

AYMARA GENDER AND KINSHIP. BOLIVIAN FEMALE MOBILITIES, AND POLITICAL HORIZONS

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Introduction

This article has two central objectives that make up its main guiding thread. First, to present a review of anthropological studies on gender and kinship in Aymara communities, focusing on the literature produced in Bolivia, Chile, and Peru. Second, to address the interplay between these theories and the current transnational and transborder mobility process of Bolivian Aymara women in South America.

These objectives emerged and were inspired by a particular research process. In 2019, we began an ethnographic project comparing the experience of indigenous women on the Andean Tri-Border (between Chile, Peru, and Bolivia). We focus on the experience of Bolivian Aymara women who work in the region of Arica and Parinacota, Chile's northernmost administrative-territorial unit. This region is located in the Atacama Desert and is part of the Chilean "Norte Grande" (together with the regions of Tarapacá and Antofagasta, which used to belong to Peru

and Bolivia). This area was annexed to the country after the *Guerra del Pacífico* [the War of the Pacific] (1879-1883).

Arica and Parinacota has extensive border areas with Peru and Bolivia: historical human, livestock, and trade mobility routes crossed its territory. It is an ethnically diverse region that was part of different state domains: the Tiwanaku (AD 700-1250) and Inca (AD1470-1532) Empires, the Spanish colonial domination (1532-1824), the Peruvian Republic (1824-1880), and the disputed occupation of the Chilean army (1880-1929). Since 1929, it has been part of the Republic of Chile.

The labor insertion of female Bolivian migrants in the domestic and care work in the Norte Grande has been studied by various researchers (Leiva & Ross 2016; Leiva et al. 2017; Tapia & Ramos 2013). Their studies observed mobility patterns and the social and labor profile of the female migrants, making visible the violations they face in Bolivia and Chile. In addition, they studied the strategies the women employ to confront these circumstances. However, these studies have paid less attention to the ethnic nature of the women's migratory networks that originate in their Aymara community links. At the same time, the anthropological literature on Aymara families in these areas has made visible the persistence of patterns of gender inequality that accompany female trajectories in rural and urban areas (Carrasco 1998; Carrasco & Gavilán 2014; Gavilán 2005, 2020; Gavilán & Carrasco 2001, 2018). Despite this, the literature does not go into depth on the female transnational and/or transborder migratory experience. Seeking to integrate these perspectives, we started our ethnographical process by carrying out a thorough review of these two fields of study.

This review led to other fields. In recent years, Aymara marriage — *chachawarmi* — has gained political centrality in Bolivia. Ideas on Andean community balance and complementarity have penetrated the Bolivian political agenda since the country assumed them as pillars of its national constitution in 2007. Important tensions over gender interpretations in *chachawarmi* appeared in the debates of female Bolivian indigenous leaders. These debates addressed the need to rethink the principle of complementarity, thus making visible the different forms of violence and inequality that indigenous women face.

This agenda calls for another look at anthropological debates on these issues and has stimulated critical readings on works considered classics on Andeanism. Our objective here is to advance this work by offering, first of all, a panoramic synthesis of how anthropological literature produced in Bolivia, Chile, and Peru conceptualized Aymara gender and kinship relationships. Second, we will also synthesize publications on the experience of female Bolivian Aymara migrants in their regional displacements in South America. We draw on the bibliographical review of 78 works published from 1970 onwards in English and Spanish. Through

synthesizing their debates, we will show critical re-interpretations that started with the gender turn in social sciences (particularly from 1990 onwards).

We start with a review that examines classic concepts of kinship and patriarchy while drawing on some criticisms that feminism has offered on the arguments we deal with in this article. Then, we review the work of classic Andeanism on the Aymara worldview, gender studies in these communities, and research on the migration of Bolivian females in South America. We conclude with a review of critiques of classic conceptions about the symbolic complementarity of the Aymara. We point out future research possibilities in opening an agenda for indigenous women leaders in Bolivia, investigating the use of the Aymara worldview as a national political platform.

Kinship and gender: feminist anthropological perspectives

In classic anthropology, the word "kinship" does not allude to a list of relatives that share blood ties. Rather, it refers to a "system of categories and status" that establishes the family ties of people and often "may contradict existing genetic relationships" (Rubin 1975:169). In stateless societies, kinship is:

[...] the language of social interactions, economic organization, and political, ceremonial, as well as sexual activities. People's tasks and responsibilities, and the privileges vis-à-vis others, are defined in terms of mutual kinship and its absence (Rubin 1975:169-170).

Levi-Strauss (1998[1949]:91) resized the classic theory on the topic. He established that kinship was also a "total social fact", constituting the elementary structure of the *social prestation system*¹, given that its logics organize and interweave symbolic, religious constructions, people flows, and pacts of alliance and conflict between groups. Thus, "the exchange of brides is merely the conclusion of an uninterrupted process of reciprocal gifts which effects the transition from hostility to alliance, from anxiety to confidence, and from fear to friendship" (Levi-Strauss 1998[1949]:108). The appropriation of women as an exchange element is an elementary structure of social bonding that constitutes the genesis of economic relationships in various societies. Women are the foundational gift.

This theory also made visible the *moral obligation to move* to other territories after marriage in patriarchal and patrilocal societies² that weighs on women (Levi-Strauss 1998[1949]:108). Patrilineal logics imply the community stipulation of *female mobility patterns* understood as a primordial form of tradition and male

power. This obligation of mobility also weighs on non-first-born brothers who do not have access to the succession of family property: their displacement in search of resources or land responds to ancestral patterns that accommodate the patriarchal succession logic.

The ties between men of the same lineage in descending form (fathers with their sons) in patriarchal systems engender logics of dominance and power that configure gender differentiation. Here, we understand by gender those categorizations "of persons, artifacts, events, sequences, and so on which draw upon sexual imagery upon the ways in which the distinctiveness of male and female characteristics make concrete people's ideas about the nature of social relationships" (Strathern 1990:ix). Gender is a cultural construction of biological sex with a historical, conflictive, and dynamic character (Gavilán & Carrasco 2001:717).

Critical feminism offers several more anthropological considerations that resize the assertions of Levi-Strauss (1998[1949]) on patriarchal kinship systems. In this article, we subscribe to two of them, which articulate and provide theoretical intelligibility to the two central objectives of our text. The first comes from Strathern (1990), who observed that classic anthropology tended to see the gift system — and the establishment of exchange duties — as forms of sociability and integration. These were crucial for structuring life cycles, social celebrations and also as instruments of political competition. The problem lies with the pigeonholed vision of the construction of gender:

Often, gifts subsume persons themselves, especially under patrilineal regimes where women move in marriage from one set of men to another, although this is not the only context in which objects, as they pass from donor to recipient, appear to be categorized as male or female. However, one cannot read such gender ascriptions off in advance, not even when women appear to be the very items that are gifted. It does not follow that "women" only carry with them a "female" identity. The basis for classification is not inherent in the objects themselves but in how they are transacted and to what ends. The action is the gendered activity. (Strathern 1990:xi).

It is not that kinship systems and the construction of patriarchal logics of circulation, alliance, and rights impute a tacitly pre-existing sense of gender (Strathern 1990). The construction of gender occurs in the process of the exchange; it is the action that frames the socially established forms of gender. This idea allows us to move away from the Levi-Straussian structuralism to assume a creative character attributable not only to the *mobility of women* but also to all the exchanges

that this circulation articulates. Mobility is one of the actions by which women produce (and are produced) as gendered beings (Strathern 1990). These reflections are central to studies of the transnational/transborder mobility of contemporary Aymara women (as we will see in the third section). Their displacements tend to be configured by gender mandates and family obligations in their communities of origin.

The second consideration on kinship we pick up here comes from Segato (2010), who argues that this "pact" between male members cannot exist without institutionalizing masculine violence. The contract between men presupposes a violent act: the patriarch's domination over the women in his group. Thus, the founding contract is not in the prohibition of incest, but in the "appropriation by force of all the females of his horde by the primitive macho-father-patriarch, as the crime that originates the first Law, the law of status: the gender law" (Segato 2010:28). From here, Segato (2010) speaks of violence as an "elementary structure". In doing so, she paraphrases Levi-Strauss (1998[1949]) by pointing out that masculine violence is the foundation of patriarchy's regulation.

The structuring of patriarchal power is articulated by the gender division of social labor. Historically, it has entailed the construction of a differentiation between public space (a sign of male power and locus of men's work) and private space (where women are enclosed and limited by patriarchal power) (Segato 2013). In this domestic space, women are responsible for *social reproduction* work, which, although fundamental for the maintenance of life, is undervalued. In societies with patriarchal structures, women are exposed to the overload of reproductive functions, assuming the care of people, objects, animals, and environments. The patterns of the gender division of labor and female overload strongly impact the gender mandates validated by each social group³.

In feminist anthropological literature, the use of the concept of patriarchy has become a watershed. Rubin (1975) proposed reserving the category only for those specific forms of hierarchical social organization in which men constituted the heads of family groups. These forms determine succession processes (material and immaterial), the spatial distribution of women and their offspring, and monopolize the exercise of violence. She observed that most contemporary human groups are not organized according to this specific regime of male power but are based on heterogeneous forms that mix different patterns. Thus, Rubin (1975) proposes the term *sex/gender system* to name how each society establishes the relationship between supposedly natural distinctions between the sexes and the cultural contractions about their roles and access to power. Taking the above into account, Rubin (1975) invites us to inquire about how each social group organizes its sex/gender system without denying that this system generates inequality that harms women in many societies.

In this text, we agree that different societies and groups construct the sex/gender system in heterogeneous ways. The articulations of these systems are profoundly historical: they change whenever the circumstances of social life are transformed. However, we propose a different use for the term "patriarchy", establishing that the concept is not restricted to the description of a specific model of kinship. Relying on Segato (2010), we consider patriarchy as a system of hierarchical domination and a project of (self)reproduction. As such, it engenders changing forms of representation, sensitivities, and affects (conscious and unconscious) that are articulated with economic and power processes. The historical transformation of these articulations endows male domination with distinct configurations that, nevertheless, allow for the conflictive continuity of the asymmetry of power between masculine and feminine. *Patriarchy is a hegemony; it is not a model of kinship.*

In the last decade, we have carried out comparative ethnographic studies on the experience of women of different origins in South American border areas (Guizardi et al. 2021). In these spaces, the reiteration of common patterns of violence – which have also been reported by other female researchers on different Latin American borders – demands the establishment of conceptual frameworks that facilitate cross-cultural interpretation (Guizardi et al. 2021). Given that the same patterns of gender violence, division of labor, or inequality of social relations are repeated among women from different territories, nationalities, ethnic origins, social classes, and ages, we cannot subsume the analysis to microsocial interpretative categories, ignoring the repetition of common patterns. This is an extensive debate in the anthropological literature on transborder female mobilities that, for reasons of space, we will not be able to exhaust here (Guizardi et al. 2021).

The complex articulation between kinship, power, and gender takes on particular symbolic characteristics in Aymara communities where patriarchal structuring is associated with specific worldviews.

In the Aymara world

Starting points

Although they have several features in common, ethnic Aymara groups are made up of diverse and heterogeneous communities. They inhabit the regions of northern Chile, central-western Bolivia, northeastern Argentina, and southeastern Peru (Albó 2000:44-45; Fernández-Droguett 2009:31). Their history dates back to the Tiwanaku Empire (700-1250 AD), which constitutes a trans-territorial and multiethnic macropolitical organization. Despite this heterogeneity, the hegemony and political control were determined by Aymara-speaking groups, natives of the

peaks of the current Andean Region of Bolivia (Torero 1987), in particular those from the Lake Titicaca basin (Villanueva-Criales 2017: 1). Between 1100 and 1470, this empire went through a process of disaggregation that decentralized political organization and transferred power to the patriarchs of each village or community (Muñoz 2019). This process formed "a multiethnic mosaic of Aymara-speaking lordships in constant struggle", which constituted "the oldest ancestors of contemporary Aymara groups" (Villanueva-Criales 2017:2). These villages became part of the Inca Empire between 1470 and 1532 AD before being intervened by European colonial power⁴. Thus, Aymara-speaking villages and communities were "Inkanized and Hispanized" (Villanueva-Criales 2017:2).

During the process of independence and formation of its Nation-state in the nineteenth century, Peru based its national narrative on the construction of a glorious Inca past, stipulating the myth of racial and cultural superiority over the Aymara (Guizardi et al. 2019:58). Bolivia sought to configure an ideology of a non-indigenous State despite there being a significant number of Aymara communities. This was only formally redefined with the 2007 constitution (endorsed by a plebiscite in 2009)⁵. At the end of the nineteenth century, Chile annexed Peruvian and Bolivian territories of the Atacama Desert and applied a policy of dis-indigenization (*Chileanization*) of the Aymara people. Hence, the processes of Aymara ethnic identification are transnational and transborder phenomenon; in addition, they were intervened by various forms of organized political power between Bolivia, Chile, and Peru (González-Miranda 2009:32). These caveats are key to avoiding essentialist views that when talking of identity, consider it as static. Here, we prefer to think of the Aymara communities as plural, intersected by economic, political, and symbolic processes and by historical transformations of gender (Cerna & Muñoz, 2019). Moreover, we urge the reader to understand that these communities are active agents in all these processes (Fernández-Droguett 2009).

Recognizing this heterogeneity, we will situate aspects of the constructions of gender in Aymara groups in the following section.

Symbolism, kinship, and reciprocity

Andean cultural groups had gender structures that exceeded the "man-women" binarism that has been hegemonic since European modernity. According to Rostworowski (2009:37), one of the main Inca myths places the origin of this society to the cave *Pacaritambo* (from the Quechua "place of production" or "of dawn"). The first family, *Ayar*, emerged from this cave, composed of four brothers (*Ayar Uchu*, *Ayar Cachi*, *Ayar Mango*, and *Ayar Auca*) and four sisters (*Mama Ocllo*, *Mama Huaco*, *Mama Ipacura*, and *Mama Raua*). The brothers' names begin with

the family name, indicating the *patriarchal*, *patrilineal*, and *patrilocal* nature of kinship. Each of the four brothers and sisters represented a different gender. Thus, the myth made clear the various possibilities according to which men and women could compose identities and roles that integrated in different ways those attributes considered masculine or feminine.

The Incas conceived the world as divided into two halves that simultaneously opposed and complemented each other. Their *ayllus*⁶ and the community territory were divided into upper parts (*Hanan*, of a sacred nature) and lower parts (*Hurin*, of a profane nature), which structured gender, exchanges, and alliances:

Hanan men were masculine/masculine, while *Hurin* men were masculine/feminine. As for women, those at the bottom were classified as feminine/feminine, and those at the top were feminine/masculine. The prototypes of these women are feminine/feminine (*Mama Ocllo*) and feminine/masculine (*Mama Huaco*) (Rostworowski 2009:43-44).

The myth specifies four possible genders with structures far from the hegemonic used by the European colonizers. For example, *Mama Huaco* was a powerful woman, very skilled in the arts of war. She led the taking of the sacred place, which mythologically constituted the definitive Inca settlement. She exercised the offices of the captain of the army and led the troops in war (Rostworowski 2009:39).

In addition, Rostworowski (2009:44) explains that the sons and daughters of an Inca sovereign constituted a *panaca*: a dynastic model of family lineage that contemplated forms of matrilineal succession. When they married, the sovereign's daughter remained linked to the *panaca* — they did not join the husband's family —. Thus, regardless of whether they descended from his daughters or sons, the sovereign's grandchildren were still considered members of the royal *panaca*. The *panaca* had a mixed successional character: it was patrilineal for the sovereign's sons and matrilineal for his daughters. This structuring coexisted with that of the patrilineal *ayllus* (of families that did not descend from the sovereign) (Rostworowski 2009:44). Thus, this mythology shows the existence of mixed and not exclusively patrilineal kinship systems.

The symbolic interpenetration between the Inca and Aymara worlds marked the structuring of the gender representation systems of both. According to Murra (1972), the symbolic constitution of the world between those from "below" and those from "above" was not exclusively Inca. It appears as a structuring of the political organization of communities from different Andean sectors and established hierarchical and reciprocal systems, both intra-and extra group, particularly

between peoples situated at different altitudes (Platt 2010:297). This worldview persists where communities settled on the highlands between 3,800 and 4,500 mamsl are "elevated" (and centers of authority and power) with links to pasturing. The communities below 3,800 mamsl have a lower status, and their inhabitants are linked to agricultural work (Van Kessel 2003 [1980]:114).

Murra (1972) observed that between high and low Andean communities, a system of reciprocity and mobility is organized according to kinship logics. Those from below do not lose the right to visit their highland communities from which they migrate, generally because they are people with no inheritance rights in the "elevated" communities (Platt 2010:298). Thinking about this system of hierarchy, mobility, and kinship, Murra (1972) coined the expression *vertical archipelagos*, alluding to the settlements that were emerging from:

Societies that sprang from the mixture of settlers from the different groups at the confines of the political extension of their nuclear societies, both up and down and on both sides of the mountain range, towards the Pacific and the Atlantic. The settlers were conceived as living on something like "islands" in a "multi-ethnic" neighborhood, adjoining other "islands" placed there by other groups. (Platt 2010:298).

Following Murra (1972), it is possible to establish that mobility to lands considered inferior in symbolic status is the moral obligation of those family members who do not have inheritance rights in high-altitude villages (non-first-born sons and all women who do not marry first-born sons of other families).

Harris (1978) suggested that members of Aymara communities in the higher regions of Potosí (Bolivia) extended their social ties to very distant lands that could be located at sea level in other countries (Platt 2010). On the other hand, communities located at intermediate orographic levels, between 2,000 and 3,800 mamsl, had shorter circuits and were able to move more and up and down at shorter time intervals.

Paraphrasing Murra from Harris' findings, we could say that these communities establish *long-and-short-distance* vertical archipelagos, both based on different temporal logics. This is fundamental to understanding the current Aymara female and male migration between Bolivia, Peru, and Chile; its transnational character is not properly a consequence of globalization but results from the transformation of translocal patterns that became transboundary with the imposition of national borders (Guizardi et al. 2019).

On the other hand, the Aymara world is governed by sociopolitical structures based on symbolic logics of bipartition (Van Kessel 2003[1980]:115). Communities are organized according to *ayllus*, forming a *marka* (community) (Gavilán & Carrasco 2001:720). In turn, pairs of *markas* form a *saya*, and pairs of *saya* create a *señorío*. Thus, *ayllus*, *markas*, *sayas*, and *señoríos* are hierarchized between those above and those below, between female and male (Agar 2010:12), but always in an articulated way, forming systems of intra- and extra-group duality that generate a network of reciprocal exchange (linking through the obligation to give, receive, and reciprocate). Van Kessel summarizes this system, which he observed in the Chilean Tarapacá region, in the following terms:

This socio-political and territorial quadripartition of the Andean community is reflected in the conception of the family, nuclear and extended, the economy, and architecture, and constitutes a basic paradigm of the Andean worldview, which stands out in all rituals and customs, as explained by Tristan Platt (1976:15), and is valid for the Aymara and Quechua man [sic]. (Van Kessel 2003 [1980]:115).

The principle of duality and complementarity (bottom/top; male/female) is called *Panipacha* by the Aymara: it governs the symbolic conception of the world, the territory, the forces of nature, and human relations (Mamani 1999:307). It also structures an interdependence between opposed parts, which generates an equilibrium by complementing each other⁷. Until the end of the twentieth century, research sustained that the mythological construction of *Panipacha* pointed to the existence of a community notion of equality in difference (Mamani 1999). It was believed that this system contemplated the difference between polarities but gave them an equal communal value, as if the male and female parts were equally recognized (Harris 1978). However, this reading has been questioned since 1990, opening up new questions about Andean gender theory. Authors such as Rösing (1997) criticized the relational validity of these principles.

Gender and chachawarmi

The cultural and historical construction of gender among Aymara communities is changing and conflictive. Furthermore, it is intrinsically connected with constructions of religious symbolism (Gavilán & Carrasco 2001:718), intra- and extra-community exchange systems, political alliances, and ruptures (Carrasco 1998:318), accepted moral and ethical communitarian frameworks, and the social

representations of all these elements. Thus, gender identities are important elements for differentiation, but they coordinate with hierarchical differences that are "also defined around the life-cycle phase of people and the social role they play" (Carrasco 1998:318).

Working with Aymara communities in northern Chile, Carrasco (1998:318) identified that male and female fetuses were named in the same way at birth (*suyu*); they were also given the same name after birth until three months (*suyu-wawa*) and between the age of four months and two years (*wawa*). From this age on, a differentiation by gender was established: girls between 3 and 11 years old were called *imilla*, while boys were called *yoqalla*. Preadolescents between 11 and 15 were called *maldaya*, if female and *majta*, if male. Fifteen-year-old women were called *tawago* and men *wayna*. On marrying, they were considered adults; females were known as *warmi* and males *chacha*. Adult women who were still of reproductive age could also be called *tayka*. After reaching 50, people were considered old: women were *apache* and men *achichi*. After death, both sexes were *hihuata*.

The passage from adolescence to adulthood is a key social institution for the Aymara: marriage allows subjects to become people in symbolic community terms (Carrasco 1998:318). Marriage for the Aymara seeks to guarantee the "recreation of the community. Hence, the word *Jaqichasiña* (translated as marriage) indicates more than this: *Jaqi* = person, and *chasiña* = to become. Thus, a rough translation is: to become a person" (Argandoña 1996:38). Thus:

In the Andean world, everything has a partner; each living being has a dual complementary equal, which makes it a complete being: this addresses the use of space, people, animals, deities, sacred places, and the elements used in rites. The Andean worldview is essentially based on this bipartite and complementary existence, based on a view of sacred naturalization with cultural sediments: there can be no being without a partner, without an equal. In this case, it can be understood that the alliance between man and woman becomes a bridge between nature and culture (Irigaray 1998:101). (Agar 2010:13).

The marital alliance and union is understood from the notion of complementarity and is called *chachawarmi*. It is a cornerstone of gender relations (Gavilán & Carrasco 2018:113). The acquisition and maintenance of a stable partner prove that men and women have the necessary attributes to be considered complete persons: they are fit for work and to be parents. Those who remain single in adulthood are considered incomplete (Carrasco 1998:322), and their community

participation is less (even more so if they are a woman) (Agar 2010:15). Families put pressure on young people to enter into marital unions. When they do not meet this expectation, they are expected to self-marginalize from the main community activities (Agar 2010). Single adult women, with or without children, are punished by their community and family and forced to do tasks that would have been left to the partner they do not have (Agar 2010:15). This de-hierarchization of her social function in the gender division of labor means:

Not belonging, not having land, nor their own home, or easy possibilities of being an authority despite having the training or education to hold positions, because these factors do not overlap with the communal customs of the rotation of authorities; the unmarried woman is not valued in the same way as a married one; she develops a self-exclusion for having broken a fundamental principle of belonging and participation. (Agar 2010:15).

Community and intra-family social control is applied to women who exceed or fail to comply with the principles of marriage in adult life. This constitutes a serious problem for those who suffer processes of violence perpetrated by their partners, mothers-in-law, and sisters-in-law (Van Vleet 2002:12) since they are prescribed to interrupt the marital union to stop this violence. Most Aymara communities structure marriage relations according to patrilocal and patrilineal criteria (Carrasco 1998; Gavilán 2005). As we explained earlier, a social, moral, and political obligation of mobility falls on women. When they integrate into the familiar networks of their husbands, they suffer a strained relationship with their mothers-in-law, sisters-in-law, and their husbands' aunts, who tend to dialogue with them in a conflictive and violent way (Van Vleet 2002).

Following Maclean (2014), beyond the importance of these symbolic constructions, we should avoid translating the expression *chachawarmi* from a binary view of sexes and genders that stipulates it literally as the communion of adult males and females. The centrality of *chachawarmi* as an Aymara institution does not imply the construction of immovable gender patterns. Rather, they are "living spaces of interaction and cultural resistance, in which women of diverse ethnic status interact among themselves and with men" (Rivera-Cusicanqui 1996a:7).

Several female authors agree that *chachawarmi* contemplates various forms of union that do not necessarily reproduce patrilineal, patrilocal, and patrifocal patterns. Likewise, the public/private, community/household division is not limited to the male/female dichotomy either and takes very diverse forms in different contexts. However, some dominant androcentric and patriarchal representations,

even if they are not the only ones adopted, show a predominance of masculine power. It is useful to identify at least three aspects of this symbolic system.

First, in the general Aymara worldview, natural explanations are given for differentiating male and female bodies and sexualities (Platt 1976). In his study of the Bolivian *macha*, Platt (1976) describes their idea that there are two forms of blood: male (white) and female (red). Their combination creates fertility and the continuity of existence; the red blood coagulates the white blood, constituting a kind of spark of life (Gavilán & Carrasco 2001:718). Hence, female menstrual blood is associated with fertility.

Second, in symbolic terms, the recognition of female fertility and its importance for the reproduction of the community is associated with the understanding of "Mother Earth", *Pachamama*, as a female deity. A being who creates life: a fertile mother through whom all forms of life are created (Llanque-Chana 1990). This association elevates the female figure to a status of important symbolic power but also implies concrete obligations: it assigns to women the responsibility for domestic and care tasks, not only in relation to children but also for animals, plants, and older people (Agar 2010:16), linking it to the gender division of labor (Gavilán 2002). The domestic space is understood as female and the public space as male, but there is no notion of a dichotomy between the two as in the prototypical modern vision. However, the female protagonist at home does not displace male leadership: the man is considered the "head of the household" (Agar 2010:15). Men and women carry out productive tasks, but the reproductive ones are female by antonomasia (Agar 2010; Carrasco & Gavilán 2014; Gavilán 2002).

Third, various anthropological studies carried out in northern Chile testify that "relations between genders develop in a context of power that disadvantages women" (Carrasco 1998:88) and that "the place of the masculine and its position of power (expressed in the terms husband-father) place a greater supposed value to these physiological attributes of the male body" (Gavilán 2005:144)⁸. These studies attest to the increase in sexist conjugal violence in Aymara families in urban contexts (Carrasco 2001)⁹. Research carried out with Aymara women between Chile, Peru, and Bolivia suggests that female subordination is also justified in their social groups based on attributes affirmed as biological, thereby constructing discourses and practices of differentiation between genders. Thus, the indigenous women who live between these countries embody a subordinate constitution of their identity in relation to their cultural groups of origin and the national identities of these spaces. These debates have allowed the emergence of an Andean agenda of critical gender studies. From our perspective, this agenda finds several elements of confluence with studies of Bolivian Aymara female migration in South America. In the following section, we revisit this research.

Female Bolivian Aymara migrants in South America

This section discusses studies on female Bolivian Aymara migrants in South America. In line with what we discussed previously, there are two central aspects to consider.

First, Aymara women are (generally) forced to move due to patrilineal inheritance norms that deprive them of access to family lands. Thus, female mobility and translocality are so closely linked to inter-community exchange systems and intra-community inheritance logics that they are incomprehensible when dissociated from these logics.

Second, female productive and reproductive overload is a constant in the predominant kinship systems among several Aymara communities (Carrasco 1998, Carrasco & Gavilán 2009, Gavilán 2020). The overload mandate is also an element that drives women to migratory processes. In the second section, we drew on the argument of Strathern (1990) to affirm that the construction of gender occurs precisely in the process of exchange. That action frames socially established forms of gender and not vice versa. This idea allows us to assume a creative character attributable not only to the *mobility of women* but to all the exchanges that this circulation articulates.

This shift sediments an anthropological opening to the conception of gender as a situational, concrete, interactive, and performative practice. It is not that family structurings do not provide (sometimes rigid and coercive) frameworks for men and women (particularly for the latter). Rather, it is about observing that systems are horizons of possibilities that subjects concretize but which they can also alter. Thus, it is fundamental to see the mobility performed by Aymara women as a gendered action (Strathern, 1990); as a creator of the female being that inhabits them.

Studies on female Bolivian migrants in South America provide empirical elements that allow us to understand this second aspect. Research on the rural labor migration insertion of Bolivians in Argentina and Chile highlights the persistence of labor precariousness in the context of reception (Pizarro 2011, Tapia 2015)¹⁰, linking Bolivian Aymara women with three main niches: agriculture, commerce, and paid care work. The daily experience of female Bolivian indigenous rural workers is marked by an oppressive labor hierarchy structured by various forms of inequality (class, ethnicity, gender, nationality, and age) (Pizarro 2011:337).

For example, in the Chilean territories bordering the Andean Tri-Border, namely the productive valleys around Arica, Tapia (2015:207) observed that children getting Chilean nationality – or even the migrants themselves through nationalization – opened up the possibility of acquiring arable land. This has changed the position of the families in labor hierarchies in the space of a generation.

Thus, there is a relationship between the labor and economic stratification of the families, migration times, nationalization, and the land access regime. With a strict work and savings ethic, a significant number of Bolivian Aymara families seek to progressively move from the status of day laborers (working day by day on other people's land) to that of custodians, *medieros* [tenant farmers], and later landowners (Albó 2000). To do so, they rely on the migratory networks built up with relatives and members of the communities of origin with whom they share productive insertion. These links favor labor inclusion, but they do not improve the quality of employment, reproducing a logic of ethnic enclave with "poorly regulated relationships that tend towards arbitrariness, clientelism, and precariousness" (Rojas & Bueno 2014:80-81). It is true that this labor precariousness framed by these ethnic networks is experienced by men and women; however, women are the most vulnerable due to the position of power men occupy in family and community ties (Rojas & Bueno 2014:81).

Ataíde (2019:183), in her study on Bolivian migrant women in horticulture in Salta (on the border between Argentina and Bolivia), reaffirms these findings and complements them. She shows that the agreements between Bolivian Aymara tenants or "*patrones*" [landowners] are made by the male migrant figure, marginalizing female decisions and establishing systems of exploitation that affect the whole family but have more drastic repercussions on women.

In terms of commerce, studies carried out in important Bolivian urban centers (such as La Paz and El Alto) have recorded the leading role played by women in small and medium-sized trade that pushes women's mobility to other national border territories (Aparicio 2014:27). Simultaneously, this trade drives women into processes of marginalization and exploitation (Rivera-Cusicanqui 1996b). Nevertheless, through this activity and the territorial mobilities it implies, women develop knowledge and strategies to circumvent vulnerable circumstances (Rivera-Cusicanqui & Choque-Quispe 2009). In this niche, the Aymara woman is usually "the administrator of economic resources" (Choque-Quispe 2014:161) and is in charge of expanding relational links, thus articulating "extensive information and knowledge for the management and administration of their capital" (Choque-Quispe 2014:161).

Since the nineties onwards, transnational/transborder informal trade has become an important resource for Bolivian women, who assumed a "transcendental and hegemonic role" in South American "markets and street markets" (Choque-Quispe 2014:161). This led to female empowerment, which, although anchored in family networks and relationships, projected women's local political participation (Choque-Quispe 2014:161). In addition, this commercial deployment has its own symbolic logic. Although Tassi et al. (2013:135) explain with caution that their study does not "allow generalizations about gender-specific trends and roles",

they do find that this logic of Bolivian informal commercial expansion is connected to "the Aymara worldview of abundance: more sales, more replenishment; more stock, more buyers, and, therefore, more bonanza" (Tassi et al. 2013:225). This allows us to link the notion of *Panipacha*, which, as we have seen, is centrally linked to the Aymara construction of gender.

Research carried out on international border territories shows that trade allows Bolivian women "greater independence in time management and the possibility of combining productive and reproductive tasks" (Moreno & Martínez 2016:92). This does not mean that they manage to revert the inequities of gender or the exploitative regimes; on the contrary, this activity also exposes them to even more overload (productive/reproductive). Between Brazil and Bolivia, Hernández and Loureiro-Ferreira (2017:46-47) observed that female Bolivians as commercial protagonists pushed a reorganization of the gender division of labor in their families: "Women carry out the trade, while men are in charge of transporting goods, setting up stalls, and, if necessary, taking care of the younger children" (Hernández & Loureiro-Ferreira 2017:47).

In Comodoro Rivadavia (an Argentine oil city), González & Sassone (2016) observed that local commerce (in vegetables and clothes) articulated a form of female Bolivian leadership, opening up possibilities of autonomy for migrant women, but without fully reconfiguring gender inequalities. In turn, Moreno & Martínez (2016:88) found that, for Bolivian Aymara migrant women in Mendoza (Argentina), commerce was an important labor alternative to overcome the physical wear and tear of agricultural work. It allowed them to position themselves as privileged social agents, taking their production from the peripheral rural enclaves where their communities were settled to the urban markets. This is connected with imaginaries spread regionally, which associate Bolivian Aymara women with strong commercial performance (Moreno & Martínez 2016:92). Therefore, commercial knowledge constitutes an "ethnic resource" that legitimizes these migrant women.

In the Chilean Norte Grande, Bolivian Aymara women were identified as local traders and as protagonists of the transnational trade that connects the Tacna Free Trade Zone (far south of Peru) with the Iquique Free Trade Zone (northern Chile) and the Altiplano regions of Bolivia, Argentina, and Brazil. In addition, these studies show gender inequalities in the distribution of paid care work (which they offer to Chilean families) and the social reproduction of their own family nuclei on different sides of the national borders. It is argued that this inequality (enhanced by symbolic imaginaries of *Panipacha*) articulates specific forms of labor insertion that connect female migrants to a chain of transfer of the overload of care (Leiva et al. 2017:23). These studies elucidate, then, that inequality – with the obligation to care and the lack of support to delegate these

responsibilities — pushes women into complex chains of labor precariousness and also constitutes a lack of protection, given that they do not have access in their communities and family networks to the right to receive care (Leiva & Ross 2016, Leiva et al. 2017, Tapia & Ramos 2013).

Since 1970, feminist studies have used the concept of “double presence” to refer to this overload on women who, unable to share the burden of the family’s sustenance and care work with male figures, pay with their own health the burden of reconciling these productive and reproductive spheres (González & Sassone 2016, Magliano 2013). The concept problematizes the centrality of care tasks and their impact on the organization of women’s time. It refers to “a conceptual framework of analysis” that observes how “this double presence becomes multiple as spaces and times multiply, intersect, intertwine, and overlap” (Magliano 2013:167-168). Several female researchers studying the overload of female Bolivian Aymara migrants in Argentina speak not of double but of “multiple presence” (Magliano 2013:168). Thinking about these processes in these terms implies focusing on how women balance the difficulties of reconciling spheres and “roles traditionally defined as different and separate — family and work, private and public, productive and reproductive, domestic and extra-domestic — and, likewise the strategies aimed at combining, negotiating, reproducing, inventing, and/or transcending those spheres and roles” (Magliano 2013:168).

Different studies on female Bolivian migration in South America allow us to establish common elements to interpret the multiple presence of these female migrants and their connection with borders and the feminization of survival:

Although there is no single way of experiencing the multiple presence, Bolivian migrants’ accounts depict a multiple set of images and representations of the female Bolivian migrant, which highlights her status as a *fighter*, *defender* of the family unit, *guardian of affection*, pillar of the family through her role in the productive and reproductive world, and *mediator between the cultures* of origin and destination. The reconstruction of these images and representations allows us to infer the meanings of these presences in the migratory trajectories of Bolivian women. (Magliano 2013:168).

These studies accompany the debates proposed by Strathern (1990) and establish reflections on the gender specificity of gift systems among Bolivian Aymara families. In particular, on the specific way women build the social networks that allow their labor insertion and the reproduction of their family groups in migratory contexts. Both mobility and the female role in families are centrally configured from the logic of productive and reproductive overload, a cornerstone of Aymara

family relationships. However, these women do not suffer these circumstances passively. By making female agency in migratory contexts visible, the findings of these studies allude to the necessity to abandon dualistic visions of gender relations. In addition, they observe that the women frequently build strategies of resistance that, although they do not break inequalities, they do open possibilities to important transformations for them and the new generations.

Complementarity questioned

Throughout the text, we articulate classic kinship studies, Andean research on gender among Aymara groups, and findings from studies on female Bolivian Aymara migration. Here, rather than revisiting the debates of each section, we will point out a new research horizon that articulates these three fields: the emergence of a political agenda on gender relations led by indigenous Aymara women in Bolivia.

In academic anthropology, this political debate began to gain importance in 1990 when the "classic" views on kinship and gender in the Andes were questioned. After participating in the congress on kinship and gender held in Scotland (1993), several female authors published reflections on the limitations of the gender approach of the classics on Andeanism (Paulson 1998). They explained that these works were based on "rather schematic concepts which are limited in order to understand the contexts studied" (Paulson 1998:482).

One of the books that framed this debate, *Más allá del Silencio* [Beyond Silence], was edited by Denise Arnold (1997) and brought together works that questioned the assumption of Andean societies as tacitly patrilineal (Arnold & Yapita 1997; Dransart 1997; Isbell 1997). Arnold had already ethnographically demonstrated the complex articulation between patrilineal and matrilineal practices. She showed that in the domestic space of the Aymara community of *Qaqachaka* (in Potosí), power was female:

Although it is women who normally move into their husbands' residence, taking with them their inheritance of cattle and other valuable objects, the house as a domestic and "interior" domain and a focal point of matrilineal ideology is a legacy of the female gender, while other more transitory elements are perceived as moving on the periphery. The men are quite explicitly characterized as "outside the house", *uta anqa*. At a higher level of social organization, a competing matrilineal ideology also seems

to subsume the various local patrilineal groups within a network of intersecting matrilineal ties. According to this matrilineal ideology, women are the central node of discourse on wealth. (Arnold 2014[1992]:46-47).

Studies such as that by Rösing (1997) broadened the understanding of relations in the Andean world by demonstrating the existence of ten different genders represented in the ritual of the Aymara community of Amarete in Kallawaya (Bolivia). The author observes that the translation of *chachawarmi* as "man/woman" replicates the modern (Eurocentric) atomization of gender and contributes to a misinterpretation of Andean systems. This insufficient translation ends up entering the interpretative logics of bilingual indigenous communities, given its immersion in a "complex negotiation of discursive and material power dynamics in the recreation of gendered identities in this context" (Maclean 2014:76-77). Attentive to these criticisms, several female authors have pointed out that the supposed equality in the Andean "*complementary duality*" principle helped to reproduce power structures that privileged the male half of the community, thus deepening male domination and female submission (Agar 2010; Burman 2011; Carrasco 1998; Carrasco & Gavilán 2014; Gavilán & Carrasco 2001; 2018; Gigena 2014; Harris 1980; Maclean 2014; Paulson 1998; Van Vleet 2002; Windmark 2019).

Likewise, Rivera-Cusicanqui (2010) sustains that these principles of complementarity did not generate gender equality and that violence towards women has continued to worsen since colonization (see also: Gavilán 2020:340). In the Chilean (Gavilán 2020), Peruvian (Meentzen 2007), and Bolivian (Rivera-Cusicanqui 1996b) territories, the subordination of Aymara women today responds to the "connection between the colonial and racist patriarchy and the Aymara patriarchy of pre-colonial origin" (Gargallo 2012:17). The reflections of Van Vleet (2002) are fundamental and allow us to argue that in societies organized around kinship, marriage is a primordial sphere of reproduction of power inequalities structured through the roles and mandates of sexuality, gender, generation, and ethnicity (De la Cadena 1992; 1997).

Kinship is also a transcendental category for constructing identities and trajectories of power between the woman and her husband, as well as his mother and sisters. It operationalizes cycles of gender violence that are reproduced and naturalized (Van Vleet 2002:12). In recent years, the political reproduction of discourses that makes gender domination invisible in *chachawarmi* has gained notoriety. These notions have been playing central roles in the complex sets of political negotiations in the struggle for indigenous participation.

Observing the use of the discourse on the unity and balance of chachawarmi in Bolivia, Maclean (2014) argues that this notion was used politically to defend equal female representation and rights. It was also the apex of the decolonization program of *Movimiento al Socialismo* (MAS) governments, which governed the country during the presidential terms of Evo Morales (2006-2019) and the current government of Luis Arce (since 2020). During Morales's period, Bolivia went through a profound political review process of paradigms and imaginaries about national identity. The plurinational character of the Nation-state was affirmed, and the constitution declared equal rights as "nations" for the 35 ethnic groups (Fernández-Droguett 2019), among which the Aymara collectives have assumed a central political role. In this process, the recovery of indigenous worldviews in general, and the Aymara in particular, implied the assumption of the principles of complementary duality as political axes to understand the link between internal political groups, identities, and genders in the country (Maclean 2014).

Nevertheless, "there is a risk that in being distilled from its lived instantiations in the current politics of Bolivia, chachawarmi is being idealized and romanticized" (Maclean 2014:76). It is recognized that the MAS governments reached fundamental achievements in gender equality and that the discourse of chachawarmi was crucial to do so. However:

There is a distinction between chachawarmi and mestizo gender equality, which is often elided. It is argued that chachawarmi can disguise gender oppression and cannot be understood without a discussion of, and respect for women's equal rights. Vice President Garcia Linera states that there is a role for women's rights as "chachawarmi often disguises the subordination of women within organizations themselves" (Svampa & Stefanoni 2007:11). This resonates with the views of indigenous feminist organizations that "in Aymara communities where they supposedly apply chachawarmi, there isn't a correlation between this idea and the reality" and that Andean machismo is still present "in every area" (Julieta Ojeda in Bolivian Express 2012:16). (Maclean 2014:76-77).

It is necessary to return to questions posed by Gigena (2014:115) about the possibility that Aymara women manage to depatriarchalize institutions with an evident colonial heritage, such as the State, to advance towards the demystification of indigenous gender relations and rethink "the masculine bias of citizenship and dispute the practices of white-urban women" (Gigena 2014:115). This leads, in turn, to question to what extent and in what ways female agency can advance in rethinking hierarchical processes of power inequality intersected by gender, ethnicity, and class.

In this regard, studies on female Aymara migration in South America can make a major contribution. Their findings allow us to establish how resistance and adaptation are articulated in female Aymara agency. They are, therefore, a critical analytical horizon for linking the political agenda of these women with anthropological knowledge on kinship and gender.

Notas

- 1 The term was coined by Mauss (1979[1924]:163). According to this author, links between people and internal subgroups of a society and between that society and others constitute archaic forms of contract called *systems of total prestation*. These systems coordinate exchanges inside and between groups. They are the genesis of law, linked to the construction of social forms of power and authority, and act as a balancing mechanism for the circulation of goods. These systems have a religious origin since they establish an obligation "between the souls" of those who interchange them (Mauss 1979[1924]:168). This spiritual substance, called *gifts*, establishes three obligations: to give, receive, and reciprocate.
- 2 Kinship systems in which relationships between family members are established according to the power of the *paterfamilias* are called *patriarchal systems*. Said systems are *patrilineal* when the family inheritance (of property, honor, or power) is transferred between male figures of a lineage. Thus, it is a system of "father-right" in which men depend on "their patrilineal lineage, and so that of their father and the brothers of their father; those who hold authority and control, and those to whom they turn to for protection and inheritance" (Radcliffe-Brown 1986[1969]:23). In addition, these regimes usually have a *patrilocal* character: upon marriage, women are obliged to move to their husbands' community of property.
- 3 Gender inequalities operate through three registers that make up what we call here "gender mandates": systems of dominant meanings and senses; social relations structured in different spaces in the form of roles, practices, possibilities of transit and/or permanence; and these are experienced by people as components of their sense of personality (Mills 2003:42).
- 4 The Incas called these groups "*Colla*". The colonial administration called them "Aymara", using their language as the principle of identity designation.
- 5 This was promoted by the government of President Evo Morales (2006-2019), who declared the country a plurinational State, recognizing the right of the Indigenous Nations to belong (among them Aymara) (Fernández 2009:42).
- 6 The *ayllu* was formed by a group of families (with blood and/or political ties) who were supposedly related by a common ancestor (*huaca*) and who worked collectively on a common territory, establishing reciprocal obligations among themselves. The leadership was in charge of the *curaca*, a patriarch who was the legal regulator and divided the work, land, and resources.
- 7 In Quechua, we find an analogous principle of complementary equilibrium between opposites called *yanantin* (Mamani 2019:191).
- 8 See also: Gavilán (2002) and Carrasco & Gavilán (2009).
- 9 Comparative research between sexist violence experienced by Aymara and non-indigenous women finds the former register persistently higher indices (Zapata-Sepúlveda et al. 2012).

10 These two countries are the priority destinations for female Bolivian migration in South America. The labor insertion of female Bolivian migrants in agriculture and commerce has been studied in detail in the peripheries of Argentina's cities and border areas (Ataíde 2019). Work developed in Chile is relatively recent (from the 21st century) and focuses on paid care work in cities in the Norte Grande (Leiva et al. 2017, Leiva & Ross 2016, Tapia 2015, Tapia & Ramos 2013).

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AYMARA GENDER AND KINSHIP. BOLIVIAN FEMALE MOBILITIES, AND POLITICAL HORIZONS

GÉNERO Y PARENTESCO AYMARA. MOVILIDADES FEMENINAS BOLIVIANAS Y HORIZONTES POLÍTICOS

Abstract

This article has two central objectives. First, to present a review of anthropological studies on gender and kinship in Aymara communities, focusing on the literature produced in Bolivia, Chile, and Peru. Second, to review the literature on the transnational/transborder mobility of Bolivian Aymara women. We will begin by examining classic concepts of kinship and patriarchy, taking up the feminist critiques of these arguments. Then, we review the work of classic Andeanism on the Aymara worldview, gender studies in these communities, and research on the migration of Bolivian females in South America. We conclude with a review of critiques on the classic conceptions about the symbolic complementarity of the Aymara. We point out future research possibilities in opening an agenda for indigenous women leaders in Bolivia, investigating the use of the Aymara worldview as a national political platform.

Keywords: Anthropological theory, feminisms, Aymara communities, state-of-the-art review, Bolivia.

Resumen

Este artículo se plantea dos objetivos centrales. Primero, presentar una revisión de los estudios antropológicos sobre género y parentesco en las comunidades aymara, enfocándose en la literatura producida en Bolivia, Chile y Perú. Segundo, revisar la literatura sobre la movilidad transnacional/transfronteriza de las mujeres indígenas aymara bolivianas. Iniciaremos problematizando conceptos clásicos sobre el parentesco y el patriarcado, y retomando las críticas que el feminismo ofreció a estos argumentos. Luego, revisamos los trabajos del andinismo clásico sobre la cosmovisión de las comunidades aymara, los estudios sobre género en estas comunidades y los trabajos sobre la migración femenina boliviana en Sudamérica. Finalizamos con una revisión de las críticas a las concepciones clásicas acerca de la complementariedad simbólica aymara. Explicitaremos, para apuntar futuras posibilidades investigativas, la apertura de una agenda de las lideresas indígenas en Bolivia indagando sobre uso de la cosmovisión aymara como plataforma política nacional en este país.

Palabras clave: Teorías antropológicas, Feminismos, Comunidades aymara, Estado del arte, Bolivia.

GÊNERO E PARENTESCO AYMARA. MOBILIDADES FEMININAS BOLIVIANAS E HORIZONTES POLÍTICOS

Resumo

Este artigo tem dois objetivos centrais. Primeiro, apresentar uma revisão dos estudos antropológicos sobre gênero e parentesco em comunidades aymaras, com foco na literatura produzida na Bolívia, no Chile e no Peru. Segundo, revisar a literatura sobre a mobilidade transnacional/transfronteiriça de mulheres indígenas aymaras bolivianas. Começaremos problematizando conceitos clássicos sobre parentesco e patriarcado, retomando as críticas que o feminismo ofereceu a estes argumentos. Em seguida, revisaremos os trabalhos do andinismo clássico sobre a visão de mundo das comunidades aymaras, os estudos sobre gênero nessas comunidades e os trabalhos sobre a migração feminina boliviana na América do Sul. Terminaremos com uma revisão das críticas às concepções clássicas sobre a complementaridade simbólica aymara. Especificaremos, para apontar possibilidades investigativas futuras, a abertura de uma agenda das lideranças indígenas na Bolívia indagando sobre o uso da visão de mundo aymara como plataforma política nacional neste país.

Palavras-chave: Teorias antropológicas, Feminismos, Comunidades aymaras, Estado da arte, Bolívia.

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