

The Lightning's Children and My Own Child: Notes on Twin Births and Double Crowns in the Huarochirí Manuscript

Los hijos del rayo y mi propio hijo: apuntes sobre los partos de gemelos y los remolinos dobles en el Manuscrito de Huarochirí

Sarah Bennison

University of St Andrews, Scotland, UK
<https://orcid.org/0000-0003-3805-2028>
sb333@st-andrews.ac.uk

Abstract: This article explores the related Andean concepts of *pallqa* (bifurcation) and *huaca* (sacred animate entity) through considering the meanings attributed to corporeal manifestations of bifurcation. It takes as its central point of reference the under-discussed supplementary chapters of the early colonial Quechua *Huarochirí Manuscript* of Peru. These chapters describe the significance of twin births and distinctive hair growth patterns (*parca*, i.e. *pallqa*) and their ominous interpretations according to the traditions of the Checa ethnic group of San Damián. Drawing on the Andeanist ethnographic literature and my experience of doing fieldwork in San Damián with a double-crowned baby, I offer a contextualized translation of the Aymara term *parca*. This term is central for understanding the fundamental difference between the sacred and the mundane. In Andean society, those born with physical differences, particularly a *parca*, are associated with ancestor lightning beings from whom they are said to inherit certain characteristics while in the womb.

Keywords: lightning; ontology; bifurcation; body; Huarochirí; San Damián; Peru.

Resumen: Este artículo explora los conceptos andinos relacionados con *pallqa* (bifurcación) y *huaca* (entidad animada sagrada) mediante la consideración de los significados atribuidos a las manifestaciones corporales de la bifurcación. Toma como punto de referencia central los capítulos suplementarios, poco tratados hasta ahora, del manuscrito quechua colonial temprano de Huarochirí, Perú. Estos capítulos describen el significado de los nacimientos de gemelos y los patrones distintivos de crecimiento del cabello (*parca*, i.e. *pallqa*) y sus interpretaciones ominosas según las tradiciones del grupo étnico checa de San Damián. Basándome en la literatura etnográfica andinóloga y en mi experiencia de trabajo de campo en San Damián con un bebé caracterizado por un remolino doble en el cabello, ofrezco una traducción contextualizada del término aymara *parca*. Este término es central para entender la diferencia fundamental entre lo sagrado y lo mundano. En la sociedad andina, los que nacen con diferencias físicas, en particular una *parca*, se asocian con seres ancestrales ligados con el rayo, de los cuales se dice que heredan ciertas características mientras están en el vientre materno.

Palabras clave: rayo; ontología; bifurcación; cuerpo; Huarochirí; San Damián; Perú.

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In the early seventeenth century, a decade after his arrival in the colonial parish of San Damián, the priest Francisco de Ávila realized that the so-called ‘Indian’ population continued to worship the Andean mountain deity Pariacaca. Furthermore, he learned that twins and children born with abnormalities in their hair were associated with Pariacaca, who was worshipped throughout the Huarochirí province of Lima. Although Ávila removed and destroyed many idols and shrines associated with Pariacaca and other Andean deities in his parish and beyond, (Duviols 2012, 224), he was no doubt unsettled by the news that certain newborn babies were taken by the native population to be messengers of Pariacaca.

Around this time, San Damián gave rise to the *Huarochirí Manuscript* (ca. 1608), an anonymous Quechua document describing local traditions and the deeds of landscape beings known as *huacas* during the early colonial era (see, e.g., Salomon and Urioste 1991). The text is thought to have been written by an indigenous scribe from the Checa kin group of San Damián named Cristóbal Choquecasa, who had connections to Father Ávila (Durston 2007, 238).

In San Damián and other Huarochirí villages, Ávila pioneered an “extirpation of idolatries” campaign against Andean idols and the rituals dedicated to them (Duviols 2012, 219). Ávila’s role in the production of the *Huarochirí Manuscript* was linked to this Christianization work (Dedenbach-Salazar Sáenz 2016, 64); and as Adelaar’s linguistic analysis of the text suggests, it was probably written in San Damián (Adelaar 1997, 138-139).

Linguistic analyses of the *Huarochirí Manuscript* suggest that an Aymara language such as Jaqaru was spoken in early colonial Huarochirí alongside two varieties of Quechua (a local variant of the Quechua *lengua general* and *wáywash* Quechua) (Adelaar 1994, 140-149; Taylor 2008). Due to intensive language transformation that began in the early twentieth century (Salomon and Niño-Murcia 2011) and continued to the mid-twentieth century (Bennison 2019), indigenous languages are no longer spoken fluently there. Nevertheless, local varieties of Spanish heavily feature indigenous language lexica (Bennison 2019).

Despite language transformation, many communities in Huarochirí today practice traditions resembling those mentioned in the 1608 manuscript, including rituals geared at pacifying the *huacas* and enabling production (e.g., irrigation rituals). The majority of the first thirty-one chapters in the text describe the *huaca*-focused rituals as well as the origin narratives of various kin groups called *ayllus*. Multiple chapters of the *Huarochirí Manuscript* relate to the respective rituals and origin narratives of the unrelated Concha and Checa *ayllus* who were forcibly relocated to opposite sides of the colonial *reducción*¹ San Damián de Urutambo.

Two untitled supplementary chapters focus on twin-birth rituals carried out by the Checa *ayllu* to which the scribe Choquecasa belonged. Despite the fact that Huarochirí

¹ This term refers to the colonial villages formed by the Spanish authorities under the vice royal Francisco de Toledo, who forcibly ‘reduced’ distinct *ayllu* groups side by side in the 1570s (Spalding 1984, 215).

studies have experienced a boom in recent decades, no scholarship has focussed on these supplementary chapters. In this paper, I aim to demonstrate that these two chapters contain important information for understanding fundamental aspects of Andean belief and understandings of materiality. My aim is to contextualise these supplements in order to illuminate Andean ontologies of the human body and the ways in which ancestor *huacas* associated with lightning were said to interact with their 'children'.

There is evidence suggesting that the veneration of lightning and the conferral of high status on twins and individuals with cleft lips might go all the way back to the Moche era in Northern Peru (Staller and Stross 2013, 99-100). Whether or not this is indeed the case, the Inca made lightning, alongside the sun and the moon, a primary focus of veneration throughout its empire (Staller and Stross 2013, 48). This may account for the pan-Andean attribution of twin births and physical differences to lightning and related ritual practices. An examination of how Inca-sponsored *huacas* such as Pariacaca were said to engage with their 'kin' can illuminate the ways in which the Inca rulers established productive reciprocal bonds between themselves and their subjects and thereby legitimized their rule (Bennison 2019; Hernández Garavito 2020). The insights I gained through carrying out fieldwork in San Damián and neighbouring villages with my baby, who was considered by locals to be distinctive, enable me to contextualize the supplementary chapters of the *Huarochirí Manuscript* and illuminate their significance in the respect outlined above.

As Brown and De Casanova (2009) point out, ethnographers who are mothers can establish different relationships with their local collaborators when doing fieldwork and garner unique insights into their philosophies and practices of childcare. In 2012, I carried out doctoral fieldwork on irrigation customs in San Damián accompanied by my baby son Alfie and my former husband. Throughout this time, locals would advise me on how to care for our baby and protect him from malevolent manifestations of the animate landscape. Since Alfie was a baby, locals regarded him as particularly vulnerable to the actions of the sacred ancestors who could 'grab him' or, if he fell while toddling around, permeate his body upon contact with the ground (Bennison 2016). Alfie's white-blond hair was a matter of curiosity among locals, not just for its colour but also because of a noticeable tuft of hair towards the back of his head that emerged from two well-defined crowns and merged to form an upright spike. As I shall explain, this hair-growth pattern was associated with Pariacaca and twin births in the early colonial and pre-Hispanic eras.

My discussion of twin births and associated manifestations of bifurcation highlights the ontological vulnerability of the womb in the Andean cosmivision and the babies that form, and take form, therein. Building on the work of Platt (2001) on the role of ancestor beings in person formation in utero, this paper explores the material onto-logics through which landscape beings known as *huacas* are understood to shape the physical and moral characteristics of humans. In pre-Hispanic Huarochirí, yet-to-be-born



Figure 1. In Osuna, overlooking San Damián (photo: Sarah Bennison, 2012).

humans were regarded as intermediaries between the sacred ancestors and their descendants, who ‘read’ babies’ bodies for signs of communication with the twin-peaked mountain and apical ancestor Pariacaca. In the eighth chapter of the Huarochirí Manuscript, which depicts a battle between Pariacaca and the huaca Huallallo (Wallallo), the former manifests as lightning: “flashing as lightning, [Pariacaca] blazed out in five directions” (Salomon and Urioste 1991, 68).

In this paper, I seek to contextualize the supplementary chapters of the *Huarochirí Manuscript* using ethnographic data to explore the term *parca*. This term features in the second supplementary chapter, where it is explained that a *parca* on the head of a newborn signifies a message from Pariacaca. I propose that a *parca* refers to a distinguishing physical feature with a clefted formation such as a double crown (i.e. two whorls in the hair rather than one), which is taken to have been imparted by the lightning being Pariacaca.

In 1966, José María Arguedas wrote of his frustration at the lack of information in the Huarochirí Quechua manuscript about the meaning of *parca* in his Spanish translation of the text. Despite the fact that the second supplementary chapter revolves around the significance of children born with a *parca* in their hair, no explanation of the term is given (Arguedas 2002, 195). Although Zuidema (1989, 267) has acknowledged that one of the supplementary chapters describes rituals relating to the birth of children with



Figure 2. The tuft of hair between Alfie's double crown was noticed by many locals in Huarochiri (photo: Sarah Bennison, 2012).

double crowns in his study of Andean duality, translators of the manuscript have been less certain about the significance of the term (as I shall discuss further below). Perhaps because there is no clear consensus on the meaning of *parca* among translators of the text (such as Arguedas 2002; Taylor 2008; and Salomon and Urioste 1991), scholars have yet to explain the relationship between Pariacaca (manifest as lightning), *parcas* (i.e., double crowns), and twin births as described in the two supplements.

Divinity and division

For Gifford, narratives about twins in Amerindian societies express “the division of the divine into two” (n.d., 195). The work of the huarochirano archaeologist Julio C. Tello testifies to an apparently widespread Amerindian understanding of twin births caused by animate cosmic forces entering into the womb (Tello 1923). Furthermore, his work on Amazonian oral narratives holds that twins have a special status in being a living example of sacred bifurcation (Tello 1923). While twins are conceived of as being ‘split’ or bifurcated in that two babies result from only one birth, entities with ‘split’ physical features such as cleft lips are conceptualised among various Amerindian groups as being not completely split in two and only part-way between becoming twins (Lévi-Strauss 2013, 21-29).²

2 I am grateful to Frank Salomon for recommending Lévi-Strauss' work on twins and bifurcation.

In Andean society, twins and other manifestations of corporeal bifurcation are attributed to lightning (Gade 1983; Staller and Stross 2013). As I shall elaborate on below, twins and individuals with visible ‘splits’ – such as a cleft lip, a sixth finger or toe, etc. – were historically considered sacred precisely because of their association with lightning. Furthermore, I propose that individuals with double crowns also fell under this category, and their lightning-endowed distinctive clefts would have been both a cause for concern and veneration.

As Mannheim and Salas Carreño (2015, 55) point out, the Quechua term *wak'a* [*huaca*] which refers to sacred places and entities, denotes a crack or crevice as well as physical deformities: “A cleft-lipped or hare-lipped person or animal is waka, as is a person with six fingers”. The semantic association between sacred places and people with these differences becomes clearer if we acknowledge the role of lightning in ‘selecting’ people and places and marking them out as venerable. As Gade (1983, 776) explains, in the pre-Hispanic Andes, places that were visibly transfigured by a thunderbolt became sacred places. In the 1990s, this was still the case among the Kallawayá of Bolivia: Places struck by lightning were considered to be sacred and in need of veneration (Rösing 1995, 82). According to Tello and Miranda (1923, 522), people in San Pedro de Casta in Huarochirí used to sacrifice a white llama at the temple of the lightning deity Wallallo, throwing the creature into a deep crack in a rock plateau at the nearby site of Marcahuasi. Gade (1983, 776) suggests that the fact boulders and rocks cleaved by lightning were considered sacred may be informed by the same logic whereby people with a cleft lip were considered sons of lightning.

The fact that locals in San Pedro de Casta acknowledge the founders of the local lineages as “hijos del Rayo” (“children of lightning”)³ (Tello and Miranda 1923, 481) suggests that lightning is fundamental to local conceptualisations of common origins and, furthermore, is associated with fertility. A century ago, Tello and Miranda (1923, 511) documented the sacred origins of twins in Andean society in their paper on the water customs of San Pedro de Casta:

In almost all of the highlands, Lightning has always been related with the fertility of the land; he is the force that germinates seeds. Lightning, be it called Wallallo, Wampu, Makas or Yaro, causes twins to be born, not only in women and animals, but also in plants. This explains the eagerness of the people from ancient times who sought to harness and benefit from this aspect of their divinity’s power. Aside from the widespread belief that Lightning is a common ancestor of the Indians, many superstitions, customs and ceremonies can be explained by this religious concept. The Indians always take care to keep twins, be they fruits, animals or humans and conserve them until they die in their own houses, along with the best selections of fruits from their crop harvests, or burying them in their dry areas of land to make them fertile.⁴

3 All translations from Spanish in this text are mine.

4 “El Rayo, en casi toda la sierra, se halla siempre relacionado con la fertilidad de las tierras; es el poder que hace germinar las simientes. El Rayo llámase Wallallo, Wampu, Makas o Yaro, engendra mellizos,

The *Huarochiri Manuscript* tells us that three centuries earlier, the birth of twins required the parents and members of the extended family to engage in elaborate ritual demonstrations of penitence. It meant that they had ignored a forewarning from the most powerful local landscape being, Pariacaca. As the second supplementary passage details, they would all be required to perform a complicated and expensive series of rituals that involved bathing the babies in the lake of the Concha *ayllu* “to the point where they were almost dying from cold” (Salomon and Urioste 1991, 146-148). The *Huarochiri Manuscript* explains that other villages practiced the same customs: “We think that in other villages outside of here people do practice it, and we hear as much, too” (Salomon and Urioste 1991, 148). A recent ethnographic account confirms this: According to Farfán (2002), locals in the nearby Canta province remember rituals practiced within their lifetimes where a twin boy taken to be a ‘child of lightning’ was bathed in a lake.

The 1608 text, moreover, explains that newborn twins had a specific kind of string tied around their necks: “People put on them a necklace with black and white intertwined strands, which was the sign of a *curi*” (Salomon and Urioste 1991, 148). In this context, the term *curi* refers to a twin, however, as Itier points out, the term *curi* also refers to ‘lightning’ (2016, 312) and as Mariscotti de Görlitz explains, in San Pedro de Casta, Huarochiri, *curi* also refers to mountain peaks (1978, 78). It is worthwhile reflecting on the aforementioned sign of a *curi* here. Intertwined black and white cords spun to the left (known as *lloque* cords; *lloque* means ‘left’ in Quechua) are usually associated with birth and death. Following birth, they are used to tie the umbilical cord to the mother’s left foot to encourage the expulsion of the afterbirth (Bradby 2002, 185). Gose (1994, 124) describes the use of black and white *lloque* (*lloque*) cords in the funerary washing rites of clothes in Huaquirca, where black and white strands of yarn are stretched across the stream where the clothes are being washed or worn on the left wrist of those washing the clothes. Funerary clothes washing usually takes place at a *tinku* or *pallqa*, a site where one river breaks off into two. Black and white cords are also used for burials and in Cuspón are known as funerary *khipus* (Tun and Zubieta Núñez 2016). It may be possible to identify a connection between the different occasions when black and white cords are used, given that both colours are associated with lightning (Staller and Stross 2013, 95). These cords, which bear a striking resemblance to an umbilical cord, may have been used to associate particular

no solo en las mujeres y animales, sino en las plantas. Esto explica el afán que han tenido los gentiles por atraer en su beneficio este poder de su divinidad. Aparte de la creencia generalizada de considerar al Rayo como un ancestral común de los indios, muchas son las supersticiones, costumbres y ceremonias que pueden ser explicadas por este concepto religioso. Los indios tienen siempre cuidado de guardar a los mellizos, sean estos frutos, animales o humanos, y conservarlos al morir, en sus propias casas, junto con los más selectos frutos de sus cosechas agrícolas, o enterrarlos en sus tierras áridas de cultivo para convertirlas en fértiles”.

people with lightning. Since black and white intertwined cords were attached to the necks of twins, doing so probably would have marked them out as children of lightning. According to Kemper Columbus, ropes and cords represent kinship and affiliation in Andean society, being conceptually associated with the umbilical cord (Kemper Columbus 1998, 442).

Although same-sex twins were considered bad luck among the Checa, mixed-sex twins were a good sign (Salomon and Urioste 1991, 149):

If the twins were born both males or both females, people would say,
'Times aren't going to be good.' 'There'll be times of terrible hardship'
But if they were born male and female, people interpreted it as a good sign.

Despite this difference, twin births are presented as the result of repeated ritual shortcomings, since the twin-peaked mountain Pariacaca forewarned his descendants.⁵ How this warning was issued is explained the second supplement. Salomon and Urioste (1991, 151-152) translate *parca*, the term for this warning, as a 'reverse whorl':

When we speak of an *ata*, we mean a child born with a reverse whorl in its hair. About a person born like this: When the baby turns three years old, its elders get together in the house or in the courtyard. Starting at broad daylight, they first inform the father's brothers-in-law or his fathers-in-law, saying 'On that day we'll cut the hair of this *ata* and *illa* of Pariacaca'. (When we speak of an *illa*, we mean just the same thing as an *ata*.)

So they let everyone know about it, and begin to brew maize beer. When people say, 'They're brewing half a *fanega* of maize, maybe a whole one!' they ask one another, 'What could that maize beer be for?' Once they find out what day the fiesta will take place, all the people gather on that day.

The *ata's* father sits with his brothers-in-law and all the men who rank as his fathers-in-law but down by the low end, he begins to dance and serve them drinks.

When they get good and drunk, they spread out a blanket or a cover and make the baby go to its corner and sit there, and they make this speech:

Fathers and brothers,
Today we'll cut the hair of this *ata*, this *illa*,
For he's Pariacaca's and Tutay Quiri's *ata* and *illa*,
And it's they who have sent him to me to be born so.

5 Chapter five of the *Huarochiri Manuscript* tells of a powerful lord named Tamta Ñamca, whose wife was said to have committed adultery. Following this, her husband became ill and a two-headed toad was reported to be living in his property, causing his illness (Salomon and Urioste 1991, 57). Thus, we can appreciate that instances of bifurcation such as polycephaly were at times regarded ominously as a sign that moral codes of law had been broken.

As the passage continues, the child's father begins dancing and calling out the names of his ancestors after cutting the *ata*'s hair, saying:

This is your *ata*, your *illa*,
 And now we have finished his rites.
 Henceforth may Pariacaca send us no other,
 We will do right and be well (Salomon and Urioste 1991, 153).

As I mentioned earlier, Salomon and Urioste translate the Aymara term *parca* as 'reverse whorl'. In his 2008 Spanish translation from the Quechua, Taylor (2008, 151) leaves *parca* untranslated and glosses *ata* as "those born with a *parca* in their hair, and who, according to the narrator, are the same as *illas*".⁶ Taylor's 1987 translation gives the term *parca* more consideration, suggesting that it refers to a physical abnormality (Taylor 1987, 513).

The fact that the term *ata* was synonymous with *illa* suggests that these babies were associated with lightning. Today, *illas* are powerful objects or entities associated with the lightning deity Illapa. It is noteworthy that the term *illa* also refers to a male twin when his fellow twin is female (Lara 1971, 306). According to Duviols (1973, 167), Pariacaca was a regional representation of the Inca deity Illapa.

Children with a *parca* in their hair were associated with lightning since their being born was deemed to foretell the arrival of twins: "This is the sign of a *curi*, people say. He has sent this *ata* to foretell the coming of a *curi*. People haven't minded their debts properly" (Salomon and Urioste 1991, 153). The term *ata*, which in the early colonial era referred to someone with a *parca* in their hair, remains in huarochirano parlance today. In Santiago de Tuna, not far from San Damián, *ata* refers to someone with an abnormality such as six toes (Véliz Alberco Cuya, pers. comm. 2014).

Around the time the *Huarochirí Manuscript* was written, *parcca chaqui* [*parcca* foot] was a term used for someone with six toes. González Holguín's Quechua dictionary associates *parcca chaqui* with *huacca* (1952 [1608], 284). Just as the *Huarochirí Manuscript* explains that *ata* was an idiosyncratic term for *huaca*, clearly *parca* was also synonymous with *huaca*.

Definitions of the Quechua word *huaca* [*wak'a*] are helpful for understanding both the term *ata* and *parca*. The early colonial dictionary of González Holguín (1952 [1608]) mentions that the Quechua word *huaca* is associated with bifurcation or forked objects. Mannheim and Salas Carreño (2015, 55) explain the meaning of *wak'a* in rural southern Peru today:

It can be used to denote a cleft, a fissure, a cavern, or a crevice, as in *riru wak'a*, 'the crevices between the fingers,' *siki waka* 'butt crack,' or in the phrase *makiyga wak'ashanmi* to refer to the development of cracks in the skin of the hand (as, for example, occurs due to continual manipulation of nearly frozen water)...It also refers to deformities: a cleft-lipped or hare-lipped person or animal is *waka*, as is a person with six fingers.

6 "[...] los que nacen con un parca en el cabello, y que según el narrador son iguales a illas".

According to Arnold (1987, 326), *wak'a* refers to a transition point between two worlds, where the female body plays a central role in the transmission of material from the ancestors to the living:

Wak'a is an important concept in the Andean world, usually applied to sacred sites which are perceived as places of power and transition points between the two worlds. Here, I shall emphasize its important relationship to the *puraka* or belly of women and the human placenta inside, seen as something always moist and associated with blood. It is in the *wak'a* as one such point of transition that ancestral substance as blood is transformed through the labyrinthine of the uterine passages into the human world of lineage.

While the concept of *wak'a* [*huaca*] is linked to the female reproductive system, so is *pallqa*; in birth-giving contexts, the entrance to the birth canal is referred to in Aymara as *pallqa punku* (or 'clefted door' in English).⁷

There is furthermore a semantic association between twin births and babies born with a cleft lip. Lara's Quechua dictionary includes the term *wak'awachasqa* for "a male and a female from one birth"⁸ and *wak'aruna* for those with a cleft lip (1971, 306). These usages both within and beyond the *Huaro-chiri Manuscript* demonstrate an intrinsic connection between the words *parca* and *ata* and the presence of an 'extra' corporeal feature. Crucially, the extra feature is taken to be the result of contact with a powerful being.

***Parca* or *pallqa*: A sacred stamp**

The word *pallqa* conveys the idea of bifurcation and is used in Huarochirano parlance today to refer to locally made hide moccasins, similar to *llanqui*. The term *parca* or *pallqa* [or *palca*, *p'arqa*] is of Aymara origin and refers to a singular entity that is split in two (Earls and Silverblatt 1978, 311). Lara's Quechua dictionary glosses *p'arqa* as "disproportionate, deformed" ("desproporcionado, deforme"), *p'arqachaki* as "someone with six toes on their feet" ("él que tiene seis dedos en los pies"), and *p'arqamaki* as "someone with six fingers on their hands" ("él que tiene seis dedos en las manos") (Lara 1971, 206).

In this respect, the particular kinds of difference or 'deformity' denoted by the term *parca* relate to the presence of a physical feature that exceeds the typical number for that part of the body. As Urton explains, understanding conceptualisations of physical division in the Quechua-speaking Andes such as *palca* [i.e. *parca*] demands an "intimate knowledge and a sophisticated understanding of Quechua ideas about the way things are considered to be structured in their natural, 'appropriate' state" (Urton 1997, 167).

The term *parca* refers to examples of physical 'excess,' where a typically singular feature is 'split', resulting in the appearance of both a double and singular physical entity

7 The gloss in Spanish reads: "PALLQA PUNKU.s. pv. Anat. (Ing) lit. 'puerta partida', puerta del canal del parto, la vagina" (Arnold, Yapita and Tito 1999, 166).

8 "Varon y mujer nacidos de un parto".

at once. For this reason, twin-births and cleft lips are likewise *parca*. It is important to point out that *parca* [or *palca*] refers to both the sections branching out from a split entity, as well as the point of simultaneous division [and unification] (Urton 1997, 83). In this respect, the *parca* on a baby's head may refer to the two (or more) whorls, as well as to the point(s) between them.

Salomon and Urioste's (1991, 151) translation 'reverse whorl' for *parca* can be further refined to 'double crown' or the 'space between a double crown'. In their Aymara dictionary of terms association with birth, Arnold, Yapita and Tito (1999, 166) gloss *pallqa* as "clefted, e.g. a clefted lip". Furthermore, they note that such clefts are attributed to lightning; specifically, if a woman has been frightened or made ill by lightning, this splits the lip of the baby (Arnold, Yapita and Tito 1999, 166).⁹ The concept of *pallqa* manifests similarly in Huaquirca, Peru, where twin peak mountains are deemed to be represented by twin cobs of maize joined at the base (Gose 1994, 131).¹⁰

Since double crowns were said to perform a semiotic function for Pariacaca – as well as other manifestations of lightning as explained by Arnold, Yapita and Tito – we can define *parca* or *pallqa* more definitively as 'a cleft made by lightning.' A looser translation could be a 'corporeal marker of distinction conferred divinely, often before birth'.



Figure 3. Guaman Poma's 'Native Astrologer' carries a clefted staff (courtesy of Royal Danish Library, GKS 2232 kvart: Guaman Poma, Nueva corónica y buen gobierno (ca. 1615), page 883 [897]).

9 "PALLQA.v.(Aba) lit. 'partido/a', p.e. el labio partido o leporino, el palador hendido. Estos casos son muy pocos y se los atribuyen al rayo; si la mujer fue asustada por los relámpagos, entonces, se dice que a la wawa se le parte el labio" ("clefted", e.g. a clefted lip, a clefted palate. Such cases are very infrequent and are attributed to lightning; if the woman was startled by lightning strikes then it is said that it splits the baby's lip" (Arnold, Yapita and Tito 1999, 166).

10 In the early colonial era, conjoined potatoes were known as *Axomamas* and, when found, were kept by the native population to bring good luck to the potato harvests (Arriaga 2002 [1620], 30).

Guaman Poma's early colonial *Nueva Corónica* suggests that pre-Hispanic Andean society regarded bifurcated entities to be conducive to communication with the *huacas* and cosmological entities. His illustration of an Inca astrologer (Figure 3) is seen carrying a *khipu* (i.e., a knotted string recording device) and a forked staff (Guaman Poma 1615, 883 [897]). Given that the astrologer's work involved monitoring the sky in order to determine when fields should be planted (Orlove, Chiang and Cane 2002), his forked staff undoubtedly assisted with such sacred work. As Urton explains, a single line branching out into two is referred to as *palca* [i.e. *parca*] (Urton 1997, 165).

The chosen ones

In Andean society, lightning is understood to select people both in the womb and beyond, preordaining their 'path' or vocation in life. There are reports in the ethnographic literature of various individuals across the Andes who have been struck by lightning and who thereafter went on to become ritual experts (e.g. for Bolivia, see Canessa 2012, 131) and in Southern Peru, diviners (Allen 2002, 37)¹¹

As Rozas Álvarez (1983, 147) explains, the *apu* (mountain deity) can choose people to become ritual specialists through striking them with lightning bolts. If we consider the fact that lightning bolts have branching formations alongside the understanding that the essential characteristics of a powerful being are passed on to a foetus, perhaps this helps to explain why those with corporeal bifurcation are considered powerful. Their distinctive feature is structured like lightning. As Rösing (1999) points out, the Kayawalla of Bolivia assign value to those with differences and particularly those with birth anomalies, who often fulfil important ritual duties. Within this context, individuals who have a clear association with lightning such as twins are attributed a particularly high status:

The most significant case of being different to do with birth is the twin birth. Anybody in this context has a vocation – he may have a twin brother, one of his parents may be a twin, he or she may have fathered or given birth to a twin. To be within the context of a twin birth gives you a vocation because twins are created through lightning. It is the god of lightning that splits the child into two in the mother's womb. Thus lightning, twin births and vocation are all inextricably bound together (Rösing 1999, 35).

As I shall explain, people representing 'doubleness' are also said to be well-suited to vocations requiring expert knowledge in Huarochirí today. According to Farfán (2002), people with visible differences performed important ritual roles in the nearby Canta province in the twentieth century. Elderly collaborators remembered a twin boy (to a female sister, i.e., a *mellizo*) and a person with a cleft lip invoking the rain deities during rain-making rituals (Farfán 2002, 124-125). Furthermore, these people were described as "hijos del rayo" ('children of the lightning') and were highly esteemed and respected (Farfán 2002, 125).

11 Bacigalupo also reports the significance of being struck by lightning for Mapuche shamans of Southern Chile (2016, 2-4).



Figure 4. The twin-peaked mountain Pariacaca (photo: Jorge Armando Guevara Gil).

Wombs, huacas and ontological permeability

The notion that a human body, especially one in formation, may be penetrated by an ancestor *huaca* can be contextualized by the work of Itier (2013, 75-76) who attributes this capacity to the greater ontological status of *huacas*. In this sense, ancestor beings are more powerful than humans, so much so that they demonstrate their power (through penetrating bodies) until this fact is acknowledged (often it must be acknowledged through ritual). Itier's work on the 'permeability of beings' in the Andes is highly relevant here, since he points out that landscape beings can potentially permeate one another and that some beings tend to project themselves onto, or spill over into, other "ontologically weaker" beings (Itier 2013, 75). Moreover, he explains that creatures in gestation or recently born are especially vulnerable to having an impression (i.e., a mark) left on them, and the unborn or young may absorb physical or characteristic attributes from the being which permeated them (Itier 2013, 75). In the late twentieth century in San Pedro de Casta, Huarochirí, the verb used to describe the process of an unborn or

young child being penetrated by a landscape being and thereby absorbing its characteristics was *malkear* (Haboud de Ortega 1980, 81).¹²

Within this framework, wombs are a potentially vulnerable part of the body. Arnold (1987) explains that the womb is closely linked to mountains in Andean society. Furthermore, both women's bellies and the human placenta inside them are linked to the concept of *wak'a*, which is "usually applied to sacred sites which are perceived as places of power and transition points between the two worlds" (Arnold 1987, 326). The womb and the placenta moreover act as transition points, through which blood – an ancestral substance – is "transformed through the labyrinthine path of the uterine passages into the human world of lineage" (Arnold 1987, 326). In this respect, the pregnant female body represents a conduit between the ancestors and the living. Arnold (1987, 325) writes: "In terms of human reproduction among the Aymara, ancestral substance as blood is said to pass only through women". Similarly, Canessa observes that the umbilical cord "connects the fetus not only to its mother but also to the ancestors" (Canessa 2012, 178). The centrality of the umbilical cord for communication between ancestor *huacas* and their 'children' may explain why the Rapaz *khipu*, which is associated with lightning, has a llama fat 'navel' beneath its altar (Salomon 2018, 60).

In San Damián, I was told various stories of evil springs entering into women's bodies via their bellies and of the capacity of rainbow beings (which are associated with lightning) to harm unborn babies. Rainbows are said to chase pregnant women and harm their unborn babies (Bennison 2016). I was told by the late Don Eugenio Anchelía Llata, a former *curandero* (ritual specialist and healer), that in his youth women would wrap fabric around their middle in order to prevent malevolent landscape beings from entering their bodies. Women therefore developed practices to protect their bodies and their unborn children from being penetrated by these beings. Once, during the rainy season when a bright rainbow appeared, I was approached by a woman who wanted to check if I was pregnant. If I was, I should not be out and about with a rainbow looming over.

In San Pedro de Casta in Huarochirí, both thunder and lightning are said to pursue pregnant women. As Haboud de Ortega (1980, 81) explains:

Pregnant women must protect themselves from thunder, loud sounds, hills, water, lightning. . . , which can at times penetrate the child, that is to say, transmit some of its characteristics to him or her. It is thought that thunder pursues pregnant women; if the mother lets this strike her on the back or get close to her, the child will be born with a cleft lip.¹³

12 The Quechua term *mallqui* refers to ancestors and their mummified remains.

13 "Cuidándose de los truenos, sonidos fuertes, el monte, el agua, el rayo . . . , que en determinada circunstancias pueden 'malkear' al niño, es decir 'contagiarlo' de algunas de sus características. Se considera que el trueno persigue a las embarazadas; si la madre deja que este 'reviente' en su espalda, o que la alcance, su hijo nacerá con el labio 'Partido' (Le, labio leporino)". In Tupicocha, Huarochirí Pariacaca is described as a sound made by water (Salomon and Niño-Murcia 2011, 232).

The work of Platt (2001, 634) is an important precedent regarding the interaction between the dead and the living within the womb, where ancestral landscape beings enter the woman's body to give life and energy to foetuses.¹⁴ The notion that Pariacaca gives a warning to communities through affecting hair-growth patterns is part of a larger cosmological framework where flows of water and liquids more broadly are not confined within bodies of water or living creatures but rather may spill over and mingle with one another. Fibers such as hair are also part of this network of materials in motion.

While whorls are associated with water, the action of spinning fibres is associated with both the landscape beings and the cosmological order (Dransart 2002, 125, 243). In San Pedro de Casta, Huarochirí, where various lightning-focussed traditions persist, water songs are sung at ancestral sites during the annual canal-cleaning ritual where singers stand in a spiral formation (Olivas Weston 1983, 73). In a similar sense, the directional growth of human hair fibres appears to be meaningful and likewise associated with landscape beings. In the Inca era, hairs were thought to impart a person's energy and could be used to represent a person for ritual purposes (Polia 1999, 391) including after their death (Brosseder 2014, 353). Father Ávila might have found it problematic that Pariacaca's demand for acknowledgement – or in other words, his demand for proper adherence to ritual – was inscribed onto human bodies. Sacred objects such as idols could be disposed of, but ideas about the powerful communicative role of lightning were deeply engrained in Andean ways of life. Although double crowns are not directly attributed to Pariacaca in San Damián today, children with double crowns are considered to be noteworthy there and in nearby villages.

My own *ata*

During my doctoral fieldwork in San Damián in 2012, I was accompanied by my baby son Alfie and former husband Craig. I first became aware that double crowns have cultural significance in the present-day Andes when I stood chatting with a travelling merchant from Huancayo, who regularly sells her wares in Huarochirí villages. Doña Julia Castellanos de la Cruz and her husband's stall had been set out in the plaza, with various items of clothing piled neatly atop brightly coloured *kalashmantas* (carry cloths). Alfie, who was one year old at the time, and who had recently learned how to walk, toddled over to Julia's stall, and began to disarrange it. After observing Alfie for a few moments, Julia explained to us that our baby had a double crown, which means '*fuerte carácter*' (strong character), though she added that two crowns also betoken good luck.

14 "Pre-Christian ancestral souls are thought of as little ancestor 'devils' who dwell inside the land (*uckhu pacha*) and who must enter women's abdomens in order to give life and energy to the human embryos in gestation" ("Las almas ancestrales pre-cristianas son pensadas como pequeños 'diablos' gentiles, que moran dentro de la tierra (*ukhu pacha*) y deben entrar en los vientres de las mujeres para dar vida y energía a los embriones humanos en gestación") (Platt 2001, 634).

With items of clothing virtually flying through the air, we agreed enthusiastically that this characterization of Alfie was fitting. At that moment, a local grandmother passed by the stall, carrying her baby granddaughter on her back. She stopped for a moment to take off her granddaughter's bonnet to explain that her double crown signified '*fuerte carácter*' and was the reason for her stubborn, strong-headed nature.

In both English and Spanish, a 'character' or '*carácter*' may be a mark inscribed onto something or someone, and in Spanish, *carácter* may also represent a quality which distinguishes an individual from others. The sign or distinguishing feature may also be 'magical' in nature; a *carácter* can be a "magical sign or formation".¹⁵ A *carácter* can be used to categorise individuals, being a "mark or branding with which the animals of one herd are distinguished from those of another".¹⁶ Furthermore, a *carácter* can be a "spiritual mark left in someone as a result of an important experience or insight, such as, in the catholic religión, those left by the baptismal sacraments, confirmation and order".¹⁷ The term may have come to be associated with powerful non-catholic spiritual authorities like Pariacaca. In Huarochirí, many colonial terms used today convey meanings associated with pre-Hispanic Andean spirituality (Salomon and Niño-Murcia 2011; Bennison 2016). Perhaps *carácter* came to acquire meanings associated with *parca* in some colonial Central highland Andean contexts?

Synthesizing the semantic associations of *parca* and *carácter* allows us to identify overlaps with the Quechua term '*unancha*', which was used in the early colonial era to describe the way Pariacaca communicated with his 'children'. The Quechua term '*unancha*' or '*unanchay*' refers to visual marks or signs (González Holguín 1952 [1608], 355). Furthermore, *unanchay* denotes a motivating force conducive to the fulfilment of a person's obligations (Bennison in press). Since a *parca* is taken to be a reminder about each person's individual responsibility to comply with ancestral ritual obligations, this 'sign' functions as a reminder of everybody's respective ritual obligations.

In Jaqaru (which, as I mentioned earlier, was formerly spoken in Huarochirí) '*uñantsa*' means 'to indicate, to show using a signal of any kind' (Belleza Castro 1995, 182).⁹ An '*unancha*' is therefore an identity marker; a visible reference used to distinguish categories so that entities are clearly defined in terms of their value, identity or their fundamental nature. An *unancha* can refer to insignia of Inca power (Howard 2002, 35) and also denotes signs taken to represent powerful ancestor beings in Inca cosmology (Harrison 1989, 80).

15 "Señal o figura mágica" (Real Academia Española, <https://dle.rae.es/>, 08.02.2022).

16 "Marca o hierro con que los animales de un rebaño se distinguen de los de otro" (Real Academia Española, <https://dle.rae.es/>, 08.02.2022).

17 "Señal espiritual que queda en una persona como efecto de un conocimiento o experiencia importantes [sic], como, en la religión católica, la dejada por los sacramentos del bautismo, confirmación y orden" (Real Academia Española, <https://dle.rae.es/>, 08.02.2022).

As Salomon explains, the term *hunancharcán* is used in the *Huarochirí Manuscript* to describe the way Pariacaca “began to lay down the rules for his worship” (Salomon 1991, 71). The term is authoritative and in Rapaz today, the verb *unanzar* means “to attach a mark of ownership to something” (Salomon 2018, 179). Considering that Pariacaca was deemed to confer a *parca* on an unborn baby, perhaps a *parca* was taken as a ‘mark of ownership’ signalling that such individuals are children of Pariacaca, or in other words ‘children of lightning’.

In Tupicocha, where we went for a short visit, we ate in a restaurant owned by Doña Emilia Rojas. She had cooked us a delicious meal, but Alfie would not sit still, so she and her teenage daughter Karina tried to entertain him. She had an explanation for Alfie’s restlessness: his double crown. Emilia explained that people whose hair grows this way are remarkable: “They are like wise folk, they’re ... very different to normal people, aren’t they? It’s as if he had two heads”.¹⁸ Similarly, collaborators in San Pedro de Casta agreed enthusiastically when a tourist from Piura (Northern Peru) explained that people with double crowns are *genios* (geniuses). Nevertheless; such individuals are said to exhibit behavioural differences; Emilia had explained that Alfie’s two-headedness was manifest in his inability to sit calmly on my lap while eating. This observation echoes that of Doña Julia, who noted Alfie’s ‘fuerte carácter’. This conceptualisation of double crowns suggests that Lévi-Strauss’ observation that corporeal bifurcation is interpreted among Amerindian groups as “two opposite characteristics [...] merged in one and the same person” (2013, 29) extends beyond physical appearance to behaviour. It is quite likely that this is specifically the case when the bifurcation presents on the head, since this is likened to polycephaly.

Emilia explained that I should expect Alfie to become a doctor or lawyer, and that I should plan my finances accordingly. I was advised to start saving for my child’s university studies – “Make preparations for his future”.¹⁹ In this respect, the notion that ‘children of lightning’ are an initially costly sign of good fortune appears to have persisted in Huarochirí along with the notion that they simultaneously represent one and two entities.

Although parents of double-crowned babies in Huarochirí apparently no longer incur large ritual expenses following the birth, it is still deemed necessary for the parents to make special preparations for the child’s life so that they can fulfil their vocation. To some degree, the activities of these children’s parents are still geared at ensuring economic well-being, suggesting that these distinguishing ‘signs’ are given serious consideration today.

18 “Son como sabios, son así... muy diferentes a los naturales, normales-¿no? ... es como que tenera dos cabezas”.

19 “Que prepare su futuro, pues”.

Concluding Remarks

My discussion contextualised the supplementary chapters of the *Huarocharí Manuscript* within a broader Andean ontological framework characterised by a 'permeability of beings' (Itier 2013). Within this framework, the womb is an ancestral domain understood to be a point of communication between powerful lightning-ancestor beings and kin groups. Newborn babies with distinctive features, particularly those with a bifurcated presentation, are taken to represent the media through which lightning beings exert their agency'.

As I have argued, the distinctive feature described in the *Huarocharí Manuscript*, a *parca*, is a double crown. Although the relationship between babies with a *parca* (described in one of the supplements) and twin-births (described in the other) is not immediately clear, acknowledging *parca* to mean a double crown is helpful for clarifying the connection.

A body of ethnographic and linguistic literature attributes twin births and clefts on the human body and in the landscape to lightning beings. In order to illuminate the relationship between double crowns and twin-births, my discussion synthesized ethnographies detailing the ways in which lightning is said to manifest together with ethnographies describing the significance of twins and individuals with corporeal bifurcation.

While double crowns and twin-births were associated with Pariacaca in Huarochirí, it is likely that beyond Huarochirí, they were regarded as sacred insignia of other local lightning beings. The fact that double crowns and associated features were interpreted as insignia of Pariacaca in the early colonial era begs a question: What could Ávila have done about examples of idolatry that manifested as icons of the *huacas* marked on human bodies?

It is difficult to ascertain whether Ávila used his knowledge about local conceptualizations of twins and children with double crowns to Christianize or otherwise modify these beliefs. The basic logics of lightning worship explored here persist in Huarochirí and elsewhere in the Andes today through the attribution of meaning to corporeal bifurcation. The deeply rooted belief that lightning ordains sacred entities by striking and splitting them was evidently too fundamental an aspect of Andean spirituality to be eradicated.

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