

**‘The Aimara Identity of Neopentecostals in Urban La Paz, Bolivia,  
with specific reference to the Power of God Church’**

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**ABSTRACT**

An established combination of religious identity between popular Catholicism and Aimara beliefs in La Paz, Bolivia is on the move after five centuries of dealings. A similar case is happening among Neopentecostals and Aimarans after four decades of interaction. This thesis presents a study about the vigorous contemporaneous intercultural exchange between the Aimara indigenous identity in urban La Paz and Neopentecostalism. In the Bolivian context the Aimara ethnicity, with its distinctive way of perceiving the world and living in it, wields a permanent weight inculcating a sense of personal and collective identity and continuity.

This study explains, analyses, and evaluates the forces that shape the identity of the Bolivian Neopentecostals, with particular regard to ‘Power of God’, an Aimara church in the most indigenous Latin American country, Bolivia. The examination of religious cultural identity is the outcome of open observations of indigenous culture such as multidimensional logic, beliefs, language, values, customs, and institutions; description and enquiry of Neopentecostal Aimarans both from a historical perspective and as part of socio-religious phenomenology. Field research is the main approach adopted for the study, applying participant analytical observation, focus groups and in-depth interviews that allowed members of the church to relate people’s ongoing Neopentecostal faith to their established indigenous identity. Literature research prioritizes Aimara, Bolivian and Latin American resident authors.

Neopentecostal experience has a profound affect on the life of PoG affiliates while mirroring deep-rooted features of Aimara cultural tradition. Innovative interaction of these two convenes a new identity. Their new identity is still predominantly Aimara. Indigenous worldview exerts a permanent influence on them but Neopentecostal Christianity has significantly influenced identity and worldview in urban Aimara places. They have incorporated both radical change and continuity into their indigenous lifestyle and identity because they are not moved by the conflict of bipolarity but by their three-dimensional logic, that is, their way of perceiving reality and determining how they relate with the supernatural both of Aimara and Neopentecostal beliefs.