



ANDERS BURMAN

CHACHAWARMI: SILENCE AND RIVAL VOICES ON DECOLONISATION AND GENDER POLITICS IN ANDEAN BOLIVIA

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ABOUT THE ARTICLE

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TOPIC

the coloniality of gender in relation to indigenous Aymara gender notions

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

2009 → Evo Morales approved a Constitution
from the Republic of Bolivia to the Plurinational State of Bolivia

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- Political Ecology and Environmental Anthropology
- Indigenous communities, gender politics, climate change



FIELDWORK

- Bolivian Andes
- Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency.
- Ethnographic research mainly in the cities of El Alto and La Paz, five months in 2009.
- The fieldwork included several hours of informal interviews and conversion with women and men of the Aymara community and formal interviews with 12 women and six men.

AYMARA



Indigenous nation in the Andes and Altiplano regions of South America; about 2 million live in Bolivia, Peru and Chile.

Numerous movements for greater independence or political power. e.g the Cocalero Movement and Evo Morales.

Many Aymara have flourished under Morales' rule, who appointed women, indigenous peoples and labor leaders to his cabinet.

“Unity Pact,”: leaders of Andean, lowland and Amazon tribes.- Together, they helped draft the new constitution, approved by 60% of Bolivians in a 2009 referendum.

CONSTITUTION 2009



- Criticism on the Aymara concept of chacha-warmi
- Decolonisation of the concept of gender.
- It strengthens participatory democracy on the one hand but on the other also the executive branch.

- Women's right
- "Indigenous autonomy"
- "Communitarian administration of justice"
- Legitimazation of indigenous socio political practises, including those concerning gender.



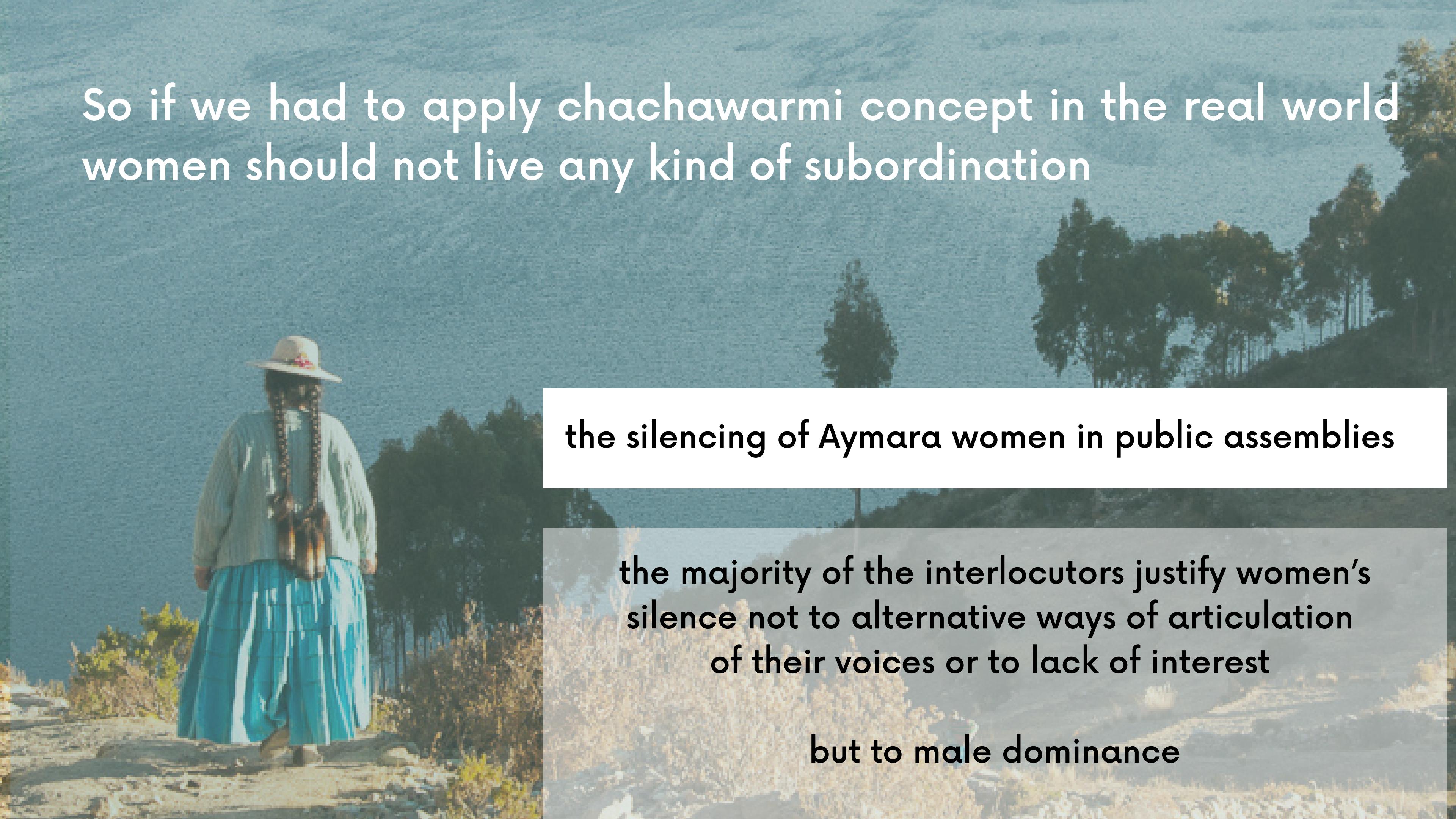
CHACHAWARMI

Andean cosmovision

chacha + warmi
man + woman

everything in the cosmo has a complementary partner - not just people, but also animals, plants, objects - together they constitute a unity

So if we had to apply chachawarmi concept in the real world
women should not live any kind of subordination

A photograph of a woman from the Aymara community. She is wearing a light-colored, wide-brimmed hat, a long, light greenish-blue poncho, and a bright blue, layered skirt. She is standing on a rocky, dry landscape with sparse vegetation and a large body of water and distant hills in the background. A white rectangular box is overlaid on the image, containing text.

the silencing of Aymara women in public assemblies

the majority of the interlocutors justify women's
silence not to alternative ways of articulation
of their voices or to lack of interest

but to male dominance

EXCLUSION psychological violence

devaluation of 'female
domestic duties'

the silencing of women in public speech is only
one aspect of female subordination in Bolivia

SEXUAL
VIOLENCE

physical violence
UNDERPAID LABOR

EXPLORATION

"none could be likely to argue that precolonial Andean society was a non-hierarchic heaven of absolute, symmetric gender complementarity"

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- this discrepancy has been connected to colonialism
- the idea of machistas has been inherited from the Spaniards

DECOLONIZATION

as a way to move beyond not only colonialism but also male dominance and the subordination of women

- beyond formal political independence and beyond the recognition of cultural difference
- re-valorization of what has been deemed subaltern and/or denied by colonial power



WHAT WOULD A PROJECT OF DECOLONIZATION MEAN FOR INDIGENOUS WOMEN?

FIVE DIFFERENT POSITIONS

CHACHAWARMI as a cosmic order and social reality existing today since pre-colonial times

COLONIALISM has not affected chachawarmi, it only relegated it in an indigenous practice

There's no need for a process of **DECOLONIZATION** of Aymara gender relations

CHACHAWARMI as a social and cosmological reality and a socio-political practice since pre-colonial times

COLONIALISM together with male dominance have eroded it somewhat in human society

DECOLONIZATION would result in a restoration of chachawarmi as a pre-colonial value

CHACHAWARMI as a social reality and a socio-political practice since pre-colonial times now found only at the household level or in remote places

COLONIALISM and male dominance have eroded chachawarmi considerably

DECOLONIZATION have to take seriously the matter of chachawarmi, to find a solution to the subordination of women.

There's no proof of CHACHAWARMI as a socio-political practice in the pre-colonial past. It's only an ideological notion which serves the indigenous 'patriarchy'.

COLONIALISM is part of the patriarchy and not the other way around.

DECOLONIZATION is seen as a risk because it could end up concealing patriarchy.

CHACHAWARMI cements genders asymmetric of power and stereotypes by implying the notion of complementarity between women and men.

Not only it has served patriarchal purposes but it also has profound heterosexual bias. Complementary relationship is not the same as emancipation.

COLONIALISM here loses all its explicatory value.

CRITICS TO WESTERN FEMINIST APPROACH

- Too narrow
- Not take into account issues related to colonialism and imperialism
- Not all the oppression are equal



Southern and Eastern culture see feminism as a mark of western colonization.





PLAN DE GÉNERO

- designed by the author and his workmates (5 men, 5 women)
- reflects the perspective of Indian-Katarista movement
- counter narrative against the narrative of female emancipation articulated in the north
- chachawarmi is seen as a good alternative to liberal notion of gender equality

NEW NATIONAL GENDER EQUALITY PLAN

- Issued by Julieta Paredes à communitarian feminism movement (1990s')
- Does not endorse the concept of chachawarami that devices women and conceal discrimination
- Needs for decolonizing the concept of gender

CONTROVERSIES

Based on 3 assumption:

- Chachawarmi is a recent invention and not a traditional concept
- Women were subordinated even in pre-colonial society
- There is a breach between chachawarami as a discourse and its application as socio-political practice



CHACHAWARMI AS A FURTHER OBSTACLE ON THE PATH TOWARD EQUALITY

"The habits and customs [of the indigenous peoples] are part of the instruments of oppression. To convert habits and customs into law means giving power to the hierarchs of the community and converting the indigenous condition into a conservative and conservationist being which expels and punishes those who wish to change things. "

DECOLONIZATION AND EMANCIPATION

Pivotal point:

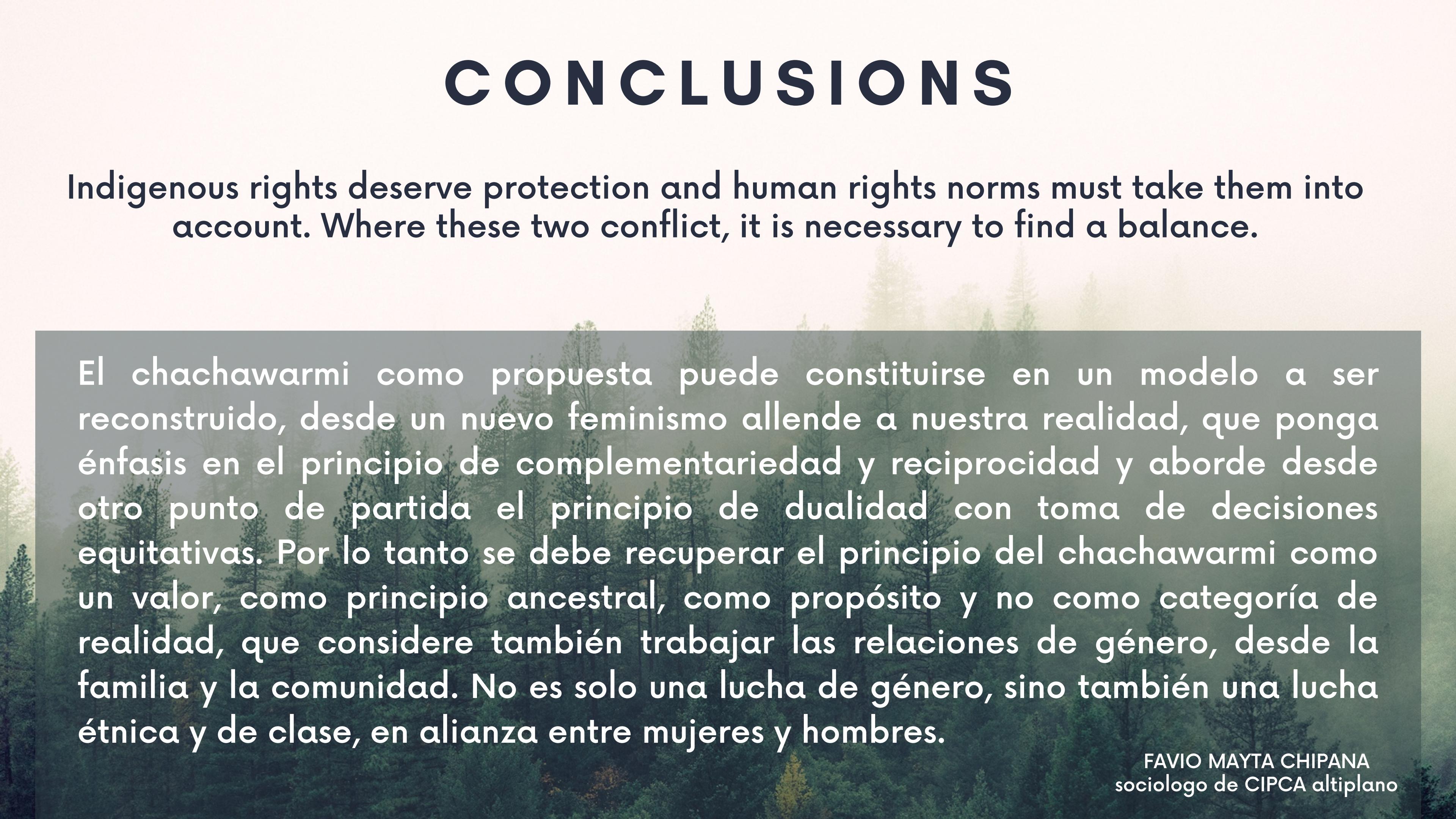
- Revalorization of what is subaltern or have been denied by colonial power
- The elimination of colonial domination at social, cultural and political level.

Concerns:

Negative outcomes: abandoning indigenous women in their “traditional silenced subordination”.

CONCLUSIONS

Indigenous rights deserve protection and human rights norms must take them into account. Where these two conflict, it is necessary to find a balance.



El chachawarmi como propuesta puede constituirse en un modelo a ser reconstruido, desde un nuevo feminismo allende a nuestra realidad, que ponga énfasis en el principio de complementariedad y reciprocidad y aborde desde otro punto de partida el principio de dualidad con toma de decisiones equitativas. Por lo tanto se debe recuperar el principio del chachawarmi como un valor, como principio ancestral, como propósito y no como categoría de realidad, que considere también trabajar las relaciones de género, desde la familia y la comunidad. No es solo una lucha de género, sino también una lucha étnica y de clase, en alianza entre mujeres y hombres.

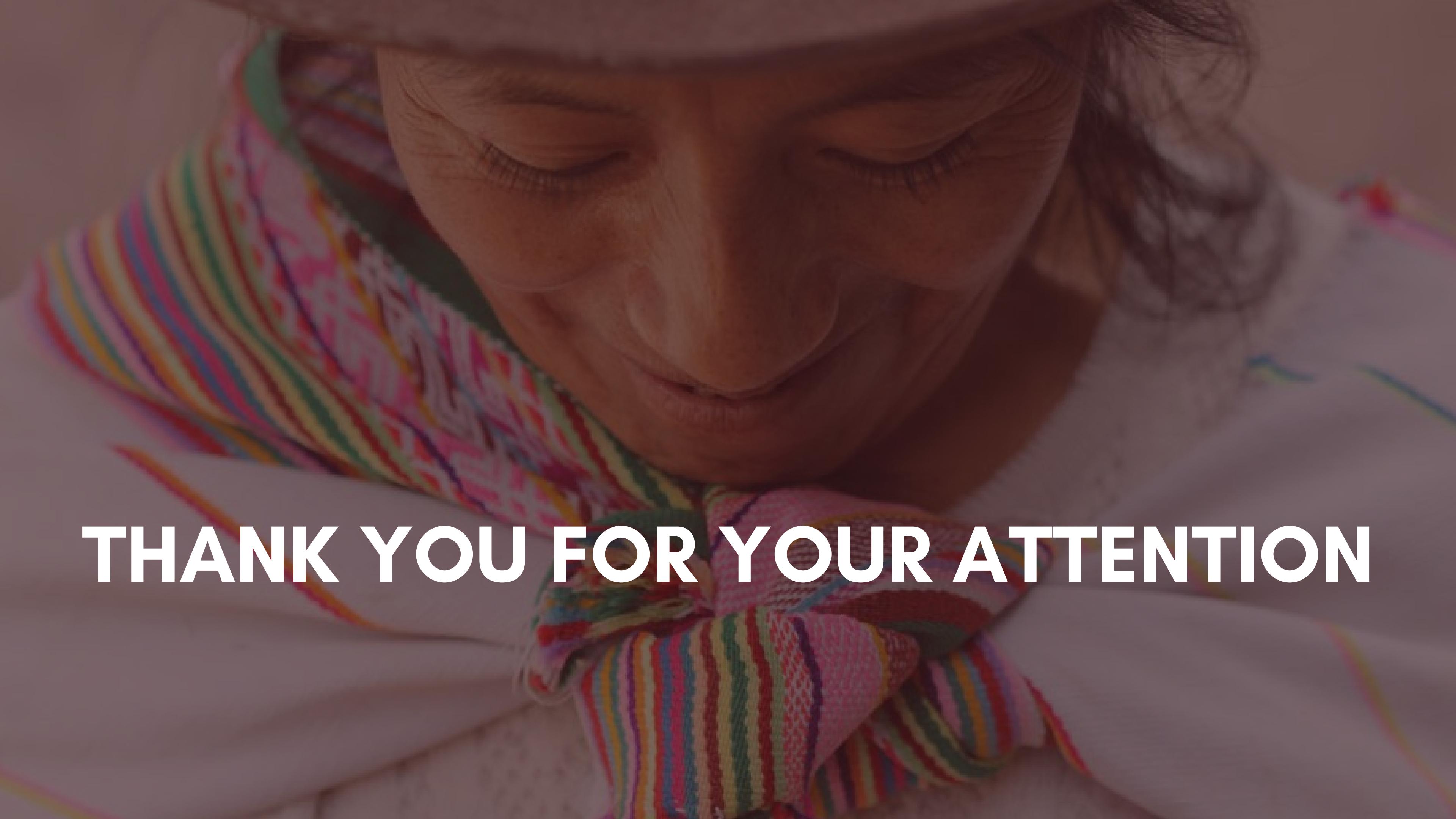
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SOME QUESTIONS TO START DISCUSSION

Do you think that colonialism had an impact on subordination of women? If yes, in which extent?

Do you think decolonization could be useful to reach emancipation, equality and to end the subordinate women condition?

Concerning the legitimacy given to some indigenous customs: to which extent is it fair to judge as right or wrong the different indigenous practices using Western standards?



THANK YOU FOR YOUR ATTENTION

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