

Animal Rearing, Hunting, and Sacrifice in the Andes: Rethinking Reciprocal Relations Between Humans and Mountains

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Abstract

A common idea in the southern Andes is that rituals to the mountains are part of a reciprocal pact between local populations and these powerful places, directed towards stabilising ecological systems and controlling resource management in their surrounding areas. However, human relations with mountains, especially the guardian mountains called *uywiri*, also serve as a crucial point of reference for *metahuman* powers of dominion that constrain human intervention in a certain environment, and which respond to the abuse of extracting too many minerals, or too many animals or plants, by devouring the humans within their domain. This Andean ethics concerning moral obligations towards the mountains, including the practices of rendering sacrifices, and its history, is my interest here. I compare these Andean practices, where mountains have mastery and ownership over the environment, with their lowland equivalents, and the proposal that these relations of power provide a missing link between regional notions of predation and of commensality through feeding.

Keywords: Andes, Mountain Guardians, *uywiri*, ecological systems, Andean ethics, animal mastery and ownership.

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1. Introduction

It is common in ethnographies of the southern Andes to assume that rituals to the mountains, especially the high “guardian” mountains, form part of a “reciprocal pact” between local populations and these powerful places (Gose, 2008, p. 324; Sax, 2018). This notion of reciprocity through exchange relations is often expressed in the native languages of Aymara and Quechua by the term *ayni*, although its use in these ethnographies tends to be imbued with a certain nostalgia and idealism (Temple, 2000; Salas Carreño, 2016). Another Aymara term, *uywaña* (or *uywasina*) refers specifically to the *social* relations of “rearing mutually” between the guardian mountains and the human populations under their charge, although this term has also been interpreted in terms of a symmetrical reciprocity (Martínez, 1976; Van Kessel, 1980). However, other studies draw our attention to these human-mountain relations, not as reciprocal ones between carers and their offspring, but of “alterity” predicated upon relations of power (Lema, 2014), where mutual rearing is combined with predation (Gose, 2018; Bugallo, 2020). I explore here this articulation between relations of reciprocity and predation. Some recent studies do examine these combined relations in the Andes (Przytomska-La Civita, 2019; Lema, 2020; Bugallo, 2020), although such studies are still exceptional.

In part, the overemphasis on social contracts and their ecological consequences has tended to obscure the more asymmetrical aspects of human-mountain relations. The focus on local practices, for example in the studies of “human service to ecosystems” (Comberti et al., 2015), does examine the making of offerings, especially sacrifices, to the mountains, within a wider symmetrical “social contract” between humans and their environments, directed towards stabilising ecological systems and controlling resource management within determined territories. But the foregrounding of ecological relations tends to avoid theorising the more predatory power relations underlying these pacts of service, or any moral obligations at the basis of these social contracts.

More detailed ethnographic evidence about human-mountain relations indicates that the conditions underlying this pact go well beyond relations of reciprocity (Fernández, 1997; Richard, 2007, p. 335). For local populations, the guardian mountains hold predatory relations of mastery and ownership

over their immediate environments, and they fear that hungry mountains will react with predatory responses to any failure on their part to feed them in these reciprocal pacts (Przytomska-La Civita, 2019). Angry mountains will also respond to the excessive abuse of extracting too many minerals, or too many animals or plants, by devouring the humans at fault (ibid.). In these contexts, the guardian mountains embody non-human powers *over* humans rather than reciprocal relations with them (Gose, 2018).

I analyse here this underlying Andean ethics concerning the ways human behaviour is constrained by their ideas about particular mountains, and their appeasement of these mountain beings through periodic offerings and sacrifices. A study of these ideas reveals the human acknowledgement that regional resources are limited, and that control mechanisms for the ecosystem to reproduce itself were in place in the recent past. But any such study must also take on board the moral dimensions to these relations, which seem to have diminished in recent times. Many Andean herding and farming groups are now characterised by overgrazing, and by excessive cultivation without adequate periods of fallow, resulting in a generalised environmental degradation (Godoy, 1984; Orlove & Godoy, 1986; Arnold & Yapita, 1996). Changes in market demands and in migration patterns have also influenced the degree of care herders can give to the quality of fleece produced, and the manpower they dedicate to managing wetlands or reseeded the grasses favoured in pasturing the animals (Arnold & Espejo, 2010, pp. 85–87). Excess consumption of fodder by animals is another issue that modern herders have to curb strictly to prevent the animals from reverting to a state of wildness and the control of the mountains (Pazzarelli, 2022). Amazonian groups, such as the Achuar, are also engaging in overhunting (Chacon, 2011). So, an additional challenge would be to examine the reasons for the abandonment of the former moral imperatives.

The underlying ethical values that motivated the will to obey these ecological norms in the recent past have long been implicit in Andean ethnography (Martínez, 1976; Allen, 2002; Lema, 2014). Recent studies are now examining their specific characteristics. With respect to human-mountain interrelations in highland Peru, Marisol de la Cadena's *Earth Beings* (2015) reconsiders these as part of an "indigenous cosmopolitics", adding a contemporary political focus that opposes local values to those of the state or private enterprises,

which seek to extract resources from within the mountain beings. In Bolivia, Rosalyn Bold (2020) identifies this kind of contestation by local groups in the Kallawaya region as a way of constructing “cosmoscapes,” in ever changing patterns of beliefs and alliances. Even so, many of these recent studies ignore the accompanying aspects of mastery and ownership attributed to the mountain guardians in underlying relations of predation and power, which trigger these human attempts in practice to mitigate such dangers by establishing relations of commensality through feeding in sacrifices and other offerings.

Amazonian ethnography presents a different focus. A cursory glance at the lowland equivalents to these Andean ideas confirms how human-environment interrelations acknowledge notions of mastery and ownership over regional ecosystems by non human beings, and how these notions of power underlie the relations established between humans and these beings (Fausto, 2008; Costa & Fausto, 2019). In this lowland setting, the masters or owners of the game animals are predatory beings of the forest, usually jaguars, and considerable attention has been given to the relations between humans and these game masters, in decades of studies into lowland perspectivism, and of the ontological relations between humans and animals (Stolze, 1999; Viveiros de Castro, 2012).

One difference in the highland studies of this phenomenon is to question how changing historical contexts might have influenced the characteristics of human-mountain relations, notably in Andean colonial history (Gose, 2008, 2018). In this chapter, I examine how human-mountain relations might have changed, but in the earlier historical transitions from hunting societies to those engaged in animal pastoralism and domestication. Current debates suggest that such changes can be witnessed in the local practices of human-mountain relations concerning the hunt and animal sacrifice, in ideas about who does the hunting, and on who's behalf, and who does the sacrificing. Again, a prevalent notion in the Andes is that this historical transition towards animal domestication is not one of human *domination* over the natural world, but a “mutual rearing” between mountains beings and their human populations in a world dominated by animist ontologies (Dransart, 2002). I examine these current debates here, paying attention to ethnographic evidence in highland Bolivia and the northwest of Argentina, in order to rethink key concepts in Andean ethnography where the reciprocal pacts between hu-

mans and mountains, and in human-animal relations, are combined with relations of predation and commensality. My hope is that this debate might inspire comparative perspectives among scholars working in other mountainous regions of the world.

2. Andean Debates about the Transition from Hunting to Herding

To date, the anthropological debates about the transition between hunter societies to those of herders tend to focus on the circumpolar region, although they do take into account the animist and perspectivist turns of the last decades to reflect on these processes of domesticating. In the Andes similar transitions took place, but with characteristics unique to the region. Camelid domestication began from 6000 years ago, but at 2000 years ago, camelid herders still hunted wild game to supplement this activity (Mengoni Goñalons & Yacobaccio, 2006, p. 240). Colonial descriptions of the Titicaca region still mention, apart from the camelid and sheep herders in the high Altiplano, other groups in more remote places, characterised by their collective forms of hunting wild vicuñas for their fleece in the rituals known as *choquela*, a name that refers to those same groups. Late summer communal vicuña hunts still took place in the early twentieth century near the Atacama oases (Bowman, 1924, pp. 247–250), and wild vicuñas are still hunted for their fleeces in northwest Argentina (Salvucci, 2017). Vicuñas were almost exterminated in Bolivia, thanks to the Mauser rifles handed out in rural areas by supporters of the Bolivian Revolution of 1953 (Arnold & Yapita, 1996, p. 332), although some regions of Bolivia, too, have recovered herds enough to justify renewed roundups to shear fleece (Renaudeau D’Arc, 2006).

The heart of these debates distinguishes between *hunting* rites, still practiced by hunters around the world, and *sacrificial* rites, practiced by herders who have domesticated their animals. Many of these groups have animist ontologies, where power in the world is distributed among the different beings that inhabit it. This means that, as the British anthropologist Tim Ingold describes, no form of life is permanent, but ever changing. Ongoing relations of interdependence form between bodies and souls, and creation in

one place demands its diminution in another (Ingold, 2000, p. 113). Similar ideas in the Andes are often expressed in terms of the flow of force or energy in the world (*ch'ama* in Aymara and *kallpa* in Quechua) (Cavalcanti, 2007; Arnold, 2012, p. 179).

The Andean equivalent to these animist ideas includes the vital role of mountains as masters (or mistresses) over the animals and other resources within their domains, and the obligations towards these powerful beings by humans, in order to gain access to these resources. I say “powerful” beings rather than “sacred” ones as this reflects the Andean terms used to describe them (but for a comparative study of “sacred” mountains in other parts of the world see Mathieu’s chapter in this book). Andean practices that seek to regulate the ecological conditions and interrelations capable of reproducing these existing interrelations acknowledge the important mountains as “persons” with many diverse characteristics: geological, meteorological, and biotic, including the assumption of human sociality (Gose, 2018, p. 489).

Classical studies call these mountain beings the “Master of the Animals,” with its female counterpart as the “Mistress of the Animals” (Chittenden, 1947). In the high Bolivian Altiplano, mountain guardians are called in the native languages *uywiri*: “that which rears or nourishes,” or *achachila*, *wamani*, *apu*, *jirka* or *mallku*, depending on the region, while their female counterpart is the Pachamama or Virgin Earth (Choque Churata, 2009), these terms of respect going beyond any notion of gamekeeper or steward. Depending on the colonial history of each region, these beings can be perceived as more Andean, or more Western (Gose, 2018, p. 489). In Northwest Argentina, this tutelary being is called “Coquena,” considered a quasi-human personage who wanders about wearing animal skins. Coquena owns his equivalent herds of wild animals (*sallqa*) (Forgione, 1994). As in Bolivia, his dog is a feline, his chickens are condors, his camelids are deer or vicuña, his donkey a vizcacha, and so on. His troops of vicuña are thought to carry minerals from deep inside the mountains through the night, in the flow of tributary wealth throughout the whole region (Arnold, 2021, p. 59).

In Bolivia, the Pachamama or Virgin Earth tends to be associated with the land and agriculture. However, ethnographic data about human-mountain relations includes her ties to herding. In Northwest Argentina, with her partner Coquena, we then have regional expressions for the Master and Mis-

tress of the Animals who vigilate both agriculture and herding. This allows me to reconsider many rituals in terms of the wider debate about differences in perspective between hunters or herders in the processes of domestication, and the ethical norms of human behaviour towards other species under the mountain's control. In this cosmological context, human-animal practices tend to share the same characteristics, whether in hunting or herding societies, hence Tim Ingold's proposal that the cosmologies of hunters and herders are basically similar (Ingold, 1980, 1986, 2015). The question is why, in some cases, hunters became herders, while in other cases they did not.

Ingold (1986) proposes that the principles of sacrifice are already prefigured in the hunt, and that the change from hunting to pastoralism only necessitates a transference of control over the herds from the Master of the Animals to their human owners. But note again that Andean herders do not recognise a historically defined process of domestication that finally ended (Dransart, 2002, p. 66). This is because, in each generation, herd animals must be reintroduced into the human domain, generally by the women herders, by singing to them, instructing them in speech, and wrapping them in beautiful weavings. As a corollary, a hunting logic still dominates a male herders' activities of sacrifice and butchering, and their relation to the Masters that control the release of herd animals into their territories.

Given these similarities between hunters and herders, Ingold (1986, 2015) prefers to think of the processes of domestication (or semi-domestication) in terms of historical (and ontological) "changes in perspective." For him, it is not the hunter but rather the Master of the Animals who sacrifices one of his own herd. So, when herders sacrifice their animals, they do what hunters *say* the Master of the Animals does. From the perspective of this Master of the Animals, watching over all that passes in his domain, the action of the hunt appears as the "ideal" narrative of events. But from the perspective of the hunters, they must accomplish the immolation of the prey on the part of the Master of the Animals, and they receive the animal meat in recompense for their services. They only have to guard against an excessive hunt. The Master of the Animals is impeded from carrying out the immolation himself as the animals are considered his "offspring," above all his "daughters," so it would be equivalent to father-daughter incest. That is why the Master of the Animals is perceived as a spiritual herder of the animal domain, who permits

hunters to accomplish their necessities, while the hunters confide in this Master to provide them with animals to kill and consume. Appealing to a kind of totemism, Ingold recognises that the perceived narrative from the perspective of the Master of the Animals in the circumpolar region is additionally the narrative on the part of the bear, who figures as the Master of the Animals par excellence in those societies. In the Andes, the same can be said of felines.

In comparing these other-than-human beings in different societies, Ingold (2015, pp. 26–27) notes that we are dealing with different models of domination. In the patriarchal model of the Near East and the Judeo-Christian tradition, expressed in Biblical stories, the Master of the Animals is more anthropocentric, often a king with power over these kingdoms. But, in animist ontologies, we are dealing with anthropomorphic beings often expressed by the animals themselves (cf. Viveiros de Castro, 2012, pp. 100–101). So for Ingold, the transition from hunting to herding societies, giving origin to domestication and sacrifice, can indicate not so much an evolutionary progression as an interchange of perspectives (*sensu* Viveiros de Castro).

3. The *Qurpachada* Ritual in Abralaite, in the Jujuy Puna

With this debate in mind, I turn to *three* case studies. First is the Argentine anthropologist Lucila Bugallo's description of two rituals to the Pachamama and Coquena in Abralaite, a small community in Northwest Argentina near Jujuy, that take place in August and February each year (Bugallo, 2015).

The August *qurpachada* ritual forms part of the wider annual agricultural cycle when the earth is prepared to receive the food seeds (Bugallo, 2015, p. 43). Bugallo names this set of offerings to the Pachamama as "*pacha*-existence," and says the participants perceive these acts as "feeding the earth," and as "payments" to the earth (p. 43). She compares these August agricultural rituals to the Pachamama to the pastoral rituals in February to mark the animals, called in the Jujuy region the *señalada* (usually accompanied by an animal sacrifice).

The people of Abralaite perceive the Pachamama as a living being (p. 42), an expression of the natural world of the place. Bugallo traces the meaning

of *qurpachada* in Aymara and Quechua verbs for “sheltering” or “feeding” someone, with a sense of retribution for something, such as participation in agricultural and herding tasks during the year. An additional Aymara meaning of *qurpa*, which Bugallo does not mention, is as a “boundary marker” for a territory and its herding lands (Bertonio, 1984 [1612] II, p. 53). This would extend the range of meanings of the ritual to the whole territory in which the highland families live, from their houses to cultivated lands, on to the mountains, springs and pastures. On this occasion, highland families offer the earth coca leaves and a sprinkling of *chicha* (maize beer), particularly in the cultivated fields (Bugallo, 2015, p. 45). Bugallo notes that the *qurpachada* in the Jujuy puna is a family ritual directed by the household owners (man and woman), and *not* by a ritual specialist.

With some days of anticipation, household members prepare the maize beer, and sacrifice a black female llama to obtain a foetus to be offered in the ritual. They have already begun to accumulate throughout the year a set of ritual ingredients to complete the offering (sugar tablets, *illa* miniatures of the animals and their corrals, bitter mint, lengths of animal fibre, raw quinoa etc.). Bugallo proposes that the Pachamama is the hostess for these offerings, and that the family who participate in the ritual do so as recompense for having been sheltered and nourished by the *pacha* (the wider territory in which they dwell) during the whole year (p. 46). The offerings are to make this being “happy” (p. 59).

By comparison, the communal rites, carried out today by the neighbourhood groups (the *juntas vecinales*, as the indigenous community no longer exists as a legal entity), tend to carry out the offerings to a wider territory used collectively. This extends to the nearby mountains and springs of water, and these ritual acts are sometimes accompanied by dances, again to “make these places happy” (p. 65).

The *qurpachada* is accompanied by a special meal that “the Pachamama loves,” called *tistincha* (or *tijtincha*). Quite different from everyday food, the *tistincha* is made from dry ingredients boiled together the whole night beforehand. These include the dry meat (*chalona*) from the heads and feet of sacrificed and butchered animal, with broad beans and dry corn cobs. Eating this dried meat produces entire bones, offered later in the ritual. The dried meat is accompanied by ground maize-flour mixed with the fat from a llama’s chest

and water, but with no added salt. Before eating the *tistincha*, the house, patio and corrals should be purified by burning aromatic bitter mint, and wafting its smoke (p. 68).

In her description, Bugallo does not mention the term “sacrifice,” neither is she worried about differences between herding and hunting animals, since in Abrolaite they practice both options at distinct moments in the year. Rather she reiterates the moral obligations as the basis of these offerings to the Pachamama, and the imperative to accomplish them within the norm of “feeding her or else being eaten by her.” So the group dynamics of human sociality and shared commensality are underlined here in the ritual pact.

The *qurpachada* ritual is directed towards the “heart” of the house: an excavated hole in the patio called *pacha* or *pachero* covered by a stone, preferably white. The principal ritual ingredients are offered in this hole, after which each participant lights a cigarette and directs the smoke towards these ritual sites in a kind of divination. They emphasise, in the words that accompany this part of the rite, the family’s wishes for plentiful production, good food and good health for all and for their herd animals (called the house’s *hacienda*), all under the Pachamama’s protection. The participants continue making similar offerings during August to ritual sites further and further away, in the hamlets (*estancias*), corrals, cultivated plots, the places where the herd animals roll about to loosen their fleas (*revolcaderos*), as well as the mountains, the domain of Coquena as Master of the Animals, with his springs, high pastures, and boundary markers.

In the present context, the *qurpachada* ingredients, above all those of the *tistincha*, are generated by a family’s herding production just as much as by their agricultural work. So although the ritual offerings are made to honour a reciprocal pact to the Pachamama of the minor plots of agricultural crops, they are offered to her just as much as the Mistress of the Animals of a much larger territory, in partnership with Coquena. Beyond this immediate pact, these rituals create a flow of energy, through which human actors sustain and reproduce the elements of their world, in line with the animist ontologies they live. This is why the family makes a point of recognising its benefit during the whole year for the cultivated fields and pastures, and why, in recom-

pense, they render to the Pachamama and Coquena a sacrifice of one of their own herd animals, in the hope that these will never die out.

My question is, given that the herder-hunters of Abrolaite are carers of the animals of the Pachamama and her partner Coquena, what are the rules of sacrifice of one of her own animals?

4. The *Tistincha* Feast in Huachichocana

A second set of clues about the *tistincha* banquet served after the *qurpachada* rite are found in an essay by the Argentine anthropologist and archaeologist Francisco Pazzarelli (2014), about the community of Huachichocana in the same region. As in Abrolaite, this dish is prepared by boiling all night a large pot of pieces of meat with maize cobs, and again, this dish is a food *not* for the consumption of the human participants but for the Pachamama herself. The meat introduced into the pot can be of goats, sheep or llamas, but it must be from large and older animals, and so of a much harder meat than usual, and it is prepared in large pieces. This dish in Huachichocana already had months of preparation, as the heads of sacrificed animals from previous months have been put aside, kept in the household stores, and left to dry out for August. Importantly, while eating this *tistincha* dish, Pazzarelli tells us how care is taken not to break any of the bones, in order to conserve the family's "luck" (*suerte*), which results from having raised the animals.

The dried maize cobs added to the meat are also specially selected, dehydrated and stored from the previous summer harvests. According to Pazzarelli's description, certain designs called "little pathways" (*caminitos*) are added to the cobs by taking out some of the grains, without breaking them, and whose negatives left behind end up like "drawn" figures: in straight lines or zigzags, as in textiles. These refer to the pathways through the local landscape that lead to specific places, or else rectangles that refer to the family fields, houses or corrals. The hope is that, with the prolonged cooking, the grains left behind will "swell" to occupy the spaces forming the "little pathways," and this will propitiate the indicated places positively, while the "houses" formed in this way will "fill up" and attain good luck. The pathways of the maize cobs guide luck towards these selected places. Only a very

little salt in this case is added to the mixture of maize cobs and meat, salt being taboo for offerings to the earth or the mountains.

The pieces of meat end up soft and all frayed, separated almost completely from the bones, that once taken out of the pot, "reveal their total whiteness." In parallel, the corn cobs finish up with their grains swollen and exploded, "in flower," duplicated in size and occupying all the space left by the "little pathways," it being almost impossible to divine which design each one had.

On the days when "feeding" the Pachamama take place, people eat from dawn until night, breakfasting on baked patties, soups, mate tea, roast meat, and finally the *tistincha*. Immediately after eating, they begin drinking different kinds of alcohol: maize beer or *chicha*, *yerbeao*, wine, *química*, various liquors and beer. In addition they light up one cigarette after another and never leave off chewing coca leaves. If one of the adults present leaves off chewing coca or drinking, the hosts approach them gently to fill up their glass again, offer them more coca and invite them to have more food. There can never be an invitation that is refused; in this forced commensality, everyone must eat, drink, smoke and chew coca. *Coquien, coquien!*, they insist.

Pazzarelli stresses that this ritual of "giving food" has a similar logic in each family group. A household generally possesses a principal ritual site called its "mouth" (*boca*) and then various minor "mouths." These are holes, about a metre in depth, covered with a flat stone, opened annually to deposit the food for the *pacha*. In order to "feed" the Pachamama, first the food is shared out in the house, dividing that destined for the *pacha* from that for the participants. Then, after people have eaten and drunken large quantities, and smoked and chewed coca, bundles of food are wrapped up and all the guests go out towards the first "mouth," where they carry out the ritual opening of the hole, make libations, burn aromatic herbs, and then offer food, drink, coca and cigarettes. Once they have "fed" that place (and the cigarettes they are smoking for the *pacha* have come to an end), the mouth is closed up again and they all return to the house kitchen, before proceeding to the second "mouth," and so on. Opening each "mouth" is an intense moment, because if during August the *pacha* is particularly hungry, the mouth will literally spew out this hunger and initiate a moment when everything has to be measured and controlled.

According to Pazzarelli (2014), the *tistincha* is consumed in a festive spirit. Hands go feeling about in the food pots in order to pull out the best pieces of meat, and there is friendly fighting over the heads. As a result, they all leave a single pile of white animal bones, and another pile of the “bones” or husks of the corn cobs. Only *people* eat the *tistincha*; no dog or other animal should approach it.

This process of transforming and ingesting (with no instrument for cutting, just the fingers) has the object of liberating and exposing the bones hidden by the meat, without breaking or damaging them. So why this custom of not breaking the bones of the *tistincha*? In an essay of 2009, Bugallo proposes that the *tistincha* is a kind of offering in which bones play a key role: they express a relation between figures made of lightning, the *pacha* or territory with all of its elements, and San Santiago, on the one hand, and the ancestors, bones and fertility, on the other. For her, the *tistincha* is one of the foods that calms the anger (and hunger) of those predatory beings on which humans depend for abundance, and the “luck” of the living. Otherwise lightning will castigate them, breaking the luck of those dining there.

Pazzarelli emphasises the differences between the “table manners” in the case of the *tistincha* feast of boiled meat, and in ordinary feasts when people eat roast meat (*asado*). In the *tistincha*, the bones are not offered to the participants. Instead, their teeth must battle against the meat stuck to the bones, so that they end up complete, clean and white, to “feed the *pacha*.” One of the signs revealed on opening the “mouth” holes each August is finding the bones all clean, with the meat from the previous year no longer attached to them, meaning that the *pacha* has received the offering and devoured it, which in turn reveals the faith of the participants.

In the flow of forces in these actions, Pazzarelli tells us how the Huacheño locals refer to the process of revealing the bones hidden within the meat, as “undressing” them. Animal hides are described as “clothes,” so the process of skinning the carcass is “undressing” it. Liberating the bones from the meat that wraps them forms part of other ritual sequences that include butchering. Here, the relations of rearing and kinship that link herders to their animals are explicit in the relations between the “interior” and “exterior” of living beings (Pazzarelli, 2013). The actions of “wrapping” and “unwrapping” are key processes to understand the modalities by which an animal’s vital ener-

gies (*animu*) are maintained together or else released, respectively. To butcher animals supposes manipulating these relations directly. Peeling a bone (or a corn cob) with the teeth appeals to the same set of relations.

Another aspect emphasised by Pazzarelli is that eating “luck” in the meat and maize cobs of the *tistincha*, is not so much an act of cannibalism as of self-immolation (or auto-cannibalism). This is because the meat still contains the luck of the family that each animal materialises, having been reared by its herder as part of the *pacha*. In the Huacheños own words: “The *pacha* is our mother, the *pacha* rears us and eats us.” So the predatory relation between the *pacha* and humans is similar to that established between herders with their animals. Both are considered to be their children. As the Huacheños say: “One always eats the children one raises.” For Pazzarelli, we are dealing with a mutuality of being, a form of commensality that Catherine Allen (2002) identifies as a “communion of stomachs” between kin, where one person eats to satisfy the hunger of another.

Each August, the *pacha* opens and reclaims the food from the *tistincha*. Similarly, people offer up themselves to be eaten through their own part in these relations, since they are captured by the *pacha*, and made to officiate with their own teeth. They do not eat “with the *pacha*”; rather they chew and gulp “for her.”

Two additional points clarify how Pachamama and Coquena belong just as much to the herding domain as to the agricultural one. First, the actions of eating the *tistincha* are closely associated with the work of the human herder of the sacrificed animal —it deals with food made in his household— and the identification of this herder with the Pachamama in her guise as the Mistress of the Animals, in the process of eating one of her own reared-ones or children. Thus the importance of eating “with the Pachamama’s teeth,” since you are eating as one of the herders of this being. Could this particular guise be that of a feline? And second, I am struck by the prolonged process of cooking the sacrificial meat to dry it out, as if the participants wished to diminish its animal materiality, or at least reduce the appearance and taste of the blood present, as the vital essence in the *animu* of the animal that has been killed.

5. Family Rituals and Sacrifices to the Guardian Mountains, in Qaqachaka

A third case study, in the ethnography of the *marka* and six ayllu communities of Qaqachaka (in Southern Bolivia) (Figure 1), that I know from years of fieldwork with the Bolivian linguist Juan de Dios Yapita, adds comparative details of the family rituals to the mountains to those provided by Bugallo and Pazzarelli. The Qaqachaka rituals occur on the same dates, when redistributive obligations become part of wider ecological cycles, which include the world of felines.



Figure 1 – A typical herding hamlet (estancia) in the upper levels of Qaqachaka. Photo in the Collection of the Instituto de Lengua y Cultura Aymara, La Paz, 2009. Copyright 2009 by Instituto de Lengua y Cultura Aymara. Reprinted with permission.

In our book *River of Fleece, River of Song* (Arnold & Yapita, 2001), we describe how the moral impulse goes beyond human interventions into a moral sphere organised at a much higher level. The herder Doña María Ayca emphasised to us the reciprocal pact between the people of Qaqachaka and the great mountains of the ayllu, as the real “owners” (*tuyñu*) of the animals, from whom the people of the ayllu only “borrow” them, and to whom in exchange, they must make a regular system of “payments” (*pagos*). These offerings of the first

fruits from the earth, or the meat and fat of animals fed on the pastures of the place, are given so that the mountains continue to release their animals in the future, and to watch over the herds. However, Doña María mentioned how, for her grandparents, the original pact was between the highest mountains and the Sun and Moon, who released the herd animals from their celestial abodes in the “dark lakes” of the Milky Way, and sent them to the highest mountains (Arnold & Yapita, 2001, pp. 175–176). Water flow is a key element in this local cosmology.

In Qaqachaka, in the annual August ceremonies, a family sacrifices a male llama. The older people present make an invocation in Aymara saying in effect: “Red water, snowballs, don’t grow thin, oh, Herder mountain, Provider of meat and fat” (Arnold & Yapita, 2001, p. 102), because, when snowballs melt, they set off a sequence of water dripping to the ground, giving rise to the running waters in the ayllu and the new green pastures, which will, “with luck,” make the animals grazing there meaty and fatty. Then the ritual participants consume the sacrificial meat at a banquet, taking the same care not to break any of the bones as in the *tistincha* ritual. The visceral fat is meanwhile heated up to soften and refined into *llamp’u*, ready for making offerings to the mountain.

After the feast, a ritual specialist gathers up all the bones of the sacrificed animal, which he takes that night (at the dark of the moon) to the family offering place (*liwaña*) on the side of their own guardian mountain, accompanied by the men of the family. First, they open and prepare the offering pit (its “box” or *caja*), which has been in the family for decades, if not centuries. *Caja* is a juridical name, as the sacrificial offering is considered a kind of tribute. Then the specialist reconstitutes the entire skeleton, with its skull, body and tail, penis and testicles, re-covers the bones with a new “meaty layer” of green coca leaves and red flowers, and inters it with other ritual ingredients (the softened llama fat, llama foetuses, yellow and white ground maize, sweets, cinnamon stems, sugar blocks, turmeric powder, grass stems, and importantly a small bottle or bottles of water) (Arnold, 2021, pp. 313–314).

The softened llama fat offered here alludes to the refinement of minerals in the mines of this mountainous region (Gose, 1986, p. 305, 2018; Dransart, 2022, p. 366), and the offerings of white and yellow ground maize-flour seem to replicate this comparison. Of all the minerals in the Andes, gold and sil-

ver are the most valued; they are compared to the Sun and the Moon. So the yellow and white maize offerings embody a herding family's tribute to the mountain of these life-giving substances. The vivifying power of the llama's red sacrificial blood and the whiteness of its visceral fat, reiterate the substantiality of these offerings to the Herder Mountain and the Earth.

The idea is that the fetid emanations from the decomposing skeletal carcass, together with the offerings inside the mountain "box," will gradually transform into dark rainclouds that rise from the mountain to release the next cycle of rains. These rains, in turn, will green the dry pastures on the mountainsides to feed a new generation of young animals, who will offer up their meaty and fatty layers to feed the families who live around the foot of the guardian mountain.

During this ritual, the polysemic term *ch'iwu* occurs in different contexts. In ordinary parlance *ch'iwu* means "shadow." But here *ch'iwu* refers initially to the cooked meat of the sacrificed animal distributed to the participants at the family banquet. Then *ch'iwu* is the term spoken aloud while the participants chew a round of coca leaves after eating, to record the meat granted them by the mountain. And once the family group and ritual specialist reach the offering place on the side of the guardian mountain, *ch'iwu* is the term used to describe the wrapping of coca leaves around the reconstituted animal skeleton, offered in the family "box," together with the other ritual ingredients. So, in the whole ritual sequence, *ch'iwu* captures the transformations of the meat of the sacrificed animal, first as the coca leaves wrapped around its skeleton in the offering pit, then as the dense shadowy rainclouds that generate the new covering of green pastures in the territory under the domain of the guardian mountain, and finally in the new green pastures that feed young herd animals and produce their new wrappings of meat and fat, that will render food in the coming year for the humans that live there. This whole complex concerns the circulation of waters in the control and balance of the local ecosystems (cf. Bugallo, 2015, p. 109), but goes beyond this in the recreation of life itself, embodied in this complex cycle of commensality.

6. Felines as the Guardians of the Gateways Between Worlds

As the participants close the mountain box and leave the place, they should never look back; they might see mountain cats or other felines approach the place to devour the animal remains (cf. Bugallo, 2015, p. 502). It is common knowledge that these felines, while eating the animal offerings left on the mountainsides, could eat any humans there. This is the reason given why women should not approach these ritual places. It is as if the fetid breath from the decomposing carcass, which will gradually release the rains, embodies that of the feline predator that consumed the offering.

Felines are considered the real mountain “herders” (*awatiri*) that protect the herd animals if they have been given the right offerings in their proper moment. The Qaqachakas often mention how animals have been found as dry cadavers at the foot of cliff faces, with their blood sucked out, and they blame these mountain beings, *paqu punchu* and *paqu awayu*, male and female, referring to the wild cats (*titi michi*) that have not been duly respected at certain moments. Sometimes these beings are said to push the animals over the cliffs, before sucking out their blood. This emphasis in sucking out the blood seems to be related to the powerful breath felines are thought to possess; when they grip the throat of a herd animal, their breath alone is considered sufficient to kill it, and the body is not maimed.

In these circumstances, a feline, as the model herder of the Pachamama and Master of the Animals, plays a vital role in the wider ecological cycle concerning the creation of clouds and subsequent rainfall. This tie between felines and rains is part of a long tradition. Many Inka and colonial drinking cups show felines from whose mouths rainbows form, as the beings that controlled the rains in the Inka empire (Figure 2). Those drinking cups in the form of feline heads are also covered with images of coca leaves, as in the sequence of transformations called *ch'iwu* (see for example MAM7507, in the Juan Larrea Collection).



Figure 2 – Inka *qiru* with felines and a rainbow. From: “Beaker; kero”, British Museum of London, 1950, https://www.britishmuseum.org/collection/object/E_Am1950-22-2. CC BY-NC-SA 4.0

Another widespread idea is that felines are the guardians of springs of water on the hillsides, of the gates between the different worlds, and hence of the entry points into this world of the llama herds released from these watery places. Around the Taraco Peninsula, near the site of Tiwanaku and the pre-Tiwanaku site of Chiripa, the locals still pay their respects to the wild cats (*titi michi*) thought to guard the springs there.

In Northwest Argentina, Bugallo notes how felines (or sometimes foxes) are considered the animal herders of the Pachamama and Coquena, as in Qa-qachaka. Coquena himself goes behind his animals, as their owner, herder

and driver, dressed in vicuña fibre, like his animals clothed in skins, fibre and pelts. Curiously, the name Coquena seems to derive from the Spanish *coqueen*: “chew some coca” in the imperative, given the close nexus between coca leaves and animal pasture (Bugallo, 2015, pp. 356–7). This makes the ritual incentive in the Jujuy puna to renew the vegetative covering each year, through sacrifice and offerings, an equivalent to the *ch’iwu* complex in the South-central Andes of Bolivia (Arnold & Yapita, 2001, p. 110; Bugallo, 2015, p. 365). And it makes of the etymology of Coquena a direct link to the semantics of *ch’iwu*, as meat, coca leaves, clouds and rain, pastures and animal fleece, in distinct moments during the regeneration of these multiple external coverings, and of Coquena a personification of *ch’iwu* in its manifold senses as transformative power (cf. Bugallo, 2015, pp. 354, 506–507, 545). But note that, behind these reciprocal relations of mutual regeneration, there lurks the predatory feline, as the herder par excellence of the Master of the Animals and his consort, capable of vengeance upon any humans that fail to make the appropriate offerings.

The notion that felines are the true herders of the animals echoes those of other societies where these apex predators are admired, as they cull the weaker animals and so keep the herds healthy. The Scottish anthropologist Penelope Dransart (2002, p. 28), referring to Isluga in Chile, confirms how felines are the spiritual guardians of the domesticated animals there too. This is evident in the Chilean *wayñu* ceremony, equivalent to the “*señalada*” in Argentina, when the participants manage mummified mountain cats, as well as loons or grebes (*chullumpi*), as the true “herders” of the camelids (Dransart, 2002, p. 92, cited in Smith, 2012, p. 44). The birds here complement felines as the spiritual aspect of the llamas, as they act as intermediaries between the inner world of the mountain lakes, lagoons and rivers, the surface world of the earth as such, and the sky world above.

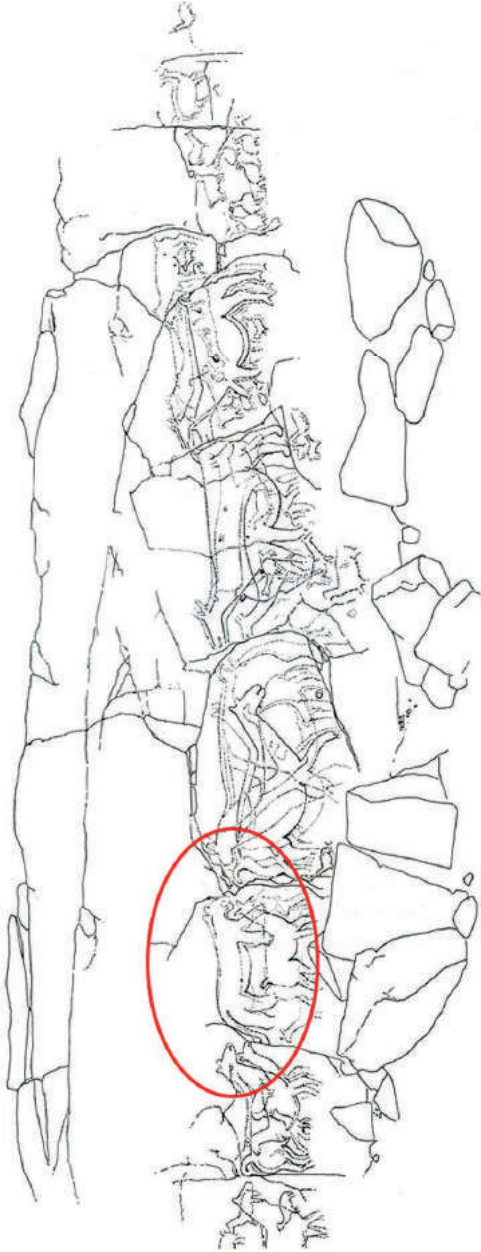


Figure 3 – Rock art in the North of Chile, with a feline as the herder of the animals, in the site TU-60, Quebrada de Tulán, Salar de Atacama. From: "Panel of rock art, site TU 60" (p. 349, Fig. 7.24), P. Z. Dransart, 1991. Copyright 1991 P. Z. Dransart. Reprinted with permission.

These ideas about felines as animal herders have a long trajectory, given the many images of felines guarding camelids in Precolumbian Andean rock art. Dransart (2002, pp. 193–194, Fig. 7.19, p. 237) describes two panels of this type in North Chile near the frontier with Bolivia. One panel (TU 60) shows life-sized camelids, which face a more or less vertical fissure in the rock face. Immediately to the left of this crack, a life-sized puma confronts the camelids and faces the viewer's right (Dransart, 2002, p. 193) (figure 3). The vertical figure is pertinent, because it alludes to the idea that the camelids emerge from the springs or "eyes" of water, and the caverns in the mountain.

7. Alimentary Exogamy or the "Own Kill Rule"

These long-term associations in Andean rituals are reminiscent of the classic anthropological complex of "exogamy," concerning marriage rules, the social norms of animal sacrifice, and the redistribution of the resulting meat and rules of commensality. So are many aspects of present day rituals described here. First, in the *qurpachada* ritual, the main offering to the Pachamama is the foetus of a sacrificed llama. Second, the tendency in the preparation of the *tis-tincha* feast is to avoid the animal nature of the sacrifice, manifest as the blood present in the meat, by overcooking it, so that the sacrificer can eat it. And third, the predatory figure of the feline is often associated with the moon, the rains and the rainbow, and regarded as the ideal herder at the bid of the Pachamama and Coquena, but with a danger of vengeance towards the animals and their human owners if they have not been rendered proper offerings.

The norms of the division of prey, according to the rules of "alimentary exogamy" (Makarius & Makarius, 1961; Alain Testart, 1978, 1985, 1986), or the "own kill rule" (Knight, 1991, cap. 3; cf. Malinowski 1913, p. 290), are that when a hunter kills an animal, the hunter himself is prohibited from eating his own prey, because this would infringe the rules of sociability and reciprocity that bind human groups through their ties of exogamy. Rather, the hunter must offer a part of the prey to the family of his partner, after having offered, at the site of the kill, a vital part of the game animal to the Master of the Animals (or his equivalent) in recompense for having killed an animal from his domain.

Another idea shared by many groups is that if the hunter were to eat his own prey, he would lose his “luck” in hunting other animals. Among hunters in South America, this complex has been illustrated by Baldus (1952) among the Siriono in eastern Bolivia. Among the Guayaki of eastern Paraguay (Clastres, 1972), this notion of good-luck is called *pana*, while *pane* is the anguish a hunter feels if he eats his prey and loses his luck. For the Bororo of Brazil, according to Chris Crocker (1985, p. 41 ff.), the term *bope* refers to the spirits of certain animals of prey with which the hunter himself identifies, and to which he must offer a part of the animal before eating the rest. He must also take care not to eat the *blood* of these animals, so the meat must be boiled sufficiently to obviate any evidence of the blood (Crocker, 1985, pp. 41–42), in alimentary rules similar to those in the Andean *tistincha* feast.

The concept of “luck among contemporary Andean herders seems to follow on from this hunting logic, with its corporeal, social and alimentary aspects. However, more attention is given to the social practices of rearing animals in herds, mainly by the women of a household, and to how a male herder should kill and process a herd animal before it becomes edible meat in the family kitchen. In Huachichocana, as in Qaqachaka, “luck” (*surti*) describes this social relationship between a herder and his or her animals, established in childhood, especially a herder’s predisposition to reproduce many animals from the small animal gifts they receive as children at the animal marking ceremony by their parents (Arnold & Yapita, 2001, pp. 78, 105; Pazzarelli, 2017, p. 141). In this social context, luck also refers to a female herder’s ability to transform animals from the hills into family herd animals. At the end of their lives, luck refers to how a male herder should kill a herd animal “well,” without the animal suffering. At the moment of beheading, the animal’s *animu* or spirit is said to leave the body. But the animal’s luck only leaves once the bile is separated by hand from the rest of the viscera, and the meat is dried out of blood, and folded “like cloths” so that it looks materially different from fresh meat to any potential predator (Pazzarelli, 2017, p. 137–139). Only then is the animal transformed into edible meat, and the luck able to leave the carcass to recirculate in the herder’s family and in the wider world. If any of these actions should be thwarted, any luck left in the meat can awaken the hunger of predators, including the mountain beings.

These ideas and actions suggest that the herder, in an Andean context, accomplishes similar norms of alimentary exogamy to those of a hunter, at the moment of killing the animal, and by offering the reconstituted bones of the *tistincha* feast, or the blood and bile from a kill, as an offering in recompense for the spirit of the animals. Or does the Andean herder, in comparison with the hunter, assume the role of the Master of the Animals (or the Pachamama) at the moment of sacrifice, turning a hunting act into a sacrificial act, in which case the Master of the Animals (or the Pachamama) is sacrificing one of his or her own animals? I suspect that these sacrificial aspects, in the *qurpachada* and *tistincha*, can be perceived from the point of view of both a hunter and a herder. From the point of view of the *hunter*, a part of the hunted animal is offered to the mountain in the skeletal bones, blood or viscera. Yet from the point of view of the herder, by eating the *tistincha* with the teeth of a feline, he is identifying with the Pachamama, the Master of the Animals, and their own “feline” herders par excellence, in the slaughter of one of their own animals.

In addition, the redistributive impulse at the basis of these rites illustrate the moral rules, or *costumbres*, that sustain them. Bugallo calls this “culinary reciprocity” (Bugallo, 2015, p. 82). For Bugallo, the moral obligation at the basis of these reciprocal acts goes much further than these ritual contexts, to include the norms of economic interchange of distinct products between different ecological zones, and the sense of what is “just” in the prices established in regional fairs (Bugallo, 2015, p. 482). Here, moral obligations, too, are extensions of biocultural systems. The norms for lodging people (known as *qurpa*) during their travels to other zones are another example, as is the widely disseminated idea among present day highland populations that the earth is the medium for living and the source of work.

8. Concluding Remarks

My aim here, to view human-mountain relations in the Andes in terms of both reciprocity and predation, sought to understand the history of these relations, with reference to any differences that might have taken place in the transition between hunting and herding societies.

This has entailed going beyond the language of “reciprocal pacts” between humans and mountains, and taking into account the consequences of over-harvesting game animals, plants or minerals. Turning to more universal ideas about the rules of the hunt underlying these pacts in the past, I suggested that these, too, occurred within a more asymmetric and predatory system of power relations, only assuaged by modalities of sacrifice and commensality towards the powerful Masters of the game animals. It seems probable that contemporary herders in the Andes inherited these ideas, but now directed towards the high Guardian Mountains. An intermediary aspect at play here seems to be the regional history of mining, where over-extraction is a powerful source of vengeance on the part of these mountain beings.

This change of emphasis in the analysis of human-mountain relations, to take into account their asymmetrical and predatory aspects rather than focusing exclusively on symmetry and reciprocity, confirms the lowland proposition that recognizing the mastery and ownership on the part of the Masters of the Animals might be an important link between notions of predation and commensality (Allard, 2019). The ethnographic data I cited also confirms that there are no major differences in rules between hunters and herders within the modern Andean pastoral societies that descended from these earlier hunting traditions, although the figure of the hunter does still seem to lurk in the background as a more primordial and predatory personage.

In addition, these similarities in rules of behaviour do imply that both hunters and herders direct their attention towards the continuity of life in a certain territory, through techniques of resource management combined with ethical patterns of behaviour. The ethnographic data presented here confirms that the herders in contemporary rituals, such as the *qurpachada*, the *tistincha*, and the *ch'iwu* mountain sacrifice, direct their ritual techniques to ensure these possibilities. However, this observation must also take into account the awareness, on the part of these social actors, that reproducing their conditions of life in local ecosystems also demands the accomplishment of a set of moral obligations towards the Guardian Mountain beings with their greater-than-human power. In this sense, various human moral obligations are directed towards what Gose calls a greater “metapersonal” power (2018, p. 488), although Gose assumes that this greater metapower has colonised overtones, prefiguring alien political power (2016).

Human-mountain relations in the Andes have undoubtedly gone through many periods of change. But I propose that some underlying characteristics of these human-mountain relations long predate colonial power, and can be traced to the rules of behaviour of much earlier hunting societies. In a low-land context, Carlos Fausto, too (2008, p. 6), identifies a certain logic to how human actors have themselves created these “masters” and “owners” of all the resources within their domain (animal, vegetable, mineral, human), and as the real agents that ensure the continuity of life, if they receive adequate sacrificial offerings. Often personified in a human-like image, the predominant characteristics of this creation are of a singular, yet collective being, which absorbs the multiplicity of individual actors and their acts, even entire ecosystems, within itself. It is indeed a human representation of collectivity and group subjectivity, in a Durkheimian sense. This is what gives this figure its predatory power, to such a degree that humans will render their lives for its continuity.

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