

## **Navigating Globalization through Myth in Quechua Communities of Southern Peru**

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### **Introduction**

My research is positioned at the convergence of myth and globalization, exploring how intercultural contact impacts myth in contemporary Peruvian Quechua communities as well as how myth aids in interpreting and shaping the meaning of that contact. In the fields of folklore and anthropology, myth is operationally defined as a sacred narrative that describes events that occurred before historical time (Dundes 1984). Myth proves to be a valuable area to study in the context of globalization due to the various functions it performs in navigating the interaction between cultures, such as providing societies and individuals with ultimate moral ground (Schrempf 2012) or serving as means of making sense of intercultural contact (Clarke 2007).

The Quechua are the direct descendants of the ancient Inca, an empire that extended along the Andes Mountains until conquered by the Spanish in the late sixteenth century. The Sacred Valley, previously the heart of the Inca Empire, is now a popular location for the study of the Quechua in a modern context, combining the indigenous culture with a contemporary urban environment. Within these Quechua communities, myth remains prevalent, preserved through oral tradition (Howard 2012; Mannheim and Van Vleet 1998; Nuckolls 2003) as well as through ritual (Hill 2008).

While myths, legends, and folktales all provide significant insight into the values of a culture, myth is distinct for its sacredness, often regarded as particularly salient and central to a culture's core beliefs. Furthermore, because of the ahistorical nature of myth, many cultures continually reference and apply myths to contemporary situations (Clarke 2007; Hill 2010). Myths are incorporated and integrated into a coherent view of the world, often by means of ritual, thus bringing the creative events of the beginning of time to life and enabling them to be repeated and applied in the present (Myers 2001).

Traditionally, myth has been explored using a variety of approaches, including functionalist (Malinowski 1926), structuralist (Lévi-Strauss 1976), and psychological (Dundes 1962). More recently, folklorists have employed instrumental and expressive lenses, analyzing myth for its social and cultural functions as well as its style and presentation (Bronner 2012). Previous research on specifically Quechua myth and narrative has focused heavily on morphology and other linguistic structures (Carpenter 1985; Seligmann 1987; Mannheim and Van Vleet 1998; Howard 2012) rather than the functional role it plays in the community. In his analysis of Quichua myth (an Ecuadorian subpopulation of the Quechua), Carpenter (1985) studies morphemes and narrative structure of the oral traditions of the Loreto Quichua to

demonstrate how individual myths function at both the concrete and symbolic levels and how each performance follows underlying concepts of the language and culture. Mannheim and Van Vleet (1998) also rely heavily on the linguistic analysis of Quechua myths to draw conclusions about these narratives. Both Seligmann (1987) and Howard (2012) employ analytical methods rooted in linguistics to investigate specific Quechua concepts of “wallpa” (“chicken”) and human-spirit metamorphosis, respectively.

From these studies, Quechua myth has been explored through textual and linguistic analysis, rather than ethnographic methods of interviewing and participant observation. Such approaches lack both a balance of instrumental and expressive analysis as well as enough attention to contextual dimensions of narrative performance, dimensions that are central to the contemporary folklore theory (Cashman 2012). Accordingly, applying folklore methods and theory provides a new avenue for the analysis of Quechua myth, one grounded in the more emic or native perspective offered by ethnographic analysis.

However, scholarship on other indigenous Latin American groups such as the Peruvian Yanesha and the Venezuelan Wakuénai has employed more instrumental approaches to great effect. The Yanesha, who have been displaced by colonization, have interpreted such events through their mythology and conceptualized these efforts as acts of desecration (Santos-Granero 1998). In this way, myth functions as an interpretive agent for the Yanesha considering present globalization. Similarly, the Wakuénai have incorporated the experience of Western colonization into "their narrative representations of the original coming-into-being of human society and history" (Hill 1993:159). The myths of the Wakuénai have shifted to include these experiences of globalization by changing and adapting the details of the landscape to reflect the effects of colonization. Santos-Granero (1998) and Hill (1993) employed interviews, participant observation, content analysis of narratives, and archaeological and historical analysis of local geography in efforts to connect myth to the surrounding landscape for both the Yanesha and Wakuénai.

Understanding the relationship between myth and globalization is crucial since myth is often used by the Quechua to actively navigate and make sense of their globalized identities. Globalization embodies “a transformation in the spatial organization of social relations and transactions, generating transcontinental or interregional flows and networks of activity, interaction, and power” (Held and McGrew 2004:462). Recent literature on Latin American society and culture emphasizes the ways in which Latin American cultural groups are refashioning traditional or indigenous cultural practices in the context of modernity (Hill 2010, Belton 2010), showing how they are taking ownership of globalizing forces. For example, the emic, political dimension of “interculturalidad,” that requires the interplay of Spanish and Quechua cultures is built upon a notion of adaptation and resistance, showcasing how indigenous activists are working with the Quechua to claim more of a stake in the Peruvian government while still maintaining their indigeneity (García 2003; Bonilla 2006; Hill 2010). Myth plays a fundamental role in the construction of indigenous identity as it positions indigeneity in relation to culturally shared values and beliefs (Bamberg 2012). Furthermore, the pride people take in their indigenous identity, known as *indigenismo* (Hill 2010) provides the Quechua a means of presenting themselves to external communities. Recognizing the active role indigenous groups play in myth narration parallels recent scholarship on globalization, which calls for indigenous

peoples to be seen not as victims but as actors (Hahn 2008, García 2003). Through both the examination of the role Quechua storytellers assume in myth narration as well as the framing of indigenous peoples in the context of globalization, this project will bridge the connection between myth and globalization through the construction of Quechua indigenismo.

### **Main Goal of Project**

The purpose of this research project is to analyze how myths are perceived, shared, and applied in Quechua communities in southern Peru; determine the specific functions myths have within these communities; explore how globalization has impacted Quechua myth; and investigate how myth is used to navigate instances of intercultural contact and globalization.

Analyzing how myth is perceived, shared, and applied among the Quechua addresses critical matters of indigenous identity, looking at ways local communities behave as active agents in constructing identity in a rapidly globalizing world. Furthermore, this project addresses the crucial role myth plays in the belief systems of Quechua communities, focusing on how myth functions at both the individual and institutional levels of belief systems. The Peruvian Quechua are a particularly relevant group to examine as Quechua activists are attempting to reform the educational and political systems of Peru to become more inclusive of indigenous groups. Making the national education system more intercultural, activists argue, will better equip indigenous people to empower themselves and demand that the state grant them rights as indigenous citizens. Moreover, activists demand government attention to the cultural and political rights of indigenous groups by asking for the recognition and legitimation of linguistic and ethnic differences (Brysk 1996; García 2003; Hill 2010). Investigating the impact intercultural contact has on myth and the way community members apply myth to understand that relationship is particularly relevant to these activist groups, as myth's encapsulation of the core values of a culture influences the way Quechua people present themselves to external communities.

Diverging from the existing literature that rests in the field of linguistic anthropology, this project pioneers a folkloric examination of Quechua myth and ethnographic exploration of myth's function in the communities. Although other Latin American indigenous groups like the Yanasha and Wakuénai have received attention regarding globalization and instrumental approaches to folklore, the Quechua have yet to be studied under such contexts. The intersection of globalization, myth, and Quechua identity is unexplored territory and this project, positioned at that convergence, helps yield new contributions to the fields of folklore and cultural anthropology.

### **Community Site**

Huilloc, situated about three hours from Cusco and 45 minutes from Ollantaytambo, is one of the many different Quechua communities on the Río Patacancha, a river located within the province of Urubamba in the department of Cusco. A small village, Huilloc has a population of about 800 individuals, or approximately 200 families. All citizens speak Quechua and a substantial fraction speaks Spanish at varying levels, primarily men and younger individuals.

Agriculture, artisanship, and tourism drive Huilloc's economy, each family owning at least one chacra—a farm typically worked by men—and many kinds of animals. Almost all able-bodied men work on the Inca Trail during the tourist season (May-September) as porters or cooks, ranging from hikes once a month to hikes every week. Most women tend to remain at home weaving textiles, though current trends in Huilloc encourage women to visit Ollantaytambo to sell their products. Awamaki is a nonprofit that works with weavers in the region to help sell products, refashioning woven textiles into marketable products for a tourist consumer base. Tourism, a stimulating factor for the textile-driven part of Huilloc's economy, yields ample income on its own, too. Claudio Laucata, a key informant, led a tourism association comprised of thirty community members, each contributing to the tourism industry in some capacity. Furthermore, because Huilloc is situated on the Lares Trail and a popular mountain biking path, tourists unaffiliated with a company often pass through the town.

## **Methodology**

Data was collected during June and July 2016 in the small Quechua community of Huilloc in the Sacred Valley. I employed ethnographic methods for data collection as well as situational and cultural context analysis for myths. These approaches allow me to consider how the Quechua use myth to navigate intercultural contact and globalization as well as the ways such forces impact the myths themselves.

For collection methods, my project relied on ethnographic fieldwork to provide a detailed description of a culture using interviews, participant observation, and direct observation. Though unstructured interviews were occasionally conducted, my main method for collecting data was semi-structured interviews, allowing for participants to elaborate upon a set list of questions (Annex 1), thereby providing unique perspectives for each individual. I interviewed eleven community members, nine from Huilloc and two from neighboring communities. Snowball sampling was used to obtain further interviews, relying on the connections of my key informant, Claudio Laucata. Because Andean folklorist John McDowell (1998) posits that South American Indian myth cannot be analyzed apart from its native language, I sought Claudio's assistance in contextualizing and translating those interviews held in Quechua. Future studies should be conducted in Quechua to help overcome this barrier.

To gain context for the data collected through interviews, I also conducted participant and direct observation in the community. I observed instances of globalization and intercultural contact in the community, namely the presence and enactment of tourism. However, other factors of intercultural contact—a phenomenon catalyzed by globalization—were also observed, such as the gradual transition from Catholicism to Evangelicalism and the increase in adolescents attending school in Ollantaytambo. Furthermore, I took notes any time myths or mythic figures were shared or referenced, be it in more formalized ritual settings or during casual conversations.

I spoke using a tape recorder with a total of eleven community members. Because I wanted to focus on myth and its function within a single community, most of my participants were from Huilloc. One informant, Cristina, lived in the neighboring town Qallqanqa while another, Mario, lived in Choquechaca. While their interviews cannot necessarily be analyzed

directly in relation to Huilloc, they still provide insight into some of the narratives shared in Quechua communities in the Sacred Valley region. Although collecting a diverse range of voices is ideal, one of the limitations of snowball sampling is its reliance on the relationships of the informants already interviewed. This should be taken into consideration when reading the results, as having a concentrated group of primarily Catholics is not necessarily representative of Huilloc's religious demographics.

## Myth

Academically, taxonomy matters when it comes to narrative folklore. William Bascom's 1965 article adds clarity to the ambiguity behind generic boundaries, arguing that the term "folktale" refers to a fictitious narrative, "legend" refers to a true narrative that takes place in a past time and setting still familiar to the audience, and "myth" refers to a true narrative with a setting in the remote past. Furthermore, myths are accepted on faith and are often associated with ritual and dogma.

While there are clear definitions and differences in these three predominant forms of prose narrative folklore, such definitions are etic and not particularly applicable or relevant to the community members in Huilloc. According to Claudio, myth is defined as "Nuevo. Como una educación... Preguntas universitarias."<sup>1</sup> Claudio's definition of mito includes explanations of cultural systems and phenomena, often apparent in conversations with educators or persons associated with academia. For legends, Claudio provided an example: "Muere mi papa, entonces yo estoy caminando tristemente. Muere mi papa, muere mi mama, entonces no tengo dónde de vivir. Voy a una casa de mi tía. No me hacen buena alimentación..."<sup>2</sup> A legend is classified as a personal history shared in narrative form. Lastly, Claudio referred to the term cuentos antiguos to indicate the stories shared in the community, which encompasses the etic definition of myth.

Cuentos antiguos are shared through many different media, the most common of which is oral narration. Stories tend to be shared by grandparents to kids when they are young. Many informants commented that they used to know stories when they were younger but have now forgotten many because of the lapse in time. According to the majority of informants, abuelitos and viejitos (old men) are the comuneros, or community members, who share stories, evident in my interviews with Manuel (80 years old) and Primitivo (75 years old), both happy to share some of the stories they knew. Decades prior to the study, cuentos antiguos were typically shared within the household at night after dinner. Benigno remembered how his father used to tell stories to calm down him and his siblings when it was time for bed. According to participants, why stories are shared in Huilloc seemed to depend on situational context: sometimes it is to entertain, other times it is to pass the time, and still other times it is to share a part of Huilloc's cultural history.

Cuentos antiguos are also present in some of the textiles. Francisca Laucata walked me through some of the animal figures on the manta she had with her, showing images of foxes, condors, and pumas. According to her, the production of textiles has changed over time due to tourism. Patterns have shifted to become more iconographic, as tourists are interested in the images that more clearly represent the community from which the textiles are produced. Older textiles are more design-driven rather than image-driven. Animals from cuentos antiguos are

present in contemporary textiles but not old textiles, showing how the details of these stories are being evoked in a tourism context as means of expressing cultural identity.

Lastly, mythic figures are communicated in Huilloc via ritual. The payment to Pachamama is a great example, which is a ritual in which comuneros make an offering to Pachamama, the Andean Earth mother. These payments occur predominantly in August but also take place throughout the year, many times with tourists involved. When asked about the difference between an offering with tourists versus one without them, Claudio insisted that both are equally legitimate. However, the key difference between the two contexts is the takeaway from the audience, as the offering would likely be more spiritually significant for a comunero than it would be for a temporary visitor. Overall, like textiles, rituals have increased in frequency because of tourism.

## **Globalization**

Globalization is frequently framed as a negative phenomenon faced by indigenous populations, and while true in many instances, such a stance positions indigenous populations as victims and does not frame them as active agents considering globalization. I propose to take a stance like that of Haarstad and Fløysand (2007), who frame the individuals in Tambogrande, Peru as agents in response to outside forces. That being said, the emic perspective is still crucial for understanding how the Quechua in Huilloc navigate globalization. Based on the data collected, Huilloc comuneros understand globalizing forces at multiple levels, including the environmental, economic, and religious.

Environmental globalization is most evident in the introduction of the eucalyptus tree to the region. Claudio mentioned that the Spanish brought the invasive species in the sixteenth century, which has continued to grow in controlled and natural situations since its arrival. However, according to a tour guide, the Peruvian government introduced the tree in the early twentieth century to aid in wood supply for the region. Although one is in the context of colonization and the other in globalization, both recollections demonstrate how the tree is a physical representation of intercultural contact in the region.

Claudio dubbed the tree as a negative entity for Huilloc because it hurts Pachamama. When asked why, he cited the fact that it soaks up water from the other native plants. At the same time, the tree is a valuable resource used in the community, providing items like firewood and construction materials. Claudio insisted that the tree's negative presence was not the fault of an outside force, but rather of the community for continually allowing it to grow. The community taking the role of the perpetrator in the eucalyptus issue shows Huilloc's agency in the situation, thusly positioning the comuneros in a place of power to act should they want to in the future, paralleling the communities studied by Bonilla (2006) and Haarstad and Fløysand (2007).

The principal way Huilloc comuneros experience economic globalization is through tourism. The Laucata family owns a small handbook that serves as a guide for navigating tourism, explaining the proper ways to prepare for and accommodate visitors. Cleaning the yard and offering flowers to visitors are tips mentioned to ensure tourists have a positive experience.

As mentioned in the previous section about myths, textiles have changed, too. Tourists are more likely to buy a manta with animals than one with geometric designs. New color schemes and products have also been introduced, including small handbags and coin purses that are increasingly popular among younger generations of tourists.

Generally, comuneros have positive views of tourists. Marta Laucata de Quispe appreciated both the connections formed—comparing tourists to sisters—as well as the additional income. Because most of my informants were involved in the tourism association, tourism was greatly appreciated by the folks with whom I spoke. Some comuneros did not want to associate with tourists, but Marta attributed that to their general lack of desire to do any additional work.

Another major change that has come from tourism directly deals with the sharing of cuentos antiguos. Decades ago, Francisca recalled hearing stories from her grandfather late at night in their small shack by the farm. When it was too cold to go to bed, everyone would stay awake and listen to stories. Once tourism and its inherent revenue boost were introduced to Huilloc, comuneros constructed houses with warm rooms, electricity, and multiple beds. The physical setting where stories were typically shared changed and, because of that, so did the instances of sharing stories. During our nighttime interview, Francisca turned to her daughter Mily, asleep on the table next to us, and pointed to her as a perfect example of what she was talking about: because the house was warm and the weather and animal noises did not keep her awake, there was not a natural time to share stories with her.

The final manifestation of globalization is religious. Fifty years ago, all the comuneros in Huilloc were Catholic; now, the population is broken up into different religious fragments, including Methodist, Israelista, and other forms of evangelical Christianity. Padre Facundino, the priest of Huilloc, told me that Huilloc is less united because of this religious division. Groups are distinct now. Even the kids make fun of one another for their religion, as Dino mentioned his classmates rudely call him, “Catholic!” instead of by his name at school.

The primary religious division is between Catholicism and all other forms of evangelical Christianity. Catholics in Huilloc are known for keeping with cultural traditions, such as festivals, rituals, dances, and storytelling. Evangelical Christians refer to these acts as sacrilegious or, occasionally, as connections to the Devil. The convergence of Andean animism and Western ideals of Catholicism is termed “Catholic” the region, as beliefs in Pachamama and apus are distinctly Catholic (yet frowned upon by non-Catholics). The conversion phenomenon brought about by missionaries frightens Catholics like Claudio and Padre Facundino, who say that such a change has led and will continue to lead to a loss of culture in Huilloc over time. Already, non-Catholics do not engage in annual festivals, such as the Bajada de Los Reyes every January. In the eyes of many Catholics, if Catholicism is lost, so are the traditions that go along with it.

Interestingly the tourism association—whose members perform rituals and dances associated with Andean cosmology—is not solely Catholic. Evangelical comuneros still take part by participating in the preparation of the rituals yet only observing them during their performances. This paints an interesting image of globalization, as many Catholic comuneros

now perceive tourism as means of retaining religious—and subsequently cultural—identity in Huilloc, especially among those who no longer identify as Catholic.

## Conclusion

The different manifestations of globalization lead to a central conclusion: the comuneros of Huilloc view globalization as a complex phenomenon. In many ways, they are appreciative of its benefits: increased income, increased standard of living, and a chance to express their cultural identity—not only to others—but to themselves as well. At the same time, they recognize the detriments: invasive species and religious conversion associated with identity loss. This begs the question: what role does myth play in this experience for the comuneros of Huilloc?

Mythic narratives are seen as oral representations of cultural tradition to the comuneros of Huilloc. Sharing them is a method of informing a younger generation of the culture of the past. In this sense, myths are important for maintaining cultural identity, explaining why they are shared even though such sharing settings have decreased over time due to housing development in Huilloc. Ritual and textile representations of myth have increased because of globalization's manifestation in the form of tourism. These, too, are seen as representations of cultural tradition and are similarly important for comuneros.

Globalization has impacted myth in several ways. Beginning with oral narration, the context and frequency has changed over time due to globalization. Tourism has directly increased the frequency of ritual performances that have associated mythic figures. Furthermore, tourists have changed the nature of woven products, as more include animal images that are commonly mentioned in cuentos antiguos. Indirectly, tourism has rapidly boosted the economy of Huilloc, leading to changes in house development. Physically altering the setting, according to Francisca, has reduced the frequency of storytelling, as the ability for children to go to bed directly after dinner removes the prime time for storytelling. Furthermore, the introduction of religions other than Catholicism has reduced the ritualistic performances connecting to myth, yet such changes are countered by their increase due to tourism.

The evocation of the mythic Pachamama in relation to the eucalyptus highlights another way comuneros invoke myth to navigate globalization. Claudio applying Pachamama to the situation shows how Quechua comuneros understand the tree as a negative presence in the region. This connects to the larger illustration of how the Quechua use myth to understand intercultural contact, a phenomenon that intensifies every year with increasing amounts of tourism, religious conversion, and changes to the environment.

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