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Kitu-Andean thought: the ontological distinction between Inti and God and the triadic order emanating from the centre of the earth, a decolonial shift in intercultural indigenous higher education.

Short description / Abstract:

This study, conducted with participants from the Kitu-Andean cultures of the ‘Centre of the Earth’ region in Ecuador, analyses the foundations that characterise their way of thinking through a qualitative, ethnographic and etymological interpretation of the testimonies of Kitukara, Otavalo and Kayampi elders. The results show, firstly, a clear ontological distinction between the sun and God; Tayta Inti (Father Sun) is conceived as a superior being who forms part of the cosmic system and provides the energy, heat and fertility indispensable for the recreation of life on Earth, with whom playful ritual practices of connection, energisation and respect are established; whereas God, or Pachakamak, is recognised as a supreme, invisible and transcendent being who sustains the order of the universe; therefore, the sun is not a God of divine worship, as the colonial idolatrous interpretation suggests. Likewise, Kitu-Andean thought is expressed through a triadic order, distinct from the Cartesian binary logic of opposites. This understanding is manifested in the notion of ‘kay pacha, hawa pacha and uku pacha’; in the triad of seeds when sowing, as symbols of the continuity of life; in sacred geography, the generative unity of three mountains emerges: tayta, mama, wawa (child); amongst other manifestations. Consequently, Kitu-Andean thought reveals an implicit pedagogy grounded in relationality, respect and interdependence between humans, nature and spirituality; one that revitalises indigenous epistemic frameworks in the face of colonial narratives and contributes to dignifying indigenous wisdom within contemporary educational contexts.