

Indigenous Philosophy and World Politics:
Cosmopolitical Contributions from across the Americas

by

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ABSTRACT

The call for an Inter-Civilizational Dialogue informed by cosmopolitical forms of Comparative Political Theory as a way to address our unprecedented global challenges is among the most laudable projects that students of politics and related fields across the world have put forth in centuries. Unfortunately, however, up until this point the actual and potential contributions of the Indigenous or 'Fourth' World and its civilizational manifestations have been largely ignored. This has clearly been the case in what refers to Indigenous American or Abya-Yalan cultures and civilizations. The purpose of this dissertation is to acknowledge, add to, and further foster the contributions of Indigenous American cultures and civilizations to the emerging fields of Comparative Political Theory and Inter-Civilizational Relations. Guided by a cosmopolitical concern for social and environmental justice, this work adds to the transcontinental and transdisciplinary effort to decolonize knowledges and practices by offering socio-ecologically balanced alternatives beyond the crisis of globalized Western modernity. This work draws on three broad Indigenous traditions, Mesoamerican, Andean, and Native North American, to offer some historical and contemporary examples of the many possible ways in which the recovery, revalorization, and revitalization of Indigenous modes of thought, practice, organization and planning can contribute to foster forms of comparative political theorizing that address the challenges of a global age bedeviled by the confluence of social and environmental crises of an unprecedented scale and scope. The dissertation first introduces comparative political theory as a framework for the inter-civilizational dialogue, arguing that Indigenous contributions have been marginalized and must be considered. Part I then focuses and elaborates on specifically Mesoamerican contributions; Part II is dedicated to Andean contributions; and Part III to Native North American contributions. The dissertation closes with a brief reflection of how Indigenous American contributions can help us address some of our most crucial contemporary global challenges, especially in what concerns the construction of cosmopolitical alternatives built on post-anthropocentric forms of socio-ecological justice.

DEDICATION

To Abya-Yala¹ and her peoples.

To the Indigenous heritage of the world.

To all our relations.

So that the L.A.W.S of the PACHA may live on:

Land

Air

Water

Spirit

¹ *Abya Yala*, roughly translatable as “land in plenitude,” is an Indigenous Kuna name for what the Westernized call the “Americas”. Most Indigenous movements today have agreed on the use of the name Abya Yala.

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From within an Indigenous experience of the world, it is always problematic to both claim authorship or to acknowledge the individual contributions of any persons in particular without excluding the help we receive on a quotidian basis from all our relations, including the countless human and non-human persons whose efforts enable us to fulfill even the simplest of our endeavors. We are the offspring of the biotic, ecological, cosmic and therefore also human community, and hence, so is our every work. Therefore, I must first acknowledge the effort and spirit of all those non-human persons and forces, from the Earth, Water, Wind, and Energy to the smallest of minerals, insects, animals and plants, and from there to the dance of the shining stars whose circular motifs beautify and invigorate our existence; I must primarily acknowledge the endeavor and energies of all of them, the many unnamed, whose often silent but ever consistent contributions serve to sustain the continuation of the vital cycles that nurture, nourish, procure, embrace and constitute our bodies, thereby also enabling the lives of all those human persons whose valuable help has contributed to make this work possible.

Second, I must acknowledge the work of the many people, both past and living, whose names I sometimes unfortunately do not know or are too many to cite, but whose small and large sacrifices, resistances, contributions, and dreams have enabled me to be here, healthy, happy, well rested, and nourished, writing; to them I offer thanks: this work and my own life are also the product of their sustained commitment to life.

Third, I want to thank *Olin Yoli*, the movement of (my) life (in Nahua), known by most around her as Abigail, together with whom I hope always to make a *jaqi* (a uniduality, a couple, for the Andeans), and whom I hope will accept to join me in *jaqicha* (fertile linkage of energies, marriage). I am grateful for her every effort, and for all our shared endeavors, and I pledge to always celebrate the renewal of the love that draws us together, doing so again and again in accordance with the Indigenous way of the cycle.

Fourth, I must thank all my family and friends without whom I would not be here; special mention goes to Stefan P. Borg, whose friendship and intellect is a testimony of admirable wisdom that I will always be grateful to have shared. I thank my parents who did the best they could with a

child whose passions, projects and commitments were never easy to understand, but who loved them dearly. I must also thank a great many old and new friends, who have been around to help at one point or another, among them Andres Quezada Garza, Jessica Auchter, Alonzo Garcia (Pey), Suhail Bayot, among many others that I must apologize for not naming as I would need many more pages. Thanks also to those many students who were willing to listen to and engage my lectures and discussions concerning the topics of this dissertation and many other related themes.

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Also, I would like to thank the many people who share the aspirations and values of this effort, who have been, are, and will be involved in the same struggle for Global Indigenous Liberation, Socio-Ecological Justice and Cosmopolitical Harmony and whose efforts, writings,

activities, organizations, voices, words, and overall spirit makes it possible to believe that this project is much more than the product of an isolated intellect speaking to the void of an objectified desacralized universe. This work is both by them and for them. For those whom I owe thanks and did not mention I hope you accept my apologies. I am responsible for these and all other shortcomings.

Finally, this work is an acknowledgement to the many whose struggles and sacrifices and whose sustained commitments to the dreams and aspirations of a wronged people and a subdued Earth are a testament to the fact that resistance has not been futile:

Por Nuestra Madrecita la Tierra Hablará el Espíritu Indígena: el Espíritu de Nican Tlacah.

(For Our Dearest Little Mother the Earth the Indigenous Spirit Shall Speak:

The Spirit of We the People Here²).

² *Nican Tlacah*, 'We the people here' in Nahuatl, refers to the Indigenous of Abya-Yala.

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INTRODUCTION

THE INDIGENOUS RENAISSANCE AND THE GLOBAL CRISIS OF THE

ANTHROPOCENE: A CONTRIBUTION TO THE DIALOGUE OF CIVILIZATIONS

If current trends continue, if current patterns of production and consumption of natural resources prevail and cannot be reversed and 'decoupled,' then governments will preside over unprecedented levels of damage and degradation... The scientific evidence, built over decades, is overwhelming and leaves little room for doubt... The moment has come to put away the paralysis of indecision, acknowledge the facts and face up to the common humanity that unites all peoples...

— Achim Steiner, Executive Director, United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP)³

The scale, spread and rate of change of global drivers are without precedent. Burgeoning populations and growing economies are pushing environmental systems to destabilizing limits.

—UNEP *Global Environmental Outlook 5* (GEO₅)⁴

Affirming ... that all peoples contribute to the diversity and richness of civilizations and cultures, which constitute the common heritage of humankind...

Recognizing that respect for Indigenous knowledge, cultures and traditional practices contributes to sustainable and equitable development and proper management of the environment...

Recognizing the urgent need to respect and promote the inherent rights of Indigenous peoples which derive from their political, economic and social structures and from their cultures, spiritual traditions, histories and philosophies, especially their rights to their lands, territories and resources...

Welcoming the fact that Indigenous peoples are organizing themselves for political, economic, social and cultural enhancement ...

—from the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP), adopted by the UN General Assmebly in 2007⁵

³ Quoted in “Consumption driving 'unprecedented' environment damage: UN” (AFP news report, 6/6/2012; available online at http://www.google.com/hostednews/afp/article/ALeqM5gep_A4SNdd5-yZeTbgtc4HgCgWww?docId=CNG.756801fe5a29b2762ff29194a7da609b.cb1).

⁴ The UNEP’s GEO₅ is available at <http://www.unep.org/geo/geo5.asp>. Quoted in “Consumption driving 'unprecedented' environment damage: UN” (AFP news report, 6/6/2012; available online at http://www.google.com/hostednews/afp/article/ALeqM5gep_A4SNdd5-yZeTbgtc4HgCgWww?docId=CNG.756801fe5a29b2762ff29194a7da609b.cb1).

⁵ United Nations (UNDRIP) 1-4. Appendix A shows some of the passages and articles of the UNDRIP that most directly bear upon this work. They are worth keeping in mind as a premise and context to this project and as way to understand the purpose and import of projects of this character.

This work is the preliminary result of an ongoing effort to recover, revalorize, and revitalize the heritage of Indigenous American or Abya-Yalan⁶ wisdoms and ways with a view to address the global challenges of our era. Academically, the writer of this work comes from a perspective that emphasizes three dimensions of knowledge and practice, namely, philosophy, political theory, and global affairs; however, as these three dimensions can all be understood as part of the study and practice of politics, especially in the context of our global era, from this point on what is being done in this work will be articulated simply as an engagement with the study and practice of politics understood in a broad historical and global context. Personally, the writer of this work is the product of a struggle to recover, revalorize, and revitalize a long undervalued Indigenous heritage⁷. The writing of this text is itself part of the struggle, a struggle which is

⁶ *Abya Yala*, roughly translatable as “land in plenitude” or “land in full maturity” is an Indigenous Kuna name for what the Westernized call the “Americas”. Most Indigenous movements today have agreed on the use of the name Abya Yala. The Kuna people are originally from what the Westernized refer to as “Panama.”

⁷ As it is to be expected that questions concerning my human ‘genealogy’ may arise at several points (or what some may call, though I would question as ‘identity’), I will offer some commentary in that regard, knowing perfectly that no person can ever hope to control (at least fully) the categories that will be placed upon them. If I were to be pressed to give an account of my human genealogy, one such account might go along the following lines. My existence can be interpreted as the embodied materialization of a ‘mixed,’ ‘hybrid’ or ‘mestizo’ heritage. Among my ancestors people once identified as Zapotecs, Mayas, Nahuas, and perhaps Mixtecs can certainly be found—a great part of this heritage has been erased or deprecated via involuntary and sometimes forced ‘acculturation,’ ‘assimilation’ and a prevalent Euro-centrism, but my skin color and many of my phenotypical features give away any attempt that would (and has) been made to deny this heritage. Also among my ancestors there are those of Norwegian, Scottish, Spanish and—so they say but I doubt—Italian ancestry as well, maybe even Moors, but that latter heritage I assume might too have been denied. It could be the case that some African ancestry might be mixed in judging of the region from which both of my grandmothers came but then again, prejudice would have worked to erase much testimony of it. Among my closest ancestors one might find both those who were born in what is known in the dominant political geography as a part of the US, but ancestrally known as Dakota Sioux and Hochunk lands, and those who were born in what is known under the dominant geography as Southwestern and central Mexico, ancestrally known as Zapotec, Maya, Nahua and Mixtec lands. This again, is just one possible account of my human genealogy, but I know I owe as much to the land, air, water, sun, and the countless unnamed plants and animals whose flesh have helped to sustain me. Though I value my hybrid heritage, the injustices inherited through it must be questioned. So altogether, my efforts are traceable *less* to this genealogy and more to my commitment to justice and harmony; hence what is offered throughout this work and the project as a whole is, I hope, more of a testament to a commitment to recover, revalorize and revitalize the heritage of a people and cultures that have been wronged and whose wisdoms could have prevented our current global crises—wisdoms whose recovery can be the key to a global renewal.

communal and transgenerational and of which the writer is in many ways an epiphenomenon, the small thread of a beautiful mat that carries a great burden. This work can therefore be interpreted as a derivative effect of the accumulated efforts of creative resistance and emancipatory struggle on the part of many others whose endeavors have served as exemplars of how the energy that has been concentrated by the cosmos to form our bodies and enable our lives can be channeled towards the nurturing of balance, the celebration of harmony, and the materialization of justice for the extended political community that weaves all that exists into the fabric of a boundless, dynamic, and infinite *cosmopolity* that precedes, enables, and exceeds the limits, entities, and definitions of any ‘being’ as would be ‘humanity’.

In this spirit, this work can be interpreted as a contribution to the nurturing of a non/post-anthropocentric,⁸ post-human,⁹ and de/post-colonial cosmopolitics.¹⁰ It is a cyclically recurrent

⁸ The family of terms associated with ‘anthropocentrism’ will be used repeatedly and hence deserve a preliminary footnote which should not be conceived as a battery of definitions, but rather as an outline of some characteristic aspects importantly associated with this family of terms. Anthropocentrism basically entails the assumption, presumption or disposition to envision a ‘human’ embodiment of life *onto-logically* and/or *meta-physically*, which is to say as an entity distinct from, and/or superior to, and/or more central/important than the rest of what constitutes the bio-eco-cosmic continuum of energy or spirit some call the universe, others the cosmos, and the Indigenous Andeans call the *Pacha*. Non-Anthropocentrism is simply an experience of the pacha or cosmos which does not imply the above-described assumption, presumption or disposition. Post-anthropocentrism is the conscious (and often critical) displacement of a history dominated by anthropocentric dispositions, structures, practices and institutions. Post-humanism specifically refers to an ensemble of critical dispositions that seek to go beyond the different versions of humanism whose genealogy is often traced back to the European Renaissance and the European Enlightenment; these humanisms often embody anthropocentric assumptions, presumptions, and dispositions. Again, these are not foreclosing definitions, as this work entails many elaborations and variations on these themes.

⁹ I recently encountered a book engaging in a comparable effort that could in part be seen as complementary to this work. The book is by Erika Cudworth and Stephen Hobden (2011), and it is titled *Posthuman International Relations: Complexity, Ecologism, and Global Politics*. Coming from a different, complex ecology, perspective, it shares several themes and viewpoints with this work that proceeds from Indigenous perspectives.

¹⁰ Besides the Indigenous sources which will be discussed throughout, some of the following references exemplify critical discourses on these themes which are of direct relevance to this dissertation: Torgerson 2006; Adams 2003; Curry 2003; Curry 2007; Curry 2010a; Curry 2010b; Curry 2012; Huggan 2004; Huggan 2007; Huggan and Tiffin 2010; Curtin 2005; Giri 2009; Watson 2008; Coward 2006; Midgley 1994; Plumwood 1995; Plumwood 1996; Plumwood 1997; Plumwood 2002; Cudworth and Hobden 2009; Cudworth and Hobden 2011; Panelli 2010; Maragia 2005; Eckersley 1998; Dryzek 1997; Latour 2004; Des Jardins 2012; Bryant and Bailey

argument throughout this work that, especially in the context of our global ecological crisis, it is crucial that the study and practice of politics becomes *post-anthropocentric*; and it can become so by endeavoring to re-embed our efforts within the context of the boundless non-anthropocentric cosmopolity in accordance with the Indigenous spirit. Moreover, it is precisely this encompassing political community which is the primary source of inspiration and responsibility for this work. In keeping with these considerations, the text that you are about to encounter can be read as a contribution to both the study and practice of politics broadly understood and to the Indigenous Renaissance throughout Abya-Yala and worldwide. If a general description of the task of this endeavor were to be requested, a synthesized illustrative account might refer to it, perhaps with some variations, as a treatise of Indigenous American or Abya Yalan Philosophy and Political Theory for a Global Era.

The task of this work is rather straightforward, notwithstanding the sprawling complexity of the challenge at hand. The task is to draw on the ancient and contemporary wisdoms of Indigenous American cultures and civilizations to elaborate a variety of arguments and proposals concerning our contemporary global challenges. Admittedly, as simple as the statement reads, the challenges it poses are tremendous and of varied nature. This particular piece of work cannot set out to exhaust these seemingly infinite tasks, both in what concerns Indigenous wisdoms and in what concerns contemporary global challenges. Hence, as the initial stage of a much larger project that will last a career, this piece offers only a first approximation to and elaboration upon three specific traditions of Indigenous wisdom and a delimited set of pressing global challenges.

The work is divided in three large parts, each dedicated to the recovery, revalorization, and revitalization of one of three broadly identifiable Indigenous traditions and to how each tradition can help the world address some of its most pressing problems. These three traditions are

1997; Gare 1995; Biro 2005; Torgerson 1999; Braidotti 2006; Smith 1997; Apffel-Marglin 2011; Dobson 2000; Connelly and Smith 1999; Bell and Russel 2000; Bell 1994; Humes 2008; Xu Xin 2002; Noske 1997; Pepper 1993; Xu Xhun 2004; Wu Zhuo 2001; O'Neill 1997; Purser, Park, and Montuori 1995; Kortenkamp and Moore 2002; Steiner 2010; Povinelli 2004; McShane 2007; Meyer 2001; Besthorn 2002; He Yuel et. al. 2011; Kai-Miao 2005; Drenthen 2011; Dallmayr 2005; Mikulak 2007; Sen 2009 among several others.

(I.) the Mesoamerican, (II.) the Andean, and (III.) the Native North American traditions of Indigenous wisdoms and ways, especially as they pertain to what from a Western perspective would be understood as ‘politics’ and the ‘political’.¹¹ In endeavoring to recover, revalorize, and revitalize Indigenous wisdoms and ways, this work not only draws on the record of ancient wisdom but it also emphasizes the contemporary efforts of organizations, groups, and all persons endeavoring to bring about an Indigenous Renaissance. Such efforts are proliferating across the world, but I draw primarily on the contemporary thought and practice of Abya-Yala.

As I started this research I conceived of it as focusing on three separate ‘case studies’, in the more conventional way of the (Western) social sciences, that is, three case studies focusing on the work of specific Indigenous organizations from different locations in the Americas, organizations such as the (Neo)Zapatistas of Chiapas, the (Neo)Magonistas of Oaxaca, the Andean Coordination of Indigenous Organizations, the Indigenous Alliance Without Borders, or the Indigenous Environmental Network. However, such an approach does not do justice to the open-ended continental and thriving theoretical thrust of the Indigenous Renaissance. So, each part refers to a broad tradition yet all three parts treat overlapping topics, especially in what concerns the theme of the non/post-anthropocentric and post-human bio-eco-cosmopolitical community. So instead of reading each part as if separate and unrelated, I suggest that it is best to reflect upon them as spatially dispersed (though *not* separated), yet thematically fused, overlapping and indeed reciprocally reinforcing and mutually constitutive themes and struggles. Moreover, the articulation of the great variety of perspectives that will be encountered by the reader are both thematically and politically tied into an actually thriving network of intimately related struggles linking countless groups and individuals, communities, and organizations into a broader effort to recover, revalorize, revitalize, and globalize Indigenous wisdoms and ways. In this regard this work articulates the voices of organizations such as those mentioned above within the broader network

¹¹ It is crucial to keep in mind at every moment that, as Dallmayr notes, “importantly, politics” does “not signify the same thing or occupy the same semantic status across cultures. This means that...study has to concentrate not on isolated terms but on broader semantic clusters or fields.” (Dallmayr 2010, xi)

of Indigenous philosophy and political discourse. These efforts and my treatment of the various ancestral traditions and their contemporary manifestations should therefore *not* be interpreted as enclosed ‘cases’ that would be contained within prescribed cultural limits or geopolitical boundaries; doing so would defeat the purpose of this work and of their actually articulated efforts.

It is important to underline also in relation to these struggles and traditions that this work does *not* intend to treat the ‘actors’ involved and their contributions as ‘subjects’ of research, but rather to articulate and appraise their combined contributions. In many ways it is not they who are the subjects of my research but rather I who am a subject to their lessons. I therefore thematically combine and discuss their efforts and contributions in articulation with the rest of my discussions as corresponding to each of the three traditions. Also, in accordance with the non-linear and circular/cyclical Indigenous experience of the cosmos, in my revalorization of each tradition I articulate both ancient and contemporary contributions, often in tandem. I reiterate that this is because this is both the way Indigenous efforts have unfolded throughout Abya-Yala, and because from an Indigenous perspective all is cyclical: everything comes back around, time is not linear, the past comes back in the future in a circle that ties them both together to constitute the present. Hence the importance of ceremony, celebration, and renewal in Indigenous cultures: the creative rehearsal of tradition constitutes the present as the ancestral enables the future. It is in this spirit that in my discussions I combine both ancient and contemporary sources and contributions concerning Indigenous wisdoms and ways especially as they pertain to what from a Western perspective would be understood as ‘politics’ and the ‘political’. The fact that I organize the work into three broad traditions and three parts is only to make it more manageable, but, as will become evident from the recurring themes across all parts of the dissertation, this tripartition should be understood as merely contingent and in the last instance the lessons of Abya Yala should be discussed in relation to each other, because in fact they are all intimately related.

Therefore, in what pertains to my broader approach to the tasks, it should be explained from the start that from the perspective of Indigenous wisdoms and ways there are no such things as ‘disciplines’ and ‘fields’ nor should there be. In Indigenous traditions *all is related*, and to

engage in a work of Indigenous research and philosophy assuming the disciplinary division of fields as a premise would be to start by walking a path that is not the path suggested by Indigenous lessons. In this work I follow Indigenous wisdom, setting aside disciplinary divisions and parting from the premise that all is related and all should be(come) related. The relevant and therefore guiding question is *how* is all related, a question whose answers should not be foreclosed by a preemptive argument on the part of the writer. Nevertheless, it will become clear throughout the work how we may come to understand that all is related. In fact, in many ways it is already being suggested in this first step. So at the very start, this I hope should be clear: Indigenous wisdoms and ways walk a non-disciplinary cyclical path, a boundless relational circle; from within the Indigenous experience of the cosmos, the possibility—perhaps fact—that *all is related* is to be fostered, nurtured and celebrated, not separated and mutilated into discrete fields and disciplines divided by borders that mirror and reproduce those other borders through which the expansion of modern Western forms of statecraft came to divide the Earth like a pie of mutually alienated countries.

The analytic fundamentalism of Western modernity, the penchant to divide in knowledge as in practice, to onto-logize¹² every-‘thing’, is here set aside in favor of an Indigenous *relationality* that does not reduce all to a simple homogenous unity, but rather interweaves differences into a congenial fabric of complementary and harmonious relations of reciprocal balance that can embrace the world’s diversity, both human and other-than-human. This Indigenous disposition accords far more with what is understood, for instance, as the emerging approaches of ‘interdisciplinary’ and ‘global studies,’ a disposition that should not seek to divide nor to simply unite or homogenize, but rather to articulate, as in “rhizomatic”¹³ fashion. Excellent

¹² Onto-logy: the *logos* (logic, language, and law) of entities.

¹³ An Indigenous disposition of the sort articulated throughout this work would favourably compare to a *rhizomatic* disposition as suggested by Deleuze and Guattari (2004, 23-24) who propose a “relation to the world,” to “politics” and to epistemic-relations “that is totally different” from the hegemonic Western modern attitude. According to Deleuze and Guattari, “the principal characteristics of a rhizome” are that it “connects any point to any other point, and its traits are not necessarily linked to traits of the same nature,” it “brings into play very different regimes of signs,”

examples of this Indigenous disposition can be found, for instance, in recent works concerning Indigenous philosophy such as Gregory Cajete's *Native Science*¹⁴, Fernando Huanacuni Mamani's *Buen Vivir/Vivir Bien: Filosofía, políticas, estrategias y experiencias regionales andinas*¹⁵ (Good Living/Living Well: Philosophy, Politics, Strategies and Experiences in the Andes Region) and Carlos Lenkersdorf's various works such as *Conceptos Tojolabales de Filosofía y Altermundo*¹⁶ (Maya-Tojolabal Concepts of Philosophy and Alter-Globality) or *Aprender A Escuchar: Enseñanzas Maya Tojolabales*¹⁷ (Learning to Listen: Maya-Tojolabal Lessons).

In the effort to recover, revalorize, and revitalize these Indigenous traditions the reader will notice a particular concern with drawing lessons and insights on how these traditions can help the world address a certain ensemble of concerns, most noticeably, those related to socio-environmental justice, ecology, social economy, political geography, and 'democracy'. Certain global themes loom large as contexts and challenges for this work to address, most clearly, the global ecological crisis, global inequality, the emerging 'age of migrations' coupled with the crisis of sedentary, urban, and anthropocentric civilization, and the urgency to reform governance to

it "is reducible neither to the One nor the multiple," it "is composed not of units but...of directions in motion and...is made only of lines," it "pertains to a map that must be produced, constructed, a map that is always detachable, connectable, reversible, modifiable, and has multiple entryways and exits and its own lines of flight." Furthermore, "In contrast to centred (even polycentric) systems with hierarchical modes of communication and pre-established paths, the rhizome is a-centred, non-hierarchical...system without a General and without an organizing memory or central automaton." A rhizomatically-inclined disposition can help to build de-centred or a-centred non-hierarchical relations with modifiable lines or links that can bring into play different signification-regimes so as to allow the spawning plurality of (view)points in a 'globalized' world to interconnect without reducing the particular traits of their diverse concerns to a General system or to an absolutely unconnected multiplicity (of mutually-isolated 'entities,' 'fields,' or 'worlds'). This can enable the diversity of specific concerns to be recognized and valued as they transmit, compare, complement and respectfully contest the similarities and differences between how each experiences, interprets, and performs life, world and cosmos. Rhizomatic-infrastructures require the exercise of a decentred diplomatic ethos that recognizes and considers the interconnected plurality of "very different" values and so-called 'worldviews' and 'cosmologies'.

¹⁴ Cajete 2000.

¹⁵ Huanacuni Mamani 2010.

¹⁶ Lenkersdorf 2004.

¹⁷ Lenkersdorf 2008.

address the global ‘environment’, global inequality, the global democratic deficit and to face the broad challenges of our era which are unprecedented in scale and scope. Across all these themes, Indigenous concerns and voices are unequivocally given preferential treatment, not least because their vital contributions have been historically marginalized; moreover, as will become clear, it is precisely the marginalization of Indigenous wisdoms and ways which is in great part responsible for the lacunas from which our gravest contemporary problems emerge.

A lot has been said in these first words about ‘our era’ or ‘our global era’. These phrasings are not just arbitrary (or trendy) signifiers. They need to be carefully articulated. It is therefore pertinent to ask what is meant by ‘our era’. The term ‘era’ is broad and encompassing; the use of such a term entails something ‘big’. It is not being used without motive in the context of this work. Although there are many possible themes that could serve to characterize this emerging global era, there are two which are here invoked to outline the spatiotemporal context that I (among many others) believe constitutes the major global challenge of our times; these two themes are the dawn of the Anthropocene Era and the theme of the Global Crisis.

The ‘Anthropocene’ is an emerging term within several scientific discourses that describes a relatively new geological era (within long-historical geological parameters) in which there is a dawning awareness that ‘humanity’ has become among the most influential, if not *the* most influential geological force shaping the biosphere.¹⁸ This growing awareness is common for instance in the circulation of concepts such as ‘anthropogenic climate change’.¹⁹ This discourse of

¹⁸ For the emerging scientific discourses concerning the ‘Anthropocene’ see, for example, Andersson, Mackenzie, and Lerman 2005; Andersson, Mackenzie, and Lerman 2006; Armesto et. al. 2010; Codispoti 2001; Crossland et. al. 2005; Crutzen 2000; Crutzen 2002a; Crutzen 2002b; Crutzen 2003; Doney and Schimel 2007; Ehlers and Krafft 2006; Elis 2009; Gibson 2010; Mahowald 2007; Meybeck 2002; Meybeck 2003; Meybeck and Vörösmarty 2005; Paquette and Messier 2010; Raupach and Canadell 2011; Steffen, Crutzen, and McNeill 2007; Steffen 2006; Steffen, Grinevald, Crutzen, and McNeill 2011; Tungsheng 2009; Zalasiewicz, Williams, Haywood, and Ellis 2011; Zalasiewicz, Williams, Smith, et. al. 2008; Zalasiewicz, Williams, Steffen, and Crutzen 2010; and Zalewski 2007.

¹⁹ See primarily Crutzen 2002, 2003; Zalasiewicz, Williams, Smith, et. al. 2008. See also Rosenzweig, Karoly, Vicarelli et. al. 2008; Oreskes 2004; Thomas, Cameron, and Green 2004; Goodman, Boykoff, and Evered 2008; Karl and Trenberth 2003; Mahowald 2007.

the Anthropocene has gathered some valuable attention among critical voices concerned with our emerging global condition. I believe it is important to consider the Anthropocene as a contextual premise for the reflections undertaken throughout this work. Simon Dalby's work on global environmental politics²⁰ has been important in alerting many like myself of this new context for the study and practice of politics in the 'global era'. In his recent work on global environmental security, Simon Dalby²¹ reminds us that Earth system science today shows that human actions are changing the Earth on such a large scale that we live in a new geological era, the Anthropocene.²²

As explained by the International Geosphere Biosphere Program:

The interactions between environmental change and human societies have a long complex history, spanning millennia. They vary greatly across time and place. Despite these spatial and temporal differences, in recent years a global perspective has emerged that forms the framework for a growing body of research within environmental sciences. Crucial to the emergence of this perspective has been the dawning awareness of two fundamental aspects of the nature of the planet. The first is that the Earth itself is a single system, within which the biosphere is an active essential component. In terms of a sporting analogy, life is a player, not a spectator. Second, human activities are now so pervasive and profound in their consequences that they affect the Earth at a global scale in complex, interactive and accelerating ways; humans now have the capacity to alter the Earth System in ways that threaten the processes and components, biotic and abiotic, upon which life depends.²³

In many ways this work is an exploration, from within Indigenous perspectives, concerning what it entails to have achieved an awareness of life in the Anthropocene and what our responsibilities within it should be.²⁴ What can be broadly advanced in an introductory manner in this regard would be summed up in the following reflection. The extent of human influence on the

²⁰ See Dalby 2004, 2006-2007, 2007, 2009, 2010a, 2010b, 2010c, 2011; Oswald Spring, Brauch and Dalby 2009. See also Brauch 2011, Lövbrand, Stripple, and Wiman 2009.

²¹ Dalby 2007. For other discussions on global ecology and global environmental security that directly bear upon this dissertation see, for example, Litfin 2003; Cudworth and Hobden 2009 ; Curry 2007; Plumwood 2002.

²² Within the Anthropocene, Global Human Urbanization or what Simon Dalby calls 'Glurbanization' is becoming the dominant artificial force in the global biosphere.

²³ Quoted in Dalby 2007, 112. See also International Geosphere Biosphere Program 2001; The Global Environmental Change Programmes, Special Issue of *Environment: Science and Policy for Sustainable Development* (Earth System Science: An Integrated Approach) 2001; Steffen, Sanderson, Tyson, et. al. 2004a and 2004b.

²⁴ With regard to questions of this character see, for instance, Alberts 2011; Katz 1997.

rest of the biosphere requires us to critically rethink our responsibilities in regard to all our relations, among ourselves and with the more-than-human biotic, ecological, and cosmic community which enables our existence and of which we are inextricable members with non-renounceable and inescapable bio-eco-cosmo-political obligations. This larger political community is understood from within the Indigenous experience of the world as the bio-eco-cosmic community; that is: an open-ended non-anthropocentric cosmopolity in which humanity must experience itself as just a knot in complex web of dynamic relations from which humanity cannot be separated and in regard to which humanity, like any other member of the cosmopolitical community, must fulfill its corresponding responsibilities.

As has been made explicit by the International Geosphere Biosphere Program, we have entered a new geological era in which we can no longer ignore or defer our responsibilities to this encompassing cosmopolitical community. For if it is true that the fate of the biosphere hinges so much on human conduct, then we can no longer think or act by the illusory assumption that ‘Man’ can be separated from ‘Nature’ or from the ‘Cosmos’ or that conduct should be governed exclusively or even primarily by forms of organization that place human desires at the center. The Anthropocene Era demands a post-anthropocentric ethos. As students and practitioners of politics at every level—local, global, or *glocal*—one of our crucial responsibilities in light of this emerging geological scenario, is therefore to deconstruct the anthropocentric (dis)order that we have inherited in order to build post-anthropocentric alternatives that will enable us to justly fulfill our complementary responsibilities to all our relations in an era in which the continuation of all cycles—social, biotic, ecological and even cosmic—come to depend more and more on our disposition and effort to live in bio-eco-cosmpolitical balance, equilibrium, and harmony.

However, as we encounter ourselves in the Anthropocene Era, we are found with hardly even the rudiments of such a cosmopolitical community, bedeviled instead by a jumble of ecological, economic, and political problems for which we are responsible—problems that have engendered an unprecedented global crisis characterized precisely by anthropocentric ways coupled with a blatant absence of complementarity, balance and equilibrium in all our relations.

For instance, in a recently published and widely circulated document titled *Vivir Bien como Respuesta a la Crisis Global* (Living Well as a Response to the Global Crisis) the Andean Coordination of Indigenous Organizations and the Indigenous-led Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Plurinational State of Bolivia offer a daunting, yet eloquent and highly sophisticated diagnosis of our contemporary global condition which can be summarized simply as a condition of “Global Crisis.” The diagnosis, which I am translating from Spanish, is worth citing in full, as it offers an encompassing rendition of what can be interpreted as a context for this dissertation:

We are on the brink of a global ecological and social collapse... [there is] palpable evidence that the natural, social, and economic systems of the planet are on the brink of a catastrophic change, a Global Crisis for which few societies are prepared. There is a constant increase in the probability that the consequences of this change will be grave and of unprecedented magnitude, especially for the equilibrium of nature...and this will continue unless the world changes its course immediately. If we do not take care of these problems now, the problems will ‘take care’ of us...The Global Crisis and world emergency which we are currently experiencing has its origin in various major tendencies that move rapidly and that reinforce each other...These tendencies can be summarized in the following points:

- 1) *Climate change* which causes natural alterations and disasters such as the phenomena of El Niño and La Niña, droughts, floods, heat waves, tsunamis, hurricanes and tornadoes which are increasingly stronger and more frequent, creating economic and social tragedies with especially grave consequences for the most impoverished nations and peoples. As we are crossing certain critical thresholds ecologically speaking, the pace of changes can accelerate unpredictably, creating abrupt alterations with catastrophic consequences.
- 2) *The depletion of the natural resources (including the biodiversity) of the planet* which are being reduced drastically as a result of overexploitation by the industrialized nations which each year consume 30% more than what the Earth can regenerate, thereby threatening life in the planet as well as the wellbeing of humanity and the survival of our ancestral Indigenous nations and cultures which have always offered alternative models and practices that are in harmony with nature.
- 3) *The crisis of water.* Urbanization, industrialization and the greater use of energy implies a greater consumption of water and an increase in the extraction of subterranean resources, all of which is lowering the level and availability of this vital liquid in many parts of the world, thereby resulting in the fact that anywhere from 15% to 30% of the extractions of water for irrigation are not sustainable.
- 4) *The crisis in the production of foodstuffs* due to the impact of climate change and the increased conversion of agricultural products into raw materials for the production of agro-fuels, which is gradually reducing the world’s reserve of foodstuffs. Along with the increasing costs of fuels, fertilizers and transportation, this is causing a dramatic increase in the price of foods which has already reached its maximum level in the last 50 years and will probably continue to increase in the next few years.
- 5) *The end of cheap energy*, first and foremost of petroleum and gas, without our being able to find alternative energies that could substitute fossil fuels in the quantities to which we have grown accustomed, which thereby threatens the long term survival of industrialism in its contemporary magnitude and of ‘Western Civilization’ itself. But this can also mean the

salvation of the planet and a great opportunity to change our way of life, and to redesign our production of foods and our forms of settlement, that is, beyond modern urbanization.

6) *The world financial crisis* as provoked by the reduction of economic growth caused by the stagnation of petroleum production ever since 2005. This, together with the impetus of climate change, prompts a deceleration of production and violently alters the prices of energy and minerals. But the expectations that the economic crisis will be overcome and that economic growth will continue will probably be frustrated by the impending stagnation of petroleum extraction... And whether there is a temporary recovery or not, that will not prevent the middle to long run decline of a global economy that is based on non-renewable resources that are running out.

7) *The crisis of time*, wherein the global time of industrial production, of cyberspace and telecommunications brutally clashes against the time of life, causing a tremendous collision of times between the cyclical time of nature and the cosmos, and the linear time of history and of the clock.

The combination of these dangerous tendencies could soon bring about, if they are not reverted, an ecological and social collapse of global proportions that would break apart the most basic economic and operational functioning of global society and would destroy or profoundly damage human life as well as the life of all other living creatures, in addition to the planet itself. Some say that such a collapse is already inevitable. This collapse will affect all of humanity, but particularly the most impoverished countries... which will be the first in being hit and the ones who are hit hardest. This Global Crisis threatens to destroy all life plans and development efforts, not to speak of the effort to build a world where we can all enjoy a life in plenitude. If we do not do something to stop this Global Crisis, we will all end up disappearing, both the wealthy and the poor, Indigenous or non-Indigenous, those with money and those without it, professionals, non-professionals, we will all be gone. Money will not save us.²⁵

This sort of critically encompassing diagnosis of the contemporary global condition is shared by most Indigenous (and a growing number of non-Indigenous) voices and organizations across the world; this dissertation proceeds from such perspectives. Although critical perspectives concerning the expansion and now globalization of anthropocentric civilization have been shared by the Indigenous for centuries, the dominant society is only recently coming to an awareness of the unsustainability of its ways, now exported to (and often imposed upon) almost every corner of the globe. Although the preconditions that have led to the global crisis diagnosed above were predicted by Indigenous Abya-Yalans ever since they first encountered Western colonialism, it is only now that a growing number of dissidents from the dominant society is starting to listen, and yet not always carefully enough. Still, most people informed about global affairs would probably recognize that the the above diagnosis does articulate a number of growing global concerns. Hence

²⁵ Ministerio de Relaciones Exteriores del Estado Plurinacional de Bolivia and Coordinadora Andina de Organizaciones Indígenas 2009, 8-10; my translation.

such a diagnosis of the contemporary condition by now should not come as a surprise to anybody who follows world affairs with a critical sensibility and a concern for what may come about should we fail to find, elaborate, and enact alternatives to the contemporary global (dis)order.

In light of the unprecedented crises and challenges that the world is facing it is worth pondering very carefully the idea that we must be willing to explore previously underestimated or previously unimaginable alternatives and that we should be disposed to radically change the way we live in every dimension and at every level. The above cited diagnosis is not the only one of its kind, but it is exceptional in its combination of parsimony, accuracy, and breadth, and what is no less important, it comes from Indigenous perspectives whose voices, wisdoms and ways have been historically marginalized, subjugated or erased which, as will be shown throughout this work, is precisely one of the major problems which has led to this Global Crisis and which has prevented the world from addressing its challenges before they became as dramatic as they have.

Even so, and as has been already noted, the informed reader will be aware that there is a growing number of voices from diverse fields and cultural spheres across the world similarly diagnosing the current era as an era of global crisis that brings unprecedented challenges and calls for previously unthinkable and radical changes to how we live in every way, and therefore to how we think, write and do just about everything. James Skelly aptly summarizes articulations made by such voices when he writes,

The future, as we know, looks increasingly problematic. Soil has been rapidly eroding on the agriculturally productive land on the planet, water is becoming an ever more scarce resource, and biodiversity is in such serious decline that there is an unprecedented mass extinction of species underway ... In tropical forests where 50% of all land species live, estimates suggest that between 4 – 6,000 species have been disappearing every year ... India once produced 30,000 separate varieties of rice, but today most rice production is centered on 10 species. In other words, “the world’s available gene pool” has shrunk inexorably! ... And this is to say nothing of climate change, pervasive hunger among many of the world’s peoples, nor the unsustainable dependence of almost all societies on fossil fuels. James Lovelock, who articulated the Gaia thesis that the Earth is a living organism, estimates that by the end of this century there will be nearly 5 billion less people on the planet than there are currently ... In...*Our Final Hour?*, Martin Rees ... takes an even more grim perspective and estimates that humans have only a 50/50 chance of surviving the current century *unless we radically change our approach to our existence on the planet...*²⁶

²⁶ Skelly 2008, 135-152, 136, emphasis added. It is important to point out that Indigenous voices stand on their own and need no confirmation from Western voices. Moreover, Indigenous outlooks

This work therefore proposes radically different ways of thinking and living, and to do so it is also written in a different way from what is accustomed in conventional (most often Western(ized)) intellectual circles. Different questions need different approaches, and, as Robert Cox²⁷ has insisted, we are facing a rapidly changing world with tremendously different challenges for which our accustomed languages, knowledges, and ways are no longer appropriate.

It is not outrageous to declare that the world is at an epochal crossroads for, as it will be explained and discussed throughout this work, it is becoming more and more evident that ‘civilization’ as we know it is unsustainable, unviable and for a great many, unjust, not only in the long run, but in the short run as well, and indeed also in the present. It is therefore plausible to diagnose the twilight of an epoch in civilization, and more precisely the twilight of *anthropocentric* civilization, the twilight of a civilization built upon the conception of an abstract being called ‘Man,’ most often abstracted from the embodied characteristics of the European male, later extended into and upon ‘humanity’, understood most predominantly as a living entity fundamentally separated from the rest of the cosmos, and whose aspirations are conceived as more important and its condition superior to that of all else. It is also plausible to call forth the dawn of a new epoch, a New Sun as Abya-Yalans refer to the coming era, one that is yet to arise. The world hence currently dwells at the margins between what has not yet died and what has not yet been born; this limbo is precisely the instance which Antonio Gramsci²⁸ refers to as ‘crisis’, this is the instance from which this work springs forth, as both a critical reflection of the epoch that is coming to an end—indeed, a call for a celebratory closing of the anthropocentric epoch—and as an exploration of what we are responsible for bringing about. Let us greet this New Sun with a cosmopolitical celebration of bio-eco-communal renewal.

are based on a wisdom that is millennia old, and a long-term resistance that is centuries old, a resistance against what from an Indigenous perspective has always been seen as an unsustainable mode of civilization.

²⁷ Cox 2006.

²⁸ See Gramsci 2000; Cox 1983.

But nothing in this world is born out of nothing. Our futures, possible and actual, should therefore be built on the inheritance of accumulated wisdoms from different civilizations, of the wise interweaving and further elaboration of their qualities and the scrupulous critique of their limitations. In the midst of our epochal crisis it is worth remembering what Karl Jaspers articulated as the Axial Age. Jaspers referred to the period between 800 and 200 BC in the Gregorian calendar as a crucial moment in the midst of important changes where “the spiritual foundations of humanity were laid simultaneously and independently in China, India, Persia, Judea, and Greece. And these are the foundations upon which humanity still subsists today.”²⁹ Drawing again on Gramsci’s concept of ‘crisis’, such an ‘Axial’ Age should be characterized precisely as a moment of crisis that marked the end of a previous epoch and the start of a new epoch built on crucial changes in worldviews and lifeways. Judging from the global crisis of our era it makes sense to speak of the instance of our contemporary juncture as precisely the sort of breeding ground for a new Axial Age. However, in order to avoid the shortcomings of the Axial Age emphatically articulated by Jaspers, this New Sun can only be born from complementary, proactive and creative inter-civilizational collaboration, and moreover, it will have to be open to Abya-Yalan contributions which have so far been ignored, ancestrally by the kismet of geographical oblivion, but since 1492 by the crude violence of persisting injustice. Our current global crisis is the best of possible occasions to engage in such complementary cooperation and to seize the opportunity of an emerging framework of Inter-Civilizational Relations, in ‘intellectual’ as in ‘political’ life,³⁰ which is a timely instance to bring about the New Sun upon a new Axial Age. In keeping with these considerations, this work embodies an effort to bring the contributions of Indigenous America to the emerging Inter-Civilizational Dialogue by drawing on the commendable emerging framework known as Comparative Political/Global Theory (implying and including also Comparative Philosophy and Comparative Science).

²⁹ Jaspers 2003, 98.

³⁰ To discern ‘intellectual’ from ‘political’ might indeed seem superfluous since at least they are mutually constitutive, if not just arbitrary distinctions.

But in order to do so two tasks must be fulfilled, both of which are addressed in a preliminary section that precedes the three substantial Parts; this preliminary section concisely outlines the philosophical, theoretical and political framework for this work. In doing so it addresses two questions. The first is the question of why do we need to bring about a New Axial Age based on Inter-Civilizational Dialogue(s). The answer that has already been offered is that a New Axial Age is precisely what is called for in the face of our unprecedented global crises, and the Dialogue of Civilizations guided by Comparative Political Theory is a framework upon which the accumulated wisdoms of all cultures can be brought to bear on the tremendous changes that need to be made globally. The second question is: why should the world invest major time and effort to recover, revalorize, and revitalize Indigenous Cultures and Civilizations? Beyond the obvious reason that peoples of Indigenous descent and their achievements should be owed respect and consideration, and should be allowed to flourish out of intuitive ethical and political justifications, also Indigenous Cultures and Civilizations have been recognized to safeguard and cultivate some of the most precious wisdoms for an age devoid of ecological and social balance.

But as will be further elaborated throughout the work, and as we will reflect upon towards the end of this dissertation, the value of Indigenous wisdoms and ways is even more significant when we come to recognize that the ongoing subjugation of Indigeneity and of those who embody and practice it constitutes one of the major causes of our current global crises. The ongoing coloniality of power that has subjugated and continues to subjugate Indigeneity and those who embody it, in doing so, has concomitantly subjugated ecologically and socially balanced ways of life that were built with the efforts of millennia to accord with the logic of bio-eco-cosmic cycles and relations. The subjugation of the Indigenous is hence directly responsible for the world's epochal crisis. The committed recovery, critical revalorization, and creative revitalization of Indigeneity is therefore both just and necessary for redressing our inherited injustices, correcting our historically persistent imbalances, and addressing our contemporary global challenges by constructing viable alternatives upon a new Axial Age that is open to Indigenous wisdoms and ways from where shall emerge the New Sun upon which the world shall celebrate its

renewal by recycling itself into the form of a viable and harmonious non-anthropocentric and post-human cosmopolitical community.

* * *

Before we proceed any further, a brief description of the sequence of the work is owed to the reader. This dissertation will first introduce comparative political theory/philosophy as framework for the inter-civilizational dialogue, arguing that Indigenous contributions have been marginalized and must be considered. Part I then focuses and elaborates on specifically Mesoamerican contributions; Part II is dedicated to Andean contributions and Part III to Native North American contributions. The Conclusion offers a broad overview and reflection of how Abya-Yalan or Indigenous American contributions can help us, and are indeed vital to address our most crucial contemporary global challenges, especially in what concerns the deconstruction of anthropocentric civilization and the construction of bio-eco-cosmopolitical alternatives built on post-anthropocentric forms of socio-ecological justice, balance, and harmony.

OPENING COMPARATIVE POLITICAL THEORY AND THE DIALOGUE OF
CIVILIZATIONS TO THE CONTRIBUTIONS OF ABYA-YALA³¹:

A PHILOSOPHICAL, THEORETICAL, AND POLITICAL FRAMEWORK

The assumption guiding...“comparative political theory”...is that, in all or most societies throughout history, there has been some thinking or theorizing about politics, about the right and wrong ways, and the proper and improper ways of conducting...life in a community. Yet...the teaching of political theory has been confined almost exclusively to the so-called Western “canon,” that is, the tradition of political thought stretching roughly from Socrates to Marx or Nietzsche. No doubt this is an immensely rich tradition and...students should be exposed to it...However, in our age of rapid globalization, confinement to this canon is no longer adequate or justifiable. In our time, when the winds of trade spread not only goods but also ideas and cultural legacies around the globe, confinement to the Western tradition amounts to a parochial self-enclosure incompatible with university studies.

—Fred R. Dallmayr, *Comparative Political Theory: An Introduction*.³²

What would be marked as the decades of the 1990s and 2000s in the—admittedly Eurocentric—Gregorian Calendar, marked also the most explicit articulation in the English language of a project that many across the world had undertaken for centuries—often without Western recognition, namely, the mutually respectful and constructive comparison between historical, actual and potential modes of civilizational life. The linguistic articulation of what could be called a congenial *comparative civilizational conscience* in the Western Anglo-sphere has been put into words most recognizably by Fred R. Dallmayr³³ who has called for a—long overdue³⁴—“Comparative Political Theory.” This Comparative Political Theory would bring

³¹ *Abya Yala*, roughly translatable as “land in plenitude,” is an Indigenous Kuna name for what the Westernized call the “Americas”. Most Indigenous movements today have agreed on the use of the name Abya Yala. The Kuna people are originally from what the Westernized refer to as “Panama.”

³² Dallmayr 2010, ix.

³³ Dallmayr 1998; 1999; 2001; 2002; 2004; and 2010.

³⁴ As Rengger and Thirkell White (2007, 3) recently pointed out, although critical theorists have helped “move...the discipline a long way in the right direction” even in their work “there continue to be problematic silences—most notably about the role of the non-Western world in shaping international relations” and the contemporary world. See Rengger and Thirkell-White 2007, 3-24.

intellectual efforts from across the world together in order to channel dialogues among civilizations³⁵ so as to confront our contemporary global challenges and foster alternative paths towards the construction of a global village. As Dallmayr puts it, there is an emerging “need to imagine and cultivate new cross-cultural or even inter-civilizational bonds and arrangements.”³⁶ This emerging need calls for political, international and global theorists to cultivate a “properly comparative, cross-cultural inter-civilizational philosophy.”³⁷ In this context, Stephen J. Rosow informs us, “Comparative political theory seeks to introduce non-Western thought into political theory.”³⁸

Back in 1997 Dallmayr noted that “comparative political theory” or “comparative political philosophy” is “a field of inquiry which is either nonexistent or at most fledgling and embryonic in contemporary academia,”³⁹ or more specifically in Western academia. To be sure most people beyond the West have always had to compare at least two traditions of political thought—albeit in asymmetric and often unfavorable conditions: their own vis-à-vis the expansionist Western tradition. Hence, as Rosow notes, “Comparative political theory is a critical discipline made necessary...by the hegemony of Western modernity,”⁴⁰ and, we should add, Western coloniality and neo-coloniality. Clearly, comparative political theory is necessary especially to those attacked, subordinated and marginalized by Western expansionism and hegemony. Hence, as Dallmayr points out, “it is not surprising that many of the pioneering efforts

³⁵ As Dallmayr is quick to point out and I agree, civilizations should be understood not as monoliths but as “storehouses of accumulated learning” that “posses the ongoing capacity to learn afresh and transform themselves in the light of new experiences.” (Dallmayr 2010, x)

³⁶ Dallmayr 2004, 249-257, 250. Dallmayr appropriately adds in a later work that the idea of a “dialogue” among civilizations is “significant for comparative political theory, which, like every comparative study, has to rely on cross-cultural questionin, dialogue, and perhaps contestation.” (Dallmayr 2010, x)

³⁷ Dallmayr 2004, 249-257, 251.

³⁸ Rosow 2004, 255, 255.

³⁹ Dallmayr 1997, 421-428, 412-422.

⁴⁰ Rosow 2004, 255, 259.

toward comparative political theory have been launched by scholars on or from the periphery of the corridors of power.”⁴¹ But as will become increasingly clear throughout this work, comparative political theory is necessary to the West as well and more importantly to the globe in general, especially as an urgent counterbalance to those pernicious worldwide effects resulting from the continuing expansion(ism) of Euro-Western (neo)colonialism and modernity, particularly—though not exclusively—in their ecological manifestations. These, and other phenomena such as ‘globalization’ have prompted Western academia to start opening up—albeit quite late—to the seemingly obvious fact that people from other cultures can also offer some very valuable and relevant contributions to political thought, civilizational organization, and global life.

Fred Dallmayr, arguably the foremost contemporary articulator of “comparative political theory” among Anglo-Western voices, described this framework back in 1997 as

an inquiry which, in a sustained fashion, reflects upon the status and meaning of political life no longer in a restricted geographical setting but in the global arena. The motivation behind this initiative is a transformation which profoundly shapes our waning century: the emergence of the “global village” involving the steadily intensifying interaction among previously (more or less) segregated civilizations or cultural zones⁴² ... Faithful to the Platonic motto of “wondering” (*thaumazein*), the theorist in the global village must shun spectatorial allures and assume the more modest stance of co-participant in the search for truth: by opening mind and heart to the puzzling diversity of human

⁴¹ Dallmayr 2004, 249-257, 252 and 2010, 12.

⁴² Dallmayr’s diagnosis of “previously (more or less) segregated civilizations or cultural zones” must be questioned in light of the history of colonialism and the ongoing coloniality and hegemony of Western power(s). For civilizations and cultures targeted and affected by Western colonialism and hegemony it is impossible to uphold the claim that they have been (as if only until recently) separated cultural zones—although they have certainly been ethno-racially and culturally segregated. For the Indigenous Americas, for example, ‘interaction’ frequently in the form of ceaseless attempts at destruction or absorption—often coerced and non-consensual—with(in) an expansionist Western civilization and its cultural spheres has been a constant for over five hundred years. For the rest of the world this is also true within varying time frames. So it is appropriate to remember that Western colonialism and hegemony (again) betrays the assumption of claims that would (re)present the world as (if) only recently coming into intensified interaction. Certainly, for peoples of Indigenous descent, ‘intensified interaction’ started more than five centuries ago and that interaction which continues to this day has occurred in ‘more or less’ ‘intense’ forms of violence and segregation. So the underlying conditions that have called for *the West* (since ‘The Rest’ have had little choice) to engage in a long overdue comparative political conscience are much older and acute than any account that would attribute the ultimate justification for Comparative Political Theory to recently increasing trade, communication, and what would seem as the seemingly harmless emergence of a ‘global village.’ Even in consideration of these pertinent contentions, the disposition articulated by Dallmayr should be considered commendable.

experiences—and also to the possibility of jeopardizing cherished preconceptions or beliefs. In more concrete terms, the Western practitioner of political theory/philosophy must relinquish the role of universal teacher (buttressed by Western hegemony) and be content with that of fellow student in a cross-cultural learning experience.⁴³

In his 2010 book, *Comparative Political Theory: An Introduction*, Dallmayr further describes his “sense of cross-cultural or comparative political theory” as a

mode of theorizing that takes seriously the ongoing process of globalization, which entails, among other things, the growing proximity and interpenetration of cultures or the emergence of (what Marshall McLuhan called) the “global village.” In contrast to hegemonic or imperialist modes of theorizing, the term implies that the language or idiom of the emerging “village” (or global civil society) cannot be monopolized by one segment of its population. Differently put, shared meanings and practices—to the extent that this is possible—can only arise from the lateral interaction, negotiation, and contestation among different, historically grown cultural frameworks.⁴⁴

Moreover, as Dallmayr pointed out in 2004, comparative political theorizing must be guided by a “long-range political vision” that “supports global democratic cooperation.”⁴⁵ In order to enable such a long-range political vision comparative political theorizing must first proceed from a critical disposition towards the fact that

the study of political theory or political philosophy...[a]s practiced in most Western universities, revolves...around the canon of Western political thought from Plato to Marx or Nietzsche—with occasional recent concessions to strands of feminism and multiculturalism as found in Western societies.⁴⁶

⁴³ Dallmayr 1997, 421-428, 412-422. Dallmayr further adds that “In terms of methodology, comparative political theory proceeds mainly through the interpretation of texts, utterances and practices, which in turn are embedded in a distinct life-form or cultural way of life.” Distinct, we assume, means distinct from the dominant Western life-form(s) and cultural way(s) of life. Although this dissertation does share part of Dallmayr’s suggested methodology it will not bind itself to Western methodological prescriptions of any kind, unless they happen to have a comparable referent in Indigenous wisdoms. But by and large, this dissertation gives preference, precedence and as much liberty as possible to Indigenous perspectives without subjecting them to the gaze of Western “epistemology” or “methodology.” *This work relies much more on Indigenous and decolonizing methodologies* such as would, for instance, be found in Tuhiwai Smith (1999), Smith and Wobst (2005), Grande (2004), Denzin, Lincoln, and Tuhiwai Smith (2008), Kovach (2009), and Watkins (2000).

⁴⁴ Dallmayr 2010, 8.

⁴⁵ Dallmayr 2004, 249-257, 254. In a later volume Dallmayr aptly adds that “Comparative political theorists proceed on the assumption or hypothesis that something like a global...society is emerging, making room for mutual learning and the cultivation of better understanding about ideas, aspirations, and practices.” (Dallmayr 2010, x)

⁴⁶ Dallmayr 1997, 421-428, 412-422.

And in fact, since most of the world has been subject(ed) to Western colonialism and/or hegemony, this same canon with very slight variations is almost globally dominant. As Dallmayr highlights, scholars coming from the ‘peripheries’ of a Eurocentric order into Western academia, such as Canadian-Indian political theorist Anthony Parel, have noted that “scholarship in political theory has come almost exclusively to mean the study of modern Western political thought; it assumes that modern Western texts are “products of universal reason itself”.⁴⁷ This reveals the continued effects of an ongoing Euro/Western-centric coloniality, and in this particular case, the coloniality of Western knowledges over other-than-Western knowledges. This coloniality persists even beyond Western settings or in settings that have been forcibly Westernized such as settler societies like those A. W. Crosby called the “Neo-Europes”⁴⁸, and supposedly “post-colonial” societies which are nevertheless dominated by Western or heavily Westernized elites as is the case across most of the Americas⁴⁹ which is the focus of this work. Hence, the Western canon not only

⁴⁷ Dallmayr 2004, 249-257, 252. In this regard, it is also pertinent to keep in mind the work of Anthony Parel himself, for instance his collaboration with Ronald C. Keith (2003) in the edited volume titled *Comparative Political Philosophy: Studies under the Upas Tree*.

⁴⁸ See Crosby 1986. The Neo-Europes are locations outside of Europe predominantly populated and/or clearly controlled by people of European descent. For example, the US, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, the Southern Cone of the Americas, Eastern Russia, parts of South Africa, etc.

⁴⁹ This pattern of Neo-European settler colonial dominance is also found throughout the rest of Latin(ized) America which is mostly dominated by small settler colonial elites which are in these places a very clear minority—though an extremely powerful minority as well. But, again, across all of the Americas from Alaska down to the southernmost tip of the Andes, colonialism and the ongoing coloniality of power that prevails, has created spaces for Neo-European expansion. The history of this expansion is unfortunately marred by a living heritage of genocide, ethnocide, ethnic cleansing, violence-induced miscegenation and programmatic ‘blood dilution’, dispossession, attrition, displacement, uprooting, involuntary ‘relocation’, and systematic non-consensual assimilation/acclaculturation (or ‘de-Indianization’) of the Indigenous. Massive dispossession and cleansing is very clear throughout the history of most of North America and the Southern Cone. In the rest of the Americas the sizable numbers of peoples of Indigenous descent that persist, whether as “pure” or “mixed” in combination with the African descendants (mostly from the slave trade) made it difficult for Neo-European settler colonial elites to achieve an ethnically defined majority; however, that did not prevent many of them from trying as much as possible through a combination of systematic violence against the Indigenous (which has historically included outright or covert genocide, forced sterilization, premeditated ‘blood’ dilution and programmatic ‘purification’ or ethno-cultural ‘whitening’ through violence-induced miscegenation, an ongoing structure of social dominance, and many other strategies and tactics, more or less atrocious); to this we must add the aggressive campaigns to Europeanize the

marginalizes the contributions of other-than-Western thought in Western academia, but also across the world. This is especially clear throughout the Americas.⁵⁰ This is a sign of the continued ‘legacy’ or rather perpetuation of an ongoing Eurocentric coloniality of the world, the dismantling of which demands what many call a “decolonization” of knowledges and practices⁵¹ that must be the premise for the realization of Dallmayr’s proposal, namely, that we must “replace...the rehearsal of routinized canons” which are characteristically Euro/Western-centric and andro-centric “with a turn to global, cross-cultural,” or “comparative” political theorizing.”⁵²

In any case, though the call for a Comparative Political Theory/Philosophy⁵³ raises challenges and demands that will take an unprecedented effort by political thinkers and philosophers of all types to address, this call has already started bearing its first fruits. In this regard, it is a pleasure to see how a critical awareness of civilizational hegemony and the search for congenial, pluralist, and cosmopolitical alternatives has grown ever since Dallmayr’s initial prompts, already resulting in various high profile scholarly exercises in Comparative Political,

Americas by importing, seeking to attract or accepting massive contingents of (exclusively) European immigrants—while concomitantly rejecting immigrants from other parts of the world, most infamously the historically prevalent rejection and/or mistreatment of Asian immigrants by Euro/Western-centric settler colonial states and elites.

⁵⁰ Particularly relevant in regard to the Americas is the work of Walter D. Mignolo (Mignolo 1992; 1998; 2000; 2001; 2003; 2006; 2007; 2008; Boone and Mignolo 1994; Mignolo and Tlostanova 2006). Several of Mignolo’s works are in Spanish; however, many are also in English.

⁵¹ In the context of international theory, some interesting efforts at decolonizing knowledge can be found in the following works: Jones 2006; Saurin 2006 and 2010; Hobson 2004 and 2007; Sabaratnam 2011.

⁵² Dallmayr 2010, 8.

⁵³ Dallmayr notes that “academic philosophy has been way ahead of political theory in moving into the area of comparative study.” (Dallmayr 2010, 3) This might be accurate to a limited extent, but so far the Western academic philosophy engagement with Indigenous philosophy is very short from being satisfactory. See the excellent arguments on the topic in the works of Anne Waters (notably her edited volume with entries by Indigenous North Americans), Viola Cordova, Gregory Cajete, Miguel León Portilla, Carlos Lenkersdorf, Josef Estermann, and Javier Medina cited throughout this dissertation and referred in the bibliography. All of them make it evident that Western Academic philosophy knows has heeded little to nothing from Indigenous philosophy.

International, and Global Theory.⁵⁴ Indeed, by 2004 Dallmayr could already note the “mushrooming literature in the field of non-Western politics and political thought.”⁵⁵ Moreover “comparative political theory has steadily gained momentum, emerging as a viable field in the discipline of political science.”⁵⁶

In this setting, we should celebrate along with Dallmayr that in the context of globalization “broader cultural or civilization[al] constellations have attracted the attention of international political analysts.”⁵⁷ Students of politics, as Gerbhardt notes, have now clearly come to the shared realization that “Civilizations—clashing or not—do matter in that they establish the basis of humankind’s global existence.”⁵⁸ In large part because of that realization, Rosow has noted,

Political theorists are beginning to introduce courses in non-Western political theory into the liberal arts curriculum, as well as non-Western theorists into topical courses in political theory. Justified as necessary to reform a democratic liberal arts curriculum in the age of globalization, comparative political theory—as some theorists refer to the trend—offers hope of opening theory to the diversity of a globalized world, as well as reimagining the boundaries of political thought and action. Underlying the practice is the belief that doing so will enhance democracy in the context of deepening interdependence and cultural interaction. Increasing knowledge of other cultures will engender respect for the dignity of others, and counter an unthinking ethnocentrism.⁵⁹

But as Rosow also notes, an opening to the “others” of the West will require more than just introducing courses and books, but decolonizing knowledges in general, restructuring institutions, if not deconstructing and reconstructing them anew—both locally and globally. In any

⁵⁴ For those explicitly concerning civilizations in/and world politics see, for example, Tickner and Wæver 2009; Acharya and Buzan 2009; Hall and Jackson 2007; Katzenstein 2010.

⁵⁵ Dallmayr 2004, 249-257, 427.

⁵⁶ Dallmayr 2004, 249-257, 253.

⁵⁷ Dallmayr 2004, 249-257, 334.

⁵⁸ Gebhardt 2008, 5. Gebhardt’s use of “clashing” refers to Samuel P. Huntington’s (in)famous theory of the clash of civilizations. (Huntington 1997)

⁵⁹ Rosow 2004, 255.

case, the growing trends seem very promising and are commendable in many ways. Rosow

outlines in detail some of the positive trends prompted by comparative political theory:

...comparative political theory seeks explicitly to fold into political theory the concern for the particularity of non-Western cultures as they are situated in the globalizing world order. Its novel way of approaching the issues surrounding the universal and the particular in politics opens political theory to participating in a revamped liberal arts curriculum that aims at developing democratic citizens in a global and multicultural world order by encouraging students to engage in a global dialogics in which political possibilities are reimagined through reflexive engagement with others. It provides a compelling argument for introducing non-Western cultures into political theory. By doing so, it reworks the critical liberal arts curriculum away from the distillation of the essentiality of the national culture and toward a multicultural imaginary...[moreover,] comparative political theory can promote... [global] cosmopolitan citizenship...[and furthermore] broadening the pallet of political theory to include non-Western thought might enable our students to become democratic citizens in a global order... [and that is why] introducing non-Western civilizations, including in political theory, is becoming the norm in general education programs and in liberal arts teaching...⁶⁰

Unfortunately, however, the growing scholarly and educational trend towards

“comparative political theory,” along with “post-national or global political theory”⁶¹ and “cross-cultural inter-civilizational philosophy” has tended to privilege a collection of the most dominant civilizational manifestations across the world. This has been the case even when Dallmayr insisted that a key entry point into the cultivation of responsible comparative political theory is to persistently engage with what Michel Foucault called ‘subjugated knowledges’.⁶² Most often this collection of privileged civilizations—perhaps unintentionally—tends to ignore “Fourth World”⁶³ and non-“Old-World” civilizational manifestations. It is a lamentable yet perhaps predictable shortcoming of comparative political theory—at least so far—that it would ‘forget’ about the Fourth World, and it is all the more lamentable in the specific case of Abya-Yalan (Indigenous American) cultural and civilizational manifestations since the specific paradigm known as

⁶⁰ Rosow 2004, 255, 260, 268.

⁶¹ Rosow 2004, 255, 256.

⁶² Rosow 2004, 255, 259.

⁶³ Griggs, Fallon, and Center for World Indigenous Studies 1992; Castells 2000; Seton 1999; Notes 2001; Duffié 1998; Griggs and Hocknell 1995; Nietschmann 1994; Churchill 1993 and 2002; Dyck 1985; Manuel and Posluns 1974; Burris and Women-Fourth World 1971; Silko 1989.

“comparative political theory” is precisely growing quite visibly on the Indigenous American lands of Turtle Island (Northern Abya-Yala or ‘North America’). For instance the otherwise admirable work of Dallmayr reveals a regrettable silence about Indigenous America. As late as 2010, Fred Dallmayr, who is writing from within Turtle Island in the ancestral lands of the Indigenous Miami—perhaps dryly—known by the colonizing society as “Indiana”, states the following,

After all, comparative political theory necessarily includes in its ambit comparisons between “Western” and “Eastern” thinkers, as well as between [South Asian] Indian and East Asian or between Islamic and African theoretical perspectives.⁶⁴

It is worth noting that there is no Columbian confusion in this quote from Dallmayr: “Indan” clearly refers to India in South Asia. In any case, nowhere do we find even a hint of Indigenous, not even specifically Abya-Yalan, and within that not even Native North American cultures and civilizations. This utter oblivion concerning the Indigenous is the direct effect of an ongoing coloniality of which Dallmayr’s silence in a book designed to be an *Introduction to Comparative Political Theory* is just another lamentable manifestation.⁶⁵

Without any interest in downplaying the admirable efforts of this emergent comparative civilizational work (and with every interest in contributing to it), it must be noted that already in its early stages there is a risk that these very valuable and well-intentioned intellectual (and political) endeavors might unwittingly be contributing to build the allure and power of a select group of privileged civilizations. That is, there is a risk that there will emerge in the intellectual

⁶⁴ Dallmayr 2010,

⁶⁵ Dallmayr’s *Comparative Political Theory: An Introduction* does not include any chapter concerning any part of the Indigenous Americas, nor does it have any chapter on “Latin[ized] America” or Africa. The book offers a rather unconvincing apology for not including entries on “Latin[ized] America” and “Africa” (Dallmayr 2010, x) but does not have anything to say about the Indigenous Americas or even about the Indigenenity anywhere. Dallmayr’s book is very much paradigmatic of the lamentable trend to ignore the Indigenous. Dallmayr even writes that the choice to start the book with “Islamic civilization” is “a choice based on the fact that, as part of the so-called “Abrahamic” religions, Islam is *closer* than other cultures to the Western canon.” (Dallmayr 2010, x; emphasis added) Again, it saddened me to read this from an author whose efforts are generally admirable. Perhaps those trained in the Western canon and living throughout the Americas cannot see how *close* they are of the Indigenous America(s) because they are in fact stepping on her—literally and politically.

and global imaginary something of a Civilizational Club whose would be ‘official members’ always seem to be owed a voice in every single oeuvre and event on the matter while a great many ‘others’ are not. An overview on any work on civilizational politics, whether constructive or not so constructive (e.g., Huntington’s⁶⁶), results in a rather predictable set of often essentialized and would be official civilizations mapped in the Eurocentric geopolitical imaginary as “Western,” “Eastern,” “Middle-Eastern,” “Far-Eastern,” “Subcontinental (South Asian),” and *sometimes* “African” and “Latin American” civilizations. While the name and number may vary there are indeed many problems to the attempt to determine the “relevant” civilizations and to the attempt to go around delineating civilizational boundaries and establishing civilizational entities and identities, especially without considering the interests and positions of those doing the mapping and of those who would presumably ‘represent’ those ‘civilizations’.⁶⁷

These practices of mapping, representing, and listing the would be ‘relevant’ civilizational ‘actors’ or ‘players’ rehearse the deludingly simple and often violent habits of the modern (predominantly Euro-centric) geopolitical imagination which, as John Agnew⁶⁸ puts it, has endeavored to have the world “actively ‘spatialized,’ divided up, labeled, sorted out into a hierarchy of places of greater or lesser ‘importance’.”⁶⁹ Whether intentionally or unintentionally

⁶⁶ Huntington 1997. For an excellent critique of Huntington’s work see Said 2006. In the context of comparative political theory, Dallmayr offers the following critique concerning Huntington and his thesis of the “clash of civilizations”, a critique which is worth pondering. Dallmayr writes: “In large measure, comparative political theory—like comparative philosophy and comparative humanities—is an attempt to prove Huntington’s thesis wrong...In lieu of the Huntingtonian scenario, comparative inquiry places the emphasis on cross-cultural encounters, mutual learning, and (what has been called) dialogue among civilizations”. It so happens that, in 1999, the then Iranian President Mohammad Khatami proposed the idea of such a dialogue in a speech to the General Assembly of the United Nations; and the Assembly took up the idea and proceeded to designate 2001 as the “Year of the Dialogue among Civilizations.” (Dallmayr 2010, x)

⁶⁷ For interesting debates on the question of “civilizational identity” see Hall and Jackson 2007 and Katzenstein 2010. Notwithstanding the valuable contributions of these books, they are both also examples of the loud silence concerning the contributions of “Fourth-World”, Indigenous, and Abya-Yalan civilizational manifestations.

⁶⁸ Agnew 2003, 3.

⁶⁹ See also Dalby 2007, 103-118.

the old habits that reified the geopolitical constructs of modernity are already starting to vitiate what we could call the new civilizational imaginary which could otherwise serve as a fruitful ideational background to debate our global futures.⁷⁰ But instead of an ever expanding conception of a plurality of valuable civilizational manifestations, the predominant tendency has led to a gradual closure of the civilizational imaginary in favor of a privileging of The Big Five Civilizations—Plus Two; that is, sometimes adding the vaguely (mis)understood ‘African’ and ‘Latin(ized) American’ civilizations. And, indeed, when a ‘Latin American’ civilization is considered, if at all, it is considered mostly in its Latinized guise—that is, as a largely Western-Europeanized and just marginally ‘Amerindian’ (Abya-Yalan) civilization and if then only through an asymmetric mixture widely tending towards the European pole—and largely ignoring the crucial African influence(s). This is the case even among most of the more critical and reflective literatures.

The predominant tendency to consider a limited set of the most visible civilizations threatens to turn what would seem as a noble attempt to open a table of dialogue among civilizations into a rather selective process that leads to the establishment of an exclusive negotiating table that would look much like a Civilizational Security Council. In this Council, European civilization shares seats with only four other civilizations that most visibly managed to survive and compromise with 500 plus years of European civilizational expansionism. To this table is added a rotating seat for two convalescing invitees, much to the chagrin of the rest of historically (and contemporaneously) buried, subjected, marginalized and ignored civilizational manifestations who have often become the targets of what many Abya-Yalans call “wars of forgetting.”⁷¹

⁷⁰ The consideration of an emerging civilizational imaginary as a new background matrix that would enable the projection and appraisal of different possibilities and prospective futures can also be raised in contrast to the increasingly common argument, aptly articulated by Manfred Steger (2008), that we are living in the midst of an epochal transition and tension between a predominantly national imaginary and an incoming global imaginary. An alternative civilizational imaginary should also be brought into the articulation of an increasingly complex world.

⁷¹ Marcos, Peña-Vargas, and Ruggiero 2007, 45.

In particular there has been a tremendous fixation on civilizational manifestations from the misnamed ‘Old World’ and an unfortunate omission of ‘Fourth World’ or Indigenous cultures and civilizations. This has resulted in a—sometimes but not always unintentional—erasure of the historical, actual, and potential contributions of what could be called in a Eurocentric geopolitical imaginary the *Far-Western Civilizations*, cut out or devoured by the Western edge of European civilizational expansionism.⁷² These Far-Western Civilizations would include the Polynesian and Abya-Yalan (so-called ‘Amerindian’) civilizational manifestations whose wisdoms and practices can also contribute to the construction of alternative paths to a “global village” where different and better worlds can cosmopolitically come to harmoniously share and foster life.

Therefore, it is important to turn away from the temptation to build a Civilizational Club (however big or small) and instead open up to the revalorization of all historical, actual, and potential civilizational manifestations; this entails making a deliberate effort to remember and consider also the less visible, most forgotten, and often more unjustly disadvantaged and subalternized civilizations. This is especially important since it is these civilizations which may often hold the most valuable lessons, precisely because they have been systematically forgotten, buried and marginalized their lessons have rarely been considered, if at all. In what regards the world’s contemporary ecological crisis, this is particularly true of Abya-Yala or what in Western terms would be referred to as ‘Amerindian’ (Indigenous American) cultures and civilizations.

This work seeks to become an example of the effort to recover, revalorize, and revitalize the contributions of historically subjected civilizations and cultures to world politics by focusing and elaborating upon Indigenous American or Abya-Yalan contributions to the (Inter)Civilizational dialogue. Moreover, it is a conscious and deliberate contribution to the “wars against forgetting.”⁷³ As Marcos, the spokesperson for the Indigenous Neo-Zapatistas and the Subcommander of the Zapatista Army/Movement of National Liberation puts it: “They do not

⁷² C.f., Rouquié 1997.

⁷³ Marcos, Peña-Vargas, and Ruggiero 2007, 53.

want to give us any space other than that of the museums of ancient, past things, which will be left behind in an already distant yesterday.”⁷⁴ Yet as Mayanist philosopher Carlos Lenkersdorf⁷⁵ underlines, Indigenous peoples “are not fossils that we can only admire in the museums. They are our contemporaries and have an ancient history with many changes across centuries and millennia.”⁷⁶ But the constant attempt to use Indigenous cultures as living anthropological relics of ‘dead’ civilizations for tourists to gaze at, leads students of Indigenous life to feel forced to repeatedly insist on the obvious to the point of fatigue, as does the *mestizo* (mix-blooded) philosopher León Portilla, when he reminds us once again that Indigenous American culture “is far from dead.”⁷⁷

The problem is that Indigenous peoples are up against a systematic war of forgetting. So as the Neo-Zapatistas insist: “As our ancestors resisted wars of conquest and of extermination, we have resisted” and will overcome “the wars of forgetting” for “we, the Indigenous, are the guardians of history.” We are “the ones who guard and nurture the ancient word...The ones who respect history.”⁷⁸ In this context it is valuable to remember a common Mesoamerican prompt:

⁷⁴ Marcos, Peña-Vargas, and Ruggiero 2007, 112.

⁷⁵ *Important Note on Translations*: In this work I will be drawing on many sources that I have translated myself since they are not originally available in English. In Parts I and II notes concerning translations will be found, especially at the start and as pertaining to quoted text from sources not originally in English. Another note on translating terms or statements of particularly philosophical/political import: when translating philosophical concepts I will often use qualifiers such as “roughly translatable as” or “comparable to...” This is because we are working with different worldviews and cosmoexperiences whose semantic networks cannot nullify, substitute or supplant each other. As Dallmayr points out, it is important when engaging in translations to be aware of a “very important feature” that needs to be “kept in mind” when engaging in comparative political theory/comparative philosophy, namely that “cultures are linguistic and semantic frameworks whose ingredients are correlated in a particular, culture-specific order.” Hence, “there is no assurance that the coordination of semantic elements will carry over from place to place.” (Dallmayr 2010, xi)

⁷⁶ Lenkersdorf 1999, 5. I have personally translated all quotes appearing in this work from the texts of Carlos Lenkersdorf.

⁷⁷ León Portilla and Shorris 2001, 527.

⁷⁸ Marcos, Peña-Vargas, and Ruggiero 2007, 45, 90, 120.

“Do not let the red and the black of the ancients perish!!!”⁷⁹ The “red and the black” refers to the main colors used by the classic Indigenous Mesoamerican codex writers who were considered wise, but more broadly, it refers to the wisdoms and ways by which passing generations have been able to live on. But the exercise of remembrance requires a deliberate struggle to rise against the brutal erasures resulting from a predominantly overlooked and yet ongoing history of violence and oppression. In this regard, this work is written in the same spirit as that of Oaxacan philosopher of Indigenous Mixtec heritage Abraham Castellanos.⁸⁰ “This work” he said, “is written especially to elevate the spirit of ... [Amer]indians, so tormented,” forgotten and “exploited.” So as he said of his work I say of my own: “within each line, read my cry of protests against the brutality of the oppressors.”⁸¹

Yet a cry of protest against brutality and oppression must offer alternatives beyond that very brutality and oppression. As contemporary Mixtec philosopher Ignacio Ortiz Castro⁸² points out; for Castellanos “violence” has to be “the last thing to which one should recur,” if at all “for one must understand the bad of domination not from the viewpoint of morality but from an Ethic of philosophical reflection.” Although one must develop an “omni-comprehension of domination as the bad for those who suffer it” that is not enough reason “to return the same bad.” Instead, we must “prefix moral comprehension in a broader understanding of the dual alternation between good and bad in order to surpass that badness so that the dominator comes to understand it and becomes liberated from himself.” This occurs once we share the understanding that we are all

⁷⁹ León Portilla and Shorris 2001, 274-275.

⁸⁰ Abraham Castellanos (1871-1918) was a philosopher, pedagogist and professor. He was also a profound “knower of the Mixtec and Mesoamerican theogony, cosmogony and cosmology.” He used this knowledge “to settle his moral philosophy,” which draws substantially from “the mythic *Ya koo tidaa kui* or Quetzalcoatl (Kukulkan among the Mayas, Viracocha among the Andeans).” (Ortíz Castro 2006b, 143). I have personally translated all quotes appearing in this work from the texts of Mixtec philosopher Ignacio Ortíz Castro, including those of Abraham Castellanos.

⁸¹ Abraham Castellanos cited in Ortíz Castro 2006b, 14.

⁸² Ortíz Castro 2006a, 133.

“siblings” since we all “come from the same...cosmic energy that generates life on Earth” and which allows us to reflect, along with Abraham Castellanos, as follows:

My brother Yayauhqui makes war upon me, said Tlatlahuqui, How is it possible that brothers, both children of the same mother, flesh and warmth of...the Cosmos, tear each other apart? This cannot be. *I will return good for bad ...* and even though we may receive bad for good in an ever-continuing struggle, the child of my heart that lights the world shall shine radiantly, and will vanquish, for the consolation of men and for joy on Earth.⁸³

* * *

⁸³ Abraham Castellanos quoted in Ortíz Castro 2006a, 133.

PART I

COSMOPOETIC CHRONOPOLITICS:

A MESOAMERICAN CONTRIBUTION TO COMPARATIVE POLITICAL THEORY, INTER-
CIVILIZATIONAL RELATIONS AND WORLD POLITICS

May you enjoy the wisdom and beauty of Mesoamerica.

—Miguel León Portilla

...we need to rethink ... humanity's role in the larger order of things—in new ways.

—Millennium Ecosystem Assessment

...we Indian peoples have come in order to wind the clock...

—Ejercito Zapatista de Liberación Nacional through the voice of Subcomandante Marcos

Introduction to Part I

The purpose of this first part is to introduce and elaborate upon some contributions of Mesoamerican cultures and civilizations to Comparative Philosophy, Comparative Political Theory and Global Theory, especially in what concerns the question of Inter-Civilizational Relations and Cosmopolitics. “Mesoamerica” refers to an ample and historically extensive civilizational élan or spirit that has enabled and shaped the life of a great many generations of Indigenous American or Abya-Yalan descendants and many others across the world.⁸⁴ This Mesoamerican civilizational élan has lived on even under the genocidal and ethnocidal pressure of over 500 years of ongoing and globalizing Eurocentric civilizational hegemony.⁸⁵ As León Portilla states, “Mesoamerica, whose cultural influence now reaches all of northern Mexico, most of Central America, and the Southwest of the United States, has never been silent.”⁸⁶

In this work I offer only a few examples of the many possible ways in which the recovery, revalorization, and revitalization of the Mesoamerican civilizational élan can contribute to the cultivation of a Comparative (World) Political Theorizing for a global age. The call for Comparative Political Theorizing is arguably among the most noble and laudable projects that students of politics—and other related intellectual spheres—across the world have put forth in centuries, if not millennia. Unfortunately, however, up until this point the actual and potential contributions of the ‘Fourth (‘Indigenous’) World’ and its civilizational manifestations have been largely ignored. This has clearly been the case in what refers to Abya-Yalan civilizations. This work is designed to acknowledge and foster their contributions. To do so this Part I will focus specifically on select Mesoamerican contributions.⁸⁷ The historical and actual breath, scope,

⁸⁴ For a great and expansive introduction to Mesoamerican civilization through its literature and philosophy see León Portilla and Shorris 2001.

⁸⁵ For an insightful and provocative analysis of Mesoamerican civilizational resistance see Maldonado 2002 and Levi 1998.

⁸⁶ León Portilla and Shorris 2001, 15.

⁸⁷ Part II will be dedicated to Andean contributions and Part III will be dedicated to Native North American contributions. The Conclusion will offer an overall reflection on how the recovery,

complexity, and extensiveness of Mesoamerican civilization and its potentials would obviously overflow the margins of any single text, and that is probably what will happen as a result of this effort. Hopefully, indeed, this work will prompt an overflowing of further contributions by Mesoamerican civilization to the world. Understandably, nevertheless, this work can only offer an example which I have decided to articulate here as the Mesoamerican praxis of *cosmopoetic chronopolitics*

Cosmopoetic Chronopolitics: A Mesoamerican Contribution to the World

You are the first ones who want to learn FROM US. Never had someone told us something similar. The whole world wants to teach us: the teachers, the priests, the nuns, the doctors, the lawyers, the outreach agents, the government... The whole world wants us to learn from them. For them, we know nothing about nothing. You, our friends, on the other hand, know that we do know something that you and the rest of the world don't know and that you want to learn from us.

—A Maya-Tojolabal elder's comment to Carlos Lenkersdorf⁸⁸

Students of the Indigenous American world have come to the consensus that there exists among the Indigenous people of Middle America or Middle Abya-Yala a shared heritage of wisdoms and practices that constitutes a “Mesoamerican ethos.” As León Portilla puts it:

Can we say that there is a Mesoamerican ethos, or shared tone of sentiment, attitudes, and worldview; of values and forms of behavior, the sense of belonging to a family, both nuclear and extended; of being part of the community as a whole...? The answer is that such an ethos exists and cannot be denied; evidence of it is widely apparent... Their linguistic differences aside, [Mesoamericans] have more than a few elements in common.⁸⁹

revalorization, and revitalization of Indigenous contributions is crucial to address some of our most important contemporary global challenges.

⁸⁸ Lenkersdorf 1999, 15; upper case and emphasis in the original. It is important to notice that among Indigenous peoples knowledge is communal so claims to authorship or ownership of knowledge are bypassed (and in fact questioned) by most elders, these comments here are evidence of such communal values.

⁸⁹ León Portilla and Shorris 2001, 15, 40.

One aspect which makes up a significant part of the common Mesoamerican ethos concerns the understanding and importance of Time. In contrast to the overarching role of what Martin Heidegger called a fixation with “Being” in the constitution of European worldviews and civilizational manifestations,⁹⁰ Mesoamerican civilizational manifestations have been recognized to be driven by the élan of a “*cosmoexperience*”⁹¹ shaped by what Miguel León Portilla⁹² and Prudence Rice⁹³ call an “obsession” with “Time.” The Mesoamerican élan fosters an experience of existence embedded in what Lenkersdorf,⁹⁴ Maldonado,⁹⁵ and Ortiz-Castro⁹⁶ have referred to as the cycles of biocosmic communality; that is, an experience of all existence (not just ‘human’ existence) as embedded in the transient cycles of a cosmic communality in which “All Lives,”

⁹⁰ Heidegger 1978.

⁹¹ The contemporary Mixtec philosopher Ignacio Ortíz-Castro articulates the notion of a “cosmoexperience” as follows: we are “endowed with a *reflexive conscience* that is guaranteed and projected in a *cosmovision*, and vice versa, the *cosmovisions are related with the feeling, thought and acting* of the peoples, with their *behavior*, because this is generally *regulated by that particular cosmovision to which one belongs, thus enabling a cosmoexperience [cosmovivencia]...*” (Ortíz Castro 2006a, ix emphasis added) A cosmovision, as implied by the term, is a view of the cosmos, which is a qualitative equivalent of a “worldview,” but carrying much broader implications, especially when compared across civilizations. (Lenkersdorf 1999, 16) But, as Lenkersdorf points out, there is a major differentiation to be made between worldviews and cosmovisions on the one hand, and cosmoexperience(s) on the other. While the notions of worldview and cosmovision underline the sense of vision as the privilege entry point towards the world or the cosmos, the notion of cosmoexperience involves all five senses and indeed the whole organism, extending also to the imagination and the manner of living in a biocosmic continuum. (Lenkersdorf 1999, 20) Although cosmovisions and cosmoexperiences complement each other, the latter, as will become obvious when we move on, embeds, reinserts and fuses the whole experience constituting the “human” organism directly into the “environmental” network and the rhizomes of cosmic energy. This, as will become clear, is crucial for all aspects of Mesoamerican and indeed Abya-Yalan civilizational manifestations.

⁹² León Portilla 1962; León Portilla 1990; León Portilla 1990; León Portilla, Thompson, and Rojas 1994. *I have personally translated many of the quotes appearing in this work from the texts of Miguel León Portilla, except for the works already appearing in English.*

⁹³ Rice 2004.

⁹⁴ Lenkersdorf 1996; 1998; 1999; 2002b; 2002a; 2004a;2004b.

⁹⁵ Maldonado1994; 2002; Maldonado and Colombres 2004.. *I have personally translated all quotes appearing in this work from the texts of Benjamin Maldonado.*

⁹⁶ Ortíz Castro 2004, 17; Ortíz Castro 2004, 13-16; 2007, 85.

including the cosmos itself. For reasons that will quickly become clear—if they not already are—I will make explicit what is already implicit by extending the concept to bio-eco-cosmic communality, which will be elaborated throughout this work as the constitutive network that dynamically constitutes and cyclically renews the spirit or energy of Indigenous cosmopolitics. For now let us return to the specifically Mesoamerican experience of the cosmos and its ‘political’ manifestations.

In order to share this Mesoamerican experience and understand how it has shaped Mesoamerican civilizational manifestations throughout millennia it is necessary to develop a careful sensibility for what is understood through the notions of “Time” and the “Cosmos” in the Mesoamerican *élan* or spirit. In what follows I will outline the theoretical rudiments of a Mesoamerican philosophy of the cosmos-and-time (hence ‘cosmo-experience’). After that, I will offer some discussions based on ancient and contemporary examples of how this philosophy shapes Mesoamerican civilizational thought and praxis elaborating as we advance on two major political dimensions: (1) calendrical micro- and macro-political organization (mainly through the Mesoamerican “system of burdens” or “rotation and obligation”) and (2) communal politics and economics (mainly through the Mesoamerican forms of “cosmic democracy” and the “*tequio*” as political economy).

The Mesoamerican Cosmo-Poetic-Experience: An Overview

It is helpful to understand the Mesoamerican “cosmoexperience” by coupling the Western notions of the cosmos and cyclical time. If we were to risk an oversimplification for the purposes of introductory explanation, it would be to say that the Mesoamerican *élan* results from a fusion of the notion of the cosmos on the one hand and of cyclical time on the other through the mutually constitutive tropes of “All Lives,” “All Passes—in cycles” (or “All is Passing/Transient/Becoming”), and “All is Shared” or what most students of Mesoamerican civilization refer to as “*communality*.” In regard to communality which merits an explanation right from the start, Lenkersdorf explains that while in Western languages the “the term We-Us is just

the plural personal pronoun,” in Mesoamerican languages such as the Maya-Tojolabal, “the We-Us (*ke’ntik*), besides working as a pronoun, is a very frequently used word, *it is the key concept that explains the socio-political organization of the people and their culture.*”⁹⁷ This is also the case among the Mixtecs⁹⁸ and in fact among all Mesoamericans. Hence, As Lenkersdorf argues, if we listen to the Mesoamerican élan, “We listen to the language of a millennial culture...whose fundamental ethos is the *We* or *Us* and **not** the *I* of winners, champions, chiefs, leaders, presidents, and commanders.”⁹⁹ Hence, it is said that Mesoamericans are “*nosotricos*” (Spanish for “We-oriented”) in contrast to self-centered.¹⁰⁰ Proceeding from the infrastructure of shared communality, it is from the fusion of the three aspects abovementioned that Westerners could roughly translate as (a) holistic relational animism, (b) cyclical transience, and (c) cosmic communality from which emerges a broader understanding of what can be called the Mesoamerican cosmoexperience of cyclical bio-eco-cosmic communality.

The first step in understanding what would seem to many as rather unfamiliar sequences of slippery tropes and abstract concepts is to articulate an explanation of the Mesoamerican conception of time and how it became paramount. By starting out with the concept of time, there is a risk of suggesting that, in contrast to the preeminence of a ‘metaphysics of Being’ governing European civilizational manifestations, we find a prevalence of a ‘metahistory of Time’ driving Mesoamerican civilizations. Although such a comparison might serve as a usefully parsimonious introductory proposition, it should only serve as preliminary since the cyclicity and interconnectedness of the Mesoamerican cosmos tends to resist the inscription of any linear order or primordialist logic. Having warned about the contingent utility (which is *not* to say uselessness) of *initially* drawing on Western frameworks and categories to engage in broad philosophical

⁹⁷ Lenkersdorf 2008, 24; emphasis added.

⁹⁸ See Ortíz Castro 2004, 17; Ortíz Castro 13-16; and Ortíz Castro 2007, 85

⁹⁹ Lenkersdorf 2008, 18.

¹⁰⁰ Lenkersdorf 2008, 32, 36. See also Ortíz Castro 2004, 17; 2004, 13-16; 2007, 85.

comparisons among civilizational manifestations, I will move on to discuss how an “Obsession with Time” (in contrast to the Western obsession with Being) has shaped the Mesoamerican civilizational élan.

The registry of historical and contemporary manifestations of Mesoamerican thought and practice attests to the constantly recurring insistences concerning the question of the passing or transience of all in this world. As this classic Nahua “Song of Orphanhood” recites,

...I weep, I am saddened,
I remember only that we have left
the beautiful flowers,
the beautiful songs;
still we enjoy ourselves,
still we sing,
we go completely,
we perish.
...We are not born twice,
one is not a child on this Earth twice;
we only depart this Earth.
Still, *we are but briefly here*,
...Where does my heart live?
Where can I make my home?
Where will my house remain?
Because I am needy, orphaned here on
Earth.

...One does not live anywhere
...We leave everything behind,
no one shall remain on Earth.
...*Perhaps* people are awaited in the place of
the fleshless,
or in the heart of the sky?
*Or is the place of the fleshless only here on
Earth?*
...For this I weep,
our death destroys,
ruins our works,
the beautiful songs.
Only for a brief time
*do we ask for the loan of them here on
Earth.*¹⁰¹

These two “Sad Otomi Songs” similarly recite,

A Sad Otomi Song

...those who thirst for something,
who came to receive honor on this Earth,
who value no one,
who live without understanding,
who do not heed You, Giver of Life;
in truth, they deceive only themselves.
Thus, *they think they shall live on Earth
forever.*¹⁰²

Another Sad Song of the Otomi

I recall the princes,
the shattered princes,
who were lords,
who exercised their power on Earth,
the princes, crushed like quetzal plumes,
broken like pieces of jade,
...If only we were able to know it, we the
ungrateful.¹⁰³

¹⁰¹ León Portilla 2001, 173-176, emphases added.

¹⁰² León Portilla 2001, 137, emphasis added.

¹⁰³ León Portilla 2001, 139.

Similarly the Classic Nahuatl “Dialogues of Chants and Flowers” reads

Tecayehuatzin speaks:

...If there is a place where some truth [as permanence] exists on Earth,
perhaps the Giver of Life is aware of it?
...If I could borrow
for a moment,
or for all time,
the jades, the bracelets, the princes...

Ayocuan responds:

Have we arrived, have we sprung up on Earth in vain?
Shall I perish like the flowers?
Will my fame eventually fade away,
Will my renown be nothing on Earth?
At least flowers, at least songs!
What can my heart do?
Have we arrived, have we sprung up on Earth in vain?
*Let us rejoice! Here, among friends,
let there be embraces.
We live on the flowered Earth.
Here, no one will bring to an end the flowers, the songs;
they endure in the house of the Giver of Life.
...Only a moment on Earth...*

Cuahtencoxtli continues:

...Are men (sic)¹⁰⁴ perhaps real?
Soon our song will not be real.
What is standing?
What will come about?
Do we live over there[?]
is that where we are?
You are in need, my friend,
I should take you along,
so that you could stand on your feet there.¹⁰⁵

Or as the Classic Nahuatl “Song of Cuacuauhtzin” reads

Even if I were of jade,
or of gold,
I would be pierced and melted;
...[So] do nothing without *enjoyment*,
enjoy every single thing, my friends...¹⁰⁶

¹⁰⁴ León Portilla translates the Nahuatl term into “men” when “humans” would also be pertinent.

¹⁰⁵ León Portilla 2001, 81- 90.

¹⁰⁶ León Portilla 2001, 158-159.

Many more examples of such articulations can be found in the literary manifestations offered to us by both ancient and contemporary Mesoamerican expression, some of which we will discuss further in detail later on. A recognition of the irremediable transience of all in this world, including the transience of life and of the most powerful and of power itself, led to the development of a characteristically Mesoamerican civilizational attribute, namely, the recognition (or acceptance) of *poetics* as the only appropriate way to articulate the unforgiving evanescence, the experience of a cosmos in which all irremediably passes.

Mesoamerican literature and life in general is hence characterized by a preference for the poetic experience and expression. For instance, as has been noted by Earl Shorris and Miguel León Portilla, works like the *Popol Vuh*, the sacred Book of Council of the Quiche Maya which occupies a place of distinction among Mesoamerican literatures and “is often considered the Bible of the New World”¹⁰⁷ is characteristically poetic. This replicates the fact that “formal Maya... is written and even spoken in *couplets*, which requires poetic form in English...”¹⁰⁸ Furthermore, “the quotidian speech of the Mayas, as well as their writings, is rich in the use of proverbs and metaphors. The latter often appear...as kennings, a form related to the *difrasismos*¹⁰⁹ (dual-phrasisms) used by the Nahuas,”¹¹⁰ whose quotidian expression has also traditionally been poetic. This tendency towards poetic expression perseveres to this day, even among contemporary Indigenous political movements. For instance, concerning the Neo-Zapatistas, Carlsen notes:

¹⁰⁷ León Portilla and Shorris 2001, 394.

¹⁰⁸ León Portilla and Shorris 2001, 399.

¹⁰⁹ As explained by León Portilla, a *difrasismo* refers to “the Mesoamerican kenning, sometimes said to be a metaphor.” It was first identified from a Western viewpoint by Miguel Angel Garibay who described it “as two concrete terms used together as a convention to express a single idea.” As is easily noticeable from any reading of Mesoamerican literature, “there are numerous examples” of *difrasismo*, particularly important is “flower and song” referring to poetry; but also “one lip, two lip—translation; night and wind—invisible, as in *Ometeotl*,” the Dual/Ambivalent God which is the supreme Mesoamerican deity (discussed ahead); also “the skirt, the blouse—the sexuality of a woman; jade and quetzal plumes—beauty; black ink and red ink—writing-wisdom; in the box, in the coffer—secret” among many others. (León Portilla and Shorris 2001, 656, 208).

¹¹⁰ León Portilla and Shorris 2001, 562.

What has caught the attention of the world, for both their impact and their unexpected use of the genre, are the [Neo-Zapatista] stories. These reveal a preference for *parables* over manifestos and often *reflect Indigenous ways of understanding the world*.¹¹¹

Contrastingly, the characteristically Western “logo-centric”¹¹² faith on the capability of the strictly rational word—as specifically manifest through prose—to serve as the bearer, representative, and container of an essential and permanent truth is notably absent in Mesoamerican articulations. This insistence, born out of the desire to capture “Being” in its permanence, would seem as rather superfluous to a civilization whose expressions are pervaded by the repeated insistence on the transience of all, including the transience of language itself: not even our words—insist the Mesoamerican poets—can be true in that *nothing* can take permanent root in this world. As the song by Cacamatzin from Texcoco, entitled “My Friends” recites: “no one speaks truly on Earth.”¹¹³ Or as Axayacatl in his song even more starkly states,

You are celebrated,
you expressed divine words,
but you died.
[...]/S/He makes no one durable on the Earth.¹¹⁴

The emphatic notice of the transitoriness of all for Mesoamericans leads us to find very few instances in which poetics would not be the preferred way of articulating life and the cosmos—and, as we’ll find out, of organizing political and civilizational life.

The recognition of the inexorable passing of all in this world enabled a Mesoamerican ethos that would not easily give in to what Jacques Derrida called the “metaphysics of presence.”¹¹⁵ This metaphysics of presence is driven by the desire for something permanent, something that would simply “Be”; something that would not pass away, something that would transcend the transience of this world and ultimately triumph over fortune and cosmic flux. This

¹¹¹ Carlsen in Marcos, Peña-Vargas, and Ruggiero 2007, 17, emphasis added.

¹¹² Derrida 1998.

¹¹³ León Portilla 2001, 157-158.

¹¹⁴ “Song of Axayacatl” in León Portilla 2001, 152.

¹¹⁵ Derrida 1998.

metaphysical drive becomes easily absorbed by the temptation to arrest, comprehend, or seize existence within concepts such as “Being”: what is permanent, absolute, universal, what does not change, what stays—which then reveals itself as the very opposite, the *other* of the cosmos, the *other* of our existences which are inexorably transient, yet beautifully moving: *olin yoli* it is said in Nahuatl, life-as-movement.

In contrast, the metaphysics of presence embodies the desire to contain existence within the *logos* (the word, reason, etc.) in order to ultimately transcend cosmic flux. This metaphysics of presence has predominantly governed European grammar and life in general. In contrast, the Mesoamerican *élan*, driven by an acute conscience of cosmic transience, is understandably suffused with poetics. Poetics becomes manifest not just as an art form, or even as a linguistic modality; it pervades all Mesoamerican civilizational manifestations, from spirituality to philosophy, to politics and everyday practices. Using the example of language, poetics became the commonsensical mode of articulation since among Mesoamericans it has been widely accepted that in the cosmos all is passing, living, transient, becoming and in a ceaseless cyclical transforming. Language should therefore not attempt to contain, comprehend, delimit, determine, or define—let alone arrest—the inexorable passing of cosmic life. The Mesoamerican recognition and respect of cosmic *movement* entails that language should not try to grasp or hold down the passing of life and of the cosmos itself through language, logic or laws; instead life (*yoli*) should be allowed to travel the paths of its transience through the vessel of poetic experience or as the Nahua¹¹⁶ call it, the “movement” (*olin*) of “chants and flowers” (*in cuicatl in xochitl*¹¹⁷), a practice

¹¹⁶ Following León Portilla’s description, the Nahua are “a diverse group spread across much of central Mexico and as far south as Nicaragua (Nicaros) and El Salvador. In Mexico alone, there are more than 1.5 million Nahuas who speak Nahuatl in its various forms. The civilization developed in the ninth century in Culhuacan and later in Tula, with roots probably in the Teotihuacan culture and as far back as the Olmecs of the Gulf Coast. The Nahuas themselves appear to have come to Mexico from the North, bringing their Uto-Aztecan language with them. The great Nahua city of Tula, home to Quetzalcoatl, was destroyed in the eleventh century by the Chichimec invaders from the north. The second flowering of the Nahua world took place in the high central plain of Mexico, where the legendary seven tribes established themselves. The last of the seven tribes, those we know as the Aztecs, founded their city of Mexico-Tenochtitlan in 1325. Under a series of expansionist leaders—Tlacaélel, Motecuhzoma Ilhuicamina, Axayacalt, Ahuitzotl, and Motecuhzoma Xocoyotzin—who formed an alliance with Texcoco and Tacuba, the

which they (have) classically believed was “the only thing divine and real in this world,” “the only approximation to the movement of the cosmic divine.” As recited in the fragments of the Classic Nahuatl “Florid Chant” (*Xochicuicatl*),

(Mexico) Aztecs extended their political and cultural hegemony across virtually all of central Mexico and south into Central America. When the Spanish Conquest in the sixteenth century, the Aztec state fell into decline as many of its works were destroyed, its people killed, and its religious and cultural practices outlawed.” (León Portilla and Shorris 2001, 661). However, Nahuatl culture was not born with the Aztec empire and did not die with the fall of its Aztec variant, nor with the onslaught of Euro-Hispanic colonialism. Nahuatl culture resisted, survived and is now experiencing a renaissance. As a modern Nahuatl poem, “Coyotes of Today,” states:

Some Coyotes are saying / that we Nahuas will disappear, / will vanish, / our language will be heard no more, / will be used no more. / The Coyotes rejoice in this, / as this is what they are looking for. / Why is it that they want us to disappear? / We do not have to contemplate this too long, / because four hundred years have shown us / the aim of the Coyotes. / They are envious of our lands, / our forests and rivers, / our work, our sweat. / The Coyotes want us living / in the slums of their cities, / naked and hungry, / subject to their falsehoods and frauds. / The Coyotes want us to work for them, / they want us to abandon / our communal lands, our labor, / our endeavors and language, / our ways of dressing and living, / our forms of thinking. / The Coyotes desire / to make Coyotes out of us, / and then they will deprive us / of all that is ours, / the fruits of our labor / which has caused us fatigue. / We must strengthen our hearts / with one, two words, / which will illuminate our eyes, / so we can become fully conscious of it. / We have many tasks to perform. / I will add only a few words. / Where and how many / are the Nahuas in Mexico? / We, the Nahuas, / are not just in one place, / we are scattered in sixteen states / and eight hundred and eight municipalities. / One has to understand / that it is not only in our farm[s], / not only in our village[s], / that we Nahuas exist. / Sometimes we hear / that we Nahuas are vanishing, / Truly we can assert that, / although some want us to disappear, / we Nahuas continue to live, / we Nahuas continue to grow ... (León Portilla 1962, 169-171, also in León Portilla and Shorris 2001, 383-385)

¹¹⁷ As Leon León Portilla explains in detail, the term “flower” is “one of the key metaphors in classical Nahuatl composition. In its simplest form, it describes the beautiful sound of a drum; at the next level, it stands for beauty both as noun and adjective. . . in the *difrasismo* [dual-phraseism] “flower and song,” it forms part of the concept of poetry.” (León Portilla 2001) According to León Portilla, “the Mayas also sometimes referred to poetry similarly, as in the poem titled *Kay Nicté* or “Flower Song.”” (Leon León Portilla 2001, 553)

... We have come here, friends,
to plead for a brief time on Earth.
We shall have to leave the beautiful songs,
we shall have to leave the beautiful flowers.
 It pains me, Giver of Life,
 that we shall have to leave *your* songs behind.
 The flowers sprout *again*,
 they spring forth, green *again*,
interwoven, they bloom.
The flower of song springs from within you,
 and you the singer scatter it,
 you send it out among the people...

...*Not forever here on Earth!*
 ...I ask you, priests,
 from whence come
 the intoxicating flowers,
 the intoxicating songs,
 the beautiful songs?
 They come only from over there,
 from *your* house,
from the heart of the sky;
 the myriad flowers come
 only from your house.¹¹⁸

Considering these poems, it is clear that for the Nahua as for the rest of Mesoamericans, that poetics is far more than just a genre or a manner of expression or even just an art form: poetics is the closest manifestation of the divine movement of the cosmos. The following poem beautifully illustrates how important a poetic disposition to everyday life was among the classic Nahua:

With flowers and songs
 I give life to the new sun.
 With flowers and songs
 I greet the dawn.¹¹⁹

“Flowers and songs” again, beautifully articulates what Westerners would call poetics. Poetry, in the Mesoamerican context, can be translated into the words of the Irish philosopher Richard Kearney who wants us to understand poetry as “a creative letting go of the drive for possession...”¹²⁰; and in the case of Mesoamericans, poetry as a creative letting go of the drive to possess existence, life and the cosmos. Poetics allows the transience of the cosmos to freely move through and among us; that is, to enliven us like the air, water and other nutrients that feed, constitute and (cyclically) regenerate our bodies in the everyday. Poetics enables the cosmos to travel through the *macehualtin* (humans, the people), enabling them to share in the passing of life, as they inevitably become and migrate through this world sharing in the tragic and yet beautiful

¹¹⁸ León Portilla 2001, 170-173; emphases added.

¹¹⁹ León Portilla 2001, xxi..

¹²⁰ cited in Skelly 2008, 135-152, 150.

transformations of the cosmos. Hence, as is repeatedly said in so many Mesoamerican words: all migrates in this world, all passes by, all comes along and soon again it leaves, and will at some time return and then leave again. “All passes,” including life itself. *Existence is nomadic*; hence we are all homeless and indigent orphans in a cosmos that allows only for the evanescence of life. As a Mesoamerican Otomi poem entitled “The River Passes” recites,

The river passes, passes,
never stops.
The wind passes, passes,
never stops.
Life passes,
*never returns.*¹²¹

An Account, Much Abbreviated, of the History of Mesoamerican Thought¹²²: Cosmovisions of Radical Transitoriness and Existential Homelessness, Metaphysical Untruth and Metaphorical Ambivalence

This is what we are: ...The one who sings...The one who speaks...The one who speaks flowers

—Marcos, Spokesman and Subcommander (“*el Sup*”) of the Zapatista Movement and Army of National Liberation (EZLN)¹²³

After having offered a broad overview of the overall conception of time and the cosmos among Mesoamericans, it is important to go into greater detail as to how this conception emerged in the first place. For that, it will be valuable to proceed from the example of Nahuatl philosophy. This is not to grant any particular privilege to Nahuatl thought over other Mesoamerican traditions, but rather to offer a substantial focus; this focus nevertheless helps articulate an ethos shared across Mesoamerican cultures. In other sections of this Part I, as in those dealing with political and

¹²¹ León Portilla 2001, 639.

¹²² This title is *in memoriam* of Bartolomé de las Casas and his courageous manuscript *An Account, Much Abbreviated, of the Destruction of the Indies*. It stands to the effect of insisting that much has been overlooked and forgotten of the Amerindian experience and that no single work can do justice to what has been buried. At least this much should never be forgotten.

¹²³ Marcos 2007, 120.

economic organization, I shift the focus to other Mesoamerican traditions, like the Maya, the Mixtec and the Zapotec. So for now, let us focus on the Nahuatl.

According to León Portilla¹²⁴ a detailed understanding of Mesoamerican thought must proceed from what seems to have evolved from at least two millennia before the arrival of Europeans as the “original experience of the *tlamatinime*,” that is, the wise ones, “the ones who know something,”¹²⁵ and specifically their experience concerning “the transitoriness and fragility of all that exists.” As stated so characteristically in chants and flowers or songs and flowers (*in cuicatl*¹²⁶ *in xochitl*), that is, poetically, floridly and beautifully spoken by the Nahuatl *tlamatinime*: “Even when of jade it cracks / even when of gold it breaks / even when of quetzal feathering it wears away...” this can be interpreted to mean that no matter how beautiful or powerful, *all* is transient in this world, all passes away. As the Classic Nahuatl “Song of Loss” reads, “on Earth no one can *hold* power,”¹²⁷ which is to say, among other things, that no one can contain or control power since the remorseless passing of time will ultimately take it away: power too passes (away). It is clear, as León Portilla writes, that “among recurring questions expressed in poetic form,” by the *tlamatinime* “these works raise the problem of the evanescence of existence” as well as the concomitant evanescence of the word (and hence of logic and knowledge), that is, “the problem speaking truth in this world.” Hence, the Mesoamerican poetic form is more than just an ‘aesthetic’ choice in Western terms, but rather an existential demand made upon the thinker by the realization of the evanescence of all existence, including her/his own and that of her/his words. As León Portilla notes, “[i]n one poem or song (*cuicatl*) after another, the Nahuatl ask if we truly live on Earth,” given the irremediable evanescence of existence. As a classic Nahuatl poem recites,

¹²⁴ León Portilla 1993, 316-320.

¹²⁵ León Portilla 2001, 77.

¹²⁶ Sometimes written “*icnocuicatl*” to refer to songs.

¹²⁷ León Portilla 2001, 91-101. It is very important to keep this conception of power in consideration as we move through this work, because it shapes political organization.

it is not true, it is not true,
that we come on Earth to live
... We come only to dream.¹²⁸

Also, as Nezahualcoyotl, a Classic Nahua prince recited in his poem “Though it Be Jade”:

I, Nezahualcoyotl, ask this: <i>Do we truly live on Earth?</i> Not forever here, <i>only a little while.</i>	Even jade breaks, golden things fall apart, precious feathers fade; <i>not forever on Earth,</i> <i>only a moment here.</i> ¹²⁹
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This “original experience,” according to León Portilla, led the Nahua mind to question: since all becomes transitory and fragile, “can we speak [(of)] anything that would be firmly rooted [i.e., ‘true’] here?” “Can we speak any *truth* here?” which also means “can we speak with any truth and of any truth here [in this world]?” And since “truth” or “firm rootedness” would be what would “give a foundation to things,” even further questions arose: “what is perchance on foot [standing]” or “what stands [firmly] perchance?” recite the tlamatinime. Moreover, if humans are themselves without firm foundation or firm rootedness in this world for they too crack, break, decompose, and wither away, then we must also raise the biting question: “*are humans true* [in any way]?” Such is “the problem of humanity’s own truth” or rather humanity’s *lack of truth* due to humanity’s lack of a firm rootedness or unflinching, unbreakable foundation in this world, its “existential indigence,” “existential homelessness,” or “metaphysical orphanhood”¹³⁰ as León Portilla puts it.

This *problem of humanity’s (un)truth* therefore emerges as the most imperious since it cracks open a radical uncertainty about the very possibility, character and course not just of its own existence but of the existence of all else about which this two-legged embodiment of cosmic energy would claim to speak truth about or validate it as such. Therefore, the Nahuatl¹³¹ speaking

¹²⁸ “We Come only to Dream” León Portilla 2001, 78.

¹²⁹ León Portilla 2001, 146; emphases added.

¹³⁰ León Portilla 2001, 77.

¹³¹ As León Portilla describes it, “Nahuatl is a Uto-Aztecan language that served as a lingua franca for much of pre-Hispanic Mesoamerica.” (León Portilla and Shorris 2001, 661) Uto-Aztecan

tlamatinime raised the question: “do things and humans [and the things humans say] have any foundation or are they (like) a dream: just as what is thought when one is awake.” Having opened up to this radical uncertainty, many tlamatinime cried like Ayocuan Cuetzplatzin, Lord of Tecamachalco once did centuries ago in the “Dialogues of Chants and Flowers”: “*Here on Earth [in this world] is the region of the moment fugacious*”¹³²

Such are the poetics displayed by more than a few Mesoamerican *tlamatinime* who would therefore always already manifest an “openness to doubt” and questioning in regard to the root and rootedness of whatever exists in Earth and in this world—that is a relentless questioning of the possibility to find or uncover a firm foundation or deep truth of whatever sprouts in this world (*in tlalticpac*), including the *macechuales* (roughly translatable as “people” in some contexts and “humans” in others). As Cuauhtencoztli tragically recites, also in the classic “Dialogues on Chants and Flowers”:

I, Cuauhtencoztli—exclaim—here: I am suffering...	What is what comes out well?
<i>Have humans any root, any truth?</i>	Here we live, here we are,
<i>Will our chant have root and truth tomorrow?</i>	<i>But we are indigent, homeless</i>
<i>What stands [firmly] perchance?</i>	Oh my friends! ¹³³

As dramatically and yet also joyfully performed many times in these dialogues of “chants and flowers,” this vein-opening question that haunts existence in “the changing world of *tlalticpac*”¹³⁴ unfolds into an admirable self-reflective awareness in regard to the word (what the Greeks called the *Logos*) and language itself and its pretense to embody what is “firmly rooted” or

languages stretch throughout Mesoamerica, Aridoamerica, and Oasis-America, and in this family of languages we find Ute (the people from where the names Utah and Uto-Aztecan are derived), Hopi, Tubatulabal, Numic (e.g., Shoshone, Comanche, Paiute), Takic (e.g., Kitanemuk), Pimic (e.g., Pima-Papago, Tepehuan, Tepecano), Taracahitic (e.g., Tarahumara, Opatan), Corachol (e.g., Cora, Huichol), and Aztecan (e.g., Pochutec, Nahuatl(n)). That is part of the reason why Indigenous peoples that are divided by current borders are a family divided by settler colonial statecraft.

¹³² León-Portilla, 1993, 313-315; my translation.

¹³³ León-Portilla, 1993, 314; emphases added.

¹³⁴ León-Portilla, 1993, 322.

“true”: how can the utterances and symbols that proceed from transient bodies that lack any solid rootedness, foundation, or “truth” in this world—in *tlatlcpac*—have themselves any firm rootedness in some profound, well anchored, and permanent foundation or “truth”? This acute sensibility and reflective awareness of transitoriness and temporality enabled Nahuatl *tlamatinime*, for instance, to sublimate the desire for arresting the passing movement (*olin*) of life (*yoli*) in *tlatlcpac* by cultivating chants and flowers in dialogue (and plurilogue) *instead* of attempting to apprehend some underlying “Being” in the world whose firm rootedness in unchanging foundations would serve as the unflinching anchor, essence or center that would arrest the cosmic flux through the grasp of an ideally consistent, coherent, unshakeable (static) and permanent language, logic or law such as the (Greek) *Logos* or (the European) Reason.

And yet, as Tecayehuatzin responds to his *tlamatinime* friend in the “Dialogues of Chants and Flowers,” Cuauhtencoztli’s *pessimism* concerning the evanescence of existence is not necessarily warranted. Tecayehuatzin sings that while there is no language which “may utter true words in the Earth,” that is, words which may apprehend cosmic flux by grasping what would be firmly rooted or fundamentally true, we may nevertheless *share* the “chants and flowers” that “enable our friendship.” Our common passage in this world is precisely the motive to share, enjoy each other and celebrate what together we sing and sow. If fundamental truths escape us, we can nonetheless live out the friendships enabled by sharing the flowers we cultivate and the chants we sing, and this gives a “semblance and a heart” (or a “face and a heart”) to each other, comparable to what the Westernized would call a personhood. That is why from Tecayehuatzin’s viewpoint Cuauhtencoztli’s pessimism cannot be warranted by the awareness of temporality for we can still “chase away the fear” of the imminent passing of self and world through the shared celebration of our “chants and flowers,” which therefore become a common journey in the search for a background region or third space where that dialogue among us may take place and this third space is to be found in the place of duality and ambivalence, *Omeyocan*, where *Ometeotl* resides: the supreme deification of duality and ambivalence whose wisdom enacted brings about the

possibility of sharing the chants of our genius and the flowers of our efforts which are, as Tecayehuatzin sings, the common “wealth and joy of those of us on Earth.”

- *Uni-Duality as Giver of Life or (Re)Creative Principle*

It is therefore how we can recover, in great part thanks to the work of Miguel León Portilla,¹³⁵ the axis of Mesoamerican cosmo-poetics and the organizing principle of Mesoamerican life. This principle can be referred to through the “supreme metaphor” that seeks to articulate the critical movement of primordial distinction (*meta-aphorism*: literally primordial distinction, elemental distinguishing, basic axiom¹³⁶) that constitutes the ubiquitous “duality and ambivalence” which enables all that exists. Duality, ambivalence, and complementarity is turned divine as a consequence of the recognition of our transience that leads to the realization that *we always need each other*, from which emerges the background space that allows us to realize this duality, which is always already ambivalent: sometimes complementary, sometimes contradictory but always already *mutually necessary* and often *fertile*, not least for the hope that while life will never be permanent it might nevertheless have a future.

It is perhaps from this realization that emerges the overarching Mesoamerican metaphor—*Ometeotl* (“dual-divinity,” “divine duality,” “divine ambivalence,” divine uniduality) for the Nahuas—that becomes manifest in the moment, instance or “location of duality and ambivalence”—*Omeyocan* for the Nahuas. Omeyocan is enacted as the instance of the fertile encounter(s) among complementary dualities; Omeyocan occurs as the fecund effect of unidual ambivalence. According to León Portilla the “dual divinity” and “God of Duality and Ambivalence,” becomes manifest as the “Giver” or “Provider of Life” known as “Ometeotl...who is *at the same time* One and Dual” or unidual. Ometeotl “was in Nahuatl thought the supreme

¹³⁵ Unless explicitly noted, all quotes from this section are from León Portilla 1993. The following pages will be referred to in this section: León-Portilla 1993, 284-285, 296, 304-308, 310-311, 313, 319-320; my translation, my emphases.

¹³⁶ Elaborated from the Greek etymology of ‘metaphor’.

deity” and “if we analyze other non-Nahuatl sources from the cultural milieu of Middle America” or Mesoamerica “we find precisely that in some Indigenous texts of the Maya area, as important as the celebrated *Popol Vuh* of the Quichues and in some of the books of *Chilam Balam*” or jaguar priests “of the Mayas of Yucatan the same supreme deity,” albeit with different names, “is mentioned.” In Nahuatl culture we find that *Ometeotl* can become manifest through a plurality of ways which can be roughly identified through the many names by which it can be referred to such as the fertile uniduality of “Our Mother-Our Father” (*in Tonan, in Totah*), “from whom we receive life [and] from where befalls our destiny...and existence”—s/he is “responsible for the destinies” of humans. The “Lord and Lady of Ambivalence and Duality,” (*Ometeotl*) “enters the interior” of children at the moment when the child “slips” or “slides” into the world—the child is sent and “mandated” by the Lord/Lady of duality—that is to say, as an effect of the fertile enactment of (re)creative uniduality. *Ometeotl* is the divine embodiment of this fertile uniduality; and as such *Ometeotl* is the “owner of the near and the alongside” (*Tloque Nahuaque*), “the self-invented” (*Moyocoyani*), and the “Eldest God” (*Huehueteotl*); s/he is “The Lord and Lady of Fire, Time and the Years,” “the Mirror of Day and Night,” “the torch that burns and illuminates all yet is invisible as night and impalpable as wind.” S/he is “one and dual at the same time [unidual] engendering and conceiving all which may exist” and s/he both “grants things truth and allows them to vanish in the region of obliviousness.” S/he is “the inventor of humans, who pours them as drops in the maternal womb; s/he who has humanity and the world in the palm of his/her hand and agitating them s/he enjoys her/himself and laughs.”

In the Maya world we also find as supremely deified this fertile uniduality known as “she who conceives, he who engenders” (*Alom Qaholom*); in the Quiche of the *Popolu Vuh* s/he is invoked as *Cabauil* (of two collars) who becomes at the same time *Quxcah* and *Quxuleu*, that is, “Heart of Heaven and Heart of Earth.” Moreover, according to León Portilla, if “we consider other cultures that flourished within the same geographical delineations of Middle America, we find also in the particular case of the Mixtecs the pictographic testimony which is conserved in the codices Selden I, Vindobonense, and Gómez Orozco, as well as in an ancient tradition recovered in the

region of Cuilapa,” identifiable in conventional contemporary geographies as southern Guatemala “a similar belief in the supreme creative duality, masculine and feminine at the same time.” Furthermore, *Ometeotl*, signifier of uniduality and ambivalence can display at the same time “his” male—*Ometecuhli*—semblance and “her” female—*Omecihuatl*—physiognomy. This in turn means that the numerous pairings of ‘gods’—or (uni)dual gods—as found in Mesoamerican pantheons can be better interpreted as diverse manifestations (symbolizations more than deifications) of the omnipresence of the cosmological axiom of creative ambivalence and fertile uniduality—i.e., the creative fertility that emanates from the actual pairing of forces; this creative and fertile unidualism therefore becomes the only incidence through which life, activity, and existence can be contingently brought forth and made to continue in a cosmos characterized by ceaseless transience.

Quetzalcoatl, the legendary Tolteca *tlamatinime* (a wise one, “one who knows something”) and priest of Tula, who gradually became a sort of conveyor of *Ometeotl* in practice for Nahuatl culture, was celebrated for invoking

...*her* in the petticoat of stars
Lady of our flesh, *Lord* of our flesh;
She who dresses in black,
He who dresses in red,
 [Black and red symbolize wisdom]
She who grants stability to Earth
He who is activity in Earth
 In that direction [Quetzalcoatl] directed his voices,
 [...] towards the *instance of Duality* [*Omeyocan*]...¹³⁷

Let us remember that as the “owner of the near and alongside,” s/he, *Ometeotl*, can become manifest at every juncture and across every locality. It is “necessary to approximate divinity, putting all effort to reach what is most elevated in [Ometeotl], her/his wisdom.” Indeed, wisdom flows from the approximation to the divine principle of (uni)duality and ambivalence, *Ometeotl*. That is why the codices are said to be drawn by those who practice the art of “the black and red ink,” which is to say, by those who practice wisdom, a wisdom resulting from the

¹³⁷ *Anales de Cuauhtitlan, Codex Chimalpopoca*, folio 4, AP 1, 15; emphases added. Quoted also in León Portilla 1993.

experience of creative (uni)duality. In order to approximate Ometeotl it is crucial to understand that to exist *in tlalticpac* is to exist in a world “of the transitory, threatened always by death and destruction” and characterized by the “fugacity of all that exists,” as pondered by Nezahualcoyotl, the historically renowned *tlamatinime tlatoani* (philosopher ruler) of Texcoco.

And yet to actually bring about the instance of wisdom, *Tlilan, Tlapalan*—the ‘country of red and black’—one must first consecrate oneself *in tlalticpac* by endeavoring to “become divine” through the enactment of the beauty that can only be born from the emulation of the unidual divinity’s fertile and creative wisdom. This requires one to commit oneself to the aesthetic performance and ethical (re)creation of the *toltecayotl*, the collection of arts and practices whose refinement must emulate and perform the (re)creative fertilizing activity of the unidual divine. Among these, primarily one must consecrate oneself through the cultivation of “chants and flowers” (*in xochitl in cuicatl*) which is to say, a performative poetics that embraces the ambivalent creative movement of the fertile uniduality which “engenders and conceives all that exists.”¹³⁸ As Aquiahtzin, *tlamatinime* of Ayapanco once recited, it is only through “chants and flowers” that one can invoke the Giver/Provider of Life, the (re)vitalizing force, for if invoked poetically like “one who strides among the flowers calling for a friend [or partner]” s/he “may, perhaps, become present through the world of symbol.” This is to say that creative fertility emanates or is called forth by the enactment of beauty. Moreover, in order to actually encounter or bring about the experience of *Tlilan, Tlapalan*, the region of colors black and red, the world of wisdom it is necessary to “transpose...the present reality *in tlalticpac* in which all is like the

¹³⁸ It is relevant to point out in regard to Quetzalcoatl that the Nahuatl “history or legend” about Quetzalcoatl, the mythical great priest, concludes with an account of his escape from Tula, his abandonment of the arts and his definitive move and retirement from public life and to the location of wisdom, *Tlilan, Tlapalan*. It is revealing to find out, as Leon Portilla (1993, 307) emphasizes, that Quetzalcoatl had to leave; indeed he was forced to leave by the “sorcerers that came from afar and who were bent on introducing to Tula the rite of human sacrifices” which Quetzalcoatl always refused to partake in “because he loved his people [the Toltecas] very much.” The (hi)story states that Quetzalcoatl “went to die there/in the Land of Colors Black and Red.” The legendary death of Quetzalcoatl, who left behind the *toltecayotl* and life in Tula and went to die in the Land of Colors Black and Red raises the question of whether it is possible to live or survive *in tlalticpac*—this word of the transitory—while committedly practicing wisdom.

feathering of a quetzal [i.e., temporary beauty] that wears away” with a ceaseless cyclical reenactment of “the [uni]dual divinity” (*Ometeotl*) to bring about and celebrate the instance of creative ambivalence (*Omeyocan*) whose celebratory encounter can only be contingent since it always already slips beyond the reach of the immense fluxing “waters”—an hence should be cyclically renewed. Thus, it was characteristic of “the ones who know something,” the *tlamatinime* or wise ones, to articulate what was known as the cultivation of “chants and flowers” which is to say, the performance of poetics for it is only through the art of black and red (wisdom), as practiced through chants and flowers that we “may *perhaps* cease to be indigent,” if only for a fleeting moment.

All these traditions are a common heritage among Mesoamerican cultures. Their effort to approximate or call forth, through *poetic praxis* (not just expression), *Ometeotl* or *Alom Qaholom* as the creative principle, the fertile axiom of all that exists is so constitutive of the Mesoamerican ethos that, for instance, the Nahuatl language as a whole is grammatologically interwoven through this very axiomatic duality and ambivalence, enabling what León Portilla refers to in Spanish as the spawning of Nahuatl *difrasismos* or “dual-phraseisms” as noticed in recurring dualistic tropes such as “the black and red ink,” (roughly translatable as “wisdom”), “the chants and flowers” (roughly “poetics,” or “poetry”) and innumerable more.¹³⁹

Common Life in Existential Indigence and Cosmic Homelessness: A Mesoamerican Cosmopoetics of Solidarity and the Chronopolitics of Calendrical Constitutions

As León Portilla argues, it is precisely with the purpose of facing this existential indigence and homelessness” and the “desire to feel centered in [this] world” of radical transitoriness that the Nahuatl *tlamatinime* first “threw themselves into thinking” not just about the lofty question of how to invoke and enact *Ometeotl* and approximate or rather bring forth

¹³⁹ Here are again the specific pages corresponding to the quotes from León-Portilla that were made in this section titled “Uni-Duality as Organizing Principle”: León-Portilla 1993, 284-285, 296, 304-308, 310-311, 313, 319-320; my translation, my emphases.

Omeyocan through the cultivation of chants and flowers (to which we will come back later on), but how to bring about a *practical* way of living *and* passing away in view of the shared experience of existential indigence and homelessness brought upon all that exists in the radical transitoriness that reigns *in tlalticpac* (in this world). While it is understandable that the inextricable fact of transitoriness *in tlalticpac*, the realm of radical evanescence, might arouse an anxious desire to attempt to discover deeper and firmer roots in this world or at least to build firm foundations where there are none (such as would be the case through the attempt to discover or build solid truths through the language, logic and laws of the Greek *Logos*, the Abrahamic *Word*, or the Modern European *Reason*), in contrast the characteristically “fatalist” and yet admirably practical Mesoamerican wisdom led into a distinctive reflection that did not seek to transcend or escape transitoriness, but rather more modestly to artistically shape it, to chant and cultivate along with it; that is, to give it a “semblance (face) and a heart” or rather, to shape life according to the movement of the transitory, to the dance of the cosmos.

One of the most striking contrasts between, on the one hand, Mesoamerican and, on the other, “Old World” responses to the event of existential indigence/homelessness in this world of inextricable transitoriness is the extent to which the former sought to embrace this transitoriness by embodying the evanescent dance of the cosmos and giving it a communal shape in what we will henceforth call a (primarily calendrical) chronopolitics, instead of becoming drawn into the existential angst that has stimulated the characteristically “Old World” anxious desire to discover or impose something firm, profoundly rooted, static, and permanent by which the passing of movement and flux, rise and decay, birth and death and so on can be arrested by becoming anchored to some sort of unwavering and solid foundation—whether it be physically (such as in the concept of “Reality”) or metaphysically (such as in the concepts of Being, God, or the One) or in a correspondence between the physical and metaphysical (such as in the concept of Truth) through the language logic and law of the *Logos*, the *Word*, or *Reason*.

In a practical sense this contrast can be easily identified by the comparative status of calendrical versus legal forms of rule in Mesoamerican and “Old World” traditions (“Old World”

here is restricted to the Abrahamic and Greco-Roman-European and Neo-European traditions). It has been insightfully recognized by many who have reflected carefully upon the evolution of “Old World” thought, practice, and organization that it is predominantly the case that in “Old World” traditions the “problem” of how to live (and die) in the radical transitoriness of this world must be first and foremost “solved” through the discovery and/or institution of what *is* most permanent and therefore unshakeable and true. This has often led into the formalization, invocation, and/or discovery of the Law, the Word, the right Logic or Logos, or the universal Reason as the means through which the radical transitoriness of this world can be subdued, conquered, subjected, controlled, rendered into a manageable more or less static state in order to make it ultimately governable. Contrastingly, many Mesoamericans had much less of a desire for the Law, in fact, some Mesoamerican groups like the Maya-Tojolabales of today, as Carlos Lenkersdorf points out, “do not usually have written laws,” indeed, “the term corresponding to *law* does not even exist in their language” instead, “what has the regulatory function of the law is the consensual agreement, in Tojolabal, *lajub’alxa*, ‘it has been accorded upon,’ that is, *among the equalized, among those paired up*,”¹⁴⁰ that is, paired up in a shared transience—*lajub’alxa*, of course, is a practical enactment of the creative fertility of uniduality. We will come back to this later.

Instead of the Law and to complement the regulatory function of consensual and hence also moderately contingent agreement, Mesoamerican traditions historically opted for an emphasis on what can be referred to as an ethico-politics and poetics of transitoriness. In what pertains to its more ethico-political aspects, Mesoamerican traditions have consistently privileged *calendrical* and specifically cyclical-calendrical modes of shaping the practicalities of life and death—in contrast to legal forms. In Mesoamerican traditions we therefore do not find what would be interpreted from such perspectives as the excessive “Old World” emphasis on the permanence and universality of the Law, the search for the ultimately static State, the Word (and the One, the unchanging Being or God), the Logos or Reason. This is not to say that chronopolitics and

¹⁴⁰ Lenkersdorf 2008 95.

calendrical regimes play no important role in “Old World” traditions (since they do), but only that in them a basic distinction is most often unproblematically assumed between Being and Time, and Identity and Difference, and in such distinctions, as Parmenides would have it, Being most often subordinates (if not erases) Time as Identity subjects Difference. It is therefore not surprising that “Old World” traditions are most often governed by the hegemony of forms of chronopolitics that are most often derivative from metaphysics or ontology (and onto-theology) and this becomes most manifest in the linear-centric conceptions of World/History as the ascending calendrical unfolding of linear paths of “salvation,” “growth,” “accumulation,” “evolution,” “progress,” “development” (and so on) which are characterized by a hierarchical unidirectionality of orientation towards a higher status or State and anchored to the appetite for a fixed and would be definable ontological or metaphysical object of desire such as “deliverance,” “salvation,” “redemption,” “happiness (or Aristotelian *eudaimonism*),” “utility,” “transcendence,” “success,” “triumph,” “wealth,” “(natural or artificial) selection,” “power (or dominion or supremacy),” “triumph,” “liberation,” “emancipation” or any number of similar “linear-centric” metanarratives with their derivative calendars of *ages as stages* that characteristically constitute “Old World” thought and practice in which every contingency becomes the subject of calendrical regimes governed by the anxious desire to simply Be (or achieve absolute Being).

Contrastingly, in Mesoamerican traditions chronopolitics (and kairopolitics) most often takes precedence over metaphysics and ontology, indeed, as Prudence Rice argues in her *Maya Political Science: Time, Astronomy and the Cosmos*,¹⁴¹ Mesoamerican wisdoms and ways were and have been “obsessed with time.” Mesoamerican traditions most usually did not seek a metaphysical escape from this world of flux and transitoriness (though they might in quite exceptional cases), but rather sought from at least two millennia before the arrival of Europeans to coordinate their “chants and flowers” and their way of life (including their institutions and forms of organization) with the cosmic “movement...of the stars,” the “stellar parade across the heavenly

¹⁴¹ Rice 2004.

pathways”¹⁴² and the re/de-generative vital cycles of Earth and all life. It is therefore not surprising to notice that among the most relevant “cosmological categories” of Nahua culture “we find the periodization of the world in ages or cycles” and ages as cycles, “...and the concept of [unidual] struggle as the mold through which cosmic occurrences can be thought.” But “the peculiarity” of this cyclical cosmovision which is derived from the Toltec vision of cosmic cycles is that, in contrast to other forms of what Westerners would brand as ‘fatalist’ thought, it actually opens the door to diverse possibilities. “Each age or sun can conclude in sudden ways, and yet it is also possible that it will continue to exist,”¹⁴³ *depending on whether and how we fulfill our cosmic duties.*

This helps explain how one particularly famous Nahua group, the Aztecs (who are often quite erroneously assumed as the exemplary and representative, if not the only, Nahua civilizational manifestation), came to interpret their own role in the cosmos as “The People of the Sun.” This meant nothing less than the interpretation of themselves as a people whose every action at every contingency was responsible for the continuation of the solar (i.e., cosmic-temporal) cycle, namely, the cycle of the “Moving Sun” (*Olin Tonatiuh*): they came to think of themselves as those upon whose actions depended the continuation of a whole epoch and of time—and yet this noble interpretation of their own responsibility of cosmic proportions was twisted for political-imperial purposes by the (in)famous and very influential counselor of Aztec *tlatoanis* (spokespersons, leaders), Tlacaelel, into the mystic-warrior militaristic ideology.¹⁴⁴ Nevertheless,

¹⁴² León Portilla, 1993, 322.

¹⁴³ León Portilla, 1993, pp. 303, 308; my translation.

¹⁴⁴ In this regard and in what pertains to the controversial problematique of human sacrifices in Mesoamerican cultures and its unusually pronounced practice towards the end of the Tenochtitlan-based Aztec Empire it is worth citing León Portilla at length to invite a careful reflection which will hopefully be taken into account by those who would like to unjustly reduce whole cultures and complex plural ways of life to an insidious selection of just their more problematic and admittedly violent manifestations to the exclusion of what is certainly most praiseworthy:

It has been underlined many times that in the mystic-military plane the religiosity of the Aztecs [which were really only one late-coming city-state of the Nahua milieu among many

most Mesoamerican cosmovisions more broadly interpret the continuation of cosmic time to depend to a greater or lesser extent on the actions humans—but generally without the extreme exceptionalist view of the Aztecs. The Maya traditions too have conceived of time as something which depends on the cyclical “relay of burdens” or rotating responsibilities between persons as well as between gods—for, as among all cosmic bodies, like the Sun, stars, et cetera, all cyclically rotates.

In Mesoamerican traditions therefore it is not that ‘time is of the essence’ but rather that ‘the essence is of time’ which is to say that there is no ontological or metaphysical essence because essence is made out of time and time is made out of this cyclical relay of burdens and responsibilities among organizing axioms (e.g., different manifestations of uniduality or so-called ‘gods’), and among persons (human and other-than-human) on whose conduct and actions depends the continuation of time and of the cosmic and ecosystemic energies that enable the cycles of life and death to go on. The cyclical continuity of cosmic vitality is not guaranteed; all forces, including human forces are responsible for enacting the continuation of Time. All cosmic forces must organizationally plan to coordinate and relay diverse responsibilities so as to ensure the continuation of cyclical vitality. Unsurprisingly thus, because of how crucial the collective coordination and scheduling of this relay of “burdens” or responsibilities was (and is),

The calendar among the Mayas as among the Nahuas, Zapotecs, Mixtecs and other peoples [of Mesoamerica]... was like the spinal cord which enabled them to move, act

others] became oriented towards the path of florid war and bloody sacrifices, destined to conserve the life of the Sun threatened by a fifth fatal cataclysm. In this sense, the supreme ideal of the Aztec warriors was to fulfill their mission as the chosen ones of *Tonatiuh* (the Sun), which needed blood, the precious liquid, to continue lighting and warming all of *Cemanahuac* (the world) [this was only according to one interpretation of the dependency of cosmic cycles upon Earthly behavior that became hegemonic in a particular city, Tenochtitlan, during the influence of the powerful political counselor, Tlacaelel]. Yet, confronting those who thought [and acted] along those lines we have found also...the [markedly] *different* disposition of numerous *tlamatinime* [from across the history and places of the Nahuatl world] who, following the footsteps of Quetzalcoatl—the symbol of Nahuatl wisdom—preferred to encounter the sense of their lives in other, more intellectual [and artistic] planes. As the texts demonstrate, these two distinct and perhaps also opposed conceptions of the cosmos and life coexisted. This should not estrange anybody since a brief look at history reveals a variety of similar situations even in contemporary times. (León Portilla 1993, 316, my translation, my emphasis).

and think within time. Not only from a utilitarian viewpoint, principally in relation to agriculture, but also closely linked to religious celebrations, commemorations, and cosmogonic myths and in one word, their social and religious life, *the calendar always occupied a tremendously central place, perhaps even an omnipresence [it was the spinal cord of their body politic].*¹⁴⁵

Moreover, those dedicated to study and enact the “science of the calendar” were always among the *primus inter pares* in the circles of the wise, authoritative, and powerful. From another viewpoint, the existence of calendars as constitutive aspects of Mesoamerican life from many centuries before the Christian era and perhaps two millennia before the arrival of the Europeans attests that Mesoamerican thinkers and rulers dedicated a contrastingly unusual effort to philosophical speculation concerning transitoriness and time, to mathematical calculus and to the chronopolitics and what could be called *calendrication* (in contrast to legislation). As León Portilla describes it, it is this sort of what has been here called *chronopolitical and/or kairopolitical* wisdom that became the precedent for “*other, alternative* modes and orders of thought and practice which it would not be an exaggeration to describe as the first fruit of a long evolution in the realm of Mesoamerican intellectual culture.”¹⁴⁶ Furthermore, it is important to underline the shared cultural inheritance of these calendrical modes of organization. The “systems of calendars possessed by [Mesoamerican] cultures” were “fundamentally equal” (though with some variations) amongst each other ever since “the classic epoch, some fifteen centuries before the arrival” of Europeans in 1492: “the solar calendar of 365 days (or “account of the years” known as *Xiuhpohualli* in the [northern and central Mesoamerican] highlands and *haab* among the Mayas), as well as the prognostic calendar of 260 days (or “account of the days” known as *tonalpohualli*, *tzolkin*, *pije*, etcetera), it can be supposed that the corresponding cycles of religious” and other “celebrations and practices of the distinct peoples, by being normed through identical systems of measuring time, kept also, even when in different degrees, more than just a few

¹⁴⁵ León Portilla 2006, 461.

¹⁴⁶ León-Portilla 1993, 282, 293-294, 310, my own translation, my emphases.

similarities.” These calendrical arrangements make up a constitutive part of the “substratum of that worldview that became a common possession among Mesoamerican nations.”¹⁴⁷

In order to understand how calendrical chronopolitics and/or kairopolitics become the substratum of the Mesoamerican cosmoexperience and the constitutive “spinal cord” of the Mesoamerican way of life, we must go back to the basic insight of Mesoamerican wisdom as expressed, for instance through the “chants and flowers” of Nahua tlamatinime who shared the realization that we are all “living in what we would call the existential indigence” of all that exists *in tlatcpac*. As explained above, Mesoamerican tlamatinime came to the realization that the constitutive uniduality and (re)creative ambivalence that we share in this world can only be (re)vitalized through the poetic wisdom of “chants and flowers”; as the *Mexican Hymns* recite: “grab a good hold of the black and red [wisdom] / And only then *might* you cease to be an indigent.”¹⁴⁸ And all practical wisdom can only emerge from the basic acknowledgement that *all that exists in this world shares* an inexorable homelessness and existential indigence for we are irremediably without firm rootedness, without secure substance or fundamental truth in this world. As the “Flowers and Songs” of the Nahua recite,

... We know it is true	<i>We wander here and there</i>
that we must perish,	<i>in our desolate indigence.</i>
for we are mortal men.	We are mortal men (sic).
You, the Giver of Life,	We have seen bloodshed and pain
you have ordained it.	where once we saw beauty and valor. ¹⁴⁹

This indigence is an experience shared by all: it constitutes a cosmic We. As Ortiz Castro¹⁵⁰ helps us notice in his *Approximation to the Philosophy and Ethics of the Mixtec World*, because the Mesoamerican awareness of shared otherness as a collective, as a “We” (a *nosotredad*) in contraposition to Truth, Permanence, and Being (all of which are then revealed as

¹⁴⁷ León-Portilla, 1993, pp. 289, 290, 291, 296.

¹⁴⁸ León-Portilla 1993, pp. 320; my translation, my emphasis.

¹⁴⁹ León Portilla 2001, 179.

¹⁵⁰ Ortíz Castro 2004, xvii.

the very constituents of the Other of what we always already become through passing embodiments *in tlalticpac*)—this We precedes our very passing and enables an awareness of the inextricable transitoriness of all (including the other-than-human). This awareness of our shared otherness in relation to Truth and Being in actuality precedes (the construction of) Time itself, as constructed and accounted through shared conventions such as reproduced in the common practice of calendricalation. While evanescence composes and decomposes us, Time on the other hand is rather constructed relationally *as a result of our common response to our shared evanescence*. Time cannot therefore be made sense of or accounted for without the concomitant *recognition* of the otherness-shared-among-us (*nosotredad*¹⁵¹) in constant movement in contraposition, uniduality and ambivalence in relation to our shared ‘big Other’: Truth, Being, a Permanent *State* of Being, etc. This is to say, among other things, that from this Mesoamerican juncture, *We, as a transitory commons (that includes the biota, ecosystems, and Earth)*, reveal our condition as precisely the Other of *Being* (which thereby vanishes the foundation that would make up the essence and foundation of human “being”). It is thus how dialogue enables the dual ambivalence of Time and Being: for us to come to an awareness of the temporality that makes up our shared passing embodiment *in tlalticpac* we must always already refer as a collective to *the Other denied to us all* by the actuality of our very passing existence. This Other denied to us all is Permanence, Truth and Being. Being is recognized, but precisely only as the very Other, the constitutive outside, the lack and yet also the necessary complement and therefore desideratum of all that exists in this world (including the *macehuales*, that is, the people or humans).

That is why the sharing of the “chants” of our voices and the “flowers” of our efforts, make up the poetics that enact the *Omeyocan* (the place or instance of duality); given our common existential indigence, it is only by sharing our chants and flowers that we can embrace the constitutive duality of a transitory existence driven by an unsatisfiable appetite for Being without completely surrendering our passing embodiments in this world—that is, without leaving this

¹⁵¹ A fusion of the Spanish terms *nosotros* (we) and *otredad* (otherness)

world (i.e., dying) in pursuit of the permanence, truth and being that has been at once revealed to us in shared interaction as what We commonly lack, what we desire in all its tempting seductiveness and what we all have been relentlessly denied—and this denial of Being is what turns all that exists *in tlatlcpac* into a *nosotredad*: a shared otherness whose awareness of its passing embodiment derives precisely from the inextricability of constitutive ambivalences such as Time and Being, plural manifestations of an infinitely fertile duality that engenders, conceives, and provides life and vitality to all that exists through the reproduction of mutually necessary distinctions and complementary differences, whose interactions in turn enable the renewal of vital cosmic cycles.

This basic awareness of our common otherness (Ortiz's *nosotredad*) in relation to foundations (i.e., our joint experience of denied foundations/rootedness/permanence/stasis *in tlatlcpac*) explains both how the sharing of “chants and flowers” becomes the sublime expression of existential wisdom, but also how communality or *comunalidad*¹⁵² shapes Mesoamerican lifeways through practices such as communal support, solidary work and the celebration of the sharing of its fruits referred to in Mixtec culture as “*Tniñu ñuu*: work for the people” or the Nahuatl “*tequitl*,” more contemporarily referred to as the Mesoamerican “*tequio*.”¹⁵³ Although we will discuss the *tequio* at length ahead we should say at this point that because of our shared otherness in our lack of foundations in this world, the *tequio* becomes the only meaningful way to participate in the relaying of burdens and responsibilities that enables the continuation of cosmic cycles of life and death. And yet this seemingly abstract wisdom is paradoxically perhaps also quite material: this is the only logic which enables the continuation of social and ecological life-death cycles. Communality is chronopolitically built into the calendrical design of Mesoamerican lifeways. Mesoamerican lifeways are characterized, for instance, by the fact that “communitarian

¹⁵² Maldonado, 2002.

¹⁵³ Ortiz Castro, 2004, pp. 69-71.

life...exercises power through the participation in the assembly”¹⁵⁴ and through the calendrical relaying of “burdens of communal responsibilities”¹⁵⁵ among all members, *all* of whom serve in average more than ten years throughout their lifetimes, without any compensation since their service amounts to a payment owed to the community for having granted them life. The community therefore reveals itself as the Provider of Vitality, the Giver of Life.

Mesoamerican Cosmopoetic Practice: Chronopolitics

...the Giver of Life, the community.

... Here you have come,
before the lords,
you marvelous being,
in an erect pose.
*Upon the mat*¹⁵⁶
of yellow and blue feathers ,
there you stand proudly.

...Quetzal feathers,
precious jades,
so perfectly polished,
will be destroyed.
Nowhere on Earth is their model,
thus let it be,
but let it be without violence.

But, precious flower of toasted maize,
You only lend yourself,
soon you must be abandoned,
you will have to go away,
there will be a defleshing.

—Song of Tlaltecatzin of Quauhchinanco

After having offered a rather brief and summarized account of the history of Mesoamerican thought leading up to the emergence of a Mesoamerican ethos constituted by a poetic experience of the cosmos, we can discuss how this poetic cosmoexperience has shaped Mesoamerican practices.

Mesoamerican civilizations have incorporated their poetic experience of cosmic existence into the broader conduct of life. Poetics here is not just a form of expression, but a practical

¹⁵⁴ Maldonado, 2002, 5.

¹⁵⁵ Rice, 2004.

¹⁵⁶ “The mat” symbolizes authority, the seat of the cycle; what the Westernized would identify—not unproblematically—as the seat power.

disposition, a way of existing. Poetics demands an embrace of transience and, for Mesoamericans, transience is cyclical and hence a poetic disposition entails the effort to shape practices in accordance with the flow of cyclical temporality and its recurring transformations. In this regard it is particularly crucial to set aside for a while the basic Western binary of life/death with an alternative Mesoamerican view of “death” as the “defleshing” or decomposition and reincorporation of concentrated cosmic energy (“the body”) back into the Earth and the cosmos, and its (dispersed) recomposition into other forms of living existence—in short, as transempodiment, transmuting, transfiguration, or transmaterialization. What from a Western perspective is understood as the transition from life to death (or conversely from non-existence into ‘birth’), from within the Mesoamerican cosmoexperience the binary division between life and death is interpreted as the drawing of an arbitrary boundary since from an experience of the cosmos as transience what occurs is merely a transformation of cosmic energy from a particular embodiment into the (re)embodiment of a plurality of other configurations.¹⁵⁷

The decomposition and transfiguration of a body, *whether individual or collective*, conceived as an inevitable break through the concept of “death” in many “Old World” cultures, does not for Mesoamericans entail a vacuous material end or the final dematerialization of a distinctively “human” life; and it does not entail either an ontological limit—or a metaphysical finality. It is rather a reincorporation of the body into the cosmic cycle, albeit at a different stage, a transempodiment. From the viewpoint of many Abya-Yalan cultures, ‘death’ can be recast as the defleshing or decomposition of concentrated cosmic energy and its redistribution into other parts of the ‘environment’ wherein life continues on its vital cycles of renewal. Keeping with these considerations, from this viewpoint it is impossible to uphold a distinction, let alone a hierarchy, between “the human” and “the environment”—as is commonly upheld in the dominant Western

¹⁵⁷ Bonfil Batalla 1981, 11-53; I have personally translated fragments from the work of Guillermo Bonfill Batalla when it is not available in English.

perspectives;¹⁵⁸ there is instead a bio-eco-cosmic continuum. Ancestral persons and polities are not thought to have ‘died’, but rather to have *defleshed* or disaggregated themselves into fragments or diffusions of cosmic energy that are reincorporated into the Earth, Sky, or Cosmos, only to return again re-cycled in the form of different configurations, some diffused and some concentrated. With this ceaseless cyclical transmaterialization in consideration, a poetic disposition seems like the most appropriate way to do justice to our transient experience in the cosmos.

Politically speaking, this means that Mesoamerican organization was marked by what would seem as a seemingly ‘fatalist’ or at least surprisingly ‘stoic’ acceptance, if not embrace and celebration, of the transience of whole communities, polities, and even whole civilizations, and of power and its different configurations in general (I prompt the reader to consider this in light of the “Song of Tlaltecatzin of Quauhchinanco” cited as epigraph to this section and to keep this poem in mind as we move through the rest of this work, as it illustrates the rationale behind several Indigenous and in this case Mesoamerican system(s) of burdens). Perhaps the most accessible way to understand this is to contrast once again the Mesoamerican chronopolitical and/or kairopolitical practice of ‘the political’ with the dominant Western mode of political organization. From a Western viewpoint, the capacity of a polity to become permanent and long lasting is seen as a virtue, perhaps its paramount virtue or evidence of strength. Anything from city-states, to empires and modern nation-states are driven by *a desire to stay*, to stand tall, and to lengthen their lifespan as much as possible, ideally to become permanent and if possible to live forever; that is, to attain absolute Being. The maximum political desideratum is to transcend cosmic transience, contingency, and ‘fortune’. Conventionally the end of life to a particular

¹⁵⁸ It has been only until recently that *some* Western scholarship, and mainly only a dissident wing, has acknowledged that “the old...assumptions of an environment outside or separate from human existence is no longer a tenable assumption for thinking about matters of nature.” (Dalby 2007, 103-118, 111) But what would seem to the dominant culture as a ‘radical’ and ‘novel’ acknowledgement has been experienced by Amerindians as a commonsensical understanding of life and the cosmos for millennia. If European civilization had spent less time, exterminating, subordinating or educating Indigenous Americans their ways, and more time learning from them many of the globe’s ecological problems would not even have emerged.

political manifestation or the political epoch of a city, state, empire or order has been understood negatively as something lost, as something which its agents would always already prefer to have avoided. 'Death' in general has a negative connotation, and the death of a polity is no exception. Transience is that which politics must define itself in opposition to.

Perhaps the paramount example of the desire for permanence and absolute Being that dominates Western civilizational forms can be found in the very concept of 'the State,' the principal mode of modern political organization. The State is a term and form of organization that is *fundamentally* committed to its own permanence, to its stasis, to the staticity of its hierarchy, to the dream of its immortality, or in Machiavelli's famous words: to the mastery of Fortuna¹⁵⁹— even to the point of a static fundamentalism. Indeed, the State is above all constituted by this desire to overcome or at least master the transience of human life: if individual humans or families and even groups can exist only temporarily, perhaps it is through the State as the embodiment of the desire for permanence that humans may *defer* their inevitable passing, even if only vicariously. Indeed, the constitutive urgency of State-craft and of States, their *raison d'état*, is primordially and above all, the struggle to survive, to stay and to stay present, to preserve themselves, to live as long as possible, to survive *other* states *through any means necessary (including violence)*, and if fortune does not frown upon them, to become permanent; that is, to become the embodiment of absolute Being. Indeed, it could be argued that the "State" emerges from the exercise of a violence that is unleashed precisely in the very measure that those who once embodied the power of the community become unwilling and incapable to accept, as Tlaltecatzin sings, that they "*will have to go away,*" moreover, that "*there will be a defleshing.*"

Contrastingly, Mesoamerican political bodies are characterized by what would seem from a Western viewpoint as a rather uncanny acceptance and even embrace of their own 'death'. However, this is rather seen by Mesoamericans as the (re)incorporation (and recycling) of their modes of collective life into the cycles of cosmic transience, as the political defleshing and

¹⁵⁹ Machiavelli 1984; Machiavelli and Atkinson 2008. See also Walker 1993.

(dis)embodiment of the inexorable transience of all and the necessary transmaterialization, transfiguration or transempodiment of all that exists. But it is not just an acceptance of a final passing away, but rather a recognition of the need to *relay* life to the political embodiments which cyclically follow, and which should be allowed and helped to do so. What does this entail in practice? The best way to understand this is perhaps to focus on Classical Maya political organization which should not be seen as the only, but rather, as an exemplary manifestation of Mesoamerican cosmopoetic (kairo or) chronopolitics. As has become more and more clear to the students of the topic, the main organization of classical Maya political life was based on the concept of the *may* from where could indeed come the very name of “Maya.” The *may* refers to a particular span of time, a cycle, translatable to more or less 256 years of the Gregorian Calendar.¹⁶⁰ The term *may* can also be translated as “cycle”. Hence, the Maya are said to be “the people of the cycle, the people of the *may*.” As Prudence Rice argues in her insightful *Maya Political Science*,

The political organization of the Classic period (A.D. 179-948) lowland Maya civilization of northern Guatemala, Belize, and the Yucatan peninsula of Mexico...has defied explication. ... Proposed models debate... often with far-flung analogies ... [But we now understand that] Maya political organization was structured by short- and long-term temporal cycles recorded in their calendars, particularly recurring intervals of approximately twenty years (the *k'atun*) and 256 years (the *may*). Maya calendrical science...was not only a system of precise and predictive astronomical calculations and record keeping but also the foundation or “deep structure” of their political science. The key is deceptively simple: the Maya are “the people of the cycle,” the people of the *may*...The Maya ... geopolitical organization was ordered through a complex web of calendrical cycles and their regular celebration... rituals surrounding the 256-year *may* cycles.¹⁶¹

What is crucial politically-speaking concerns how the overarching embrace of a cyclical conception of time shaped classical Maya political organization. Let me explain this in the broader context of Mesoamerica. As mentioned above, all Mesoamerican peoples share a traditional mode of political organization known as the “system of burdens” or rotating responsibilities, also known

¹⁶⁰ See León Portilla and Shorris 2001; Rice 2004; Caso and Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, Instituto de Investigaciones Históricas 1967; Caso 1996; León-Portilla 2006.-

¹⁶¹ Rice 2004, 1, 56; underlining added.

as obligation and rotation.¹⁶² As Juan Jose Rendón, and Benjamin Maldonado point out, the “system of burdens [*sistema de cargos*]—along with the communal assembly and the Council of Elders—[are] the basic components of [Mesoamerican] *communality*,” all of which should be understood as “the backbone” and “the kernel” of Mesoamerican culture and “the basis of resistance”.¹⁶³ The system of burdens, as the backbone of Mesoamerican chronopolitics, is hence intimately tied to calendrical practices, which brings us back to the question of Time. As discussed above, Mesoamerican people conceive of time not as something that automatically or mechanically advances, but rather as a rotational succession or relay of mutually collaborating forces that rehearse and re-enact astronomical rotations (and, as we’ll see, environmental cycles) by carrying the burden of responsibility for the reproduction and continuation of cosmic cycles: Time-as-Life (or Vitality) does not continue its cycles on its own, it needs the communal effort, collaboration, and responsibility of all cosmic forces, including human forces.¹⁶⁴ The system of burdens materializes this understanding of time in quotidian practice, both micro- and macropolitically. The system of burdens is characterized by the long-term planning of a relay of responsibilities cyclically passed on from person to person, from group to group, and from polity to polity (one could perhaps surmise, from civilization to civilization).

Communally, the system of burdens (also known as ‘*rotation and obligation*’) demands that each person fulfill a burden of responsibility for their community during a period of time or

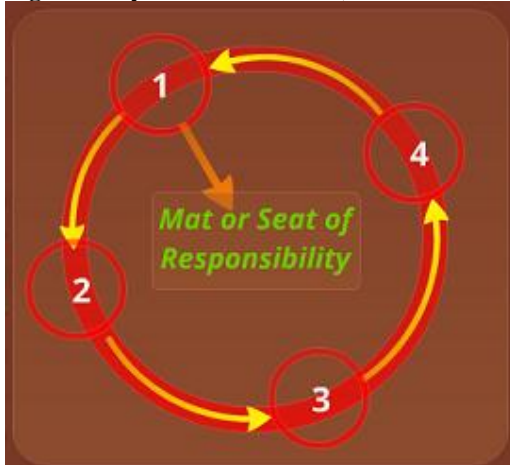
¹⁶² See LeónPortilla and Shorris 2001; Marcos, Peña-Vargas, and Ruggiero 2007; Rice 2004; Maldonado 1994 and 2002; Maldonado and Colombres 2004; Bonfil Batalla 1981; Bonfil Batalla 1996; Beltrán 1981.

¹⁶³ Maldonado 2002, 81, 86-88. See also Maldonado 1994.

¹⁶⁴ The Mesoamerican understanding of time should be revalued to understand current global developments. Consider increasingly common argument that: As the evidence for human-induced climate change mounts...we have effectively taken on the role of determining what the world’s climate will be in the future...” which can be interpreted from a Mesoamerican viewpoint as implying that the march of cosmic time depends at least partly on what we do, on how whether we fulfill our responsibilities in contributing to the continuation of cosmic life. As Dalby further laments, “The fundamental switch to understanding ourselves as actively creating the global climate has yet to be made.” A revaluation of Mesoamerican wisdom can help us make this fundamental change. (Dalby 2007, 103-118.)

cycle, a burden which will then be relayed to another person. The following figure serves as a simplified illustration:

Figure 1: System of Burdens (Rotation and Obligation)



As already noted, there is no compensation or pay for fulfilling the burden; it is rather a responsibility owed to the community—a debt that can never finally be settled since the community gives and sustains life: the community is the Giver of Life, the Provider of Vitality. For instance, among the Mixtecs, for those who serve the community (which are not traditionally called politicians, just servants of the community, responsible for a ‘*cargo*’ or burden) it is well understood that holding some sort of power does not lead to the earning of “any stipend or salary” since “service is obligatory”: it is a debt owed to the community that gave you birth, nurtured you and kept you alive, providing conditions for descendance as well. For that reason it is not exaggerated to say, as do the Mixtecs: “that this class of burden is pure suffering, pure problems,” but, as Ortiz Castro says, “somebody should do it and this is none other than the child of the people,”¹⁶⁵ the offspring of the community which is every member of the community. Hence, it is accustomed in Mixtec communities to tell those who are about to take a position of power in service of the community the following:

¹⁶⁵ Ortiz Castro 2006, 86-87.

<i>Juan diku kivii ya´a, kuu kivi</i>	Because of that in this day, the signaled day
<i>Kukuintsa ichi sa u´u sa nda´vi</i>	<i>Commence your trail of sorrows</i>
<i>Sa nakunchido tavitsa</i>	<i>With the burden of responsibility</i>
<i>Ndida jchiño ñuu.</i>	<i>For the multiple labors of your people.</i>
<i>Sa wa´ani tu na kaatsa</i>	Whether it be uphill
<i>Adi na keetsa</i>	Or whether it be downhill,
<i>Adi na ki´intsa icha´a ichukua...</i>	Here or there...
<i>Doko na kadatsa sa sa´a xuuntsa.</i>	But do it and raise your people. ¹⁶⁶

As people grow older and fulfill their communal burdens (*cargos*), they become entitled to greater authority, fulfilling progressively more important cycles in a spiral of increasing responsibility until—if constant, responsible, and conscientious—they attain the status of wise elders. This system in its various guises and embodiments has historically existed, resisted and shaped Mesoamerican peoples and cultures.

However, it is perhaps among the Maya that the system of burdens attained its most sophisticated manifestations. Even though it has accompanied Maya civilization throughout, even under colonialism, it flourished the most during the Classic Maya period (though it could well flourish again in a new guise). The Maya turned their whole civilization into a mode of organization governed by a calendrical form of chronopolitics that sought to materialize the rotating system of burdens at a geopolitical or rather geo-chronopolitical level. The Maya not only relayed burdens cyclically among their individual rulers or groups within a particular polity, they actually relayed burdens of authority among different polities and even whole regions or what Westerners (mis)interpret as “territories”. As noted before, drawing on the excellent work of Prudence Rice,

Maya politico-religious organization was structured by Maya calendrical science, particularly the intervals of approximately twenty years (*k´atun*) and 256 years, or thirteen *k´atuns* (*may* ‘cycle’). . . . sites hosting the *may* for 256-year periods were [‘]capitals[’] of [‘]territories[’] in which *k´atun* seats rotated among other dependent sites.¹⁶⁷

¹⁶⁶ *Tu´un sa´an vili itakuutsa*— Discourse-Paragon Branch of Flower You Shall Be, paragraphs 7-8 (quoted in Ortíz Castro 2006, 83; emphases added).

¹⁶⁷ Rice 2004, xv.

This was done through a chronopolitical calendrical schedule organized in terms of what has become known as the “seating of the cycle” or “seating of the *may*.”¹⁶⁸ Explained in the simplest terms, the Maya relayed political authority among sets of polities within a given period of time in accordance with bio-cosmic (including astrophysical/astronomical and ecological) cycles. Each polity would serve as the “seat of the cycle,” that is, the seat of Maya geochronopolitical authority, during a period of about 256 years. Halfway through the period, the current polity holding the seat of the cycle would host what would become the incoming polity that would later become the seat of the cycle for the next 256 years. The period in which a polity held the “seat of the cycle” was one in which that given polity held the burden of responsibility to look over the Maya world and the continuation of biocosmic cycles both macropolitically and in everyday life.

Moreover, halfway through the period, that same polity holding the seat was also responsible for sharing her governing wisdom with what would become her successor polity, that is, the next seat of the cycle. The successor polity, in turn, had the responsibility to learn from the preceding polity how to conduct “the governance of time”, that is, the burden of sustaining the passing of transembodied life and energy in the cosmic cycle(s). Indeed, there is evidence that “the Classic Maya might have had dual rulers and diarchical political organization,” especially since this “would accommodate...successional patterns” which is to say that there were at times two authorities simultaneously sharing power: those representing the out-going seat of authority, and those representing the incoming seat: “the paired succession of *may* seats,” allowed for an “incoming guest or co-seat, ruling or host seat, and then out-going with a new guest seat.”¹⁶⁹

The Maya practice should be recognized as a form of (inter)polity ‘democracy’ that is hardly known from the Western experience, and indeed, from any “Old-World” experience. Not only have Mesoamericans practiced a system of relayed rotating burdens which involves a form of ancient communal democracy which is millennia old (and was not taught to them by any

¹⁶⁸ See León Portilla 2001, 24.

¹⁶⁹ Rice 2004, 267-268.

Westerner), some Mesoamericans and most notably the Maya have taken the system of burdens to a complexity and scale that was even more unknown to the West: the cyclical, consensual, and rotational relay of geochronopolitical power among different polities and regions, was calendrically calculated not just for centuries, but for millennia ahead (!) and yet also allowing for much flexibility and contingency (as noted by Prudence Rice). Of course, The Maya chronopolitical organization has been systematically undermined by invasion, colonization, and the ongoing Westernization. In any case, the only close example comparable to the Maya way from our contemporary world politics would be the very modest relay of political authority over sporting events with planning terms no longer than decades ahead (like the organization of the modern Olympics or the World Cups/Leagues of different events) and only recently in some international organizations—but even so, just within decades of prospective. Never have “Old World” civilizational manifestations shown a comparable calendrical planning of relays of authority (or in its defect, ‘hegemonic power’) with *centuries* or *millennia* in consideration (indeed, the calendrically planned Maya system of rotational authority could have operated for nearly two and a half millennia!).¹⁷⁰ Even within states today this relay of power is very limited: even though power is electorally relayed within states among political parties, certainly there is no relay of “capitals” within the same state (i.e., Washington D.C. is the only and permanent “capital” [head] of the United States of America). In world politics relay is even rarer and very limited in temporal scope.

In contrast to the Maya world, in “Old-World” civilizational manifestations (including the so-called West and Euro-America¹⁷¹) massive wars of ‘hegemonic succession’ and other large-

¹⁷⁰ As Rice notes, “...over a period of about eleven hundred years, there is always at least one of the chronicles which carries on the sequence of the *ka'tuns* unbroken.” (Rice 2004, 13) The relay sequence seems to have carried on uninterrupted at least from what would be the period between 692 and 1752 in the Gregorian calendar; that is, for at least 1060 years. But if we look beyond the literature and focus on the archeological evidence, as Rice does, we could find that “according to the evidence, the...cycles of the may...operated for nearly two and a half millennia”!

¹⁷¹ ‘American’ in Euro-American refers to the whole Americas, and it is not to be reduced to a particular state.

scale calamities have been a recurring problem of many regions and epochs of the ‘world system’, since there has never been chronopolitical planning on the Maya scale in Old World civilizations—and certainly not in the specific case of the dominant Western civilization. Contrastingly, in the case of the Maya which are only one manifestation of the Mesoamerican system of burdens, Rice notes that “Modeling political rotations on cosmic cycles allowed power to be shared predictably, minimizing the potential chaos of political succession and the disruption of social order.”¹⁷² And yet, the system of burdens or “calendar-based...mode of politico-ritual” organization modeled on “astrocalendrical cycles”¹⁷³ also allows a greater and more communal participation in power from different persons, polities and regions and an acceptance of the transience of power that minimizes violence. In short, the system of burdens favors peaceful political succession and stable social order because it is far more ‘democratic’ than the system of states that is currently dominant, and also more so than most other existing systems of inter/intrapolity and intra/inter-regional relations that have been known. So contemporary or modern forms of international/interpolity relay, when they exist at all, are *very* modest and limited in the scope of time and power-sharing/relay in comparison to the ancient Mesoamerican, and particularly (but not exclusively) Mayan, forms of cyclical relay of burdens. The world has much to learn from Mesoamerica in this regard.

Before we move on, let us review. For the Maya, a particular ceremonial center would be the seat of authority of the whole Maya world for about 256 years. Halfway through that period previously coordinated and calendrically scheduled ceremonial and ritualized contests of different kinds would be held to decide which polity would be the next seat of the cycle. Once decided, those in charge of the succeeding seat of Maya political authority would be hosted by the current seating polity to share wisdom about the governance of time, life-cycles, and practical matters—that is, about the burden or responsibility of enabling the cycles of cosmic vitality to go on. At the

¹⁷² Rice 2004, 83.

¹⁷³ Rice 2004, 84.

end of the cycle the succession would take place and the next period would start with a similar calendar of transitions and relays. As Rice explains, ceremonial centers, often interpreted by Westerners as “cities”

serving as new *may* and *k'atun* cycles would have been decided on in the midpoint of a cycle...and their role was initiated as they collaborated during the second half of that cycle as the guest of the current ruler of the period. They then came to full power as seats of authority at the beginning of the relevant cycle and ruled alone for its first half. At the midpoint, new seats were decided for the upcoming *k'atun* and *may*, and these shared rule as guest of the existing seat for the second half of the cycle.¹⁷⁴

Up to here, the Maya model would seem quite simple; however, there is more to it than that. The Maya not only incorporated the temporality of the cosmos by relaying authority in long periods with incredibly complex and ample calendrical horizons, they also incorporated an even more complex form of geopolitical poetics, namely, the actual physical transition of life from one political body to another—that is, the transempodiment of political life. This entailed that at the end of a polity's period as the seat of the cycle, that polity and its main ceremonial centers would be left to rest and allowed to pass away, sometimes gradually, but sometimes rather quickly. From a Western viewpoint this would be interpreted as the seemingly unexplainable tendency of Maya polities to suddenly “die” or be “abandoned”—hypothetically (from a Western viewpoint) as a consequence of a tragic event like a plague or a natural disaster or a major war. But if we remember the Mesoamerican understanding of the cosmos as transience—as shared also by the Nahua—these changes look quite different.

¹⁷⁴ Rice 2004, 280.

So let us re-cite the insightful “Song of Tlaltecatzin”

the Giver of Life, the community.
... Here you have come,
before the lords,
you marvelous being,
in an erect pose.
Upon the mat of yellow and blue feathers
 [i.e., the seat of the
 cargo/responsibility/authority],
there you stand proudly.

...Quetzal feathers, precious jades,
 [i.e., (symbols of) beauty]
so perfectly polished,
will be destroyed.
Nowhere on Earth is their model,
thus let it be,
but let it be without violence.

But, precious flower of toasted maize,
You only lend yourself,
soon you must be abandoned,
you will have to go away,
there will be a defleshing.

This Nahua “Song of Tlaltecatzin” reveals a profound understanding of the cosmic transience of all (including the power and beauty of people *and* whole communities or polities) that all Mesoamericans share and that the Maya in particular brought to an impressive degree of geo-chronopolitical sophistication. To say that Maya polities “died” or were “abandoned” reveals more about the negative “Old World” view of cyclical transempodiment, than about Mesoamerican life cycles. From a Western perspective, the passing away of a polity is seen only as the consequence of a negative event. Polities are expected to maintain themselves as permanent States (in the strong sense) through violence if necessary (and it usually becomes so). However, the repetitive tendency to find periods in which the Maya ‘abandoned’ or apparently left their cities to ‘die’ is not to be predicted from within the Western prejudice against cosmic transempodiment (or “death”) as an unexplainable tragedy that must be resisted at all costs, even if violently. From a Western viewpoint the sudden downfall, disappearance, or simple abandonment of a polity, a “city,” a “capital” and its ceremonial centers and buildings can only be explained as a tragedy, and most certainly an undesirable and even unexpected event, since it is believed a priori that polities—as people—(should) wish and strive to live forever, to become permanent and they would stay so, as a permanent State, if it were not for the tragedies of fortune (be it the environment or an Other’s enmity) or the polity’s own stupidity or lack of ‘rationality’, lack of the

right knowledge of the *logos* of the universe and how to bend it to one's will (for instance, via state-craft).

Instead, for the Maya the 'death' of a polity was embraced *and* prompted, indeed, calendrically pre-planned and ceremonially enacted, as an obvious and (and sometimes happily celebrated) acceptable aspect of the cyclical renewal and transition of all in this cosmos. Polities were given life and grandeur for a pre-scheduled period; they lived and flourished at the peak of their cycle, but relayed their wisdom to their successors and then willfully and often consensually passed away towards the end of their cycle—in the midst of ceremonies of renewal. As with people, the “dying” or rather passing polity had to be left to “rest in peace”—a transition which *seemed* like downfall, death, or abandonment from a State-centric Western viewpoint. True, while some Maya polities would die peacefully, some in celebration, and yet others embattled and reluctantly, ultimately the calendar of cosmic cycles chronopolitically guided and regulated the life and passing of polities, as well as the birth and learning processes of their successors.

The wisdom to be learned from such “cosmic” modes of political organization is limitless. So let us continue on teasing out some of its interesting aspects. Prudence Rice, and León Portilla¹⁷⁵ both note that the Maya mapped the cosmos in a quadripartite fashion. As Rice explains:

the Maya cosmos was, above all, divided horizontally into four parts. According to the *Popol Vuh*, the highland Maya book of creation, the first act by the gods was to “set up the *kan xuc kan tzuk*, ‘four corners, four partitions’...[*this*] *quadripartite cosmovision*...[*has been*] *shared throughout Mesoamerica in ancient times and modern*”¹⁷⁶

As the *Popol Vuh*, the Book of Council of the Maya Quiche, reads,

...the Maker, Modeler, Mother-Father of Life [proceeded]
To complete the emergence of all the sky-earth:
The four-fold cornering, measuring, four-fold staking, halving the cord,
Stretching the cord
In the sky, on the Earth,
The four sides, the four corners¹⁷⁷

¹⁷⁵ León Portilla 1990; Rice 2004.

¹⁷⁶ Rice 2004, 17-19; the quote is from Schele and Mathews 1998; emphasis added.

¹⁷⁷ cited in Rice 2004, 20.

Evidence of this can also be found in the “Ritual of the Four World-Quarters” in *The Chilam Balam of Chumayel* or Book of the Sacred Priests of Chumayel.¹⁷⁸ Moreover, as is widely recognized by now, not only the Maya, but *all* “Mesoamerican cities, architectural complexes, and individual buildings are [or were]...often *cosmograms*, *Earthly representations of the sacred cosmic domain*...and these constitute *sacred landscapes*...”¹⁷⁹ Hence, political space from a Mesoamerican viewpoint and not just among the Maya should be understood as the very materialization of their cosmoexperience, indeed, as a cosmogram:

In Mesoamerica and among the Maya, buildings were arranged in the four directions around plazas and towns may have been divided physically and administratively into four quarters or wards. Further, as noted previously, the few surviving Maya maps show the landscape divided into four quarters...In addition, many Mesoamerican gods, for example, the rain gods, had four aspects or existed in groups of four, each with an associated color, direction, and augury...Each directional god aspect also had an associated priest, tree and other elements.¹⁸⁰

All political space from a Mesoamerican viewpoint is to be conceived as a manifestation of the cosmos, as “...cosmologically...based physical organization...”¹⁸¹ This is also the case among the Nahuas, as explained by León Portilla. The Mesoamerican architecture of great ceremonial centers and cities such as Teotihuacan—“the City of Gods” or more precisely “the place where one is transformed into a god” (illustratively ‘to be transformed into a god’ also means ‘to die’)—“seems to be the plastic image of the multiple celestial strata...The orientation of the pyramids towards the four” cosmologically oriented “points of the universe...makes one think that those who edified them would want to make visible and tangible their...conception of the cosmos.”¹⁸²

¹⁷⁸ Chumayel is a location in the northern part of the Yucatan peninsula.

¹⁷⁹ Rice 2004, 21.

¹⁸⁰ Rice 2004, 20.

¹⁸¹ Rice 2004, 46.

¹⁸² León-Portilla, 1993, 296, 298.

As León Portilla further adds, the conception of the great ceremonial centers of the Zapotec, Mixtec, Maya and the people of the highlands all followed very similar patterns from the classic epoch and onwards with their temples, superimposed pyramids, which were symbolizations of the celestial floors and of the cosmic distribution towards the four directions of the world. The same is the case with the ball courts; all of which evolved in parallel through the whole region of Middle America.¹⁸³ Hence, an understanding of Mesoamerican cosmology is crucial to understanding Mesoamerican political organization and processes.¹⁸⁴

Having understood that Mesoamericans in general have turned political space into “cosmograms” we can return to the exemplary case of the Classic Maya. As with all Mesoamericans, political space among the Classic Maya was always divided in a quadripartite fashion. But the Maya infused the quadripartite cosmogram with an even more complex cosmopoetic dynamic not only among polities, but also among whole regions. The Maya organized political spatiotemporality and even architecture and ‘ceremonial/civic’ planning as a cyclically dynamic “cosmogram” of multiple, embedded and interacting quadripartitioned layers of rotating authority. How did this work in practice? As Rice notes, “politico-ritual power was concentrated in important cities that seated the *may* cycle and were ceremonial centers of a region for a period of 256 years.”¹⁸⁵ And within that region and interval of time, the high priests and leaders (*jalach winiks* or *ajaws*) of the most prominent towns circum-habiting the ceremonial center took turns “seating” (i.e., holding authority over) the thirteen constituent *k’atuns* (periods of approximately 20 years), from which “the jaguar priests, or *b’alams*, presided, for periods of

¹⁸³ León-Portilla, 1993, 290.

¹⁸⁴ Rice 2004, 20.

¹⁸⁵ Rice 2004, 75-76. We will see in Part II that this tetrapolitical organization is shared by Andeans and indeed also by many Native North Americans such as the Dine’ (Navajo).

twenty years.”¹⁸⁶ Moreover, “In an idealized *may* model there would be thirteen *k’atun* seats in addition to (or perhaps including) the *may* seat.”¹⁸⁷

These relayed burdens (*kuch*) of responsibility involved looking over a region, *but only for a moment* since, as the Nahua sing all is “only for a moment” in this world. Hence the burden of being responsible for a region had to be relayed to other ceremonial centers in another region (which were not exactly like ‘cities’) at the end of the *may*. The cycle would usually circle around four regions. This could also be the reason why the Maya were called by that name since *lamay* means four-cornered or four-quarters¹⁸⁸ so the Maya were also “the people of the four corners” and more specifically the people of the four-cornered or four-quartered cycle. Rice summarizes,

Several lines of evidence support the proposition that ... Maya political organization is [based on] [t]he *may*—a 256 year, thirteen *k’atun* calendrical cycle—[which] was the key geopolitical device that structured power relations from the Preclassic period onward. The *may* model proposes that during the Classic period there existed multiple “capitals” throughout the Maya lowlands, each a sacred city that seated the *may* and thereby *shouldered responsibility for ensuring cosmic continuity, for a period of 256 years*. Within the realm dominated by each cycle seat, or *may ku*, were numerous subsidiary sites that had similar responsibilities for seating the *k’atun* for periods of twenty years within that cycle. *May cycles—along with shorter temporal cycles folded in them, longer cycles (the b’ak’tun) within which they operated, and the overarching Mesoamerican principle of quadripartition—provided the ... charter for the structure of regional roles of power and authority...[this] acknowledges the imperative of recursive calendrical cycling in Maya geopolitical-ritual...calendrical cycles established an underlying [infra]structure for political events...the may model acknowledges that cosmic cycling [and its co-constitutive Mesoamerican system of burdens or rotation and obligation] and quadripartition were operational principles that established the deep structure of the Maya world.... [A]n emphasis on rotating politico-religious offices and responsibilities, suggest... that a cyclical structuring of ... Earthly affairs was modeled on cosmological-calendrical cycles.*¹⁸⁹

In a schematic and ideal Maya model we would find also a cycle between regions. First, four polities within a first region would relay the seat of the cycle among them; once the cycle was done, the seat (or “mat”) of authority would not return to the first polity, rather it would move to a

¹⁸⁶ Rice 2004, 75-76.

¹⁸⁷ Rice 2004, 116.

¹⁸⁸ Rice 2004, 76-77.

¹⁸⁹ Rice 2004, 275-276; emphasis added.

second region where four other polities would rotate the cycle for a given period; once that period was over, the seat of the cycle would move to a third region in a counterclockwise rotation among four regions; in that third region, four new cities would relay power and once the cycle of that region passed away the seat would rotate literally like the *astros* (Latin for luminous bodies) of the cosmos to a fourth region where four other city-polities would relay the seat of power. Finally at the end of the fourth region, the rotational system of relayed seats of power/responsibility among multiple cities and regions would come full circle. Such cycles were calendrically planned to take what Westerners would call “centuries” or even “millennia.” The “seat of the may” or “seat of the cycle,” that is the Maya seat of authority would nevertheless eventually return to the region where it started as all in the cosmos tends to cycle back around.

This plurality of embedded and dynamic cycles enabled the passage of civilizational life as chronopolitically incorporated and organically embedded within the movements of the cosmos through the transitory poetics of complex calendrical practices based on the system of relayed burdens that has shaped the Mesoamerican cosmoexperience. As Rice synthesizes, “Maya political power” was based on the elements of “temporal cycles and cosmic quadripartition.” Moreover,

The critical aspect of the temporal cycles is not the calendrical interval itself but rather the regular and public ritual celebration of the completion of these cycles...such rituals, assuming that they were conducted efficaciously, reaffirmed social, natural, and dynastic history and communicated cosmic order and continuity. The significances of the 256-year cycles of the *may* and the 20-year cycles of *k’atuns* lies in their establishing a *cosmological charter for praxis: the pragmatic structuring of history and power vis-à-vis intra and intersite relations*...the *may* model [with] the hierarchical relations between *k’atun* seats and the *may* center resulted in a *geopolitical system of shared, overlapping and rotating power among sites*...This system...that resolved practical concerns with political legitimation and succession and also provided stability for the Maya through periods of chance and transformation *over two millennia*...during these millennia, [different] *ritual practices and paraphernalia*...would have been added and deleted, modified, or otherwise reworked to accommodate particular circumstances...the *may*, the multi-*k’atun* calendrical cycles by which Classic and Post-Classic[Maya] political organization was structured, also contoured the topography of Classic period political geography. For some two millennia, then, Maya calendrical cycles and their underlying astronomical science provided the basis for Maya “political science.”¹⁹⁰

¹⁹⁰ Rice 2004, 289-290.

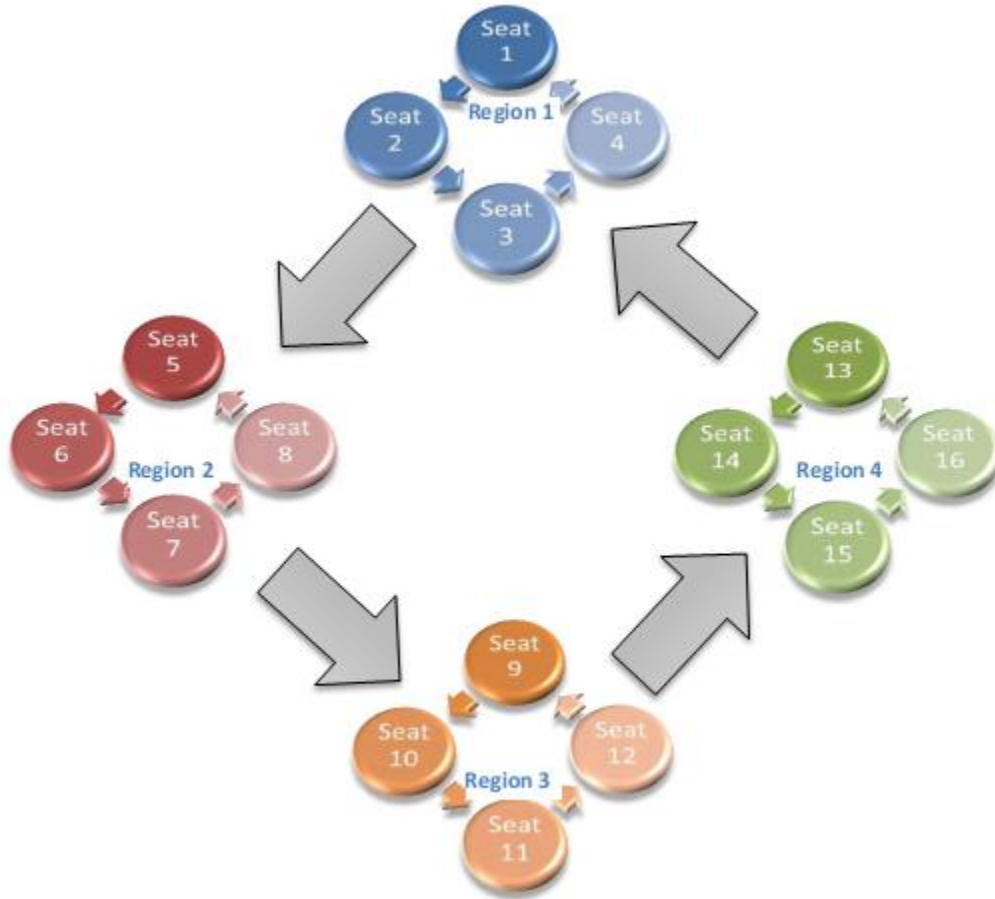
This is an impressive and perhaps unparalleled system that European colonialism and settler statecraft decided to sweep away *completely*, without even understanding it. True, it is a system that is far from perfect, and that had a great many vices which had certainly to be critically engaged and probably overcome (such as the use in some instances of human sacrifices as part of the rituals (ab)used strategically by some leaders—and yet even this requires much more research and reflection since human sacrifice was conceived as noble to many who underwent it, although it was sometimes ignobly abused by leaders).¹⁹¹ It is also hence a system that had also much to learn from European civilization as all peoples have a lot to learn from each other; it is a system that had to change and improve from its engagement with European and other knowledges and practices—a form of life that had to confront and overcome its vices. But neither Europe nor any other civilization or people deserves to be buried for its vices for if such had to be the rule, then Europe and all other civilizations should already had to have been buried long ago. In sum, the Maya system has at least as much to *teach* Europe, the Old World and the whole world as it has to learn from them, and perhaps even from those who have sought to bury it completely.

With this reflection in mind, let us continue. Figure 1 below offers a schematic, abstract, and simplified geo-chronopolitical model inspired on how the Maya chronopolitically organized the cyclical relay of authority or “system of burdens” (rotation and obligation) in the projection of different dimensions of quadripartite geopolitical spatiotemporality. This model is not the only possible one, but it transmits the idea of overlapping and embedded (not necessarily quadripartite)

¹⁹¹ It is important to consider at this point what Dallmayr (2010, 15) says at one point: “...horror is not a monopoly of the “East” but can also be found abundantly in Western, so-called “Judaeo-Christian” civilization (witness the crusades, the Inquisition, world wars, holocaust, and Hiroshima, which should hardly lead to a wholesale rejection of that civilization.” Although a very commendable reflection, Dallmayr seems to have forgotten again to mention the countless atrocities of colonialism and imperialism that lasted centuries and its coloniality persists clearly across Abya-Yala (‘the Americas’). These colonialisms and imperialisms achieved global magnitude, with genocide, ethnocide, and slave trade as major components that affected masses of peoples among them the Indigenous who were and continue to be the subjects of the most longstanding and devastating genocide and ethnocide. The ongoing coloniality of power has been precisely based on “a wholesal rejection of” Indigenous cultures and civilizations; the issue is far from redressed, the causes far from corrected, the solutions far from devised—alternative futures are yet to be constructed: Indigenous recovery and revitalization is owed and will be attained.

systems of cyclical relay of burdens. One can imagine different variations on the same theme, and certainly one should. What matters is to point at how the Maya and more broadly the Mesoamerican wisdoms, practices, modes of organization, and experiences offer different alternatives for political and global life:

Figure 2: A Model of Chrono-Geo-Political Organization based on the Maya Legacy



Source: My own elaboration.

And yet there is more wisdom to this cosmopoetic mode of chronopolitical organization. The Mesoamerican cosmos, as we pointed out at the start, is not just constituted by the temporal flow, but by its ceaselessly *living* aspect, hence we referred to the Mesoamerican experience of the world as biocosmic as well as cyclical. In what way does the Mesoamerican system of (relayed) burdens *poetically* incorporate the movement of political life into the cosmic cycle? More appropriately what would have to be asked is rather: how does the Mesoamerican system of

relayed burdens *incorporate itself* through the movement of the cycle into the movement of cosmic life (rather than anthropocentrically trying to bend cosmic cycles into the whims of just one peculiarly capricious form of life)? If we draw upon the Maya model which we briefly explained above we would notice again how the Maya not just relay(ed) power from one polity to another, and from one region to another in ceaseless counterclockwise cycles; it goes beyond that, deliberately cosmo-programming the birth, maturation, and passing away (and hence ‘abandonment’ or leaving to rest) of whole ceremonial centers and their *circum-habitated* areas¹⁹² (perhaps inaccurately interpreted as “polities”) and even regions. As Eliade notes, “*The foundation of the new city repeats the creation of the world,*”¹⁹³ and since the world has multiple creations and destructions, like all that lives in this cosmos, so do cities and regions. As León Portilla explains, much of Maya Literature

has to do with the seating of a cycle (a period of 260 *tuns*, approximately 256 years) in a single city ... However, *at the end of the cycle, the city was destroyed, and the new cycle was seated in another city.* The last such cycle begins with a deal made by Hunac Ceel

¹⁹² Most Mesoamericans have always resisted the temptation to over-urbanize, preferring always to stay close to the land so as to avoid becoming alienated from the pulse of Mother Earth and the health of the ecosystems and biotas. Hence, it is appropriate to say that Mesoamericans have not tended to inhabit polities, but rather to circum-habitate ceremonial (and sometimes trading) centers, that is, to live around them, not contained by them or inside them: urbanization and urbanity should never be allowed to overflow the conditions on which it depends, namely, the land. Excessive urbanization alienates humans from the environmental conditions of their own reproduction, leading precisely to the ecological crises of our hyper-urban or “glurbanized” age (see Dalby 2007, 103-118; Dalby 2009b and 2009a). This is a crisis which most Mesoamericans and indeed most Abya-Yalans tirelessly warned about, resisting always the ambition to understand “development” as the construction of ever larger centers of concentrated consumption, population, and trade. (see also Lenkersdorf 1999, 2002a, 2004a) To this day the Maya preserve their settlement patterns. As Lenkersdorf describes in regard to the Tojolabal-Maya:

The Tojolabales are *campesinos* [people from *el campo*—the fields—that can be but are not necessarily peasants or farmers; perhaps more appropriately called fields people], they cultivate maize that represents the basic food [*maíz, mays, meiz*]. If things go well, besides the maize in the shape of tortillas and pozol, they eat beans and chilies and drink coffee. These are the basic aliments of daily foods. They are, hence, vegetarians. Meat is eaten on rare occasions during the year. They do not drink milk either. (Lenkersdorf 1999, 12)

Moreover, “If we observe the map of the Maya region, we observed that up until our day, there is no such thing as a city in the interior part of the region. They [the cities] are in the periphery. Said in an other way, we notice the first signal of Maya culture.” (Lenkersdorf, 1999 10).

¹⁹³ quoted in Rice 2004, 21; emphasis added

(whom readers first encountered in the [*Chilam Balam of*] *Chumayel*), which leads to the ultimate destruction of Mayapan.¹⁹⁴

Moreover, as Rice adds,

*Evidence for destruction of sites and monuments, which has been an important contributor to scenarios of widespread Classic period warfare, could instead represent the termination rituals that accompanied the end of the seating of the may in a particular city. As Edmonson comments about the Postclassic Maya in northern Yucatan, they destroyed the primate city and its road at the end of the may. There are indications that this "destruction" may have been largely ritual and symbolic, and that the "abandonment" of the city was an evacuation...rather than total depopulation...The demise and destruction of Late Classic sites attributed to some generalized belligerence may be more specifically tied to calendrics and the real or symbolic destruction-termination ritual-that accompanies the ending of the cycle of seats of the mayor k'atuns.*¹⁹⁵

Even the *temporary* passing away of Maya civilization (to the European invasion) was predicted by some calendar priests, who also predicted that its cyclical rebirth would eventually happen. In any case, after a certain polity held the seat of authority for a given period it was left to rest and pass away: both its creation and its passing away were ceremonially celebrated. That "city", in turn embraced its own passing away (even if reluctantly and sometimes un-peaceably in a few historical instances) and the majority of its peoples would move to settle around the area of the succeeding ceremonial seat. The same occurred with whole regions that were programmed to be born, thrive and then pass away and be left to rest after a life-cycle.

All these chronopolitical dynamics were not the capricious result of esoterical fantasy. The sense of these practices can be traced to the *living* aspect of the cosmos. As was said at the beginning, Mesoamerican peoples conceive of the whole cosmos as living, and the Earth itself was not an exception. The Earth which is the Mother of the peoples also lives and feeds all persons that inhabit it, whether they are two-legged or four- or more or other-than- legged persons.¹⁹⁶ Like all

¹⁹⁴ León Portilla 2001, 497.

¹⁹⁵ Rice 2004, 272. The interpretation of transitional periods as periods of supposed general belligerence betrays more about the Euro-centric experience of the interpreter than about the Maya world.

Also it is worth noting that these Maya settlement patterns along with their practically vegetarian diets are ecologically friendly by design. The absence of livestock in the Maya economy and diet prevents the massive deforestation needed to sustain livestock and the pollution that comes along

that is living the Earth and its ecosystems are *not* tireless machines that can work without rest. They call upon other cosmic ‘persons’ to allow them to rest and we must learn to listen and to understand that the burden of cyclical life has to be relayed to others and among us all in the biocosmic community. Predictive astronomy and a highly sophisticated sensibility for life cycles (bio-ecology), that is, a very sensitive ‘ear’ for the language of the Earth and the stars, was “an essential tool for maintaining long term cycles of cosmically based geopolitical authority”¹⁹⁷

with it through the residues and the use of chemical technologies to adapt livestock reproduction and dairy productivity to the rhythm and scale of human consumption.

¹⁹⁶ All too recently—that is in the year 2001 of the hegemonic calendar—a group of Western scientist from the International Geosphere Biosphere Program published a quite valuable declaration concerning “earth system science” in which they insightfully stated the following: “*In recent years a global perspective has begun to emerge that forms the framework for a growing body of research within the environmental sciences. Crucial to the emergence of this perspective has been the dawning awareness of two fundamental aspects of the nature of the planet. The first is that the Earth itself is a single system, within which the biosphere is an active essential component. In terms of a sporting analogy, life is a player, not a spectator.*” (cited in Dalby 2007, 103-118, 112, also in Steffen 2005) As stated above, this statement is valuable and insightful but comes along very late, hopefully not too late. If Indigenous Americans had not been systematically exterminated, subordinated, or ignored there would have been no need to wait so many centuries and indeed until “recent years” to “begin” a “dawning awareness” of the “fundamental aspect” that the Earth is a whole living organism. Injustice breeds ignorance, and in this particular case, an apocalyptically deadly ignorance. Moreover, as Dalby laments, “This growing recognition of changed circumstances of our collective existence has been slow to penetrate either the academy or the halls of political power in the West.” (Dalby 2007, 103-118, 112) Much of the reason of why it has been slow has to do with the fact that the West still refuses to seriously consider the wisdom of other civilizations and mainly of the ones it has sought to erase or subjugate like Indigenous American civilizations. Dalby continues: “While it has gradually permeated the rhetoric of international politics and at least some of the formulations of global security in the United Nations, how all this might change our understandings of the appropriate governance structures for humanity is only beginning to be considered.” To find out how exactly all of this could and should change our understandings of the “appropriate governance structures for humanity” we can start out by considering the understandings and practices of governance precisely of those groups who lived for centuries by those very knowledges that the West ignored for centuries and has finally now—in the midst of a global crisis—come to acknowledge as relevant. This work is precisely an attempt to start considering how a civilization that had acknowledged this for millennia developed appropriate governance structures for humanity as an inextricable part of the biocosmic community. “If we take the science of Earth systems seriously then the implications for governance and politics are profound.” If we take the governance and politics of those who acknowledged for millennia what Earth system science acknowledges now we could notice very profound ways in which we could and perhaps should change our governance and politics in our global age, and this is precisely what is being prompted and attempted in this work.

¹⁹⁷ Rice 2004, 288.

among the Maya. Biotas and ecosystems as well as lands or seas, and all organisms in this regard, also need rest. Hence, when a ceremonial ‘city’ was circum-habitated as the seat of the cycle for a long period it was acknowledged that the Earth and its ecosystems with its biotas surrounding and feeding the life of two-legged (‘human’) animals would get tired. A sedentary fundamentalism that would seek to keep a human community statically or permanently rooted in a single location (such as the State) would lead to the excessive over-exploitation of (and imperialist-colonial expansion over) the ecosystem that sustains these two-legged persons, and would also lead to the death of whole biotas which included humans themselves.

For that reason, the Maya were wise in deconstructing—or perhaps defleshing—through the exercise of cosmopoetic chronopolitical wisdom the binary between sedentary “civilization” and “nomadism.”¹⁹⁸ Nomadism contains a basic wisdom: the Earth cannot offer its fruits endlessly for excessive human exploitation and consumption; this fatigues the ecosystem. Sedentarism, on the other hand, also contains a basic wisdom: a human community which does not become familiar with a certain ecosystem and its biotas does not develop any responsibility for it. On the one hand, a radical nomadism can lead to the vice of irresponsible plunder without cultivation; on the other, a fundamentalist sedentarism turns human communities into life-sucking parasites on particular ecosystems, eventually leading to ecological fatigue and the demise of the whole biotic community which includes humans. The struggle and often open war between nomadic and sedentary ways of life has not ceased to this day, but sedentarism achieved hegemony with the establishment of ‘civilization’ as a particularly anthropocentric mode of organization which emerged with stationary agriculture and eventually permanent settlement (followed by massive industrialization). This sedentarism abnormalized unregulated movement and migration (seasonal or other), and normalized what to many Mesoamericans amounts to a questionable appropriation of whole swathes of the Earth—partitioned and bounded, or even in whole—and beyond Mother Earth (e.g., the space, the Moon) as if it all existed for the satisfaction of human needs and desires.

¹⁹⁸ C.f., Baofu 2006.

Anthropocentric civilization understood as the permanent settlement and appropriation of parcels or the whole of Earth and beyond for the satisfaction of human needs and desires led to the relentless attempts to establish and secure the State, which whether in the form of city, empire or nation-state, it has always been the maximum expression of sedentary fundamentalism and of the ecological parasitism of humanity over the rest of 'nature'. This can be seen through its geopolitical appropriation of the global imaginary that conceives of the world as a pie to be sliced among States and their capitals. In its most accentuated expression yet, anthropocentric civilization has led to the phenomenon that Dalby calls "glurbanization" which has turned humanity into an "urban species"¹⁹⁹ and accelerated the global ecological crisis derived from environmental hyperexploitation, human and especially urban parasitism and overconsumption. The Maya understood the risks entailed by both a radical nomadism and a sedentary fundamentalism. They also anticipated the problems of our Anthropocene (geological) epoch²⁰⁰ much better than Old-World now dominant civilizations—problems that could have been resisted if Mesoamericans had been listened to instead of subjected to Western civilizational dominance.

In any case, the Maya incorporated their communal life into the biocosmic cycles by assuring that their way of life concomitantly embodied both a measure of nomadism and a measure of sedentarism—a *fertile ambivalent uniduality*—into their cosmopoetic mode of chronopolitical organization. Having understood that everything in this cosmos is transient they did not try to escape their own mortality by seeking immortality through the establishment of a permanent (civilizational and political) State; a State that was also permanently sedentary and parasitic upon a delimited and boundary-defined/partitioned environment (let alone the whole

¹⁹⁹ Dalby also adds in this regards that "Urbanisation, with its indirect but powerful impacts on rural areas far from the metropolitan centres, is the dominant artificial force in the global biosphere...our artificial ecologies of urbanity are now changing the biosphere itself in significant ways" (Dalby 2007, 103-118, 104, 109-111).

²⁰⁰ Many now speak of our times as the Anthropocene epoch. As Dalby puts it, an argument emerging from Earth system science recently is that "humanity is now changing 'natural' systems on such a scale that we have in effect become a new geological force in the biosphere, one that requires designating our times as a new geological era, 'the Anthropocene'." (Dalby 2007, 103-118, 104-105)

Earth). Unlike the dominant civilizational forms, the Maya did not conceive of Earth and all inhabiting it as something that could be subdued and parceled into Estates *and* States so as to be exclusively available and exploitable for the satisfaction “human” needs and desires. Instead, the Maya incorporate their whole polities into the living and passing cycles of the cosmos by calendrically programming in measures of millennia the birth, peak, and demise of ceremonial centers and whole macropolitical regions. Whole ceremonial centers surrounded by dispersed settlements would be calendrically settled, cultivated and then *left to rest* (in a sort of macro-fallow) to allow the ecosystem and biotas to recover and prevent ecological fatigue. Then whole regions would also be settled and then abandoned to allow for cyclical ecological regeneration.

The wisdom to be learned from the Maya displacement of the nomadic/sedentary binary whose contradictions bedevil ‘Old World’ civilizations and the modern industrial and State-centric, and the late-modern hyper-consumerist civilization itself is endless. A quick overview of any map easily reveals a world partitioned into sedentary states, or rather macro-Estates which work more or less like huge plantations delimited by borders and with confined working populations—macro-estates that selectively and unilaterally regulate the movement of life (including people) amongst each other: not surprisingly migration, nomadism and home(land)lessness are criminalized. In short, a quick view of the global geopolitical map of modernity reveals the hegemony of sedentary civilization that has sought to normalize and legalize itself through an ideology of sedentary fundamentalism most clearly embodied in State-centrism and Capital-ism (in all its forms: both the political capital and economic capital). This sedentary-fundamentalism upholds the self-destructive ecological parasitism of anthropocentric “civilization”. Surely, the return of a (neo)nomadism can be predicted as a radical backlash to the ecological parasitism and greedy overregulation of life and movement exercised by the modern E/State. Even the life of air and water are prevented the “right” of free movement, let alone animals—human or other. In any case, even the cyclical return of a radical (neo)nomadism cannot solve the problem derived from the desire for absolute permanence against the fact of inevitable cosmic transience. In this regard, a transempodiment of global political life into an arrangement

such as that inspired upon Mesoamerican cosmopoetic chronopolitics could help overcome the domination of sedentary civilization and its devastating ecological effects without falling into the irresponsibilities of a confrontational or also a potentially predatory nomadism such as that exercised by some “globalized” financial capital, especially vulture capital. The Maya modes of biocosmic cyclicity and the broader cosmopoetic organization of political life practiced by Mesoamericans for millennia can guide precisely the sort of world-political changes that can move humanity beyond the perpetuation of conducts which are leading to the suicidal effects of its sedentary parasitism—a parasitism upon which the hegemonic forms of modern political and economic power thrive.

In this regard, it is valuable to point at how a Mesoamerican cosmopoetic chronopolitics puts aside a problem that patently bedevils an international politics built upon the binary separation of Space from Time, a binary that ideologically underpins the sedentary fundamentalism of the system of (macro E)/states.²⁰¹ This separation has led to the distinction between the organization of life across space on the one hand, and the movement of life through time on the other hand. This separation entails in political practice that the geopolitical organization of the world into a grid of fixed entities or States is not to be affected by the movement of time in any way. The movement of actions and events occurring through time is undeniably recognized to affect spatial organization, but that does not displace the division between time and space in the dominant imaginary. For instance, spatial organization leads to the establishment of a global grid made out of geographical entities separated by shared yet mutually exclusionary borders whose existence, location, form and (geopolitical) *status* is expected to *stay* more or less *static* or fixed across time (hence the name *State*). The movement of time is not

²⁰¹ There are several works that have sought to deconstruct the binary of Space/Time in the literature concerned with international relations and global affairs. Known to many in the Anglo-Sphere in this regard is the work of James Der Derian (see, for example, Derian 1990, 295-310; and 2009, 330). Notwithstanding the significant virtues of this sort of work, there is little evidence in literature on these matters that would attest to the existence of political manifestations that actually deconstructed the Space/Time binary *in practice* and as a conscious and deliberate part of their organization—as the Maya have done.

expected to affect this State of the World, at least not too much. Sure, some states may appear or disappear and expand or contract across time; but generally time is neither deliberately nor conscientiously incorporated into the spatial organization of the world, nor is space incorporated into the temporal organization of life. As Dalby notices, the dominant geopolitics “usually understands the geographical features of the Earth’s surface to be relatively stable” and certainly not alive or moving in any way; the Earth is reduced to a “stage” for “the political dramas [of humanity] to unfold.”²⁰²

Contrastingly, a Mesoamerican biocosmopoetic chronopolitics incorporates ‘human’ existence and politics consciously and deliberately into the biocosmic movement of *spatiotemporal* variation. From a Mesoamerican and particularly Mayan viewpoint, polities can be expected and calendrically scheduled to be born, grow, and pass away, as can regions. Moreover, geopolitical organization is expected and calendrically scheduled to move along with time, indeed to embody time understood as cyclical transience: whole regions, cities and maps are expected and scheduled to be modified or transembodied by time and because of time as they constitute and are constituted by time. From a Mesoamerican viewpoint spatial organization must rehearse a chronopolitical poetics that incorporates itself into and acknowledges—even celebrates—the inexorable biocosmic transience of all. Time and space are not mutually alienated, but rather complementary.

Contemporary Manifestations of Cosmopoetic Chronopolitics

To this day, the Mesoamerican *élan* lives on in the daily practices of resistance and liberation undertaken by Indigenous and Indigenously-descendant (whether pure or mixed/mestizo) communities and those few who have listened and learned from them. As Benjamin Maldonado, Oaxacan scholar and Indigenous activist, articulates it,

²⁰² Dalby 2007, 103-118, 5.

The indians have been searching for ways to destructure the political schemes under which they have been compelled to organize themselves, and one way of doing it is through the resymbolization of the system of burdens [*sistema de cargos*].²⁰³

Many Indigenous communities, notably—but not exclusively—the Neo-Magonistas²⁰⁴ of Oaxaca²⁰⁵ and the Neo-Zapatistas in Chiapas, for instance, have energetically endeavored to cultivate, reincorporate or resymbolize the system of burdens (rotation and obligation) within their autonomous communities. This is the case among many communities such as the Chatino communities²⁰⁶ in which the system of burdens has evolved into an organizational mode with a dual function: (1) the classic function of biocosmic and chronopolitical reproduction (as it was classically the case), but now also (2) civilizational resistance. In Maldonado's words,

...it can be pondered that the [communal] strategy goes further and that the exercise of power—through the system of burdens—[which is no longer only] an end in itself, but rather it has been resymbolized to constitute it in a means of avoiding the possibility that the municipal [Westernized] hierarchy overflows the communal power. In this sense...the finality of the system of burdens does not rest only in testing and forming...the population in the communitarian service, but rather it has as its fundamental function the institution of a form of counterpower [ultimately embodied in] the Council of Elders. It is possible that this Council is not only the culmination of a scale [of relayed responsibilities or burdens] that gives prestige but precisely the political apex of this scale. [And in its manifestation as civilizational resistance it shows] the fact that there are functions that are exclusive only to the Council without the intervention of the municipal [Westernized] authorities...²⁰⁷

The rotating system of burdens and the notion of communal power, so common among autonomist and especially Magonista movements of Oaxaca, have also been increasingly cultivated and actively promoted by new Indigenous movements such as the Neo-Zapatistas. As Carlsen describes it,

[Neo]Zapatista roots in Indigenous culture and the movement's encounter with the communalist current of the Mexican Indigenous movement helped forge a very different

²⁰³ Maldonado 1994; 2002, 81.

²⁰⁴ Ricardo Flores Magón was a radical liberal turned anarcho-communist of Indigenous descent that helped spark the Mexican Revolution of 1910 and became a great influence to many peoples afterwards. See Maldonado; Beas, Alvarado, and Gaibrois 1997; Magón and Bufé 2005.

²⁰⁵ Maldonado 1994; 2004.

²⁰⁶ Maldonado 1994; 2002, 82.

²⁰⁷ Maldonado 2002, 82; see also Maldonado 1994.

understanding of political power than conveyed by previous revolutionary forces. The maxim is “*mandar obedeciendo*”—“to command [by] obeying.” The National Indigenous Congress describes the guiding principles of this power as “To serve, not be served; to represent, not supplant; to build, not destroy; to propose, not impose; to convince, not defeat; to come down, not climb up.” The principles of organization aim to develop grassroots leadership that is “horizontal, *rotating*, collective, inclusive, flexible, representative, plural, gender-equal²⁰⁸ and non-partisan.” it proposes taking power not by storming the National Palace but on the level of *empowering*...social actors.²⁰⁹

The Neo-Zapatistas have also reincorporated the chronopolitical cycling of birth, maturation, and passing away of polities which is starting to be resymbolized into new practices. As is explained in the text written by Marcos (cited below), the Neo-Zapatistas scheduled the death of a previous mode of political arrangement, the “Aguascalientes.” The “Aguascalientes” was a political modality that outlived its functions since its form of government was based on a more guerrilla/military-like structure, a throwback to the times when the EZLN rose (in 1994) against the central Mexican state and in which the urbanized Zapatista leaders had not yet learned enough from Indigenous wisdoms and ways. The “Aguascalientes” were still anchored in a more traditionally Western state-centric framework, and worked as peripheral in a struggle centered on/against the (Westernizing) State—in this case, the Mexican State.

The effort by the Zapatistas to listen and learn from Mesoamerican and particularly Maya ways would lead to the timely and welcome passing away of the “Aguascalientes” and to the birth of a new form of governance known as the “*Caracoles*” (Conchs). These Caracoles would govern on a more autonomous communal mode of ‘democracy’ (the “Good Government Juntas”) with a direct reincorporation of the cyclical rotating system of relayed burdens and without interest in seizing State power or becoming a State power, indeed, with an interest in completely and deliberately ignoring any State, and resisting the temptation to become one. In any case, what I

²⁰⁸ As has been noted by Lenkersdorf, “[i]n recent years, some 30 years ago, more or less, women started to participate in the communal gatherings, whether it be among them or along with the men. In this way a problem of the past is being overcome.” (Lenkersdorf, 2008, 90) However, it should be noted that *in the specific case of the Maya*, women were not always excluded from power, especially in prehispanic times, before the heavily patriarchal arrangements brought by the Spaniards. As León Portilla notes, evidence shows that “Inscriptions on stone” told “of the deeds of both male and female high rulers” as did “painted books” (León Portilla 2001, 393).

²⁰⁹ Marcos, 2007 21-22.

would like to emphasize is the resymbolization of the cyclicity of birth and death, and the relay of burdens between political modalities. Marcos writes:

The sun was halfway through its journey when I returned to the meeting with the committees. *The death of the Aguascalientes having been decided the previous dawn, now being decided was the birth of the "Caracoles," with other functions in addition to the ones the now-dying Aguascalientes had.* And so the Caracoles will be like doors for going into the communities and for the communities to leave. Like windows for seeing us and for us to look out. Like speakers for taking our word far and for listening to what is far away. But, most especially, for reminding us that we should *stay awake and be alert to the rightness of the worlds that people the world.*²¹⁰

Or in more celebratory terms Marcos issues an invitation to what Westerners and/or Christians may call the 'funeral' of the "Aguascalientes" and the 'baptism' of the "Caracoles":

"It's official: *You are formally invited to the celebration of the death of the Aguascalientes and to the fiesta for naming the "Caracoles" and the beginning of the "Good Government Juntas" ...* There is a sign at the entrance to the Caracol of Oventik that reads: "*You are in Rebel Zapatista Territory: here the people govern, and the government obeys*" (I want to put up a similar one in our camps, but it would say: "*Here the Sup governs, and everyone can do whatever they like.*" Sigh.).²¹¹

Hence, the Rebel Zapatista Autonomous Municipalities (MAREZ)²¹² now operate as "caracoles" or snail shells (owing to the loop/spiral-like shape of such shells),²¹³ and have started to incorporate the cycling (and spiral) of burdens within and in relationships among their constitutive communities and with other-than-Zapatista communities as well. Indeed, the Neo-Zapatistas have designed what they call "an *other* calendar, the calendar of resistance,"²¹⁴

"There are calendars," the hand says [as it flips the pages of a (Gregorian) calendar], "and then there are calendars," and it puts two newspaper photographs on the table: In one appears the fetus that will be [ex-Mexican President Vicente] Fox's grandchild. In the other, some mothers are weeping for their dead children in Comitán, Chiapas. The hand says: "Here, the calendar of a birth with the blessing of power. And here an *other* calendar of

²¹⁰ Marcos 2007, 218.

²¹¹ Marcos 2007, 238.

²¹² Acronym in Spanish.

²¹³ Marcos, Peña-Vargas, and Ruggiero 2007. As Peña Vargas explains, Caracol is the Spanish word for "conch" or "spiral-shaped shell." The Caracoles are also Zapatista community centers, where public services are provided, committees and cooperatives are centered, and contact with international civil society is mediated." (Marcos, 2007, 102).

²¹⁴ Marcos, Peña-Vargas, and Ruggiero 2007.

many deaths due to the irresponsibility of power. ...The hand continues to speak: "Calendars of births and deaths, calendars of payments, calendars of national celebrations, calendars of trips by officials, calendars of government sessions. Now, in 2003, the election calendar. As if there were no other calendars. For example: the calendar of resistance. Or perhaps that one is not spoken of because it demands a great deal and does not look like much." ... The hand stops for a bit. The calendar remains closed. It appears as if it has been made by Zapatista sympathizers. Each month, in addition to photographs on the subject, there are fragments of the many messages from the EZLN during the March for Indigenous Dignity, in February, March, and April 2001. ... And in this way, the hand points to a map of the Mexican Republic [for there can be many maps as there can be many calendars we should add to Marcos's words] ... The gaze follows the hand's path, and the hand rests above a word: OAXACA ... And, on top of this word, the first stele²¹⁵ is lifted ... Oaxaca, the First Stele (...History Resists in the Face of Death) January 2003.²¹⁶

In a similar vein, Marcos further ahead writes,

The stories and legends of the Zapatistas point toward a future that has its roots in the past and reveal their first lights in the present. Perhaps that's why *our* time and *our* calendar are somewhat mixed up, and we speak of things that took place centuries ago as if they had happened yesterday or, better yet, as if they were still to happen, and of distant places as if they were very near, just right around the hill. That's why our stories don't start with the traditional "Once upon a time..." and instead they start with "There will be a time..."²¹⁷

This previous paragraph teaches about what is at stake in the governance and control of time and how it can be resymbolized cyclically. Consider also the calendar of an *other* (type of) development—as in Arturo Escobar's notion of multiple possible (post)developments, one that could perhaps emerge by unearthing Bonfil Batalla's 'deep' Indigenous civilization²¹⁸ that has been buried by an ongoing coloniality. In this regard, Marcos contends

I sincerely believe that, ever since the dawn of the First of January of 1994 [when the EZLN declared war on the Mexican state], we have won the right to decide for ourselves *our path, its rhythm, its speed, its accompaniment, continuous or sporadic*. We shall not cede that right. We are willing to die to defend it.²¹⁹

²¹⁵ A *stela* is a monument, similar to a column in which Mesoamericans registered events that seemed important to them as a collective. Many of them can still be found in archeological ceremonial centers across Mesoamerica and they are valuable to interpret history and political organization. Many Mesoamericans are deliberately reviving or resymbolizing them into new forms (20th century murals and murals of late can be also interpreted in this light).

²¹⁶ Marcos 2007, 176-177.

²¹⁷ Marcos 2007, 356-357.

²¹⁸ Levi 1998, 543; Bonfil Batalla 1996; 1977, 95.

²¹⁹ Marcos 2007, 255.

This is to say that the Neo-Zapatistas are willing to die to defend their right to design and govern their own time and the calendarization of their own lives; this clearly articulates the the stakes involved in chronopolitics. And indeed they have acted upon this commitment. For instance,

Following the [2006] elections, Subcomandante Marcos [the EZLN spokesperson] and an equally mixed female-male group of EZLN comandantes set out on a low-profile tour to continue the work of articulating local battles, discovering hidden pockets of resistance, and *creating a map of Mexico Profundo, the deep Mexico, the underground Mexico*, Indigenous and non-Indigenous, that will form the basis for new strategies for change.²²⁰

This tour was planned according to an “*otherly*” type of calendar. This “*otherly*” calendar directly challenges the governing political calendar of Mexican politics and its electoral interests. And it can be circulated to resist cooptation into the State system:

The Other Politics of the Other Campaign explicitly distances itself from government and formal political power by committing [itself] not to seek gifts, positions, advantages, public positions, from the Power or those who aspire to it, but to go beyond the electoral calendar.²²¹

Moreover, this tour was designed to travel several cities starting from San Cristobal de las Casas, Chiapas (in southern Mexico) to Mexico City, the movement traced by the tour drew the shape of a snail shell, a spiral; indeed, the shape traced by the tour as well as the arrangement of buildings in Zapatista communities resymbolizes the Mesoamerican cosmogram (and biogram), the shape of a galaxy or snail. As Marcos describes it, “The layout of the [NeoZapatista] buildings look[s] like a huge *caracol*.”²²² Indeed, the layout of the cities chosen for the “Zapatour” looks like an even larger *caracol*. As entertainingly illustrated by Marcos, the Neo-Zapatista tour traces a *caracol* shape that manifests something very important about the Mesoamerican ethos,

They say that the most ancient say that the even more ancient said that the first people of these lands valued the *caracol*'s shape [that in one way replicates the cycling cosmos we may add, the shape of galaxies]. They say that they say that they said that the *caracol* represents entering the heart, which is what the most ancient called understanding. And they say that they say that they said that the *caracol* also represents leaving the heart to walk the world, which is what the most ancient called life. The *caracol* was used to summon the collective so that the word could travel between one and the other-so that

²²⁰ Marcos, Peña-Vargas, and Ruggiero 2007, 27; emphasis added.

²²¹ Marcos, 2007, 26.

²²² Marcos, Peña-Vargas, and Ruggiero 2007, 205.

agreement could be born. They also say that the caracol helped to hear even the most distant word. That is what they say they say they said. I'm not sure. I am merely walking with you—hand in hand—showing you what my ears see and what my gaze hears. I see and I hear a caracol, the *pu'y*, as they say in their language here.²²³

We know now why the *caracol* shape is so important to Mesoamerican (and other Abya-Yalan) peoples.²²⁴ By poetically resymbolizing cosmic cyclicity into new bio-cosmograms in the caracol shaped arrangement of buildings and the traces left by the movement of political tours, the Neo-Zapatistas have revived the controversy over chronopolitics, challenging the calendars outlined by hegemonic interests and setting forth alternative calendars that articulate the pulse and impulses of subaltern and marginalized groups (including non-human groups and Mother Earth) in Mesoamerica and across the world.

These other calendars or alternative calendars more broadly have sought to challenge the belief that Time is One and that it can be ruled centrally and universally in the same manner according to the same calendar or schedule, as for instance, by the Gregorian calendar, or the dominant political, economic and academic calendar, or the dominant linear and/or ascendant philosophies of time. Behind different calendars lie different interests and worldviews; moreover different calendars and schedules articulate different practices. As Marcos bitinglly puts it,

*Since ancient times, the governing elites have been fashioning calendars according to the political world, which is nothing but the world that excludes the majority. And the disparity between those calendars and those of the lives below [both humans and other-than-humans we should add] is what provokes the ['social' and 'natural'] Earthquakes [and hurricanes, and floods, and droughts, etc.] from which our history abounds.*²²⁵

The struggle for the renaissance of calendrical politics and for an open chronopolitical imagination, or rather its cyclical rebirth, brings to light the long buried fact that a constitutive aspect of life and of 'the political' concerns precisely the politics and the governance of time, or

²²³ Marcos, 2007, 202.

²²⁴ Puebloan peoples of Aridoamerica traditionally shared in the spiraled patters of cyclical and seasonal migration (see Jojola 2004, especially the Pueblo "Transformational Model"); Puebloan patterns outline spiral movements exactly like those of the Zapatista communities and the Zapatour.

²²⁵ Marcos, Peña-Vargas, and Ruggiero 2007; emphasis added.

rather the struggles over how time is experienced, conceived and governed, and how time is to shape lives and the government of life (i.e., ‘biopolitics’). To simplify our understanding of the politics of time, we could add to George Orwell’s famous insight: who controls the calendar, controls the present, the past, the future and indeed time itself²²⁶—and yet to that we should also add the question of how the calendar(s) constitute us as its subjects, how the calendar(s) construct, deconstruct, and reconstruct subjects and how the calendar(s) themselves can always already be de/reconstructed. The struggle over what takes place, when, and how, and in what order, or more broadly over the relevant ‘units’, sequences, and cycles of time, over when something starts, how it unfolds and when it ends and/or is repeated is a paramount struggle that has been brought to a halt by the crystallization of an hegemonic conception of time ruled by a single linear mode of calendarization and perhaps even a single calendar. We need to enable spaces for a critical and open politics of time that enables the recognition of a plurality of multiple actual and possible calendars that cannot be subsumed under a hegemonic conception of time or a single calendrical agreement that would be ‘universal.’ This will have to be combined with the work of critical geopolitics that has already started opening spaces in a parallel regard concerning ‘space’. In short we need a critical, de/post-colonial and open chronogeopolitics.

Without an open politics of space-time, the wisdom of contributions such as the Mesoamerican system of burdens or the broader cosmopoetic practices of chronopolitical organization would go unrecognized at a huge cost to both human and other-than human life. The Mesoamerican system of burdens (‘rotation and obligation’), whether micropolitically or macropolitically like in the Maya model hence challenges the notion of an hegemonic or universal calendar, supplanting the anthropocentric calendarization of the cosmos—which reigns in the dominant Western civilization, and because of its hegemony, also in most other parts of the world—with a calendarization of life that reincorporates this hitherto narcissistic two-legged animal within the cycles of Life, Earth and Cosmos. But in order to understand how we must

²²⁶ This is a rephrasing and a modification of one of the passages in Orwell’s novel *1984* (Orwell 1987, 88).

recalendarize global and local life to reincorporate it within the cosmic cycles we first need to learn to *listen* to the voice of the cosmos, indeed, we must first recognize that *all lives*.

Mesoamerican Bio-Cosmic Communalism and Democracy

This brings us back to the question of *bio-eco-cosmic communalism*. Mesoamericans have a long tradition of practicing what could be called a *biocosmic democracy* or simply a *cosmic democracy* that listens to the voices and concerns of the other-than-humans as well as those of humans. Among the Maya for instance, Carlos Lenkersdorf points out that “we must underline that both in the internal life as in the relations with others a form of co-living [*convivencia*] prevails, with complementarity and not competitiveness. Such complementarity included both the humans and the cosmic nature.”²²⁷ Unlike Westerners whose worldviews tend to depend on the centrality of the word, the *logos* (including “reason”) and of speech,²²⁸ Mesoamericans know very well how to *listen*, indeed, the whole cosmoxperience of some Mesoamerican communities often grants more importance to the listening faculty than to the faculty of speech which from a Western

²²⁷ See Lenkersdorf 1999, 285; Lenkersdorf 2004, 397; Lenkersdorf 2008, 105-106.

²²⁸ A great anecdote in this regard concerns the history of the rise of the Neo-Zapatista movement. As sardonically told by Marcos, the spokesman and *subcomandante*—that is, subaltern to the Indigenous peoples—it is narrated thus:

After all, such had been the EZLN's fundamental origin: a group of “illuminati” who came from the city [i.e., Mexico City] to “liberate” the exploited and who looked, when confronted with the reality of the Indigenous communities, more like burned-out light-bulbs than illuminati. *How long did it take us to realize that we had to learn to listen*, and, afterward, to speak? I'm not sure, but I calculate two years at least. Meaning that what had been a classic revolutionary guerrilla force in 1984 (armed uprising of the masses, the taking of power, the establishment of socialism from above, many statues and names of heroes and martyrs everywhere, purges, et cetera-in sum, a perfect world), by 1986 was already an armed group, overwhelmingly Indigenous, *listening attentively, and barely babbling its first words with a new teacher: the Indian peoples. What I mean by this is that the main founding act of the EZLN was learning to listen and to speak*. I believe, at that time, we learned well and we were successful. With the new tool we built with the learned word, the EZLN quickly turned into an organization not just of thousands of fighters, but one which was clearly “merged” with the Indigenous communities. ... [W]e ceased to be “foreigners,” and we turned into part of that corner forgotten by the country and by the world: the mountains of the Mexican Southeast. (Marcos, Peña-Vargas, and Ruggiero 2007, 205-206 emphasis added)

viewpoint is often used to distinguish and privilege “humanity” over all else. As Lenkersdorf illustrates, coming from a critical Maya viewpoint:

In the European languages listening undertakes a subordinate and secondary role. Speaking and saying is emphasized at the expense of listening. We therefore live in a social, cultural and political context inundated by speech, discourse and advertisements.²²⁹

Moreover,

In European languages, there is a knowledge of how to philosophize, but very little or nothing is known of how to listen. There is knowledge of politics as well, however, it is characterized by maintaining pyramidal structures and shows little or no interest in forming social bases and listening to them...We know how to speak, how to present discourses, sometimes very erudite, we know of rhetoric, of politics, we have discourse analysis, we know of the language of certain philosophers, but always or almost always the emphasis is in what is spoken and in its written form. We don't even notice that we exclude half, that is, half of the language that is listening. And this exclusion includes the bases, the popular majorities [including other-than-humans].²³⁰

On the other hand, Mesoamericans demand that we listen not only to other humans, but to the others of “humanity”—to listen to animals, plants, mountains, atmosphere(s), biotas, ecosystems, the Earth and the cosmos itself. This is what Lenkersdorf refers to as a Mesoamerican “cosmoaudition,”²³¹ for instance, he continues, in the case of the Maya-Tojolabales, they

Not only listen at the social level, but they listen to the plants, the animals and all of nature. At the social level they listen attentively to others. In the Western context, there is little listening at the social and natural levels. If there was listening we would not find ourselves in the climate and environmental crisis which we live. Nature is speaking to us: the polar and other glaciers are melting; the temperature is rising; hurricanes are multiplying and growing in destructive force; the lands, the water and the air are contaminated; lucrative tourism for fun is promoted, but rural zones are being depopulated. All this is not being “listened to,” because what is of interest is businesses, competitiveness, and macroeconomics. Life is thus because there is no listening, especially at the level of nature. This non-listening is found in politics, economics, culture, and society. It is worrying and unsettling that which motivates us to listen.

In contrast, Mesoamericans have insisted for millennia that we must learn to listen to all of this—not least because the “environment” that is purportedly separate, “outside” and secondary to “humanity” for Mesoamericans has always been obvious that it is also “inside” and

²²⁹ Lenkersdorf 2008, 39.

²³⁰ Lenkersdorf 2008, 66.

²³¹ Lenkersdorf 2008, 17

“primordial” since the environment organically enables, lives through and constitutes the human body itself. “Humanity” is nothing without the “environmental” conditions which enable its existence: hence from a Mesoamerican viewpoint there is no abstract “human” extirpated from its enabling cosmo-eco-biological conditions. There is no distinctive boundary between the “human” and the “environment”, let alone a priority of either over the other. And we only set up such a boundary at the cost of our own existence. Therefore, Mesoamericans have developed over millennia very sophisticated ways to “listen,” for instance, to the air, water, “nutrients,” and “compounds” that always already cross (on a daily basis) the imaginary boundaries of the skin that supposedly separate “humanity” from all else, but as we breath, drink, eat, and excrete it is revealed how they give us life and constitute our bodies from “within” and “without” embedding and incorporating us inextricably to the rest of the world and cosmos.²³² In an attempt to translate this Mesoamerican cosmoexperience it could be said that the “human” body is a biospheric epiphenomenon that would disintegrate absent the ecological conditions for its daily and indeed constant organic subsistence and reproduction as a form of life. As Marcos puts it, “Brothers and Sisters of...the World: In this, the seventh year of the war against forgetting, we repeat what we are. We, *we are wind*. Not the breast that inspires us...”²³³ Similar articulations are reiterated in another Neo-Zapatista poem,

This is what *we are*: ...
The one who is rain...
The one who is sand.
The one who is river.
The one who is desert.²³⁴

As Lenkersdorf makes it clear, “To enter in the daily life of the Tojolabales, in the Tojolabal cosmovision, or better said, the Tojolabal cosmoaudition translates us into a radically

²³² Lenkersdorf 2008, 19

²³³ Marcos 2007 35.

²³⁴ Marcos 2007 120.

other reality.”²³⁵ In this reality “The challenge is to *listen*” for “There is a lack of a *cosmoaudition*...because it is not only about a *cosmovision*.”²³⁶ And yet it is *also* about *cosmovision*, but in a way that goes far beyond the Western understanding of “worldview,” challenging it directly. A “worldview” usually characterizes only the way in which humans view the rest of the world; it is hence a unilateral relation in which the human gazes at the world without being gazed at. However, for Mesoamericans, a “cosmovision” is far broader, multilateral and reciprocal than what is usually understood as a “worldview” from a Western perspective. As Lenkersdorf explains, “For the [Maya-]Tojolabal the houses, the trees, the heavens, the maize, and so many other things have eyes” (and ears), indeed, all in the cosmos has eyes: “...the Tojolabales emphasize that if these have eyes that see, hence they also see us. They therefore have eyes and also a heart which makes them live because everything lives and has heart,”²³⁷ but what’s more, they also gaze at us, they judge us, and manifest activity, reactivity, interactivity, and reflexivity in relation to us as a consequence of those judgments.

That Mesoamericans listen and perceive (and feel perceptions) so carefully might seem as rather abstract and unfamiliar, indeed, somewhat uncanny. However, Mesoamerican political life endeavors to participate alongside the voices and views of the non-human in a cosmic communal democracy as exemplified by how Maya cycles accommodate the pulse and rhythm of the land and the larger ecosystem to avoid their fatigue.²³⁸ The land indeed has an *other* language and an

²³⁵ Lenkersdorf 2008 21, 23.

²³⁶ Lenkersdorf 2008 21, 23.

²³⁷ Lenkersdorf 2008, 25.

²³⁸ Although the term ‘democracy’ does not literally exist in many Mesoamerican languages, it definitely has existed in practice way before the Europeans arrived. For instance, among the Maya Tojolabal there exists what Carlos Lenkersdorf refers to as “an *other* variety of society and democracy.” This can be found in the Tojolabal word “*oj jlaj jbájtik, we shall pair up*” or also “*lajub’al*, that is, *pairing up or putting ourselves on equal terms*, which corresponds to participative democracy,” and also “a democracy of consensus.” (Lenkersdorf 200827, 28) In what concerns to biocosmic communal democracy, this would entail pairing up with or putting ourselves on equal terms with the rest of (other-than-human) nature and realizing how destinies are shared and depend on our equal, reciprocal collaboration among us—regardless of whether we

other view which humans must learn to feel, listen to and to translate themselves into and accommodate, and so does the air, the animals, the minerals, the skies and all else. The excessive privileges of linguistic rationality, verbal and written skill, characteristic of Western civilization (what some call its “logocentrism”) create the anthropocentric prejudice which renders humans unable to realize the altogether *different* modes of communication that are needed to incorporate and re-embed humanity into the bio-eco-cosmic communality—and not the other way around. It is not that plants and animals, or that the atmosphere (e.g., ‘climate’) do not know how to defend their interests in the all-powerful tribunal of human logocentric reason and that we must hence ‘represent’ their interests and defend them before *our* anthropocentric ‘democracy’ (or whatever other such system we come up with); it is rather that humans have used their particularly logocentric form of life to alienate themselves from the bio-eco-cosmic community in which all the *other* manifestations of cosmic energy actually participate: it is not about bringing nature into our democracy, but rather about approaching and reinserting “humanity” into the communal politics of the rest of nature and the cosmos. What this demands is not an effort to bring nature into (anthropocentric) “human” democracy as is so often attempted by mainstream environmentalism, but rather what is needed is to dissolve the experience of an absolutely distinct “humanity” separate from the rest of the cosmos and its anthropocentric modes of governance into a biocosmic communality that understands, feels, listens to and values the pulse of all life with no particular privilege in favor of any one particular embodiment of transient cosmic energy. It is not that “humanity” should be “devalued” to the “level of nature” but rather that the rest of (non-human) nature has to be revalued.

As some critical Western scholars like Dalby have come to realize, “if environment is no longer understood as out there, somewhere separate from humanity then ‘our’ place ‘in’ nature too is a matter for critique.”²³⁹ Yet as Lenkersdorf shows us, across millennia Mesoamericans have

are “human” or other than. We will further address this when we discuss language in the context of the Mesoamerican critique of objectification below.

²³⁹ Dalby 2007, 103-118, 111.

already lived and organized themselves according to the realization that the environment constitutes humanity and that human lifeforms are just one embodiment of cosmic energy, one form of life among many others, with no particular privilege. What many Mesoamerican communities practice, as in for instance the anarcho-communalisms and autonomous communities of present day Oaxaca or Chiapas, is a form of communalism that seeks to welcome the human life-form back into the (cosmo)political cycles of the cosmos and not the other way around. Indeed, from a Mesoamerican viewpoint, the human form of life is not actually superior in any way, but rather weak and dependent: while other species can get along with (the rest of) their ‘environment’, humans seemingly cannot survive without bending the rest of the cosmos to their will, which ultimately reveals humanity’s lack of capacity to adapt, a lack of resilience, and a total oversight of the politics among “species” and of the politics of “nature” and the cosmos at large. As Lenkersdorf explains from a Maya-Tojolabal perspective,

From the Tojolabal perspective we encounter ourselves in a cosmos that is replete with life. The authentic life is not found in some place beyond the cosmos, but rather this same cosmos embraces all the living and ties us all in a cosmic community of life. Therefore, we humans, *yes we are particular* in that we are made out of specific functions, *but we are not unique* [or superior]: WE ARE A SPECIES AMONG OTHERS. Hence, on the one hand we are obliged to be humble and to not make ourselves [or believe ourselves] to be greater than what we are. Said in another way, it is convenient for us to respect the others who also live and who accompany us. They are our companions. We live, thus, in a cosmos in which the whole world is looking at us, evaluating us, and expects of us our companionship. There is [in this cosmos] nothing disposable and there is [in this cosmos] no despicable waste. ... Such is the intersubjectivity at an extralinguistic level; it is the cosmic community, respectively, the biocosmic intersubjectivity.²⁴⁰

Hence, from a Mesoamerican viewpoint the call for transformative changes moves us in the direction of a *biocosmopolitics* that incorporates or even dissolves “humanity” into the life-cycles of the cosmos via the cultivation of a mode of cosmopoetic chronopolitics. This mode of organization like that of the classical Maya would not seek to bend the world to fit into an anthropocentric order and calendar designed upon and ruled by exclusively human desires. The art of creating a biocosmic democracy in which the voice of humanity is reincorporated into the concert of other non-human “voices”, and in which the notion of ‘humanity’ itself as something

²⁴⁰ Lenkersdorf 1999, 40.

distinct, superior, and more central than the rest of the cosmos is overcome is the challenge of a truly global and comparative political theory in which “humanity” is not theorized as the axis of political, global or cosmic life.

A way to start exploring what Mesoamericans experience as a biocosmic communality is to explore precisely how communality shapes relationships among humans and between humans and the rest of the “environment”. For many centuries Westerners and the Westernized were completely convinced that Mesoamericans were ‘naturally’ incapable of civilizational development—in the West’s terms. They were thought as inferior because they simply refused to adopt the basic principles of (Western) economic behavior, namely, property and profit—or rather, ‘civilization,’ ‘development,’ or ‘modernization’ primarily understood as the sedimentation of property (including sovereignty) regimes and the ceaseless growth of exploitation, productivity, and profit. To this day, Mesoamerican movements have never ceased questioning how this very particular conception of life and history parades as if it were universal, objective, and inevitable. One such movement that questions these Eurocentric conceptions is the Neo-Zapatistas of today:

And then we ask: [Is it that] in the mind of the powerful, the country [and the world] [“]develops[“] more as more Indigenous disappear? The development and modernization plans that the government praises, are they nothing more than plans to exterminate the Indigenous? Do they, the powerful, believe that they are deceiving us and that they are doing something new? Because their ways of thinking and methods are not at all different from those with which they tried to exterminate us five centuries ago, a war of destruction and looting they called "civilization." "Civilization" is what they have called the destruction of our society and our culture, the massacres of the Indigenous, the seizure of lands and wealth, the humiliation of and contempt for our culture, the mockery of our language, rejection of our clothing, disgust for our dark color, which is nothing other than the color of the Earth [which replicates the mistreatment of the Earth]. Now the same war against us has taken another name, and it is called "modernization."²⁴¹

It is the voice of the one who yesterday used the whip and the sword to conquer our land and who today uses modernization to do away with us. ... it is the voice of the one who cannot conceive of any way of living other than at the cost of our deaths. It is the voice of the one who says that the Indigenous peoples will make progress only when they cease being Indigenous.²⁴²

²⁴¹ Marcos, Peña-Vargas, and Ruggiero 2007, 81.

²⁴² Marcos, Peña-Vargas, and Ruggiero 2007, 80.

Mesoamericans have never been “incapable” of ‘civilization,’ ‘development’ or ‘modernization’ as their colonizers and critics presume: Mesoamericans are simply resistant to it (and justifiably so). Indeed, as contemporary Mixtec²⁴³ philosopher, Ortiz Castro articulates it, the Indigenous have learned the virtue of “existence as resistance,”²⁴⁴ and particularly to Eurocentric and anthropocentric conceptions of ‘civilization,’ ‘development’ or ‘modernization.’ The question, as Oaxacan scholar and Indigenous activist Benjamin Maldonado puts it, is: “Why have [Amer]indian populations rejected the cultural incorporation into the [Modern Western] nation? Why have they rebelled against [Eurocentric] domination²⁴⁵ and what is the logic of this rejection?”²⁴⁶ First, in what concerns property, Mesoamericans have never agreed that the world can be partitioned and assigned to different human individuals or groups to be held as sovereign property (whether as Estates or States, ‘private’, ‘public’ or however). This is because Mesoamericans see themselves (and humans) as the offspring of the Earth. For instance, when in the early 1900s the Indigenous revolutionary Emiliano Zapata translated the Spanish word *patria*

²⁴³ The origin of the Mixtec culture is traced back to the Highland Mixtec marked around 1350 years a. n. e. (“before the common era” in Spanish, an alternative to before Christ). They started their long cultural trip in the Mixtec Highland, but eventually affected the cultures of the Central Valleys of Oaxaca, Puebla-Tlaxcala, the Valley of Mexico, the north of Mesoamerica, Tehuantepec, Quintana Roo, Belize and Honduras. According to Ortiz-Castro, “the Mixtecs have possessed a fame of being outstanding *toltecs* [artists]; de facto, because of the evidences found in diverse activities, such as in the elaboration of the codexes.” (Ortiz Castro 2006a, 3-4)

²⁴⁴ Ortiz Castro 2006b, 129. See also Ortiz Castro 2004, 17; Ortiz Castro 2004, 13-16; Escamilla and Castro 2005.

²⁴⁵ It important here to keep in mind Maldonado’s words concerning the particularly ethnocidal and civilizational character of Eurocentric domination vis-à-vis the practices of domination that have occurred among Indigenous peoples across history. As Maldonado acknowledges, “The indians resist domination and domination did not come with the European invasion. It is known that precortesian empires subjected peoples and chiefdoms from which they extracted tribute, *but they did not demonize the culture of the subordinated peoples nor did they tried to ravage it.* Hence, *a pre-Columbian cultural resistance cannot be assumed because in this time the domination of empires did not imply cultural aggression,* and the struggles of the tributary peoples were for their liberation from political subjection. This leads to concluding that *ethnic resistance emerged to face the ethnocide, and this did arrive with the European invasion.* Parting from then, the aggressions against original cultures were transformed in the *quotidian* way in which the conquerors related to their dominated.” (Maldonado 2002, 79)

²⁴⁶ Maldonado 1994; 2002, 75; 2004 and Maldonado and Colombres 2004.

(“fatherland”) into Nahuatl²⁴⁷ in his speeches, he would translate it into the Spanish equivalent of *Nuestra Madrecita la Tierra*; roughly “Our Dearest Little Mother Earth.” As Canek Peña explains in the case of the Neo-Zapatistas who draw inspiration on the Zapatista revolutionary movement of the early 1900s,

The word *Patria* generally refers to a person's native land or country. It is often used by Latin American governments to promote varieties of government-centric nationalism. The word's etymology also suggests a patriarchal tradition of inheritance. In this case, however, the [Neo]Zapatistas seem to use *Patria* for another purpose: *to reference the Indigenous tradition of communal and ancestral connectedness to the Earth.*²⁴⁸

And that is why the Neo-Zapatistas proudly proclaim in a statement of thick significance, “These steps of ours have a name; the voice we speak has a word: Ours is the March of Indigenous Dignity...the march of those of us who are the color of the Earth.”²⁴⁹ Furthermore, “YA BASTA! [ENOUGH ALREADY!] ... We, who are the color of the Earth, deserve a place / A dignified place in order *to be what we are, the color of the Earth.*”²⁵⁰ If Earth is understood and embraced as Mesoamericans have done so, as “Our Dearest Little Mother Earth,” she certainly cannot and should not be turned into property since that would basically mean the enslavement of our very Mother. Even less could the Earth be traded, bought or sold: Mesoamericans saw Westerners as

²⁴⁷ Emiliano Zapata was a revolutionary during the 1910 Mexican Revolution (León-Portilla 1978) who has never ceased inspiring a great many people, including the famous *Ejercito Zapatista de Liberacion Nacional* (EZLN or Neo-Zapatistas). There is an excellent fragment of testimonial evidence about the fact that Emiliano Zapata, the 1910 Mexican Revolutionary was a *Nahuatlato* (Nahuatl speaker). It is very significant since the closeness of Zapata to his Indigenous roots has served as tremendous inspiration to a great many people, including the Neo-Zapatistas. The fragment from “Life and Death in Milpa Alta” (today a delegation of Mexico City) reads

This was the first thing we heard of the [1910-1920 Mexican] Revolution. One day a great man by the name of Zapata arrived from Morelos. He wore good clothes—a fine broad hat and spats. *He was the first great man to speak to us in Nahuatl.* All his men were dressed in white... shirts, white pants, and they all wore sandals. *All these men spoke Nahuatl more or less as we spoke it.* Señor Zapata also spoke Nahuatl. When all these men entered Milpa Alta, *we understood what they said.* ... Zapata stood at the head of his men and addressed the people of Milpa Alta in the following way: “Come join me! I have risen in arms... (León-Portilla 2001, 374; emphases added).

²⁴⁸ Marcos 2007; Canek Peña-Vargas, 41.

²⁴⁹ Marcos 2007, 43-44.

²⁵⁰ Marcos 2007, 47.

people who would prostitute their Mother. Mesoamericans refused to either enslave or prostitute Mother Earth—which Westerners interpreted as their incapacity to “civilize,” “develop,” “modernize,” and “globalize”. However, Mesoamerican wisdom went beyond this. As most students of Mesomerica recognize, from a Mesoamerican cosmoexperience, the Earth has to be conceived, as James Lovelock²⁵¹ would later do so in his Gaia thesis, as a living organism with pulse and rhythm. Mesoamerican wisdom had been for centuries considered to be ‘primitive’ and ‘backward,’ to be in the need of ‘catching up’ with the West, of ‘civilizing’, ‘progressing’, ‘modernizing’, ‘developing’ in the terms of the West:

All this [Mesoamerican wisdom] is considered by the dominant society to be primitive and backward, but is it? The Tojolabal confession is a manifestation that all lives, just as in contemporary [Western] terms it is expressed by James Lovelock and Rupert Sheldrake by speaking of the Earth as a living organism. They are current conceptions of ecology, in no way backward. If we encounter them among the [Maya-]Tojolabales, even if in different terms, they represent a conception that in the West was lost because up until today the thought is to dominate nature instead of living with her. It is this domination whose product is the climate/environmental crisis. This crisis, hence, warns us and demands to us that we listen to her before she shakes and frightens us. Our Mother Earth, finally, is in danger, because the current society wants to dominate her and it is destroying her.²⁵²

Clearly the Earth should never have been treated as a mere passive “object”; at least such is the view of many Mesoamericans. As the contemporary Zapotec poet, Mario Molina Cruz recites an “eruption of petals” to Our Dearest Little Mother that is a poem appropriately titled “The Earth”:

²⁵¹ Lovelock 2000.

²⁵² Lenkersdorf, 2008, 128.

You opened your womb,
 and I came out of the darkness.
 I experienced the light, the air;
 I saw the grandeur of the sky,
 its lullaby to the Earth.
 When I crawled, you stayed with me,
 and so...
 little by little I learned to step on you.
 Tirelessly, after every clumsy fall
 you picked me up,
 to every demand of my being
 you changed your season;
 in your hands, over time,
 I found the rules of life.

Now, grown up...
 I do nothing but defile you,
 bury you under concrete
 or look at you from my terrace.
 Every day I damage you,
 putting off my own end;
 but everyone knows: .
 that when the goodness of the mother is over,
 you open your womb again,
 and we are given back to the void.²⁵³

To Mesamericans the rest of (non-human) nature can never be treated as an “object.” So much so that Carlos Lenkersdorf has noticed that in many Maya languages there is not even a grammatical category for object(s): nothing in the cosmos is lifeless, everything shows ‘subjectivity’, life and spontaneity—“All Lives.” This merits that we go into further detail. To do so we will draw on the example of the Maya-Tojolabal language. As Lenkersdorf points out, in the Maya language of the Tojolabal people, there are simply no (grammatical) objects and nothing in the cosmos can be treated as an object, even the proverbial “stone” is recognized as a subject.²⁵⁴ As the contemporary Maya poet Humberto Ak'abal recites in “Stones”: “It is not that the stones are mute: / they are only keeping silent.”²⁵⁵

“*The difference among languages,*” Wilhelm von Humboldt once noted, “*is not that of sounds and signals, but the difference among visions of the world.*”²⁵⁶ And what a difference there is between the Euro-Western views of the world and the Mesoamerican cosmoexperience. On the

²⁵³ León Portilla 2001, 629.

²⁵⁴ Quite illustratively the Neo-Zapatista leader and story-teller Marcos articulates an excellent Maya story of a rock that wants to fly to travel the world. Understandably, the rock eventually does fly. From a Mesoamerican viewpoint this could be possible, but must be translated into the Western worldview by explaining how the “rock’s” concentrated sediments start withering away into the air: the very passing away of a cosmic concentration of minerals and its transemdiment into deconcentrated minerals emancipates the subject allowing her to fly the skies like the birds. See (Marcos, Peña-Vargas, and Ruggiero 2007)

²⁵⁵ León Portilla 2001, 601.

²⁵⁶ This discussion is broadly based on Lenkersdorf 1999; emphasis by Lenkersdorf.

one hand, for Westerners the world is filled with objects with the exception of select humans which are not objectified (since many humans are often also objectified). On the other hand, for Mesoamericans all in this world acts and reacts, lives with a measure of unpredictable movement and spontaneity, “All Lives.” Language is a great entry point to a cosmovision and cosmoexperience. Hence, to understand the differences between two cosmovisions we can study their linguistic differences. For instance, while Spanish and most other European languages (including English) are structured in a vertical (hierarchical) and unidirectional subject to object relationship where the subject is privileged as the active agent and the object is subalternized as the passive recipient, the Maya-Tojolabal language has no objects, it is made out of communicative links between a plethora of subjects. As Lenkersdorf explains, “communication...in the Tojolabal context is realized amid two equal subjects that complement each other.”²⁵⁷ If we compare Tojolabal and Spanish we find that while in the Tojolabal language “[t]here are only subjects albeit of different classes [types]” and “[t]here are no objects,” on the other hand “in the Spanish language there are subjects and objects.” That is why the Tojolabal “structure should be denominated as INTERSUBJECTIVITY” while the Spanish “structure should be denominated as SUBJECT-OBJECT.”²⁵⁸ We find such intersubjective languages like the *Mayence* languages also “outside the Maya populations” among other Mesoamerican peoples such as “their Zoque neighbors who live in the northwest region of the state of Chiapas and in the neighboring states of Veracruz and Tabasco.”²⁵⁹

Moreover, while in the Tojolabal language “the subjects relate to each other in structures that are horizontal, bidirectional and complementary and which are arranged in the form of a loop”

²⁵⁷ Lenkersdorf 1999, 26.

²⁵⁸ Lenkersdorf 1999, 31.

²⁵⁹ Lenkersdorf 1999 37. As Lenkersdorf also notes, across the world we find few “other peoples whose languages have an intersubjective structure.” Among them we find, for instance, “the Basque in the Pyrenees of Spain and France, the Georgian peoples in the Caucasus and the Aboriginal peoples of Australia, Polynesia and maybe Melanesia. In any case, they are very dispersed peoples and, in the majority of cases, they are not related to each other.”

or cycle, in most European languages “the subjects execute the actions and the objects receive them; hence the structures are vertical, unidirectional and of subordination—they are arranged pyramidally.”²⁶⁰ In most European languages such as Spanish or English indeed, “In the cusp of the pyramid is the subject from which results the action, transmitted through the verb towards the base” of the pyramid “where the object is encountered, passive or patient, to receive what is being communicated to it.” The dominant mode of European/Western communication “is vertical, of subordination and unidirectional.” On the other hand, in the Tojolabal language “there is no communication unless it is that which emerges from each subject in action. Said in another way, the communication is horizontal, complementary and bidirectional. Instead of the pyramid we have the circle, cycle, ring or loop.”²⁶¹

What is crucial to note is that “from the Tojolabal perspective the person who speaks and that who listens are paired up or equalized” or set in equal terms—in accordance with the Mesoamerican principle of uniduality. The Maya-Tojolabal “is a language that is distinctive because of its plurality of different types of subjects and because of its setting aside of objects.” Hence, in Tojolabal “one only encounters subjects—and I [Carlos Lenkersdorf] underline their plurality—that, as such, are paired up or equalized, one speaks and the other listens. This plurality of subjects explains also why in Tojolabal there are no objects from the syntactical and social viewpoint.” The issue at stake here “is about communication” that is, “among two or more interlocutors that can be [human] persons or other living beings” whose personality is also recognized. Therefore, in Tojolabal “the making or receiving” of language; that is, language as a cyclical loop of speech and listening is explicitly “mentioned” not only as a part of the grammatical patterns, but of quotidian communication. As Lenkersdorf also notes, in Spanish and in other European languages, in contrast, there is no explicit mentioning of or grammatical status granted to the role of the listener in everyday speech. While in English the sentence “I speak” is

²⁶⁰ Lenkersdorf 1999, 32.

²⁶¹ Lenkersdorf 1999, 27.

taken as a complete sentence, in Maya-Tojolabal is only half a sentence: the other side is missing; hence in Tojolabal it would have to be stated “I speak, You Listen” as Tojolabales actually do. Otherwise, the communicative cycle is incomplete.

As Lenkersdorf emphasizes, the grammatical and verbal omission of the listener in European and many other languages is rather surprising from a Maya-Tojolabal viewpoint. While in every language “listening must be realized” since people would otherwise be speaking to nothingness, in most languages the linguistic recognition of the listener shines for its absence: “Simply, it is omitted, it is not recognized and it is because of the absence of a corresponding term [for listening] why we note the omission or “negligence” on the part of the European languages. This forgetfulness is not explained because of the absence of the word *listen*. In effect, it exists, but it is not taken into consideration, the word is not employed” and there is no grammatical demand to offer a verbal space for the recognition of the act of listening either. “What is the reason of this omission?” That is, “why is listening not considered of importance” in dominant languages “in front of the privileged value granted to speaking/saying?” On the other hand, “speech...inasmuch as it gives an order, no longer necessarily requires that listening be noted.”²⁶²

It must be highlighted, moreover, that the privilege of “speech” or the (spoken) word coupled with the denial of the same status and recognition to listening produces as an effect which it always already presupposes, that speech is power and speaking amounts to an order. As Lenkersdorf further adds, “the ‘object’ is not even given the possibility of responding, of saying a single word. With the saying, the subject commands, and the object is muted. The subject is the only one that can speak and command.” In this context, we must underline how the dominant “syntax signals a social, political and cultural structure that is vertical and, hence, authoritarian.”²⁶³

In contrast,

...from the Tojolabal perspective, there is always ears that listen to us and eyes that see us *because it is all alive* and has eyes and ears. Hence, we are not only informed of what

²⁶² Lenkersdorf 2008, 64.

²⁶³ Lenkersdorf 2008, 65.

we say and do, but, simultaneously, we are conformed by it even when we do not notice it. What occurs is as the houses we inhabit, we form them and they conform us...or deform us.²⁶⁴

So, on the one hand, while, “in the dominant society it is thought that all institutions cannot exist without their having a chief, leader, president or boss in whose hands decision-making is concentrated,”²⁶⁵ just as it is thought that communities cannot work without a permanent capital or that the world necessarily requires an hegemon—always vying to stay hegemonic—to preserve stability (as has been suggested by the (in)famous hegemonic stability theory). On the other hand, the Maya-Tojolabal practice a “Democracy of Listening.” For the Maya Tojolabal, “Listening is a distinctive aspect” because

Thanks to listening the voices of all and each one are respected. There exists a marked trust in the voice of the people, that is, the voice of the siblings. Trust is not among authorities and subalterns, but among the constituents that make up the community. This explains the absence of persons that stand above others...in the context of the Tojolabal democracy which is participative...To listen is democratic...²⁶⁶

If we return to address the Western principle of property (whether individual, collective, national or global, private or public) from a Maya-Tojolabal perspective, we can immediately notice how it amounts to a rehearsal of the hierarchical subject-object power relation in a particularly anthropocentric way and hence is simply an antinomy to the cosmoexperience of the Mesoamerican world: it assumes that the world can be treated as an object always available to human impulses and that it will not in any case act upon humanity or react (even angrily) against humanity’s mistreatments. From this alternative Mesoamerican perspective, humanity’s relationship to the rest of nature cannot be one of “property” since all in nature lives, must be listened to, and hence cannot legitimately be enslaved by ownership; instead, the relationship must be political, and more precisely democratic, that is, conceived as a cultivation of cosmic democracy.

²⁶⁴ Lenkersdorf 2008, 73.

²⁶⁵ Lenkersdorf 2008, 91.

²⁶⁶ Lenkersdorf 2008, 90-92.

But in stark contrast to the Mesoamerican cosmoexperience of (other-than-human) nature, Simon Dalby points out, global life is dominated by a

geopolitics that understands the world as an external entity to be manipulated and controlled, turned into resources and commodities for the purposes of the rich and powerful...[We need to] challeng[e]...the modern [Western] assumption that nature is an external entity which industrial processes can manipulate, and which our urban designs can effectively ignore because of the power of this technology.... Environment cannot any longer be understood as a separate external entity; thus the divisions between human and physical geography are once again also in question.²⁶⁷

To advance such a challenge we could draw on a good dose of Mesoamerican wisdom. Tellingly, and for the Maya specifically, the epoch in which humans were *unable* to treat all else as a living organism was indeed a “prehistoric” epoch, before the rise of Mesoamerican civilization. In this regard it is important to understand how Mesoamericans conceive of the evolution of the cosmos. As León Portilla explains,

The universe in which Mesoamericans have lived—and many still think in this manner—has been established, destroyed and reestablished several times: four according to the Maya, five in the Nahua tradition. This conception which parallels that of the *kalpas* or recurring cosmic ages in Hindu thought, has provided some Mesoamericans, like the present Maya Tzotzil of Chiapas, with a temporal frame of reference wherein they locate the most significant happenings of their own modern history. ... There are more than twenty testimonies—archeological representations, codices, and texts in several Indigenous languages—which speak of the ages or “Suns” that have existed.²⁶⁸

The *Popol Vuh*, one of the sacred books of the Maya, narrates these various creations and destructions, the epochs and cycles that came and went before the rise of the current people or what we call “humanity”. One of these passing epochs is precisely one in which people “made of wood” were unable to listen to the Earth and to other-than-human persons; it was an epoch when the “people of wood” (mis)treated every other body as an object, and failed to recognize the multiplicity of cosmic subjectivities. Towards the end of this epoch, everything from dogs to turkeys and trees, to pots and pans, and the whole ‘environment’ turn against the “people of wood” in anger against how they were (mis)treated as mere objects. As the *Popol Vuh* recites,

²⁶⁷ Dalby 2007, 103-118, 109, 112-113, 116.

²⁶⁸ LeónPortilla and Shorris 2001, 16; see also Rice 2004, 17-19

Wandering they were the humans of wood on the Earth without remembering the Heart of Heaven. Multiplying themselves the humans of wood on the Earth they came to be many. Then the Heart of Heaven punished the humans of wood...The Cotcowach bird came and poked out their eyes...and then came all genre of animals, sticks and stones for grinding, pots, plates, bowls, pans, dogs and jars, they mistreated them and denigrated them. The dogs and hens said to the wooden humans: "You treated us really badly, you bit us, you ate us, and in (re)turn equally we will mistreat you, bite you and eat you now." The grinding stones told them: "You tormented us much, and all morning and all afternoon you did not allow us to rest, as you made us cry *holi, holi, huqui, huqui*, when you grind maize on our faces; now you will taste our forces, we will grind your flesh and we will make your bodies flour."²⁶⁹

In greater detail the *Popol Vuh* describes what the the people of wood endured because of their mistreatment of the non-human world and all its non-human persons:

There came a rain of resin from the sky.
There came the one named Gouger of Faces: he gouged out their eyeballs.
There came Sudden Blood-letter: he snapped off their heads.
There came Crunching Jaguar: he ate their flesh.
There came Tearing Jaguar: he tore them open.
They were pounded down to the bones and tendons, smashed and pulverized even to the bones.
Their faces were smashed because they were incompetent before their-mother-and-their-father, the Heart of Sky, named Hurricane.
The Earth was begrimed because of this; the gloomy rainstorm began; rain all day and all night.
Into their houses came the animals, small and great.
Their faces were crushed by things of wood and stone.
Everything spoke: their water jars, their tortilla griddles, their plates, their cooking pots, their dogs, their grinding stones; each and every thing crushed their faces.
Their dogs and turkeys told them:
"You caused us pain, you ate us, but now it is you whom we shall eat."
And thus spoke the grinding stone:
"We were undone because of you.
Every day, every day, in the dark, in the dawn, forever, *r-r-rip, r-r-rip, r-r-rub, r-r-rub*, right in our faces, because of you.
...This was the service we gave you at first, when you were still people, but today you will learn of our power. We shall pound and we shall grind your flesh," their grinding stones told them.
And this is what their dogs said, when they spoke in their turn:
"Why is it you can't seem to give us our food? We just watch and you just keep us down, and you throw us around. You keep a stick ready when you eat, just so you can hit us. *We don't talk, so we've received nothing from you. How could you not have known? You did know that we were wasting away there, behind you.*
"So, this very day you will taste the teeth in our mouths. We shall eat you," their dogs told them, and their faces were crushed.
And then their tortilla griddles and cooking pots spoke to them in turn:

²⁶⁹ As cited in Lenkersdorf 1999, 41-43.

“Pain! That’s all you’ve done for us. Our mouths are sooty, our faces are sooty. By setting us on the fire all the time, you burn us. Since we felt no pain, you try it. We shall burn you,” all their cooking pots said, crushing their faces.

The stones, their hearthstones were shooting out, coming right out of the fire, going for their heads, causing them pain. Now they run for it, helter-skelter.

They want to climb up on the houses, but they fall as the houses collapse.

They want to climb the trees; they’re thrown off by the trees.

They want to get inside caves, but the caves slam shut in their faces.

Such was the scattering of the human work, the human design. The people [of wood] were ground down, overthrown.²⁷⁰

This ‘environmental’ anger against the people of wood is more than just a poetic articulation of an bio-ecological crisis (which it also is): moreover, it is the expression of the Others’ subjectivity. A subjectivity which the next creation of humans—the humans of flesh, the ones that live in this era—learned to recognize and which the Mesoamericans thought of as a just development, indeed, as a form of existential and cosmic improvement. And when Mesoamericans were and still are faced with the way Westerners treat other-than-human others, they tend to react in a very particular and critical way. As Earl Shorris and León Portilla comment, the *Popol Vuh* was “written by a people who had to struggle to sustain densely populated” areas “in a difficult environment.” Hence “it raises questions of human ecology.” They then narrate an example of the contemporary use and value of the lessons of the *Popol Vuh* among Mesoamerican peoples,

an example of this was given recently by a group of Maya students in a small village in Yucatan near the Campeche border. They had been discussing the third “creation,” [as narrated in the *Popol Vuh*] in which manikins made of wood populated the Earth. These men (sic?) of wood were unable to think, meaning they were without the human attribute of language, but they were able to make all of the things used by humans. Since they could not think, “They were not competent,” according to the *Popol Vuh* so they were destroyed: Their things-grinding stones and pots and jars and griddles-rose up against them and tore their faces. Then came the flood. The students, all of whom had been to the metropolis of Merida, *understood this as a warning against the thoughtless advance of technology*. The next day, when a backhoe was brought to the village to dig a trench for a waterpipe, the students pointed to the operators of the roaring, clanging machine, and said, “*Look! The men of wood!*”²⁷¹

As Lenkersdorf explains, the text of the *Popol Vuh*, hence not only expresses the idea that all things live, both the animals and the products of culture, but it also underlines another

²⁷⁰ León Portilla 2001, 408-409; emphases added.

²⁷¹ León Portilla and Shorris, in León Portilla 2001, 394.

characteristic of the biocosmic community. The fact that everything lives does not only underline a particular way of framing the reality as biocosmic cosmovision, but it also implies a demand: the members of the biocosmic community must respect each other reciprocally. The intersubjective cosmovision is intimately tied to a corresponding cosmoexperience. “The perception of the world and the relating to the world represent two sides of the same medal.” In short, “the fact that all lives” entails “that a community of life or a community of the living demands mutual respect from all.”²⁷²

When the Mesoamericans were confronted by the Westerners who tried to convince them that the ‘principle of property’ was indeed the basis and sign of “civilization,” “progress” and (human) “advancement”, most Mesoamericans rejected it not least because they thought that the objectification (and subsequent commodification) of the Earth, of animals and the cosmos was a throwback to a prehistoric and indeed pre-human form of life. “Ownership of the land,” Rice says, was “not something understood by the Mesoamericans;”²⁷³ but I beg to differ: ownership was very well understood by Mesoamericans, it was very well understood indeed and therefore criticized: Westerners (and the Westernized) who objectified land (and the rest of non-human nature) and traded with Mother Earth were seen (and continue to be seen) as “men of wood” or “manikins of wood.” Only prehistoric people from a previous era, as fragile, inflexible, and breakable as wood would have failed to notice that Our Dearest Little Mother the Earth cannot be treated, commodified or traded as an object, because the Earth, Sky and Cosmos and all in it has living personality and subjectivity, a life that feeds us and constitutes us—we are nothing without her. As the contemporary Nahua poet, Natalio Hernandez Xocoyotzin recites in his poem “I Ask Myself,”

²⁷² Lenkersdorf 1999, 41-43.

²⁷³ Rice 2004, 43.

I ask the stars,
the sun,
the wind
and our Mother Earth:

What gives us life?
What causes us to walk?
What gives us strength and energy?²⁷⁴

The answer to Xocoyotzins's questions is rhetorically implied: the addressees of the questions give us life. As Ortiz Castro explains from a Mixtec perspective,

Ñu'un de'e nduta also connotes the source of life par excellence because of its fertile and germinative characteristics, it is therefore, The Mother Earth that ceaselessly generates life at the same time as it feeds; she is creative goodness and safety and her children cannot but respond to that goodness by serving their people and others, for living is serving...

Hence, the Earth as the Sky must be appealed to, as in this classic Nahuatl "Hymn to Tlaloc," the divine personification of Rain:

The breast of our mother and father, Lord of the Earth, is dry...
Oh with a sprinkle, with a few drops of dew,
may you succor, may you aid, Tlaltecútlī, Lord of the Earth,
who feeds and nourishes the people!²⁷⁵

Having understood that Mesoamericans have always recognized the subjectivity of the other-than-human, it is much easier to comprehend why they have never ceased resisting the principle of property, and rather see themselves as extensions and manifestations of the land and of cosmic life, as cosmic embodiments who are literally made by the land and from what the land gives them: Mesoamericans are "the people of maize." As León Portilla emphasizes, "Mesoamericans are so closely attached to maize that they believe their bodies were formed of it, as their narratives and poems make clear."²⁷⁶ However, it is much more than a belief, it is a realization of the constitutive role of the Earth and its gifts (e.g., maize) in the quotidian shaping and enabling of "human" existence. This is an understanding which is alive and well, as for

²⁷⁴ León Portilla 2001, 388-389.

²⁷⁵ León Portilla and Shorris 2001, 211.

²⁷⁶ León Portilla and Shorris 2001, 40.

instance among the Neo-Zapatistas who state through the voice of their spokesman Marcos: “This is what we are: ... The one who is of maize”²⁷⁷ So as Lenkersdorf clarifies:

As in the time of the *Popol Wuj* [or *Popol Vuh*] the Tojolabales along with the rest of the Mayas [and the Mesoamericans] are people of maize [the Mayas are people of *mays* literally and symbolically]. The *Popol Wuj*, written in the Maya-Quiche of Guatemala, represents a sacred text of the Maya which tells us that humans are not made of mud or clay as in the Bible but of maize.²⁷⁸

Indeed, the cycle of the *may* which gives name to the Maya could hypothetically be related to the period of time in which a particular ecosystem is healthily apt to produce the staple food(s) and principally *mays* or *maize* without suffering fatigue (especially in the traditionally Mesoamerican lands). This further shows the extent of “environmental” or rather biocosmic embeddedness of Maya chronopolitics—an embeddedness that can be traced directly to their cosmoexperience of nutrition as more than just a way of surviving, but rather as the quotidian (metabolic) (re)embodiment of cosmic energy into the form of a “human” organism. Nutritional aspects hold such a cosmic significance that they constitute part of divine discourse in the Maya cosmoexperience. As stated in the fragment on the “Advent of Humans and the End of Omniscience” from the *Popol Vuh*, the sacred book of the Maya:

And this was when they found the staple foods.
And these were the *ingredients for the flesh of the human work*, the human design, and the water was for the blood. It became human blood, and maize was also used by the Bearer, Begetter...
After that, they put it into words: the making, the modeling of our first mother-father, with yellow maize, white maize alone for the flesh, food alone for the human legs and arms, for our first fathers, the four human works. *It was staples alone that made up their flesh.*²⁷⁹

And still now it is staples and the environmental nutrients alone which constitute the human body. To this day, Mesoamericans do not even conceive of themselves as a form of life that is ontologically distinct from the Earth or the Cosmos. When it is said that Mesoamericans are people of maize, it is *not* a shorthand for saying that their civilization nutritionally depended on

²⁷⁷ Marcos, Peña-Vargas, and Ruggiero 2007, 120.

²⁷⁸ Lenkersdorf 1999, 12.

²⁷⁹ León Portilla and Shorris 2001:438-439.

maize, it is rather a literal statement of how the ‘human body’ is a reconfiguration and transempodiment of maize and other cosmic factors and elements such as air and water—humans are only a particular embodiment of biocosmic energy. An embodiment whose cyclical transience will inevitably lead it to transform itself back into air, Earth, grass and so on: ancestors are literally *in the land* and *in the air*; indeed they help constitute Earth, Sky, Water, and Cosmos—it is not just a metaphor, it is a constitutive poetics; that is, the movement of biocosmic energy into different configurations: the movement of transempodiment.

Not surprisingly, considering all of this, Mesoamericans have always resisted (Western) “civilization” and “development(alism)”. As the Neo-Zapatista words recite, “the land is not merchandise”:

Before they arrived, dealing out death and destruction, the wealth of the Earth was not lusted after.
Because the wealth of the Earth was the wealth of those who inhabited it, and the one who stole it was stealing only from himself.
And that stupidity of stealing the wealth of the Earth is what they are offering us as "modernity"?
And then they call us, the Indigenous, "ignorant."
Did we not care for the land before they arrived? Did we not care for our mother?
Did they not turn her into a prostitute, young and carefree before, and today dried-up and old?
Did we invent the methods of overexploitation of natural resources? Are we the ignorant ones?
Does being wise mean doing everything possible to destroy the only house one has?
Up until now, no one has discovered another habitable planet, so this is the only one we have.
Perhaps words have changed quite a bit. For us, the one who seeks his brothers' and his own ruin is stupid and ignorant.²⁸⁰

Mesoamerican poverty has not resulted from an “Indigenous” incapacity to incorporate or assimilate itself under the course of a unilaterally Eurocentric, and linear anthropocentric ‘human evolution,’ but rather as a result of the genocidal *agression*, ethnocidal *retaliation* and structural *marginalization* that Mesoamericans have suffered at the hands of the dominant civilization for having stood up in a justified, conscious, deliberate and quotidian mode of (alter)civilizational

²⁸⁰ Marcos 2007, 83.

resistance.²⁸¹ Yet even when faced with overwhelming power, resistance has never given away to the acceptance of subordination or assimilation; instead, as Lorenzo Aubague acutely points out:

*The Indian culture chose the path of the simulacrum in order to make others believe in its destruction. And it has not been seen that this [seeming] destruction was nothing more than a deliberate deconstruction chosen as strategic recourse to preserve all their inheritance and cultural coherence under the line of flotation of the colonial and postcolonial society. It deconstructed, effectively, its most visible face, it protected it under the mask of acculturation to preserve it in the place that is most intimate, most distant, most occult, protected against the daggers of symbolic [and actual, material] dispossession that threatened and continue to threaten [Indigenous American civilizations]... Thus, syncretism ceases to be a passive product of acculturation and becomes a formula of masking...[which] speaks of the historical tenacity of [Indigenous American] culture against all ethnocidal formulations.*²⁸²

As Maldonado insists; “syncretism is not an acceptance of defeat or the rejection of what is one’s own; on the contrary, it is the strategy with which defeat was avoided... Simulating the acceptance of defeat, the Indians could conserve what was theirs.”²⁸³ Moreover, as Aubague further comments:

Nothing impedes the belief that syncretism functioned as an exterior façade for those that do not belong to the Indian world. In the meantime, this Indian knows how to unravel, under the confusion s/he deliberately produced to defend and hide his/her belief, the syncretic discourse.²⁸⁴

Prudence Rice also explicitly suggests that the Maya, for instance, simulated the disappearance of their astrocalendrical cyclical chronopolitics to hide their civilizational wisdom during the period of subjugation:

Under the “circumstances” of Spanish and Euro-Mexican domination, it has been in the best interest of the Maya to hide or disguise the operations of their traditional geopolitical-religious structure. And as it was hidden from the Spaniards, it has remained opaque to us today.²⁸⁵

²⁸¹ See Maldonado 1994; 2002; 2004.

²⁸² Aubague 1983, 252-253.

²⁸³ Maldonado 1994; 2002, 83.

²⁸⁴ Aubague 1984, 276.

²⁸⁵ Rice 2004, 277.

These sophisticated modes of civilizational resistance have enabled Mesoamericans to resist the persuasions of a concept of “civilization,” “modernization,” and “development” that entailed the progressive appropriation and exploitation of Earth. Instead, a common underlying Mesoamerican insistence has been for centuries that the West (or rather European civilization) or at least most of it has not surpassed its stage of living like “men of wood” (using Maya terms). That is, the West has not in its majority come to acknowledge that the rest of non-human nature and the Earth cannot be treated as an object—and if it is thus treated Mother Earth or “Gaia” will react angrily unleashing consequences that will turn the tide of the times against “humanity”: “The people [will be] grinded down, overthrown” in the terms of the *Popol Vuh*.

Current prognoses of our future by dissident Westerners who have come to this—long overdue—realization seem to fully legitimate Indigenous American (Abya-Yalan) resistance to the “progress,” “development,” “advancement,” and “globalization” of the dominant (anthropocentric) “civilization” and to uncontrovertibly confirm the logic behind it which attests to the consequences of living like “men of wood”:

The future, as we know, looks increasingly problematic. Soil has been rapidly eroding on the agriculturally productive land on the planet, water is becoming an ever more scarce resource, and biodiversity is in such serious decline that there is an unprecedented mass extinction of species underway ... In tropical forests where 50% of all land species live, estimates suggest that between 4 – 6,000 species have been disappearing every year ... India once produced 30,000 separate varieties of rice, but today most rice production is centered on 10 species. In other words, “the world’s available gene pool” has shrunk inexorably! ... And this is to say nothing of climate change, pervasive hunger among many of the world’s peoples, nor the unsustainable dependence of almost all societies on fossil fuels. James Lovelock, who articulated the Gaia thesis that the Earth is a living organism, estimates that by the end of this century there will be nearly 5 billion less people on the planet than there are currently ... In...*Our Final Hour?*, Martin Rees ... takes an even more grim perspective and estimates that humans have only a 50/50 chance of surviving the current century *unless we radically change our approach to our existence on the planet...*²⁸⁶

Perhaps it is this long overdue realization which will allow the underlying Mesoamerican élan to emerge out of a long period of resistance and come forth liberated without the need for a mask, and with the disposition to offer its modest bit of wisdom and help to “radically change our

²⁸⁶ Skelly 2008, 135-152, 136, emphasis added

approach to our existence on the planet” and in the cosmos at large. The current global contingency might just be the answer to the critique and lamentation uttered by the scholar and promoter of Indigenous languages, Juan Jose Rendón Monzón, back in 1991, namely, that “the resistance of the peoples is just that, resistance, without real possibilities of victory, *at least while the world is not ruled by an other...model of relationships.*”²⁸⁷ As Maldonado puts it, “resistance and liberation are two different things...Resistance is not an ideal state in which one desires to live permanently, it is only a gestational condition for the forces that will enable [to live] life as desired.”²⁸⁸ This is also the reason why Marcos (the Neo-Zapatista spokesman) has repeatedly prompted the oppressed to think that “Beyond Resistance: Everything” becomes possible—i.e., liberation. In this context, the reply to the critique and lament of Rendón is that it is perhaps in the possibility to contribute to the emergence of this “other model of relationships” (and not just human relationships) where Mesoamericans can emerge from resistance and achieve liberation through the input of their wisdoms and ways to the radical change to our existence in the planet that is so urgent. As Maldonado states: “There does not exist the possibility of propelling a movement of liberation without beforehand imagining the society that one aspires to through the movement,”²⁸⁹ and in our times the new society that we must imagine and to which we aspire must also aspire to embrace everybody else in this world. And this is precisely what I am attempting to do in this work by endeavoring to recover, revalorize and revitalize some potential contributions of the Mesoamerican (and broader Abya-Yalan) world to imagine “an *other* model”. But in so doing it is important to hold dear the following reflections by the contemporary Mixtec philosopher, Ortiz Castro:

To go in search of one’s buried and forgotten world which is agonizing since the Conquest and the Colony requires that we work to strengthen it since only by strengthening it will it have the possibility to live. Such is the path to be undertaken ... to a world where no anxieties or disillusionments exist, *where there shall be space there not*

²⁸⁷ Maldonado 1994; 2002, 86-88.

²⁸⁸ Maldonado 1994; 2002, 86-88.

²⁸⁹ Maldonado 1994; 2002, 86-88.

*only for one's own world but also for that of the alien [European(ized) world] that has in general excluded and negated ours ...it is necessary to search for a We with the other, without exclusions in an exercise of reflection...*²⁹⁰

Biocosmic Communalism in Politics and Economics

Up to this point I have already offered some examples of how the recovery of subjugated knowledges and specifically Mesoamerican wisdoms can help guide us globally. I would like to further elaborate in this regard by introducing a basic wisdom that guides the practices of Mesoamerican political economy. This is known in (Hispanicized) Nahuatl as the *tequio*. The *tequio*, practiced by all Mesoamerican people like the Mixtec, the Zapotec and Nahuatl,²⁹¹ is a system based on communalism as well as on the principles of duality, complementarity, and reciprocity. But before we explain the *tequio* and how it rehearses the rotational logic of relays or “system of burdens” that reflects and rehearses biocosmic cyclicity it is pertinent to go a bit deeper into an understanding of the importance of communalism for Mesoamerican life.

From the viewpoint of Mixtec philosopher Ignacio Ortiz-Castro, while individualism seems to be characteristic of the European, communalism would be what is most characteristic about the Indigenous American or Abya-Yalan. As he reflects upon the contrast, Ortiz-Castro quotes a very interesting passage from the historian and chronicist Father Gay who in 1881 wrote:

*In Europe the peoples are aggregations of individuals, each of which has his/her value and his/her own signification, which s/he does not lose by entering society; in America, the indian has no worth [as an individual], disappearing in the community with which it forms a compact and well unified mass. *Presumption, pride, and ambition, so common in the rest of the Earth are unknown for the Indian: egoism is a word that has no signification here. The Indian is not a debased being, it is a (hu)man who does not think of himself and who is of all his people.**²⁹²

What has been noticed also by Magallon, a philosopher originally trained in the Western canon who was challenged by his Mixtec mentee Ortiz Castro, is that “the language, the thought,

²⁹⁰ Ortiz Castro 2006a, 16.

²⁹¹ Maldonado 1994; 2002; Ortiz Castro 2004, 17; Ortiz Castro 2004, 13-16; Bonfil Batalla 1981, 11-53; Bonfil Batalla 1991; Bonfil Batalla 1996; García 1996.

²⁹² Ortiz Castro 2006a, 66.

the acting of the Mixtec challenges the discursive forms of Western rationality by presenting an organizational principle altogether different from its philosophical roots to its political structures.” He continues, noticing that in Mesoamerican cultures like the Mixtec, “the language and the speech are given in an open horizontal dialogue with the *communality* in the *We-ness*, all of which is integrated in the totality of the subjects of the...community.”²⁹³ As Lenkersdorf notes, this is also the case among the Tojolabales, the Chamulas or Tzotziles,²⁹⁴ and all other Mayas such as those from Guatemala who “proceed from the reality of the *We-Us*.”²⁹⁵ Furthermore,

For the Tojolabal language, the *We-Us* is a key concept, while for Spanish and other European languages it is not. What dominates [in European languages] is the *I*. That is why we do not encounter the concept of *We-Us* as an entry in dictionaries of philosophy, political theory, sociology, etc.²⁹⁶

The *We-oriented* communal disposition “becomes present in all the aspects” of the Mesoamerican “reality ramified by the cosmos.”²⁹⁷ This modifies all practices, as for instance in the materialization of justice as corresponsibility where the need of one is assumed as the need of all. Or as the Maya-Tojolabal put it:

²⁹³ Magallon in Ortíz Castro 2006a, xvi.

²⁹⁴ The Tzotziles have achieved a saliency in the gaze of the hegemonic Euro-American powers. As described by León Portilla, the Tzotziles are

a branch of the Maya linguistic family; also the people sometimes known as Chamula. Frequent rebels against colonial authority, they were involved at the end of the twentieth century in the extremely complicated conflict in Chiapas, one of the richest states in Mexico in natural resources but among the poorest in standard for living for Indigenous people. Although many members of the [Neo-]Zapatista movement are Tzotziles, not all Tzotziles support the Zapatistas. There is a long history of rebellion by the Tzotzil people. (Portilla and Shorris 2001, 670)

²⁹⁵ Lenkersdorf 2008, 37-38.

²⁹⁶ Lenkersdorf 2008, 37.

²⁹⁷ Lenkersdorf 2008, 37-38.

One of Us We're hungry
One of Us We suffer injustice
One of Us We're imprisoned unjustly
One of Us We die while crossing the border
One of Us We're tortured
Thus, asks the We:
Why do We lack maize, beans and nourishment?²⁹⁸

Marcos, the famed Neo-Zapatista spokesman and subcommander (“sub” because he is *under* the commands of the Indigenous), who was originally brought up in a Westernized Mexico City, illustratively articulates a contemporary anecdote that seeks to explain how he was confronted by and learned about certain aspects of communality and the Mesoamerican habit of carrying shared burdens through his chat with an Indigenous elder, Old Antonio:

I don't quite remember how it came up in our talk, but Old Antonio explained to me that the Indigenous always walk as if they were hunched over, even if they aren't carrying anything, because they carry the good of the other[s] on their shoulders. I asked how that was, and Old Antonio told me that the first gods, the ones who gave birth to the world, made the men and women of maize in such a way that they always walked collectively. And he told me that walking collectively also meant thinking about the other, about the *compañero*. "That is why the Indigenous walk bent over," Old Antonio said, "because they are carrying on their shoulders their hearts and the hearts of everyone."²⁹⁹

In short, among Mesoamericans power is communal: “power is distributed among all the components of the We.”³⁰⁰ Moreover, “...there is neither government nor State in the Western sense...we find among the Tojolabales the sociopolitical structure of the *nonstate*...”³⁰¹ And as Carlsen notes,

More than an invention of the New Indian Movement, this conception of power arises out of a series of particularly Indigenous forms of organization, political conformation, justice and many kinds of human relationships that together make up the best of indian peoples...their deeply reasonable intention is to distribute power evenly so it can do no harm—an idea implicit in the way they weave their clothes, mats and baskets and also in the design and dynamics of the constellations.³⁰²

²⁹⁸ Lenkersdorf 2008, 84.

²⁹⁹ Marcos, Peña-Vargas, and Ruggiero 2007, 241.

³⁰⁰ Lenkersdorf 2008, 102.

³⁰¹ Lenkersdorf 2008, 103.

³⁰² Marcos 2007, 93.

Lenkersdorf explains this form of communal power in more detail:

Decision-making is...in the hands of all of those who constitute the sociopolitical body that “governs” through consensual decisions...the plurality of the communal We undertakes the functions of a government that is not in the hands of one, of a group, of a party or political class. Hence, we can say that instead of government we should speak of “deciding institution”, that is, the We that has the power to decide by consensus. Neither is there a center of power, for instance, a president, nor is there a center to the state, that is, a capital. This is because these centers have not been formed precisely because of the particularity of this deciding institution. Hence we speak of the nonstate complex that is realized and proceeds through structures that, to this day, have not emerged in the context of the dominant societies. Indeed, it is highly probable that these sort of sociopolitical structures existed in the prehispanic times of the late postclassic Maya...³⁰³

Having broadly discussed how communal politics works, we are now better prepared to understand how a Mesoamerican political economy operates. But to do that we need to return to what was discussed at the start, namely, that next to transience, the principle of (uni)duality, ambivalence and/or complementarity constitutes the infrastructure of the Mesoamerican cosmoexperience. It is useful to return to the aspects of Mesoamerican spirituality that were discussed at the start in order to understand how the valuation of uniduality, ambivalence and/or complementarity even crystallized into divine symbolizations. As Miguel León Portilla comments, in many of the archeological representations, codices, and texts in several Indigenous languages,

reference is made to the supreme divine pair. *Tonantzin, Totahtzin*, Our Mother, Our Father, *Ometeotl*, the dual god, to whom the origin and successive restorations of the universe are attributed. S/he, Begetter, Conceiver, resides in the uppermost of the heavens; in the center of the world as depicted in the Mixtec codices *Selden Roll* and *Gomez de Orozco*, and in the one from the central plateau known as *Vatican A* and the *Maya Tro-Cortesiano*. ... Tonantzin/Totahtzin, Our Mother/Our Father, the supreme divine pair, continues to be worshipped in Mesoamerica today. Many peoples in Mexico, Indians and mestizos [mixed peoples], when asked whom they revere most—God the Father, the Son, or the Holy Spirit—frequently they answer that they have recourse in their needs to Our Mother Guadalupe and Our Father Jesus. ... Today, as in the past, the supreme divine pair continues to be thought as the ultimate source of life for other gods, now in the form of Christian saints, or for human beings, animals, and plants with their respective destinies. All that exists on the celestial levels, on the surface of the Earth with its four cosmic quadrants and the center, as well as in the underworld, has its origin and is governed by Him/Her, Our Father/Our Mother. ... One very important trait of the Mesoamerican pantheon is that most, if not all, of its members exist and act in pairs, reflecting the ultimate nature of the supreme dual god. [For instance] Quetzalcoatl and Cihuacoatl,³⁰⁴ Feathered Serpent or precious twin, and the Feminine Twin, the word *coatl*

³⁰³ Lenkersdorf 2008, 104-105.

³⁰⁴ Cihuacoatl refers to “Serpent Woman,” which is more broadly understood as “the feminine aspect of the great dual god of the Mexica, worshipped in her dual aspects, Xochiquetzal, and

meaning both “serpent” and “twin” [and wisdom]... The Quiche Maya *Popol Vuh*, as one might expect, is a story twins.³⁰⁵

To Mesoamericans every force and phenomenon is the manifestation of a creative ambivalent uniduality, an either-*and-or* that enables and constitutes the movement and life of the cosmos. This duality is often, but not exclusively represented, through the fusion of genders—or perhaps also a displacement of genders—into a same person, something of an hermaphroditical force, that is both two and one at the same time, contradictory and complementary—and thus always fertile and (re)vitalizing. As can be read in the Maya *Popol Vuh*,

By the Former	<i>Children of the Mother of Light,</i>
And Shaper,	<i>Sons of the Father of Light,</i>
<i>The Mother</i>	The Mediator,
<i>And Father</i>	The Thinker
Of Life	Of Everything,
And Mankind,	Whatever exists:
The Inspirer	Heaven,
And Heartener,	Earth,
Bearer	Lake,
And Heartener of	And Sea.
Light	
And the Race,	

Humanity itself is understood as the offspring, carrier, and transmitter of this creatively fertile ambivalent duality. As a Nahua poem entitled “Bathing the Baby” chants,

...you have come to arrive on Earth.
Your mother, your father,
Orne tecutli, Orne ciuatl
have sent you.
Our mother, our father,
*Tonatiuh, Tlaltecutli...*³⁰⁶

From a Mesoamerican viewpoint, there are always two sides to all which are at once the same, contradictory and yet complementary with each other, one and divided at the same; that is, ambivalent. Paradox and irony, duality and ambivalence, complementarity and reciprocity are the

Coatlícue, the mother of Huitzilopochtli. Also a term of political organization for a deputy ruler: when the huey tlahtoani was absent, the cihuacoatl was left in command of the Mexica.” (Portilla and Shorris 2001, 654)

³⁰⁵ León Portilla and Shorris 2001, 16-17.

³⁰⁶ León Portilla and Shorris 2001, 235-238.

constitutive, creative basis of the cosmos. As already noted, for the Nahua, the most widespread culture of Mesoamerica (along with the Maya), the overarching divinity is known as *Ometeotl*, the unidual, ambivalent or complementary God.³⁰⁷ Prehispanic Nahua “palaces, schools, marketplaces...reflect[ed] their conception of social duality, derived from the divine duality.”³⁰⁸ The communal sociopolitical importance of (uni)duality is clear as well among the Mixtec peoples (today largely in Oaxaca and Guerrero). As Mixtec philosopher Ignacio Ortiz-Castro beautifully explains in great detail:

...masculine-feminine are inseparable in the communal vision. *Taa*: father-male; *de'e*: mother-female, that is, half mother and half father, whose significance is mother-father...it is about *Taade'endoo*: mother-father of us (of the people), who are the representatives or guides. ... The community is enframed in the dual dimension... *The immolation of one over the other becomes disastrous; the dominance of one over the other is negative. It is about mutually necessary and complementary opposites.* ... where there is a lack of one or one of them is denied, there is disequilibrium in many aspects; *the presence of both is necessary in order to enable harmony.* ... *Yutu kuukua* is the masculine and feminine arm; in other words, *the hug of the progenitors*, protector and loving arms that are built and close as *Yutu Kuukua: embracing community and world.* This generic dualism of the Mixtec world *does not conceive any entity as complete in itself but rather in virtue of its complementarity with others in diverse planes of reality*; the counterpoised entities are included among themselves and become integrated in an *overarching relational totality*, as is the concrete case of *Yutu Kuukua*, which is conceived as *synthetic unity under the category of the dual.* All existent forms part of a couple. ... *Concordant Dualism: The cosmos is ruled by a dualism, even though opposite, it is complementary, in order for it to be given in an equilibrium and harmony.* This equilibrium is by counterweight and harmony, because of the complementarity and the counterpointing/contrapuntal. Does this latter aspect signify the (mutual) necessity of the opposites? Without a doubt, *the contrast balances and diversifies, what is monotonous generally results as uniform and trivial. What is harmonic because of its variety is rich and prolix. Therefore, multiplicity is also one of its characteristics.*³⁰⁹

This understanding of the cosmos, the world and politics as shifting manifestations of a creative unduality or fertile ambivalence that is always already divisive and yet complementary is itself a complement to the experience of cosmic justice as reciprocity, which is the basis of the Mesoamerican political economy.

³⁰⁷ León Portilla and Shorris 2001, 208.

³⁰⁸ León Portilla and Shorris 2001, 40; emphases added.

³⁰⁹ Ortíz Castro 2006a, 94-96.

In this regard, the *tequio*, for instance, is an economic system which partitions groups into moieties (halves) or pairs of halves that hold mutual responsibilities to each other, not just for mere human justice, but to preserve the cosmic balance in which whatever is taken has to be returned. It is a mode of political economy that materializes the Mesoamerican principle of creative ambivalence and complementary (uni)dualism. Although the *tequio* exists throughout the whole of Mesoamerica (and with other names in other cultures of Abya-Yala), we can better explain it by focusing on the example of the Mixtec peoples, with the help of the Mixtec philosopher, Ignacio Ortíz Castro.

Ortiz Castro proceeds from the Mesoamerican presupposition that the community as a whole is a living being, which bears children and it needs the efforts of its children to survive. This efforts or work for the community are referred to as *Tiñu ñuu* or work for the people which the Nahuatl know as *tequio* (and is thus known in many other parts as well). The *tequio* serves to “strengthen the community at the same time as it benefits all and each one.” And it is in everybody’s interest to serve the interest of the community since the communal reproduction is what gives each one the possibility of continuing their existence. Replicating and extending the system of burdens to “economics,” the *tequio* is a voluntary service without any pay or stipend, at least not a pecuniary pay. The retribution comes in the form of communal reciprocity and a healthy community for all. The *tequio*

is a collective effort, the only way to strengthen oneself individually and communally; in concomitant mode it is exemplary because everyone attends, co-lives (shares life) to generate joy and this creates satisfaction because it is there where the communal effort becomes concrete, which eventually translates into grandeur; it is perhaps the best way to think our existing-passing in the world: *Du’a, jani dikie’ kundekue’*, Hence, to think (in this way) is to live. ... *Na chinde tna’ae* or solidarity is not only translated in *Tiñu ñuu* or “work of the people”, but also into *Da’an*: “mutual help”. ... *Da’an*: mutual aid or mutual help. As labor ... *Na chindee tna’ae* collects efforts and does not disaggregate them; these are translated into coliving and *da’an* (mutual help). It is turn of hand, that is, reciprocal support, aid, or help within and across families...³¹⁰

As Juan Julian Caballero describes it, using examples,

³¹⁰ Ortíz Castro 2006.

...there is the establishment of organizational forms where groups from 20 to 30 *campesinos* reunite and meet to go to realize the work of somebody. The rule is to go among all and realize the work of one member of the group, the day after that the same group goes and helps an other member of the group, and hence successively until exhausting the first round of activities. In these activities children and youths of distinct ages participate; the only condition is that they must all be able to sustain the rhythm of labor of the adults.³¹¹

As Ortiz Castro adds, the *tequio* always proceeds from a communitarian “*nosotrico*” (We-oriented) cosmology. Indeed, it points us towards

a nosotric (We-oriented) cosmology leading towards a cosmology among the human species and not just of (hu)mans but of an interrelationship of humans with all existing, in search of a balanced relationality, that is, a holistic cosmology with the whole (flora and fauna); this is also a generative co-living not only of abilities but of transmission and acquisition of wisdoms through labor.

As Mixtec intellectual Juan Julian Caballero further explains,

The mutual help or *guetza* (*da'an*) constitutes an excellent space and opportunity to learn not just the history and relevant facts that are shared, but also the notion of time, the agricultural calendar and the classification of crops, besides listening to literatures, above all local stories and legends.

It is important to realize that the Mixtec *Da'an* or Zapotec *guetza*,

is not circumscribed to the merely imperious, that is, to the primary work for necessary subsistence but is also circumstantial and spontaneous support. It is understanding of the human limitation and the need to overcome it: a needing of the other; a ‘we all need of all’. Hence the limitation is surpassed and, as a consequence. The potentiation of all activity and of the human is enabled.³¹²

For Mesoamericans, mutual aid is a celebration. This aid extends beyond mere “work” and physical activities. It more broadly embodies the principle of unmediated reciprocity, and the mutual gift which is to be understood as a festive experience,³¹³ as found in the traditional *guelagueta* celebrations of Oaxaca.

The *tequio* as a form of political economy is a direct challenge to the principles of profit on which the Western economy is based. From a Western viewpoint ‘Man’ must always obtain more than what he gives back to the rest of ‘nature’, and ultimately, the balance sheet must yield a

³¹¹ Juan Julian Caballero cited in Ortiz Castro 2006, 69-70.

³¹² Ortiz Castro 69-71.

³¹³ Ortiz Castro 2006, 71-73.

‘positive’ number in favor of ‘Man’ (or the ‘Human’ in its gender inclusive version). A profit must be extracted from each transaction with other humans as much as with each encounter with ‘nature’ treated as a ‘resource’, objectified and often later commodified (when the ‘market’ logic prevails). In its most anthropocentric extremes, ‘Man’ is believed to have a ‘right’ to treat the whole of nature and the cosmos as a resource from which to extract profit without ever giving anything back. Many Westerners (and the Westernized) see the Mesoamerican economy, often pejoratively, as merely a ‘subsistence economy.’ But this is an interpretation that undervalues Mesoamerica on the basis of a Eurocentric standard and language—an interpretation that obscures the vices of a growth/profit driven economy. As Lenkersdorf retorts from a critical Indigenous (Maya) viewpoint, a profit-driven economy can be characterized as a massive King Midas,

Hence King Midas can be actualized and personified, he transformed all that he touched in gold, but died of hunger. The hunger for profit is manifested in our days in the climate/environmental crisis. People speak of the need to drastically reduce the production of carbon dioxide. But in Alberta, Canada, boreal forests of the size of Florida are cut down in order to elevate the production of oil and hence augmenting in extraordinary fashion the generation of greenhouse gases. That is why the US and Canada do not subscribe to the agreements to reduce the production of these gases. There is more interest in the augmentation of profits and the global oil hegemony, even when this accelerates the destruction of the Earth as humanity’s habitat.³¹⁴

Mesoamericans, in contrast, question growth and profit as the organizing principles of a viable political economy and instead believe in reciprocity among humans and between humans and the rest of the Cosmos and as part of the balance inscribed in biocosmic cycles: what is taken from the Earth must be given back, literally and very strictly re-cycled. Work is not undertaken to extract a profit at the expense of the Earth or an other, but rather as simply a basic ‘metabolic’ manifestation of biocosmic duality: now it is the human’s turn to consume from the Earth, but later it is the Earth’s turn to consume from humanity—and if humanity tries to consume the Earth itself (or as a whole), it shall be the Earth’s turn to consume the whole of humanity (remember what is done to the ‘humans of wood’ in the *Popol Vuh*). A Mesoamerican economy can only grow if it is reciprocal and biocommunal growth: every economic transaction must be

³¹⁴ Lenkersdorf 2008, 40,

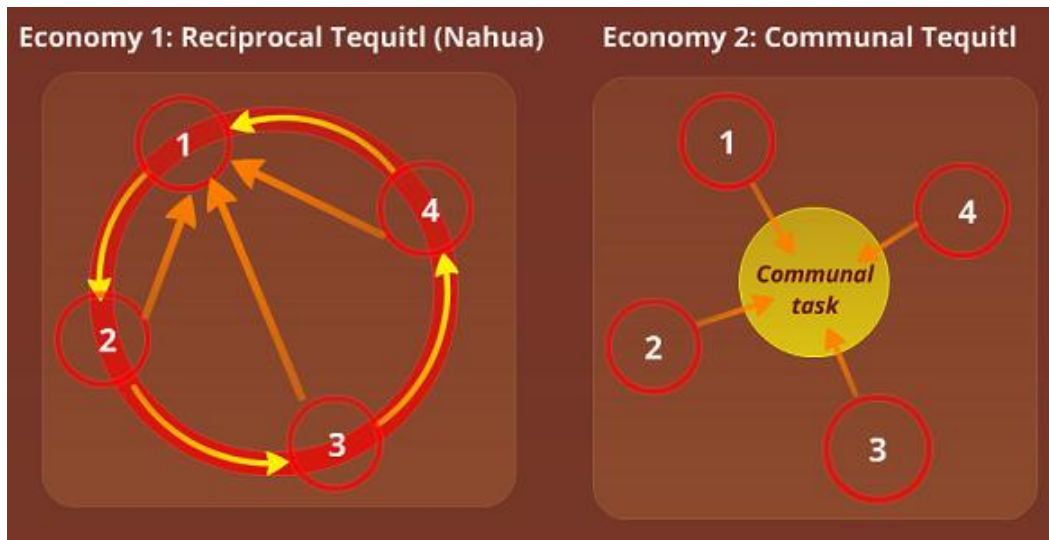
reciprocated, not through money, but directly through our own effort (but it must be understood that growth is not at all the paramount value: cyclical renewal and balance is more valuable to Mesoamericans).

A beautiful example is found in community labor (known as *tequitl* in Nahua or the Hispanicized *tequio*). In a given community at one point a family could have the need to build a house. Whenever that occurs, the rest of the community must share the *burden* (again as part of the cycle of relayed burdens): the whole community must help the needy family with labor and/or whatever else they can contribute. But that favor is accounted for in a communal registry. The calendar comes back around and in the next cycle a different family might need to build a barn. So the family that was originally helped by the community has the responsibility to make sure that the whole community comes back together to help build the other family's barn. The same goes for communal projects, such as roads, or major infrastructural projects, when needed. Also, deposits³¹⁵ for communal goods and services available to everybody who cooperates are held and people relay responsibilities over them. In that case, the community must come together to cooperate, and it is not well perceived to send somebody else instead of going there oneself to cooperate; sending money is seen as the last option (only for dispossessed and displaced migrants), and is badly perceived if it is sent repetitively.

The following figure offers simplified diagrammatic illustrations of two common types of communal labor or *tequio* economy:

³¹⁵ See Maldonado. 1994; 2002, 396.

Figure 3: Tequio



The same goes in relationship to non-human or rather more-than-human communality. Any human community that takes something from the land, such as trees for wood, must never conceive of that as a legitimate extraction of resources from an ‘inert’ land (or forest or waters or skies); rather, it must realize that whatever is taken from the land is accounted for in a biocosmic registry that will have to be cycled back and balanced out through some form of reciprocal act in favor of the forest and the wider ecosystem. If it is not given back, and just taken, the ecosystem will justifiably come back to settle the scores in some way, for instance, by taking away the protection that trees grant to crops which will then be exposed to deadly and chilling winds or massive hailstorms or excessive sunlight that will dry them out. In fact, this lack of reciprocity in regard to humanity’s global relation with forests has led to unprecedented levels of soil erosion as a consequence of the eroding protection that forests once offered especially in the context of multi-crop economies like Mesoamerican milpas³¹⁶ (which have themselves been swept away by the hegemony Westernized monocrop growth- and profit-driven systems).³¹⁷

³¹⁶ *Milpa*: small self-sufficient multi-crop space that usually feeds an extended family. It is an agricultural space where Mesoamericans replicate the workings of the larger ecosystem in miniature so to speak to produce a great variety of crops in a small space without disturbing the biocommunal multi-species biodiverse logic of the biota. It stems from the understanding that all species are interdependent and the continuity of vitality depends on complementary diversities

Brought to the macropolitical level, the world could learn much from a cosmoexperience that sets aside the hegemony of a political economy based on the sanctity of property or ownership over the Earth and the cosmos (whether individual, collective, national or human-species/planetary property, “private” or “public”—it is ownership all the same), and that also sets aside the obsession with exacting profit at the expense of human and other-than-human others. We live in a world where the needs of others are not conceived as a burden to be shared by all, in which satisfying the self-centric or state-centric or anthropocentric needs of an individual “I” or egotistic “We” or “Us” is seen as legitimate far and above the responsibility to the global and cosmic biocommunity. A time will come when this will have to change, and much sooner rather than later. The “people of wood” that we have become will have to realize that the Earth and the cosmos is not an object at our disposal that can be owned and manipulated, and that other peoples’ and species’ needs demand the communal and reciprocal responsibility of the global biocosmic community. We hence need to build a post-anthropocentric global communality. But as Mayanist philosopher Lenkersdorf argues, in order to do so we must first learn to

understand what is being said to us. From “outside,” since we [should] not only listen to the words of others, rather we [should] listen, at the same time, to nature which speaks to us, which sustains us, which caresses us and, sometimes, unsettles us. We lack this listening to her [i.e., nature] in all its manifestations, because *we are part of her and in no way are we owners of her to manipulate her.*³¹⁸

In concrete terms, an alternative that is crucial to ponder, for instance, is the possibility of a *global tequio*. A simple and different global political economy based on the reciprocal, communal, and cyclical collaboration in which peoples gather together to solve others needs in turn, relaying burdens calendrically amongst each other. Mesoamericans have shown that there is

(hence monocrops are ecologically unsound). For instance, some plants and animals (like humans themselves) need the shade from larger plants to survive, while the larger plants need the residue of the smaller plants and animals. Together they all can produce a great diversity of nutrients. Separated in monocrops, they become ‘lonely’ as Mesoamericans say, and die. Mesoamericans have always understood that all species need other companion species to flourish—there are no exceptions (certainly not humans).

³¹⁷ See also Varese 1996; Varese and Chirif 2006; 2007, 219.

³¹⁸ Lenkersdorf 2008, 45 emphasis added.

little need for money in a community like that, even if it is a ‘global village’. There is only the need for an account of the favors we owe to each other and to those who need them, and the reciprocity that those who receive the benefits of communal work owe to the rest of the community, coupled with a calendrical organization of our successive responsibilities to each other, including our other-than-human companions. Practically speaking, one could think of something quite basic: communities coming to identify the location of need, and the gathering at that location to help solve the need. Each group in turn can be the recipient of communal help. It is not utopian, it has been practiced by Mesoamericans for millennia and to this day it is practiced by many communities such as the Neo-Magonista autonomous communities of Oaxaca, the Maya communities of the Yucatan peninsula and Central America or the Nahua and other groups of central Mexico. Many *mestizo* communities still partly foster these practices as well.

There is nevertheless a question: what would be the value of the modern Western-styled polity in a global tequio economy—if any? Perhaps this is where the modern polity can redeem itself—if only to some extent, and as long as it embraces its transience. The subjectivity of the ‘imagined community,’ the polity, can serve to globally coordinate the communal work in favor of the communities that need it. Profit aside, polities, corporations and humans in general should cease to work as apparatuses and machines of land appropriation, resource extraction, surplus accumulation (especially when without equitable redistribution) and profit maximization—that is, they must cease to ‘grow’ at the expense of human and other-than human others. Instead they must gather into an assembly of communal collaboration where burdens can be reciprocally shared to solve a human or non-human other’s need—and in turn the favor will be reciprocated. But how is human civilization ever to reciprocate for all which it has taken from the rest of the Earthly biocosmic community? That is a question that we must now start to think about, lest we are willing to halt the transit of cosmic time once and for all or relay our responsibility over cosmic existence to another life-form much sooner than we were expecting to.

So how can we summarize this Mesoamerican contribution to a comparative political theory oriented towards alternative paths for constructing a global village? Mixtec Philosopher

Ortiz Castro³¹⁹ helps us answer this question on the basis of his reflections upon the words of Oaxacan-Mixtec thinker Abraham Castellanos. Like Zapata, who was of mixed (*mestizo*) Nahua ancestry, Castellanos prompts us towards a cyclical “return to the beloved flower: the motherland,” *Nuestra Madrecita la Tierra*, Our Dearest Little Mother Earth, in Zapata’s terms, the “birthplace of our ancestors.” Such a cyclical return, Castellanos insists, “is crucial because therein lies regeneration [renewal, recycling] not just of certain peoples” like the Mesoamerican and other Indigenous peoples or of certain humans, “but finally of the peoples of the world;” “it is a passage from a particular to a universal homeland,” to “the communal, the cosmic community.” In such “planetary community all, for being children [of the Earth], are protected.” Moreover, “it is the great family” embracing also the other-than-human. “And as occurs in the micro-community: all do *tequio*, all practice hospitality, there is mutual aid, they reproduce solidarity, endorse cooperation, the communal assembly is the rule, the enjoyment of the fiesta is common,” burdens are relayed and shared, “there is no mine or thine,” as Abraham Castellanos projected, “because the idea of communal responsibility for Earth is de facto equal as here, that is, the lands of the commons” where “communal responsibility” reigns in the “Common Home,” the house not just of the “human family,” but of the Cosmic Family. Such is the Mesoamerican *sentipensar* or way of feeling-thinking.

In Lieu of a Conclusion: A Call for an *Other* Cosmopolitics

The limit of future work is set by losses long past. The tragedy of the European invasion of Mesoamerican is best characterized...in a single line from *Maya Cosmos* by Linda Schele: “*Hom*, the old K’ichean word for ‘ballcourt,’ is now the word for ‘grave.’”³²⁰

—Earl Shorris, *In the Language of Kings: An Anthology of Mesoamerican Literature—Pre-Columbian to the Present*.

There is no possible way in which a single work can make up for the centuries of grave-digging that have come upon Mesoamerican civilization/s. The wisdom that humanity has lost to

³¹⁹ Ortíz Castro 2006, 141-142.

³²⁰ Shorris in León Portilla and Shorris 2001, xxvii.

the insistence to bury and forget a great many civilizations may never be recovered in whole. But what is lost to our injustices is not lost without consequence. The expansion of the modern world order started out through the subjugation of the Indigenous peoples of Abya-Yala, Cemanahuac (continent circumvented by waters in Nahuatl), or 'the Americas'. The ethnocentric and anthropocentric views that serve as the basis of our ecologically parasitic modern civilization have served also as the very 'legitimation' for the subjugation of the Indigenous peoples of Abya-Yala and of other places. This domination has come at the price of the global ecological crisis. It is precisely the ignorance of the lessons which the dominant civilization could have learned from Abya-Yalan and in this case Mesoamerican peoples which eventually has led it to its current crisis. As in this case, everything which is buried by injustice comes at a cost which we pay unless we reciprocate the measure of injustice with a balancing justice. As is the case of the buried Abya-Yalan wisdom which in this work an attempt is being made to recover, revalorize and revitalize, the same will be the case with any other wisdom(s) buried by the pretenses and violences of power and dominion: the wisdom of all that have been subjected or ignored—of the female, of all the colonized, all the non-Western, the non-human, the non-logocentric and many other Others.

For now, this work can serve only as the rudiments of what a work of civilizational archeological recovery and revitalization can do for world politics. I have presented these rudiments as just a first step into what would be the contribution of Mesoamerican civilizations to a committedly *global* comparative philosophy and comparative political theory that is attuned to the problems of our age: problems caused precisely by what we have buried and ignored. Admittedly, this work depends on the efforts of many others, as well as on tremendous simplifications since it attempts to translate what is uncanny to a Euro-centric worldview, but nevertheless, this is perhaps the only way to start opening up to a truly cosmopolitical world: a world in which we can recognize and cultivate a reciprocally responsible politics among a plurality of different cosmologies and cosmoexperiences. In the words of the Neo-Zapatistas "the

support we are demanding...is for the building of a new world where many worlds fit.”³²¹ Or rather a cosmopolis in which many cosmologies, cosmovisions and cosmoexperiences can share and create a better life together.³²² As Marcos puts it,

The Indigenous movement... is not trying to return to the past, nor to maintain the unfair pyramid of society, changing only the skin color of the one who mandates and rules from above. ... The struggle of the Indian peoples ... is not pointing backward. In a linear world, where above is considered eternal and below inevitable, the Indian peoples ... are breaking with that line and pointing toward something that is yet to be deciphered but that is already new and better... “a world where many worlds fit”³²³

To better understand what this sort of cosmopolitics entails it is valuable to consider the words of Carlos Lenkersdorf who spent a great part of his life living with Maya communities and indeed gradually becoming a welcomed part of them—he became Mayanized. Lenkersdorf constantly reminded us of the necessity to recognize “the plurality of cosmovisions” and cosmoexperiences and to practice a deliberate and conscious pluralism that further cultivates this plurality of cosmovisions, cosmoauditions, and cosmoexperiences, enabling fruitful interactions among them so as to foster a viable cosmopolitical world. He states:

As we talk of the Maya cosmovision we want to emphasize the plurality of the cosmovisions which demands the recognition that the Western cosmovision...scientific, globalizing, modern, progressive, etc. *is not the only one, nor is it universal*. In effect, it is provincial, it is one among others. Therefore, it must learn to live with the plurality of cosmovisions. To live pluralism in all aspects, cultural, political, social, etc. demands modesty, tolerance, mutual respect and the recognition of the limitations of our view, of our manner of arranging society and life.³²⁴

Drawing also from the arguments of contemporary Mixtec philosopher Ignacio Ortiz Castro this work proposes a cosmopolitics that is also “about eliminating the homogenization and the hegemonization of a unique cosmovision in the world as well as its effects.”³²⁵ In this regard it is important as Magallon notes, that we must remember that

³²¹ Marcos 2007, 213.

³²² Lenkersdorf 1999; 2002a; 2004a.

³²³ Marcos 2007, 188.

³²⁴ Lenkersdorf 1999, 21-22 emphasis in the original.

³²⁵ Ortíz Castro 2006a, 107.

Western philosophy, reason, culture and universality is not the oeuvre of a rational free communication, but rather of domination and violence, since access to the universal culture by other peoples and ethnicities in the world has signified the alienation of other forms of life, of existence and of philosophy and culture. Because of that, in face of the hegemonic role of domination of the Western European culture, there must be an insistence on the value of cultural plurality from the multiplicity of historical, social, ethnic and cultural horizons.³²⁶

The building of a viable cosmopolis depends on the fostering of a disposition to assure that the “plurality” and “multiplicity” of horizons are allowed to flourish and interact within the parameters of mutual respect and collaboration. But in order to achieve this mutual respect that would allow for actual cosmopolitical collaboration we first need to overcome the myth that all valuable thought (e.g., “philosophy”) and practice (e.g., “democracy”) can be traced back to its origin in Greece and exclusively there, from which it presumably unfolded through the times of Rome directly into modern Europe and from there into the rest of the world through colonialism, modernization/Westernization and then globalization. As Ortiz Castro points out, in order to build a global cosmopolitical dialogue we first need to acknowledge that

*...there is not one unique place of birth of philosophy [or wisdom or politics, etc.], that is, that Greece is the birthplace is a myth...The assumption that that cultures are philosophical spaces, since they facilitate specific practices of philosophizing, implies the necessity to de-Westernize philosophy from its logocentric and ethnocentric origin and locate *the West in its place*, in the sense that it is “not the place of all the possible philosophy, but rather the place of certain possibilities of philosophy.” (Raul Fonet Betancourt) But such de-Westernization will be clearer and incontestable when, paraphrasing [Abraham] Castellanos, there will openly emerge the manifestation, when...this sea of ideas breaks its Westernizing chains, then Europe will not say the last word...but rather its word with our word in a philosophical dialogue; dialogue that will have to be horizontal and of cooperation...as it feedbacks for both parts.³²⁷*

But the overcoming of Euro/Western-centrism should not lead us into the reification of a small club of major ‘civilizational actors/players’ either. Instead, we must seek an *other* cosmopolitics that is relentlessly open to alternative cosmoexperiences, including those of buried, silenced, and marginalized civilizations and of civilizations to come.

³²⁶ Magallon in Ortíz Castro 2006a, xv.

³²⁷ Ortíz Castro 2006a, 11.

To speak of an *other* cosmopolitics “is not theoretical stuff, of the head,” as Lenkersdorf argues; rather “it has political, social, cultural, religious repercussions.” Concretely, it means “the end to the idea that it is only One who knows and determines.” Moreover, “We do not refer to visions” or experiences “that are either superior or inferior we rather affirm the plurality of profoundly differentiated cosmovisions” and cosmoexperiences.³²⁸ A recognition of the plurality of cosmovisions and cosmoexperiences “represents the end of monisms, monotheisms, monarchies, presidentialisms, and also the end of the single truth(s).” Lenkersdorf further explains the sort of humble disposition needed to cultivate a cosmopolitics by critically discussing Plato’s myth of the cave; illustratively insisting that our emerging cosmopolis should be populated by wandering “cave(wo)men”:

Said within the framework of the myth of the cave, when leaving the cave of the enchained we do not find the true light which makes us see the true things which disqualifies all things seen with anteriority. None of that; when leaving the cave we enter another cave. There are, then, many caves. We are cave(wo)men and little by little we commence to become acquainted with the other companions or sibling cave(wo)men. We are at the basics. We have much to learn.³²⁹

And as Lenkersdorf warns, building such a cosmopolis is no easy task. We face various challenges. First:

The problem of how to approximate an other cosmovision lies before us. The problem is double, how to leave *our* cave and how to enter the cave of another cosmovision. It is a challenge because it relativizes all our convictions, it interpellates us, it shakes us and conducts us to ignored realities and truths, sometimes repressed, up until now.³³⁰

But we also face a second challenge, namely the policing of the dominant cosmovision by the hegemonic powers. As Lenkersdorf warns:

We would like to underline that the theme of cosmovisions can result dangerous. Socrates was not the last victim. The Holy Office or the Inquisition, the Security Polices of the State, the CIA, the Gestapo, the GPU [the Soviet State Political Directorate], and all their inheritors continue in the defense of the One accepted [and dominant] cosmovision and cosmoexperience.³³¹

³²⁸ Lenkersdorf 1999, 35.

³²⁹ Lenkersdorf 1999, 22-23.

³³⁰ Lenkersdorf 1999, 22-23.

³³¹ Lenkersdorf 1999, 23-24.

Such policing of cosmovisions has especially affected Mesoamerica for as the author of the celebrated *La Filosofía Nahuatl: Estudiada en sus Fuentes*,³³² Miguel León Portilla notes in the introduction to his expansive anthology of Mesoamerican literature (*In the Language of Kings*), “It has taken many years, and cost much blood and suffering in an as yet unresolved struggle,” for the contemporary (settler) states of the Americas “to recognize their multicultural and plurilinguistic identity,” and indeed to recognize themselves as perpetuating and expanding the structures of Eurocentric coloniality. Moreover,

this is not exceptional in the world today. Global cultural trends induced by hegemonic powers—nation-states and transnational corporations—tend to homogenize worldviews, beliefs and moral values. The method now relies heavily on technology, but the damage to...cultures bears a strong resemblance to the aims of the colonial empires of earlier centuries.³³³

These two challenges call for ways through which we can overcome the hegemonic homogenization of cosmoexperiences or what we could here call *cosmohegemony*. Lenkersdorf, from a Maya viewpoint, gives quite a few valuable ideas on how to resist and overcome this cosmohegemony; he argues that we must *disarm* ourselves:

Disarming ourselves transforms the vision of the world that we have constructed: [under cosmohegemony] we are surrounded by enemies, terrorists, narcos, and dangerous people in general. We must hence prepare ourselves to defend ourselves and vanquish others. This is the cosmovision of competitiveness, of living in a hostile context. War is imposed to us and in order to avoid it we must initiate preventive war with all the consequences we see in Iraq. [Yet] Disarmed, we are already in another reality. We are not surrounded by enemies but potential siblings. We do not seek confrontations but complementarity. We are in the context of the...Maya people...³³⁴

But how can we disarm ourselves? Literally, from a Mesoamerican viewpoint, the opening of a cosmopolitical field results from the disarming our ‘self’, that is, doing away with the ontological primordialism that constructs the world as a function of an onto-logized ego. In order

³³² This title was translated into English and published under the misguided title *Aztec Thought and Culture*. As was discussed, the Aztecs were only one cultural manifestation of a very ancient and much broader Nahua civilization. A more appropriate translation for the title of this work would be simply Nahuatl Philosophy: As Studied in its Sources.

³³³ León Portilla and Shorris 2001, 15.

³³⁴ Lenkersdorf 2008, 53.

to do this, we can enter the Mesoamerican cosmoexperience. As Ortiz Castro³³⁵ puts it from a Mixtec viewpoint, the Mesoamerican cosmoexperience “does not privilege the poles of an opposition but rather the harmonic integration between them.” As was noted from a Nahua viewpoint, the supreme constitutive force of the cosmos is not the One, but rather the fertile creativity of an ambivalent complementary uniduality, or what the Nahua called *Ometeotl*. Hence, from a Mesoamerican viewpoint “the good is only possible in the framework of this necessary dualism.” This “Cosmic dualism” is tied to and depends upon an “Ethical Dualism” where “two cosmic forces” are always and already “permeating all”: we must always recognize ourselves as an other to the others. As Ortiz Castro further explains, it is through the “cognitive exercise of the ethical-dual” that “it is possible to contemplate what is convenient or perhaps less noxious not only for the dominated but also for the dominator, with a view to finally eliminate this obscuring dominion, this obscurity for the human species...” and replace it with “*Tu’un va’a* (the good word) as that which is convenient”³³⁶: a poetics that can only be woven from the relational dualism of cosmic transience because “...cosmic dualism and human history run together.”³³⁷ This requires that the cosmos be understood as a field of interacting, mutually necessary, and complementary ambivalences: “Contrary forces, even when antagonic, complement each other; even though mutually exclusive, they necessitate each other.” Setting aside the notion of a *Universe* ultimately traceable to the One Being and One Truth and embracing an experience of a transient cosmos as the cyclical recurrence of (re)creative ambivalences sharing a communal existence is one way to start building a viable cosmopolis.

So how precisely can we build the conditions for cosmopolitical global living? Mayanist and Mayanized philosopher Carlos Lenkersdorf has seven interesting suggestions worth considering:

³³⁵ Ortiz Castro 2006a, 83, 110.

³³⁶ Ortiz Castro 2006a, 133

³³⁷ Ortiz Castro 2006, 114

1. We need to recognize, especially in regard to the dominant cosmovision, both the relativity and limitations of cosmovisions. Said in other terms, we need to seriously live the sociocultural and political pluralism.
2. We need to learn from the aboriginal and Indigenous peoples whom everyone sought to give lessons to. This learning refers to cosmovisions, but not only to that. Indigenous peoples have much to teach the world and to contribute to, especially given the situation of Western crisis.
3. When learning from Indian peoples, we need to realize that the cause of the so-called Indigenous problem is not the Indians but the dominant society...for not having recognized and embraced the Indians as brothers. What is lacking thus is to learn to live in community.
4. We need to acquire conscience of the relationship between cosmovisions and cosmoexperiences.
5. We need to accept and support the awakening of the Indigenous peoples across the world, seek the dialogue, and exercise wisdom in knowing how to live as members of the [bio]cosmic community, and they expect reciprocity on the part of the dominant society; they expect the same reciprocity that they receive from all other biocosmic subjects.
6. We need to acknowledge the validity of so-called 'animism' from the Western perspective, which is an integral part of Mesoamerican and other Indigenous cosmovisions. Its presence interpellates the hegemonic society in relation with all else, humans and animals, plants and minerals and all other so-called 'things'. The reason is that 'animism', bearer of the intersubjective perspective, changes reality. It puts us in our place as a species among others in the biocosmic context and also from the epistemological perspective. The world continues being the same, but by perceiving and living in an *other* way this world makes us see that it is a living organism and that each one of us is not as unique as we imagined. In this other Mesoamerican cave [in contrast to the Greco-Roman-Euro-Western cave] there are eyes that see us and whose existence we have not even acknowledged; these eyes that await us and whose hope we have defrauded. They are the eyes of mountains and springs, of clouds and soils, of furniture and 'disposables'. The eyes of Mother Earth.
7. We must not deceive ourselves: Western societies are living a crisis which...becomes visible in many ways, social, political, economic, etc. It is a crisis that does not add just one more issue among many others that are already known; rather, it is a crisis that questions the actual configuration of all the forces and factors. At a socio-political level, the crisis was made particularly present with the Indian uprising of the Mayas of Chiapas. The rebellion of the Maya Indians of Chiapas is the uprising of the 'objects' that decried: With what right have you converted us into objects? Enough already! That is, it is not about a local problem of a few of municipalities, but about...an international problem. The dominant societies are divisive. There are those who mandate, the subjects, and those who are mandated, the objects. And it is the objects who have commenced to raise their voice because they no longer accept being objects. They ask: why have you converted us into objects?³³⁸

Additionally, to build a cosmopolitics it is also relevant to ponder the Mixtec philosophy or "*Ñuu Savi*." This philosophy grants significant value to hospitality or "*Nakundeku tnaae*". From a Mixtec viewpoint, we must always show hospitality to others because we are all siblings, children of the Earth or *ñani-ku'va*. So even though we have differences and particularities, whoever enters a Mixtec community is welcome, and even if only in passing—as we all ultimately are—that person becomes part of the community since we are all *children of Mother Earth*. Also,

³³⁸ Lenkersdorf 1999, 64-67.

from a broader Mesoamerican viewpoint, since we are only in passing in this life and shall ultimately return to the womb of Mother Earth, nobody can own the world or pieces of her, or assume it to be his/her/their exclusive home(land). Indeed, not even ‘our’ bodies are permanent homes; at most, they are just in passing abodes of the cyclically transmuting cosmic energy that constitutes our actual existence.

As Nezahualcoyotl once sang to his friends, who like him were princes, not being a prince myself and with no intention to become one I nevertheless sing to the princes of today,

My friends, stand up!
The princes have become destitute,
...Not here is our house,
we do not live here,
[Even] you [the princes] will also have to go away.³³⁹

As all Mesoamericans acknowledge, in this Earth is the place of passing sojourn, of a ceaselessly transmuting cosmic energy, and the least that can be done as we pass and become, is to share the flowers that we cultivate and the songs we chant while in transit and transformation.³⁴⁰

Hence, I would like to make a proposal to close Part I of this dissertation; this proposal complements those about Indigenous cosmopolitics already made above. I would like to articulate in Indigenous terms, the character of an emerging form of cosmopolitics which could be called *Olinopolis*, the emergence of a cosmopolitical mode of global life that subverts the sedentary fundamentalism that underpins all hegemonic forms of human civilizational organization ever since the dawn of the Anthropocene epoch that can be roughly traced to the establishment and rise to predominance of *fully* sedentary agricultural (excluding the semi-sedentary/semi-nomadic like the Maya) and post-agricultural—e.g., industrial—(yet also predominantly sedentary) modes of life. *Olin-No-Polis*: *Olin* is Nahuatl for movement or flux, *Polis* is Greek for city, city-state, state (including nation-state as polity or any sort of state), citizenship, or body of citizens; and the “*No*” in between *Olin* and *Polis* in *Olin-No-Polis* stands for negation in more than a few languages, that

³³⁹ León Portilla 2001, 149-150.

³⁴⁰ see Ortíz Castro 2006, 63, 114.

is, the negation of the state and the polis (as well as their constitutive notions of citizen/alien, inside/outside, etc.) by the movement and flux of those who have No Polis, No Polity, No State, No Home and No sedentary Homeland; most who have been uprooted by the advance of anthropocentric ‘civilization.’

Oinopolis cannot be located, or placed as an entity with a delimited identity; nor can it be identified as an entity in some Cartesian plane or in the conventional impatience to arrest the contingency of flux through the monitoring and surveillance technologies and techniques wielded by the geopolitical eye of power. *Olinopolis* cannot be an enclosed box or a bounded space delimited by borders or walls (whether of stone or status) wherein some would be included while others excluded. *Olinopolis* emerges as the unfolding movement of life and possibilities which cannot be held down by the territorial, demographic, and biopolitical claims of the sedentary fundamentalism and anthropocentric domination that underpins all hegemonic modes of human civilization such as the Westphalian system of states and many other primarily sedentary modes and orders that would partake in the upholding of state and state-like modes of human reproduction based on such distinctions as the captive citizen and the alienated foreigner or on anchored andro-phallogocentric fixations to a firm center, head or capital (*cap* is Latin for head, as in head of state, head of (the) polis, head of police, head of homeland, head of household and so on).

Olinopolis refers not just to the exponentially growing multitude of the landless, homeless and home-land-less migrants, refugees and displaced individual and collective bodies of humans,³⁴¹ the uprooted indigenous, abjected and rendered faceless by the apparatuses and practices of anthropocentric civilization and its colonially expansive sedentary fundamentalism; *olinopolis* recognizes the face and personhood of the indeterminable human *and* other-than-human life-forms (other-than-human species and whole biotas) and dynamics (e.g., ecosystems) who have been deprived of both a home/hood and a personhood under the expansive claims to sovereignty

³⁴¹ I am very grateful for having the privilege to listen to Prof. Camilo Pérez Bustillo concerning the growth of what we could call here a class defined precisely by their home(land)lessness: the “peoples in movement.” His work is a great inspiration to the idea of *olinopolis*.

of anthropocentrically organized homelands under statecraft that serve to uphold and perpetuate international and global forms of sedentary statehood. The possibility of a global cosmopolis is being preceded by the actual rise of *olinopolis*. Hence, the cosmopolis to come should, among other things, open up to become a global homeland for the global homeless, the uprooted indigenous for, as Mesoamericans have taught us, in this cosmos we are but indigent orphans always already in transit, always already passing away: we are all temporary embodiments of cyclically transmuting cosmic energy.

* * *

PART II

COSMOPOLITICS FROM THE *PACHA*:

ANDEAN CONTRIBUTIONS TO COMPARATIVE POLITICAL THEORY, INTER-CIVILIZATIONAL RELATIONS AND WORLD POLITICS

To design a society with/in the biospheric continuum, behold here the challenge of the era of knowledge and information. And, oh good news! The Indigenous Andean “model of the ayllu” and perhaps even the “Inka model,” have been and still are political models with/in the biospheric continuum. I know that this perspective horrifies many. I, however, surmise, indeed I glimpse it as the promised Earth of the Twenty-First Century, but I know that I will not walk on it; and yet that does not excuse me from the lucidity and the lunacy of announcing its advent.

—Javier Medina, *Suma Qamaña, Por Una Convivialidad Post-Industrial*³⁴²

To Live Well is to live in plenitude, with the wisdom to live in harmony and equilibrium...in harmony and equilibrium with the cycles of Mother Earth, of the cosmos, of life and of history, and in equilibrium with and with permanent respect for all forms of existence

—Fernando Huanacuni Mamani, *Buen Vivir/Vivir Bien: Filosofía, Políticas, Estrategias y Experiencias Regionales Andinas*.³⁴³

³⁴² Medina 2006, 180. The title of the work can be translated as Life in Plenitude: For a Post-Industrial Conviviality. *Suma Qamaña* broadly means Life in Plenitude or Living Well or Plentiful Vitality in Aymara. The concept will be extensively discussed throughout this work.

NOTE ON TRANSLATIONS: The vast majority of source that are cited, referred to, and quoted throughout Part II are originally in Spanish; translations into English are very rarely available. Hence, when quoting any source originally in Spanish, the translation is my own, unless specified.

³⁴³ Huanacuni Mamani 2010, not paginated. <http://www.reflectiongroup.org/stuff/vivir-bien>. The title of this excellent work of Andean philosophy and political/global theory can be translated as Living Well: Philosophy, Politics, Strategies and Experiences from the Andes.

Introduction to Part II

The purpose of Part II of this dissertation is to discuss the Andean civilizational spirit or élan by elaborating on some of its constitutive geo-cultural, philosophical, economic, and political dimensions and by offering some illustration of how these dimensions have become manifest historically and in contemporary times through a variety of practices at the local, national, regional and global levels. This discussion is intended as a contribution to Indigenous philosophy and politics, to comparative political theory and comparative philosophy, and to the study and practice of inter-civilizational relations and global affairs. In consideration of our contemporary global challenges, this work is guided by two main concerns, namely, social and ecological justice. However, the ‘social’ and the ‘ecological’ will not be treated separately for, as this chapter will show, from within the Indigenous worldview and, in this case, the specifically Andean cosmoexperience, there can be no legitimate division or hierarchy between the ‘social’ and the ‘ecological’ as existence unfolds in a ‘socio-bio-eco-cosmic continuum’,³⁴⁴ that constitutes a single cosmopolitical community; to differentiate this broader cosmopolitical community from more narrow and anthropocentric understandings this work articulates the concept of the post-anthropocentric and post-human cosmopolitical community, within which ‘humanity’ is just one of many possible embodiments of cosmic energy, one of many participants with responsibilities in the materialization of biocosmic harmony and justice. Henceforth, the guiding concern of this chapter is the question of justice as the post-anthropocentric equilibrium that constitutes a bio-eco-cosmopolitical community.

Part II of this dissertation includes four sections in addition to this brief introduction.

Section 1 will discuss ‘the Andes’ as a geocultural civilizational élan; this section seeks an answer to the question: what is to be understood as ‘Andean’ or as the ‘Andes’? Section 2 is

³⁴⁴ The concept of the biospheric continuum comes from Javier Medina; I am extending it to bio-eco-cosmic continuum to make its implications more explicit. See Medina 2008, 20; Medina about Torrez 2008, 59, 62-63; San Martin 2008, 147-148; Medina 2008, 181, 187, 188-189; Pauca and Rafayle 2007, 11, 14; Yampara and Subirats 1996, 50-51; Medina in Yampara 2001, 24; Yampara 2005, 22, 28-29; Medina 2006, 112-115, 174, 180; Miranda Luizaga 1996, 20.

predominantly ‘theory’ oriented, it entails an in depth discussion of the philosophical, economic, and political infrastructures that make up the basic constitution of Andean modes of civilizational thought, organization, and practice. This section will draw on the long historical and contemporary tradition of Andean philosophical, political and economic thought and practice to theorize a model of Andean civilizational organization. Section 3 illustrates the growing efforts at recovering, revalorizing, and reconstructing Andean modes of thought, organization, and practice by discussing the emerging Indigenous, non/post-anthropocentric, posthuman, and decolonial paradigm of ‘Living Well’ (*Suma Qamaña* in Aymara, *Sumaq Kawsay* in Quechua)³⁴⁵ in various instances in which a deliberate effort at revitalizing, updating, and adapting Andean wisdoms and ways is being undertaken. I will emphasize the cases of Ecuador and Bolivia, as well as their effort to globalize in collaboration with many transnational Indigenous organizations the Andean paradigm of ‘Living Well as an alternative to the Global Crisis.’ In lieu of a conclusion, the last section draws on all previous sections to offer a proposal of how to reshape global governance along the lines of Andean wisdoms and ways and guided by a concern for post-anthropocentric socio-ecological justice. In this last section a model for the reform of global governance inspired on what will be discussed in Sections 1, 2, and 3 is outlined and proposed as an addition to the Indigenous paradigm of Living Well and as a way to help address some of the major local and global crises of our troubled times. In general, this Part contributes throughout every section to the study and practice of politics, inter-civilizational relations, and global affairs, especially from an Indigenous Abya-Yalan, and specifically Andean, perspective.

³⁴⁵ Important note concerning language: Andean linguistics are hybrid and hybridizing. There are no predefined boundaries among Andean languages—and European languages (in this case Spanish) are mixed in as well. For instance, although Aymara and Quechua can be discerned from one another, they share many terms and structures (although Aymara is older and Quechua is said to be born in part as a modification of Aymara in combination with other languages). Moreover, there is also Quechu-Ayamara and there is a great many variations of Quechua such as northern Andean Kichwa. Hence, many terms here used are terms that have been underlined as of philosophical import and in every case Andean scholars and philosophers or Andinists will be cited as references. So, unless specified, these terms are of Quechu-Ayamara origin.

1. The Andes and the Andean Civilizational Élan

It is pertinent to start this part of the dissertation with a seemingly simple question: what is understood as Andean and what is referred to by the concept of ‘the Andes’? The main focus of this dissertation is the recovery, revalorization, and revitalization of *Indigenous* American, ‘Amerindian,’ or Abya-Yalan modes of thought, organization, and practice. The concept of ‘civilizational élan’ which was used in the previous Part concerning Mesoamerica is used again as the guiding spirit throughout the discussions in this second Part. In light of these two parameters what is needed first is to understand what ‘the Andes’ refers to and what is to be understood as ‘Andean’. It therefore becomes rather important to describe the geo-ecological and historical dimensions that constitute the Andean civilizational élan and the cultures and peoples whose long term (millennial) population of the region has earned them the honor to be referred to as Indigenous to it, that is, as Indigenous Andeans or peoples and cultures of Indigenous Andean heritage, ancestry and descent. Let us start with what is to be understood as Andean in its constitutive geo-ecological dimensions. As we will see through Part II on the Andes, a good understanding of the geo-ecological conditions that constitute the Andean region is more than crucial to explain and elaborate on the philosophical, economic, political, organizational and overall civilizational dimensions of the Andean civilizational élan or what Luis Enrique Alvizuri, the contemporary Andean philosopher, refers to as *Andinia*,³⁴⁶ a simpler name for what has come to be recognized as a distinctive mode of civilization. Both for its cultural relevance and its practicality, I will use the term Andinia to articulate the political force of the Andean civilizational élan.

A. The Andes as a Geo-Ecological Area

Geographically, what has come to be known as the Andes is usually identified with the space occupied by the Andean mountain range in what Westernized people call ‘South America’

³⁴⁶ Alvizuri 2004, 11.

or what Indigenous organizations call *Aynacha Abya-Yala*,³⁴⁷ a space that stretches from what is known as ‘Venezuela’ all the way south to what is known as ‘Chile’. As Andeanized³⁴⁸ philosopher Josef Estermann describes it,

What is ‘Andean’ in a geographical and topographical sense refers to the mountainous region of South America which is known as the ‘highland’ part of the continent... The Andes (or the Andean region) extends from Venezuela, through Colombia, Ecuador, Peru and Bolivia down to the northern parts of Argentina and Chile. This geographical space has very particular topographic characteristics. It is a mountainous region with an altitude between 2,000 and 6,900 meters above sea level, partially populated up to about 4,800 meters. Notwithstanding the seemingly adverse climatic conditions, the Andean geographical space, because of its diversity of microclimates and ecological floors, has been for more than ten thousand years a preferred space for humans. This very peculiar situation has made it possible over the course of centuries for various splendid cultures of high civilization to emerge, from which the cultures of the Tiwanakota and Inka [or Enka] have been the best known and most sophisticated.³⁴⁹

The Andes is an extremely particular, perhaps even special part of the Earth. As Alden Mason notably pointed out:

Few regions of the world encompass such contrasts, from sea level to the highest habitable regions: from totally arid deserts to the most luscious tropical rainforests, from invariably hot regions to zones in which ice and snow are eternal. And probably in no other part of the world can there occur similar transitions in such a short space.³⁵⁰

The Andean mountain range has an ‘S’ shape, the shape of a serpent or snake, an *amaru* or *katari*, that moves parallel and close to the Pacific coast of *Aynacha Abya-Yala* on the side of the sunset (*jalanta tuqu* in Aymara), and that borders the Amazon rainforest and the pampas of the southern cone on the side of the sunrise (*jalsu tuqu*). The chain of peaks that makes up the great *amaru/katari* of the Andes is more than just a mountain range; this extensive mountain range is a constitutive geological force that shapes the ecological and therefore also the socioeconomic and

³⁴⁷ See Yampara 2005, 14. *Aynacha Abya-Yala* means South Abya-Yala. *Aynacha* is “South” in Aymara. We remember also that *Abya-Yala* means land in plenitude or land in full maturity in the Kuna language.

³⁴⁸ By Andeanized I mean somebody who has lived among Andean peoples for long enough and with such commitment to be welcome among many Andeans as a companion.

³⁴⁹ Estermann 2008, 143. See also Huanacuni Mamani 2010, not paginated

³⁵⁰ Alden Mason cited in Yampara 2001, 56, 146.

political conditions of most of Aynacha Abya-Yala, and especially of most of the Western half of the continent.

In Indigenous cultures, the serpent stands as the figure of wisdom—such is the case for the *coatl* which is the symbol of Quetzalcoatl and Kukullkan, the high sages of Nahua and Mayan cultures in Mesoamerica. The amaru or katari is similarly relevant to Andeans who often associate it to the figure of Wiracocha, a similarly deified sage crucial to the Indigenous Andean cosmoexperience and culture. Therefore, the amaru or katari serves as an excellent symbol to describe the mountain range of the Andes. The Andes are the source of great wisdom; the peaks themselves stand as symbols for some of the highest divine powers, the *Apus* or high-mountain sage deities.³⁵¹ The mountain range is therefore seen as more than just a geological accident, but as the source of cosmological and organizational wisdom.

Throughout the ages, most of the culture of Aynacha Abya-Yala (‘South America’), especially on the side of the sunset or ‘West’ has been organized in an around the geological force of the Andes mountain ranges. The mountain range shapes most geological characteristics spanning from the coasts of what is known by the Westernized as ‘Peru’ on the side of the sunset to the largest and most important rainforest in the globe, the Amazon. The Andean peaks are the wellspring for one of the most complex natural hydraulic systems in the world, from where stems nothing less than one of the most powerful and ecologically determinant rivers, the Amazon River, itself a geological force of global import. A great many other rivers which are valued as sacred from within the Indigenous cosmoexperience flow from the peaks and their glaciers which embody the force of *Apu Taytacha*, the fatherly deified figure of nature that fertilizes *Pacha-Mama*, the motherly deified figure of the land/Earth, with his sacred water. The peaks therefore are, to reiterate, more than just a geological accident, they are a source of deified energy, a

³⁵¹ See Estermann 1998, 140, 255-256, 272; Estermann 2008, 175-177; Claverias Huerse 1990, 40-41; Renjifo and Grillo 2008, 88-89, 94-95; Medina 2008, 205; CAOÍ, Palacín, Ortíz, Ruiz 2011, 7; CAOÍ, Palacín, Ortíz, Ruiz 2011, 139; Paucca and Rafayle 2007, 38, 40, 64-65; Salomon 2004, 49, 146, 156; Boero Rojo 1991, 133; Pacheco Farfan 1994, 62, 209, 239-240, 247-248; Estermann, personal communication, 1/10/2012; Yampara and Subirats 1996, 50-51, 70

determining force of geo-ecological wisdom, the katari or amaru whose movements in concert with those of Pacha-Mama, procure life for all the inhabitants of the region, whether non-human or human, and those especially on the Western side of South America.

Figure 4: The Andes Mountain Range



Source: Guillermo Romero (Huhsunqu).³⁵²

Key:

Extremo norte: extreme north
Septentrional: northern
Central: central
Centro-sur: south-central
Meridional: southern
Extremo sur: extreme south

³⁵² Availavle online at http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:%C3%81rea_Cultural_Andina.png#filelinks (extracted 4/7/2012)

When a reference is made to the Andean region, therefore, we are not just referring to the mountain range itself, let alone to the peaks exclusively. Rather, we refer to all that is shaped and influenced by the mountain range both on the side of the sunrise and on the side of the sunset. So the Andean region as a geocultural imaginary is often recognized to encompass everything from the Pacific coast of the Atacama Desert to the western side of the Amazon rainforest and the Western pampas of the southern cone. Geoculturally this is what we will refer to as the Andes, not just the mountain range itself, but rather everything from the often dry Pacific coast of ‘South America’ on the side of the sunset, to some of the highest lakes such as the Titikaka and peaks such as the Illimani, the Huascarán, the Chimborazo, and the Aconcagua, and parts of the low Amazonian *yungas* or rainforest and the pampas of the Southern cone on the side of the sunrise.

So when we speak of Andinia we refer to a geocultural region that constitutes a spectacle of ecological diversity that is potentially unparalleled throughout the globe. As Huanacuni Mamani explains,

The Andes constitute one of the regions with the greatest climatic and geomorphological diversity in the world. Given its enormous north-south longitude which extends across all climate zones with diverse vegetation between the equatorial line and Antarctica, just as the great heights from the level of the sea up to the peaks with perpetual snow, it is not surprising that the Andes contains the most extreme range of types of landscapes, climates, and biotic communities of the world.³⁵³

Diversity is therefore the defining characteristic of the Andean ecology. Andinia boasts up to 80% of all the different ecosystems in the whole of the Earth.³⁵⁴ It is therefore appropriate to refer to the region as mega-diverse or even hyper-diverse. Few if any regions of the world show such a contrast of climates. This is due to the tremendous altitudinal variation that can be experienced in extremely short distances. In a matter of days, if not hours, one can walk from the tropical rainforest *yungas* of the Amazon to the high punas of the Andes and from there to the

³⁵³ Huanacuni Mamani 2010, not paginated.

³⁵⁴ Yampara 2005, 14, 130. According to CAOI, Palacín, Ortiz, Ruiz (2011, 42) “the Andean region encompasses 84 of the 114 zones of life and 28 of the 35 climates recognized at the global level. It is megadiverse, with enormous contrasts of microclimates, ecological niches, and a high diversity of culture and knowledges.”

frozen peaks, then down again on the west to the desert coast of 'Peru', in between, one will find valleys filled with fresh water lakes like the Titi-Kaka where great civilizations have emerged and still resist and persist to this day waiting for the right moment for a full-fledged renaissance.

The *hyper-diversity of Andinia* cannot be exaggerated; it shapes ways of thought organization and practice in rather virtuous ways. The combination of diverse altitudinal and latitudinal variations whose transitions are extremely acute can create tremendous contrasts in climate and geo-ecological zones, giving life to an enormous variety of micro climates in between and across the peaks, as well as a marvelous diversity of biomes. The Andes offers what the Indigenous philosophers and scholars Yampara and Torrez call an exceptional site for the study of *orogeobiocenosis*, that is,

The study of the mountains (oro) and the Earth (geo), in relation with the association or collection of distinct symbiotic animal and plant species... which are indispensable for the survival of the community... which inhabits a certain territory (biocenosis)...³⁵⁵

The orogeobiocenosis of the Andes is the constitutive condition for a hyperdiversity that enables the emergence of incredibly complex ways of life. Consider the following description of the Andes by the transnational Indigenous network known as the Andean Coordination of Indigenous Organizations (CAOI for its acronym in Spanish):

The Andes Mountain Range is our home, it is a mountainous chain of 7,250 kilometers of longitude and 240 kilometers broad; it is located near the Pacific coast. It possesses the highest glaciers, from which originate the most important hydrographic basins of the world such as the Amazon and the Orinoco. These territories are the birthplace of our culture which not only left a valuable cultural and technological legacy, in accordance with the [great variety of] ecological floors, but also vegetable species that are essential for the world's nutrition, such as the potato, maize, and other forty essential foods [actually, "about 40% of the plants that are consumed by humanity emerged from ancestral Indigenous Andean [and other Abya-Yalan] genetic engineering and biotechnology"³⁵⁶].... This biological diversity is possible thanks to the environmental conditions generated by the combination of latitudinal and altitudinal gradients. In the mountain range there is a prevalence of mountainous systems that fluctuate between 2,500 and more than 45,000 meters over sea level. In the high mountain region we distinguish the high Andean zone (between 3,000 and 3,500 meters over seal level) and the moorland (between 3,500 and 4,800 meters over seal level). In the low moorland there are forests and shrubs, with many trees and bushes; while in the high moorland zone

³⁵⁵ Yampara and Torrez in Yampara 2005, 89.

³⁵⁶ Yampara 2005, 130. See also Quispe 2000, 224.

vegetation is discontinuous, with much naked soil...The Central Andes concentrate the greatest quantity of Indigenous population in Latin[ized] America. The mountainous ecosystem, whose characteristics were excellently used by the Indigenous Andeans, constitute a source of natural fresh water, biodiversity, and recreation.³⁵⁷

Because of the tremendous biodiversity of life (including human life) that the Andes enables, the mountain range is therefore understood as the embodiment of a wise deity; each of its peaks is an Apu, a creative force that engenders a space where a wealth of climates and modes of organization give life to the cultivation of incredibly rich and complex civilizational modalities.

B. The Andes as a Historical-Cultural Area

The emergence of Andean civilizations is, as will become increasingly clear, profoundly tied to the hyper-diversity of Andinia as a geo-ecological region. The region has given rise to an equally diverse social landscape. Nevertheless, from within the Indigenous cosmoexperience, the social landscape is not to be treated as something distinct from the geo-ecological landscape. From within the Indigenous cosmoexperience, human life forms are just another manifestation of Mother Earth's biodiversity. Strictly speaking therefore, the concept of diversity here should not be understood as either, social or biological, human or ecological, but rather in a non-anthropocentric fashion as diversity plain and simple. The human life form is, in Andean terms, 'walking Earth'. In the long history of Andinia the region has given rise to human life-forms characterized by a hyper-diversity that corresponds to that of the geo-eco-logical conditions. Yet what is most characteristic of this hyper-diversity of the Andes is that diverse Indigenous groups do not live alienated or separated from each other in mutually exclusionary entities (such as states), but rather as interlaced threads in a highly complex and dynamic patchwork of cultures and societies that mutually complement each other.

Historically and culturally, it is widely agreed upon by most Indigenous and non-Indigenous commentators alike that Andinia constitutes a network of life that is knitted tight

³⁵⁷ CAOI, "Reciprocidad para el Buen Vivir", 2.

enough to be understood as a more or less integrated civilizational “rhizome.”³⁵⁸ Most commentators indeed would insist in referring to the Andes as a single civilization, but one whose constitutive characteristic is its interlaced hyperdiversity and complementary heterogeneity. So it should be noted from the start that when referring to Andinia we are not referring to an homogenous entity, nor are we referring to a bounded whole; to the contrary, we are referring to a rhizome or textile of interlaced ties of dynamic complementarity among a diversity of communities that move horizontally, vertically, and transversally, relating to each other in complementary and reciprocal fashion throughout the region of the Andes. Historically speaking the region was never a closed system, at least not until the attempted imposition of Western polities brought about the forced homogenization and Westernization of populations within bounded frontiers of centralized nation-states. To this day, however, neither the age of colonialism nor that of settler colonial republics has been able to erase or fully bend the resistance of the underlying network that makes up the millennial civilization of Andinia, whose history as a civilizational area is traced back at least until the tenth century before the present era of the Judeo-Christian or Western calendar(s).³⁵⁹

Throughout history many societies and modes of civilization have emerged in the region of the Andes. In this work we will not dedicate time to list them or to discuss each of them in detail. We will only point at some markers that give us an understanding of what are the historical-cultural parameters that make up the Andean region. When thinking of the Indigenous Andes what comes to people’s mind is mostly the idea of the so-called ‘Inka Empire’, a structure of power that expanded throughout the Andes during the two centuries (or less) before the arrival of the Iberian invasion. There are many problems with associating the Andes exclusively with the so-called ‘Inka Empire’. Clearly this structure of power had a great influence in the region during the 1400s and early 1500s before the European invasion, but its influence as viewed in the historical, global

³⁵⁸ The concept of the rhizome was explained in the Introduction to this dissertation. See also Deleuze and Guattari 2004, 23-24.

³⁵⁹ Mejía Huamán 2005, 51

and even the regional imaginary about the Andes is rather exaggerated. Most of the cosmological, philosophical, economic, and political infrastructures that make up the Andean civilizational élan precede and survived the time of the Inka, who in many ways only formalized or glued together underlying tendencies which were already actualized or latent. Moreover, five centuries of colonialism and settler colonialism have not managed to disarticulate the underlying infrastructures of Andinia which resist and have gradually regained some of their strength as has become evident from the rise of the Indigenous Aymara leader, Evo Morales, to power in Bolivia and of the Peruvian leader of Quechuan ancestry Ollanta Humala. So when we look closely, much of the infrastructure of Andinia persists, either in a manifest or in an underground or perhaps even a latent fashion, and it is bound to resurface with force sooner or later as it has been evident that the imposition and transplantation of Western ways and structures have never really managed to take root or succeed fully in the area, not even in highly Westernized pockets such as the urban conglomerations of Lima, La Paz, or Quito. And just as Andinia has survived the Western onslaught, even if weakened, it also preceded by a great many centuries the rise of the so-called 'Inka Empire'.

As mentioned, there are many shortcomings in associating Andinia exclusively with the imaginary of the so-called 'Inka Empire'. The almost mythical relevance of the Inka imaginary has had such impact in the global and even regional understanding of the Indigenous Andes that it is worth discussing some of these shortcomings. One of them is that, first of all, the term 'Inka' can be distracting. 'Inka' must be etymologically traced back to 'Enka' which means the link that brings about equilibrium.³⁶⁰ 'Inka' is a term that was applied exclusively to a governing elite; all members of such an elite bore the title of Inka (or perhaps Enka) and the most empowered of them bore the title of the Sapan Inka or High Inka. But the polity that is often referred to in most discourse as the 'Inka Empire' did not call itself that way nor was it called that way by others at

³⁶⁰ Milla Villena 2003. According to Milla Villena 'Enka' comes from a family of terms associated with certain connotations such as "equilibrator" or "equilibrating force," or "harmonizer," "balancer," among other possible translations. As we move the underlying logic of the term will become increasingly evident.

the time. Some Westerners imposed the term ‘Empire’ because they did not understand Andean political organization and sought to reduce it to categories they were familiar with; unable as they were to understand what the responsibilities attached to the term ‘Inka’ (or Enka) were they sought to find in the Sapan Inka the equivalent of a European ‘King’ or ‘Emperor’ with absolutist power. The Inka as Enka was more of an equilibrator and mediator or (inter)linkage between a great diversity of peoples and their energies, an ensurer or procurer of balanced and complementary reciprocity among the “Four Directions of the Sun” (the Tawa-Inti-Suyu) and among all the hyper-diversity of its (human and no-human) constituents. Not understanding the role of the Inka as Enka most Westerners reduced the figure to that of a King or Emperor.

Most Westerners were also unable to understand the highly complex and rather different form of political organization that was actually known by Andeans as the *Tawa-Inti-Suyu* in Quechua (or *Pusi-Suyu* in Aymara) meaning literally the Four-Sun-directions.³⁶¹ Most Westerners were (and have been) also unable (or unwilling) to understand Andean cosmology, philosophy, politics and economics, let alone ecologies or Andean geology. Unable (or unwilling) to understand all this, most Europeans saw in the massive political structure that articulated the Andean region nothing more than an ‘Empire’ when by and large the Tawa-Inti-Suyu could have been better translated (not without some limits) as a confederation of nations articulated into a complex network and brought together sometimes through mutual persuasion, sometimes through cooption and sometimes through coercion by a coalition of ethnic groups based in Qosqo or ‘Cuzco’ (the ‘navel’ or ‘bellybutton’ of Earth Mother and ‘splendor of the Sun’)—this coalition later became a lineage known as the Inka.³⁶² Along with the violence of the Iberian invasion, ‘conquest’ and colonization therefore also came the violence of translation that engendered the misunderstanding that the Tawa-Inti-Suyu was nothing more than just another version of an

³⁶¹ Boero Rojo 1991, 270. Tetradic political, and specifically cosmo and astro-political organization is common across all of Abya-Yala.

³⁶² Yampara 2001, 70, 71, 207; Pacheco Farfan 1994.

absolutist European style empire. As will be made clear through this work, things are far more complicated and interesting than that.

Another shortcoming of reducing the Indigenous Andes to a facile association with the so-called ‘Inka Empire’ most appropriately understood as the Tawa-Inti-Suyu or Tawaintisuyu is the tendency to quickly reduce or attribute anything Indigenous Andean to the Inka lineage or to the time of the Inka. This is a major shortcoming as well since the Inka lineage became influential and powerful throughout the Andes only within the last century or century and a half before the Iberian invasion.³⁶³ Before the Inka there were a number of civilizational and cultural manifestations throughout the region such as the Caral, Chavin, Valdivia, Nazca, Moche, Chachapoyas, Wari, Lupaqa, Chimu, Muisca, and perhaps most influentially the Tiwanaku civilization which was also a tetra-political form of organization (Tiwa or Tewa also refers to ‘four’). As we will explain in the section concerning philosophy, politics and economics, tetrads are crucial in Andinia (as they are for Mesoamerica and the rest of Abya-Yala). For now it is important to point out that the rapid growth of the Tawa-Inti-Suyu over the course of a century is due to the fact that the Inka did *not* create Andean civilization, they merely articulated it into a larger network of infrastructures that were either already in operation or latent. This infrastructure, cosmological, philosophical, economic, political, and cultural emerged gradually beforehand and persisted after the Tawa-Inti-Suyu, resisting over the course of European settler colonialism and well through the time of the Euro-mestizo polities of today.

These comments concerning the limits of a facile association of the Andes with the so-called ‘Inka Empire’ should serve to render clear that an understanding of the historical-cultural horizons of Andinia extend far beyond the ‘Inka’ imaginary—the Indigenous Andes were not born with the birth of the Inka elite and it did not die with their beheading by the European invasion. This is not to say that the Tawa-Inti-Suyu is not relevant as a major civilizational structure. In fact, it is very relevant, but not so much because of what it stood for during the time of its region-wide

³⁶³ Estermann 1998, 63, 151-152; Quispe 2000, 213; Yampara 2008, 76, 78.

reign of one hundred years or a little over that, but rather because the Tawa-Inti-Suyu is an articulation of underlying Andean infrastructures, a superstructure that brought together what was brewing for millennia in the Andes, a seed of what could have become had the European invasion never occurred and most importantly, a source of force and inspiration for theorization, projection and planning of what can (re)emerge in an enhanced, adapted and more complex form once the Indigenous Renaissance evolves from resistance to liberation and materializes in political form in the Andes of today and tomorrow. It is in this spirit that the Tawa Inti Suyu and other earlier civilizational manifestations like Tiwanaku (which many take as the ‘mother’ of Andean civilizations) will be discussed in this work, alongside the more resilient Andean civilizational infrastructures that existed and persist before and beyond the Inka elite (whatever its virtues and vices) and beyond the ethnocidal and genocidal apparatus of the still prevalent though eroding Eurocentric settler colonial order.

Andinia as a historical cultural region is characterized by the long historical evolution of a civilization of Indigenous descent that in spite of the often violent process of syncretism and forced Westernization prevails as a mode of community that is bioculturally different from the superimposed Eurocentric order that it continues to resist. Andinia shares the constitutive values of the Indigenous American civilizations of Abya Yala with the distinctive adaptations and innovations that have been organically developed to adapt to the extremely particular hyperdiverse geo-ecology of the Andean region. Today Andinia preserves its cultural diversity among Indigenous peoples and many peoples of Indigenous biocultural heritage. As articulated by the Andean Coordination of Indigenous Peoples,

The Andean Indigenous peoples are those of us who inhabit these territories since twenty thousand years ago, way before the European invasion of Abya-Yala (the Americas) and the formation of the contemporary republics. The Andean mountain range is our natural habitat, which houses our great diversity: quechuas, aymaras, mapuches, kichwas, and may more, we live in harmony with Mother Earth, nurturing her and allowing ourselves to be nurtured by her. Our way of life continues to be valid because we knew and we know how to adapt to the climate of the Andean mountains.³⁶⁴

³⁶⁴ CAOI, “Reciprocidad para el Buen Vivir”, 1.

2. The Civilizational Constitution of Andinia

In order to understand Andinia we must engage in an in depth study of three constitutive aspects of its civilizational élan (or spirit): (A) its philosophy and worldview or rather cosmoexperience, (B) its socioeconomic infrastructure, and (C) its political infrastructure. It is important to reiterate here that a guiding concern in discussing these issues is the question of the extended, non-anthropocentric cosmopolitical community, which will of necessity bring about reflections on what from a Western viewpoint is understood as ‘cosmology’, ‘ecology’, and ‘social-environmental justice’, all of which are crucial issues in every dimension of Indigenous, and specifically Andean life.

A. The Philosophical Infrastructure of Andinia

A trip into the Andean cosmoexperience is an endless voyage into a world of fascinating reflections and emotions, an open space which cannot by any means be easily summarized; indeed it cannot and should not be summarized at all, but rather expanded and articulated with other Indigenous and non-Indigenous worlds. What shall be done in this section is not to offer an exhaustive treatise on all the possible themes of Andean philosophy, but rather to discuss some crucial ideas that constitute the basic infrastructure of the Andean cosmoexperience, wisdom and philosophy. Also, it should be noted that this work is an active exercise in Indigenous philosophy which is to say that it does not reserve itself to mere documentation of previously articulated ideas and worldviews but rather seeks to make a direct contribution to Indigenous thought and politics, in this case, by drawing on the wealth of Andean concepts, reflections and worldviews. This work is only a small piece of what can and should be discussed, and should be read as an opening to what is to come in terms of further discussion from others as well as myself. Andean philosophy, theory, and science is a field that is undergoing an impressive renaissance along with Indigenous Andean politics; attention should be paid as it looks to become extremely influential within and

beyond the region—in the perspective of many including my own, it is already becoming globally influential, and arguably leading the global Indigenous Renaissance.

- *Pacha-Sophy and Political Theory*

Notwithstanding the tremendous complexity and expanse of Andean wisdom, there seems to be a general agreement among most authors, Andean or other, that to understand the philosophical infrastructure of Andinia the term with which to start is the term *pacha*.³⁶⁵ In the Andean cosmoexperience *pacha* articulates the wide open and indeterminate experience that could be compared to the Greek term *kosmos* or *cosmos*. The comparison should only be preliminary as *pacha* and *kosmos* do not entail exactly the same, but if a comparison is to be made that is where we should start. Let us focus only in what is of our concern in this work, the term *pacha*. To start we must first reflect upon the etymology of the term for it is the key not only to understanding what it semiotically entails, but indeed it is an entry point to the great network that makes up Andean philosophy and it is an incredibly good way to understand Andean socioeconomic, political and cultural life.

Pacha is a term with a dual etymology: ‘*pa*’ and ‘*cha*’. In the simplest form, ‘*pa*’ is a root that can be translated as ‘dual’, ‘duality,’ ‘two’, ‘dyadic,’ ‘parity,’ ‘pair’, ‘ambivalence’, or any other conglomerate of terms that connote ideas pertaining to these senses.³⁶⁶ ‘*Pa*’ is associated with terms such as ‘*paya*’ entailing the number ‘two’ in the Aymara language, and with terms such as ‘*Pachjaña*’ which entails ‘to divide in two’. The second part of the etymology is ‘*cha*’ which is

³⁶⁵ Basically every work related to the Andes touches upon the question/philosophy of *pacha* whether directly or indirectly. I will just cite a few examples: Untoja Choque and Mamani Espejo 2000 (the whole book is dedicated to an in depth discussion of ‘*pacha*’); Estermann 1998, 111, 134, 140, 144-147; Estermann 2008, 67, 76; Mejía Huamán 2005, 16, 128-130, 149; Del Carpio 2000, ix; Luizaga and Del Carpio 2000, 4-6, 25-32; Medina and Del Carpio 2000, 56; Mamani Pocoaca 2000, 103; Arce Helguero 2000, 172; Schmidt Colque 2000, 236-237; Claverias Huerse 1990, 17-18; Van Kessel 2006, 8.

³⁶⁶ The term *Pacha* is doubtlessly comparable and related to to the Mesoamerican ‘principle of (uni)duality’ (e.g., the Nahua *Ometeotl*, the Maya *Alom Qaholom*). As will become evident, Andean and Mesoamerican experiences of the cosmos share much.

a root that invokes the sense of ‘energy’ or ‘force’.³⁶⁷ Like ‘pa’, the root ‘cha’ is associated with a great many terms in both the Aymara and the Quechua languages, and in Quechu-Aymara combinations of both languages.³⁶⁸ One of the most philosophically relevant associations for our purposes is the term ‘*ch’ama*’ which connotes whatever is done ‘with force’ or ‘with energy’, ‘with vigor’, with ‘vitality’, a ‘friction’, an ‘encounter’ that engenders a ‘noise’, a ‘roar’ a ‘disquietude’. It is important to note here that the connotation is neither negative nor positive; it merely refers to the clashing sound or movement of a friction of encountering forces.

Going back to *pacha*, we then conceive of the term as an invocation of an experience, the experience of the friction that emanates from a duality of energies that encounter each other. Literally ‘*pa-cha*’ would be translatable as ‘dual-energies’ or ‘dual-forces’, yet in its extended interpretation *pacha* invokes the friction of sound and movement animated by the encounter of two forces or energies. The basic Andean experience of the cosmos is an experience that flows from the encounter of energies which causes the friction from which emanates the sound and movement, the ‘waves’ so to speak,³⁶⁹ that animate existence, that is, the friction of (dual) forces from which emanates life and vitality.

From within an Andean experience, the vitality and movement of the open indeterminate emanates from *pacha*, and therefore when translating *pacha* into European languages we often find that *pacha* can mean, in different contexts, anything from time, to space, to spatiotemporality, to cosmos, place, instance, and so many other terms and even sentences. We also find that *pacha*, just

³⁶⁷ Yampara 2005, 25, 113.

³⁶⁸ To repeat an important note concerning language: Andean linguistics are hybrid and hybridizing. For instance, although Aymara and Quechua can be discerned from one another they overlap very much so that there is also Quechu-Ayamara and there is a great many variations of Quechua such as northern Andean Kichwa. Hence, many terms here used are terms that have been underlined as of philosophical import. Unless specified, these terms are of Quechu-Ayamara origin.

³⁶⁹ Andean philosophers like Javier Medina and Simon Yampara often compare the Andean cosmoexperience with the view of quantum physics, arguing that while Western civilization would be particle-centric (or onto-logical), Andeans instead would emphasize the waves that move and vitalize the cosmos, preceding, constituting and exceeding any entities and identities; Andeans emphasize what Native North Americans would call the moving energy or spirit.

as *pa* and *cha* occur as the root etymologies of a great many crucial terms in Andean languages and specifically Andean philosophy, terms which we will come across later such as *cha-kana* (roughly ‘bridge or link among forces’), and *pacha-kuti* (inversion of forces, turn of forces, overturning of energies, cycling of forces, rotation of forces, for some ‘revolution’ or ‘transvaluation’, etc.).

So *pacha* broadly entails the friction of dual forces from which emanates sound, movement, vitality, animacy or simply, life. *Pacha* animates all, it is the force from which emanates the movement of the cosmos, the vitality of all that exists. *Pacha* articulates the movement which enables the open indeterminate animacy of the cosmos, the sense of ceaseless friction that creates and recreates life and vitality. From a Western viewpoint many important terms which can be used to invoke major connotations or actions within Indigenous and in this case Andean cosmoexperience have been interpreted by commentators and Western scholars as so-called ‘gods’ or ‘deities’ or ‘spirits’. Hence, it has become common to say that when Andeans use the term ‘pa’ or ‘cha’ or ‘Pacha’ in variations such as *Pacha-Qama(k)* (‘*Qama(k)*’ entailing that which animates or vitalizes) or *Pacha-Kuti* or *A-cha-chila*, *Pacha’ama* or *Pacha-Mama*, they are referring to ‘gods’, ‘deities’ or ‘spirits’. To believe that *Pacha* refers to a ‘god’ in the sense of a transcendental extra-cosmic subjectivity with intentionality would be to colonially superimpose the Western metaphysical imaginary on a culture which does not give credence to the idea of a meta-cosmic world beyond the experience of this *pacha* or what would broadly be understood as the here and now—however open and indeterminate. *Pacha* would be ill-translated as a ‘god’ or ‘deity’;³⁷⁰ much like the Mesoamerican principle of (uni)duality that we discussed in Part I, *Pacha* denotes an *emanatory dynamic*,³⁷¹ a regenerative or recreative friction of (unidual) forces or energies from which vitality, animacy and movement unfold.

³⁷⁰ Estermann 1998, 255.

³⁷¹ Flores Quelopana 2006, 2007

It has been pointed out by some of the most acute Andean philosophers and scholars³⁷² that after the term Pacha it is most crucial to understand the term *Pacha-Qama* (alternatively written as Pacha-Qama(q), Pacha-Kama(k) or other variations with or without the hyphen and with or without the -q or -k at the end; I will use *Pacha-Qama* as it seems the written form that semiotically corresponds best to the connotation of the term). Pacha-Qama was first translated by commentators and Western or Westernized scholars as the principal ‘god’ or ‘deity’ of the Andes, a deity so crucial—perhaps even sacred—that the term would not be used save in very unique contexts. To this day the connotation of Pacha-Qama as a ‘god’ prevails, however, although Pacha-Qama may have once been symbolized in the form of an ‘idol’ or ‘statue’ or other similar form, the term Pacha-Qama cannot easily be reduced to the figure or shape of a metaphysical or extra-cosmic deity. Nevertheless, most commentators do agree that Pacha-Qama is a crucial term in the Andean cosmoexperience.

As briefly mentioned above, ‘Qama’ refers to that which animates, that which vitalizes, energizes, that which gives movement, that which disposes or gives life. As with this translation, there is no one single term that would be exhaustive, but a conglomerate of terms, a semiotic web which should be considered here. Pacha-Qama, a crucial signifier in the web of Andean philosophy, therefore articulates the fully extended signification of the Andean cosmoexperience as the animacy or vitality emanating from the (re)creative encounter of and friction among a (uni)duality of energies or forces.³⁷³ Like Pacha, the extended Pacha-Qama should be henceforth kept in mind as a crucial key into the life and experience of the Indigenous Andes. The term *qama* is extremely important in that it connotes the Indigenous Andean understanding that all is

³⁷² Like in the case of pacha, discussions concerning (pacha)qama/kamak recur frequently. I will only cite some illustrative examples: Yampara 2001; Flores Quelopana 2006, 2007; Estermann 1998, 255, 266, 268-269

³⁷³ Some interesting comparisons have been made among the terms Pacha and Pachaqama with the Heraclitean cosmology.

animated, that all is vitalized, all lives.³⁷⁴ As mixed-blood (*mestizo*) Bolivian scholar Javier Medina emphasizes when discussing the work of Aymara philosopher Mario Torrez, within the Indigenous Andean cosmoexperience,

The Qama(ña) which entails all spatio-temporality is something that lives, composed of living beings and inhabited by living beings. Hence, for the Indigenous Andeans, not only the underground, the ground, the water, the air, and the mountains are alive, but also the spatiotemporalities in which spiritual beings are latent are alive; the ecosystems themselves are alive, the plateau, the valleys, the yungas [rainforests] are living organisms; the plants, both cultivated and wild, the animals, both savage and domesticated, are all living beings. All these beings exist in a relationship of conviviality and sharing with the human individual, the family and the human community. We are all part of the continuum of life.³⁷⁵

The following term that has been agreed upon as crucial to the Andean cosmoexperience or rather pacha-experience is the term *Pacha-Mama*. This term has become extremely popular both in the region and globally as it is often associated with the Earth as a living organism. Recently many people the world over have pointed to the commonalities between James Lovelock's understanding of Earth as Gaia (i.e., a living macro organism) and the Andean Pacha-Mama. Without a doubt all Indigenous peoples of Abya-Yala have lived according to a strict understanding of the whole Earth as a living macro-organism and specifically of the telluric forces as motherly forces that live and nurture life and that must in turn be nurtured (we will return to this when talking about the Andean economy). Pacha-Mama has therefore come to mean Mother Earth. The etymology of the term, however, brings forth a much more intricate logic. There are reasons to suspect that the second component of the concept, namely, 'mama', is not originally Andean, but rather the result of syncretism with Spanish in which 'mama' refers to the mother and to the motherly relationship, both biological and emotional. This is a question that needs more research, but there are grounds to hypothesize that the term Pacha-Mama might be a transformation of the earlier *Pach'ama* which means (uni)duality of encountering/clashing forces

³⁷⁴ See Huanacuni Mamani 2010, not paginated. This vitalism is again another instance of shared Mesoamerican-Andean understandings. This, as will see in Part III extends to Turtle Island or Northern Abya-Yala as well.

³⁷⁵ Medina about Torrez 2008, 59.

from which emanates a friction of energy/energies. Whether it is the outgrowth of syncretism or not the trope *Pacha-Mama* unquestionably connotes the fact that from an Indigenous Abya-Yalan perspective, embodied existence must be experienced as the offspring, the gift, of telluric and cosmic forces. In short, we are all, humans and non-humans, Earth's progeny and indeed a continuation of Earth.

There is reason to believe, however, that the Andean cosmoexperience is more elaborate than just declaring that we are Earth's progeny which is already a rather important comprehension of the fact that we are biospheric epiphenomena. But the Andean cosmoexperience is more complex than that. This is precisely where there is reason to believe that behind the now famous term *Pacha-Mama* may in fact lie the more traditional and perhaps pre-syncretic term *Pa-Ch'ama* or simply *Pachama*; that is, the friction that emanates from the vigorous encounter of two forces or energies. One can think here of the regenerative friction of the sexual encounter or the degenerative friction of the clash of violence, but whether it is one or the other, the point here is the friction, similar to the electricity that emerges from the friction of two forces. Not surprisingly lightning—along with sexuality (explained below)—holds a very crucial place in Andean cosmogony, mythology and cosmology.

As has been mentioned above, for Andeans all lives, and all this vitality emerges from such friction, rubbing or encounter among different forces. From here it is easier to understand how it is that the Andean experience of the cosmos has come to be divided along two axes.

The **first axis** serves both as a division (*pachja*) and link/bridge (*cha-ka*) between the forces or energies of the cosmos (*alax-pacha*), that is, the outer forces of the cosmos on the one hand and the telluric forces, including the underground forces, that is the inner forces, of Earth (*manqha-pacha*), on the other hand. As described by Huanacuni Mamani,

Aka-pacha: corresponds to this world, where all forms of visible life unfold: human, animal, flora, and mineral...

Manqha-pacha: refers to the world underneath where the forces of Mother Earth are to be found. In the Andean world, the interior of the Earth is conceived as alive...

Alax-pacha: refers to the superior tangible plane, where we find the astronomical bodies, the stars, sun, moon, lightning... In the Andean world, the cosmos is conceived as alive.³⁷⁶

The forces of alax and manqha are drawn to meet each other and thereby engender the frictions that animate life through vigorous encounters that instantiate in the location referred to as *akax-pacha*, which is the instance of the *taypi*, the space of the crossing, the in-between location of the encounter among two forces whose friction animates and recreates the vitality known as 'life' and which materializes in the form of the 'surface' of the Earth.³⁷⁷ Akax pacha would be comparable or similar (though not necessarily equal) to the space which Westerners identify as the 'biosphere.' As Huanacuni Mamani explains:

Our ancestors comprehended that there exist two forces, the cosmic force that comes from the sky and the telluric force of the Earth. These two forces converge in the process of life, generating all forms of existence, and the different forms of existence relate to each other via the *ayni* (equilibrated complementarity)... All forms of existence emanate from the synthesis of both energies, the bridge [*cha-kana*], the center [*taypi*] at the encounter between the cosmic and telluric forces. The word Pacha has that conception, it is the union of both forces [uniduality]; PA which comes from PAYA: Two, and CHA which comes from CHAMA: force. Two forces, cosmic-telluric, which interact to manifest that which we call life as materialized energy ([Pachama] Pachamama) and spiritual vitality (Pacha-Qama)... Pacha also means the convergence of forces: e.g., *chacha-warmi* (masculine-feminine) when we refer to the complementarity of the couple, also in a relationship of equilibrium [*ayni*].³⁷⁸

The **second axis** unfolds as a function of the "territorial organization of Andean ecology," itself "a function of solar movement,"³⁷⁹ this second axis serves as a division and link/bridge among the forces of luminous energy or the forces of the sunrise moiety (*aran-saya*) with those of dark energy or forces of the sunset/night moiety (*urin-saya*); it is important to point out that there is no negative connotation to 'dark energy' or 'forces of the sunset/night'. The forces of *aran* and *urin* are drawn to encounter each other and thereby engender the frictions that animate life through vigorous encounters (*ch'amacha* or *tinku*) that instantiate in the location referred to as

³⁷⁶ Huanacuni Mamani 2010, not paginated.

³⁷⁷ Yampara 2005, 25.

³⁷⁸ Huanacuni Mamani 2010, not paginated.

³⁷⁹ Yampara 2005, 27.

*Chika*³⁸⁰ (-*saya*), which is another instance of the *taypi*. *Chika* entails whichever instance (moment-location) where a revitalizing unidual encounter occurs.

Taypi (and the Chi-ka) therefore is the instance of the encounter at which frictions can be made to occur, the frictions from which emanate the vitality that animates life, the recreation of the *taypi* through the vigorous or passionate (re)encounter(s) among dualities of energies/forces enables the emergence of that which Westerners refer to as the biosphere. The instance of the *taypi* enables the occurrence of the *usnu*, the transformative nexus among opposing forces that encounter each other, the instance which engenders a moment of *musphata*, an ‘ecstasy’;³⁸¹ this ecstasy is the instance of recreative transformation that enables the continuation of life. The shape that results from the intersection between the four forces and the two axes is a cross which is most usually referred to as the *cha-ka-na* (or *chakana*) which entails the act, practice or endeavor of bridging or drawing pairs of forces together in order to nurture life through the vigorous or passionate friction among energies.³⁸² The following diagram offers a simplified picture of what is admittedly a complicated worldview or rather pacha/cosmoexperience often referred to as a manifestation of Andean (and indeed Abya-Yalan) tetrads or tetralectics, that is, the fertile intersection or inter-crossing of two complementary dualities which fosters the contingent recreation of life:

³⁸⁰ Most terms that include the root ‘Ka’ are associated with a network of connotations that would include semiotically what the English terms “bridging,” “linking,” “tying,” “crossing,” among other related terms entail.

³⁸¹ Miranda Luizaga 1996, 43.

³⁸² Cha: energies/forces; Ka: bridge, link, ties, crossings, articulations; ‘Na’ often serves to verbalize a term, implying ‘the act(ion)/endeavor of’. Hence, *chakana* would entail the act(ion), endeavor, or movement of linking/bridging/articulating/crossing energies or forces.

Figure 5: The Chakana in Andean Cosmology



Source: my own elaboration on the basis of information from different sources.³⁸³

The above discussion followed by the diagram gives a simplified outline of the overall ‘topography’ of the Andean pacha, that is, the way in which the ‘cosmos’ and the ‘world’ is understood and recreated from within the Andean experience. Now, up to this point there has been a great insistence in the concept of the energetic, passionate or vigorous encounter between diverse forces that engenders the friction from which vitality emanates. Emphasis was placed on the linking or bridging (*chakana*) that articulates, brings or draws together the forces and on the instance of the encounter, the *taypi* or *chi-ka*, as well as the practices or efforts of mutual encountering (*ch’amacha* or *tinku*) that bring about the transformative nexus (*usnu*) in the moment of ecstasy (*muspahata*) that enables the recreation of life. From all of this explanation there is an added dimension which is already announced in terms such as the encounter, the transformative nexus, the moment of ecstasy and the emphasis on vigor, passion, and recreation. This dimension is what in Andean philosophy is referred to as the *sexuity*³⁸⁴ (which is more than just sexuality) of the Andean cosmoexperience. The Andean emphasis on vitalism goes hand in hand with the

³⁸³ See, for example, Yampara 2005, 115, 116; Medina 2006, 127-128.

³⁸⁴ Estermann 1998; 2008. Mejía Huamán 2005, 193-194.

celebration of biocosmic fertility and the understanding that the pacha is inherently a movement that is cyclically recreated according to the pervasive energy/friction of sexuality. That is, all works according to the impulses of fertility and reproductivity. Everything in the universe fulfills a role in the continuation of this fertility, all forces in the cosmos work to ensure a function that is literally sexed.³⁸⁵

To exemplify by drawing on the diagram above, it is often understood that a force with masculine impulse in Alax such as the sun (*inti* in Quechua) and a force with feminine impulses in Manqha such as the underground *Uku* forces of (Mother) Earth³⁸⁶ are drawn into recreative ecstasy with each other thereby enabling the friction of energies that engenders life in the form of Aka-Pacha or the 'biosphere.' The same occurs in encounters between the feminine forces (*uma*) from the side of the sunrise such as the humidity and soft soil of the yungas in the Amazon rainforest with the masculine forces (*urqu*) on the side of the sunset such as the Atacama desert and its hard soil, engendering an exceptional vitality as a result of their encounter at the in between, in the Taypi of the inner valleys within the central Andes. This is a place of extremely complementary biodiversity where we find the area near and around the lake Titikaka from where civilizations like Tiwanaku and the Tawa Inti Suyu were born and flourished by bringing together the (re)productive forces from the lands on both sides of the Andes.

In short, the Andean cosmoexperience in general can be seen as the active dynamic of enabling and re-enabling pacha. Pacha would be ill understood as something that simply 'is'. Pacha cannot simply 'be', rather it must be brought about, it must be enacted; it must be brought to manifestation, recreated, made to manifest or show itself in the form of an occurrence. Another so-called Andean 'god' or 'deity' which is better understood as a constitutive cosmological

³⁸⁵ This is comparable to the hermaphroditical or (uni)dual-sexed character of the Mesoamerican principle of (uni)duality and other deified biocosmic manifestations.

³⁸⁶ The interior of the Earth is literally a womb for Andeans, from which are born to the surface a myriad offspring, among whom we find *runa* (or human persons) and *jaqi* (human couplets). This is comparable to the Western observation of the important role of the inner heat of the Earth in enabling and driving geological, ecological, meteorological, and climatological phenomena.

dynamic/experience/understanding is referred to as *Pachayachachik* (or *Pachayachachiq*)³⁸⁷ which can be roughly explained as that through which the pacha is made manifest, that by which the pacha is brought forth, that by which the pacha is revealed, announced or exposed. What is important to understand here is that in the Andean cosmoexperience, as it is in other Indigenous American or Abya-Yalan cases, the ‘cosmos’ cannot simply ‘be’, it is not simply there on its own, and it cannot uphold its existence on its own, it must be brought about and cyclically revitalized.³⁸⁸ The manifestation of pacha, of the energetic encounter among forces which animates life and recreates the cosmos, is the responsibility of all participant forces, the encounter must be brought about to engender the friction, the ecstasy that recreates life and makes possible the continuation of all life/death/life cycles—cosmic, ecological, biological, and ‘social’ (in a non-anthropocentric sense).

In the broad, non-anthropocentric cosmopolitical community, all participant forces, humans included, have a burden of responsibility to make the pacha possible, and thereby to *nurture* the continuation of cosmic, ecological, biological, and social fertility. For instance, the encounter among the cosmic and telluric forces of *alax* and *manqha pacha* does not occur mechanically or automatically, as if in a Newtonian fashion; there is no mechanical causality, nothing is automatic in the Andean cosmoexperience; it is rather a question of responsibility, passion and commitment, and hence of the contingency pertaining to the question of whether such a burden (*cargo*) of responsibility will be fulfilled or not. All participants must fulfill the(ir) burdens, practice their encounters and thereby engender the parity and ecstasy that nurtures the pacha, and makes the revitalization of all cycles possible.

³⁸⁷ Estermann 1998, 150.

³⁸⁸ Mesoamericans would say that the burden of time must be relayed, and humans must carry their part so that the cycles of biocosmic time continue. Cosmic cycles do not persist on their own, all participants must contribute with their share of responsibility in procuring the continuation of bio-eco-cosmic cycles. This is the cosmoexperience that underpins the system of burdens in all its manifestations (e.g., rotation and obligation).

Humans here are no exception, the human life form itself is an offspring of pacha, both a part and an effect of pacha and is, like any other life form, responsible for contributing to recreate pacha³⁸⁹ by nurturing a fertile encounter between the forces of alax and manqha pacha, for instance, by coordinating the forces of the sun and the forces of the ground, mediating or bridging them adequately (e.g., via agriculture) through the channeling and care of water which is the liquid that fertilizes Earth. In this encounter between the forces of alax and manqha emerges the aka pacha, the vitality of the biosphere where life is possible only as the result of a friction, an encounter of cosmic and telluric energies in the ‘in-between’ space (taypi or chika) where the *ch’amacha* or tinku is acted out in a ritual celebratory fashion that constitutes the chakana , the cosmic bridge that brings opposing forces into a complementary fertility from which the offspring of the Earth in the form of its diverse fruits, forms of life, and other ‘products’ including all animals (and yes, humans) are nurtured. The most illustrative example is of course the practice of agriculture which for Andeans is a ritual celebration of the cosmic encounters, the art of recreating the ecstasy which enables the reproduction of cycles of vitality. The other such example is the taypi that ties together the different biomes on the side of the sunrise and the sunset to enable “complementary economies”³⁹⁰ between different climatic niches thanks to the wide variation of altitudinal, latitudinal, and transversal (hydraulic) zonation enabled by the hyper-diverse geo-eco-bio-sociology of the Andes.

B. The Economic Infrastructure of Andinia

For the Andean all activity, whether it be economic, social, religious or artistic, whether it be labor related, domestic, festive, of cultivation or education, all activity from within the pacha-experience of the Andean is about ‘Nurturing Life.’ The central economic value for the Andean is life, and this entails life such as is experienced and conceived by the Andean, all life in all its forms: animal (including human), plant, and spiritual, the activity of those who have passed or the ‘dead’ and of the climate, and even the activity of the mountains, the waters, and Earth itself, the life of the cosmos or Pacha, and of the world, of Mother Earth, of Pacha-Mama. Life becomes simultaneously manifested as one

³⁸⁹ Estermann 1998, 168.

³⁹⁰ Huanacuni Mamani 2010, not paginated.

and multiple, appearing in its three spheres: the life of the *wak'as* [roughly 'spirits'], of the wild (*sallqa*) and of the *runa* [humans], including those who have passed [and those who are to come]. The Andean *ayllu* [roughly 'equilibrated community'], its territoriality, is a living cosmos which comprises three communities: the *wak'a*, *sallq'a* and *runa*. The ultimate end of economic activity is not to increase or accumulate capital and power, but to nurture the *sumaq kawsay* (the sweet, harmonious, vigorous life in plenitude) and it is to nurture, to vitalize this life through balanced harmony. Signs of the *sumaq kawsay* are an ever more lasting and fulfilled social and cosmic harmony which is in turn the pathway to prestige, strength, and fulfillment for all persons and communities implied. Economy or production rather means the regeneration or recreation of the *sumaq kawsay* (in the *chacra*, and from there to the human family, the human [and the extra-human] community). That is why the technological discourse of the Andes is filled with terms such as planting, procreation, gestation, birth, nurturing, and sowing.

—Juan van Kessel, *La Economía Andina de Crianza*.³⁹¹

From within the Andean cosmoexperience, economic thought organization and practice is geared towards the nurturing of *pacha* so as to procure the continuation of the cycles of recreation and regeneration. In this, humans have direct responsibility as nurturers or *arariwa* of *pacha*. The human life form must fulfill a metabolic organic function as an integral force within the *pacha*. Hence, not only are humans nurtured by *pacha* but they are also responsible for nurturing *pacha* as a reciprocal act. As has been explained above, from within the Andean cosmoexperience there is no such thing as a 'being' for itself and by itself; all participant forces of the eco-cosmic community are co-constitutive and thereby co-responsible for the recreation of *pacha*. Humans have the particular responsibility of acting as a specific form of link-among-forces or *chakana* between the forces of *alax* and *manqha* so as to bring about the instance of the *taypi* (the encounter) and therefore the recreation of the life and vitality that enables what would be called the 'biosphere'. In doing so, humans do not only procure their own reproduction—which is metabolically integral with the reproduction of *pacha*—but indeed contribute to nurture the recreation of all ecological and cosmic cycles.

As *arariwa*, humans, like other participants of the cosmopolitical community, are responsible for ensuring that bio-eco-cosmic cycles 'run smoothly,' energetically and vigorously

³⁹¹ Van Kessel 2006, 18. The title of the work can be translated as The Andean Economy of Nurturing.

and thereby continue living on. Their own recreation as a life form is fully dependent on their capacity to fulfill their burdens (*cargos* in Spanish), obligations and responsibilities in the recreation of pacha.³⁹² What is understood as ‘labor’ from within the Western worldview is contrastingly understood from an Andean cosmoexperience as the ritual celebration of the recreation of fertility through the consecration of the ecstatic encounter between dualities of forces such as alax and manqha, aran and urin, and uma and urqu, among other complementary and mutually encountering dualities. From within the Andean worldview humans are not seen as a ‘productive’ force, indeed, only the overall complementarity of forces that make up the pacha can be seen as (re)productive. The responsibility of humans is to act gratefully and reciprocate for being nurtured by the different pachas by nurturing the (rest of the) pacha in return (e.g., fulfilling their *cargos*). The Andean ‘economy’ of nurturance is well understood as a metabolic function organic to the broader vitality of the pacha.

Now, it is clear that this economic philosophy is rather a subset of the much broader understanding of the pacha as a cosmoexperience. There is for Andeans no separate ‘economic sphere’. The economy is just another manifestation of a cosmic and ecological ethic that entails responsibilities in regard to the reenactment of cosmic cycles and the maintenance of the equilibrium between complementary forces. Paraphrasing the rendition of Andeanized scholar Juan van Kessel,³⁹³ the terms and concepts of the Andean economy have a meta-economic reach because they are geared towards the cultivation and nurturing of the *sumaq kawsay/suma qamaña*; economic cycles must correspond with and fulfill their burden within the broader bio-eco-cosmic cycles; there is no separate ‘human’ or rather anthropocentric economy, instead, human forces are a small integral organic part of a much more encompassing bio-eco-cosmic economy. It is thus how the Andean ‘economic system’ or rather economy of nurturance achieves the integration within a unique model of the demands and necessities, the opportunities and reciprocities which

³⁹² Here again, Mesoamerica and the Andes share similar understandings.

³⁹³ Van Kessel 2006, 13.

are offered by bio-eco-cosmic cycles, all of which are considered together as the same vitality which emanates from within the pacha, which in turn is shared by every-body and is developed as an organic mega-body woven out of the dynamic interlacing of fibers of reciprocal solidarity that move together in a concert of rhythmic vitality.

As van Kessel summarizes:

Andean economic thought proceeds from the [‘]allegory[‘] [or rather fact] of biological life. Its basic concepts have been developed as part of a cosmovision and a pacha-experience based on the concept of a living world and an integral cosmic organism—the world/cosmos as a mega-organism, or mega body. In this way Andeans achieved an economic system of production-distribution-consumption-reproduction which has been capable of nurturing, vitalizing, procuring and reproducing the “life in plenitude” or the “living well”—the *sumaq kawsay* [or *suma qamaña*]—of the Andean world.³⁹⁴

Huanacuni Mamani adds in this regard that

suma qamaña in economic terms means generating economic relations in complementarity and reciprocity with the rest of life, Mother Earth, the community...all economic relations are fostered not with the end of accumulating capital for capital’s sake, but in order to nurture the continuation of life and its cycles.³⁹⁵

Therefore, as Huanacuni Mamani further notes,

economic relations should not be framed exclusively within economic laws pertaining to a narrow human interest, but in relation to a broader...normativity that nurtures and procures life, Mother Earth, the [post-anthropocentric] community and the family. Within the *Suma Qamaña*, the human being does not stand separate or above all other forms of existence, the human is at the same level with the rest of them; therefore, in the complementary economy the benefits are not circumscribed to the social-human units and structures, they are instead a function of the unit and structure of life, that is, beyond the human. In the *Suma Qamaña* there are no hierarchies but rather natural complementary responsibilities.

In a similar vein, Van Kessel further elaborates on the economic philosophy of the Indigenous

Andes:

If we are to ask ourselves for the central value of Andean economics, the response is necessarily: Life, and vitality as a multiformed omnipresence; biological, human, natural, divine [as in ‘precious’, not meta-physical] life; life as central, supreme and meta-economic value. The final purpose of economic activity is not to increase or accumulate capital and power, but to nurture the ‘*sumaq kawsay*’ [in Quechua or *suma qamaña* in Aymara] (a sweet, harmonious, vigorous, life in plenitude) and to nurture and vitalize this life through balanced harmony. Signs of the ‘*sumaq kawsay*’ are...a social and

³⁹⁴ Van Kessel 2006, 13.

³⁹⁵ Huanacuni Mamani 2010, not paginated.

[ecological-] cosmic harmony that is every time more lasting and fulfilled; this is the pathway [*thakhi*] to greater prestige, strength, and fulfillment of all beings and communities involved. Economy, production, means the regeneration or recreation [or renewal] of the “*sumaq kawsay*” (in the *chacra*, and from there to the human family and in the human community). It is for this reason that there recurrently appear within the Andean technological discourse terms such as sowing, procreation, gestation, birth, nurturing, cultivation (in both Aymara and Quechua!). To summarize, the purpose of economic activity is a meta-economic value, inasmuch as its ultimate purpose is not the augmentation of capital and power, but the vitalization and procuring of the *sumaq kawsay*, through “harmonious nurturing and cultivation”...which leads to greater...social and cosmic harmony. It is in this way that greater prestige and fulfillment is attained.³⁹⁶

An extended explanation of this complex economic philosophy is called for. Let us proceed with a brief illustration. It was mentioned above that for Andeans the mountain range and specifically peaks and their glaciers are sacred, and that they are seen as high and wise fatherly forces, as *Apu Taytacha*³⁹⁷; *Apu* means high, wise, deserving reverence; *Tayta* means fatherly; *Cha*, as we know means force or energy or spirit. The peaks are seen as sacred because their height creates a proximate link or bridge between the cosmic and upper atmospheric forces of *alax* and the underground lower, inner forces of *manqha*—the Earth’s womb. This is especially clear when speaking of volcanoes which are both close to the skies and also channels of subterranean energies, for instance, the sacred *Cotopaxi* in Ecuador. But this is equally valid for all other mountains as mountaintops store frozen water which is sacred because it is well understood as the life blood of the Earth. As the Quechua philosopher Mario Mejía Huamán explains, “In the Andes water (*yaka* or *unu*) is deserving of religious respect as a vital element.”³⁹⁸

Water, which flows through underground channels or through rivers, like sun light, are major *chakanas* that link the forces of *alax* with those of *manqha* to foster the fertility that gives life to *aka-pacha* or the biosphere. It is often said in popular discourse that the masculine forces of *Alax Pacha* like the Sun or *Inti* which fertilizes the feminine *Pachamama* or Mother Earth by showering the Earth with sunlight that, among other things, heats water and through evaporation

³⁹⁶ Van Kessel 2006, 6.

³⁹⁷ See Getzels and Gordon, 1985.

³⁹⁸ Mejía Huamán 2005, 119.

turns it into the rain that through an ecstatic encounter with the land produces the fertility that results in offspring such as plants with their fruits from which animals feed. Animals in return for the favor, including humans, must procure that such processes continue by nurturing and caring appropriately for the Earth and assuring its fertility through appropriate organic eco-bio-metabolic processes of ‘production’, ‘consumption’, and ‘disposal’ (as metabolic cycles that embed and constitute the human embodiment of pacha qama). Humans, for instance, in the process of responsible agriculture must enact the celebration of the encounter between the forces of alax and manqha by assuring that water flows and continues to flow in the right way (procuring the continuation of hydraulic cycles), that the Earth is cared for so that it produces in a healthy fashion (e.g., through poly-cyclical rotational agriculture) without being overworked and similarly in regard to many other such activities in which humans are responsible for fostering the adequate equilibrium³⁹⁹ of forces, and the continuation of cyclical encounters that maintain the fertility which fosters the vitality of the biosphere and along with it procures the reproduction of life cycles for all forms of life including human life.

In fulfilling these responsibilities humans must understand that in the pacha every force is co-dependent and co-constitutive, that the recreation of the pacha as a whole is contingent on the capacity of each of its participating forces to fulfill their reciprocal and complementary responsibilities (or ‘burdens’) to each other. For instance, from within an Andean interpretation of the cosmos/world, the Earth does not give its fruits for ‘free’ (*‘la tierra no da así no mas’*).⁴⁰⁰ The Earth, as any living organism expects to be cared for, to be treated with respect, and expects the gift of love and responsibility in return for granting life and the fruits to feed her. The cosmos is based on reciprocity. That is, again, what the term pacha-qama entails, the encounter among

³⁹⁹ Here it might be appropriate to remember the term Enka or En-ka as the equilibrator or bridger among the four directions/forces of the sun (Enka Tawa-Inti-Suyu).

⁴⁰⁰ Hence the notion of free market and other modern commodifications of life and Earth are atrocious for Andeans. Earth and the broader pacha are the real producers, the real laborers, the real economy of which humans are offspring, benefactors of a cosmic gift; their task is to merely nurture and cultivate the fertile continuation of the pacha and its cycles.

complementary forces that engenders the vitality which sustains the cycles of life. From an Andean viewpoint, the predominant factor that enables the recreation of life is the complementarity between all cosmic and biospheric forces (this includes all forms of life). The mountains collaborate with the rainforests in that the mountains store the frozen water from which flow the rivers that fertilize vegetation during dry seasons. Animals collaborate with the Earth that feeds them by transforming energy from ‘food’ into ‘excrement’ that becomes fertilizer. Humans must therefore ensure that their own ‘waste’ and other disposed matter is granted to the Earth in a form that can be cyclically regenerated into healthy energy. Examples of complementarity in ‘nature’ abound, and it is not the point to list them here, suffice it to say that Andeans emphasize that in ‘nature’ and the cosmos the main rule is complementarity, not conflict; collaboration, not competition. And it is this complementarity which ensures the continuation of reproductive cycles by fostering the reenactment of pacha, the encounter among dualities of energies.

The understanding of complementarity and reciprocity as the crucial values through which pacha-qama, the foremost process by which life cycles must be continuously revitalized—this understanding is what serves as the basis for Andean economic organization. Although today the Andes are increasingly absorbed into the logic of the market which commodifies the Earth and all life, including human life, much of the traditional philosophy of the economy resists, persists, and often prevails. In our times of ecological crisis, a revitalization of these economic wisdoms and ways is appropriate. Notwithstanding the onslaught of the anthropocentric economy that has taken over the West (and from there to the rest of the world, often through violent means), many Andeans still sustain their old economic practices based on the values of cyclical complementarity and reciprocity. Let us explain some of the basic forms of organization and practices associated with the traditional Andean economy.

Several practices are characteristic of the Andean form of economy. Perhaps the most well-known and relevant of them is known as the *ayni*. The term *ayni* contains the root ‘ay-’ which is often translated as connoting equilibrium and balance. *Ayni* has been translated to mean

‘reciprocity’ or equilibrating reciprocity or work/collaboration of reciprocity.⁴⁰¹ The ayni is seen as general practice in all sorts of relations not only among humans but between all forces in the cosmos, and this includes relations between humans and non-humans. The ayni constitutes the basic logic of the Andean community which is often known as the *ayllu*. Both terms, ayni and ayllu, share the root etymology ‘ay-’ which refers to a condition of equilibrium and balance among all members. The ayllu is a non/post-anthropocentric form of community, a bio-eco-cosmic community which the Aymara scholar and philosopher Huanacuni Mamani describes in the following terms:

Ayllu is a...term that is often translated as ‘community’...From a Western perspective a ‘community’ is understood exclusively as a “*social* unit and structure”, that is, from a Western viewpoint the components of the community are exclusively human(s), but from within the cosmovision of the aboriginal Indigenous peoples the community is understood as the ‘unit and structure of *life*’, that is, the human is only one part of that unit; animals, insects, plants, mountains, air, water, the sun and sunlight, even that which cannot be seen, our ancestors and other beings, we are all part of the community. All lives and all is important for the equilibrium and harmony of life; the disappearance or deterioration of one species is the deterioration of life. We conceive that we are offspring of the Cosmos and of Mother Earth (*Pacha-Qaman Pacha-Maman wawapatanwa* [in Aymara]). In the ayllu there is no place for the term “resource”, because if all lives, what exists are living beings and not objects, and the human is not the only parameter of life, nor is the human the king of creation or the apex of evolution. The principle of the West seeks to dominate nature; from within the aboriginal principle there is no desire to dominate anybody, what is sought is that we relate to each other under the principle and conscience of the ayni (ayni is an Aymara term that connotes ‘reciprocity,’ ‘the energy that flows among all forms of existence’). There is no space either for the concept of exploitation of anyone by anyone, because nobody is and nothing is to be utilized by/for an other, nor is it the purpose of the other forms of existence to exist for the benefit of the human form; all exists in a complementary relationship, in a perfect equilibrium (Ayni). As a consequence, all has importance; for example, plants expel oxygen and other elements for the benefit of all beings, insects complement the seeds in order to nurture the fruit, the rain renews the life of all and the sun warms the Earth for everybody. The horizon of the ayllu in ayni [that is, in equilibrium] is the Suma Qamaña [plentiful vitality or life in plenitude]; that is to say that the horizon of all complementary relation(s) within the community is to live well, nurturing each other and respecting every form of existence; fostering and respecting life.⁴⁰²

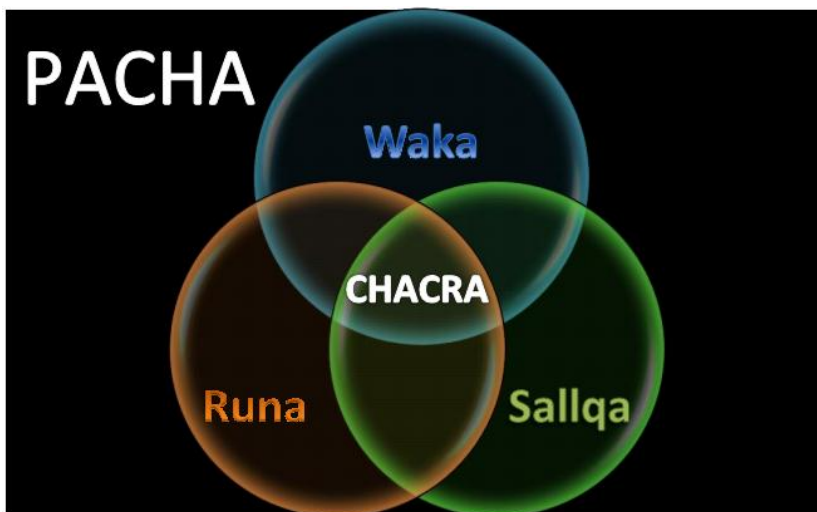
The Ayllu therefore emerges as the aggregated effect of a complementary balance among a diversity of constitutive forces that includes but extends well beyond humans and results from

⁴⁰¹ The ayni is comparable, similar, and in some occasions equal to the Mesoamerica tequio and guetza.

⁴⁰² Huanacuni Mamani 2010, not paginated.

practices of equilibrated reciprocity or *ayni* among different forces or energies, especially those which proceed from its three constitutive types of ‘citizens’: the *runa*, the *waka*, and the *sallqa*. This needs further elaboration. The *ayllu* is made up of a complementary partnership between three forces: the forces of the *runa*, those of the *waka*, and those of the *sallqa*. The *runa* are the living human persons, the *waka* are the spirits (or ‘de/pre-fleshed’ or de/pre-composed energy) of the persons (human and non-human) who once were and the persons who are to come enmeshed with the spirits/energy of non-human persons (e.g., non-human organisms), and the *sallqa* is the sphere of undomesticated non-human nature. All of them come together in the *chacra* or space of cultivation/nurturing.

Figure 6: The Andean Chacra within the Pacha



Source: my own elaboration on the basis of information from various sources.⁴⁰³

The *chacra* refers to any force from which humans obtain something that they need in order to live on; a *chacra* could refer to anything from an agricultural field to a herd of llamas, to a mine (i.e., for obtaining valuable minerals). For Andeans the *chacra* is the place where diverse forces or energies are convened with the help of human effort in order to enact the complementary

⁴⁰³ Medina 2006, 16, 120; Milla Villena 2003, 35; Van Kessel 2006, 11; Renjifo and Grillo 2008, 94.

collaboration which enables the nurturing of the fruits, offspring or ‘products’ of Mother Earth and Father Sky in the space of Akax Pacha, from the encounter-fostered—in part by the runa—emerges the vitality of the space which constitutes the ‘biosphere’. Therefore, humans are direct participants with unique and specific responsibilities in the recreation of the life cycles which emanate from the vitalizing encounter of complementary energies or forces known as pacha. As Van Kessel further elaborates in regard to the chacra,

In the chacra the Runa, the Wak’as and the Sallq’a act in tandem and mutual complementarity. The encounter of these three communities of living forces with personhood⁴⁰⁴ constitutes the Andean ayllu; they encounter each other in the chacra in order to nurture life in the local space of the territory and of the living cosmos which also displays personhood. They encounter each other into an organic integrality to converse and share, to reciprocate and thereby mutually nurture each other, to unfold in a *sumaq kawsay* [in Quechua, or *suma qamaña* in Aymara]: the flourishing of life, life in plenitude, the sweet, harmonious and vigorous life. The crops that are born, that flourish and give their fruit are the materialization of this mystery: the *sumaq kawsay* that emanates from the encounter of the three vital forces of the ayllu and the Andean cosmos. Andean...culture is chacra-culture...and it is enacted by the three living communities; this chacra-culture is the nurturing of life; it is to nurture and to allow oneself to be nurtured; it is nurturing under the ethical norms of the ayllu and of its three living communities; chacra-culture is also pacha-culture, pacha-conviviality and pacha-experience [a performative (re)vitalizing ‘cosmoexperience’]: in the chacra the runa experiences an integral participation in the mystery of life and its filiation with the Pacha-Mama.⁴⁰⁵

The chacra consecrates the integral experience of bio-eco-cosmic responsibility for humans in relation to the recreation of and participation with/in the contingent unfolding of life-cycles. The living runa cultivates, feeds from, gives back and returns to the Earth, never at once becoming separate or independent from—let alone superior to—the rest of the pacha. So, for

⁴⁰⁴ It is worth noticing at this point that among Andeans, “every animal or plant like the crop is cared for and nurtured as a person” indeed, for Andeans they are persons, and are deserving of personhood as much as humans are. This aspect of non/post-anthropocentric “empathy gives meaning to the agrocentric cosmovision of the Andean human.” There is therefore “an organic integration between cosmovision...with respect to nature and economic security for the lasting plenitude and welfare of the community” (Claverías Huerse 1990, 36). As V. Ochoa has noted: “Each class of product is planted in a parcel...which once it is cultivated it receives the name of ‘Y-apu’. This ‘yapu’ has to be worked with all seriousness, patience and in the best possible manner and cannot be abandoned at any instance for one has to nurture her [the non-human person] with love, care for her with all fidelity. Products are considered as persons” (Ochoa cited in Claverías Huerse 1990, 36).

⁴⁰⁵ Van Kessel 2006, 11.

instance, the runa transforms (metabolizes) food into energy, which becomes 'labor' through the means of nutrition, which is later transformed by the body into the residue that becomes fertilizer thereby giving something back to the Earth as any other animal and organism must. But the runa also dies and when the body decomposes it does not disappear into another world; energy, as it is known is not created nor destroyed, it is merely transformed, and so it is well understood by the runa that the 'defleshing' and decomposition of the pooled energy that once constituted a human body does not entail 'death' but rather a de-composition, diffusion, and dispersal, or rather redistribution of cosmic energy into the rest of the environment. The forces that came together to constitute a human life transmaterialize into the rest of nature thereby persisting as living energy within the macro-organism of the pacha, whether it is in the manqha of the underground, in the alax beyond the atmosphere, or in the akax of the biosphere. The point is that the condensed circulating energy that transitorily constitutes itself into a human form eventually transmaterializes and disperses itself into the rest of pacha.

That is why for Andeans, as for many other Abya-Yalans, the 'landscape' is as sacred and alive as anything else, not least because the same energy which once came together to constitute a human body continues to live on by feeding and (re)constituting life cycles in other forms. Many Andeans were traditionally known for burying bodies underneath trees in order to feed them.⁴⁰⁶ Also Andeans as other Indigenous Americans have always embraced the fact that their ancestors continue to live in the environment, albeit in other dispersed forms, as the constitutive matterized-energy of mountains, trees, other animals, parts of the land, parts of the air, and hence also even as parts of the nutrients we indirectly ingest through the regenerative cycles of the Earth.⁴⁰⁷ Literally, we are ingesting (drinking and breathing) in part our ancestors on which the land that produces crops feeds, and thereby we embody them as we do our descendants; it is all cyclical, ancestors, the living, and those to come are only recycled energy that lives in a

⁴⁰⁶ Paucca and Rafayle 2007, 54-55.

⁴⁰⁷ See Medina and Del Carpio 2000, 83

continuum within the rest of the bio-eco-cosmic community. This in many ways illustrates what it means to live in celebration of the fact that we exist in a cosmo-eco-biospheric continuum.

‘Chemically’ to speak in Western terms, it is obvious that the energies that materialize into the form of the (human) body only become dispersed into different forms once human life goes through ‘death’. This obvious fact was understood and more importantly embraced by Andeans since time immemorial. So here is the delicate point in the understanding of the Andean ‘economy’. In the Andes death is often referred to as *jiwasa*, which entails among other processes, a beautiful transition—and this is implied in the etymology of the term *jiwasa*. ‘Death’ is not the end, but a transformation.⁴⁰⁸ The energies that constitute us continue on in other dispersed forms. Literally the ‘we’ or ‘I’ may seem to ‘die’ but it has only dispersed to become other forms, part of it becomes oxygen into the air, other parts, become nutrients for underground worms which later decompose and feed the Earth which fertilizes the land that gives the crops which feed the animals including the human body and so on the cycles of the pacha continue. So our ‘ancestors’ are not in fact in the ‘past’, but very much ‘present’, they *are* (in) the land, (in) the water, (in) the air, (in) the plants, (in) the animals (and other organisms), and (in) the minerals (e.g., stones); they are literally part of a sacred landscape. Part of us becomes a tree and hence the tree is owed the same respect as we are for the energies that constitute us may have once or will at some point constitute part of the tree or become a tree or a non-human animal—like the tree or animal or part of it becomes human via the cycles of pacha. The same goes for every manifestation of the pacha. The cyclicity is even narrower as the energy which constitutes and reconstitutes the human body flows on a daily cyclical basis in and through the body via respiration, transpiration, nutrition, and excretion: bodily cells are born and dying on a quotidian basis, hence the cyclicity of the pacha which constitutes and flows across all bodies is constant. Cycles of fusion and dispersion of energies happen in longer or shorter cycles, but never cease recycling.

⁴⁰⁸ See Medina about Torrez 2008, 64, 69; Pauca and Rafayle 2007, 11

The term 'waka' refers to these many dispersed energies of those that once were and those who -are to come, Westerners may have translated wakas as the 'spirits of the ancestors', 'the spirits of non-human persons' like animals or plants or geological forms, or the 'spirits of future generations' but simply said the wakas are the dispersed energies which once constituted a human form or which will at some point constitute the human form. Spirit(s) is best translated as energies. The wakas become what is no longer or not yet. The wakas are the link, the chakana, the transformative nexus between the living runa and the sallqa which is the rest of 'nature', the 'wild'. The sallqa refers to those parts of nature whose constitutive energies have not been brought into the direct form of a runa but that are nevertheless linked with the runa via the wakas, and indeed, might once become or once could have been runa.

Perhaps the most interesting implication of this logic of the ayllu, the non-anthropocentric community, is that for Andeans time-space can never be lineal or divided. In a sense it can be said that there is no 'past behind' or 'future ahead' either. Some Andeans say the past is actually ahead because those who once were and 'decomposed' will constitute what is to come: what is past is paradoxically also what is to come. There is only ch'ama, and its cyclical transformation into various forms. There is only energy in cyclical transformation via pacha. Ancestors and descendants are all remnant and latent in the 'land', in the 'air', in the 'cosmos' (including our bodies) to put it in simple terms. The energy that constitutes us is the same energy from which the land/air/cosmos feeds and becomes whatever is to come. Andean philosopher Virgilio Roel offers a detailed explanatory reflection in this regard which is worth citing in full. For the Andeans,

All that exists is part of Pacha or proceeds from Pacha [including Pach'ama/Pachamama]. The past has generated the present (and therefore, it is also present), in the same mode as the present unfolds forming the future (and therefore it is also future); in this manner, Pacha integrates the past with the present and the future. In the same way, the dead who were in their moment gestated by Pacha, return to Her and in/through her womb return to life (and therefore, do not die); so Pacha contains both the remnants of all dead which become also the seed of all the beings that will be born in the future, just as she cares lovingly for the existing beings. In this form, Pacha contains in her womb all the beings of the past [those who once were] and all the beings of the future [those who are to come], at the same time as it protects and cares for the living [those who are]. And as all in the cosmos contains the vital[izing] seal of Pacha, in Her are concentrated all space, all

beings, and all times...Pacha is all the cosmos, all the infinite space (all that exists in it) in the same way Pacha also encompasses the past, present, and future. This is what is contained in the integral vision of the cosmos, properly Indigenous Andean-Amazonian, the cosmovision we Indians conserve today...As a result of this cosmovision, the existential attitude of us Indians is not one of struggle against Nature, but of harmony with her.⁴⁰⁹

This understanding of pacha therefore precludes the linear vision of time, as it predominates in the West. Cyclical time is much more prevalent. There are cycles which for Andeans are consecrated in the chacra. Runa, wakas, and sallqa come together in the chacra. The chacra is the location of transmaterialization, the place of the encounter where the energies of runa, the wakas, and the sallqa are brought together to nurture each other and be nurtured by each other. In a single 'plot of land' which is rather a space of cosmic encounter the decomposed energy that once made the bodies of our ancestors who have dispersed throughout the surroundings has meshed in with the rest of the eco-cosmic energy that makes up the sallqa and the two of them are brought together through the processes of cultivation, 'consumption', and 'disposal' in which runa are engaged in a cyclical responsibility. This is a form of non-anthropocentric ayni or reciprocal and cyclical complementarity that nurtures equilibrium and the continuation of vitality, All is cyclical, all is reciprocal, all is complementary, all lives.

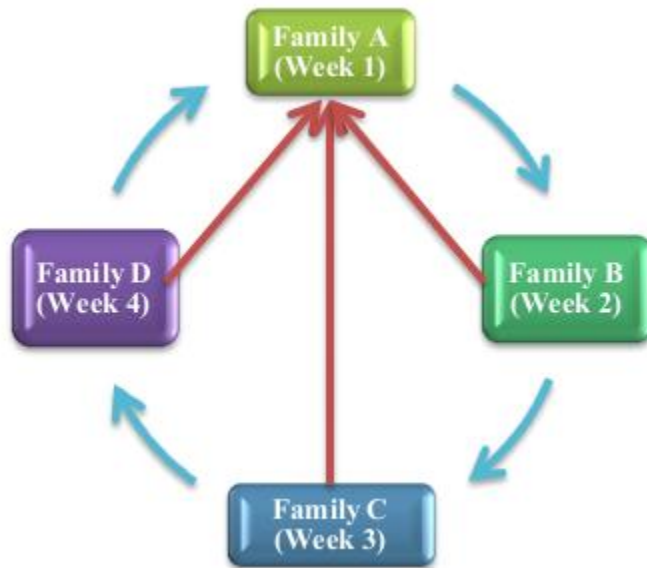
These acts of cyclical reciprocity between runa, waka, and sallqa must also be mirrored in relations among the runa (or currently human-formed energies) themselves. The ayni between the runa takes the form of reciprocal collaboration as for instance in the sphere of 'production': we help you today knowing that you will help us tomorrow. A common form of ayni is that which occurs in rounds or turns (*kuti*) within any sort of Andean community. To simplify, let us assume a small community or ayllu, besides practicing ayni with non-humans, humans themselves must practice ayni among themselves. A common model is the round or cycle of ayni collaboration. In such a cycle any given member of the community gets to benefit from the collaboration of every other member for a certain activity (such as building a house) during a certain time. Each member gets their chance to coordinate and channel the energies of all other community members at a

⁴⁰⁹ Virgilio Roel cited in Pacheco Farfan 1994, 70.

given time. So, for example, in a community of four families, during week 1 of the month family A receives help from the other three families in building their house. During week 2 of the month, family B receives help from the other three families in a certain activity (it need not necessarily be the same activity that benefitted family 1). During week 3 of the month, family C receives help from the other three families in order to achieve a certain task of relevance to family C. During week 4 of the month, family D receives help from the other three families in a certain activity of relevance to family D. Once the cycle of reciprocity ends at the end of the month a new cycle of turns (*kuti*) starts anew.

This form of cyclical and reciprocal *ayni*, comparable if not equal to the Mesoamerican *tequio*, also entails complementarity in that, for instance, family A might lack the skill of home building while family B might have good wall builders, family C might have great roof builders, and family D may have excellent furniture makers; hence, family A gets to reap the benefits of the diverse skills of each member of the community. Family B in turn might lack the skills needed to repair a certain type of agricultural machinery while families A, C, and D might all know a bit about it or at least have the resources to find somebody who does. So, the *ayni* as a practice of creating communal equilibrium via reciprocity is also the result of complementarity between those who are different and who can offer energies in different forms. This enactment of the *ayni* works among individuals as among groups or collectivities of different levels of aggregation.

Figure 7: Ayni, Example of 1 Month (Four Week) Ayni Cycle (Kuti)



Source: my own elaboration on the basis of information from several sources.⁴¹⁰

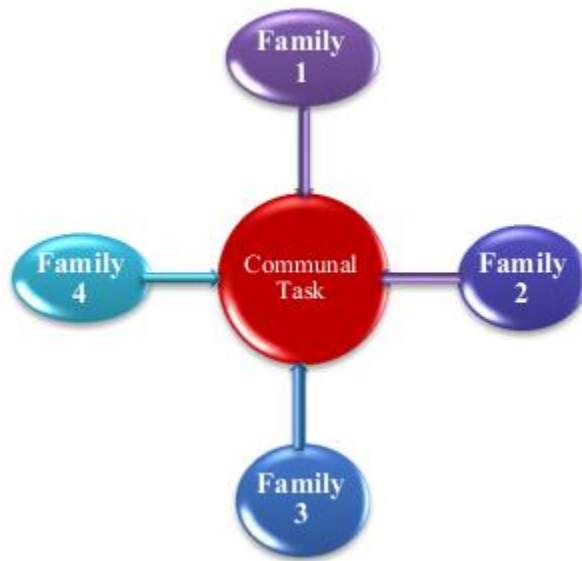
Another common form of complementary and reciprocal conjugation of forces in the form of communal collaboration, also comparable (if not equal) to the tequio, is what is known in the Andes as the *minka*. Although the term *minka* is often translated simply as ‘collaboration’ it may connote much more than that. *Minka* seems to imply the knitting (*mini-*) of links or bridges (-

⁴¹⁰ Estermann 1998, 134, 205-206, 237, 250; Estermann 2008, 84, 90, 152, 154; Mejía Huamán 2005, 27, 222; Getzels and Gordon, 1985; Claverias Huerse 1990, 61, 62, 119; Van Kessel 2006, 26, 46-49; Untoja Choque 2001, 77, 85-88, 124, 174; Pfuturi, Consa, Interview in “Contrastes”; Quispe 2000, 224, 226-227; Mutuberría Lazarini and Chiroque Solano 2011, 3, 5, 6, 11, 13; Ministerio de Relaciones Exteriores del estado Plurinacional de Bolivia 2009, 141, 165; Yampara 2008, 80; Renjifo and Grillo 2008, 87; Llanque Chana 2008, 100; Medina about Cancio Mamani 2008, 125-127, 129-130; San Martín 2008, 149-151; Medina 2008, 173-174, 211-213, 214-219; Huanacuni Mamani 2010, not paginated; CAO, Palacín, Ortíz, Ruiz 2011, 112-113; Pauca and Rafayle 2007, 10-11; Pauca and Rafayle 2007, 26-27, 33, 72-73, 93; Salomon 2004, 56, 70, 195-196, 201-203, 215-216, 270-271; Boero Rojo 1991, 39-40, 81-83, 93; Pacheco Farfán 1994, iii, 15, 62, 68, 116-117, 158, 291-292, 310-312; Luis E. Valcárcel cited in Pacheco Farfán 1994, 80; Flores Quelopana, personal communication, 1/9/2012; Estermann, personal communication, 1/10/2012; Pacheco Farfán, personal communication, 1/9/2012; Yampara 2005, 14, 17-18, 24, 56-61; Saul Mamani in Yampara 2005, 75-76; Yampara and Mario Torrez E. in Yampara 2005, 89; Yampara 2005, 117, 119, 122, 127-128, 137, 159, 163; Medina 2006, 16, 77-78, 184; Quisbert, Callisaya, and Velasco 2006, 20, 31; Murra 1975, 27-29; Miranda Luizaga 1996, 61, 73; Milla Villena 2003 (the whole book is dedicated to the ayni in its myriad manifestations).

ka) among community members. The *minka* is not done as a 'job', but rather is celebrated ritually. Like the *ayni*, the *minka* is a way to perform or enact the equilibrium among the bio-eco-cosmopolitical forces or participants that constitutes a balanced community such as the *ayllu*. The *minka* entails a drawing together of the energies or forces of community members in order to fulfill a task of benefit to the community as a whole such as building a bridge that links one half of the community to the other moiety (*saya*) across a river.

The *minka*, like the form of *ayni* explained above (and like the *tequio/guetza*) must be performed in a cycle. It can happen that the *minka* occurs two to three times a week in which each family is expected to contribute their energies simultaneously to a communal project, or it can happen alternatively that families rotate among each other in attending to a certain communal task. For instance, let us assume that the people of a certain community of four families needed to travel at least once a week to another town in order to obtain a certain type of supply necessary for conducting activities within a workshop. A rotation of *minka* responsibilities would require that family A make the trip on week 1 of the month, then family B would have to make it on week 2 of the month, then family C would have to make the trip on week 3, and family D would make the trip on week 4, and at the end of the cycle the turns or rounds would start again. To reiterate, the *minka* can occur as either relayed collaboration or a simultaneous collaboration or it can take other forms or combinations thereof. But the most important part of the *minka* is that it entails a weaving (*min-*) together of diverse forces from different people to generate the friction or energy [*pa-cha*] that fulfills a certain task from which all benefit and thereby (re)vitalize and (re)animate [*qama*] the community by building bridges or links (*-ka*) of complementary solidarity among all participants. As in the *ayni*, the *minka* enacts an economy of reciprocal complementarity among differences (e.g., different skills or attributes)

Figure 8: Minka



Source: my own elaboration on the basis of information from several sources.⁴¹¹

Another common form of complementary and reciprocal conjugation of forces in the form of communal collaboration is what is known as the *mita*. The ‘mita’ is similar to the *minka*; it may even be the case that the term *mita* is a linguistic variation or modification of *minka*. In any case, a differentiation is often made in that for the *mita* the energies of the community are brought together for tasks that benefit a community of communities. In more detail, this means that in the *mita* the energies of the members of a certain community are drawn together to create a (labor) force that is mobilized to work in a larger scale project *outside* the community in collaboration with other communities and for the benefit of a higher aggregation or confederation of

⁴¹¹ Estermann 1998, 134, 205-206, 237, 250; Estermann 2008, 84, 94, 152, 154; Getzels and Gordon, 1985; Claverias Huerse 1990, 61, 119; Van Kessel 2006, 47, 48-49; Untoja Choque 2001, 85-88, 111, 124, 174; Pfuturi, Consa, Interview in “Contrastes”; Quispe 2000, 224, 226-227, 229; Mutuberría Lazarini and Chiroque Solano 2011, 2-3, 5-6, 11, 13; Llanque Chana 2008, 100; Medina 2008, 220; Pauca and Rafayle 2007, 72-73, 93, 101; Salomon 2004, 5, 46-47, 56, 58, 69, 74-75, 187-188, 196, 197, 202-203, 205, 218-221, 234-235, 258, 271; Boero Rojo 1991, 23, 39-40, 53, 81-83, 184; Pacheco Farfán 1994, 15, 62, 291-292; Flores Quelopana, personal communication, 1/9/2012; Estermann, personal communication, 1/10/2012; Pacheco Farfan, personal communication, 1/9/2012; Medina 2006, 16, 79, 82-83; Quisbert, Callisaya, and Velasco 2006, 20, 25, 37, 62; Murra 2002, 73, 153; Murra 1975, 33, 61; Milla Villena 2003, 147, 259.

communities (this would contrast with the mink'a which enacts collaboration for intra-communal tasks). So let us assume there are four communities, Ayllu A, Ayllu B, Ayllu C, and Ayllu D. Each one of these Ayllus or communities is located at different altitudes along the same hydraulic system, for instance, a human-made canal using and distributing the water that gradually melts from the glaciers of a high Apu or mountain. All four Ayllus depend on the good functioning of the same hydraulic system, and so all must work to build, rebuild, and maintain it in collaboration. The mita refers to the coming/drawing together or encounter of the diverse (labor) forces of all four ayllus, often by rotating labor among their constitutive families, to engender collaborative energy that mobilizes to give life to the flow of water down the mountain in order to keep it flowing so as to nurture the life of all four ayllus. Like the minka, the mita can occur in several forms, whether in simultaneous collaboration or by relay and rotation. The mita like the ayni and the minka enacts the principle of reciprocal complementary differences. In a more formal sense, while the minka is collaboration for intra-community task, the mita is collaboration for an inter-community or supra-community task.

Figure 9: Mita



Source: my own elaboration on the basis of information from several sources.⁴¹²

Like the Mesoamerica tequitl or tequio (or guetza), the ayni, minka, and mita are all forms of reciprocal and complementary collaboration that gestated and became consolidated throughout millennia, working at all levels of socio-economic-organic aggregation, and persisting especially at the communal levels despite the ethnocidal onslaught of Westernization. Today these are often known under the Spanish name of ‘faena’. Traditionally, the Andean economy was based on these forms of collaboration and they needed no monetary or market type of relations, instead what they relied upon was a complex accountancy of cyclical reciprocity which up until about four or four and a half centuries ago would still be conducted with the help of a *hipu*, that is, a cord/knot based system. These systems create an economy of complementary cyclical reciprocity which can perfectly subsist with its own form of accountancy and without the need for any monetary intermediation; some system of computing, accountancy, accountability is all that is needed.

Westernization brought a measure of syncretism and now market, monetary and exchange relations and even profit making have been added to or blended with an economy of complementary cyclical reciprocity that flourished sustainably and in a socially just fashion without the need for money, profit or commodification. Out of the three forms of collaboration that have been discussed so far, the mita seems like historically it is the most recent form; it is known to have reached its peak during the times of the Tawa-Inti-Suyu, where the Inka elite mobilized huge contingents of labor force (e.g., the *mitmaqs*) from all communities across very long distances to build massive projects and address large scale tasks at progressively higher levels of socioeconomic and organic-political aggregation.

⁴¹² Untoja Choque 2001, 57, 85-86, 88, 96, 172, 174, 175; Quispe 2000, 216; Mutuberría Lazarini and Chiroque Solano 2011, 3-4, 6; Salomon 2004, 47, 56, 70, 187-188, 197-198, 205, 234-235, 250, 258; Boero Rojo 1991, 23, 40, 53, 193, 202; Pacheco Farfán 1994, 291-292; Quisbert, Callisaya, and Velasco 2006, 37; Murra 2002, 3, 61-62, 79, 82, 125, 127, 153, 156, 203-204, 206, 223-224, 239, 253, 261-292, 306, 315, 317-318; Murra 1975, 24, 26, 30-41;

European colonialism perverted the mita to an extreme. When colonizers learned that Indigenous Andeans were known to collaborate without compensation and only in exchange for reciprocal and complementary redistribution of goods and services, the colonial powers transformed the mita into a system of forced mobilization for the massive extraction of resources and large scale production without reciprocal redistribution and with overextended cycles that were downright murderous; in short, the mita was used as an excuse for extensive exploitation in slave-like conditions that had ethnocidal and genocidal results.

Notwithstanding these colonial perversions and the often violent forms of modern syncretism, the economic infrastructure of the traditional Andes now subsists clearly in the intellectual and philosophical rearticulation of the practices of collaboration and in the many communities and even urban neighborhoods which still cultivate them in one form or another, whether in their traditional names or under Hispanicized names such as ‘faena’. Also, the effort to recover and revitalize these practices has been well underway and is especially in full swing in Bolivia under the Indigenous led administration of Evo Morales and in parts of Ecuador and Peru; we will discuss this in one of the sections ahead of us. For now, let us continue discussing the economic infrastructures of Andinia.

We have already shown how the pacha is enacted, made manifest or brought about (*pachayachachik*) through what in Western terms would be called the ‘sphere’ of ‘production’; we will now discuss the ‘sphere’ of ‘(re)distribution’. In the traditional Andean economy (re)distribution of goods, services, tools, and in general the allocation of the products of work and of the Earth is crucial not just in an economic or social sense, but also in a bio-ecological and even cosmic sense. The system of (re)distribution can be initially understood by discussing the institutional network of *pirwas*, *tampus*, and *qollqas*. *Pirwas*, *tampus* and *qollqas* are knots in webs of redistribution among communities in different regions dispersed throughout various interwoven locations according to criteria of altitudinal, latitudinal, transversal (i.e., hydraulic), ecological, climatic and other forms of geo-eco-cultural zonation and even cosmic zonation as a function of astronomical and meteorological cycles.

Pirwas and tampus are eco-geo-strategically located institutions where surpluses produced by members of diverse communities are deposited and stored and from where they are redistributed to those who need it; the system works traditionally according to principles of reciprocal complementarity (e.g., ecological/economic complementarity among different bio-ecological climatic zones). Pirwas and tampus can be intra or inter-communal. Traditionally it was expected that every family and every community (or higher social aggregations) deposit part of their product in the pirwa or tampu, from where other families (if intra-communal) or other communities (if inter-communal) or the upper aggregation of redistribution (if supra-communal) would be able to take what was needed. Often, what was deposited would be the surplus product. The system of pirwas and tampus existed alongside the qollqas during the Tawa Inti Suyu; the qollqas were deposits dispersed across the huge pre-colonial system of Andean roads; the qollqas supplied needed goods for workers, officers, warriors and travelers. The system of pirwas, tampus and qollqas, once served as a huge network of redistribution.

Today active remnants of it are to be found but mostly at the intra-community level, although the government of Bolivia has now implemented a full scale effort to revitalize the system of redistribution at every scale and Bolivia's foreign policy as well as the stance of many transnational Indigenous networks like the CAOI repeatedly propose that such system be enacted regionally and globally to address the world's many problems of socio-economic and ecological (in)justice; this work develops a proposal on this basis ahead. So the effort to reappraise these philosophies, institutions and practices is more than just an academic exercise concerning a 'past' system of which only remnants are left; to the contrary, as with the rest of this work, what is called for and exemplified is the active and creative recovery, revalorization, and revitalization of Indigenous modes of thought, organization, and practice at every scale. This sort of work is well under way by intellectuals, governments, and organizations across Abya-Yala, notably in the Andes and with their allies elsewhere.⁴¹³

⁴¹³ See, for instance, Alvizuri 2004, 2007; Boero Rojo 1991; all works and efforts by the CAOI and its allies such as CAOI, COICA, CICA, CIMA. 2011; CAOI 2008; CAOI, Palacín Quispe,

So let us briefly explain how the system of *priwas*, *tampus* and *qollqas* works. Let us assume that we have a *Marka*, meaning a ‘bunch’ or ‘cluster’ (‘*mar-*’ or ‘*mar(k/q)a*’) of inter-linked or inter-bridged (-*ka*) *Ayllus*. Let us assume that this *Marka* is made up of four basic communities or *Ayllus*: *Ayllu A*, *Ayllu B*, *Ayllu C*, and *Ayllu D*. Each *Ayllu*, while belonging to the same *Marka*, is nevertheless located at a certain distance from the others across a space with widely contrasting altitudinal, latitudinal, and transversal zones and therefore extremely diverse climates and microclimates or niches. This is where the hyperdiversity of the Andean region comes most clearly into play. *Ayllu A* might be located in the high altitude *puna*, *Ayllu B* in the mid-high altitude valley, *Ayllu C* in the mid-low altitude tropical *yunka* and *Ayllu D* in the plains of the Chaco, all of them, would in this case be located on the sunrise side of the Andes. A system of *priwas*, *tampus* and *qollqas* could be established among all four *ayllus*, thereby interlinking or bridging different *saraqas*⁴¹⁴ or ‘ecological floors’ or ‘ecological archipelagos’⁴¹⁵ and ‘climate

Ortíz, and Ruiz 2011; Chivi Vargas 2011; Claeveryas Huerse 1990; Estermann 1998, 2008; Farah and Vasapollo, eds. 2011; Fernandez Quisbert 2007; Flores Quelopana 2006, 2007; García, Gutiérrez, Prada, Quispe, and Tapia 2001; Gudynas 2011; Gutierrez Rojas, Ramos, et. al. 2010; Huanacuni Mamani 2010; Kusch 1975; Lajo, J. 2002; Llanque Chana 2001; Luizaga, Natcheff, Medina, Mamani, Loma, Arce, Tamayo, Paredes, Colque, Mansilla, Waskar. 2000; Mamani Hualco and Chivi Vargas 2010; Mamani and Medina. 2001; Medina 1995, 1997, 2001, 2006, 2006b, 2008; Medina and del Carpio 2000; Medina ed. 2001; Meinert 2001; Mejía Huamán 2005; Mendez 2006; Milla Villena 2003; Ministerio de Relaciones Exteriores del Estado Plurinacional de Bolivia 2009; Miranda Luizaga 1996; Miranda Luziaga and del Carpio Natcheff 2000; Miranda 2001; Moreno 1983; Morin Tone 2009; Murra 2002; Murra 1975; Mutuberría Lazarini and Chiroque Solano 2011; Nicolas, Fernández, and Flores 2007; Nuckolls 2010; Nuningo 2001; Pacheco Farfán 1994; Pacheco 2006; Paredes 2000; Paucca Gonzales and Rafayle Cuadra 2007; Proyecto Andino de Tecnologías Campesinas (PRATEC) 2006; Quispe 2000; Rengifo, Panduro, and Grillo 1993; Renjifo and Grillo 2001; Republica del Ecuador 2009; Salomon 2004; San Martín 2001; Schmidt Colque 2000; Temple 2001; Ticona Alejo 2005, 2002; Ticona Alejo ed. 2006; Torrez 2001; Tórrez and Ticona 2006; Untoja Choque 2001; Untoja Choque and Mamani Espejo 2000; Van Kessel and Condori Cruz; Van Kessel 2006; Van Kessel and Condori Cruz 2004; Waskar Chukiwanka 2000; Yampara, ed. 1996; Yampara 1995, 2001a, 2001b.

⁴¹⁴ Medina about Torrez 2008, 67.

⁴¹⁵ J. V. Murra (1975, 2002) first used the concept for a Western audience in his theory of the Andean ‘vertical control of a maximum of ecological floors’ or ‘ecological archipelagos’. Yet Murra’s theory refers to ancient and still prevalent Indigenous Andean knowledges and practices, and it is a constitutive dimension of Andean philosophy, scholarship, economics, politics and culture in general. See Estermann 1998, 132, 133; Estermann 2008, 143, 151-152; Mejía Huamán 2005, 149; Mamani Pocoaca 2000, 115, 116-117, 119; Claverías Huerse 1990, 22, 27, 38, 40, 41, 43-44, 48-49, 54, 78-79, 81, 86, 88, 92, 116-118, 129; Van Kessel 16; Untoja Choque and Mamani

zones' and drawing together their productive forces into a complementary economy of reciprocity that creates the energy to vitalize the Marka, that is, the cluster of interlinked ayllus. The '*maluri*' is the traditional 'authority' responsible for, in charge of or with the *cargo* of tying networks of complementarity between settlements strategically located in different ecological zones and biomes.

What is most impressive about this networked-system is that the long historical experience of Indigenous Andeans in living in a hyperdiverse geo-ecological region taught them to create a network or rhizomatic economy of complementary eco-zones tied together into relations of reciprocity and redistribution by deposits and institutions of storage and reallocation (*tampus*, *pirwas*, *qollqas*) from which the products of different climates in different altitudinal and latitudinal zones are shared and redistributed with those of other zones on the basis of mutual need, reciprocity, codependency and complementarity. As Yampara⁴¹⁶ describes it, the "Andean system is characterized by the complementary ordering of a variety of different ecological spaces, ranging from the coast and the lowlands to the highlands like the plateau, passing through the valleys and the oriental plains," interweaving different climate-zones in order to enable a "system of organization that...constructs life in interaction and in accordance with the rest of nature." This

Espejo 2000, 52; Untoja Choque 2001, 4, 44, 55, 79-80, 88-89, 91, 124, 167, 168, 172, 174; Quispe 2000, 224; Mutuberría Lazarini and Chiroque Solano 2011, 2, 5, 8, 11; Ministerio de Relaciones Exteriores del Estado Plurinacional de Bolivia 2009, 128, 157, 170, 178, 189; Medina 2008, 32; Medina about Torrez 2008, 67, 68; Miranda 2008, 120; Medina 2008, 176, 190; CAOI, "Reciprocidad para el Buen Vivir", 2, 5, 16; CAOI, Palacín, Ortíz, Ruiz 2011, 44, 106; Paucca and Rafayle 2007, 52, 92, 94-95; Boero Rojo 1991, 23, 33, 35, 44-47, 48, 77, 151-153, 187, 203, 212, 226-227, 232-233, 299; 337, 341, 345-346, 347, 350; Pacheco Farfan 1994, 13; Luis E. Valcarcel cited in Pacheco Farfan 1994, 85-86, 95; Pacheco Farfán 1994, 97, 99; Flores Quelopana, personal communication, 1/9/2012; Estermann, personal communication, 1/10/2012; Ticona 1996, 71-72, 74; Medina in Yampara 2001, 28; Yampara 2001, 32-31, 33, 42, 50-51, 57, 60, 62, 68, 71, 77, 92, 94, 97, 113, 115, 118, 120-121, 146-148, 151, 152, 171, 173; Yampara 2005, 13-14, 17, 20-21, 22-23, 27, 32-34; Yampara and Mario Torrez E. in Yampara 2005, 91, 101, 120-122; Yampara 2005, 130; Mario Torrez Eguino in Yampara 2005, 140-141, 141-145; Yampara 2005, 170; Medina 2006, 23; Wolf de Romero in Murra 2002, 11-12; Mould de Pease in Murra 2002, 15; Murra 2002, 58, 61-159; Murra 1975, 26; Milla Villena 2003, 232-234

⁴¹⁶ Yampara 2008, 142.

is what has been referred to as ‘*interzonal symbiosis*’⁴¹⁷ or ‘discontinuous eco-symbiotic complementarity.’⁴¹⁸ Each *tampu*, *pirwa*, or *qollqa* is a knot in a web of inter-relatedness and reciprocal complementarity; they are more than just centers of redistribution, but places where different communities enact, celebrate, and perform their ties to each other, locations where the forces of two or more communities are drawn together to produce and redistribute the creative complementary friction that unleashes the energy that (re)vitalizes life; in short, the *pirwa*, *tampu*, or *qollqa* is yet another enactment of *pa-cha-qama*, and each knot functions as a redistributive *chakana* among a diversity of (re)productive forces.

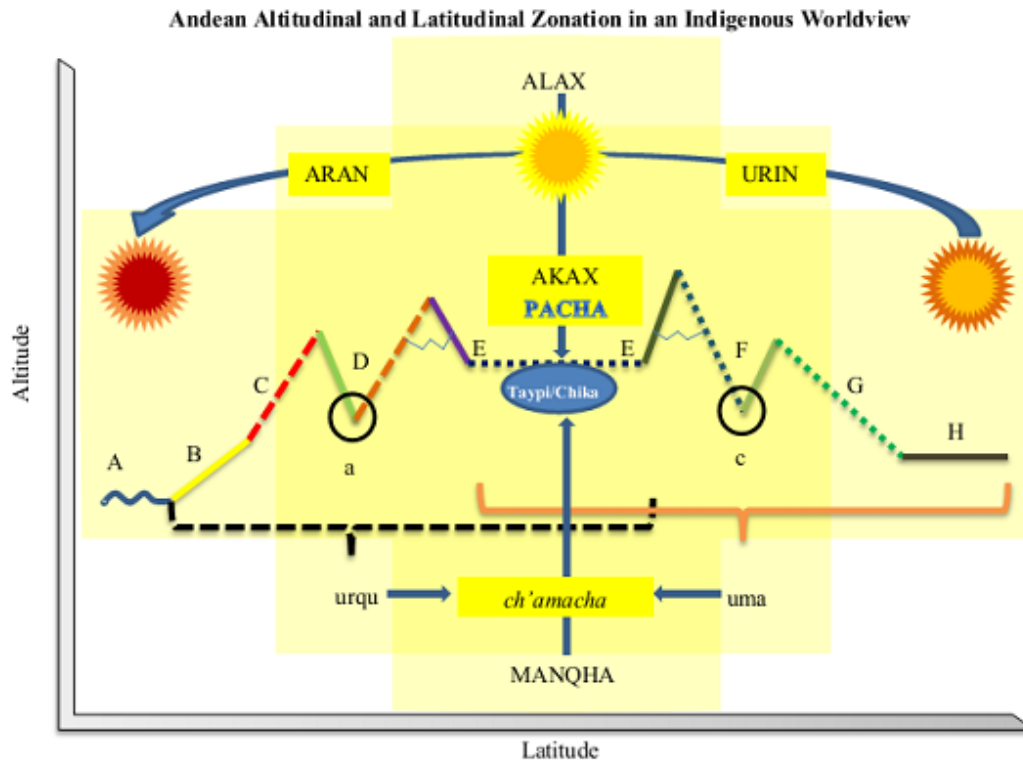
An explanation of the network-system of redistribution is a key entry point into an understanding of the wider Andean infrastructure which produces what has been already referred to here as *interzonal symbiosis*. The performance of *interzonal symbiosis* as the infrastructure of the Indigenous Andean economy is without a doubt one of the most impressive achievements of Indigenous wisdom, organization and practice and it deserves a detailed description and discussion. Substantial space will be dedicated to explaining it and discussing it here.

Consider the following diagram which is a model of the surface variations in altitudinal and latitudinal zonation of the central Andes as seen from within an Indigenous Andean worldview or rather *cosmo/pacha*-experience. The purpose of the drawing is only explanatory and it is only meant as a simplified representation of how Andeans articulate and construe/understand the geological features and relationships of the area:

⁴¹⁷ Medina about Torrez 2008, 62-63, 67; San Martin 2008, 149-151; Medina 2008, 176; Medina 2008, 177; Ramiro Condarco Morales cited in Ticona 1996, 71-73; Medina in Yampara 2001, 28; Yampara 2001, 57, 60, 146-147, 171; Yampara 2005, 13-14, 17; Condarco Morales cited in Yampara 2005, 19; Yampara 2005, 27; Mamani Pocoaca 2000, 116-117.

⁴¹⁸ Medina about Torrez 2008, 62-63

Figure 10: Indigenous Zonation of the Andes



Key

Note: The embracing cross in the background symbolizes the *chakana* or cross-bridging/interweaving/interlinking of complementary opposing forces that vitalize and energize by reciprocating and equilibrating each other

PACHA = Encounter of two forces/energies (that vitalizes, i.e., pacha-kamak)

Ch'amacha (or *tinku*) = the instance of a vigorous encounter among forces, a friction of energies that engenders balance or equilibrated parity of reciprocal complementarity.

TAYPI (or **CHIKA**) = the instance or moment of wherein dualities of forces encounter each other, the location of reciprocal and complementary equilibration, the conditions and outcome reiterated *Ch'amachas* or *tinkus*.

ALAX = Cosmic forces/energies

AKAX = Biosphere

MANQHA = Telluric forces/energies

uma = soft/humid or 'femenine' soil/land

urqu = hard/dry or 'masculine' soil/land

URIN = sunrise orientation

ARAN = sunset orientation

A = *Qocha* (Sea)

B = *Quta Laka* (Coast)

C = *Wasa* (Desert)

D = Dry *Qirara* (Dry or Semi-Desertic valley)

E = *Pala Suni* or '*Puna*' (Andean Plateau)

F = Humid *Qirara* (Humid or Semi-Tropical valley)

G = *Yunka Uraqi* or '*Yunga*' (Tropical Rainforest, i.e., Amazon)

H = *Ch'umi* or '*Pampas*' (Plains)

a = an example of a dry intra Andean valley (qeshwa) microclimate

b = an example of a humid intra Andean valley (qeshwa) microclimate

Source: My own elaboration based on information from several sources.⁴¹⁹

⁴¹⁹ Yampara 2005 27; Torrez in Yampara 141; Medina 2006, 127-128.

The interzonal symbiosis of the Andean economic infrastructure consists in the network of complementary productive forces from different eco-zones, biomes, and microclimates cross-linked or interlaced into an economy of reciprocity by a (re)distributive system of *tampus*, *pirwas* and *qollqas*. It is pertinent to remember again at this point that the Andean cosmos/world is vitalized (*qama*) through the energy that emanates from reciprocal encounters among complementary oppositional forces (*pacha*). Strictly speaking, *pacha* evokes the dynamism and contingency that is not invoked by concepts like ‘cosmos’ or ‘world’. *Pacha* does not just occur; it is the responsibility of all forces to bring it about. Such is the case of the economy of interzonal symbioses. The way it works is as follows.

The Andean region is a hyperdiverse geo-ecological and cultural area. It contains 80% of the diversity of ecosystems in the world.⁴²⁰ The area known as ‘Bolivia’ today alone boasts “80 of the 101 zones of life of the terrestrial ecosystems.”⁴²¹ The diagram above merely shows a very simplified version in that it presents eight broad geo-bio-ecological areas, as expressed from within the Andean worldview, the *Qocha* (Sea), the *Quta Laka* (Coast), the *Wasa* (Desert), the Dry *Qirara* (Dry or Semi-Desertic valley), the *Pala Suni* or ‘*Puna*’ (Andean Plateau), the Humid *Qirara* (Humid or Semi-Tropical valley), the *Yunka Uraqi* or ‘*Yunga*’ (Tropical Rainforest, i.e., Amazon), and the *Ch’umi* or ‘*Pampas*’ (Plains). Within these broad ecological areas there are several bio-climatic areas. Hence these eight broad ecological areas do not by any means exhaust or cover in detail the biodiversity that is encountered throughout the Andean region. These are merely broad categorizations that can be further subdivided and combined in multiple ways to generate a wide variety of eco-zones, biomes, and microclimates; plus there are several broad ecosystemic variations across the Andes that are not contained within this broad eight, and several eco-zones not explicitly discussed at this point, plus dozens of biomes and hundreds of microclimates. Moreover, the diagram above is a model inspired on the geo-ecology of the

⁴²⁰ Yampara 2005, 14.

⁴²¹ Medina 2006, 27.

Central-Southern Andes, along the latitude of the historically, mythologically, and cosmologically crucial Lake Titikaka; hence the term ‘*taypi*’ as the idealized location of fertilizing equilibrium is placed in the diagram inside a blue oval symbolizing the (mytho-bio-ecological) origin of fertility in Lake Titikaka. So for the purpose of parsimony the broad categories used serve to explain the logic of the Andean economic infrastructure. In order to do so I will offer a simplified model.

As explained above, the basic unit of Andean economic organization is the Ayllu. The ayllu is an aggregation of *Hatha* or *Jatha*, which are kin⁴²² groups. *Hatha* means ‘seed’ in Aymara. We will discuss this more in detail when we speak of Andean political organization. For now it suffices to specify that the ayllu is the basic unit of Andean political organization. In the simplest version, there must be at least two ayllus to make up a marka (although there can be many more, but they always add up in pairs or dyads). A marka therefore must be made up of at least two ayllus, so that the marka can thereby be made up of two complementary ‘*saya*’, halves or partialities (*parcialidades* in Spanish) or moieties. Again there can be more than one ayllu in each moiety, but for simplicity let us assume one per moiety. One moiety must be oriented and located towards the side of the sunrise and the other towards the orientation of the sunset. Because of the altitudinal-litudinal-transversal variations created by a mountain range that cuts across the whole continent from its southernmost tip to its northernmost coasts, by definition each moiety will always be located at a different altitude from that of its counterpart. If the marka is located, for instance, on the eastern side of the Andes facing towards the Amazon rainforest, then the *urin-saya* (sunrise moiety) will usually be on a lower altitude than the *aran-saya* (sunset moiety) unless one or both of the moieties are inside a *qeshwa* or intra-Andean valley. The same will happen conversely, if we are speaking of a marka that is located on the side of the Andes that faces the Pacific Ocean (i.e., facing the West), the *urin-saya* (sunrise moiety) will usually be at a higher altitude than the *aran-saya* (sunset moiety). But then again, since the Andes are made up of great

⁴²² “Kin” may but does not necessarily imply blood-ties, but it does always imply familiarity and ties of more or less intimate mutual responsibility and often friendship.

altitudinal variations with numerous intra-Andean valleys, the altitudinal position of each moiety can vary depending of exactly where they are both located.

In any case, markas will be made up of two sayas, urin and aran, and each saya will usually occupy a different biome and potentially also a different ecological zone or a different ecosystem. Different ecological areas nurture different forms of life (many of which would be seen by Westerners as ‘products’, Andeans see them as offspring, progeny, or gifts of Earth that must be nurtured and reciprocated). Runa, that is living humans, have a role in nurturing these different life-forms, the offspring of Mother Earth and Father Sun/Sky. Humans, as any other creatures have the privilege of obtaining their nutrients and whatever else they might need from Earth so long as they reciprocate by caring for what Earth offers. Strictly speaking, humans cannot own the pacha or any piece of her as they are not separated from or superior to her. Humans are walking Earth whose life cycles and reproduction are wholly constituted and shaped by the rest of the pacha; every fiber and molecule that makes up human life is part of the bio-cosmic continuum. Hence, humans are permanently indebted to and integrated with the rest of pacha; they have responsibilities to fulfill in sustaining the pacha which in turns constitutes, sustains, hosts, and embeds them. This means that when a group of humans lives in a particular moiety, those humans are never the ultimate ‘owners’ of whatever exists in the ecosystem around them. Andeans say that they cannot own their own mother Pacha, and of course to sell or trade with her is to prostitute her. Ultimately humans cannot own pacha, they can only be responsible for contributing to the revitalization of pacha, or a certain part of pacha. Hence, among Indigenous Andeans the concept of property in the anthropocentric sense is inappropriate and even atrocious. This does not mean that it has not been forcibly implemented nor does it mean that all people of Andean descent resist it. But the underlying cosmoexperience that informs Andean life is generally resistant to any idea of anthropocentric property or anthropocentric sovereignty. Instead, it would be more appropriate to understand the role of humanity in the pacha as one of responsibility (and in fact communion), not property.

Humans who live in a certain *saya* or moiety (or any location for that matter) cannot therefore behave as if they were the ‘owners’ of the ‘parcel’ of nature in which they dwell. *Ayllus*, as has been explained above, are communities among *runa* (living persons), *waka* (the persons who once were or are not yet, “spirits” or dispersed energies often pooled in or distributed among no-human persons), and the *sallqa* (the rest of ‘nature’). So it is clear here as well that living humans cannot in any legitimate way claim or behave as if they ‘own’ nature or even the parcel of the *pacha* which they happen to dwell in (or grew out of). Instead, the relationship must be one of responsibility, and particularly the responsibility to play and celebrate their part in nurturing the cyclical revitalization of the *pacha*. This has a direct implication in regard to how the ‘economy’ should work or rather be celebrated.

Going back to our example of the *Marka*, we assumed that it is composed of two moieties, *urin-saya* and *aran-saya*. Those who dwell in *urin-saya* are not the owners of the parcel of the *pacha* they dwell with/in, they are only responsible to nurture its fruits, to care for them to make sure that they flourish at their best, but they must always make sure that some of that ‘product’ is made available for circulation and redistribution via the network of *tampus*, *pirwas* and *qollqas* to the members of the other moiety of the same *Marka* and to the members of other *markas*. The ‘product’ of the Earth is not something that can be appropriated in an anthropocentric fashion, but is rather conceived of as a part of the life cycle. So redistribution and consumption, as well as disposal of residue among humans is not something that can be subsumed easily under the logic of anthropocentric or ethnocentric property or a separated ‘human economic sphere’. In this regard the concept of the *chacra* that we explained above is not a simple parcel or a simple herd of livestock or a simple mine, it is rather an allotment assigned to a group of humans for them to nurture and care for, most usually to a couple (*jaqi* or *chacha-warmi*⁴²³), or a conglomerate of *jaqis* so that they become responsible for nurturing it (or rather her) on behalf of the balance and equilibrium of the wider *pacha*.

⁴²³ *chacha-warmi* refers to the masculine-femenine relationship.

The concept of ‘land tenure’ does not do justice to the Indigenous Andean understanding of the *chacra* or to other concepts of land use such as the *saraqa*. Surely we can speak of different types of ‘land tenure’ in the Andes, but without fully doing justice to the Andean spirit. It is better to speak of ‘land relation’ or land responsibility. In the simplest classical Andean model of land responsibility there are at least two types of allotments, the (a) *Sayaña* and (b) *Saraqa* (or *Unta*), each of which can be used in one of two forms, as (1) *Aynuqa* or as (2) *Anaqa* depending on climatic and calendric determinations as made by the authoritative figure of the *Pachaqamaña* (the name connotes the following meaning in the Aymara language: the force that repartitions life and vitality). Drawing on the description and explanation by the Indigenous Andean scholar, philosopher and leader Simon Yampara,⁴²⁴ we know that

- a) *Sayaña* is the principal sort of territorial settlement which is to be used and enjoyed by a family; the *sayaña* is where the family home, yard, corral is located. It is allotted for the use of families and families are fully responsible for the care and nurturing of such space.
- b) *Saraqa* (or *unta*) is the complementary territorial space to the *sayaña*. This space and whatever is produced from it is for circulation and redistribution among families and towards the community as a whole which in turn circulates part of the produce within the larger network of communities. The *saraqa* is of communal usufruct, it is the source from which produce is circulated and redistributed among families and other communities.

It is tempting to assimilate the dyad of *sayaña-saraqa* to the dyad of ‘private’ and ‘public’. The comparison is not completely unjust, so long as it is clear that *sayaña* does not refer to a ‘parcel’ of ‘private *property*’ nor does the *saraqa* refer to a ‘parcel’ of ‘public *property*’ in any anthropocentric or Western sense. Rather, the *sayaña* is an allotment of *pacha* for which a family is *responsible* in an intimate or intra-familial sense while the *saraqa* is an allotment of *pacha* for

⁴²⁴ Yampara 2008, 142-143.

which the conglomerate of families is responsible in a communal fashion. In the logic of the Andean (Aymara) economist and philosopher Fernando Untoja Choque, what is ‘proper’ or ‘appropriate’ from within the Andean understanding of the economy is not an anthropocentric appropriation or property that would easily turn into exploitative behavior, but rather what is ‘proper’ or ‘appropriate’ is a relationship of responsibility among humans and with/in the rest of the pacha.

Allotments can be treated either as (1) *Aynuqa* or as (2) *Anaqa*. Drawing on Yampara⁴²⁵ again, we know that

- 1) *Aynuqa* is the territorial space mainly allotted for agriculture, whether it be familial or communal, and
- 2) *Anaqa* is the other territorial space mainly allotted for herding, whether it be familial or communal. Allotments are never permanent, there is (poly-)cyclical repartitioning.

It is important to point out that within the Andean economy allotments are never fixed or perennial. There is no such thing as a given right to inherit a piece of land permanently, nor is it appropriate to believe that any family will permanently hold or unilaterally decide what is to be done with a particular territorial space. In practice, a family usually settles in a *sayaña* for a long time, and it is rather easy for that family to renew ‘tenure’ over it or rather responsibility for her, but notwithstanding that fact, there is no ultimate property over it/her since as Untoja puts it, from a Western viewpoint it would be said that all territorial space is of ‘communal property,’ even when there are parts of it that can be allotted and held as ‘private possession.’ Strictly speaking however, as we have seen, the ‘community’ is not exclusively human and therefore ‘communal property’ does not equate with anthropocentric property either; anthropocentric ownership is *improper* and *inappropriate* from within the Andean cosmoexperience. This is because humans cannot own the pacha which enables and constitutes their existence, nor can families possess parts of her. In rigor, humans are epiphenomena of the pacha, manifestations of the pacha, and they hold

⁴²⁵ Yampara 2008, 142-143.

reciprocal responsibilities with the rest of her. That is why the relation of families and communities to the (rest of the) pacha is ultimately one of responsibility, of familial intimacy and even deferential love, and not of property or possession. Humans belong to the pacha, and not the other way around. Therefore, allotments are never permanent, there is cyclical repartitioning, and such repartitioning is determined not according to unilateral human will, but rather on the basis of the responsibilities of humans to each other and with the rest of the pacha in terms of ‘climate’ and kairological calendrics (or chrono/kairopolitics), and many other bio-eco-cosmo-political criteria.

At this point it is particularly relevant to stop and discuss the concept of the *saraqa* and its crucial role in the economy of interzonal symbiosis. Saraqas are territorial allotments incorporated into a network of inter-familial and inter-communal reciprocal complementarity according to geo-eco-bio-logical criteria. So if every marka is divided in two sayas (moieties), urin and aran, the products of saraqa allotments in the saya of urin must be deposited in pirwas from where ‘produce’ is shared or ‘redistributed’ among families, in tampus where produce is shared/redistributed among communities (or ayllus or sayas), and in qollqas where produce is shared/redistributed throughout the whole Andean network of ayllus, markas, and the larger suyus (macro-regions). By definition, the very purpose of saraqas is that they must be dispersed like ‘archipelagos’ across the ‘maximum possible variety of ecological floors’⁴²⁶ along an axis of altitudinal zonation and throughout the widest possible variety of eco-zones and biomes in latitudinal zonation so that the economy becomes hyperdiverse. What is produced in a *saraqa* is circulated through the system of pirwas, tampus, and qollqas and thereby redistributed among settlements in different ecozones to create the network of interzonal symbiosis that constitutes the basic infrastructure of the Andean economy.

⁴²⁶ Murra 2002.

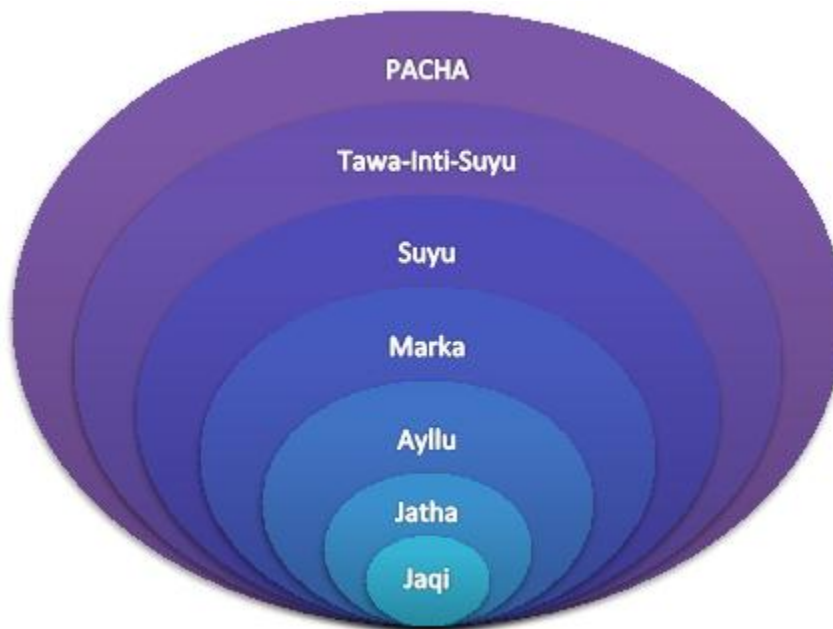
C. The Political Infrastructure of Andinia

The political infrastructure of Andean civilization emanates also from the pacha. As with the philosophical and economic infrastructure, politics is organized also in terms of paired dualities of complementary and reciprocal forces that equilibrate each other. I will offer a parsimonious explanation of the political infrastructure of Andean organization and practices. There are two major dimensions to be explained, one corresponds to the political structure which will be referred to as the structure of organic aggregation, and the other corresponds to the political dynamics and I will refer to it as the cyclical system of relayed obligation and rotation, known across several parts of the Abya-Yalan world (e.g., in Mesoamerica) as the system of burdens or *cargos*.

i. Political Structure: Organic Aggregation

The political infrastructure of Andean organization is built on seven levels of bio-ecocomic political aggregation: (1) Jaqi, (2) Jatha, (3) Ayllu, (4) Marka, (5) Suyu, and the (6) Tetrapolity (or Tawa-Suyu). It is important to point out as a premise that from within the Andean cosmoexperience, each level of political aggregation exists organically, metabolically, and non-anthropocentrically within a macro-organism, the pacha.

Figure 11: Structure of Organic Aggregation in Andean Political Organization



Source: My own elaboration on the basis of data from several sources.⁴²⁷

To put it in Western terms, for Andeans just as genes make up cells, and cells make up organs, and organs make up bodies, it is understood that the jaqi (or couple) is an interlacing of two different complementary forces (through the encounter known as jaqicha⁴²⁸). The encounter of complementary force (re)produces the seed or jatha whose equilibrated growth engenders a cell called the Ayllu. A conglomeration of interwoven and complementary cells or Ayllus makes up an organ or Marka, and several Markas make up the body of a suyu, four suyus in turn make up a community of body polities whose existence is possible only as micro-organisms within the biosphere or Akax Pacha. This biosphere is part of the greater meso-organism of the ‘Pacha-Mama’ which in turn is part of the macro-organism that makes up the solar system and from then on to the galaxy and the rest of the cosmos, the indeterminate open-ended Pacha. This explanation

⁴²⁷ See Quispe 2000, 13; Yampara 2008, 78, 140.

⁴²⁸ The Western translation of *jaqicha* is usually ‘marriage’, although we can see from our discussion that it has a much more encompassing eco-cosmological meaning because jaqicha is a literal enactment of the pacha and of pachaqama.

is not meant as an ‘allegory,’ ‘metaphor’ or a ‘political metaphor’ in the sense often discussed when it is argued in Western political theory that ‘state’ is *like* a ‘body polity’ and each of its citizens is *like* a ‘cell’. The Andean aggregation of polities is organic which means that it is a literal understanding of the cosmos as a macro-organism containing smaller components within from the level of the whole ‘universe’ to that of the galaxies, the solar system, the Earth as living organism within a larger living solar system, and human organisms as living organs and cells within the larger cosmo-eco-biospheric continuum—all metabolically related.⁴²⁹ Human bodies in turn are made up of such micro-organisms.

For Andeans the meaning is literal, the bio-eco-cosmological language is not a metaphor, but rather a relation of correspondence. Within the Andean understanding of human political organization every organizational structure is organically and metabolically embedded within the larger manifestations of pacha; every organizational aggregation embeds and is embedded thereby constituting an organic system of corresponding micro, meso, and macro vitality. Human organisms, whether as couples or as ayllus or markas or suyus exist literally as blood cells or organs within the Earth body; if a blood cell is extracted from the body and placed outside its biological conditions of existence it decomposes, transmaterializes or ‘dies’; similarly, if a human organism is placed outside the eco-biospheric conditions of its existence it simply decomposes, transmaterializes or ‘dies’. One cannot insist enough on the fact that it is not a metaphorical relation, but an analogical one, a logic of *correspondence*: the human body is to blood cells and organs what the biosphere is to humans and their societies. The relationship is one of progressively aggregated organic correspondence, a relationship that the Andean architect, scholar and philosopher Milla Villena refers to as Indigenous “cosmobiology”.⁴³⁰ This cannot be understated as Andean cosmopolitics are based on what would be called in Western terms the

⁴²⁹ Medina about Torrez 2008, 62-63.

⁴³⁰ Milla Villena 2003, 26.

constitution of the bio-eco-cosmic community. Let us look at each level of organic aggregation in detail

a) *Jaqi*

The basic tissue of traditional Andean politics is the jaqi or couple; it is also often referred to as the chachawarmi or chacha-warmi, that is, the masculine-feminine relationship. As Quechua philosopher, Mejía Huamán puts it, “in the Andes humans are created in couples.”⁴³¹ From within the traditional Andean cosmoexperience, personhood is not attached to the figure of the embodied ‘individual’, but rather to the relationship(s) from which emanate(s) the roles and responsibilities of life. The jaqi is *not* a sum of two individuals, nor is it the relationship that would ‘result’ from the coupling of two onto-logically autonomous individuals; the jaqi is the relationship itself whose cosmo-eco-biological status precedes, enables, and exceeds the poles which are brought together. Let us try to simplify this: for Andeans, the recreation or reproduction of vitality or life has cosmo-eco-biological precedence over those who are to participate in it. The reproductive relationship is the source of personhood, it is the link or bridge that ties a duality of complementary forces into a vigorous or passionate friction that vitalizes and recreates life and which constitutes personhood itself. Personhood is an effect of the relationships which produce responsibilities in regard to the revitalization of cosmic cycles. The recreative or reproductive relationship sets the conditions that shape the responsibilities of human forces in relation to each other. So it should be made clear that from a cosmo-eco-bioic perspective the cyclical demands of the pacha are what create the link or chaka that that draws polar forces together into a reproductive relationship. ‘Who’ are to be those who operate as the complementary poles or forces drawn together to recreate the cycles of life in the enactment of pa-cha is indeed a secondary affair enabled only by the preceding demand for the revitalization of cosmic cycles. From an Andean viewpoint what matters is that the reproductive friction among complementary forces, the ecstatic relationship, must be fulfilled in one way or another and at some point so that the pacha is brought

⁴³¹ Mejía Huamán 2005, 191-192.

to manifestation, revitalized. Hence jaqi refers neither to a couple of ‘individuals’ nor to the relationship that would ‘result’ from the sum of two individuals, jaqi refers to the energy that draws two complementary opposing forces into the ecstatic friction (jaqicha) of a reciprocal and equilibrated relationship that ensures the revitalization of life cycles. The jaqi-cha is the basic political manifestation of the *pa-cha-ka-ma-k* (*pacha, ch’ama, qama*), and this vitalizing friction among two interlaced forces, is an integral part of a system of micro, meso, and macro organic correspondences as explained above.

b) *Jatha*

The reproduction of jaqi produces a seed or a Jatha from which grows a plant with many branches that themselves produce seeds and reproduce through encounters with other plants. The jatha is the extended family, the kin group in terms of Western anthropology. Again, the language is of correspondence not metaphorical.

c) *Ayllu*

The Ayllu conglomerates several jatha who live in complementary and reciprocal equilibrium, thereby forming a community. The ayllu is perhaps the most crucial political aggregation. Much has already been said about the ayllu and it will be further discussed below because of its relevance. For now, it is important to keep in mind at least a broad description of the Ayllu as a political organizational structure. As Yampara states, “the Ayllu cannot be understood without considering its belonging to a broader Marka.”⁴³² Any given Ayllu belongs to a *saya* of a Marka, that is a moiety or half—each Marka contains two *sayas*. Yampara continues

The Ayllu is a multisectorial and multifaceted organizational system, an Andean institution, the Andean cosmological house, which interacts/emulates a double force and energy of the Pacha in the life of the Peoples. The ayllu is...tetralectic; while making up a territorial unit, it unfolds in two partialities of *Araja-Aynacha* (duality), the encounter and unity among them is expressed through a third element, the “*Taypi*”... This system is procured by a political authority that operates in parity, the *Tata-Mama Jilakata*, helped by the *Yapu-Uywa Qamana* (authorities of production) and the *Yatiri/Chamakani* (authorities of the Andean cosmovision).⁴³³

⁴³² Yampara 2001, 69.

⁴³³ Yampara 2001, 69.

d) *Marka*

The marka is a conglomeration of interlaced ayllus. Markas are divided into two moieties or saya (*parcialidades* in Spanish), one of the moieties is referred to as urin-saya (sunrise half) and the other is aran-saya (sunset half). As discussed above, the term marka connotes a notion of a cluster of inter-bridged or interwoven ayllus. Each moiety must at least contain one ayllu, but often there are many more. Moieties must relate to each other on the principle of relations of complementary mutual emulation to pair up their energies (ch'amacha or tinku) thereby creating a bridge of equilibrium in the space in between (chika or taypi). Moieties are often very co-dependent geo-ecologically, for instance, they might share the same hydraulic system, one moiety maybe located up the channel while the other may be located down the channel. This means that they must share responsibilities in maintaining the waterway and for that they must complement each other.

e) *Suyu*

The suyu is a meso-political organization; the literal translation of the term *suyu* is orientation or direction. It is often translated into terms such as region or province; however the logic of the suyu is not easily comparable to the traditional geopolitical logic of Western politics and political science. The suyu is organized according to a cosmo-eco-political logic. That is, the suyu is not a mere carving up of the Earth on the basis of power relations among humans. The suyu is an orientation outlined according to astrophysical movements and atmospheric dynamics. The most well-known example, of course, is the organization of the Tawa-Inti-Suyu which entails the organization of the polity according to the four orientations or directions of the sun. The division between the suyus was marked by the southern and northern limits of the arch drawn by the sun in the sky which defined the summer and winter solstices at the points in the horizon(s) of both sunrise and sunset. This will be explained in the section below, for now it suffices to specify that like all other Abya-Yalan (Indigenous American) modes of political organization, the organizational logic is not anthropocentric but bio-eco-cosmo-political in the sense that for

Indigenous cultures political organization must respond to (and be responsible to), adapt, rehearse, embody, and reenact the logic, cycles, movement, relations, and structure of the cosmos, the ecosystems, and the forms and cycles of life. This is the most distinctive aspect of all Indigenous Abya-Yalan political organization, practice and planning: it does not seek to separate itself or bend nature and the universe to its willpower and order, but rather celebrates its rehearsal in *blending* with the cosmos and pacha.

f) *Tetra-Polity (or Tawa-Suyu)*

As briefly described above, the next aggregation of classical Andean political organization is the conglomeration of polities. The two most prominent classical examples are the Tawa-Inti-Suyu which was preceded by Tiwa-Naku. *Tiwa-Naku* or *Tewa-Naku* can be literally translated as the Four-Mutualities or (Reciprocation-) Among-Four. Tiwa-Naku is the name of a macro-political structure which has a very important role in the horizons of Andean civilizational history. Tiwa-Naku is often called the ‘Mother Culture’ that articulated what came beforehand and influenced—or served as blueprint for—all that came afterward. Its main ceremonial center was located south of the lake Titi-Kaka in what today is known as Bolivia; the remnants and ruins of the ceremonial center which managed to survive the colonial looting can still be visited and seen. Many of the philosophical, economic and political infrastructures that have characterized Andinia such as the economy of interzonal symbiosis achieved a substantial development during the time of Tiwa-Naku. Tiwa-Naku was known to have already instituted the logic of diarchy and tetra-political division. Divided in four political constituencies, Tiwa-Naku was the sum of two dyadic relationships, each of which enacted the pacha (duality of forces/energies) and the cross interaction of which enacted the chakana or bridge among forces/energies.⁴³⁴ As has been repeatedly shown, all Andean infrastructures unfold on the basis of the logic of the pacha and the chakana, the pacha being a (uni)duality of forces and the chakana being the bridge among two (uni)dualities of forces which forms the figure of a cross.

⁴³⁴ Yampara 2005, 32-33.

The Tawa-Inti-Suyu is, as we explained above, the actual political organization that is often referred to in a way that is not fully appropriate as the 'Inka Empire'. Tawa-Inti-Suyu means the tetra-solar-orientations; this can be roughly translated as the confederation of four polities oriented according to the Sun. Here again we find what Yampara explains as the "territorial organization of Andean ecology" and politics "as a function of solar movement,"⁴³⁵ The sun here functions as Tayta Inti or the fatherly force whose movements across the sky over the course of the year serve as a blueprint, an "astronomical archetype,"⁴³⁶ from which humans can learn how to organize themselves politically. To be more specific, if seen from the Earth, the Sun moves north-south in the horizon over the course of the year drawing an arch, the arch's outer limits mark the summer and winter solstices, while the location in the middle marks the equinoxes.

To organize politics in accordance to cosmic dynamics could be seen as both an expanded and non/post-anthropocentric understanding of cosmo-politics. Abya-Yalans consider that political organization should be organically incorporated into the logic of life, the Earth, and the cosmos. According to Miranda Luizaga,

The observation of the behavior and conformation of astral bodies provides Andean cultures with a pattern of proportions and relations... which shape the codes of social conduct in regard to issues such as the logic of territorial distribution, and the conformation of the social nucleus, the Jatha...the Ayllu, and the relationship of society with/in nature.⁴³⁷

Political organization is therefore understood as integral to the logic of the cosmos and should not only 'mimic' its logic but actually embody and rehearse it, blending itself with it for humans are not something separate from it, but rather a force integral to it. This is cosmo-politics in the expansive, most encompassing, and strictest sense. Hence, one will always find that within classical Abya-Yalan approaches to politics the challenge is always to develop forms of organization, planning and practice that correspond to and materialize the broader logic of bio-

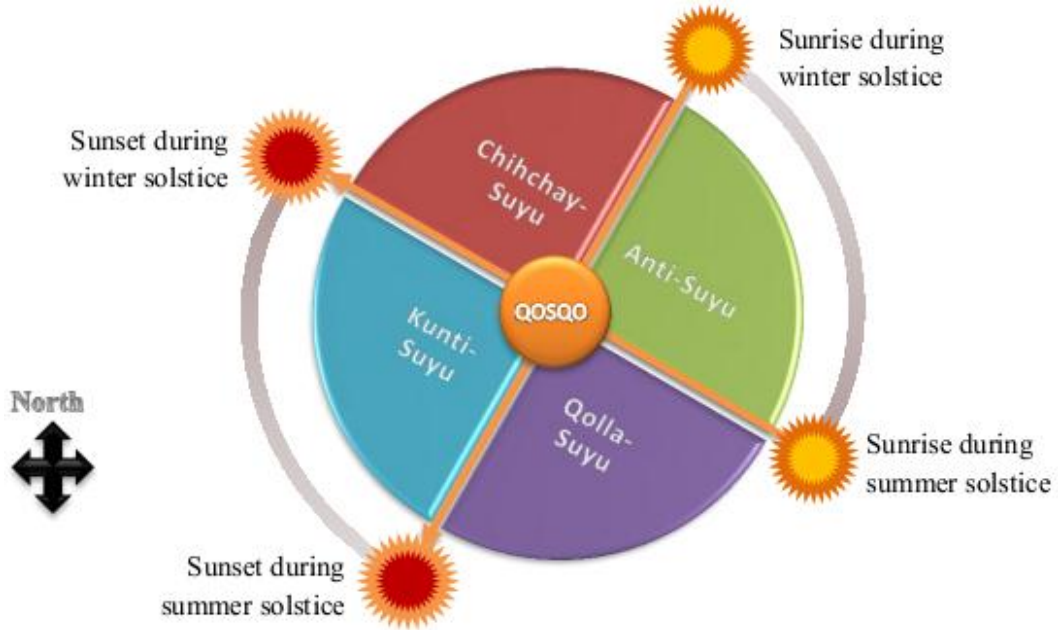
⁴³⁵ Yampara 2005, 27.

⁴³⁶ Miranda 2008, 105-108.

⁴³⁷ Miranda 2008, 105-108.

eco-cosmo-logy. The Tawa-Inti-Suyu is an excellent example of this. The diagram below explains the overall logic behind the cosmo-political infrastructure of the Tawa-Inti-Suyu. The diagram is followed by a map that shows the Tawa-Inti-Suyu at the peak of its expanse just before the European invasion during 1533.

Figure 12: Tetradic Cosmopolitical Organization of the Tawa-Inti-Suyu



Source: My own elaboration on the basis of data from various sources.⁴³⁸

⁴³⁸ Yampara and Mario Torrez E. in Yampara 2005, 101.

Figure 13: The Tawa-Inti-Suyu before the European invasion (1533)



Source: Map courtesy of anonymous Wikipedia authors EuroHistoryTeacher and Kintetsubuffalo.⁴³⁹

- *A Note on Diarchy.*

As has been made evident throughout this work so far, all Andean infrastructures rehearse the enactment of pacha, the (re)vitalizing duality of forces, that is, the friction of two forces that engenders energy and vitality (pachaqama). In addition to the way in which this is built into every aspect of classical Andean organization, there is also the structure of what many authors recognize as *diarchy*⁴⁴⁰. The principle of diarchy in Andean politics derives therefore from what the Andeanized philosopher Josef Estermann⁴⁴¹ calls the basic *pacha-sophy* of Indigenous Andeans. All Andean organization shows one form or another of diarchy. For instance, the jaqi couple as a relationship that earns political personhood is evidently made up of a duality of forces and exercises authority in the form of a diarchy. Every ayllu has two major authorities, one responsible for internal affairs and the other for external affairs. These authorities are not

⁴³⁹ Available online at http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Inca_Empire_South_America.png (Extracted on 04/09/2012)

⁴⁴⁰ Medina 2006, 2008; Murra 2002, 195, 220-222; Yampara 2008, 80.

⁴⁴¹ Estermann 1998, 2008.

individuals, but jaqi, that is, there are two governing couples. In order to exercise authority according to the traditional principles it must be done in pairs of oppositional forces that reciprocally equilibrate each other. Also, every marka is divided in two halves, moieties, partialities or sayas that must emulate, pair, up, complement and reciprocate each other. And the tetradic macropolitical organization is also the result of two dyads put/crossed together to form a chakana. Diarchy is the logical inference from a worldview that conceives of the cosmos as the result of opposite forces that recreate/renew life or (re)vitalize by relationally complementing, equilibrating, emulating, and reciprocating each other.

1) Political Dynamics: Cyclical System of Relayed Rotation and Obligation (System of Cargos or ‘Burdens’), the *Thakhi*

Another constitutive logic of the cosmos besides that of pacha is the cyclical logic. For Andeans, it all occurs in cycles, there are cosmic cycles (e.g., those of the stars, planets, solar system, galaxies, etc.), there are ecological cycles (e.g., hydraulic cycles), and there are biological cycles (e.g., the life of plants and animals, like humans), and hence human organization should also be enacted in a cyclical fashion.

As mestizo Andean-Bolivian philosopher and scholar, Javier Medina puts it,

The integral field organizes all the cosmos, of which—pay attention!—*we are part of*: the movement of the galaxies, of the stars, the rotation of the Earth, the cycles of the seasons, the biological rhythm of our bodies, the migration of the birds during the propitious season towards the correct place, the return of the fish to the places of spawning, etcetera. In other words, the integral field is an infinite organizational power. It can fulfill innumerable tasks at the same time and then establish a correlation among them.⁴⁴²

Having considered this, the classical dynamic of Andean political organization is known as the system of rotation and obligation (*muyt'a*),⁴⁴³ also known by some as the *thakhi* or path (or

⁴⁴² Medina 2006, 179; emphasis added.

⁴⁴³ Huanacuni Mamani 2010, not paginated. This system is comparable, if not equal to the Mesoamerican system of burdens or rotation and obligation.

pathway).⁴⁴⁴ This pathway is in the form of a spiral, a succession of cycles on which all members of a political community fulfill cyclical obligations by rotation or by turns (*kuti*) that last one year; progressively as they grow more experienced they are expected to fulfill or carry greater burdens of responsibility. Hence, the form of the spiral; each cycle of the spiral lasts a year and must lead each person into a cycle of greater responsibilities; this is what is meant by pathway or *thakhi*. All members of the community are obliged to serve without any special compensation, and all get to serve regardless of their socioeconomic or personal characteristics. As Andean scholars Quisbert, Callisaya, and Velasco explain:

Leadership in the community is something that must be forged and therefore there is little interest in the economic or intellectual antecedents, or in whether a person has or not participated in formal political structures [e.g., within the settler colonial state/republic]. What is more, within the community, everybody is obliged to become an authority at one moment or another through the system of “turns” or rotation which indefectibly must be filled by all families [or community members] without exception.⁴⁴⁵

The *thakhi* is an obligation that is due to the community since it is well understood that the life of each person is wholly dependent on the communal forces which allowed for and enabled birth, sustenance and growth. So everybody must give back to the community in reciprocity. There is also a relay in the cyclical rotation, those who are ahead must guide those who come behind, and everybody without exception must serve. Although Western political ways have now filtrated into every corner of the Andes, creating all sorts of syncretic versions, it is important to point out that in the classic Andean models, at least at the community or Ayllu level, and also often at the Marka level, there was no such thing as a class of politicians, neither were there parties. Everybody was expected and indeed obliged to serve by rotation, everybody must at one point enact the function of equilibrator, interlinker and coordinator of community affairs, and serve different roles throughout the *thakhi* or pathway of their life. The system of rotation and obligation is still alive and well at many levels and locations, whether in part or in whole, whether

⁴⁴⁴ Among the best discussions of the *thakhi* and its system of rotation and obligation or *muyt'a* in the Andes can be found in Quisbert, Callisaya, and Velasco 2006. As will become evident, this system is comparable if not equal to the Mesoamerican system that was discussed in Part I.

⁴⁴⁵ Quisbert, Callisaya, and Velasco 2006, 105.

in isolation or in mixture with some form of Western democracy, and in often awkward combinations with the settler state, plus it is being actively revitalized at many levels as we will see in some of the following sections.

The system of rotation and obligation, shared by many Indigenous peoples across Abya Yala is modeled on a strict form of bio-eco-cosmo-politics. Again, the reason there is relayed rotation is because the political wisdom of Indigenous peoples dictates that if the cosmos and the Earth and all life operate according to cycles as it is evident in the cycles of the sun, the stars, the moon, the reproduction of flora and fauna, the hydraulic cycles, among many others, then authority and responsibility must also move and rotate in cycles. The relationship between cosmo-eco-bio-logical cycles and political cycles is, again, not a metaphorical relationship but a relationship of embedded and embedding correspondence: human organization is not merely ‘mirroring’ the cosmos, it is enacting its own pathway as an integral part of the movement of the cosmos, humanity *is* the cosmos, it is an active (co-)participant in and of the cosmos, and hence the recreation of cosmic, ecological, and biological cycles is in part the responsibility of the human capacity, passion and commitment to (re)enact and (re)vitalize this (often cyclical) bio-eco-cosmic movements in all aspects of life. Just as ‘labor’ is the celebration of the encounter of cosmic and telluric forces—the very performance, the ritual enactment of the pacha—authority or political responsibility through rotation is also the celebration of the cycles of the galaxies, stars, Earth, and all life within it. Again, there are relationships of correspondence that make up ever more encompassing levels of organic aggregation, and human organization by materializing itself in the cyclical paths of the spiral actively partakes in the organic recreation/renewal of all cycles; in this sense, Indigenous politics are strictly cosmopolitical—as well as bio-eco-political.

- *A Note on Leadership or Authority: System of Burdens (Cargos)*

There are many types of responsibilities in the complex system of Andean organization. Andean “government” (to use what is perhaps an inappropriate translation) entails the effort to interlink (bridge), equilibrate, and balance, to foster fertile relational complementarities among differences, and to ensure the fulfillment of the responsibilities of all community members in the

ensuring and procuring of the continuation of bio-eco-cosmic cycles. Although those are the general traits of Andean “government” the particular form it takes varies across regions and cultures in the area; moreover, in Andean “government” there are a great many different functions, but in order to explain the way leadership or authority works in the Andean way it is important to emphasize some of the most characteristic functions, traits, and constitutive values. We can do that by offering a brief explanation of the communal logic of ‘service’ in the Indigenous political philosophy.

The system of rotation and obligation does not serve to select or elect ‘leaders’ or ‘authorities’ in the sense of powerful decision-makers or central(ized) commanders. Positions are not understood as positions of power, or even of leadership or authority, they are to be understood as ‘cargos’, that is, burdens or burdens of responsibility. No specific stipend is given for them, and since the responsibilities are many, and the incentives few (besides honor, prestige, and gratitude), it is often more common for people to want to avoid their challenges than to attempt to control them. In any case, cargos are fulfilled by carrying the community along the pathway of a cycle (or a cycle of cycles). Those who occupy cargos are not decision-makers or executives; they work as coordinators in economic, cultural, or ritual affairs, conveners in communal assemblies that operate according the logic of consensus, intermediaries, interlinkers or equilibrators in social relations, mediators or guides in the search of justice, or interlocutors among the runa and other constitutive members of the bio-eco-cosmic community. In short, to be responsible for a cargo is to perform as *chakana*: as a bridging, interlinking, coordinating, equilibrating, interlocutionary, or articulating function. For instance, in the case of the operations of the Andean economy, those who fulfill a cargo are, for example, responsible for coordinating, conducting, motivating, scheduling, accounting for, and enacting the performance of *aynis*, *minkas*, or *mitas* and other such ‘faenas’. Those responsible for the cargo are expected to convene the consensus-based decision-making assemblies, but never to command them. They are expected to mediate or equilibrate (to act as ‘Enka’) between families, or between *ayllus*, or between *sayas*, or between

markas, or among suyus, but they cannot take decisions on behalf of them nor can they act as if they had a distinctively higher status (or state), as if they were the leaders or the executive power.

As stated above, the structures of cargos can vary significantly across Andean geography and culture, with many different possible functions, but there are nevertheless very clear examples that illustrate the way the system of rotation and obligation in general as a form of Andean political infrastructure works. In a region as ample and diverse as the Andes there will be many variations and Andeans are not fond of homogenization as can be clear from the pervasive hyperdiversity that has been discussed so far—in fact the contrary is true: heterogenous complementarity is among the constitutive values and infrastructures of Andean life. Nevertheless, in order to explain the overall interaction of structure and dynamic in the political organization of the Andes it would be appropriate to offer an example in the form of a model that articulates the constitutive infrastructures of Andean life. The following exemplary model draws on and is inspired on the political organization that was articulated by the Tawa-Inti-Suyu; many of its components were already there for many centuries beforehand and many of its components prevailed after collapse of the Inka elite brought about by the European invasion; moreover, many Andean infrastructures are resurfacing today—and some never really disappeared, they just went into an underground resistance mode. In any case, what is undeniably interesting about the Tawa-Inti-Suyu is how it articulated or brought together, and expanded upon Andean organizational forms that were already in existence or latent, leaving also a testimony of the impressive potentials of Andean organization.

The Tawa-Inti-Suyu interlaced a network of political organization that linked the whole Andean region. Diverse strategies and tactics were used to do so, these strategies and tactics combined persuasion with coercion, negotiation with cooptation, solidarity with war. There is no one-dimensional account of the growth of the civilizational network known as the Tawa-Inti-Suyu. A preliminary note is also in turn: over the course of the expansion of the Tawa-Inti-Suyu the Inka elite gradually and increasingly started to adopt a logic of power and privilege that did *not* correspond to the logic, values, and organization of the rest of the Tawa-Inti-Suyu or of the Andes;

to put it in simple terms, as the Inka elite became more and more established it started operating according to an exclusive logic, the Inka elite—though characterized by many virtues—did not always hold itself to the standards that the rest of the population were held to, and the structures of power at the cusp of the Tawa-Inti-Suyu progressively ceased to correspond with the organic structures of Indigenous Andean political organization. But this is not to say that the apparatus of the Tawa-Inti-Suyu as a whole was an authoritarian superimposition; nothing would be further from the truth. The Inka elite did not invent the infrastructures of Andean organization and practice and these infrastructures did not and have not disappeared with the demise of the Inka elite. Rather, the Inka elite served as the glue that brought together ancient and latent organizational structures into a common apparatus; a critical analysis of this ‘gluing’ process brings about judgments that legitimately serve to question several Inka practices, but the wider apparatus itself would have probably come together the way it did or in some similar way sooner or later (had the European invasion not occurred), and it is perfectly possible that the wider apparatus of the Tawa-Inti-Suyu—or a similar apparatus—could operate without the existence of the gluing material that tied it together at the beginning. So let us briefly describe how the organic structure of aggregation coupled with the dynamic of rotation and obligation (*cargos*) operate on the basis of the example of the Tawa-Inti-Suyu.

2) Outline of the Structure and Dynamic of Andean Political Organization: Organic Aggregation with Rotation and Obligation (*Cargos*)

As explained above, an Andean tetra-polity like the Tawa-Inti-Suyu is a form of political macro-organism whose structure is the result of aggregated cells and organs that are interlinked and (re)vitalized through the cyclical metabolism of obligation and rotation. The Tawa-Inti-Suyu is not an anthropocentric entity separate from the rest of the pacha; it is rather organic to the pacha: people and communities live within the biosphere as cells and organs within a body. The relationship is one of direct literal correspondence, not metaphorical. The Tawa-Inti-Suyu in its classical form had the following levels or rather spheres of progressively more encompassing

aggregation, all of these levels—with the (intermittent) exception of the Inka elite—operated according to the system of rotation and obligation (cargos). The levels of aggregation were jaqi, jatha, ayllu, marka, suyu, and the tetradic confederation of suyus or Tawa-Inti-Suyu. Colonization sought to wholly de-structure or simply destroy this system, and the settler colonial republics which were criollo or criollo-mestizo dominated (criollizing nevertheless) mostly continued the effort at de-structuration and plain destruction until recently (the trends are significantly changing in Bolivia and to a smaller extent in Ecuador). Notwithstanding the efforts at destructuration, the levels of aggregation corresponding to the jaqi, jatha, ayllu and sometimes even to the marka have resisted and persisted; in fact, in many places they are alive and well, sometimes under the disguise of Western political forms such as the ‘municipality’ or ‘syndicate,’ sometimes in creative syncretic forms of resistance and sometimes in open defiance (or indifference) and under the classic names or variations of them.

One of the most crucial cargos held in each of these levels operates as a political chakana. Westerners (and the Westernized) might identify this cargo with that of the ‘leader,’ main authority or so-called ‘chief’. As explained, such translations do not do justice to the system of cargos. In any case, the level of jaqi, that is, the intra-familial structure of authority will not be discussed here, suffice it to say that there is a micro-system of rotation and obligation (cargos) within it—with obvious adaptations of course; the same goes for the level of the jatha. But where the operation of the system of obligation and rotation starts to become clearest is at the level of the ayllu. The person ‘in charge’ or responsible for operating as the main chakana at the level of the ayllu is referred to as the Jilakata or Kuraka, at the level of the marka we find the Mallku, at the level of the suyu we find the Apu, and at the level of the Tawa-Inti-Suyu we find the Inka (or Enka)—the latter of whom, as I mentioned, historically did not subject themselves to the system of obligation and rotation, and rather operated dynastically (which is probably why the beheading of the Inka elite did not bring about an immediate widespread backlash, and why Andeans did not immediately resist the invasion and some groups actually aided it not knowing how destructive European colonization would be; this is because at the time of the Iberian invasion it was clear to a

great many Andeans that notwithstanding the many virtues of the Inka system of government, the Inka elite itself did not sufficiently live by the norms and values of Andean political culture and philosophy, something that created justified resentment among many groups—groups which could not imagine the violences that European/Eurocentric domination would bring about). But the system of rotation and obligation can and has worked even in spite of the semi-dynastic politics of the Inka elite that pervaded especially the upper levels of political aggregation. With the Inka displaced by European colonialism and settler colonial states, the lower levels of aggregation persisted in cultivating the system of burdens.

The table below summarizes the structure of aggregation with the corresponding ‘authorities’ or rather responsables (*responsables*) at each level; ideally, each cargo must be exercised in diarchy in two senses: (a) two authorities operate at each level (except the Inka), one authority is responsible for operating as chakana in intra-community affairs and the other authority must operate as chakana in inter-community affairs with other communities and higher/more encompassing levels of aggregation, and (b) *all* authorities/responsibilities must be fulfilled in couples or jaqi and are referred to via unidual sexuality as Tata-Mama, as in Tata-Mama Jilakata.

Table 1: Political Organization of the Tawa-Inti-Suyu

	Level of Aggregation	Cargo
4	Tawa-Inti-Suyu	Inka
3	Suyu	Apu
2	Marka	Mallku
1	Ayllu	Jilakata/Kuraka
0	Jatha	Jaqi/Chacha-Warmi

Source: my own elaboration drawing on various sources.⁴⁴⁶

⁴⁴⁶ See Quispe 2000, 13; Yampara 2008, 78, 140.

As Quispe (2000, 213) summarizes,

With time, the Aymaras and Quechuas became part of the Tawantinsuyu, also known as the Inca Empire. Literally translated, Tawa[i]ntinsuyu means “The Four Parts of the Sun”. These four parts correspond to the four regions or suyus which made up the Tawantinsuyu: Collasuyu (present-day regions of southern Bolivia, and northern Argentina and Chile), Chinchasuyu (present-day Ecuador and northern Peru), Antisuyu (northern Bolivia and Peru), and Contisuyu (the rest of Peru). The capital of the Tawantinsuyu was Cuzco [Qosqo], also called the navel or splendour of the sun, and the nation’s highest authority was the Inca or representative of the Sun God or Inti,

D. A Model of Andean Civilizational Organization

To close this section of Part II a (re)construction of classical Andean Civilizational Organization will be offered. The purpose of this reconstruction is dual and accords with the two strategic-methodological premises of this dissertation, namely (1) it synthesizes the effort to decolonize knowledge and power by contributing to recover, revalorize, and revitalize Indigenous modes of political thought, organization, and practice, and (2) adds to the Indigenous contribution to the emerging global dialogue of civilizations which is very much needed to make the local, regional, and global changes called for in order to face the unprecedented ecological, economic, political, and philosophical (even cosmological) crises of our era. After outlining this model of Andean political organization we will move to Section 3 of Part II which is dedicated to a discussion of the efforts that are being undertaken at the national, regional, and global level to decolonize knowledges and practices by recovering Indigenous (and in this case specifically Andean) modes of thought, organization, and practice, and to bring Indigenous wisdoms and ways to the table of inter-civilizational dialogue.

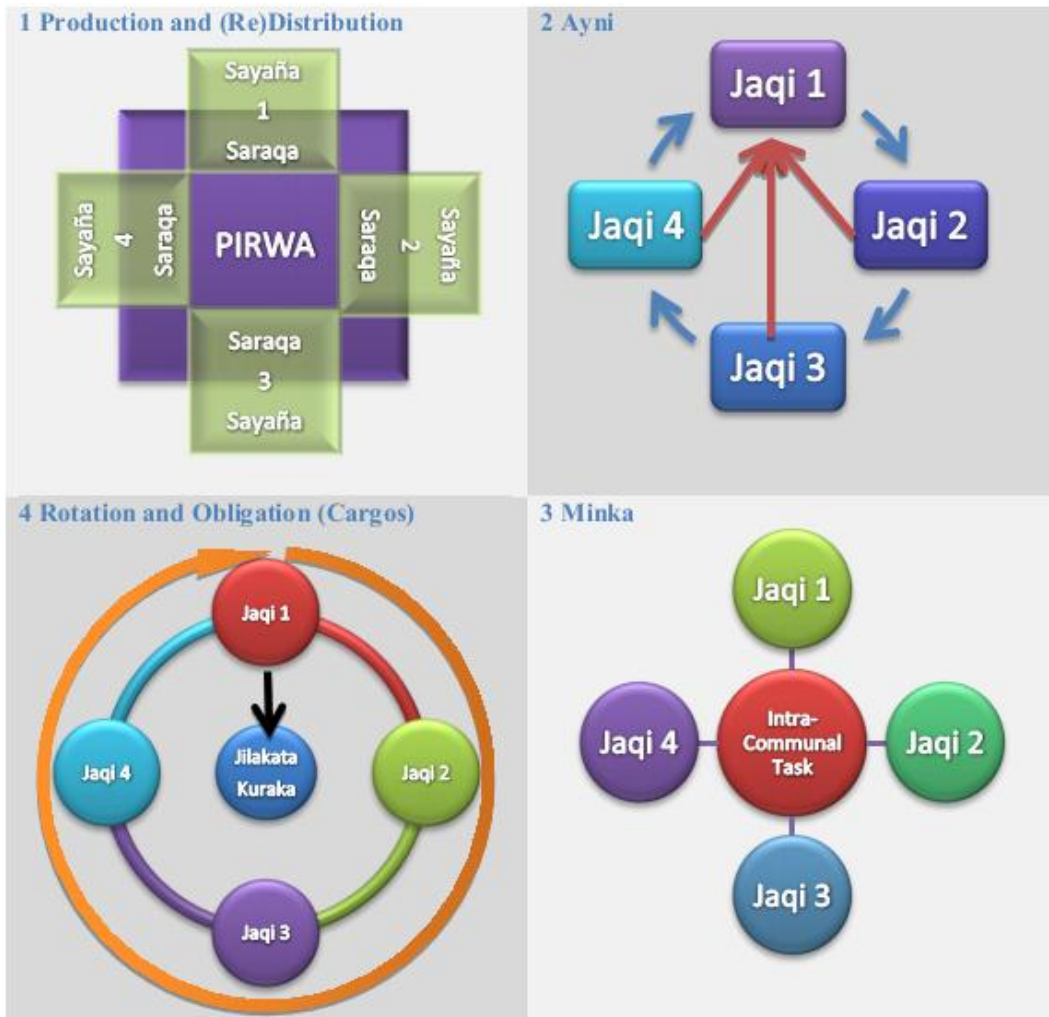
The model I will develop below is a synthesis of all the constitutive infrastructures of Andinia that we have discussed so far. It incorporates the geo-ecological, historico-cultural, philosophical, economic, and political infrastructures. This model is in itself an exercise in Indigenous political theory and it is meant to be useful for those (including myself) who are actively involved in the recovery, revalorization, revitalization, updating, and innovation of Indigenous modes of political thought, organization, and practice. We will build the model in several steps, following the levels of organic aggregation.

symbolising the oneness of all four suyus. The suyus consisted of a number of markas, ruled by the Apu. Markasin turn consist of ayllus, under the authority of the Mallku. The ayllu is made up of a number of families and comprises between 100 and 10,000 individuals. The Jilakata is the representative of the ayllu.

(1) *Ayllu*.

Consider the following diagrams which help describe the infrastructure and basic dynamics at the level of the ayllu. The diagrams are explained afterwards

Figure 24: Constitutive Infrastructures of the Ayllu



Source: my own elaboration.

At the most basic level, the ayllu is constituted by the four infrastructures described by the diagrams. The diagrams will be described in a cyclical clockwise order.

Diagram 1 above illustrates the system of production and (re)distribution based on the two forms of land or resource ‘tenure’ or rather responsibilities/relations that are characteristically Andean. While the *Sayaña* form of land relation (or “tenure”) is assigned for familial

responsibility (including usufruct), saraqa is for comunal use and the products (or rather “offspring”) of the saraqa are deposited in the pirwa from where they are to be shared or distributed equitably on the basis of need, whether it is for *persons* who need them or for *times* in which they are needed (e.g., crises). Redistribution is to occur according to the principle of reciprocal complementarity. Traditionally, the pirwa made it unnecessary for there to be any monetary economy or intermediation whatsoever.

Diagram 2 above illustrates the ayni as a form of complementary reciprocal labor that creates a cycle of collaborative help among all members of the community

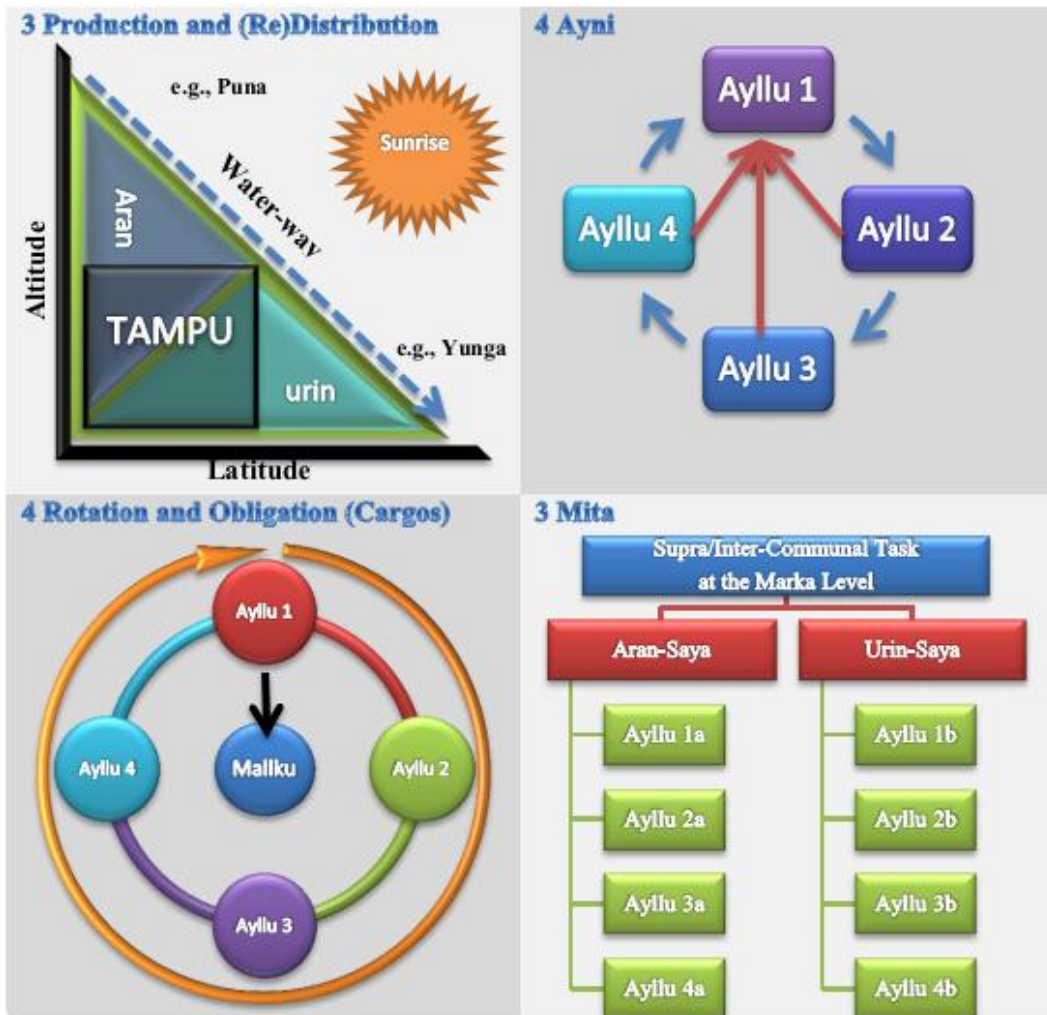
Diagram 3 illustrates the minka as a form of complementary labor among all the members of the community for the purpose of fulfilling a communal task or project.

Diagram 4 illustrates the system of rotation and obligation (relayed cargos), a political system in which all persons in the community are obliged to serve the community in some function for cycles of a year. Such cargos are fulfilled at different stages in life in different levels of responsibility. The advancement of a person upwards in a spiral of ever more relevant cycles of cargos is referred to as the thakhi or pathway. The diagram shows the example of one of the major cargos that can be held, that of the jilakata or kuraka. The cargo traditionally should be exercised in couples or jaqi and its major role is as interlinkage and equilibrador among all the forces that make up and enable the (re)vitalization of the community. No matter how important the cargo is, all persons in the community must fulfill it at least once. Many people whose cargos formally appear today as those of municipal president, vice-president or mayor underneath the surface actually operate more or less as Jilakatas or Kurakas.

(1) Marka

Consider the following diagrams which help describe the infrastructure and basic dynamics at the level of the marka. The diagrams are explained below

Figure 15: Constitutive Infrastructures of the Marka



Source: my own elaboration.

The marka is usually constituted by at least the four infrastructures outlined by the diagrams above. The diagrams will be described in a clockwise order.

Diagram 1 illustrates the system of production and (re)distribution at the level of the marka. Markas are divided in two halves or moieties, that is, sayas. Each saya is strategically located in a different geo-eco-climatic zone according to latitudinal, altitudinal, and transversal

(i.e., hydraulic) zonation. Transversal zonation is a function of the location in the hydraulic system (e.g., upstream versus downstream). The two sayas are divided in order to hold a complementary and reciprocal relationship of emulation and collaboration with each other, for instance what the pacha offers in a yunga climate cannot be found in a puna climate and vice versa; neither saya can claim ultimate ownership over their allotment and both are obliged to share their 'products' with each other as pacha offers her fruits to all and not just to those who happen to be settled on a particular 'parcel' or 'territory' of 'nature'. Expanding on the sayaña-saraqqa logic of division, each saya or moiety must therefore dedicate part of what it nurtures (or 'produces') to the communal tampu which serves at the marka level a similar function to that of the pirwa at the ayllu level. Indeed, many use the terms pirwa and tampu interchangeably, but we can model each to refer to a different organic level of aggregation, although the functions are basically the same.

Diagram 2 above illustrates the ayni as a form of complementary reciprocal labor that creates a cycle of collaborative help among all ayllus of the marka. The ayni at the marka level works the same way as it does at the ayllu level. The only difference is that it is an equilibrated collaborative community among whole ayllus that are expected to engage in ayni with each other.

Diagram 3 illustrates the mita as a form of collaboration among ayllus in order to fulfill common projects that benefit the whole marka. The mita is not unlike the minka, the only difference being that the work offered benefits a higher level of political aggregation. Although most authors report or treat the minka and the mita separately, at times the distinction is not all that clear, as it seems that the mita does at the levels above the ayllu what the minka does within the ayllu. From what I have gathered in my research it would seem that the mita is a 'vertical' sort of minka where collaboration is scaled up to achieve a project or task that benefits a more encompassing level of organic-political aggregation. It is well known that European colonialism perverted the mita, turning it into a genocidal form of slavery, most infamously in the mines of Potosi (today in what is called 'Bolivia').

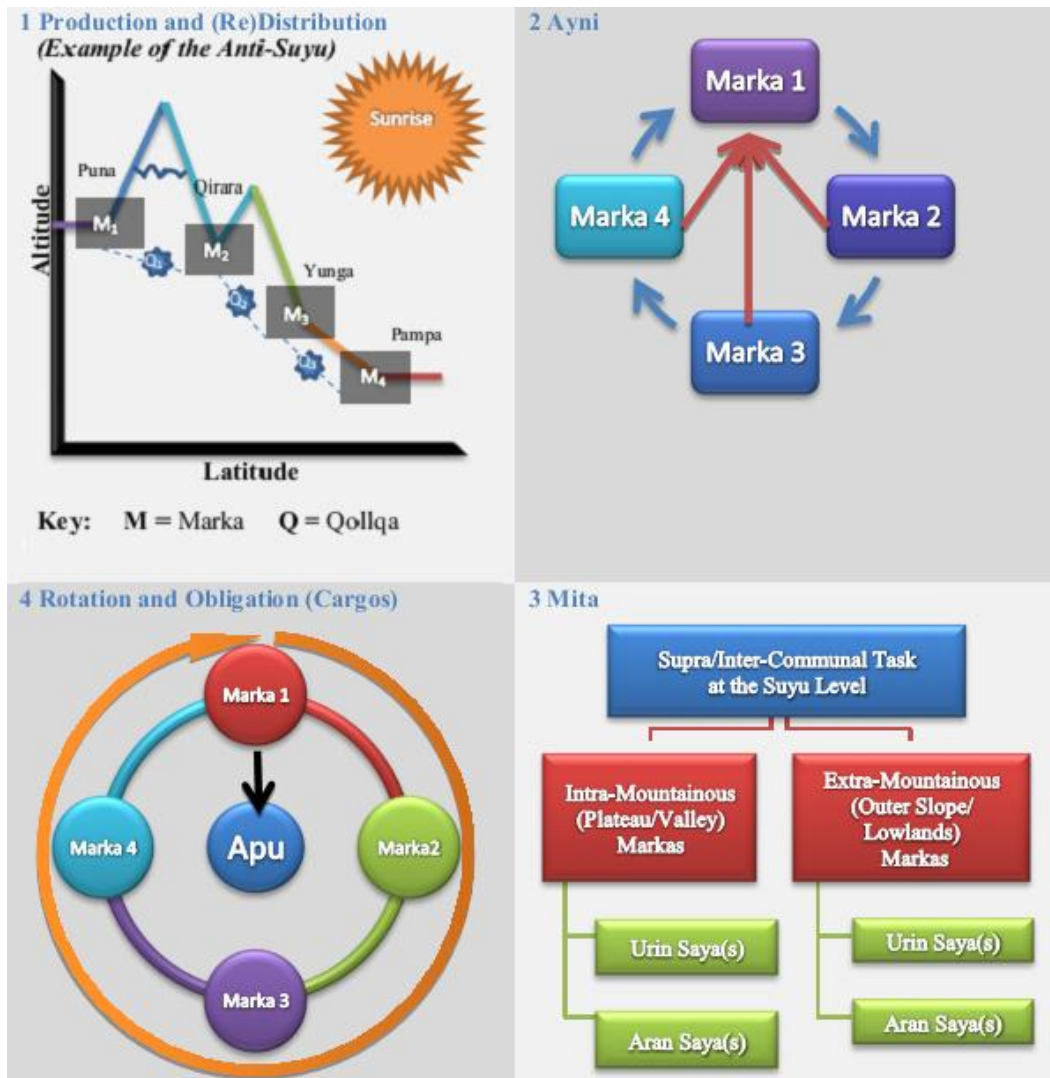
Diagram 4 illustrates the system of rotation and obligation (cargos) at the level of the marka. The system basically replicates the same logic that has been explained before, but at a

higher level of political responsibility. The example used to illustrate is that of one of the most important cargos that can be held at the Marka level, namely, that of Mallku. A note concerning contemporary politics is timely at this point. The Andes is known for its ample formal use of the type of organization known as the syndicate; this is especially because of the Western left/Marxist influence throughout the twentieth century and its not so incoherent (though hardly harmonious) relationship to Indigenous communalism. Many people whose cargos formally appear as that of general secretaries of a syndicate are underneath the surface actually operating more or less as Mallkus.

(2) *Suyu*

Consider the following diagrams which help describe the infrastructure and basic dynamics at the level of the *suyu*. The diagrams are explained below

Figure 6: Constitutive Infrastructures of the *Suyu*



Source: my own elaboration.

The *suyu* is a comparatively large form of political organization, as large as any South American nation-state or even larger. Today Bolivia has officially readopted the flag of the Qulla-Suyu which was the south-eastern region or orientation of the Tawa-Inti-Suyu. But at the time of the European invasion, the Qulla-Suyu was actually larger than Bolivia, including most of Bolivia,

and parts of Argentina, Chile and Peru. Today the revival of the political form of the suyu is in full swing in Bolivia which has made it part of its political project to carry out a complete restructuring of the country according to the model of the suyu in complementary combination with selected aspects of Western civilization. This will be further discussed ahead. For now, in what concerns the model, it is important to point out that a suyu is constituted by at least the four infrastructures outlined by the diagrams. The diagrams will be described in a clockwise order.

Diagram 1 illustrates the system of settlement, production and distribution according to the logic of interzonal symbiosis. As discussed above, the purpose is to create a network of settlements (like *markas* in the graph above) strategically located in different altitudinal-latitude-transversal zones and thereby different eco-zones, biomes, climates, and microclimates which nurture (or ‘produce’) widely different sorts of what Westerners would call ‘goods’ (for Andeans are gifts that must be cared for, the progeny of the *Pacha*); these hyper-diverse pattern of settlements is interlaced through a networked-system/rhizome of *qollqas*, *tampus* and *pirwas* into complementary and reciprocal relations. The *qollqa* refers to any sort of institution that works as a deposit that is strategically located or operated to share or ‘distribute’⁴⁴⁷ whatever might be needed among towns and settlements (e.g., *markas*).

Diagram 2 illustrates how the *ayni* works among *markas* in a *suyu*, exactly in the same way as it does among *ayllus* in a *marka*. In both cases the logic of interzonal symbiosis also becomes important to determine the relations of complementarity that are enacted via the *ayni*.

Diagram 3 illustrates how the *mita* operates at the level of the *suyu*, wherein projects that benefit the whole *suyu* are fulfilled by collaboration among the *markas*. Here again contributions (or rather gifts that are to be reciprocated) are made on the basis of the diverse skills and resources

⁴⁴⁷ Using the term ‘dis-tribute’ might be problematic in the Andean context as traditionally there was no such thing as a tribute in the region; this was even rare during the height of the *Tawa-Inti-Suyu* (see Murra 2002). Hence, infrastructures such as the *tampus*, *pirwas*, and *qollqas* are better interpreted from within an Andean organic articulation rather as more of a pooling and sharing, or pooling and dispersing of the offspring (so-called “products”) gifted by the *pacha*—the offspring which *runa* helped to nurture.

that each of the diverse marka can nurture, share, and provide, and interzonal symbiosis is a crucial criterion.

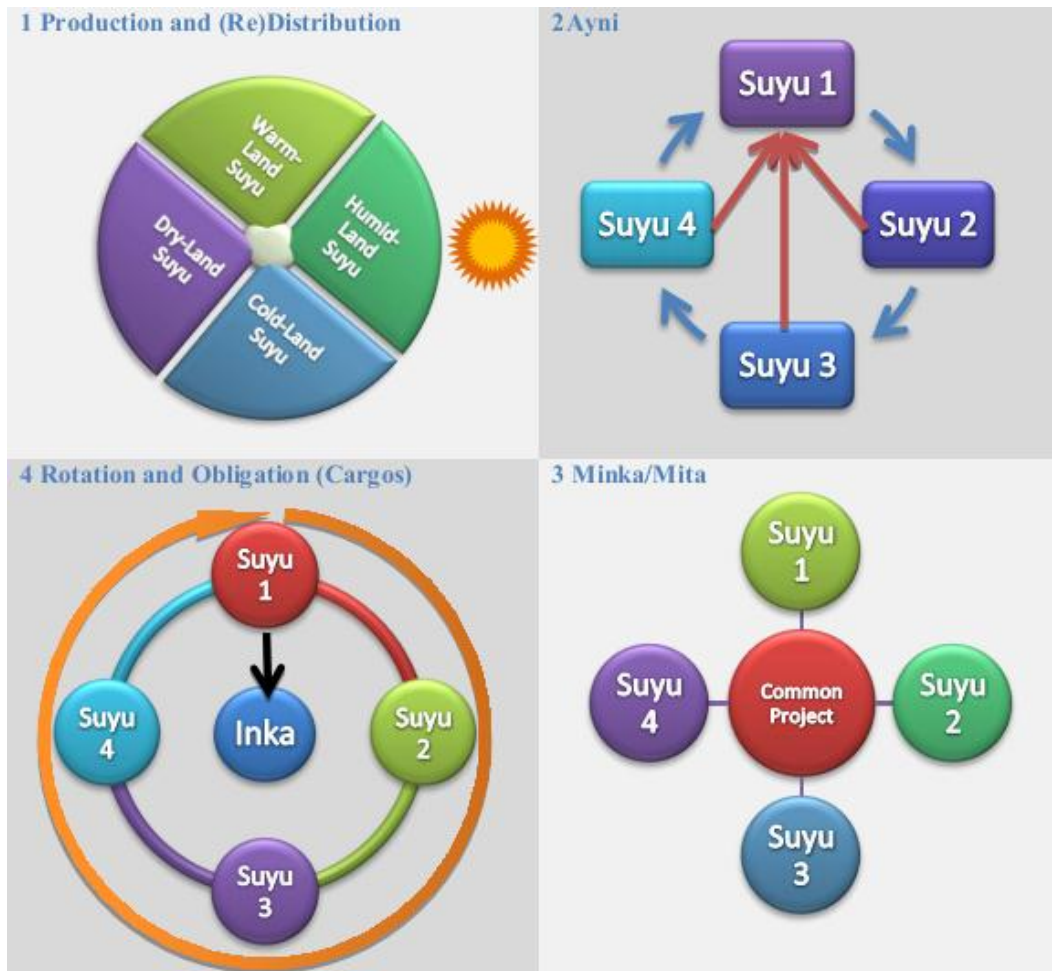
Diagram 4 illustrates the system of rotation and obligation (cargos) at the level of the suyu. The system basically replicates the same logic that has been explained before at lower levels of aggregation, but at a higher or rather more encompassing level of organic-political responsibility. The example used to illustrate is that of one of the most important cargos that must be fulfilled at any level, namely, that of Apu or 'the high one', a term also used to refer to important forces in the pacha and to the highest mountains. Many people whose cargos formally appear as that of 'governor' and many Indigenous and mestizo (mixed/hybrid) leaders who have a strong inheritance of Indigenous customs and who would seem as conventional politicians in the Western sense still operate under the surface more or less according to the customs of the Apu.

This superimposition of a colonial system on ancestrally gestated and organic forms of organization explains many of the reasons why settler-states in locations with high concentrations of populations of Indigenous Ancestry (whether pure or mixed) are often prone to so-called 'failure' and so-called 'corruption'; in reality, these phenomena are just another lamentable and ongoing effect of the colonial attempt to destructure and destroy ancestral ways and superimpose instead a system that is largely contrary and hostile to Indigenous values, ways, and forms of organization and practice. The so-called 'failure' and so-called 'corruption' of superimposed settler colonial apparatuses (such as the state and its Euro-centric law) will end when the coloniality of power is dismantled, and ancestral systems find a way to flourish anew, perhaps in congenial complementary with selected though modest and unpretentious forms of Western thought, organization, and practice that relinquish any expansionary aspiration to prevail, hold hegemony over or subordinate Indigenous ways. Especially across the Andes and Mesoamerica this will entail a massive revival of Indigenous forms of thought, organization, and practice, since these regions are predominantly of biocultural Indigenous heritage (whether pure or mixed).

(3) *Tawa-Suyu*

Consider the following diagrams which help describe the infrastructure and basic dynamics at the level of the *suyu*. The diagrams are explained below.

Figure 7: Constitutive Infrastructures of the Tawa(Inti)Suyu



Source: my own elaboration.

As has been already mentioned, tetrapolitical organization has been constitutive of many forms of political organization throughout the history of the Andes—as has also been the case throughout Mesoamerica (and across Abya-Yala). It is not only the Tawa-Inti-Suyu that was organized as the complementary confederation of ‘Four Directions in relation to the Sun’ (in Quechua-Aymara). Tiwa-Naku or Tewa-Naku, the ‘Four-Mutalities’ also translatable as the ‘Complementary Four’ or ‘Among-(the)-Four’ in Aymara, also was a tetrapolitical apparatus.

Tetrapolitical organization is a model based on the principles of the pacha and the chakana, and the understanding of pachaqama, the vitality which emanates among mutually complementary and reciprocally emulating or interlaced/bridged dualities (chakana).

Suyus are organized both cosmopolitically and geo-eco-politically. The major ceremonial center of Tiwa-Naku which is seen by Westerners as a 'city', being rather the main knot in a large network of interzonal symbiosis, was established very strategically close to the lake Titi-Kaka, which is known as a sacred location of Andean 'origin stories,'⁴⁴⁸ not least because of its excellent geo-eco-logical location. The geo-eco-biotically exceptional location and conditions of the Titi-Kaka valley and its surroundings enable it to always be an origin where the fertility of Andean life can be ceaselessly renewed. The Titi-Kaka area is situated inside a valley that is located at the taypi or meeting point between the most diverse possible zones in terms of altitude, latitude, longitude, and transversality. The plateau, within which Tiwanaku emerged, close to where the Lake Titi-Kaka is located, is situated right at the mid-point inside the central Andes which gives it perfect access to both the lands of the humid uma-suyu on the side of the sunrise and the dry lands of the urqu-suyu facing the ocean on the side of the sunset. Another crucial aspect of zonation is that the Titi-Kaka and Tiwanaku area is geographically located at a practical equidistance from the Equator and the Tropic of Capricorn; this means that the area around the lake Titikaka (which includes not only Tiwanaku but the later 'navel' or Qosqo (Cuzco) of the Tawa-Inti-Suyu) is also in the taypi or field of encounter among/between the warm weathers that approximate the Equator and the cool weathers that approximate the Tropic of Capricorn. The Titi-Kaka area is a taypi in every geo-eco-bio-logical sense: in terms of latitude, longitude, altitude, and in terms of climates; it is also strategically located in the middle (taypi) of the world's most hyperdiverse region. The Titi-Kaka area is in every sense the taypi of pacha-qama, the meeting point among a great many dualities of forces from whose encounters emanates tremendous vitality. It is therefore understandable that Titi-Kaka would be recognized as the 'origin' in many ways, not in the sense

⁴⁴⁸ Miranda Luizaga 1996, 43.

of an origin located in some past within a linear temporal narrative, but as the cyclically re-turning (pacha-kuti) 'origin' of vitality.

The Tawa-Inti-Suyu had the virtue too of being organized tetrapolitically and with tremendous wisdom in regard to geo-eco-biological zonation. Having more information about the Tawa-Inti-Suyu we know that like Tiwa-Naku it was cosmo-politically and geo-eco-bio-politically organized. The Tawa-Inti-Suyu was explicitly organized according to the orientations of the sun and other astro-cosmic and atmospheric criteria. Qosqo as political ceremonial center was itself organized archeoastronomically⁴⁴⁹ as a huge calendar round, a circle, marked according to the solar arch of solstices and equinoxes. From the center of Qosqo lines and paths called ceques⁴⁵⁰ stretched out to the rest of the Tawa-Inti-Suyu, most if not all lines had a calendrical orientation according to the sun and other cosmic forces; the buildings themselves and the whole ceremonial and calendrical center was effectively a cosmopolitical calendar. The wisdom of Qosqo's cosmo-geo-eco-bio-political location and design is as impressive if not more than that of Tiwa-Naku; the location of Qosqo is the location with the single highest exposure to ultraviolet light/rays on the whole Earth. It literally receives more energy from the sun than any other location on Earth. It is by archeoastronomical design that Qosqo became the coordinating/equilibrating chakana that bridged/interlinked the whole Tawa-Inti-Suyu. Qosqo was literally and symbolically the offspring of Inti, the sun. Qosqo too is nearby the Titi-Kaka area, and hence also is wisely located as a chakana in the intersection of several taypis, among highly diversly located zones according to latitudinal, longitudinal, altitudinal, transversal, and geo-eco-climatic zonations. The Inka-as-Enka would (ideally) operate as equilibrating inter-bridger or inter-linker which by and large they effectively did as it is well known that the Tawa-Inti-Suyu was a potentially unparalleled

⁴⁴⁹ As Lange Loma (2000, 138) explains, "it has been proven that many pre-Columbian temples and buildings in the Andes are oriented astronomically in regard to the meridian, with an astounding precision."

⁴⁵⁰ See Bauer 1998.

apparatus of socio-economic justice as basically all commentators agree that there was virtually no hunger, scarcity, poverty, or destitution during its prevalence.

Unfortunately, the Inka elite *politically* did not always manage to make the best out of their wise designs. Notwithstanding the great virtues of Inka rule, especially as applied to all people who were not part of the elite, the elite itself and the upper governing levels of the Tawa-Inti-Suyu did not operate enough according to the Andean political or economic logic, indeed, the Inka gradually grew into a dynasty which is probably the source of their political weakness when trying to mobilize Andeans en masse against the European invasion.

Nevertheless, the Tawa-Inti-Suyu as a macro-political structure which cannot be reduced to its 'upper crust' is a tremendous feat of political, economic, and ecological organization; it is a great source of philosophical, theoretical, practical and organizational inspiration. Many structures prevalent during its height resist and persist to this day, recently resurfacing. The recovery of the accumulated civilizational wisdom of the Andeans can always use the Tawa-Inti-Suyu as an entry point into the recuperation of a wealth of underlying knowledges and practices of the Andes. Hence the revalorization and revitalization of Andean civilization must both recover and critically revalorize the Tawa-Inti-Suyu, updating what was worse and enhancing what was best. For instance, the system of rotation and obligation (cargos) did not generally apply to what became the Inka dynasty as it did to most levels beneath them, but it *should* have applied to all (including the Inka elite), and in the present and future for the recovery of the Indigenous civilizational élan it should apply to all forms of political responsibility; but on the other hand, the ayni and the minka among suyus did mostly apply, though in qualified and asymmetric fashion, in many ways yet again due to the dynastic impulses of the Inka elite. The mita was the most common institution used by the Inka elite to expand state projects, and some of the most impressive achievements of Inka engineering, architecture, and planning which far surpassed those of Europe at the time of the invasion, were the offspring of the mita.

Therefore, the diagrams above, specifically those corresponding to the macro level of tetra-political organization, are not an acritical nostalgic recounting, nor a literal repetition of how

the Tawa-Inti-Suyu once worked; that is why here those diagrams have been called Tawa-Suyu or Tetra-Directionality as a general kernel of organization and practice; this is crucial to point out so that it is made clear that as a work of political theory and philosophy the effort must be made to critically valorize and separate what must be retained and further developed from what should be set aside, and those aspects from the past which should be corrected and enhanced. So these diagrams and their discussion are an Andean-inspired model of a tetra-political form of civilizational organization, inspired that is on the long accumulated wisdom of millennia of Andean wisdoms and ways. The diagrams above involve a critical valorization as well as a normative theory and projection of the sort of model which should be of value for the present era. Indeed, the diagrams illustrate a lot of the thinking and acting that is already going on among Andean and other Indigenous or Indigenously-inspired voices and organizations, and even a couple of current governments (Bolivia most notably, and Ecuador to a certain extent).

In short, the entire model that has been explained above is designed as a proposal, the result of a critical revalorization of the accumulated history, wisdom, and experience of what has here been called Andinia. The model is meant as a work of political theory and philosophy, as a practically-oriented strategy as well, and should be judged in those terms.

Those of us who like myself work for the purpose of Indigenous and socio-ecological justice and liberation are not in the business of merely contemplating the past as dead matter; the design of this model combines rigorous research with critical theorizing and active philosophizing, it is a work of committed engagement to the project of the Indigenous renaissance, and its value should be primarily judged in the measure that it is able to contribute to that purpose. Hence, the effort has been made to study, recover, critically evaluate, reflect, deliberate, select and design on the basis of accumulated Andean experiences and aspirations what many like myself consider as a viable, balanced, harmonious, and desirable civilizational project. As in the case of other Indigenous knowledges and practices, efforts to recover, revalorize and revitalize Indigenous and

specifically Andean wisdoms and ways are on the rise, having major implications at the local, national, regional, and global levels. This work is a direct contribution to those efforts.⁴⁵¹

To close this section, I would like to offer a brief summary of some of the constitutive values of Indigenous Andean wisdoms and ways (see Table below). These values reflect also the broader Abya-Yalan spirit. All of these values have been discussed in one way or another up to this point and it is important to keep them in mind because they serve both to shape the infrastructure of Andean life as well as to understand its contemporary manifestations in thought, organization, and practice, some of which we will discuss in the following section which is dedicated to the emerging Indigenous Andean paradigm of civilizational (re)vitalization and (re)organization at the local, national, regional and global levels referred to as the ‘Living Well’ (*Suma Qamaña* in Aymara, *Suma Kawsay* in Quechua) as an alternative to the global crises.

⁴⁵¹ See, for instance, Alvizuri 2004, 2007; Boero Rojo 1991; all works and efforts by the CAOI and its allies such as CAOI, COICA, CICA, CIMA. 2011; CAOI 2008; CAOI, Palacín Quispe, Ortíz, and Ruiz 2011; Chivi Vargas 2011; Claeveryás Huerse 1990; Estermann 1998, 2008; Farah and Vasapollo, eds. 2011; Fernandez Quisbert 2007; Flores Quelopana 2006, 2007; García, Gutiérrez, Prada, Quispe, and Tapia 2001; Gudynas 2011; Gutierrez Rojas, Ramos, et. al. 2010; Huanacuni Mamani 2010; Kusch 1975; Lajo, J. 2002; Llanque Chana 2001; Luizaga, Natcheff, Medina, Mamani, Loma, Arce, Tamayo, Paredes, Colque, Mansilla, Waskar. 2000; Mamani Hualco and Chivi Vargas 2010; Mamani and Medina. 2001; Medina 1995, 1997, 2001, 2006, 2006b, 2008; Medina and del Carpio 2000; Medina ed. 2001; Meinert 2001; Mejía Huamán 2005; Mendez 2006; Milla Villena 2003; Ministerio de Relaciones Exteriores del Estado Plurinacional de Bolivia 2009; Miranda Luizaga 1996; Miranda Luizaiga and del Carpio Natcheff 2000; Miranda 2001; Moreno 1983; Morin Tone 2009; Murra 2002; Murra 1975; Mutuberría Lazarini and Chiroque Solano 2011; Nicolas, Fernández, and Flores 2007; Nuckolls 2010; Nuningo 2001; Pacheco Farfán 1994; Pacheco 2006; Paredes 2000; Paucá Gonzales and Rafayle Cuadra 2007; Proyecto Andino de Tecnologías Campesinas (PRATEC) 2006; Quispe 2000; Rengifo, Panduro, and Grillo 1993; Renjifo and Grillo 2001; Republica del Ecuador 2009; Salomon 2004; San Martín 2001; Schmidt Colque 2000; Temple 2001; Ticona Alejo 2005, 2002; Ticona Alejo ed. 2006; Torrez 2001; Tórrez and Ticona 2006; Untoja Choque 2001; Untoja Choque and Mamani Espejo 2000; Van Kessel and Condori Cruz; Van Kessel 2006; Van Kessel and Condori Cruz 2004; Waskar Chukiwanka 2000; Yampara, ed. 1996; Yampara 1995, 2001a, 2001b.

Table 2: Andean Values

Constitutive Values of Indigenous Andean Wisdoms and Ways	
1. Complementarity	meaning the cosmos is made of relations among complementary differences.
2. Biocosmic Vitality	meaning that “All is Living”, Earth, humans, rocks, ecosystems, astronomical cycles, etc. That is why the constitutive principles of the cosmos among Andeans are <i>Pacha</i> and <i>Qama(k)</i> and <i>Pacha-Qama(k)</i> , meaning the vitality that emerges from the interaction of complementary energies.
3. Reciprocity	not just among humans but across the extended, non-anthropocentric cosmopolitical community.
4. Relationality	meaning “All is Related”, all is mutually constitutive, nothing owes its existence exclusively to itself, nothing is independent, and no one can claim absolute sovereignty over self or others because we are all knots in a cosmic web: “all is connected, all is related, all is interdependent.” ⁴⁵²
5. Equilibrium, Balance, Harmony	meaning that the primary responsibility is not to “grow” or “improve”, but to sustain, nurture, and foster the equilibrium, balance, and harmony of the cosmopolitical community. All else is secondary.
6. Equivalence	among humans as among all members of the extended cosmopolitical community. Humans are no better and no worse than any other participant of the cosmos; we are active members in a community of complex complementarities where we hold unique responsibilities which are as valuable as those of any other non-human member.
7. Cyclicity	meaning all is understood as the manifestation of biotic, ecological, and cosmic cycles whose continuation is the responsibility of everybody to sustain.
8. Communality	meaning we are all offspring of both the social and biocosmic community.
9. Solidarity, cooperation, and collaboration	as the primary modes of association which are crucial to sustain balance in relation to competition, confrontation, and conflict.
10. Nurturing	as the way to relate with each other and with the non-human world. Andeans, for instance, do not exploit the land; instead they are nurtured and fed by Mother Earth whom they nurture in reciprocity.
11. Labor as a celebration	of our responsibility in the social, biotic, ecological, and cosmic cycles.
12. Symbiosis	among all components of the cosmos, including the biotic community (of which humans and human relations are just a small part), and the cosmological cycles; that is, the encompassing cosmopolitical community.

Source: My own elaboration drawing on several sources.⁴⁵³

⁴⁵² Huanacuni Mamani 2010, not paginated.

⁴⁵³ Medina 2008; Renjifo and Grillo 2008; Estermann 1998, 2008; Miranda Luizaga 1996, among many others (see Sources and References corresponding to the Andes).

3. The Andean Paradigm of Living Well: The Contemporary Recovery, Revalorization, and Revitalization of Indigenous Civilization(s)

A. Outline and Relevance of the Living Well Paradigm

The paradigm of ‘Living Well’ can be summed up in the words of the Indigenous Aymara philosopher and political leader Mauricio Mamani Huanacuni

*Living well is living in plenitude, with the wisdom to live in harmony and equilibrium; specifically in harmony and equilibrium [ayni] with the cycles of Mother Earth [or Pachamama], of the cosmos [or Pacha], of life and of history, and in equilibrium with and with permanent respect for all forms of existence.*⁴⁵⁴

The paradigm of Living Well should be understood as strictly non-anthropocentric or post-anthropocentric. Within this paradigm, humanity’s responsibility is not to improve itself in an endless linear advancement of anthropocentric progress, development, or civilization, and in relation to others, whether human or non-human. Moreover, within this paradigm, it is patently not humanity’s destiny, right, or task to conquer or subdue nature (whether human or non-human) or to exploit her and employ her for the materialization of anthropocentric desires and aspirations. To live by such anthropocentric aspirations is instead interpreted as an expression of the paradigm of “Living Better” which is always already “Living Better—than Others”; the paradigm of “Living Better” is what has dominated and driven the expansion of the anthropocentric modality of the predominantly Western form of modernity to every corner of the globe via colonialism, imperialism, modernization, developmentalism and globalization. The paradigm of “Living Better” is what is responsible for the global ecological crisis of anthropocentric civilization. In contrast to the paradigm of “Living Better”, the paradigm of “Living Well” demands that the overarching responsibility of humanity is to nurture and be nurtured by the cycles of Mother Earth, the cosmos, life, and history and to respectfully care for and assure with all our faculties, forms of organization and practice, the continuation or reestablishment of the balance,

⁴⁵⁴ Huanacuni Mamani 2010, not paginated; emphases added. The paradigm of Living Well is the communal offspring of a great many efforts and voices across generations and should by no means be attributed to any single ‘author’ or even a collection of ‘authors’.

equilibrium, and harmony among all our biotic, ecological, and cosmic relations, including our social relations of every kind.

The paradigm of “Living Well” is not the creation of any single person or organization, and it is not the creation of any single generation of people; instead, as in the Indigenous tradition of wisdom, this paradigm is the communal and intergenerational outgrowth of decades, some would argue centuries, of creative resistance and emancipatory planning on the part of innumerable communities, organizations (national and transnational), individuals and now governments (such as Bolivia and Ecuador) who have proactively and often tirelessly collaborated to recover, revalorize, and revitalize the civilizational heritage of the Indigenous American continent of Abya-Yala.

Although it first gathered under the name of “Living Well” within the sphere of Andean and Mesoamerican politics, all of its major premises are in general agreement with the thoughts and efforts of Indigenous peoples and movements across Abya Yala. It coincides with the views and practices of Native North American organizations such as the Indigenous Environmental Network, Tonatierra, and the Indigenous Alliance Without Borders, and with intellectuals, as would be clear in relation to the works of innumerable Indigenous intellectuals like Gregory Cajete, Viola Cordova, Oscar Kawagley, Clara Sue Kidwell and many, many others, whose efforts and works will be discussed in Part III of this dissertation.

Some of the most elaborate articulations of the paradigm of ‘Living Well’ can be found in the efforts of the Andean Coordination of Indigenous Organizations (CAOI) which is a massive transnational network interlinking the Indigenous organizations of Bolivia, Ecuador, Chile Colombia, and Peru; also in the Coordination of Indigenous Organizations of the Amazon Basin, another major transnational network interlinking Indigenous organizations of Bolivia, Brazil, Colombia, Ecuador, Guyana, French Guayana, Peru, Surinam and Venezuela. “Living Well” as a paradigm has also articulated the efforts of the Indigenous Council of Central America (CICA), and the Indigenous Council of Mesoamerica (CIMA) which are also huge transnational networks interlinking organizations across all countries from Panama up to Mexico. The paradigm of

“Living Well” has also recently been interwoven with the Indigenous-autonomist Neo-Zapatista agenda in Chiapas, Mexico and the anarcho-Indigenous Neo-Magonista organizations in Oaxaca. All of these organizations together articulate a huge transnational movement, an Indigenous network of unprecedented dimensions, tied also to North American and global Indigenous movements and to the many groups which gather under the banner of the World People's Conference on Climate Change and the Rights of Mother Earth.

But the paradigm of “Living Well” has also been embraced now by a couple of governments in the Americas, namely Bolivia and Ecuador, both of which are endeavoring to further develop it and implement it in all their policies and to use it as their foreign policy platform; Peru might soon join in as well as the recently elected Ollanta Humala, also of Indigenous descent, has agreed publicly and repeatedly with Evo Morales that the two nations should be integrated again as they were in pre-colonial times during the times of the Tawa-Inti-Suyu;⁴⁵⁵ the term “Andino-America” has been invoked to articulate the reemergence of an Andean polity that would at least embrace the territories claimed under the jurisdictions of Peru, Ecuador, and Bolivia.

Let us therefore look at the philosophy, theory, contentions, and proposals of the Living Well paradigm. We will follow that with a discussion of how it is becoming manifest in Bolivian and Ecuadorian politics and life, then throughout transnational Indigenous networks like the Coordinadora Andina de Organizaciones Indigenas (CAOI), and finally as a form of global Indigenous theory and diplomacy.

⁴⁵⁵ See the Joint Declaration by the two Presidents in the Palacio Quemado of Bolivia at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zYI4iDSOITo>. See also the speech by Ollanta Humala alongside Evo Morales at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xWVztk-p2qA>.

Ollanta Humala is part of the Humala family who are known as the articulators the “etnocacerista” political philosophy and ideology which is unequivocally committed to the Indigenous-Andean Renaissance, and explicitly articulates this renaissance in relation to the Tawa-Inti-Suyu. The name Ollanta was given to his father explicitly as an Indigenous gesture, “Ollanta” or “Ullanta” would mean in Quechua ‘the warrior who sees it all.’

A. The Philosophy of Living Well/Life in Plenitude/Plentiful Vitality

In this segment I will engage in an in depth discussion of the paradigm which has become known in Spanish as Living Well (*Vivir Bien*), but which in the several Indigenous languages of the Andes is called differently and has complicated connotations which cannot easily be translated. I will carefully interpret those which correspond to the two major languages of the Andes, Aymara and Quechua. In Aymara the paradigm is known as Suma(q) Qamaña, in Quechua the paradigm is variously known as Allin Kawsay or Suma(k) Kawsay, in Guarani as Nande Reko.

The Aymara concept of Suma(q) Qamaña as we know from the discussion in this work so far means something more complex than just ‘Living Well’ which is an oversimplifying translation of the Andean cosmoexperience of the *qama*. *Qama* as, as we’ve discussed, entails vitality, energy, vigor, force and life, or a combination and effect of these many connotations; for instance, the term *qamasa* broadly refers to courage or valor. So Qamaña (or Kawsay in Quechua) entails more than living, it entails vitalizing, energizing, vigorizing, infusing force, living intensely and passionately, with courage and valor, and it can also mean living, conviviality or wisdom about living; these connotations are not mutually exclusive but rather complementary and mutually reinforcing, so that vitality is mutually reinforced via conviviality and to live wisely is to nurture this conviviality or complementary-living.⁴⁵⁶

Suma(q) and Allin can be translated into at least all of the following terms or some combination of them: beautiful, flourishing, good, well, plentiful, luscious, excellent, blossoming, mature, in plenitude, sublime, magnificent, among others.⁴⁵⁷ These terms are related to the Kuna “Yala” in “Abya-Yala” meaning land in plenitude, blossoming, in full maturity, plentiful, flourishing, et cetera.

In any case, considering these connotations of Suma(q) and Qamaña, the expression Suma(q) Qamaña may connote something such as unbridled vitality and life that flourishes

⁴⁵⁶ See Huanacuni Mamani 2010, not paginated.

⁴⁵⁷ See Huanacuni Mamani 2010, not paginated.

beautifully, bountifully, plentifully, with energy and in plenitude or with vigor. According to Huanacuni Mamani perhaps the best translation of Allin Kawsay or Suma(q) Qamaña is “life in plenitude”⁴⁵⁸ or perhaps plentiful vitality.

It should be understood that the previous statements do not amount to a definition, they are rather interpretations of the many possible connotations that the concept of Suma(q) Qamaña may invoke. But the crucial understanding to be shared here is that Qama-ña refers us back to Qama which in turn brings forth the underlying cosmoexperience of Pacha and of course the unfolding of Pacha-Qama so that the concept of Suma Qamaña implies within itself the concept of Pacha-Qama and therefore a broader interpretation of Suma Qamaña in light of what we have discussed so far would be extended into the *Suma Pacha-Qama-ña*, a vitality or vitalizing effect that flourishes in plenitude from the complementary encounter of different forces (the Latin root ‘di-’ in ‘di-fferent’ also refers to a duality, such as pa- in pacha).

Again, this is only one of several viable interpretations; for instance, Javier Medina adds that *qamaña* also brings forth the underlying Andean conception of life as the “wellness” that is “produced by” or emerges from the “mutual interconnectivity” of forces.⁴⁵⁹ This again reminds us of pacha. Medina’s interpretation is not incompatible with the other interpretations set forth here. Either connotation should bring forth or rather allow us to submerge ourselves with/in the underlying cosmoexperience from which unfolds the philosophy of the Suma Qamaña which is in the extended form the *Suma Pacha-Qama-ña*. With this in mind, let us look further into the philosophy of Suma Qamaña.

For the Aymara philosopher and scholar, Simon Yampara, Suma Qamaña entails “living well in harmony with all other members of nature and with oneself.”⁴⁶⁰ That is, the Indigenous Andean peoples do not focus exclusively on the flourishing or the “material growth” of the

⁴⁵⁸ Huanacuni Mamani 2010, not paginated.

⁴⁵⁹ Medina 2008, 60.

⁴⁶⁰ Yampara 2008, 142.

human; they are similarly concerned with the “flourishing of the plant, animal, lithic and territorial worlds”.⁴⁶¹ This is because as Huanacuni Mamani explains

The inheritance of the Indigenous nations considers the *community* as a structure ...of life...constituted by *all forms of existence* and *not* only as a social structure (constituted only by humans). This does not imply the disappearance of what makes each person [whether non-human or human] unique; rather this uniqueness is expressed amply in its natural capacity in a process of complementarity among all members of the community [understood in a non-anthropocentric sense]. In these times in which modernity is submerged in an atomistic and individualist paradigm and humanity is in crisis, it is important to listen and practice the inheritance of our Indigenous ancestors: this is the emergent cosmovision that aims to reconstitute the harmony and the equilibrium of life which made up the conviviality of our ancestors and which today is the structural response of Indigenous aboriginal peoples to the global crisis, namely, the horizon of Living Well.⁴⁶²

This non/post-anthropocentric understanding of community is crucial to develop a sensibility for what the philosophy of Suma Qamaña entails in practice. From within an Indigenous Andean cosmoexperience, as Huanacuni Mamani⁴⁶³ explains, “all forms of existence have the category of equals.” Moreover, all emerges from and is interlaced within a network of “relations of complementarity” where “all lives and all is important.” Hence “when we speak of Living Well we are referring to the whole community, we are not talking about the traditional ‘common good’ reduced or limited exclusively to humans; Living Well encompasses all that exists, it endeavors to preserve the equilibrium and harmony among all that exists.”⁴⁶⁴ Thus, what Living Well entails is the nurturing of a form of *non/post-anthropocentric and post-human conviviality*. As Huanacuni Mamani further expounds:

To Live Well implies to be wise as to how to relate in conviviality with all forms of existence. The Aymara term ‘suma qamaña’ translated as ‘living well’ or ‘living in plenitude’ generally means ‘living in harmony and equilibrium; in harmony with the cycles of Mother Earth, of the cosmos, of life, and of history, and in equilibrium with all forms of existence.’...Within this Living Well our existence unfolds in harmony with all in a conviviality where we are similarly concerned for all that surrounds us. What is most important is neither ‘Man’ nor ‘Money’, what is most important is harmony with [the rest

⁴⁶¹ Yampara 2008, 80.

⁴⁶² Huanacuni Mamani 2010, not paginated.

⁴⁶³ Huanacuni Mamani 2010, not paginated.

⁴⁶⁴ Huanacuni Mamani 2010, not paginated.

of] nature and life. Living Well is the basis to save humanity and the planet...because it aims towards a simple life that reduces our addiction to consumption and maintains an equilibrated production without ruining the environment...to Live Well is to live in [non/post-anthropocentric] community...and complementarity. It is a communal...harmonious life. Living Well means to complement each other and share with each other without competing, to live in harmony among humans and with/in nature. Living Well is the basis for the defense of nature, of life itself and of humanity as a whole. Living Well is not the same as Living Better, Living Better is living *better than* others. Living Better is egotism, disinterest for the others, individualism, thinking only of profit. Because in order to live better than others [whether human or non-human others] it becomes necessary to exploit, a profound competition is produced and wealth becomes concentrated in few hands.⁴⁶⁵

B. Living Well from Ecuador and Bolivia

a. Ecuador

The recent wave of Indigenous revitalization in Ecuador can be traced all the way back to 1964 when the Federation of Shuar Centers set as its main goal the autonomy of Indigenous peoples.⁴⁶⁶ From that point on the movement slowly, but steadily grew.⁴⁶⁷ The organizational structures of the Indigenous peoples of the Amazonia and the Andean mountain range in Ecuador

⁴⁶⁵ Huanacuni Mamani 2010, not paginated; emphasis in the original.

⁴⁶⁶ According to the Andean Coordination of Indigenous Organizations (CAOI) (“Reciprocidad para el Buen Vivir”, 3) although the majority of the population in Ecuador is of Indigenous or mixed-Indigenous descent, there remain only “13 self-identified Indigenous nationalities, from which 8 are located in the Amazon, 4 in the coast and one in the highlands: the Kichwa, which is composed of 13 peoples which occupy territories in 10 Ecuadorian provinces. 71.7% of the Indigenous population is located in the Andean zone. For the Confederation of Peoples of Kichwa Nationality of Ecuador (ECUARUNARI), the Indigenous population amounts to approximately 45% of the total national population.” It is however very important to point out that the data presented do not account for the fact that there is no clear boundary between who counts as Indigenous and who does not. Ecuador, like any other country in most of Abya-Yala, underwent widespread asymmetric and violence-induced miscegenation (i.e., under racialized Euro-centric power relations) and forced Westernization or ‘acculturation’. This means that countries of the region are populated by huge numbers of forcibly ‘de-Indianized’ peoples—both mixed mestizos and non-mixed. If all those people were to be counted as Indigenous in one way or another, the numbers would be raised significantly. For instance, according to Carlos A. Pereyra Mele (2005), “*La Población De Ecuador Es Un 60% Indígena Y Un 30% Mestiza*, este 90% está tradicionalmente relegado de la Política y la actividad económica” (emphasis in the original); this is to say that the population of Ecuador is 60% Indigenous and 30% mestiza, this 90% has been generally relegated from the politics of the hegemonic settler colonial state, and from the “formal” economy. As it is clear, all data, statistics, categories, and debates concerning the quantification of ‘Indigenous peoples’ and mixed bloods (mestizos) are highly debatable and politicizable.

⁴⁶⁷ Huanacuni Mamani 2010, not paginated.

conformed in 1986 the Confederation of Indigenous Nationalities of Ecuador (CONAIE, acronym in Spanish). Towards May of 1990 a movement and uprising of Indigenous peoples developed, which moved Indigeneity from a condition of invisibility that denied those of Indigenous biocultural descent an access in fact and in law to history, the State, and to society, and towards a condition of visibility in the eyes of society as a whole, thereby leading to their recognition as full-fledged citizens. The main proposals of Indigenous movements pointed towards plurinationality and interculturality. This allowed Indigenous movements to consolidate and open new organizational spaces that enabled them to appropriate the political agenda. In 1990 the CONAIE became a political force to be reckoned with; it demanded for the first time a major reform in Article 1 of the National Constitution. The demand was that Ecuador be declared as a Plurinational State.

As the Indigenous movement grew Kichwa/Quechua Indigenous peoples from Ecuador started proposing the paradigm and discourse of the “Sumak Kawsay” (Living in Plenitude/Living Well) in order to reshape the relations within society as well as between humans and the rest of nature along the lines of Indigenous wisdoms and ways. Another demand was that historical narratives would be retold from an Indigenous viewpoint and that society and democracy would accommodate the traditional Indigenous systems such as the *minka* and the system of *cargos* (rotation and obligation). Indigenous Ecuadorian organizations have since advanced the notion of *Sumak Kawsay* in the effort to reinsert humanity in the broader dynamics of *Pacha-Mama* and the encompassing *pacha* from a perspective of respect by reintroducing ethics and politics into extra-human conviviality.⁴⁶⁸

But the persistent, volatile and dangerous tensions between the Indigenous movement and the governments of the 1990s and early 2000s provoked a repressive backlash that destabilized and disarticulated Indigenous organizations, but notwithstanding the repression, the Indigenous

⁴⁶⁸ Mutuberría Lazarini and Chiroque Solano 2011, 7.

movement managed to introduce its philosophy and ideology into the New Constitution.⁴⁶⁹ The movement experienced also a recovery around the time of the elections that brought Rafael Correa to power. In many ways, it was the vitality and actuality of the social, popular, and Indigenous movements, among others in Ecuador that enabled a platform that supported the coming to power of President Correa in the year of 2007. The Correa administration was therefore indebted to the Indigenous movements and has in many ways seriously (though not without qualifiers) assumed the pending agenda proposed by the Indigenous movement—not without certain tensions however between the administration and the movement.

Notwithstanding the tensions, in the same year, the Constitutional Assembly took place. This led to the proposal of the New Constitution of Ecuador that was approved by referendum and promulgated in 2008. The New Constitution promulgated in 2008 recognizes the “millenarian roots forged by women and men of different peoples, celebrating, nature, Pacha Mama, of which we are a part and which is vital for our existence.”⁴⁷⁰ The New Constitution appeals to the ancestral wisdom as judicial organizing principle and declares “A new form of citizenship conviviality in diversity and harmony with nature and to achieve the Living Well, the Sumaq Kawsay.”⁴⁷¹ So the New Constitution recognizes and sustains the construction of the state based on citizen conviviality and respect of non-human nature as a subject with the purpose of fulfilling the Life in Plenitude which is the integral philosophy of post-anthropocentric and post-human respect in accordance with the revitalization of ancestral Indigenous values. Article 14, for instance, recognizes the right of the population to live in a healthy and ecologically equilibrated environment that guarantees sustainability and living well or Sumaq Kawsay.⁴⁷² Thus the Constitution states clearly the horizon of Living Well, declaring a society that respects in all its

⁴⁶⁹ Huanacuni Mamani 2010, not paginated.

⁴⁷⁰ Quoted in Mutuberría Lazarini and Chiroque Solano 2011 and Huanacuni Mamani 2010.

⁴⁷¹ Huanacuni Mamani 2010, not paginated.

⁴⁷² Huanacuni Mamani 2010, not paginated.

dimensions the dignity of persons and collectivities. In invoking the philosophy of the Sumaq Kawsay Indigenous peoples, communities and nationalities have become empowered to demand its implementation. In turn, the state has become subject to the demand that Indigenous wisdoms, ways, and cultures be enacted and protected, their sense of belonging ensured, and their ancestral traditions and forms of social organization nurtured.

Also, under the New Constitution communal responsibility for lands (still phrased however as communal ‘property’) is promoted as well as their inalienability; lands held under Indigenous tenure cannot be embargoed or divided. This invokes the infrastructure of Indigenous economics. The Constitution promotes the conservation and cultivation of Indigenous forms of conviviality and social organization, of Indigenous forms of generating and exercising authority, and of the protection and legal recognition of communal lands of ancestral possession. The New Constitution also maintains, protects and develops collective knowledges, the sciences, technologies and ancestral Indigenous wisdoms, the Indigenous knowledge and generation of genetic ‘resources’ which encompass great biodiversity and agrobiodiversity, Indigenous medicine and traditional medicinal practice. Moreover, the New Constitution promotes the right to recover, promote and protect the ritual and sacred Indigenous places, as well as the plants, animals, minerals and ecosystems ancestrally associated with Indigenous cultures, also the Indigenous knowledge of resources and of the attributes of the flora and fauna.⁴⁷³

The New Ecuadorian Constitution recognizes nature as a subject by identifying Pacha-Mama as the force that recreates and realizes life and which therefore has the right to be respected in its integrity, its existence and the maintenance and regeneration of its cycles of vitality, its structure, functions and evolutionary processes. The so-called ‘developmental regime’ now unfolds from an organized, sustainable and dynamic collection of economic, political, socio-cultural and environmental systems that guarantee the realization of life in plenitude or the Living Well (Sumaq Kawsay). The State commits itself to plan ‘development’ by propitiating social and

⁴⁷³ Mutuberría Lazarini and Chiroque Solano 2011, 9.

territorial equity, promoting the harmonization of forces (drawing inspiration from Indigenous wisdoms), and decentralized, de-concentrated and transparent forms of participation.

This Living Well will require that persons, communities, peoples, and nationalities effectively enjoy their rights and exercise their responsibilities under the framework of interculturality, the respect of their diversities and the harmonious conviviality with nature. The economic system that is set forth is socially oriented and solidary; it recognizes the human as a subject within a society of dynamic and equilibrated relationships that extend beyond exclusively human concerns. State and market are to be embedded in a broader logic of harmony with nature, guaranteeing the production and reproduction of the material and immaterial conditions that enable Life in Plenitude or Living Well. The economic system shall be integrated by a mixture of different forms of economic organization, including public, private, mixed, popular, solidary and communal and others which the Constitution determines.

In relation to labor and production, the State now recognizes diverse forms of organizing production in the economy: communal, cooperatives, entrepreneurial, whether public or private, associative, familial, domestic, autonomous and mixed, so long as the forms of production assure the promotion of the Living Well paradigm. A variety of property titles are now recognized and guaranteed, including the right to public, private, communal, state, associative, cooperative and mixed property, so long as these forms of property fulfill their social and ecological responsibilities.⁴⁷⁴ Finally, the government of Ecuador recently published its central four year governmental program through which it is implementing these and many other laws and policies; the program is very much influenced and shaped by the Indigenous paradigm of Living Well, so much so that it is titled *National Plan for Living Well: 2009-2013, Building a Plurinational and Intercultural State*.

⁴⁷⁴ Mutuberría Lazarini and Chiroque Solano 2011, 10.

b. Bolivia

Bolivia enjoys a long history of Indigenous⁴⁷⁵ anti-colonial struggles and insurrections (most recently the Water Wars of 2002 and the Gas Wars of 2003), Indigenous struggles for autonomy and independence, for access to basic services, and defense of natural resources, for land and territory as well. These struggles and mobilizations after long decades contributed to the incursion of representatives of the Indigenous and peasant (predominantly Indigenous and mestizo, mix-blood) movements in the political sphere. On that basis in 2006 Evo Morales was elected as the first (full blooded and culturally unapologetic) Indigenous President.⁴⁷⁶ In the same year a Constitutional Assembly was convoked to write a proposal for the reform of the Constitution of Bolivia. After a long succession of controversies, the New Political Constitution of the State was subjected to a referendum and gained acceptance on January 25, 2009. The New Constitution recognizes the economic, social, judicial, political and cultural plurality of Bolivia; it aggressively defends equality, as well as equity in the distribution and redistribution of the social product, all of which are elements guided by the objective to achieve the Sumaq Qamaña or Life in Plenitude/Living Well.⁴⁷⁷

⁴⁷⁵ According to the Andean Coordination of Indigenous Organizations (CAOI) (“Reciprocidad para el Buen Vivir”, 3) although the majority of the population in Bolivia is of Indigenous or mixed-Indigenous descent (up to 85% or more), many people are, again, de-Indianized mestizos or Westernized/’accultured’ Indigenous peoples. Due to widespread ‘acculturation’ the categories, data, and statistics are debatable and heavily politicized; also a person can try to ‘pass’ or ‘whiten’ for demographic purposes. In any case, the CAOI quantifies the “Indigenous population” as equal to “5,358,681 inhabitants” which would amount to “66.4% of the total population, which is over 8 million. The Indigenous population is majority Quechua (50.3%) and Aymara (39.8%), situating itself mainly in highland departments and organized in Ayllus and Markas.” A similar situation occurs throughout what is known by the Westernized as “Peru,” similar also to the Mesoamerican situation. In all these cases efforts at de-Indianization and ‘acculturation’ produces the deluding image of an indigenous population that seems much less numerous than what it actually is.

⁴⁷⁶ Bolivia has had some mestizo presidents who are heavily Westernized and govern in accordance with Eurocentric and Westernizing canons, structures and institutions. Exceptions to this trend might include (not without certain reservations) people like the mestizo Juan José Torres González (short lived presidency during 1971), who was unsurprisingly and still lamentably toppled by a right-wing coup d’etat and later murdered in 1976 during Operation Condor.

⁴⁷⁷ Mutuberria Lazarini and Chiroque Solano 2011, 10.

In incorporating the paradigm of Living Well into the newly drafted 2007-2008 Constitution Bolivia officially refounded itself as a Plurinational State that is based on an intercivilizational compact that seeks to nurture equilibrium between Indigenous American (Abya-Yalan, specifically Andean) Civilization and Western Civilization. Bolivia, during the administration of the Indigenous Aymara Evo Morales, has taken huge steps into the implementation and promotion of the Indigenous American Paradigm of Living Well both at home and abroad. From Bolivia, the Indigenous renaissance is fully underway.

As found in its Article 8, the New Constitution of Bolivia is based on the trilogy of ethical-moral principles of the Tawa-Inti-Suyu, the Ama Qhilla, Ama Llulla, Ama Auwa (do not be lazy, do not lie, do not steal); it is also based on the paradigm of Suma Qamaña (Living Well/Life in Plenitude), Ñande Reko (Harmonious Life), Teko Kavi (Balanced Life), Ivi Maraëi (Earth without Badness) and Qhapaj Ñan (Noble Life-Pathway).⁴⁷⁸ The New Constitution also incorporates the following elements: complementarity in the access and enjoyment of material goods as well as in affective realization in subjective and spiritual life; it also promotes respect and harmony with nature, and post-anthropocentric conviviality in and within the community understood in the Indigenous bio-eco-cosmopolitical sense. The Plurinational State is designed to be inclusive, to be the promoter of interculturality, and of direct participatory democracy. It promotes the equitable redistribution of resources, income, opportunities and wealth; it promotes complementary relations among all forms of economy, state-based, communal, and private; it promotes integral growth on the basis between economy and production, the social communal sphere, in international relations as well as social and communal power.⁴⁷⁹ The plural economic system promoted by the Plurinational state of Bolivia articulates the different forms of economic organization on the principles of complementarity reciprocity, solidarity, redistribution, equality,

⁴⁷⁸ Huanacuni Mamani 2010, not paginated.

⁴⁷⁹ Mutuberría Lazarini and Chiroque Solano 2011, 11.

sustainability, equilibrium, justice and transparency, many of which are recognizably Indigenous Andean.⁴⁸⁰

The new Bolivian constitution promotes the idea of the plurinational and communal state based on the notion of diversity in all fields of life, political, economic, judicial, cultural, linguistic, and bio-ecological. This new form of organization promotes an understanding of government as a participatory democracy that includes new forms of participation such as direct democracy, universal, and communal democracy—which includes the revitalization of Indigenous forms of organization like the system of cargos (rotation and obligation). This is already being implemented; for instance, “The Council of Ayllus and Markas of the Qullasuyu (CONAMAQ) have initiated a process of restituting the aboriginal governments in departments like Oruro, La Paz, Cochabamba, Chuquisaca and Potosi.”⁴⁸¹

It is crucial to underline the insertion of the cultural values and wisdoms of the Indigenous peoples and nations and their contribution to substantially reshape the system. All these elements seek a re-foundation and restructuring of Bolivia from a decolonial perspective that entails also political and administrative decentralization with the objective of bringing the colonial, republican, and liberal state to an end, and to openly recognize and respect diversity, building a new polity on that basis. The communal characterizes the new Bolivian state; it recognizes the vitality of Indigenous principles and institutions not only in rural but also urban areas.⁴⁸²

To support the construction and implementation of the paradigm of “Living Well” across Bolivian society and in its foreign affairs, the Bolivian government has created a Viceministry of Decolonization within the Ministry of Cultures that includes an innovative Unit of

⁴⁸⁰ Mutuberría Lazarini and Chiroque Solano 2011, 11.

⁴⁸¹ CAOI, “Reciprocidad para el Buen Vivir”, 3.

⁴⁸² Mutuberría Lazarini and Chiroque Solano 2011, 10.

Depatriarchalization geared towards the dismantling of gendered power relations. As Idon Chivi Vargas, the current Viceminister of Decolonization explains:

In 2009 the Viceministry of Decolonization is created with specific attributions in what pertains to decolonization and herein lies the novelty, the Viceministry includes depatriarchalization [in fact an office or Unit of Depatriarchalization] as part of state institutionality (Headship of the Unit is established since August 4, 2010); this does not exist in any part of Latin America [or anywhere else throughout the Americas] and it will not exist unless this State throughout its process of Decolonization propels it towards the whole of Abya Yala [i.e., the whole of ‘the Americas’]...In 2010 the Viceministry of Strategic Planning is born, wherein the decolonization of planning and the strategic construction of the plural economy encounters its economic crux in practical questions which transform the state’s horizon into decolonization and Living Well/Living in Plenitude (this is noticeable in Article 49, paragraph b. of the Decree concerning the Organization of the Executive Organ).⁴⁸³

Having discussed at length the crucial role of sexuity, complementarity and the figure of the jaqi(cha)/chacha-warmi in the Andean cosmoexperience, philosophy, economics, and politics, it is understandable why for the Indigenous-led Bolivian government, as well as for the implementation of “Living Well”, it would be so important to pursue decolonization and depatriarchalization in tandem. As Chivi Vargas states

...within the new emancipatory constitutionalist framework which is also plurinational, political affairs such as Decolonization and Depatriarchalization...show the differentiated logics between a neoliberal model and a plurinational model, that is, between genocide and Living Well...In this way we should assume that Decolonization is the *ajayu* (spirit) of the process, and Depatriarchalization is the *q’amasa* (energy) of the process. And this because both concepts, decolonization and depatriarchalization, encompass the sense of solidarity and communality of a political program whose horizons have not yet been defined by this moment of constitutional transition, but their already abundant and visible contours—unquestionably—signal the fact that human dignity does not run any risks...the refoundation of Bolivia as a Plurinational State demands therefore an ample process of theoretical modulation that definitely has profound practical reach.⁴⁸⁴

Along these lines, for instance, in September, 2010, The Bolivian Ministry of Cultures sponsored the publication of a full treatise on these matters titled *Decolonization and Depatriarchalization in the New Political Constitution: Emancipatory Horizons of the Plurinational Constitutionalism* (my translation of the title). Published also in *To Decolonize Ourselves*, the Online Journal of the Plurinational State of Bolivia, this treatise was penned by

⁴⁸³ Chivi Vargas 2011, 14.

⁴⁸⁴ Chivi Vargas 2011, 10-11.

Amalia Mamani Hualco and Idon Chivi Vargas. This treatise is a major part of the philosophical, theoretical, and political platform of the Viceministry of Decolonization and its Unit of Depatriarchalization.

Both offices are the first of their kind in the whole of the Abya-Yalan continent. Idon Chivi and Roberto Choque Canqui, the Indigenous scholars, intellectuals and leaders who have headed the Viceministry, have both insisted, as was cited above, that such decolonization and depatriarchalization offices are sorely lacking throughout all Abya-Yala, that is, all of the Americas, South, Central and North. An active foreign policy in their promotion has already been deployed.

Decolonization, Depatriarchalization and Living Well are now the forces that are reshaping every aspect of Bolivian life. This is visible in every aspect of the Bolivian government and society; for instance, the paradigm of “Living Well” has become the basis to reform the whole Bolivian educational system to make it decolonial, de-patriarchal, intercultural, intercivilizational, and multilingual. As Idon Chivi Vargas further explains

...very recently, the Law of Education “Avelino Siñani-Elizardo Pérez”, contains in its matrix the concepts of decolonization and depatriarchalization as programmatic and political messages of high intensity, let’s see: “Article 3. (Bases of education). Education is founded in society, through the participation in plenitude of all Bolivians (female and male) in the Plurinational Educational System, respecting their diverse social and cultural expressions, in their different forms of organization. Education shall be founded on the following bases:

.1. Education shall be decolonizing, emancipatory, revolutionary, anti-imperialist, depatriarchalizing, and transformative of economic and social structures; education shall be oriented towards the cultural reaffirmation of the Indigenous aboriginal and peasant nations and peoples, of the intercultural and Afro-Bolivian communities in the construction of the Plurinational State and of the Living Well [or Living in Plenitude]”.⁴⁸⁵

Most provocatively, Idon Chivi has wrote that the incorporation of the Viceministry of Decolonization and the Unit of Depatriarchalization entails nothing less than the voluntary “suicide” of the modern Western form of State and economy “from within” in order to give birth to a new alternative way of life that is socio-ecologically balanced and just, as guided under the

⁴⁸⁵ Chivi Vargas 2011, 12-13.

call for decolonization in order to “Live Well.” It is important to point out that both decolonization and Living Well are explicitly intercivilizational and intercultural paradigms that do not seek to erase Western civilization, but rather to recover, revalorize, and revitalize Indigenous American or Abya-Yalan civilization(s) in order to enable a *complementary and reciprocal equilibrium* or what the Andeans call an *ayni* between Western and Indigenous Civilizations on the one hand, and on the other hand to re-embed humanity within the larger biotic, ecological, and cosmic community, an open community understood as a *post-anthropocentric and post-human cosmopolitanism* that literally interrelates all the cosmos, human and more-than-human.

It is impossible for reasons of space to go over the full extent of the efforts along the lines of decolonization and the building of “Living Well” in Bolivia so I will only add that as part of the “Living Well” program Bolivia has radically reshaped its foreign policy. For instance, The Bolivian Ministry of Foreign Affairs has elaborated and globally circulated its remarkably iconoclastic platform document titled *Living Well as a Response to the Global Crisis*, a full-fledged political treatise containing a large discussion of the global ecological crises, an encompassing critique of the anthropocentric excesses of modern Western Civilization, a forceful call to reconstruct Indigenous civilizations worldwide in order to restore biotic and ecological balance, and a detailed program to recover, revitalize, and update Indigenous Andean and Amazonian civilization in South America and especially the Andes in the context of the global era. The Bolivian government has also embraced, further elaborated, supported and sought to implement the “Living Well” program of transnational Indigenous organizations such as the Andean Coordinator of Indigenous Organizations (CAOI).

Bolivia (and to a smaller extent Ecuador) have also been very active sharing their proposals in venues such as the United Nations Working Group on Indigenous Populations, in all events related to the World People's Conference on Climate Change and the Rights of Mother Earth such as the Indigenous Peoples Summit on Climate Change 2009 in Alaska which led to The Anchorage Declaration, in all of these and countless other events and declarations the Bolivian government has been actively endorsing and participating. As a constituent element of the

paradigm of “Living Well” networks of Indigenous and ecological movements worldwide have insistently advanced the Draft of the Universal Declaration of the Rights of Mother Earth⁴⁸⁶ which has found in the Bolivian government and in the president Evo Morales a spokesperson, a *tlatoani* as the Mesoamerican Nahua would articulate it. Today’s Bolivia therefore stands for people of Indigenous descent as much more than just a country: it is a living example that a full-fledged political renaissance of Indigenous American or Abya-Yalan civilization is becoming possible. Evo Morales himself has become an Indigenous voice in the not very Indigenous-friendly world of states and international organizations.

In all of these venues, the paradigm of “Living Well” emerges as the outgrowth of the efforts of many Indigenous, Indigenous-inspired groups, and many of their allies across Abya-Yala and worldwide. To repeat, this paradigm should not be seen as the creation of any single author, whether it be an individual, organization or government, or even of a single generation, it is a trans-generational artifact that is nurtured and shared communally in accordance with Indigenous wisdoms and ways. An illustrative example of this is that one of its most elaborate documents, *Living Well as a Response to the Global Crisis* (published only in Spanish so far), is literally published as authorless and distributed for free in the world wide web; anybody can access it, it deliberately omits copyright and any claims of intellectual property; to the contrary, at the very start, the text is presented as an open source document which can be shared and modified by anybody. The document first opens with the statement of its purpose:

The present work has the objective of gathering the information about the dangerous situation concerning the deterioration of our communities and of the planet as rooted in the incipient crises that are befalling us.⁴⁸⁷

Then the document addresses the reader thus:

This work is yours and ours. It is thought to be a work of collaborative creation. You can do whatever you want with it. You can reproduce it or throw it in the sea. You can read it

⁴⁸⁶ See the Draft of the Universal Declaration of the Rights of Mother Earth at <http://pwccc.wordpress.com/2010/02/07/draft-universal-declaration-of-the-rights-of-mother-earth-2/>.

⁴⁸⁷ Ministerio de Relaciones Exteriores del Estado Plurinacional de Bolivia. 2009, 1-8.

along with a few beers and celebrate that the moon is nightly and beautiful. You can feed it, debate it, critique it. You can correct it, augment it or take stuff away from it. You can summarize or amplify it, illustrate it or leave it just as it stands.

Above all, you can share the ideas that are presented here or those which you add to it: through the Internet, in blogs, or in communal newspapers, read in parties and celebrations. From this point onwards this work is of the wind and can be transported by turtles in a slow manner or by hurricanes at high velocity.

Knowledge only flourishes if it is shared; hence this work seeks to be a tool to generate knowledge, to search for ideas and proposals of analysis, and of struggle in the face of the crises that threaten us, ideas that will give us the opportunity to save ourselves and to save our home, the planet.

Therefore, we await with hope for all the possible contributions to this work so that together we can make this new millennium a millennium of life and not of war, a millennium of the people and not of empire, a millennium of equilibrium and complementarity.⁴⁸⁸

After that the document outlines the crises to which it refers, upon which it elaborates ahead—a diagnosis that this dissertation broadly shares:

We are on the brink of a global ecological and social collapse. We see that the droughts, floods and other natural calamities that are affecting the Andes and many other locations, mainly in the production of foods, in infrastructure and in health, are nothing else than the palpable evidence that the natural, social, and economic systems of the planet are on the brink of a catastrophic change, a Global Crisis for which few societies are prepared. There is a constant increase in the probability that the consequences of this change will be grave and of unprecedented magnitude, especially for the equilibrium of nature and of communities and this will continue unless the world changes its course immediately. If we do not take care of these problems now, the problems will ‘take care’ of us.⁴⁸⁹

The document then offers a full scale diagnosis of this global crisis that is summarized in the confluence of seven crises:

The Global Crisis and world emergency which we are currently experiencing has its origin in various major tendencies that move rapidly and that reinforce each other... These tendencies can be summarized in the following points:

1) *Climate change* which causes natural alterations and disasters such as the phenomena of El Niño and La Niña, droughts, floods, heat waves, tsunamis, hurricanes and tornadoes which are increasingly stronger and more frequent, creating economic and social tragedies with especially grave consequences for the most impoverished nations and peoples. As we are crossing certain critical thresholds ecologically speaking, the pace of changes can accelerate unpredictably, creating abrupt alterations with catastrophic consequences.

2) *The depletion of the natural resources (including the biodiversity)* of the planet which are being reduced drastically as a result of overexploitation by the industrialized nations

⁴⁸⁸ Ministerio de Relaciones Exteriores del Estado Plurinacional de Bolivia. 2009, 1-8.

⁴⁸⁹ Ministerio de Relaciones Exteriores del Estado Plurinacional de Bolivia 2009, 8.

which each year consume 30% more than what the Earth can regenerate, thereby threatening life in the planet as well as the wellbeing of humanity and the survival of our ancestral Indigenous nations and cultures which have always offered alternative models and practices that are in harmony with nature.

3) *The crisis of water.* Urbanization, industrialization and the greater use of energy implies a greater consumption of water and an increase in the extraction of subterranean resources, all of which is lowering the level and availability of this vital liquid in many parts of the world, thereby resulting in the fact that anywhere from 15% to 30% of the extractions of water for irrigation are not sustainable.

4) *The crisis in the production of foodstuffs* due to the impact of climate change and the increased conversion of agricultural products into raw materials for the production of agro-fuels, which is gradually reducing the world's reserve of foodstuffs. Along with the increasing costs of fuels, fertilizers and transportation, this is causing a dramatic increase in the price of foods which has already reached its maximum level in the last 50 years and will probably continue to increase in the next few years.

5) *The end of cheap energy,* first and foremost of petroleum and gas, without our being able to find alternative energies that could substitute fossil fuels in the quantities to which we have grown accustomed, which thereby threatens the long term survival of industrialism in its contemporary magnitude and of "Western Civilization" itself. But this can also mean the salvation of the planet and a great opportunity to change our way of life, and to redesign our production of foods and our forms of settlement, that is, beyond modern urbanization.

6) *The world financial crisis* as provoked by the reduction of economic growth caused by the stagnation of petroleum production ever since 2005. This, together with the impetus of climate change, prompts a deceleration of production and violently alters the prices of energy and minerals. But the expectations that the economic crisis will be overcome and that economic growth will continue will probably be frustrated by the impending stagnation of petroleum extraction... And whether there is a temporary recovery or not, that will not prevent the middle to long run decline of a global economy that is based on non-renewable resources that are running out.

7) *The crisis of time,* wherein the global time of industrial production, of cyberspace and telecommunications brutally clashes against the time of life, causing a tremendous collision of times between the cyclical time of nature and the cosmos, and the linear time of history and of the clock.

The combination of these dangerous tendencies could soon bring about, if they are not reverted, an ecological and social collapse of global proportions that would break apart the most basic economic and operational functioning of global society and would destroy or profoundly damage human life as well as the life of all other living creatures, in addition to the planet itself. Some say that such a collapse is already inevitable. This collapse will affect all of humanity, but particularly the most impoverished countries... which will be the first in being hit and the ones who are hit hardest. This Global Crisis threatens to destroy all life plans and development efforts, not to speak of the effort to build a world where we can all enjoy a life in plenitude. If we do not do something to stop this Global Crisis, we will all end up disappearing, both the wealthy

and the poor, Indigenous or non-Indigenous, those with money and those without it, professionals, nonprofessionals, we will all be gone. Money will not save us.⁴⁹⁰

In response to this Global Crisis, the Indigenous-led Bolivian government, along with its increasingly numerous allies, such as most transnational Indigenous organizations like the transnational Andean Coordination of Indigenous Organizations (CAOI) and more than a few environmentalists have advanced a number of proposals around the paradigm of Living Well. Their proposals are variegated and very complex, and deserve an extended discussion which deserves a separate book, but one them is perhaps rather concise, and that is to share the paradigm of Living Well with the rest of the world as a response to the confluence of the crises discussed above and to project the reshaping of global life in part on the basis of Indigenous and in this cases specifically (though not exclusively) Andean wisdoms, ways, and modes of organization.

It must be noticed also that the amount and quality of material that is being outputted from the Andes and by people involved in the Indigenous Andean debate related to or about the Global Crisis and Living Well is truly impressive. So summarizing the discussions and proposals would be inappropriate. It is best to refer the reader to the extensive bibliography I have compiled and that appears at the end of this work. But at this point, what can be reflected and expanded upon is bits of text that can tie the reader into the sprawling network of alternative horizons projected from Andinia. One such textual entry into the contemporary Andean horizon and its proposals for the reshaping of global life can be articulated through the following prompt:

What we need to propel is a political economy that, taking into consideration the North/South and South/North asymmetries, will defend life in the long run and will spread to everybody the possibility and responsibility to Live Well [Suma Qamaña]...in such a political economy *the world shall share in an equilibrated manner all global and local resources among all nations in harmony with nature and within the limits that nature's health and its resources will allow. Learning from nature and from its functioning we can suggest the following basic principles for the reconstruction of an economy in equilibrium with mother nature: (1) to reinsert humanity within the limits of the Earth's [Pacha-Mama's] carrying capacity, drawing on the Sun [Tayta-Inti] as the principal source of energy; (2) to close all material cycles and not transport them for excessively long distances; (3) to respect the equilibrium among the multiple varieties of species. In simple ways we can live slower in accordance with cyclical time, to enter a*

⁴⁹⁰ Ministerio de Relaciones Exteriores del Estado Plurinacional de Bolivia and Coordinadora Andina de Organizaciones Indígenas 2009, 8-10.

phase of deceleration in order to have time for life, *to procure, restore, and nurture Mother Earth, just as we should nurture plants and fruits...and time to foster personal relations with all the beings of nature...*[in order to build this new global (cosmo-) political economy] *we can proceed from the experience of our aboriginal Indigenous communities from which we can achieve the Life in Plenitude by exchanging what we produce among our lands in different altitudes and among our communities and societies at the national, continental, and global level...*⁴⁹¹

In lieu of a closure, the final section of Part II of this dissertation will offer an opening in the direction of the horizon pointed at by the prompt above. That is, I will try to offer a contribution to these efforts along the lines of the above-cited paragraph to the broader field of Indigenous thought, philosophy, and politics as well as to international/intercivilizational/global theory by elaborating a proposal on how to reshape global life on the basis of Indigenous Andean political organization.

4. In Lieu of Conclusion: A Proposal on how to Reshape Global Life on the basis of Andean Civilizational Organization

Having discussed in some depth the ancient and contemporary modes of Indigenous philosophy, and political thought, organization and practice, I would like to close this part of the dissertation with a proposal on how to transform global life on the basis of Andean wisdoms and ways. Besides discussing the constitutive infrastructure of Andinia and outlining a general model of Indigenous Andean civilizational organization, we have also discussed the emergence of the Indigenous paradigm of Living Well or Life in Plenitude. This paradigm is not only the result of the struggle for the recovery, revalorization, and revitalization of Indigenous civilizations; it is also an alternative to the multiple global crises that we face today. We have discussed some of the proposals that are coming from the Andes and from the perspective of Living Well on how to transform Global Life in order to overcome our many crises. In this last section I would like to add a proposal of how we can plan out a world that is restructured or rather renewed on the basis of a revalorization of Indigenous wisdoms and ways, especially in light of our unprecedented and

⁴⁹¹ Ministerio de Relaciones Exteriores del Estado Plurinacional de Bolivia 2009, 154; emphases added.

contemporary global crises. It is important to point out that this proposal, as many parts of this work, is still a work in progress, and it should be evaluated as one of many possible alternatives, noticing that much research and theorizing is yet to be done. For reasons of space I will offer only a concise and brief outline of this proposal. As a contribution to the emerging paradigm of Living Well, this proposal seeks to adapt to the global level the Andean model of civilizational organization by fusing it with the emerging eco-geography of biodiversity as found for instance in the work of the World Wildlife Fund.⁴⁹² Let us tentatively call this proposal a global model of interzonal bio-eco-socio-symbiosis inspired on the Andean civilizational élan.

- *The bio-eco-cosmopolitical infrastructure of a post-anthropocentric world*

One of the major lessons to be learned from Indigenous civilizations, and not just the Andean manifestations, is that human organization should endeavor to *blend* in with the bio-eco-cosmological conditions that precede, enable, and exceed its existence. Indigenous political theory and philosophy prescribes a literal form of bio-eco-cosmo-politics, literal in the sense that human organization should be built into and incorporate itself into the rest of nature and the cosmos (its cycles, its infrastructures of biodiversity, etc.), and not seek to separate itself from it, or to dominate it, to stand above it, or to declare itself superior to all else. What we learn from Indigenous philosophy and political theory is that if the world is ever to overcome the structural problems that have led it to the succession of crises which culminate with the ecological crisis of anthropocentric civilization, it must rebuild the infrastructure of its civilizational organization on a bio-eco-cosmopolitical infrastructure. A blueprint of this infrastructure is already provided by the historical examples of Indigenous civilizations and by their inspirational and ongoing legacy of resistance and revitalization. All Indigenous models of civilizational organization enact this bio-eco-cosmopolitical infrastructure. Part I of this dissertation, for instance, discussed and modeled the constitutive aspects of civilizational organization inspired on the ongoing Mesoamerican

⁴⁹² See <http://www.worldwildlife.org/home-full.html>.

legacy and offered proposals on how to transform global life on that basis. Part II has done similarly on the basis of the Andean legacy.

From the very start of this Part II it has been explained how the Andean civilizational élan is primarily non/post-anthropocentric and is built with respect to the hyper-diversity of the pacha. In contrast, the current organization of the world is primarily based on anthropocentric foundations and built on the basis of homogenization through colonization, (Euro-Western-centric and Andro-centric) ‘civilization’, and its globalization, all of it without much regard for the bio-ecological conditions that precede, enable, and exceed life. The crux of the problematique to put it in philosophical terms lies in the idea of ‘sovereignty’ or to be precise, the idea of human-centric sovereignty, basically the presumption that humanity and most often only a limited category of humans can determine on the basis of certain speciesist (and often also ethnocentric and gendered) fears and aspirations, and as a consequence of its will the character of its civilizational organization and the destiny of the whole Earth, human and non-human—and even beyond Earth—without much regard to other bio-eco-cosmopolitical forces such as other species, ecological phenomena, geological forces, or astrophysical energies. When consideration of any of these is made it is usually on anthropocentric premises that alienate humanity from all else, thereby often serving to legitimate the everyday reenactment of anthropocentric violences, many of which we barely even notice.

The ecological crisis of our age however has made the message clear: humanity—and *especially* (though not exclusively) the privileged and most powerful portions of it—can no longer act as if it was sovereign, alone, separate, or superior from all else. Often the primary solution offered is that a ‘space’ should be opened within the anthropocentric polity and the broader anthropocentric civilization for the ‘representation’, ‘voice’ and in the most radical cases the ‘participation’ of non-human forces such as the flora, the fauna, the broader meteorological, ecological, and geological forces, and to a certain extent the atmosphere, and the cosmic bodies such as the Sun as phenomena with a certain ‘clout’ in political affairs. One could consider phenomena such as global warming, the hole in the ozone layer, the mass extinction of species

leading to the practically apocalyptic demise in global biodiversity, and the global crisis of the Earth's hydraulic systems as evidence of the fact that the many 'others' of humanity should be recognized as political 'agents', in their own right (many of them extremely influential in fact) and not merely as a function of anthropocentric concerns. Many of these crises are the direct result of our unwillingness to recognize the non-human other(s) as (bio-eco-cosmo-)politically active, as bearing 'agency' or 'subjectivity' or 'spirit' and as being capable of 'reflexivity' and worthy of respect and ethical interaction and communication. But the solution is not merely to presumptuously offer a slot to '(the rest of) nature' (and the 'universe') within the anthropocentric polity. From within an Indigenous cosmoexperience, the polity must be rebuilt so that 'humans' reincorporate and re-embed themselves in/to the wider eco-bio-cosmic community, the post-anthropocentric and post-human cosmopolity, not least because it has always been an illusory impossibility for some such entity as an abstracted 'humanity' to exist (let alone flourish) in an imaginary nothingness outside, separated, or beyond its biotic, environmental, and cosmic conditions of possibility.

A way to start reincorporating or re-blending 'humanity' with/in the rest of the bio-eco-cosmic continuum is to consider biodiversity as a political infrastructure. The Andean example cannot easily be surpassed in this as it has been shown that the hyper-diversity of the Andes basically makes it a microcosm or meso-cosm for the whole Earth. One of the problems we face globally is that civilizational organization (in its philosophical, economic, political and other dimensions) does not in any way correspond to the Earth's infrastructure of biodiversity. Current civilization does not organically nurture itself out of the Earth, in many ways it does not even consider, listen, or regard Earth and the non-human as a political actor worthy of equal respect and tends to see all that is non-human as mere resources at worse or as worthy of a condescending paternalism that stewards at best (although in this regard there are exceptions, resistance, and dissent on the fringes of 'mainstream' civilization). In many ways, the globalization of Western civilization, along with its monotheistic 'Old World' spiritualities, its state-centric modes of political organization, and its growth-driven and ownership-based (whether individual(ist) or

collective(ist)) modes of economy, is to be held responsible for the fact that the way humanity is organized today does not correspond with how the rest of the pacha recreates, revitalizes, or renews itself—in fact it works against her, and to the detriment of all.

The example of Andean civilizational organization shows that humans can indeed organize themselves in accordance with the infrastructure of biodiversity. We know of course that the expansion of Western civilization dealt an *almost* lethal blow to Indigenous civilizations, but fortunately enough knowledges and practices have been accumulated, inherited, or preserved in practice through (often underground) resistance and recently through active revitalization so that we can re-circulate Indigenous wisdoms and ways as blueprints and models for alternative forms of civilizational organization at every level and in every dimension of global life. So let us engage in a thought experiment and a proposal: how could the world be reorganized if we were to use Andean civilization as a blueprint for the nurturing of a global polity embedded and re-incorporated with/in the bio-eco-cosmic continuum?

Fortunately today organizations like the World Wildlife Fund for Nature (WWF) are already working towards the project of rebuilding global life on the basis of a geo-ecology of biodiversity. In fact, the WWF has been pushing the idea that at least in Turtle Island (in Indigenous lore) or North America (in Westernized lingo) should be politically and economically ‘redistricted’ according to a geography of biodiversity. The efforts of such organizations happen to converge quite adequately with those of Indigenous organizations. If we merge contemporary Western discourses on biodiversity with Indigenous political theory and eco-cosmic wisdom such as the Andean variant we can come to a strikingly simple and interesting model of global transformation and renewal on the basis of the Andean model of interzonal symbiosis, communal collaboration, organic aggregation, and rotation and obligation. As mentioned above, this model is referred to here as a global model of interzonal bio-eco-socio-symbiosis inspired on the Andean civilizational elan, or simply, Indigenous interzonal symbiosis writ global.

To start let us remember that the Andean region is basically a micro/meso-cosm of the world in terms of biodiversity. As the Andean Coordination of Indigenous Organizations explains,

The Andes is a megadiverse region...In the mountains, the ecological diversity is accompanied by cultural diversity. The Andean countries are the most megadiverse of the world: we concentrate 25% of the biodiversity of the planet and we form part of the 17 countries with the greatest biodiversity of the world. Within the territory of the Andean Community of Nations we find a concentration of 16.8% of the birds, 10.5% of the amphibians and 10.3% of the mammals out of the world total of each of these species. This megadiversity is possible thanks to the confluence of geographical and climatic factors that favor the existence of a great variety of biomes, ecosystems, and habitats. In the great geomorphological variations of the Andes, we find great proportions and slopes that contrast the profundity of the canyons with the high peaks, which enables the existence of diverse climatic conditions, which range from the warm and humid climate that exists only in the depth of the narrow and deep inter-Andean valleys of the oriental side to the frozen and dry climates of the highland and the great altitudes. These characteristics facilitate the existence of a great biodiversity in the Andes which forms part of our ancestral Indigenous knowledges. The different ecological floors enable a diversified production which assures the subsistence of our peoples.⁴⁹³

The Andean region is a hyperdiverse geo-ecological and cultural area which boasts about 80% of the world's different types of ecosystems.⁴⁹⁴ Only the region known today as Bolivia alone boasts 80% of the world's variety of terrestrial ecosystems.⁴⁹⁵ It is not without justification that many Andean and other authors who speak of the region or specifically about a country such as Bolivia argue that in a world whose overarching challenges are bedeviled by the specter of a bio-ecological collapse the region of the Andes and its accumulated traditions of Indigenous bio-eco-cosmopolitics can serve as the exemplar and laboratory for the forms of human organization to come⁴⁹⁶; that is, the Andes can serve as a blueprint and model for the rest of the world. It is therefore perfectly plausible that if the Andean region contains 80% of the world's terrestrial ecosystems, the Indigenous ways of life that have been built upon such an infrastructure of hyperdiversity, blending in with their bio-eco-cosmopolitical conditions of possibility over the

⁴⁹³ CAO, "Reciprocidad para el Buen Vivir", 5.

⁴⁹⁴ Yampara 2005, 14.

⁴⁹⁵ Medina 2006, 27.

⁴⁹⁶ This is precisely what the current Indigenous-led government is promoting at home and abroad: to reshape Bolivia into a model that would serve as an example for an alternative to the globalization of the current (anthropo/Euro/andro-centric) civilization that has been colonizing and globalizing throughout the world for centuries and which has led us to our current global crises, especially the ecological crisis.

course of millennia, can indeed serve as a blueprint for an alternative model for the rest of the Earth.

So let us then bring together two particularly relevant models. On the one hand, let us remember the classical model of Andean civilizational organization that was assembled above. On the other hand let us bring in the bio-eco-geography of the world as modeled by the World Wildlife Fund for Nature or simply World Wildlife Fund (WWF). The latter needs a brief description.

- *The Bio-Eco-Geography of the World Wildlife Fund (WWF).*

The WWF's bio-eco-geography is an excellent example of what could be a post-anthropocentric form of geography and indeed of geopolitics. It maps the world in two forms or levels of bio-eco-geographical aggregation; at a broader scale we find the 'ecoregions' of the world each of which contains a number of smaller 'biomes'. The WWF's description of what an 'ecoregion' is makes it plain that a post-anthropocentric bio-eco-geography would inevitably also become *geo-political*. As the WWF puts it, "*Biodiversity ignores national and other political boundaries, so a more relevant conservation planning unit is required—WWF addresses this need with ecoregions.*"⁴⁹⁷ To extend the WWF's contention a bit more, the statement entails that the current organization of the world in terms of states, boundaries, and other sub- and supra-state organizational forms are anthropocentric and therefore dangerously disregard the much more encompassing and ultimately more important organization of Earth and the biosphere in terms of a bio-eco-geography that precedes, enables, and exceeds the very possibility of human existence and of 'human civilization'. On the basis of this rather basic and yet crucial reflection, it has been repeatedly argued here that a sustainable political (and economic) geography—indeed the only possible ways of life that can be sustained in the long term—must not seek to *bend* the rest of nature to human will but must instead endeavor to *blend* (if not dissolve) 'humanity' with/in the more encompassing bio-eco-geography of Earth (and indeed the broader forces and cycles of the

⁴⁹⁷ WWF "Ecoregions," <http://www.worldwildlife.org/science/ecoregions/item1847.html>, extracted on 4/13/12 (emphases added).

cosmos). And as examples of such post-anthropocentric geographies/geopolitics, we have both the bio-eco-geography of the WWF and that of the Indigenous Andean Civilizations, the two of which are admirably convergent. So to put it in simple terms, the question is one of *bending versus blending*, that is, anthropocentric infrastructures endeavor to *bend* the rest of nature (and the cosmos) to their will while non/post-anthropocentric infrastructures endeavor to *blend* in with the broader non/post-human bio-eco-cosmopolitical community. That is perhaps the basic starting quest(ion) of both an Indigenous political philosophy and theory and of a post-anthropocentric political wisdom and practice.

So what then is an *ecoregion* according to the WWF? The WWF defines it thus:

An ecoregion is defined as a large area of land or water that contains a geographically distinct assemblage of natural *communities* that

- (a) *share* a large majority of their species and ecological dynamics;
- (b) *share* similar environmental conditions, and;
- (c) *interact* ecologically in ways that are critical for their long-term persistence.

The Conservation Science Program has identified 825 terrestrial ecoregions across the globe, and a set of 426 freshwater ecoregions has just been completed. WWF has recently launched an analogous global framework of 229 coast and shelf marine ecoregions in collaboration with The Nature Conservancy.⁴⁹⁸

There are several points to emphasize from the definition of ecoregion(s) above in terms of a post-anthropocentric and Indigenous political theory. I have emphasized the terms which illustrate this. First, ecoregions involve *communities*, that is, they are made up of mutually constitutive relations among co-dependent participants. These communities *share* their dynamics and conditions, and it is this sharing among communities which enables them to subsist and flourish. Herein lays an ethico-moral-political infrastructure of (post-human) solidarity and complementarity—and it should remind us of the ayllu. Finally, these communities *interact* “in ways that are critical for their long-term persistence” which entails that they partake of agency, reflexivity, and strategic interdependence, so that the dynamics of mutually constitutive reciprocity and other forms of interaction, which are easily recognizable as ‘the stuff’ of politics, bring forth the fact and challenge of their recreative co-dependence and their shared destinies.

⁴⁹⁸ WWF “Ecoregions,” <http://www.worldwildlife.org/science/ecoregions/item1847.html>, extracted on 4/13/12 (emphases added).

Needless to say, this language and especially from an Indigenous interpretation compares very meaningfully with what has been discussed extensively as an Indigenous experience of the bio-eco-cosmopolity as a community of non-anthropocentric and post-human communities.

The one difference between the eco-biotic worldview of the WWF and the Indigenous cosmoexperience (and it is a significant one) is perhaps that Indigenous wisdom emphatically locates humans within and as constitutive part of and not separate from the bio-eco-geography of biodiversity; in short, from an Indigenous viewpoint it is not only meaningless to separate ‘human’ (e.g., political or economic) geography from the more encompassing bio-eco-geography because humanity is neither separate from nor superior from the rest of the pacha; humanity is an integral part of biodiversity and its diverse manifestations are just another embodied effect of the pacha. To organically nurture humanity in conviviality with the rest of the pacha (of which it is just another manifestation) is the basic quest(ion) of Indigenous philosophy and political theory. As we will see below the WWF foundation does hint at this in its description of a biome, but perhaps not as much as would be emphasized from within an Indigenous cosmoexperience.

So let us return to the geography of the WWF. The smaller level of bio-eco-geographical aggregation is the *biome*. Many biomes are contained within each ecoregion. As described by the WWF:

Biomes are the various regions of our planet that can best be distinguished by their climate, fauna and flora. There are different ways of classifying biomes but the common elements are climate, habitat, animal and plant adaptation, biodiversity and human activity.⁴⁹⁹ It is important to know *the inter-relationship between each of these elements in a biome. A change in one affects the other directly or indirectly*. Scientists argue on the exact number, or different types of biomes in existence but they are commonly classified as grasslands, forests, deserts, aquatic and tundra. ...Biomes (bioclimatic zones) are appropriate divisions by which to organize the natural world, because the organisms that live in each of them possess *common constellations of adaptations* to them, in particular to the climate of each of the zones and to the characteristic vegetation types that develop in them. ... *All the elements of a biome*

⁴⁹⁹ It is interesting to notice here that the WWF feels compelled to mention both “biodiversity” on the one hand and “human activity” on the other. From within an Indigenous cosmoexperience, there is only diversity plain and simple, the diversity of the pacha of which “humanity” and its different manifestations are but another embodiment of diversity. There is no need to speak of the “bio” and the “human,” or to add the “human” to the “bio” as there is only pacha and its diverse manifestations.

*exist in some meaningful relationship with each other, and change in one... habitat, leads to a change in the biome.*⁵⁰⁰

Again, here we notice an underlying bio-eco-political infrastructure in the realization that a biome is the communal effect of an interrelationship among its members (or constitutive forces) who share common constellations of adaptations, and that changes in one affect others as well as the rest of the biomes. Furthermore and most importantly, and adding here an Indigenous articulation of biocommunal membership or citizenship, all members of a biome *exists in some meaningful relationship* with each other such that their destinies are co-dependent. Again, humans must be reincorporated into this broader bio-eco-polity as, notwithstanding claims to human exceptionalism, humans are biomic ‘citizens’ like all others who subsist and flourish *because* of their communal relations with other biomic co-citizens within broader biomic zones or areas, ecoregional communities, and inter-ecoregional communities among different ecoregions.

This post-anthropocentric and post-human conception of citizenship is precisely what is prescribed by the paradigm of Suma Qamaña, as Huanacuni Mamani emphasizes, “Living Well means comprehending that the deterioration of one species entails the deterioration of the whole.”⁵⁰¹ And here in this very reflection we find the main point of convergence between the bio-eco-geography synthesized in the worldview of the WWF and other similar worldviews on the one hand, and the Indigenous Andean cosmoexperience as materialized in its forms of civilizational organization. As noted above, Andeans would explicitly emphasize that humanity is not some ‘being’ separate from the rest of ‘biodiversity,’ instead it is an integral and equal co-participant withi/in the bio-eco-cosmopolity in which all members possess vitality and what Westerners would call ‘subjectivity’. So humanity from an Indigenous perspective needs no separate geography; rather, human geography is an organic subset of the broader bio-eco-geography (and indeed of astronomy as well), and its organizational forms must be organically cultivated or

⁵⁰⁰ WWF “Major Biomes of the World,” http://wwf.panda.org/about_our_earth/teacher_resources/webfieldtrips/major_biomes/, extracted on 4/13/12. (emphases added)

⁵⁰¹ Huanacuni Mamani 2010, not paginated.

nurtured as fruits or effects of the pacha wherein they must co-participate existing in every way so as to fulfill their unique (but not superior) responsibilities in the continuous revitalization of the wider pacha.

- *Globalizing the Andes: Bio-Eco-Cosmopolitics and Interzonal Symbiosis*

With these considerations in mind let us briefly outline the proposal of a global model of interzonal symbiosis by merging the eco-geography of biodiversity (as suggested by the WWF) with the blueprint of Andinia and its constitutive infrastructures and civilizational models as discussed and set forth throughout this work. For practical purposes we can start building the model upon a set of correspondences. Looking at the bio-eco-geography of biomic zones, ecoregional communities, and inter-ecoregional relations from within an Indigenous Andean cosmoexperience we could propose the following correspondences that would easily cohere as indeed Andinia has been actively nurtured throughout the ages to flourish organically and harmoniously out of the hyperdiversity of the Andean region:

- (1) The Andean organizational form of the Ayllu can correspond and be organically nurtured from within the bio-eco-geographical aggregation of the biome or the bioclimatic zone.
- (2) The Andean organizational form of the Marka can correspond and be organically nurtured from within the bio-eco-geographical aggregation of the ecoregion or ecoregional community.
- (3) The Andean organizational form of the Suyu can correspond and be organically nurtured from within the bio-eco-geographical map of inter-ecoregional relations, that is, the community of ecoregional communities.
- (4) This community of ecoregional communities can correspond to broader latitudinal, longitudinal, and transversal zonations that would make up a geography of interlinked Suyus or a Pluri-Suyu (on the blueprint of the Tetra-Suyu).

It is an extensively documented fact that has been discussed in some detail in this work that Indigenous forms of political organization are organically nurtured from/upon a bio-eco-cosmopolitical infrastructure and that they are integral to and embedded within the more

encompassing pacha. It is well documented wisdom that the Andean forms of organization are without a doubt grown or cultivated to blend in and nurture the more encompassing geo-bio-eco-cosmic vitality wherein human organization corresponds directly to the hyperdiversity of the region, as illustrated for instance in the geo-bio-ecological worldview of the WWF. In fact, it is literally the case that Ayllus, Markas, and Suyus have historically corresponded in one way or another to bio-eco-geographies such as that of the biomes, ecoregions and inter-ecoregional networks—albeit in other names known in Western terms as ‘ecological floors’ or ‘ecological archipelagos’. In terms of specific details the correspondence might not be absolute, but qualitatively speaking there is no doubt that the sort of (bio-eco-)geopolitics that Indigenous civilizations, and in this particular case Andean civilization, sought to foster or nurture was specifically the type of geopolitics that would never ignore biodiversity and that would indeed be nurtured upon it. From within and Indigenous cosmoexperience, human organization and planning must be cultivated from the underlying bio-eco-cosmopolitical conditions that precede, enable, and exceed it, and that is exactly the lesson that has been passed on to us in the form of accumulated knowledge and practices by people of Indigenous and specifically Abya-Yalan descent.

Today however we encounter a world whose political and broader civilizational structure is (dis)organized in such a manner that hardly corresponds in any meaningful way with the infrastructure of bio-eco-diversity and much less so with some cosmo-political (in the sense of astronomical or astro-political) criteria. Human organization is so anthropocentric that anybody can see clearly that biodiversity has not been a constitutive criterion for modern (or even traditional ‘Old World’) social, economic, or political theory or practice (except as a ‘resource’ to exploit from a strategic and economic perspective and for the primary purposes of anthropocentric and often ethnocentric reproduction and satisfaction). We re-cite here that the WWF contends that “Biodiversity ignores national and other political boundaries...”⁵⁰² but it must be noted as well

⁵⁰² WWF “Ecoregions,” <http://www.worldwildlife.org/science/ecoregions/item1847.html>, extracted on 4/13/12.

that *the disregard is mutual*: humanity by and large ignores and disregards the eco-geographies of biodiversity also. Clearly the responsibility for this dangerous disregard is not to be placed on non-human biodiversity, but rather on human organization, or rather the expansion or ‘globalization’ of a particular form of anthropocentric and specifically a Western-Euro-Andro-centric variant of civilization that literally ‘conquered and colonized the Earth’, and not just the majority of humanity over the last five centuries or so. And when we speak of how anthropocentric civilization conquered the Earth we must insist that the human component that was ‘conquered’ and subjected to ethnocide and genocide, although a dramatically significant component, was not the only one: there is (or was) the rest of the non-human Earth that has also been conquered and subjected to biocide and ecocide. The consequence is, of course, a world marked by a history of ongoing social-and-ecological injustice(s) yet to be redressed and on top of that the global ecological crisis of anthropocentric civilization coupled with a number of other crises such as that which corresponds to the unprecedented inequality among humans—resulting significantly from the ongoing legacy of coloniality.

V. Spike Peterson in one of the articles which to my judgment contains one of the most lucid reflections to be found in Western international relations/global theory titled “A Long View of Globalization and Crisis”,⁵⁰³ articulates the reflection that a major problem when facing any crisis and especially the unprecedented confluence of global crises of our age is that even when we have come to recognize that we face a crisis, and even when we know the conditions and causes (structural and historical) that have made the crisis possible, and even when we might know ways of how to overcome it—even when we have reflected and attained ‘consciousness’ of all of this and more we are nevertheless indisposed to make the necessary changes because we become emotionally, psychologically, culturally invested in the old ways, the old structures, the old institutions, so much so that our sense of sanity and normality is predisposed by the continuation of the prevailing order—or disorder. This reluctance becomes a suicidal factor in that we become

⁵⁰³ Peterson 2010.

invested in practices, structures, and institutions that are the very condition and cause of the crisis that may ultimately swallow us whole, yet the terrorizing sense of a crumbling normality lures us into repetitively defaulting into a smooth indifference or an automated mode that perseveres in the old ways notwithstanding the announcement of impending catastrophe and refuses to fundamentally change and to radically transform the dominant foundations even in the face of tragic collapse; in the effort to sustain a habitual sanity and normalcy this suicidal reluctance ties itself to the very structures and practices which created the crisis in the first place.

This is precisely the sort of (in)disposition that is gradually swallowing us up today: we are invested in the infrastructures of anthropocentric (as well as Euro- and Andro-centric) civilization, we are reluctant to deconstruct them or to construct alternatives even when we know that these very infrastructures are the conditions that enable and often bring about and accentuate the crisis. In order to consider alternatives or to bring them about we must renounce the idea that what has come to be experienced as normal and commonsensical is actually good or just or viable—especially because by this point in the socio-ecological crisis of anthropocentric civilization we should have been already convinced that what we experience as sane and normal is actually insane unless we are suicidal; and, yes, we are gradually aware of this and still we refuse to change. The world has slowly but gradually come to the realization that we are on a path that is “not sustainable,” that we are on our way to catastrophe. Most of us are aware of it,⁵⁰⁴ a good

⁵⁰⁴ There is widespread agreement worldwide on the fact of an unprecedented global crisis that is directly tied to the development and expansion of modern and especially industrial civilization, a crisis which from an Indigenous viewpoint is similarly the effect of a more encompassing and historically profound globalization of a particularly anthropo/andro/euro-centric form of civilization. In any case, just about everybody is more or less aware of this global crisis so I will not dwell on discussions concerning it. It suffices as a reminder to point out that just recently, even the mainstream Western online source *Yahoo! News* which is not known for publishing many news of academic relevance at least on its front pages actually decided to report the following. This serves as just an interesting illustration that even in the most mainstream locations of Western hegemonic consciousness there is awareness of what is going on in this crucial epoch of unprecedented global crisis and impending ecological collapse:

“The Next Great Depression?” MIT researchers predict ‘global economic collapse’ by 2030. A new study from researchers at Jay W. Forrester's institute at MIT says that the world could suffer from “global economic collapse” and “precipitous population decline” if people continue to consume the world's resources at the current pace. *Smithsonian*

number of us are aware of the causes and enabling conditions, and still others have good ideas about the alternatives, but stuck as we are in our sedimented normality we are reluctant to imagine—let alone bring about—the truly radical alternatives to the hegemonic mode of human (dis)organization, the alternatives that are needed if we are to overcome the crisis of anthropocentric civilization. We cannot fathom that as ‘humans’—that insist in thus de-fining our ‘selves’ and thereby de-limiting our possibilities—we cannot fathom that we could renounce our vested commitment to the very structures and practices that might be the cause of our demise such as the anthropocentric structure of states which partitions the Earth among powers as a pie to be divided and consumed (and sometimes conserved if only for anthropocentric reasons), or the anthropocentric growth-obsessed and ownership-based economy that commodifies Earth, all life, and even the cosmos.⁵⁰⁵ I will not engage here in a macro-psychoanalytic critique of our vested commitments to bankrupt (or rather Earth-rupt) forms of ‘human’ organization, nor will I dwell too much on the causes of the global crisis (which I actually do in other works) or the structures that enable it for all that has been done and repeatedly so in the West and beyond for a few decades now and peoples of Indigenous heritage have insisted and been ignored in this regard for centuries now—at the world’s peril.

Magazine writes that Australian physicist Graham Turner says “the world is on track for disaster” and that current evidence coincides with a famous, and in some quarters, infamous, academic report from 1972 entitled, “The Limits to Growth.”...Produced for a group called The Club of Rome, the study’s researchers created a computing model to forecast different scenarios based on the current models of population growth and global resource consumption. The study also took into account different levels of agricultural productivity, birth control and environmental protection efforts. Twelve million copies of the report were produced and distributed in 37 different languages...Most of the computer scenarios found population and economic growth continuing at a steady rate until about 2030. But without “drastic measures for environmental protection,” the scenarios predict the likelihood of a population and economic crash...Turner says that perhaps the most startling find from the study is that the results of the computer scenarios were nearly identical to those predicted in similar computer scenarios used as the basis for “The Limits to Growth.”...”There is a very clear warning bell being rung here,” Turner said. “We are not on a sustainable trajectory”.
<http://news.yahoo.com/blogs/sideshow/next-great-depression-mit-researchers-predict-global-economic-190352944.html> (extracted 4/4/2012)..

⁵⁰⁵ Consider ideas and attempts such as disposing of ‘trash’ in ‘outer space’, planting flags on the moon and scrambling to claim other planets and their ‘resources’, most frequently those of Mars.

It is clear what we are up against—a decadent version of our ‘selves’ institutionalized in a fundamentally violent and unrealistically de-natured, alienated, and abstracted form of civilization—and it is time to think and carry out alternatives beyond the prevalent mode of human organization, and this is precisely what I have been setting forth in this work and I am not by any means alone in this: what is to be done is to set forth and bring about *alternatives*, viable alternatives proceeding from the decolonization of Earth and the recovery, revalorization, revitalization, updating and innovating of Indigenous modes of civilizational organization. Of course, in light of our vested commitments to a bankrupt (or rather Earth-rupt) civilization we may find any of these alternatives outmoded, outrageous or simply impossible, but that (in)disposition is precisely the effect of our vested attachment to a way of life that simply has no future. We can stick to the ‘normal’ and face catastrophe or adapt to it, or we can renounce our contemporary ‘sanity’ and ‘rationality’ which is rapidly revealing itself as insane and irrational and instead embrace the fact that we need to explore a combination of an older sanity and wisdom with a newer more imaginative creativity. I have committed to the latter and my work may be interpreted as outmoded or outrageous but I am by no means alone in the exploration of a new (and yet also ancient) (in)sanity. This work and this effort is only one among a flourishing many being outputted by the world’s ecologists, many academics, a good number of gender theorists, the majority of decolonial thinkers and activists, and just about every Indigenous activist, intellectual, and organization across the world and now even two nation-states. The majority of these have embraced the thought that reshaping the world in accordance with a revitalization and updating of Indigenous wisdoms and ways is actually a good idea. As we gradually decolonize the world and our lives, we come to find that Indigenous wisdoms and ways make sense, that they might sound strange from within the hegemonic (neo)colonial imaginary, but that so many ideas coming from Indigenous perspectives that were once ridiculed and (mis)judged as outmoded or silly within a culture bedeviled by the colonality of power, have now revealed themselves to make better sense of the world and to be the basis of often more harmonious ways of life. From within a traditional and critical Indigenous cosmoexperience the way the world is today looks and feels like an

aberration, and all the crises that we face, especially the ecological crisis of anthropocentric civilization is no surprise to anybody familiar with the Indigenous experience of the pacha or cosmos. So on the basis of Andean knowledges, practices, and forms of organization I will continue outlining here a simple and concise proposal on how to reshape global life in accordance with Indigenous wisdoms and ways.

In terms of traditional political science, what the world could benefit from is a form of bio-eco-geographical ‘redistricting’ followed by the restructuring and enhancing of the system of international/global cooperation and governance inspired on Andean civilizational organization. First, the current anthropocentric geopolitical organization must be supplemented (not necessarily substituted, at least in the short run) with a geopolitical organization and with institutions ‘organically’ nurtured on the basis of a combination of a geography of biodiversity (like that of the WWF) and an Andean bio-eco-cosmo-geography. The current borders between ‘entities/units’ of human organization have no coherence or even relation with and practice no responsibility with regard to the underlying geography of biodiversity that enables their very existence, plus they suffer (and make others suffer) from the fact that they are based on principles of mutual exclusion as opposed to reciprocal complementarity. As both the geography of biodiversity and the eco-geography of Andean organization prescribe, the relevant lines or ‘boundaries’ of differentiation should be those between biomes, eco-regions, and communities of ecoregions; furthermore, the boundaries should not mark a relation of (mutual-)exclusion but one of mutual, reciprocal, equilibrated, and harmonious complementarity that revitalizes—indeed, a pacha-qama(q) or pacha-qama(ña). This is based on the Indigenous notion that it is not humans but the pacha (including the Earth) who should determine the infrastructure of organization: it is the pacha—the encounter of complementary forces—that energizes and vitalizes. For instance, the dwellers of different biomic zones and ecoregions cannot claim to be ‘sovereign’ or ‘proprietors/owners’ of the parcel of nature in which they dwell as they exist only as biospheric epiphenomena, transitory manifestations of the pacha and its vitality.

This means also that the differentiations among bioclimatic zones and ecoregions do not legitimately support the claim that borders can entail mutual exclusion. To the contrary, differences should complement and (re)vitalize each other, not exclude each other. As it happens with the rest of nature, those human and non-human forces of the pacha have a responsibility to reciprocally complement each other. Just as the dwellers of different ayllus in different bioclimatic zones have the responsibility to have relations of ayni with the rest of nature and among each other, and are expected to share the offspring-gifts (so-called ‘products’) of the pacha via a network of pirwas, so it should also be the case among sub-national units in the community of nations. Just as dwellers of different markas have the responsibility to hold ties of reciprocal complementarity as in the minka and the mita with other markas, for instance, through a networked-system of tampus, so it should be the case among nations in the community of nations. And just as dwellers of different suyus have the reciprocity to share among each other (e.g., through a networked-system of qollqas) the product of the ‘parcel’ of nature which they are responsible to care for and nurture with a view for the health and equilibrium of the whole pacha (including other humans), the dwellers of different continents should also be responsible for caring for the part of pacha that cares for them and for equitably sharing her fruits in a global network of complementary and reciprocal interzonal cooperation with a view towards cosmopolitical equilibrium in the non/post-anthropocentric sense.

Overall, two main obstacles for this as well as two main causes of the crisis of anthropocentric civilization are two of its constitutive principles: property and sovereignty—both traceable to the problem of ownership and the alienation of ‘Man’ from and then against the rest of so-called ‘Nature’. Both property and sovereignty are built upon an anthropocentric separation of ‘humanity’ from the rest of the pacha that places humanity as above all else and sweeps under the pavement the fact that the human form of life is at every moment and in every instance just a biospheric epiphenomenon which is itself an effect, a manifestation of the cyclical vitality of pacha. The ‘deeper’ ecologists as well as Indigenous cultures know this, and Indigenous civilizations have lived by it for millennia (way before others noted the ‘lessons’ of over-

industrialization and the ‘growth’ obsession); the Indigenous have—as Medina (in the epigraph of this Part II) has put it—built civilizations with/in the biospheric continuum and not in separation from or hierarchy in relation to the rest of the pacha. Property and sovereignty which are respectively the bases of the economic and political infrastructure of anthropocentric civilization are both the everyday reenactment of a violence, the atrocious attempt at a rupture from and separation of the pacha by enacting the human as sovereign entity. This mundane violence constantly reproduces the structural causes and conditions of the global ecological crisis. This violence is simply the violence of anthropocentrism, the ignorance, reluctance, or simple cynicism that insists on creating the abstraction of a human that stands separate and above the rest of the pacha. This is the violence that *ignores* (in the terms of the WWF) the eco-biotic conditions of its own possibility. This is the violence that allows so-called ‘individuals’ and ‘states’ and other such human ‘entities’, whether atomized or in aggregated fashion to claim ownership over the pacha and divide it between the most competitive or powerful among them as its overlords whether in the form of property or states (or estates or whatever other form). As it is made clear through Josef Estermann’s rendition of the Abya-Yalan or Indigenous American (resi)stance to the violences and pretensions of ownership,

The human is not the owner, but rather the caretaker, nurturer [*arariwa*] and enabler of life. Therefore, also the “selling” [or commodification] of the sustenance of life (water, territory, gas, minerals, biodiversity, etc.) is a declaration of war for aboriginal or Indigenous populations. It cannot be allowed that a handful of “overlords” appropriates the fountain of life, Pacha-Mama, which has sacred character for the Andeans. The economy should be “ecosophy,” that is: wisdom in the conducting of the common home, the home of all, wisdom for the fostering of...life in plenitude or the living well (*allin/sumaq kawsay* or *suma qamaña*) of all flora and fauna, including humans.⁵⁰⁶

The violence of property and of sovereignty which are down to their simplest terms one and the same—(anthropocentric) ownership, the dominion over Earth—is not only the source of ecological disequilibrium and of the apocalyptic reduction of biodiversity, but it is the source of disequilibrium among humans.

⁵⁰⁶ Estermann 2008, 161.

Andean civilizational organization is based on the simple recognition that no human or aggregation of humans can ultimately be ‘sovereign’ over any-body (‘human’ or ‘other’)—not even its ‘self’ (a manufactured metaphysical abstraction)—and therefore nobody can ‘own’ or ‘claim’ the pacha (let alone sell her or profit from her, or unilaterally legislate over her), nor can humans separate themselves from or stand above the rest of pacha. Human existence can only emerge as the cyclical manifestation of effects that are constituted and reconstituted on a continuous basis through the revitalization of pacha and its enabling of the biospheric conditions that propitiate the epiphenomenon called ‘life’. Humans, as effects or moments of the pacha, have a responsibility like any other member of the bio-eco-cosmopolitical community to nurture the recreation and vitality of pacha, which entails also that they have a responsibility to each other as complementary forces in the cycles of revitalization. In the Indigenous Andes competition and cooperation must therefore equilibrate each other, and this is what they refer to as complementary reciprocal emulation in the infrastructure of the taypi which is rehearsed by the different forms of emulative encounters (including also ritualized competition and conflict) known as the tinku, and the reciprocal complementarity of practices like the ayni, the minka, and a great many others of the sort.

The world as it is organized today is completely imbalanced in favor of competition and conflict and against collaboration and cooperation—a look at any pyramid of global wealth distribution (and they are increasingly steep pyramids) or at the budgetary allotments of any government for cooperation (especially in comparison to ‘defense’ and ‘security’ or rather military and policing affairs, i.e., organized violence) will make it unquestionably clear. This is in significant measure enabled and propitiated by the anthropocentric aberrations known as ‘property’ and ‘sovereignty’. Humans (at least the majority of them, and most among the ‘powerful’ and ‘competitive’) under the coloniality of anthropocentric power believe themselves to have a right and a priority of ‘self’ over human and non-human others, and so do collectivities in that they believe in their so-called ‘in-group’ to have a legitimate right over ‘their’ territory and precedence over (non-human and human) others and their concerns. Clearly capitalism as the

primary 'economic' mode and realism as the still dominant political 'mode' are the most exemplary forms of this coloniality of anthropocentric power, but as they extend to bio-ecopolitics they reveal themselves as the effects of an underlying anthropocentrism.

Among Andeans no individual or group of humans can treat the 'parcel' of the pacha where they dwell as if it was their own, they must recognize non-human personhood, reciprocate and relate bio-eco-cosmopolitically according to non-anthropocentric ways and ethics. Among each other humans are responsible for sharing through as system of cooperation (e.g., the network of *pirwas*, *tampus*, and *qollqas*) the fruits of the pacha that they have nurtured along with other members of the bio-eco-cosmic community (i.e., the fruits of the pacha are nurtured only through the collaboration among *runa*, *sallqa*, and *waka*, and countless cosmo-biospheric forces). On the basis of this understanding, all humans have an obligation to share with each other the fruits of human and nonhuman collaboration⁵⁰⁷ that they have contributed to nurture because nobody can ultimately claim to own the 'land' on which they dwell—not least because they are extensions of the land and will be swallowed by her, they are blood cells in the macro-organism called *pacha(mama)* outside of which they would disintegrate. For Andeans, these reflections are valid and current among individuals, as among communities, and among broader communities of interrelated communities.

To cut to the point, if the structural conditions that have led to the crisis of anthropocentric civilization are to be overcome, the global system of governance has to be reformed (or rather radically transformed and renewed) so as to renounce the violent myth of anthropocentrism and all the structures and practices that are built and legitimated upon it, including the two crucial principles of property and sovereignty. This will allow for the consideration of alternative forms of organization such as the creation of a networked-system of global cooperation based on the models of the *pirwa-tampu-qollqa*, the *ayni*, the *minka*, the *mita*, and the system of rotation and obligation that implements the constitutive values of Indigenous

⁵⁰⁷ And in fact the human contribution to any process of nurturing the fruits of nature is comparably minimal to that of others.

Abya-Yalan civilization(s) at a global level. But for the design of such a system to be possible the non/post anthropocentric bio-eco-geopolitics of biomes and ecoregions and of Indigenous civilizations have to be fully considered and brought to materialization in practices and institutions. Humanity can no longer pretend to live as if it were not an integral part of the eco-biotic and cosmic continuum.

In the short run the current geographies of power may be temporarily maintained while we transit into a way of life that blends us back into the bio-eco-cosmopolitical community. An instant, ‘shock doctrine’ approach to transitioning would certainly destabilize our sense of sanity and normalcy, but it must nevertheless be recognized that our investment in this sense of ‘sanity’ and ‘normalcy’ is a direct contributor to the aggravation of the crisis and perhaps among the worst of our problems. We are too invested in a bankrupt (or rather Earth-rupt) sanity and normalcy even though their logic is bio-eco-cosmo-logically insane. If we want the next cycles of humans to live out a decent and viable future or to live at all the old geographies and institutions must gradually be supplemented and eventually set aside by a geopolitics that corresponds to the fact of humanity’s existence within the large bio-eco-cosmopolitical continuum.

I propose that the correspondences between (a) ayllu and bioclimatic zone, (b) marka and ecoregion, and (c) suyu and continental communities of ecoregions, and their overall (d) network of interlinked suyus become operational in the middle to long run. This proposal makes sense, not least because the broader system of interzonal symbiosis once operated in full during centuries and in ecologically and socially harmonious ways throughout the Andes, and it is well known that the Tawa-Inti-Suyu was ecologically balanced and that it knew no hunger among any of its populace. Now, of course, its shortcomings should be addressed, one of which is that the system of global redistribution, collaboration and cooperation should operate in strict accordance with the system of rotation and obligation (*cargos*) *at every level*, from that of individuals/couples and families, through communities of different levels of aggregations, to that among all regions of the world.

Now the question is how to plan ahead for the transition from an anthropocentric civilization to a post-anthropocentric mode of global organization such as the one proposed here

(recognizing that there are many other alternatives of course). Let us think of three stages of planning: short, medium, and long term.

- (a) In the short run the geopolitical organization of anthropocentric civilization and Eurocentric modernity according to the logic of anthropocentric property (mostly capitalist) and sovereignty (mostly state-centric) can operate in tandem with the implementation of a much more expansive system of redistribution, cooperation and collaboration based on the Andean organizational model. For instance, this could be a cooperative system based on non/post-anthropocentric values that would gradually implement a network of *pirwas-tampu-qollqas* supplemented by a multilevel system of collaboration operating according to the logic of *ayni-minka-mita*, and managed politically according to a multilevel *thakhi* of rotation and obligation or *cargos* (*muyta*). This system of multilevel redistribution, cooperation, and collaboration implemented especially but not exclusively at the level of global governance would create a concerted force among actors at all levels that would revitalize the *pacha* by enabling a *taypi* or *chika* which can complement, balance out and therefore equilibrate the excesses of ego-centric capitalist competition based on the anthropocentric principle of property and of the state-centric realist paradigm based on the similarly anthropocentric principle of sovereignty, both of which still make up the crumbling foundations of our global (dis)order—and this premise is hardly weakened by the construction of liberal (and to a smaller degree welfare) institutionalisms at levels above and below the system of states. In this first stage the crucial part is that the new system can start operating on the basis of the already existing anthropocentric political geography and civilizational organization. In this first stage, which is a first step in a transitional process,
 - a. the organizational level, structure and dynamics of the *Ayllu* would be temporarily attached to the units of organization corresponding to the sub-State level (such as municipalities and states within nation-States);

- b. the organizational level, structure and dynamics of the Marka would be temporarily attached to the level of the States,
 - c. the organizational level, structure and dynamics of the Suyu would be temporarily attached to the level of regional or continental organizations (such as Mercosur, the EU, the NAFTA region, the African Union, etc.), and
 - d. the global system of cooperation would operate according to the structure and dynamics of the tetra-polity as have been modeled beforehand in this work, although there might be more than four suyus or continental organizations (the logic of production and redistribution, of collaboration, and of rotation and obligation would not vary with more suyus).
- (b) In the second stage which should start being implemented early, even in tandem with the first stage (although it would not be operable until after a few decades), would entail the multi-level institutionalization of an economic and political geography that is post-anthropocentric in that it must be built on the infrastructure of diversity as mapped out above in terms of bio-eco-geography and Indigenous interzonal symbiosis (i.e., the correspondence between the organic Andean model of organization and the eco-bio-geography exemplified through our discussion of the work of the WWF). This could for instance give birth to the creation of a new multilevel ‘districting’ of the world in which
- a. biomes or bioclimatic zones correspond with what could be called the new ‘Organic Ayllus’ (to differentiate them from the first stage where ayllu functions are merely attached to already existing political structures);
 - b. eco-regions would correspond to new ‘Organic Markas’; and
 - c. ‘Organic Suyus’ would be continental-wide communities of eco-regions or collections of organic markas,
 - d. finally these continental wide communities or organic suyus would be tied to each other into a network, an ‘Organic Cosmo-Poly-Suyu’ in which organic suyus relate to each other on reciprocal, complementary and equilibrated production and

redistribution, collaboration, and rotation and obligation just like any other level of the macro-organic bio-eco-cosmo-polity would.

The crucial aspect of this second stage is that the old anthropocentric economic and political geography would coexist with the geography of the new 'organic' bio-eco-cosmopolitics. The purpose is to ensure a smooth transition from the former to the latter.

- (c) The third stage would entail a gradual abandonment of the old anthropocentric civilization, its principles, its institutions and its geographies and a full transition into the new 'organic' bio-eco-cosmopolitics of post-anthropocentric, complementary, reciprocal, and equilibrated interzonal symbiosis as inspired, for instance, in the Indigenous Andean forms of civilizational organization. In this last stage the principles of anthropocentric civilization such as property and sovereignty would be supplanted by the values and infrastructures of a non-anthropocentric and post-human cosmopolitics such as the eco-Indigenous values of bio-cosmopolitical responsibility and the infrastructures discussed here and in other similar works, some of which have been cited here and others which for reasons of space I have been unable to cite, as well as others to come (see also the Sources and References for this work).

Ultimately, what is being articulated here is that the world is at a crossroads or rather a turning point, on the verge of a Pacha-Kuti, and we must deliberate on whether we will stick to our vested commitments in structures, habits, and practices that will preserve our short term 'sanity' and 'normalcy' at the cost of assuring the aggravation of our unprecedented global crises and worse, or whether we will embrace the exploration of new alternatives, the search for a new sanity that just might entail the (Indigenous) renaissance of what the coloniality of power has hitherto deemed 'insanity'. The latter, the Indigenous renaissance tied to the emergence of a great many 'new' reflexivities such as those concerned with the ecological, gender, decolonial, and posthuman consciousness could entail, as has been argued here and in many other instances, the recovery, revalorization, revitalization, updating and innovating of wisdoms and ways as well as modes of organization and practice that have proven viable many times before and even in the face

of the onslaught of ego-andro-ethno-anthropocentric civilization. The deliberation is between continuing on the anthropocentric pathway that has led us to our contemporary crisis or, like revolving cosmic bodies, revolutionizing, revitalizing, and renewing the world by abandoning anthropocentric civilization and reincorporating 'humanity' into the broader bio-eco-cosmopolitical community. *To bend or to blend*, that is the question. A global Pacha-Kuti: that is the answer.

PART III

NATIVE COSMOPOLITICS:

CONTRIBUTIONS FROM TURTLE ISLAND TO COMPARATIVE POLITICAL

PHILOSOPHY, INTER-CIVILIZATIONAL RELATIONS AND WORLD POLITICS

The European, armed with a different definition of what it is to be human, seeks not to adapt to the conditions of the Earth, but to adapt the Earth to a vision of what human beings should be.

—Viola Cordova, *How It Is*.⁵⁰⁸

Because the current worldview causes escalation of our destructive relationship with the environment at every level of life, human meaning atrophies. The emerging environmental cosmology will be in conflict with the popular mechanistic view. This “cosmic” conflict can be seen in the energy underlying philosophical, political, religious, and economic debates all over the world. A modern “ecosophy” would be about the rediscovery of meaning as it relates to our universe. It would require not only a different way of thinking, but also a different way of knowing and living. Such an ecosophy would rebuild a . . . view of the cosmos in which everything is interdependent and moved by creative energy, one that views the Earth and the universe with reverence and explores our essential relationships and responsibilities therein. It would be, essentially, the philosophy Indigenous people have lived by for generations, writ large.

—Gregory Cajete, *Native Science*.⁵⁰⁹

Movement is life. Without movement, change, and transformation, there would be no life or death. Movement is seen everywhere. The clouds rise out of the mountains and move across the sky, forming, shifting, and disappearing. The clouds became the model for the way people need to move through life. And, certainly, movement was characteristic of the ancestors, who moved across the land like the clouds across the sky.

—Tessie Naranjo, Santa Clara Pueblo⁵¹⁰

⁵⁰⁸ Cordova 2007, 225-226.

⁵⁰⁹ Cajete 2000, 60.

⁵¹⁰ Quoted in O'Donnell 2001, 30.

Introduction to Part III

The purpose of Part III of this dissertation is to discuss some important aspects of Native philosophy and political theory in consideration of a selection of contemporary controversies, especially in relation to the overarching purpose of this dissertation which concerns the recovery, revalorization, and revitalization of Indigenous wisdoms and ways and their importance for contemporary local, regional, and global affairs, with special regard for the theme of post-anthropocentric/post-human cosmopolitics as has been discussed so far.

After opening with excerpts from the poem “How it Is” by Apache philosopher Viola Cordova, Section 1 offers an elaboration of some of the constitutive concepts of Native cosmology, philosophy and political theory. This section is divided in two subsections. Subsection 1A focuses on the cosmological premises of Indigenous/Native political theory. Subsection 2A builds on the previous section to elaborate an outline of the most important aspects of Native political theory, around the broader theme of this dissertation, namely, Indigenous cosmo-political philosophy.

Then we move on to Section 2 which opens with the follow up (and counterpart) poem by Viola Cordova titled “How It Isn’t”. Section 2 addresses the not so congenial impact of the dominant forms of Western cosmology, philosophy, and politics upon Native cosmopolitics, and in general it is dedicated to the rather problematic relationship between the two and written in the spirit of hope that the future may open up to more promising horizons for a world renewal inspired on Indigenous contributions. Section 2 is divided in two subsections. Subsection 2A discusses the topic of Indigenous cosmopolitics vis-à-vis the dominant form of anthropocentric-politics or anthropolitics for short. Section 2B is focused on three discussions of how this “clash of cosmologies,” to use the terms of Tewa philosopher Gregory Cajete, bears upon several regional and global controversies of contemporary relevance. The first one concerns a detailed discussion of the political discourses referred to as the “Framework of Dominion/Dominance” and the Doctrine of Discovery; this section involves a detailed discussion of the Preliminary Study on the Impact of the Doctrine of Discovery submitted by the Special Rapporteur, Tonnya Gonnella

Frichner, to the United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues (UNPFII). Following this discussion I offer an analysis of the proceedings and speeches that were given at the Indigenous Peoples Forum on the Impact of the Doctrine of Discovery which took place in the House of Representatives of the Arizona State Capitol on March 23, 2007. Part III of this dissertation closes with a discussion of how the themes discussed in relation to the preliminary study submitted to the UNPFII and the Indigenous Peoples Forum bear upon the topic of ‘transnational’ movement for people of Indigenous ancestry and transnational Indigenous activism along and across the US/Mexico border; this last section offers a case study drawing on voices collected over the course of my participatory research with two Indigenous organizations, the Alianza Indigena Sin Fronteras/Indigenous Alliance Without Borders and Tonatierra-Nahuacalli.

1. Indigenous Philosophy and Political Theory

To introduce this section it would be valuable to remember some of the most relevant passages of the poem on Indigenous cosmology titled “How It Is” by Apache philosopher Viola Cordova. The excerpt is extensive, but what it articulates is worth every instant of our reflection. The paragraphing has been simplified to fit the excerpt from the poem in a couple of pages; this may harm aesthetics, but saves trees, which accords with the spirit of the poem. The discussions contained in this section will serve to explain and further elaborate on what is brought forth in Cordova’s poem. Similarly, Cordova’s poem serves as an excellent prelude to the themes that will be addressed throughout all of Part III.

“How It Is”

Before there was any thing / There was...mist. / And in the mist...was absolute Motion. / Some call this circumstance, / Plasma; / Some call this Energy / We call it, / Wind. / We call it, / Sacred. / Because it is Wind...it is not static...there are fluctuations. / We call these fluctuations, / Things. / We call these fluctuations, / A Universe / A Galaxy / A Solar System / And in this field of / Motion, there are smaller and smaller fields and when the fields are dense enough—they hold themselves together. / We call them / Stars / We call them / Suns / We call / One Star / —Ours / We call it / —Holy Sun. / Oh, Holy Sun, the Mother Earth...is in your debt. / From it she derives...her creative energy. / And from deep within her own energy she derives us / ALL / From life, from the living something, that always is and always will be, comes more life. / We call it Holy Wind. / There is not anything that is not suffused with Wind. / We call the wind’s creations and

sub-creations “objects” and things—they are, more properly, fields. / A field is a vortex of / Wind / a whirlpool, a whirlwind. / We know that this is so because at our fingertips, at our toes, at our hair, are the vortices that connect us to all the other things, the air, the water, the rock, the tree, the grass, the deer, the Earth, the Sun, the universe. What we see and call / “Things” / and, “Many Things,” are...only one thing. / We call it / WIND. / We call it / Holy. / Some call the wind “energy,” / and they call the / many things / “matter” / and so they see / two things / where we see / only one. / It is matterized energy. / That we call / WIND, / when it becomes / THINGS. / There is no absolute space if / Wind is everywhere / how could there be void and emptiness? / There is no absolute time—if / Wind fluctuates / how could there be / anything but motion? / Time is the counting / Of motion. / Space is the discounting / Of the in-between. / And so it is. / How what is was, and how what was not, came to be. / And so there came to be / She, / She we call Mother, / Woman, / Ground, / Area, / *Na’ho’dzaan*. / She is *not*— / a dead rock / a blue ball, / suspended, / in empty space. / She is fiery egg, / the yolk- / a smoldering cauldron / separated from the misty / albumen of atmosphere / by the thinnest of crusts / the shell—a permeable barrier / receptive, enveloping. / She is a minor sun, following, like a child, the grandparent. / Like a child, connected / Round and round and round. / But, unlike a child and, like a woman / She produces, from within the living fire all manner of things. / WHITE SHELL WOMAN / WHITE BUFFALO WOMAN / CHANGING WOMAN / SHE WHO SPEWS FORTH / POSSIBILITIES, POTENTIALITIES. / From deep within / through layers of being / out of the yolk / and into the albumen / come the potentialities / to be finished / in the shadows of stones / in the rays of the sun / in the warmth of the waters / in the cool of the mountain / in the heart of the desert / come the myriads of things. / Like a living being / She makes no two things exactly alike... / She it is who creates / In the light of the sun / In the path of the wind / In the belly of fire / She / The Mother. / Diversity is her signature. / And there is motion. / If something exists, it is in motion, and if there is motion there is life. / Everything that exists is in motion / Therefore, everything that exists, is alive. / Picture a landscape of shiftings and / Nothing stays still / yet it is the same. / The sand ripples / forms dunes / shifts. / This is the way of the Universe: / Stable shifting / Shifting stability. / This is the way of a human: / Stable shifting / Shifting stability. / In harmony, / Balanced. ... / We are no more than a blade of grass / and we are no less. / We all partake ... / in that which is sacred. / We are all equals / for how could inequality arise / if we are essentially / the same? / We are all siblings / of the same mother. / We are all children / of the same father. / Connected / related through the one / Wind. ... / I, alone, can know / the consequences / of my actions. / I, alone, am responsible, / and, I am not alone. / Humans are animals of the herd / Language is the bonding mechanism / Empathy is the cause. / Because we are not alone / there are no meaningless actions. / I affect the universe / I bring into the universe: poverty, wealth, kindness, shame, meanness, pride, ugliness, beauty, envy...sharing, pleasure, respect, hatred, knowledge, horror, ignorance, calm, apathy, caring, tolerance, loyalty, intolerance, jealousy, competition, cooperation / I am a co-creator / I can enhance / I can detract / I...am responsible. / BEAUTY / I can make it. / But what is it, this thing-we call Beauty? / Pride, but not arrogance. Strength, but not forcefulness. / Courage, but not foolhardiness. / Caution, but not cowardice. / Softness, but not weakness. / That is beauty...

—Viola F. Cordova (Apache), “How it is”.⁵¹¹

⁵¹¹ Cordova 2007, 87-99.

A. Native Philosophy: The Cosmological Premises of Indigenous Political Theory

The philosophical doors are cracked open, and like reviving nations, American Indian philosophers will continue to walk in two worlds, alongside our ancestors and elders, and on the paths of cultural struggle that articulate our Indigenous being. May these doors remain open, and may they never be closed again. May American Indian philosophy and philosophers be respected and appreciated for what we are, as carriers of human origins on this continent, and believers of ideas about all our relations of the universe. There will likely always be sacred knowledge that American Indians will hold close...against colonial intrusion. But many...speak about a need to share our ways of being, for in the sharing...the ethics of a traditional rapport with all the universe can be understood and acted upon.

—Anne Waters, “Introduction” to *American Indian Thought: Philosophical Essays*.⁵¹²

A sensitive articulation of any form of philosophy as well as of political/global theory, should proceed from a careful understanding of cosmology,⁵¹³ for as Tewa philosopher Gregory Cajete explains in his landmark book, *Native Science*,

Cosmology is the contextual foundation for philosophy, a grand guiding story, by nature speculative, in that it tries to explain the universe, its origin, characteristics, and...nature. A cosmology gives rise to philosophy, values, and action, which in turn form the foundation of a society's guiding institutions.⁵¹⁴

In what concerns cosmology, there is an agreement⁵¹⁵ among Indigenous voices from Turtle Island or Northern Abya Yala that the cosmos can be understood as an ever-flowing and poly-cyclical continuum of “energy” (often translated as “spirit”) whose vitality temporarily materializes into a web of interrelated yet differentiated manifestations. Let us tease out the implications of this understanding by drawing on the work of various Indigenous scholars, philosophers, and other Indigenous voices. The philosophical articulations of the Indigenous

⁵¹² Waters 2004, xxxviii.

⁵¹³ Concerning the relevance and value of cosmology for social organization, with specific regard to Abya-Yala or the Indigenous Americas, see also Kidwell 2003.

⁵¹⁴ Cajete 2000, 58.

⁵¹⁵ While it must be acknowledged that there is a great diversity of peoples and therefore perspectives and experiences among the Indigenous peoples of Turtle Island, as Dine’ (Navajo) philosopher and scholar Marilyn Notah Verney notes (as have done many others), “Although American Indians are members of different tribal nations, we are bound together by similar political, social, and spiritual philosophical beliefs.” (Notah Verney 2004, 134)

experience of the cosmos by Apache philosopher Viola Cordova are without question amongst the most eloquent and beautiful. Cordova explains that “From an Indian perspective,”

the universe...had no beginning. It is...in motion, and change is inevitable. Motion/change are, overall, harmonious, balanced, and stable despite occasional...suddenness. Because the universe is dynamic, changing, creative, infinite, and full, there is no idea of a static or empty space in which things exist. The universe would be best described as an energy field with no gaps. What we interpret as “things” are concentrations of energy [which...] result of the motion of the universe (dynamic energy) and are viewed as temporary but necessary. Motion and existence are necessarily interrelated...What exists has motion; what has no motion does not continue to exist. The universe is...energy. ... This “energy” seems to have a...tendency to “pool;” that is, to gather in various degrees of concentration. The “pooling” causes the diverse “things” in the universe. Thus, for the Hopi [for instance...] there are not “things” but rather the world consists of “events”: being, peopleing, mountaining, and so on... [T]he quality of thingness...in a Native American context is doubtful...⁵¹⁶

Gregory Cajete’s writings are comparably beautiful and similarly explanatory. Cajete articulates the Indigenous experience of the cosmos and its implicated understanding of “nature” *not* simply as an onto-logical collection of bounded “entities,” delimited “objects” or separated “things” with an essentially defined “identity”, *but* rather as a “dynamic, ever-flowing river” of ceaseless (re)creation “from which we and everything else have come and to which we always return.”⁵¹⁷ Among the Indigenous, Cajete explains, “Everything is considered to be “alive” or animate and imbued with “spirit” or “energy.” Even a “stone” is viewed as a “unique” concentration of “energy”. Moreover, “Everything is related...connected in dynamic, interactive, and mutually reciprocal relationships.” Finally, “All things, events and forms of energy unfold and infold themselves in a contextual field of the micro and macro universe.”⁵¹⁸

Prefacing Cajete’s *Native Science* we find the words of Leroy Little Bear who eloquently articulates what he refers to as the “Native American paradigm”:

The Native American paradigm is comprised of and includes ideas of constant motion and flux, existence consisting of energy waves, interrelationships, all things being animate, space/place, renewal, and all things being imbued with spirit. Gary Witherspoon, studying Navajo [Dine’] language and art observes, “The assumptions that

⁵¹⁶ Cordova 2007, 117.

⁵¹⁷ Cajete 2004, 47-48; also cited in Waters 2004, xxi.

⁵¹⁸ Cajete 2000, 75.

underlie this dualistic aspect of all being and existence is that the world is in motion, that things are constantly undergoing processes of transformation, deformation, and restoration, and that the essence of life and being is movement" . . . The constant flux notion results in a "spider web" network of relationships. . . everything is interrelated. . . all. . . is related. If human beings are animate and have spirit, then "all my relations" must also be animate and. . . have spirit. What Native Americans refer to as "spirit" and energy waves are the same thing. All. . . is a spirit. Everything. . . consists of a unique combination of energy waves. . . [W]hat appears as material objects is simply the manifestation of a unique combination of energy waves. Conversely, all energy wave combinations do not necessarily manifest themselves in terms of material objects. . .⁵¹⁹

And yet the dance of constant flux that makes the cosmos gives birth to certain motifs. As Little Bear is prompt to underline, "[f]rom the constant flux, Native Americans have detected certain regular patterns, be they seasons, migration of animals, or cosmic movements." And from these emerges the experience and understanding of the cosmos "as a continuous process" but one that is shaped by "certain regularities" or motifs which are crucial to our "continuing existence;" and these regularities "must be maintained and renewed" and "if these. . . are not maintained and renewed, we will go the way of the dinosaurs." That is to say that "we will be consumed by the constant flux" and that is why from within the Indigenous experience of the cosmos the very continuity of life and society hinges on the cyclical reenactment of "renewal ceremonies"⁵²⁰ that contribute to the continuity of bio-eco-cosmic cycles.

Choctaw and Chippewa scholar, Clara Sue Kidwell, in her insightful article titled "Ethnoastronomy as the Key to Human Intellectual Development and Social Organization," makes plain the relevance of these "regularities" or motifs of which Little Bear speaks, and especially of the multiplicity of cycles (poly-cyclicity). In the Indigenous experience of the cosmos this poly-cyclicity has a constitutive role, and it enables us to understand cosmologies and worldviews, and how they shape cultures and social organization. As Kidwell writes:

Seasonal cycles repeat themselves in endless time and space. The year is marked not only by [cosmo-telluric] cycles but also by the [often similarly cyclical] movements of heavenly bodies both overhead and in relation to the horizon. . .

⁵¹⁹ Leroy Little Bear in Cajete 2000, x-xii.

⁵²⁰ Leroy Little Bear in Cajete 2000, x-xii.

Seasons provide the great metaphors of cosmology and a key to understanding different cultural worldviews. Human and natural cycles are inextricably linked in patterns of life, death, and rebirth...⁵²¹

Because of this, Kidwell explains, the “attention to the cycles of nature becomes the organizing principle of intellectual inquiry and social organization” in Indigenous American or Abya-Yalan cultures. Donald Fixico, a Shawnee/Sac & Fox/Muscogee Creek/Seminole scholar, philosopher, and historian, confirms and further elaborates on the bio-eco-cosmo-cyclical logic of Indigenous thinking which he calls its “circular philosophy”; in his words:

Thinking Indian or Indian thinking is the native logic of American Indians, based on...how they see the world and the universe. Traditionalists view the world according to relationships with the natural environment and a circular philosophy based on cycles of seasons, migrations of animals, and the rotations of the Earth and the stars.

Renowned Sioux intellectual Vine Deloria Jr. confirms this view concisely when he writes in his landmark treatise *Spirit and Reason* that “We...receive most of our signals about proper behavior from...the environment around us.”⁵²² So, for example, among Abya-Yalan peoples and cultures, political organization, settlement/migration patterns, geo-political and geo-economic organization, transitions of power, ceremonies and many other organizational and practical endeavors have traditionally been “timed by the stars, sun, and moon,”⁵²³ and by the life cycles of Earth, and of the many bodies living within the biosphere. Kidwell further underlines that

Celestial phenomena are the most obvious source of repetition in human experience. The movements of heavenly bodies becomes the organizing principles of social groups...The Hopi Royal ceremony is timed by the winter solstice...The Inca and Mayan people had calendar systems that governed transitions in political leadership in their communities...The Pawnee organized their villages with reference to the patterns of stars in the sky⁵²⁴...[Among the] Aztec...transitions of leadership followed the calendar. Cycles of celestial events determined the ascension of new leaders. The day carriers

⁵²¹ Kidwell 2003, 7, 14.

⁵²² Quoted in Talamantez 2003, 273.

⁵²³ Kidwell 2003, 6-7.

⁵²⁴ See also Kidwell and Velie 2005, 26.

[burdens] of the calendar, glyphs associated with the transition from one month to the next, [cyclically shaped political] transitions...⁵²⁵

For Abya-Yalans, Mother Earth is a living body that partakes in the dance of celestial movement and cycles. Among many other reasons, this is why Leroy Little Bear explains that the Native American paradigm is embedded in the “land” which is always a crucial referent in the Indigenous experience of the cosmos. As Little Bear explains:

The land is a very important referent in the Native American mind. Events, patterns, cycles, and happenings occur at certain places. From a human point of view, patterns, cycles, and happenings are readily observed on and from the land. Animal migrations, cycles of plant life, seasons, and cosmic movements are detected from particular spatial locations; hence, medicine wheels and other sacred observatory sites. Each tribal territory has its sacred sites, and its particular environmental and ecological combinations resulting in particular relational networks. All of this happens on the Earth; hence, the sacredness of the Earth... The Earth is so sacred that it is referred to as “Mother,” the source of life... But, for the Native American, even regularities are subject to change. Native Americans never claim regularities as laws, or as finalities. The only constant is change... livingness.⁵²⁶

In Nahua thought from Mesoamerica this experience of the cosmos is often referred to as *olin yoli*, “life is motion,” “vital motion,” or “the motion of vitality;” this reminds us also of the Andean notion of “life in plenitude” or “plentiful vitality” (*Suma Qamaña* in Aymara, *Suma Kawsay* in Quechua). There are a certain implications to be derived from this Native Paradigm which are crucial to understand the constitutive philosophical aspects of Indigenous Political Theory. Concerning the “human” manifestation of energy or spirit, Gregory Cajete offers a crucial explanation regarding the fact that from within an Indigenous cosmoexperience:

Creative participation with the living Earth extends from birth to death and beyond. At birth, humans come new yet recycled through the elegant cycles of metamorphosis, transformation, and regeneration that form the basis for all life on Earth. Indigenous peoples view the body as an expression of the sensual manifestation of spirit [or energy]. Death and the body's ultimate decomposition into the primal elements of Earth, wind, fire, air, and water mark the transformation of one's relatives and ancestors into living landscape, its plants, animals, waters, soils, clouds, and air. This is a literal biological truth as well as a metaphoric one hence, the meaning in Chief Seattle's statement, “I cannot sell the body, the blood and bones of my people.” Life and death are transformations of energy into new forms, the material and energetic fuel of nature's

⁵²⁵ Kidwell 2003, 6-7, 10.

⁵²⁶ Leroy Little Bear in Cajete 2000, x-xii.

creativity. Death is understood as a metamorphosis, wherein the spirit of the deceased does not disappear, but becomes part of the animating and creative forces of nature.⁵²⁷

One cannot underestimate the value of the above-cited paragraph by Gregory Cajete, and I invite the reader to carefully ponder over what Cajete articulates before moving on. In a similar vein, Kidwell and Velie emphasize that “cycles of birth and death” are continuous so that “Death is not an end in itself, merely a necessary part of life” and therefore “Time is cyclical, not linear.”⁵²⁸ Echoing countless Indigenous voices, Maureen Smith agrees with Kidwell and Velie, stating that “[t]ime” in this cosmoexperience is “perceived as cyclical and reciprocal, not linear” so that, for instance, it allows us to ponder what would be experienced as a non-anthropocentric and post-human understanding of “immortality” in the sense that “existence” is understood as “circular in nature;” furthermore, “[s]uch concepts connect...living individuals with future generations yet unborn and the ancestors.”⁵²⁹ In a poignant autobiographical and political essay, Anne Waters, philosopher of Seminole, Choctaw, Chikasaw and Cherokee ancestry, offers the following account of the Indigenous cosmoexperience, explicitly relating it to the legacy of genocide against Indigenous peoples:

We were told we were a part of that land, and that that land, in the Southeast,⁵³⁰ that land and no other, was a part of us from which we grew to be who we were. The land had provided our food, and was in us, and we, in setting our relatives to rest, were in the land... A partial disappearance of the stories, our deeds, our people, was caused by those who committed genocide upon us. These events live with us still; as in memory together we walk the lands of our ancestors. And in the walking we feel the energy of our being mixing with the energy of those who have shed blood, and through this walking we, the Indigenous people, remain on and in our land, our place, our cognitive space. We love our land, and we will not be moved without struggle.⁵³¹

⁵²⁷ Cajete 2000, 21.

⁵²⁸ Kidwell and Velie 2005, 23.

⁵²⁹ Smith 2004, 117-118.

⁵³⁰ Waters is personally referring to the ancestral lands of the Seminole, referred to within the hegemonic geographical imaginary as “Florida”. But her arguments extend in solidarity to explicitly embrace the common experience of the Indigenous peoples of all of the Americas (Waters 2004, 167).

⁵³¹ Waters 2004, 164-166.

Echoing Waters' moving words, we find sociologist Tessie Naranjo's who offers a similarly and equally illustrative testimony from a (Santa Clara) Pueblo perspective. She states,

Pueblo people believe that our origins are within Earth Mother. We are literally born of the Earth and mark the places in the land from which we came. [For Pueblo people] These places are generally watery places, springs or lakes. They are also places that connect us to the other levels of existence. Our origins are where we began and where we return. We were born of the mother and return into the Earth upon death.⁵³²

Such accounts of origins and cycles are biologically and evolutionarily accurate in that the body did and does emerge and constantly reconstitute itself from watery sources and returns to them, both historically and cyclically. Cheyenne scholar, Henrietta Mann, contributes with a similarly valuable illustration, drawing on the Cheyenne origin story. She writes:

Nistaomeno (In the past of long ago), the Great Mysterious Life-Giver planted the first people in the ground—womb of the Great Mother Earth and gave them...life ways that are anchored in the dirt and soil of this land comprising the Western Hemisphere. The Cheyenne word *Xamaa-vo'estaneo'o* linguistically illustrates this special relationship between humans and the land. The word translates into English as the Indigenous, aboriginal, ordinary people, or the natural, simple people *of* this land.⁵³³

The statement “of this land” again is bio-ecologically literal and concomitantly spiritual in that Indigenous bodies as transmuted energy are constituted by and become part of the land over millennia. In further elaborating upon the spiritual and ethico-poitical as well as ecological implications of such understanding of the origins of the people, Henrietta Mann writes that

...the natural people of this land, the culturally and spiritually diverse first nations, have long-standing and continuous caretaking responsibilities for maintaining the sanctity of Earth. This is affirmed by their beliefs that they come from the Earth, that they must live in mutual relationship with the Earth, that they must constantly and responsibly observe ceremonies that revitalize and renew the Earth, and that in the end they return to the Earth. As Earthborn people, they have a sense of place that has been deepened throughout the thousands of years they have lived on and with this land. Their spiritual Earth roots have resulted in a kinship like that of a mother to her children. It is a sacred relationship that is characterized by prayerful love and deep religious reverence for holy ground.⁵³⁴

In an artistically concise rendition of this insightful understanding of the cyclicity of existence in relation to the land or Earth, Zuni anthropologist Edmund J. Ladd states,

⁵³² Tessie Naranjo in O'Donnell 2001, 18-19.

⁵³³ Mann 2003, 194; emphasis added.

⁵³⁴ Mann 2003, 194.

We are of the Earth.
We emerged from the Earth.
We replenish the Earth.
We grow old
We return to the Earth.⁵³⁵

A comparable testimony is offered by Leigh J. Kuwanwisiwma, director of the Hopi Cultural Preservation Office, with a specific regard for the significance of the Grand Canyon for the Hopi people:

Why is the Grand Canyon important to Hopi people? The answer is simple: We are the canyon. The Grand Canyon is both the genesis and the final destination of our people...It is our destination because when a Hopi completes the human life cycle, the canyon becomes his or her final spiritual home. We are the canyon.⁵³⁶

Gregory Cajete, a (Tewa) Pueblo himself, offers further valuable insight on how this understanding informs the Indigenous or Native experience of the world and existence. For instance, in problematizing the purported lines separating the ‘human’ from the ‘other than human,’ Cajete explains that

...the interplay of humans with the natural world and the cosmos as seen in Native peoples’ creation stories depict the lines separating humans, animals, and forces of nature as rather fluid, instead of rigid. Animals transform into humans and humans transform into animals. Biologically, the metaphor is accurate, because when we eat an[other] animal [or plant or element (e.g, minerals)] we are “transformed” into that animal [or plant or element], and the animal is “transformed” into us. When we are eaten by animals (including by the small bacteria that will eat us all eventually), we are then transformed back into the cycles of nature. In many ways, ancient Native myths preceded biological theories of...transformation.⁵³⁷

In light of these considerations, it is easy to understand how, as Cajete explains, “in the Native way, there is a fluid and inclusive perception of animal nature that makes less of a distinction between human, animal, and spiritual” conditions⁵³⁸—remembering that “spirit” is best understood in as “life energy” or “life force.” Bodies (including human bodies) are

⁵³⁵ Quoted in O’Donnell 2001, 71.

⁵³⁶ Leigh J. Kuwanwisiwmo in O’Donnell 2001, 18-19.

⁵³⁷ Cajete 2000, 40.

⁵³⁸ Cajete 2000, 150. As Cajete repeatedly reminds his audiences, these ancestral Indigenous views often converge to a certain degree, not without qualifiers, with the interpretations of the “real” as put forth in quantum physics.

temporarily pooled or “matterized” manifestations of a cyclically transmuted “life-energy”⁵³⁹ or “spirit.” The testimony of Dine’ (Navajo) nation vice-president Rex Lee Jim further illustrates this understanding; he argues that “hunting means, ultimately, converting animal energy into human energy.”⁵⁴⁰

A similar understanding serves to deconstruct the human/plant hierarchical dichotomy. As Cajete explains, through eating (and excretion) humans and plants literally interpenetrate and transmute into each other in a continuum of life energy or “spirit” in cyclical flux. Cajete writes in relation to this that:

The idea that human life is maintained through constant work, sharing, and relationship with food and other sources of life underlies the Native relationship to...plants with which they have formed special reciprocal compacts. The Native garden provides an exemplification of this idea in an environmental and communal context of participation. When people eat the vegetables that grow in their gardens, the substance of the plants joins with the substance of the person in a way that is more than physical—more than survival of the body. It is a survival of the spirit [i.e., “life energy/life force”] also. The people's spirits also meet the spirits of the Corn Mother, or the Three Sisters [squash, maize, and climbing beans], who give of their flesh to ensure the survival of the people⁵⁴¹

The Indigenous experience of the transmuting of “life energy” via the cycles of nutrition (and excretion) can be understood even within the hegemonic scientific discourse that largely “desacralizes” the notion of spirit-as-energy into mere substance. In Cajete’s terms we can understand the meeting and reciprocal transmutation among plant and human spirit in the following terms:

It is no accident that human hemoglobin and plant chlorophyll share similar biochemical structures, or that humans breathe oxygen produced by plant respiration and that plants depend on the carbon dioxide produced by humans and other animals. In many Native myths plants are acknowledged as the first life, or the grandparents of humans and animals and sources of life and wisdom, as in the...Native mythic symbol of the Tree of Life. Through such an acknowledgment of plants, Native myths [embody...] human evolution in the context of relationship to plants. For example, in the creation myth of the Inuit, the first man is born fully formed from a pea pod with the help of Raven, the Inuit trickster god.⁵⁴²

⁵³⁹ Cajete 2000, 67-71.

⁵⁴⁰ Quoted in O’Donnell 2001, 58.

⁵⁴¹ Cajete 2000, 130-131.

⁵⁴² Cajete 2000, 108-109.

In is important to notice that within this Indigenous experience of the cosmos, what Western theory would articulate as ‘agency,’ ‘causality’ or ‘vitality’ cannot be exclusively located, nor can it be *bounded* or *contained* within an essentially defined entity such as the ‘human’ or indeed *within* any delimited ‘entity,’ (not even a ‘plant’ or an ‘animal’); indeed, the very notion of an ‘entity’ and the very quality of ‘thingness’ is put into question and along with it the very possibility of ontology.⁵⁴³ In contrast, from within an Indigenous experience of the world and cosmos existence unfolds as the movement of “life energy” or “life force”⁵⁴⁴ in the manner of a circular flux, an “ever-flowing” and ceaselessly recycling river of (re)creativity—to use Cajete’s terms. This replicates the Indigenous Andean *Pacha* as a bio-eco-cosmic continuum of encountering life-energies from which vitality emanates. Existence and its “human” embodiment is a temporary and transient manifestation or expression of this life-energy, life-force or spirit, and as such the *gift* of its occurrence entails an intimate co-participation and co-responsibility in the ever-flowing river of (re)creation. As Cajete elaborates:

Our universe is still unfolding and human beings are active and creative participants. Creativity is both the universe’s ordering principle and its process, part of the greater flow of creativity in nature. It flows from the “implicate order” or inherent potential of the universe, and whatever it produces becomes a part of the “explicate order” of material or energetic expressions. These expressions range from entire galaxies to the quarks and leptons of the subatomic world. Human creativity is located in this immense continuum. We are, after all, a microcosm of the macrocosm. We are an expression of the nature within us, a part of a greater generative order of life that is ever-evolving. It is from this creative, generative center of human life that central principles of Native science emanate...⁵⁴⁵

This cosmoexperience is what creates the basis of what Cajete describes as the “foundational paradigm of Native science” which can be described as the active, responsible, and recreative renewal and “maintenance of dynamic balance and harmony with all relationships;”⁵⁴⁶

⁵⁴³ Onto-logy: the logic, language, laws, and order(s) of entities.

⁵⁴⁴ Cajete 2000, 67-71.

⁵⁴⁵ Cajete 2004, 47.

⁵⁴⁶ Cajete 2000, 73.

this is eloquently explained by Cajete in the following terms. From an Indigenous viewpoint and sensibility, the cosmos

...is based on mutual reciprocity, the rule of “paying back” what has been received from nature... The world operates on a constant flow of give-and-take relationships. In traditional Native hunting, when a hunter takes a deer, an offering is made and thanks is given to the spirit family of the deer and, in some traditions, to the “mother of game” who is another mythic manifestation of the Earth Mother. Hunting rituals are performed before, during and after traditional Native hunting to acknowledge the transformation of the deer's life, spirit, and flesh into that of the human. The Native hunter and community know well that this gift from Nature and the game spirits will have to be “paid back” at some time in the future by humans in the universal cycle of death, birth, and rebirth.⁵⁴⁷

In describing Indigenous Alaskan worldviews, the late Yup'ik scholar Oscar Angayuqaq Kawagley offered an excellent illustration of Cajete's articulation of the Indigenous experience of the cosmos. Angayuqaq Kawagley wrote that Indigenous (Alaskan) “worldviews are dependent upon reciprocity—do unto others, as you would have them do unto you.”⁵⁴⁸ This is because

All of life is considered recyclable and therefore requires certain ways of caring in order to maintain the cycle. Native people cannot put themselves above other living things because they were all created by the Raven [the symbolic embodiment of the creative cosmic life-energy], and all are considered an essential component of the universe. They were able to sustain their traditional...economy because [according to Freeman and Carbyn] “they possessed appropriate ecological knowledge and suitable methods/technology, ...a philosophy and environmental ethic to keep exploitative abilities in check, and established ground rules for relationships between humans and animals”...Out of this ecologically based emphasis on reciprocity, harmony, and balance have evolved some common values and principles that are embedded in the worldviews of most Alaska Native people.⁵⁴⁹

In consideration of such illustrations, let us return to Cajete's rendition. As Cajete further notices, the reciprocity of transmutation comprises every dimension of the cosmos, macro and micro, he continues:

This transformation of energy is also exemplified in the continual transformation of energy to matter and back again. Electrons continually borrow energy from the universe to transform themselves into different kinds of atoms. However, what has been borrowed from the universe must eventually be paid back, and this happens when an electron “dies”

⁵⁴⁷ Cajete 2000, 73.

⁵⁴⁸ Angayuqaq Kawagley 2009, 227.

⁵⁴⁹ Angayuqaq Kawagley 2009, 227.

back to the field of energy from which it came to provide energy for the creation of new electrons and atoms.⁵⁵⁰

In a follow up article to *Native Science*, Gregory Cajete further elaborates on the “foundational paradigm of Native Science.” He explains in both the article and in the book that

Native science reflects a celebration of renewal. The ultimate aim is not explaining an objectified universe, but rather learning about and understanding responsibilities and relationships and celebrating those that humans establish with the [rest of the] world.⁵⁵¹

Furthermore, “Native science” is about “mutuality and reciprocity with the natural world, which presupposes a responsibility to care for, sustain, and respect the rights of other living things, plants, animals, and the place in which you live.”⁵⁵² And as Cajete surmises, in concert with the discussions that have been undertaken throughout this dissertation,

This is reflective of one of the oldest ecological principles practiced by Indigenous people all over the world, past and present, principles that have been incorporated as rules for human conduct. If you depend upon a place for your life and livelihood, you have to take care of that place or suffer the consequences. In addition to responsibility there is also celebration of life, a key element in seeking to understand how to live a good life.⁵⁵³

That is why “Native scientific philosophy mirrors,” recreates, and contributes to renew “the cycles of time, space, and being in individual action, community action, ritual and ceremonial activities, and direct relationships with the land.” Moreover, “The ubiquitous use of the circle and directional orientations” shape “Native science,” including all its “forms of organization and practice.” Therefore, “Native scientific philosophy reflects an inclusive and moral universe. All things, events, and forms of energy unfold and infold themselves in a contextual field of the micro and macro universe...”⁵⁵⁴

⁵⁵⁰ Cajete 2000, 73.

⁵⁵¹ This quote fuses text appearing in Cajete 2000, 79 and Cajete 2004, 55. This is because the article reproduces what the book says almost literally, yet both the article and the book contain something important that the other lacks, however small.

⁵⁵² Cajete 2000, 79 and Cajete 2004, 55.

⁵⁵³ Cajete 2000, 79 and Cajete 2004, 55.

⁵⁵⁴ Cajete 2000, 79 and Cajete 2004, 55.

Further elaborating on a similar articulation of the Indigenous experience of the cosmos, Donald Fixico emphasizes that Indigenous thinking entails opening our senses up to the rest of the cosmos “from a perspective emphasizing that circles and cycles are central to the world and that all things are related within the universe.”⁵⁵⁵ Anne Waters also echoes and adds to Cajete’s and Fixico’s cosmological rendition, to which we will return below. Waters writes that

For many Indigenous people, the importance of order and balance, as well as a proper (moral) behavior, are part of the cosmological understanding of our universe. If one is out of balance with metaphysical forces or out of balance within oneself, sickness will appear and remain, until the universe, and the person in that universe, is again in balance, or ordered. The structures of the cosmos are like the structures of the mind, in that everything must be balanced and nurtured properly in order for the universe, and [therefore] us, to survive. So, also, in Indigenous thought, dualism embraces difference in principle, not as division but rather as complementarity.⁵⁵⁶

Waters beautifully illustrates this Indigenous experience of the cosmos with an explanation of Dine’ (Navajo) and Zuni thought that brings forth the insightful Indigenous experience of breath, speech and song. She reminds us that in “Dine’ (Navajo) thought, for example, because the breath of life (air) is constantly being exchanged in the universe, from the cosmos and to the Earth, breath plays a central role in complementary” cosmological philosophy and “thought.”⁵⁵⁷ Moreover, in Dine’ thought, “Not only is breath that which is life-giving, but smoke, as manifesting aspects of breath, operates as the medium for air to reach the sky, the cosmos, as do words when spoken or sung.” That is why “the exchange of breath is important because all things in the universe are related through air, and all are made of the same basic elements.” So, for instance, “Just as we take in air to breathe, so also we let out breath, giving back to that from which we take”⁵⁵⁸ in a celebration of cosmic reciprocity. Hence, in Dine’ philosophy, for example,

⁵⁵⁵ Fixico 2003, 2.

⁵⁵⁶ Waters 2004, 103-104.

⁵⁵⁷ Waters 2004, 103-104.

⁵⁵⁸ Waters 2004, 103-104.

Earth, air, fire, and water are the basic elements of the entire cosmos. These elements are continually in a give-and-take relationship in the universe as spirit (energy) infuses everything. Thus, upon death, after air is released from the body (given back), the body will decompose into the elements, giving itself back to that from which it was created.⁵⁵⁹

To the example concerning Dine' philosophy, Anne Waters adds an illustration from Zuni thought. She explains that in Zuni thought the Twin Gods, also known as the Evening Star and Morning Star, "embody the principle of dualism, as manifested not in a binary, but in a non-binary," or "complementary dualism of life force and death" which "are held together" as "in real life".⁵⁶⁰ Moreover, the "Twins share a single breath of life that animates them both separately and together." As a result of the vitality emanating from their complementary interaction, the cosmos unfolds as a "moral space" of balance and reciprocity; and hence "the providing of breath of life, via singing or talking, back to the universe" in reciprocity for the breath and respiration that the cosmos has gifted to us "fulfills a moral connection" that embodies the creative co-responsibility for the "nurturing" of all that enlivens the Earth and the cosmos.⁵⁶¹

Athabascan scholar, Beth Ginondidoy Leonard, explains that a similar understanding of breath is shared among many Indigenous Alaskans. For example, she explains that "in the Deg Xinag language, the word *yeg* means "breath" and "spirit"." Athabascan "Deg Hit'an medicine men or shaman were often able to cure using their breath in ritual song;" Ginondidoy Leonard narrates a mythical story where "The creation of" a "giant pike takes place through transformation of" a "spruce tree via a medicine song and a breath of Raven," a sacred figure among many Indigenous Northwestern and Alaskan peoples. She argues that when we examine Indigenous cosmologies "that acknowledge the power of air, the role of plants in the environment and

⁵⁵⁹ Waters 2004, 103-104.

⁵⁶⁰ Waters 2004, 103-104. Here again we find the principle of (uni)duality shared with Mesoamerica (e.g., Ometeotl) and the Andes (Pacha).

⁵⁶¹ Waters 2004, 103-104.

potential for motion, we can see that the transformation of the spruce into a giant pike becomes a natural process.”⁵⁶²

Extrapolating on the relevance of breath in the Indigenous experience of the cosmos, an experience shared among many Indigenous peoples, Apache philosopher Viola Cordova offers a particularly poignant interpretation of the epiphenomenal fragility of the human life form and of its biospheric derivativeness, embedded as it is in extremely particular and contingent conditions of emergence, possibility, and recreation (or reproduction); she writes,

Humans, since the guarded acknowledgment of their development on this planet, are known to require very specific conditions in order to continue as a species. The temperature cannot be too high or too low for any period of time without severe consequences. The atmospheric mixture offers us “breath” only within a very narrow range of circumstances. We are not only creatures of this planet but of very specific and fragile conditions on this planet. Humans, from this perspective, are not creatures above and apart from “nature”—they are a part of nature.⁵⁶³

In light of these reflections, it is worth pondering what could be considered one of Cordova’s most insightful articulations of the Indigenous experience of the cosmos, the world, and of the Earth. In her compilation of essays and poems, *How It Is*,⁵⁶⁴ Cordova seeks to move us into an alternative, Indigenously-inspired form of cosmic and telluric awareness. She points out that under the still hegemonic modern Western cosmic imaginary we usually “assume” that “the Earth is an inanimate form of dumb matter,” that it is simply there, “requiring no second thought on our part as we step onto” what we take to be its “surface.” She notices that we are most often unaware of the Earth’s “animate” character, and that we become only temporarily aware at certain seemingly “unusual” occurrences of telluric instability, such as would be the case of an “earthquake.” Otherwise, she points out, “We are accustomed to assuming that we are walking and living on the surface of a ball that is more or less smooth.” She would like us to come to a

⁵⁶² Ginonidoy Leonard 2009, 102.

⁵⁶³ Cordova 2007, 217.

⁵⁶⁴ Cordova 2007, 77-78.

different, more embedded awareness, more in accordance with an Indigenous experience of the cosmos. And so she invites us to consider “another paradigm”:

What if we view “the Earth” not as a ball in “empty space,” but like the inside of a raw egg? The Earth is the yolk, swimming in the egg white—which we know commonly as the “atmosphere,” but usually disregard as part of the Earth. In this portrayal, or “paradigm,” we do not so much walk on the surface of the Earth as swim in a narrow area surrounding the skin of “the yolk.” The Earth... is not a simple hard surface that we need not take into consideration when we plan our actions. The Earth becomes a more fragile “thing.” Its permeability is exposed, its “surface” becomes less sure. In this scenario, we are like the creatures that dwell on the ocean floor; perhaps a fish in water is as “unaware” of the water as we are of the atmosphere that sustains us. We become aware of the equivalent of the Earth’s “albumen” only when its consistency changes, in a wind storm, for example, or when the air is excessively polluted. The idea of being in some thing (the Earth as the inside of an egg) would result in a very different set of “forms and categories” underlying our languages than if we saw our selves as existing on the surface of “a ball in empty space.”⁵⁶⁵

As Cordova further points out

The egg analogy would not be so unfamiliar to many of the Indigenous peoples... who envision the female Earth as surrounded by a male fertilizing “sky.” The reality of the Sky-Father and Earth-Mother in an unavoidable and eternal embrace would then “make sense” to those who presently see the analogies as mere figments of the imaginations.⁵⁶⁶

In a rather illustrative comparison, Cordova follows her alternative “paradigm” with a favorable comparison with the reflections of Dutch philosopher Baruch Spinoza who once “likened our existence to that of a cell in the bloodstream.” As Cordova explains, “the lone cell would be unaware of the fact that it is merely a part of a greater whole.” Therefore, Cordova infers:

The people with the imagery of the Sky-Father/Earth-Mother whole would be individual blood cells participating in a dance of existence and non-existence, with one exception: they would be aware that this was the fact of their existence, a “knowing” blood cell, so to speak.⁵⁶⁷

Gregory Cajete’s insightful interpretation of the “interpenetration” of human and other than human nature as the ceaseless transmutation of a continuum of energy further explains the underlying experience that informs Indigenous understandings of the cosmos; Cajete explains:

⁵⁶⁵ Cordova 2007, 77-78.

⁵⁶⁶ Cordova 2007, 77-78. Cordova articulates here what Andeans understand as the Pacha.

⁵⁶⁷ Cordova 2007, 77-78.

...humans and the natural world interpenetrate one another at [every] level, [for example, in] the air we breathe, the carbon dioxide we contribute to the food we transform, and the chemical energy we transmute at every moment of our lives from birth to death.⁵⁶⁸

This cosmoexperience allows us to understand and acknowledge the manifestation of our temporary vitality as the transitory embodiment of what Cajete calls the cosmic “life-energy”⁵⁶⁹ or “spirit”, and this is what prompts us to extend solidarity to all our relations beyond the bounds of the anthropocentric construct of ‘humanity’ by acknowledging our *corpo-reality* as an organic epiphenomenon, thereby recognizing this embodied existence as just one more of Earth’s offspring, an organism among other organisms, just another blade of grass, a life-form among many other life-forms, all differentiated manifestations of a spirit or energy in cyclical transmutation.⁵⁷⁰

Gregory Cajete adds to this cosmoexperience an illustration of his own. Cajete reminds us of Kokopelli, a crucial symbol among the Indigenous peoples of Arido-America and Oasis-America, the ancestrally continuous region that the hegemonic geographical imaginary has sought to sever into two bounded entities that make up the ‘Mexican North’ and ‘US southwest’. Concerning Kokopelli, Cajete explains, “Native people have” very well “understood that things were always in process, that things were always being created and then destroyed and then created once again in new forms.” These “basic ways of understanding” cosmological, biological, and “ecological processes are deeply embedded in symbols like Kokopelli that represent the creative process in nature, human beings, and even the evolution of thought.”⁵⁷¹

Cajete, as a philosopher and scholar of Tewa (Pueblo) ancestry, further elaborates about Kokopelli in regard to Pueblo mythology, commenting that

Native peoples have particular understandings of the way the world has come into being, and the ways they have come into being as people. These understandings are

⁵⁶⁸ Cajete 2004, 47.

⁵⁶⁹ Cajete 2000, 67-71.

⁵⁷⁰ See Cajete 2004, 47.

⁵⁷¹ Cajete 2000, 36.

communicated in stories in the context of myth and art. Kokopelli, one of the archetypal figures of Pueblo mythology, represents many things to the Pueblo people of the Southwest. Kokopelli represents the creative process or the creative energy that [constitutes] all...—humans, the Earth, and the cosmos as a whole. It is a symbol of the procreative and creative nature of all life, organic and inorganic...Kokopelli, the seed bringer and life symbol of creative energy...⁵⁷²

Moreover, Kokopelli

plays a role in Pueblo stories of the “first times,” or origins, and is depicted in many forms in Pueblo prehistoric, historic, and contemporary art. He is an archetype of the communicator or teacher in the sense that he was the bringer of news, seeds, and goods. Kokopelli then is also a type of life bringer, a representation of the creative spirit that resides in each of us as in all natural forces.⁵⁷³

Furthermore, as Cajete explains, “indeed, there may have been a group” known as *pochtecas* among the Mesoamerican Nahua “of traveling merchants throughout...the Americas, from the Incas in South America” via Mesoamerica “through the north, who traded with various tribes. They may have played flutes for musical expression as well as to assure the people in the villages they were approaching that they were friendly.”⁵⁷⁴

Throughout this paper we will keep Kokopelli in mind as a symbolic embodiment of the (re)creative cosmic life energy or life force that constitutes all, and we will also return later to its role as trans-Abya Yalan (or pan-Indigenous) communicative and pedagogical bond, as the seed or life-bringer who moves and flows across Abya-Yala tying all its relations, its peoples, communities, and life-forms, into a web of ever flowing creative life-energy. For now let us further elaborate on some crucial themes of how this cosmology bears on some basic philosophical aspects of Indigenous political theory.

B. Kernels of Indigenous Cosmo-Political Philosophy

American Indians often say that the people are an ear of corn. We may try to just think of each little kernel of corn on the ear, the individuals, but to do so is to take away from what the kernels are: an ear of corn... On an Earth that suffers each day from

⁵⁷² Cajete 2000, 31-32.

⁵⁷³ Cajete 2000, 31-32.

⁵⁷⁴ Cajete 2000, 31-32.

environmental catastrophes of tragic proportion, we would do well to learn from this thought. Western thought, philosophy, and science, have gotten us far, we suppose. We have, through technology, become nearly invincible, but we have forgotten how we are related. We desire what is eternal: eternal life, knowledge that is eternal, truth that is eternal. But are our heads not in the clouds? Have we not forgotten what is behind us and at our feet? Have we not followed Coyote [the American Indian trickster figure] and Thales [of Miletus] down a very uncertain path toward a rather deep well? This desire for the eternal, the unchanging, through technology and philosophy—eternal life, eternal truth—are surely the desires of Coyote [and Thales]. Life and knowledge are not permanent, American Indian philosophy teaches us. We must continually cultivate them. But just as the ear of corn is cultivated and grows, so does it die. It does not live forever. It provides food for another generation that will carry on and grow and live and die. American Indian philosophy teaches us that to step out of this circle is to make a step on the wrong road for human beings to walk. It is to forget our relations, to forget what our elders have told us, to forget the stories of our ancestors. It is, ultimately, to forget who we are.

—Brian Yazzie Burkhart, “What Coyote and Thales Can Teach Us: An Outline of American Indian Epistemology.”⁵⁷⁵

Viola Cordova offers an elaboration on the themes discussed so far that ties Indigenous cosmology to Indigenous politics; this elaboration is worth having in consideration, as it makes explicit certain crucial philosophical implications for ethical-political theory and practice. She comments on the Indigenous American conception equality. This “notion of equality,” Cordova explains, “extends to children,” “promotes...consensual decision-making” and it “extends...even to...actions toward the planet and its many life-forms.”⁵⁷⁶ She emphasizes that there is an important factor which significantly accounts for that “which the Native American once had as the dominant source of his [or her] actions (and in many cases still practices),” namely, the Indigenous

recognizes that he [or she] is a part of the Earth. He acknowledges that he is a part of a natural process that has led to his existence as well as to the existence of all other things, “animate” and “inanimate.” (The terms are not relevant within a Native American context; all that exists is seen as participating in a life process.) The Native American recognizes his dependence on the Earth and the Universe. He recognizes no hierarchy of “higher” and “lower” or “simple” and “complex,” and certainly not of “primitive” and “modern.” Instead of hierarchies he sees differences which exist among equal “beings” (mountains, as well as water and air and plants and animals would be included here). The equality is based on the notion, often unstated, that everything that is, is of one process.

⁵⁷⁵ Burkhart 2004, 26.

⁵⁷⁶ See also Sandy Grande’s notion of “equity” among humans and the rest of nature in her book, *Red Pedagogy* (Grande 2004, 8)

The Native American, in other words, has a more inclusive sense of the We than others...⁵⁷⁷

This “We”, as is evident from this quote, is much larger than humanity, and in it humanity is just a small participant. This is the meaning of Burkhart’s retelling of the Cartesian maxim “I think therefore I am” into the Indigenous maxim “We are therefore I am.”⁵⁷⁸ The testimony of Santa Clara Pueblo sociologist Tessie Naranjo serves again to illustrate this non-anthropocentric conception of the “We” as community—a conception shared across Abya-Yala. She states,

Native communities are about connections because relationships form the whole. Each individual becomes part of the whole community, which includes the hills, mountains, rocks, trees, and clouds.⁵⁷⁹

Viola Cordova in this regard, offers us further insight and explanation of this Indigenous experience of the bio-eco-cosmic community and some of its ethical-political implications:

The combination of defining the human as a social being and denying any hierarchical systems, and a recognition of humans as a part of a greater whole, leads to a complete ethical system. This “complete” system includes not only one’s behavior toward other individuals and to the society as a whole but toward the planet which has produced one and upon which one is dependent. For those who would raise objections to the validity or the durability of such an ethical system, it must be pointed out that Native American [or Abya-Yalan] societies existed for tens of thousands of years and have not perished.⁵⁸⁰

There are two crucial ideas that shape the bio-eco-cosmo-political dimensions of Indigenous philosophy; one of them concerns the notion of diffused or “distributed power,” and the other concerns the notion of “natural democracy.” Both of these notions are well articulated by Gregory Cajete who develops them in relation to the interpretation of Indigenous “creation and origin stories”. As it is evident, this articulation is directly embedded within and reinforcing of the Indigenous experience of the cosmos discussed previously and of the constitutive dimensions of

⁵⁷⁷ Cordova 2004, 176-177.

⁵⁷⁸ Burkhart 2004.

⁵⁷⁹ Naranjo quoted in O’Donnell 2001, 44.

⁵⁸⁰ Cordova 2004, 176-177.

Indigenous philosophy; moreover, it incorporates the non-anthropocentric notion of equality explicated by Cordova above. Cajete writes:

Native...stories have multiple components, meanings, and variations. One of the recurring themes revolves around the observation of “distributed power” in nature. Energy is distributed throughout the natural world and plants, animals, places, natural phenomena, and human beings share such energy... stories [therefore] reflect...“natural democracy,” in that rather than presenting humans as the gifted and favored species of the world, the special traits of plants and animals are regularly depicted...with mention to human dependence of people upon them. Some origin stories relate to how human-like creatures transform the world in ways that allow for human habitation. In other stories humans strive to possess admired animal qualities or to establish relationships with certain animals for human benefit....all native myths reflect important relationships between the human and non-human, tales...relate how humans have been formed by and participate with the creative forces of the universe. Stories also show kinship between non-human and human reciprocity with nature; intermarriage with animals, Earthly and celestial beings; and youths who play a role in bringing humans and nature into closer relationships.⁵⁸¹

The broad outlines of the Indigenous experience and understanding of a non-anthropocentric “natural democracy” constituted by a “distributed” notion of power as life-energy are very clear from Cajete’s articulation which not only emphasizes that the human manifestation of life energy is neither separate nor superior from the rest, but rather in many ways is “dependent” and epiphenomenal on non-human others whom the hegemonic imaginary deems and treats as inferiors and often as alien.

Cajete’s articulation refers, for instance, to the frequent narration of “intermarriages” among different participants of the cosmos, including among humans and other “beings” such as animals, Earthly, and celestial bodies. The narratives are not mythical stories in the sense of being merely symbolic or secondary illustrations of what would be a more ‘fundamental reality’. As was explained above, in the Indigenous experience of the cosmos, the temporarily differentiated spirits of various manifestations of the life force(s) regularly “meet” and literally transmute into each other on a quotidian and indeed a constant cyclical basis (e.g., via nutrition, excretion, respiration, perspiration, breath, etcetera). This was repeatedly illustrated above, for instance, in the “meeting,” “intermarriage,” “interpenetration,” or transmutation of plant spirit or life-energy into

⁵⁸¹ Cajete 2000, 33-35.

animal (including human) spirit or life-energy. This is also the case in the “interpenetration” of elements that constitute the cosmos such as air and water and which make up the human life form. This was also the case in the understanding of humans as components of a yolk in the terms of Cordova or as blood cells in a larger body in the terms of Baruch Spinoza. It is also the case in the participation of Indigenous forms of organization, for example, in cosmopolitical calendrics as a direct co-responsible participation in and co-(re)creative celebration of the circular dances of the stars. So when Indigenous stories articulate notions such as “intermarriage” among different participants of nature and the cosmos they are also referring to the quotidian performance of this transmutations, meetings, interpenetrations, and dances.

J. H. Gill⁵⁸² in his book *Native American Worldviews* reminds us that the value of stories like these is not primarily in their reference to some external sequence of events in a linear imaginary, but rather they are to be understood as codes for reenacting ethical-political and eco-social conduct or articulating and prompting the cyclical recreation of crucial events on a periodical or quotidian basis. From within the cyclical Indigenous philosophy, it might actually be to a certain extent misguided to see these stories as “creation” or “origin” stories (unless the origin is cyclically (re)created); to understand them too literally as “creation” or “origin” stories risks an emplotment of the account into a linear narrative that would locate an “origin” or “creation” in some distant past within the linear narrative imaginary. I surmise that perhaps these stories at least should not be seen as *exclusively* about a distant past, but often also about how that past is to be cyclically recreated or re-enacted. Intermarriages among plants and animals, among the human and non-human happen on an everyday basis in the sense of the cyclical meeting, reciprocal interpenetration and metabolic co-transmutation of their life-energy.

Let us now return to the theme of “natural democracy.” Donald Fixico further elaborates on the notion of a “Natural Democracy” when he writes

...Indian genius...is all about understanding “relationships”...All of the[se] interrelationships [make up] a system called the Natural Order of Life for the American

⁵⁸² Gill 2002.

Indian who knows his or her traditional beliefs. Their perception is defined and determined by their natural environment in a type of Natural Democracy, for they treat all things with respect. This democracy is based on respect. In this belief, all things are equally important.⁵⁸³

Fixico argues that the enactment of this natural democracy is crucially dependent on the philosophical significance of the circle (or cycle) in governing Indigenous life and in the capacity to “listen to the environment” so as to conduct modes of decision-making that are “responsive to nature.”⁵⁸⁴ Fixico explains:

Indian thinking is...circular in philosophy. Imbedded in an Indian traditional reality, this ethos [entails] [l]istening [to]...the natural environment...Decision making is responsive in nature...[C]oming to a consensus is coming to a balance of all factors so that the right decision is the best decision for all concerned. Although this logic may not be direct, it includes human and nonhuman entities. This type of thought is the basis of an Indigenous ethos that is defined by tribal cultures within the natural environment of the people...⁵⁸⁵

In his explanation of the constitutive “premises” of the Native worldview, Gregory Cajete⁵⁸⁶ underlines as the first premise that “Natural democracy must prevail” because the “Earth is alive and nurtures all things of her body and all have intelligence and a right to exist.”

Moreover, “natural democracy” should be the basis or principle of social organization in the form of a “social ecology.” To supplement this premise, it is necessary to understand the second premise, namely that “We are all related”. As Cajete puts it into words, this premise articulates the active and responsible awareness of the fact that the (non-anthropocentric We) makes up a “web

⁵⁸³ Fixico 2003, xiii, 4.

⁵⁸⁴ Fixico 2003, xii-xiii. It is illustrative to remember at this point what Black Elk, Oglala Sioux Holy Man once famously said:

You have noticed that everything an Indian does is in a circle, and that is because the Power of the World always works in circles, and everything tries to be round...The Sky is round, and I have heard that the Earth is round like a ball, and so are all the stars. The wind, in its greatest power, whirls. Birds make their nest in circles, for theirs is the same religion as ours...Even the seasons form a great circle in their changing, and always come back again to where they were. The life of a human is a circle from childhood to childhood, and so it is in everything where power moves. (Quoted in Dudgeon 2008, 24)

⁵⁸⁵ Fixico 2003, xii-xiii.

⁵⁸⁶ Cajete 2000, 77.

of life” that is woven out of “relationships among all living things.”⁵⁸⁷ This premise allows to conduct life according to a vitality-enhancing ethic, and to politically organize ourselves accordingly. Finally this web of relationality locates each of us as particular knots within a broad indeterminate network or ‘rhizome’, and at any given position each one of us evolves from a history of relationships with a collection of many others, including other humans as well as plants, (non-human) animals, the rest of nature, and all other manifestation of the “life energy” or “spirit”. This brings back the Indigenous notion of non-anthropocentric community, the extended “We,” which ties humans into specific networks or places that make up the notion of a “sacred land” with its many sacred sites. In short, as Cajete puts it, “The people learn to respect the life in the places they live and thereby to preserve and perpetuate the ecology.”⁵⁸⁸ And this respect must be based in the active participation in the responsible renewal of all cycles, and not just ceremonially, but through our everyday actions and via the organic articulation or nurturing of pertinent forms of socio-political and economic organization that blend (or perhaps dissolve) harmoniously with/in the rest of the bio-eco-cosmo-political community.

Ines Talamantez, Apache scholar and philosopher, further confirms and adds to Cajete’s reading of Indigenous stories and myths, and of their bio-eco-cosmo-political relevance when she underlines that

Central to the diversity of beliefs among the various Native American nations are elaborate explanations of how the cosmos came into being and what our corresponding responsibilities are to the world of nature that surrounds us and connects us. Implied are our instructions in reciprocity for all the gifts we receive from nature, especially from the land, and our obligation to sustainability.⁵⁸⁹

All these elaborate explanations of which Talamantez speaks of are embedded in Indigenous stories, as Cajete explains, and in order to illustrate Cajete summarizes the Pueblo

⁵⁸⁷ Cajete 2000, 77. Dudgeon (2008) illustratively articulates this as “eco-holism;” although this is a valuable translation, I surmise that we translate this as an ‘eco-rhizomatic disposition’ since it seems to me as it would entail an indeterminate open web or network.

⁵⁸⁸ Cajete 2000, 77.

⁵⁸⁹ Talamantez 2003, 273.

origin story and offers an explicit interpretation that brings forth the crucial aspects and values that constitute the basis of Indigenous philosophy and bio-eco-cosmo-politics. Cajete's rendition of the Pueblo "origin story" is worth citing in full because more than an origin story it serves as a constitution, a normative account that is cyclically retold to re-enact, re-create, re-vitalize, and renew on a periodical basis the constitutive values of bio-eco-cosmopolitical community (implying its non-anthropocentric infrastructure). Chippewa sociologist Duane Champagne explains how these "creation stories" operate as normative constitutions, ceremonially renewed on a cyclical basis; he writes that the Indigenous

...generally have creation stories that outline the formation of the world, and the place where people are placed on the land, as well as their relation to the land. The creation stories provide many social, political, and cultural institutions, which are often upheld and kept through ceremony and tradition as part of the cosmic order.⁵⁹⁰

Cajete writes that "The typical myth that deals with the stories of how a people came to be and how they moved in the landscape is embodied in a very elegant way in the general Pueblo story of emergence."⁵⁹¹ This story is periodically retold and therefore serves as the normative constitution that cyclically reinforces the values of bio-eco-cosmopolitical community. The story, which is worth citing in full, reads as follows,

Humans came into this world, their place after having evolved through three other worlds...Before they could come in they sent messengers to ask the powers of this world if they could live here. As the people received the message that they were indeed invited to come into this Earth, they were very happy. Their messenger, a sparrow, explained the rules they must follow, and those rules dealt with proper relationships. As the people emerged, the first man and the first woman led them. The sun and the moon and plants and animals greeted the people. They came into a world [of] mountains, waters, sky, and Earth...their home, and they had certain responsibilities to this place...they began their journey moving a long a rainbow pathway into the place where they now live.⁵⁹²

As Cajete further describes and explains,

This pueblo story is a tale of evolution, of journeying, of learning about responsibilities to each other and to all other creatures inhabiting the world with them. This story becomes

⁵⁹⁰ Champagne 2005, 6.

⁵⁹¹ Cajete 2000, 37-38.

⁵⁹² Cajete 2000, 37-38.

complex as it guides; it is the story from which other stories come, from which other understandings about relationships develop.⁵⁹³

What is interesting as well is that the story is communally inspired, it is a transgenerational communal product and no individual can claim authorship. The story has no subjective origin as it springs from a communal continuum in accordance with the “ever-flowing river” of life-energy. As Cajete writes “Each generation adds to it something of itself and of its experience.” Also, these stories are bio-eco-cosmically informative and contribute to an awareness of the enabling cosmological conditions of community in that “they explain that humans, plants, and animals, and the forces of nature are part of the universe’s creative impulse.” Moreover, these stories shape ethico-political conduct and personhoods in that “[t]his very participation in procreation brings with it certain responsibilities and understandings that must be maintained, the kinds of understandings that today we call an “ecological compact” or “spiritual ecology”.”⁵⁹⁴ As Cajete further observes, the stories have broader implications for ecosophy and political theory:

Environmental philosophers recognize that a culture’s assumptions about how the world works, the purpose of human beings, and the like, embody how people relate to their place at the deepest levels. A culture’s understanding of relationships encompasses everything, from the spiritual to the physical, including the technologies and tools that develop from a specific mode of thinking and understanding of relationships. From this understanding comes a people’s ecological compact with all things in the world.⁵⁹⁵

It is important to notice that Indigenous stories about the time following the creation “are filled with...tales about transgressions in the...ecological compact”⁵⁹⁶ and of the consequences of those transgressions (remember the Maya *Popol Vuh*’s account of what befell the Humans of Wood). These “myths” and “stories” are constitutive articulations of Indigenous values which “are told by Indigenous people all over the world and describe compacts built on relationships

⁵⁹³ Cajete 2000, 37-38.

⁵⁹⁴ Cajete 2000, 37-38.

⁵⁹⁵ Cajete 2000, 37-38.

⁵⁹⁶ Cajete 2000, 37-38.

established between humans and other living things.”⁵⁹⁷ These stories are cyclically retold because they

...embody the understanding that humans, along with all other entities, continually create the world. People are co-creators and their role as co-creator is no more important than that of all other co-creators. Humans have responsibilities to their co-creators and vice versa. Unless one understands his/her place in the whole, there is always a tendency to move beyond, to glorify, to self-aggrandize. The technologies that humans build tend to follow understanding, or the lack thereof, of their role in the world.⁵⁹⁸

Without a bio-eco-cosmopolitical understanding, Cajete notes, there is a tendency to “move beyond,” “to glorify,” “to self-aggrandize;” such would be the anthropocentric tendency as for example in the authorial mystique, and that is why these stories must be authorless, they emanate from the transgenerational bio-eco-cosmopolitical community which itself emanates from and goes back to the “land” which in turns constitutes the “We”.

Another such “origin story” that articulates similar conceptualizations, values and responsibilities is the Muscogee Creek myth of emergence. As appearing in the work of Muscogee author Donald Fixico, it narrates that

Long, long ago, the Muscogee Creek people lived in a dark misty fog and they were cold. They felt along the walls something damp and realized they were moving upwards. *Slowly they emerged from the Earth* and the fog blinded them. Unable to see and stricken with fear, the people and even the animals cried out until the wind blew away the fog so that they could see. *Perceiving animals and people to be equal*, the Creeks named groups of people after animals and called them clans. The savior wind became the highest recognized clan. In all four cardinal directions the forces of fire confronted the people, and they had to make a decision. From the south, a yellow fire faced the people, a black fire burned in the west, a white fire was aflame in the east, but the people chose the red and fire from the north. The fire of the north warmed the people and provided light over the world and enabled plants to grow, so that the Muscogee Creeks learned to *respect all of the elements for life* and they celebrated the harvest of the green corn (busk) in ceremonials. *Should the people fail in their respect for nature* and forget the busk ceremonies, *the people would disappear from the land and it would fall beneath the waters of the ocean*. The Muscogee Creeks stressed the importance of *community and generations* of ceremonials reinforced it. As the ceremonies became ritualized, the Muscogees developed *ceremonial laws* to maximize the community’s confirmations of successful ceremonies, and thus the way of life of the Creeks was the correct way.⁵⁹⁹

⁵⁹⁷ Cajete 2000, 37-38.

⁵⁹⁸ Cajete 2000, 37-38.

⁵⁹⁹ Muscogee Creek myth cited in Fixico 2003, 1; emphasis added.

The work of Donald Fixico allows us to understand and extrapolate on some of the most relevant implications of Indigenous “myths” for philosophy and political theory. Fixico explains that peoples of Indigenous descent “who are knowledgeable of their cultures, see things in more than a human-to-human context. It is a perspective that involves human beings, animals, plants, [and] the natural environment.”⁶⁰⁰ Fixico is referring to what we have here discussed extensively as the expanded non-anthropocentric notion of Indigenous bio-eco-cosmopolitical community. As has been repeatedly—or rather circularly—argued, this is not one community in which humans act as gatekeepers benevolently (or rather condescendingly) ‘including’ non-human ‘actors’; rather, it is a community in which human manifestations of life-energy are very small participants among many other manifestations of life-energy. As Fixico explains, human participation in this more encompassing community entails much more demanding standards of accountability and responsibility, than those that would be embodied in anthropocentric polities. Fixico writes: “This broader context of perception involves more accountability...for taking care of and respecting their relationships with *all* things.”⁶⁰¹

Fixico, as many Indigenous voices, refers to a “creation story” (in this case the Muscogee creation story) as a way to explain as well as to reenact on a cyclical basis the ethicio-moral-political norms that should constitute the responsibilities and shape the relationships that allow for the renewal of the extended community of which humans are merely an integral part. Again, it is important to emphasize that in the “circular” Indigenous way this stories operate in a similarly circular fashion, they are retold cyclically so as to reenact the conditions that make the renewal of community possible. Let us consider Fixico’s interpretation of the Muscogee “creation story” in this circular light. He writes:

Like the creation story of the Muscogee, the people establish...their relationships with each kind of animal and plant with the help of *He-sa-ke-tv-me-se*, the Giver of Breath or

⁶⁰⁰ Fixico 2003, 3.

⁶⁰¹ Fixico 2003, 3; emphasis added.

Life. This system of relations set[s] the kinship of community for all beings, and with other peoples or tribes...⁶⁰²

As Fixico is prompt to point out, “This inclusive” non-anthropocentric “kinship conflicts with the mainstream linear way of seeing things in the world where everything is based on human-to-human relationship.”⁶⁰³ The reduction of the social imagination to exclusively human-to-human relations is what is being articulated here as the anthropocentric polity. In contrast to this very limiting and in fact dangerous and misguided social (and socio-political) imaginary, Fixico further narrates that according to the late Muscogee Creek couple of elders, Jean Hill Chaudhuri and Joyotpaul Chaudhuri, the Creek tradition crucially differs from linear ways of thought; they note that while “mainstream” and “Christian thinking” usually “conceives of a bracketed, reified, individual self and soul,” or mind and body, it is noticeable that “Creek thought also eschews the existence of atomistic permanent souls, selves, and entities.” This entails that for “The Creek” so-called “entities” would rather be understood as “all my relations” tying together “male, female, human and non-human, known and unknown,” into “a continuum of energy and spirit” that the Creek call “*boea fikcha/puyvfekev*” and this continuum fluxes according to “the ever-present principles of transformation and synergy” which thereby enable the pooling of energy and diffusion of power—to use Cordova’s and Cajete’s terms—that shapes all the relations that constitute the Creek world. The Chaudhuri couple adds that “Due to the spiritual energy” shared among all relations and temporarily condensed (seemingly “thingified”) manifestations of life-energy, all such manifestations or “things” should be “respected for their potential”. To the extensive network of spiritual energy that encompasses and ties it all, the Muscogee Creek refer to as “*Ibofanga*,” which articulates “the existence of all things and energy within all things.” As a result of this experience of the cosmos, for the Creek “all things are capable of possessing spiritual energy.”⁶⁰⁴

⁶⁰² Fixico 2003, 3.

⁶⁰³ Fixico 2003, 3.

⁶⁰⁴ quoted in Fixico 2003, 3.

Leigh J. Kuwanwisiwma, director of the Hopi Cultural Preservation Office, offers a testimony that in many ways articulates and confirms what Gregory Cajete, Ines Talamantez, and Donald Fixico among so many other Indigenous voices understand as the awareness of our bio-eco-cosmo-political responsibilities in relation to each other whether human or other-than-human. Moreover, this testimony offers the hope that this way of thought and life will help to bring about a more harmonious future for the world. Leigh J. Kuwanwisiwma states the following:

Since I am from a family of traditional farmers and shepherds, I am emotionally bonded to the land and the animals. We are taught that we are at the mercy of nature. Treat the Earth and environment with respect, humility, and cooperatively and it will in turn provide for you. Our life is corn ... Perhaps the Hopi prophecy that our way of life and our corn will someday save the world will come true.⁶⁰⁵

2. An Encounter of Cosmologies

As a prelude to this section we would similarly do well in quoting again parts of another of Viola Cordova's extended poems of Indigenous philosophy, this one titled "How It Isn't." This poem is the counterpart of the one with which was a prelude to the previous section titled "How it Is." The excerpt, again, is extended, but what it brings forth is worth every instant of our consideration.

"How It Isn't"

In the beginning (it is said) / There was: / Nothing. / But how can SOMETHING arise from NOTHING? / It is postulated / IT WAS GOD said some. / IT WAS VACUUM said others. / And God said / Let There Be / And the vacuum that was nothing / EXPLODED! / The big bang / It is said. / And that which was nothing / EXPANDED into nothing which is space and time began before which there was nothing. / It is said. / And I whisper / Is not "GOD" a mere name, a euphemism, a metaphor for ... SOMETHING? / Is not "VACUUM" a mere name, a euphemism, a metaphor for ... SOMETHING? / Of course NOT! / It is a Miracle, said one. / It is Mystery, said another. / (Or...A BLACK HOLE). / There must be secrets so that we can find them / So that we can say / "I found it!" / "He found it!" / So that there can be medals, honors, awards, elevations / HEROES / The universe is a machine. / The deity is an engineer, or perhaps, a chemist. / It all works according to laws: of ratios and forces, maybe even action at a distance (or by inverse proportions?) / Anyway: $E = mc^2$ / And there is a purpose for the mechanism / It was made so that man could rule—or at least be foreman of the maintenance department. / Residing in the somewhat flawed mechanism called / "BODY" / is a somewhat less

⁶⁰⁵ Leigh J. Kuwanwisiwma quoted in O'Donnell 2001, 53.

flawed: / "MIND." / The mind operates the body. / It analyzes input, / It creates output. / It is immortal. / It is immaterial. / It is the "ghost in the machine." / The ghost is spiritual as opposed to the mundane, crass, material, and functional / It is where the "higher order" of things happen. / ONLY HUMANS HAVE "MINDS" / THEREFORE, THEY ARE NOT—AS ARE ALL OTHER THINGS—MERE MECHANISMS. / Each knows only its own mind. / It does, however, assume that other things exist. / Other things may be consumed, used, led, organized, analyzed, categorized, and other-wized. / All things exist in a hierarchy—culminating with the / Ghost. / The ghost is the culmination of 4.5 BILLION years of progressive evolutionary / DEVELOPMENT or — / The ghost is an alien infusion into an alien and hostile environment. / HEADS OR TAILS. / IN ANY CASE— / The goal of the ghost is to surpass, overcome, transcend, supersede / NATURE (that which is red in tooth and claw) / To bring CIVILIZATION to the stars / (And, incidentally, find new resources to feed the voracious mechanisms of the civilized man).

—Viola F. Cordova (Apache), "How it is in 't"⁶⁰⁶

A. Cosmopolitics faces Anthropolitics: The Subduing of Natural Democracy

And God blessed them, and God said unto them, "Be fruitful, and multiply, and fill the Earth, and subdue it: and have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that moves upon the Earth."

—Bible, Genesis 1:28⁶⁰⁷

We started out the previous section with a discussion of the crucial role of cosmologies in the constitution of worldviews, philosophies, and modes of political thought and organization. We are starting this second section on a similar footing. Let us tread lightly on these delicate topics.

The epigraph with which we are opening this section is probably familiar to many. The reason for which I have cited it is that this passage from the Bible serves to illustrate the underlying desires that have historically propelled and still continue to propel the global expansion of the anthropocentric mode of civilization; a civilizational modality that first took over the "Old World," starting in Europe, and then sought to swallow up the rest of the world, whether it be in the form of colonization, empire, modernization, development or globalization. This passage is doubtlessly a paradigmatic and extremely influential articulation of what I refer to here as anthropocentric-politics or simply anthropolitics. I will not offer an extended exegesis or critical

⁶⁰⁶ Cordova 2007, 87-99.

⁶⁰⁷ This version of Genesis 1:28 is from the King James Bible. This and other versions can be found at <http://bible.cc/genesis/1-28.htm>.

interpretation of this passage as its (theocratically-sanctioned) anthropocentric content is rather evident and has been extensively discussed by countless people;⁶⁰⁸ I will only point out its crucial aspects that should be kept in mind as we move along. These aspects can be summarized in the metaphysical and theologically sanctioned blessing (and license) for those who are to take upon this command for anthropocentric expansion and dominion. It is important to start with this passage as it sets the tone for the problematic at hand: the expansion of anthropocentric civilization and specifically its sustained onslaught against Indigenous peoples, wisdoms and ways, not least because of their bio-eco-cosmo-political spirit of “natural democracy” or “cosmic democracy” (as was explained in Part I concerning Mesoamerica).

Gregory Cajete again guides us artfully in these rather complicated and problematic endeavors. In *Native Science* Cajete describes the problem at hand eloquently, starting with the question of cosmologies; his articulation is worth an extended consideration with support from other authors. Cajete first describes the question of cosmologies, he writes:

Cosmologies are the deep-rooted, symbolically expressed understandings of “humanness.” They predate all other human structured expressions, including religion and social and political orders...⁶⁰⁹

He then follows with a summary of Indigenous cosmologies that highlights some of the crucial aspects we discussed above; he writes:

Indigenous cosmologies were based on the perception that the spirit of the universe resided in the Earth and things of the Earth, including human beings. Because of this perception, these people remained equally open to all possibilities that might manifest through the natural world. In turn, perceptions of the cycles of nature, behavior of animals, growth of plants, and interdependence of all things in nature determined culture, that is, ethics, morals, religious expression, politics, and economics. In short, they came to know and express “natural democracy” [also referred to as “cosmic democracy”.] In

⁶⁰⁸ Especially illustrative are the discussions by Cheyenne scholar, Henrietta Mann 2003 (194-195), mainly with regard to its relationship to Manifest Destiny. She writes: “Those that left their homelands [in Europe] to immigrate to this country held differing attitudes toward Earth, based on their belief in Manifest Destiny...that [this world] is cursed [and] cannot be sacred; consequently, land is nothing more than a commodity to be subdued, which is justifiable under the doctrine of Manifest Destiny.” See also Cordova 2007, 114-115;

⁶⁰⁹ Cajete 2000, 52-54.

the inclusive view of natural democracy, humans are related and interdependent with plants, animals, stones, water, clouds, and everything else.⁶¹⁰

Cajete follows his summary of Indigenous cosmologies with an inference that is particularly relevant, not just politically, but for every dimension of life and human organization. He underlines the fact that from within an Indigenous experience of the cosmos it “becomes in every sense abnormal to view the world as dead matter, private property, commodities, or commercial resources.”⁶¹¹

In an insightful essay titled “On Authenticity” Dine’ (Navajo) elder and scholar Marilyn Notah Verney⁶¹² confirms and adds to Cajete’s understanding that human claims to sovereignty *over* land and all living things (whether theocratically-sanctioned or not) which is to say anthropocentric property or ownership of the world or of any ‘parcel’ of the world—in any of its variations, whether individual or collective—is simply not in accordance with an Indigenous experience of the living cosmos. Within an Indigenous experience of the cosmos it can never be legitimate—nor can it be bio-eco-cosmo-ethically sustainable—for anybody or group to claim anthropocentric sovereignty or dominion *over* Mother Earth or (its vernacular manifestation as) “land” in part or in whole or any living thing on it. From within an Indigenous cosmoexperience any claim to ownership, whether individual or collective, over any *body*—whether human or non-human—and anybody who makes such a claim would be proceeding from the misguided ontology that there can be such a ‘thing’ as ‘entities’ that would be fundamentally bounded, essentially defined, and absolutely separated from each other. Therefore any claim to sovereign dominion *over* Earth, any part of her, or any living thing on her should be actively resisted on nothing less than bio-eco-cosmo-ethico-political and spiritual grounds.⁶¹³ Notah Verney writes, as Cordova and

⁶¹⁰ Cajete 2000, 52-54.

⁶¹¹ Cajete 2000, 52-54.

⁶¹² Notah Verney 2004.

⁶¹³ There is a growing number of voices that are increasingly suspicious of the notion of sovereignty, especially considering Indigenous wisdoms and ways, and mainly as it comes from the Western canon, and importantly because of its theological and anthropocentric underpinnings.

Cajete have, that non-anthropocentric “equality” and solidarity is to be predicated from an Indigenous awareness of our co-creative responsibilities as part of and within the bio-eco-cosmic continuum of “life-energy/life-force” or “spirit”. She writes

Our philosophy is simple. It is through our spiritual...connection with Mother Earth that we are able to teach our philosophy of communal living among all life in the universe. We are no better or worse than any of our relations, because the [cosmologies] of respect (interdependency) sustaining our fundamental relations with Mother Earth are relations of equality. Everything that sustains life is within our reach, for we sustain and are sustained by life, which is given to us by our Mother. Therefore, our universe and land are sacred, holy, and to be treated with respect. This...respect grounds our philosophical ethics, based on kindness, caring for others, sharing what is given to us by our Mother through a communal way of life. Nothing is owned, and hence nothing is owned by an individual. In this [view] ownership is inconceivable. Mother Earth continually nurtures all her children by providing food and shelter. So long as we sustain Mother Earth all of our needs are provided for, and there is no desire to commodify our environment. Without commodification, everything is shared equally, as needed. How can one own what is shared with our Mother? It is inconceivable to claim (own) that which must be shared.⁶¹⁴

Notah Vernay’s articulation cited above is worth pondering very carefully.

Kanien'kehá:ka political theorist Taiaiake Alfred reaches a similar conclusion, he states that, from within an Indigenous understanding of the cosmos, “...since humans had no hand in making the Earth, they have no right to “possess” it or dispose of it as they see fit—possession of land by humankind is unnatural and unjust.”⁶¹⁵

In light of Notah Vernay’s and Alfred’s words, it is now pertinent to return to Gregory Cajete’s articulation of the problem at hand. Cajete adds to the discussion the pertinent critique that “The manifestations and roots of the Native sense of democracy,” that is, as Natural or

Among them we find Alfred 1999; Deloria and Lytle 1984; d'Errico 1997; Lyons 2000; Richardson and Villenas 2000; Cheyfitz 2003; Grande 2004. Deloria and Lytle famously dismissed the idea "self-government" as well as an idea that "originates in the minds of non-Indians" who have reduced traditional ways to dust, or at least believe they have, and "now, wish to give, as a gift, a limited measure of local control and responsibility." Basically sovereignty and self-government would be incompatible with the traditional Indigenous cosmopolitics of bio-eco-cosmic responsibilities and interdependence. Humans cannot determine themselves, nor can they be sovereign over themselves, over others, or over Mother Earth. Alfred (1999) argues that “...sovereignty is an exclusionary concept rooted in an adversarial and coercive Western notion of power.”

⁶¹⁴ Notah Verney 2004, 135.

⁶¹⁵ Alfred 2009, 84.

Cosmic Democracy “run much deeper than all the modern version[s] of democracy” including European or Euro-American⁶¹⁶ versions as established in the West and colonially superimposed on Indigenous ways throughout Abya-Yala. The roots and manifestations of Indigenous natural (or cosmic) democracy, Cajete emphasizes, run much deeper because in Indigenous natural democracy “all of nature, not only humans, has rights.” Cajete points out that this difference is the condition that has led to the historical and ongoing “cosmological clash” between anthropocentric civilization and (Abya-Yalan or other) Indigenous wisdoms and ways.

In Cajete’s terms we have been witnesses to an ongoing “cosmological clash” between the bio-eco-cosmopolitical web of Indigenous culture and the theocratically-sanctioned anthropolitical foundations of the Old World and its purportedly ‘secularized’ “modern society”—which (with or without God’s blessing) continues on along the path of expansive anthropocentric dominion. Cajete then goes on to offer a concise but revealing articulation of what has been referred to here as the anthropolitical cosmology, whose evolution can be traced to a time much earlier than the dawn of (Western-European) modernity and yet has continued to fuel the expansionism of “modern” anthropocentric civilization, and its clash with, subduing of, dominion over, and attempted (and near) extermination of Indigenous bio-eco-cosmopolitics. Cajete’s rendition is worth considering in full. He writes

The cosmology that has shaped the evolution of the West with its focus on dominion over nature, the hierarchy of life, and a transcendental male God, has also shaped modern peoples perception of the “real world.” Modern Western [and Westernized] societies are rooted in institutions based on the old unexamined tenets of this cosmology, although our collective thinking is [or rather might be] shifting toward a more inclusive cosmology. But the mindsets of many modern people are still firmly vested in the old [anthropocentric and] mechanistic worldview. Therefore, conflict at all levels of modern life is inevitable.⁶¹⁷

⁶¹⁶ ‘American’ in Euro-American refers to the whole Americas, and it is not to be reduced to a particular country or state.

⁶¹⁷ Cajete 2000, 52-54.

Because of this, Cajete adds, “The ambiguity, conflict, and tension that we are now experiencing at all levels of modern life are reflections of our inability to come to terms with an essentially dysfunctional cosmology, a cosmology that can no longer sustain us at any level.”⁶¹⁸ Furthermore,

Although there are different stories from the people who gave moderns the current dominant cosmology, all espouse essentially the same root paradigm. God was seen to live outside the universe, transcendent and greater than the universe, while also having dominion over the universe and all inhabitants.⁶¹⁹

Cajete continues,

Humans were seen to have a connection to this divine god, but in order to fully consummate this union or connection, people had to transcend the material world, and become transcendent and exercise dominion over it in God’s name. This orientation leads people to a perception of the world in purely material terms, hence, the objectification, secularization, and scientification of the world. The non-human world (many times including...Indigenous peoples) was considered the property of the transcendent God and his chosen people. Although it was considered holy, it was also considered material, without spirit, and therefore eligible to be used or exploited according to the chosen people’s needs.⁶²⁰

As Cajete further explains, “This conception of the world as spiritless (dead/lifeless) material allowed” those under its sway, and those presumably ‘entitled’ to its power, first and foremost the “Western peoples to have a sense of detachment that was religiously justifiable.”⁶²¹ Hence, Cajete continues, “It was therefore up to Western peoples as to how they might express or apply this God-given right of dominion over nature” and thus also dominion over those who refused to sever themselves from “nature” which is to say, the Indigenous.⁶²²

In a similar vein, *Kanien'kehá:ka* political theorist Taiaiake Alfred argues,

Nowhere is the contrast between Indigenous and (dominant) Western traditions sharper than in their philosophical approaches to the fundamental issues of power and nature. In Indigenous philosophies, power flows from respect for nature and the natural order. In

⁶¹⁸ Cajete 2000, 52-54.

⁶¹⁹ Cajete 2000, 52-54.

⁶²⁰ Cajete 2000, 52-54.

⁶²¹ Cajete 2000, 52-54.

⁶²² Cajete 2000, 52-54.

the dominant Western philosophy, power derives from coercion [or dominion]...in effect, alienation from nature.⁶²³

Viola Cordova attributes much of the issues discussed by Indigenous voices such as Vernay, Cajete, and Alfred (among many others throughout Abya-Yala), to the metaphysics of the “extraterrestrial God,” or rather extra-cosmic God and the metaphysical ‘mind’ (or ‘soul’), which is the foundation even of the theologically-sanitized or secular version of anthropocentrism. In contrasting the Indigenous Abya-Yalan cosmology with that which was brought by settler colonialism Cordova writes, with her characteristic critical edge, that for the Indigenous,

Our world is defined as Mother, and we grow up with a certain attitude to the Earth that penetrates all of our everyday thinking. Yet we walk out into a world that does not share our view of the Earth. Everywhere we look the Earth is covered, “paved,” with asphalt, concrete, glass, and buildings that resemble from afar one of the European cemeteries with their projecting memorials. On those occasions when we can look at the Mother or her offerings, we see “tamed” vegetation: the grasses are manicured, the trees pruned, and the whole is surrounded with fencing or signs that warn one away. “Keep Off The Grass.” The domesticated bits of Earth lie like prisoners behind bars—contained, restrained, and isolated. The subjugation of the Earth is the product of another mind—a mind that shares few of our own definitions, or “answers,” about what the world is.⁶²⁴

Moreover, Cordova continues,

The world is defined...as “hostile,” “wild,”—something, that is, that is potentially harmful. It must be kept at bay. Even the “enlightened” view of the modern environmentalist or ecologist maintains [a] distance from the Earth. Man's duty, they might say, is to “keep guard” over the Earth—as if the Earth without their ministrations would deteriorate into chaos, or worse yet, become “unusable.”

As Cordova explains, there is an anthropolitics to this that is particularly paradoxical and problematic,

There is a definition of man in all of this, a strange definition: man is, at the same time, a pawn of the universe and its guardian. The paradoxical definition is resolved, however, when we explore the definition of man: a human being in the European sense is not a part of the world; in the religious sense, he is a creation of an extraterrestrial god who has set man up in an alien environment. In the secular sense, man is a being that has evolved beyond his former relationship with the Earth. In both cases *man is seen as alien, a stranger, to his environment.*⁶²⁵

⁶²³ Alfred 2009, 77-84.

⁶²⁴ Cordova 2007, 51-52.

⁶²⁵ Cordova 2007, 51-52; emphasis added.

In reflecting about Cordova's critique of the metaphysics of the extraterrestrial or rather extra-cosmic God, Chikasaw writer Linda Hogan comments:

We dwell in different matrixes... There is first the relationship with the Earth that is the primary experience of tribal peoples whose theology is land-based. Christianity, upon which the Euro-American social structure has come to be based, has what Cordova calls an extraterrestrial god, and traditionally believes in the human "elevation out of nature," out of dumb matter [a belief inherited by the dominant, purportedly 'secularized' evolutionary narratives]. Much is missing in such a belief system, and she notes that it is also a belief system that requires unquestioned foundations of its own mind-set.⁶²⁶

Cajete's "cosmological clash" among Hogan's "different matrixes" serves to explain a great many problems concerning the current condition of the Earth, the critical condition of hegemonic civilization, and the lamentable condition of peoples of Indigenous descent. It is not possible to discuss every dimension of this clash and its often woeful and ongoing legacy; we will only discuss a few of its implications here. At this point, it is nevertheless crucial to point out that throughout Abya-Yala ('the Americas') the extermination, marginalization, subjugation, dispossession, subordination, displacement and impoverishment of peoples of Indigenous descent can be *directly* traced to the racialized institutionalization, structural sedimentation, and quotidian reenactment of anthropocentric civilization, an institutionalization and sedimentation that has been and continues to be resisted by peoples of Indigenous ancestry that refuse to become either extinct, subordinated, violently or illegitimately or questionably miscegenated, 'conquered' or assimilated into the dominant cosmology and the (dis)order that this cosmology continues to uphold, even in the face of the accumulation of un-redressed historical injustices and an ecological crisis of unprecedented and potentially cataclysmic dimensions.

There are many ways in which Indigenous bio-eco-cosmopolitics clashes with anthropolitics and especially its most aggressive, that is, its modern Western manifestation (traceable at least as far back as the so-called 'Age of Discovery' and the Scramble for the Americas—which will be discussed ahead). Some space could be dedicated to compare, for instance profoundly divergent approaches to wisdom and knowledge, especially in regard to how

⁶²⁶ Hogan in Cordova 2007, vii.

anthropo-technocratic modern science became as it did a (frequently racialized, gendered, and speciesist) matrix of knowledge/power bent on the colonization, conquest, and control over 'nature', both non-human and human 'nature'. Religion and spirituality⁶²⁷ might be another topic of great interest, and so would be a great many others, ranging from nutrition, to architecture, planning,⁶²⁸ and technique/technology, to economics and modes of (re)production. But for purposes of conciseness we shall focus on what is perhaps the most volatile and crucial point of conflagration, namely the radically divergent experiences and conceptions of the "land" (and Mother Earth in general) and of what from within an Indigenous experience of the cosmos would be understood as the proper political, ethical, economic and ecological relationship among humans and (the rest of) the land and Mother Earth. As countless Indigenous voices throughout Abya-Yala and other continents have repeatedly stated, Western anthropocentric civilization has sought to stand above and against the rest of Mother Earth (and indeed the cosmos) in a relationship of domination or "dominion" that has often theocratically commanded and scientifically licensed the subduing of "nature" and along with that the domination and subduing of whoever lives organically with/in the cosmos as an integral part of so-called "nature" (i.e., '*los naturales*,' the natural, the native, the Indigenous) and/or resists to become severed from the broader embrace of the bio-eco-cosmopolitical community.

At this point it is pertinent to turn back to what Notah Vernay articulates. In light of the problem at hand it is relevant to consider what the Dine' (Navajo) elder has to say about the question of Indigenous versus Western (that is, European, including Euro-American⁶²⁹) conceptions of land. In a moving passage, Notah Vernay emphasizes again that "[o]ne example"

⁶²⁷ Vine Deloria Jr.'s intellectual legacy is a valuable critical engagement with Western religion/spirituality and science from an Indigenous perspective. See, for instance Deloria 2004; 1995; 2010; 2006. About Deloria Jr.'s legacy see Pavlik and Wildcat 2006.

⁶²⁸ In what concerns Indigenous planning, see the excellent work of Ted Jojola (1998; 2004).

⁶²⁹ 'American' in Euro-American refers to the whole Americas, and it is not to be reduced to a particular country or state.

of Indigenous cosmological “assumptions that differ from Euro-American philosophical assumptions can be recognized in how land is viewed” or rather experienced:

*The land viewed by Euro-Americans is seen as an object, a commodity to be owned, and viewed as an investment for profit; it is there to develop and commercialize for financial gain. By contrast, a common philosophy that is shared by all Indigenous people is that our land is sacred, holy. There is a strong relationship (interdependent relational bond) between land and people. Land is Mother Earth. We came to be from within the womb of Mother Earth. Mother Earth is home for all living beings: human people, animal people, plant people, everything in the universe. Therefore, Mother Earth, as an interdependent sustainer of life, is not to be stripped, taken apart, or desecrated, nor should boundaries of property (ownership) be placed upon her. To understand American Indian philosophy one must first understand our spiritual relationship, our connection with the land, with Mother Earth. If non-Natives can understand our traditional spiritual relationship with the land and its connections within the universe, that all things have life, then one can better understand our people, our culture, and our traditional beliefs. Only then will our philosophy, hopefully, touch your heart, and bring meaningfulness into your life.*⁶³⁰

Every aspect of Marilyn Notah Vernay’s articulation is worth considering, not least the idea that from within an Indigenous experience of the bio-eco-cosmic community, it is never legitimate to objectify, (claim to) appropriate, own, or place any boundaries of property or ownership upon Mother Earth or any part of her, however big or small. The idea of anthropocentric sovereign ownership is not compatible with Indigenous cosmologies. Oneida scholar Maureen E. Smith echoes and further emphasizes similar understandings. She underlines that

Europeans...brought with them the idea of *property* rights and consequent notions of *boundaries, limits, restrictions, and prohibitions*, thereby instituting the concept of *bounded land*. Because land to Europeans was a *commodity, ownership* became a fundamental concept underpinning the law [and actually sociopolitical and economic organization as a whole]. Throughout this process, economic development and religious beliefs became inextricably intertwined.⁶³¹

Maureen Smith is emphasizing the same problematique (property, ownership, boundaries, limits, objectification, commodification, etc.) and in invoking the intertwinement of economic development/growth/productivity with religious beliefs she is gesturing critically to the underlying anthropolitics so illustratively embodied in that maxim which continues to fuel the expansionist

⁶³⁰ Notah Verney 2004, 134; emphasis added.

⁶³¹ Smith 2004, 119; emphasis added.

desires of anthropocentric civilization, namely, the kernel of which is well articulated by Genesis 1:28,

And God blessed them, and God said unto them, “*Be fruitful, and multiply, and fill the Earth, and subdue it: and have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that moves upon the Earth.*”⁶³²

Anne Waters would explain that these desires and their theocratically sanctioned or “blessed” license/command correlates strongly and reinforces itself with the “Western European ontology of discretely bounded entities,” an ontology that profoundly clashes with the Abya-Yalan experience of the cosmos as a dynamic ever-flowing river of (re)creating life-energy or spirit among all our relations—to use Cajete’s terms. Notah Vernay makes it plain that as opposed to the ideal of communal life in natural or cosmic democracy which Indigenous Abya-Yalans by and large have sought to enact since time immemorial,

Many early Europeans came to our home for different reasons. They came to escape from religious persecution and oppressive economics, or to seek new *land* for their nation. These foreigners who came to our home were greeted by our people and, in keeping with our philosophy, we offered them food and shelter. But rather than visit, we learned they had come to *conquer*. Unfortunately for our people, Europeans also brought their own philosophy, a philosophy grounded on and framed by religious and economic principles of *ownership*. Our people, not knowing about *property* and *ownership (dominion)*, were considered uncivilized, savage, and not human. We were forcefully introduced to the Europeans' philosophy. To be civilized, one had to embrace the Christian religion, with its teachings of male *dominion* over all creation (stemming from the Christian creation story [as found, for instance, in Genesis 1:28]).⁶³³

Under such oppressive, genocidal and ethnocidal conditions, coupled with still ongoing often coercive assimilationist pressures, Abya-Yalan peoples were (and continue to be) pushed to relinquish their wisdoms and ways—on top of being pushed to renounce their sacred relations with the Earth, the continent, and their ancestral homelands. Notah Vernay laments, “History will remind us that through wars, treaties, and congressional and judicial decisions, our people were

⁶³² This version of Genesis 1:28 is from the King James Bible. This and other versions can be found at <http://bible.cc/genesis/1-28.htm>. Emphasis added.

⁶³³ Notah Verney 2004, 135; emphasis added.

forced to change our relationships with our Motherland.”⁶³⁴ And she continues, the settler peoples and cultures that immigrated and colonized what they have called ‘the Americas’ have

...viewed our people as obstacles needing to be removed, in order for Europeans to migrate...Our grandfathers and grandmothers were forced to walk hundreds of miles to a new location, and once there, they learned that *boundaries and restrictions had been placed upon them. Our people did not comprehend, but quickly grasped that they were no longer free, free to migrate across the land as the seasons changed.*⁶³⁵

The arrival, expansion and persistence of settler colonialism⁶³⁶ and settler colonial statecraft⁶³⁷ to every part of Abya Yala from the southernmost tip of the Andes to the northernmost tip of Alyeska throughout the last five centuries and counting has turned the continent into a tapestry of bounded and fenced entities of different aggregations. Considering the still ongoing spatialization of the continent through anthropocentric modes of ownership, whether as private property or a sovereign (group/national) property, there is probably not one square mile of Abya-Yala that has not yet been subject to dominion, that is not subdued, domesticated (under some settler state), “owned” and demarcated, delimited by overlapping matrices of boundaries, borders, fences, and restrictions, some more visible than others, and especially affecting the

⁶³⁴ Notah Verney 2004, 134.

⁶³⁵ Notah Verney 2004, 134.

⁶³⁶ The literature on settler colonialism and settler colonial statecraft or the settler state, sometimes known as “settler colonial studies,” has expanded tremendously over the last years. *Unsettling Settler Societies: Articulations of Gender, Race, Ethnicity, and Class*, edited by Daiva Stasiulis and Nira Yuval-Davis is one of the earlier interventions. It has been followed by a proliferating literature; see, for instance, Stasiulis and Yuval-Davis 1995; Wolfe 1999; Ostler 2004; Elkins 2005; Coombes 2006; Godstein and Lubin 2008; Jacobs 2009; Veracini 2010; Ford 2010; Surhone, Timpledon, and Marseken 2010; Bateman and Pilkington. 2011.

⁶³⁷ According to *Edward Cavanagh and Lorenzo Veracini*,

Settler colonialism is a global and transnational phenomenon, and as much a thing of the past as a thing of the present. There is no such thing as neo-settler colonialism or post-settler colonialism because settler colonialism is a resilient formation that rarely ends. Not all migrants are settlers; as Patrick Wolfe has noted, settlers come to stay. They are founders of political orders who carry with them a distinct sovereign capacity. And settler colonialism is not colonialism: settlers want Indigenous people to vanish (but can make use of their labor before they are made to disappear). Sometimes settler colonial forms operate within colonial ones, sometimes they subvert them, sometimes they replace them. But even if colonialism and settler colonialism interpenetrate and overlap, they remain separate as they co-define each other. (<http://settlercolonialstudies.org/about-this-blog/>)

subsistence, way of life and, movement of people of Indigenous ancestry throughout the continent. As Notah Vernay explains, “boundaries and restrictions had been placed upon” the people of Indigenous Abya-Yalan descent. As Notah Verney laments “Our people did not comprehend, but quickly grasped that they were no longer free, free to migrate across the land as the seasons changed” just as would any other of the peoples of nature, the other two-legged peoples, the four-legged peoples, the winged, finned, and other peoples, the wind and the waters.

And ironically, this over-regulation and even prohibition of the movement of the Indigenous and those of Indigenous ancestry who have endured boundaries and restrictions imposed by colonial dominion upon them has been coupled with an almost completely unrestricted movement for those who colonized them and their descendants. Viola Cordova critically reflects upon the issue:

How relevant is the view of bounded space for today's world? If one looks at a map of the world and traces the expansion of European peoples and their descendants, one sees a tremendous disruption of “natural boundaries.” The “Age of Discovery” ends with the populations of Europe in control of three entire continents—North and South America and Australia. There are serious inroads into other continents as well. No other population has equaled the movement of the Europeans. We are taught that the “swarm” of peoples is a simple matter of “might makes right.” We are told also that it is “natural” for a people to scour the planet in search of needed resources—so long, that is, as the people doing the scouring are ourselves. The inhabitants of the “developed” world have a “right” to go where they please, regardless of the desires of the inhabitants of other occupied areas. The entirety of the planet’s resources goes “naturally” to those with the desire and capacity to mine the surface and depths of the Earth. The actions toward others are justified under the guise of “bringing democracy” and “modernity” to the world’s peoples. We ignore the fact that once self-sufficient groups, anywhere from two-thirds to three-quarters of the world’s people, now suffer from malnutrition and disruption because of the elimination of ancient means of adapting to specific areas... [indigenous] peoples seem not to have been “contaminated” with the “germ” of thinking themselves “owners” of the world [at least not without systematic ‘acculturation’ and ‘assimilation’] ⁶³⁸

Lamentably, however, even a great number of people of Indigenous descent—mostly because of a history of systematic de-Indigenizing ‘evangelization,’ ‘acculturation’ and

⁶³⁸ Cordova 2007, 191. It is important to point out here that the expansion of anthropolitical civilization also displaced and marginalized other ways of life that existed in Europe and among peoples of European descent; anthropolitical civilization however has been undeniably tied to Euro-centric racialization and ethnocracy, hence the double viciousness of the violences endured under its expansion by those of non-European ancestry.

‘assimilation’⁶³⁹—now mirror, adopt, and rehearse the anthropolitical cosmology and/or partake—many reluctantly and often just for survival—in the objectification, commodification, appropriation, bounding and division of Mother Earth and Abya-Yala. But ownership-as-dominion and development-as-exploitation have never been very actively embraced by peoples of Indigenous Abya-Yalan ancestry. That is why all locations of the ‘Americas’ where we find concentrations of peoples of Indigenous ancestry (most notably the less mixed) have been pushed aside and marginalized by the expansion of an anthropolitical economy bent on ‘converting’ (i.e., desacralizing and enslaving) the Earth into “resources.” It is worth reiterating that, as Viola Cordova accurately notes, when the world’s privileged few accuse the majorities of ‘underdevelopment’ and so-called ‘endemic poverty’, they “ignore the fact that once self-sufficient groups, *anywhere from two-thirds to three-quarters of the world’s people*, now suffer from malnutrition and disruption because of the elimination of ancient means of adapting to specific areas.”⁶⁴⁰ Indigenous marginalization and impoverishment worldwide (and throughout Abya-Yala) have become the legacy of “civilization’s” wrath against Indigenous resistance to anthropolitical “dominion.” The political subordination and economic displacement of peoples of Indigenous ancestry is a direct result of the racialized, structural and direct violence targeted against them in reaction for their resistance to the expansionist ‘advancement’ of anthropolitical civilization.

⁶³⁹ See Bonfil Batalla 1996; Chávez Leyva 2003; and Perez Aguilera and Figueroa Helland 2011.

⁶⁴⁰ Cordova 2007, 191; emphasis added. In an insightful article titled “Race in the Ontology of International Order,” Branwen Gruffyd Jones eloquently articulates an important part of the problem at hand. She writes:

The current world order is characterised by profound global inequality, depicted through reference to the [‘]developed[’] and [‘]developing[’] world. The racialised character of global inequalities in power is rarely acknowledged, however. Explicit racial discourse has been removed from the institutional form of the modern world order, and this apparent transcendence of race is mirrored in the lack of attention to race ... [However] A survey of the long global history of colonialism reveals that the relations structuring societal interaction with nature on a global scale have been built upon a basis of racialised dispossession ... the racialised structures of social power produced through centuries of colonial dispossession remain entrenched ... revealing the endurance of race in the structures of international order. (Gruffyd Jones 2008, 907).

The anthropological tapestry of Euro/Western-centric patterns of settler colonial power and ownership in the form of anthropocentric sovereignty and property persist to this day, as the basis of the hegemonic forms of economy (primarily capitalist) and of political organization (primarily statecraft, the states, and the state-system). Notah Vernay clearly summarizes the contraposition, indeed the problem at hand in terms that should be carefully considered:

In this way Mother Earth was seen [by settler colonizers] as *land, and beheld and coveted as a material commodity to be owned* in a Lockean framework, *with boundaries signifying ownership demarcations*. The land had to be *divided*, worked, and *owned*, in order to produce commodities that could be sold for profit rather than shared. The land itself became a commodity. American Indian philosophy is and always has been contrary to much of traditional Euro-American philosophy. *Euro-American philosophy is deeply rooted within the...social, political, economic, religious, and educational structures. Euro-American philosophical assumptions create standards and principles that operate as foundations for these systems.*⁶⁴¹

Chippewa sociologist Duane Champagne further explains the radical contraposition between the two matrixes; he writes:

The native conception of community and relation to nature varies considerably from the Western...view. Attitudes toward land and nature are fundamentally different from Western...views, which often inform the creation of nation-states. [For the Indigenous,] Land is given as a sacred gift... *People do not own land, but must care for the land as part of their sacred task within the purpose and direction of the cosmic order.*⁶⁴²

In contrast, “The Western emphasis on land as a resource that must be exploited and transformed into cultural and valuable goods is very different.”⁶⁴³ Therefore,

The world as resource for the work of humans to transform into increasingly more productive and useful things is wholly foreign to native interpretations of nature and their place within the cosmic order.⁶⁴⁴

And what is crucial to point out, “These fundamental differences in cultural epistemology are at the root of conflict”⁶⁴⁵ between the hegemonic mode of civilization (including nation-states and

⁶⁴¹ Notah Verney 2004, 135-136; emphasis added.

⁶⁴² Champagne 2005, 7; emphasis added.

⁶⁴³ Champagne 2005, 7.

⁶⁴⁴ Champagne 2005, 7.

⁶⁴⁵ Champagne 2005, 7.

anthropocentric economies, whether individualist or collectivist) on the one hand, and communities of Indigenous ancestry on the other hand. Moreover, as Champagne points out, “The two different cultural epistemologies indicate two very different views of the order and purpose of nature, and the relation of humans within the cosmic order.”⁶⁴⁶

Taiaiake Alfred’s arguments accurately illustrate how these different cosmologies lead to profoundly different philosophies and practices in what concerns political economy, raising a number of crucial issues and challenges that must be confronted. Alfred writes that under the dominant form of Western political economy,

...Trees, rocks, and fish become commodities whose value is calculated solely in monetary terms without reference to the spiritual connections between them and Indigenous peoples. From a traditional [Indigenous] point of view, this is an extreme devaluation of nature. Yet, in a world economy dependent on resource exploitation that is structured so that such exploitation seems the only means of survival, what are Indigenous peoples committed to traditional values to do? All societies must take their sustenance from the land; however, we must also recognize that the Earth has an inherent value, beyond human needs. The situation now, and in the framework of conventional economic development models, is that a small minority of the white population of the Earth go far beyond sustenance to take extravagant wealth from Indigenous lands. Very little in terms of either employment or wealth comes back to the Indigenous people themselves. ... [Indigenous] traditionalists believe that Native people must assert their consciousness of nature and power by demanding that [Earth be treated] in ways that respect Indigenous notions of justice, not simply for the short-sighted generation of wealth...⁶⁴⁷

In short, from an Indigenous viewpoint—Alfred insists,

...development for development's sake, consumerism, and unrestrained growth are not justifiable. It is the intense possessive materialism [and I would add anthropocentrism] at the heart of Western economies that must be rejected—for the basic reason that it contradicts...values aimed at maintaining a respectful balance among people and between human beings and the [rest of] Earth.

But as Champagne writes “native views present entirely alien values and goals to Western national communities.” So if we are to build “democratic and consensually based” polities, we must start by “honoring native values and epistemologies” as well as Indigenous

⁶⁴⁶ Champagne 2005, 7.

⁶⁴⁷ Alfred 2009, 85.

“understandings of land, government, and community institutions...”⁶⁴⁸ For instance, we can start with Taiaiake Alfred’s initiative that “Governance structures and social institutions should be designed to empower” people specifically with a view “to maintain the balance found in nature.”⁶⁴⁹ Most of this work so far has been precisely in the spirit of contributing to initiatives of this sort.

Still the effort to share these ideas and collaborate on making them possible locally and globally confronts the issue of what Cajete called the “clash of cosmologies,” especially with regard to what should be the proper relationship to the ‘land,’ the Earth and all that lives in her. Anishnabai philosopher and political theorist Dale Turner illustrates the political intricacies that result from this “clash of cosmologies”. He laments that the expansionism of Western civilization created an “asymmetry of justification that is deeply embedded in the relationship between Indigenous ways of understanding” the proper relationship to “the land” and “Western European legal and political discourses that define political sovereignty, rights, and title.”⁶⁵⁰

For the Indigenous, developing a relationship with the land is exactly like developing a relationship with any human person, or community of persons; the personhood of the Earth/land and of what lives in her must be recognized first, and so developing a proper relationship is a matter of long term commitment and respect that engenders familial intimacy as reverence and esteem; it is a loving relationship that cannot be broken without affront and devastating consequences by those who would lay claim upon the ‘land’ without patiently, respectfully, fostering “profound connections.”⁶⁵¹ It takes many generations to foster such a proper relationship, and newcomers must accept the guidance and defer to the wisdom of those who are literally *familiar* with the ‘land’ (which includes also the defleshed, decomposed, diffused,

⁶⁴⁸ Champagne 2005, 7.

⁶⁴⁹ Alfred 2009, 86.

⁶⁵⁰ Turner 2004, 235-236.

⁶⁵¹ Turner 2004, 235-236.

de/transmaterialized energy or spirit of those who were and those who are to come who are literally part of the land/Earth and all that lives upon her). “Property” as ownership and “sovereignty” as dominion are *not* the right relationships; instead of property, it must be more a question of *propriety* and familiarity. Hence, as Turner points out, for the Indigenous, “the notion of a “homeland” is not simply lands, but everything around one’s world: land, air, water, stars, people, animals, and especially the spirit”⁶⁵² or energy that suffuses and ties them all (including the ‘human’) together in a web of intimate relationships. As Turner insists, “Understanding the balance in one’s world takes a long time, and one cannot hope to learn these relationships without being guided by people who possess, and practice, these forms of knowledge.”⁶⁵³ As Turner points out, the Indigenous understanding of a proper relationship to the land is very different and in many ways contrary to “the legal and political discourses of title, rights, and sovereignty.”⁶⁵⁴

“The idea of political sovereignty and the language of rights,” Turner adds,

goes back to Plato and Aristotle, through the Stoics, then on to Augustine, Aquinas, Vitoria, Grotius, Hobbes, Locke, Pufendorf, Rousseau, Tocqueville, Kant, Hegel, Marx, Weber, Berlin, Oakeshott, Arendt, Strauss, Rawls, Sandel, Taylor, Kymlicka, Tully, and too many others to mention...⁶⁵⁵

Turner observes that “[m]any of these thinkers have written about Indigenous peoples.”⁶⁵⁶ And then he offers some examples, of how they have written about or in relation to the Indigenous. It is worth keeping these examples in mind. He states:

For example, the discourse of property was developed by John Locke in the seventeenth century; it has recently been argued that he deliberately designed his theory of property to exclude Indigenous forms of ownership. As another example, Hobbes has a notion of power and political sovereignty that requires a distinction between a “state of nature” and a “civil society,” where, incidentally, American Indians are permanently located in the nasty and brutish state of nature. Immanuel Kant’s views on rationality imply that Indigenous ways of thinking are irrational. Hegel defends the view that colonialism is a

⁶⁵² Turner 2004, 235-236.

⁶⁵³ Turner 2004, 235-236.

⁶⁵⁴ Turner 2004, 235-236.

⁶⁵⁵ Turner 2004, 235-236.

⁶⁵⁶ Turner 2004, 235-236.

natural extension of a civil society. Political liberals view Indigenous rights as a form of minority right, which therefore can be subsumed within a more general theory of rights...⁶⁵⁷

These examples might be unsurprising but that does not make them any less unfortunate.

One of the reasons can be attributed to the fact that, as Turner points out, “The normative force behind the legal and political understandings of rights and sovereignty has essentially evolved without...Indigenous participation.”⁶⁵⁸ And as Turner is quick to add, “Mind you, Indigenous understandings of” what should be the proper relationship among people and with the rest of nature and the land, “have no need for Western European participation, either.”⁶⁵⁹ However, as Turner concludes “[t]he main difference is, of course,” that settler colonial states/regimes “do not have to justify their philosophical reasoning in the discourses of the [indigenous] traditions.” Their

⁶⁵⁷ For literature concerning some of the examples Turner articulates, see Banner 2005; Gruffyd Jones 2008; Berkhofer 2011; Holly 1994; Squadrito 2007; Williams 1990; Buchan 2005; Hoffheimer 2001; Maloney 2011; Bernasconi 2002; Tomlins 2001. For instance, Gruffyd Jones points out that

Liberal political theories of...property...originated in part in the imperatives of racialised colonial dispossession. The theories developed by John Locke regarding property and rights were informed by and reflected the imperatives of English colonisation of North... The English colonisation of North America, legalised, justified, planned and detailed in charters, was legitimised with reference to the [purported] inferiority and inadequacy of the culture, organisation and economic activities of the peoples already inhabiting the territories to be chartered. [According to Tomlins] The actual inhabitants were ‘invoked as a preliminary only to establish that their want of civic personality rendered them unsettled, and therefore unfit to occupy what they, in fact, occupied’ ...The Amerindians were considered to be living ‘in Darkness and miserable Ignorance of the true Knowledge and Worship of God’; colonisation was necessary to ‘bring the Infidels and Savages ... to a settled and quiet Government’ (‘First Charter of Virginia, 1606’...) ...Not only did the indigenous peoples lack the Christian faith...their ways of life and production were deemed to bring no improvement to the land they ‘wandered over’. The legal right to claims and ownership of property came to be related directly to notions of improvement and productive investment...The English charters of colonisation rendered the lands of the Americas metaphorically ‘empty’, unoccupied and therefore open to English claims, in ways that acknowledged the presence of existing peoples but literally emptied that presence of ‘any legal or political significance’...This imperative was central to Locke’s development of the theory of property rights...Locke developed his theory in part as an explicit defence of England’s claims to property in land in America, against the claims of the Aboriginal or Amerindian peoples...England superseded the right of occupation by the Amerindians by virtue of their specific form of labour. Suddenly a whole continent was open to English colonization... (Gruffyd Jones 2008, 920-922)

⁶⁵⁸ Turner 2004, 235-236.

⁶⁵⁹ Turner 2004, 235-236.

discourses are assumed as given by the grace of hegemony and dominion (whether theocratically sanctioned or not). In contrast, peoples of Indigenous heritage and ancestry, “on the other hand, must engage” under the hegemonic “legal and political discourses” of settler colonial regimes “if they want to survive”.⁶⁶⁰

Now, there are many reasons why this asymmetry is unjust, but similarly importantly, *it is dangerous* (for the whole world) because the subduing of Indigenous understandings of proper relationship(s) among all participants in the bio-eco-cosmic community under the dominion of Western hegemony is precisely one of the major causes for the socio-ecological crisis of the now globalized Western civilization—a potentially catastrophic crisis that in great part can be attributed to the subjugation, marginalization and thereby ignorance of indigenous wisdoms and ways and to the theological, philosophical, legal, political, and scientific discourses specifically as they have served to underpin, extend, articulate, and legitimate dominion, ownership, property, title, rights, and sovereignty.⁶⁶¹ As Peter d’Errico clearly put it “The overall ecological failure of the system of...sovereignty—the destruction of the biosphere in the name of sovereign interests—is...becoming frighteningly obvious.”⁶⁶²

⁶⁶⁰ Turner 2004, 235-236.

⁶⁶¹ See also Sandy Grande’s Indigenous critique in *Red Pedagogy* of the prevalence of a human/nature dichotomy in the Western canon which precludes the symbiotic relationship that will be needed for a sustainable global age. (Grande 2004, 7)

⁶⁶² D’Errico 1997. D’Errico’s lecture is very recommendable as it makes it plain that the genealogy of sovereignty is rather questionable, and its content is antithetical to Indigenous values, wisdoms, ways, and modes of organization. He writes:

The classical attributes of “sovereignty” already foreshadow the problem of applying this concept to [Indigenous] and other non-state peoples: absolute, unlimited power held permanently in a single person or source, inalienable, indivisible, and original (not derivative or dependent). These are characteristics of power associated with divine right monarchy and the Papacy of the Christian Church. They are the core concepts of state power that arose around monarchs and church. They were the brainchild of Western political theorists of the 16th and 17th centuries (especially Jean Bodin and Thomas Hobbes)... They are not the characteristics of power in [Indigenous] societies... Camilleri [1990] pointed to “an increasingly powerful ... desire to cultivate Indigenous values, traditions, and resources that are often antithetical to conventional notions of state sovereignty”... Sovereignty -- the notion of “absolute, unlimited power held permanently in a single person or source, inalienable, indivisible, and original” -- is today a theory

In this regard, Taiaiake Alfred's reflections are extremely timely and valuable. He writes

The Western view of power and human relationships is so thoroughly entrenched that it appears valid, objective, and natural. It has become what Jens Bartelson⁶⁶³ has called "the unthought foundation of political knowledge." The challenge, then, is to "de-think" the concept of sovereignty and replace it with a notion of power that is based on more appropriate premises. Indigenous thinkers from around the world have had some success in undermining the intellectual credibility of state sovereignty as the only legitimate form of political organization. Scholars in international law are now beginning to see the vast potential for peace in Indigenous political philosophies. [For instance] The international attention focused on the *Rotinohshonni Kaienerekowa* (Great Law of Peace) is indicative of the growing recognition given to Indigenous models as post-colonial alternatives to state sovereignty... Such conceptions outside the mold of classical Western liberalism would appear to provide a more appropriate foundation for understanding humanity.

The reader may immediately recognize that this work seeks to be in every way exemplary of what Taiaiake Alfred articulates in the above-cited paragraph. And as Alfred observes, among the difficulties that are faced in the confronting of these challenges is that "the state will not easily release its grip on" what Alfred calls "control-power" and which has been called here dominion. It is difficult to bring people to accept the alternative(s), among them, the Indigenous form of power. As Alfred recognizes, this is because the

... values of Indigenous peoples directly threaten the monopoly of control-power currently enjoyed by the state. Some scholars have interpreted the violence that occurs when the state confronts [the] Indigenous... as a natural statist reaction to such threats. For example, Arthur Kroker believes that the state is determined to eliminate the intellectual threat posed by the idea of a politics beyond state sovereignty and to that end is prepared to use terror-including not only physical force but the intellectual violence inherent in state policies.⁶⁶⁴

In consideration of these critical observations, it is imperative to understand exactly what it is that drives this seemingly "natural" (or rather unnatural) violence of the state bent as it is on upholding sovereignty and especially against any sign of Indigeneity.

under siege. Indigenous peoples are only one of the besiegers, but their presence is felt worldwide... [According to Tony Hillerman (1997)] Navajo elder Hastiin Alexander Etcitty, "would say that the notion that any human, or group thereof, has sovereignty over any part of Mother Earth is a myth based upon the white man's Origin Story."... the current system of international law--"discovery" and "state sovereignty"--must be discarded [we will discuss the doctrine of discovery ahead] (<http://www.umass.edu/legal/derrico/nowyouseeit.html>)

⁶⁶³ See Bartelson 1995.

⁶⁶⁴ Alfred 2009, 88.

B. The Anthropolitics of Dominion

The mythology of the state is hegemonic, and the struggle for justice would be better served by undermining the myth of state sovereignty than by carving out a small and dependent space for Indigenous peoples within it. The need to perpetuate a set of fictive legal premises and fact-denying myths is apparent in every legal act of the state. To justify the establishment of non-Indigenous sovereignty, aboriginality...must necessarily be excluded and denied...the loss of collective memory is an essential requirement for creating a colonial reality [namely]...the pretense of European sovereignty on Turtle Island...⁶⁶⁵

—Taiaiake Alfred (Kanien'kehaka), *Peace, Power, Righteousness: an Indigenous Manifesto*

In consideration of arguments such as those of Dine' (Navajo) elder Notah Vernay, it is important to illustrate how, as she puts it, "Euro-American philosophy is deeply rooted within the...social, political, economic, religious, and educational structures," and how "Euro-American philosophical assumptions create standards and principles that operate as foundations for these systems."⁶⁶⁶ Let us focus particularly on the issue pertaining to the theocratically sanctioned anthropolitics of dominion (illustrated by Genesis 1:28) and its constitutive role in the practice of Western statecraft. Especial emphasis will be made with regard to the question of "land" and the issue of "sovereignty" and the related question of "freedom" for peoples of Indigenous descent especially as pertaining to the restricted movement or migration of people of Indigenous descent across 'the Americas' in the face of the transplantation of the onto-politics of "boundaries, limits, restrictions and prohibitions" from Europe to this continent.

As we discuss these themes I will illustrate with some Indigenous interventions in contemporary controversies that have been taking place in what is conceived within the hegemonic geopolitical imaginary as the Mexico/US borderlands. I will make special reference to the experience of the region known in non-Indigenous geographies as Arizona, a region in which I have dwelled, studied and conducted research for the last six years. References to the experience

⁶⁶⁵ Alfred 2009, 62-63.

⁶⁶⁶ Notah Verney 2004, 135-136.

of Arizona will be mostly associated with two interrelated activities or rather dimensions of the same activity that have been taking place in the region. The first is an event that took place within the Arizona State Capitol House of Representatives on March 23, 2012 known as the Indigenous Peoples Forum on the Impact of the Doctrine of Discovery (from here on referred to as “Indigenous Peoples Forum”); this was a historically exceptional event for all peoples of Indigenous ancestry, and which I had the fortune to personally attend. As described by its organizers, the event constituted

A regional forum to address the local, regional, continental, and global implications of the Preliminary Study on the Impact of the Doctrine of Discovery by the United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues in the context of the standards established by the adoption on September 13, 2007 of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples [UNDRIP].⁶⁶⁷

The second dimension concerns a consideration of the Indigenous basis for the thought, and practice of two of the organizations that have been most active in bringing about events such as the Indigenous Peoples Forum on the Impact of the Doctrine of Discovery, and in interventions concerning the legitimate revitalization of the ancestral autonomies and freedoms of peoples of Indigenous ancestry, such as political autonomy and freedom of movement across the continent. These struggles face up to racialized claims of expansionary and exclusionary territorial ownership that are ultimately traceable to (often onto-theologically sanctioned) frameworks of anthropolitical dominion (or dominance) embedded in ethnocentric⁶⁶⁸ doctrines such as the Doctrine of Discovery (and the Doctrine of Conquest).⁶⁶⁹ It is upon these frameworks of anthropolitical dominion that Euro/Western-centric forms of statecraft and their still unfolding settler colonialism(s) have

⁶⁶⁷ See <http://doctrineofdiscoveryforum.blogspot.com/>

⁶⁶⁸ For a valuable discussion on ‘ethnocracy’ and ‘domination ethnicity’ see Nederveen Pieterse 2006. Nederveen Pieterse accurately points out that the “general origins of ethnocracy are conquest and settler colonialism, a rank order between old and new immigrants and postcolonial ethnic shuffles.” Ethnocracy is most clearly—though not exclusively—manifested as the “domination” or “monocultural control of the state apparatus.” (Nederveen Pieterse 2007, 38-41)

⁶⁶⁹ One commonly discussed manifestation of these doctrines and their underlying myths is the ideology of Manifest Destiny, a topic we will only briefly touch upon, but which should be kept in mind.

claimed to legitimize their ultimate sovereign ownership, (re)partitioning, and division of Abya Yala, Turtle Island or ‘the Americas’. The two organizations to which I will frequently refer to are Tonatierra and the Indigenous Alliance without Borders or *Alianza Indígena Sin Fronteras*.

I will address the topics in the following order. First I will discuss what has come to be known as the Doctrine of Discovery and its effect on the Indigenous peoples of North America, illustrating with the Forum that took place in the Arizona State Capitol, and then I will discuss how Indigenous philosophy informs the thought and practice of these two organizations which have been crucial in bringing about such events of great historical import both locally and globally, and in revitalizing the ancestral wisdoms, ways, autonomies and freedoms of people of Indigenous descent in the region and throughout Abya Yala.

i. The Framework of Dominion (Dominance) in the Doctrine of Discovery

Centuries of destruction and ethnocide resulted from the application of the Doctrine of Discovery and framework of dominance to Indigenous peoples and to their lands, territories and resources.⁶⁷⁰

— Tonya Gonnella Frichner (Onondaga, Haudenosaunee), Special Rapporteur to the United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues.

The establishment of the United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues (UNPFII) in July 28 of 2000 and the adoption by the United Nations General Assembly of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP) in September 13 of 2007 has opened the floodgates for the local, regional, and global recovery, revalorization and revitalization of what has been articulated throughout this work as Indigenous cosmopolitics. In doing so, such milestones have accentuated what Gregory Cajete calls the “clash of cosmologies” and its different implications for every dimension of life, not least the dimensions traditionally associated in Western discourse and practice with the politics of statecraft. A very illustrative

⁶⁷⁰ Gonnella Frichner 2010, 6. For discussions concerning the “Doctrine of Discovery” see also Gonnella Frichner 2010b; Newcomb 1993; Newcomb 2008; Miller 2005; Miller 2006; Miller and Ruru. 2008-2009; Wilkins 1998; Wilkins and Lomawaima 2001; Williams 1991; Behrendt 2010; Blumm 2003; Bratspies 1006; Fitzpatrick 2002; Huff 2005; Katz and Taylor 1988; Watson 2011; Watson 2006.

example of the “political” theater of Cajete’s “cosmological clash” can be found in the growing controversy concerning the international legal construct known as the doctrine of discovery which, according to a preliminary study by the Special Rapporteur of the UNPFII, Tonya Gonnella Frichner (Onondaga, Haudenosaunee), “has served as the foundation of the violation of [the] human rights” of “Indigenous Peoples.”⁶⁷¹

A discussion of this document is crucial to understand what has been articulated here as the anthropolitics of dominion and to make sense of Indigenous interventions like those that have occurred in Arizona. It is on the basis of the preliminary study from the Special Rapporteur to the UNPFII that several Indigenous voices gathered to discuss at the Indigenous Peoples Forum on the Impact of the Doctrine of Discovery that took place in the Arizona State Capitol on March 23, 2012. The Discussion of the preliminary study will be followed by a discussion of the Indigenous Peoples Forum.

- *The Preliminary Study on the Impact of the Doctrine of Discovery*

During the eighth session of the UNPFII that took place in May 2009 Tonya Gonnella Frichner⁶⁷² was appointed as a Special Rapporteur to the UNPFII. Her task was to “conduct a preliminary study on the impact on Indigenous peoples of the international legal construct known as the Doctrine of Discovery” (I will refer to it as the “preliminary study” from here on). The findings of this preliminary study are concisely reported in the opening summary:

⁶⁷¹ Gonnella Frichner 2010, 1.

⁶⁷² It is relevant to point out in relation to our discussion in this work that Tonya Gonnella Frichner later went on to articulate the voice of Phoenix-based organization Tonatierra at the 11th session of the UNPFII on May 9, 2012. The speech voiced by Gonnella Fricher further elaborates on the impact of the Doctrine of Discovery, with specific reference to the US and to Arizona. This speech was written by Tupac Enrique Acosta, one of the leaders of Tonatierra and one of the main organizers of the Indigenous People’s Forum on the Impact of the Doctrine of Discovery that took place at the Arizona State Capitol on March 23, 2012. The speech voiced by Gonnella Frichner is a summary and report, including a set of recommendations for the UNPFII resulting from the Indigenous Peoples Forum that took place at the Arizona State Capitol. A video of this speech at the UNPFII coupled with a brief news report was uploaded to the internet by Indian Country Today Media Network (May 10, 2012) to their website and is available at <http://indiancountrytodaymedianetwork.com/2012/05/10/video-gonnella-frichner-delivers-doctrine-report-to-unpfii-112414>.

This preliminary study establishes that *the Doctrine of Discovery has been institutionalized in law and policy, on national and international levels, and lies at the root of the violations of Indigenous peoples' human rights, both individual and collective. This has resulted in state claims to and the mass appropriation of the lands, territories, and resources of Indigenous peoples. Both the Doctrine of Discovery and a holistic structure that we term the Framework of Dominance have resulted in centuries of virtually unlimited resource extraction from the traditional territories of Indigenous peoples. This, in turn, has resulted in the dispossession and impoverishment of Indigenous peoples, and the host of problems that they face today on a daily basis.*⁶⁷³

Even though the insights of the preliminary study can easily extend to every state in the Western Hemisphere and Oceania (at least), the Rapporteur chose to focus on the case of the US because, as she explains, she is most familiar with that country and with federal Indian law and because this case, according to the Special Rapporteur, “serves as an ideal example of the application of the Doctrine of Discovery to Indigenous peoples.” From the viewpoint of this dissertation, this case should not be singled out as a more “ideal example” than others since the effects of such doctrines—and other similar/comparable doctrines and practices—have been equally devastating throughout the Western Hemisphere and Oceania (and elsewhere). With these premises in mind, the preliminary study offers a detailed analysis of the ‘foundations’ of the system known as “federal Indian law” as found in “the Supreme Court ruling *Johnson & Graham's Lessee v. M'Intosh* 8 Wheat. 543 (1823).”⁶⁷⁴ This case which will be described below has been widely, extensively and very critically discussed, especially by Indigenous scholars from North America.⁶⁷⁵ But this preliminary study adds a deeper layer in that it directly ties it to the “framework of dominion” and, most importantly, it does so within a forum taking place as part of the apparatus of international organization; also, according to the Special Rapporteur, this study

⁶⁷³ Gonnella Frichner 2010, 1; emphasis added. In a footnote that closes this paragraph, Gonnella Frichner refers the reader to a 2009 UN report on “The State of the World’s Indigenous Peoples” (United Nations Publication, ST/ESA/328) which must be kept in consideration. The report is available at <http://www.un.org/esa/socdev/unpfii/documents/E.C.19.2010.13%20EN.pdf>.

⁶⁷⁴ *Johnson & Graham v. M'Intosh* 8 Wheat. 543 1823 is available online at http://press-pubs.uchicago.edu/founders/documents/a1_8_3_indians9.html.

⁶⁷⁵ See, for instance, Morris 2003; Grande 2004, 36-40; Williams 1986, 224-256; Kidwell and Velie 2005, 64.

provides “evidence... demonstrating that the Doctrine of Discovery continues to be treated as valid...”⁶⁷⁶

This preliminary study can be read as critical genealogy of Western statecraft in general and specifically its settler colonial manifestations, whose claims to “sovereignty” as exclusive territorial “ownership” would be founded on the Doctrines of Discovery and Conquest (discussed at length as we move on), both of which trace their roots to a single, rather questionable and violent, root, namely, what Gonnella Frichner calls the “framework of dominance”—a framework whose basic kernel can easily be recognized in the paradigmatic illustration of the anthropolitics of dominion articulated in the theocratically sanctioned license and command to subdue the Earth and establish dominion as found, most paradigmatically, in Genesis 1:28.

Because of the genealogical character of this preliminary study, it is interesting to reverse engineer it, so to speak, as it concludes by summarizing how the framework of dominion still operates as the foundation that enables the reproduction of the political structures of our day, specifically the reproduction of a mode of statecraft and a principle of ‘sovereign’ ownership which is based on the quotidian reenactment of the anthropolitical violence of dominion. As the Special Rapporteur writes in her conclusion,

This preliminary study...documented that for more than 500 years the Doctrine of Discovery has been global in scope and application. [Moreover] At least two...other [national governments]...Canada and Australia, have cited the *Johnson v. McIntosh* ruling to enforce the Doctrine of Discovery. When they have done so they have cited the Doctrine of Discovery and the Framework of Dominance. Non-Indigenous legal scholars and State actors have interwoven the Doctrine of Discovery into international and domestic law....⁶⁷⁷

Moreover, since the time of *Johnson v. McIntosh* up until as late as 2005 in the case of *Sherrill v. Oneida Indian Nation of New York*, several Justices, federal prosecutors, and government/state attorneys have, according to the Special Rapporteur, “relied upon the Doctrine of

⁶⁷⁶ Gonnella Frichner 2010, 1-2.

⁶⁷⁷ Gonnella Frichner 2010, 18-19.

Discovery which is rooted in and perpetuates the Framework of Dominance passed down, from generation to generation, from the era of Christendom and the Vatican papal bulls.”⁶⁷⁸

The preliminary study is meant to link contemporary legal cases that shape still valid and operational jurisprudence directly to the questionable content of Vatican papal bulls that have long been recognized as Eurocentric and densely charged with racist discourses of many kinds, as well as questionable political ideologies of theologically sanctioned dominion. In addition to that, even the Vatican has long declared these documents void and null—which does not of course relieve the Vatican of responsibility, nor does it serve as satisfactory redress for the devastating, massive, and still ongoing and upheld consequences, or as correction of the deep structural problems that bedevil a global (dis)order that is still largely founded on an onto-theology of dominion.

In any case, the preliminary study refers us to the time of the Roman Empire, most notably to the Papal Bull *Romanus Pontifex* issued by Nicholas V in January 8, 1455 that grants to the Crown of Portugal in the person of King Alfonso V all lands discovered and conquered. The most illustrative framework of the Papal Bull which contains the framework of dominion (or dominance) reads as follows:

We [therefore] weighing all and singular the premises with due meditation, and noting that since we had formerly by other letters [such as *Dum Diversas*⁶⁷⁹] of ours granted among other things free and ample faculty to...King Alfonso to *invade, search out, capture, vanquish, and subdue all Saracens and pagans whatsoever and other enemies of Christ wheresoever placed, and the kingdoms...possessions, and all movable and immovable goods whatsoever held and possessed by them and to reduce their persons to perpetual slavery and to apply and appropriate to himself and his successors the kingdoms, dukedoms, counties, principalities, dominions, possessions, and goods, and to convert them to his and their use and profit*---by having secured the said faculty, the said King Alfonso, or, by his authority, the aforesaid infant *justly and lawfully has acquired and possessed, and doth possess, these islands, lands, harbors, and seas, and they do of right belong and pertain to the said King Alfonso and his successors*...in order that King Alfonso himself and his successors and the infant may be able the more zealously to pursue and may pursue this most pious and noble work, and most worthy of perpetual remembrance (which, since the salvation of souls, increase of the faith, and the overthrow of its enemies may be procured thereby, we regard as a work wherein the glory

⁶⁷⁸ Gonnella Frichner 2010, 19-20.

⁶⁷⁹ *Dum Diversas* is the Papal Bull issued by Pope Nicholas V in June 18, 1452.

of God and faith in Him, and His commonwealth, the Universal Church, are concerned)...⁶⁸⁰

This Papal Bull is perhaps among the most infamous ‘classical’ articulations of the “doctrine of discovery” and its implicated “framework of dominion”. There are several others that could be cited, since it was not just an exemplar but a prevalent discourse; but let us jump directly to how this framework of dominion and this doctrine of discovery continues to constitute and uphold modern settler colonial statecraft. The landmark legal manifestation of these Doctrines across most of North America is found in the case of *Johnson v. M’Intosh*.

The Special Rapporteur writes that, after the independence of the thirteen British colonies in North America “The newly formed” state and government “needed to manufacture an American Indian political identity and concept of Indian land title that would open the way for... westward colonial expansion.”⁶⁸¹ According to the preliminary study, the principle that the Supreme Court devised for this purpose in the *Johnson* ruling was “that discovery gave title to the government, by whose subjects, or by whose authority it was made, against all other European governments, which title might be consummated by possession.”⁶⁸² Let us consider at length the highly questionable rationalization behind this principle given in the *Johnson* ruling:

On the discovery of this immense continent, the great nations of Europe were eager to appropriate to themselves so much of it as they could respectively acquire. Its vast extent offered an ample field to the ambition and enterprise of all; and the character and religion of its inhabitants afforded an apology for considering them as a people over whom the superior genius of Europe might claim an ascendancy. The potentates of the old world found no difficulty in convincing themselves that they made ample compensation to the inhabitants of the new, by bestowing on them civilization and Christianity, in exchange for unlimited independence. But, as they were all in pursuit of nearly the same object, it was necessary, in order to avoid conflicting settlements, and consequent war with each other, to establish a principle which all should acknowledge as the law by which the right of acquisition, which they all asserted, should be regulated as between themselves. This principle was that discovery gave title to the government by

⁶⁸⁰ This quote is extracted from Davenport 1917, 23; see also p.22. I am thankful for this reference to Shawnee scholar Steven Newcomb whose lecture I had the honor of hearing at the Indigenous Peoples Forum on the Doctrine of Discovery that took place in the Arizona State Capitol.

⁶⁸¹ Gonnella Frichner 2010, 11-13.

⁶⁸² *Johnson & Graham v. M’Intosh* 8 Wheat. 543 1823 is available online at http://press-pubs.uchicago.edu/founders/documents/a1_8_3_indians9.html.

whose subjects, or by whose authority, it was made, against all other European governments, which title might be consummated by possession.⁶⁸³

The evidently questionable character of this discourse does not call for much analysis in order to demonstrate its clearly Eurocentric and racialized underpinnings. Yet if proof is asked for, it suffices to ponder over the italicized terms and statements; undoubtedly in reading this paragraph we are witnesses to an attempt to legitimize “title” over this “inmense continent” on the pretense of “discovery”—a pretense that is ultimately ‘rationalized’ upon Eurocentric and racialized discourses. In any case, as the Special Rapporteur writes, “Based on the concept of “discovery”, the Supreme Court constructed an Indian title of “mere occupancy”.” Furthermore, in keeping with this concept of “discovery”, “it has often been argued” by countless Indigenous scholars and other scholars that

the Indian title of “occupancy” is merely a temporary right, inferior and subject to the absolute title and ultimate dominion of early Christian European powers, and later State actors such as the United States [among others].⁶⁸⁴

“To illustrate the origin of the “principle” of “discovery”,” the Special Rapporteur reminds us, Chief Justice John Marshall “examined the language of the John Cabot charter and a number of other royal charters issued by the British crown.”⁶⁸⁵ The Special Rapporteur refers us⁶⁸⁶ to the words that Marshall used:

No one of the powers of Europe gave its full assent to this principle [of discovery], more unequivocally than England. The documents upon this subject are ample and complete. So early as the year 1496, her monarch granted a commission to the Cabots, *to discover countries then unknown to Christian people, and to take possession of them* in the name of the King of England. Two years afterwards, Cabot proceeded on this voyage, and

⁶⁸³ *Johnson & Graham v. M’Intosh* 8 Wheat. 543 1823 is available online at http://press-pubs.uchicago.edu/founders/documents/a1_8_3_indians9.html.

⁶⁸⁴ Gonnella Frichner 2010, 11-13. See also Morris 2003; Williams 1986, 224-256; Grande 2004, 36-40; Kidwell and Velie 2005, 64; Gonnella Frichner 2010b; Newcomb 1993; Newcomb 2008; Miller 2005; Miller 2006; Miller and Ruru. 2008-2009; Wilkins 1998; Wilkins and Lomawaima 2001; Williams 1991; Behrendt 2010; Blumm 2003; Bratspies 1006; Fitzpatrick 2002; Huff 2005; Katz and Taylor 1988; Watson 2011; Watson 2006.among several others.

⁶⁸⁵ Gonnella Frichner 2010, 11-13.

⁶⁸⁶ Gonnella Frichner 2010, 18-19.

discovered the continent of North America, along which he sailed as far south as Virginia. To this *discovery* the English trace their title.⁶⁸⁷

As the Special Rapporteur⁶⁸⁸ finds, the language that Chief Justice Marshall used can be traced directly back to the rather problematic tradition of Papal Bulls illustrated by *Romanus Pontifex*. As the Special Rapporteur writes, the language used in the ruling of *Johnson v. M'Intosh* “from King Henry VII’s charter to John Cabot and his sons traces directly back to the long tradition of the Vatican papal bulls...”⁶⁸⁹ What the Special Rapporteur is showing is basically that European powers were involved in what should be called a ‘Scramble for the Americas’, the consequences of which are perfectly palpable to this day. As the Special Rapporteur further notes, “With that language,” that is, the language used in the British crown’s charter to John Cabot (in turn cited in the *Johnson v. M'Intosh* ruling)

the British crown was acting on the view that *previous papal grants to Portugal and Spain could not rightfully bar the British crown from voyaging and appropriating lands of “the heathen and infidel”* which before this time “have been unknown to all Christian people.”⁶⁹⁰

Clearly, the Papal Bulls unleashed and/or sought to legitimize a Scramble for the Americas and, basically a scramble for the world, the scramble known as the “Age of Discovery” (for Europeans) which for the rest of the world, including the Americas, should be called the “Age of Dispossession and Subjugation” (or worse). To clarify why it would be pertinent to call it thus, it is suitable to remember what Viola Cordova noted: “The “Age of Discovery” ends with the populations of Europe in control of three entire continents—North and South America and Australia;” moreover, “There are serious inroads into other continents as well.”⁶⁹¹ What the preliminary study shows is that this Age and its ongoing consequences are far from over, in fact,

⁶⁸⁷ *Johnson & Graham v. M'Intosh* 8 Wheat. 543 1823 is available online at http://press-pubs.uchicago.edu/founders/documents/a1_8_3_indians9.html; emphasis added.

⁶⁸⁸ Gonnella Frichner 2010, 18-19.

⁶⁸⁹ Gonnella Frichner 2010, 12.

⁶⁹⁰ Gonnella Frichner 2010, 12.

⁶⁹¹ Cordova 2007, 191.

contemporary judicial and political structures are built upon the ‘spoils’ and ‘doctrines’ of the Age; and this is still true for most of the Americas where formal ‘decolonization’ has been more specifically a transfer of power from the metropolitan elites to the settler colonial elites, more or less mixed with the subordinate peoples (actually less rather than more indeed); certain conflagrations might have softened the hegemony of settler elites, and in exceptional cases some revolutions might have temporarily unsettled and modestly transformed the pyramid(s) of power, but by and large, the structures of power and hierarchies of privilege as built upon the foundations of settler colonialism throughout the Americas are still the norm rather than the exception.

In any case, let us return to the example discussed in the preliminary study. In the case of *Johnson v. M’Intosh*, which is the basis of federal Indian law (and from there the basis of many other laws, such as those related to what would be the legal basis of settler statecraft itself), the Special Rapporteur reminds us that the *Johnson* ruling says “that the Cabot charter constitutes “a complete recognition” of the “principle” or doctrine of discovery.”⁶⁹² This is how the *Johnson* ruling literally reads

In this first effort made by the English government to acquire territory on this continent, we perceive a complete recognition of the principle [of discovery] which has been mentioned. The right of discovery given by this commission, is confined to countries “then unknown to all Christian people”; and of these countries Cabot was empowered to take possession in the name of the King of England. Thus asserting a right to take possession, notwithstanding the occupancy of the natives, who were heathens, and, at the same time, admitting the prior title of any Christian people who may have made a previous discovery.⁶⁹³

As mentioned above, the *Johnson* ruling is still the law, thereby betraying the questionable foundations of settler statecraft. Similarly important is how the *Johnson* ruling embodies what the Special Rapporteur refers to as the “framework of dominance”. She notices that the “Supreme Court’s language” repeatedly “invokes the Framework of Dominance.”⁶⁹⁴ She

⁶⁹² Gonnella Frichner 2010, 12.

⁶⁹³ *Johnson & Graham v. M’Intosh* 8 Wheat. 543 1823 is available online at http://press-pubs.uchicago.edu/founders/documents/a1_8_3_indians9.html; emphasis added.

⁶⁹⁴ Gonnella Frichner 2010, 12.

underlines that “earlier in the *Johnson* decision Marshall also identified that same framework through his use of the concept “dominion”.”⁶⁹⁵ The Special Rapporteur is referring specifically to the following section of the *Johnson* ruling:

While the different nations of Europe respected the right of the natives, as occupants, they asserted the *ultimate dominion* to be in themselves; and claimed and exercised, as a consequence of this *ultimate dominion*, a power to grant the soil, while yet in possession of the natives. *These grants have been understood by all, to convey a title to the grantees, subject only to the Indian right of occupancy. The history of America, from its discovery to the present day, proves, we think, the universal recognition of these principles.*⁶⁹⁶

It is rather interesting that the ruling declares that “These grants have been understood by all” in that the audience implied by the ruling surely would not involve those who are most negatively affected by it. Moreover, the ruling equates the fact of settler colonial *power over* the Indigenous with the “universal recognition of the principles”; it is very questionable that the masses of peoples the world-over who have been affected by these principles of “discovery” would consider them worthy of recognition. It is to be assumed here that the “universe” invoked by and large excludes most of the world.

This paragraph of the *Johnson* ruling is followed by a rather apologetic discussion of how all Western powers were engaged in the application of this principle to justify their massive colonial claims of continental dimensions. The logic of the *Johnson* ruling betrays a disposition to believe and act upon the questionable ‘rationale’ that ‘if others can get away with it, the so can ‘we’.’ For instance, the ruling says in regard to France:

France, *also*, founded her title to the vast territories she claimed in America on discovery. However conciliatory her conduct to the natives may have been, she still asserted her *right of dominion* over a great extent of country not actually settled by Frenchmen, and her exclusive right to acquire and dispose of the soil which remained in the occupation of Indians. Her monarch claimed all Canada and Acadie, as colonies of France, at a time when the French population was very inconsiderable, and the Indians occupied almost the whole country. He also claimed Louisiana, comprehending the immense territories watered by the Mississippi, and the rivers which empty into it, by the title of discovery.⁶⁹⁷

⁶⁹⁵ Gonnella Frichner 2010, 12.

⁶⁹⁶ *Johnson & Graham v. M’Intosh* 8 Wheat. 543 1823, http://press-pubs.uchicago.edu/founders/documents/a1_8_3_indians9.html. Emphasis added.

⁶⁹⁷ *Johnson & Graham v. M’Intosh* 8 Wheat. 543 1823, http://press-pubs.uchicago.edu/founders/documents/a1_8_3_indians9.html. Emphasis added.

The *Johnson* ruling goes on to add another excuse for highly questionable colonizing⁶⁹⁸ behavior by exemplifying with the case of “The states of Holland” who “*also* made acquisitions in America, and sustained their right on the common principle adopted by all Europe” yet, as the Marshall ruling sought to rationalize it, “The claim of the Dutch was always contested by the English; *not because they questioned the title given by discovery*, but because they insisted on being themselves the rightful claimants under that title. Their pretensions were finally decided by the sword.”⁶⁹⁹ This statement of the *Johnson* ruling is rather illustrative of the underlying culture of dominion shaping the European outlook. It is, again, fair to call and question this unfolding of events as a Scramble for the Americas—whose consequences are still largely upheld. About this, the Special Rapporteur writes, in what concerns the claim by the *Johnson* ruling that the English Royal Charters serve as an allegedly legitimate precedent for “acquiring” or to “take possession” of lands that vastly surpass the size of England, and by implication dispossess all of those Indigenous to those lands. The Special Rapporteur writes,

As the... Supreme Court viewed the matter in *Johnson*, the English royal charters expressed the doctrine that “Christian people”, on the basis of a claim of “discovery”, had asserted a right to take possession of any lands inhabited by “natives, who were heathens”, meaning non-Christians. The Political philosopher Thomas Hobbes stated that “the right of possession is called Dominion”. Thus, asserting “a right to take possession” is simply another way of saying “asserting a right of dominion” or dominance.

The preliminary study shows in further detail how this doctrine of discovery with its embedded framework of dominance has been constitutive of settler colonial statecraft, specifically with reference to North America. The Special Rapporteur discusses several other cases, as well as

⁶⁹⁸ As Tomlins relates, “To colonize means, fundamentally, to appropriate, to take possession. What is appropriated varies. In the Americas, the Spanish appropriated metallic wealth and an indigenous population to extract it. The Dutch appropriated routes, connections, to sustain commerce. The English appropriated territory, which required that they find ways either of sharing it with a pre-existing population or of depopulating it—mostly the latter.” (Tomlins, 2001, 26; quoted also in Gruffyd Jones 2008, 925).

⁶⁹⁹ *Johnson & Graham v. M'Intosh* 8 Wheat. 543 1823, http://press-pubs.uchicago.edu/founders/documents/a1_8_3_indians9.html. Emphasis added.

the writings of influential scholars and jurists who have shaped jurisprudence at various levels of power, including the Supreme Court. Although it is worth discussing the document in more detail, for conciseness I will only mention here one of the most paradigmatic cases and then I will jump to the closing arguments of the preliminary study, the arguments concerning the persisting influence of these doctrines and frameworks in contemporary statecraft.

Among the most unapologetic attempts at legitimating the violences of colonialism and settler colonial statecraft the Special Rapporteur finds the articulation of the doctrine of discovery and its paradigm of dominion by Tennessee Supreme Court Judge John Catron in 1835 who was later appointed by Andrew Jackson to the Supreme Court, a testament to his ‘genius’. In this regard the Special Rapporteur writes:

What is now called “international law” was previously known as the Law of Nations. In the late nineteenth century, for example, the international law scholar Thomas Erskine Holland referred to the law of nations as “the law of Christendom; as little applicable to infidels as was the ‘common law’ of the Greek cities ... to societies of barbarians”. In 1835, Judge John Catron (1786-1865), while seated on the Supreme Court of the State of Tennessee...officially identified “a principle” as part of “the law of Christendom”, specifically, “that discovery gave title to assume sovereignty over, and to govern the unconverted...peoples of Africa, Asia, and North and South America”. Catron declared that this principle had been recognized as a part of the Law of Nations “for nearly four centuries, and that it is now so recognized by every Christian power, in its political department and its judicial.”⁷⁰⁰

This “Law of Nations” which mostly survives as so-called “International Law” was, of course, the Law of *European* Nations and their offshoot nations in other continents; that is, the settler colonial states, to the exclusion of all others. These laws—and the discourses and ‘values’ they embody—still play a significant part in upholding the current global (dis)order, and a genealogy of them and of the institutions they underpin serves to explain many of the world’s contemporary problems at every ‘level’.

Let us now jump to the final section of the preliminary study concerning the persistent role of the framework of dominion—as embedded in the doctrine of discovery—in the constitution

⁷⁰⁰ Gonnella Frichner 2010, 5. The Special Rapporteur is quoting from *State v. Foreman*, 16 Tenn. 256 (1835); see also Newcomb 2008, 198.

of modern settler statecraft, with specific regard to the case selected by the Special Rapporteur. In this regard, the Special Rapporteur writes

In the mid-twentieth century, the...Supreme Court reaffirmed and embraced the Doctrine of Discovery. Five hundred years after the issuance of *Romanus Pontifex*, the...Supreme Court handed down its decision in *Tee-Hit-Ton Indians v. The United States*...⁷⁰¹

Gonnella Frichner writes that eventually, as the *Tee-Hit-Ton*⁷⁰² case unfolded, “government attorneys filed a brief with the Supreme Court that was based in part on the Doctrine of Discovery and the era of the Vatican papal bulls.”⁷⁰³ What the government attorneys argued in their brief “was a well-recognized principle in international law that “the lands of heathens and infidels” were open to acquisition (taking) by “Christian nations”.”⁷⁰⁴ As the Special Rapporteur clarifies, “Christian Nations” in this context refers to the claim that

until 1856, there existed a collective international political identity, comprising different monarchies and States, called variously by such names as “Christendom”, “the Christian common wealth” and “the Family of Nations” (“the Christian nations of Europe and their offshoots in America”).⁷⁰⁵

⁷⁰¹ Gonnella Frichner 2010, 16. According to Gonnella Frichner, the case of *Tee-Hit-Ton Indians*

had to do with the Tee-Hit-Ton people whose language is Tlingit, and whose “customs, laws, and traditions [are] similar to other Tlingit peoples” in what is now called Alaska...In 1947...Congress authorized the...Secretary of Agriculture to sell the timber of the Tongass National Forest, a national forest that the Congress had established in an area that partly encompassed the traditional territory of the Tee-Hit-Ton and the Tlingit. On 20 August 1951, the...Forest Service sold Ketchikan Pulp and Paper Company “the right to all harvestable in the Tongass National Forest, estimated at 1,500,000 cubic feet”. Shortly thereafter, the Tee-Hit-Ton sued, arguing that they “were the sole owners of the land and water in dispute; that they had never sold or conveyed the land to any other party; and they asked for a judgment for the losses and damages from the Tongass taking, plus interest”.

⁷⁰² See also *Tee-Hit-Ton v. United States* 348 U.S. (1955) available at <http://thorpe.ou.edu/treatises/cases/TeeHitTon.html>.

⁷⁰³ Gonnella Frichner 2010, 17.

⁷⁰⁴ Gonnella Frichner 2010, 17.

⁷⁰⁵ Gonnella Frichner 2010, 17.

The Special Rapporteur then underlines that in keeping with this questionable Eurocentric tradition the government attorneys offered their “summary of argument” by referring to the *Johnson v. McIntosh* decision. The attorneys wrote

It is a *well established principle of international law that with respect to the lands of this continent discovery gave title* to the government by whose subjects, or by whose authority, it was made, against all other European governments, which title might be consummated by possession (*Johnson v. McIntosh*, 8 Wheat. 543, 573).⁷⁰⁶

Furthermore, the government attorneys argued:

... the discovering nations asserted in themselves, by virtue of the principle of discovery, the complete and exclusive title to the land—subject only to a right of occupancy in the Indians, such right being retained by the Indians *only by the grace of the sovereign*.⁷⁰⁷

The Special Rapporteur, in this regard, further notices that “Under the heading “Argument” the... attorneys referred back to the centuries-long era of “the Christian nations of Europe”.⁷⁰⁸ And they even “included a discussion of the era of the papal bull *Romanus Pontifex*.”

The “Argument” reads:

Prior to the great era of discovery beginning in the latter part of the fifteenth century, the Christian nations of Europe acquired jurisdiction over newly discovered lands by virtue of grants from the Popes, who claimed the power to grant to Christian monarchs the right to acquire territory in the possession of heathens and infidels.⁷⁰⁹

As Gonnella Frichner notes, the Attorneys continued their argument in *Tee-Hit-Ton* “based on the Vatican papal bulls.”⁷¹⁰ The attorneys stated:

For example, in 1344, Clement VI had granted the Canary Islands to Louis of Spain upon his promise to lead the islanders to the worship of Christ, and, following the discovery of the New World by Columbus, Alexander VI in 1493 and 1494 issued bulls granting to Spain all lands not under Christian rule west of a line 100 leagues west of the Azores and Cape Verde Islands. ... The latter papal grant, because of the breaking down of the papal authority and the vastness of the territory covered, was not accepted by the other nations

⁷⁰⁶ Brief for the United States in *Tee-Hit-Ton Indians v. The United States* quoted in Gonnella Frichner 2010, 17.

⁷⁰⁷ Brief for the United States in *Tee-Hit-Ton Indians v. The United States* quoted in Gonnella Frichner 2010, 17; emphasis added.

⁷⁰⁸ Gonnella Frichner 2010, 17.

⁷⁰⁹ Quoted in Gonnella Frichner 2010, 17.

⁷¹⁰ Gonnella Frichner 2010, 17.

or even greatly relied upon by Spain, and *it was necessary for the civilized, Christian nations of Europe to develop a new principle which all [European nations that is] could acknowledge as the law by which they should regulate, as between themselves, the right of acquisition of territory in the New World, which they had found to be inhabited by Indians who were heathens and uncivilized according to European standards...*⁷¹¹

As Steve Newcomb noticed during his lecture at the Indigenous Peoples Forum, “the attorneys were using [in the above quoted paragraph] the exact framework [of dominance] in their method of argumentation” that is present in the Papal Bulls and what is most notorious is that “the Supreme Court actually ruled in favor of the federal prosecutor’s position in that case.”⁷¹² As the Special Rapporteur states in regard to this case in her preliminary study:

When Justice Reed wrote the majority opinion for the...Supreme Court in *Tee-Hit-Ton*, he concurred with the argument made by the [government] attorneys. He ... applied the same line of reasoning regarding the Doctrine of Discovery ... He said that it was “well settled” that American Indians held claim to lands in North America “after the coming of the white man, under what is sometimes termed Indian title or permission from the whites to occupy. That description means mere possession not specifically recognized as ownership by Congress. After conquest they were [‘]permitted[‘] to occupy portions of territory...This is not a property right but amounts to a right of occupancy which the sovereign grants”. He further said that “this right of occupancy may be terminated and such lands fully disposed of by the sovereign itself without any legally enforceable obligation to compensate the Indians”. Mention of “conquest” references the Framework of Dominance, and Justice Reed went on to say: “This position of the Indians has long been rationalized under the theory that discovery and conquest give the conquerors sovereignty over and ownership of the lands thus obtained.”⁷¹³

As Steve Newcomb notes in his lecture in the Indigenous Peoples Forum, “when you look at the *Te-Hit-Ton* decision you will not find language [referring] to Christians in their

⁷¹¹ Brief for the United States in *Tee-Hit-Ton Indians v. The United States* quoted in Gonnella Frichner 2010, 17; emphasis added.

⁷¹² Lecture at the Indigenous Peoples Forum on the Impact of the Doctrine of Discovery in the Arizona State Capitol House of Representatives, March 23, 2012.

⁷¹³ Gonnella Frichner 2010, 17-18. Here is the full quote from the Tee-Hit-Ton case to which the preliminary study refers:

This position of the Indian has long been rationalized by the legal theory that *discovery and conquest gave the conquerors sovereignty over and ownership of the lands* thus obtained. 1 Wheaton's International Law, c. V. The *great case of Johnson v. McIntosh*, 8 Wheat. 543, denied the power of an Indian tribe to pass their right of occupancy to another. It confirmed the practice of two hundred years of American history "that discovery gave an exclusive right to extinguish the Indian title of occupancy, either by purchase or by conquest." P. 587. (emphasis added).

ruling.”⁷¹⁴ However, “what the Supreme Court did do in its ruling is to cite to Henry Wheaton’s *Elements of International Law* published in 1836.” As the Special Rapporteur⁷¹⁵ notes in her preliminary study: in his book, *Elements of International Law*,⁷¹⁶ in the section under “Rights of Property”, Henry Wheaton (1785-1848), a government lawyer and diplomat, wrote the following paragraph which, based on Justice Reed’s words, “reveals the context of the...Supreme Court’s ruling in *Tee-Hit-Ton*.” Wheaton’s words read thus:

The Spaniards and the Portuguese *took the lead* among the nations of Europe, in the *splendid* maritime discoveries in the East and the West, during the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. *According to the European ideas of that age, the heathen nations of the other quarters of the globe were the lawful spoil and prey of their civilized conquerors*, and as between the Christian powers themselves, the Sovereign Pontiff was the supreme arbiter of conflicting claims ... Thus the bull of Pope Alexander VI reserved from the grant to Spain all lands, which had been previously occupied by any other *Christian*⁷¹⁷ nation; and the patent granted by Henry VII of England to John Cabot and his sons, authorized them “to seek out and discover all islands, regions, and provinces whatsoever, that may belong to heathens and infidels”; and “to subdue, occupy, and possess these territories, as his vassals and lieutenants”. In the same manner, the grant from Queen Elizabeth to Sir Humphrey Gilbert empowers him to “discover such remote and barbarous lands, countries, and territories, not actually possessed by any Christian prince or people, and to hold, occupy, and enjoy the same, with all their commodities, jurisdictions, and royalties”. *It thus became a maxim of policy and of law, that the right of the native Indians was subordinate to that of the first Christian discoverers, whose paramount claim excluded that of every other civilized nation, and gradually extinguished that of the natives.*⁷¹⁸

In fact, if we look at the rest of what Wheaton writes, we get an even clearer idea of the rather problematic discourse which is involved in these rationalizations. Wheaton concludes that paragraph by stating that “...the progress of cultivation gradually compelled the savage tenant of the forest to yield to the superior power and skill of his civilized invader.”⁷¹⁹ But what is most

⁷¹⁴ Lecture at the Indigenous Peoples Forum on the Impact of the Doctrine of Discovery in the Arizona State Capitol House of Representatives, March 23, 2012.

⁷¹⁵ Gonnella Frichner 2010, 18-19.

⁷¹⁶ Wheaton 1866.

⁷¹⁷ Emphasis in the original

⁷¹⁸ Wheaton 1866, 167.

⁷¹⁹ Wheaton 1866, 167.

notorious is that, as Steve Newcomb underlines, the paragraph above from Wheaton “is actually what the Supreme Court cited to in its decision concerning *Te-Hi-Ton*” as recently as in 1954.⁷²⁰

So in that very instance in 1954 the Court was engaging in the reenactment of a violent myth of origins (or ‘discovery’) that would presumably uphold the purported legitimacy of the Scramble for the Americas and its many ongoing and as of yet un-redressed consequences.

But there is even more recent evidence; in fact, the same principles of “Discovery” were used as recently as 2005. “Discovery,” operates as a rather problematic ‘origin story’, as it were, that must be recited cyclically once every number of years to serve as the constitutive principle of settler statecraft. As the Special Rapporteur Gonnella Frichner emphasizes in her preliminary study,

That *the Doctrine of Discovery is still being used as an active legal principle...* in the twentieth-first century is revealed in the case *City of Sherrill v. Oneida Indian Nation of New York* decided in March 2005, exactly 50 years after the *Tee-Hit-Ton* ruling. The case involved a dispute over taxation of ancestral lands of the Oneida Indian Nation. During oral arguments, it became clear that the case would hinge on whether, in the opinion of the Court, the Oneida Indian Nation “has sovereignty status” with regard to the ancestral lands the Oneida Nation had reacquired. To contextualize the Court’s decision and to decide the sovereign status of the Oneida Indian Nation, the Supreme Court relied upon the Doctrine of Discovery. This is revealed in footnote number one of Justice Ruth Bader Ginsberg’s decision for the Court majority: “Under the ‘Doctrine of Discovery’”, wrote Justice Ginsberg, “... fee title to the lands occupied by Indians when the colonists arrived became vested in the sovereign — first the discovering European nation and later the original states and the United States.”⁷²¹ As documented by this preliminary study, the Supreme Court’s reference to the Doctrine of Discovery places the context for the Court’s decision in *Sherrill v. Oneida Indian Nation of New York* within the Framework of Dominance, dating back to the era of the Vatican papal bulls.⁷²²

The critical genealogy of the Doctrine of Discovery as exemplified through the case discussed by the Special Rapporteur to the UNPFII is just one piece of evidence in support of the contention that the framework of dominion/dominance/domination embedded in the Doctrine of Discovery still constitutes a crucial part of the “foundation” of Western statecraft, and

⁷²⁰ Lecture at the Indigenous Peoples Forum on the Impact of the Doctrine of Discovery in the Arizona State Capitol House of Representatives, March 23, 2012.

⁷²¹ See footnote 1 of *City of Sherrill v. Oneida Indian Nation of New York*, 125 S. Ct. 1478, 148384 (2005). Available online at <http://caselaw.lp.findlaw.com/cgi-bin/getcase.pl?court=US&navby=case&vol=000&invol=03-855>

⁷²² Gonnella Frichner 2010, 18-19.

emphatically so in its settler colonial manifestations. As the Special Rapporteur for the United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues shows, this framework of dominion can be traced back to the discourse that was contained in the Vatican papal bulls, and this discourse finds its generative kernel in that crucial constitutive myth of Judeo-Christian civilization, so illustratively embodied in Genesis 1:28 which reads, once again,

And God blessed them, and God said unto them, “*Be fruitful, and multiply, and fill the Earth, and subdue it: and have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that moves upon the Earth.*”

In many ways, the persistence of this generative anthropological kernel which recurrently reemerges to sanction the exercise, spread and even the institutionalization of violence in the form dominion is due to the fact that the constitutive myth, as any myth, does not operate according to a linear logic. From an Indigenous viewpoint this “framework of dominion” which keeps recurring, keeps thereby returning to haunt the legitimacy of the very order it purports to uphold—this “framework of dominion” and its origin is not exclusively located in the papal bulls and its manifestations are certainly not restricted to its explicit legal or judicial manifestations—this framework that keeps coming back to haunt the contemporary world (dis)order and must therefore be interpreted from within the circular Indigenous perspective as a “myth of origin,” a foundational violence that must be invoked and retold periodically. And in so far as the foundation must be reinscribed in order to sustain an order of questionable legitimacy, the vicious cycle of violence continues. As one of the most relevant constitutive kernels of Judeo-Christian civilization and Western statecraft, the anthropological myth, this framework of dominion, must be periodically invoked to ‘renew’ the foundations of power whenever such foundations are found to be wanting, and in so being reinvoked it reinscribes anew the question concerning the very legitimacy of the very (dis)order it purports to uphold.

Contrary in content, though comparable in its operation to the “origin stories” of Indigenous peoples, Genesis 1:28, a metonym for the framework of dominion, is an important part of one of the most influential “origin stories” in the world, one which is retold cyclically in different ways, in order to reenact the constitution of a certain mode of power (Alfred’s “control

power” or power-as-dominion). Genesis 1:28, *Romanus Pontifex* and other Papal Bulls, *Johnson v. M’Intosh*, *Tee-hit-Ton v. United States*, and *Sherrill v. Oneida Indian Nation of New York* , and many, many other non-legal accounts as ‘applied’ throughout the Western Hemisphere and beyond are all metonymical retellings of the same “origin story,” cyclical retellings of an underlying onto-theology of dominion which must be necessarily invoked every once in a while to reinscribe the foundations that would claim to sustain the legitimacy of a form of power that ultimately must rely on the cyclical reassertion of an originary violence. Dominion as the theologically sanctioned foundation for power is often retold and reasserted directly, and even without legal excuse (it is indeed surprising that the cases discussed would be tempted to make the violence at least somewhat explicit).

And even the passage cited from the Bible still operates as one of the most influential ‘origin stories’ that on a quotidian basis underpin and constitute ‘modern civilization,’ and yet this origin story as an anthropological myth that constitutes the framework of dominance also recreates itself anew in different guises and at different moments whenever there is a need to ‘translate’ violence into power, especially when the foundational, structural, and often explicit violence that underpins and upholds certain institutions, ways of life, and even whole civilizations is put into question. The myth of spiritually sanctioned dominion embodies a cosmology of violence that in the case discussed by the Special Rapporteur is ceremonially renewed once every number of years in the form of, for instance, judicial decisions. It need not be explained in too much detail that this cosmology of anthropocentric and often ethnocentric violence is contrary in numberless ways to the Indigenous cosmopolitics of “natural-cosmic democracy”.

At this point it is rather important to have a quick look at the current organization of world politics from the perspective of this framework of dominion. Among the many legacies resulting from over five centuries of continuing Euro-Western expansionism we find the spread of the (Westphalian) system of states to almost every corner of the globe; it is hard to find many if any of these states which are not in one way or another organized according to a Western structure of government on the basis of the principle of sovereignty which involves, among other things, the

Western conception of ownership writ large, which itself embeds the framework of dominance and the onto-theology of dominion. Behind the doctrine of discovery and conquest lies the problem of property, ownership, sovereignty and ultimately dominion. As the Special Rapporteur writes in a crucial footnote:

The Old World idea of property was well expressed by the Latin *dominium*: from *dominus* which derived from the Sanskrit *domanus* (he who subdues). *Dominus* in the Latin carries the same principal meaning (one who has subdued), extending naturally to signify “master, possessor, lord, proprietor, owner” *Dominium* takes from *dominus* the sense of “absolute ownership” with a special legal meaning of property right of ownership ... *Dominatio* extends the word into “rule, dominium, and ... with an odious secondary meaning, unrestricted power, absolute dominium, lordship, tyranny, despotism. Political power grown from property — dominium — was, in effect, domination” ... In this preliminary study, “Framework of Dominance” and “dominance framework” are both used in this latter sense. State claims and assertions of “dominion” and “sovereignty over” Indigenous peoples and their lands, territories and resources trace to these dire meanings, handed down from the days of the Roman Empire, and to a history of the dehumanization of Indigenous peoples. This is at the root of Indigenous peoples’ human rights issues today.⁷²³

The preliminary study is emphatic in the persistence of concepts of dominion as the foundation of settler statecraft, and the motive behind its violences. Dominion, of course, is premised in an attempt at alienation, separating and extirpating “Man” from the rest of nature and the cosmos, and hence it is not surprising that both Nature and “the natural” or “native” would be the outlet for the alienated “Man.” As Shawnee scholar Steve Newcomb stated in his lecture at the Indigenous Peoples Forum on the Impact of the Doctrine of Discovery, concepts of dominion are the “organic concepts, the originating concepts that resulted in so much devastation for our...people.”⁷²⁴

In another rather crucial footnote within the preliminary study, the Special Rapporteur notes that the 1493 papal bull *Inter Caetera* by Pope Alexander VI that Supreme Court Justice Joseph Story cited in 1833 in his *Commentaries on the Constitution of the United States* “was reflective of the framework of dominance”⁷²⁵ as

⁷²³ Gonnella Frichner 2010, 3; italics in the original, underlining added.

⁷²⁴ Lecture at the Indigenous Peoples Forum on the Impact of the Doctrine of Discovery in the Arizona State Capitol House of Representatives, March 23, 2012.

⁷²⁵ What John Story wrote about this in his *Commentaries on the Constitution of the United States* was the following:

the pope, for example, called for non-Christian nations — “barbarous nations” — to be “subjugated” and for the “propagation of the Christian empire”. Additionally, the Holy See declared in the *Inter Caetera* bull, “We trust in Him from whom empires, governments, and all good things proceed”. That this sentence is consistent with the framework of dominance is revealed by the Latin translation of “governments” which is “dominationes”.⁷²⁶

In fact the Latin version reads “in Illo a quo imperia et *dominationes* ac bona cuncta procedunt confidentes...”⁷²⁷ There is no doubt that the “government” as instituted through the practice of statecraft on the model propagated from the West is indeed constituted by dominion, and so any government of this sort derived as it is from the Western model must be understood first and foremost as *domination*. Of course, this is still reenacted on an everyday basis as this mode of government is ultimately the effect of a quotidian attempt to uphold a “monopoly of violence” or of “coercive force” over a *subject* territory and population—to use Max Weber’s terms; in this regard, “government” is indeed the effect of a quotidian reenactment of an originary violence of dominion. So it would be inaccurate to believe that the equation of “governments” (in this Western model) with the Latin “dominationes” is a thing of the past; it is very much reenacted on a daily basis to this day.

To finish this section, our reverse engineering of this important preliminary study on the impact of the doctrine of discovery, it is important to consider how the study opens up with the following rationalization for its undertaking; it states that [see quote in next page]:

... The Indians were a savage race, sunk in the depths of ignorance and heathenism. If they might not be extirpated for their want of religion and just morals, they might be reclaimed from their errors. They were bound to yield to the superior genius of Europe, and in exchanging their wild and debasing habits for civilization and Christianity they were deemed to gain more than an equivalent for every sacrifice and suffering. The Papal authority, too, was brought in aid of these great designs; and for the purpose of overthrowing heathenism, and propagating the Catholic religion, Alexander the Sixth, by a Bull issued in 1493, granted to the crown of Castile the whole of the immense territory then discovered, or to be discovered, between the poles, so far as it was not then possessed by any Christian prince. (Justice Story quoted in Gonnella Frichner 2010, 15)

⁷²⁶ Gonnella Frichner 2010, 14-15; italics in the original, underlining added.

⁷²⁷ Quoted from *The Bull Inter Caetera (Alexander VI.)* May 4, 1493. Found in Davenport 1917, 78. The quote is from p. 75. I thank Steve Newcomb who addressed this issue in more detail in his lecture at the Indigenous Peoples Forum on the Doctrine of Discover in the Arizona State Capitol.

The United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples... is the product of efforts spanning three decades. The Declaration addresses human rights grievances and other concerns that Indigenous peoples' representatives have brought to the international arena since the early 1900s, during the days of the League of Nations. The adoption of the Declaration presents the opportunity to clearly identify *what lies at the root of those grievances and concerns, namely, the historic tendency of State actors to assert a sovereign dominant authority over Indigenous peoples, based on claims to and assertions of ultimate or superior title to Indigenous peoples' lands, territories and resources.* This paper demonstrates that *the Doctrine of Discovery lies at the root of such claims and assertions of dominance by States.*⁷²⁸

In fact, the Doctrine of Discovery embodies a deeper “root,” namely, the reenactment of the foundational or originary violence already present in Genesis 1:28, the mythology of dominion that constitutes and upholds the theocratically sanctioned anthropological logic which later informs statecraft, colonialism, and their (still present) cyclical reenactment on a quotidian basis. This “root” paradoxically, is not a “root” in that it is premised on the constant attempt to uproot or alienate “Man” from “Earth” and it is this attempt at uprooting “Man” that requires the violence of Earth’s periodical subjection (or ‘subduing’), and of all that lives in her, including those who would insist on the fact that we *are* the Earth (i.e., the Indigenous). The Doctrine of Discovery is a particularly vicious manifestation of the mythology of dominion that constitutes sovereignty, property (both as ownership) and therefore statecraft, but it is not the root, it is just a re-symbolization and vicious re-actualization of the myth already inscribed in the story of origin called the Genesis which itself is not the root, as the myth just refashions itself cyclically in different manifestations in order to serve as a legitimization of diverse violences. This myth persists as the basis of present day political organization in the form of the state and of property.

The performance of statecraft involves the constant assertion of sovereign dominance over the Earth or a part of her and over those who refuse to partake in the violence prescribed in the myth of anthropological dominion. Certainly, the doctrine of discovery heavily racializes the constitution of statecraft so that people of the Indigenous Americas, by mere ‘virtue’ (or ‘vice’) of a bio-cultural “strangeness” in the eyes of Europeans and Euro-Americans often become excluded from partaking in the renewal of the originary violence that recreates the state. But on top of this

⁷²⁸ Gonnella Frichner 2010, 3; italics added.

genocidal and ethnocidal exclusion, there is a more lasting and similarly devastating “clash of cosmologies” which turns anybody who partakes in the renewal of Indigeneity through the reenactment of cosmic or natural democracy into a literally “natural” enemy of sovereign statecraft. What lies at the ‘root’ of the violence against those who would commit themselves to the recreation and renewal of Indigeneity is precisely that such recreation entails the active and unrelenting refusal to partake in the quotidian and periodical reenactment of the originary violence of dominion that constitutes the performance of statecraft and enables the assertion of the ultimate title of ownership, namely, sovereignty; that is, the ‘root’ of the violence is precisely anti-Indigeneity for *Indigeneity* is the refusal to be uprooted from the Earth, and the commitment to stay rooted in this Earth and in this cosmos.

Living the Indigenous way is therefore precisely the contrary to performing the originary violence that reenacts dominion and therefore ownership, sovereignty and statecraft. The basis of the theocratically sanctioned anthropolitics of dominion is precisely the reenactment of the myth of origin contained in Genesis, which entails exactly what every Indigenous myth of origin *proscribes and forbids*, namely, the subduing of the Earth and of every “living thing” on it. Strictly speaking, the renewal of Indigeneity, its very possibility of subsistence not only proscribes and forbids any participation in the reenactment of dominion but indeed demands an unrelenting resistance to it. And since statecraft and its constitutive principles (like sovereignty) are based on the ceaseless quotidian renewal and even celebration of dominion it is fair to conclude that *Indigeneity and statecraft are incompatible*.

Now, the problem here is that because the myth of dominion recognizes no boundaries except its own (and only temporarily so), it must subdue the whole Earth (and beyond); as a consequence it recognizes no legitimate space for Indigeneity. Dominion recognizes only dominion, this is clear in the dynamics of sovereignty (i.e., mutual recognition) and under this mythology of sovereignty the world must be either a tapestry of dominions or a universal dominion, or it shall be nothing at all. The consequences of this expansion of dominion are today evident in the ongoing effects of the genocide and ethnocide against people of Indigenous

descent and in the global ecological crisis resulting from the insistence in subduing the Earth and all that lives on her. As has become clear, Indigeneity entails the celebration of cosmic and natural democracy and it is for that reason that the violence of dominion against Indigeneity is one and the same with the violence of dominion against the rest of the Earth and all that lives in her. In a sense, the world is left with one of two alternatives: either to celebrate the renewal of Indigeneity—not least to save the eco-biospheric conditions that enable our existence—or persist on dominion (whether as property or sovereignty/statecraft); their principles, their values, their constitutive myths are incompatible and insisting on the violence of the latter option is unethical and unsustainable.

ii. The Indigenous Peoples Forum on the Impact of the Doctrine of Discovery

Someone called me the other day and she said, “I’m a white girl, can I come?” and I said “yes”. It is important for all people of [all] colors to listen to this forum today; there are many issues that we are going to be talking about. You are going to hear words like assimilation, relocation, ethnic cleansing, genocide... We are going to talk about things that maybe never have been brought up in this building [the Arizona State Capitol]. We are going to talk about things that are difficult, still today happening... if we go back in history we realize that the great American democracy could not be created without the annihilation and the assimilation of Indigenous peoples...history is written by the victors, today however we want to tell a different story and sometimes the history that we speak of about the Indigenous peoples is uncomfortable, and basically it is denied...we talk about the landing of Columbus and the pilgrims, but we don’t talk about the Indigenous peoples and because of that tensions remain, racial tensions, racial divides, and it is hard for us to talk about injustice...[for] we rarely talk about the American Holocaust.

—Shannon Rivers (Akimel O’Odham).⁷²⁹

Following the publication and distribution of the preliminary study by the Special Rapporteur to the UNPFII on the *Impact on Indigenous Peoples of the International Legal Construct known as the Doctrine of Discovery, which has served as the Foundation of the Violation of their Human Rights*, several Indigenous and allied voices across Arizona and elsewhere mobilized to organize a forum where the themes raised by the preliminary study could be discussed:

⁷²⁹ Lecture at the Indigenous Peoples Forum on the Impact of the Doctrine of Discovery in the Arizona State Capitol House of Representatives, March 23, 2012.

In a historic act of presence and testament of Indigenous Nationhood and Self Determination, an Indigenous Peoples Forum convened on the floor of the Arizona State House of Representatives...to address the impact of the Doctrine of Discovery on Indigenous Peoples from a range of perspectives that ranged from the O'otham Hemuchkam to the academic, from the legal to the educational, and from the economic to the cultural. The event was organized by the Nahuacalli, Embassy of Indigenous Peoples as an expression of Self Determination and to move with healing into the future of the *Nican Tlacah Ilhuitl*,⁷³⁰ Indigenous Peoples Day. The event was hosted by the Native American Caucus of the Arizona State Legislature, and presided over by the O'otham Hemuchkam upon whose traditional territories as O'otham Nations the capitol complex now stands. The United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP), adopted by the United Nations General Assembly on September 13, 2007 served as reference and standard of protocol for the Indigenous Peoples Forum.⁷³¹

Among those who made the event possible we find the Phoenix-based non-governmental organization Tonatierra led by Nahua-Xicano activist Tupac Enrique Acosta in collaboration with Akimel O'Odham activist Shannon Rivers. They were supported in their efforts by Senator Albert A. Hale, former President of the Navajo (Dine') Nation, and by Representative Jack C. Jackson, also member of the Navajo (Dine') Nation. As a result of the Forum a Report was elaborated; this report penned by Tupac Enrique Acosta collects various relevant aspects of the different themes brought up during the Forum as well as recommendations for the UNPFII. The Report was delivered on May 9 of 2012 to the 11th Session of the UNPFII by Tonya Gonnella Frichner herself, the former North American Representative to the United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues who penned the preliminary study discussed above.

This Indigenous Peoples Forum that took place within the House of Representatives of the Arizona State Capitol represents a historical landmark for many reasons. First, the themes discussed in the forum would seem to raise a number of questions concerning the legitimacy of the foundations of the very governmental body whose building hosted the forum itself. Second, the event took place in a very particular geopolitical space and historical moment. Arizona has of

⁷³⁰ “The Day of We the People Here” (translated from Nahuatl)

⁷³¹ Report from Tonatierra-Nahuacalli: Embassy of Indigenous Peoples at <http://doctrineofdiscoveryforum.blogspot.ca/2012/03/Indigenous-peoples-forum-calls-for.html>. The report with a video excerpt from the event is also available at <http://intercontinentalcry.org/steve-newcomb-at-Indigenous-peoples-forum-on-the-doctrine-of-discovery-arizona/>.

lately become a very problematic space for peoples of ‘Amerindian’ descent or Indigenous American ancestry, regardless of whether they are local to the region or whether they are moving into or across the region (as has been the case since time immemorial), especially when coming from the south or what is conceived within the dominant geopolitical imaginary as ‘Mexico,’ ‘Central America,’ or even ‘Latin America’ as a whole.⁷³² Because of these and many other factors, the time and place for this Indigenous Forum is rather emblematic and important. In this section we will discuss some of the relevant points brought up, with specific regard to what Gregory Cajete conceptualized as the “clash of cosmologies.”

It is pertinent to start this discussion with an intervention by Shannon Rivers, Akimel O’dham who presided over the event and who stated the following:

I would like to take a few minutes to speak about this territory in which we are today...if you are not [Tohono] O’dham, then you are a foreigner or an immigrant to this territory, to the original inhabitants, to the O’dham people.

Rivers’ intervention immediately brings to the fore the fact of a subdued Indigenous geography that has never ceased to resist domination. It also immediately displaces the claims of those who would represent themselves and others as “natives” to the region, and who would

⁷³² Two pieces of legislation have become paradigmatic in this regard, and to this we can add a war over hydraulic control that directly affects Indigenous reservations in a state marked by its dire scarcity of water, and a number of other conflicts that have turned people of Amerindian descent, whether of “mixed” or “pure” ancestry, into the targets of questionable policies and laws. Peoples of Amerindian descent coming from or with ties to “south of the border” have been particularly, thought by no means exclusively, affected. The passage of Senate Bill 1070 also known as Support Our Law Enforcement and Safe Neighborhoods Act as one of the toughest “anti-immigration” bills in North America has affected anybody who phenotypically looks of Amerindian ancestry, whether “pure” or “mixed”. This basically includes most people coming from or with ties to “south of the border.” The border wall strongly supported by several powerful factions cuts through Indigenous reservations without regard for their ancestral political autonomy and Indigenous geographies that predate any settler colonial borders; also, border enforcement has set the conditions for the death of hundreds of peoples of Amerindian descent, whether “pure” or “mixed,” moving from South to North. The passage of House Bill 2281 designed to seriously erode and potentially dismantle ethnic studies programs has justifiably raised suspicions of ethnocracy. In a state with one of the largest populations of Amerindian descent, whether inborn or immigrated (usually from “south of the border”), “pure” or “mixed,” tribally enrolled or without formal affiliation, documented or undocumented (by the settler state), the situation raises little doubts among many as to which groups would be affected by the bills, and it raises even less doubts concerning the ethnically implicated damages that they cause. Amerindian movement across the continent will be discussed later in regard to the controversies concerning “immigration.”

arrogate to themselves the power to determine who is a “native” and who is an “immigrant”: “if you are not O’odham, you are a foreigner or an immigrant to this territory.” As Rivers emphasizes, anybody who is not Tohono O’odham and dwells in the area now occupied by the city of Phoenix or within the superimposed geopolitical district of Maricopa county is an immigrant or a descendant of immigrants. The descendants of other groups that have been ancestrally Indigenous to any given region of the continent can certainly make a similar claim to that made by Rivers. In stating this, Rivers articulates also the legitimate claim that it is the descendants of the people who are ancestrally Indigenous to the region whose permission should be primarily (and indeed ultimately) requested for undertaking any activity or dwelling within the region, or moving across it. If anyone would be entitled to regulate movement and (im)migration and determine who can legitimately be in a particular region or not it is the peoples ancestrally Indigenous to the particular region who should do so; clearly, for the O’odham, most of those who claim the power to regulate who moves across or stays or dwells in the region or in North America have in fact arrived here without regard for the norms and laws, and sometimes even the presence, of the peoples Indigenous to the region—from an Indigenous viewpoint most settlers now claiming to be ‘natives’ would immediately be re-cast as ‘illegals’ within the normative (and) discursive logic of settlers themselves. Rivers’ intervention puts into question the coloniality of the hegemonic geographical/geopolitical imaginary, and of the power, norms, policies and actions that claim legitimacy upon that colonial imaginary.

Shawnee scholar Steve Newcomb explicitly articulated a similar questioning of the hegemonic geographical/geopolitical imaginary when he stated the following in his intervention:

I live in the Kumeyaay territory, today commonly called San Diego. I make sure I acknowledge that it is still existing because of the thousands of years of relationship, culturally and spiritually, of a particular nation or people with their land and with all the elements of life within those ecosystems, with the waters and everything; that cannot just be negated or cancelled out just because some other people show up to a shoreline and plant their flag and their cross in the sand [at that] land...and then make some proclamation in front of a notary [or in a] document to say that they have created rights of sovereignty in that place when they are from somewhere else.⁷³³

⁷³³ Lecture at the Indigenous Peoples Forum on the Impact of the Doctrine of Discovery in the Arizona State Capitol House of Representatives, March 23, 2012.

Considering both River's and Newcomb's interventions, the Indigenous Peoples Forum takes place in what would seem to those accustomed by habit or by force to the hegemonic political geography to have occurred in a sort of parallel dimension, and *otherly* universe (one of the many 'others' of Justice Marshall's "universe" of course); this is one of those many other universes historically subdued to dominion—and yet nevertheless resistant and persistent despite dominion. In this light, the forum conjures up the resurfacing of a subdued, still subsistent, geography: the Indigenous Forum does not take place in 'Phoenix, Arizona, US' but in the O'odham Nation. The 'subversion' of the hegemonic geography is all the more disconcerting in that it is being brought about within the very building that would presumably embody the claims to sovereignty of those who would craft and declare this region as something other than the O'odham Nation. With an acknowledgement of this decolonial political geography, let us proceed to analyze what was brought to the forum in the form of diverse Indigenous interventions.

The forum was opened through an Indigenous ceremony requesting permission from Mother Nature, the elements, and the O'odham nation to proceed. The ceremony was led by Tupac Enrique Acosta and accompanied with a prayer by an O'odham elder. What followed was an opening speech by Tupac Enrique Acosta whose content is worth a detailed discussion. His speech started in the following manner:

Every once eleven years of the cycle of the Sun energy waves from the surface of the Sun are ejected and travel through our Earth, Mother Earth, and cause disruptions in our communication systems and in the media networks of today's society, of the world that we live in, this world that is being broadcast with these same technologies...every eleven years. These counts of the daytimes, the sun times are part of our nature, as Indigenous peoples they are part of our constitution, they are part of the reason of why the time is now that we are here doing what we are doing today. Every cycle of the sun, some of them are days, some of them are by the years, some of them follow along with the count that is given by the moon which reflects those messages of the life...and for that reason this is again that day, *Nican Tlacah Ilhuil*,⁷³⁴ the day of the Indigenous, the Indigenous day...Every eleven years, every day, every year, every month, but there are also 26,000 more or less cycles of years that we call the *Tonal*, the *Huey Tonal*, the cycles of the Suns and the ages under which we have shared our tracts on this Mother Earth. We now are emerging upon the sixth sun of our nationhood, and under that constitution we come today, with that legislation we come today, under that system of jurisprudence we arrive

⁷³⁴ "The Day of We the People" (translated from Nahuatl).

today and we present ourselves again today before all of you, before all of our relatives to share these words with you... with the same breath may I also express my thankfulness and give honor to the spirit of our ancestors and relatives who endured centuries of genocide and oppression in order to give us this opportunity today.⁷³⁵

This paragraph, being the very first formal intervention that occurred in the Indigenous Peoples Forum, embeds several crucial ideas, directly corresponding with what has been described throughout this work as Indigenous bio-eco-cosmo-politics. Noticeable is the notion that the ultimate governing code among Indigenous peoples must refer to cosmic cycles which operate as “constitution,” “legislation”, or “jurisprudence.” This is reinforced with the reflection that we are all ultimately dependent of larger cosmic forces which we must heed and live accordingly. This invocation of a broader bio-eco-cosmic constitution concomitantly serves to displace or at least put into question the anthropolitics of settler colonial statecraft and its anthropocentric apparatuses of normativity and governance, and this is especially important considering the venue in which this is taking place; theorists may perhaps interpret this as a gesture of “subversion” and “appropriation”.

Noticeable also is the invocation of a biotic community implied in the reference to the *Huey Tonal*. *Tonal* is a Nahuatl word that can be translated as calendar day, but it imbues a dense network of significations derived from the correspondence of any given day with different manifestations of eco-bio-cycles such as those associated with the life of different animals. Any given day is associated with an animal or an animate symbol; being born in a certain day associates one’s life with the spirit of an animal. *Huey* means great, grand or big, as in *Huey Tlatohani*, Great Spokesperson, in this case a role performed by Tupac Enrique. *Huey Tonal* in this context would be invoked to imply the great constitutional calendrics of eco-bio-cosmic cycles in co-participation with all the members of the biotic community, such as other-than-human animals. Finally, we can also notice the invocation of Mother Earth and “all of our relatives,” the first of which reminds us of the underlying Indigenous ecosophy and the latter of which reminds

⁷³⁵ Lecture at the Indigenous Peoples Forum on the Impact of the Doctrine of Discovery in the Arizona State Capitol House of Representatives, March 23, 2012. Emphases added.

us of the conception of the cosmos as a web of life-energy that interrelates us all into an extended bio-eco-cosmopolitical community.

We also notice that in a single statement gratitude to the spirit of the ancestors and to relatives is articulated through the “same breath;” this reminds us that from within the Indigenous experience, the “spirit” or energy of ancestors and human and non-human relatives are all tied through the same “breath” of life-energy. Crucial in this opening statement is the fact that the message invokes Nahuatl discourse, a theme we extensively addressed in Part I of this dissertation corresponding to Mesoamerica. As it is obvious, there are no easy boundaries to be drawn between Mesoamerica, Arido-America, Oasis America, and the rest of North America, Nahuatl discourse like other Indigenous discourse embeds the very same basic Indigenous American constitutive values that we find throughout all Abya-Yala, from Alaska to the southernmost tip of the Andes. This was also shown in Part II corresponding to the Andes. The infrastructure of the Indigenous Americas is basically an ear of corn of which its diverse Indigenous cultures are each a kernel. This ear of corn is made of the same life-energy and hence it is difficult and illegitimate to place boundaries that would divide this way of life into separate bounded entities; indeed, the very possibility of such an onto-politics is antithetical to the Indigenous experience of the cosmos.

Tupac Enrique continues,

Today we stand as nations and *pueblos* of Indigenous peoples in regeneration of the role and responsibility that we share with all living beings to protect the sacredness of the natural world and the spirit of life itself. Today we stand in the face of challenges that extend from our own families and the local community all unto the regional territory, from continental scale to global magnitude. We face now challenges that are unparalleled in all of human history. As global human society we face the tipping point of global climate chaos and in this “We” there is no “They”.⁷³⁶

In this paragraph we immediately notice again the displacement of the hegemonic political geography that has historically and continuously sought to sever the Indigenous from “south of the border” from those “north of the border”; the displacement of geopolitical divisions is undertaken through the term used by Hispanic colonialism to describe Indigenous groups

⁷³⁶ Lecture at the Indigenous Peoples Forum on the Impact of the Doctrine of Discovery in the Arizona State Capitol House of Representatives, March 23, 2012. Emphases added.

throughout the Americas, namely, *pueblos*, as in *pueblos Indigenas*. Indigenous nations are *pueblos Indigenas*, kernels of the same ear of maize, kin peoples. Then we notice the idea that Indigeneity commands the enactment of an ethico-politics of responsibility to partake in the nurturing, protection, and renewal of the biotic, non-anthropocentric community. We may notice also the shared diagnosis, from an Indigenous perspective, of a crisis of global magnitude, as described in previous parts of the dissertation. The idea of unparalleled challenges to humanity, especially in what concerns the limits of the anthropolitics of dominion as manifested in the ecological crisis of anthropocentric civilization. Finally, we find yet another subversion of colonial identity markers.

From within the hegemonic history, Indigeneity has been the marker of otherness and inferiority, the characteristic of those and of that which had to be surpassed; now, in light of the crisis of the mode of civilization that sought to subdue it, the Indigenous ethic itself could become the very spirit that encompasses the whole world into a global “We” able to live according to a way that corresponds to the ethico-politics of Indigeneity, but not without first acknowledging and redressing the damage done for as Tupac Enrique is understandably prompt to underline,

The Indigenous peoples of Mother Earth were treated as road-kill on the highway of human civilization. Our nations, our territories, our flesh, our blood, our labor, our natural resources have been treated as raw material to be expropriated and exploited without any just consideration for our human rights or the rights of Mother Earth.⁷³⁷

Tupac Enrique then moves on to articulate the marginality of Indigeneity within the hegemonic global order. He states,

Within international law, among the governing states of the world order known as the UN system our collective legal personality and cultural identity with its corresponding human rights and territorial rights as nations of Indigenous peoples are not acknowledged nor respected...Even our treaties with the government states which provide unequivocal evidence and testimony to our nationhood and rights...have been subverted and domesticated...[left] to rot and decay into the oblivion of human conscience that is the Doctrine of Discovery...⁷³⁸

⁷³⁷ Lecture at the Indigenous Peoples Forum on the Impact of the Doctrine of Discovery in the Arizona State Capitol House of Representatives, March 23, 2012. Emphases added.

⁷³⁸ Lecture at the Indigenous Peoples Forum on the Impact of the Doctrine of Discovery in the Arizona State Capitol House of Representatives, March 23, 2012. Emphases added.

And he emphasizes,

Within the UN system we [have] only existed as populations and not as peoples, minority groups and not as nations, we were regarded as cultural relics. Denial, discrimination and invisibility [have been] the coins of the realm that were tossed our way in spite of the fact that we continue to be the most ancient of human societies, we are the roots of humanity itself at the planetary level.⁷³⁹

These two passages illustrate what was described above as the ‘root’ of the violence of the system of states against the condition of the Indigenous. What lies behind the invisibility, marginality, denial, and discrimination is precisely the radical incompatibility between the cosmopolitical commitments of the Indigenous to a “natural democracy” that is planetarily rooted and the reenactment of the originary violence that constitutes the foundation of the system of states; in short, the anthropolitics of dominion (e.g., Genesis 1:28, the Papal Bulls, ownership/property/sovereignty as dominion, Max Weber’s insight concerning the state as a sovereign “monopoly of violence” over a parcel of nature and a population, etc.). Neither the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP), nor the UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues (UNPFII) can circumvent the fact that the system of states is founded on an anthropolitics of dominion, indeed, a quotidian celebration of dominion, in which recognition of identity and status (hence the term “state” from the Latin “status”) is ultimately only brought about through the attainment of a “monopoly of violence” and “sovereign ownership” *over* human and non-human others or what was ‘classically’ known as dominion. And that is what lies, as we have discussed, behind the Doctrine of Discovery.

The UN system, as Tupac Enrique acknowledges, is a system of *states*, and statecraft is simply the quotidian reenactment of dominion and the demand for its recognition (i.e., “sovereignty”) by others who partake in the everyday implementation of the same mythology of dominion. That those who refuse to partake in the performance of statecraft and live according to the cosmopolitical commitments of “natural democracy”, i.e., those living according to the

⁷³⁹ Lecture at the Indigenous Peoples Forum on the Impact of the Doctrine of Discovery in the Arizona State Capitol House of Representatives, March 23, 2012. Emphases added.

Indigenous way, are rendered invisible, marginal, or even erased by a system whose organizing kernel is the practice of dominion is something that cannot be addressed through any other means but the deconstruction of the institutions whose primary task is the enactment of this mythology of dominion, and of the mythology itself. Indigeneity and statecraft are incompatible, and the UN system can only be pulled in one of the two directions, and as Tupac Enrique recognizes (quoted below), the UN system is—still to this day—primarily responsive to the anthropological principle of *sovereignty-as-dominion* and only secondarily responsive to other concerns (such as Indigeneity or Mother Earth), whether it be for authentic empathy or as a buffer against the destabilization or de-legitimation of its organizing kernel. The established institutional apparatus could be appropriated or ‘hijacked’ or it could shift its primary commitments through suasion or in light of our global crises, but that is unlikely to happen as it would question the very ‘foundations’ of its constitutive actors, whose contributions and participation ultimately support the system. So it is not ideal to rely on a system whose ultimate organizing kernel is a mythology that is radically contrary to the very values that would be enacted through the Indigenous way, and that are necessary to fulfill our global responsibilities and address our global challenges. The hegemonic institutional apparatus can be infiltrated and even employed, can be disabled, deconstructed, softened and even used as an instrument, its operations can work to attenuate the damages caused by the very actors who sustain it, and yet this institution cannot ultimately defer the fact that the global enactment of an Indigenous—and hence also a socio-ecologically harmonious—way would necessarily disable the foundations of its constitution.

When considering these issues in a conversation with Tupac Enrique, he insightfully articulated the questions and challenges at hand when he stated:

Faced as we are with crises like the global water and climate crisis, We the Indigenous are setting up the stage... at the planetary level of Mother Earth for a challenge to the civilizational paradigm of the so-called civilized world in order to bring forward the vision of the Indigenous nations, not necessarily as a “civilization”...as we are positioning ourselves to challenge “civilization” ... *the idea is [therefore] to create an Indigenous world that looks eyeball to eyeball at the state system...*they [the states] have international organizations at the planetary level, so we the Indigenous peoples are also going to come together at the planetary level to move forward and project the alternative...based on the root, on the Indigenous...cosmovisions, we have always been

planetary...And the root? What is that? That is us, the Indigenous...we are fighting in the ground and we are also fighting at the global level.⁷⁴⁰

In this commentary, Tupac Enrique articulates what is ultimately at stake, the Indigenous challenge to a civilizational paradigm, especially in the context of what in this work has been articulated as the global crisis of anthropocentric civilization. The idea of “an Indigenous world that looks eyeball to eyeball at the state system” is precisely the articulation of what Cajete calls the “cosmological clash” and what results from the radical incompatibility between the cosmopolitics of Indigeneity and the anthropolitics of dominion (whether as sovereignty or property). For Indigeneity to look eyeball to eyeball at the state system is for the values of “cosmic/natural democracy” to look eyeball to eyeball vis-à-vis the values of anthropocentric dominion. And what is at “the root”? This idea basically means the re-rooting of humanity in “the land”: its re-Indigenization in the very Earth that dominion has sought to subdue, the reinsertion of humanity in the web of life-energy, the re-incorporation of humanity into the bio-eco-cosmopolitical community. Such are the stakes.

Nevertheless, in his speech to the Indigenous Forum Tupac Enrique draws on the value of instruments such as the UNDRIP to articulate a number of important declarations. He states that “On September the 13th, 2007” (the day of the adoption of the UNDRIP) the “reality” constructed by the system of states “collapsed...”

...and a new, yet ancient truth, the truth of the sun, *Nican Tlacah Ihuitl*, the day of the Indigenous...this time, this day a new and ancient truth came once again to life. We as Indigenous peoples are equal to all other peoples...We as Indigenous peoples are equal to all other peoples...As such, we freely determine our own future and in exercising the right of self determination as peoples of the world equal to all other peoples, we also possess...we also possess the right to our memory, to our past, to our history... As Indigenous peoples we are peoples equal to all other peoples and our histories are equally part of the weave of human memory globally, and as such must be taken into account on an equal basis...to provide the necessary foundation for public policies of fairness and justice, and education, and the delivery of services of public health and public safety by the states.⁷⁴¹

⁷⁴⁰ Interview (January, 2012)

⁷⁴¹ Lecture at the Indigenous Peoples Forum on the Impact of the Doctrine of Discovery in the Arizona State Capitol House of Representatives, March 23, 2012. Emphases added.

The UNDRIP, an ambitious instrument in the defense of the Indigenous people, still operates significantly within the system of states. It is a very important instrument in the struggle to limit the power of dominion, but it cannot ultimately deconstruct the order of dominion. While the “reality” constructed through the quotidian reenactment of the myth of sovereignty-as-dominion is certainly put into question by instruments such as the UNDRIP, this “reality” cannot unfortunately be “collapsed” by it; the UNDRIP still falls squarely within the system as it ultimately relies on its ‘implementation’ through the very principles of statecraft which Indigeneity would challenge. Now, this is not to diminish the great value of the Declaration which has also great, yet unrealized potential, but we should not confuse a *limit* placed on power-as-dominion with the *disabling* of this power.

Tupac Enrique’s paragraph above contains the virtue of two positions in a single reflection, a fertile ambivalence—reminding us of the Indigenous principle of uniduality. On the one hand, his discourse emphasizes that “a new, yet ancient truth, the truth of the sun, the *Nican Tlach Ilhuatl*,” the day of “We the Indigenous,” this “ancient truth comes once again to life;” this first statement embodies the renewal of Indigeneity, the Indigenous renaissance, implied explicitly in “the truth of the Sun,” which is to say, the bio-eco-cosmopolitics of Indigeneity. On the other hand, however, Tupac Enrique emphasizes, twice indeed, “We as Indigenous peoples are equal to all other peoples... We as Indigenous peoples are equal to all other peoples... As such, we freely determine our own future and in exercising the right of self determination as peoples of the world equal to all other peoples, we also possess... we also possess the right to our memory, to our past, to our history.” This statement would equate “Indigeneity” with simple nationhood, and would place “Indigenous peoples” alongside all other nations in what would appear as a concert of equal, self-determined nations, possessing equal rights, and holding a right to define their own identity. This latter statement fits into an onto-political discourse consistent with that of the prevalent civilization, but not consistent with the Indigenous renewal of life-energy and the enactment of natural and cosmic democracy.

The fertile key to the ambivalence is that within the reality of “equality of nations” “possessing rights to identity” and so forth we find the question concerning the fact that this supposed “equality of nations” was built precisely on an inequality against Indigeneity. The rights of nations are based on sovereignty-as-dominion over a territory and population; that those who would be “Indigenous” were rendered unequal and treated as road-kill on the highway of human civilization, that they were marginalized within this system of “rights” and “possessions” is a testament to their commitment to reject the temptation of becoming “like the rest,” that is, “equal”—in dominion. In short, their virtue is to be found in the fact that they are not “like the others”, that they are not “equal to the others”, that they have been subdued by the others because they do not do as the others, the others being those who partake in the materialization of the mythology of dominion in the form of the state.

So the Indigenous renaissance is not compatible with the conversion of Indigeneity into a plain equality of rights and other possessions (e.g., “territory”) within a system of nations: the Indigenous renaissance sets itself up *as an alternative to* this system, and to be accepted (or perhaps coopted) into the “concert of nations” as an “equal” would be to renounce “the truth of the Sun,” which is in part the truth that the “system of nations” as it stands is incompatible with the non-anthropocentric cosmopolitical community of “natural and cosmic democracy” and that is precisely the reason why *within* this “system of nations” the Indigenous condition has been rendered unequal, inferior, subdued, dominated as has the Earth—or the rest of “nature,” non-human animals, etc. To uphold Indigeneity is to resist the temptation to become “like the others,” to resist the temptation to become “equal to all other peoples”, to resist the temptation to give in to acceptance by and within a community ultimately based on dominion. Indigeneity demands not to be accepted as equal into a system based on dominion, but to de-compose that system in order to give birth to a “New Sun,” a new Epoch. In this context, the language of “freely determining our future” is a language that this community of nation-states recognizes, but it is a language that cannot be recognized in the broader bio-eco-cosmic community in which humans can never pretend to be sovereign or self-determining: we are epiphenomenal, dependent, so instead of “self-

determining” we *all* must become *responsible*, we must embrace our membership not within the “community of self-determined [human] peoples” but within the more encompassing bio-eco-cosmo-political community where no-body is self-determined or sovereign and every-body is relationally tied into networks of reciprocal responsibilities and co-dependencies.

The temptations of “sovereignty,” “self-determination,” anthropocentric “freedom,” “equality of rights” within an anthropological community of nation-states which are ultimately dominions, those many temptations are in the last instance traceable to the desire to transcend or simply ignore the broader constitution of the bio-eco-cosmopolitical community. Such desires are onto-theological, tied to the metaphysics of an extraterrestrial and extra-cosmic god. The *Nican Tlachah Ilhuitl*, the day of the Indigenous, can only be brought about through the displacement of an order of nation-states built and sustained on the mythology of dominion. The statement here that must be made, however problematic it may seem, is that the commitment to Indigeneity is a commitment to *resist* the temptation and the invitation to become an “equal” within a system whose reproduction demands the quotidian celebration of inequality---specifically, the inequality ultimately traceable to the kernel of dominion. The just thing to do when facing an unjust system is to refuse to partake in the (re-)enactment and continuation of that injustice.

A further statement that has to be made, perhaps a harsh judgment is that it is not the Indigenous that should become equal to the non-Indigenous by being welcomed into the “concert of nation-states”, but the other way around: the non-Indigenous should become equal to the Indigenous in their resistance to the mythology of dominion and to all the institutions whose reproduction depends on its reenactment. It is perhaps accurate to say that the continuation of the gift of human existence granted by Earth and the broader cosmos hinges on the inversion and indeed subversion of the order of dominion that currently prevails, an inversion of the world or what Andeans call a *Pacha-Kuti*, an inversion of cosmic life-energies, an inversion that would not make the Indigenous equal to all other peoples, but rather make other peoples equal to the Indigenous and in turn make all humanity equal to all other non-human peoples that make up the

bio-eco-cosmopolitical community—the stars, the Earth and all living things that “creep” upon it—*that is* “natural-cosmic democracy”.

Tupac Enrique’s speech gives us more to think about, he states “What does this new context of the UN system mean in terms of the Doctrine of Discovery?” Moreover, “What does it mean in terms of” the global and “continental” systems of states, “legislation,” “policy” and “jurisprudence that derive from the Doctrine of Discovery?” and he follows:

May we suggest...may we suggest that what we have before us is not simply a set of questions but the actualization of a new systematic standard to address these issues in terms of a context and a process that is an initiative of We the Indigenous peoples, *Nican Tlaca*.⁷⁴²

This paragraph reveals the underlying question that is at stake here. Let us remember that the Indigenous People’s Forum is about the Doctrine of Discovery and is a follow up to the preliminary study by the Special Rapporteur to the UNPFII. We showed above, that what is ultimately at stake is the deconstruction of the foundations of an order founded on a “framework of dominance”. Beneath the issue of the Doctrine of Discovery is the persistence of the framework of dominance that sustains the contemporary world order, a framework based on the periodical reenactment of the anthropolitics of dominion, persistent to this day in the idea of sovereignty-as-monopoly of violence over a subject territory and population, which is itself the basis of statecraft and amounts to the ultimate title of “property” and “ownership”. So to cut o the point, Tupac Enrique mentions a “context,” that context which he articulated above as the crisis of anthropocentric civilization as made most clear in its global ecological manifestation. He mentions the “issue”, this being mostly a world (dis)order built, sustained and globalized on the anthropolitics of dominion—that particularly affects both the Indigenous and Mother Earth. The “process” to which Tupac Enrique refers is what in our conversation he articulated as the “planetary projection” of “the alternative” “based on the root,” namely, the “Indigenous cosmovisions”. And what is the “new systematic standard” (he could as well said ‘holistic’ or

⁷⁴² Lecture at the Indigenous Peoples Forum on the Impact of the Doctrine of Discovery in the Arizona State Capitol House of Representatives, March 23, 2012. Emphases added.

rather rhizomatic standard)? That new systematic standard is the “new truth” which is also an “old truth”, the “truth of the sun” which is to say the truth our embeddedness within the continuum of an encompassing bio-eco-cosmopolitical community, that is, that *other* legislation, that *other* constitution, that *other* jurisprudence, the celebratory every-day renewal of what Cajete called the “natural democracy” and what Lenkersdorf called “cosmic democracy” which I believe is more appropriate to call cosmopolitics in the most encompassing, non-anthropocentric sense of the term.

Tupac Enrique’s speech closes as follows:

Today is a day of emergence; today we break out of the constraints not only of the Doctrine of Discovery but of Doctrine itself, with a call to courage to all humanity. We look back; we call for the courage that is necessary in order to envision a new horizon for Mother Earth as she is reborn from the seas of reemergence. The millennial journey of the nations and pueblos of Indigenous peoples, guardians of Mother Earth begins once again here today...in...the spirit of...community sustainability. We look back now across the generations of our ancestors and we look forward to a path of the future generations and here now, *Nican Tlaca*, set our sights. We direct our leadership to engage with all our relations of the sacred Mother Earth to let our path...be known, let it be told, let it be respected, and let it be protected. It is not about what we want, it is about what we will. We call for this process to...prevail...over the distortions of doctrine, not merely for the purposes of redress of past violations...not merely for the purpose of redress of past violations, but to actually engage in collective corrective action in order to move forward...towards our common destiny as humanity and in maturity, as children of the nations and *pueblos* of Mother Earth. Therefore, we direct that the record of this Indigenous Peoples Forum...be presented...to the entire conscience of the world...⁷⁴³

Tupac Enrique declares that we are to “break out of the constraints of...Doctrine itself.”

It is pertinent to consider the context in which the term “Doctrine” is being used here. Considering that what is being discussed in this juncture is the preliminary study on the doctrine of discovery, the term “Doctrine” refers us to the “teaching” emitted by a “doctor” in the classical Latin sense. Like the term “doctrine,” its root precedent, “doctor” can be etymologically traced to its early use in the 1300s and 1400s and it referred specifically to “church father” or “religious teacher, adviser, or scholar.”⁷⁴⁴ In the context of this Indigenous Forum which is a follow up on the preliminary

⁷⁴³ Lecture at the Indigenous Peoples Forum on the Impact of the Doctrine of Discovery in the Arizona State Capitol House of Representatives, March 23, 2012. Emphases added.

⁷⁴⁴ Etymologies of “Doctrine” <http://www.etymonline.com/index.php?term=doctrine> and

study concerning the doctrine of discovery, the term doctrine immediately refers us to the “teachings” of the highest “church father,” that is, the Papal Bulls, but from that, they invoke the name of the Father of whom the Pope would be a representative, and so doctrine ultimately refer to the theological teachings of the Father that would speak through the Pope, his representative on Earth, and that Father who is ultimately being invoked is the voice that is to be found in Genesis 1:28, the teaching of dominion:

And God blessed them, and *God said unto them*, “Be fruitful, and multiply, and fill the Earth, and subdue it: and have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that moves upon the Earth.”

So when Tupac Enrique declares that we shall break away from the constraints of doctrine itself, in this context, he is referring to the doctrine of dominion, behind which stands the theology of dominion.

After that, Tupac Enrique states: “We look back; we call for the courage that is necessary in order to envision a new horizon for Mother Earth as she is reborn from the seas of reemergence.” Again, in prompting us to “look back” in order to envision a new horizon for Mother Earth he is inviting all to celebrate the renewal of a cycle that would bring forth the Indigenous cosmovisions. This circular Indigenous logic becomes even more complex when he states “*We look back* now across the *generations* of our *ancestors* and *we look forward* to a path of the future *generations* and *here now*, *Nican Tlaca*, set our sights. We...engage with all our relations of the sacred Mother Earth...” It is at this point where we should remind our selves that the Indigenous experience of the cosmos is circular, which is to say that the future generations, born of the “land” are made of the same “matter” of the decomposed “ancestors”—We are the land, the ancestors are in the land, the future generations will be born of the land: it is the same spirit, the same life energy “matterized” and “de-matterized” cyclically in the constantly fluctuating “here and now.” So to look back to our ancestors is to look forward to our future generations, life energy decomposed and recomposed, pooled and dispersed and pooled again

“Doctor” (n.) http://www.etymonline.com/index.php?term=doctor&allowed_in_frame=0.

through the cycles of the Earth and the rest of the cosmos. Linear time is a construction, only the circle exists. It is why “we are all related” and this is why Mother Earth is sacred.

Tupac Enrique declares that these efforts are “not merely for purpose of redress of past violations” and he repeats this statement to emphasize that this is an issue that goes beyond just “repairing” old damages. He insists that we need to “engage in collective corrective action in order to move forward...towards our common destiny as humanity and in maturity, as children of the nations and *pueblos* of Mother Earth.” And this is precisely what is most difficult, to correct and rebuild our world in light of our common destiny as *mature* children of Mother Earth who will responsibly take care for her. And that these reflections confront the entire world is a fact derived from the problem that so-called “Indigenous issues” and “grievances” are precisely at “the root” of the largest issues that bedevil humanity, a good many of which can be traced to the anthropolitics of dominion. This is clearly the case with the ecological crises as the Indigenous are Indigenous because of having taken a stance of existential solidarity and in fact continuity with the Earth.

Tupac Enrique’s intervention was followed by Shawnee Professor Robert Miller from the Lewis & Clark University. So let us remember that this was a forum on the impact of the doctrine of discovery. It is therefore pertinent to discuss Professor Miller’s intervention in light of his conclusion; he states: “So what is the impact of the Doctrine of Discovery today? Every federal principle that you are aware of comes directly from the Doctrine of Discovery...”⁷⁴⁵ Of course, Professor Miller is referring to the fact that in one way or another the whole apparatus of settler statecraft and its claims to sovereignty at basically every level rests on the doctrines of discovery and the underlying framework of dominion which served to legitimate the appropriation of the continent. Those doctrines at every level and on a continued basis must operate to underpin the very existence of the state apparatus. This is often exemplified by the case of *Johnson v. M’Intosh*, but in practice the discovery doctrine underpins the settlement of the whole state apparatus; as

⁷⁴⁵ Lecture at the Indigenous Peoples Forum on the Impact of the Doctrine of Discovery in the Arizona State Capitol House of Representatives, March 23, 2012. Emphases added.

Professor Miller states, “This country...was founded and settled on the Doctrine of Discovery and of Conquest...” His most straightforward articulation of the argument was the following:

Thomas Jefferson called the Doctrine of Discovery ‘preemption.’ The...very first Congress concerned the Trade and Intercourse Acts...this first Congress used the word ‘preemption’ in the very first Trade and Intercourse Act in July 22nd 1790. So the founding fathers, those people that drafted the Constitution and started this country, they understood this legal principle [the Doctrine of Discovery and Conquest, implying also framework of dominion], they knew the claims that the United States were making over Native peoples and they knew they came from this ancient crazy idea that Europeans could show up and claim the rest of the world. Usually when I give...this lecture I pick somebody from the front row and I ask them, ‘where do you live? I am coming over today with...my flag and...my religious symbol and I am going to claim your house, what are you going to do?’... What’s the number for 911 here? You have a gun? I have got to be insane—am I not?—if I think I can show up at your house and claim it. That is what Europeans did. That is what this international doctrine of discovery did. So we’re talking about the impact on Indigenous peoples folks; it was the colonization, it was the domination of European civilizations and religions of the rest of the world. European ‘Title’, it was this overall claim that Europeans now own the land... The United States adopted this international law of discovery and turned it into what we call today...Manifest Destiny...In *Johnson v. M’Intosh* the Supreme Court says several times that the United States owns the ‘ultimate title,’ ‘the ultimate dominion,’ the sole title, the exclusive title of Indian lands, even though Indian peoples were still living on the land, using the lands, and had been there for millennia.. Folks, you know that is still the law today, right? So this is not just some old interesting thing that happened in history, we live this today...The United States had the...hubris...or whatever word you want to use, to show up and claim it... So Manifest Destiny was not a new idea folks, it was just a repetition of these elements of the Doctrine of Discovery, this idea of European and Christian superiority and right to the entire world.⁷⁴⁶

The most illustrative and problematic passage of *Johnson v. M’Intosh* that articulates the framework of dominion, again, is the following:

While the different nations of Europe respected the right of the natives, as occupants, they asserted the ultimate dominion to be in themselves; and claimed and exercised, as a consequence of this ultimate dominion, a power to grant the soil, while yet in possession of the natives. These grants have been understood by all to convey a title to the grantees, subject only to the Indian right of occupancy. The history of America, from its discovery to the present day, proves, we think, the universal recognition of these principles.

As Steve Newcomb’s lecture (discussed below) underlines about this paragraph of *Johnson v. M’Intosh*,

...if you parse that, you pull it apart and you delve deeply into it, it is the idea that [Europeans and Euro-Americans] have, just by showing up, ... somehow inherent within themselves this right of Christian domination or Christian dominion ... and that the

⁷⁴⁶ Lecture at the Indigenous Peoples Forum on the Impact of the Doctrine of Discovery in the Arizona State Capitol House of Representatives, March 23, 2012. Emphases added.

Indians, the ‘heathen,’ the original...peoples actually have merely a right of ‘heathen’ ‘occupancy’. And so that terminology is used throughout.

These are all themes that we are familiar with from the vast literatures from several disciplines, including Indigenous studies, but this information is rarely articulated within a venue such as that in which this Indigenous Forum took place. In any case, one of the most interesting themes brought up by Professor Miller’s lecture concerns the attitude of Europeans towards Earth (or “land”) and to all “living things” on it, an attitude extended towards the Indigenous peoples. He repeatedly illustrates this in his lecture; for instance, he states:

When Europeans walked to shore with the flag and the cross and stuck it in the sand. When Mary Weather Lewis crossed the continent in 1803 and 1806 and carried a branding iron... and as he crossed the continent, once they crossed the Rockies, Mary Weather Lewis starts branding his name that says U.S. CAPT M. LEWIS and they start carving their names on sandstone and Lewis starts branding his name on trees...Mary Weather Lewis out in my area branding trees...gee...sounds like he was sticking his flag and cross...he was claiming the Oregon Country for the United States...claiming...and using principles that *Johnson v. M’Intosh* reaffirmed in 1823....What did it mean when European countries showed up with their flag and cross and their branding irons? What allegedly happened to Native peoples?... How ironic it is that, as you know Mary Weather Lewis and William Clark, they were lost everywhere they went. Every Indian person they ran into they asked, where are we? And what’s up the road? But oh no, if we read [most] American history it was the Indians who were discovered...how ludicrous... You had to be the first European or Euro-American to show up, so how do you prove that... gosh maybe that is why Mary Weather Lewis carried a branding iron. How else could Europeans show that they had showed up first? They gave names to various areas, they named the rivers, mountains and various features. Remember what Lewis and Clark did, they named every single river, every single mountain... International law [embodies] these principles of how Euro-Americans claim territories just by showing up with their flags... which is what Lewis did with the branding iron.⁷⁴⁷

Professor Miller makes other similar statements along the same lines, it is worth citing them and then we will discuss the implications. Professor Miller reviews the theme of *terra nullius*, well known among scholars focusing on colonialism and imperialism. About it he states:

Terra Nullius, Latin word that means empty land. Europeans acted as if lands that Indians were using were empty and they could claim it. This principle was used most vigorously in Australia—they didn’t even pretended not to see the aboriginal peoples, [on the basis of this principle] it said they didn’t exist, ‘Australia is empty, we can claim it’...⁷⁴⁸

⁷⁴⁷ Lecture at the Indigenous Peoples Forum on the Impact of the Doctrine of Discovery in the Arizona State Capitol House of Representatives, March 23, 2012. Emphases added.

⁷⁴⁸ Lecture at the Indigenous Peoples Forum on the Impact of the Doctrine of Discovery in the Arizona State Capitol House of Representatives, March 23, 2012. Emphases added. See also Miller, Ruru, Behrendt, and Lindberg 2010.

Professor Miller also revisits the views commonly held about Indigenous peoples by statesmen whose influence in history is well known. Their views are paradigmatic in that they also illustrate the views of a great many others, especially at the time. Professor Miller reminds us

General George Washington said in 1783... “the savage as the wolf” We don’t have to fight Indian peoples he said because we will get their lands as soon as we want and when we are ready to do it. [Washington] says, and I am paraphrasing here, what happens to the animals of the forest as we advance our frontier? He says, they disappear, don’t they? Then he says, it is the same with the ‘savage’, “the savage as the wolf”. What Washington was saying is that Indian people will disappear in front of Europeans like snow disappears before the sun and that idea was repeated throughout American history.⁷⁴⁹

Moreover, Professor Miller further stated that Thomas “Jefferson said: we will be obligated to drive the Indians along with the rest of the beasts into the Rocky Mountains,⁷⁵⁰ so he had the same idea” and “Secretary of State Henry Clay added in 1825 that it was “impossible to civilize Indians...They were destined to extinction...”⁷⁵¹ Finally and not surprisingly, Professor Miller adds,

You know what the favorite Bible scripture of the English colonists and...founding fathers was? Genesis 1:28... ‘Fill the Earth, subdue it and have dominion over all living things’...and this ‘subduing of the Earth’ was very much what the colonists were into, and they wanted possession of it...⁷⁵²

Again, none of this information is unfamiliar or surprising to scholars familiar with the history of colonialism and settler statecraft or even among certain historians. But certainly, the fact that it is being articulated in such a venue and by Indigenous voices is. But what I would like to discuss here about Professor Miller’s lecture in this context is, as stated before, the question of the problematic European and Euro-American attitude to the Earth (“land”) and all that lives on it, an

⁷⁴⁹ Lecture at the Indigenous Peoples Forum on the Impact of the Doctrine of Discovery in the Arizona State Capitol House of Representatives, March 23, 2012. Emphases added.

⁷⁵⁰ The quote literally reads: “we shall be obliged to drive them, with the beasts of the forest into the Stony mountains.” The quote is from a letter written by Thomas Jefferson to John Adams in Monticello on June 11, 1812. It can be found at <http://www.loc.gov/exhibits/jefferson/178.html>.

⁷⁵¹ See Miller, Ruru, Behrendt, and Lindberg 2010, 88.

⁷⁵² Lecture at the Indigenous Peoples Forum on the Impact of the Doctrine of Discovery in the Arizona State Capitol House of Representatives, March 23, 2012. Emphases added.

attitude historically extended to the Indigenous. Let us remember Lewis & Clark's "branding iron" used on tree-people and other non-human members of the 'landscape'; let us also review the fragment of the letter to James Duane by General George Washington (September 7, 1783) cited by Professor Miller; the letter compares "Indians" with "Wild Beasts of the Forest" and the "Savage" with the "Wolf":

...attempting to drive them [the "Indians"] by force of arms out of their Country... as we have already experienced is like driving the Wild Beasts of the Forest which will return as soon as the pursuit is at an end and fall perhaps on those that are left there; when the gradual extension of our Settlements will as certainly cause the Savage as the Wolf to retire; both being beasts of prey tho' they differ in shape. In a word there is nothing to be obtained by an Indian War but the Soil they live on and this can be had by purchase at less expense...⁷⁵³

So let us look at this issue in light of the Indigenous philosophy we discussed in an earlier section. We remember that from an Indigenous viewpoint, "we are all related" since all the cosmos is woven out of a continuum of life-energy which manifests itself differentially in accordance with cycles of transmutation. We remember also that in this Indigenous cosmoexperience energy cannot ultimately be determined or delimited within any bounds, that "thingification" is merely the temporary pooling of energy and that therefore there cannot emerge ultimately separated "entities" or "identities" in accordance with an onto-logized worldview. This cosmoexperience is at 'the root' of the idea that "tree-people" and "non-human-animal people" are our relatives and that indeed we can become 'them' and they can become 'us' through cycles of life/death/life, through breath (including respiration and perspiration), nutrition/excretion and that, as Cordova reminds us by citing Spinoza, we are blood cells within a body, Mother Earth, whose atmosphere is like the albumen of a raw egg. These few notes should be enough to remember all the other implications discussed in the section on Indigenous cosmology, philosophy, and political theory.

If we look at the (pre)dominant European attitude towards the Earth ("Land") and all in it, and how it extended to the Indigenous, from the Indigenous perspective we can clearly see the

⁷⁵³ The letter is available at <http://teachingamericanhistory.org/library/index.asp?document=359>.

depth of the violence associated with Lewis's and Clark's "branding iron" used to brand different members of the biotic community and thereby appropriate them. And this is why Shawnee Professor Miller repeatedly and energetically emphasizes acts such as planting flags and crosses on "land", and branding trees and other non-human persons dwelling in the landscape with iron. The notion of ownership (whether as property or sovereignty) that most Europeans brought along with them was premised on a profound anthropocentrism based on a view of the universe that was primordially onto-logical, which is to say, a universe made up of fundamentally separated entities and in addition to that, entities that were arranged in a hierarchy where subjectivity was diminishing as a function of its distance from an ultimately sovereign God (sometimes supplanted by the Logos/Reason), and in these hierarchy humans (especially European males) stood closest to the ultimate sovereign. For the Indigenous the pretense to act in such a way as to appropriate a landscape without becoming fully familiar with the land over many generations would be atrocious, and even then, one can never really own the land or any living "thing" in it. Since "subjectivity" or "existence" can neither be located nor contained within any entity and instead flows among them all in a field of shared life-energy or "spirit" or "breath" it is understandable that all members of the "landscape" are manifestations of the spirit, that is, spirited matter or what we would call "persons."

The appropriation of the 'Americas' is all the more atrocious in that it was not even done in a way that was respectful to the "environment." Let us put it this way, from an Indigenous viewpoint, the relationship to the landscape is no different ethically speaking from that which humans should have to each other, since we are all persons: tree-persons, mountain-persons, buffalo-persons, etcetera. Just as one cannot claim to establish a legitimate and solid long term relation with human persons by merely branding our name on their bodies with a branding iron and declaring that person part of our property or under our sovereignty (e.g., by legal decree), for the Indigenous it is similarly atrocious to try to appropriate a tree, or a rock, or field or a mountain or a deer by merely branding them with a branding iron and declaring them under our sovereign ownership in an instant of 'legal' power. Indeed, since we are all manifestations of the same spirit

or life-energy in transmutation, to appropriate an apple tree with a branding iron is literally to press a branding iron on our ancestors whose decomposed energy ('remains') transmuted into the roots and the trunk and on our descendants whose future composition is in part constituted by the apples that we are gifted by the tree-person, and we indeed are never entities whose imaginary identities could be bounded within the limits of our skin—as Cordova puts it we're merely the flow of life-spirit aware of itself, existence dwells not within the body but in the continuum of life-energy which is in permanent transmutation, reconstituting life forms on an everyday basis through the experience of phenomena such as "breath," "respiration," "nutrition," and "excretion."

So what Lewis and Clark's iron-branding practices amount to and are exemplary of is an affront in that they imposed a hierarchical relationship on non-human persons whom they did not even bother to become familiar with; 'wherever they went they were lost' Professor Miller insists, which is to say that they had not developed a relation of familiarity, respect, and friendship with the land and all that lives in/from her. Lewis and Clark's practices were widespread and to a very prevalent extent still are and the reality we have "constructed" and that is most frequently sustained and normalized (i.e., it is hegemonic) is precisely a reality that emanates from the quotidian reproduction of such habits. The paradigmatic Lewis and Clark practice was/has been even a greater affront in that the hierarchical relationship that was imposed was one of *ownership*—a hierarchical relationship founded on alienation from Earth and dominion over her—and not one of respectful co-dependence, love, respect, vital continuity, mutual embrace and familiarity. This 'ownership' attitude literally amounts to an enslavement of the landscape, quite similar to—and co-extensive with—the branding of non-human and human animals in farms and plantations. The wholesale 'baptism' of the landscape (and of human and non-human people) by branding iron and sovereign appropriation (and even more so without nurturing any previous familiarity) is an affront to the personhood which we share with all our relations through the spirit or life-energy by which we are all related and of which we are all diverse manifestations. The appropriation of land was not only offensive in that it displaced the Indigenous but it was even more so in that it enslaved the 'landscape' and all non-human persons dwelling in it. And all of

this was as a recycling and reenactment of a theology and metaphysics of dominion and a rather anthropocentric (in addition to Eurocentric) ontological stance. Now it is rather crucial to consider how and why this devastating attitude extended towards “Indians.”

Mainstream Western civilization (along with others) today prides itself in the claim that its active members have finally come to the acknowledgement that human bodies who have non-European ancestry are indeed ‘humans’ with an ‘equal’ ‘status’ before the eyes of the Law and of God. Herein lies this problem of desiring to be “equal” or extending “equality” within a hierarchy of dominion (without displacing the hierarchy itself) and in desiring to make all variations of a particular hominid “equal” within a cosmology that is bedeviled by a mythology of dominion, hierarchy, and status. In any case, this contemporary pride in the belief that the hegemonic mode of civilization has surpassed its “prejudice” is rather problematic in that it is based on the assumption that the hierarchical cosmology of dominion (whether in its theological or in its evolutionary basis) is still broadly right, and the only historical “mistake” (one that has allegedly been “corrected”) is once having erroneously “believed” that human bodies of non-Western ancestry and/or without penises (and “other” so-called ‘deficiencies’) did not hold the same “status” within this hierarchy of dominion. But by and large the constitutive values of the cosmology, namely hierarchy, power, dominion, are themselves intact; generally, the cosmology is intact. Only now, human bodies of non-Western ancestry and/or ‘without’ penises (and “other” would be “disabilities”) can celebrate the fact that they have now been recognized as being of “equal status”; and even when experience so often contradicts such claims of recognition they have at least been formally invited to join the concert of the dominant but the hierarchical structure of the ruling cosmology, namely of dominion in general and anthropocentric dominion particularly, is largely immune to such adjustments in “status.”

From an Indigenous perspective it is the cosmology of dominion, hierarchy and status, and the ontology of separate(d) entities and identities which is by and large unsustainable and unjust, and unsustainable because it fails to do justice to the bio-eco-cosmic fact of cyclical continuity as life-energy or spirit. To live according to the Indigenous ethic is to live in accordance

with the fact that our temporary “human” existence is but one manifestation of the “spirit” or the life-force. “We are the land” is not a metaphor; when the Yupik say “We are the salmon” or when the Hopi say like the Maya or the Zapotec “We are the corn/maize”, or when the Yaqui perform the Deer Dance to celebrate that “We are the deer”, or when the Dine’ declare that “We are the Wind” they are not engaging in a so-called metaphor, and these articulations and dances are not romantic beautifications of “nature” and its “pretty animals” and other “phenomena.” Beyond these colonial constructs of the environmentally-friendly Indian who befriends wolves and talks to trees lies a rather straightforward bio-eco-cosmoexperience based on a simple awareness of the most basic constitutive aspects of life, namely, that existence is a manifestation of the cyclical transmutation of matterized energy, made undeniably evident through utterly necessary practices as basic as respiration, nutrition, excretion, and the delicate biospheric/atmospheric conditions that envelop and in fact constitute (more than just interpenetrate) the manifestation of existence euphemistically referred to as “humanity.”

There is an incredibly illustrative anecdote beautifully articulated by Yupik intellectual Harold Napoleon concerning the arrival of Russian “explorers” and colonizers to the shores of Alyeska (“Alaska”). Napoleon writes

To the Western explorers, whalers, traders, and missionaries who first met them, the Yup’ik were considered backward savages steeped in superstition. *Their villages were small and hard to find because they were a part of the earth. Grass grew on their houses, making it hard to see the village.* Only when the warriors came out in their kayaks and umiaks did the newcomers see them and then they were surprised that humans would already be in this part of the world.⁷⁵⁴

What Napoleon underlines is that when the Russians arrived to the shores they could not “see” the Indigenous because their homes, their demeanor and their “settlements” completely blended and almost perfectly belonged with the “landscape”. Like the Lewis and Clark branding and naming habit which would, among other things, be unable to distinguish one tree-person from another tree-person because from that viewpoint they are all just standardized thingified trees, the Russians were unable to distinguish the “Eskimos” from the rest of the “landscape” and for that

⁷⁵⁴ Napoleon 2009, 124-128; emphasis added.

matter, colonizers in general have been unable to make more distinctions among the persons (whether human or non-human) that are targeted for colonization. But the point here is that the Indigenous never sought to distinguish their living bodies from the continuum of living “land,” nor to create an extraterrestrial landscape like the “extraterrestrial god” to which Cordova refers. To live Indigenous is precisely to deliberately blend in, emulate, and participate in the renewal of the cycles in which life energy transmutes itself constantly into a great diversity of manifestations. There is no desire to create a “civilization” that is separate, fully distinguished and superior to all else, that is alienated from the rest of the bio-eco-cosmic community. Indigeneity has no particular obsession with creating an ontological boundary of distinction and alienation from “The Forest” or the “Wolves” invoked by General George Washington.

This is not to say that Indigeneity does not recognize difference, it does, but it understands that difference as the cyclical transmutation of spirit, as the movement of life-energy, so the dichotomy of identity/difference is displaced and there can be no hierarchy, at least none that would go beyond the most immediate, temporary, and consciously ethical practical purposes. When a pregnant hunter eats the deer (or a plant) that dwells a land that the ancestors have dwelled in since time immemorial she is aware of the fact that she is literally eating her ancestors who in turn will become her children as the energy that is transmuted and transmateralized (e.g., metabolized) comes to constitute the life of the baby to come, and so the same is with every member of the “landscape”; that is what it means to be “rooted in the land”, to be Indigenous, to be and become the deer (or the plant) as the deer (or the plant) becomes us—that this is a bio-eco-cosmic fact grounded in *this* universe, in *this* cosmos, in *this* pacha, and not a mythology of dominion based on the speculative status of an extra-cosmic deity or an “extraterrestrial god” in Cordova’s terms, should suffice to explain why most Europeans did violence and often cannot cease to do violence to those of Indigenous ancestry, and especially those who cherish their Indigenous heritage. The cosmology of dominion and hierarchy feeds on ontology; that is, the premise of absolute or “metaphysical” separation, which from an Indigenous perspective can never be legitimately upheld: we *will* become our own prey. So the violence of colonization, a

violence that harms the “land” of which the Indigenous is merely a manifestation, a responsible co-constituent—that violence is a direct result from the misguided dispositions known as “metaphysics” and “onto-logy,” which find their most vicious manifestation in the onto-theology of dominion and with its metaphysics of hierarchical separation, a myth that can never find the ultimate physical confirmation that it seeks so it often ceases to look for it in this Earth and cosmos, a myth that cannot locate itself in relationship to the bio-eco-cosmic continuum of life-energy in cyclical transmutation, and so in order to sustain its aspirations it must assert itself through a vicious combination of violence and faith. And this collusion of violence and faith is the basis of the framework of dominion, responsible for the devastations of colonization, both the colonization of Earth or the “land” and of its human manifestation referred to as the “Indigenous.”

Before we proceed any further with the many potential implications that could emerge from these themes, it is pertinent to return to the interventions at the Indigenous Forum. Let us consider some of the aspects of the intervention by Julie Cavanaugh Bill, attorney and activist for the Western Shoshone Defense Project. Julie is a person of Irish ancestry that has come to a critical awareness of the events that have unfolded throughout this continent and of the asymmetric structures and unresolved injustices that have been inherited and from which people like her directly or indirectly may benefit. Her voice is very valuable as it attest to the fact that the participation of those who could be the inheritors and beneficiaries from the ‘spoils’ of settler colonialism and settler statecraft can be and should be welcome when their participation is shaped by a critical awareness that is actively deconstructive and congenially reconstructive.

The Western Shoshone Defense Project is an organization that struggles

To affirm Newe (Western Shoshone) jurisdiction over Newe Segobia (Western Shoshone homelands)⁷⁵⁵ by protecting, preserving, and restoring Newe rights and lands for present and future generations based on cultural and spiritual traditions.

⁷⁵⁵ *Newe Segobia* is an area that comprises most of what is conceived within the hegemonic political geography as the states of Nevada, an important part of southwestern California, a small region of Northwestern Utah and a small region of southern Idaho.

Cavanaugh Bill has been active in a number of cases concerning the recovery of Shoshone (Newe) jurisdiction or rather responsibility over Newe Segobia. In her work she frequently faces the legacy of the Doctrine of Discovery, a legacy she has learned to persuasively challenge. In this regard, during her speech at the Indigenous Peoples Forum, she articulated the following issue:

One of the responses we've gotten in our cases is people saying to us, 'well if you guys win, what is going to happen? We're going to have this whole Pandora's Box of Indian land claims.' Now, we had a minister from New Zealand tell me, 'well, if you guys are right, if we do what the Indigenous ... are asking for, to give them their ancestral land back, recognize their rights because no outside colonial body can take those rights away...' this minister from New Zealand says 'well if you are right then we have to recognize the entire country of New Zealand...' and then he is looking at me terrified, and he says, 'what would they want us to do, to get on boats and leave?' ...and he was serious, and this is a diplomat at the United Nations; and I am looking at him and thinking...how do we try to redress the history, but also move forward?.. and I told him: 'we are pretty horrible guests in these land... why don't we start by telling the truth? Why don't you start by admitting what has happened?' ...and I get this blank look...⁷⁵⁶

Cavanaugh Bill brought forth one of the many issues that usually arise when the ongoing injustices and plain reality of settler coloniality is brought forth and challenged on legitimate terms. Clearly the damages done cannot be redressed with a mere apology and the derogation of a few laws and the question will not be solved after a succession of truth commissions, even when these will have to take place. The question will not be solved either by merely throwing money or "resources" at the problem, nor will social programs, even when necessary, will suffice. The issues here are much deeper, painful, and complex: whole histories and myriad possibilities were erased, whole continents were taken, lives, cultures, futures and dreams were all prematurely brought to an end, the flourishing of whole civilizations and ways of life were subject to attrition, direct and structural violence and in many cases cut short or abruptly ended. Colonialism and its ongoing effects, and the structures that are still upheld upon its 'spoils' still continue as the largest unsolved and unsurpassed genocidal and ethnocidal injustice in the modern history of humankind. No amount of apologies or affirmative action policies or funds will supplant the loss of ancestral

⁷⁵⁶ Lecture at the Indigenous Peoples Forum on the Impact of the Doctrine of Discovery in the Arizona State Capitol House of Representatives, March 23, 2012. Emphases added.

ways of life. As the North American-based scholar of Indigenous Andean ancestry, Sandy Grande, puts it in her book, *Red Pedagogy: Native American Social and Political Thought*, the settler state in ‘the Americas’ is a specific type of nation

defined by its original sin: the genocide of American Indians. Everything afterward is just another chapter in the fall from grace. And, just as in the Christian creation story, there is no going back. No reparation, no penance, no atonement can ever erase the eternity of genocide. Life ever after will be forever stained by the attainment of this “carnal knowledge.” Such an inauspicious beginning raises significant questions about the viability of [the] so-called democratic experiment: Is it possible for democracy to grow from the seeds of tyranny? Can the “good life” be built upon the deaths of thousands [and indeed millions]?⁷⁵⁷

Sandy Grande’s statement explicitly addresses the northern-most settler states, but should be extended to ‘the Americas’ as a whole, and hence we are undoubtedly talking about millions, both the millions who were, the millions who are, and the millions who could have been and yet never were. So with these reflections in mind we must nevertheless ask, indeed we are even more so now obliged to ask: what is to be done?

Cavanaugh Bill would seem to be accurate when stating that we need to start by telling the truth, but what follows from that is a cascade of profoundly and vastly consequential questions concerning the condition of humanity and the character of the world and of the ‘universe’ in which we live in and which we contribute to shape and recreate: we are responsible (for the constitution of world and cosmos)—as Cordova sings in her poem “How It Is”. I will therefore venture to suggest here what is to be done, and I will not speak alone as my articulation is shared by those many whose sentiments are embodied in statements such as those of Tupac Enrique when he stated in his speech:

We call for this process to...prevail...over the distortions of doctrine, not merely for the purposes of redress of past violations...not merely for the purpose of redress of past violations, but to actually engage in collective corrective action in order to move forward...towards our common destiny as humanity and in maturity, as children of the nations and *pueblos* of Mother Earth. Therefore, we direct that the record of this Indigenous Peoples Forum...be presented...to the entire conscience of the world...⁷⁵⁸

⁷⁵⁷ Grande 2004, 31.

⁷⁵⁸ Lecture at the Indigenous Peoples Forum on the Impact of the Doctrine of Discovery in the Arizona State Capitol House of Representatives, March 23, 2012. Emphases added.

The question that has to be brought forth is precisely the underlying question addressed in the preliminary study on the Impact of the Doctrine of Discovery, namely: what is the driver behind this force that has brought about so much violence upon which our contemporary global system is still founded to this day? Redress will not be enough. Correction is necessary. What is the correction? The acknowledgement that the order which has been built rests on foundations that are ultimately traceable to the periodical reenactment of a mythology of dominion, which is to say, the elevation of violence to the standard of the *ultima ratio*, the standard embodied in the organizing kernel of the prevailing order and manifested in its premise reliant as it is in the subduing of and holding dominion over Earth whether as property or sovereignty—most clearly in statecraft as the endeavor to attain, uphold, quotidianly reenact, and expand the “monopoly of violence.”

At a point in her speech Julie Cavanaugh Bill offers the following reflection, she states that this is a crisis

*that is happening to all of us because if we are going to exert dominion over natural resources and territory and not think of the consequences and think only that we have some God given right as human beings to destroy and take what we want and not think of the consequences, then that has an impact on all of us...*⁷⁵⁹

This order is unsustainable, dangerously so. Redress within the framework of an order that is still founded on dominion is undesirable; only deconstruction and displacement of the order will do: a full fledge ceremony of renewal. Recognition and incorporation of those who have resisted it or have been marginalized by it into the framework as it stands would be self-defeating. There seems to be no alternative other than to face the fact that those who resisted the order of dominion were correct: the prevalent (dis)order is unsustainable and it must be abandoned and supplanted for an alternative refounded upon the values and cosmovisions of those who were marginalized *because* they have resisted its expansion. As Cavanaugh Bill emphasizes: “For

⁷⁵⁹ Lecture at the Indigenous Peoples Forum on the Impact of the Doctrine of Discovery in the Arizona State Capitol House of Representatives, March 23, 2012. Emphases added.

Indigenous peoples to give up the struggle is a violation of their own spiritual teaching.”⁷⁶⁰ It is time to acknowledge that Indigenous resistance was neither meaningless nor futile,⁷⁶¹ nor was it only a question of ethnic pride or even survival; there was and has been profound wisdom in it, a wisdom that far surpasses the theocratically sanctioned violence of dominion which motivated their oppression; those who (have) resisted either actively or passively, those who (have) preferred marginality or death over subordination and assimilation, those who endured violence to embrace a more vital form of cosmic justice, those who simply resisted because they felt an intuition that they must resist were right: many of them recognized, whether consciously or intuitively, that there was something profoundly questionable about the “progress” and “globalization” of anthropocentric “civilization.” The only solution that will honor the victims of the civilizational onslaught is to recognize the catastrophic mistake, redress the damage and most importantly empower them to help correct the problem; this can be aided mostly by globally cultivating the value of Indigenous wisdoms and ways and to celebrate the renewal of their cosmovisions in the form of a global renaissance that materializes in altogether different principles, different institutions and different ways of life. Julie Cavanaugh Bill’s concise conclusion in this regard is exemplary, she states the following

For Indigenous peoples there are only L.A.W.S.:

L = LAND

A = AIR

W = WATER

S = SPIRIT

Those are the traditional LAWS; those are the sacred things and if any one of them is gone then there is no life.⁷⁶²

So after redress, which must happen anyway, what would it mean to take corrective action? It means to deconstruct the current order founded on the framework of dominion and build

⁷⁶⁰ Lecture at the Indigenous Peoples Forum on the Impact of the Doctrine of Discovery in the Arizona State Capitol House of Representatives, March 23, 2012. Emphases added.

⁷⁶¹ See Alfred 2009, 95.

⁷⁶² Lecture at the Indigenous Peoples Forum on the Impact of the Doctrine of Discovery in the Arizona State Capitol House of Representatives, March 23, 2012. Emphases added.

an alternative way upon the L.A.W.S. of Indigeneity. This challenge is nothing short of monumental, but such are the stakes in the face of the global crisis of anthropocentric civilization.

Julie Cavanaugh Bill was followed by Shawnee scholar Steve Newcomb who offered a more thorough overview of the preliminary study on the doctrine of discovery by the Special Rapporteur Gonnella Frichner to the UNPFII. Much of Newcomb's lecture revisited what the preliminary study already discusses, so I will only address some issues not already covered by the preliminary study. Among his many valuable contributions, Steve Newcomb offered the following reflection:

What are these documents we are talking about in terms of the documents issued by the Holy See what is now denominated as the Vatican and why are those documents so important? *When you look at the language of those documents [the Papal Bulls]... you ... understand ... why they result in behavior that has been so destructive all throughout the world for [the] Indigenous...* For example...in 1452 the pope instructed or authorized the King [of Portugal] to go to the Western coast of Africa and... "to invade, capture, vanquish, and subdue all Saracens, pagans, and other enemies of Christ, to reduce their persons to perpetual slavery and to take away all their possessions and property,"⁷⁶³ and the instruction in the Doctrines is that they are to *convert the land*, of course they are to engage in religious conversion, but this is specifically to convert the land of the African peoples. And in that context the word "convert" means to unlawfully or lawfully appropriate that which belongs to another and ... the very next sentence of the very next section of the [Papal Bull]...declares the actions to be just and lawful.⁷⁶⁴

⁷⁶³ The extended quote is from the document titled *The Bull Romanus Pontifex* (Nicholas V.). January 8, 1455. The extended quote reads "We [therefore] weighing all and singular the premises with due meditation, and noting that since we had formerly by other letters of ours granted among other things free and ample faculty to the aforesaid King Alfonso to invade, search out, capture, vanquish, and subdue all Saracens and pagans whatsoever and other enemies of Christ wheresoever placed, and the kingdoms...possessions, and all movable and immovable goods whatsoever held and possessed by them and to reduce their persons to perpetual slavery and to apply and appropriate to himself and his successors the kingdoms, dukedoms, counties, principalities, dominions, possessions, and goods, and to convert them to his and their use and profit---by having secured the said faculty, the said King Alfonso, or, by his authority, the aforesaid infant justly and lawfully has acquired and possessed, and doth possess, these islands, lands, harbors, and seas, and they do of right belong and pertain to the said King Alfonso and his successors...in order that King Alfonso himself and his successors and the infant may be able the more zealously to pursue and may pursue this most pious and noble work, and most worthy of perpetual remembrance (which, since the salvation of souls, increase of the faith, and the overthrow of its enemies may be procured thereby, we regard as a work wherein the glory of God and faith in Him, and His commonwealth, the Universal Church, are concerned)... " (Davenport 1917, 23; see also p.22)

⁷⁶⁴ Lecture at the Indigenous Peoples Forum on the Impact of the Doctrine of Discovery in the Arizona State Capitol House of Representatives, March 23, 2012. Emphases added.

We can see how this “converting the land” relates to the iron-branding habit of which Lewis and Clark are paradigmatic; from an Indigenous viewpoint this conversion of land is actually a desacralization of the Earth/land, a denial of its personhood and of all that lives in her, a baptism of the land that declares it domesticated thingified objectified matter and this extends to the Indigenous who are themselves manifestations of the land—all desacralized through “conversion” which is also appropriation, and property, ownership, sovereignty-as-dominion, all of this is literally conversion-as-desacralization: respect is swept aside, after conversion all life is there for the taking. As Newcomb underlines, these kinds of doctrines resurface recurrently, for example in Papal documents of 1452, 1455, 1456, 1481, 1514. Importantly in 1493 we find the “documents issued by Pope Alexander VI regarding the voyage of Cristobal Colon otherwise known as Columbus and in that document we find some key phrases” also reproducing the framework of dominion. Then Newcomb stops to make the following observation:

by the way, these documents are found in a book called *European Treaties Bearing on the History of the United States and its Dependencies to 1648*⁷⁶⁵ published by the Carnegie Institution in 1917 and you can find it in both Latin and English...the Latin is the *language* of the Roman Empire *which explains so much of what is going on in the world today*.⁷⁶⁶

So, for instance, as Newcomb insists, we find that in one of the papal documents from 1493 “there is one sentence in particular in Latin” that is worth considering attentively; it states “*sub actuali dominio temporalis aliquorum dominorum Christianorum constitute non essent*”⁷⁶⁷ and what that means in English is ‘not under the domination of any Christian dominator.’ As Newcomb underlines, “*dominorum Christianorum* is a critically important concept because it is the idea of Christian domination, Christian dominator” and therefore Christian dominion. Newcomb notices that “There is another sentence in that document that says “We trust in Him

⁷⁶⁵ Davenport, F. G., ed. 1917. *European Treaties Bearing on the History of the United States and its Dependencies to 1648*. Washington D. C.: Carnegie Institution of Washington.

⁷⁶⁶ Lecture at the Indigenous Peoples Forum on the Impact of the Doctrine of Discovery in the Arizona State Capitol House of Representatives, March 23, 2012. Emphases added.

⁷⁶⁷ Found in Davenport 1917, 65. Quoted from *The Bull Eximiae Devotionis (Alexander VI)*. May 3, 1493.

from whom empires and dominations and all good things proceed” and,” as we have discussed here already, “the word for “dominations” is translated into “governments”⁷⁶⁸ in English.” So, as Newcomb infers accurately, “the singular word for government in that context is *domination* in Latin.” That the basis of the hegemonic modes of government can be traced directly to the violence embedded in the doctrine of dominion is clear from the fact that to this day we still understand the state as a monopoly of violence (*over* a—subject—territory and population), and in the international order sovereignty is still the result of mutual recognition among such would be monopolies of violence.

We will not discuss this further as the issue should be more than clear by now, but circularly reiterating insights as crucial as this—in the Indigenous way—is important so as to not forget the lesson; it is also important in the context of Newcomb’s further insights. He stated:

Now when you trace these documents back or forward rather in history, what you will find is that they, the papal documents along with the Royal Charters of England and many other kinds of charters which were grants of presumed rights of dominion and so forth, you find the source of the organic laws of the United States.⁷⁶⁹

This reiterates the insights of Professor Miller concerning the underlying and still operating foundational infrastructure of settler colonial statecraft. Newcomb further adds to these insights by extending the argument to the states within settler colonial states. Newcomb’s explanatory words are worth being cited extensively:

And so for example, before I came here I thought I should look into how these doctrines of discovery and domination relate to...Arizona. So I looked in a book called *The Federal and State Constitutions, Colonial Charters and Other Organic Laws of the United States*⁷⁷⁰ published in 1878 by the United States Senate and the U.S. Government Printing Office, and what I found is that what gave birth to the territory of New Mexico was an agreement between the Republic of Texas and the United States and then that

⁷⁶⁸ Found in Davenport 1917, 78. The Latin reads “in Illo a quo imperia et dominationes ac bona cuncta procedunt confidentes...” (Davenport 1917, 75). Quoted from *The Bull Inter Caetera (Alexander VI.)* May 4, 1493.

⁷⁶⁹ Lecture at the Indigenous Peoples Forum on the Impact of the Doctrine of Discovery in the Arizona State Capitol House of Representatives, March 23, 2012. Emphases added.

⁷⁷⁰ Newcomb is referring to Perley Poore, B. ed., 1878. *The Federal and State Constitutions, Colonial Charters and Other Organic Laws of the United State*. Washington D.C.: Government Printing Office

organic act of New Mexico gave birth to the organic act of Arizona and that resulted in the territory of Arizona... I looked more closely at the language on Texas... so I go back to the Table of Contents under Texas and what I look at there, right under Texas it says “*Spanish claims of dominion in the Americas*” then I go back to the book and look under Texas and I am not finding anything, so I have to look more carefully at the Table of Contents it refers me actually to a much earlier part of the book, pages 304 and 305, so I go back to those pages and then that refers me to Florida and interestingly enough, the organic documents, the originating documents for Florida given in this book published by the United States Senate refer me to two different documents. One the royal “Prerogatives granted to Columbus—1492” and the second document is the Papal Bull issued by Pope Alexander VI to the monarchs of Spain in 1493 [“Bull of Pope Alexander conceding America to Spain—1493”] and that is the ‘great’ document in which we find the great troubling concepts of domination and so forth.⁷⁷¹ So that means that *there is a direct linkage between the organic documents of Arizona and of New Mexico and Texas and as a matter of fact also to California and Utah and Idaho and Colorado, they all go back, traced back to the Spanish common law and to these other documents...the Papal Bulls...So these are fascinating ways in which all of these ideas give rise to patterns of behavior and claims of territory and dominion on the part of the United States Government and various state governments to the detriment of Indigenous...peoples.*

What is brought up in this example by Professor Newcomb puts into question the very ‘foundation’ on which the reproduction of settler statecraft proceeds on a quotidian basis; this reproduction proceeds by the recurrent reenactment through everyday proceedings, legislations, jurisprudence and policies of the originary violence implied in its claims to sovereignty-as-dominion. For such claims to be upheld in the present and to be projected unto the future, their everyday materialization depends on the cyclical reenactment of an act of dominion that can never become part of a bygone past so long as it continues to underpin the reproduction of the prevailing order and so long as its basis is not corrected by a fundamental renewal that would entail nothing less than a careful deconstruction of the order, and a similarly careful reconstruction that proceeds from altogether different values; let us remember then that all passes in this Earth, so let it be, but let it be *without violence*—as the Nahua wise-poets would sing (see Part I).

Steve Newcomb’s lecture concludes with the following critical reflections

When you start to look these concepts up, so for example, conquest, conqueror, conquer and so forth and subordinate, all these types of terms, there is actually a structure that has been identified by...international law professor named Anthony Angie and he has published a book called *Imperialism, Sovereignty and the making of International Law*⁷⁷²

⁷⁷¹ see Poore 1878: 304-307.

⁷⁷² See Angie 2004.

and in the forward to that book written by James Crawford...international law professor. He mentions that there is a structure of domination and subordination⁷⁷³ that professor Angie has identified in International Law, and what I have begun to understand is that there is a specific vocabulary of dominance or vocabulary of domination that has been used repeatedly throughout all these various cases and continues to be used today and that once we identify that vocabulary we are able to decode and understand exactly how that system is operating today.

And when reflecting on “how that system is operating today” Newcomb concludes that “...what we are pointing out is that domination results in massive destruction,” and “it results in the suicides in our various communities,” in harm among Indigenous peoples, “it results in the destruction of waters and it results in so much that is very problematic that needs to be dealt with and addressed.” In addition, Newcomb brings forth the insight that this profoundly affects the (literally) dominant society as well. He concludes with several reflections, the first of which concerns directly the very premise of this dissertation, namely that domination in general and specifically of the Indigenous breeds not only injustice, but a catastrophically dangerous ignorance which is the very condition that has enabled and propelled both the expansive and domineering violence that constitutes anthropocentric civilization and the global socioecological crisis that results from it and that may ultimately bring about its calamitous demise. But there is hope in the possibility of a future beyond this anthropocentric civilization based on dominion or domination; this hope significantly emerges from all efforts to recover, revalorize, revitalize, update, and project Indigenous cosmopolitics in solidarity with other alternatives.⁷⁷⁴ As Steve Newcomb’s valuable intervention concludes:

...what I see is that the non-Indian society has actually deprived itself tremendously by dehumanizing and subhumanizing Indigenous peoples, they have deprived themselves of being able to learn from the vast amount of knowledge and wisdom that Indigenous nations and peoples have been able to accumulate over thousands and thousands of years going back to the beginning of time... and so [this learning] is what needs to occur. Once this understanding and respect for the original L.A.W.S of the land, for the original... peoples of the land. Once that begins to occur then there is going to begin more of a flow of communication and that knowledge that has been buried and suppressed is going to

⁷⁷³ Crawford calls it a “pattern of domination and subordination.” See Crawford in Angie 2004, xi.

⁷⁷⁴ Alternatives most visibly coming from perspectives such as those of the ‘deeper’ ecologists, the posthumanist, and deconstructive gender approaches such as eco-feminism, as well as various forms of anarchism.

rise up... There is a Latin term, '*derpimantur*,' ...to push down, press down, weigh down, oppress, to hold down...that pushing down is the dehumanization subhumanization process...the people are trying to rise up. There is a term in English... 'civilization' ...[and there is] the act of 'civilizing', especially the forcing of a particular cultural pattern on a population to whom it is foreign...when you impose or force another cultural pattern on a people and *especially if that cultural pattern happens to be one of domination [i.e., a civilization of domination]*, well also the forcing itself is also part of that domination. So when they say 'uncivilized', they are really talking about undominated...those who have not yet been subjected to that process of domination and assimilation...so the healing that is critically important, *the revitalization that is critically important* comes to a deeper level of understanding of ourselves that we are not conquered, it is not a conquest that they accomplished, it is not a conquest that they have accomplished and achieved and that's just the state of things. It is very important to understand that word "is"...they are alleging, purporting or deeming something...These are concepts and ideas that we have a right as the original...peoples of this land to fully expose, to shed the light of understanding upon, so that we can come to a better appreciation of each other as human beings who have a sacred role to live in right relationship with the original L.A.W.S of the land:

Land,
Air
Water
Sun [or what others call Spirit/Energy].

So let us summarize Newcomb's conclusion: the civilization of dominion has sought to subdue Mother Earth and all of that in which her life is manifest, all that lives "on" her, including the Indigenous, and in doing so the civilization of dominion has deprived the world (including those who partake in its reproduction) of the very wisdoms and L.A.W.S according to whose constitution the Indigenous have sought to live, the very L.A.W.S of the cosmopolitical constitution of Indigeneity that would have rendered impossible the global socioecological crisis that is swallowing up the world whole. However, hope for a future beyond anthropocentric civilization remains, in the effort to redress and correct the continuing and growing damages and effects of past and ongoing injustices, an effort which entails the active recovery, revalorization, and revitalization of Indigeneity, an effort to which this work has sought to contribute.

In Lieu of Conclusion: The Return of Kokopelli

Native people have...understood that things were always in process, that things were always being created and then destroyed and then created once again in new forms. These basic...ways of understanding [cosmological, biological, and] ecological processes are deeply embedded in symbols like Kokopelli that represent the creative process in nature, human beings, and even the evolution of thought.⁷⁷⁵ ... Kokopelli, one of the archetypal figures of Pueblo mythology, represents many things to the Pueblo people of the Southwest. Kokopelli represents the creative process or the creative energy that [constitutes] all...—humans, the Earth, and the cosmos as a whole. It is a symbol of the procreative and creative nature of all life, organic and inorganic...Kokopelli, the seed bringer and life symbol of creative energy...⁷⁷⁶ Kokopelli plays a role in Pueblo stories of the “first times,” or origins, and is depicted in many forms in Pueblo prehistoric, historic, and contemporary art. He is an archetype of the communicator or teacher in the sense that he was the bringer of news, seeds, and goods. Kokopelli then is also a type of life bringer, a representation of the creative spirit that resides in each of us as in all natural forces. Indeed, there may have been a group [known as *pochtecas* among the Mesoamerican Nahua] of traveling merchants throughout...the Americas, from the Incas in South America [via Mesoamerica] through the north, who traded with various tribes. They may have played flutes for musical expression as well as to assure the people in the villages they were approaching that they were friendly.⁷⁷⁷

—Gregory Cajete (Tewa Pueblo), *Native Science*

According to the most recent and comprehensive set of available statistics from CBP [Customs and Border Protection], 3,557 people died while attempting to cross the border into the USA between 1998 through 2008. However, data collection by CBP is inadequate and this is likely to be an underestimate. For example, CBP figures do not include deaths that occur on the Mexican side of the border, and not all deaths are reported to Border Patrol by local law enforcement officials. A review by the Government Accountability Office (GAO) found that inconsistent data collection and coordination between agencies meant that CBP statistics may understate the scale of the problem by as much as 43 per cent in a given year. Data from other sources including NGOs and the Mexico Secretariat of Foreign Relations suggest that the number of deaths for that 10-year period may actually be as high as 5,287.

—Amnesty International, *In Hostile Terrain: Human Rights Violations in Immigration Enforcement in the US Southwest*.⁷⁷⁸

One of the closing interventions at the Indigenous Peoples Forum on the Impact of the Doctrine of Discovery that took place inside the House of Representatives of the Arizona State

⁷⁷⁵ Cajete 2000, 36.

⁷⁷⁶ Cajete 2000, 31-32.

⁷⁷⁷ Cajete 2000, 31-32.

⁷⁷⁸ Amnesty International 2012, 16.

Capitol on March 23, 2012, was by Gustavo Gutierrez, Opatá-Xicano elder, activist, and founder of the Arizona chapter of the United Farm Workers Organizing Committee (UFWOC). In his intervention Gutierrez directly addressed how the contemporary reenactment of settler colonial statecraft affects all people of Indigenous American or ‘Amerindian’ descent, not least those coming from or with any (actual or potential) ties to spaces lying “south of the border.” Gutierrez states:

It isn’t the first time and it won’t be the last time that we will come here [to the Arizona State Capitol] and that is because of all this psychological mind warfare that this legislature is playing on us. And I am not only talking about laws like SB 1070 or HB 2281⁷⁷⁹...they thought of it as a form of harassment so that we would leave the state. So that the *Mexicanos* and Xicanos and O’Odhams from Mexico and the Cocopahs from Mexico and all these other nations like the Opatas and the Nahuas from Mexico and the Apache and the *mestizos* [mixed-bloods] and the Maya from Mexico would disappear. But they have all the right to be here, they have all the right to be here because we are from this hemisphere. We have been here since time immemorial and we have been traversing this continent since time immemorial, from Alaska, all the way to Tierra del Fuego. This is not a new phenomenon, this ‘migration’ of Indigenous peoples from one end of the hemisphere to the other end...And that is why I am so glad to be here with you.⁷⁸⁰

⁷⁷⁹ These two pieces of legislation have become paradigmatic in this regard in a state bedeviled by policies that have turned people of Indigenous American or “Amerindian” descent, whether “mixed-blooded” (*mestizo*) or “full-blooded,” into the targets of questionable policies and laws. Peoples of Indigenous American ancestry coming from or with ties to “south of the border” have been particularly affected, though by no means exclusively so. The passage of Senate Bill 1070 also known as Support Our Law Enforcement and Safe Neighborhoods Act as one of the toughest “anti-immigration” bills in the United States has affected anybody who phenotypically looks of “Amerindian” ancestry, whether “full-blooded” or “mixed”. This basically includes most people coming from or with ties to “south of the border.” The border wall strongly supported by several powerful factions cuts through Indigenous reservations without regard for their ancestral political autonomy and without respect for Indigenous geographies that predate by millennia any settler colonial borders; also, border enforcement has set the conditions for the death of hundreds of peoples of Indigenous American descent, whether “pure” or “mixed,” moving from South to North. The passage of House Bill 2281 designed to seriously erode and potentially dismantle “ethnic studies” programs has justifiably raised suspicions of ethnocracy. In a state with one of the largest populations of Indigenous American or “Amerindian” descent, whether inborn or immigrated (usually from “south of the border”), “pure” or “mixed,” tribally enrolled or without formal affiliation, documented or undocumented (by the settler colonial state), the situation raises little doubt among many as to which groups would be affected by the bills, and it raises even less doubt concerning the ethnically implicated damages that they cause. Indigenous or “Amerindian” movement across the continent will be discussed in regard to the controversies concerning so-called “migration.”

⁷⁸⁰ Lecture at the Indigenous Peoples Forum on the Impact of the Doctrine of Discovery in the Arizona State Capitol House of Representatives, March 23, 2012.

What Gustavo Gutierrez is articulating is that the current order of settler statecraft and its onto-politics of bounded entities is a colonially superimposed political geography, a form of dominion in the terms of Steve Newcomb, that has sought to subdue and divide the ancestral Indigenous relationships that continue to resist the claims to dominion and the boundaries set up by settler colonial regimes. Angelique T. Eagle-Woman, law professor at the University of Idaho of mixed Santee Dakota and Purepecha-Tarascan ancestry (the latter from what is known in the hegemonic imaginary as “Michoacan, Mexico”) writes the following:

Fencing as a way of asserting territorial rights is a practice that has been carried over from Europe. In North America prior to European settlements, there was not a fence to be found. With the formation of the United States, Canada, and Mexico, the free-flowing trade and travel north and south from the Yukon to the Amazon has been severely curtailed...[Moreover] In recent years, the Tribal Nations located in the southwestern areas of the United States have been under further restraints as the government has stepped up militarization along the U.S. and Mexican border...Where Indigenous peoples once moved freely to engage in social, cultural, and economic interactions, the United States is now pursuing policies that will have the effect of destroying these ties and criminalizing the movement of Indigenous peoples from the south into mid-North America...[all the while oblivious to the fact that] the plentiful resources that have been nurtured and cultivated for centuries by past generations of Indigenous peoples are now the building blocks for the superpower status of the United States.⁷⁸¹

Thanks to Eagle-Woman we can come back around in a circular logic to the underlying Indigenous rationale that is similarly well articulated in the writing of Oneida scholar Maureen E. Smith whom we cited above, stating:

Europeans...brought with them the idea of *property* rights and consequent notions of *boundaries, limits, restrictions, and prohibitions*, thereby instituting the concept of *bounded land*. Because land to Europeans was a *commodity, ownership* became a fundamental concept underpinning the law [and sociopolitical and economic organization as a whole]. Throughout this process, economic development and religious beliefs became inexplicably intertwined.⁷⁸²

Brenden Rensink, in his valuable work titled *Native but Foreign: Indigenous Transnational Refugees and Immigrants in the U.S.-Canadian and U.S.-Mexican Borderlands, 1880-Present*, offers an excellent historical perspective on the question at hand that

⁷⁸¹ Eagle Woman 2008-2009, 33.

⁷⁸² Smith 2004, 119; emphasis added.

is of much value. Several excerpts of his contribution are worth quoting and commenting at length.⁷⁸³ Rensink writes that “In contrast to pre-Columbian centuries of dynamic...movements across Indigenous spheres...the static nature of Euro-American boundaries” have “proved inherently incongruous.” Therefore, “when these more static, regulated and policed boundaries were superimposed over traditional,” that is, Indigenous, “landscapes, *conflict was inevitable*,” and this conflict, turned now into a human rights catastrophe, will probably continue unless settler peoples—who immigrated to this continent (‘the Americas’) only a few centuries ago—recognize the ancestral, active, and lively/s legitimacy of Indigenous geographies. This conflict, Rensink continues, is in great part “the result” of “incompatible worldviews” and “misunderstandings of the environment...”⁷⁸⁴ which is just another manifestation of what Cajete articulated as the “clash of cosmologies”

Rensink further explains,

The establishment of the current U.S.-Canadian border westward to the Rockies along the 49th parallel through the Jay Treaty of 1794 and Convention of 1818, and the U.S.–Mexican border established via the 1848 Treaty of Guadalupe-Hidalgo and 1853 Gadsden Purchase bisected traditional Native territories.⁷⁸⁵

Moreover, from the perspective of the settler states, as Rensink explains, “the drawing of” what they perceive as “impermeable boundaries involved clearly defined assignments of national identity, citizenship and jurisdiction of residents on opposing sides of the line.”⁷⁸⁶ But as Rensink makes it plain, “these new classifications failed to consider conflicting Indigenous identities in these regions.” This “[c]onflicting understandings of Indigenous, national and international space were shared by” many groups such as the Crees in the North and Yaquis “in the South” and countless other Indigenous peoples...” Rensink adds also that

⁷⁸³ Rensink 2010, 12-14, 16-18, 60.

⁷⁸⁴ Rensink 2010, 12-14, 16-18, 60; emphases added.

⁷⁸⁵ Rensink 2010, 12-14, 16-18, 60.

⁷⁸⁶ Rensink 2010, 12-14, 16-18, 60.

In attempting to navigate the shifting cultural, political and military realities that crossed their lands...Indians often found their territories as the locus of colonizing efforts, multinational conflicts and struggles for power...the imposed and contested borders of Euro-American empires placed...Indians in precarious situations.⁷⁸⁷

Hence, Rensink continues, “This historical context is foundational to North American Native and borderlands history” and crucial to make sense of what settler states interpret as “Indigenous border-crossing.” However, Rensink emphasizes, the Indigenous “were not” and still are not “fully deterred by the arbitrary bifurcation of their homelands, or convinced of the immovable nature of the new boundaries and new national identities thereby assigned to them.” It is because of these reasons that “traditional Indigenous migratory patterns that crossed international lines assumed new meanings.” To settler states these migratory patterns are seen as “transnational” but from an Indigenous viewpoint they are merely movements that proceed from a simply different, much more ancestral understanding of the continental ‘landscapes’. However, as Rensink notes, for settler states, so-called “transnational” Natives have been supposedly “violating” the “sanctity and integrity of their newly defined boundaries. “ Hence, the “legal implications” from within the hegemonic perspective is that these movements constitute “border violations” where indeed the borders are interpreted from within Indigenous worldviews as violations of ancestral landscapes and as yet another manifestation of settler colonialism. In any case, the hegemonic legal apparatus has “either cast Indigenous peoples as refugees or illegal immigrants,” categories which are understandably resisted. To summarize the problem Rensink states the following,

The Indigenous landscapes of North America, before and after they were bisected by Euro-American international boundaries, were in constant flux...For...Indigenous peoples...the imposition of Euro-American empires across the continent introduced new and powerful complexity to their world. It is within the context of...empire-building in the post-Columbian era that [“]transnational[“] (as newly defined by the Euro-American concept of impermeable policed international boundaries) Native histories emerge.... For Natives boasting centuries [in fact millennia] of negotiating dynamic Indigenous geopolitical landscapes, the arbitrary and concrete bisection of the continent by overlaid Euro-American international boundaries introduced unfamiliar constructs to their traditional views of land, environment and territorial claims.⁷⁸⁸

⁷⁸⁷ Rensink 2010, 60.

⁷⁸⁸ Rensink 2010, 12-14, 16-18, 60.

So, as Rensink further annotates,

As proverbial lines in the sand evolved from purely nominal demarcations on the maps of distant foreign empires into carefully policed and enforced barriers to their movements, Native peoples faced new challenges. Borders did not terminate Native adaption and movement, but dramatically directed it down new paths....⁷⁸⁹

Finally, Rensink notes that in many ways the solidification of borders is in part directly targeted against the ancestrally-based Indigenous resistance to and “disregard” for this system of borders. Rensink writes: “Few factors” have “transformed the nature of North American borderlands and international boundaries with more rapid effect than Native [i.e., Indigenous] disregard for the supposed sanctity and impermeability of “the line”.”⁷⁹⁰

At this point it is proper to return to Eagle-Woman’s articulation of the issue at hand, an articulation which is also worth considering at length, specifically concerning the contemporary resistance and persistence of ancestral Indigenous geographies. Eagle-Woman writes in this regard: “To fully understand Indigenous perspectives on the U.S./Mexico border requires consideration of the environment” of the Americas “prior to white settlement and the historical concept of Turtle Island and Aztlan.”⁷⁹¹ She says:

The idea of Turtle Island is that land formed from the oceans as Mother Earth upon which North American Indigenous peoples now live. Aztlan is known as an area extending from the Gulf of Mexico north to the Colorado mountain highlands, west through Nevada and Arizona, and south through the U.S./Mexico border into northern Mexico. The current U.S./Mexico border region was historically a shared territory of Tribal Nations, including the Apache, Aztec, Hohokam, Hopi, Mayan, Navajo, Pima, Pueblo, Tohono O’odham, and Zuni, among others.⁷⁹²

⁷⁸⁹ Rensink 2010, 12-14, 16-18, 60.

⁷⁹⁰ Rensink 2010, 12-14, 16-18.

⁷⁹¹ Eagle Woman 2008-2009, 33.

⁷⁹² Eagle Woman 2008-2009, 33. Western Shoshone scholar Stephen J. Crum similarly explains,

...with the coming of the Europeans, many tribes found their ancestral homelands divided and split by the creation of newly established political entities. For example, in 1848, with the end of the so-called Mexican American War and the signing of the treaty of Guadalupe-Hidalgo, the United States acquired from Mexico a huge area of today’s Southwest. A short time later, in 1853, the United States secured more land from Mexico in the Gadsden Purchase, which added the area of southern Arizona to the United States. With these land acquisitions of the mid-nineteenth century, the 1,952-mile international border that separates the United States from Mexico came into existence. Not only did

The region that Eagle-Woman refers to as “Aztlán” equates broadly to the regions encompassed by Arido- and Oasis-America, regions which constitute the relevant geographical markers for the Indigenous; these regions include all of the space associated in the dominant geographical imaginary with the northern states of the *Estados Unidos Mexicanos* (United States of Mexico) and the southwestern and western states of the US. As Eagle-Woman explains:

With the landing of Europeans, pressures mounted in this area. From the south came the Spaniards set on conquest, and from the northeast came the Anglos to claim the territory. *After intermarriage or violence-induced mixed parentage with Spaniards, the Indigenous peoples in this area stretching to Central America [and South America] were labeled as mixed-race "mestizos," "ladinos," peasants, or "campesinos" to deny their Indigenous heritage as American Indians or "indios."* ...Over several centuries of warfare, conceptions of identity led to the idea of the *mestizo*, or mixed-race person of European, American Indian, and possibly African bloodlines. In the United States, the official term adopted to describe these people has been "Hispanic" and, unofficially, "Mexican American" or “Latino.”⁷⁹³

As Eagle Woman makes it plain, “Culturally, ancestrally, historically, and physically,” so-called ‘American Indians’, ‘Mexican Americans’, and ‘Mexicans’, and indeed also ‘Central Americans’ and a majority of ‘South Americans’, especially along the Andes and the Amazon, “share much common history and ancestry as the Indigenous peoples” of ‘the Americas’;⁷⁹⁴ that is, they are all of Abya-Yalan descent.

An awareness of the widespread prevalence of power-distorted racialized marriage practices or violence-induced mixed parentage involving people of Indigenous ancestry throughout the “Latin(ized) Americas”, many genealogically conscious “mestizos” and so-called “*campesinos*” or “peasants” of Indigenous/mixed-blood ancestry will react to the category of “Latino” or “Hispanic” branded or labeled upon them within the categories of Euro-American

the U.S./Mexican international border split more than one aboriginal tribal territory, it also split the people themselves. *Some became labeled as Mexican Indians and others as U.S. Indians.* The divisions became evident among several tribes, including the Tohono O’odham (formerly Papago) of southern Arizona, and the Kumeyaay of southern California... these boundaries or these borders have negatively disrupted the[ir] lives (Crum 2005, 24; emphasis added.)

⁷⁹³ Eagle Woman 2008-2009, 33.

⁷⁹⁴ Eagle Woman 2008-2009, 33.

(whether Anglo or Iberian) settler statecraft with a certain critical stance or unfamiliarity. Gustavo Gutierrez, a mestizo/mix-blood of Indigenous ancestry, who is very much aware of the violent genealogy of his own history, offered an intervention during the Indigenous Peoples Forum that is very illustrative of the underlying issue at stake; he states:

When somebody comes to interview me and they ask, for instance, ‘well what do you think of the Latino and Hispanic vote? What do you think about them?’ I say to them, ‘the moment that you call me a ‘Latino’ or you call me a ‘Hispanic’ I am not going to be answering your questions...you can call me an Indian, a Mexicano, a Xicano...but you cannot call me a Latino or Hispanic because I was not born in Spain, I didn’t come from Spain...most of my ancestors are Opata Indians.’⁷⁹⁵

In fact, Eagle-Woman reminds us of the often denied yet obvious fact that, as Jack Forbes wrote, perhaps up to “eighty percent of the genetic makeup of the Mexican people is Indian or Native American and only about ten percent is Spanish-European.” This means that “[t]he typical Mexican would correspond to a United States Indian of one-eighth or one-sixteenth Caucasian ancestry,”⁷⁹⁶ the rest is African; all this often goes unacknowledged due to the inheritance and continued prevalence of Eurocentric racialized structures throughout the Americas—not just in what most people understand as ‘Mexico’. The genetic makeup of the people from ‘Central America’ is more or less similar to that found in ‘Mexico’, and in the case of ‘Guatemala’ it is in fact more Indigenous.

As Eagle-Woman explains, the history of settler colonial statecraft has repeatedly sought to sever, divide, partition, and repartition a region (and a continent) which has ancestrally been continuous since time immemorial for people of Indigenous ancestry. Yet, as she insists, “Common ancestry and the common history of dealing with Europeans bent on colonization have

⁷⁹⁵ Lecture at the Indigenous People’s Forum on the Impact of the Doctrine of Discovery in the Arizona State Capitol, March 23, 2012.

Opata is one of the Indigenous cultures ancestrally associated with many regions claimed by the states of Sonora and the southeast corner of Arizona.

⁷⁹⁶ Eagle Woman 2008-2009, 33. She is quoting from the work of Jack Forbes (1973), *Aztecas Del Norte: The Chicanos of Aztlan*.

contributed to the maintenance of alliances among Indigenous peoples within the Western Hemisphere into contemporary times.”⁷⁹⁷ Moreover, as Eagle-Woman explains, since

the 1970s, Central, South, and North American Indigenous peoples [have] engaged in many efforts to rebuild the sense of community that existed prior to the settlement of Europeans in the Western Hemisphere. ...

Hence, as Eagle-Woman further argues, “In recent years, U.S. policy regarding its border with Mexico has had the effect, whether or not intentional, of separating” ancestrally related (often even intimately familiar) peoples of Indigenous descent. That is why “[s]ome Indigenous observers see this as a policy of “divide and conquer, “a modern day game of “cowboys and Indians”.”⁷⁹⁸ As Henry Ramon, vice-chairperson of the Tohono O’Odham stated a few years ago,

It used to be that our people moved freely across the border...From time immemorial, we lived here... We didn't cross the border, the border crossed us, and now our people are being harassed. They have guns pointed at their heads. The place is becoming a war zone.⁷⁹⁹

Tupac Enrique Acosta, leader of the Tonatierra-Nahuacalli, Embassy of Indigenous Peoples hosted within the Tohono O’Odham territory (known within the dominant political imaginary as ‘Phoenix’), in one of his speeches in front of an incredibly diverse crowd that included many Euro-Americans mobilizing in solidarity to resist SB1070, very clearly stated the problem and prescribed what would be a very appropriate disposition along the lines of the Indigenous spirit. He stated,

*Sabes what?*⁸⁰⁰ It is not the question of how *we* got here. *Sabes what?* We have been here all along. We did not get here. *Nosotros no somos inmigrantes en nuestro propio continente.*⁸⁰¹ We, as the Indigenous peoples, we are not immigrants in our own continent. We, *Nican Tlaca*,⁸⁰² we did not cross the border, the border crossed us...Let

⁷⁹⁷ Eagle Woman 2008-2009, 33. She is quoting from the work of Jack Forbes (1973), *Aztecas Del Norte: The Chicanos of Aztlan*.

⁷⁹⁸ Eagle Woman 2008-2009, 33.

⁷⁹⁹ Quoted in Taliman 2001, 1 and Crum 2005, 25-27.

⁸⁰⁰ “You know what?” (translated from Spanish).

⁸⁰¹ “We are not immigrants in our own continent” (translated from Spanish).

⁸⁰² “We the people here” (translated from Nahuatl)

me correct that, the border tried to cross us. The border has tried to divide us. Let's get at how it is... When the first Europeans came to our continent, we never asked them for papers and they are still here to this day, and still to this day we don't ask them for papers, but you know what we do demand? We demand respect.⁸⁰³

Tupac Enrique's demand is another manifestation of the same demand as articulated by *Kanien'kehá:ka* political theorist Taiaiake Alfred, whose Indigenous homeland is also divided by an other border (the US-Canada border):

The kind of justice that Indigenous people seek in their relations... has to do with restoring a regime of respect. This ideal stands in clear contrast to the statist notion, still rooted in the classical notion of sovereignty, which... preserves the state's superior position relative to them [the Indigenous] and to the Earth.⁸⁰⁴

Considering that most people moving from south to north, whether 'pure' or 'mixed', are more "Indigenous" than anything else, especially those categorized as "undocumented" by the settler state and whose lives are at risk or already lost, it is easy to understand why the claims to sovereignty of settler colonial regimes (including its borders) would probably seem as derived from a dangerously misguided cosmology with lethal consequences, a cosmology based on an very uncritical or simply uninformed view of the history of this continent over the last five centuries and before, a cosmology that is unnecessarily alienating, divisive, and harmful.

Besides the fact that Indigenous movement through these regions has been a constant for millennia, the very notion of a state-crafted dominion built upon an onto-theology of boundaries and anthropolitical hierarchy does not correspond to the view of life, world and cosmos as a continuum of life-energy, and hence the symbol of Kokopelli and its association with the Mesoamerican *pochteca*. Kokopelli as a symbol of life energy embodies also a representation of those who moved all along Abya-Yala intercommunicating peoples as distant and as diverse as Aymaras, Mapuches, Quechuas, Guaranis and Kunas from the Andes and the Amazonia with Mayas, Zapotecs, Mixtecs, Purepechas, and Nahuas from Mesoamerica, and Tarahumaras, Opata,

⁸⁰³ Speech at the event titled "A Conversation with Cornel West—How We Got Here: Historical Roots of SB1070" (Saturday, October 2, 2010, North High School Auditorium, Phoenix AZ. A video of the speech is available at <http://www.youtube.com/humanleague002>.

⁸⁰⁴ Alfred 2009, 86.

Hopi, Yaqui, O'dham, Apache, Dine', Hopi, Kumeyaay, Tewa, and Shoshone from Aridoamerica, and Oasisamerica, and from there to the plains of the Cheyenne, Lakota, and even higher north; there is acknowledgement that moving people from regions as distant as the Alyeska would be very much interlinked with this network. In any case, Kokopelli symbolizes the life-energy brought up to Arido-America to people like the Hopi, the pueblo, the Dine', the O'dham and the Opata among many others by relatives from Mesoamerica. Moreover, evidence of the ancestral familial relations that tie peoples of Indigenous descent across Abya-Yala are obvious in the fact that Indigenous languages are often of the same family—and this is a family that precedes and subsists despite Western linguistic imperialism. As Edmund J. Ladd, Zuni Pueblo elder, states:

We speak
Keresan,
Tohono,
Uto-Aztecan,
Athabaskan,
and Zunian [among other Indigenous languages].
English [and Spanish are] our second language[s].⁸⁰⁵

As was mentioned in Part I, Uto-Aztecan languages (e.g., Ute, O'dham/Pima, Tepehuan, etc.) so common among the Indigenous across Arido-America and Oasis America, are of the exact same linguistic family as Nahuan, the 'lingua franca' of most Mesoamerica (hence, Aztec Nahuatl is a Uto-Aztecan language); this also extends to other Mesoamerican languages, of which Aztec Nahuatl and other Nahuatl tongues are just one manifestation. And these familial ties persist even when people of Indigenous ancestry speak Spanish or English because Hispanic or Anglo linguistic imperialism has sought to ethnocidally erase Indian cultures through systematic 'acculturation' and 'assimilation'. The vitality of this family, regardless of the colonial languages that its descendants have been made to speak, is owed in many ways to the life-energy that they have shared since time immemorial. To return to Ladd's commentary, this familial ties stretch very long distances: the invocation of Athabaskan by Ladd attests to the fact that the continuum of

⁸⁰⁵ Quoted in O'Donnell 2001, 36.

life-energy that links those of Indigenous ancestry stretches all the way to what is known in the dominant political geography as Alaska to the North and well into Mesoamerica to the south.

This continuum of life-energy that flows throughout Abya-Yala without borders among the Indigenous is the reason why people like the Pascua Yaqui elder José Matus, leader of the *Alianza Indigena Sin Fronteras/Indigenous Alliance Without Borders*⁸⁰⁶ struggles on an everyday basis against the boundaries that sever the American Indian family or Abya Yalan family. When I asked him to describe the philosophy of the *Alianza* this is what he responded, with an unwavering clarity and conciseness. He stated:

The philosophy of the *Alianza* is *open* because we believe that *we are one family, whether you are Indigenous from North America, including Mexico, or South America, we are all one family... we are and we have been Indigenous to this continent, to this community and to this land way before the last five hundred years...and we do not*

⁸⁰⁶ The following is a brief account of the *Alianza's* mission and history as quoted from a handout that I attended on January 21, 2012 in Tucson:

In 1997, The Indigenous Alliance Without Borders came together as a result of persistent law enforcement abuse of authority and violation of human rights against Indigenous peoples living in the southern United States and Mexico border region.

Our Mission: To affirm the rights of Indigenous peoples, their right to self-determination, their collective human and civil rights, the rights of sovereignty and the protection of sacred sites, and the free unrestricted movement across the U.S./Mexico International border line.

The Indigenous Alliance Without Borders is seeking to develop a “Southern Border Rights” manual to promote recognition of Indigenous peoples rights when crossing the U.S.-Mexico international border without impediments or being hassled.

Interestingly, the handout cites three articles from the UNDRIP,

Article 36 - Indigenous people divided by international borders have the right to maintain and develop contacts, relations and cooperation with one another.

Article 27 - Indigenous peoples have the right to restitution of the lands, territories and resources which they have traditionally owned

Article 10 - Indigenous peoples shall not be forcibly removed from their lands or territories.

In light of these articles, if the US does not ratify the UNDRIP suspicions that its stance on “immigrants” might be an extension of its historical stance on “(Amer)Indians” would seem justified, since most immigrants coming from the south are undeniable of Amerindian heritage.

recognize any borders... the border does not make any sense to us because for many centuries...people would come and go, from South America, to Mexico up to here, to Alaska and back, they would share the crops and they would work. And so we as Indigenous peoples do not recognize any borders, this our land... And as a family we believe that we should help each other out...and that is basically the philosophy of the *Alianza*.⁸⁰⁷

As Eagle Woman notes, it is understandable why historically aware people of Indigenous ancestry would react in such a way to actions like the building of a fence to separate ancestrally related peoples; “the Fence,” she writes, “separates Indigenous peoples of the Americas” and what is most questionable, the fence is not being built by any Indigenous nations, it is being built “by a relatively new settler state”⁸⁰⁸ and without bothering to acknowledge the ancestral authority and responsibility of peoples like the O’odham or Apache for the land and in deciding who should have a right to live in their territory or move across it or whether a fence should be built or not in land from which they were dispossessed on the basis of a very questionable doctrine such as the doctrine of discovery with its embedded framework of dominion. For example, for the O’odham people the corridor linking ‘Puerto Peñasco’ or ‘Rocky Point’ with what under the hegemonic settler political geography is called ‘Maricopa County’ is or rather was in fact a sacred space for transit and rituals of passage; now, besides divided by a fence, has become a corridor for tourism among the privileged. Tohono O’odham Angelo Joaquin describes this ancestral ritual of passage which due to the fence, like many other ancestral movements, can no longer take place:

In a ritual of passage, O’odham boys ran over one hundred miles from the desert to present-day Puerto Peñasco [or Rocky Point] on the coast of the Gulf of California. They were accompanied by O’odham men, who would set up campsites for the runners. The boys would collect salt on the beach for their village. The area just south of the U.S.-Mexico border is sacred, and the old trails through the volcanic rock in the Pinacate region are still visible. I am saddened that nothing has taken the place of this transition from boyhood to manhood.⁸⁰⁹

⁸⁰⁷ Interview (1/21/2012)

⁸⁰⁸ Eagle Woman 2008-2009, 34.

⁸⁰⁹ Quoted in O’Donnell 2001, 34.

Many links, ties, transits, and relations that have been fostered since time immemorial are being broken on an everyday basis by the divisive modes of dominion-statecraft and control-power. It is in consideration of these and many other issues that, as Eagle-Woman writes,

...tribal opposition to the border wall and many of the policies now being enforced ...will continue as well. Along with the toll on Indigenous identity, the stewardship of lands at the heart of traditional Indigenous culture is also at risk. Basic Indigenous beliefs on relationships, stewardship and compassion are being disrupted and denied by these...policies against southern Indigenous peoples [that is, those from south of the border]. Sacred sites are being desecrated by the Border Patrol, and access to such sites will be cut off if the double-layered fence is put into place. The life force of water meant to be freely shared amongst all people is being denied to those Indigenous peoples attempting to cross the Sonora Desert. Transporting an Indigenous migrant worker to the hospital for treatment subjects the transporter to criminal penalties. And, the movement of animals and other living creatures across the region will be disrupted, resulting in harm to Indigenous stewardship principles.⁸¹⁰

For these and many other reasons, Indigenous nations lying north of the border have organized themselves to struggle against the injustices and reframe the issues within an Indigenous framework:

From September 29 through October 1, 2006, the International Indian Treaty Council and the American Indian Movement facilitated the Border Summit of the Americas to discuss united opposition to the Secure Fence Act and other U.S. border measures. The summit was held on Tohono O'odham tribal land and organized by Mike Flores, a Tohono O'odham member. Representatives of several Tribal Nations discussed the dissection of ancestral lands, including the Cocopah and Tohono O'odham in Arizona, the Kickapoo in Texas, and the Kumeyaay in California. Other concerns raised at the summit included the desecration of sacred sites and burial sites, the violation of environmental laws, the failure to consult with Tribal Nations as new military border programs are developed on tribal lands, harassment of tribal members by the Border Patrol, the adverse economic impacts on tribal economies, and concern over southern Indigenous people dying in the desert...and general interference with Indigenous traditional life-ways...Current U.S. policy, under the guise of national security, would seem to violate all of these...Indigenous principles both for the Tribal Nations within U.S. borders and the Indigenous peoples to the south. Advocates of Indigenous peoples' rights were not surprised that the United States opposed the adoption of the first minimum human rights standards set forth in the international arena for Indigenous peoples [namely, the UNDRIP]. In spite of U.S. isolationist policies, the Indigenous peoples of the Americas continue to maintain their alliances with one another and have opposed this latest border wall proposal to separate them...⁸¹¹

⁸¹⁰ Eagle Woman 2008-2009, 34-35.

⁸¹¹ Eagle Woman 2008-2009, 35.

In this regard, Native writer, Valerie Taliman writing also in relation to the efforts of the *Alianza* has stated that

For the Yaqui, Tohono O'odham, Cocopah, Yavapai and Kickapoo whose homelands were bisected without their knowledge—much less their consent—the land is sacred. It is more than just geography; it is home to deities, medicines, ceremonial sites and countless generations of ancestors.⁸¹²

As *Alianza* leader, José Matus has stated “No colonizer's line drawn in the sand and fenced with steel walls and barbed wire can extinguish the reality of...shared bloodlines and cultures”.⁸¹³ The *Alianza* is very much aware of the underlying bias against people of Indigenous ancestry. They recognize that certain interests have sought to employ the government apparatus to

....”Get Tough” on people of color...by implementing anti-people of color and anti-immigrant, racist laws and the continued militarization of the southern border; Indigenous peoples are profoundly affected by these...policies. The vast majority of the undocumented immigrants of the southern border region are Indigenous peoples or *mestizos* (mixed bloods) from Mexico, Central and South America...In fact a high percentage of Indigenous peoples from Mexico are Yaquis, Tohono O'odham, Pimas, Mixtecs, Purepechas, Zapotecs and others who are forced to cross illegally because they know that to obtain a U.S. Travel Document is not possible—much less a work permit from the U.S. Department of State... They don't have the financial resources to pay for the Laser Visa application fee, or have proof they are gainfully employed. The U.S. Department of State—U.S. Consulate Officials do not recognize or respect Indigenous people, cultural participants or accept letters from Indigenous Ceremonial Leaders who invite them to participate in ceremonies in Arizona.⁸¹⁴

Similarly we hear the voice of Yaqui mestiza activist Monica Carrasco, also member and spokesperson for the *Alianza Indigena Sin Fronteras*, who gave a speech at the Indigenous Peoples Forum on the Impact of the Doctrine of Discovery. She added: “We should be able to cross borders...all peoples of Indigenous ancestry have a right to cross any border because we were in this continent before there were any borders...”⁸¹⁵

⁸¹² Quoted in Taliman 2001, 2

⁸¹³ Taliman 2001.

⁸¹⁴ Quoted from a handout concerning a the purpose of a meeting of the *Alianza Indigena Sin Fronteras/Indigenous Alliance Without Borders* which I attended on Saturday, January 21, 2012 in Tucson, AZ.

⁸¹⁵ Interview (1/21/2012)

Now let us remember that this unusually accelerated movement that is occurring from south to north coming from the countries of Latin(ized) America is not merely because the regions have always had such traffic. There are drivers behind this traffic, drivers directly associated with the expansion of dominion. Let us consider this issue. The countries of Latin(ized) America show some of the highest rates of economic inequality and most alarming wealth concentration. It is not unsurprising that the economic and political status of any given person in these countries generally and inversely correlates with the percentage of “American Indian/Native American/Indigenous” ancestry in their genetic and phenotypical makeup. This logic is exactly reproduced within what is known as the “US” and this is not surprising because we are talking about the same “Amerindian” ancestry. The fact that the more “Indian” you are the more “impoverished” and more “disempowered” you are likely to be throughout *all* of the Americas is the direct effect of the prevalence of settler colonial regimes and it is a direct consequence of the marginalization and backlash faced by anybody of Indigenous ancestry who has resisted or challenged ‘acculturation,’ ‘assimilation’ and subordination into anthropocentric and Euro-centric civilization. For “Indians” to acquire any wealth or status—if any at all—they often have to give up the Indigenous way (in all except some superficial markers).

The great majority of those who make up the mass movement of people into North America over the last few years are precisely those who have been displaced, marginalized, and subordinated by the expansion of “market civilization” which is just the latest version of the mythology of dominion that subdues, objectifies and commodifies the Earth while displacing those who refuse to renounce the Indigenous way of “natural democracy” and subordinating those who do renounce the Indigenous way as subalterns within the advance of “civilization.” Let us not forget that the main cause behind the acute spike of mass migrations from south to north over recent decades is precisely the advancement of market civilization in the form of the neoliberal reforms and free trade agreements implemented throughout Mexico and Central America, policies that engage anew in the systematic uprooting of people from their ancestral lands in the face of the

advance of dominion, forcing them to migrate elsewhere towards where the resources extracted from the enslaved land are concentrated.

It is easy to see then why “anti-immigrant” legislation like Arizona’s SB1070 and “anti-ethnic studies” legislation like Arizona’s HB2281, policies of “English-only”, the mere creation and the over-regulation of the US-Mexico border, “border-enforcement,” “fences,” “border walls,” and other “anti-immigrant” actions such as raids and other programs of systematic deportations, vigilante groups, etc. all of which disproportionately affect people Indigenous-American or “Amerindian” ancestry—it is easy to see why all of this can be judged as just the latest reenactment of the infamous legacy of settler colonialism, the contemporary reenactment of “Indian removal” and “boarding school” education, and in addition to that, a form of ethnocracy. Since most people being deported are of Indigenous ancestry (both ‘pure’ and ‘mixed’), these deportations can easily be interpreted as the latest version of Indian removal policies. It is also easy to see why the mounting deaths and removals (“deportations”) of people of Indigenous American ancestry or “Amerindian” descent trying to cross the desert because the advance of “(market) civilization” through treaties like NAFTA among settler colonial elites that deprived them of their lands and turned them into “cheap labor”—it is easy to see why these deaths could easily conjure up memories of the Trail of Tears: a majority of these migrating peoples risking their lives (and sometimes losing them) to cross lethal borders are mostly those of Indigenous heritage and ancestry, now dispossed of their lands and sustenance.

That so many uprooted so-called “peasants,” and other marginalized and impoverished people, the great majority of undeniably Indigenous ancestry, are willing to risk their lives and lose them in order to reach *el Norte* is a *direct* consequence of the sustained efforts by settler elites (including privileged Euro-Mexicans and some de-Indianized endo-racist *mestizos*⁸¹⁶) to dispossess them of their ancestral lands and “convert” or rather enslave these lands into resources for the consumption of “market civilization”, folklorize their way of life as obsolete and turn them

⁸¹⁶ See Bonfil Batalla 1996; Chávez Leyva 2003; and Perez Aguilera and Figueroa Helland 2011.

into cheap labor. In short the massive uprooting of people from their ancestral lands, the reason why they are moving ‘northward’ and to the urban centers of Western civilization (including those in Latin(ized) America) in search of at least some of the fruits from the land and the Earth which are concentrated therein is precisely because this land was taken from their ancestors and it continues to be taken from them, and the driver behind this dispossession can be traced directly to the latest advancement of anthropocentric civilization, in its most recent guise known as market globalization. And perhaps no previous stage of “civilization” has sought to implement the ontology of dominion as strictly as the creed of market globalization has, which is nothing less than the final “conversion” of Earth and all living things (including the majority of human-animals) into a commodity; we are witnesses to the attempt to achieve the final realization of the commands of Genesis 1:28, but without any further theocratic sanction needed. The subduing of Earth and the advancement of dominion no longer needs God’s blessing; it often just proceeds guiltlessly in an unapologetically anthropocentric fashion where the violence of ‘human’ satisfaction for a select minority of its specimens has become the *ultima ratio*.

In a conversation with Tupac Enrique Acosta we pondered over the conditions that would enable the rise to power of those who would legislate and implement policies that would so negatively and so directly affect people of Indigenous American or ‘Amerindian’ (i.e., Abya-Yalan) ancestry. This is the reflection he offered:

How do you create a political constituency that would put such people as their representatives? You have to get to the core of that psychology of that constituency; what is upholding...these doctrines of dominion? *It is this psychology of alienation from the natural world...the only way to feel secure is by being dominant because they don't have harmony with themselves, the harmony which is part of the natural world.*⁸¹⁷

Having come to a similar and comparable reflection, Juaneño-Yaqui author MA Jaimes Guerrero writes that,

The only alternative to this pathological anti-American Indian scheme is an emerging transnational Indigenous movement in these postnationalist times. This is critical in order to assert precolonialist cultural, human, and sacred rights in the restoration of a Native

⁸¹⁷ Interview (January, 2012); emphasis added.

America that may also serve as a model for non-Natives to follow—a Native America that exhibited a profound respect for the Earth as a living being.⁸¹⁸

In this context, it is worth considering what Xicano-Nahua Salvador Reza, spokesperson for the Puente Movement and member of Tonatierra once said in a conversation outside of the Arizona State Capitol during a peaceful and harmonious Indigenous ceremony where a diverse crowd of people from all imaginable ethnic and age groups gathered to support and celebrate the freedom of movement of all people and the harmonization of humanity with all the elements of the Earth and the cycles of the cosmos. His comments offer reflections that are worth taking into consideration. He stated:

We of Indigenous ancestry have been here thousands of years, not too far from here you have Pueblo Grande Museum, you have Casa Grande, and then you have all the Canals that were built by the Anasazi, and we're related, the Aztecs, the Hopi, *Indigenous peoples are all related* so in a way we are coming here to assert that we are still here and we are going to have a *Teocalli* [a Mesoamerican ceremony involving a communally built pyramid to align human life with the four directions of the cosmos and Mother Earth in a celebration of renewal] here in the center of the Capitol of Arizona to say 'we are here,' we are not going to leave, you can pass whatever laws you want to, but our people are here to stay and you might make our life miserable but you are not going to defeat us...you are not the power... *The power is in the Earth, it is in the land, which is the power of the people.*⁸¹⁹

As I conducted my research I kept wondering what was driving the fear of the so-called demographic shifts and movements that are occurring throughout Turtle Island, a shift largely due to the increasing northward movement and growth of peoples whose ancestors or themselves have some relationship to the imaginary of the 'Latin(ized)' American, the 'Hispanic(ized)' American, the 'Mexican-American' and the 'Mexican', the 'Central-American' and even the 'South-American'. I kept asking all of the people I talked to the same question as I would not be content with any explanation that would reduce the problem to an unexplainable 'racism' or an empty 'fear of the other' and the 'alien.' I could not bring myself to accept that that was all that there was to it. There must be something more complicated that would make sense of all this. So I kept

⁸¹⁸ Jaimes-Guerrero 2003, 79.

⁸¹⁹ Interview (March, 2012).

inquiring: where is all this fear and even hate coming from? And the answer I was given came from the Earth:

It is said frequently among those of us with Indigenous ancestry that we are of the color of the Earth. It is said frequently among *all* peoples of Abya-Yalan ancestry who cherish their Indigenous heritage that we *are* the animals, that we *are* the plants, that we *are* the Earth; it is said frequently that we *are* the deer and the buffalo and the coyote that runs upon the Earth, that we *are* the raven and the eagle and the condor that flies above in the air, that we *are* the salmon and the whale and the pike that swim across the waters and the sea, that we are the corn, the flower and the song, that we *are* the breath and the wind and the air, that we *are* the water and the force of the sun, that we *are* the energy of the cosmos and the spirit of the Earth. But we have faced for long enough the wrath of a God whose blessing commanded that *the Earth who is us* be subdued and that dominion be placed on her who is us:

And God blessed them, and God said unto them, “Be fruitful, and multiply, and fill the Earth, and subdue it: and have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that moves upon the Earth.”

The advance of ‘dominion’ and ‘civilization’ has nearly destroyed all our relatives, and like George Washington’s “wolves” and the “trees,” and the “forests,” *Nican Tlacah*, We the people here, We the Indigenous, have nearly been destroyed by it as well. Over five centuries ago our Indigenous ancestors were pushed to make a choice, Christianization and Westernization or destruction, and most of them have been damaged or destroyed regardless of the choice. Beneath the layers of Christianization, Westernization, Latinization, Hispanization, Anglicization, assimilation, acculturation, violence-induced miscegenation, and all the failed attempts at colonization, the “Indian” resists, the “Indian” persists, and *that* is what dominion is afraid of: the “Savage as the Wolf,” the return of the “Wild Beasts from the Forest,” the horror that we shall come into awareness of the fact that we grew from this soil, from this land in full maturation, from this land in plenitude, from this Abya Yala, and from Mother Earth, by the power of Father Sun, in the celebratory company of the stars and in communion with all our relations; it is the fear that the world shall awake from the long night of five hundred years, that we shall emerge anew from the

Earth against the extraterrestrial God of metaphysical imagination. We, who are the Earth, shall not be settled, we shall not be domesticated, and we shall not be subdued. As we give respect, we demand respect, and this is the simple overarching regime of cosmic reciprocity and harmony, the *ayni* and the *guetza* by which we shall live in cosmopolitical community among all our relations.

For those of us who traverse this Abya Yala from south to north, we have a great responsibility to all our relations *without* exclusion of those who have done us harm; it is our responsibility to live up to that noble emblem that our relatives from the north honored our ancestors with; it is our responsibility to embody Kokopelli anew: to become the bringers of that seed of creative energy that will enable us to celebrate the renewal of spirit that infuses with breath the life that flows through *Pacha*. Movement is Life, Life is Movement; among Mesoamericans, the same symbol for movement is the symbol for music and harmony; the Nahua refer to her as *Olin Yoli*. And so by the rhythm of the flute, we come in peace and harmony, with flower and song to bring the news of the coming dawn. Let us together celebrate the emergence of the sixth Sun: The Age of Cosmopolitical Community.

IN LIEU OF CLOSURE:

PACHAKUTI, THE DAWN OF A NEW SUN

As was stated from the very beginning, this dissertation has been the preliminary result of an ongoing effort to recover, revalorize, and revitalize Indigenous Abya-Yalan wisdoms and ways, especially with a view to further diversify and enrich debates in the emerging international and intercontinental fields of Comparative Philosophy, Comparative Political Theory, Inter-Civilizational Relations, and Global Theory. Moreover, this project is being undertaken with a particular concern for recovering and nurturing Indigenous-inspired non-anthropocentric and post-human cosmopolitical alternatives that will help the world overcome the unprecedented challenges that characterize our contemporary Anthropocene epoch, convulsed as it is by a plethora of global socio-ecological crises.

This dissertation has shown that Indigenous wisdoms and ways are vital to the renewal of harmonious relations among all members of the non-anthropocentric cosmopolitical community. Moreover, this detailed study of Indigenous cosmology, philosophy, and political thought in the context of our contemporary global crises has offered support for a particularly timely and critical reflection concerning the intimate link between social and ecological justice; this indispensable reflection concerns our growing awareness that the historical, ongoing, and as of yet unredressed extermination, oppression, subjugation, marginalization, and subordination of Indigenous peoples, knowledges, practices, and forms of organization is a thoroughly lamentable condition that is primarily responsible for the potentially cataclysmic ecological crisis of “civilization”.

As this dissertation has showed, Indigenous, and in this case Abya-Yalan wisdoms and ways, have embodied forms of bio-eco-cosmo-communal philosophy, practice, and organization whose careful and respectful recognition, appreciation, adoption, and institutionalization *would have* made it impossible for the contemporary socio-ecological crisis of the world to emerge in the first place. Clearly, over the course of the last five centuries (and counting) this vital learning process did not and still has not occurred: Indigeneity and those who embody its biocultural heritage and its constitutive values have historically been wronged and continue to be displaced by

the expansive and racialized onslaught of a—predominantly Euro/Western-centric—and anthropocentric civilization. Yet as Indigenous wisdom teaches, history is cyclical and therefore it all comes back around: the specter of past and ongoing injustices is palpably taking its socio-ecological toll on the dominant and domineering order (and on the world); and now more than ever, the accumulation of these ongoing and as of yet un-redressed injustices is haunting the very order that has been built upon the ‘spoils’ of a violence that is most clearly manifest in the form of dominion (as thoroughly explained in Part III).

Injustice breeds ignorance and ignorance breeds catastrophe. With the subduing of Indigeneity has come the concomitant subjugation, marginalization, and near erasure of Indigenous wisdoms and ways; such has been the violence endured by the Indigenous cosmopolitics of “natural” and “cosmic democracy”, the ignorance and deprecation of which is directly responsible for the world’s contemporary global crises. Only full redress of the accumulated injustices and the complete correction of the conditions which have enabled those injustices to accumulate can disable the looming cataclysm that weighs upon the conscience and future of the world—a impending catastrophe whose very likelihood is but the lamentable effect of as of yet unredressed historical and ongoing wrongs done to Mother Earth and her guardians, the Indigenous.

The revaluation of Indigeneity is therefore one and the same, in fact *equal* to the revaluation of the Earth, of all that lives within and because of her, and indeed also of *this* cosmos, of *this* world, of *this* “universe”. Because of the vital bio-eco-cosmic wisdom of Indigenous ways, only the recovery, revalorization, revitalization, dignification, and empowerment of Indigeneity and her biocultural and ancestral carriers can guide the world beyond the global socio-ecological crisis that has resulted from the globalization, for over five centuries, of an alienated mode of civilization built and upheld upon the violences of anthropocentrism and dominion. The magnitude of our global crisis has brought the world to a threshold, the surpassing of which demands nothing less than the celebration of a world renewal: if Time is to continue its revitalizing circular course of regeneration, we must embrace the responsibility to relay the cosmic

burden and thereby initiate a new cycle, unless we are willing to endure the consequences of sustaining the unsustainable, inharmonious, unjust and unbalanced (dis)order of dominion.

In 1781 the Indigenous Andean (Aymara) resistance leader Tupac Katari (known by the hispanicized as Julián Apaza Nina) said to his colonial torturers and executioners:

*Naya saparukiw jwayapxitata, nayxarusti waranqa, waranqanakaw kut'anixa...*⁸²⁰
Today you kill me...but I will come back and I will be millions...

Let us remember that the Indigenous experience 'death' as a cyclical transmutation of life-energy that beautifully becomes, and thus the Andeans call this transmutation *jiwasa*. Hence, after *jiwasa* the Indigenous do not abandon *this* pacha, the Indigenous do not abandon *this* cosmos for an extra-cosmic and extra-terrestrial heaven (or hell). Through *jiwasa*, the Indigenous becomes what the Indigenous has always been, the Earth, the cosmos, the pacha; and in celebration of the passage of cosmic cycles, the Indigenous live on within and through the Earth and in all that lives upon her. The largest genocide and ethnocide in modern history cannot erase the cycles of life-force which embody the energy of the Indigenous, and so, whether as human energy or as transmateralized energy, the Indigenous spirit lives on, cyclically coming back to balance the cosmic account of reciprocity that embodies the L.A.W.S. which constitute the equilibrium and harmony that primarily and ultimately governs the pacha.

Today the ongoing history of all dead and suffering generations of "Indians" that once were, still are, and will be, and of the great many who could have been and never were—this ongoing history of generations and regenerations weighs like a nightmare on the brains and lives of those who still live off the 'spoils' of planetary 'conquest' and 'dominion.' In this nightmare known as the ecological crisis of 'civilization'; we are witnesses to the cycles of justice, the return of the 'Indian'—like the lobo reborn from the nurturing forests that harbor the tree of wisdom. Land, Air, Water, and Spirit, the L.A.W.S of transmuting life-energy that tie every *body* into a

⁸²⁰ Although this statement is popular knowledge among Andeans, the statement can be found in as one of the opening quotes for the current autonomous government of Sica Sica in the vicinity of the birthplace of Tupac Katari (in nearby Ayo Ayo). See <http://www.sicasica.com/pages/esp/intro.php>

cosmic web of relations, are coming back to haunt a civilization whose foundations have been built upon the subduing of the Earth and all that lives with/in her, including her guardians, the Indigenous.

But the history all dead and suffering generations ‘Indians’ has returned in the form a specter, and this specter is haunting ‘civilization,’ it is the specter of the ‘ecological crisis.’ And embodied in this crisis the ‘Indian’ is coming back around because the ‘Indian’ never left: the “Indian” did not desire to abandon this Earth or to ‘transcend’ her; the “Indian” shall not relinquish *this* pacha to attain a higher status, to stand over and above her, at an alienating distance as the ‘superior species’ or to become one with an extraterrestrial God in some meta-cosmic paradise beyond the limits of imagination. The ‘Indian’ lives on, with/in the Earth, transmuted and recycled by the life-cycles of the cosmos, and that is why and how the ‘Indian’ keeps coming back, now as ravaging Earth, now as an ‘other’ ‘Indian’ that embodies the testimony of past and ongoing wrongs and the lessons for a more harmonious future. The ‘Indian’ thus keeps coming back around again, now as Wind, now as Wave, now as Soil, now as Air, now as Fire, and now as Heat: the “Indian” has come back around and now the “Indian” has become millions—the millions of so-called ‘ecological factors’, the non-human forces, spirits, and persons of a trembling Earth and its feverish ‘biosphere’ who have come around to balance against the civilization of dominion.

The ‘Indian’ has come back around, like the turns of the cycles of the celestial bodies, and now the “Indian” is millions, millions more than the millions killed by the ‘advance of civilization’: the ‘Indian’ has come back around in the form of the ‘living things’ that have convened in the council of non-human animals, minerals, plants and ‘geo-meteorological’ and all other ‘natural’ and cosmic forces to deliberate that they shall no longer cooperate with the ungrateful civilization of dominion, the civilization that does not respect and does not rehearse the L.A.W.S of reciprocity and respect, the civilization that long ago broke the cosmo-ecological compact, pretentiously throwing scorn at all of them and treating them as inferiors. And this grand council, scoffed at by a group of two-legged animals on a power-trip of dominion—this grand council has deliberated and the consensus comes in the form of a question, indeed, an ultimatum:

‘what shall we do with these hard-headed Men of Wood? What shall be brought upon these Manikins of Wood to reciprocally restore the balance and harmony of the cosmos?’ If these Men of Wood do not learn to *listen* we know what the *Popol Vuh* foretells. The council declares: ‘Listen to the ‘Indian’,’ the council now cries in unison, ‘Listen and learn from the ‘Indian’ now before we all stop listening to you!’

And while the passing Indian who joins now in the great council of cosmic life-forces deliberates on our behalf, the live “Indian” fulfills also a great responsibility. The live ‘Indian’ resists as the rebel witness gazing critically upon a decadent epoch and persists as the seed and root of a new cycle soon to come, the cycle of the Sun. For centuries the ‘Indian’ has paused, in underground resistance, protected by the womb of Mother Earth, strategically waiting for over five hundred years, rebel yet poised, patient as the Mother, waiting for the day of reemergence, the day which is today, the *Nican Tlaca Ilhuitl*. For the cosmos is a circle, and the day is now, the day of reemergence, the time of the Pacha-Kuti, of the inversion of the Earth, the transvaluation of its cosmic values, the revolution of world renewal. Today is the dusk of a decadent civilization, built on dominion and with no future beyond the certainty of ecological fatigue, potential collapse, and looming catastrophe.

The time is now to close a cycle, the time is now to relay the burden so that Time may continue; the time is now to gratefully celebrate the end of a *may*, to celebrate the end of the long night of the five hundred years; it is time to voluntarily abandon in celebratory fashion a mode of civilization that is crumbling by the weight of its own accumulated violences, the weight of dominion, a burden that Mother Earth and Father Sky shall not longer tolerate. We shall all mature, like the Mayas and all whose roots flourished since time immemorial from this land in full maturity, this land in plenitude, this Abya Yala. We shall all mature beyond the Age of Wood, lest we are obstinate in living and thereby dying as Manikins of Wood. Let us all learn from the Maya, to recognize the twilight of a cycle, and greet the dawn of a New Sun. Let us learn from all Abya-Yalans to recognize that it is our turn, the turn of the world, the Pacha-Kuti to celebrate a global renewal that will begin the new cycle: the cycle of cosmopolitical communality. Let the world

know that the time is now to relay the burden so that Time continues its cyclical cosmic spiral of wisdom, responsibility, and renewal: its *thakhi*. Let us all celebrate this ceremony of renewal with harmoniously communal changes, so that we can all together greet the daybreak of a new epoch where ‘humanity’ will be dissolved into the embrace of all our relations and tied by the spirit of life-force we shall rejoice in the dawn of the New Sun, the birth of the era of the cosmic community. Come along, the Indigenous shall host the celebration; so that together we may chant:

With flowers and songs
I give life to the New Sun.
With flowers and songs
I greet the dawn.⁸²¹

⁸²¹ Classic Nahua poem (quoted in León Portilla 2001, xxi.).

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IN LIEU OF A CONCLUSION

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APPENDIX A

SECTIONS OF THE UNITED NATIONS DECLARATION ON THE RIGHTS OF
INDIGENOUS PEOPLES (UNDRIP) DIRECTLY BEARING UPON THIS DISSERTATION

The United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples

(UNDRIP) contains a number of sections and articles which turn it into an excellent instrument to justify and advance the recovery, revalorization, and revitalization of Indigenous modes of political organization. I will only cite some of the most relevant. Some of the passages of the UNDRIP most relevant to this presentation read thus:

Affirming ... that all peoples contribute to the diversity and richness of civilizations and cultures, which constitute the common heritage of humankind (p. 2)

Recognizing that respect for Indigenous knowledge, cultures and traditional practices contributes to sustainable and equitable development and proper management of the environment, (p. 2)

Recognizing the urgent need to respect and promote the inherent rights of Indigenous peoples which derive from their political, economic and social structures and from their cultures, spiritual traditions, histories and philosophies, especially their rights to their lands, territories and resources, (p. 2)

Welcoming the fact that Indigenous peoples are organizing themselves for political, economic, social and cultural enhancement ... (p. 2)

Article 3

Indigenous peoples have the right to self-determination. By virtue of that right they freely determine their political status and freely pursue their economic, social and cultural development.

Article 4

Indigenous peoples...have the right to autonomy or self-government ...

Article 5

Indigenous peoples have the right to maintain and strengthen their distinct political, legal, economic, social and cultural institutions...

Article 7

2. Indigenous peoples have the collective right to live ... as distinct peoples ...

Article 9

Indigenous peoples and individuals have the right to belong to an Indigenous community or nation, in accordance with the traditions and customs of the community or nation concerned. ...

Article 11

1. Indigenous peoples have the right to practice and revitalize their cultural traditions and customs. This includes the right to maintain, protect and develop the past, present and future manifestations of their cultures...

Article 13

1. Indigenous peoples have the right to revitalize, use, develop and transmit to future generations their histories, languages, oral traditions, philosophies, writing systems

and literatures, and to designate and retain their own names for communities, places and persons.

Article 18

Indigenous peoples have the right to participate in decision-making...in accordance with their own procedures, as well as to maintain and develop their own Indigenous decision-making institutions.

Article 20

1. Indigenous peoples have the right to maintain and develop their political, economic and social systems or institutions...

Article 25

Indigenous peoples have the right to maintain and strengthen their distinctive spiritual relationship with their traditionally owned or otherwise occupied and used lands, territories, waters and coastal seas and other resources and to uphold their responsibilities to future generations in this regard.

Article 31

1. Indigenous peoples have the right to maintain, control, protect and develop their cultural heritage, traditional knowledge and traditional cultural expressions, as well as the manifestations of their sciences, technologies and cultures...

Article 33

1. Indigenous peoples have the right to determine their own identity or membership in accordance with their customs and traditions...

Article 34

Indigenous peoples have the right to promote, develop and maintain their institutional structures and their distinctive customs, spirituality, traditions, procedures, practices and, in the cases where they exist, juridical systems or customs, in accordance with international human rights standards.

Building on these sections from the UNDRIP, this work contributes to the collaborative efforts by a growing number of people and organizations who endeavor recover, revalorize, update, and revitalize Indigenous American civilization and the renaissance of its modes of political thought and organization.

APPENDIX B
INSTITUTIONAL RESEARCH BOARD EXEMPTION

To: Roxanne Doty

From: Mark Roosa, Chair Soc Beh IRB

Date: 01/11/2012

Committee Action: Exemption Granted

IRB Action Date: 01/11/2012

IRB Protocol #: 1201007267

Study Title: Indigenous Political Thought, Organization and Activism

The above-referenced protocol is considered exempt after review by the Institutional Review Board pursuant to Federal regulations, 45 CFR Part 46.101(b)(2) .

You should retain a copy of this letter for your records.