CHAPTER 1

Ethnic Denomination and the Aymaran Language Family

The ethnonym “Aymara” may be ultimately derived from the name of some group occupying the southern part of what is now the Quechua speaking area of Apurimac (Adelaar with Muysken, 2004:259). Nonetheless, the usage of the word “Aymara” as a label for this people was standard practice as early as 1567, as evident from Garci Diez de San Miguel’s report of his inspection of the province of Chucuito (1567, 14; cited in Lafaye 1964). In this document, he uses the term aymaraes to refer to the people. The language was then called Colla. It is widely believed that Colla was the name of an Aymara nation at the time of conquest, and later was the southernmost region of the Inca empire Collasuyu. However, Cerrón-Palomino disputes this claim and asserts that Colla were in fact Pukina speakers, who were the rulers of the Tiwanaku kingdom in the first and third centuries (2008:246). This hypothesis suggests that the linguistically-diverse area ruled by the Pukina came to adopt Aymara languages in their southern region.

In any case, the use of “Aymara” to refer to the language may have first occurred in the writings of the lawyer, magistrate and tax collector in Potosi and Cuzco, Juan Polo de Ondegardo. This man, who later assisted Viceroy Toledo in creating a system under which the indigenous population would be ruled for the following two centuries, was very interested in Inca civilization and, in 1559, wrote a report entitled ‘On the lineage of the Yncas and how they extended their conquests’ in which he discusses land and taxation issues of the Aymara under the Inca empire.1

It took over another century for this usage of “Aymara” in reference to the language spoken by the Aymara people to become general use (Briggs, 1976:14). In the meantime the Aymara language was referred to as “the language of the Colla”. The best account of the history of Aymara is that of Cerrón-Palomino, who shows that the ethnonym Aymara, which came from the glottonym ayma-ra-y ‘place of communal

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1 For more on the understanding of litigation as a lens from which one may understand ethnography, see Mumford (2008). For a contemporary overview of the reports of de Odegardo, see Murra (1968).

Today Aymara is spoken by communities in a region within both Bolivia and Peru from the north of Lake Titicaca to south of Lake Poopó, extending westward to the valleys of the Pacific coast and eastward to the Yungas valleys. Before the European conquest, the Aymara community was significantly larger and numbered somewhere in the hundreds of thousands, or even millions (Rowe, 1947). Such figures can be considered an educated guess as the only information about the size of any Aymara-speaking population during the colonial period was made for the Lupaca in 1549. Briggs notes that the total number of heads of household in this year for this location was 18,032 (Diez de San Miguel 1964, 202–203). The 1567 Visita gave a total of 63,012 people (men, women, and children), of whom some 15,047 were Urus, a people whom Torero suggested spoke a language related to Chipaya alongside another local language (1972:60).

“Aymara” is the name broadly assigned to all varieties of the language. The adjective “Aymaran”—and not “Jaqi” as used by Hardman et al. (2001) or “Aru” as used by Torero (1972)—in the present work refers to the macrolanguage and subsumes Aymara and the Peruvian languages Jaqaru and Kawki spoken in Tupe and the Cachuy villages of Peru, respectively. According to the generally-accepted division first posited by Cerrón-Palomo, Aymara may be split into Central and Southern speakers. The Southern daughter is divisible into Northern (exemplified by Puno and La Paz varieties), Intermediate (Cala-coa and Sitajara), and Southern (Oruro and Potosí, Bolivia, as well as Northern Chile) varieties whereas Central Aymara is formed by Jaqaru and Kawki as the latter two languages are more closely related to each other than to Aymara. Jaqaru and Kawki are two generally mutually-intelligible languages characterized by their similar obstruent inventories, which are even richer than that of Aymara. All three languages distinguish between plain, aspirated, and ejective obstruents—the difference with Aymara lies in the fact that Jaqaru and Kawki have three additional non-sonorant consonant series (alveopalatal stops, alveolar and retroflex affricates). Moreover, these two languages have a palatal sibilant which Aymara lacks. According to glottochronological calculations provided by Torero (1972) and Hardman (2000), divergence between Jaqaru and Aymara likely happened around the year 480. Kawki and Aymara diverged later, likely around the year 840 (Briggs, 1976:10).

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