

On Place, Well-Being, and Illness in the Andes¹

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Abstract: Andean places are animated by agential beings embodied in and associated with features of the local landscape. Some of these powers are generally benevolent and oversee the productivity, health, and wellbeing of households, crops, and herds, while others are primarily malevolent and may cause misfortune, illness, and ill-being. Andean people provide ritual offerings for the mountain spirits and Pachamama so as to ensure agricultural fertility and prosperity, and they make ritual payments to *diablos* in order to restore health and wellbeing. While ritual feeding attempts to act on these place-based spirits, it is efficacious because these agential forces may act on highlanders in turn. Andean people find themselves to be addressed by place-based powers who demand to be fed: they experience a corporeal interpolation of place through the bodily and material conditions of household members, their crops and herds, and their livelihood activities.

Keywords: embodied experiences; supernatural beings; agency; Quechua-speaking people; Andes; 21st century.

Resumen: Los lugares en los Andes están animados por seres con agencia que se encuentran incorporados en y asociados con ciertas características del paisaje local. Algunos de estos poderes son generalmente benevolentes y velan por la productividad, la salud y el bienestar de los hogares, cultivos y rebaños, mientras que otros son sobre todo malévolos y pueden causar infortunio, enfermedad y malestar. Los pueblos andinos hacen ofrendas rituales para los espíritus de las montañas y la Pachamama, como una forma de asegurar la fertilidad agrícola y la prosperidad. También hacen pagos rituales a los diablos para recuperar la salud y el bienestar. Si bien esta suerte de alimentación ritual intenta actuar sobre estos espíritus lugareños, su eficacia depende de la posibilidad que tienen estas fuerzas con agencia de actuar, a su vez, sobre los habitantes de los Andes. Cuando estos se sienten requeridos por unos poderes lugareños que solicitan ser alimentados, están experimentando una interpolación corporal de lugar por medio de las condiciones materiales y corporales de los miembros del hogar, de sus cultivos, de sus rebaños y de sus actividades de subsistencia.

Palabras Clave: experiencias incorporadas; seres sobrenaturales; agencia; quechua-hablantes; Andes; siglo XXI.

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“I had another baby, but she died of *chocando*”, my informant tells me. This is a condition that may be described as a ‘shock’ or ‘clash’ experienced by vulnerable bodies unaccustomed to the high-altitude climate, and potentially due to failing to properly address powers embodied in highland places. Her baby had fallen ill and died after a trip to the sierra from Lima. I do not know if my informant thought this was connected to her other experiences of place-based illness, but what she told me next suggests that it does indeed fall within the same field of experience and understanding.

My informant is the thirty-something daughter of the widow that I am staying with outside of the highland town of Paucará (department of Huancavelica, Peru). At the time (2007) she is the only member of her immediate family who continues to live in the highlands close to her mother; all her grown siblings have moved to Lima to establish households there. My informant had worked in Lima as a household maid and cook when she was younger. After her father was killed in an automobile accident during a period of seasonal work in the city, she continued to send money to her mother and younger siblings in the countryside. At some point, she returned to Paucará, where she married her husband and started a family. They then decided to move to Lima, where she sold food on the street while caring for the three young children they had at the time.

Her husband also worked in the informal economy on the street, but then he became ill. They went to the hospital where doctors said he was malnourished. My informant worked hard to pay for the medicines, but still her husband was sick. “He had no strength; he couldn’t even get out of bed”. She thought her husband would die, so they returned to Paucará and consulted a ritual healer, who said that her husband’s illness was caused by a devil called the *diablo chacho*. According to my informant, when her husband was a child, he had a “bad” father, and he spent many nights sleeping on hillsides with his mother. Such unknown hillsides are dangerous because they may house formless and malicious spirits, who may attack unsuspecting people who walk by, and in particular, fall asleep on them. “Who knows how many years he had that *diablo* inside him”, she said. The ritual healer (*curandero*) ‘fed’ the *diablo* a ritual payment, and her husband recovered his health, energy, and ability to work. “I believe in the *santanas* [those who work with saints] and *curanderos*. Doctors don’t believe in them, so they can’t know. That’s why they couldn’t cure him”.

Why is it that Paucareños and other Andean people find themselves to be addressed by place-based powers, both malevolent and benevolent? How is it that this ‘inalienable’ bodily connection is maintained despite the distance of space and time? What is it about place that has such a ‘hold’ on highland dwellers? As the brief narrative of my Paucareños informant indicates, the experiences of wellbeing and ill-being of Andean people are connected to the places that they inhabit and by which they find themselves to be corporeally interpolated. Place matters not just because it is where Paucareños are

situated (as spatio-temporal location) and the material that they work with (as farmland). It matters because it has been made to be a pragmatic extension of and subjectivized 'other' to themselves. In practice and experience, place becomes something that acts upon Paucareños at the same time as they act upon it; indeed, specific places become not objective things at all, but subjects that possess agency, will, and desire, with human-like needs for nurturance, respect, accommodation, and when all else fails, appeasement.

Animated and animating places

In one sense, 'place' is a material reality within which people corporeally exist. Indeed, an important link between feeding and place presented here is the bodily and embodied experiences that people perceive as originating in their material relationships to particular places. But 'place' is intended here not as a spatio-temporal location that objectively exists in a static world, as our received Western rationality proposes, much as a marked intersection of longitude and latitude on a map. Rather, people participate in the meaningful existence of places as they inhabit and reach out to the world with certain practical intentions (Casey 1996; Merleau-Ponty 2002). 'Place' is therefore much more than 'where' a person is in a physical sense, for it entails a context for a given action; memories of events passed by and the anticipation of events to come; a reference point for a particular perspective; and a host of bodily sensations and embodied experiences including texture, weight, form, temperature, and movement. In short, place is a 'gathering' and 'holding' of innumerable bodies, objects, experiences, events, intentions, and meanings in dynamic interaction and co-existence (see Casey 1996: 21-28).

In an Andean sense, place is fundamentally animated. It is animated not only by the vitalizing forces of life that circulate between the divine and the human, living and the dead (Allen 2002; Gose 1994). Andean places are also animated by divine and supernatural beings that are attributed with agency, subjectivity, and in certain cases individuality. Some places – most notably mountains – are embodiments of agential powers in the sense that they are attributed with having independent will and the capacity to act upon it in the world, to the benefit or detriment of the people by whom they are recognized and named. Other disembodied, de-individualized powers are associated with particular highland places (such as pools of water and unknown hillsides) and natural phenomena (such as strong winds and the darkness of the night).

Both sorts of divine agents and supernatural powers are characterized by hunger and demand to be fed. But while figures such as mountain spirits (*apus*, *wamanis*, *cerros*) and the earth mother (Pachamama) may be drawn into relationships that are governed by the obligation to reciprocate, other powers are unsocializable and can only be offered payments to satisfy their hunger. The former, embodied place-based powers are largely benevolent, as they ensure the health, fertility, and prosperity of the crops, herds, and households under their tutelage. However, if they are ritually neglected or desire to draw

householders into a more intimate relationship they can also cause illness and misfortune (see for example Gose 1994: 78-79). On the other hand, the latter (often disembodied) powers associated with highland places are generally malevolent as they cause illness and misfortune (e.g. *diablos*, *sirenas*, *pishtakus*, *gentiles*), yet they also at times play an essential role in the success of agrarian-based livelihoods. For example, in certain highland communities, the ‘cold winds’ that come from the ancient tombs (*chullpas*) of the ancestors (*machukuna*) are said to make the crops grow as well as potentially cause sickness (see Allen 2002: 38-40, 78, 81). Similarly, the diabolical ‘owner’ of the mine (*El Tío*, *Supay Muqui*) can cause grave misfortune and death, but will also provide rich strains of minerals and ensure prosperous livelihoods for miners if properly fed ritual offerings (see Harris 1989; Nash 1979; Platt 1983; Salazar-Soler 2006).

The signification of Andean places is therefore shifting and somewhat ambivalent. Agential places may be attributed with benevolence or malevolence; they can bring life, prosperity, and fertility as well as sickness, misfortune, and death. At the same time, certain place-based powers (e.g. mountain spirits, the Pachamama, and *El Tío*) are also ambivalent in the sense that they are characterized by relative capacities for rather than absolute distinctions of ‘good’ and ‘evil’, through the performance of goodness and evilness in their life-giving and life-taking roles (Bouysse-Cassagne & Harris 1987; Platt 1983).

In the highland district of Paucará, a powerful local mountain spirit called Cerro Huallanca is described as at once a ‘god’ and a ‘devil’, with the power to bring fertility and success as well as misfortune and illness. He is the ‘god’ or ‘saint’ addressed by the Scissor Dancers (*danzantes de las tijeras*), renowned in Huancavelica, Ayacucho, and Apurímac for their distinct footwork accompanied by a rhythm tapped out with shear-like scissors, their acrobatic moves, and dangerous feats such as piercing their skin with knives and swallowing swords (see Arce Sotelo 2006). While individuals with the proper offerings, prayers (*oraciones*), and faith may address Huallanca to be ‘baptized’ as a *danzante de las tijeras* (thereby gaining the power to perform the dance), he is threatening to others to whom he is not known, and whom he may cause to fall ill. Cerro Huallanca is also said to be the abode of a *gentil* (i.e. pagan, non-Christian) with a rich mine. Informants described gentiles as ‘ancient’ and ‘primitive’ people (*antiguos, primitivos*), said to be the survivors of an immoral ‘First Age’ destroyed by God. They were irredeemably envious and selfish, and for this they had to be eradicated. Burned with the heat of two suns, they were driven underground and into the mountains, where they now guard their hoards of gold. Cerro Huallanca is said to be hot at night, “like a fire”, because the gold of the *gentiles* is inside. If someone tries to mine this gold, he will be killed by Huallanca, unless he brings the payment of another human life for permission to mine there. No one in his right mind would try to mine this mountain, but still people know that there is gold there because “Huancavelica has a lot of mines”.

Another powerful local mountain spirit, Cerro Calvario, is associated with agricultural fertility and animal husbandry in Paucará. Cerro Calvario is associated with the health and prosperity of the households surrounding him. The mountain is also said to be the abode of a *wamani* (mountain spirit) who has “rich fields” inside, and who is the ultimate “owner” of all the animals who graze on his hillsides. Both the mountain spirit and Pachamama must be properly and sincerely fed during agricultural rituals so that they will look after the livestock and increase their numbers, thus ensuring the prosperity and health of householders.

At the same time, places around Paucará are animated by illness-causing spirits that are marked by a discursive and experiential differentiation from tutelary mountain spirits and the Pachamama. These disembodied, formless, unseen, and de-individualized place-based spirits exist on the strong highland wind, in cold pools of water, and in hollows on hillsides. People may unknowingly come into bodily contact with such devils (*diablos*) by walking by them and going about their everyday work. Through physical contact and exposure, these malevolent spirits enter the bodies of unsuspecting victims, feeding off the vitalizing life-force which animates their bodies and activities, and thus their capacity to be productive and ground of wellbeing. They become lodged in the bodies of their victims, causing illness, debilitating loss of energy, and even in certain cases death. Such insatiably hungry spirits must be ritually addressed and paid in offerings of consumables so that they will leave the victim’s body, thereby restoring a state of health and wellbeing in the individual.

Wellbeing and ill-being

‘Wellbeing’ and ‘ill-being’ do not just refer to bodily states or an evaluation of health or sickness. Rather, here they are intended to point to a holistic notion of the body-subject (i.e. embodied self) in their world. Thus a provisional understanding of wellbeing refers to physical, emotional, and social functioning, contentment, harmony, and most importantly for the Andean context, the capacity to be productive and achieve desired goals. Conversely, ill-being refers to observable or otherwise detectable physical distress, disfunctionality, or sickness; emotional turmoil indexed as by one’s self-motivation, behavior, and/or social relations; social discord within or between households; and chronic misfortune or ‘bad luck’, all culminating in an inability to work or be productive. In the Andean context, a healthy body-subject is animated and productive, while one who is sick is entangled in corporeal, social, and cosmological disequilibrium (see Camino 1992: 68-69, 82-83).

Health and well-being are not just about the physical and material condition of the individual (or for that matter the individual’s ‘subjective’ experience), but about the general conditions of one’s lived experience and ultimately one’s ability to work and one’s capacity to be productive. If health is “an inherent state in everyone who works

and strives to maximize their potential labour capacity” (Camino 1992: 65), sickness occurs when people experience conditions that prevent them from interacting with others in productive ways or achieving their desired outcomes (see Camino 1992: 69). Symptoms may range from corporeal states of being (physical pain or ailment such as a rash, restlessness, loss of appetite, insomnia) and emotional states (excessive worry, sadness, anger), to social comportment and relations (inappropriate behaviour, mental derangement, interpersonal conflict) and general state of being (good or bad fortune in one’s family, household, and productive activities) (see Camino 1992: 65-74).

These states of wellbeing and ill-being are perceived and experienced in terms of the bodily conditions of individuals and the material conditions of what may heuristically be thought of as physical extensions of the individual, such as one’s fields, herds, and household. Individuals who experience illness in their own selves or misfortune in their livelihood activities may attribute such ill-being to the hunger of place-based powers, which must be offered sacrifices or payments through an idiom of feeding in order to restore productivity and wellbeing. Andean people are thus addressed by place-based agential forces that make claims and demands on individuals and households to be ritually attended and fed – claims which are specifically experienced through and indexed by the body.

In this sense, wellbeing and ill-being are corporeally experienced relations to place. The Andean life-world is one in which the fortunes and states of households and individuals are not only an outcome of human action, but are affected by agential powers who are embodied in and associated with highland places. The relation of wellbeing and ill-being to an Andean sense of place may be ethnographically discussed by considering two key ritual events that involve Andean people’s bodily and embodied relations to place-based powers: household animal fertility rituals (e.g. the *herranza*) in which ritual plates of consumables are offered to mountain spirits and the Pachamama, and curing rituals (e.g. the table or *mesa*) to treat illnesses attributed to place-based spirits.

The *herranza*

The *herranza* is a household animal fertility ritual that involves the marking and blessing the family’s livestock (llamas, sheep, and/or cattle) and making ritual offerings to the Pachamama and local mountain spirits who oversee the health, fertility, and productivity of the animals. Throughout the Andes, the *herranza* is generally associated with the dry season that precedes the preparation of fields for a new agricultural cycle, although in some communities additional animal fertility rites may be held at other times of the year (see Allen 2002: 140; Fuenzalida 2009: 70, 75; Gose 1994: 90-91, 194-196; Isbell 1978: 138, 154-155, 164; Rivera Andía 2003: 66).

The *herranza* is described by Paucareño informants as the most important annual agricultural ritual in the department of Huancavelica. Here agricultural activities largely aimed at the maintenance of peasant households are characterized by animal husbandry (especially sheep and llamas) and the raising of high-altitude crops such as potatoes and other indigenous tubers. In contrast, in areas of the southern Andes characterized by maize production, prominent agricultural rituals may also concern the maintenance of terraces and irrigation canals (e.g. *yarqa aspiy*; see Gelles 2000; Gose 1994; Isbell 1978).

In Huancavelica, the *herranza* is also called the *Fiesta Santiago*, and its celebration corresponds with the saint's day on July 25. While the *herranza* is closely associated with the ostensibly 'Catholic' saint, Santiago is not really a Christian figure for contemporary Andean people. Rather, Santiago is a *wamani* (mountain spirit) and the divine protector of household animals that graze in the high-altitude plains (*puna*). This is in distinction to the incarnation of Santiago at earlier historical moments as the divine protector of Christians who battled first Moorish 'infidels' and then Indian 'idolaters', as he was for the Spanish *conquistadores* and missionaries in colonial Peru (see Choy 1987: 353, 415, 422; Fuenzalida 2009: 70-71; Silverblatt 1988: 176). The fiery imagery of Santiago descending from the sky while mounted on a horse and wielding a sword merged with the lightning-throwing, storm-producing Andean imagery of Illapa, the pre-Hispanic god of thunder (see Choy 1987: 424-426, 432-433; Fuenzalida 2009: 71; Rostworowski 2007: 38-40; Silverblatt 1988: 176-178).

In Paucará, informants called him Japaq Santiago and identified him as a 'pure spirit' (*espíritu puro*) who resides in a local mountain called Cerro Calvario, which has a prominent cross and small chapel that overlooks the town. Japaq Santiago is said exit this mountain (also called Señor Wamani on this occasion) at midnight on July 25 and stay until midday July 26. He comes mounted on a white horse by which he passes over the flat-topped mountain where sheep and cattle are brought to graze, in order to inspect all 'his' animals and receive the offerings that householders have made to him. If the mountain spirit and Pachamama are pleased by the offerings of cane alcohol (*trago*), wine, and coca leaves, the household's herds will be healthy and prosper; if householders neglect to make these payments, their animals may sicken or be 'swallowed' by the hungry Pachamama.

Japaq Santiago is also said to come from three powerful places in Huancavelica and Huancayo: Waman Raso, Jarwa Raso, and Raso Wilca. These mountains are described as rich millionaires and powerful gods (*todos milloneros, todos wamanis*). The three *wamanis* are connected to a story about the origins of the *herranza*. In a lake called La Mar Jocha, a yearling bull (*novillo*) was born. The *novillo* was brought out of the lake by three men: San Marcos, San Felipe, and San Pablo. In the lake there grew a reed called *tотора*, which grows like a long horn (*corneta*) played by men during the *herranza*. The men blew the *tотора* to call out the *novillo* from the depths of the lake, but the bull would

not come. So with the bull's own horn and hide, the three men together made a *corneta* and a lasso, with which they called out three bulls: Hasay Bandera, Joleqe Circo, and Romano. But of these three *novillos*, only the first two would leave the lake. They could not bring out Romano because he was very fierce and wild (*bravo*). Then two women came to call out the *novillos*: Helena and Marta. They sang and played small drums (*tinyas*); they sang "for the *vispera*". From then on, those "both poor and not" have had cattle, and since then, people call their cattle on the eve (*vispera*) and day that Santiago comes.

Householders who sincerely provide ritual offerings to the mountain spirits and Pachamama on this occasion can expect their households to prosper with healthy and abundant herds and crops, while householders to fail to fulfill the 'reciprocal contract' with tutelary place-based powers may experience misfortune, low productivity, sickness, and even death. One particularly ritually-conscious informant suggested that to celebrate the *herranza* merely for folkloric tradition (*por gusto no más*) is to 'play' with the fortunes of one's animals (*jugar con sus animales*), and thus one's household. In this individual's assessment, his sisters were doing just this by holding their *herranza* two days after Japaq Santiago's arrival on July 25. The larger implication is that the foremost concern for all celebrants is not necessarily the *herranza* as a divine accompaniment to the application of human labour, both of which are necessary to be productive in traditional Andean praxis (see also Gose 1994: 131).

According to my Paucareño informants, the ideal sequence of events begins on July 24 by preparing the necessary materials and foods for the following day, when livestock will have their earring tassels (*cintas*) renewed. In addition to butchering a sheep to make a thick, corn-based soup (*caldo de mote*), families prepare their ritual tables (*mesas*) for the mass (*misa*) or vigil that night. These *mesas* include crosses woven out of broad green leaves, bowls of a white powder called *lasta*, bunches of 'wild' *ichu* grass, colourful cloth ribbons, small metal or ceramic figurines of bulls, coca leaves, and alcohol arranged on a woven blanket (*manta*).

The following day, the *mesa* is transferred to the field that overlooks the activities of the *herranza*, but during the eve of the ritual (*vispera*), it is at the centre of a vigil in the family's home. As the *mesa* is prayed over, the family receives visiting friends and neighbours who travel from one house to another playing horns and small round hand drums (*tinyas*), singing songs 'of Santiago' (i.e. a musical genre of *huaynos* specific to the Fiesta de Santiago), drinking cane alcohol (*trago*), and chewing coca. The visitors spread and share the festivities, but in the spirit of 'negative reciprocity' they are also said to steal a little meat from the kitchen. At midnight, families light small bonfires called *lusi-lusi* to herald the arrival of Japaq Santiago and "show him how the people will feed him".

The focus of the *herranza* is the family's livestock, which could include cattle, llamas, alpacas, and sheep. Although there are many more sheep, llamas, and alpacas around

Paucará than cattle, there the Fiesta de Santiago is reserved for a household's bulls and cows. In my informants' idealized description of the *herranza*, the cattle are first 'called' by men blowing long *cornetas* and women beating small *tinyas* in the early afternoon of July 25. According to my observations, however, Paucareños initiated the *herranza* by parading throughout their neighbourhood with a live brass band (*orquesta*) to collect additional relatives and cattle.

This was how I met a group of *herranza* celebrants with my informants outside of Paucará in 2009. As we were walking towards the small community of Lirpanga to attend the *herranza* of their acquaintances, we heard the sounds of an *orquesta* as they paraded with a party of the family members through the hillsides. The hired *orquesta* players were dressed in dark suits and felt hats, while the family members were dressed like us: men in dark pants and white dress shirts, women in colourful *polleras* and embellished blouses, all with felt hats topped with long sprigs of wild grasses (*flores*). The party approached us on the dirt road, where they stopped to play and dance: women and men faced each other in two straight lines, dancing in the characteristic turning shuffle of the women and hop-step of the men, and then paired off to weave in and out of each other as the saxophones and snare drum beat on. The dancers and musicians were also recorded on film by a hired cameraman, who stayed with them throughout the entire day's festivities. After some time, they all continued on their way over a hill, and when we arrived by the road to their house yard, we heard and saw them coming with the final bull they had collected.

The parading party was greeted by other family members waiting in the open yard, where a ritual *mesa* was already assembled at one end opposite the house. The *orquesta* took up a position and two or three staged dances were performed for the film camera before cases of commercial beer appeared, toasts were given, and the semi-organized festivities really got under way. The band continued to play with short breaks and everyone danced and drank beer and *trago* as the family's cattle were caught one by one, blessed, and marked with new *cintas*.

Paucareños are proud of their custom of older boys and young men chasing down the cattle without the help of a lasso. They compete to grab the animals by the horns "with their bare hands" in pairs, one for each side. Informants emphasized the 'emotional' and 'exciting' character of the *herranza* in Paucará by referring to this potentially life-threatening practice. It seems to represent and demonstrate an ideal Paucareño character of strength and bravado, at the same time that it reiterates the connection between the virility of bulls and men.

The pragmatic objective of catching the cattle is to remove the old earring tassels (*cintas*) and sew in new ones. Sometimes cows and calves receive ribbon necklaces and necklaces of fruits and breads (*wallqas*) instead of earring tassels. Once a bull has been caught (a task that may take half an hour or more, depending on the maturity and recal-

citance of the bull), it is brought to the yard, where the bull continues to be held down by the boys. A head male proprietor (e.g. the father of the household) sets out to remove the old *cintas* and sew in new cloth ribbons, which the bull sometimes responds to by leaping forward or trying to jostle out of the boys' hold, much to the alarm (and enjoyment) of the celebrants. Meanwhile, the proprietor's wife feeds the boys overflowing glasses of beer or cane alcohol and adorns them with large necklaces of breads and fruits (*wallqas*) as their 'prize'. Sometimes the cattle are also force-fed a corn-based drink. The boys and the cattle are sprinkled with the talcum-like *lasta* and wild (uncultivated) *ichu* grass from the 'wild' high-altitude plains (*puna*), while the *orquesta* continues to play, and everyone else looks on and dances.

Throughout the identification and blessing of the cattle, guests are served alcohol provided by the proprietors and hosts (commercial beer, *trago*, and occasionally non-alcoholic drinks such as carbonated soft drinks). As is the customarily Andean mode of drinking, all drinks are served from a communal glass that is passed around with the bottle, and rather than making an effort to minimize beer foam, glasses are poured to overflowing in a reiteration of the animating energy and over-abundance proposed by the event.

Once all the cattle were attended to (eight or nine on this occasion), celebrants and guests took a break, with men seated on one side of the ritual *mesa* and women and children on the other. Here guests made offerings out of unblemished coca leaves (*coca k'intus*) that were said to represent the proprietors' existing and new cattle hoped for in the upcoming year. The *k'intus* were given to the proprietors and placed stem-down in the bowls of *lasta* on the *mesa*. The contents of one of these bowls were then fed to one of the bulls.

I was told that the proprietors would bring the coca *k'intus* to a mountaintop at midnight. According to my informants, this is the formal offering or *recomendación* made to the mountain spirits and Pachamama, which explicitly has to be done at night when the Pachamama will be able to receive the offering. The *k'intus* should be buried in the ground along with a sprinkling (*t'inka*) of white 'wine' (probably *chicha de jora*), in order to ensure the fertility of the cattle and sheep in the coming year. Householders perform *t'inkas*, bringing *kiwicha* beer (*chicha de kiwicha*) or corn beer (*chicha de jora*) to the various fields on which their animals pasture, and making the offering to the mountain spirits and Pachamama in the name of the animals. Informants described this as help or aid (*apoyo*) to look after the animals and to augment the herd's numbers.

By late afternoon, all the cattle were identified and marked with colour-coded *cintas*, and hosts threw sweets onto the crowd, which were enthusiastically chased after by children and adults alike. At other *herrerazas*, I have observed additional moments of playful ritual inversion during the conclusion of the livestock marking. For example, children may pile onto the family's donkeys and playfully whip the docile animals, or families

may get down on all fours to “baa” like the sheep they have just blessed and drink *chicha* out of a communal bowl. Regardless how the *herranza* proper thus draws to a close, celebrations inevitably continue with dancing, drinking, and music well into the night.

The *herranza* is not only the single most important ritual event in the agricultural calendar in Huancavelica, and the practice most representative of people’s relationships of production and wellbeing to mountain spirits; it is also representative of what it is to be Paucareño. There is strong symbolic affinity between the mountain spirits (*wamanis*) and Santiago, who is said to live in the same mountains; the mountain spirits who oversee and care for the cattle, and who are the sources of their fertility and wellbeing; and the cattle (and especially bulls) that are signs of fertility and prosperity themselves, but are also potentially dangerous, much like mountain spirits. In both cases, their power is ambiguous as they have the potential to bring life as well as death (e.g. a prosperous household or mauled bull-catcher). However, this ambiguous power only adds to their value. For example, bulls that are fierce, wild, and brave (*bravo*) are both feared and celebrated in Paucará. The wild or *bravo* character of bulls is in turn pragmatically likened to the virile character of the young men who put their bodies at risk by running to catch them and grabbing the bull by the horns. More generally, cattle are metaphorically linked to people. Not only is the health and wellbeing of one’s cattle indicative of one’s own state, but the world of cattle parallels the world of people. In local accounts of the mythical origins of bulls, they are said to look up from the depths of their lake into this world “as if looking into a mirror”. The fate of cattle is thus the fate of people.

The mesa para curar

The *herranza* serves to identify and bless the household’s livestock, while celebrating and giving offerings to tutelary mountain spirits and the Pachamama who oversee the health and prosperity of these herds and households. Not all ritual offerings directed towards place-based powers are specifically concerned with agro-pastoral production or prosperity, however. Ritual tables may also be constructed so as to diagnose and cure illness attributed to place-based spirits, such as malevolent *diablos* associated with wild and unsocialized highland areas. When a family member falls ill with a condition that does not respond to other forms of treatment, or a household experiences extended ill-being, a ritual specialist (generally called a *curandero*) may be consulted to divine the cause of the illness and make the appropriate ritual offering or payment (see Fernández Juárez 1997). For the our present purposes, this may be called the *mesa para curar*, to distinguish ritual tables intended to diagnose and cure illness from the mesas containing offerings made to the mountain spirits and Pachamama during agricultural rituals such as the *herranza*.

Just such a table was constructed on behalf of one informant, who sought out a consultation with a *curandero* for her grown daughter living in Lima. Her daughter had

been suffering from an eye infection for six or more years, which she had contracted before she had left for the city. Several cures had been attempted in the past, but they had not succeeded because the *curandero* had not found the correct mountain spirit or *diablo* that was causing her sickness. This night a *curandero* would try again.

The *curandero* arrived in the early evening with his wife, a bowl of soup waiting for them both. As darkness came on, the floor of my informant's small sleeping quarters was filled with guests sitting on sheepskin rugs and wrapped in wool blankets: the *curandero* and his wife, my informant's elderly mother, and me. Everyone chewed coca for a half an hour or so, their own coca bags bolstered by the coca the hostess passed around. The guests conversed in Quechua while my informant prepared things according to the *curandero's* instructions.

A large framed picture of Jesus was brought down from the wall and seated beside the *curandero*, along with a folded blanket and six or so white candles, which were lit one at a time throughout the night. The *curandero* brought out from underneath his jacket another small framed picture of Jesus as well as a large crucifix on a rope, which he placed on the blanket. My informant brought an empty two-litre plastic bottle, a small bottle of *trago* and packet of cigarettes, two clean sheets of writing paper, and a cloth-wrapped plate containing three cobs of dried maize, a small packet of white sugar, and a soft white rock called *llampu*.

As my informant told the *curandero* of her daughter's condition and how it had appeared (which I unfortunately did not understand), the *curandero* counted off the kernels of maize in pairs as he dropped them onto the plate. Once he had reached a hundred or so, he took the plate of kernels to the kitchen with my informant, where they were ground along with the sugar and *llampu* in the mill. This 'flour' was brought back in two packets formed out of the paper, and they were emptied into the plastic bottle, which was full of "raw" (*crudo*), unboiled water. The flour and water mixture was shaken a bit and set to the side.

Everyone sat around talking quietly and chewing coca until two in the morning, with the *curandero* drinking the *trago* and smoking the cigarettes. I confess that I fell asleep, so I must have missed when the flour-water was emptied into a nearby pool of water (*puquio*) or patch of earth (*pacha*), as my informant's daughter later told me should happen. This flour-water is the place-spirit's food (*la comida del diablo*). The *curandero* is to bring this food as 'payment' to the *diablo* or Pachamama that is making the patient sick. The *diablo* will eat this, and in a day the person should be cured. If the person is not completely cured, the *diablo* is 'very hungry' and needs a second serving with a repeated curing. The next morning my informant told me that her daughter was helped but not completely cured, and that she would require another *curandero*.

Illness may sometimes be caused by particular mountain spirits that are embodied in specific mountains, but at other times it is caused by *diablos* that live on the wind

without form: disembodied, unseeable. According to my informant's daughter, devils merely live on the wind, so in whatever place there may be a devil ("Ese diablo vive en aire no más, pue[s] en cualquier lugar está diablo"). A person may encounter a *diablo*, for example in the form of an unseen voice calling to follow it in the middle of the night. Drunks or fools who follow these voices will be led to a hole (*bueco*) or hill (*cerro*) where the *diablo* will capture and kill them.

Individuals who are attacked by *diablos* sometimes die within a few days, and at other times may waste away for years, their life force slowly draining, before they become aware of their problem. This was the case for my second informant, the aforementioned daughter still living in the countryside. She and her husband hoped to establish their home in Lima, where they both worked in the informal economy by selling food and providing a service on the street. After a time, however, her husband fell ill with a debilitating loss of energy and was unable to work. Despite expensive biomedical treatment, he was just 'wasting away' in a hospital bed. According to my second informant, the doctors they consulted could not diagnose or cure her husband's illness beings they do not believe in the place-based spirits that caused it.

Fearing his death, the family returned to Paucará to consult a ritual healer. The *curandero* identified the illness as caused by a formless, disembodied devil called the *diablo chacho*, associated with unknown hillsides and hollows that her husband had come into bodily contact with as a child. This malicious spirit had become lodged in her husband's body, where it had hidden for countless years, slowly consuming his vitalizing life-energy. The formless devil was 'paid' a ritual offering of consumables by the *curandero* so that its hunger would be satisfied and it would leave his body, thereby curing the wasting illness and restoring a state of health and productivity in the victim. My informant pointed towards her husband's productive activities in his fields, as a tricycle porter in town, and his small DVD stand in the Sunday market as demonstrating that he has regained his energy, ability to work, and health.

This same informant experienced another state of illness and ill-being associated with place-based powers during my fieldwork. When her mother and grandmother travelled to Lima for the wedding of her younger brother, her elderly grandmother had fallen deathly ill. My informant considered following the example of her aunt by converting to Evangelical Protestantism so as to ensure the recovery of her grandmother. Such religious conversion would entail the repudiation of the power and indeed existence of mountain spirits, the Pachamama, and place-based *diablos*. One night she prayed with her Evangelical aunt, declaring that she would convert if her grandmother regained her health. But she felt uneasy that night, and the next day when she brought her mother's sheep to the pasture, they started "peeing blood". Moreover, several days later one of the sheep died for apparently no reason. "It was a punishment from God", my informant declared. "Now I will never again think of converting to Evangelicalism, I am only

Catholic”. (Of course, contemporary Catholicism in the Andes does not exclude the acknowledgement and ritual attention of mountain spirits and the Pachamama). Instead of bringing health and wellbeing through faith in the ‘one Christian God’ as she hoped, my informant found that the prospective abandonment of place-based powers would only bring misfortune and death.

Despite the somewhat fragmentary nature of these three ethnographic examples of illness associated with place-based powers, some useful points can be made. In the first and second examples, the victims of the eye infection and debilitating loss of energy remained ill despite the physical distance and time that separates them from the origin of the place-based *diablos* attributed with causing the illness. In these two instances, illness is predicated on the victims coming into bodily contact with the places or place-based elements where those hungry spirits reside. This suggests that through this bodily contact, the *diablo* can enter the body of the unsuspecting victim, becoming lodged in their body, and causing sickness and ill-being for countless years, until the condition is diagnosed by a *curandero* and the *diablo* is given the appropriate ritual payment so that it will have its hunger satisfied by ritual foods and leave the body of the victim.

The first example offers an ethnographic description of the *mesa para curar*, with the ground white corn, white sugar, white rock, and raw water that is offered as food and a payment to satisfy the hunger of the place-based spirit. What distinguishes the second example is that the state of illness and ill-being specifically resulted in the victim being unable to work. His cure was described in terms of recovering his energy so that now he may work and support his family, which was however only once he returned to live in the highlands. While this may reasonably point towards the disempowering trauma of the racialized class dynamics in the city (Crandon-Malamud 1991; De la Cadena 2000), for our present purposes the relevant point is that the illness and state of ill-being was experienced in his bodily condition, explained in terms of physical contact, and discursively connected to the malevolent hunger of a place-based spirit. Finally, in the third example, illness and death affected the family’s sheep (an extension of the individual) rather than the individual themselves. In this case, moreover, ill-being was attributed not to a hungry *diablo*, but the retribution of the potentially benevolent place-based powers who oversee the health, fertility, and wellbeing of the herds, crops, and households under their care.

The corporeal interpolation of place

In their benevolent element, the attention of the mountain spirits and Pachamama is necessary to ensure agricultural fertility and prosperity, and thus the health and wellbeing of Andean households. These powers are at times capricious and will punish those who either circumvent proper ritual engagement or to whom they are not known; but with proper ritual offerings of consumables, they will ensure that one’s crops and herds

are bountiful, that one's family is healthy, and that one's household is maintained. Yet as the significations of mountain spirits slip into the demonic realm, gentiles and *diablos* threaten and seduce with a hunger that is not altogether the same. It is not a hunger which drives something onward, much like a *tinku* (a confluence of forces or encounter of two agents that is said to advance production; see Allen 2002: 176-178; Bouysse-Cassagne & Harris 1987: 29-31; Gelles 2000: 99, 185n4), but one which leaves victims weakened and drained of their life force.

While the feeding of mountain spirits and the Pachamama involves sacrificial offerings that acknowledge and maintain reciprocal relationships by which households seek to ensure their productivity and wellbeing, the feeding of place-based *diablos* is described as a 'payment', which at least in the capitalistic sense (that it seems to draw upon) is pragmatically defined by the completion of the transaction and thus the cessation of the relationship (or at least as entailing no further obligation to continue a relationship). Like mountain spirits and the Pachamama, malevolent place-based powers are also hungry, and they demand to be fed, for they will cause sickness and death or destroy the grounds of one's production if they are not attended to. But while the former receive ritual offerings that acknowledge and maintain ongoing relationships between tutelary powers and householders, *diablos* receive ritual payments of consumables to satiate their hunger. This responds to a demand that has been made on the individual as experienced and perceived through the body – the physical, emotional, and social state of the body-subject.

In the *herranza* we saw the offering of ritual consumables with the expectation of healthy and prosperous herds, and by extension the general wellbeing of the household. In the *mesa para curar* we saw that it was also necessary to feed hungry place-based spirits, but in this instance to restore (rather than maintain) the victim's capacity to be productive, and a state of wellbeing in the body-subject and extensions thereof. By considering the *herranza* and curing mesa in purposeful juxtaposition, they are drawn into a common interpretive field, in which rituals for agricultural fertility and the restoration of wellbeing are connected through common concerns with a distinctly Andean conceptions of place, and within the corporeal experience and interpretive understanding of wellbeing and ill-being in the holistic sense suggested above. This is illustrative of how Andean people find themselves to be addressed by potentially benevolent and malevolent place-based powers which demand to be fed.

In terms of their pragmatic concerns, the performative similarity of the two ritual practices highlights, firstly, that people find themselves to be corporeally addressed by place-based powers; secondly, these powers are hungry and demand to be fed; and thirdly, people are obligated to give ritual offerings and payments so as to maintain or restore their capacity to be productive, a condition of health, and a general state of wellbeing. This is what is meant by a 'corporeal interpolation of place': Andean people find

themselves to be addressed by place-based powers based on the “anticipation of understanding” (Gadamer 2004: 293-294) that certain places are animated by agential beings with whom they interact. The field of communication is the state of the body-subject and the bodily and material conditions of their lives.

If we agree with Maurice Merleau-Ponty that the body is the medium for having and instrument for experiencing a world (see 2002: 94-95, 167), this corporeal interpolation of place can be said to be ultimately grounded in people’s phenomenological, lived reality. But more immediately (and to the point for our present purposes), it is grounded in the Andean notion of place as animated, agential, and subjectivized. This applies not so much to ‘place’ as a general category, but to specific places (certain mountains, landforms, locations, and climatic aspects of place) that are animated by agential beings or forces that interact with people upon whom they may have a bodily affect – that is, affecting a bodily and embodied condition of health, productivity, and general wellbeing. As such, the ethnographic specificity of the ‘corporeal interpolation of place’ may be located in the practices surrounding and discursive framing of experiences of wellbeing and ill-being.

Conclusion

People feed the mountain spirits and Pachamama so as to ensure agricultural fertility and prosperity, and they feed *diablos* so as to restore health and wellbeing. The extension of this practical logic is that while ritual feeding attempts to act on mountain spirits, the Pachamama, and *diablos*, it is efficacious because these agential forces may act on highland dwellers in turn. And this is really where the corporeal interpolation of place is articulated. Specifically, place-based powers have a somatic affect on the bodies of householders and family members, as well as the material conditions of their livestock, lands, and livelihood activities.

In a life-world in which “wealth is not alienable from the body, but a part of its vitality” (Gose 1986: 296), health and sickness point to an individual’s productive capacity, fortune, and state of being *vis-à-vis* place-based powers such as the mountain spirits, Pachamama, and disembodied *diablos*. The bodily and material conditions of people index their inalienable relationships to these powers. Such relationships may be said to be ‘inalienable’ in the sense that physical distance and time do not necessarily circumvent the ‘hold’ that certain highland places have on Andean people. Place is the conceptual ground upon which production, reproduction, and in a general sense wellbeing are established and maintained; by being embodied in material conditions and corporeal states, the body is the medium through which these place-based concerns are perceived and experienced. In this sense, wellbeing and ill-being are corporeally experienced relations to place.

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