

Université de Genève  
Faculté autonome de théologie protestante  
Institut œcuménique de Bossey

**Tatitu Alaxpachankiri : towards the understanding of  
indigenous spiritualities in the Andes**

by/par  
Juan Carlos Chávez Quispe

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Supervisors:  
Prof. Dr Michel Grandjean  
Prof. Dr Odair Pedroso Mateus

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## **DECLARATION**

As required by the university regulations, I hereby declare unequivocally that this project, unless specifically indicated to the contrary in the text, is my own original work.

*To María Chávez (†), the angel  
who will always be with us.*

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## **Abstract**

Indigenous spiritualities are a fact in contemporary Andean Christianity, so it is their attempt to hold gospel and culture together. As contextual manners of life, they are disseminated in and out of the churches' tradition. Their place in the churches has been shifted from a complete aversion to a strategic tolerance of indigenous symbols and ritual practices. Thus, Indigenous spiritualities affirm one faith in the triune God while validating its multiple expressions, or beliefs, not as mere adaptations to definite historical settings, but as dynamic contextual (re)interpretations of God's message. This is an echo of the transcendental importance of spiritual life in the Andes. It draws not from individualist regards to God, but from communal practices experienced every day. Its input to the modern ecumenical movement looks for restoring human dignity while grounding justice as the previous step to reaching unity in the Church.

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## Introduction

Indigenous spiritualities and theologies had been integrated into world Christianity as challenging yet enriching life-promoting contextual perspectives. They are focused on practical more than on doctrinal matters, and they are rooted on the awareness of *indigenouslyness*<sup>1</sup> in history as much as in modern society. On the one hand, a long-time indigenous continuous adaptation in ever changing settings explains the current configuration of Andean Christianity. On the other hand, former positions of selecting between either foreign or local traditions acquire, nowadays, more conciliatory attitudes while recognizing both traditions as a fact in life communities. This situation is particularly intense in Bolivia since almost two thirds of its inhabitants recognize themselves as Andean indigenous peoples<sup>2</sup>.

In that respect, spiritualities are multidimensional life experiences referred not only to communal orientations in regard to God, society and creation, but also to personal explicit relationships with God<sup>3</sup>. The indigenous attribute implied on 'indigenous spiritualities' affirms coherent expressions of individual/communal thought and deeds embedded in ancestral wisdom and traditions. This integral perspective not only responds to indigenous peoples' spiritual needs, but also to the surrounding setting it comes from. In the Andes, interconnecting time, space and culture is a lively life directing element that endorses our talking of spiritualities, and not of religion, for it goes beyond binding people to the divine<sup>4</sup>. Likewise, the close relationship between

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<sup>1</sup> This concept refers to the indigenous identity explicitly recognized in both political and religious scenes. It has been assumed under the concept Indigenous Peoples by the WCC, and expresses a need to return to original processes of humanizing people who is diverse yet united in life community/ies. For further information *cf.* Maria Chávez Quispe, "For the Sun Heats Up Again", in: WCC, *International Review of Mission: A Century of Ecumenical Missiology*. 100.2 (393), November 2011, 281-296, 290-291.

<sup>2</sup> Indigenous peoples comprise more than 60 % of the Bolivian population; over 90 % of them are Aymaras, Quechuas, or Kallawayas living in the Andes. *cf.* Organización de las Naciones Unidas, Banco Interamericano de Desarrollo and Comisión Económica para América Latina y el Caribe, *Los pueblos indígenas de Bolivia: Diagnóstico sociodemográfico a partir del censo del 2001*, Santiago: Publicación de las Naciones Unidas, 2005, 39.

<sup>3</sup> This concept has been elaborated as a working tool that does not intend to embrace all connotations attributed to the term spirituality, but to depict the twofold basic dimensions of it, individual and communal. For further information *cf.* William J. Collinge, *The A to Z of Catholicism*, Lanham, Maryland & London: The Scarecrow Press, Inc., 2001, 493-494; Gustavo Gutiérrez, *We drink from our own wells: The spiritual journey of a people*, London: SCM Press, 2005, 88.

<sup>4</sup> Even though there is not a consensus on defining religion, it has been assumed that derives from the Latin term *religare* which can be translated as "to bind". It basically supposes both an outlook of the world and human life when related to the transcendent reality, and the practices conducive to express such and outlook. *cf.* Collinge, *Op. Cit.*, 446-447. In this regard, the term religion has been utilized on

spiritual (faith) and intellectual (belief) dimensions of life is important not only for affirming complementarity, but also for validating multiple regards to God<sup>5</sup>.

Because of that, this research expects to assess the contemporary religious panorama in the Andes while incorporating it into wider reflections. It also intends to vindicate peoples' multiple identities, to acknowledge indigenous spiritualities, and to point out towards the self-understanding of Andean Christianity in a multicultural and pluralistic world. This enterprise has been conceived as a qualitative research developed under both phenomenological and heuristic methodologies<sup>6</sup> along with historical critical analysis. Beyond analysing empirical data or confessional analyses, multidisciplinary written literature and common indigenous spiritualities, in and out of confessional bodies, are the main focus on this research. Its structuring argument has been constructed on three chapters as it follows.

The first chapter recounts the Andean sacred history; it takes continuity, through adaptation, as the transversal grounding basis of contemporary Andean Christianity. This diachronic synthesis intends to unveil the manifold roots of the dehumanization process against indigenous peoples, and the invisibilization of their identities. The continuous denial of human dignity to indigenous peoples during more than five hundred years has motivated a number of negative consequences. Despite their regrettable effects, merciless experiences of oppression, discrimination, and marginalization have also been shaping multiple regards to God. They are embedded in complex double-faceted settings comprised by both local (indigenous) and foreign (Christian) traditions.

The second chapter deals with the current theoretic debate on Andean Christianity, also referred to as 'religion in the Andes' from both social and theological perspectives. This comparative approach has been achieved through a structured

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this research from its sociological connotations whereas referred to the system of beliefs and practices directed to the divine and structured along with social, politic or economic systems of organization.

<sup>5</sup> Faith is a gift given by God, a deeper spiritual experience embedded in a certain religious tradition but not constraint to it. Beliefs are expressions of the common faith derived from the intellect yet not subordinated to it; they respond to both the setting are embedded in and the human religious quest. For further information *cf.* Wilfred Cantwell Smith, *Faith and Belief*, Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1979, 163; James L. Fredericks, *Faith among Faiths: Christian Theology and Non-Christian Religions*. Mahwah, NY: Paulist Press, 1999, 80; Paul Knitter, *No Other Name? A Critical Survey of Christian Attitudes toward the World Religions*, London: SCM Press, 1985, 212; Raimon Panikkar, *The Intra-Religious Dialogue*, New York, NY/Ramsey, NJ: Paulist Press, 1999, 17-23.

<sup>6</sup> David E. Gray, *Doing Research in the Real World*. Los Angeles: Sage, 2009, 26-32.



analyses centred on the main key points raised by each perspective. At this stage, a critical analysis questions the incongruence of dehumanization's supporting arguments initiated by Christendom yet sustained by contemporary systems of domination. In this context, there is a need for restoring indigenous identities to indigenous peoples as a previous step for restoring their human dignity. Once accomplished, its internalization is a must to be reinforced by individuals in local, regional and national communities.

The third chapter portrays the current situation of indigenous peoples, indigenous theologies and indigenous spiritualities in the ecumenical debate. It has been centred on the work and deep involvement of the World Council of Churches (WCC) through its specialized Indigenous Peoples Program. As a twofold working program, it has been focused on 1) promoting indigenous peoples' theological insights, and 2) accompanying indigenous peoples' advocacy in international organizations. This chapter ends up portraying the main inputs of indigenous theologies and spiritualities to world Christianity. Even though these inputs had been developed from the Andean context, they are analogous to other indigenous reflections as can be traced on comparative literature.

Finally, the conclusions highlight the three chapters' main contributions while assessing the causes and consequences of historical incongruences and anachronisms. They also intend to enable further reflections on the self-understanding of indigenous peoples within world Christianity in a pluralistic world. Affirming indigenous peoples' human dignity is a transversal aspect that needs to be internalized by individuals as the life communities' foundational element that both indigenous and Christian traditions are looking for.

## Chapter 1

### **The Andean: A complex, dynamic and challenging scenario**

In 1492 America, the “new discovered world”, was incorporated into global economy, politics and culture. However, it is not until 1532 that Christendom reached the Andean world. Though two different civilizations faced each other by the very first time, earlier patterns of social and cultural organization remained slightly unaltered across the Andes throughout the following centuries. The same happened to a number of Andean religious expressions within Christianity. Even though a system of exploitation, exclusion, dehumanization and impoverishment was exerted over those who survived the double process of conquest-evangelization, former identities were hidden deep inside the ancestors’ memory. Thus, this chapter intends to assess the dynamic transformation of Andean religious identities as a key element for understanding contemporary indigenous spiritualities.

#### **1.1 From geographical assumptions to cultural affairs**

The Andes is one of the most challenging environments where human beings had developed complexity in culture and religion prior to external invasions<sup>7</sup>. Its name has been derived from the *Cordillera de los Andes*, the world’s longest range of mountains located alongside South America’s Western coastline. The Bolivian Andes is bound to two ranges of mountains which average snow-capped peaks surpass 6000 masl<sup>8</sup> in height, the *Cordillera Occidental* and the *Cordillera Real/Oriental*. They circumscribe the *Altiplano*, a 4000 masl inner High plateau, and create a wide variety of valleys placed on a 2700 – 3800 masl height range<sup>9</sup>. Beyond its geographical

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<sup>7</sup> cf. Michael E. Moseley *The Incas and their Ancestors: The Archaeology of Peru*. London: Thames & Hudson, 2008, 87-275.

<sup>8</sup> Meters above sea level (masl).

<sup>9</sup> In general, both height and cold weather hinder life spreading in the *Cordilleras*. The *Altiplano* is the main populated area where agropastoral activities were developed for over three and a half millennia. This economic strategy lies on the agriculture of tubers such as potato (*solanum tuberosum*), oca (*oxalis tuberosa*), ulluco (*ullucus tuberosus*) or mashua/añu (*tropaeolum tuberosum*); grains such as quinoa (*chenopodium quinoa*), cañihua (*chenopodium pallidicaule*) or achita/coimi (*amaranthus caudatus*); and legumes such as tarwi (*lupinus mutabilis*), jíquima (*pachyrrhizus ahipa*) or frijol (*phaseolus vulgaris*). Likewise, the domestication and herding of camel-like mammals such as llama (*lama glama*) and alpaca (*lama pacos*), besides cuy or guinea pig (*cavia spp.*), endorsed the dawn of

implications, the interaction between nature and culture has been shaping a differential yet complementary long-term relationship among its inhabitants<sup>10</sup>.

According to archaeological and ethno-historical records, assimilation and adaptation had been a constant in the emergence, development and breakdown of Andean pre-Columbian organizations (**Appendix**). Even though a diachronic study would have led us to disclose indigenous peoples' background, analysing the Inka state as the synthesis of the Andean world is providing us key elements for understanding the Andean religion<sup>11</sup>. Then, the Inka was neither a uniform nor a monolithic society; it comprised several nations and cultural traditions along its vast territory. Continual adaptation to novel patterns of organization not only created unity among diversity across the Andes, but also reinforced plural identities<sup>12</sup> in local, regional and macro-regional levels<sup>13</sup>.

That situation depicts the complexity and dynamicity of Andean structures in a double-sided system of organization, from a micro to a macro level and vice-versa<sup>14</sup>.

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civilization in the *Altiplano*. Finally, the valleys are mild fertile lands where the agriculture of maize (*zea mays*) had taken place for millennia, yet, from the 16<sup>th</sup> century onwards barley, wheat, beans and peas were introduced as regular cultivation products. Its wide variety of ecological unities, rugged hills, slopes, steep-ridges, cliffs and gorges, was adapted to human needs through the implementation of complex agrarian terraces and canal systems. For further information *cf.* Thérèse Bouysse Cassagne, *La identidad aymara: Aproximación histórica (Siglo XV, Siglo XVI)*. La Paz: HISBOL – IFEA, 1987, 33–40/212-232; Moseley, *Op. Cit.*, 25-50; Charles Stanish, *Ancient Titicaca: The Evolution of Complex Society in Southern Peru and Northern Bolivia*. Berkeley - Los Angeles – London: University of California Press, 2003: 63 – 66.

<sup>10</sup> *cf.* Joseph Bastien, *La Montaña del Cóndor: Metáfora y ritual en un ayllu andino*, La Paz: HISBOL, 1996; Bouysse Cassagne, *Op. Cit.*, 32-33; Juan C. Chávez Quispe, *Entre los Andes y el Amazonas: Apuntes sobre la Historia y Arqueología de los grupos Yunga-kallawaya*, Manuscript; Josef Estermann, Freddy Maidana, *et al.*, *Lo Andino, una realidad que nos interpela*, La Paz: ISEAT, 2006, 11-15; Moseley, *Op. Cit.*, 87-106.

<sup>11</sup> This aspect not only validates variety within Andean religious expressions, but also affirms the indigenous origin of its population. The first feature highlights a diverse yet continuous process of shaping identities as the grounding element of contemporary Andean Christianity. The second feature remarks the Andes as the embedding setting of adaptation, continuity, and emergence of new expressions of faith, beliefs and spiritualities.

<sup>12</sup> Identity is here referred to as a relatively accurate notion that defines individuals as different from others; it is comprised by several religious, ethnic, social, economic, national among other *appartenances* (belongings). These belongings are not important at the same time, but they may define individuals' personality. *cf.* Amin Maalouf, *Les identités meurtrières*, Paris: Bernard Grasset, 1998, 18-19.

<sup>13</sup> For instance, the Inka influence was not enough for (re)structuring the Aymara religious thinking and practices, the adoption of Inka cultural patterns as the pan-Andean standard is a result of Spanish Colonial efforts for organizing the new conquered territories. *cf.* Bouysse Cassagne, *Op. Cit.*, 59.

<sup>14</sup> On the one hand, the Capital of the Inka Empire, Cuzco, became the most sacred shrine in the Andes whereas placing local *wak'as* from the whole Inka territory around a sacred geographical structure. On the other hand, local populations, such as the Aymara in the *Altiplano*, adopted imperial rituals and religious practices along with their own just after (re)signifying them in the light of regional sacred landscapes. For further information on these perspectives *cf.* Bouysse Cassagne, *Op. Cit.*, 282-292/314-

The most remarkable aspect here is the parallel religious framework built upon time, space and cultural understandings of the Andean history when taking it as *Heilgeschichte*<sup>15</sup>. Consequently, the continuous transformation of Andean religious traditions reveals a dynamic process of building identities. Analogous religious manifestations among Andean inhabitants are a result of social/political adaptation *vis-à-vis* cultural/religious continuity. Though this double process was a constant throughout the Andean (pre)history, it acquired new expressions after the arrival of Christianity as explained in the following section.

## 1.2 From Christendom to Christianity

The Andean history did not start in 1532 when the Spaniards arrived in Cajamarca, but it did produce a shift in earlier organizations after the Spanish conquest. Spaniards brought brand new patterns of civilization where politics and religion were neatly interwoven - they brought Christendom<sup>16</sup>. According to history, both the Spanish Empire and the Roman Catholic Church assumed Evangelization as *Missio Dei*, as a divine mandate for spreading out the Gospel into Western Indias, the name given to the “new discovered lands.” This mandate was pursued through a joint effort shared by soldiers and clergy as partners working for the same cause<sup>17</sup>; not distinguishing between politics and religion ended up in abuse, oppression, humiliation and exploitation against those who did not die while receiving the word of God<sup>18</sup>.

Despite that the evangelization was grounded on economic more than on spiritual interests<sup>19</sup>, it began with reading the *Requerimiento*<sup>20</sup>. It was followed by massive

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320; Stanish, *Op. Cit.*, 278-294; Tom R. Zuidema, *Reyes y Guerreros: Ensayos de cultura andina*, Lima: FOMCIENCIAS/CONCYTEC/SHELL/IFEA, 1989, 523-524.

<sup>15</sup> “Human history in its totality is *Heilsgeschichte*. The history of the history of man is the history of religion, and the history of religion is the history of salvation by faith.” Smith, *Op. Cit.*, 140.

<sup>16</sup> Christendom is here referred to as the church-state relationships in the sense of legal intervention in religious matters, but not to massive expressions of Christian rites, politics or culture in definite contexts. For further information *cf.* Stephan Paas, “Post-Christian, Post-Christendom, and Post-Modern Europe: Towards the Interaction of Missiology and the Social Sciences”, in: *Mission Studies 28 (1)*, *Journal of the International Association for Mission Studies*, 2011, 3-25, 12.

<sup>17</sup> Justo L. González and Ondina E. González, *Christianity in Latin America: A History*, New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008, 38; Fernando Mires, *La colonización de las Almas: Misión y conquista en Hispanoamérica*. San Jose: DEI, 1991, 50.

<sup>18</sup> *cf.* Giulio Girardi, *Desde su propia palabra*, Quito: Ediciones Abya Yala – Docutech, 1998, 23; Mires, *Op. Cit.*, 57.

<sup>19</sup> The economic aspect of evangelization is founded on the Spaniards’ strong desire of getting gold and silver as fast as possible in order to spend it in the Metropolis. At first this enterprise succeeded looting

baptisms and a Gospel teaching in extension, not in depth<sup>21</sup>. Neither clergy nor civil Metropolitan authorities were able to manage this situation across the continent; however, later on it was controlled by the new constituted elite in America, the *encomenderos*<sup>22</sup>. This “Americanisation” of the church responds to a double-sided framework of juridical dependence to the Empire *vis-à-vis* political dependence to the Conquerors. It derived on a church’s formal attachment to the Papacy and the Spanish Crown, but a direct dependence to the *encomenderos*<sup>23</sup>. As a consequence, the Christian message among indigenous peoples was weak and shallow if not absent.

Even though evangelization is bound to historical settings, it was strongly criticized by socially-committed clerics like Antón de Montesinos or Bartolomé de Las Casas<sup>24</sup>. They looked for the recognition of indigenous peoples’ humanity while improving their living conditions. As public defiance to the oppressive colonial system, the clerics’ work produced 1) a conditioned support from the empire, and 2) total rejection from the American civil and ecclesiastical elite. Such a complex situation depicts the co-existence of three branches within the church in America: 1. Colonialist, 2. Statist/Centralist, and 3. Indigenist; yet the first one prevailed as the official church<sup>25</sup>. Despite other isolated efforts, this situation remained slightly unaltered across Latin American history.

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temples and sacred sites all over the Andes (e.g. Cuzco, Pachacamac or Copacabana), but later on it moved to finding its sources. Beyond other consequences, this behaviour suggests that “[solo] gracias al oro llega el amor salvífico de Dios a los habitantes de esta tierra” ([only] because of gold God’s love for salvation reaches this lands’ inhabitants. *Personal translation*). Gustavo Gutiérrez, *Dios o el oro de las Indias: Siglo XVI*, Lima: IBC – CEP, 1989, 119-124.

<sup>20</sup> The *Requerimiento* is a land’s possession certificate used right after the conquerors’ arrival in new territories; it is basically an exhortation read by clerics to indigenous peoples calling to accept the King as Lord, to accept God, and to accept Christianity. Its authority derives from a God’s power concession conveyed by the Pope to the Catholic Monarchs. Nonetheless, its intricate logic had been questioned by the Inka in Cajamarca with no serious consequences. *cf.* Mires, *Op. Cit.*, 48-58.

<sup>21</sup> Mires, *Op. Cit.*, 143–144.

<sup>22</sup> “In the Americas, the *encomendero*, or holder of the *encomienda*, was required to treat his charges well and protect and Christianize them. In exchange, Indians were to work for the *encomendero* in whatever capacity he chose...*Encomenderos* rarely, if ever, fulfilled their side of the *encomienda* equation, instead working “their” Indians to death, so sure were the Spaniards that their supply of laborers was unending.” González and González, *Op. Cit.*, 29.

<sup>23</sup> Mires, *Op. Cit.*, 15–38.

<sup>24</sup> The Humanist thinking of Las Casas is based on the recognition of Indigenous peoples’ human nature and condition as sons of God. Besides grounding their freedom, it affirms their civil rights as Christians. Therefore, evangelization should persuade Indigenous peoples, not impose Christendom’s precepts over them. *cf.* Gustavo Gutiérrez, “¿Quién es el indio? La perspectiva teológica de Bartolomé de Las Casas”, in: Bottasso, Juan (ed.), *La iglesia y los indios*. Quito: Abya Yala, 1990, 123-140.

<sup>25</sup> Mires, *Op. Cit.*, 210.

In that regard, the progressive power transference from Cuzco to Castilla is a result of successful symbols and ideologies translation from ancient traditions to new spiritualities. It not only endorsed violence as the main tool for conquering the Andes, but also justified the exploitation, humiliation and imposition of heavy tributes on indigenous peoples<sup>26</sup>. Though isolated and weak, those earlier Indigenist initiative is one out of many attempts for stopping inhuman treatments against subjugated populations<sup>27</sup>. Later on it became the grounding point of reference and development of novel religious expressions within Christianity. Even though these may be adaptive responses to concrete situations, its bare existence has been creating multiple understandings of God throughout the Andean sacred history.

### 1.2.1 Formation (1550 – 1660)

Both the *Juntas Teológicas* (Theological Consultations) held in Valladolid (1550-1551) and the First Lima Council (1551-1552) marked a shift on Mission; it moved from an interchangeable military conquest meaning to a more limited spiritual sense. Pragmatically, these discussions produced a proper Gospel accommodation into local cultures - it helped bringing Christ closer to indigenous peoples<sup>28</sup>. This kind of accommodation promoted the Gospel translation/teaching into vernacular languages (e.g. Aymara, Quechua or Puquina), the inclusion of mestizos and indigenous peoples into grass-root clergy, and the indoctrination of local population into Christianity<sup>29</sup>. These actions reinforced a new enterprise for conquering indigenous peoples' souls since their bodies were already conquered<sup>30</sup>.

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<sup>26</sup> Bouysse Cassagne, *Op. Cit.*, 30-33.

<sup>27</sup> Giulio Girardi, *Op. Cit.*, 25.

<sup>28</sup> Even though accommodation is not new for Andean people, it acquired a brand new face after assimilating medieval popular Christian religiosity. For instance, Guaman Poma de Ayala, a well-known Peruvian chronicler, suggested that the Gospel came to America not with the Spaniards but with the apostle Bartholomew. *cf.* Juan Sepúlveda, *The Andean Highlands: an encounter with Two Forms of Christianity*, Geneva: WCC Publications, 1997, 17-19. A similar process may be recognized on Jesus' superposition on *T'unupa/Inkarri*, two earlier Andean divine beings. *cf.* Josef Estermann, "Jesucristo como *chakana*. Esbozo de una Cristología andina de la Liberación", in: José María Vigil, *Bajar de la Cruz a los Pobres. Cristología de la Libración*, Comisión Teológica Internacional de la ASETT/EATWOT, E-Book, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, 93-102, 94-96. Even though those are just two examples of accommodation, they depict either the association of Western elements into indigenous traditions, or the identification of foreign characters with ancient divinities.

<sup>29</sup> Mires, *Op. Cit.*, 137-149.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, 153.

In that regard, a Catholic orthodox perspective on evangelization was persecuted through the Extirpation of Idolatries Campaigns promoted by the Jesuit Jose de Arriaga<sup>31</sup>. Though discontinuous, these campaigns were open attacks to indigenous religions remains; it not only caused a massive destruction of pre-Columbian material icons, but also murdering to all of those who kept the ancestral wisdom. General Andean beliefs were eradicated from public spheres, but remained intact in familiar and intra-communal circles whereas able to hide from clerics and adapt to Catholic festivals<sup>32</sup>. Beyond circumstantial effects, the extirpation of idolatries campaigns is another example of the historical agency denial to both local and transplanted populations in conquered territories (indigenous and African peoples respectively)<sup>33</sup>.

### 1.2.2 Consolidation (1660 – 1850)

Christianity spread out all over the Andes during the previous phase, but its acceptance came only in late 17<sup>th</sup> century right after the anti-idolatry campaigns ended up<sup>34</sup>. Beyond earlier efforts, improving indigenous peoples' life was a must for committed religious orders such as Dominicans, Franciscans or Jesuits. This kind of witnessing in society had stimulated the foundation and management of schools, hospitals, and asylums. At first, the Andean population expressed a profound respect to clergymen because of their good deeds; but later on they gained recognition as genuine representatives of the powerful God who defeated ancient divinities<sup>35</sup>. Nevertheless, a growing mingling between the Christian message and vestiges of pre-Columbian religions wove new religiosities among Andean Christians<sup>36</sup>.

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<sup>31</sup> cf. González and González, *Op. Cit.*, 98-99.

<sup>32</sup> cf. Abraham Colque Jiménez, "El caminar hacia las teologías andinas", in: Josef Estermann (Coord.), *Teología Andina: El tejido diverso de la fe indígena*, Vol. 1, La Paz: ISEAT – Plural, 2006: 113-131, 116; Thierry Saignes, "Borracheras Andinas. ¿Por qué los indios ebrios hablan en español?", in: Thierry Saignes (ed.), *Borrachera y Memoria: La experiencia de lo sagrado en los Andes*, La Paz: HISBOL – IFEA, 1993, 43-72: 58-68.

<sup>33</sup> cf. González and González, *Op. Cit.*, 91.

<sup>34</sup> cf. Jeffrey Klaiber, "The Church in Peru, Ecuador and Bolivia", in: Enrique Dussel (ed.), *The Church in Latin America: 1492 – 1992*, Kent/Maryknoll, NY: Burns & Oates/Orbis Books, 1992, 287.

<sup>35</sup> cf. Mires, *Op. Cit.*, 167.

<sup>36</sup> For some examples cf. González and González, *Op. Cit.*, 54-63.

The official church in America remained under the Spanish Crown control throughout the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> century as a result of the *Patronato Real* (Royal Patronage)<sup>37</sup>. Despite the imperial control (secular clergy), isolated socially committed orders struggled with improving indigenous peoples' life (regular clergy). The Mission shift from peoples' conversion to peoples' formation enabled spreading out the Gospel in a more structured way. Nonetheless, it could not succeed because of both the regular clergy's mobility after the Jesuits eviction (1767), and the ecclesiastical authorities' ambivalent position between America and Spain<sup>38</sup>. In this context, most of the indigenous population adopted Catholic rituals and symbols as their own, but they were reinterpreted from Andean categories.

That process' most acknowledged example is noticeable in two masterpieces named "*La Virgen del Cerro*" (The Virgin of the Hill) and "*La Virgen de Copacabana*" (The Virgin of Copacabana). In a superficial level, venerating these Virgin's advocations seems to be a token of Christian accommodation into local religions, but in a deeper sense it only masks earlier venerations to the *Pachamama* (Mother Earth). Those examples show that new understandings of the Gospel arose and shaped new religious spectrums. Likewise, adaptation to early 19<sup>th</sup> century changing setting was the church's main strategy when facing pro-Independence movements. Even though the Spanish Crown and the Papacy rejected the Latin American states' independence, most of them established Catholicism as their official national religion<sup>39</sup>.

### 1.2.3 Resistance (1850 – 1950)

A growing antagonism between liberalism and conservatism questioned the church-state tight relationship in Latin America<sup>40</sup>. The church was forced to (re)evaluate its position between either local or universal scopes in an ever expanding liberal setting.

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<sup>37</sup> According to this juridical right, the Spanish Crown, and representatives, is the highest church's authority in the new discovered lands; it means that the King is the direct responsible for appointing bishops and other ecclesiastical authorities in America. This right was acquired by the Catholic Monarchs through papal concessions formulated in the bulls "*Inter caetera*" (1493) and "*Eximiae Devotionis*" (1493), which was extended to the Metropolis in the bull "*Universalis Ecclesiae*" (1508). cf. Mires, *Op. Cit.*, 31–35.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, 206-207.

<sup>39</sup> This paradox is a result of both the Catholic Church's hegemony in the continent, and its influence on Indigenous peoples' beliefs. cf. González and González, *Op. Cit.*, 161.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*, 140-145.



The separation of civil and ecclesiastical jurisdictions in social affairs, like education, encouraged the adoption of a more liturgical, devotional and eschatological attitude in the church. Despite that secularization in the Andes was based on the Catholic Church loss of juridical privileges (1856 in Peru and 1901 in Bolivia); it still kept its earlier influential power on peoples' consciousness<sup>41</sup>. Out of social implications, and besides attending circumstantial liturgical celebrations (e.g. baptisms, weddings or funerals), Christian life had been reduced to attending periodical Patron Saint festivals.

Several Protestant and Pentecostal churches came in the Andes in late 19<sup>th</sup> century; their arrival involved assistance and support to rural populations through social, educational and health programs mainly deployed in the *Altiplano*. Behind these initiatives were Adventist, Methodist, Lutheran and Baptist missionaries<sup>42</sup>. As it had happened three centuries before, these evangelizers seek for converting every inhabitant into their own tradition – it usually included the conversion of Andean Catholics. These new “extirpation of idolatries” not only recall early missionary procedures, but also show their break off with the indigenous peoples' ancestral wisdom<sup>43</sup>. In this context, the Andean strategy of adaptation within transforming settings was still creating multiple religious expressions among its inhabitants.

#### **1.2.4 Renewal (1950 – 2012)**

Beyond the evident tension among Catholic, Protestant and Pentecostal churches, the arrival and fast growing of neo-Pentecostal movements marked a shift in Andean Christianity. Both the awareness of indigenous peoples and the recognition of their civil rights defined the role of the churches in late 20<sup>th</sup> century. Likewise, the Second Vatican Council (1962 - 1965) together with the Latin American Episcopal Conference in Medellín (1968) brought out a renewal phase in Latin American

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<sup>41</sup> Klaiber, *Op. Cit.*, 289.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*, 292.

<sup>43</sup> Balance-based systems of organization were built on double complementary realities across the Andean sacred history (e.g. mental-physical or natural-social). Breaking up with this ancestral wisdom is not only unreal –because it adapts itself into circumstantial settings-, but also denies life promoting attitudes. So, a renewal of values and feelings grounded on indigenous wisdom may turn as self-identity's freedom elicitors. cf. Edward L. Cleary, “Birth of Latin American Indigenous Theology”, in: Guillermo Cook (ed.), *Crosscurrents in Indigenous Spirituality: Interface of Maya, Catholic and Protestant Worldviews*, Leiden/New York/Köln: E.J. Brill, 1997, 171-188: 187; Colque Jiménez, *Op Cit.*, 123.

Catholicism. Their pragmatic actions were focused on (1) a deeper involvement in social and economic matters, (2) a liturgical adaptation to local settings, and (3) an emphasis on the lay peoples' role in the Kingdom of God. The most important fact on this phase is the emergence of Liberation Theology among clerical circles.

Those theological reflections respond to "Christ's preferential option for the poor". Its multiple expressions not only denote sensitivity to the pain and suffering of poor, oppressed and marginalized people, but also challenge conventional theologies. Liberation Theology affirms social justice while seeking liberation in the context it emerges from<sup>44</sup>. Stressing contextuality on theological reflections supports the awareness of hidden identities, such as the one of indigenous peoples, along with their historical demands. The forthcoming development of indigenous theologies was initially supported by Catholic theologians, but later on it was also reinforced by Protestant theologians<sup>45</sup>. In both cases, indigenist and indigenous initiatives joined together when validating diversity within faith communities<sup>46</sup>.

Finally, the arrival of neo-Pentecostal movements in late 20<sup>th</sup> century not only changed the Andean Christianity panorama, but also brought back earlier rejections to indigenous people's culture and traditions. Despite its initial strong corporatism<sup>47</sup>, contemporary neo-Pentecostal churches are willing to accept valuable indigenous elements as a members gaining strategy<sup>48</sup>. Unlike its predecessors, adopting local features, values and culture is probably not a foreseen goal, but a means for implanting Western fundamentalist messages. Despite preaching in indigenous languages, their message does not proclaim freedom and justice; instead it conveys

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<sup>44</sup> Latin American theology and/or Liberation theology "intends to be above all else a theology of repentance and conversion and a theology committed to seeking liberation from those evils for which Christianity itself is co-responsible and for which it expresses repentance." Walter Altmann, "A Latin American Perspective on the Cross and the Suffering", in: Tesfai, Yacob (ed.), *The Scandal of a Crucified World. Perspectives on the Cross and Suffering*, Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1994, 75-86, 81.

<sup>45</sup> Briefly, indigenous theologies are "a deepened awareness of the sacredness of the world, of the transcendence of God, of God as male and female and of humans with both masculine and feminine qualities, of identity only through community, and of connectedness with past and future." Cleary, *Op. Cit.*, 186-187.

<sup>46</sup> In this research, the term indigenist refers to non-indigenous persons dealing with indigenous realities, while the term indigenous refers to actual indigenous persons talking about their own reality. *cf.* María Chávez Quispe, *For the Sun Heats Up Again*, 290.

<sup>47</sup> *cf.* Jean-Pierre Bastian, "Protestantism in Latin America", in: Enrique Dussel (ed.), *The Church in Latin America: 1492 – 1992*, Kent/Maryknoll, NY: Burns & Oates – Orbis Books, 1992, 313-350, 344.

<sup>48</sup> *cf.* Tancara Chambe, Juan Jacobo, "'Tuve una importante revelación': revelación en la experiencia evangélica andina", in: Josef Estermann (Coord.), *Teología Andina: El tejido diverso de la fe indígena*, Vol. II, La Paz: ISEAT – Plural, 2006: 11-48: 16.

fear, shame and sorrow<sup>49</sup>. The same happens among songs and hymns; most of them are performed in traditional instruments and melodies yet keeping alien contents.<sup>50</sup>

## Conclusion

The historical overview above depicted suggests that contemporary Andean spiritualities are a result of a long complex process of adaptation, change and continuity within ever changing settings. Diversity among Christian spiritualities is a result of both the accommodation/adaptation of Andean religious expressions into Christianity, and the (re)interpretation of Christian elements from indigenous traditions. Beyond prospective understandings of a religious identity *vis-à-vis* social, economic or cultural identities, a conscious self-recognition is the first step when building faith communities. Living according to Christ's command of love is the second step towards turning the Kingdom of God into real. In this regard, the following chapter is going to outline contemporary indigenous theologies and spiritualities.

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<sup>49</sup> Even though the following sources do not directly support this idea, they ground it as concrete descriptive examples from the Andes. On the one hand, they depict individuals' disassociation from society as a result of Pentecostal and neo-Pentecostal's preaching. On the other hand, even though creating "new relationships" within the church, they also produce isolation within extended families in society. *cf.* Lesley Gill, "Like a Veil to Cover Them": Women and the Pentecostal Movement in La Paz", in: Anna L. Peterson and Manuel A. Vásquez, *Latin American Religions: Histories and Documents in Contexts*, New York – London: New York University Press, 2008, 191-197; Sepúlveda, *Op. Cit.*, 26-29; Tancara Chambe, *Op. Cit.*, 26-37.

<sup>50</sup> Intipampa, Carlos, *Opresión y aculturación: La evangelización de los Aymaras*. La Paz: Cepita – Hisbol – ISETRA, 1991, 25–38.

## **Chapter 2**

### **A Common Quest: Andean Christianity**

The Latin American double process of evangelization - conquest/colonization had been metaphorically comprised in the well-known image of the Cross as a Sword. As a symbol, it portrays 15<sup>th</sup> century Christendom; its interchangeability derived on merciless actions against indigenous peoples. Though indirect, vestiges of these actions continue to justify discrimination and violence against marginalized communities in Latin America. Turning this situation into life community experiences requires deconstructing God's message received version, and reconstructing it as an expression of God's incommensurable love for humanity. Therefore, there is a need for restoring human dignity to those from whom it was taken away.

Beyond assembling an explanatory synthesis of contemporary Andean Christianity, this chapter addresses indigenous spiritualities as a fact within World Christianity. Despite its manifold divergences, contextual reflections vindicate indigenous faith expressions as a living reality in the Andes – this awareness helps to build up a bridge to the complex pluralistic world they are embedded in. So, the continuous intertwining between local and foreign religious traditions reflects both a physical more than ideological control over indigenous peoples, and a dynamic transformation on contemporary Andean Christianity. Likewise, a pragmatic viewpoint, more than a theoretic one, is to be reviewed on this chapter a transversal topic for it deals with a reality other than western Christianity.

#### **2.1 Indigenous peoples and God**

Cultural and ideological continuity have been assembled across the Andean sacred history before, during and after the Spanish colonial experience. Ancestral wisdom and religions acquired a brand new face after the arrival of Christendom; it suggests a dynamic yet gradual process of interaction between Christian and indigenous traditions. The resulting variety of local beliefs spread out all over the Andes. Likewise, a common understanding of the divine has been shaped as a collective

explanatory effort conveyed through both oral tradition and symbolic/iconographic expressions<sup>51</sup>. Its successful articulation is a result of either revolutionary actions or symbolic resistance<sup>52</sup>; both strategies were validated out of social standards since the latter were defined by non-locally oriented leaders<sup>53</sup>.

That situation suggests, however, a range of conditioned individual/communal actions oriented to promote life for, from and within Christian values. In this context, emerging indigenous theologies are the origin and consequence of dynamic religious identities<sup>54</sup>. They join Gospel and culture together, but first and foremost they look for restoring respect and dignity to indigenous peoples as a pragmatic expression of their human condition. Even though this is just an expression from and on behalf of one marginalized collective, its central argument enables alternative spiritualities to restore the human quality to all humanity. To be more meaningful, this indigenous enterprise needs to be addressed for those of us, individuals and communities, from whom humanity has been taken away not years but centuries ago<sup>55</sup>.

Finally, out of mere curiosity on vernacular myths and folktales, which illustrate vestiges of ancient traditions<sup>56</sup>, the Andean was labelled as an anachronism meant to disappear<sup>57</sup>. Nonetheless, these traditions are not only alive but also embody the many ways for perceiving God; besides stressing contextual reflections, they affirm a common faith in the triune God. This phenomenon has been mainly addressed by three hermeneutical perspectives: Social sciences, Indigenist and Indigenous theologies. That is why this section intends to analyse those perspectives from each one's theoretical assumptions and background. The implied comparison is neither chronological nor polarizing; instead, it ponders interconnectivity among each other as a tool for understanding their inputs and limitations.

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<sup>51</sup> Indigenous religions and spiritualities survived as stories, legends and myths, with or without visual support (e.g. painting, textiles). cf. Jerónimo Granados, "Fenômenos espiritualistas na religiosidade indígena nos Andes Centrais Peruanos", in: *Espiritualismo/Espiritismo: Desafios para a Igreja na América Latina*. trans. João Artur Müller da Silva, São Leopoldo: Sinodal/Federação Luterana Mundial. FLM Estudos 01/04. 2004, 11–34: 12.

<sup>52</sup> cf. Silvia Rivera Cusicanqui, *Oprimidos pero no vencidos: Luchas del campesinado aymara y qhechwa de Bolivia, 1900 - 1980*, Geneva: United Nations Research Institute for Social Development, 1987, 1-9.

<sup>53</sup> cf. Rivera Cusicanqui, *Op. Cit.*, 161-162.

<sup>54</sup> Dynamism on identity-building processes confirms the absence of "pure" elements in contemporary Andean Christianity.

<sup>55</sup> cf. Cleary, *Op. Cit.*, 188.

<sup>56</sup> For a first-hand etiological myths transcription cf. Xavier Albó and Félix Layme, *Literatura Aymara: Antología*, La Paz: CIPCA/Hisbol/Jayma, 1992: 45-72.

<sup>57</sup> cf. Cleary, *Op. Cit.*, 176-178.

### 2.1.1 Social Sciences

According to Anthropological and Sociological records, religion in the Andes is a twofold phenomenon comprised by institutional and popular faith expressions. While the former expresses a number of doctrines within Christianity, the latter refers to a spam of vernacular identities embedded in a Catholic tradition. The continuous interweaving of Andean traditions moulded contemporary religious practices<sup>58</sup>. They also derived in contextual understandings of the cosmos and the Divine through the notion *Cosmovisión Andina* (*Andean vision of the cosmos*)/*Filosofía Andina* (*Andean philosophy*)<sup>59</sup>. In few words it involves the existence of *wak'as*<sup>60</sup>, their dynamic interaction with each other, as much as between them and human beings, and their actions in a tripartite world: *Alaxpacha*, *Akapacha* and *Manqhapacha*<sup>61</sup>.

In that context, the pan-Andean veneration to the *Pachamama*, as a caring mother who provides food for her children, supports her identification to the Virgin Mary. Similar analogies were developed between God and *Inti* (sun), Santiago and *Illapa* (thunder) or between angels/saints and *achachilas-awichas* (ancestors). Therefore,

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<sup>58</sup> The coexistence of heterogeneous identities does not merge them together but put them alongside finding commonalities. cf. Silvia Rivera Cusicanqui, *Ch'ixinakax utxiwa: Una reflexión sobre prácticas y discursos descolonizadores*, Buenos Aires: Tinta Limón, 2010, 7.

<sup>59</sup> The concept *Cosmovisión Andina* has been developed and utilized by Cultural Anthropology whereas referring to the continuity and adaptability of the Andean thought from pre-Columbian times onwards. Nonetheless, a recent philosophical research questions this concept from a critical intercultural perspective. It suggests that Andean rationality –as neither methodical nor systematic- does not respond to the exclusivist Western logic, but it does respond to the concrete situation of Andean culture and values. The contextual perspective implied on the latter supports our talking of *Filosofía Andina* instead of *Cosmovisión Andina*. For further information cf. Josef Estermann, *Filosofía Andina: Sabiduría indígena para un mundo nuevo*, La Paz: ISEAT, 2006, 50-54.

<sup>60</sup> Following Bernabé Cobo, a 17<sup>th</sup> century chronicler, the term “*guaca*” (*wak'a*) refers to all sacred places across the Andes; their sacredness comes from extreme abnormal attributes certain natural features may have (e.g. big rocks, colourful lagoons, highest hills, or other natural features) along the Andean landscape. cf. Bernabé Cobo, *Historia del Nuevo Mundo* (History of the New World) (1653), cited by Saignes, *Op. Cit.*, 61-62.

<sup>61</sup> The common term *Pacha* on these nominatives refers to both dimensions, time and space. Moreover what the earlier implies, according to Andean Philosophy the latter suggests a triple metaphorical division in the Andean sacred geography: 1. *Alaxpacha* (upper space): It comprises the sky and highest mountain peaks; it is inhabited by God/*Inti* (sun), *Phaxsi* (moon), *Wara-wara* (stars), Santiago/*Illapa* (Thunder), *Achachilas-Awichas* (ancestors), Jesus, saints and *mamitas* (Virgin Mary's advocations). 2. *Manqha Pacha* (lower space): This is the clandestine and secret part of the world for it is located on gorges, ravines, caves or transitional landmarks; its inhabitants are powerful beings like *chullpa jaqi* (dead people), *saxra*, *supaya*, *tío*, *anchanchus*, and *lari-lari* among other “devils”. 3. *Akapacha* (this space): This is the peoples inhabited world, but it is also the home of *Pachamama* and most of the living beings. The complex relationships between *Alaxpacha*'s and *Manqhapacha*'s beings take place in this space. Beyond apparent equivalences between both *Alaxpacha* - Heaven, and *Manqhapacha* - Hell, and what may imply for their inhabitants, all of these beings are interdependent, ambiguous, unpredictable and uncontrollable. For further information cf. Thérèse Bouysse Cassagne and Olivia Harris, “Pacha: En torno al pensamiento aymara”, in: Xavier Albó (comp.), *Raíces de América, El mundo aymara*. Madrid: UNESCO – Alianza, 1988, 244–276.

Christian temples were implanted over ancient shrines and pilgrimage centres as a way for embracing former cults and religions<sup>62</sup>. Ingenious identifications of individual Andean *wak'as* with definite apostles, saints, and Virgin's advocations had been shaped over a range of common attributes ascribed to them. Even though these actions looked for turning Andean religions into Christianity, its outcome confirms a dynamic double-faceted religious identity among local populations.

The aforementioned relationship to the Divine has not only been structured on indigenous wisdom and traditions, but also embedded in novel (re)signification codes. They emerged from a relational character between humanity and forces of nature, but are developed from personal and/or communal daily life necessities<sup>63</sup>. A continual intertwining of indigenous and Christian understandings of the Divine reinforced diversity on religious traditions in the Andes. Even though this explanation ponders culture as a spiritual life factor of development, it derives from a highly "academicist" empirical perspective. So, and besides further implications, this spiritual life portrait is but a result of a syncretic process, it combines diverse elements from two traditions into a single religious system<sup>64</sup>.

### 2.1.2 Indigenist theologies

From indigenist theological perspectives, and grounded on the aforementioned studies<sup>65</sup>, culture is a key factor when addressing indigenous identities in world Christianity. It ponders contextual religious experiences as a means for developing theological responses to the wide variety of believers' background, needs and goals. In this context, a profound commitment to indigenous peoples suffering brought out a progressive recovering of hidden/invisibilized identities in the Andes. This awareness disclosed former efforts for replacing Andean *wak'as* with Catholic sacred icons

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<sup>62</sup> cf. Bouysse-Cassagne, *Op. Cit.*, 169-204; Joseph Bastien, *Op. Cit.*, 120-145; Hans van der Berg, *La tierra no da así nomás: Los ritos agrícolas en la religión de los aymara cristianos*. Amsterdam: CEDLA, 1989, 73-127; Alison Spedding P., *Religión en los Andes, Extirpación de idolatrías y modernidad de la fe Andina*. La Paz: ISEAT, 2008, 34-55.

<sup>63</sup> Juan C. Chávez Quispe, *Entre los Andes y el Amazonas: Apuntes sobre la Historia y Arqueología de los grupos Yunga-kallawaya*, Manuscript.

<sup>64</sup> Alison Spedding P., "Introducción a la sociología de la religión en el contexto andino", in: Alison Spedding P. (ed.) *Gracias a Dios y a los achachilas: ensayos de Sociología de la religión en los Andes*, La Paz: ISEAT – Plural, 2004, 11-72, 24.

<sup>65</sup> Colque Jiménez, *Op. Cit.*, 126.

while (re)interpreting them as a programmatic instrument of evangelization<sup>66</sup>. So, inculturation and syncretism do not only address diversity within theological reflections, but also endorses the Gospel embedding in specific settings.

On the one hand, and beyond its historical definition<sup>67</sup>, inculturation “is being fully and truly Christian in a particular, cultural context or situation”<sup>68</sup>. It involves two moments, adaptation and transformation. The first one implies embedding the Christian message into the host culture’s codes, while the second looks for translating those assumptions into non-Western Christian expressions. This is what Cyril and Methodius’ programmatic work did for the upcoming Slavic Christianity in East Europe<sup>69</sup>. On the other hand, syncretism refers to a long complex contact process between two religions<sup>70</sup>; it may derive in one out of three prospective results: Synthesis, Juxtaposition or Syncretism<sup>71</sup>. Despite their implications, none of them explain quite well contemporary Andean Christianity, but their matching and differing elements do reveal a creative understanding of God.

From a wide theological perspective both inculturation and syncretism are useful notions when addressing interaction of differing religious expressions; however, they do not address the importance of spiritualities among indigenous peoples. Yet based on a socially committed project, this perspective does not take into account the indigenous self-understanding of their Christian identity. Indigenous spiritualities respond to definite settings, so, they require to be interpreted from their own cultural codes. Likewise, the Gospel teaching needs to be free of universal assumptions yet

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<sup>66</sup> cf. Xavier Albó, “The Aymara Religious Experience”, in: Manuel Marzal, Eugenio Maurer, *et al.* (eds.), *The Indian Face of God in Latin America*, trans. Penelope R. Hall., Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1996, 119-168, 127-140; Luis Jolicœur, *El Cristianismo Aymara: ¿inculturación o culturización?*, Quito: Docutech, 1996, 202-243; Marzal, *Op. Cit.*, 70-92.

<sup>67</sup> The concept inculturation has been developed after the Second Vatican Council, but it was in common use throughout the two following decades whereas referring to the Church’s role in society. Its meaning combines the theological concept of Incarnation (the word of God becoming flesh in Jesus), with the Anthropological concepts of Enculturation (the process for which a person becomes part of a culture) and Acculturation (the process for which a person becomes part of a culture different than its own). cf. Collinge, *Op. Cit.*, 255.

<sup>68</sup> Peter Schineller SJ, *A Handbook on Inculturation*, New York/Mahwah, Paulist Press, 1990, 122.

<sup>69</sup> Collinge, *Op. Cit.*, 254-255.

<sup>70</sup> In fact this process explains the evolution of Christianity if considered as “the ancient paganism or to be more precise, the complex Hebrew, Graeco, Latin, Celtic, gothic, modern religion converted to Christ with more or less success.” Panikkar, *Op. Cit.*, 223.

<sup>71</sup> These three variables suppose that the two religions are blended and consolidate a new religious system (Synthesis), are superimposed but maintain each one’s identity (Juxtaposition), or are integrated into a brand new religion (Syncretism). Each situation implies the interaction of definite elements such as beliefs, rites, ethics, and other religious expressions within the involved religions. cf. Marzal, *Op. Cit.*, 95.



bound to its circumstantial setting. As a dynamic process, the Gospel is to be adapted in form yet not in content; despite its tautological character, this notion grounds the contextual input stressed by indigenous spiritualities.

### 2.1.3 Indigenous theologies

From an indigenous theological perspective, the awareness of multi-faceted Christian practices in non-uniform settings encouraged indigenous peoples to portray contextual regards to God. Besides questioning the historical standardization promoted by Christendom, the systematic destruction of non-Christian elements grounded the deep faith in God and the strong indigenous identity among Andean Christians. Recognising a primary Catholic identity among indigenous peoples does not deny diversity on their faith expressions, whether grounded on Andean traditions or not, as far as they respond to a communal peace building enterprise. Besides enriching the discernment of the triune God, it validates contemporary indigenous spiritualities while explaining individual or communal relationships with God<sup>72</sup>.

In that context, non-Christian multiple beliefs may help to build up just and inclusive communities; their strong manifestation in daily life proves how important spiritualities are in the Andes. Even though living spiritualities are a fact among indigenous peoples, they are an incomprehensible and even unknown reality among those who do not share this identity. Indigenous theologians' reflections are expressed in a wide creative variety of manifestations (e.g. oral, written and even visual) as a result of their origin, educational background and concrete setting<sup>73</sup>. Contrary to other theologies, these contextual reflections give back voice to the silenced; they validate

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<sup>72</sup> cf. Intipampa, *Op. Cit.*, 15-45; Vicenta Mamani Bernabé, *Ritos espirituales y prácticas comunitarias del aymara*, La Paz: Creat, 2002, 20-58; Humberto Ramos Salazar, *Hacia una teología aymara*, La Paz: CTP/CMI, 1997, 12-42.

<sup>73</sup> "Andean theology is not a European theology with an Andean outfit, nor is it mere external adaption, such as many liturgies (for example, replacing the chasuble with the poncho or the altar cloth with the multicolor mantle)". Nicanor Sarmiento Tupayupanqui, "The Development of Indigenous Theologies in Latin America: The Emergence of the Andean Christian Theologies", in: Hrangthan Chhungi, M.M. Ekka and Wati Longchar, *Doing Indigenous Theology in Asia: Towards new frontiers*, Kolkata: NCCI/GTC/SCEPTRE, 2012: 104-133: 116-117.

alternative ways for feeling and thinking of God. Beyond rational contributions, feeling of God is may be the most important input raised by indigenous theologians<sup>74</sup>.

After reviewing those three perspectives, Andean Christianity comprises communal spiritualities grounded on multiple identities. Despite its non-indigenous, indigenist or indigenous approach, those perspectives validate personal and communal affirmations on the common faith in God. Beyond an outer or inner approach to religion, those three perspectives stress the complex indigenous background as the joining element on Andean Christianity. So, recognizing diversity on the many voices, expressions and manifestations of the same faith in the triune God must be the previous step on dialogue. Finally, the awareness of multiple faces within world Christianity calls to pay more attention to diversity not only among those who define themselves as indigenous peoples, but also among them and the rest of society.

## **2.2 Common ground on indigenous perspectives**

Christendom's arrival in the Andean world is linked to endless situations of violence and humiliation against indigenous peoples. The most deplorable consequence is the systematic dehumanization of Andean populations through either flagrant imposition of foreign faith expressions, or subtle methods for replacing local beliefs. A subsequent fading of the Andean identity, followed by its eventual invisibility, reinforced outer economic and political interests sponsored by the contemporary Catholic theology. Though regular during the early Colonial period, similar procedures were applied by several churches as the starting point of evangelization even at late 20<sup>th</sup> century. Nowadays, the word of God is attached to a definite setting from the past; this anachronism has been creating a number of situations as it follows.

### **2.2.1 Double discourse**

The 15<sup>th</sup> century effort for promoting Christian life and values was built on an imperial interest for strengthening its own economic and political power. The

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<sup>74</sup> cf. Diego Irarrázabal, *Inculturation. New Dawn of the Church in Latin America*, trans. Phillip Berryman, Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2000: 94.

justification of political dominance *vis-à-vis* the prophetic message of life embodied a double yet contradictory discourse in the church throughout the last five centuries. It endorsed opposing attitudes while acting with love and violence, with gentleness and cruelty in Latin American history<sup>75</sup>. This paradoxical ambivalence reflects both the official position of the church as the ideological arm of the empire, and the committed reaction of dissident clergymen who looked for restoring indigenous peoples' humanity. Such a complex situation inquires the church's subsidiary role in society, especially when contextual reflections proclaim diversity as a strong living reality.

### **2.2.2 Foreign background**

The “discovery” of brand new “beings” in late 16<sup>th</sup> century not only degraded indigenous peoples as simple or uncivilized<sup>76</sup>, but also encouraged Western societies to locate themselves as the pinnacle of civilization<sup>77</sup>. Likewise, contemporary shifts on the Catholic Church defined Christendom in Latin America. On the one hand, both the long-lasting effects of the Arabic occupation and remnants of feudalism positioned Spain in the back of Europe when facing the dawn of Capitalism. On the other hand, Spain embodied the Counter-Reformation spirit, and its anti-Protestantism fervour was energetically promoted by religious orders such as the Jesuits<sup>78</sup>. Though this spirit came into the new conquered territories and settled up Catholicity, it did not respond to complex surrounding settings such as the Andes.

### **2.2.3 Conditioned Bible reading**

Polysemy is not only the Bible's most enriching attribute when proclaiming the word of God, but it may also be an ambiguous source of misinterpretation when reading the Bible out of its contexts<sup>79</sup>. During colonial times the Bible was utilized as the

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<sup>75</sup> *cf.* González and González, *Op. Cit.*, 63.

<sup>76</sup> Such kind of labels included terms like primitive, savage, barbarian, archaic, inferior or uncivilized when referring to the social-political organization of indigenous peoples, and terms like pagan, animist or idolatrous when referring to their religious organization.

<sup>77</sup> *cf.* Sepúlveda, *Op. Cit.*, 18.

<sup>78</sup> *cf.* González and González, *Op. Cit.*, 21-27.

<sup>79</sup> According to biblical studies, ‘context’ refers to both the texts’ setting it was produced in (context of origin) and the text’s setting it is interpreted in (context of reading). They both are equally important when looking for a more accurate understanding of God’s message.

ideological basis for social/cultural discrimination, economic marginalization and political functionality of indigenous peoples<sup>80</sup>. So, a convenient misunderstanding of its liberation message with a profitable message of salvation justified oppressive systems. Nonetheless, the “word of God” was also embedded in indigenous religious traditions so far that it was even taken as a sacred token of protection<sup>81</sup>. That is why stressing non-contextual, subjective and biased understandings of the Bible may endorse analogous processes of subjugation.

#### **2.2.4 Denial of humanity and identities**

Former notions from Christendom remain in contemporary attitudes of discrimination, especially when addressing emerging identities such as the one claimed by indigenous peoples. The historical denial of indigenous peoples’ humanity was grounded on 15<sup>th</sup> century philosophical/theological assumptions<sup>82</sup>. The destruction of Andean symbols grounded the loss and subsequent invisibilization of indigenous identities; its internalization endorsed the historical denial of their agency<sup>83</sup>. However, the rising up of indigenous movements grounded historical vindication claims when pursuing the restoration of ancestral wisdom<sup>84</sup>. Even though the whole argument of dehumanization is incongruent, it has been shaping Andean society regardless its implied indigenous identity/ies.

Finally, and without having in mind an extensive analysis on evangelization, the denial of dignity to indigenous peoples has been a constant throughout history. This situation not only remarks a permanent conflict between Andean and Western civilizations, but also addresses historical paradoxes from the two-sided agenda implemented by Christendom (empire and church). Despite contextual anachronisms, these incongruences had been shaping Christian’s words and deeds during the last five centuries. Besides validating diversity within Christianity, indigenous spiritualities call for paying more attention to diversity in a pluralistic world. Finally, and

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<sup>80</sup> cf. Rivera Cusicanqui, *Oprimidos pero no vencidos*, 155.

<sup>81</sup> cf. Tancara Chambe, *Op. Cit.*, 20-21.

<sup>82</sup> cf. González and González, *Op. Cit.*, 42-47.

<sup>83</sup> cf. Rivera Cusicanqui, *Ch’ixinakax utxiwa*, 24-27.

<sup>84</sup> Though fragmented, this long-term political project has recently reached an apex while attempting to decolonize politics, society, education, and religion in Bolivia cf. Enzo Girardi, *El ejemplo Aymara en Bolivia: Saberes ancestrales y globalización*, Colección Claves para todos, Buenos Aires: Capital Intelectual, 2009, 81-120; Rivera Cusicanqui, *Oprimidos pero no vencidos*, 158.

considering that beliefs are overt faith expressions, Andean Christianity goes beyond thinking of God while embracing feeling of God as a further dimension to relate with.

## **Conclusion**

Considering that God's double face is but a synchronic contradiction portrayed by Christendom in Latin America, the indigenous assertion of God's presence from thousands of years ago is highly suggestive. It affirms that contextual understandings of God's revelations in creation are valid as truthful expressions of God's love for life. Assuming that God precedes human attempts, diachronic indigenous regards to God are different yet valid faith expressions; therefore, diversity on religious identities challenges contemporary Andean Christianity. Despite healing historical damages, these assertion looks for promoting life communities where love, justice and peace are to be a living reality. Because of this, the following chapter is going to review the indigenous spiritualities status in the ecumenical agenda.

## Chapter 3

### A Worldwide Enterprise: The Ecumenical Perspective

God's love for creation was perceived and lively practiced by indigenous peoples in the Andes long before Christendom arrived; though different than Western Christianity, the multiple Andean understandings/perceptions of God respond to concrete social, political, economic or cultural settings. They were almost annihilated during the colonial period, but their continuity forged brand new life-promoting perceptions such as indigenous spiritualities. This situation challenges world Christianity, but first and foremost assess the indigenous peoples' self-understanding in a complex pluralistic world. Thus, this chapter is an attempt for validating the Andean Christianity's multiple beliefs *vis-à-vis* the common faith in God from the WCC's ecumenical perspective.

#### 3.1 Indigenous Peoples and the World Council of Churches

From its very beginning at the World Missionary Conference in Edinburgh (1910), the modern Ecumenical Movement addressed disunity as a contemporary key issue, and promoted cooperation among the churches<sup>85</sup>. Likewise, it pointed out towards Christian unity and reconciliation ever since the constitution and First Assembly of the World Council of Churches (WCC) in Amsterdam (1948)<sup>86</sup>. Through this "fellowship of churches"<sup>87</sup> its members pursue a visible unity grounded on a common work, worship, mission and service in society in order to promote justice and peace<sup>88</sup>. As a joint effort with fellow desks, this aim has also been pursued through the *Unity, mission, evangelism and spirituality Programme* (P2). It encourages churches to call

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<sup>85</sup> cf. Thomas E. Fitzgerald, *The Ecumenical Movement – An Introductory History*. Westport: Praeger, 2004, 81.

<sup>86</sup> *Ibid.*, 109.

<sup>87</sup> The WCC defines itself as "a fellowship of churches which confess the Lord Jesus Christ as God and Saviour according to the scriptures, and therefore seek to fulfil together their common calling to the glory of the one God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit. It is a community of churches on the way to visible unity in one faith and one eucharistic fellowship, expressed in worship and in common life in Christ." WCC, *What is the World Council of Churches?*, online resource (access March 24, 2012) <http://www.oikoumene.org/en/who-are-we.html>

<sup>88</sup> *Ibid.*

each other to visible unity, to work together for building faithful witness in the world, and to deepen the spiritual dimensions of life<sup>89</sup>.

Within P2, the *Just and Inclusive Communities Project* expresses WCC's commitment to justice, human dignity and liberation among people who experience discrimination and exclusion. The project's goal is to enable reflection, analysis, advocacy and communication of differing teachings and life experiences among the WCC's member churches. This committed partnership is translated into expressions of solidarity with Indigenous Peoples, Dalits, and People with disabilities, besides raising Racism and Migration as challenging issues within the churches. Those five concerns promote inclusivity in society while giving voice to excluded populations<sup>90</sup>. In this context, the *indigenous Peoples Program* (IPP) not only addresses the struggles for land and self-determination of indigenous, aboriginal, native and tribal peoples, but also strengthens their identities, language and culture at local, regional and worldwide levels<sup>91</sup>.

Deepening that historical background, the WCC's programmatic work with indigenous peoples responds to its institutional restructuring after the 2006 9<sup>th</sup> Assembly in Porto Alegre<sup>92</sup>. The first attempt for outlining the *Just and Inclusive Communities'* theological framework was achieved through a consultative process in La Paz, Bolivia (2007)<sup>93</sup>. Its relevance lies on the fact that it defined the general guidelines to be followed by the IPP towards creating more just and inclusive communities. From that time onwards, the IPP has been involved in several activities mainly directed to networking with regional and global organizations. Considering this assigned task, and following the official statements and documents published by the office, the IPP has been working on:

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<sup>89</sup> WCC, *Unity, mission, evangelism, and spirituality*, online resource (access March 24, 2012) <http://www.oikoumene.org/en/programmes/unity-mission-evangelism-and-spirituality.html>

<sup>90</sup> WCC, *Towards just and inclusive communities*, online resource (access March 24, 2012) <http://www.oikoumene.org/en/programmes/unity-mission-evangelism-and-spirituality/just-and-inclusive-communities.html>

<sup>91</sup> WCC, *Solidarity with Indigenous Peoples*, online resource (access March 24, 2012) <http://www.oikoumene.org/en/programmes/unity-mission-evangelism-and-spirituality/just-and-inclusive-communities/indigenous-peoples.html>

<sup>92</sup> Maria Chávez Quispe, "Editorial", in: WCC, *International Review of Mission: perspectives on Indigenous Theologies and Spiritualities*. 62.4, December 2010, 333-339, 336-337

<sup>93</sup> WCC, *Just and Inclusive Communities: Report of the theological consultation, La Paz, Bolivia, April 29 - May 3, 2007*, online resource posted on May 03, 2007 (access March 24, 2012) <http://www.oikoumene.org/en/resources/documents/wcc-programmes/unity-mission-evangelism-and-spirituality/just-and-inclusive-communities/la-paz-report-just-and-inclusive-communities.html>

### 3.1.1 Indigenous theologies

Though diverse in doctrines, traditions and spiritualities, the Latin American evangelization process prompted the imposition of a Western north Atlantic Christian theology on indigenous peoples. Its social and political outcome derived in oppression, exploitation and marginalization of cultures, traditions, and wisdom of local populations. Because of that, contextual discernments of God challenge individual/communal actions in World Christianity; they not only criticize the official history but also support indigenous claims of vindication. That is why articulating indigenous theologies is the main aim pursued by the IPP when strengthening diversity on indigenous churches<sup>94</sup>. This effort has contributed to ongoing theological reflections as can be traced on the following documentary review<sup>95</sup>.

#	Posted date	Document's name, date and location
1	26.10.2008	“Statement of solidarity with the indigenous peoples and condemnation of the enforced disappearance of James Balao”, October 26, 2008. Baguio City, Philippines.
2	24.06.2009	“Report from the International Consultation on the Ecclesial and Social Visions of the Indigenous Peoples”, October 21-26, 2008. Baguio, Philippines.
3	13.10.2010	“Report of the Indigenous Theologians meeting on ‘Doing Theology with Indigenous Peoples’ Sources and Resources: A Synthesis”, October 2009. Geneva, Switzerland.
4	27.01.2011	“Affirming a spirituality that gives life to all: An open letter from Indigenous communities and theologians to the churches”, January 2011. <i>Chuquiago marka</i> (La Paz), Bolivia.
5	27.01.2011	“Indigenous Theologians Network in conversation with Faith and Order”, January 22-27, 2011. La Paz, Bolivia.
6	27.01.2011	“Indigenous Theologians Network in Dialogue with the Commission on World Mission and Evangelism”, January 22-27, 2011. La Paz, Bolivia.

<sup>94</sup> WCC, *Solidarity with Indigenous Peoples*.

<sup>95</sup> For further information cf. WCC, *Indigenous theologies*, online resource (access May 15, 2012) [http://www.oikoumene.org/en/resources/documents/wcc-programmes/unity-mission-evangelism-and-spirituality/just-and-inclusive-communities/indigenous-people/indigenous-theologies.html?print=1\\_print%20African%20churches%20address%20p](http://www.oikoumene.org/en/resources/documents/wcc-programmes/unity-mission-evangelism-and-spirituality/just-and-inclusive-communities/indigenous-people/indigenous-theologies.html?print=1_print%20African%20churches%20address%20p)



### 3.1.2 Indigenous peoples' advocacy

Articulating indigenous theologies is the main activity the IPP is working with, so it is the advocacy and networking of indigenous peoples in international organizations. This aim has been focused on promoting life in/for the whole creation; it was expressed on a proactive presence in three major forums at the United Nations: 1. Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues (UNPFII) in New York, 2. Working Group on Indigenous Populations (UNWGIP) and 3. Expert Mechanism on Indigenous Issues (UNEMRIP), both in Geneva. Moreover this ongoing involvement, the Program's greater achievements are the Convention 169, "Indigenous and Tribal Peoples Convention" (ILO Convention 169), and the "UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples" (UNDRIP)<sup>96</sup>. Despite the many inputs raised during those meetings, the WCC's advocacy for indigenous peoples has been translated into official documents as it follows<sup>97</sup>.

#	Posted date	Document's name, date and location
1	14.09.2000	"Statement from Pacific Indigenous People's struggle for land and identity workshop", September 11-14, 2000. Suva, Fiji.
2	27.07.2001	"Intervention to the UN Working Group on Indigenous Populations" (Review of Developments pertaining to the promotion and protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms of Indigenous Peoples), July 23-27, 2001. New York, USA.
3	01.01.2003	"Appeal from the Indigenous Peoples: "Why are we still waiting?"
4	01.01.2003	"Walking together towards tomorrow"
5	21.05.2009	"Joint Declaration of Indigenous Churches: Eighth Period of Sessions of the United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues" (Human Rights), May 18-29, 2009. New York, USA.
6	17.09.2010	"Statement by the WCC Living Letters team visiting Australia"

<sup>96</sup> Chávez Quispe, *Editorial*, 336.

<sup>97</sup> For further information cf. WCC, *Indigenous peoples' advocacy*, online resource (access May 15, 2012) [http://www.oikoumene.org/en/resources/documents/wcc-programmes/unity-mission-evangelism-and-spirituality/just-and-inclusive-communities/indigenous-people/advocacy.html?print=1\\_print%20African%20churches%20address%20p](http://www.oikoumene.org/en/resources/documents/wcc-programmes/unity-mission-evangelism-and-spirituality/just-and-inclusive-communities/indigenous-people/advocacy.html?print=1_print%20African%20churches%20address%20p)

7	22.02.2011	“Statement on the Situation of Indigenous Peoples of Australia”, February 16-22, 2011. Geneva, Switzerland.
8	17.02.2012	“Statement on the doctrine of discovery and its enduring impact on Indigenous Peoples” <sup>98</sup> , WCC Executive Committee, February 14-17, 2012. Bossey, Switzerland.

Considering that general background, the IPP is focused on (re)building inclusive life communities<sup>99</sup> more than on building physical structures; affirming dignity, justice, equality and harmony calls the churches to a shift<sup>100</sup>. On the one hand, promoting respect strengthens a full and dignified life for indigenous peoples; in a deeper sense it looks for (re)possessing the ancestor’s lands along with historically desecrated sacred grounds<sup>101</sup>. On the other hand, the church of Christ is called to promote social, among human beings, and ecological justice, between humanity and the Mother Earth/cosmos, in a holistic way. This endeavour looks for finding a direct link amidst texts, oral traditions and voices from both Christian and indigenous theologies. Besides these sources and resources, indigenous perspectives contribute to develop new collective languages to talk, think, and especially feel about God<sup>102</sup>.

<sup>98</sup> This document portrays a critical review of the ‘legal’ grounding precedent for the historical mistreatment of indigenous peoples under colonial administrations. On this statement the WCC a) expresses solidarity with indigenous peoples, b) denounces the ‘Doctrine of Discovery’ as contrary to the Gospel and the inherent human rights received from God, c) urges governments to dismantle related legal structures and policies, d) affirms the indigenous peoples’ rights of self-determination and self-governance, e) requests the governments and states to follow international conventions on indigenous peoples, f) calls WCC’s member churches to seek greater understandings on indigenous peoples’ issues, and g) encourages its members to support theological reflections by indigenous peoples. For further information cf. WCC, *Statement on the doctrine of discovery and its enduring impact on Indigenous Peoples*, WCC Executive Committee, 14-17 February 2012, Bossey, Switzerland, online resource posted on February 17, 2012 (access March 24, 2012) <http://www.oikoumene.org/en/resources/documents/executive-committee/bossey-february-2012/statement-on-the-doctrine-of-discovery-and-its-enduring-impact-on-indigenous-peoples.html>

<sup>99</sup> Life is here referred to as the harmonious interconnection between the Earth and all its inhabitants, not only among human beings.

<sup>100</sup> In this context, a wider understanding of just and inclusive communities expresses an essential commitment to life, life for all living beings as a result of sincere expressions of love, justice and dignity. Affirming life in community and communion include both contextual interpretations of the Bible and restitution of valuable cultural elements such as solidarity, complementarity, harmony, well living and mutual respect. cf. WCC, *Doing Theology with Indigenous Peoples’ Sources and Resources: A Synthesis*, online resource posted on 13 October, 2010 (access on March 30, 2012) <http://www.oikoumene.org/en/resources/documents/wcc-programmes/unity-mission-evangelism-and-spirituality/just-and-inclusive-communities/indigenous-people/indigenous-theologies/sources-and-resources-of-indigenous-theologies.html>

<sup>101</sup> WCC, *Just and Inclusive Communities*.

<sup>102</sup> WCC, *Doing Theology with Indigenous Peoples’ Sources and Resources*.

## 3.2 A collective interweaving of heritage

The historical exclusion of indigenous peoples encouraged their resistance against an exclusivist, centralized and culturally standardized global order. Enquiring the current development model grounded on the capitalist economic system, prompt the validation of cultures, traditions, practices and spiritual manifestations of indigenous peoples. The awareness of Christian and indigenous identities within Andean Christianity demand respect for both traditions since it is a fact on indigenous peoples life from that time onwards<sup>103</sup>. Asserting the Word's incarnation in indigenous peoples' history and culture demands a deep transformation of the church into genuine life communities. These issues had been addressed as challenging reflections to world Christianity under doctrinal and mission/evangelization formulations.

### 3.2.1 Doctrine

Identifying divergences and convergences between Christianity and indigenous traditions has been the main aim on doctrinal dialogues so far<sup>104</sup>; they highlight contextual reflections as grounding elements for understanding unity in the Church. Therefore, and based on the most recent joint document with the Commission on Faith and Order (CF&O)<sup>105</sup>, a prospective doctrinal agenda must work on:

*The Names of God:* God's many names reveal God's mystery.

*Ecclesiology:* Contextual comparative approaches to diversity may lead to build real life communities; they must express just relationships between men and women in

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<sup>103</sup> WCC, *Affirming a spirituality that gives life to all*, online resource posted on 27 January, 2011 (access on March 30, 2012) <http://www.oikoumene.org/en/resources/documents/wcc-programmes/unity-mission-evangelism-and-spirituality/just-and-inclusive-communities/indigenous-people/indigenous-theologies/affirming-a-spirituality-that-gives-life-to-all.html>

<sup>104</sup> Considering that these dialogues are in initial stages, there is only one public statement published on the WCC's webpage; it basically conveys the results of the conversation in La Paz, Bolivia, and stresses commonalities among the CF&O, the IPP and the Indigenous Theologians Network. *cf.* WCC, *Indigenous Theologians Network in conversation with Faith and Order*, online resource posted on 27 January, 2011 (access on March 30, 2012) <http://www.oikoumene.org/en/resources/documents/wcc-programmes/unity-mission-evangelism-and-spirituality/just-and-inclusive-communities/indigenous-people/indigenous-theologies/indigenous-theologians-network-in-conversation-with-faith-and-order.html>

<sup>104</sup> Ibid.

<sup>105</sup> Ibid.

daily life interaction. In a wider perspective, these communities embrace human beings as part of God's creation, not over and against it.

*Culture:* Indigenous values create balance within heterogeneous societies; their significance in World Christianity comes from a necessary (re)connection with the mothers/fathers in the faith from both Christian and indigenous traditions.

*Unity and Diversity:* Encouraging harmony and balance in common unity may validate differing faith expressions within singular life communities.

### **3.2.2 Mission and Evangelism**

Indigenous Christians (re)affirm deep ancestral traditions whereas grounding life-promoting values amidst churches and society. These attempt demands decolonizing oppressive systems while encouraging indigenous cultures, traditions and languages within church life. Following the most recent conversation with the Commission on World Mission and Evangelism (CWME)<sup>106</sup> the common working themes are:

*Mission:* The indigenous understanding of mission is critic, contextual and inclusive; it promotes a sincere dialogue between biblical traditions and indigenous wisdoms. This perspective affirms the Creator's continuous presence in time and space, especially through the feminine manifestation of the *Pachamama*. Considering that mission is not conversion, but an effort for reaching full life for all, it needs to be ecumenically and interreligiously oriented. Then, mission involves the defence, solidarity and accompaniment of indigenous peoples along with the whole creation.

*Evangelism:* Indigenous peoples affirm life and respect for all living beings. Life is not restricted to spiritual and non-spiritual dimensions, it promotes respect for each other, Mother Earth (*Pachamama*) and ancestors as family living in harmony.

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<sup>106</sup> WCC, *Indigenous Theologians Network in Dialogue with the Commission on World Mission and Evangelism*, online resource posted on 27 January, 2011 (access on March 30, 2012) <http://www.oikoumene.org/en/resources/documents/wcc-programmes/unity-mission-evangelism-and-spirituality/just-and-inclusive-communities/indigenous-people/indigenous-theologies/indigenous-theologians-network-in-dialogue-with-the-commission-on-world-mission-and-evangelism.html>

*Transformation:* A shift in Christian identity from individual to communal experiences is a must to be achieved, so it is the demand of respect from contextual faith expressions to institutional centres.

### **3.3 Indigenous Peoples in/and world Christianity**

Indigenous theologies are defined by their setting but are not confined to it; their quest for a full dignified life for all living beings concurs with Jesus Christ's teachings. On the one hand, indigenous people's historical resistance and creativity enabled them to keep part of their culture and traditions within Christianity. On the other hand, indigenous spiritualities remind world Christianity its collective relational character while deconstructing exclusivist theological formulations. Affirming multiple understandings of God endorses a common well-being pursuing for humanity as much as for creation. In this context, raising the following theological and spiritual issues pretend to challenge world Christianity in a quite concise way.

#### **3.3.1 Understanding God as community in unity**

Indigenous theologies affirm a common faith in the triune God who preserves and gives life, inspires freedom, builds just and inclusive communities/societies, and accompanies people who suffer, are excluded, oppressed and marginalized. The notion of Trinity as "unity in communion" has been suggested by Christian traditions<sup>107</sup>; but its indigenous connotations open up the understanding of God from intellectual abstractions to living perceptions. In this perspective, both emotions and rationality offer a more complete approach to God's image, a God who is present in all cultures, places and times...

*"like a generous and compassionate mother, like the refreshing breeze and wind, like the warmth of the morning sun, like the heart of the earth from which life emerges, God is like a great tree giving shade and shelter, like the river that waters*

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<sup>107</sup> cf. Veli-Matti Kärkkäinen, *Trinity and Religious Pluralism: The Doctrine of the Trinity in Christian Theology of Religions*. England/USA: Ashgate, 2004, 177; WCC, *Confessing the One faith: An Ecumenical explication of the Apostolic Faith as it is confessed in the Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed (381)*, Faith and Order Paper N° 153, Geneva: WCC Publications, 1991, 74.

*the fields, like the ancestors who watch over us on our journey. God is even more than that, depending on the perspective of each of the indigenous Peoples.”<sup>108</sup>*

This image goes beyond (re)affirming God’s omnipresence; it depicts an assemblage of biblical references along with indigenous traditions. These double faceted formulations do not contrast the wide variety of beliefs from both traditions; they look for strengthening a common faith in God while complementing each other’s tradition more inclusively. The notion of God as Father/Mother is the basis of indigenous spiritualities, but at the same time is the most challenging element to World Christianity’s heyday image of God. This shift does not only depict a double rooted relational imaginary, but also develop the notion of a closer God who cares for creation. This inclusive holistic approach does not intend to understand the complexity of God’s mystery, but to highlight its life-giving character.

### **3.3.2 Recognizing the human face of God**

The discernment of God within indigenous peoples is based on both contextual understandings of the Divine and high sensitivity to collective religious experiences. Besides God Father/Mother, indigenous Christian spiritualities emphasize Jesus’ teachings as practical means for witnessing in society. Stressing Jesus’ humanity does not diminish Christ’s divinity; it just portrays a marginalized man who defied social double standards in order to create life communities based in harmony, justice and peace. This vulnerable nature of the Word gets closer to those who suffer as a brother willing to share their suffering. This “preferential option for the poor”<sup>109</sup> not only emphasizes Jesus’ commitment to the exploited, oppressed and marginalized, but also his human nature as one among us.

Jesus Christ is the most acknowledged person of the Trinity according to Andean Christianity; it denotes a shift from the image of a powerful and severe God who punishes, to a merciful God who walks together with his/her people. Jesus’ sacrifice in the Cross is but the highest expression of love that God incarnated made for the

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<sup>108</sup> WCC, *Affirming a spirituality that gives life to all*.

<sup>109</sup> This notion was initially defined by Gustavo Gutierrez, but it was adopted by the Second General Conference of Latin American Bishops (Medellín, 1968), and ratified in the Third General Conference of Latin American Bishops (Puebla, 1979). cf. Josef Estermann, *Jesucristo como chakana*, 93.

whole creation. This formulation has not been grounded on a crucified Christ, but on a living Jesus around whom life community gathers together<sup>110</sup>. In this context, unequal unbalanced relationships are neither part of Jesus Christ's teachings nor part of indigenous traditions; both Gospel and ancestral wisdom affirm equality as a pre-condition for building life communities.

### 3.3.3 Building life communities

Jesus Christ's command of love denotes his care for humanity; his salvation program not only emphasizes life in common-unity among all living beings, but also strengthens brotherly/sisterly relationships among them. Then, indigenous theologies look for building strong relationships between individuals gathered together around God, a God who transcends temples and install tents around the world<sup>111</sup>. This shift from a reduced community of believers to a real community of life relies on a permanent practice of love, respect, justice and care for the others. In this context, spiritual matters are to be transformed into community actions that "does not arise from doctrinal principles, but from the common affirmation of justice and peace..., of the promotion and affirmation of life."<sup>112</sup>

From an indigenous perspective personal matters are no longer merely individual since humans are social by nature; this relational character is preceded by the full acceptance of one's humanity along with the others'. Living in common unity is may be the main aim in world Christianity, but it is also the fundamental communal condition among indigenous peoples. Living in and for the common good may be comprised in two practices, reciprocity and complementarity; reciprocity among personal or communal practices, and complementarity among its constitutive relational elements. Their close interaction not only creates cohesion among

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<sup>110</sup> Ibid., 93-99.

<sup>111</sup> Articulação Ecumênica Latino-Americana da Pastoral Indígena (AELAPI), *Migração e mudanças culturais: Desafios e esperanças para os povos indígenas. Memória do VI Encontro Continental da Teologia Índia: Mobilidade humana, desafio e esperança para os povos indígenas*. E-Book. Belém, Pará: Mensageiro, 118.

<sup>112</sup> WCC, *Indigenous Theologians Network in conversation with Faith and Order*.

individuals, but also affirms human dignity to human beings - life in community needs to be integral in order to embrace a life community experience<sup>113</sup>.

Life communities challenge double standards of society whereas stressing differences between men and women instead of thinking of their commonalities. On the one hand, men and women are unlike when looking at their physical features, but completely the same when looking at their human quality. On the other hand, these differences are not negative *per se* as it was assumed in the past, but positive whereas directed to complement each other towards building genuine life communities. Beyond gender-centred concerns, this principle widens forthcoming dialogues among those who are different within the same community. Even though this committed interaction works within confessional bodies, it may also work among inter-confessional or interreligious dialogues for it inserts Christianity into changing societies.

Finally, the incorporation of indigenous languages/dialects, symbols, icons and images in Christian life is a must when building inclusive communities. Subsequent actions with marginalized populations are not to heal historical wounds of abuse, displacement and annihilation, but to liberate indigenous peoples among whom women are a priority<sup>114</sup>. This pragmatic sense of inclusivity looks for a shift in the evangelization and mission paradigms as much as on social, political and economic excluding systems<sup>115</sup>. Besides uncovering indigenous inputs to World Christianity, their foreseen outcome is to restore dignity to indigenous peoples in a complex pluralistic world. Nonetheless, this *status quo* relies on the current dialogue between indigenous and non-indigenous theologies when affirming spiritualities of life<sup>116</sup>.

### 3.3.4 Care for the *Pachamama* and Creation

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<sup>113</sup> cf. Tancara Chambe, *Op. Cit.*, 25-26.

<sup>114</sup> Marilú Rojas Salazar, "Experiences and Reflections on a Latin American Feminist Theology of Liberation Using an Ecofeminist Key Towards an Indigenous Women's Perspective", in: WCC, *International Review of Mission: perspectives on Indigenous Theologies and Spiritualities*. 62.4, December 2010, 411-422, 414.

<sup>115</sup> WCC, *Doing Theology with Indigenous Peoples' Sources and Resources: A Synthesis*.

<sup>116</sup> In January 2011 the IPP organized a meeting named "Affirming Spiritualities of Life: Indigenous Peoples' Wisdoms and Traditions in Theological Conversation" in La Paz, Bolivia. This event comprised multiple sessions of conversations, dialogue and exchange of knowledge about Indigenous spiritualities; it was taken from an integrative perspective and within a mutual learning atmosphere. These sessions included the participation of the Indigenous Theologians Network together with the CF&O aside from the CWME of the WCC.



Restoring human dignity to all human beings is one of the main aims in indigenous theologies; so it is restoring balance in creation. Both the worldwide ecological crisis and climate change are a result of progressive unbalance among the Earth's community members. Taking humanity as the top of creation, and not as part of it, is causing negative effects all around the world. The attribution of equivalent yet differential rights to nature and humanity is a must that both Christian and indigenous traditions proclaim as a way to restore harmony and balance in creation. In this context, looking for ecological justice is not just a discourse, but a pragmatic concern in life communities when struggling in the defence for land, forest, water and cultures.

According to indigenous peoples, the Earth is the place where life exists and reproduces itself; human beings together with animals, plants, spirits of the land, water, wind, among other beings, inhabit the Earth in a harmonious fellowship. The sacredness attributed to the Earth, through the notion of *Pachamama*/Mother Earth, keeps balance in creation while sustaining it as God's locus of revelation<sup>117</sup>. This holistic perspective does not compete with the Gospel; instead, it affirms a perspective where life communities care for creation as the source of life<sup>118</sup>. The recognition of life protecting elements out of Christianity not only strengthens ecological sensitivity, but also encourages complementary social relationships directed to build life communities.

### 3.3.5 Perceiving dual and complementary dimensions

According to indigenous philosophies there is not a universal truth valid for every individual at any time; instead, there are multiple dimensions of truth validated by definite cultural settings<sup>119</sup>. This situation supposes a shift from a model of exclusion to another of inclusion. Consequently, there is a need for restoring hidden identities

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<sup>117</sup> cf. Tancara Chambe, *Op. Cit.*, 39-41.

<sup>118</sup> cf. Eugenio Poma and James B. Palmer, *Journey to Dignity: The Autobiography of Bishop Eugenio Poma Anaguaya*, Allen, Texas: Timberwolf Press, 2006, 139-141.

<sup>119</sup> "According to historicism, truth is simply a function of the time period in which you live. What is true for one culture may not be true for another. For historicists, truth is culture-bound; no one escape's the limits of one's culture." Brian Benestad J., *Church, State and Society: An Introduction to Catholic Social Doctrine*. Washington D.: The Catholic University of America Press, 2011, 52. Despite the implicit assumptions of that quotation, it comprises the basis of historical critical analysis such as the one promoted by indigenous perspectives. Even though the *Filosofía Andina* is one among other examples on this line, it systematically strengthens the indigenous' critic to Western philosophy and theology embedded in Western culture. cf. Estermann, *Filosofía Andina*, 314-316.

and contextual dimensions of faith; beyond unproductive formulations they are lively experienced in day-to-day life. In this perspective, life is a dual complementary reality where secular and sacred spaces are not separated<sup>120</sup>; they interact in a “both–and” not “either–or” relational framework. Even though Christian traditions remark antagonism in dual realities, like good/evil, physical/spiritual, and positive/negative, indigenous traditions incorporate them as double non-contradictory dimensions of truth<sup>121</sup>.

Contrary to the notion of absoluteness, indigenous traditions highlight complex synchronic dimensions in the world. In a higher or lower degree these dimensions coexist in both analytical and practical levels. For instance, positive actions may be negative at the same time, or vice versa, as much as good deeds may incidentally turn into evil. Besides potential ambiguities, this situation widens the discernment of God from a rational concept of the absolute, to a relational understanding of God. This dual perception also explains the complex intertwining of identities within indigenous Christianity while assuming their double background (*e.g.* Andean and Christian). It not only strengthens individuals’ belonging to a life community, but also looks forward to building genuine love expressions in such communities.

### **3.3.6 Respecting differing identities**

Assuming that every regard to God is embedded in definite settings, Christianity’s contextualization in Imperial Rome, Eastern or Northern Europe is but an example of its adaptability. Beyond translating Jesus’ teachings into social work, they need to transcend the many churches’ traditions in Bible reading prior to create openness to non-Western Christian identities. In this context, the indigenous peoples’ understanding of God enquires their historical pain and suffering while looking for restoring their denied agency<sup>122</sup>. Even though this theological endeavour has been structured on ancient wisdom, it basically responds to the contemporary self-definition of historical indigenous identities in a pluralistic world.

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<sup>120</sup> *cf.* Rivera Cusicanqui, *Ch’ixinakax utxiwa*, 22.

<sup>121</sup> Per Lønning, *Is Christ a Christian? On Inter-Religious Dialogue and Intra-Religious Horizon*, Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2002, 199.

<sup>122</sup> This complex situation vindicates Indigenous peoples as social, cultural and political subjects in society; as a whole, it looks for restoring the communal character promoted by their historical resistance. *cf.* Enzo Girardi, *Op. Cit.*, 30.

Finally, having a double background is not restricted to indigenous Christians, it is also part of every individual who identify him/herself as different from the North Atlantic patterns of civilization. The indigenous people's background affirms contextual understandings of God, not shameful attitudes from fellow Christians<sup>123</sup>. The recognition of multiple identities within Christianity looks for a non-conditioned inclusion of the marginalized into genuine life communities because "another world is possible."<sup>124</sup> Even though Indigenist and indigenous initiatives have been promoting dignity, respect, self-determination and self-governance for indigenous peoples<sup>125</sup>, it is far from succeeding whereas unity and equality are not articulated as a full of grace common history.

## Conclusion

Indigenous theologies deny a universal understanding of God; instead, they affirm a common faith in God expressed in a wide variety of beliefs. So, the Good News proclaimed by Jesus Christ have to be new and good for everybody regardless social, cultural, economic, political or any other personal/collective identity/ies. Accepting differences within life communities is vital for indigenous reflections; so it is recognizing each other's human dignity and living according to it. From the indigenous peoples' holistic perspective, strengthening human dignity in a pluralistic world is a transversal issue when building communities of justice and peace. Therefore, indigenous spiritualities not only support Christian teachings in society, but also promote life in communal common unity.

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<sup>123</sup> López Hernández, Eleazar, "Indigenous Theology in its Latin American setting", in: World Council of Churches, *International Review of Mission: perspectives on Indigenous Theologies and Spiritualities*. 62.4, December 2010, 352-360, 359.

<sup>124</sup> WCC, *Towards just and inclusive communities*, online resource (access March 24, 2012) <http://www.oikoumene.org/en/programmes/unity-mission-evangelism-and-spirituality/just-and-inclusive-communities.html>

<sup>125</sup> Maria Chávez Quispe, *For the Sun Heats Up Again*, 281-296; Enzo Girardi, *Op. Cit.*, 18-25; Rivera Cusicanqui, *Oprimidos pero no vencidos*, 132.

## Conclusions

The Andean is not a monolithic but a multifaceted scenario where life community has taken place throughout history before, during and after Christendom's arrival. Considering that this research looked for assessing the contemporary religious panorama in the Andes while incorporating it into wider reflections, it is time now to recall the steps followed when fulfilling it. The first chapter dealt with the complex historical background of religious expressions in the Andes. The second chapter explained Andean Christianity's current status from three differing perspectives while raising some critics to indigenous peoples' dehumanization. The third chapter analysed the WCC's programmatic work with indigenous theologies and spiritualities, and described their main inputs and challenges to world Christianity.

The three chapters respond to a need for recognizing the cultural and religious background of the locus where the Word of God is to be proclaimed. Indigenous peoples' spiritualities *vis-à-vis* cultural or political identities are different yet valid faith expressions; in a wider sense it implies the need for restoring human dignity to all human beings through differences, not despite of them. When reached, this shall be the first step on building a community that declares its Faith in God and lives according to it (*oikoumene*). Because of that, this research does not only portray one out of many attempts for articulating indigenous regards to God, but also constitutes one potential basis for prospective identity-based dialogues within world Christianity. In this regard, their main argumentative assertions are briefly explained as it follows.

First, the Andean sacred history has set contemporary indigenous regards to God; they rely on local languages, cultures and spiritualities along with contextual identities. Recognizing diversity within world Christianity, and in a deeper sense within faith communities, may increase both individual and communal participation in society. It would not only enable a more committed involvement in social work, but also improve life-giving actions/attitudes in the light of contextual Bible-based teachings. In this context, this research disclosed a diachronic continuity of Andean traditions within Christianity, assessed current understandings of God in Andean Christianity, and surveyed the manifold inputs of indigenous spiritualities to world Christianity.

Second, assimilation and adaptation had been a constant throughout Andean history. As a result, parallel patterns of culture and religion were continuously (re)defined by

indigenous peoples on circumstantial ever changing frameworks. The consequent dynamicity on indigenous identities shaped common regional spiritualities; it included the reinterpretation of faith, beliefs and symbols of Christianity. The colonial paradox with official evangelizers (soldiers and clerics) *vis-à-vis* isolated indigenist and indigenous advocates reinforces indigenous theologies and spiritualities. They are not apologetics of the past, but inclusive understandings of God built on life-promoting actions in church and society. They promote actual equality between evangelizers and evangelized as fellow partners working for the same cause.

Third, Andean Christianity is an example of double-rooted communities where God's multiple manifestations have been rationally and emotionally perceived across its sacred history. Besides affirming a communal faith in the triune God, contextuality has been a priority in non-indigenous, indigenist and indigenous perspectives when addressing religion in the Andes. Both social explanations on diachronic religious adaptations and theological affirmations on living indigenous spiritualities call to restoring human dignity to those who were dehumanized in history. This enterprise looks for including indigenous peoples within life communities while bringing back their voice and agency. In this context, the historical ambiguity and external background of the church not only challenge its role in Andean societies, but also confirm the need for deepening contextual theologies.

Fourth, diversity is an attribute of the triune God for it joins Father, Son and Holy Spirit together in common unity. Diversity responds to social/cultural constructions, and not to natural criteria; so, the multiple regards to God derive from differing social, cultural or religious traditions' backgrounds. Therefore, contextual regards to God challenge universal timeless theological formulations, but do not antagonize with them because of their common aim centred in God. This is precisely the main input from indigenous theologies and spiritualities to the modern ecumenical movement; its articulation has been implemented by the IPP as the previous step for restoring human dignity. Thus, unity is a living reality among indigenous Christians, but it demands to pay closer attention to diversity on the context it is embedded in.

Finally, evangelization has been a relevant issue on indigenous theologies not only for the implied church's historical ambiguity, both merciful and merciless, but also for its dual principles. Even though Andean indigenous peoples were forced to either

surrender or die, they deployed identity-based resistance strategies grounded on ancestral culture and wisdom. As a result, both Christian and Indigenous traditions were skilfully combined in a wide variety of faith expressions, but not faith in itself, while building life communities. The resultant Andean Christianity is founded on Christian scriptures and traditions along with indigenous ancestral wisdom and life perceptions. These multiple sources illustrate personal and collective spiritualities whereas expressing different perceptions of God, life community and creation.

## Appendix

### The Andean history, a history of Religion

Andean religions are as ancient as peoples' regards to the divine (*ca.* 12000 BC); however, they are only traceable through multidisciplinary analyses based on ancient temples, ritual facilities and religious materials. Because of that, the following lines intend to explain the Andean religious adaptation from a diachronic perspective.

At first, the 'Sunken court' and 'Platform mound' traditions emerged as pilgrimage centres in both coastline (*e.g.* *Caral* or *Aspero*) and highland (*e.g.* *Kotosh* or *La Galgada*) settlements in Central Andes (3000 – 1800 BC). Even though these settlements congregated multitudes in single locations, a more elaborated system bound to U-shaped civic-ceremonial centres marked a pass to the next pilgrimages centres era (*e.g.* *San Jacinto* or *Garagay*). The most influential site from this period is *Chavín de Huántar* (800 – 200 BC); its highly developed religious system was built around a smiling/snarling god holding a dual staff<sup>126</sup>. This was the first attempt for pan-Andean unity.

Later on, South Central Andes' political entities built a sacred cosmology on male/female stone carved deities placed inside sunken courts (1800 BC – 500 AD). This tradition has been named *Yama–Mama* (*Aymara* Father–Mother) for it remarks the couple as an important fertility icon in a semiarid area.

Even though Tiwanaku was one out of many settlements from that tradition, its development and effective management of a new set of religious icons and rituals made possible its raising as the major influential state across the *Altiplano* (500 - 1150 AD)<sup>127</sup>. Unlike its predecessors, Tiwanaku established a larger influential sphere where a complex religious system, based on powerful cosmic gods, grounded its existence. The highly developed range of religious paraphernalia not only worked as medium for spreading their god's image, but also as tools for promoting interaction, affiliation and even unity along its influential area. It also reinforced previous

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<sup>126</sup> Moseley, *Op. Cit.*, 16-170.

<sup>127</sup> *Ibid.*, 208-222.

institutions such as the *Ayllu*, a kin-based system where social, politic and economic interests defined a common history, cultural traditions and religious identity<sup>128</sup>.

A dramatic drought in early 12<sup>th</sup> century provoked the loss of power and destruction of the ancient gods, and the return to ancient dual traditions. Though divided, the resultant regional political organizations, also known as Aymara Kingdoms, shared a common religious system based on the *Pachamama* (Mother Earth) and *Achachilas* (Ancestors) as givers of life<sup>129</sup>. This duality had been translated into social and political structures while defining two complementary partialities within single unities. In this context, a common language and rituals helped to create a strong sense of land attachment among the *Aymara* in the Altiplano (1150 – 1480 AD). Even though this process was replied on western and eastern valleys, this kind of political organization changed dramatically after the arrival of Inka administrators.

The Inka Empire was one out of many other organizations prior to its pan-Andean expansion, except for its cultural background linked to interandean processes, and the usage of Quechua as mother tongue. Moreover its complexity, the novel religious system endorsed imperial strategies of interaction through either differential alliances with weak/weakened political entities, or war against peer organizations (1480 – 1532 AD). In both cases, *Inti* (the Sun) rose as the imperial protector and monarch's father. Its success responds to long-time etiological arguments grounded on pre-existent shrines such as *Tiwanaku - Isla del Sol* in the highlands, or *Pachacamac* in the coastline.

That process denotes a hidden relationship between former macro-regional deities, *Wiracocha* and *Pachacamac* respectively, and the new risen god *Inti* within the Inka frontier. It diminished potential resistance and identity cohesiveness within the Andean population<sup>130</sup>. Some years later the Spaniards arrived in Cajamarca, and the Andes experienced a new process of adaptation.

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<sup>128</sup> Ibid., 53-70.

<sup>129</sup> Bouysse Cassagne, *Op. Cit.*, 179-192.

<sup>130</sup> Zuidema, *Op. Cit.*, 514–522.



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