



Mama Pacha

Creator and Sustainer Spirit of God

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Resumen

¿Qué es lo que hace tan querida a la *Mama Pacha* entre las comunidades Indígenas Cristianas de los Andes y tan desagradable entre los teólogos y representantes de las iglesias cristianas? Este artículo explora a la *Mama Pacha* como el Espíritu de Dios presente en el mundo. A través de una epistemología indígena descolonizadora y feminista, me acerco a la *Mama Pacha* interculturalmente, dentro de su entorno cultural y filosófico. Creativamente interpreto la filosofía Andina o *Pachasofía* y su lógica que describen la realidad como fluida y ontológicamente relacional, desafiando la teología y filosofía occidentales. Finalmente, recupero la concepción ancestral de Dios femenino que sostiene la dignidad y el valor intrínseco de las mujeres indígenas y la creación.

Palabras clave: Lógica Andina, Pachasofía, Decolonialidad, Epistemología indígena feminista, Interculturalidad.

Resumo

O que o torna tão cara a *Mama Pacha* entre as comunidades indígenas cristãs nos Andes e tão desagradável entre os teólogos e representantes das igrejas cristãs? Este artigo explora a *Mama Pacha* como o Espírito de Deus presente no mundo. Através de uma epistemologia indígena e feminista descolonizadora, me aproximo da *Mama Pacha* interculturalmente dentro de seu ambiente cultural e filosófico. Criativamente interpreto a filosofia Andina ou *Pachasofía* e a sua lógica que descrevem a realidade como sendo fluída e ontologicamente relacional, desafiando a teologia e a filosofia ocidentais. Finalmente, recupero a concepção ancestral de Deus feminino que sustenta a dignidade e o valor intrínseco das mulheres indígenas e da criação.

Palavras-chave: Lógica andina, Pachasofía, Decolonialidade, Epistemologia feminista indígena, Multiculturalismo.



Abstract

What makes *Mama Pacha* so dear to self-identified Indigenous Christian-Andean communities and so unpalatable to many theologians and Christian churches' officials? This article explores *Mama Pacha* as God's Spirit present in the world. Through a decolonial indigenous feminist epistemology, I approach *Mama Pacha* interculturally, encountering Her within her cultural and philosophical framework. I creatively engage Andean philosophy or *Pachasofía* and its logic, interpreting reality as ontologically relational and fluid, challenging Western theological and philosophical categories. In this process, I retrieve an ancient female understanding of God, one that upholds the dignity and intrinsic value of indigenous women and creation.

Keywords: Andean logic, Pachasofía, Decoloniality, Indigenous feminist epistemology, Interculturality.

About Cecilia Titizano

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Cita recomendada de este artículo

Cecilia Titizano (2017). «*Mama Pacha: Creator and Sustainer Spirit of God*». *Horizontes Decoloniales* 3: pp. 127–159. [Revista digital]. Disponible en: <<http://horizontesdecoloniales.gemrip.org/>> [consultado el dd de mm de aaaa].



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Introduction

Mama Pacha or *Pachamama* is the Spirit of God. *Mama Pacha* is constantly creating and recreating the world. *Mama* means «Mother» or «Lady» and *Pacha* is a complex term that in its most general form could be translated as «all that there is.» When approached through indigenous, feminist, intercultural,¹ and decolonial lenses, *Mama Pacha* uncovers an Andean divinity that unfolds, sustains, and then enfolds *Pacha* back into God's dark, depth womb, where S/He transforms it. The Andean Divinity is mysterious, relational, multiple, fluid, open, and present in *Pacha*; challenging Western substantive ontology and a central traditional Christian tenant, creation *ex-nihilo* [out of nothing].

Yet, *Mama Pacha* is popularly known as Mother Earth, a living organism with a female spirit or personality and motherly functions. Popular imagination envisions *Mama Pacha* as the female personification of Mother Nature. She is not God, for God is seen as a transcendent male Spirit and She is a female spirit with a body. In academic circles, especially theological ones, *Mama Pacha* has been presented as an agricultural or fertility deity, a protector spirit and even as Virgin Mary. Amid Andean people, especially among indigenous communities, *Mama Pacha* is a beloved and encompassing presence, «the source of life» (Mamani

¹ Throughout this article, «interculturality» is understood as taking the position of a

conscious way of life in which an ethical position favors living together [*convivencia*] where difference takes place. As a framework for thought and action, interculturality is understood fundamentally as an alternative political-cultural project that seeks the reorganization of current international relations...[and] the corrections of the asymmetry of power that exist today in the world of international politics (Fornet-Betancourt, 2004: 12-13).



Bernabé, 2000: 30). She is by far the most important divine female Spirit in the Andes, a fact that all Andean scholars would agree upon.

A theological discussion about *Mama Pacha* from a decolonial indigenous feminist epistemology begins by asking why *Mama Pacha* —the most important divine female Spirit in the Andes— has not been studied pneumatologically. To answer this question, in this article I will first draw from Elizabeth Johnson's (1993) argument that it is the dualism between spirit and matter present in Western traditional theology that has caused Holy Wisdom, the Spirit of God, to be set aside and forgotten, along with women and earth. Second, I will lay out the complexity of pneumatological studies in the Andean world, a world full of S/spirit/s that until recently has been eluded by Andean theologians. Thirdly, I will provide a brief analysis of the major Andean pneumatological studies. Lastly, using a decolonial indigenous feminist epistemology of God's self-revelation, I will deploy *Pachasofia* and its tetralogics to construct a Trinitarian pneumatological reading of *Mama Pacha*, uncovering Her as God's Spirit.

Towards a Decolonial Indigenous Feminist Epistemology

Early in the colonial period in Latin America, missionaries banned the worship to *Mama Pacha*, a prohibition that lasted until the twentieth-century. It was after Vatican II that Andean theologians became more interested in clarifying *Mama Pacha's* role within Christianity. The initial intention was to somehow domesticate what Manuel Marzal (1996) calls «a tenacious persistence of the cult of the earth that after 500 years of Christianization does not go away» (p. 79). The main concern was neither to understand *Mama Pacha*



within Andean cosmology nor what makes Her so dear to self-identified Christian-Andean communities. Instead, Christian Andean theologians were interested in helping indigenous communities to abandon the native worship of *Mama Pacha* and transform it in order to place it within an orthodox Christian praxis.

Beneath the earlier demonization and —later domestication— of *Mama Pacha* resides colonialism and its modern offspring, coloniality. Both have justified the dismissal of indigenous and Afro-Latin Americans' epistemologies and philosophical endeavors in order to impose instead hegemonic principles of knowledge. In this sense, my work is a contribution to decolonial struggles, for it opens up the domain of the epistemic, hermeneutics, and logic sustaining traditional theological projects. It contributes to build *un mundo donde quepan muchos mundos* [a world where many worlds can coexist] in harmonic and reciprocal ways. Reciprocity [*Ayni*] and harmony are both Andean indigenous metaphysical principles. Walter D. Mignolo (2005) deploys them in order to call for the decolonization of the epistemic foundation of the colonial matrix of power. At the same time, he seeks to build decolonial epistemologies that legitimize and embody praxis of *Suma Qamaña* —or Sweet Living—, the Andean way of life and utopian vision.

Methodologically, decolonial epistemologies mean tapping interculturally into the universes of Afro-American, Latina/o and indigenous philosophies, cosmologies, and theogonies (Medina, 2009: 137). These ancient knowledges have, in their own merit, the right to describe reality —metaphysics— using a non-Western logic and ethical implications. Intercultural theology considers humans as cultural beings, who experience God's Spirit in our cultural humanness —sacramentally— through cultural symbols. These cultural symbols are always ambiguous and can be used to liberate or oppress. After all, Orlando Espin (1999: 124) reminds us



that we can only speak of God analogically, and that our analogies come from the cultures and historical periods we live in.

To approach *Mama Pacha* interculturally requires encountering Her within the cultural and philosophical framework that informs who She is, moving away from preconceived occidental notions about God, nature, and humanity. Henceforward, I am engaging Andean philosophy or *Pachasofía* and its tretralogic to explore commonalities and contrasts between *Pachasofía* and prevalent Andean theological interpretations of *Mama Pacha*. *Pachasofía* is a Quechua/Aymara–Greek neologism to describe the Andean conception of reality that results from the everyday experiences and the search for understanding in order to live an ethical life. It is the study of Andean thought as philosophical hybridity.

Javier Medina (Del Carpio Natcheff, 2000: 55) y Josef Estermann (2012) understand Andean philosophy as an intercultural philosophy, based on an acknowledgement and respect for the presence of cultural diversity and polyphony in the Andes. Hence, it is an ongoing hybrid and complex process in the midst of evolution. It is the result of combining elements of different prehispanic [Andean] cultures and foreign elements incorporated within the guiding matrix of the Andean cultural paradigm (Miranda Luizaga and del Carpio Natcheff, 2000: 55; Estermann, 2008: 24).

In the process, I am retrieving an ancient female understanding of God, one that upholds the dignity and intrinsic value of indigenous women and creation. Indigenous women have suffered and survived tremendous violence under the colonial civilizing mission, a «euphemistic mask of brutal access of people's bodies through



unimaginable exploitation, violent sexual violations, control of reproduction and systematic terror» (Lugones, 2012: 74).

Today these indigenous women continue to resist abuse and exploitation, and are proposing what I call a «decolonial indigenous feminism.» This decolonial indigenous feminism is anchored in 1) an ancestral wisdom, 2) a communal worldview that is expressed in the *Aymara* term *JIWASANAKA/nosotros tod@s/we* all of us, and 3) the defence of the subject «Mother Earth» (Marcos, 2013: 146).

Theologically, a decolonial indigenous feminist epistemological approach means, first, to challenge the personification of God as the Father, which Mary Daly (1973) has identified as the foremost symbol of [hetero]patriarchy.

Second, it means to endorse Elizabeth Johnson's (1993) claim that «both [women and earth] are commonly excluded from the sphere of the sacred; both are routinely taken for granted and ignored, used and discarded, even battered and raped, while nevertheless continue to give birth and sustain life» (p. 2).

Third, it means to uphold Catherine Keller's (2003) exposure of a deep-rooted Christian «tehomophobia.» *Tehom*—or primordial sea—is associated with chaos, fluidity, darkness and wetness. Theodor H. Gaster (2007) states:

The ancient Hebrews believed that the earth lay across an all-encompassing ocean, which they called *tehom* [the deep]. In the Babylonian Epic of Creation the primordial ocean is personified as the monstrous Tiamat, who launches battle against the supreme god Anu, but is eventually subdued by Marduk and split lengthwise “like an oyster,” the two parts of her body forming, respectively, the vault of heaven and the bedrock of the earth. This myth is echoed in several passages of the Bible (Isa. 51:9–10; Hab. 3:8; Ps. 74:13–14; 89:9–10) which speak of a primeval combat between God and a monster variously styled Leviathan, Rahab (“Blusterer”), Tannin (“Dragon”), Yam (“Sea”), and Nahar



(“Stream”). The personification of the primordial ocean as a monster is further echoed in Genesis 49:25, where *tehom* is described as “crouching below,” like a beast (p. 530).

«Tehomophobia» draws from the understanding of *Tehom* as the female figure that God defeats and ultimately eliminates. Keller (2003) asserts that «tehomophobia» or «fear of death and femininity cooked into a serene habit of abjection» (p. 64) is present at the foundations of Christian orthodoxy.

Fourth, a decolonial indigenous feminist epistemology means to theologize from the *mercado* [marketplace], understood as a hybrid place where the sacred and profane, clean and unclean, high and low intertwine into a rich fabric of life (Stallybrass and White, 1986).

Fifth, it means that the concrete material reality of indigenous women’s lives and bodies is the locus through which they constantly and sacramentally interact with the Divine and the cosmic reality. This *siente-pensante* epistemology experiences and relates to the Divine through an open corporality, where a thinking heart and a dark and wet womb is the place where life is constantly created and recreated. A *siente-pensante* epistemology prehends—in the Whitehead sense— *Pacha* through a thinking heart and a dark and wet womb. It begins with a deep shared awareness of the divine manifestation in matter. The cosmos pulses towards harmony and balance and, the human community, immersed in this relational and muddy reality, participates in the pulse towards harmony. Knowledge is embodied through an open corporality that prehends and then affects *Pacha*. Women in their communities, through their open corporality and thinking-hearts and wombs, actively collaborate in the on-goingness of the universe or creative advance of *Pacha*.



Sylvia Marcos (2013) explains that for indigenous women «the skin does not separate the exterior from the interior or the material from the immaterial. Instead there is a permanent and constant interchange, where the skin is constantly crossed by all types of fluxes» (p. 155). Marcos (2013: 155) is correct when she affirms that indigenous women's understanding of the body describes an open corporality towards energetic fluxes of the cosmos. This profound interconnectivity between the female bodies and the Divine points towards an intrinsically mysterious, interrelated and fluid Divinity that is present in creation, constantly creating and recreating. By the same token, the female permeable body is symbolically seen as the locus where the Spirit, spirits, vapors, humors, and matter are in permanent flux. Hence, the life that gestates either inside their wombs or inside God's womb acquires an intrinsic value that ought to be intuitively perceived and respected.

Beyond Western Colonial Dichotomies

Desencuentros with S/spirit/s

The *desencuentros* [disencounters] with the S/spirit/s has its roots in the dualism between spirit and matter in Greek thought. Spirit is the transcendent principle that brings into play activity, autonomy, reason, the mind, the intellect, the soul, the permanent, and the infinite. On the other hand, matter is the immanence principle, which shows itself in passivity, dependence, emotions, the body, the physical, nature, the transitory, and the finite (Johnson, 1993: 11). Plato equates the body to a prison in which the soul is confined. Therefore, God can only be understood as pure form and no matter, pure actuality and no potentiality. God is perfect and therefore changeless. He is also pure intelligence



and pure activity. The Holy Spirit is understood as the loving relationship between the Father and the Son and together providentially rule the universe.

The Patristic and Scripturally based understanding of the creative mission of the Holy Spirit is set aside. Theologians no longer associated the creative Spirit with animating and giving life, as the mother hen brooding over and nurturing her young or hovering over the waters of creation bringing order out of the chaos. The Spirit is forgotten because of its close association with women's role as creating, indwelling, sustaining, resisting, recreating, challenging, guiding, liberating, completing, loving, gifting, befriending, giving birth, nourishing and rearing. Furthermore, creation has been symbolically described using female imagery. This analogy is based on the fact that women are life-givers to every human child, and like earth itself, keep bringing forth fruits, even in the most precarious situations. Both are assigned instrumental value, with little or no intrinsic worth apart from their potential to serve the needs and desires of men:

Both women and earth have a symbolic and literary affinity with the creator Spirit, Giver of life, who is similarly ignored in western religion consciousness as a result of restricting the sacred to a transcendent, monarchical deity outside nature. These three relationships — human beings to earth, among each other, and to God — are profoundly interconnected. The way one is cast affects the other two. In the heritage of western thought, of which theology is a part, all three have been conceived primarily according to the values of patriarchy (Johnson, 1993: 3).

The material reductionism present in modern thought leaves no space for S/spirit/s. The earth is raw material to be used and exploited, and women are ratified in subservient



roles within the heteropatriarchal system. Theology did not escape modern machinery; and in the Andes, things were no different. Josef Esterman (2012: 233) argues that there are not homeomorphic equivalents for the terms *anima* or «soul» and «spirit» in the Aymara and Quechua language. This means that one has to go beyond a linguistic equivalent to find one that functions within a different cultural context, in similar way to the role that the equivalent plays in the compared culture. Thus, Andean cosmology was labeled «animistic,» that is to say, «pagan» and «primitive». This common interpretation remains current, especially among Western anthropologists. The colonial impositions of alien concepts such as «paganism» or «animism» onto local cultures has led missionary efforts in the Andes to eradicate indigenous religions. An approach that began with the decree of the Second Council of Lima (1567-1568) calling for «the extirpation of idolatries,» and persisted into the twentieth-century with the call to bring the Word of God to immature Christians, idolaters, superstitious, and pagans who continue syncretic practices.

The use of «animism» as analytic framework has overshadowed theological studies on the Spirit in the Andes. *Mama Pacha* was analyzed through glasses colored by a sharp dualism between spirit and matter. She has been described as a female fertility goddess, an embodied and capricious deity. As such, she suffered the same fate as other females and female-like things such as planet Earth. On the other hand, this animistic scheme also dismisses indigenous spiritualities as «primitive» and discourages pneumatological studies in the Andes. Only in the last twenty years there have been studies about the Holy Spirit in the Andes and the role of *Mama Pacha*.



Decolonizing Mama Pacha

One of the theologians taking up the cudgels in favor of decolonial understanding of *Mama Pacha* is María José Caram Padilla (2012), who argues that «the sacred relationship with *Pachamama* has helped Andean communities to resist and to recover self-confidence; as well as to indict the idols of modernity, current depredators of creation and human life» (p. 242). *Pachamama* is Mother Earth, Holy Earth, and Spirit of Life. She is an earthly spirit that along with *Apus* and other minor spirits inhabits *Kay Pacha*, the world here that surrounds us. Caram Padilla (2012: 243-247) corroborates the common view that —like other created spirits— *Mama Pacha* serves God.

Thus, Caram Padilla (2012) uses Estermann's early efforts to describe *Pacha* as space-time or material creation, and argues that

For Andeans everything that exists is in time and occupies a place. Andean spiritual beings are not out of the space-time coordinates. In this sense, they are not segregated from the universe and they relate to it, particularly to the human being. They are located in the different layers of reality (p. 244).

In the Andean cosmology, *Pacha* is a complex anthropological, philosophical, and theological concept. In his early works, Estermann (2006, 2007a, 2007b) defines *Pacha* philosophically as universe organized in time-space categories, but not as simply as something physical and astronomical. Going back to Heraclitus who said «this world-order [*kosmos*], the same of all, no god or [hu]man did create, but it ever was and is and will be» (Graham, 2015), Estermann (2007a) affirms that «the terms *kosmos* and the medieval Latin term *ordo essendi* may have a closer meaning to what *Pacha* means» (p. 157). Furthermore,



Pacha may be an equivalent to the Latin term *esse* (to be): *pacha* is 'what it is,' the whole existence in the universe, 'the reality'. It is an expression that refers to something more than a bifurcation between the visible and invisible, material and immaterial, earthly and heavenly, profane and sacred, and external and internal (Estermann, 2007a: 157).

Estermann is right when he affirms that *Pacha* may be understood as ordered reality. He is also right when he stresses that *Pacha* transcends the dualistic unity of opposites present in Heraclitus's flux doctrine of being. Yet, terms such as *ordo essendi* and *esse* (being) emphasize ontology of substance and a hierarchical order of being that falls short in explaining the intrinsic ontological relationality present in the *Pacha*. Estermann (2007b) is aware of the limitations that an ontology of substance exercises upon *pachasofia* and the difficulties encountered when one tries to explain the complex meaning of *Pacha*. Accordingly, he insists on presenting «relationality» as the key hermeneutical lens and encompassing logical principle fundamental to understanding the concept *Pacha*. For him, time, space, order, and stratification are essential elements of Andean relationality. After conjoining the meaning of cosmos with relationality, Estermann (2007a: 158) translates *Pacha* as «the interrelated cosmos» or «cosmic relationality.»

In one of his later works, Estermann (2012) qualifies *Pacha* by concentrating on the fundamental Andean principle of relationality and its theological implications. Estermann's (2008) analysis has also lead him to affirm the following:

God is in a certain manner part of the cosmos, not as an entity among others, but as the universal network of relationships: everything is in God. This Andean panentheism perhaps has more affinity with the monism of Spinoza, who one substance as a totality of



all interrelated entities, which is at the same time God and Nature (*Deus sive Natura*) (p. 183).

In this works, Estermann is exploring ways to translate the Andean understanding of God-world relationship. Key terms are relationality and panentheism. Within the Thomistic theological system, God is the only ontologically relational infinite substance. Everything else outside God is a being in itself, while relations or accidents are secondary. The Andean principle of relationality pushes against this metaphysics, espousing a relational ontology that Wesley J. Wildman (2010) defines as such: «the relations between entities are ontologically more fundamental than the entities themselves. This contrasts with substantive ontology in which entities are ontologically primary and relations ontologically derivative» (p. 55). Consequently, it would be problematic to assume that *Pacha* locates the three different spheres of reality —*Alax Pacha*, *Aka Pacha*, and *Manka Pacha*— within the created order. This assumption interprets *Pacha* through Christian philosophical categories colliding *Pacha* [*everything that exists*] with God, into a monistic system.

Another reading is possible. For example, theologians Vicenta Mamani Bernabé and Calixto Quispe Huanca (2007) explain that *Pacha* may also be understood as infinity, outside space and time. In this sense, *Pacha* seems to point toward an open possibility, «a vital cosmic force that announces the mystery of life and projects hope towards the future for humanity» (Mamani Bernabé and Quispe Huanca, 2007:19). Panentheism has become, in recent times, a third way of discussing the relationship between God and creation. John Culp (2013) affirms that «Panentheism considers God and the world to be inter-related with the world being in God and God being in the world,» without conflating God with the world into one single identity. Andean panentheism promotes an understanding of God which is «foremost a relationship and a *'relacionador,'*» or one who brings



everything into relationships, which makes Him an «*ens realissimum*,’ or the most real being» (Estermann, 2006: 287).

Caram Padilla (2012) intuites this complexity when she states: «Somehow she [*Mama Pacha*] also contains the divinity and manifests it» (p. 253). Yet, Caram Padilla’s metaphysical assumptions lead her to interpret *Pacha* as an embodied reality, outside a transcendent God; *Pacha* becomes the dwelling place of all created spirits. Consequently, «*Pachamama* is an earthly spirit, because [she] is experienced and conceived as belonging to this world (*Kay Pacha*)» (Caram Padilla, 2012: 250). Yet, she adds, «[*Pachamama*] somehow belongs to the worlds above and below, for she plays the symbolic role of relating the three layers of the universe through its fecundity [...]. Her presence interweaves the universe, in space and in time» (Caram Padilla, 2012: 175-176). At the end, Caram Padilla (2012) argues that for Christian communities, «Mother Earth represents a permanent manifestation of God’s face» (p. 272). She is a sign pointing towards the Holy Spirit, the feminine face of God, but she depends completely on God:

She is not God, Andean rituals do not invoke her first, she is considered less than Him, since she cannot act without his permission. The author of life is the Lord. Even though sometimes it is said that she is creator of life, in reality she takes care of life and allows life to grow. She is *criadora* [breeder] of life (Caram Padilla, 2012: 188)

The most interesting theological treatment of *Mama Pacha* comes from Narciso Valencia Parisaca (1998), an Aymara theologian and Roman Catholic priest. Parisaca’s main goal is to vindicate the rite of *Mama Pacha* and inculturate her worship into Christianity. He presents *Mama Pacha* as a privileged locus for God’s self-revelation. She is *Taipy* or vital center, the place where the human community enters into a



continual dialogical co-existence and reciprocity with the divinity and the three *pachas*. Valencia Parisaca's main contribution consists in deploying the Andean concept of *Taipy* to explain *Mama Pacha* and her rituals. *Taipy*, a vital *pachasophic* principle that, briefly stated, refers to the first principle, represents the primordial wholeness of the Divinity and its transformative capacities. It is the mysterious place where the unfathomable Divinity enfolds everything that exists (*Pacha*), back into itself in order to reorder it, to balance it anew.

Valencia Parisaca (1998) argues that Aymara rituals respond to the constant search of equilibrium between humanity and the three spheres of *Pacha*. Equilibrium means to accept the tension between two complementary forces playing in creation. Accordingly, the *Taipy*, the primordial center of all religious rituals, is the central place of worship. Likewise, *Mama Pacha* serves as the center, the channel through which the Divinity community and the human community communicate. As creation, *Mama Pacha* «is the open temple where nature and everything surrounding us becomes a sacrament of God's infinite presence» (Valencia Parisaca, 1998: 83) Creation talks and humans respond through rituals. In the view of Valencia Parisaca (1998), She is a symbolic representation of *Pacha*; «the sacred and privileged place where the Spirit of God encounters the Aymara people in history» (p. 77). He further asserts:

Pachamama is the maximum symbolical representation of all creation, because its meaning is not only limited to physical space, but transcends space and time denoting all existence. In other words, *Pachamama* is like the mother of the same vital existence (Valencia Parisaca, 1998: 97).



Mama Pacha is the place where the human community gives thanks to the Divinity, reciprocating and thanksgiving God's gifts of life. She is «the objectified earth, and this is why Aymara people recognize her as a fruitful mother» (Valencia Parisaca, 1998: 83). At the same time, Valencia Parisaca (1998) states that, «She symbolizes the universal maternal face of God, closely linked to the agricultural production. She is a feminine figure, maternal and loving» (p. 43). However, She is not God, nor is She a spirit, *Mama Pacha* is a symbol of the transcendent Father, and creator —*ex nihilo*— of all. *Mama Pacha* is nature objectified as the earth, God's first gift to humanity. This is why the Aymara people recognize *Mama Pacha* as a fertile mother. (Valencia Parisaca, 1998: 100).

Yet, many indigenous communities have challenged this patriarchal worldview. They have upheld an ancient cosmology that presents *Mama Pacha* as a generative matrix and Mother of all that exists, neither a merely symbol nor, worst, an assistant of a transcendent God. In this ancient cosmology, She is the immanent presence of God, who creates out of Her depths and is present in *Pacha*, constantly recreating, indwelling, liberating, and unfolding.

An indigenous feminist pneumatological Trinitarian reading of *Mama Pacha*

Upholding Pachasofía

In order to retrieve this ancient female Spirit led divinity we need to go back to the Andean cosmogenesis. The Andean primordial totality begins to unfold and creates out of her depths:



The Andean genesis is not a simple single act of creation; instead it is a progressive emanation or an infinite generation of life from a primary unity. The sacred numbers from one to five are foundational steps of the emanation, and each of them manifests a plane of concrete realization (Miranda Luizaga, 1996: 30)

Unlike the classic Christian story of creation, where God creates *ex-nihilo* in a single act, Andean cosmogony is based on a primordial totality or First Quality, where everything already exists but it is not fully realized. The First Quality is not a number per se, for it is uncountable, indeterminable and unrecognizable. Similar to non-substantial and non-dualistic Eastern traditions, the Andean One can only be recognized if another exists. Before the One has aroused itself, it is in an indeterminate and quiescent state, in a kind of unlimited or infinite chaotic plenitude; for as long as the primary unit does not divide, it will be the negation of everything, hence the negation of life. This negation is not an existential one, it is not a pure emptiness or nothingness; instead it represents the unlimited, chaotic, and non-concrete nature of the First Quality, where everything is already present. In this sense, the First Quality or primordial totality is the first cause (not in the Aristotelian sense), and beginning of the universe. The importance of the One resides in its being the energetic motor for the process of emanation that generates from the unfolding of the numerical qualities that follow (Miranda Luizaga and Del Carpio Natcheff, 2000: 37). The First Quality begins to exist or becomes conscious, in a matter of speaking, when it unfolds itself in a reciprocal and inverted reflection. This is the first step towards creation and multiplicity.

The «Second Quality is the manifested generator impulse that originates in the primordial totality of the First Quality» (Miranda Luizaga, 1996: 34). The Second Quality represents the beginning of the internal unfolding within the



totality. This Second Quality is not yet a plurality, since it takes place within the totality, introducing movement. This is what I call a «plurisingularity» because it takes place outside *spacetime*. While the First Quality expresses the totality in a passive and inertial state, the Second Quality conveys the pre-manifestation and the primordial impulse that generates an internal unfolding of complementary or non-antagonistic opposites. This is possible because the totality recognizes itself in its inverse reflection, as if looking into a convex mirror. The reciprocal and inverse reflection generates two elements that are independent and different but complementary to each other. The Second Quality, as the reciprocal and inverse reflection, provides the relationship that the First Quality ontologically needs in order to pass from emptiness into a neutral nexus between being and non-being, or as more but also less than the whole.

This reflection, or the unfolding of the Totality into itself, is the result of an auto-sacrificial act on the part of the Totality, returning to a type of bottomless darkness or death. This state kindles the duality of non-antagonistic opposites: light/non-light; positive/non-positive; negative/non-negative; to be/not-to be; being/not being, and so forth. Once the whole returns to a state of emptiness, a state without content or determination, this state becomes a crossing point between being [*estar*] and non-being [*no-estar*]; it is a neutral nexus between two complementary opposites [*tinku*].

The plurisingularity lacks generative power because it is the consequence of the unfolding Totality as a preamble for cosmic reflection, and not the consequence of a differentiation of the image (Schneider, 2008: 40). The plurisingularity is full of potentiality; it is the potential prelude to creation (multiplicity) that needs to be actualized in order to produce life. What it needs is the Third Quality, the actualization of potentiality.



Mama Pacha as Creative and Agentic

Out of the chaotic dark depth, the Third Quality unfolds, introducing into the *plurisingularity*, the separation that is needed to maintain the difference between the Totality and its reflected image. The Third Quality makes it possible for the plurisingularity to sustain the differentiation. It brings movement and actualization. It allows the Andean trinity to become a generative matrix of creation that provides an ontological logic of multiplicity within a constantly becoming cosmos (Miranda Luizaga, 1996: 38). It introduces the principle of life and the agency to generate life. It is life. The Totality is now understood as a being of unity, one in three and three in one; not as three separate individuated beings, but as three different capacities, that now and only in a Trinitarian state, can move from *ser*, or being, into *estar siendo*, or becoming.

This Trinitarian becoming generates life because it allows the plurisingularity to self-reflect, in complementary non-antagonistic opposites, creating the space and desire or agency to unfold creation. The Third Quality sustains and makes the Andean Divinity possible. This ontological logic of multiplicity or triadic be/coming is a moment of order, balance or equilibrium between the first *plurisingularity* and the Fourth Quality or the cosmic manifestation of life. In the Third Quality, the transcendent plurisingularity —or incipient self-recognition or consciousness— becomes immanent in *Pacha* (Miranda Luizaga and Del Carpio Natcheff, 2000: 44). The Third Quality, immanently present in *Pacha*, operationalizes or actualizes the principle of life. It becomes dynamic, creative, agenic, and all-powerful. The Andean Trinitarian Divinity unfolds out of its oceanic divinity creation, or be/comes incarnate. Yet, it transcends creation, for despite reflecting the non-antagonistic opposites present



in the plurisignality, creation alone lacks the transformative capacity of constant becoming.

Joan de Santa Cruz Pachacuti Salacamaygua —an indigenous chronicler who lived in the first part of the seventeenth century— attempted to explain his Andean cosmology in the framework of the Christianity brought by the Spaniards. Despite his knowledge of Christian theology and the rules of Spaniard discourse, he needed to employ visual images in order to express the complexity of Andean thought (Harrison, 1982: 69-74). At the upper center of his drawing, a large oval represented the Totality.

For Santa Cruz Pachacuti, the Andean divinity is an unfathomable mystery. Borrowing Aristotelian terminology, it could be said that the divine essence remains hidden. What is revealed is what Santa Cruz Pachacuti calls, *APU-KON-TITI-WIRA-KOCHA* [Lord–Fire–All/Source/Creation– Primordial impulse–Water], and it is neither male nor female (Jordá Arias, 2003: 64). Valencia Parisaca (1998), Jordá Arias (2003), and Nicanor Sarmiento Yupanqui (2011) interpret the Andean divinity as the Christian God the Father, who creates *ex-nihilo*. This has been a very common interpretation for centuries. Yet, another interpretation is possible.

APU-KON-TITI-WIRA-KOCHA is known by a variety of names: *Illa Teci Wiraqocha* [Light of the Universe], *Tisci Wiraqocha* [Lord of the Universe], *Hatun Apu* [Great Elder], *Apu Qollana Auqui* (Great Captain of Captains), *Inti Awatiri* [Sun Shepherd], *Pachakamaq* [Creator or Organizer of the Universe], and *Pachayachachiq* [Teacher of the Universe] (Bascope Caero, 2008: 122-123). However, there is not enough evidence to support the claim that this Andean Divinity is God the Father.



From Santa Cruz Pachacuti, we learned that the Andean divine self-manifestation or Primordial impulse involves water, a female symbol. To express divine female images, Andeans use several names such as *Mama Qucha* [Mother of the primordial impulse or Lady of the oceans], *Quya Ati* [Polar mystery of divine energy], *Quta Mama* [Matrix or Womb of energetic fluid] and *Quya Phaxsi* [Reflection of energy itself], and they are symbolically represented by the water and the moon. (Miranda Luizaga, 1991: 305) For example, the name *Wiraqocha* is made of two nouns, *wira* [fat] and *qocha* [lake or ocean] that Sarmiento translates literally as «lake of grease» or «grease or foam of the sea.» (Sarmiento Yupanqui, 2011: 117) He then assigns the meaning of the «place of power» because *wira* is a sign of vital power in the Andes. But, more than being a place of power, it means a place of origin. Out of the watery depths or womb of *Qucha Mama* or Mother of the primordial impulse, unfolds the first impulse or plurisignality.

From the unknowable, bottomless, watery depths emerges the Andean deity *Pachakamaq Wiraqocha*. The womb or ocean of divinity is the depths of God, where everything folds together in God. Out of this Totality or ocean of divinity unfolds the plusignality or *Pachakamac Wiraqocha*. This Second Quality, not separate but different from the first, is explained as «that which unfolds what otherwise remains ‘folded together’» (Keller, 2003: x) Using Catherine Keller’s (2003: 218-219) words it could be said that *Pachakamaq Wiraqocha* is like *bara elohim* (a created God) unfolding out of her own depth or ocean of divinity (*tehom*).

The unfolding begins in this precarious relation. What is more, «within the first plurisignality there is an incipient incarnation, at the edge of the depth» (Keller, 2003: 232-233). At this early stage, *Pachakamaq Wiraqocha* is without life and unable to produce life. It represents a preamble state between being and not-being. It could almost



be said that it does not quite exist on its own; he is just the inverse self-reflection of the Totality or Dark bottomless womb (*tehom*). What is needed is something to help establish and hold the difference between the Totality and its own reflection.

At this point, the Third Quality unfolds and holds in relationship the plurisignarity. The Third Quality represents divine differentiation. Keller (2003) points to *Ruach* as the one who opens a third space so «*Tehom* could flow into language and that *Elohim*, by a certain chiasmic effect, might listen» (p. 232). In the Andes, the third unfolding holds and fosters the self-reflection, bringing the plurisignarity together, pulsing forward the power of life. It could be said that «without the Spirit, the Totality remains a sterile possibility and God remains mere Word, fleshless abstraction and power code» (Keller, 2003: 233). Keller calls the Spirit the *implicatio* or differentiator that allows *Pachakamaq Wiraqocha* to reflect in its complementary opposite. By reflecting the plurisignarity, the Third Quality separates the opposites in their complementary and interdependent difference, pulsing into an infinite becoming.

The Third Quality transforms the plurisignarity into a Trinitarian generatrix that brings the principle of life. Mythically, this generatrix is represented by the *Inti/Willka* (Sun), the *Qilla/ Koati* [Moon] and *Mama Pacha*. As *Willka* rises in the horizon, he sees the *Koati's* image reflected on the water. He stops and for a moment, and his image and the *Koati's* image merge, generating the vital energy that originates and sustains life. (Miranda Luizaga and Del Carpio Natcheff, 2000: 29-30; Miranda Luizaga, 1996: 29) *Pachakamaq Wiraqocha*, the first light and first impulse, is only generative if *Koati* is present, not as a separate being, just different. They are two aspects of the same true that now thanks to the Third Quality move from the state of pure



potentiality to one of active cosmogenesis. It is the principle of Life holding the two opposites together.

Mama Pacha unfolds from the watery Divine womb (Totality/Enfolded/*Tehom*) as the third reflection. She is power of creative action, she is the immanent God, the Mother or Spirit that first binds the Totality and the plurisignality together into equilibrium between being and non-being, and then moves them into *estar siendo* or becoming. At this time —although this takes place outside time—, the Spirit of Life moves to the surface of the waters. This water is no longer *Tehom*, but a type of fluidity, the waves, and the membranes of energy from which matter forms and stabilizes. This water is mythically called *Quta Mama* [reflection of divine energy]. Hovering, almost touching *Quta Mama's* surface, *Mama Pacha*, the Spirit of Life, unfolds creation. In the process, she is *implicated* in the relationship between the Trinitarian God and creation.

The interface of creator and creation is thus implicated in the material energy: «God's spirit is life's vibrating, vitalizing field of energy. We are in God, and God is in us [...]. God's Spirit is our space for living» (Keller, 2003: 232). For Keller (2003), the Spirit is the *implicatio*, «the differentiator which relates one to another» (p. 232). In the Andes, the differentiator that relates one to another, and is implicated in the story of *Willqa* and *Koati*, is *Mama Pacha*, Mother/Lady of All that is. In *Mama Pacha*, the principle of life becomes active. She is agency, will and knowing. Thus *Mama Pacha* is not only the morphogenic matrix of creation; she is creation, both the process and the product. She has self-agency and complete autonomy, hence is not merely the power of the Absolute, She is the Absolute.

Within the Andean Trinity, she is the included Third Quality, making the Andean divine trinity fertile, capable of creating out of the Womb. *Mama Pacha* is that which



separates and holds together the unknowable and not fully realized plurisignarity. Thanks to her and in her, this otherwise anonymous God gives birth to another, not separate but different (*Pachakamaq Wiraqocha*). *Mama Pacha* is the differentiator that relates one to another. She is the connector that does not transcend or obliterate difference; rather she intensifies the difference precisely because it's being brought into relation.

Mama Pacha signifies the relationality and the moving power of life. «As the relation of relations, she relates the divine interdependency to the interdependencies of the world» (Keller, 2003: 232). The Spirit of God or *Mama Pacha* becomes the immanent life force of God and the economic interdependence of creator and creation. Keller (2003) calls it a «pneumatological materiality»; I call it a «mystical materialism», where *Pacha* be/comes the sacred body of God. The Spirit is what maintains the relationship and does not allow the Trinitarian God to be conflated with the world. The Spirit once again, this time in *Pacha*, creates and sustains the differentiation, making it impossible to draw a line between them.

Mama Pacha is vitalizing *Pacha*, therefore her worship epitomized the veneration of God as life giver, and rituals take place in a natural temple, creation. *Mama Pacha* is the mother of the Quechua and Aymara and of all living beings in the cosmos (Sarmiento Yupanqui, 2011: 135). This reverence for *Mama Pacha* can be read in the incantation reported by Cristoval de Molina in 1535: «*Pachamma Qasillaqta qespilla. Qhapag Inka wawaykipta marq'ariu, hat'alliy.* (Oh Mother Earth, Your fortunate blessed, the Inka, your son, embrace me in your arms, take me by the hand)» (quoted in Damian, 1994: 28). Another myth recovered in 1979 says:



From the dawn of the universe, *Pachamama* said: I am the Holy Earth; I am she who raises you, she who suckles you. I am *Pacha Tierra* (Earth), *Pacha Ñusta* (princess),² *Pacha Virgin*. (Therefore from the creation of the world I am worthy of respect)...Like our mother, she is suckling us and raising us. But our mother, in any case, dies; the earth never dies. At death we disappear into the earth, she absorbs us. Like her own child she is rearing us. Her hair grows: it is the pasture land; it is wool for the animals. With this pasture she feed the animals (Gow and Condori, 1976: 10).

According to Víctor Bascopé Caero (1998), «*Akay Pacha* is the place where *Mama Pacha* expresses herself or becomes visible and tangible. It is the place where [S]he gives and sustains life; generously providing food for all inhabitants» (p. 8). In the *Pacha*, *Mama Pacha* «is the carrier or the womb where She engenders life» (Miranda Luizaga, 1991: 305). She is what makes creation *ex profundis* possible, by establishing a difference in relation. *Mama Pacha* as the relation of relations relates the divine interdependency to the interdependencies of the *Pacha*. She is immanently present in creation as the Mother of the *Pacha* or Lady of the *Pacha*. Symbolically, *Mama Pacha* is the energy of life. She is life itself, which is why the Andean human community loves her, cares for her and protects her. She is sacred because she represents life (Valencia Parisaca, 1998: 42). She makes possible that *Pacha* reflects the Divinity, and it is imbued with an fluid ontological relationality.

² *Ñustas* were virgins who lived together in a setting that has been translated as a nunnery. Yet, they were religious and political leaders. These were chosen women that existed as a social, political and religious network throughout the empire, headed by the *Qoya*, the Inka's wife. As religious leaders, *Ñustas* had specific ritualistic roles, especially in reference to the main deity, *Wiragocha*, for they were the wives of the Sun. They were looked to as saints who had intimate dealings and communication with the gods (Damian, 1994: 22).



Finally, *Mama Pacha* as the implicated or differentiator that relates one to another, present in the world here, enjoys the privileged position of mediator between the world above and the world below. It is in Her and through Her that the Andean Trinity is present in creation, constantly bringing back the many into the One, where multiplicity is reordered, balanced and renewed. Then, God unfolds creation once again, in a continuing flux of becoming. *Mama Pacha* mediates between the three aspects of *Pacha*, in order to secure abundant life in this world. «She is a sacred entity, at the same time, a mediator and a harmonizer of life energies above and below» (Quispe, 2006: 10). She is also the place from which the human community can relate to God as co-creators. *Mama Pacha* signifies an «economic» interdependence of creator and creation, and as such the interrelation of all creatures (Keller, 2003: 232).

The love and veneration of the great Andean Mother is tangible in the following prayer:

Dear *Pachamama*, you who reign in the universe with the intelligence of the healthy balance, listen to your children, intercede for us [...]. Give us the grace of your eternal breath [...]. Today we ask you to accompany us in the healing of our body and spirit. You, who are wise, make us your children, an instrument of salvation (Quispe, 2011).

Conclusion

Despite the inequality and oppression that has marked the presence of Christianity in the Andes, Aymara and Quechua have integrated Christianity into their worldview; creating ongoing Andean Christian communities. *Mama Pacha* as God's Spirit is present in the world. When engaged interculturally, Andean cosmology clearly identifies *Mama*



Pacha as the God's Spirit and not merely a feminine aspect of God. She is God the Mother out of which multiplicity unfolds. In the unfolding, She is implicated in the materiality of creation, holding together transcendence and immanence. Her role as the *implicated*, becomes first evident *ad-intra*, where she holds the space, so to speak, where the divine plurisignality reflects itself becoming conscious of itself. Then, thanks to Her again, the tehomitic creation unfolds into the flux of ongoing creation.

A decolonial indigenous feminist epistemology challenges androcentric readings of ancient Andean knowledge and proposes an Andean philosophy that honors the relational ontology of Andean thought, where the female principle is active, creative, powerful and immanent in materiality. Therefore, it could be said that embodiment is divine, and human community functions as *chakana* or bridge between the divine and creation, as co-creators. She also transcends and transforms *Pacha* in its continue *devenir* or becoming.

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