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Regrounding ethnography: Andean rituality and ecology as part of a moral economy

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ABSTRACT

This essay examines Andean ritual practices in the early colonial period, when regional ethical obligations, and customary law, as part of a wider moral economy, was at odds with the legal norms of Spanish domination. By relocating the behavioral practices of a specific bioregion, including the ontological relations between beings there, within an indigenous Andean legal order, the essay explores an anthropology concerned with the ethical dimensions of environmental relations.

Keywords: Andes, relational ontologies, *usos y costumbres*, moral economy, saints as non-human beings.

Este ensayo examina las prácticas rituales andinas a principios del período colonial, cuando las obligaciones éticas regionales y el derecho consuetudinario, como parte de una economía moral más amplia, entraban en conflicto con las normas jurídicas de la dominación española. Al reubicar las prácticas conductuales de una biorregión específica, incluyendo las relaciones ontológicas entre los seres que la habitan, dentro de un orden jurídico indígena andino, el ensayo explora una antropología preocupada por las dimensiones éticas de las relaciones ambientales.

Palabras clave: Andes, ontologías relacionales, usos y costumbres, economía moral, santos como seres no humanos.

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This essay[1] examines how human actors engage through their everyday and ritual practices with other beings and elements in their territories, with reference to a regional system of ethical and moral values. I view these complex "entanglements," not as abstract ideas, but as actions guided by accumulated human experience that take place within a particular locality, its ecological setting and its historical unfolding. This accumulated experience, including the ideas that characterise local knowledge systems, articulates the dynamics of human behavior and ensures that local meanings are continually reinscribed into the local landscape (Escobar 1999).

Beyond the local landscape, I argue that this field of articulations interacts with a wider setting of ecosystems and bioregions and is enacted in an "ecoregime" of characteristic behavioral patterns (Escobar ibid.; Janusek 2020a and b). These involve local attitudes to mountains, water flows, and celestial phenomena, and include the interrelations between humans and other beings. I examine in particular how humans respond to shifting historical contexts through the ways they locate and reference their own cultural practices and behavioral patterns within the longer-term dynamics of an Andean "moral economy." The moral and ethical obligations embedded in this moral economy concern the regional economic, political and ritual customs that are enacted over time through the oral traditions of local knowledge systems, and which become cultural reference points for an active experiential engagement with the regional lifeworld.

I find that Tim Ingold's view of "humaning" (2015, 115-119) lacks this reference point of an ever-accumulating life experience that constitutes a moral impulse and bearing that direct these unfolding human interactions with the world, with their attitudes of growth and nurturing. For me, these impulses that evolve, and are transmitted and enriched between generations in a particular ecological setting, unfold in the group dynamics that develop the normative reasoning to continue these attitudes into the future. In addition, the human ability to recognise the reciprocal sense of relationality, collaboration and compassion between ourselves and other beings, is driven by these moral impulses. In Aymara language, the common expression *jaqjam sarnaqam* is an instruction to live in this way "like a human being."

I approach this study through the changing socio-political conditions of the early colonial period. This allows me to counterpose how the customs of a regional Andean moral economy, and the ecoregime associated with this at different junctures, were continually thwarted by its Spanish counterparts, when local human-environment interrelations came into tension with those imposed by the Spanish. I follow the local efforts to challenge these impositions with

[1] I thank the two attentive reviewers of this essay for their thoughtful comments.

reference to their own customary set of moral values, embodied in their moral economy and its changing dynamics. Elsewhere, I have examined how later periods saw the continuing diminution of these moral values with the onset of new priorities, especially the new educational norms established outside the immediate locality (Arnold 2022, 59; 2023, 334).

Anthropology as a discipline still contributes little to the debates about the Anthropocene, when it could explore instead the moral compass of indigenous lifeways, without reducing these to mere ecological functions. Studies derived from the ontological turn, especially in Andean contexts (Cavalcanti 2007; De la Cadena 2015; Rozo ed. 2019), have overcome some of these limitations by paying attention in these lifeways to human and other-than-human interactions and interrelations. However, there is still the tendency to overlook the moral order that defines the ways of living out these relationships. Recent studies into the association between Andean ritual practices, lifeways and the environment (Pachaguaya 2008, Lema 2014; Bugallo 2015; Bold 2020; De Munter and Salvucci 2024) enrich these insights, but make only passing references to the moral criteria in play. So there is currently little debate on the ways of inhabiting the world, where ritual efficacy is related to custom and place. Also, an increasing tendency to resort to abstract concepts seems to take us further from understanding the moral authority of accumulated human experience, and how this is passed from one generation to another. So, my aim in this essay is to show how an Andean perspective on "custom" and "customary law" within a moral economy unfolds as intertwined discursive, performative and material phenomena, including those directed at the ontological relations between beings, within a particular historical setting.

First, I refer to the work of a colonial jurist of the region, whose legal training led him to carry out extensive studies of Andean traditional law of those times (as *usos y costumbres*), within the colonial administrative enterprise. Secondly, I reread the work of historians who identified as "custom" the ethical norms and economic practices of a local moral economy. Finally, in a case study, I trace the confrontation between a local Andean moral economy and Spanish colonial impositions and refer to the use of regional languages in these contexts. My hope is that a reworking of these studies and their perspectives could contribute to an anthropology more concerned with environmental challenges, in tandem with new theoretical incursions.

The colonial study of *usos y costumbres*

So how did Andeans themselves perceive the nexus between ecological thought and cultural practices, in the early colonial period? An understanding of early examples of this perception can be gleaned from the writings of colonial

chroniclers in their work on Andean custom, although their interests were skewed towards the administrative changes they sought to impose on Andean populations during this period.

A prime example is the work of the colonial jurist Polo de Ondegardo. Polo studied Inka laws and customs within the wider body of Andean *usos y costumbres*, with a view to facilitate the system of colonial administration (Lamana 2012, 2023). He held that the continued use of Andean legal categories would guarantee "good governance and ordering" (*buen gobierno y policía*), whereas their obliteration would create problems for the colonial administration. He sought to recognise the rights to land held by Andean communities, and expected them to govern their own behavior through their system of community norms. Polo carried out his research in a context where the Spanish terminology for such efforts had already been agreed. "*Uso*" was what is "said and done" in favor of the wider community, "*costumbre*" was "unwritten law..." and "customary law" (*derecho consuetudinario*) elevated this to the status of law. "*Fuero*" defined the "jurisdiction" where uses and customs took place, and were already in force.

Within this Spanish terminology were embedded Andean notions of justice, redistribution and reciprocity, and collective moral values. Polo recognised how community insiders shared their duties and benefits in a limited form of "commons," governed by community level management. This differed from how most colonial Spanish administrators limited their concerns to aspects they sought to control: the rules for access to land and water, the labouring capacity of local populations, especially those regarding tribute, the naming and election of authorities, and the administration of justice (Suarez 1995-1996, 128-129, 144). The Spanish understanding of these norms was integrated into *Derecho Indiano*, an attempt to articulate Spanish and Andean legal customs to do with territorial rights (Suarez ibid., 127). However, in practice, *Derecho indiano* came to stipulate the norms for building new reduced communities, integrating these with Catholic places of worship, and managing the land. Already, then, this colonial legal framework applies a top-down approach to land management and community norms.

Some of these new measures derived from the prior Spanish experiences of *usos y costumbres* in different settings. Spanish administrators were especially keen that local populations could live from the land with the products it rendered, and appealed to a series of archaic terms to define these, deriving from traditional knowledge in these other settings. Colonial writers such as Guaman Poma de Ayala tend to adopt the Spanish terminology for these legal concepts, and even nowadays, the use of the Spanish "*costumbre*" (*kustumri*), and "*ley*" (*liyi*) is heard in rural settings.

I focus here on our fieldwork location in the *marka* and *ayllus* of Qaqachaka, in southern Oruro, Bolivia. In addition, I refer to the oral and written history of this region in the hands of the local historians of the place (the title bearers or *titul q'ipi*). This alternative source of Andean history shows how ayllus such as Qaqachaka challenged Spanish customary laws with their own, and with their own articulation between ethical thinking, obligations, and environmental concerns. The terms in present use in the region for this body of unwritten law are *thakhi* in Aymara or *ñan* in Quechua, meaning literally "pathway," and within this wider category the body of moral rules are encoded in *jach'a* and *jisk'a justicia*, "major and minor justice" (see also Fernández 2000). Other Andean terms define further aspects of this existing "pathway" of behavior, norms and customs. This terminology is generalised across the south-central Andean region, although some terms refer to a specific geopolitical territory, perceived through the lens of the animate and relational ontologies practiced there.

Towards an Andean moral economy

In the Western experience, ethical behavior came to be articulated with economic practice through the notion of a "moral economy." The term was originally introduced by the Irish Chartist James Bronterre O'Brien, in his 1837 critique of capitalism and nineteenth century political economists. However, the term is best known from its use by the British historian E. P. Thompson (1971,1993), and later on by the North American anthropologist James C. Scott (1976), in reference to peasant societies and their customary transactions, where a subsistence economy prevailed. Their argument is that peasant societies, working close to a subsistence level, developed a risk-averse behavior commensurate with a wider moral universe. For Thompson, a "moral economy" refers to a body of collective moral and economic rights (a "commonwealth"), together with moral assumptions regarding government and thought. While Thompson acknowledged the territorial basis of the moral economy of such societies, later social and solidary economy perspectives (for example in Daly and Townsend 1993, and Daly and Cobb 1994) developed the idea that ethics and the economy are but subsets of *ecology*, where both criteria can combine in a form of governance directed at environmental management. Despite its constructionist stance, the notion of a moral economy is useful for thinking ethnographically about the ethical obligations and moral norms of social actors in a defined community, and the motives for their behavior.

Until recently, Andean populations, such as those of Qaqachaka, learned and followed similar rules in the ecosystems that make up their local region. Although Andean legal terminology has been much influenced by long-term

confrontations with colonial impositions, the moral universe that drives the local moral economy draws on terms in the native languages of Aymara and Quechua. This Andean body of customs is comparable to "traditional law," "common law," and the "commons," as defined by colonizing legislators, as well as to the more general notion of a "moral economy." Andean economies in the recent past were driven by principles of reciprocity (*ayni*), collective labour (*mink'a* and *chhuqu*), community organization through the ayllu, and their rights to subsistence, all enacted in a spirit of feasting (Harris 2010). Local populations known as *comunarios* contributed labour without monetary compensation, and the reciprocal relations, called *ayni,* and activities of collective labour and decision-making, ensured that economic transactions were rooted in long-term social relationships.

Studies on Andean experiences of a moral economy (Sallnow 1989; Trawick 2001; Arnold 2023) illustrate how these gave rise to the longevity and multiple meanings of *comunario* values and practices, and account for the defense of these by regional populations. This can include rebellion in reaction to colonial or republican efforts to thwart these norms. Local historians and elder storytellers of places such as Qaqachaka, charged with continuing their oral traditions so that these ideas continue through time in the social memory of the *comunarios*, constantly refer to the distant past to confirm the historical precedence for these ideas.

As in the European norms of a moral economy, described by Thompson, a hierarchy of keepers or guardians is held to protect the land or territory of reference, the *lex loci*, with its core sites. In the case of Qaqachaka, the high guardian mountains (*uywiri*), together with their helpers (felines, birds, snakes), are regarded as the "Master-owners" (*tuyñu*) who watch over a marka and its ayllus (Arnold 2023). In other regions, these non-human beings often embody aspects of prior Andean states (Gose 2008; 2018, 489). The *comunarios* of Qaqachaka regard these guardian mountains as the "owners" of the wild animals, the herd animals, and the wild and cultivated plants and pastures, as well as the minerals and waters of the place. They address the mountains with terms of endearment (*q'ayata*), and acknowledge in the toponyms they use that particular mountains are "persons" (*jaqi*) that will "care mutually" (*uywasiña*) for them, in acts of environmental protection. In acts of mutual caring, the *comunarios* make regular sacrificial offerings to the earth and these mountains (Arnold 2016, 2022, 2023); in return, they themselves become endowed by the mountains with the rights to "borrow" these regional resources. So the mountain Master-owners are the real agents that ensure the continuity of life in the region, but only if they receive sufficient sacrificial offerings. Conversely, they will wreak vengeance on the humans living under their domain, in acts of predation,

by devouring those who have committed unethical acts. In this sense, the high mountains, as powerful *wak'a*, are the ultimate lawmakers and moral guardians, and the dispensers of vital energy to the ayllu in general (Ziołkowski 1996, 181). The rituals to these non-human beings are an important reference point in several Andean ethnographies (Martínez 1983; Allen 2002; Ricard Lanata 2007).

In Qaqachaka, many of the rituals that embody the regional moral economy promote a system of economic redistribution according to similar rules of reciprocity that reinforce social bonds and communal welfare. These include the large-scale sharing of food and drink at the feasts of the local saints, made possible by the feast sponsors whose moral duty obliges them to take on these ritual responsibilities of sacrificing their herd animals and sharing the meat, together with their agricultural produce. Other collective acts of reciprocity in ritual labour, at house building, harvesting or canal cleaning, where people contribute labour without monetary compensation, have become institutionalised over time.

Beyond these productive practices, other underlying social practices include communal relations to a particular territory, and the tributary obligations that guaranteed these ongoing ties. The collective recognition of powerful places in the landscape is an additional custom that ensures that human behavior towards these sites shows the proper respect. In relations between groups, a social means for promoting respect involved ways of relating to neighbors through the rituals of passing through their territories, whether in economic exchange ventures or pilgrimages, or the rites performed when people and troops of their herd animals go on long treks to the valleys in partnership with each other. By making regular ritual offerings to the earth and the guardian mountains, the *comunarios* acknowledged their dependence on the land, and how the farming and herding cycle of the year should be conducted in harmony with the environment rather than by exploiting it. This involved their labour in crop rotation and fallow periods, and the distribution of water throughout the territory.

An Andean deontics of behavior underlies the nexus between these interrelations and the cultural practices of reciprocity. However, other ethical ideas concern the failure to accomplish such rituals as a part of collective obligations, and how this can unleash the acts of predation on the part of the mountains and *wak'as*, within an ontology of devouring and becoming (Pazzarelli 2017; Lema 2020, 25; Arnold 2023). Hence the importance attributed to an underlying trophic or food cycle at the heart of the local cosmology. I do not think that these two patterns of behavior, reciprocity on the one hand and predation on the other, are necessarily inherent in the Andean notion of reciprocity (De Munter y Salvucci 2024). Rather, they provide evidence of a longstanding legal and binding pact concerning attitudes to property and

ownership inherent to the wider moral economy, and the correct ethical behavior needed to stabilize ecological systems and control resource management within determined territories, or the punishments for breaking these norms (Comberti et al. 2015, 254). This is why, even in Europe, the response to such unethical behavior was an "act of commination," an archaic term that refers to divine vengeance upon sinners. As an integral part of this legal pact, the Andean *comunarios* acknowledge a non-capitalist notion of property –or at least an unconventional form of ownership– by the mountain guardians, to which they respond by stewarding the domain under the mountain's control.

Lowland equivalents to these Andean ideas confirm how these human–environment interrelations and ritual practices concern not just local acts of reciprocity with other-than-humans, but a more structuring set of ideas about mastery and ownership over entire regional ecosystems. Carlos Fausto (2008) clarifies that mastery and ownership in these contexts does not imply the possession of private property, post Locke, but a series of categories whose reciprocal terms designate modes of relationship that apply to humans, as well as nonhumans and things, and this seems to occur in the Andean case too (Fausto ibid.; Costa and Fausto 2019, 202).

From a broader perspective, territorial limits are marked by the boundary stones (*mujuna*) that encircle an identifiable bioregion or eco-system, nourished by watersheds, which has been defined historically. These watersheds mark key divisions across the territory and provide key routes through it. The periodic circum-ambulation of these boundaries, and the numerical reckoning of production at family and communal levels, are key rites during the agropastoral year for remembering and defending these territorial limits, and the produce within them. While the major guardian mountain of a territory acts as its *uywiri* and *wak'a* principal, the lesser guardian mountains, in their role as "herders" (*awatiri*) of animals and humans, are distributed between the minor ayllus and hamlets. The category of "marka" seems to have defined historically the territory overseen by a major *wak'a* of this kind (Szemiński 1987; Chacama 2003).

Hence rethinking an Andean moral economy should acknowledge that a bioregion is a historically defined geophysical and religious setting, and a terrain of consciousness, as well as a site of human and non-human interactions, and of bodily interactions with the "affordances" of the place, in Gibson's terminology for the resources a place offers up to its inhabitants (1979). The present-day recognition that a particular territory renders its resources in this way is expressed as *mantinsyuna* or "maintenance", derived from the Spanish *manutención*, an early colonial term surprisingly close to this notion of "affordances." Their territorial layout of core and periphery is compared by the Qaqachakas to a textile unfolded, to recognise the similarities between weaving

as a bodily activity and managing the land as a similar corporeal experience (Arnold and Espejo 2009).

These various customs ensured the continuity of life in this territory, and in a series of territories linked historically. The obligations of respect (*jucha*) within the moral economy that compel the service of *comunarios* in the community, and act as the impulse of reciprocal actions, are founded in rites of sacrifice and revivification (Arnold 2022, 2024). This is probably why the term for a corpse, *aya,* forms the basis of the term for the reciprocal obligations enacted within a territory and between territories, as *ayni*, or the verb *ayniña*.

The rights of access of *comunarios* to the "affordances" offered up by the land, such as their herd animals, grant their use in sacrifices, feasting and offerings directed at the future regeneration of their flesh, and to share with others, including those from other territories. Hence the term *qurpa* in Aymara and Quechua refers to the meat of a sacrificed animal shared at a feast, as well as to the boundaries of a territory. *Qurpa* also refers to a system of just prices (Bugallo 2015, chap. 2; Arnold 2016, 119). So a territory constitutes an epistemological space of reference, enactment and social practice, and an ontological space of being, governed by moral concerns.

Human relations with the other denizens of Andean ecologies and bioregions

Geographers and ecologists have made great strides in defining the ecological make-up of the Earth's continents, and the term "bioregion" has become a reference point for viable areas to preserve on the planet, in the face of extensive ecological destruction elsewhere. However, many descriptions and categorizations of these bioregions (see the website of OneEarth.org), oriented to practical solutions of protection in the future, perceive such regions only in terms of the communities of animals and plants that live these, and overlook the role of humans in managing these regions with their resources, and the moral compass that guides them.

So a different approach to Andean lifeways, within the context of a regional moral economy, should necessarily include the unfolding of human life over time in, and between, these bioregions. It would take into account the custom of double residence lived by highland *comunarios* who travelled for some months of the year to the warmer temperate valleys to Chuquisaca to the east (Harris 1978). It would also consider the periodic sojourns that highland families made to the mining region around Potosí, for a couple of years at a time, or regional patterns of trade and barter visiting local mining and commercial centres at different ecological levels, some as far away as Tacna in Peru.

Rethinking Andean lifeways within these distinct ecosystems would appeal to an interactive conception of interconnected ecosystems and networks of biota,

according to a non-instrumentalist ethic, where the total is greater than the sum of its parts. Another challenge would be to assess and describe how an original biogeographical terrain became defined historically as a particular human habitat and political territory, a marka and its ayllus, say. Many ethnographies do indeed mention in passing how the course of mountain ranges, watersheds and river flows have been key elements in defining these human territories, together with the boundaries between these and similar biogeographical assemblages in neighbouring ayllus. But they tend to omit an understanding of how behavioral patterns became adapted over time to these complex interrelations.

Our task is further compounded by how to understand the historical development of politically-linked territories at different altitudes. In the south central Andes, this concerns the longstanding "vertical archipelagos" identified by Murra (2014), where traders from highland political centres made contact, often through warfare in the distant past, with lower ecozones, in order to facilitate the functioning of a vertical economy, so that highlanders had access to products from these other levels. Presumably, a common moral economy between these trading partners would have developed as these exchange relations expanded; the oral history of Qaqachaka suggests this was the case (Arnold 2021, 82-84). Another facet of Andean history is how drovers and their llama caravans connected territories through their trading routes, and how they managed the exchange relations between them.

Archaeological studies of the sites located in the liminal places between territories (*apachetas*, dividing rivers and watersheds, new vistas opening up, rock art that marks the separation of hunting grounds) shed light on the custom of making ritual gestures to the non-human beings that frequent these places, and their surroundings. For example, Carden (2008) examines rock art sites in Patagonia, whose locations and iconographic content (of resources such as birds and animals, the spore of these, as well as rituals and the mobility paths of access directed at obtaining these resources) seem to define specific hunting territories of Holocene hunter-gatherer populations. At the same time, these sites mark the social relationships among groups in a particular region.

Other archaeological studies highlight how ritual practices in liminal locations were directed at the non-human beings that watched over such places (cf. Allen, 2002). Nielsen et al. (2017) propose that such rituals in the southern Andes addressed these non-human agents, and made offerings to them, to solicit their protection, while acknowledging the lived human experience of exhaustion from climbing and the need for a rest or overnight stop. Material offerings in these contexts concede that a more extensive territory is at issue in such journeys, so they include lowland elements (tropical bird feathers), coastal ones (marine shells) and prized items from elsewhere (obsidian), as well as local produce in

animal and farming products. Similar practices continue today. For example, each Aymara ritual practitioner (*yatiri*) of the Taraco peninsula (south of Lake Titicaca) has a defined territory where they practice rituals, and obtain their herbs and other curing elements (communication in the Taraco project directed by Christine Hastorf).

Why then this seemingly universal pattern of human behavior reinforced by moral and ethical ideas, so tightly linked to a local territory? Firstly, the human practices directed at resource management in a particular territory often have long historical antecedents (Chittenden 1947). These are directed at preserving the physical infrastructure of the environment, while strengthening the social bonds and communal values of cooperation and mutual aid. Here the human behavioral patterns associated with a regional moral economy would embody a system of environmental customs focused on resource management over time. Secondly, the pattern of ritualised behavior that reinforces these efforts to manage regional resources focus on ongoing human dialogues with the non-human denizen-agents of these territories (animals, plants, the Master spirits of these animals and plants, water sources, rocky outcrops, the desired elements of production and rearing…) in a joint effort to achieve common ends (Chittenden ibid.). This is how I understand Ingold's reference (2016) to "correspondences" between humans and other such beings. Thirdly, resource management practices are rooted in traditional knowledge systems passed down through the generations. This includes understanding local hydrology, soil types, and crop rotation requirements, as well as the timing of agricultural and herding activities in harmony with natural cycles. By integrating this knowledge with their moral and ritual frameworks, Andean communities could effectively manage their resources in a sustainable and culturally meaningful way, which also reinforced social cohesion.

How Qaqachaka territory was defined historically, and reiterated in oral tradition and in ritual practices towards non-human beings

As a case study, I shall describe the oral history of Qaqachaka, combined with details taken from written colonial within the framework of the combined Andean and Spanish consuetudinary practices known as *Derecho Indiano*, during the early colonial period. These practices allude to *two* integral phases defined by the Spanish legal corpus and the customary practices of an Andean moral economy: the first concerns the territorial recognition of Qaqachaka by the colonial State, and the second concerns the recognition of Qaqachaka as a properly Christian community (Arnold 2018, 2021, 48).

The first territorial aspect of this history refers to some of the historical personages who figure there as ancestral beings, whereas the second phase is about how the local saints were gathered from different places and brought together in the colonial church, as evidence of Qaqachaka's transformation into a Christian community. I argue that the ritual practices towards both these ancestral figures and the saints, are key examples of ontological relations between humans and non-humans, tied to a specific territory, and directed towards its long-term survival, enacted with reference to a regional moral economy.

According to the local historians' accounts, the Qaqachakas themselves reinterpreted this colonial process of imposition as a part of their own project to have their territorial extension and religious practices recognised by the Spanish authorities. Their strategy was to outpace colonial legal structures, to pool resources and plan ahead for their own joint interests and expectations as long-term strategies. They consolidated this approach by drawing on their memories of having been part of the Inka empire, and on prior Inka customs reworked into their own moral economy. From this autochthonous perspective, the *comunarios* enacted the changes imposed by the Spanish, but retained their own interpretations for each new element as an aspect of their own identity.

The tributary obligations owed by the *comunarios* to the Spanish Crown, in exchange for their territorial recognition, were postponed until the sixteenth century, when they worked as *mitayos* in the colonial mining *mit'a*, in the mines of Potosí (from about 1578 to 1610). They say that the land of the absent *mitayos* was worked by the "part of the commune" or commons, who came to be known as the *comunarios* of a *comuna* or Andean community, the reference point for their own moral economy. This Spanish term originally described a medieval municipality under the authority of a mayor or *alcalde*. As in Europe, the Andean moral economy adopted a revolutionary stance towards this term *comuna*, and local historians frame the ensuing regional struggles over land and rights as moral obligations to resist economic exploitation. The revolutionary significance of *comuna* is related by them to the battles of the sixteenth century in Spain (1520), then later Paraguay (1537, then 1649) and Peru (1545), by the body of citizens against the elites and royal power, which culminated in the rebellions of Cusco and La Paz, in 1780 and 1781 respectively. Absorbed into the south-central Andes as *kumuna tayka* ("mother commons"), this term, like the "commons" in Europe, described the human collective of a place, whose food and waters would "attend" them. Hence the Andean use of this term replicates the same rebellious nature of collective effort combined with common rights. The Qaqachaka warrior *comunarios* still today measure their strength against the earth in agricultural

work, or against the mineral veins in mining, to confirm that economic justice is linked to environmental justice (Harris 2010, 224, 227; Arnold 2021, 70).

Other tributary obligation, from around 1560 onwards, responded to the second Spanish legal demand: that the Qaqachakas served in the colonial religious and political *mit'a*, as a properly Christian community. The local historians narrate how they achieved this through their transformation of the local landscape to accommodate the colonial stipulations. First, they conducted rituals to claim the territory as a whole by marking out the boundary stones at each limit with its neighbors. In other rituals they took possession of the land by rolling on the ground three times, first in the central plaza, then on the ground of the colonial church, built around 1612. This Spanish custom was adopted by the comunarios as it served their own purpose of legitimizing their claim to land, beyond the act of evangelization it represented for the Spanish (Arnold 2021, 203-4). Then they laid out the central plaza according to Andean custom, with miniature *illa* stones in the altars at the four quarters, with heads buried in these ritual sites. The two church towers to one side of the plaza replicated the lesser mountain guardians (*awatiri*) of the ayllu, under the charge of their new stewards, called *mayordomos*. The comunarios interpreted the church as an ancestral *chullpa* (a tomb of the pre-Christian inhabitants of the place).

In these accounts, the local populations figure as the main social actors who propel the ritual actions of possessing and founding the new *pueblo de indios*, and forging a new Solar Age to replace the previous Dark Age (*Ch'amak Timpu*). They stress how these *pueblos* were to be comprised with parcels of land called *ejidos* destined for communal work in a self-sufficient economy. The rights of maintenance of the population were to be through local resources: wood, stone, earth for constructions, vegetables for nutrition, the possibility of hunting, flat areas to sow, kindling for cooking, medicinal herbs, even hallucinogens (Arnold 2021, 167). The flora and fauna, together with the hydrography of the place, are evoked when the historians name the local toponyms to echo the comunarios' rights to their own "*manutención*".

This process of recognition included the payment, in around 1591, by a group of ancestors from the doctrinal capital of Condocondo, of which Qaqachaka was still an ecclesiastical annex, to the neighbouring ayllu of Pukuwata, and hence to the colonial State, of a pot of gold and silver, perceived locally as generative minerals. This was in order to purchase the ayllu lands in perpetuity, in a binding agreement known as an "Andean pact," or "pact of reciprocity," between the comunarios and the colonial State (Platt 1982, 40-41).

However, the local accounts of the 1646 "Composition of lands" in the region, under the Visiting Judge and Inspector José de la Vega Alvarado, give precedence to the key ancestors of the place and their deeds. The precursors of

this event begin in the final negotiations over the territorial boundaries between Qaqachaka and neighbouring Pukuwata, represented by the caciques of each ayllu, Lujana Choquecallati and Ayra Chinche respectively, who became friends (Arnold 2021, 71-75). However, Choquecallati died after falling from a horse and only his leg arrived in Qaqachaka's central plaza, in a reference to the shape of its territory as a wedge pushed between the existing ayllus of Pukuwata and Laymi. Finally, the gift of some Pukuwata lands by Ayra Chinche to Choquecallati's brother, together with cunning of his widow, Juana doña Ana, who slept with Ayra Chinche in order to steal even more land titles, completed the territorial extension of Qaqachaka (Ibid., 75-76). Choquecallati's brother, in turn, became the first of a line of regional caciques with the honorific title of Takimallku Astete (Ibid., 86, 205).

In accounts of the rites of circum-ambulation of the ayllu boundaries, under the vigilance of the land judge, the historians add mythical dimensions to the event. So as Takimallku and Juana doña Ana chewed coca leaves, so the surrounding mountains settled down upon the landscape as the sun arose (Ibid., 109). And as they went along naming the boundary stones, so they established the topographical markers along the mnemonic routes they trod, which would be remembered until today, in the libations at ceremonies that record this historical event.

Human relations with the ayllu saints to watch over their territory

The second stage in the colonial legal stipulations impelled the comunarios to accumulate several saints together in the new church, in a directive aimed at having sufficient saints to represent the six minor ayllus and celebrate a complete annual cycle of feasts to affirm their social obligations.

In accomplishing this norm, the comunarios did not view the local saints of Qaqachaka, seated inside the colonial church, as facets of a Catholic worldview, developed by ecclesial confraternities and the rules of feast sponsorship, or as another way for the Spanish to exact tributary payments. Their moral economy demanded continuities with the former period, in ancestral practices directed at their own sites, and their own ancestors and lineages, through rituals such as feeding and clothing the deceased. So they came to perceive these nominally Catholic saints as their own ancestral mummy bundles as they passed into other phases of being (Arnold 2021, 52). While the collective of saints are regarded as *wak'a*, they are also treated by the comunarios as *alma* or dead spirits, and as non-human "persons" (*jaqi*) in their own right. These practices of "making persons" (*jaqichasiña*) promote the close ontological relationship of kinship between the comunarios and each saint, whom they feed and dress, as the Inkas did to their

own ancestral mummy bundles, in regular rituals. Hence, the bestowing of personhood upon the saints embodies a sense of relationality that in turn ensures a level of environmental and human protection. For the local historians, this whole process of legitimation was achieved through communal labour, and the relationality established between their surrogate ancestor-saints and their surroundings brought fertility, health and prosperity to their territory. The songs to the saints sung at the feasts in their honour express this idea, with numerous references to the plants and animals that dwell there (Ibid., chapter 13).

Many of these local saints were fabricated regionally from a core of wood, maguey and cactus, covered by a food sack (*kustala*), then a layer of potato pulp and a coating of stucco, as if they were regional farming products (Arnold 2021, 220). They were formed in miniature, like the miniature *illa* stones used in rituals to solicit plenty. Here the crafting process was not only as a devotional act but a means of materializing virtues, in the model lives of the saints, another way of reinforcing communal moral values through shared ritual practice.

Each saint was then clothed in their own special attire, according to the practice of wrapping in textiles that characterised the relational ontology between the comunarios and these non-human beings. Among them, Tata Quri (Father Gold), who became the patron saint of Qaqachaka, exceptionally has a triple nature: the original was engraved on a white stone in a cave on Mount Phiri Phiri; another was a small metal cross wrapped in twelve layers of weavings, like a mummy bundle, brought out on feast days; and the third was a wooden cross with a Christ figure in the intersection. Tata Quri's appearance defines the founding of Qaqachaka as a *pueblo de indios*, while as a regional *wak'a* he embodies the whole marka. As the son of the two major mountains, Mount Turu and Mount Jujchu, he embodies Mount Phiri Phiri (Mount Toasted Barley Flour). In addition, his *danzantes*, who originated in the volcanic crater of Maragua near Sucre, have their own clothes and musical instruments, including a flute made of a condor wing-bone. As a *wak'a* celebrated at the feast of the Holy Cross in May, and a Master-Owner of the place, Tata Quri ensures the fructification of the harvest, the multiplication of the herds, the care of the animals, and that of his human flocks (Arnold 2007, 2021, 188). Hence, Tata Quri became a major steward of Qaqachaka, the rites and feasts in his honour reinforcing ethical economic interactions with the surrounding territory, or when these fail, battles with the neighbours.

Although the layout of Qaqachaka as a *pueblo de indios* was supposed to replicate the Spanish town in an Andean setting, oral history recounts how the comunarios brought each saint from their place of origin to the main colonial church, along a series of resting places (*samaña*). Their own configuration replicates the much older foundations of Inka Cusco, the narrative tropes in play

echoing the Inka way of defining this series of pathways (as "*ceques*") in the landscape, along which the Inka *wak'a* were brought by the kin groups that cared for them, to recreate the rays of the sun around Cusco, like the spokes of a wheel (Arnold ibid., 298-9). So their own accounts reiterate the overall topography, the place-names along which the saints journeyed, and the gradual process of bringing solar light to Qaqachaka's central church in the main plaza.

In these narratives, the pathways of the saints serve as "autoglottic" or externalised elements that are recited in the libations of ritual contexts, where certain features of the landscape become supports for history and memory. During these journeys, each saint became a social agent in his or her own right, as they were accompanied by the comunarios of the time along their independent pathways. Their chosen routes accentuate key features of the ayllu territory, mainly the mountains, rocks and watercourses. In this process, Tata Quri becomes defined as an autochthonous and "legitimate" deity from within the ayllu boundaries, to watch over the land.

The lives of the saints as environmental narratives

Then Tata Quri needed a family. So the Qaqachakas took his wife, Mama Candelaria, and his two daughters, Mama Kapitana and Mama Ch'uri, from communities outside the ayllu boundaries, according to the rules of exogamy.

Local storytellers relate how members of the Maraza family took Mama Candelaria from a chapel at Choquecarita, near a silver mine. Like the other regional saints acknowledged as "maiden or virgin deities" (*wirjina*), she was originally housed on the boundary between neighbouring Macha and Condocondo, often frequented by those from K'ultha, another former annex of Condocondo. Then they brought her along her pathway until she reached Pampa Kurusa, in Qaqachaka, where she encountered Tata Quri for the first time (Arnold 2021, 218-9). Then they both proceeded to the church. Mama Candelaria's feast at Candlemas in February marks the first sprouting of the crops sown. She is the deity of Livichuco, one of Qaqachaka's minor ayllus.

The tales of the origin of the two maiden gods, Mama Kapitana and Mama Ch'uri, that now belong to Kinsa Cruz minor ayllu, evoke a much wider ritual landscape, and underscore the ancestral origins of these ayllu saints, and above all their relationship with water (Arnold ibid., 222-28). Telling these tales, in a place where water is scarce, reinforces the awareness by the comunarios of water and rainfall in the bioregion as a whole, and promotes an awareness of climate patterns as an integral part of their religious worldview and resource management. Like her mother, Mama Candelaria, Mama Kapitana came from the east, from the mining region of Choquecarita, on the boundary with Macha (and

Qaraqara), whereas Mama Ch'uri came from the west, from Taruka Marka (Deer Pueblo) towards Asanaque and Condocondo. Each maiden was purchased from their origin place, Mama Kapitana for potatoes and Mama Ch'uri for gold, both substances associated with the inner realm (*manqhapacha*).

Then the two of them journeyed to meet at Lip'ich Pampa (Leather Meadow). Thence they travelled together to the church at Luluni, on the border with Qaqachaka's rivals, the Jukumani. There, they were celebrated in the local feast, shared between Qaqachaka and Jukumani in alternate years, in different places associated with water (Arnold ibid., 225). These were Luluni and the hot springs of Junt'üma (Hot Waters) in the case of the Jukumanis, and Ch'allüma (Libating Water) in the case of the Qaqachakas. The account continues with the seizing of Mama Ch'uri from the church of Luluni, and so from the Jukumani's hands, by an ancestor of the Arias family from Qaqachaka, to promote the heroic status of the Qaqachaka warriors against their Jukumani rivals, in an act of ayllu exogamy to replenish the energy of Qaqachaka through an act of ontological depredation.

The respective origins of the two maiden deities replicate those of Qaqachaka itself, towards the east, Potosí and the Aymara Qaraqara Federation, and towards the west, and the Aymara Quillacas-Asanaque Federation. So the topographical markers of their journeys were already a part of the Qaqachakas' collective memory. In addition, the tales of the origin of the two maidens introduces a feminine element into the local and global ties of Qaqachaka, expressed through the flow of water. The two deities are celebrated at the Feast of Conception in early December, in an event that combines the religious aspects of the Immaculate Conception of Our Lady with the Annunciation. This date previously announced the heavy rains and the time of sprouting (*alinuq timpu*), before climate change affected the pattern of waterfall in the region. This nexus between the two maidens and water is reiterated in the name Ch'allüma (Libating Water) where the two goddesses journeyed together. At their own Feast, the two maidens are invoked to request rain, and the woman feast sponsor and her guests sing *Uma Mark Siñura*, "Señora of the Pueblo's Waters" (Arnold 2021, 286-288).

If we combine the attributes of the two maiden goddesses with that of their mother, Mama Candelaria, an even wider ritual field emerges. Mama Candelaria, as the older *wirjina*, is associated with the Moon and with seawater, considered the source of all waters, including the rains, elements that are interconnected below the earth, and through the cycling of water through the mountains and rainclouds (Arnold in press). However, her two daughters (sometimes describes as her sisters) are associated with more specific water sources in the immediate vicinity (river, lakes, springs), those that bubble to the surface from within, or

splash down from the mountains to inundate and fertilise the earth (Arnold 2021, 225).

Another nexus between the two maidens and water is the fact that the church stewards of the two divisions of Kinsa Cruz minor ayllu supply Holy Water to the colonial church throughout the year. When there is a serious shortage of rain, then these authorities must organise additional rituals, such as the procession of the maiden saints, accompanied by the visiting priest, though the main pueblo and the two rivers that converge there. Again, this ritual procession has much in common with that of the Inka mummies in Cusco, in which the main priest called Capitán (like Mama Kapitana) led the royal panacas.

An additional epithet for the two maidens is Desaguadero Mamala, "the Mamala who empties or drains," understood by the comunarios to mean "the Mamala who pees" the rains. This again could be a long-standing reference to the Inka feast of Sitwa during September, which took place along the two sectors of the River Saphi that flowed through Cusco. In Qaqachaka, the two maidens seem to embody the two main watersheds to the east and to the west, and their juncture at the confluence of Large River (*Jach'a Jawira*) from the east, and River Chiruchiru to the west, at the exit of Qaqachaka pueblo to the north.

In the hydrography of the much wider bioregion, nearby Lake Poopó is linked to Lake Titicaca by the River Desaguadero as a "drain off" from the greater lake, although those who live nearby perceive this as an "umbilical cord" (*pupu* in Quechua) between the two lakes (Zacarías Alavi, personal communication). This is clear in the periodic inundations of Lake Titicaca, when the waters of Lake Poopó and its tributaries continue to rise long after those of Lake Titicaca have subsided. The oral tales about the two maiden saints follow the cosmography of this wider hydrography, first in their independent journeys across the landscape, and then in their encounter in a site with strong associations with water, before arriving finally in Qaqachaka pueblo.

Another water-laden oral tale about the two maidens refers to an even wider hydrological frame of reference, this time at a celestial level, in the dark cloud constellations of the Milky Way, especially that of the Great Mother Llama (*Jach'a Tayka*) (Arnold 2021, 227-8). Qaqachaka's older women commented to us how this celestial llama comes down to the horizon in December to give birth to a new generation of young camelids in the ayllu. Here they compare the start of the heavy rains, which should coincide with the feast of Conception, to the breaking of the Sky Llama's amniotic waters before the birth. So they imply that the epithet for the two maidens of "the Mamala that discharges or drains" refers to this phenomenon as the unleashing of the "pee" or "amniotic fluid" of the celestial Mother Llama (Arnold and Yapita 2001, 197-199). During the colonial period, the feast of Conception would have articulated a complex fusion between

an emergent Andean Christianity, related to the Marian notions of the Immaculate Conception and the Annunciation, and the Andean practices of celebrating the "breaking of the waters" of the celestial Mother Llama, followed by the birth of the baby camelids.

The human understanding of the additional entanglements they encounter seasonally between their earthly herds and their celestial equivalents show how the scope of the moral economy includes ecosystems and bioregions way beyond the immediate ayllus boundaries. And while it facilitates the planning of upcoming climatic and earthly events in the local pasturing calendar, the flow of water acknowledged in oral tradition extends as far as the distant ocean.

Concluding remarks

Given the lack of much dialogue between anthropologists and ecologists about the climatic effects of the Anthropocene, and the current anthropological failure to understand the motives behind collective action, I opted to explore an "Andean moral economy" to understand better the ethical obligations and moral norms that seem to govern the behavior of social actors in a defined setting. This concept offers ways of understanding collective action from a historical, territorial and ecological perspective, while shedding light on the moral universes and eco-regimes in play at different historical conjunctures.

Understanding collective action within a moral economy appeals to the long-standing idea of the "commons" and its characteristics in different parts of the world, and in distinct ecosystems. It also demands rethinking "group subjectivity," and what this might entail. In juridical terms, understanding group subjectivity within the framework of an Andean moral economy seems to imply a legal context in which a non-capitalist concept of ownership and property still holds sway. In Western legal terms, we might define this as a "limited commons property regime,"where entire communities have become proficient over time in pooling and managing their territory's resources, and in planning, often through ritual, their expectations of long-term survival there. However, this Western point of view takes an outsider's perspective, where such community-based regimes are concerned with ideas about property use. Instead, from an insider's view, communal action appeals to a series of consensual juridical norms that guide these actions.

I illustrated the way this is understood in an ayllu setting by describing how the Qaqachaka comunarios' respect and make regular offerings to their guardian mountain Master-owners and their helpers, whom they perceive as the real "owners," lawmakers and moral guardians of their territory and its resources. This ontological relationship is conducted through the practice of *uywasiña* or "mutual caring," whereby the mountain owners, in return, grant the

comunarios the rights of usufruct to these resources. Alternatively these Master-owners can take vengeance when humans do not accomplish their fair share of this Andean pact.

Rather than taking these behavioral patterns and moral concerns for granted, I sought to contextualise them in a historically situated body of accumulated experience that has created these figureheads of local resources, and their ambiguous responses to human action with either reciprocal acts or those of predation. As in lowland settings (Fausto 2008, 6), these non-human agents seem to be singular yet collective beings that embody the multiplicity of human actors and their acts, and the ecosystems in which these are played out. The moral economy, too, as a super-human expression of collectivity and group subjectivity, frames human action, as it becomes molded by human behavior over time.

I suggest that the ambiguous sense of power of these "other-than-human-beings" underlies the unfolding dynamics over time of the Andean moral economy. Within its sphere of action, insiders are compelled by their ontological relations with these non-humans to share the duties and benefits of their territory, and manage their ecosystem at a community, family and individual level. In my view, this is the impulse for their constant offerings to the guardian mountains and their helpers. In the Andean ayllus I know, this system of rights, obligations and ownership originated in a pre-capitalist economy. However, these moral ideas still impel the comunarios' actions inside their ayllus today, despite centuries of attacks from the outside upon their ethical foundations by the Spanish and now the Bolivian State.

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