

## Kichwa Orality, Past and Present from the Educational, Anthropological and Cultural Perspective



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### Abstract

The object of the investigation, as a contribution to the educational axis, anthropological and sociocultural was to describe an ephemeral part of the orality of the Inca people and its importance in current education, whose language, Kichwa, remains as a heritage of the ancestral peoples of South America. It begins by presenting the lineage of Kichwa as a language of imperial rank, highlighting the communicative function of the character called Chasqui. Next, the current presence of Kichwa in the world is commented on, especially in Ecuador and its educational institutions. After that, Kichwa orality is highlighted through its myths, rites, and ancestral legends, as well as its mark on the Seventh Art. The Kichwa terms used in Latin America in the 21st century are addressed. The historical-logical analysis and the dialectical method were used as a methodology to investigate the dialectal variant of Kichwañol in Ecuador. Next, the influence of the “colonized” Kichwa indigenous language in the speaking of Cuenca, a beautiful colonial city in southern Ecuador, is discussed. The result was a reflection on the importance of the Kichwa language as a forger of Ecuadorian identity.

### Keywords

*anthropology;  
cultural perspective;  
education;  
kichwa orality;  
learning;*

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### Contents

Abstract.....	577
1 Introduction.....	578
2 Materials and Methods.....	578
3 Results and Discussions.....	578
4 Conclusion.....	584

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Acknowledgments.....	584
References .....	585
Biography of Authors .....	587

## 1 Introduction

To clarify the term with which this ancestral Kichwa language is defined, it is important to say that the first conquerors, among them the evangelizing "chronicler" missionaries, called "Quichua" the language spoken in present-day Ecuador and southern Colombia and "Quechua" to that of Peru. The RAE's Pan-Hispanic Dictionary of Doubts (2005) refers to the word "Quechua", leaving the variant "Quichua" for Ecuador and northeastern Argentina. However, the Salesian philologist and missionary priest, Fr. Ángel Lobato refers to the term in this way in his literary work: *Apuntes de gramática QQuichua*, (2014).

Here the popular term Kichwa, which, although it does not appear in the Dictionary of the Royal Academy of Language, is the term used by indigenous communities in Ecuador, which represents a language that includes all current and ancestral Kichwa variants. of the Tahuantinsuyo or ancient Inca empire. In this regard, as a backup, [Montaluisa \(2019\)](#), refers: When the text is written in Spanish, it is written Quichua, and when the text is written in the language itself, it is written Kichwa, following the standardized writing for it. On the other hand, to refer to the set of speeches present in Ecuador, the term Quichua or Kichwa is used as indicated; while to refer to the entire linguistic family that encompasses all the speeches present in the different countries, the term Quechua is used ([Cattaneo, 2007](#); [Symons, 1989](#)).

## 2 Materials and Methods

The method of bibliographic compilation and logical history were used to retrieve scientific information on Kichwa orality.

## 3 Results and Discussions

*Kichwa orality is addressed in its different sections  
An ancient language with an imperial rank*

The origin of humanity dates back (evolution of the genus Homo in Africa) from 2.5 million years, of which the human being left traces of his language approximately five thousand years ago, (writing in Mesopotamia, Sumeria) according to [Harari \(2021\)](#). In this evolution, it has been confirmed that the presence of man in America dates back to 20,000 years when he dared to cross the Bering Strait. Then, fleeing from the cold and seeking to provide themselves with a greater animal reserve to survive, the "Amerindian" represented by hunting and gathering tribes, headed south 12 thousand years ago, becoming present in Andean America. ([Harari, 2021](#)).

In 1985, Bravo wrote that among all the Andean civilizations, the largest pre-Columbian empire that dominated the Andean Mountain range, already more than 6,000 years ago, was the Inca Empire, which was consolidated into the "Four Regions of the Sun" or four states called Tahuantinsuyo. Its territory had an approximate area of 1,700,000 km<sup>2</sup> and extended through Colombia, Ecuador, Peru, Bolivia, Argentina, and Chile, that is, the Pacific Coast and the Central Andes. It is said that it was the most of pre-Columbian America ([Bravo, 1985](#))

It is necessary, in this section, to make a historical exposition of the Kichwa language to the fact of how its past transcends the present, influencing all areas of the Andean man, with emphasis on education The Inca language that linguistically and ideologically united this colossal empire was the Kichwa language, the most widely spoken Amerindian language in all of America, one of the key characters in the traditional Inca oral tradition, and a kind of medi or of communication between the four of them (cardinal regions) that formed the empire (Tahuantinsuyo) was the Chasqui or "indigenous corridor" (figure 1) that carried the information or

message from or to the emperor through the Inca Road (Capac ñan). The term chasqui comes from the Quechua chaskiq or chaskij, which means "the one who receives and gives" (Guzmán, 2018).

Thanks to the messenger Chasqui, the emperor kept himself informed of everything that was happening in the empire. The Chasqui announced his arrival by blowing a large snail (pututu). His agile feet were protected with sandals (eye sandals); his body was covered with a kind of mantle (qëpi) that is placed on his back to carry his provisions. Some threads hung from his waist that represented through knots the "textual" information (quihpu) which was going to be delivered to its recipient as the governor (apunchic) of the visited region (Chiesura & De Groot, 2003; Robertson et al., 2009).

It is said that these young athlete officials could run long distances and arrive the same day from sunrise in the Andean Sierra to sunset on the Pacific Coast, through posts where they made relays to reach the indicated destination before the sunset (Korthagen et al., 2006; Wu et al., 2013). sun. It is impossible not to make the analogy of the Chasqui with Mercury or Hermes, the messenger god of the gods who interpreted their messages and transmitted them through language to mortals (De la Vega, 2020). Figure 1 shows the Inca's Hatun chasqui (main postillion), playing the pututu and carrying the quipu, the work of Felipe Guamán Poma (Poma de Ayala. Volume I. 1980, p. 339).



Figure 1. Hatun chasqui (postillion principal) of the Inca, playing the pututu and carrying the quipu

At present, this ancestral language continues to be spoken in countries such as Peru, Bolivia, northern Chile, northern Argentina, Colombia, and Ecuador. In addition, its use has spread in the United States and Spain thanks to a large number of migrants. It is considered one of the most important languages in South America due to its use by more than 7 million inhabitants (Ciudad & Howard, 2021). In this sense, this language is spoken in 13 provinces of Ecuador (quote) and, like all languages, it has variants, which depend on the place where it is spoken. Our Kichwa is a variant of Quechua that is only spoken in our territory (Cobo, 2015).

This ancestral language subsists as the "Kichwa" mother tongue in some Andean communities and, "against all odds, it has survived until today, it is recent and thriving" (Ortiz, 2001). Much of this oral legacy is attributed to the Yuyakkuna (Sages) Taytakuna and Mamakuna (Elders) who, through tales, myths, and ancestral rites, have transmitted through generations this intangible heritage of the Inca culture. thus, rooting values such as identity, family, and sense of community (Chiliqinga, 2018). Chiliqinga (2018) tells us about the most popular ancestral oral traditions that have survived to this day, including:

- The story: a short narrative of imaginary or real events, starring a small group of characters and with a simple plot.
- Myth: story with wonderful imaginary events, starring supernatural beings.
- Rite: religious act or ceremony invariably repeated.
- Legend: oral or written narrative, with a greater or lesser proportion of imaginative elements and that generally want to pass themselves off as real (p. 21).

This Ecuadorian indigenous writer and researcher also tell us about some stories from ancient times (urdimal timpu, in Kichwa) that have reached our days. One of those stories transmitted from generation to generation through orality, thanks to the Yuyakkuna (Sages) Taytakuna and Mamakuna (Elders) of the province of Tungurahua, Ecuador, is called: The Story of the Chuzhak the Fortune Teller Bird.

Our ancestors state that it is a bird that has a large, wide beak and only sings at night. When the Chuzhik bird sings, it announces that there will be death in the town; To try to avoid what was announced, the indigenous people, when hearing the song of this bird, must hit and hit its heart saying "Rumi Shungu" "Rumi Shungu" several times, (because they say that this bird takes or steals the heart, that is to say, that carries the force of life). When it cries very thin or the song is very sharp, it is an announcement that a young person is about to die or is missing a few weeks, and if the song is thick, the person unfortunately dies. Until today, the song or cry of this bird is heard, but it has never appeared in front of the public. Our elders in remote times when Pacha mama was pure, said they had seen it ([Chiquilinga, 2018](#)).

In 2018, another Chiquilina story is written and is called Inkakuna pampariska, which means "the Incas bury themselves." The Inca rebellion against the conquest is narrated that, faced with the imposition of Christian baptism, they preferred to bury themselves together with their belongings ([Seufert, 2003](#); [Pedaste et al., 2015](#)). As an element of fable, terror, and fantasy is the story Ukuchapak wawakuna, or the children of the mouse, in which the murder of a father, a mouse, by his children, human beings who were unaware of the affiliation with the rodent, is narrated. The mother, feeling guilty, locked her children in a room, who, transformed into curiaguines, cried with grief, and then died. The writer and researcher Moya, Ruth, in an interview conducted by [Rodríguez \(2016\)](#), points out her beginnings in the oral tradition of the Kichwa language, collecting oral traditions with her students and the community about the Kichwa oral tradition, this researcher of the Kichwa narrative expresses:

The world of orality is the repository of historical memory; the memory of identity is in the word. The great thing about the oral tradition is that it not only reveals to us the wonderful world of myth, tales, fable, song, and poetry, but also makes explicit the moral world, the desirable behaviors, and the values that go beyond everyday or the immediate, such as, for example, how to preserve the natural environment and life ([Rodríguez, 2016](#)).

In the oral tradition comments Who? which are reported facts of characters that are related to the conceptions of time-space of this culture. Among these ancestral narratives is the tale of the chificha magician, a cruel stepmother who hides her terrifying face. In the end, his stepchildren take his life, discover his precious treasure and live "happily" with his father in absolute "normality". There is also the story of the Devil Uma, with a frightening and chilling aspect ([Lin et al., 2003](#); [Laal & Ghodsi, 2012](#)). There is also the story called Chuzalungo, a sexual predator that ends the lives of young Kichwas. Also, there are the stories with symbolic syncretism between two cultures, indigenous and European, hence the story of Juan el Oso, or the Son of Juan el Oso, a story in which "a human woman is kidnapped by a bear and this couple procreates a son, whose incredible strength gives rise to a series of events in which the son is characterized by his extraordinary strength, which is used to kill people in the community environment. However, Juan el Oso also goes to church or wants to learn to read at school" (Rodríguez, M.).

Moya, refers [Rodríguez \(2016\)](#) has also ventured into the oneiric through the world of dreams of the Kichwa culture, but the dream is conceived with predictive value. Another topic addressed by Moya is the collection of riddles in the Kichwa culture. Finally, the riddle and the fable are also addressed as literary genres to teach something new or to affirm a behavior or appreciate a moral value.

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*Kichwa Orality in the Seventh Art*

In the film, *Sangre de C6ndor* (in Kichwa: *Yawar Mallku*) we constantly hear Kichwa orality in the voices of the Bolivian indigenous community. *Sangre de c6ndor* ("Yawar Mallku") is a Bolivian film shot in Quechua in 1969, made by the Ukamau group, directed by Jorge Sanjines. A profound denunciation of North American imperialism (Galeano, 2016). The central theme is based on the life of an indigenous community in Bolivia, receiving medical attention from the fictional US agency "Corpora del Progreso" (an analogy to Peace Corps), which is clandestinely sterilizing local women, causing death and sadness in the Bolivian people. Through this film, an investigation into the deaths of Bolivian women in Lake Titicaca began and when the crimes were confirmed, the "peace corps" was expelled from Bolivia.

It is evident in this film (projected in black and white) that, despite the influence of the foreign language, this community, as well as many peoples of the Latin American Andes, maintained and maintain the use of the Kichwa language, especially within the family, indigenous and community (Kupina et al., 2022). Among the possible causes of this attachment to this language that refuses to die, we can support the following:

The roots of language must be sought in the affective relationship, without this support throughout life, language does not develop to its full potential, or it atrophies (Bernier, 2009). It is estimated that since the human presence on the planet some 30,000 languages have disappeared. Today we know of the existence of 7,000 languages in the world, of which some 3,000 are in danger of disappearing. To make matters worse, every year, at least 10 languages disappear, and some are already in danger of extinction, which is when a language is spoken by fewer than 100,000 people.

Some of the information in the Unesco Atlas (2009) is particularly worrying: of the 6,000 languages in the world, more than 200 have become extinct in the course of the last three generations, 538 are in a critical situation, 502 are seriously in danger, 632 in danger and 607 in a vulnerable situation. Therefore, it is said that every two weeks a language dies in the world, that is, every two weeks a way of thinking of a community of speakers dies.

In this sense, the overwhelming presence of other languages, such as Spanish, English, or another of European origin in Andean America, makes the Kichwa language also degenerate into a process of disappearance. But why is a language so important? Moseley (Unesco, 2005) refers in this regard that it is important since each language is a mental universe structured in a unique way, with exclusive associations, metaphors, ways of thinking, vocabulary, grammar, and phonetic system.

In this sense, it is considered that acquiring a language is also acquiring a cultural identity since with language one obtains per se, a way of seeing the environment and of surviving in it. "The process of acquiring a language is considered a process of ideologization" (Berniers, 2009). This ideologization of the language "on both sides of the coin" has resulted in the internationalization of the Kichwa language, even though in a lower percentage because it is an indigenous language.

*Kichwa terms used in Latin America in the 21st century*

It has been more than five centuries since Kichwa was declared the official language of the Inca empire, however, despite its almost total extermination with the Spanish conquest, this language remains alive in several Andean countries and peoples, as well as in some parts of the world. Kichwa has spread throughout the world, expanding the identity of the imperial language of the southern mountain range, which, through Kichwa, has permeated countless languages, creating innumerable dialects and adaptations for each linguistic community. Below are some words of Kichwa origin that have already escaped the Andean borders, contributing to the enrichment of the universal language as the main means of communication between human beings:

Cancha: This word, which comes from the Quechua *kancha*, is used practically throughout Spanish-speaking America to designate the place where a match is held, preferably soccer.

Poncho: original from the Quechua word *Punchu*. Garment is used to protecting from the cold.

Cura: from Quechua *Kuraka* or *kuraq* who was the head of a community.

Gaicho: from the quecha *wakcha*, equivalent to orphan, used as Peruvian *hacho*, which means lonely.

Chacra: Farm or country house, comes from the Quechua *chakra* or *chajra*, which means a small partition of arable land.

Chullo: That fashionable garment that some artists use to give themselves an exotic touch is of Peruvian origin, and of course its name is Quechua. It derives from the word *ch'ullu* which is used to call a hat with earflaps knitted in wool, traditionally made of alpaca.

Tent: large awning. *Karpa* is the Quechua voice that gives rise to this word.

The Kichwa is present in the life of the Andean or Serrano (from the Andean highlands or mountain range), although it goes unnoticed. Sometimes we do not realize that this ancestral language is part of the Andean identity and everyday life, present in our day today.

There are various plants cultivated in the Inca empire whose names are currently used in Latin America and other parts of the world. Among these plants, we can mention corn, potato, beans, quinoa, cassava, sweet potato, peanut, pineapple, custard apple, soursop, sapote, pumpkin, pepper, papaya, etc. These words originating from the ancestral Kichwa have permeated the Spanish language and new dialects have been created. One of them is called *Kichwañol*. "Quechua or runasimi, in the middle of a Castilian dialogue, so common that they are used almost indiscriminately, this phenomenon is known by the name of *Kichwañol*" (Sequeiros, 2015).

#### *Kichwañol in Ecuador*

As a result of linguistic diversity, we can mention the process of metamorphosis of Kichwa with Spanish, which gives rise to *Kichwañol*, which, although not shown in the film (up supra), takes place daily in the Andes, especially in Bolivia and Ecuador.

It is in Ecuador where a beautiful Andean city is located, full of many contrasts, located in the South of Ecuador called Cuenca, Santa Ana de Los Ríos, province of Azuay. This city is called "The Athens of Ecuador" for its cultural diversity, decorated with a colonial ornament on its facades, innumerable churches, and imposing sculptures. Its streets are named after great Andean indigenous heroes, as well as distinguished Spanish conquerors. Its main street is called "Simón Bolívar", a liberator and leader of the South American war of independence that snatched from Spain all its overseas colonies called at that time "Las Américas".

In Cuenca, Ecuador, the Kichwa language is spoken daily among Ecuadorian indigenous people who work in the markets (free fair, October 9, August 10 Market, among others), in communities, and among family members, as well as Spanish and its hybrid or *kichwañol*. Spanish is spoken mainly among the inhabitants of the city whereas *kichwañol* is also spoken. Thus, it is common to hear linguistic expressions such as: *Guagua* or *huahua* (breast child), *guambra*, *huambra* (child, boy) *achachay* (exclamation that expresses a feeling of cold), *llapingacho* (potato omelette), *gara* (pretty), *ñaña* (sister), *achachay* (cold), *ayllu* (family), there *puncha/imanalla* (good morning), *inti* (sun), among others.

Some words have taken root in such a way that they sneak into our daily activities without us stopping to think about their origins: *ñaño* (brother), *guagua* (children), *mashi* (friend), *runa* (human), *papa* (potato), *pupu* (navel), *chapa* (safety) are just a few examples. (N/a. 307 words in Quechua / Kichwa (and their meaning in Spanish), 2017).

It can be clearly said that the Kichwa language is also present in the names of some streets and avenues (*Huayna Capac*, *Sangurima*), in its rivers (*Tomebamba*) as well as bilingualism (Spanish-Kichwa) in the names that identify the offices of state institutions. Quichua is also heard among the names of some people such as: *Raymy* (party), *Wari* (indomitable), *Tupac* (The Lord), *Rumi* (Stone), etc. In the same constitution of Ecuador (2008) you can read *El Sumak Kawsay* (expression of Kichwa origin) which is understood as a Good Living policy.

The Azuayan inhabitant makes frequent use of *Kichwañol* in his daily speech, in this sense, [Encalada \(2018\)](#) points out that the North American traveler Albert Frankin in 1945, recalls in his passage through Cuenca: "The language of the cholos, apart from having the percentage of quichuismos that can be expected, frequently uses only the three quichua vowels a,i,u. It is a peculiarity of the cholos throughout the old Quichua-speaking territory" (p. 286).

[Encalada \(2018\)](#) in his dictionary "La lengua Morlaca" points out about pronunciation: "In Cuenca speech there are sounds from the Quichua or perhaps Cañari area, as is the case of the S voz, which does not exist in

Spanish (...)" (p.286). In this same order of ideas, let's see some expressions of Kwicha origin in the province of Azuay (Encalada, 2018):

Acicura: Hybrid term of the Spanish thus and the qhichua rucu, a way of making augmentatives or superlatives. It means that big. The one with the hip is sharp. (Andrade, 1947)

Buchir: carrying a small child on his back. This voice comes from the Quichua puchina, which means the same. Help me buchir the huahua.

Callimanta. Quichua word that designates the way to do an action, quickly and completely. After mass, the appetizing offerings were collected callimanta by the sacristan. (Astudillo Ortega, 1973)

Changa. the leg. Quicha word generally used in a ponderative tone. The one that the changa shows, raising her skirt (...) (Andrade, 1953).

Chinzhir. Eat breakfast. It is a word derived from the Quichua chinzhi, which means breakfast. As long as I sit down to chinzhir a mote. (Mata, 1932: 21)

Chuchaqui. The malaise that occurs the day after a drunken binge. In the center of Cuenca there is a coffee bar called the corner of the chuchaqui\*.

Arishca: In Quichua voice, it means "experienced". Before cooking, make it arishca.

Naupa times: The ancient times. Ñaupa is a Quichua voice that means precisely the old, the past, and the remote. Romeros and Donosos, who made a great time, like the Andrades, in their ñaupap times (Astudillo Ortega, 2002)

Ñuto: Small; small fragment. Cuentos ñutos (short stories) \*.

#### *Influence of the "colonized" Kichwa indigenous language in Cuencan*

Speech Indigenous words, Malaret (1959) points out, were gradually learned in the invading language, from the early days of the conquest, names of all kinds and categories, of shelters, home furniture, musical instruments, farming artifacts (...) words that passed into our language in lasting spellings adapted to the civilizing alphabet, but without losing the initial nuance of their autochthony.

In this sense, it is very common to hear "Indianized" Spanish speech in Cuenca, that is, with certain characteristics of a subordinate indigenous connotation, perhaps a product of the Spanish conquest in Ecuador (1492-1822), which affected the indigenous way of thinking and was reflected in their language (Kichwa).

It is also known that in the Kwicha language "the imperative does not exist" and it is said: give me what to ask someone for something, since it is not part of this culture to place oneself in the authoritarian position of giving orders (MINEDUC, 2013). It is also commented among Ecuadorian teachers that the "give me" is equivalent to a "please" in a certain sense. Based on this, we find in Andean Spanish speaking expressions with abundant use of the verb "give" with other verbs, for example:

- "Give me seeing the teacher's note." This compound sentence is a Cuencan way of using the verb "to see".
- "Give me two coffees, please"
- We also find other indigenous expressions such as:
- "Mande". Very popular expression equivalent to the question: tell me?
- "Don't be mean." The expression used to say, "please".

We also find expressions in Cuenca with a marked influence of the conquering Spanish language, such as:

Use of Vos: of connoted Spanish influence equivalent to you or you. However, this word is being replaced by its equivalent. In this sense, a citizen from Cuenca commented on social networks with the following text message: "the VOS should be promoted instead of you, I don't know if everyone now uses tutea when it was a characteristic of the Cuencans to treat the VOS. We must maintain our customs".

#### *The Kichwa in Ecuadorian Education*

In 1990, the indigenous movement and in particular the "Confederation of Indigenous Nationalities of Ecuador" (CONAIE) demanded that the Ecuadorian State takes into account their particular rights and

interests in the education of the indigenous children. In this way, The Constitution of Ecuador (2008) reinforced the rights of indigenous and Afro-Ecuadorian peoples through article 68 (chapter 4, eighth section) where it is stated that "the national education system will include teaching programs following the diversity of the country. It will incorporate administrative, financial, and pedagogical decentralization and deconcentration strategies into its management (Aguirre, 2019).

Pillazaca (2016), reports that unfortunately, the Kichwa language has lost importance as a mother tongue. In his research, he points out that this is since parents do not speak the Kichwa mother tongue in their homes, among other reasons. However, bilingual teachers do so through literature, inside and outside the classroom. Based on the above, it is known that Kichwa is spoken mostly among indigenous people and in less urban areas.

Quichua continues to be the native language of most of the indigenous population that lives in rural areas; however, in all the provinces of the study, there is both Quichua monolingualism and Castilian monolingualism, as well as some degree of bilingualism. Of the nine provinces, Chimborazo and Pichincha represent the extremes with tendencies towards monolingualism in Quichua and Spanish, respectively, while the rest of the provinces can be characterized as bilingual ethnic (Imbabura and the provinces of group II) or bilingual mestizo (especially Azuay) (Haboud, 1998).

In summary, even when this language of imperial origins is taught in schools, or as an optional subject in high school and some universities in the country, a strategic plan is necessary that manages to claim such an important language and prioritize its learning, as a legacy of the original peoples and as intangible and necessary heritage to maintain the Ecuadorian and therefore Andean identity. It is a commitment of all

## 4 Conclusion

Information from universal history on the great civilizations that have been built around a language that identifies and unites them was studied. It is also known that the prevailing and standard language that humanity speaks at some point in history is closely related to the hegemonic power of the civilization that speaks it.

Even though the Inca civilization ceased to be a dominant empire several centuries ago, the daily use of its language, Kichwa, among the Andean inhabitants, is a sign of its survival and desire to remain alive among the Andean inhabitants of South America. south and beyond. Kichwañol, Quichuismos or Kichwa expressions are a living example of the cry of the Kichwa language to remain linguistically alive. The Ecuadorian state, for its part, proclaims Spanish, Kichwa, and Shuar as official languages of intercultural relations. There is a presence of bilingual intercultural schools, as well as universities that contemplate the study of Kichwa, however, it is still necessary to rethink a more effective, more pro-indigenous educational policy that promotes interculturality as its main axis.

It is necessary to rethink and opt for a change of mentality that favors the identity of respect and dignity towards the ancestral Kichwa indigenous language. The roots of the identity of the Andean population and its original peoples, expressed in their Kichwa language, must not be allowed to vanish. If the Spanish conquest could not erase the imperial language, let it not be globalization, nor the indifference of the Andeans for this beautiful language, much less shame for speaking the language of the indigenous and being prejudged. A social change must be transmitted and catalyzed in favor of such great ancestral wisdom mimicked in the way of speaking Kichwa, thus legitimizing the knowledge of our original peoples

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