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Rituals of the Re-Founded Bolivian State

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Rituals of the Re-founded Bolivian State

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In the month of June the Willka Kuti ritual or Aymara New Year takes place in the Bolivian Western highlands. This thesis explores Aymara historic, cosmologic and symbolic dimensions of the process of change in Bolivia by looking at this specific ritual. With the rise of indigenous people in Bolivia’s political arena there have been many changes to the country’s national affairs involving economical, social and especially religious issues. For the indigenous Aymara, the notion of pachakuti is associated with a mythical transformation of space-time and a profound change. Thus, the beginning of a new era has begun and is transforming the place of the indigenous majority in contemporary Bolivia. Exploring Aymara ritual practice, and deployment of Aymara symbolism in political spaces, this study contributes to anthropological understanding of historical currents of indigenous struggle, politics, symbolism and religion by focusing on the contemporary religious and political situation in Bolivia. Aymara indigenous cosmologies are beginning to be included in governmental discourse as a response to the changes undertaken in favor of the indigenous majority. The pluralistic treatment of religion is legitimizing Aymara ritual specialists, known as Amaw'as, who work closely with political leaders in conducting rituals at important events. Tiwanaku is a national emblem and references a grandiose Andean past and the landmark of newly invented traditions. Therefore, this study explores why Tiwanaku is the chosen place to perform rituals in recent and political celebrations. Ethno-politically engaged Amaw’tas are the main agents in conducting this ritual. For the Amaw’tas, Tiwanaku is an ancient powerful shrine attributed with the ability to concentrate sacred power. Hence, the Aymara re-appropriate Tiwanaku to fortify their ethnic pride, to exemplify political and spiritual victories and to fight the contemporary implications of Bolivia’s colonial past. The ritual speaks to various audiences, but it also condenses divergent conflicting messages. For instance, one part of the message references Aymara and/or indigenous parts of the nation in celebrating the triumph of indigenous struggles, the beginning of a new era and Evo Morales’s election to the presidency and the first indigenous head of state. Another part of the message references the continuities of Bolivia as an internally diverse nation within which harmony, peace and unity between polarized sectors are enjoined through ritual activity. As a sacred space, Tiwanaku is embraced by Aymara ritual participants as the place to mediate and conciliate conflicts between indigenous and non-indigenous groups. The main focus of this thesis is on the interweaving of politics and religious process, the Aymara perspective on the interaction of past and present and how the Willka Kuti ritual celebrated at Tiwanaku references the past as an invented tradition.
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Chapter 1: Introduction

"Uka Jacha Uru Jutaskiway
Amuya Sipxañani Jutaskiway
Taspacha Llakinacasti
Amuyasipxañani Tukusiniu
Tatanas Mamanaka
Uka Jacha Uru Jutaskiway
Tatanas Mamanaka
Amuyasipxañani Tukusiniu”

"The big day will come.
We have to stand together to end
our misery and sorrow.
Grandparents, girls and boys, all of us.
The special day will come when
our misery will change” (Aymara Song)¹

On June 21st, 2008 the Bolivian president Evo Morales welcomed the 5,516th Aymara New Year with hundreds of people at the archeological site of Tiwanaku, an ancient political and ritual center of the Americas. Among the national and international visitors was a large group of Morales’ government officials. Aymara ritual specialists conducted the ceremony and their central political message expressed hope for peace, unity, and tranquility for Bolivia.

Evo Morales, the first indigenous head of state of Bolivia has been in power since 2006. His first words as president in the administrative capital of Bolivia, La Paz, called for change and the beginning of a new era. He announced governmental

¹The song “Jacha Uru” (The Big Day) by composer Mario Gutierrez has recently become the indigenous movement’s hymn in the Bolivian highlands.
projects to give more rights to the indigenous majorities, which have been historically oppressed and exploited since Colonial times.

Bolivia, a landlocked country located in the heart of South America, has one of the largest indigenous populations in the region and has been part of a complex history of colonization, exclusion, racism and oppression since the Spanish conquest. The multifaceted political situation in Bolivia experienced a significant turning point after a series of insurgencies and political mobilizations in the Western Andean region. The popular masses and their discontent with former mestizo presidents' policies mobilized during the national election in 2006 that confirmed the designation of Evo Morales.

This significant shift in Bolivia has been the center of heated debates in Latin America and in the international news reports. The international media covers stories on Morales's leftist tendencies that stray from neoliberal policies and his controversial relationships with Venezuelan president Hugo Chavez and Cuban leader Fidel Castro. However, behind Morales's polemic political tendencies, he has achieved major changes in

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2 Geographically the region covers the highland plateau of the Andes in the west, semitropical and tropical valleys of the eastern mountain slopes and the tropical lowlands of the east.
the political, cultural and social realms of Bolivia’s indigenous population.

Moving away from neoliberal and colonial models implemented in the country before his election, Morales has nationalized natural resources to address the disparity of wealth held by elite groups (with European and Spanish ancestry) residing in Eastern Bolivia, especially in the departamento (department) of Santa Cruz.

On the one hand, these recent changes, applied by Morales’s party MAS (Movimiento Al Socialismo, Movement Towards Socialism) have antagonized the tense political situation, since non-native opponents believe that these changes are too extreme. On the other hand, Morales’s election signifies a turning point and the beginning of a new era for indigenous Bolivians who have been disenfranchised for centuries.

For Aymara and Quechua people of the Andes, the term pachakuti is associated with a mythical transformation of the world or a profound turning (of time and space). This term carries “cosmological connotations of the turning of the world upside down. It does not suggest that cosmic change occurs on a plane distinct from that of political change; rather the two are indissolubly linked” (Hylton and Thomson 2007:29). This notion of Pachakuti can be related to three historical cycles dating back in centuries and decades that have shaped contemporary
Bolivia. As a result, the recent political transformations and “the unprecedented experience of an Indian head of state have intensified this sensation of entering a new historical era” (Ibid.) With the rise of indigenous people in Bolivia’s political arena there have been many changes to the country’s national affairs surrounding economical, social and especially religious issues.

Methodology

In this thesis I address the interweaving of Aymara ritual and political rhetorical discourse. I explore Aymara historic, cosmologic and symbolic dimensions of the process of change in Bolivia by looking at one specific ritual: the Willka Kuti ritual or Aymara New Year at the archaeological site of Tiwanaku. This ritual references historical narratives, ethnic pride resurgence, nationalism and anti-colonial notions. Thus, my focus centers on the interweaving of politics and religious processes, the interaction of past and present from an Aymara point of view and how Tiwanaku is the place where ritual references past as an “invention of tradition”.

In addition, I explore political and religious discourses provided by two particular informants, one a political leader and the other a religious leader, both who support Morales’s presidency and its attempts at addressing the inequity experienced by Bolivia’s indigenous majority. Exploring Aymara
ritual practice, and deployment of Aymara symbolism in political spaces, this study contributes to anthropological understanding of historical currents of indigenous struggle, politics, symbolism and religion by focusing on the contemporary religious and political situation in Bolivia. This study contributes to understanding the dynamics played by national politics and Aymara religion. Aymara indigenous cosmologies are beginning to be included in the political discourse as a response to the changes undertaken in favor of the indigenous majority. This pluralistic treatment of religion is legitimizing Aymara ritual specialists who work closely with political leaders in conducting rituals at important events.

In the course of the thesis, I review the existing literature on yatiris (Aymara ritual specialists) and the Aymara cosmology, and I continually reference the interviews I conducted during my fieldwork which took place in June-July 2008 in La Paz, Bolivia. I attended various Aymara rituals including the ritual performed at the archeological site of Tiwanaku. In addition to the studies on Aymara cosmology and ritual specialists, I researched newspaper clippings surrounding the main events of the 2008 Aymara New Year. I also interviewed political leader, Fernando Huanacuni, and Aymara ritual specialist, Juan Angel Yujra. Their perspectives are important
because they provide a glimpse into Bolivia’s recent political and religious situation from an Aymara point of view.

Drawing from the recent work of Swedish anthropologist Anders Burman (2009) whose study addresses practice, cosmology, ethno-political activism and state politics in contemporary Bolivia, my work will complement and discuss some of his main arguments. Burman’s goal is to illuminate a particular historical, political, social and cultural process of Bolivian Aymara society and the cosmological dimensions of meaning reproduced and generated within. Alternatively, Burman’s analysis centers on radical indianista-katarista\(^3\) ethno-politically engaged activists and Aymara ritual specialists. Specifically, he explores notions of colonialism and decolonization held by ethno-politically engaged Yatiris and how the cosmological framework of such notions is formed. He compares notions of colonialism and decolonization and particularly the decolonization practices of yatiris on the one hand, and official state discourse of Evo Morales administration, on the other hand. Furthermore, he explores notions of “illness” and “cure”, “self” and “other” that fit

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\(^3\) Named for Tupaj Katari, the indianista-katarista, movement arose in the 1970s. It has a militant ideology of class and ethnic struggle. It has been a radical ethno-political project promoted by an intellectual and ideological Aymara vanguard rejects nationalist discourses of both the right and the left.
into broader fields of national political power, ethno-political ideologies and indigenous mobilizations.

Burman’s theoretical discussion of Aymara society in Bolivia is an important point of departure of my own study. Along with Burman, I found it interesting to explore notions of decolonization implicit in the discourse of Evo Morales’s administration. Yatiris are increasingly engaged with the state, elucidating how they ritually cure and decolonize the state apparatus. In my study, Tiwanaku is the chosen site to perform rituals in recent political and religious celebrations. The site of Tiwanaku is the main locus of political and religious events. Why Tiwanaku? Why is Tiwanaku the appropriate site to perform rituals since recent political transformations? What are the messages and references transmitted in these rituals? What is the significance and symbolic importance attributed to Tiwanaku in contemporary Bolivia? This site is a national emblem and references a grandiose Andean past and the landmark of newly invented traditions.

**Theoretical Perspective**

For the purpose of this study, my theoretical framework is built upon the analytical tools drawn from Eric Hobsbawm’s concept of the “invention of tradition”, as well as Victor Turner’s and Roy Rappaport’s analysis on symbols and indexical messages in ritual.
In order to unpack the significance of symbol in ritual I borrow from Victor Turner’s definition of ritual. For Turner ritual “is prescribed formal behavior for occasions not given over to technological routine, having reference to beliefs in mystical beings or powers. The symbol is the smallest unit of ritual which still retains the specific properties of ritual behavior; it is the ultimate unit of specific structure in a ritual context” (1967:19)

Turner’s contribution was to consider symbols within a specific field of social action in which he “came to see performance of ritual as distinct phases in the social processes whereby groups became adjusted to internal changes and adapted to their external environment. From this standpoint the ritual symbol becomes a factor in social action, a positive force in an activity field. The symbol becomes associated with human interests, purposes, ends, and means, whether these are explicitly formulated or have to be inferred from the observed behavior. The structure and properties of a symbol become those of a dynamic entity, at least within its appropriate context of action” (Moore 1999:233).

I explore how in the Aymara ritual symbols produce action, in particular by observing dominant symbols as the center of interaction and performance in the ritual. According to Turner “symbols can be objects, activities, words, relationships,
events, gestures, or spatial units” (Turner 1967:19). Symbols are multi-vocal and condense meaning. Symbols have two poles of meaning: ideological and sensory and “Groups mobilize around them, worship before them, perform other symbolic activities near them and add other symbolic objects to them, often to make composite shrines” (Ibid:22).

In addition, my study also draws from Roy Rappaport’s approach to ritual as behavior that communicates information and affects social relations. For Rappaport “ritual is the social basic act” and it transmits two kinds of messages, the canonical and the indexical (or self-referential). I am interested in indexical messages because they refer to the “current physical, psychic, or social states of the participants” (Rappaport 1979:179). In other words: “Indexical messages regard the current situation of the participants, thus reflect the contemporary, immediate, and particular status of the participants” (Rakita 2009:81). In this sense, Rappaport argues that “messages that are communicated within ritual can be distinguished by their source and content” (Ibid: 81).

According to both Rappaport and Turner “ritual is understood to have communicative properties, but these properties are not simply referential and they differ from, and in certain ways exceed, what can be communicated by means of words and symbols” (Lambek 2001:253). Tiwanaku is the chosen
place to execute rituals that represent the political transformation and religious process based on the notion of *pachakuti* as a profound transformation in time and space and the beginning of a new era.

This thesis addresses the ways in which Aymara symbolic and cosmologic dimensions are stressed in the *Willka Kuti* ritual. Aymara ceremonies are created as part of the political process of change and clearly have been recently invented because they do not necessarily reflect ancient rituals practiced thousands of years ago. Thus, the past is referenced as tradition. Eric Hobsbawn’s "invented tradition is taken to mean a set of practices, normally governed by overtly or tacitly accepted rules and of a ritual or symbolic nature, which seek to inculcate certain values and norms of behaviour by repetition, which automatically implies continuity with the past. In fact, where possible, they normally attempt to establish continuity with a suitable historic past" (1983:1). While the celebration of *Willka Kuti* at Tiwanaku is treated here as an invented tradition it is an invention that is intelligible within the space-time organization of the Andean world that grounds the understanding of change. It is an invention that makes sense to people according to their local standards and experiences and modes of constructing social memory, including those unwritten but replicated in ritual (cf. Abercrombie 1998, Connerton 1989).
This thesis is divided in four chapters. Chapter two explores how three key historical moments of indigenous and popular struggles determined today’s third great insurrection that placed the first indigenous politician into his position head of state. Also, within the religious arena, Aymara cosmologies, ritual specialists and expressions over time are addressed in this section. This examination provides an initial basis for understanding the close ties between religion and politics and religious imagery in contemporary political discourses of ethnicity, nationalism and anti-colonialism.

The Willka Kuti ritual or Aymara celebration is a fairly new celebration or an “invented tradition” performed on the archaeological site of Tiwanaku. Given the recent transformations and changes that Bolivia is now facing, this particular Aymara ritual provides a window on to symbols and ritual performance that are further explored in chapter three.

Finally, the fourth chapter looks closely to the perceptions of an Aymara ritual specialist and an Aymara political leader on the recent transformations in Bolivia. From their point of view, within the political and religious realms, their visions contribute to a rhetorical discourse that complements the observations explored in the Willka Kuti ritual. Both leaders discuss the roles played by ethno-politically
engaged amawt'as' versus yatiris supporters of the political process. Their insights illustrate how the involvement of religion in political discourse changes the field of religious meanings. The new changes in Bolivia are interpreted as part of a profound change of space-time that for which the Aymara people have been waiting for almost 500 years. The era of the pachakuti has finally begun.

\textsuperscript{4}Aymara ritual specialists of the cities of La Paz and El Alto who are particularly active in urban ethnic politics. This political engagement has brought them official recognition and has legitimated expansion of their operations into rural areas.
Chapter 2: The Other Bolivia: Historical context of the Bolivian political and religious landscape

This chapter explores a series of historical events of indigenous and popular-national insurrections that have influenced the recent social transformations of contemporary Bolivia. The following section will connect the religious landscape to the Aymara indigenous group of Bolivia. Thus, this chapter focuses on the connections between the ethnic, political, and religious resurgence and the notion of Pachakuti as a mythical transformation and insurgent restoration of time and space (Burman 2009:238).

Bolivian Political Landscape

According to historians Forest Hylton and Sinclair Thomson (2007) contemporary Bolivia is going through a third great social revolution. They provide an interesting analysis of indigenous insurgency and political mobilization based on three key “revolutionary” historical moments. Understanding these historical moments shed light on the ways in which they are included in indigenous political discourse and particularly the ways they are referenced in ritual.

The first revolutionary moment took place in the great anti-colonial insurrection of 1781. Aymara rebel Julian Apaza adopted the name Tupaj Katari (meaning Resplendent Serpent) and
with his companion Bartolina Sisa laid siege to the ruling Spanish elite in the city of La Paz from March to October of that year. Lacking urban allies, Indian troops were unable to take the city and were defeated by Royal forces. Katari was drawn and quartered, and Spanish authorities executed Katari by tying his limbs to the tails of four horses. His limbs were ripped apart in four directions. Soon after, Katari’s limbs were displayed in provincial capitals as warning to insurgents. Spanish authorities held on to colonial rule until they were overthrown in 1825 during the struggles for independence and the later creation of the Republic of Bolivia.

The second great revolution and the first national-popular revolution occurred in 1952. The Nationalist Revolutionary Movement (MNR) launched a process of democratization and an end to the oligarchic rule that had prevailed since the early nineteenth century. This national revolution destroyed the landlord class, introduced universal suffrage, nationalized the mines and carried out agrarian reform. The revolution of 1952 "was a middle-class and creole-led revolution that succeeded in overturning the oligarchic liberal order thanks to the

5 This term was first worked by Bolivian theorist Rene Zavaleta (1986) in his sociological analysis.
mobilization of working-class and Indian peasant forces” (Hylton and Thomson 2007:145).

The MNR shifted in a gradually more conservative direction over the course of the 1950s. In the 1970s-1980s Bolivia was ruled by a succession of military regimes, violating human rights and repressing labour sectors. A transitional period from dictatorship to democracy in the mid 1980s left Bolivia under an alarming economical crisis. After a long period of resistance and political tensions, a neoliberal regime was instituted in the 1980s dismantling trade unions, closing mines and dispersing workers and their settlements.

After the dictatorial regimes and the unstable political and economical period, in the 1990s Bolivian authorities imposed economic structures and capitalist reforms to open the country to foreign capital. In this period peasant political and indigenous organizations became involved in class and ethnic-struggle mobilizations. Aymara nationalism grew stronger and a radical indianista-katarista tendency emerged as a distinctive organization in the Bolivian Andes. In the 1990s oil and gas resources were privatized by foreign and transnational capitals. The privatization created a deep budget crisis.

The third revolution began at the very beginning of the twenty first century with cycles of political mobilizations. These “popular rebellions” (Gilly 2007) began with the “Water
War”⁶ in 2000 culminating with the indigenous insurrection of 2003 and 2005 known as the “gas conflict”. These insurrections that took place in the Bolivian Andes overthrew and brought to an end the government of Gonzalo Sanchez de Lozada who had implemented neoliberal economic policies that dissatisfied a large part of the Bolivian population. For instance, Bolivia’s natural gas was offered to foreign oil companies in return for minimal revenues, hence abrogating Bolivian sovereignty over oil and natural gas (Gilly 2007:5).

Massive protests and strikes mounted by indigenous groups and labor workers forced Sanchez de Lozada to resign and leave the country in 2003 one year after he took office for his second term as the president of Bolivia. In the following two years political mobilizations (concentrated in the highlands and valleys) demanded for the renationalization of natural resources to regain national control of the gas production and the redistribution of revenues. Meanwhile, in the Eastern lowlands of Santa Cruz, where most of the gas reserves are located, a growing conservative elite group mobilized to oppose the central

⁶The “Water War” occurred in April 2000 in Cochabamba (the third largest city of Bolivia). Social movements fought against privatization of water supply by the foreign transnational consortium, Bechtel and Edison (Italy). The consortium named “Aguas del Tunari” monopolized the water supply system and imposed high rates, impossible for peasant farmers and citizens earning minimum wages to pay (Hylton and Sinclair 2007).

Sanchez de Lozada was nicknamed “Goni”. He was a long life member of the MNR party (Movimiento Nacionalista Revolucionario) serving his first presidency from 1993-1997 and the second from 2002-2003.
government controls and petitioned for autonomous regional rights.

Consequently, national elections were held in 2005 with an astounding victory for Evo Morales’s\(^8\) MAS (Movement Towards Socialism) party. The left-wing MAS arose in the coca fields of the Chapare lowlands in the Cochabamba valleys from the peasant trade union where Morales started his political career as a union leader.

Before the 2005 elections, previous presidential candidates usually scored 25% of the national votes on the first round of an electoral run off system. However, Evo Morales and his vice-president Alvaro Garcia Linera\(^7\) won the 2005 elections with a 53.7% of the total national vote on the first round. This significant electoral outcome installed the first indigenous president of Bolivia, a country where the majority of voters self-identify as indigenous\(^10\).

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\(^8\) Evo Morales was born in a rural Aymara region in the department of Oruro. He spent his childhood herding llamas. He did not finish high school but completed the mandatory military service. He started as a leader in union activities as a coca grower in the Chapare valleys of Cochabamba.

\(^9\) He is a public intellectual, Professor of Sociology, and analyst of social movements heavily influenced by Marxist ideals. Garcia Linera was born to a middle class mestizo family in Cochabamba and was a former member of the Tupac Katari guerrilla Army.

\(^10\) According to the 2001 national census the three largest indigenous groups in Bolivia are: Aymara, Quechua (in the Western Highlands) and Guarani (Eastern lowlands). Indigenous peoples in both urban and rural areas represent 62% of the population. The remaining 30% of the population is mestizo (mixed indigenous and European) and around 10% of the population is white.
After January, 2006 a set of reforms were implemented under the Morales administration. Moving away from neoliberal policies implemented by previous presidential administrations, Morales’s reforms included: nationalization of hydrocarbons, agrarian reform, and the text of the new national constitution that set the agenda for a constitutional assembly in 2006.

The first decree of nationalization called for extending public control and ownership over oil and liquid national gas in five foreign private companies\(^1\). The second reform allowed the government to seize and redistribute land to indigenous farmers. This reform is based on the recognition of the uneven distribution of land and has provoked reactions from the largest elite landholders of the Eastern lowlands of Bolivia. Finally, a constituent assembly was demanded by popular mobilizations in order to “re-found” the nation. Many disputes and political tensions took place while drafting the new constitution. The text was approved by the National Congress in 2007 and came into effect in 2009 after a national Referendum in 2008.

Therefore, Hylton and Thomson argue, the convergence of two traditions of political struggle, an Indian and a national-popular tradition have been pivotal for present-day transformations in Bolivia. This historical turn of events

\(^1\) Foreign petroleum companies such as: Shell-Enron, Repsol, Total, Chaco, Petrobras and CLHB.
represent a revolutionary era, as the indigenous majority and
the popular movements work towards liberation from colonial
structures and oppressive regimes that have benefited only a few.

Evo Morales’s Inauguration first took place at the
archeological site of Tiwanaku in January 21st, 2006. Surrounded
by thousands of indigenous attendants, the ceremony was
impregnated with Aymara rituals crowning the first indigenous
supreme and spiritual leader of the nation. Morales’s discourse
reclaimed an indigenous Andean heritage that had been
disregarded by the Spanish rule for centuries. Wearing a replica
tunic and hat that might have been used by ancient Tiwanaku
people, Morales spoke of “times of change” and a “triumph of the
democratic and cultural revolution” acknowledging the indigenous
forces as the true source of his power (Hylton and Thomson
2007:15)

The following day, in the Bolivian capital of La Paz,
Morales recalled Bolivia’s rebel lineage and began his speech by
saying: “Because that is our history . . . we had been condemned
to extermination and now here we are . . . precisely to change
our history” (Gomez 2006:141). As an indigenous person, Morales
spoke about the subjugation and humiliation Bolivia’s indigenous
people have faced for centuries. Mentioning anti-colonial
indigenous rebels Tupaj Katari, Tupaj Amaru, Bartolina Sisa and
dozens of other indigenous leaders who died in the “gas conflict” of 2003 he insisted that his government would mark a break with this past and that after 500 years, indigenous peoples will “take power for the next 500” (Gomez 2006).

This historical perspective is essential to understanding how present day transformations are marking a new chapter in Bolivia. Evo Morales’s discourse invokes the name of past indigenous leaders and the indigenous struggles against colonial domination. In the Andean context, this notion of revolution is expressed in the concept of Pachakuti further explored in this chapter. This term carries symbolic connotations within the political and religious realms of Bolivia.

Political changes are also influencing the religious landscape of the nation. In the next section I explore the relationship of religion and State, Aymara religious expressions since Colonial times to the present-day, and the current Bolivian Constitution recognizing a Plurinational State. Aymara religious expressions are becoming more engaged in political events as political and religious mobilizations have become intertwined with the recent social transformation in contemporary Bolivia.

Bolivian Religious Landscape

Since the Spanish conquest of South America in the sixteenth century, the Catholic Church maintained an exclusive
status as the dominant religion in Bolivia and many other countries in Latin America. Europeans brought Catholic traditions to the New World and the encounter with indigenous religions created nuanced and syncretic forms (Albó et al. 1996). "Aymara and Catholic celebrations became entangled and integral to community practices. Aymara is itself emergent from long history of entanglements within dominant systems (Incan, Spanish and modern nations). Hence, Catholicism has been part of the Aymara life for centuries" (Orta 2004)

The Catholic Church has exerted its political weight in the nation since independence in 1825, enjoying a hegemonic role in its relationship with the State. The Church became involved with the national politics of the nation and retained its status in Bolivia as the only officially recognized religion until recent changes in the new constitution.

In the second half of the twentieth century, many South American countries suffered a series of repressive military regimes accompanied by socioeconomic decline. During this time the Catholic Church emerged as a dynamic and progressive institution that stood against repressive regimes and played a pivotal role in the consolidation of democracy in South America. In Bolivia’s case, the Church subsequently gained more political power as an official institution mediating the country’s
national and international political and religious affairs (Gill 2002)

Conversely, the twentieth century represented a challenging century for the Catholic Church due to the increase of evangelical Protestant groups in the region. The expansion of non-Catholic traditions is changing the religious landscape and the increasing religious pluralism has challenged the exclusive place of Catholicism in Bolivia. During the twenty-first century, Catholicism faces increased challenges of emerging political and religious pluralism and must continue to compete with other religious groups for adherents (Gill:202)

The religious landscape is experiencing its own significant involvement in Bolivia’s political mobilizations. For example, the religious “majorities” that were not part of the official religion of the country are now playing a pivotal role in the symbolic, cultural and political discourse of Evo Morales and his governmental apparatus.

At the beginning of 2009 the New Constitution of “The Plurinational State of Bolivia” aims to give more legal land holding rights to the indigenous majorities. As part of this arrangement, religion is also addressed in order to legitimize multiple cultures and religious backgrounds:
“The State respects and guarantees freedom of religion and spiritual belief, according to their cosmovisions. The State is independent of religion.”

4th Article of the New Constitution of Bolivia

This completely changes the political sway Catholicism held as the official religion in relation with the state before 2006. As such, the Catholic Church faces a new conflict with the introduction of indigenous religious practices that are being legitimized by Morales’s political administration. Thus, I view the empowerment of the Aymara indigenous religion as debilitating to the Catholic Church’s hegemony. However, Catholicism and Aymara religions are part of a dynamic process and in many cases are entangled.

The 2001 census also indicated that 77% of the population was Catholic, and even Evo Morales’s himself has stated that he is Catholic and was raised as a Catholic. The relationship between indigenous religious expressions and Catholicism cannot

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12 The New Bolivian Constitution translated in English by Luis Francisco Valle
http://www.bolivianconstitution.com/search/label/BolivianConstitution

be understood as a binary in conflict. As it has been stated before, since the Spanish conquest, religious encounters and practices have been part of a dynamic process in emergent syncretic forms. In my view, the recognition of religious pluralism is not a rejection of Catholic belief but part of a fight against the Catholic Church as a colonial and oppressive institution.

Prior to 2006, all former Bolivian presidents practiced the Catholic faith. Along with the Catholic endorsement by the national powers, the governmental apparatus was officially represented by the Catholic Church as the mediator in conflict. In national holidays and political events, the Catholic hierarchy of bishops presided over Masses at national religious celebrations. Today, the presidency of Evo Morales has contested this exclusive legitimation of the Catholic Church as the official religious institution of the country by including Aymara religious practitioners in the political arena.

The rituals performed at the ancient Andean site of Tiwanaku in 2008, represent one example of the active participation of the president and his governmental officials in Aymara ceremonies. In the past it was extremely unlikely to have the presence of the president in Aymara rituals. But much of today’s religious and political events are becoming increasingly connected. It is important to point out that many inhabitants
from neighbouring cities of La Paz and El Alto, as well from different regions of Bolivia and international locations, Catholic and non-Catholic, have been participating in the rituals of the Aymara New Year for the past twenty years. My interest, however, is to explore the meanings in ritual performed at Tiwanaku because is a locus of indigenous vindication of an ancient indigenous civilization that had no contact with Spanish Christian missionaries.

The next section explores Aymara origins, cosmology and worldview and the role they play in exercising political events in the Western highlands. In addition I explore the Aymara religious landscape, its relationship with Catholicism and its emerging role in the political events and rhetorical discourses of indigenous leaders. I also provide an overview of the Aymara ritual specialists or “yatiris”, their roles as mediators between Andean deities, their specializations and the symbolic and meaningful aspects of the offerings that are part of Aymara ritual and public ceremonies.

Aymara Cosmology

Therese Bouysse-Cassagne and Olivia Harris’s (1987) study of Aymara cosmology used colonial archives and chroniclers along with oral histories. Their study is one of the most important, in-depth historical and anthropological analyses of the three levels or ages of the Aymara cosmology.
Discussion of the Andean myths of origin reveals a wide array of female, male and androgynous figures. The mythic Andean deities are presented in correspondence with their cyclical notion of time in opposition to the linear notion of the Western point of view. According to the oral histories transmitted through generations and the colonial documents of the Spanish chroniclers, the three cosmological levels are as follows:

- The first age, known as Taypi, is associated with the Island of the Sun or Tiwanaku, which was designated by the chroniclers as ‘central stone’. The central Andean deity of this era is Thunupa associated with the “aquatic axis” in the area of the Lake Titikaka and the Desaguadero River. Thunupa, as a mythic deity, was also related to the fire and lightning and was seduced by aquatic female beings in the Copacabana peninsula (Lake Titikaka). Thus, the Aymara myth of origins place Thunupa as the central deity and situates the Lake Titikaka region as the ancient place before the arrival of the Incas and subsequent arrival of Europeans.

- The second age defined as Puruma is a dark, wild and ambiguous time. This age is characterized by a stateless society with the appearance of Chuqila, a deity associated with the power of the lightning strike. During this age Thunupa fights over ambiguous and violent entities with
huge breasts known as hapiñuñus and banishes them to the puna (the high Andean tableland). Chuqila is known as Illapa deity today.

- Finally, the third age, known as awqa pacha o pachakuti is the time of war between the opposing señoríos Qullas (ancient Aymara chiefdoms). The dualistic societies are characterized to be in opposition when at war with one another. The center or taypi facilitated the encounter of contraries by equilibrating opposing forces, mediating to achieve resolution of conflicts.

Therefore, “pachakuti involves the revolutionary turning of an entire world or an epoch, which contrasts with the Christian concept of ‘final judgment’ . . . for the Aymara, a pachakuti is like turning an outstretched hand so that the reversed part that was below ends up on top” (Sharon 2006:9).

In order to understand the contemporary Aymara thought in its origins, Bouysse-Cassagne and Harris' study is important because it explores the incorporation of Christian religious ideas regarding the three levels or domains of the cosmos (1987:10). The three Aymara levels: alax pacha (Upper level or heaven), aka pacha (earth or mundane world) and manqha pacha (lower level or hell) are inhabited by the different deities.

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The *aka pacha* or mundane world is inhabited by the humans and is located in between the upper level and the lower level. The upper level is where the celestial deities dwell. God or *Jisukristu* (Jesus Christ), the saints, Virgins, Rayo or Illapa are part of the large pantheon of deities of this level. They exist in opposition to the devils that inhabit the lower level. However, it is interesting to point out that the Christian dogma of good and evil, and heaven and hell, corresponded with Andean cosmology and were therefore incorporated by the Aymara.

As Douglas Sharon (2006) argues, Aymara ethical and social thinking is much more ambiguous than the correspondences of good and evil made by Christians, thus it does not place all good deities in heaven or view hell as the exclusive domain of evil. The Aymara deities have a more complex and transient relationship with humans and sometimes these deities switch from one level to another. For instance, one of the most important Andean deities known as *Pachamama* or Mother Earth is conceived to inhabit the *aka pacha* level or mundane world, however, in other Andean communities she is associated with a local Virgin, in which her location pertains to the upper level. In other instances, when *Pachamama* is not fed via rituals she will be driven by her hunger and will punish her devotees, and thereby inhabiting the *manqha pacha* or lower level.
Gerard Taylor's study (1987) provided important information on how ancient Quechua cults relate to supay (translated as the souls of the dead), which were identified by Catholic missionaries as devilish cults. The missionaries designated the lower level deities as devils. The Catholics' interest was to eradicate what they believed was idolatry; however these manqha pacha entities' characters were relocated in a clandestine and ambiguous level which changed the nature of the Christian devil and placed supay in an evil context (1987:10).

The Pachamama or Mother Earth is situated as one of the most important deities within a Pan-Andean tradition. She is often described with female attributes and fertile powers; she is the deity to be fed constantly with offerings in agricultural seasons and special occasions. As the Mother Earth, she is highly venerated on a daily basis in both rural and urban settings.

Along with the Pachamama, male ancestors known as Achachilas and their wives Awichas are embodied in the sacred mountains and pertain to the highest level of the pantheon hierarchy of the Aymara deities. The Rayo or Illapa deity is known to be symbolically and spiritually associated with the lightning strike; it is also known as the deity of the sky. Other deities, such as the male and female ones that dwell in
the household, are known as Kunturamani and Uywiri. The Tio is the deity that dwells in the mines and has a constant relationship of reciprocity with miners. The yatiri is a specialist that mediates between humans and deities, in which their relationship is maintained through ritual offerings.

Sacred practices of Andean groups were considered paganistic, wicked and sinful by Spanish conquistadores. The imposition of the Christian faith was harsh and traumatic for indigenous groups. Many of them camouflaged their idols and traditional native beliefs underneath a Christian mask (Wachtel 1976).

The anthropologist Xavier Albó (et al.1996) discusses the Aymara religious experience and how Christian elements were incorporated into the symbolic and cultural systems of the Aymara resulting in new syncretic forms. “The conquest oppression and the evangelization, with the bright side and shadow side of their histories, are parts which cannot be separated easily from the life and concrete memory of the Aymara people living today. Nevertheless, this religious experience is Aymara, preserved and consolidated throughout these centuries and those that preceded the invasion. Thus, we can still speak of a genuine Aymara religion, given the public expression in some parts and cultivated in others in a clandestine form” (Albó et al. 1996:121).
In addition, the incorporation of God and Catholic Saints have taken a special place in the large pantheon of Andean deities. Albó points out that God appears as a liberating force of the poor and oppressed, and He has become an essential God, involved in every basic daily activity.

Aymara Ritual Specialists and Ritual Offerings

To understand the importance of Aymara ritual specialists and political agents, we must explore their origins and importance in the Bolivian landscape. The Aymara culture inhabited the altiplano (high plain) in Bolivia, Peru and parts of Chile and Argentina. In Bolivia, yatiris originated in the altiplano, principally within the boundaries of the Departamento de La Paz and the Provinces of Pacajes, Camacho, Gualberto Villarroel, Ingavi, and Manco Kapac. The province of Omasuyos, near the shores of Lake Titicaca, is known to have produced the most famous and prestigious yatiris.

In Aymara society, the most common terms to designate ritual and curing specialists and their position in a ritual hierarchy are: yatiri, layq’a, ch’amakani and amawt’a (Burman 2009). Yatiri is known as a “wise” person. They accumulate their knowledge and reputation throughout a life-long process of divine election. Election is through supernatural forces emanating from the Andean deities. After the future Yatiri is elected, other signs will afterwards consecrate the person as a
healer, mediator and counselor for a rural and urban community (Huanca 1989). A Yatiri plays a crucial role for Aymaras and others who use their religious services.

There are many stages that an elected person must follow in order to become a renowned yatiri. Distinctive birthing experiences, such as being born as a breech birth, being a twin, being born with six fingers in one or both hands, leporine lips, blindness, one eye, one arm, and one-handed, means that the baby is special. Any odd or splendid occurrence during labor is taken as a sign straight from deities about the newborns. Throughout the lifetime of a yatiri communications from the deities can be emitted by different sources. In the rural areas, young Aymara shepherds may be hit by the lightning strike. Those who survive the high electrical voltages are believed to be reborn with special knowledge provided by the deities. The designation is confirmed by physical evidence on their bodies, or chimpu, which are the signs or marks revealing the spiritual assignment of its bearer (Burman 2009:38).

The designated yatiris will experience revelatory dreams from the Andean deities known as Achachilas on how to perform rituals. Yatiris will need the guidance of a yatiri mentor to acquire and learn much of their master's knowledge and his ritual performance style. Yatiris' curing and spiritual skills include: reading coca leaves for divinatory purposes,
elaboration of ritual offerings to the Achachilas or Awichas for health, prosperity, education, love and harvests. Yatiris are also entitled to perform cleansing rituals.

The ch’makani (owner of the darkness) is the highest ranked Yatiri in a ritual hierarchy. Not many yatiris reach this highest position. The ch’amakanis are highly respected but also feared because they are able to summon spirits (aphalla) during nocturnal sessions. These aphallas take possession of his body and deliver messages through him during a curing session. (Fernandez 1995).

The term layq’a has a very negative and evil association and refers to specialists who cast evil spells. People designate them as “witches”. They normally perform ritual in clandestine places. They charge large amounts of money to cause conflict, disease, and to perform black rituals. Normally a layq’a would keep his identity secret to avoid confrontation with the community.

Yatiris operate in sindicatos (guilds) and have established their treatment centers in various spots of the cities. Both ch’amakanis and layq’as are terms used in both rural and urban areas. However, the term amawt’a is rare in rural areas and it “has been recently re-appropriated by ethno-politically engaged urban ritual specialists in the cities of La Paz and El Alto” (Burman 2009:40). The Aymara yatiris of both
cities refer to themselves as *amawt’as*, especially during the public rituals and political events. In the inauguration ceremony at Tiwanaku, the rituals were conducted by the “Consejo de Jayi *amawt’as* de Tiwanaku” or “Council of *Jayi amawt’as* of Tiwanaku” established only when the Aymara New Year celebrations began there 20 years ago.

Yatiris’ rituals involve offerings to the Andean deities in order to heal people’s spiritual and physical troubles. The elements used in offerings are carefully chosen to fulfill the insatiable hunger of the Andean Gods. Although some of the ingredients are sometimes difficult to find, they are considered to be crucial for the success of the offering. The elements to create an offering come from different animal, vegetable, and mineral sources and come from different Andean and Amazonian sites.

Interestingly, many components of the ritual offerings use Christian elements. For instance, there is a common use of the Christian cross amongst unionized yatiris in El Alto for divinatory purposes. In their prayers, they raise prayers to the wide pantheon of deities such as: Jesuschrist (*Jisukristo*), Pachamama and Virgin, Saints, etc.

Spanish anthropologist Gerardo Fernández (1995) provides a detailed ethnography and an ethno-historical study of Aymara *mesas* in the Bolivian Andes. The origin of the term “mesa” is
still debated. Luis Hurtado (2000) defines mesas as "the ensemble of objects and ingredients disposed, in accord with criteria established by tradition, either on a blanket, bedspread, mat, etc., laid out on the ground" (Sharon 2004: 2). The origin of the term has perhaps a Spanish origin referring to a banquet table or it may be derived from the ecclesiastical Latin word "mensa" which evokes the "altar" of the Eucharistic banquet as a reminiscent of the Last Supper (Ibid.).

The word mesa is used in parallel with the native Aymara terms referring to offerings such as waxt’á and luqta in urban contexts of the Bolivian Andes; or despacho (dispatch) and pago (payment) in the Peruvian southern highlands. During my ethnographic studies, I have seen a more general use of the word mesa in sacred urban spaces and in witch-markets in cosmopolitan cities like La Paz and El Alto, perhaps as a result of the Spanish influence of urban settlements.

Fernandez (1995) states that a mesa is an enclosed package (paquete) of symbolically significant ingredients intended to satisfy Pachamama’s and the Achachilas voracious appetite through offerings. Ritual offerings are prepared as part of a reciprocal banquet to appease the tutelary deities’ hunger in exchange for good productivity, wealth, and good luck in general. I would also argue that they are devices to stress harmony, peace and unity during political tensions.
The elements from the natural sources such as plants (e.g. \textit{wira q'\'uwa} ritual plant, coca leaves, flowers, walnuts, beans), animals (e.g. llama fat, llama fetus, cat fur), and minerals (e.g. alabaster stones, incense, copal, metal figurines) are used in combination with manufactured modern elements such as confetti, silver and gold papers, and sugar.

Additionally, candy packages and carved figurines are produced in small workshops and are not edible for human beings. Ritual candies are intended to sweeten the ritual meal and make it appealing to the deities. These elements are made of lime and sugar, have symbolic carved images and can also be easily purchased in any specialized ritual market. I argue that these candy packages have a strong Catholic influence and there is a gap of information on when exactly these elements were incorporated into Aymara ritual offerings. Juan Angel Yujra, one of my main informants, speaks of going through ecclesiastical archives of Churches in La Paz to discover the importance of these elements during the colonial and Republican times.

These ingredients are used in the execution of the offerings; however each offering has its own specificity and particularity depending on the time, place and the yatiri (or yatiris) who are leading the ritual.

Drawing from the historical movements that have marked this revolutionary time in Bolivia and caused major
transformations in the country, I explore the connections between political discourse and ritual performance in the next chapter. Specifically, I provide a description of the role of the yatiris when performing the ritual, the manipulation of ritual paraphernalia and an interpretation of the way ritual symbols contribute to the efficacy of the ritual. For the purpose of this thesis, I seek to identify how these ritual symbols and political discourses, when used together, construct specific Aymara symbolic meanings and the "invention of tradition" in the Willka Kuti ritual.
Chapter 3: Willka Kuti or Aymara New Year: Ritual and Symbol

Ethnography and Participant Observation

Tiwanku has a special spiritual significance as a national symbol of the Andean heritage and it has become the center for the recent expressions of religious political Aymara symbolism. This chapter explores how some Aymara religious practices are tied to annual political events and celebrations in the current government of Morales and his party MAS (Movimiento Al Socialismo / Movement Towards Socialism).

Aymara historical, cosmological and symbolic dimensions of the process of change in Bolivia may be observed in one specific ritual: the Willka Kuti ritual or Aymara New Year at Tiwanaku. As an invented tradition the Aymara New Year ritual at Tiwanaku expresses to historical narratives, ethnic pride resurgence, nationalism, anti-Colonial notions deployed by ritual symbols and indexical messages.

This chapter explores the importance of Tiwanaku as a national symbol and its associated historical narratives via Aymara symbolism. Tiwanaku is one of the most important national emblems of Pre-Hispanic cultures of the Andes and South America, and it was declared a World Heritage Site by UNESCO in 2000. The site is located on the Andean plateau between 3000 and 4000 meters (13,000 feet) above sea level and it is located 72 kilometers away from the city of La Paz.
For many years, Tiwanaku has been the focus of many researchers studying ancient technologies and "has been appropriated for many different political, intellectual and industrial projects" (Janusek 2008:3). Tiwanaku is the precursor of the Incas and contemporary Aymara and Quechua inhabitants of the Andes. Tiwanaku's civilization emerged at approximately AD 500 (Janusek 2008:1) or nearly 1000 years before the rise of the Inca Empire and the arrival of the Spanish conquistadores (Kojan and Angelo 2005) making its ruins more ancient than the well preserved ruins of Machu Picchu in Peru.

Tiwanaku was already abandoned when the Incas arrived. According to Janusek (2008) the Inca appropriated Tiwanaku and incorporated it within their cosmological believes about mythical birth of their god Viracocha. When the Spanish conquistador found Tiwanaku in the 15th century they were astounded by the monumental ruins. Tiwanaku was also damaged by Spanish missionaries who were threatened by the pagan symbols on monuments and the sculptures. Some chroniclers in colonial times referred to Tiwanaku with the Aymara term taypi qala meaning the stone in the center (Cobo 1891:100) a name which attributes the site is power to the concentration of cosmic forces.

During the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, European travelers and foreign archaeologists carried out excavations in Tiwanaku. In the early twentieth century Tiwanaku
was becoming the main site of excavation, but it was not until the 1950s that the Bolivian government took control of the excavations. This was carried out by the MNR (National Revolutionary Movement) party during the Revolution of 1952.

The preeminent Bolivian archaeologist, Carlos Ponce Sanjinés, conducted the excavations driven by a nationalistic project promoting Tiwanaku as a national symbol. Ponce reconstructed some architectural monuments, yet many contemporary archaeologists still question the accuracy of these monumental reconstructions.

In the following section, I explore the role of symbols and indexical messages transmitted in the Willka Kuti ritual. Why Tiwanaku? Why is it becoming an important site of political and religious events in contemporary Bolivia? How are the late historical moments intertwined with the Willka Kuti ritual at Tiwanaku?

21st of June 2008: Willka Kuti Ritual

In 2008 I followed the Aymara political leader Fernando Huanacuni to the celebration of the Aymara New Year in Tiwanaku. I had the opportunity to meet one of his collaborators via a personal friend. She mentioned that they were planning a trip to Tiwanaku. They were busy with organizational matters because large groups of visitors from neighboring countries were
expected. I managed to sign up for the trip scheduled to depart from La Paz on June 20, 2008.

Despite the freezing temperatures, which occur in the Bolivian altiplano (high plateau) in June, thousands of participants arrived at Tiwanaku the night before the Willka Kuti ritual was to take place. There were countless private rituals occurring in closed residences and locations where different groups celebrated privately throughout the night. In these private rituals, ritual specialists prepare ritual offerings for productivity, health and good luck.

The gates of Tiwanaku were scheduled to open at 4 AM. Approximately 35,000 attendants participated in the ritual. Tourists, students, families, and city residents of La Paz and El Alto all attended the ceremony, but members of neighbouring Aymara communities were actively engaged in the ritual as congregants. Long lines of people holding their tickets waited to enter the site despite the freezing temperatures and the chaos of the crowd provoked by the disorganization of the event.

The archeological site has a variety of monumental structures (fig. 1) including a large pyramid known as Akapana, a large raised platform close to a sunken area and a large courtyard located north to the pyramid known as the Kalasasaya Temple. A

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big portico leads to the temple’s interior courtyard where the monolith Ponce occupies a central position. At the far corner is located the structure of the Gateway of the Sun. East of the main entrance of Kalasasaya is the Templope Semi-Subterraneo (Semi-Subterranean Temple), which is the dubious reconstruction of Carlos Ponce Sanjines (Kojan and Angelo 2005).

Fig. 1 Diagram of Tiwanaku by Raquel Nava
Since the early 1980s, the celebration of Willka Kuti has been taken over by the “Consejo de Jayi amawt’as de Tiwanaku” and this group has gained national attention as the official ritual specialists for the Evo Morales’s administration. The ritual began at 6 AM when the amawt’as were grouped inside the Kalasasaya Temple. Every year within this temple, a wood altar is built in the center of the courtyard to conduct the ritual. The amawt’as were located at the altar so the audience could observe them while they prepared the offerings.

Eight amawt’as conducted the ritual. According to my speculation, they might have been chosen because of their high rank and prestige within the organization. The amawt’as wore long white tunics decorated with an aesthetically embroidered image of the central iconographic figure of the Gateway of the Sun (fig. 2). The figures of the Gateway of the Sun are still an enigma. The lintel is carved with 48 figurines surrounding the central figure. The central figure is a figure of a man whose head is surrounded by 24 stripes as if rays are shooting from his face.
However, this symbol is used by the ritual specialists as representing the Tata Inti or (Father Sun). Interestingly, this symbol is only used in the rituals performed at Tiwanaku by amawt’as. The Willka Kutí ritual was impregnated with symbols in the form of “objects, activities, words, relationships, events, gestures, or spatial units” (Turner 1967).

The high ranked amawt’as situated close to the altar prepared the offerings at the beginning of the ritual. Additional male and female yatiris also participated, standing close to the altar forming an external circle. Yatiris from different organizations and guilds accompanied the preparation of the
ritual offerings by burning and swinging sahumerios\textsuperscript{15} while they rose praises to the Andean deities. The event had so many attendants that some people were observing from the high peak of the Akapana pyramid to get a panoramic view of the ritual.

State police officers and local authorities of Tiwanaku supervised the crowd to avoid chaos. Congregants and active participants surrounding the wood altar held two important symbols in the ritual. Hundreds of flags were carried by many participants of the audience which included the Bolivian flag and the whipala. In contemporary Bolivia, indigenous and popular protesters use the whipala in political and social upheavals.

"For the Aymaras, the whipala is composed of the seven rainbow colors and the four colors corresponding to the four suyus of the Tawantinsuyu (Aymara informant, personal communication, June 2008).\textsuperscript{17}

Each amawt’a had a basket, white paper and the same ritual elements to prepare the offerings. All of them placed the ritual elements upon the white sheet inside the basket. Each at their

\textsuperscript{16} Censer used to burn incense or other mix of herbal plants in order to clean a person or a location to extract evil spirits or bad vibes.

\textsuperscript{17} The whipala is a square flag divided in 49 squares. The seven rainbow colors are placed in diagonal squares. In pre-Columbian times, the Inca Empire or Tawantinsuyu was divided into four suyus or regions: Cinchay Suyu, Konti Suyu, Anti Suyu and Quilla suyu (Aymara territories which are now incorporated in modern states such as northern Chile and Argentina and more extensively in Western Bolivia and Southern Peru highlands). The four corners of these regions met at the center Cusco (now Peru).
own pace, the amawt’as manipulated the ritual paraphernalia and placed the elements following the same configuration. Each offering contained the same mineral, vegetable and animal elements.

Each amawt’a placed the objects as followed: unspun llama wool was the first object forming a circular shape arranged upon the white paper sheet. A ring of wira q’uwa plant and llama fat were placed inside the wool ring. A set of white sugar-lime carved sweet figurines of all sorts of shapes (rectangular, circular, square and cylindrical), gold and silver papers, wayruru beans, chiwchi misa metal figurines, and confetti were positioned in pairs forming a concentric circle from the periphery to the center. Following the positioning of these initial elements, the amawt’as sprinkled incense and copal.

A llama fetus had to be carefully decorated with white llama thread and gold and silver papers attached to its body. The llama fetus was placed on top of the initial elements previously described. This careful manipulation of the llama fetus had to do with aesthetic intentions of the offering. In the eight offerings the llama fetus had a central position. Finally, the manufacture of the offering was closed with a circular arrangement of white llama thread (fig. 3).

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18 The llama is considered a sacred animal since pre-Hispanic times. Thus the fetus represents the sacrifice of the llama before it is born out to the world.
The sum of all the elements constitutes a complete meal for the deities (Fernández 1995). The elements create a sense of wholeness, integrity and harmony. The central llama fetus placed on top covers the elements placed in pairs of complementary opposites. Hence, the fetus conciliates the opposing ingredients. For the purpose of the ritual, the offerings represent the wish to restore and harmonize the cosmos. Therefore, the offerings play a significant role in the efficacy of the ritual. The amawt’as have the important task to carefully prepare the offerings and satisfy the deities’ hunger.

President Evo Morales unexpectedly arrived in his helicopter minutes before the offerings were completed by the amawt’as. The presence of the president himself marked a symbolic moment in
the ritual. His arrival remained a secret until the loud noise of the rotating blades caused excitement and ovations from the crowd. Once the helicopter landed close to the Kalasasaya temple, Morales was immediately escorted to the location where the ritual was conducted. The president was wearing a red and black striped 'poncho'. The amawt’as handed one of the offerings to him and instructed him to place it in the altar.

The rest of the offerings were placed one by one by the rest of the amawt’as. While pouring libations and chewing coca leaves they also invoked to the Achachilas and Awichas, the Tata Inti and the Pachamama. Morales and the amawt’as poured libations moving counterclockwise around the fire.

Morales stepped down from the altar and headed to a special place in the front row in order to wait the arrival of the first rays of light. The amawt’as remained in the altar pouring libations. Pascual Pachahualla, one of the main amawt’a, solemnly addressed the crowd announcing: “I am going to say these words and you all have to repeat after me: Peace for La Paz, Peace for Santa Cruz, peace for Beni, Peace for Sucre, Peace for Tarija, peace for Oruro, peace in the world, Jallalla!, Jallalla Quillasuyu Marka!"19

19 Jallalla in the Aymara language is a greeting and exclamation that celebrates life. Like saying in Spanish: Viva! Quillasuyu Marka is the Aymara word that designates the contemporary Aymara group. In pre-Columbian times Quillasuyu was one of the four regions of the Tawantinsuyu or Inca Empire (See footnote 18).
All the participants raised their hands waiting for the first rays of light to shine in the Kalasasaya's portico on the eastern side of the complex. It was almost 7:15 AM when the sun finally rose and thousands of attendants raised their hands into the air to catch the first rays of sunlight of the Tata Inti welcoming the New Aymara Year.

While the crowds were holding their hands up, including the President, the amawt'a Pascual addressed the audience by proclaiming: Jallalla the president of the Republic, Jallalla Tupaj Katari, Jallalla Bartolina Sisa, and so on. He requested peace and tolerance for all nine departamentos of Bolivia. In particular, he asked the Andean gods for peace, happiness, and tranquility for the entire globe but also specifically in Bolivia.

Pan-flute sounds playing the tunes of the song “Jacha Uru” or the “Big Day” filled the air and marked the end of the ritual. The festivity sparked a striking display of joy where people hugged one another, even total strangers, to welcome the New Year and the beginning of the agricultural cycle. It was striking to observe the music and dancing, a symbolic moment of the ritual’s end, and that the audience had an active role as they expressed their excitement and emotions about the ritual. The ritual was broadcasted on national television in order to transmit it to the entire country.
On the one hand, the ritual was conspicuously impregnated with symbols of ethnic pride, Andean resurgence such as the whipala, the manufacture of Andean ritual paraphernalia, and the speeches commemorating anti-colonial rebel leaders. On the other hand, these rituals also addressed the intention to seek harmony for the polarized sectors of Bolivia with the presence of national symbols such as the Bolivian flag.

Additional important political figures were also present. Alongside Evo Morales and David Choquehuanca (Bolivia’s national chancellor), were the Ambassadors of Cuba, France, Costa Rica and Ecuador, as well as local authorities. National and international media were also there.

Ritual and Dominant Symbols and Indexical Messages

Tiwanaku has been the center of ritualized celebrations for the winter solstice and the Aymara New Year since the early 1980s. “Victor Turner lists the properties of the dominant symbol of the Ndembu as: 1. condensation; 2. unification of disparate meanings in a single symbolic formation and; 3. polarization of meaning. Ndembu and Andean dominant symbols share the similar property of being polysemic” (Bastien 1978:99).

Archeologists Kojan and Angelo (2005) argue that ceremonies have been recently created as part of a national consciousness using imaginative reconstructions of invented
ancient Aymara ceremonies which do not necessarily reflect the rituals performed in the Tiwanaku life 1000 years ago. Thus, the site of Tiwanaku has been physically and symbolically chosen for ritual performances in order to fortify the national indigenous heritage. This is an indexical message of re-appropriation of use and inventive representations of ancient ritual performances in Tiwanaku as a sacred place. In the last decades, this ritual has become an invented tradition that references the past where Aymara ritual specialists dramatize rituals from the ancient people of Tiwanaku. Consequently, in the creation of a national historical narrative, as a symbolic embodiment of the national past, Tiwanaku has become renowned for its spiritual importance, especially in connection with the ritual celebrations in the month of June and the beginning of the agricultural cycle. The Aymara New Year falls on the winter solstice and coincides with various other celebrations in the Andes (e.g. Inti Raymi in Peru). According to the Aymara interpretation, the year 5516 pertains to the 5000 years of antiquity attributed to Tiwanaku, plus the 516 years that have passed since the arrival of the Spanish conquistadores in South America.

Moreover, Tiwanaku was also chosen as the main site of a spiritual celebration in 2006 where Evo Morales’s inauguration was held, an event that designated him as the supreme leader by his Andean supporters. Since his election, Morales has promised
to give more power to the indigenous groups who together comprise the majority of the population. This promise was symbolized in his inauguration at Tiwanaku.

In addition to its archeological importance, Tiwanaku’s proximity to La Paz, its assemblage of monumental structures, and its antiquity have made it a national symbol linking the Bolivian nation to its historical indigenous foundations providing an ideal place to embody Bolivia’s narrative of indigenous heritage. In contemporary Bolivia, the symbolic use of this site represents a construction of a national consciousness within the Bolivian past and present in both historical and archeological narratives (Kojan and Angelo 2005). While it is considered national patrimony, Tiwanaku also embodies the magnificent past of the complex societies that emerged in the Andes prior to Spanish conquest.

The role Tiwanaku plays as a dominant symbol in rituals intertwines with discourses of nationalism, ethnic pride resurgence and anti-colonialism. The Willka Kuti ritual in Tiwanaku is a site of political discourses. Interestingly, rituals celebrating the Willka Kuti are performed in other archeological sites as well. For instance, the celebration takes place in the Island of the Sun and the Copacabana Peninsula. Both places are located in the shores of the Lake Titikaka and are ancient sites of the Inca civilization. However, president
Evo Morales and his committee members have only been attending the rituals celebrated at Tiwanaku specifically for the Willka Kuti celebration.

Tiwanaku as a dominant symbol has different meanings for the different participants of the ritual. The insurgency of Andean indigenous and popular-national groups shifted the history of Bolivia, hence, for the amawt’as and the politicians of the MAS party, Tiwanaku is a place attributed with the ability to concentrate sacred power. Tiwanaku embodies this power as an ancient sacred place, with shrines of ancient temples, and the central stone. This site is also recognized as Bolivia’s national patrimony and as the central locus of archaeological research in the country. Therefore, “Tiwanaku is constantly naturalized, reproduced and reaffirmed in contemporary Bolivia” (Ibid: 389).

As a dominant symbol I argue that Tiwanaku was chosen as the locus for ritual events because of its powerful attributes and its status of ancient shrine. As the central stone it conciliates oppositions as a mediator in conflict. Andean thought “taypi” or “center” conciliates complimentary oppositions. For instance, in 2008, the Morales’s government was facing political tensions with the right wing conservatives of the Eastern lowlands in Bolivia. Morales’s opponents were dissatisfied with the recent constitutional reforms concerning
the nationalization of the oil and gas industries, and a land reform which would bring changes in land distribution. At this time, there was a high pressure from the opposition to establish autonomous regions where they would not be bound by laws passed in La Paz by the federal government. Therefore, tensions between the political groups in highland and lowland regions were addressed in the ritual, and Tiwanaku was the place chosen to perform the ritual.

Two conflicting dominant symbols were present in the ritual. The *whipala*, a symbol of the indigenous insurgence, the Aymara political struggle, and ethnic pride, was present in contrast to the Bolivian flag as the dominant symbol for mestizo and Creole struggles against Spanish domination and the independence of Bolivia in 1825. Therefore, these two opposing symbols are conciliated in Tiwanaku by its status as the *taypi qala* or the center stone that concentrates the cosmic forces towards its center to restore balance.

The ritual offerings are equally important because they constitute a model of the cosmos (Burman 2009:275). Therefore, the ritual objects were placed following the proper logic of complimentary opposites, conciliated by the centrally placed object marking the completion of the ritual. In a similar vein, this symbolic representation aims to restore the broken dialogue between opposing sectors in Bolivia. To be more specific, the
placement of opposing elements symbolizes the polarization of regional conflicts between lowland and highland groups. In 2008, when the draft text of the New Constitution was subject to heated debate, lowland elite groups were threatening the building project of new Bolivia by requesting autonomy for their region. Hence, the offerings contributed to the restoration of harmony and to conciliate differences in order to achieve the re-founding of the nation.

Evo Morales’s presence at Tiwanaku also marked him as a ritual dominant symbol. The stress on harmony and equilibrium in the cosmos was fortified by the presence of the indigenous president. The direct participation of Evo Morales aimed to enhance the efficacy of the ritual. I suggest his presence was requested by the ritual specialists and the attendants in order to transmit a message of nationalism and unity. Thus, amawt’as required his presence to publically demonstrate the symbolic power of the indigenous head state.

Furthermore, political impact of the ritual specialists was strengthened by the presence of Evo Morales which transmitted messages of pride and the triumph of the third revolutionary era. Indexical messages of the current state of participants communicate ethnic resurgence and Aymara collective memory of resistance by the deployment of specific ritual symbols. The ritual discourse stresses the importance of past Aymara leaders,
Tupaj Katari and Bartolina Sisa, as the new proto-martyrs of the nation. For instance, in this public ritual politically engaged amawt’as never addressed national leaders of independence such as Simón Bolivar.20

Simon Bolivar is historically recognized as the liberator of the Americas, yet for the Aymaras he may just represent one more “strange” mestizo leader. Burman’s study explains how the Aymara understand colonialism. For the Aymara, colonialism centers on the past and present dominant forces that have oppressed indigenous groups. In the past, these dominant forces were exerted by colonial administrations such as the Spanish Crown. Although colonial administrations no longer hold power over indigenous groups today, colonial forces are incarnated by Western imperialist countries. Thus, Aymara people are “impoverished and subalternized in global system that still has colonial traits” (Burman 2009:14). For instance, some of Burman’s Aymara informants identified the United States as the source of contemporary colonial powers dominating third world countries. Also within Bolivia, many contend that elitist mestizo groups that have dominated indigenous groups for centuries continue to hold dominant colonial powers.

20 Bolivia was named after Simón Bolivar, liberator of South American countries from Spanish rule.
Therefore, the Aymara people are still confronted by alien colonial structures that have been imposed by the previous elite-mestizo domination. Burman’s study reveals that Aymara ritual specialists equate colonialism with illness, thus providing them an active role to cure the “strange” and “other” spirits. Now that indigenous leaders are in power, many ritual specialists are assuming an active role in de-colonizing practices and institutions.

According to Burman, amawt’as’ exercise a cosmologically charged practice of ritual designed to cure the Bolivian state and its functionaries, thereby supporting “decolonizing policies” and employing rituals in order to assure that the government executes those policies efficiently. In addition, they ally with the state in order to fight the colonial structures of earlier regimes. I also argue that Aymara ritual specialists re-appropriate Tiwanaku as an indigenous sacred shrine that utilizes the symbolic force of this ancient place to de-colonize colonial infected institutions such as the Governmental Palace in La Paz. Thus, high ranked amawt’as feel entitled to execute rituals in Tiwanaku as a way to prove their power as ritual specialists. In other words, a competitive field amongst ritual specialists has emerged in recent years. Amawt’as use Tiwanaku to claim political power by re-creating and
inventing rituals to legitimize their roles as official ritual specialists.

*Willka Kuti* ritual contributes to our understanding of the recent social, political and religious transformations in Bolivia. As an invented tradition, this ritual stresses the use of indigenous symbols in the new national project. However, there are conflicting symbols such as the Bolivian flag and the *whipala*. That is why messages of pride resurgence, harmony, and unity were stressed in the ritual. Symbols of indigenous heritage dominated the ritual and Tiwanaku as the dominant symbol holds a powerful status.

In sum, the notion of *pachakuti* and the beginning of a new era for indigenous peoples is embraced in a ritual such as The *Willka Kuti*. This ritual is an invented tradition that includes Bolivian and indigenous images, as well as symbols and discourses that are appropriated for the recent nation building project. In the next chapter, perspectives from an Aymara political leader and a Ritual specialist provide insight about the recent political and religious changes. They also discuss the role of ritual specialists in contemporary Bolivia.
Chapter 4: Political and Religious Aymara Discourse

Throughout the months of June and August 2008, I attended several Aymara religious ceremonies to conduct interviews. This chapter presents two important political and religious figures who were informants for this research: Juan Angel Yujra and Fernando Huanacuni, both of whom played active roles at the celebrations of the Aymara New Year in Tiwanaku and Titikaka Lake. In exploring their rhetorical discourses this chapter contributes to understanding their active role as Aymara religious specialists and participants in the realm of Bolivia’s governmental politics.

Conversations with an Aymara Politician and a Ritual Specialist

Fernando Huanacuni, a political leader and Juan Angel Yujra, an Aymara Yatiri, have related political and religious positions in reference to “the emergence of a new era of the Bolivian nation and especially for the Aymara people.” Throughout their discourse we can discern their quests for the recognition and revalorization of the Aymara religion through political power.

Both express in similar ways the triumph of the indigenous movement and the reordering of the political and ritual sphere with the rise of an indigenous leader. In addition, they contend that indigenous people are participating in a reordering process. For example, Yujra points out that this process “needs
disarray in order to understand cultures” (Juan Angel Yujra, La Razón, August 2006, my translation). His words are a manifestation of the Aymara world-view and of their struggle since Western contact in 1492. They believe that since the conquest of the New World, indigenous groups have gone through a process of disarray. Thus, now that the Aymara are politically autonomous, another process of disarray needs to happen to reorder the cosmos and start a new beginning: a pachakuti.

Fernando Huanacuni, a political leader deeply involved in the Aymara spiritual life, asserts that for the Aymara the sacred is not separate from the political. He also equates the awakening of this era for indigenous groups to the pachakuti. As seen in chapter two, the concept of pachakuti is deeply related to the Aymara cosmology of the third era and its contemporary meaning is associated with “new beginning”, “reawakening” or “revolution” (returning -kuti of the earth- pacha).

Pachakuti, as a symbol of indigenous resistance, is also a political movement in Ecuador, Peru and Bolivia (Van Cott 2003:764). “Pachakuti is the elevation of the indigenous nature gods to a position of hegemony as opposed to the domination by the sky gods of God, the Father, Jesus and so on” (Canessa 2000:126). Pachakuti symbolizes the triumphal return of the indigenous people during this era.
Therefore, Fernando Huanacuni and Juan Angel Yujra envision how change is being embodied by the pachakuti or the awakening of a new era. Aymara religiosity is seen by Huanacuni as something that is emerging with a new force. This force is encompassed in the indigenous movement which came to power with the election of Evo Morales in 2006 and with the third "revolutionary" moment.

Huanacuni’s discourse emphasizes the role of the indigenous movements over the last 20 years, especially those initiated by Aymara seeking to fight against inequality and in favor of social, political and economic inclusion. He also points out that the religious arena is integral to the political processes and the continuity of the indigenous movement. This can be accomplished via the support of the Aymara ceremonies in Tiwanaku and the close ties made with the Andean deities within the religious field.

Huanacuni’s explanations concerning this last point are supported by the idea that the spiritual movement is also integrated in the indigenous movement as a whole. He explains that when the social movement is tied to the spiritual movement, the mother Earth mutates, resulting in the reordering of the present situation for the Aymara people. I suggest his notion of change and social, political and religious transformations are fortified by the rituals that took place at Tiwanaku.
Moreover, he advocates the inclusion of religion into the structure of public management. Religion and politics are closely connected. According to Huanacuni, any kind of political movement or decision has to be accompanied by rituals and ceremonies. For his part, Juan Angel Yujra, attributes the triumph of Evo to the previous efforts of the indigenous movements. He clearly remembers during the 1990s the so-called celebration of the 500 hundred year anniversary of the "Discovery of the New World" by Christopher Columbus that provoked many reactions from indigenous groups. People raised their voices in protest against 500 hundred years of political and economic domination, subjugation, and social injustice.

Yujra’s analysis of the contemporary political arena in Bolivia comes from his perspective as a ritual specialist, a Bolivian citizen, and as an Aymara. His analysis provides compelling insight into the political calculus of the leftist measures undertaken by Evo Morales and the MAS party. Yujra expresses great satisfaction with the electoral results that placed Evo in the presidency. As a yatiri working in the religious arena on a daily basis, he has been repeatedly asked to occupy political posts and to act as a political authority. Nevertheless, he rejected all these offers several times.

Yujra’s rejection of any political position is in striking contrast to other yatiris who have accepted political positions
within Evo’s government, in particular the amawt’as who are entitled to perform rituals at powerful sites such as Tiwanaku. Although Yujra is satisfied with the political and social changes achieved by indigenous struggles, he prefers not to be directly involved as a politician. Why does Yujra reject any political posting when he sees Evo as the catalyst for both the revalorizing and inclusion of Aymara religion in Bolivian politics? Although he sees the legitimization of the Aymara religion as a starting point, he prefers not to play a role as a political authority and as high ranked amawt’a in order to avoid being corrupted by the power associated with politics, which might alter his role as a ritual specialist.

It is obvious that Yujra is more cautious about involvement politics because he believes that when one decides to run a government it is both challenging and dangerous at the same time because of the high pressure to confront opposing parties. In Yujra’s opinion, his decision to become politically involved as a religious consultant of sorts is justified by his refusal to participate in any kind of what Gerardo Fernandez (1995) terms “symbolic aggressions” against opposing factions. According to Fernández, “symbolic aggressions” are executed by the yatiris (mainly layq’as) who are hired to cause conflicts and spiritual illnesses via ritual offerings.
As a yatiri, Yujra is aware of the importance and the close ties between the political and the religious spheres. Therefore, he still cooperates with political authorities when he is asked to perform rituals in governmental offices, but from an independent position. He is asked to divine the coca leaves in order to predict the failure or success of some key political decisions, yet he is not associated with any organization or high ranked position.

Juan Angel Yujra is a young yatiri and an Aymara intellectual in the cities of La Paz and El Alto. He is always being questioned about his ability and knowledge to perform rituals by some Aymara ritual specialists. One participant teased Yujra in the middle of a ritual and asked him if he truly believed that he was an amawt’a. Yujra’s response was “I am a yatiri, and I represent my community in the Omasuyos Province, a powerful region where my grand fathers emerged as Aymara ritual specialists”. What struck me about this conversation was Yujra’s rejection of any association with the amawt’a and his emphasis on his status as a yatiri. When Yujra faces situations like these, he feels estranged and questions the role and place of ritual specialists that claim themselves as amawt’as.

As we have seen in chapter three, Burman argues that the term amawt’a has recently been associated with ethno-politically engaged ritual specialists. Also, the rituals at Tiwanaku are
conducting by an organization of amawt’as, the same organization that closely accompanies Evo Morales everywhere. Yujra does not attend the rituals at Tiwanaku; rather he conducts rituals in the Copacabana Peninsula (Lake Titikaka) for the Aymara New Year. In my opinion, the term amawt’a has become heavily charged with notions of political authority that may have nothing to do with a ritual specialist’s knowledge or recognition amongst the community. This term may become part of a new phenomenon of Yatiris claiming themselves as “amawt’as” to enter influential and powerful posts in the government, something that Yujra clearly rejects. This illustrates an emerging field of religious competition amongst ritual specialists. The term amawt’a is associated with political appointments and is antagonizing ritual specialists from rural and urban areas in the Bolivian highlands.

Both Huanacuni and Yujra agree that the political movement and the generations who initiated it in the name of Bolivia’s indigenous peoples have now reached the moment to enact and implement the changes needed that will favor the continuously disenfranchised indigenous majority. Much of their discourse is tied to the change of an era, the culmination of the indigenous place in the government, and the starting point of the indigenous Aymara mobilization to make changes in the political and religious realms. However, Yujra feels that some ritual
specialists are being seduced by powerful political positions. He is independent in his position and prefers to contribute to the ritual process and social transformations in contemporary Bolivia by staying away from high ranked organizations. Conversely, Huanacuni is closely associated with the organization of amawt’as. He believes that the Catholic Church’s role as an official state religion should end, and is giving more power to amawt’as as the new official ritual specialists in the President Morales’s newly established Bolivian government.

A Re-founded Nation: Religious and Political Landscape

The organization of amawt’as that conduct the rituals at Tiwanaku accompany the President to perform rituals inside and outside the Presidential buildings and are gaining their legitimate role as “official” ritual specialists. The Palace of Government or “Palacio Quemado” is the main political building where the president conducts the nation’s business. In the past, this building also housed Bolivia’s white-mestizo elites who were not concerned with the issues faced by the indigenous population.

Ethno-politically engaged Aymara ritual specialists have the task to cleanse the political buildings that are still “infected with Colonialism and the strange spirits surrounding the political locations” (Burman 2009:98). Ritual specialists’ main purpose in this process is to bring peace to spaces where
the political struggles are historically and physically rooted in Bolivia. This is accomplished to prevent negative energy entering the Governmental House Hall or Palacio Quemado in the future.

Moreover, as I discussed in chapter three, the Willka Kuti celebration is an example of a ritual emerging in political spaces and reinforcing Aymara religious practices in a highly politicized milieu. Thus, high ranked amawt’as who are taking over the Willka Kuti ritual are re-creating, re-inventing and re-appropriating Aymara symbolism and historical narratives at Tiwanaku. They also feel entitled to give political speeches, inventing traditions from their standpoint as powerful ritual specialists of Tiwanaku. In this sense, they reference the past and use this site as a powerful ancient shrine that allows them to be the designated ritual specialists.

Conversely, Yujra is an example of an independent yatiri, who supports the political, social and religious transformations and the triumph of the indigenous mobilizations in contemporary Bolivia. However, his relationship with Tiwanaku is different than with the Copacabana Peninsula, the specific place where he conducts his own rituals. He acknowledges the powerful cosmological and mythical force of Tiwanaku, but he is not an active participant, congregant and specialist in this invented tradition. This illustrates the divergences between amawt’as and
yatiris and their political discourse, ritual performance, and the invention of tradition illustrates a change in the field of religious practice.

In conclusion, the words of these two Aymara ritual specialists illustrate different stances towards the transformations in Bolivian politics and Aymara religious meanings. On the one hand, Juan Angel Yujra does not want direct involvement with political matters and high ranked organizations. He wants to avoid being misunderstood by the community because political seats could comprise his status as a yatiri. Yujra thoroughly expressed his rejection of political corruption and political power which forms the basis of his decision not to participate in the Willka Kutí ritual. Even though Juan Angel Yujra feels estranged from politics and the corruption it can create, he is deeply engaged with the political transformations wrought by Morales’s administration creating policy in favor of the indigenous majorities.

On the other hand, Fernando Huanacuni’s is one of the main supporters of the Willka Kutí ritual and promotes the celebration each year by accompanying the amawt'as and participating as a congregant in the ritual. Much of his political discourse also embraces the triumph of the political mobilizations in reference to the arrival of the new era, pachakuti. Hence, for Huanacuni, the political sphere is in need
of the mystical Andean forces, especially when religious meanings are fortified via the ritual at Tiwanaku to ease the polarized sectors and to implement new changes in favor of the indigenous masses.

At this point we recognize that the Aymara case study has nuanced meanings. Political change is going hand in hand with religious change, and rituals are the vehicles of meaning and communication mediated by indigenous specialists. The participation of deities and humans, the sacred place of Tiwanaku, and the mediators and the ritual paraphernalia bestows ritual effectiveness of Yujra and Huanacuni. Most importantly, the role of the amawt’as and the efficacy of their rituals are strengthened by the presence of the Aymara leader, Morales, and his political followers at Tiwanaku.
Chapter 5: Conclusions

A new chapter is written in Bolivian history, now declared the "Plurinational State of Bolivia". Hylton and Sinclair (2007) point to the current moment of change as the third in a series of pachakutis, or world reversals. Today's third great insurrection has installed the first indigenous president of the nation. Historical accounts of indigenous and national-popular struggles are referenced in political discourses and in religious and ritual events. The political transformations undertaken in Bolivia herald the beginning of a new era where indigenous people are the principal agents in the process of change.

From an Aymara notion of space-time, successive pachakutis occur in cycles of time. In this third revolution, the beginning of a new era has begun and has transformed the place of indigenous people now in power. This profound turning of events could not have been accomplished without the indigenous struggles of the past and the belief in pachakuti. Therefore, political discourses of pride resurgence and Aymara nationalism are referenced in the ritual. In the nation-building project, Aymara historical narratives and mythical religious meanings are included in the new Bolivian history.
Tiwanaku has been chosen as the site where ritual symbolism is deployed that condenses meanings relevant to the entire spectrum of religious and political events in contemporary Bolivia. The site simultaneously represents the center stone in the indigenous age of taypi as well as a symbol of the Bolivian nation. Home to a formidable indigenous civilization that draws its power from divine sources, Tiwanaku ritual channels this power driving the social changes emerging in favor of the indigenous population. Thus, Tiwanaku is an appropriate place to inaugurate and celebrate the Aymara New year, the beginning of a new era with Morales's election and the celebration of the most recent pachakuti.

The Aymara re-appropriated Tiwanaku to fortify their ethnic pride, to illustrate their triumph over the political and spiritual movement and, to fight the contemporary implications of Bolivia's colonial past. The ritual speaks to various audiences, but it also condenses divergent conflicting messages within a single referent of a dominant symbol. The ceremonies are impregnated with multiple symbols and indexical messages that speak to the current state of the participants.

The ritual has mixed messages. One part of the message references Aymara and/or indigenous part of the nation celebrating the triumph of indigenous struggles, the beginning of a new era (including the beginning of the agricultural cycle)
and celebrating Evo Morales’s election to the presidency. Another part of the message references the stance of Bolivia as a new nation (i.e. nationalism) in which the rituals stressed harmony, peace and unity between polarized sectors.

The transmitted messages appear to be contradictory, demonstrating why Tiwanaku was chosen as the appropriate place to perform the ritual. It represents a place of higher mythical power and the place that houses a central stone that concentrates cosmic forces towards its center. As a sacred space, Tiwanaku is embraced by Aymara ritual participants as the place to mediate and conciliate conflicts between indigenous and non-indigenous groups.

For Aymara ritual specialists, Tiwanaku is ranked high in relation to other sacred places in the Bolivian Andes. Tiwanaku is embraced as the main locus and ancient powerful shrine that entitles amawt’as to decolonize political institutions. The amawt’as are also entitled to occupy high ranking positions within the hierarchical system of Aymara ritual specialists because they are the only ones who perform rituals at Tiwanaku. The amawt’as of Tiwanaku are becoming deeply engaged with political leaders and political events in the governmental apparatus of Evo Morales. Conversely, there are independent yatiris, such as Juan Angel Yujra, who support the political, social and religious transformations in contemporary Bolivia.
Since Yujra is not affiliated with the amawt'as of Tiwanaku, he performs rituals outside of the political spotlight. Therefore, Tiwanaku is also re-appropriated by amawt'as to gain more access to political power and to undercut rival urban and rural ritual specialists, especially those in the departamento of La Paz.

Aymara cosmological meanings and religious practices are closely tied with political processes. Aymara ritual creates a framework for representing political change in terms of its continuity with the past and as a profound transformation. The importance of ritual may lie in its ability to affirm that political affairs are tied to the ongoing relevance of deeply felt indigenous modes of relationship. Such relationships are the prism through which everyday life is experienced and, following Turner (1967), link wide ranging personal concerns with larger structural transformations.

This study contributes to the understanding of how religious traditions of the Andes are uniquely positioned to provide the relevant framework for the understanding of political change. The place of Evo Morales as the head of state, supreme spiritual leader, and the new face of an indigenous revolution is marking a symbolic place in contemporary Bolivia. The president himself is somewhat of a hybrid figure because he is an indigenous leader and a leader of the Bolivian state, a creation of colonialism and a symbol of change.
In sum, the continuity of this era of change cannot be completed without the inclusion of native religious processes, and for the Aymara the challenge of this revolution is based on both the continuity and invention of cosmological meanings associated with native religion within the context of political reorganization.
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