señorio*. Such administration would govern the land and the territory, and is called *ayllu* (democracy or community), linked to the provision of services by each and every community member. However, such administration is not simple in practical terms, since for the *Aymaras*, the land and territory (expressed in the *ayllu*, *marka*, *suyu* and *señorio*) are like a *uta* (house). Some view it as a living body. This living body or house (*ayllu*, *marka*, *suyu*, *señorio*) comprises—according to their worldview or *pachas* (space/time)—several dimensions. The first dimension is made up by the *alax pacha* or world above. The second is composed by the *akha pacha* or world here, personified by the Earth or soil (Nature). The *Pachamama* or sacred Mother Earth is found in this second dimension. The third dimension is composed of the *manqha pacha* or world below (Apaza 2016: 267–270). In the next section, I explore and explain these three dimensions.

- The paradigm has a third aspect, which is the productive economy (*luraña ruway*), based on a threefold work system: *ayni* (reciprocity), *mink'a* (collective work) and *mit'a* (a rotating provision of service of physical work for the benefit of the *ayllu* community). Together, this creates an economy of reciprocity in the community.

The unity and harmony of these three parts comprise the *Suma Qamaña* or *Good Living*, showing how the *Aymara* identity presents another rationality, or another way of interpreting and appreciating life than the one presented by Western rationality. In the next section, I analyse the *Aymara* conception of the environment (Nature) from their cosmovision.

The understanding of the environment from the *Aymara* perspective: a non-Western epistemology

How do the *Aymara* understand the environment? First, this term—environment—does not exist in their language. What most resembles their understanding of this, is what they call *Pachamama* or sacred Mother Earth: that is, a homeomorphic equivalent (Panikkar 2018).⁴ The term 'homeomorphic' is useful in comparing two cultures so different as the Western and the *Aymara*. The differences between them makes any comparison difficult; however, a 'homeomorphic' comparison seeks to overlap the fundamental traits of both cultures to develop the comparison in the best possible way (although a perfect comparison will never be possible). However, there remain wide differences between the idea of 'Nature' and the *Aymara* understanding of *Pachamama*, which I clarify below.



Figure 3: *Pacha*. Source: Taipe (2004).

Pachamama is a composition of two words. *Pacha* is itself a dual word representing two related conditions: a static (space) and dynamic space (time). The *pacha* represents Andean time in the form of a loop or spiral observed from above (see Figure 3). It also represents time viewed from the front (see Figure 4) based on notions of a 'before' and/or 'after', instead of 'past' and 'future' (Manga 2018: 4). However, on movement, it is not static. Therefore, in every change of time, in every era, there is a *pachakuti*, a repetitive but different return of the identity paradigm (whole interrelated).

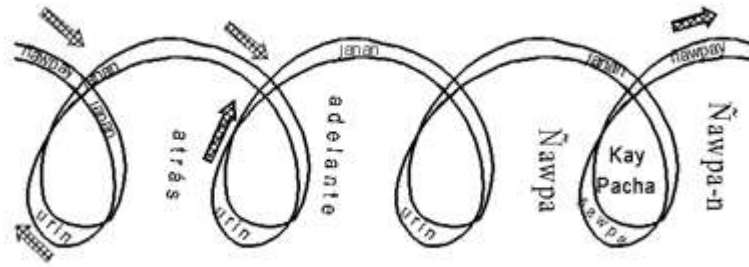


Figure 4: *Pacha* (space/time) observed from the front. Source: Manga E (2014).

Nawpa is a term located, at the same time, 'back' and 'before'. This interpretation is different from Western linear time, in which there is a past, present and future. Inside the *pacha* (space-time), various dimensions, worlds or interconnected strata coexist. Commentators (e.g., Grebe 1989–1990, Kessel 1992) have shown that the *pachas* are complex dimensions with fascinating potential for discovery. These investigations, can be summarised as follows:

- The *alax pacha* is where the *apus/achachilas* (spirits of the mountains and the ancestors) live.
- The *aka pacha* is inhabited by the cultural world of the natural forces, besides the *mallku* (protective spirit represented by the condor), *amaru* (snake, natural forces linked to water) and the *Pachamama*.
- The *manqha pacha* is the world below.

These are the three *pachas* in which different types of deities live. I focus in this article on the *aka pacha* (second dimension), where the cultural world of natural forces, including *Pachamama*, live. The interpretation that follows is inspired by my own heritage as a member of the *Aymaras* of the Chiquipata ayllu, who are geographically located on the shores of Lake Titicaca in the Tito Yupanqui Municipality, Manco Kapac Province of the Department of La Paz-Bolivia. My observations regarding the interpretation of the *Pachamama* took place throughout my childhood, in my family environment through my mother, uncles and aunts and the community in general. I develop this interpretation in two stories so that it can be better understood, and I show the interconnection that exists between the different *pachas*, which are related with the *Pachamama*.

First story: Arrival to and departure from the *ayllu* (or community)



Figure 5: *Ayllu* Chiquipata. Source: Tania Apaza.

When a person arrives at the *ayllu* community after a long time or after having spent a few days away, the first thing a person (*jak'e*) does is kiss the *Pachamama*, as a greeting of love and gratitude to her and because she is considered a woman. Later, the person greets the *apus/achachilas* that are the deities or ancestral male spirits (which can be represented by a hill or mountain), and the ancestors buried very close to the *ayllu*. As the person progresses and reaches his or her *sayaña* or plot where the closest family (father, mother, children) lives, permission is requested respectfully to enter the house to the *achachilas*, mentioning by name the ancestral spirits *Santur kuntur mamani* or holy father, Condor and Falcon living in the place represented by the house. The person then thanks *Pachamama* with a kiss for having arrived safely at home. Occasionally, I have observed that if the person has wine or alcohol on hand, a *ch'allana* is made: that is, the alcohol or wine is served to *Pachamama* because it is considered a living entity who must politely be invited to a joyful encounter. Likewise, when one goes on a trip and must leave the *ayllu* and the *sayaña*, one leaves the house ordering the *achachilas*, and asking the *Pachamama* for permission to leave the place and the same ritual of greeting the spirits is performed.

Second story: *Ch'alla* or party in honour of *Pachamama*



Figure 6: *Ayllu* Chiquipata. Source: Tania Apaza.

A party in honour of *Pachamama* is carried out in the month of February, at the beginning of the rains, at the same time as the days of carnival. This begins on Monday as a *jisk'a anata* or small carnival party. The family then conducts a short tour of all the *aynokas* (lands that are cultivated according to a rotation system) and *yapus* (cultivable lands). In these areas, there is production of potatoes, corn, beans and other foods.

The *Aymara* prepare an *aguayo*, which looks like a multicoloured square fabric, and is an offering consisting of petals of flowers, candies, coca, serpentine (a long strip of coloured paper), alcohol or wine. Once in the place of the *yapus* or plantations, a *manq'a q'oa* (offering, feeding) is made

with llama fat (domestic mammal) to the *Pachamama*; she is celebrated because she feeds and multiplies the animals all year round.

Later begins the ritual of the *ch'alla* or celebration in honour of the *Pachamama*, sprinkling the Earth with petals of flowers (or *pankaras*) of the place, and convida *tulsis* or sweets in the form of confites, as well as wine. The *yapus* are then decorated with serpentine. Once this ritual, which lasts approximately 10 to 15 minutes, is culminated, permission is asked to the *Pachamama* to take its representative fruits, because the *Aymara* will make a long journey through all the *yapus* where they will perform the same *ch'alla*. Occasionally, the *jilakata* (the person with maximum authority of the *ayllu Chiquipata*) and other families visit the house and *ch'alla* is performed with what has been collected.

Both stories illustrate the relationship and importance for the *Aymar*as of the Sacred Mother Earth or *Pachamama* and all the entities that inhabit her, as well as how the *Pachamama* is part of them and vice versa, demonstrating that their identity is interrelated with the whole (cosmos). Another important aspect that the stories show are the principles of life of the *Aymar*as regarding the 'whole', of which the *Pachamama* is a part. One of these principles is that of duality or complementarity, in which each entity or event has a counterpart, an essential complement, its pair: female and male (Lajo 2006: 81).

The relationship of the *Pachamama* with the *Aymar*as shows this complementarity with Nature, where all the inhabitants (living entities or not) do not leave the *pacha* (space/time) and are members of the 'all that is'. This way of relating, through the principle of duality, helps us to understand that only in this way is it possible to maintain the balance of life. It implies understanding that nothing in the cosmos is more or less important than anything else (Campana 2005: 30).

For the *Aymara* culture, the human being is not the most important part of Nature; hence, this diverges significantly from Western anthropocentric ontology. That is why their respect and love is born for the sacred Mother Earth or *Pachamama*; without her and its inhabitants, they would not exist. Therefore, the *Aymar*as seek to live in harmony and good agreement with Mother Earth. For them, the land and territory and everything in it are not a 'resource' or 'object' but have a profound quality of transcendence emphasising spirituality and relationality.

The Western conception of 'Mother Earth'

On 1 May 2009, the General Assembly of the United Nations declared 22 April as the International Mother Earth Day through *Resolution 63/278*. According to this declaration:

Mother earth is a common expression used to refer to the planet Earth in various countries and regions, which demonstrates the interdependence between humans, the other living species and the planet that we all inhabit.

Undoubtedly, this declaration promotes a shift in the way of appreciating Nature. This turn has been influenced by the *Political Constitution of Ecuador* (2008) that recognises Nature as a subject of rights, thereby expressing a biocentric stance (Gudynas 2013: 8). The *Ecuadorian Constitution* links Nature to *Pacha Mama* (articles 71–74) within the model of coexistence of *Sumak Kawsay* or *Good Living* of the *Kichwa* culture. This qualified it as the first Latin American constitution under an apparently biocentric perspective that leaves behind the anthropocentric concept of the subject of law.

Subsequently, in 2009, Bolivia promulgated a Constitution that mentions the *Pachamama* within the *Suma Qamaña* model. However, in the background of such environmental regulation, the anthropocentric position prevailed with its economic way of valuing Nature. Based on this, some

years later, a normative framework for the usual understanding appeared that contains several contradictions (as explained below). These changes in the way Mother Earth has been recognised worldwide partly imply a redefinition of the environment in terms of other values and positions, through which the human being is no longer taken as the centre of life. Rather, it recognises humans as part of Nature, and Nature as necessary for life. Therefore, the 'human' appears to be awakened to the need to respect and recognise the value of ecosystems.

Advances in the recognition of Mother Earth as a subject of rights continued with the World People's Conference on Climate Change and the Rights of Mother Earth, which adopted the *Universal Declaration of the Rights of the Mother Earth* (Tiquipaya-Bolivia 2010). The beginning of this declaration states: 'we are all part of Mother Earth, a vital indivisible community of interdependent and interrelated beings'.

Based on this important legal framework, the idea of creating an International Court for the Rights of Nature was generated. This civil society entity—without law-enforcing powers—was established in 2014 and included major figures who had campaigned for Nature and rights, such as Vandana Shiva, Fernando Pino Solanas and Boaventura de Sousa Santos. With other organisations from all continents, an ethical court to defend the rights of Mother Earth and all those who guarantee the rights of Mother Earth was proposed. This court would promote:

a new vision to live in harmony with the land through the recognition of the Rights of Nature. The rulings call for the definition of new economic models, social systems and governance structures to create a new path that recognizes the interdependence of humans and the systems of the earth. (Global Alliance for the Rights of Nature 2018)

This court has now held four sessions: in Quito, Ecuador (2014), Lima, Perú (2014), Paris, France (2015) and Bonn, Germany (2017). In the latter, it heard the case of the Indigenous Territory and National Park Isiboro Secure (TIPNIS for its acronym in Spanish) located in Bolivia.

In this case, the 'Indigenous' people⁵ of the lowland (Mojeños, Trinitarios, Yuracares and Chimanes) protested *Law No. 969* (2017), which would remove the inviolability of the TIPNIS and allow the construction of a highway that would divide the territory in two. This law would violate various national and international norms, such as the *Political Constitution of the Bolivian State* (Article 385), *Law 71 of the Rights of Mother Earth* (2010), the *Universal Declaration of the Rights of Mother Earth*, the *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples* (incorporated in *Bolivian Law No. 3760*) and *Convention No. 169* of the ILO that requires appropriate prior consultations. In August 2018, observers and investigators⁶ representing the Tribunal made an international visit to verify the accusations of violations of the rights of Mother Earth in situ.

In January 2019, the court issued its final report, which concluded that there was a violation of the rights of Mother Earth and called for sanctions:

The commission notes that the rights of indigenous peoples and the rights of defenders of nature are violated. Violations that are aggravated by the disrespect of the legal and institutional framework of the Plurinational State of Bolivia. Likewise, the commission demands from the government of Bolivia:

- The definitive termination of the road project by the TIPNIS.
- The repeal of Law 969 of August of the year 2017.

(International Tribunal for the Rights of Nature 2019: 1)

The ruling issued by the court is not binding. It is ethical; it is a call to the State and society to correct and make real what is established in the *Universal Declaration of Mother Earth*.

In 2015, the Second World People's Summit on Climate Change and the Defense of Life was held in Bolivia, with the conclusion of the event recognising that the increase in global environmental problems is due to a capitalist system based on an assumption that there can be unlimited growth, and also caused by the current model of consumer society. Both face limits in reality and must acknowledge this. One solution proposed was to follow a path of harmony with Nature and move towards the holistic vision of *Good Living*, exploring and embracing the complementarity between the rights of peoples and the rights of Mother Earth (as a living being), which would involve building a balanced relationship between humans and Nature.

To emphasise that such a balance is fundamentally necessary, the Summit declared the need for the dual recognition of human rights and also of Mother Earth's rights, because of the interdependence between the two. Clearly, the *Universal Declaration of the Rights of the Mother Earth* expresses a change of values towards Nature, towards the Earth and its entire ecosystem, giving rise to biocentrism as a philosophy of life.

Legislation on the rights of Mother Earth in Bolivia. A Western conception?

After having analysed the understanding of the *Pachamama* from the perspective of the *Aymara* culture, and its influence on international legislation, thereby gaining a general overview of both *Aymara* and Western visions, it is possible to ask whether Bolivian legislation is inclined towards either of these stances? The conclusion here is that Bolivian legislation regarding the environment has a clear anthropocentric and non-biocentric inclination (as shown in Articles 33, 342–347 of its 2009 Constitution).⁷ In these articles, the environment revolves around the subject (society or state), and there is no acknowledgement of Nature as a living entity, capable of having rights. Therefore, there is no balance between the rights of people and the rights of Nature.

This is a serious contradiction of the *Suma Qamaña* model (Article 8 of the *State Constitution*) allegedly advocated by the Bolivian State and supposedly supporting a harmonious relationship with Nature. It is also striking that the fundamental norm only mentions the *Pachamama* twice in the Preamble, quite the opposite of the *Constitution of Ecuador*, which has legislated more broadly with reference to the *Pacha Mama*. These contradictions continued after 2010, even with the development of more specific legislation about Mother Earth (e.g., *Law No. 071 of the Rights of Mother Earth* confirms the position of the Bolivian State as adopting the model of capitalist development). In this context, the *Suma Qamaña* model has become little more than a lyrical speech full of contradictions. At the international level, Bolivia assumes a position apparently defending and promoting the rights of Mother Earth and the idea of an international court. However, at national and local levels, Bolivia implements and sustains aggressive policies of extraction of natural resources and megaprojects. Simultaneously, it should be made clear that the definition of Mother Earth found in the Bolivian constitution does not reflect the feeling or worldview of the *Aymara*. The *Pachamama* is defined in the Constitution (Article 3) as:

the dynamic living system conformed by the indivisible community of all systems of life and living beings, interrelated, interdependent and complementary that share a common destiny. Mother Earth is considered sacred, from the cosmovision of the indigenous peoples and nations and original peasants.

The definition strives to describe the relationship between Mother Earth and the 'Nations and indigenous peoples, and original peasants'. As I have shown, however, the *Aymaras* live their identity as an 'interrelated whole', where the physical and the non-physical world share the same space/time or *pacha*, and in which deities of different types exist.

Conversely, the same error of 'anonymous identities' is again committed. For example, this occurs when mention is made of the summation of a set of denominations such as 'nations, and original

indigenous peasant peoples' in an attempt to unify in the same vision, diverse cultural identities that do not necessarily share the same conception of Mother Earth.

Given the shortcomings of previous laws, in 2012, *Law No. 300*, (known as the *Framework Law of Mother Earth and Integral Development for Good Living*) was enacted. Further, in 2013 the *Supreme Decree 1696 'Regulation of Law 300'* was issued. Both instruments tried to be operational frameworks for the *Suma Qamaña* model. The context of *Law 300* essentially lies in three concepts (Oporto 2013: 2):

- 1) integral development (Articles 5, 3)
- 2) the rights of Mother Earth, conceived as a subject of public interest (Article 4a)
- 3) *Sumaj Kamaña, Sumaj Kausay, Yaiko Pave* (Article 5, 2), the latter being defined as a:

civilizational and cultural horizon, alternative to capitalism and modernity, born in the cosmovisions of indigenous nations and indigenous original peasant peoples, and intercultural and Afro-Bolivian communities ... [which] means living in complementarity, harmony and eliminating inequalities and mechanisms of domination.

However, the definition given here is a construction that is alien to the *Aymara* worldview. The Bolivian State has tried to formulate an alternative approach that accords with the vision of the State, as it seeks to unite the majority of the cultures that inhabit Bolivia and search for a proposal that differs from the current capitalist and development model in the country.

The paradigm of the *Aymaras' Sumaj Kamaña* or *Suma Qamaña* is unique because it separates the structure of the State of Bolivia from its geographical shape. The *Aymaras* spread beyond physical borders (South America), revealing a paradigm of life as an 'interrelated whole' that encompasses the economic, political-juridical and social.

The framework law has wide contrasts. It develops mechanisms and guidelines for *Good Living* and sets objectives to establish integral development and balance with Mother Earth. It establishes principles, definitions and values of *Good Living* as an alternative to capitalism. It develops protection mechanisms and guarantees of the *Rights of Mother Earth*, including public policies, instruments and institutions. It creates a Plurinational Council for *Good Living* in harmony and equilibrium with Mother Earth. However, because it is a framework law, it cannot go beyond whatever the *Political Constitution of the State of Bolivia* establishes (Article 410, II) and it does not upset the foundations of a development economy, from which an anthropocentric regulation of the environment is promoted. Therefore, it is a vision with too many contradictions. Without a doubt, it carries a philosophical and epistemological inclination towards the West, leaving aside several aspects of the *Aymara* cosmovision and experience.

Conclusions: Breaking epistemological limits

There is a substantial difference between the Western appropriation of the concept of Mother Earth and the understanding of *Pachamama* within the *Aymara* vision. The Western conception has a short-term trajectory in Latin America (Ecuador, 2008 and Bolivia, 2009), and the world (*United Nations Resolution 63/278*). Despite giving rise to a non-binding legal framework (soft law)—with a nonetheless binding legal effect in Bolivia—the Western concept grants rights to Mother Earth identified with Nature and every living system that inhabits it, in a non-complementary or balanced manner, that keeps humans beings at the apex of the hierarchy of species. This shows the survival of a humanist, anthropocentric inclination.

Meanwhile, for the *Aymaras* the *Pachamama* is their 'Mother and is sacred', the one who gives them life, brings them to fruition, not only in a material form, but also spiritually. This gives rise to a relationship of complementarity between them. That is why for the *Aymara*, the *Pachamama*

is part of their existential intrinsic being. This conception means that they naturally respect and love all of Nature without needing to consider her as a subject of rights by obligation.

The vision of the *Aymaras* and their relationship with *Pachamama* has achieved a broad worldwide acceptance of the rights of Nature (Mother Earth), promoting international legislation and mechanisms for its defence. This indicates that the ancestral knowledge of the diverse cultures that inhabit Latin America can powerfully influence the way of appreciating Nature around the world. These cultures have elements of importance for the universal expansion of knowledge, values and principles concerning various aspects of life.

Nonetheless, in the nation-state that now hosts the *Aymara*, the legislation has an anthropocentric and non-biocentric position on the environment. The *Political Constitution of the Bolivian State* (2009) has an anthropocentric inclination, and although the State has tried to create a legal framework regarding Mother Earth (*Law No. 071, Law No. 300, DS 1696*), such a legal framework does not disrupt the most important aspects of Western epistemology affecting the treatment and conception of the environment.

The idea of the *Suma Qamaña* or *Good Living*—when interpreted from the indigenist and neo-indigenist language of the Bolivian State in Article 2 as a contribution of the ‘nations and native peasant indigenous peoples’ towards the new plural society—is completely foreign and strange to the *Aymara* vision. The paradigm is unique because it separates the structure of the State of Bolivia from its geographical shape. The *Aymaras* spread beyond physical borders (South America), revealing an ‘interrelated whole’ that encompasses the economic, political-juridical and social. This confusing and strange situation of the Bolivian State was interpreted in a normative framework, in which *Good Living* is related to *Pachamama* or Mother Earth. Although related, the paradigm has more elements; therefore, it is a distortion to the vision of the *Aymaras*.

In such a way that to present pseudo-truths (principles) of a culture, in this case the *Aymara*, and superimpose them within a State that is recognised as ‘intercultural’ Art. 2 (State Constitution) existing in Bolivia other 36 recognised cultures, in addition to the *Aymaras*, had as a result two important aspects:

1. The survival of reductionism and hegemonic Western supraculturality with which the Bolivian State was born in 1825 because relegates again to its ‘plural society’.
2. Leads to confusion to the *Aymaras* postponing them again in their centuries-old claims on their land and territory.

Finally, the last conclusion is that the *Suma Qamaña* or *Living from the Aymara* is imposed as an alternative to the development of the West (in its non-humanist aspects). Because they have an interrelated vision between the physical and non-physical world.

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¹These denominations or signifiers have been granted to the *Aymaras* and other ancestral Bolivian cultures by the *Bolivian Constitution* (2009), which names them as ‘nations and native peasant indigenous peoples’ (articles 2, 3, 5, 30, 32).

²Indigenism is an ideology created at the beginning of 1920 in Latin America (Mexico, Peru and Bolivia in particular). It was born as a philosophical doctrine to defend Indigenous peoples. It soon became a state policy of protection and guardianship for Indigenous peoples. At present, it appears as neo (new)-indigenism; this ideology manifests itself from the idea of ‘development’ for Indigenous peoples.

³The *chakana* also reveals knowledge of astronomy, agriculture, philosophy, architecture and others.

⁴According to Panikkar ‘are “functional equivalencies” or deep correspondences going beyond simple analogy that can be established between words and concepts belonging to distinct religions or cultures’.

⁵As explained previously, I disagree with the use of the term ‘Indigenous people’ because it gathers several very diverse cultures. However, I use it here because it is the term used by the court.

⁶Shannon Biggs (EU), Alberto Acosta (Ecuador), Enrique Ávila (Argentina).

⁷Article 33: Everyone has the right to a healthy, protected, and balanced environment. Articles 342–347 regulate the environment, natural resources, land and territory. They noted that the protection and preservation of the environment revolves around people and institutions. This is an anthropocentric position since it does not put the value of life of all living beings on an equal footing.

Glossary

Glossary of Aymara terms	
<i>Achachilas</i>	Spirits of the mountains that surround the community. It also refers to the spirits of the ancestors that protect it. Each community has its own <i>achachilas</i> .
<i>Aguayo</i>	Handmade quadrangular fabric used to carry babies or objects on the back.
<i>Akha pacha</i>	World here, inhabited by the <i>achachilas</i> , <i>mallkus</i> and <i>Pachamama</i> .
<i>Alax pacha</i>	World from above, a superior world inhabited by the <i>Inti</i> (sun god) the <i>Viracocha</i> associated to the Judeo-Christian God.
<i>Amaru</i>	Viper, snake that is linked to the waters.
<i>Apus</i>	Lord of the mountains.
<i>Ayllu</i>	A community is the ancestral organisation of the <i>Aymaras</i> , comprises families or family trunks (sometimes not), encompasses a geographic totality in which the community develops politically-juridically, economically and socially.
<i>Aymara</i>	Name given to a population group, prior to the Spanish conquest. This extends through several South American countries.
<i>Ayni</i>	Reciprocity, return of what has been received in a practical and ethical way, is part of the productive economy of the <i>Aymara</i> .
<i>Aynokas</i>	Portions of land that are cultivated according to a rotation system.
<i>Ch'alla</i>	Party in honour of the <i>Pachamama</i> . This consists of a brief ritual of celebration.
<i>Ch'allana</i>	Sprinkle pinches of wine or alcohol to the <i>Pachamama</i> .
<i>Chakana</i>	Andean Cross, emblem of the <i>Aymaras</i> .
<i>Chakras</i>	Or crops of <i>ayllu</i> families.
<i>Jisk'a anata</i>	Small carnival party.
<i>Jak'e</i>	Human being, in the <i>Aymara</i> world the <i>jak'e</i> is associated with the <i>chacha</i> (man)- <i>warmi</i> (woman).
<i>Jilakata</i>	The highest authority of the <i>ayllu</i> , although there are hierarchical levels, the <i>jilakata</i> is one of the most important.
<i>Qullasuyo</i>	One of the four parts of the great <i>Tawantinsuyo</i> or Inca Empire, located in Western Bolivia. This in turn was made up of <i>Aymara</i> lordships.
<i>Luraña ruway</i>	Productive economy. Denomination that I give to the interpretation of the paradigm <i>Suma Qamaña</i> in the third order.

Mallku	Protective spirit represented by the condor.
Mink'a	Collective work.
Manco Kapac	He is credited with founding the Inca culture, and is said to have been the first governor.
Marka	A level higher than the <i>ayllu</i> , at the geographical and organisational level, formed by a set of <i>ayllus</i> or communities.
Manqa q'oa	Feed the <i>Pachamama</i> .
Mit'a	Shift is the provision of services in the form of work, the community works in turn in favour of the collectivity.
Pacha	Space-time <i>Aymara</i> is a cyclical vision of time (as a spiral) as a constant repetition, the <i>pacha</i> in the <i>Aymara</i> vision is alive.
Pachakuti	The eternal return, or the return to the starting point but in a different situation (Kallisaya 2012).
Pachamama	Sacred Mother Earth.
Pankaras	Flowers.
Santus Kuntur Mamani	Holy Condor Father and Falcon.
Sayaña	Plot of land.
Señoríos	A level greater than <i>suyu</i> at a geographical and organisational level, formed by a set of <i>suyus</i> .
Suma Qamaña	<i>Good Living</i> , life paradigm of the <i>Aymaras</i> , the expression of their identity. This is 'all interrelated' because it encompasses the geographical, political-legal and social.
Suyus	A higher level than the <i>markas</i> at a geographic and organisational level, formed by a set of <i>markas</i> .
Tawantinsuyo	The Great Inca Empire constituted by four parts: <i>Chinchasuyo</i> , <i>Kuntisuyo</i> , <i>Antisuyo</i> , <i>Qullasuyo</i> .
Tierra Wirjina	Virgin land.
Tulsis	Sweet.
Uta	House.
Yapus	Cultivable lands, crops.

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