

Masters of the Living Energy



The Mystical World
of the Q'ero of Peru

Joan Parisi Wilcox

Masters of the Living Energy

“Joan Parisi Wilcox has given us a mature and sensitive portrait of a mystical system as seen through the eyes of its practitioners, the Q’ero. Written with heart and respect, this book is a gateway for serious seekers to discover the world of living energy and to learn how to live in harmony with nature and each other.”

DEEPAK CHOPRA,
author of *The Seven Spiritual Laws of Success*

“You will bring the word of the Q’ero to the world.”

DON MARIANO APASA MARCHAQA, Q’ero Master,
speaking to the author

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Inner Traditions
Rochester, Vermont

Acknowledgments

No book is ever the author's alone. Many people provide inspiration, ideas, feedback, and support. I have been blessed to have had the assistance of many extraordinary people during this project.

My deepest appreciation and love to my family, each of whom has nurtured me in ways untold, and to my friends and fellow adventurers who were indirectly a part of the making of this book. I especially would like to acknowledge my mother, who is my best friend, my earliest and greatest inspiration, and an exquisite example of strength and unconditional love.

My heartfelt thanks to Cristobál Cornejo, Jesse Telles, and Anamaria Szendroi, each of whom at various times served as Spanish translators. To anthropologist Ricardo Valderrama Fernández, I offer my sincerest gratitude for providing the Quechua translations during the Urubamba interviews.

There is no way to gauge the importance of Dr. Juan Núñez del Prado's contribution to this book. Very simply, it would not have been written without him. From my first meeting with him, which took place in the dreamtime, I knew Juan would be more than a friend and teacher to me; he would be a mentor. He has proven that to be true in more ways than he knows. He has also demonstrated that a sharp intelligence and a keen skepticism can happily coexist with humility, integrity, and a deep spirituality.

It also is impossible to adequately acknowledge my husband, John, for his unconditional support and love. It is largely your spirit, John, that has so magnificently scripted our story together, through all its challenges and triumphs.

I thank the Q'ero, the keepers of the ancient knowledge, and Fredy "Puma" Quispe Singona, who have been more than teachers to me; they have become friends. Anything that touches your heart and stirs your spirit in this book comes first from them, a gift to you from *your* brothers and sisters in the Andes.

Writing the first edition of this book was a complicated project that spanned geographic boundaries, cultures, and languages. The words, knowledge, and wisdom of the Andean shamans and their apprentices that I have been able to record for you here are the result of many people opening their hearts and their spirits to you, directing the finest energies from the *hanaq pacha* (upper world) to the *kay pacha* (middle world) for your understanding and use. Any errors that occur are, I suspect, stray signals from the *ukhu pacha* (lower world)!

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Author's Note to the Revised Edition

When I learned that my publisher would be bringing out a revised, paperback edition of the original *Keepers of the Ancient Knowledge: The Mystical World of the Q'ero Indians of Peru*, I was delighted. Updating the book gave me the opportunity to plug what I perceived as a large hole in that original edition by providing an in-depth discussion of the *mesa*, which is similar to a Native North American medicine bundle, and the *mesa*'s many uses, especially in healing. My primary "informant," to use the anthropological term, for this additional information was a young shaman of impressive knowledge, Fredy "Puma" Quispe Singona. My husband and I first met Puma at a conference on Andean shamanism and healing in Washington, D.C., and he later came to stay at our home in North Carolina. During this extended visit, he taught us more about the *mesa* than we had learned in our previous ten years working in the Andean spiritual tradition. I have presented Puma's teaching about the *mesa* and healing in a new [part 3](#), and the original [part 3](#)—the exercises—is now [part 4](#). Puma speaks Spanish, Quechua, and English, and as I have done with the words of the Q'ero, I have reproduced Puma's words as closely as possible to the way he spoke them, editing only for grammar, syntax, and context.

In addition to adding this new section, I have substantially revised many chapters in [Part 1](#), especially the chapter on energy and the energy body. I also have corrected errors elsewhere in the book and generally updated or clarified information throughout. Other portions of the book remain largely unaltered, as my purpose has always been to provide readers the fundamentals of the Andean spiritual arts and those fundamentals have not changed. However, since the original publication of this book, I have continued to work in the Andean tradition, and, as a natural result, my understanding of the tradition has deepened. Consequently, those of you who are familiar with the earlier edition may notice many small but meaningful changes throughout the book. These reflect not only my greater insight into

what I have long known but new information as well. My primary teacher, anthropologist Juan Núñez del Prado, who has been fully initiated into the sacred tradition, began a few years ago to share with his apprentices the teaching of his third Andean mentor, don Melchor Desa.¹ With Juan's permission, I have included some of the work of the Melchor Desa lineage in [chapter 2](#).

Throughout the book, you may notice that for certain Quechua words, my spelling choices vary from those that might be more familiar to you or other Westerners studying the tradition. Quechua, the administrative language of the Inkas and the indigenous language of Peru, historically was not a written language, but it has been transcribed by historians and scholars. Thus, there are various "official" Quechua dictionaries, and for this book I primarily relied upon the 1995 first edition of *Diccionario Quechua*, published in Cuzco by the Academia Mayor de la Lengua Quechua, and the advice of Ricardo Valderrama Fernández and Juan Núñez del Prado. As a consequence you will find, for example, that I spell "Inka" with a "k" rather than the Castilian "c" and chose the more traditional spelling of "kawsay" over the modernized and Westernized spelling, "kausay." Spelling variations are included in the glossary, where you will also find definitions and approximate pronunciations. In addition, I have not used the proper plurals for Quechua words. In Quechua the plural is indicated by the suffix *-kuna*. A couple of examples: the generic term for an Andean shaman is *paqo* and a mountain spirit is called an *apu*. The plural of these terms would be, respectively, *paqokuna* and *apukuna*. For the sake of clarity with readers, however, I have chosen to follow the convention of many other English-language authors and write the plural of Quechua words with an "s" suffix: *paqos* and *apus*.

I am saddened to report that since the original publication of this book, three of the Q'ero who contributed to it have passed away. Don Juan Pauqar Espinosa died of a heart ailment that, I am told, might have been successfully treated with antibiotics if he had been able to reach a hospital. The villages of Q'ero are quite isolated, so even if don Juan could have afforded conventional medical treatment, it would have been difficult for him to get to it. The two Pauqar Flores brothers, Julian and Juan, died within a short time of each other. I was told that Julian suffered from stomach pains and died soon thereafter. Juan, in deep mourning for his brother, is claimed to have taken to his bed, also complaining of stomach pains, and quietly passed

away. This story may be apocryphal, but it rings true to me, for the brothers were bonded not only at the familial level but at the energetic one as well.

Contributors: The *Paqos* and Others

So that readers can clearly follow the conversations of the interview portion of this book, this section introduces the people who participated in the interviews and explains their relationships.

I have worked with the Q'ero *paqos*—the Andean word for what we might term a “shaman”—or their mestizo students since 1993, yet I met with the Q'ero only once for *structured* interviews: for four days in Urubamba, Peru, in July 1996. Below is a list of the Q'ero who participated in the Urubamba interviews, their ages, titles, and the particular village in which they were living at the time of these interviews:

Don Mariano Apasa Marchaqa, 48, kuraq akulleq from Qollpa K'uchu

Doña Agustina Apasa, 38, pampa mesayoq and don Mariano's wife

Don Juan Pauqar Espinosa, 42, alto mesayoq from Chua Chua

Don Agustín Pauqar Qapa, 32, pampa mesayoq from Q'ero Totorani

Don Juan Pauqar Flores, 56, from Chua Chua, pampa mesayoq and often an adviser to don Manuel Q'espí

Don Julian Pauqar Flores, 47, from Chua Chua, don Juan's brother, also a pampa mesayoq; served as “president” of Q'ero in 1994

As I pointed out in the Author's Note, I am saddened to report that don Juan Pauqar Espinosa, don Julian Pauqar Flores, and don Juan Pauqar Flores are now deceased. I honor their teachings by dedicating this book to them.

Fredy “Puma” Quispe Singona, whose teachings are presented in [part 3](#), is not Q'ero but was partially trained by Q'ero *paqos*. He is from Chinceros, Peru, and was twenty-three years old at the time of our interviews, which took place in 2002 during his visit to my home in North Carolina.

I have worked with these paqos and other Q'ero many times over the past decade, both in Peru and, occasionally, in the United States. Specifically, I met with don Juan Pauqar Espinosa and don Agustín Pauqar Qapa shortly after the Urubamba interviews, in October 1996, during their visit to meet the Hopi elders in Arizona. While I did not formally interview them at any length during that trip, I did get a chance to clear up some ambiguities in their initiation stories.

I also worked extensively with the Q'ero in 1997, while undergoing the ten-day Hatun Karpay initiation with Juan Núñez del Prado and while participating in research with Don Wright about Peruvian whistling vessels.^I The Q'ero I've specifically worked with over the years, besides those named above, have included José Q'espi Marchaqa, Martín Pauqar Qapa, Martín Q'espi, Lorenzo Q'espi Apasa, Humberto Sonqo, Guillermo Sonqo, Turibio Q'espi Lonasqo, Benito Apasa Lonasqo, Isidro Q'espi Marchaqa, Modesto Q'espi Lonasqo, don Sebastián, and don Bernadino,^{II} some of whose stories are recorded in this book.

There are three other Andean masters whose teachings permeate this book. One I have worked with; the other two are deceased and I know of them only through their reputations and the work of their apprentices.

Don Manuel Q'espi, a kuraq akulleq and the elder of Q'ero. I, along with seven others, briefly visited don Manuel's village of Chua Chua and there received the *Karpay Ayni* initiation from him while sitting on a pile of tiny frozen potatoes in his hut. I have also worked with don Manuel several times over the years in and around the Sacred Valley.

Don Andreas Espinosa, a Q'ero kuraq who died in November 1981 and is still spoken of in Q'ero with reverence as one of the greatest paqos of modern times. He not only helped teach and initiate most of the Q'ero interviewed for this book but he was a primary teacher to and profound influence on two of my mestizo teachers, Américo Yábar and Juan Núñez del Prado.

Don Benito Qoriwaman, who died on April 8, 1988, was a recognized master of the Waskar^{III} lineage who lived and worked in Wasau, the "town of sorcerers," which is located just outside of Cuzco. He was a friend to don Andreas, spent a considerable amount of time in Q'ero, and also profoundly influenced both my mestizo teachers.

I have also had the privilege of working with, and becoming friends with, two Peruvian mestizos teachers of the Andean path. Each of them profoundly influenced my development as a paqo and made important contributions to this book.

Dr. Juan Núñez del Prado, a professor of anthropology now retired from the Universidad Nacional San Antonio Abad del Cusco and a kuraq akulleq. He not only handled all the logistical arrangements in Peru but he provided translation assistance and expert commentary during the Urubamba interviews. Juan is one of the most powerful of all teachers of the Andean spiritual arts, uniquely blending an immense intelligence with a boundless love and a profound respect for the tradition that has so transformed his own life. To my mind there is no better—or rarer—combination of attributes in a teacher. He is truly a collaborator in this book.

Américo Yábar was trained and initiated as a kuraq by the Q'ero, and he teaches Andean shamanism around the world. I have worked with him several times, and I had the good fortune to travel with him and four of my female friends around Peru and Bolivia for two weeks of intense training in June 1995. Much of what I learned during that time I have passed on in this book in Américo's own unique and highly poetic voice.

Finally, I would like to mention three other people you will meet in this book, especially in [part 2](#). **Anamaria Szendroi**, a friend I met during our mutual training in the Andean tradition, helped with the Spanish translations during the Urubamba interviews. **Sandra Corcoran**, another friend from the tradition who quickly became a “sister” to me, took photographs during the interviews. **Dr. Ricardo Valderrama Fernández**, an anthropology professor at Universidad Nacional San Antonio Abad del Cusco, is a recognized expert in recording the oral histories of the Andean indigenous peoples. He provided the Quechua translations during the interviews.

Introduction: Crossing the Hummingbird Bridge

The writing of this book began long before I ever picked up a pen, turned on a tape recorder, or switched on a computer. It is difficult to decipher exactly where the first seeds were sown. They may have germinated at midnight, January 1, 1994, during a New Year's pipe ceremony, when I prayed with the *chanunpa* that I would walk the Inca Trail, the road of the shamans, to Machu Picchu with my closest friends, whom I had met during my journey along the Andean path.

Or perhaps they took root high in the mountains of Peru, when a Q'ero *kuraq akulleq*¹ named don Mariano Apasa Marchaqa agreed to come down from his village to meet a group of spiritual seekers from the United States.

Maybe this book really sprung into being at Salqa Wasi, a rundown hacienda, where in August 1994, at the completion of the now very real Inca Trail trek, I sat exhausted and sore on the cold floor of a shadowy room with twenty-six fellow trekkers, two teachers, and two Q'ero shamans, and one of those teachers called my name . . .

Salqa Wasi, which means something like the house of the "undomesticated" or "wild" energy, is located in the village of Mollomarqa, in the Andes mountains of Peru, about halfway between Paucartambo and Q'ero. The compound of three rather dilapidated stucco buildings is the ancestral home of Américo Yábar, one of my teachers. A Peruvian mestizo, Américo has been trained by the Q'ero and initiated as a *kuraq akulleq*. Salqa Wasi was in the process of being turned into a place of learning, where the North American and European students of Américo, and of his colleagues who teach the Andean sacred tradition, could come to meet with and be trained by the Q'ero. I had come here with my husband and twenty-five others, all of whom had walked the Inca Trail and worked together in ceremony along the Trail and at Machu Picchu under the tutelage of Américo and Alberto Villoldo, a teacher of Andean shamanism. We had been joined in Cuzco by

two Q'ero shamans: don Mariano Apasa Marchaqa, a kuraq akulleq, and don Juan Ordoñas, who served as don Mariano's assistant.

On this night, our second at Salqa Wasi, we gathered in a circle, sitting on stiff alpaca furs on the wooden floor of the frigid great room. Two sputtering candles, precariously balanced in pools of melted wax atop overturned aluminum cans, cast the room in a gauzy yellow glow. Against one wall, at the "head" of the circle, sat Alberto, don Mariano, Américo, and don Juan. They had just completed a *despacho* ceremony, a ceremony of thanksgiving to the nature spirits and a divination of our group's energy. Two of our group, Jessie and Lynne, had been instructed to go outside with don Juan to build the fire in which the despacho bundle would be burned as an offering. When they returned, don Juan reported that the smoke had risen straight and had been filled with refined energy. Our offering had been accepted by the *apus*, the spirits of the mountains.

Now Américo and don Mariano sat crouched together, whispering in Quechua, the indigenous language of Peru. Then, as don Mariano sat statuelike under his red ceremonial poncho, Américo translated the conversation into Spanish to Alberto, who finally spoke to us in English. Alberto announced that five "students" would be called forward. I, and I suspect everyone else in the group, had no idea what being called forward entailed. Alberto began by calling Lynne. She scooted forward a few feet until she was squatting on her knees before don Mariano. He stared intently into her eyes, selected a stone of power—called a *khuya*—from his bundle of personal ritual objects and began to speak in Quechua, to give what I can only characterize as an energy reading. Américo and Alberto translated as don Mariano, placing the *khuya* in Lynne's palm, told her it represented the "head," a stone of transmission of the spiritual lineage that she should guard and protect. She was admonished never to lose the stone or to give it away. Jessie was next. Don Mariano also placed a *khuya* in her palm and then praised her for her intelligence, strength, and power. As Jessie retreated to the periphery of the circle, Sandy was called forward, given a power stone, and acknowledged simply and beautifully as a woman of pure heart. Then I heard my name called. Like everyone else, I suppose, I had been secretly hoping to be called forward, to be acknowledged by don Mariano. But when it actually happened, a wave of apprehension passed through me. For a second I wondered if I dare interact eye to eye, energy body to energy body

with don Mariano, who seemed, in the smoky glow of the flickering candles, powerful and enigmatic.

I moved the few feet forward to sit before him and nervously raised my eyes to meet his. They were black beyond expression, and unsettling. I felt him place a small khuya in my open palm and, glancing down, I saw a white stone, about an inch and a half long, barrel shaped and deeply pitted with dark spots. Then don Mariano began to speak, his eyes unwavering, locked on mine. “You have much work to do in order to gain control of your energy.” My mind whirled. *Oh my god*, I thought, *everyone else was praised and I’m being criticized*. I cut off the self-involved thought, but I felt vulnerable and exposed. Now, when I most needed to, I could not control my attention, never mind my energy body. “You must work hard,” don Mariano continued. “If you succeed, then the way will be open for the word to flow forth. You will bring the word of Q’ero to the world.”

I flinched in surprise, not so much at his prediction, which barely registered at the time, as at the fact that he had seen who I am—he had somehow discerned that I am a writer. How could he know that? I hardly knew Américo and it was obvious that Alberto was spontaneously choosing people to call forward, so it did not seem reasonable that either of them could have prompted don Mariano. My skeptical, rational mind was in a whirl. This was not simply a blessing from a shaman; don Mariano actually knew something very concrete about me from my energy field. I wondered what else he was seeing.

Then I heard Américo and Alberto translating once again: don Mariano was counseling me that when I sit down to write I should think about him, call to him to come and assist me, and he would. As I stumbled back to my place in the circle, my husband, John, was being called forward. I barely heard don Mariano’s prediction about a new career direction for John.

The next day I spotted don Mariano sitting on the lawn behind the hacienda’s main building with Pépe, who had been one of our guides on the Inca Trail. I cautiously approached, wary of interrupting their conversation. Pépe smiled and waved me forward. He translated as I thanked don Mariano for the gift of the khuya. Then I asked permission to ask a question. Pépe translated for me: ““What did you mean when you said I would bring the word of Q’ero to the world?””

Pépe listened intently to don Mariano’s reply and then translated: ““Do your work. Work hard to master your energy. Learn to extend your energies

up to the apus, and I will meet you there and give you much information.”” At a loss for words, I thanked don Mariano and rose to leave. Don Mariano spoke again, and Pépe caught my arm. “There is more. He says that he blesses you, your family, your house, and your job.”

DISCOVERING THE ANDEAN SPIRITUAL PATH

So went my first trip to Peru. I truly had crossed the hummingbird bridge, as Américo so poetically refers to the step over the threshold from North America’s mindset of material realism to South America’s indigenous shamanistic culture. I had been studying shamanism in general and the Andean spiritual tradition in particular for little more than a year, having been attracted to this realm of exploration through reading the autobiographies of various spiritual adventurers.

I have always been an avid reader, especially about metaphysics and the perennial philosophy, but I have never been the outdoors type, preferring the intellectual world to the physical. As I read more about shamanism, I was caught off guard by the psychic pull I felt toward this practice, which is in part a perceptual stance grounded in personal and experiential interaction with the natural world and the spiritual realm.

The more I read about shamanism, however, the more I wanted to know—and the more I wanted to *experience* this world of living energy myself. Although I had been meditating for nearly twenty years, my practice of mantra meditation had been rather undisciplined and sporadic. Although meditation had helped me make significant positive changes in my life, attitudes, and perceptions, I sensed shamanism could do what meditation alone had not: show me how to embrace Oneness while also helping me live fully and divinely in the physical. Since shamanistic training involves learning to sensitize yourself to the energies of the natural world, I began by stepping out of my mind and into my body. I slowly acquainted myself with nature, first by taking lazy walks in the state conservation lands around our home and then by sharing increasingly ambitious hikes with my husband. I tried to be aware of my surroundings, not just to see, hear, and smell the natural world around me but to shift my perception in order to experience my interconnections with nature. I have always been intuitive, experiencing clairvoyance and precognition among other psychic phenomena, but my immersion into the physical precipitated a whole new kind of awakening. I

felt whole—a fusion of body, mind, and spirit—for the first time in my life. Soon, my husband and I went further in our exploration and began to “intend” our meditations toward meeting teachers who could guide us into the multidimensional realms of the shamanic universe.

We were particularly interested in the Andean tradition, although strictly speaking it is less shamanic than mystical.¹¹ If I had been asked then to explain why this particular metaphysical tradition of all traditions was the one that called to me, I would have been hard pressed to answer. But now, years later, I would say very simply that the Andean concept of *ayni*—energetic reciprocity—seemed a beautiful way to engage the world and the Andean nature spirits—*Pachamama*, Mother Earth; *Mama Killa*, the moon; *Inti*, the sun; and the *apus*, the spirits of the mountains—seemed as familiar as family. The pull of Peru was as intense as any impulse toward home I had ever experienced while living away from my family in various places in the United States.

One day, a few months into this new shamanic pursuit, I received a complimentary copy of a New Age magazine. As I flipped through, my gaze fell upon a small ad for a workshop on Inka shamanism. My husband and I attended, and to be truthful, it was not a very successful weekend for me. But a curious series of synchronicities—too complex to explain here but involving eagles, my deceased father, and my deceased best friend from graduate school—convinced me that there was something about the weekend and its shamanic work to which I had not been attentive. So I decided to give the workshop route another try and continued to work with this teacher. Before long, my husband and I were intensely involved with him and volunteering our time to the educational organization he founded and through which he conducts his shamanic training. We worked with him for a year and a half, and during that time we became well grounded in his synthesis of North American and South American shamanism. Through him, we met other teachers, such as Américo Yábar, and many others who would become lifelong friends along the path. We dreamed of traveling to Peru.

In 1994, we completed the Inca Trail trek and met the Q'ero for the first time. My two weeks in Peru were, quite literally, eye opening, enabling me to perceive the world of energy and spirit—the *kawsay pacha*—and to connect with my energy body in new ways that were deeply nurturing and liberating. However, although I was satisfied with my slow but steady progress upon the sacred path, I was growing steadily more unhappy with my

teacher and what I perceived as his inability to truly walk his talk. Less than five months after this trip to Peru, I made the decision to seek out new teachers and new levels of training. In doing so, however, I broke my primary—my *only*—link to Peru, and I wondered how I would ever continue to be trained in the Andean tradition. Over many months I reached deep within myself to maintain a solid and trusting center, and I consistently practiced shamanic techniques to stay connected with my energy body, to cleanse it of heavy energy and draw into it the refined energy of the *hanaq pacha*, the upper world. Every night I slept with the khuya, the stone of power, that don Mariano had given me, and I routinely performed ceremonies to attract new teachers and form new connections to Peru and the Q'ero. Soon doors did begin to open, new teachers did appear—sometimes by the most amazing “coincidences.” I learned a huge lesson in trusting Spirit and in walking *my* talk. By May 1995, I was back in Peru: I spent a month there, training and traveling to sacred sites with two different teachers, Juan Núñez del Prado and Américo Yábar. With Juan and seven others, I found myself on horseback headed for the Q'ero villages and to Q'ollorit'i, a sacred festival held at the base of a glacier that is an ancient site of initiation. After Q'ollorit'i, I and four women friends, all of whom had been studying the tradition intently, worked in the Sacred Valley around Cuzco with Américo. We then traveled to Nazca and to the Islands of the Moon and Sun in Lake Titicaca. Nearly everywhere my companions and I went, there were Q'ero to teach us, including the two noted Q'ero kuraqs, don Mariano Apasa and don Manuel Q'espi. The evening of the summer solstice of 1995 found my four friends and me sitting under the stars at Pikillaqta with Américo and six Q'ero paqos, old and young, who performed a despacho ceremony, gave us two *karpays* (energetic transmissions or initiations), and then told us magical stories about the puma, the rainbow, the condor.

During the next year I wrote about what I learned, often collaborating with others who walk the Andean sacred path. When I sat down to write I would throw my energy filaments up to the apus to draw upon don Mariano's energy. I must have succeeded, for my writing was being published and a diverse range of people were contacting me, expressing interest in the Q'ero cosmology. The word of Q'ero was beginning to be told, through my efforts and those of a few others. But it was obvious that a project of a much more in-depth nature was needed, and soon. My intuition and instincts were telling me that time was working against the Q'ero.

DON MARIANO'S PREDICTION UNFOLDS

As I worked with my mestizo teachers and as the Q'ero became better known to Westerners, I began to see that to ensure the accurate representation of the Q'ero and the larger Andean sacred cosmology and practices, a way had to be provided for the Q'ero to speak to outsiders in their *own* words. Theirs is a spiritual system that has a depth and beauty equal to any in the world. And the Q'ero shamans themselves are complex and irresistibly interesting. There had to be some way for those of us who don't speak Quechua and who cannot continually travel to Peru to get to know the Q'ero not only as master practitioners of the spiritual tradition but also as multifaceted and vulnerable human beings. There had to be a way to demystify the Q'ero belief system by disengaging it from the worst of the New Age excesses while at the same time preserving its integrity and relevance to the modern world.

As the idea for this book took form in my imagination, I prayed, performed ceremony, and put out tentative feelers to my Peruvian teachers. I listened to the spirit energies and was alert for their synchronistic messages. It became clear that there was one formidable hurdle I had to overcome—my belief in myself. Could I really pull off such a project? Could I face another horse trip into the mountains? How would I fund such a project? How would I ever deal with the language barriers, especially since I barely speak Spanish, never mind Quechua? How would I get sustained access to more than a few Q'ero at one time? Would the Q'ero even want to talk? As I envisioned the book and formulated a plan for making it a reality, I relied heavily upon Spirit to guide me through the logistical minefield and upon close friends to buoy me with much-needed support and encouragement.

Finally, in early 1996, I worked up the courage to telephone Juan Núñez del Prado and Américo Yábar to explain the idea for this book. But overcome with self-doubt, I hung up the phone before I even finished dialing. Who did I think I was to attempt such a project?

But Spirit persisted in sending me unmistakable messages that this book was my destiny, and with the translation help of two friends, Anamaria Szendroi and Jesse Telles, I was able to fully explain my project to my teachers via telephone and fax. Américo expressed immediate interest and support, but ultimately he was too busy traveling and teaching to undertake the project with me. Juan, however, not only was enthusiastic, but he also offered to lend me whatever assistance he could. He voiced his opinion that my desire to undertake such a daunting project was a direct result of the

energy I had touched, and that had touched me, at the sacred festival of Q'ollorit'i.

“Your group was the first I took to Q'ollorit'i with the express purpose of receiving the spiritual sustenance of the Inkas,” Juan explained. “Many Westerners have gone there to investigate the culture, others out of curiosity, and still others with the intent of receiving the spirit of the mountain. But yours was the first group that went as true pilgrims, totally conscious, and with the intent of touching the heart of the prophecy.”

Soon the project took on a life of its own. My husband enthusiastically encouraged me to empty our bank account to pay the research expenses for the book. Juan and I logged hours on the phone, working out the formidable logistics and costs. After months of discussion and planning, in June 1996, Juan arranged for a messenger to ride on horseback the two days to Q'ero, for there are no roads on which vehicles can pass, to explain the project and invite the Q'ero to speak. The Q'ero enthusiastically accepted my invitation, and this book is the result.

THE Q'ERO THEN AND NOW

One reason for my eagerness to record the tradition in the Q'ero's own words is that few kuraq akulleqs are left in Q'ero. One of the most respected, don Manuel Q'espi, is in his eighties and has been unwell for a number of years. When he passes, one of the last of the Q'ero masters who live relatively isolated in the mountains will be gone. Another reason is that the younger practitioners, such as don Mariano and others, who are in their forties and fifties, have had increasing contact with foreigners as teachers from the United States bring their students to Peru. Many Q'ero have even visited the United States several times. As more and more spiritual seekers travel to Peru and as the Q'ero seek to alleviate their grinding material poverty by accepting foreigners' money and goods, the integrity of their mystical tradition is subject to enormous pressure. In addition, as this spiritual tradition is translated for consumption by other cultures, it is subject to inevitable dilution.

Although I acknowledge the counsel Juan Núñez del Prado once gave me that it is patronizing to “sentimentalize the Indians,” the fact remains that at the time of our interviews the Q'ero had little experience with outsiders. By writing about them I was risking opening the gates of their world to

potentially a flood of spiritual seekers. The first anthropological expedition to Q'ero was mounted in 1955, by anthropologist Oscar Núñez del Prado, Juan's father. Being the analytical scientist, he had only passing interest in the Q'ero shamanic tradition, although he recorded many Q'ero myths and stories and documented their cosmology. But times, and anthropologists, have changed. Unfortunately, many tour operators and shamanic workshop teachers consider indigenous spiritual wisdom as little more than a much sought-after commodity. The Q'ero, who had lived relatively isolated in villages high in the mountains, venturing out only as far as Cuzco, have stepped into a world whose values they can barely fathom.

At the time of my interviews with the Q'ero, I found it unsettling to imagine how their lives, and perhaps their spiritual practices and beliefs, might change under the increasing encroachment of foreign contact. Since then, my fears have been borne out at least somewhat. Today, there are some Western practitioners of the Andean sacred path who have become cynical about the Q'ero. They charge that the Q'ero have become, at best, overexposed and, at worst, corrupted, too willing to sell their knowledge to anyone who seeks them out. I do not share this view, for the Q'ero have always indicated that their knowledge is not secret and it is their duty to share the sacred tradition with any sincere seeker. Still, over the past half dozen years or so, they have experienced negative ramifications from the exposure I and others have given them. As the Q'ero have become more well-known to Westerners, the people of the communities surrounding the villages of Q'ero have expressed envy at the attention they have received. I have heard it reported from reliable sources that Andean shamans from other line-ages have felt neglected and even marginalized as they come into contact with Westerners and hear them talk as if everything within the indigenous spiritual domain of the Andes is Q'ero. They have a right to be put off by imprecise attribution. For years I have cautioned Westerners studying the tradition to distinguish what is Q'ero practice from what is not, but most seem unconcerned with such distinctions. As I point out in [part 1](#) of this book, the truth is that the modern Q'ero have lost many of the teachings and techniques of their forebears. What some Western teachers of the Andean tradition tout as "Q'ero shamanism" is really a smorgasbord of techniques and beliefs drawn from the entire range of Andean indigenous practice. In some cases the concepts are less Andean than Native North American.

While, on the one hand, some people are quick to make large, and dubious, generalizations about the Q'ero and the Andean tradition, on the other hand, others are ready to pass judgment on specific practices and paqos without ever thoughtfully examining the issues or meeting the people involved. For example, as the apprentices of the Q'ero and other Andean teachers have brought the tradition to Westerners, they not only have come under intense scrutiny, which is all well and good, but they also have come under attack. A case in point is one of my own teachers, Juan Núñez del Prado. I do not claim to speak for Juan, but I do know him very well, and so can use him as an example of how misunderstandings arise, no doubt because so many people have romanticized indigenous teachings or have not reconciled how they are taught in this modern day and age.

Among many other activities, Juan takes groups to Peru to participate in the Hatun Karpay, which can be translated as the Great Transmission or the Great Initiation. The Hatun Karpay—a series of ceremonies that occur over ten days—is a rite that was passed on to Juan by one of his masters, don Benito Qoriwaman. On several occasions I have heard or read the charge that Juan is willing to give this transmission of the lineage, or initiation to use the word more familiar to Westerners, to anyone and everyone, no matter what their level of training. It is true that just about anyone can undergo this initiatory experience, but it is also true that there are sound cultural, historical, and spiritual reasons for making this cycle of ceremonies available to “newcomers” to the Andean path. Juan offers this initiation and many other teachings to those who seek them out because he believes that initiation is an opportunity for intense personal experience, not a secretive ritual for a select few. Also, because Juan considers almost all Western cultures as already having attained or on the verge of attaining the “fourth level” of consciousness, it is appropriate to concretize this achievement in the Hatun Karpay, which is a rite of the fourth level. One is ready for the fourth level when one can, as Juan explains, overcome personal and cultural boundaries and “find God everywhere—in a church, a mosque, a temple, or an Inka ruin.”

But let me go back to the first point—that Andean initiations generally are not secret rites. Anyone who has even a rudimentary understanding of the Andean spiritual tradition knows that it is decidedly egalitarian. It is not a veiled society that one must be invited to join or pass tests of spiritual or physical endurance to qualify for, in the vein of, say, a Mystery School or a

Secret Brotherhood. From the Andean perspective, if you are a human being, you are ready for the Hatun Karpay! During the Hatun Karpay, an energy seed is planted within a person's energy body that will flourish, or not, according to that person's commitment to self-growth. You might say that the ceremony generates an impulse for personal evolution, allowing one to grow as a spiritual and energetic being at one's own pace. A traditional initiation usually occurs at the end of one's training. It is a reward for challenges overcome, tests passed, practices mastered, and knowledge acquired. In contrast, the Hatun Karpay, and many other Andean ceremonies and practices, is a transmission of energy that helps empower us so that we can more deeply connect with our own authenticity and to help us begin walking a sacred path, Andean or otherwise. To use a different metaphor, Andean practices are launching pads, not landing fields.

By bringing up this example and the larger issues it invites us to consider, I am not setting myself up as an arbiter of the Andean tradition or defender of the Q'ero or of my teachers. Rather, I am raising issues that are of importance to anyone seeking training in an indigenous tradition. I am suggesting that cultural and historical contexts have an important bearing on most issues about modern versus ancient spiritual "authenticity" and that we would all benefit by trading uninformed judgment for educated opinion. We are required to do no less if we are to honor the commitment—and the risk—that indigenous masters undertake when offering us the teachings in the first place.

DON MARIANO'S PROPHECY FULFILLED

Despite the concerns—and realities—I discuss above, Peru's indigenous spiritual tradition will survive the onslaught of seekers and the various writers and Western teachers who interpret it, because these beliefs and practices, which are so provocative and liberating for us, are simply everyday life for most Andeans, as natural and necessary to them as their own breathing process. This remains as true today as it was centuries ago.

Still, as I sought to organize the information from the interviews into a book, I came face-to-face with many of these challenging issues. It was not a matter of simply transcribing the tapes onto the page. I somehow had to balance my role as *recorder* with that of *interpreter* of the sacred tradition. Struggling with that challenge called to mind the dilemma of Thomas E.

Mails, who wrote the biography of the Lakota elder Fools Crow and of the Hopi Elderly Elders. He makes clear in his own books that it is impossible to make a direct translation from a foreign language, such as Lakota or Hopi, to English. He acknowledges that “the writer is forced to do interpretive writing. In other words, he has to put what the informant says in his own words, and in words that his English audience can understand.”¹ Mails’s words ring true of my own experience with the Q’ero, although I have avoided interpretation as much as possible. Instead, I have attempted to reproduce my interviews with these Andean wisdomkeepers as they actually occurred, deliberately including the give-and-take and verbal asides that occur between interviewer and interviewee. Our mutual miscommunications and frustrations—inevitable in interviews that require translations among three languages—are not edited out. Nor do I gloss over my own confusion or misunderstandings. I am a fellow seeker, no doubt experiencing a spiritual journey similar at heart with yours. I claim no special insight.

Indeed, stepping up the rungs of the language ladder—from English to Spanish to Quechua—and down again was a dizzying and hazardous climb, one fraught with missteps that often left me tumbling down to the ground of confusion. Thankfully, I had the assistance of two esteemed anthropology professors, both of whom are fluent Quechua speakers and expert at interviewing indigenous peoples. Their advice and guidance proved invaluable, and although the process of translation always involves some degree of interpretation, I can attest to their commitment to provide as accurate a rendering of the Q’ero’s words and meanings as possible.

I faced another hurdle that Mails speaks to when he says that anyone who has ever been

invited by some great holy man to do his biography . . . would have learned on the first day they sat together that the information would not flow freely out of his informant. The informant might want to do a book, but he would not have the remotest idea about what doing this entails. Informants are not faucets whose handles can be turned to obtain flowing lyrics.

True, true, true.

We in the West are expert talkers. We are eminently verbal and analytical, and we are predisposed to philosophizing. I can attest that the Q’ero are not. They are taciturn, and extremely concrete and pragmatic thinkers. As eager as they were to tell their stories and share their spiritual cosmology, the flow of their words was often dammed, and I would have to steer around the dam to

once again find the course of the stream or pry the blockage loose to get the water trickling again. The maneuvering was worth the effort. These difficulties, too, are not hidden or written out of this book. Indeed, to my mind they are an important part of the message.

I also faced another dilemma—addressing potentially unrealistic expectations from readers. It is my belief that readers who are likely to pick up this book are also readers who are, and no doubt have been for some time, on a personal spiritual journey. Most of you have probably attended workshops and read widely in the perennial philosophy, so you are familiar with the narrative—or, more accurately, with the popular vernacular—of shamanism. You by now intuitively know how it is supposed to sound. But what this book will demonstrate is that when you are face-to-face with the shamans, you may be shocked at how different the narrative can be. This may be especially true for those of you whose only exposure to the Andean indigenous spiritual tradition has been through fiction, such as *The Celestine Prophecy*, or through Western teachers of the Andean spiritual arts. Even books such as those of Carlos Castaneda tend to mislead us, for they would have us believe that indigenous masters, such as don Juan Matus, talk like philosophy professors. That has not been my experience, nor has it been that of the anthropologists with whom I have worked. It is not even the experience of other indigenous peoples. For example, Mails relates a telling anecdote about Fools Crow's reaction to hearing the words of Black Elk read to him from John Neihardt's classic *Black Elk Speaks*. Fools Crow flatly proclaimed, "That is not my uncle, Black Elk."

Another issue was the expectations potential publishers held toward readers. As I wrote the first edition of this book, I was subject to considerable pressure on several fronts to introduce you to the Andean spiritual arts by focusing on the mysterious and otherworldly, on those experiences with the metaphysical world that readers have come to expect in books about shamanism and mysticism. But I decided that, ethically, I could not make the "unusual" the focus of this book. I decided I would not write to the lowest common denominator of the metaphysical—the impulse for the enigmatic—because I have learned that real spiritual work, mystical, shamanic, or otherwise, is not practiced in the otherworld, but in the here-and-now, in the harried, anxiety-filled, self-interested world that most of us wake up to every day. It is this world that is most transformed by metaphysical training. It is this world that immersion into the mystical

reveals to be the nemesis, the trickster, the chimera. It is this world—which seeks to limit our vision and subvert our belief that the cosmos is alive and conscious—that demands to be transformed by first transforming ourselves.

But such alchemy is not wrought only from a magical encounter with a nature spirit high on a snowcapped peak or the experience of slipping the bounds of space-time under the influence of a psychotropic plant during a jungle ceremony. What is truly transformational and magical is knowing that *every* moment, no matter how seemingly mundane, is pregnant with wonder, *and then fully living that moment*. The metamorphic instant occurs instead when you can pull back the curtain of the most intensely “supernatural” experience and recognize the fat man with the fancy hat as the wizard who only plays at being a wizard because he has forgotten that he already is a wizard. That wizard is, of course, you—and me, and him, and her . . .

However, it is no doubt true that the more spectacular and out-of-this-world our experiences, the more we are inclined to question the rules about reality we have all been force-fed since birth. It is true that I have had plenty of inexplicable, metaphysical experiences. I have merged consciousness with *Mama Killa*, the moon. I have seen and dialogued with spirits, including an Inka who patiently showed me how to “walk the rocks” along the Inca Trail and who told me the story of the Hummingbird King. I have been visited by a “spirit doctor” during the blackness of night in the Amazon jungle. I have felt energy, and seen it—a streak of brilliant blue light whipping across time and space in the sacred ruins of Machu Picchu. At best, these types of experiences kept me off balance enough to recognize my own complacency and complicity in buying into the scientific, materialistic belief system. At worst, they were distractions from the true work of the Andean spiritual path.

The real value of the practices of the Andean sacred tradition is to help us to live life consciously. *To live life consciously*. That is what the choice of a spiritual path is all about. It is not only about cultivating qualities that enhance well-being, such as nonjudgment, unconditional love, forgiveness, patience, and the like. It is also about being *conscious* of your every action, thought, feeling, emotion, intention, intuition, dream, and vision. It is about *bridging* worlds, not being immersed in either the mundane or the magical; and it is about having the courage to leap from the bridge into multidimensionality with your eyes open and no bungee cord attached to your ankles. It is about conscious fluidity.

In *practice* being a shaman or a mystic is about living the principles of your spiritual path every day in your own humble way, not running to exotic places in search of unusual experiences. It is not the Hollywood moment, but the state of your being during rush-hour traffic or after spending hours with a crying child or when you've just burnt the last piece of toast. It is not about acknowledging the miraculous in the seemingly mundane but is about actually experiencing the miraculousness of the mundane.

That is why as a writer I decided to keep this book as free of razzle-dazzle as possible and to ask readers to appreciate touching a culture that is still relatively untainted by Western mystical expectation. What is a Peruvian mystic actually like after all the Western students and tourists have gone home? I cannot tell you—not really. I can tell you my experience of the Andean path and the teachers I have worked with, but my experience may not be your experience. However, I can relate to you what they told me—in their *own* words. The Andean tradition is theirs, part of every fiber of their being. It is the tradition of their fathers and grandfathers, of their ancestors back to a time beyond the count of a calendar. The understanding that the world is a world of living energy is carried in their genes, entwined in the spiral of their DNA. It is not a premise to be proved or disproved, as it may be for many of us. And yet the Q'ero struggle, just as we do. If nothing else, this book will somewhat demystify the mystics. For they reveal themselves as human, vulnerable, subject to the same fears and foibles as the rest of us. So, as I address your possible expectations, I am trying to be as honest as I can with those of you who may have an appetite only for dessert. I would like to suggest that you will find more sustenance with the main meal, despite its perceived lack of culinary flair. Like the Q'ero, you will eat potatoes, not filet mignon!

MAPPING THE JOURNEY

So, what can you expect to find in this book? First, in [part 1](#), I provide you a comprehensive overview of the indigenous spiritual system as it is practiced in the mountains of central Peru and introduce you to the “tools” of an Andean paqo. These somewhat complex, more encyclopedic chapters are a primer on the Andean sacred path and provide the necessary context for understanding the interviews and for completing the exercises. The information provided in these early chapters reveals a mystical-shamanic

tradition that is millennia old and yet that thrives robustly to this day in the hearts and minds of the Andean people. As you will quickly discover, it is not the shamanism of psychotropic-induced journeys to other dimensions or elaborate rituals and ceremonies to part the veils between the worlds. Instead you will find an eminently pragmatic sacred tradition that provides tools for living in harmony with nature, with the spirit realms, and with your fellow human beings. Its primary goal is to provide us ways to live with well-being in the challenging world of flesh and blood, and yet to live simultaneously as energy beings who are in continual interchange with the *kawsay pacha*, the universe of animating energy. It is also a cosmology that looks forward with hope and optimism to the conscious evolution of humankind. It is my hope that you will take your time in these opening chapters, absorbing the fundamentals of Andean cosmology and its unique blend of utilitarianism and utopianism, of pragmatism and mystery.

In [part 2](#), you will find the interviews with the Q'ero, which reveal the sacred tradition in the words of the masters themselves. I strove to re-create the interviews as faithfully as possible, so that you can sit in circle with me and hear the shamans just as they sounded to me. I want you not only to be my companion along the path of Andean spirituality, but also to be looking over my shoulder as we sit in circle listening to the Q'ero tell us about the joys and fears they experienced during their initiations into the sacred tradition; about heavy and light energy and all the other specifics of the *kawsay pacha*; about the journey to the land of the dead and beyond. I want you to hear their voices, not mine, and to get a feel for the rhythms and cadences, and the brevity and intensity, of a Peruvian story told by an Andean shaman.

In [part 3](#), the young pampa mesayoq Fredy “Puma” Quispe Singona shares the teaching of the *mesa*, the Andean medicine bundle. It is among a paqo's most important spiritual tools and represents his power. Puma begins by relating the story of his own call to the sacred path. He then goes on to tell marvelous stories about the meaning of the *mesa*, and he covers a wide range of topics regarding the *mesa* and healing—from how to make, activate, and work with a *mesa*; to how our words and thoughts affect our reality; to working with the ley lines of energy that connect us all; to why Westerners are ready and able to walk the Andean path. Fluent in English, Puma speaks to the West as few other Andean paqos can, bridging the worlds of North and South with keen insight into how the principles and practices of the ancient sacred tradition can serve us all. Part 4 offers a systemized way to put

Andean energy practices into use in your own life. They teach you how to perceive your own energy body and to work with your primary energy center, the *qosqo*. They reveal how some Andean paqos work with *khuyas*, or stones of power. They suggest ways for you to adapt the use of a *despacho*, or an offering bundle, to embody your desires or manifest your dreams. I provide these exercises in the hope that you may find greater well-being as a human being and as a spiritual being through an enhanced interaction with the *kawsay pacha*. But I urge you not to plunge into part 4 until you have grasped the fundamentals of the Andean tradition as presented in the first three parts of this book. No harm can come from rushing ahead and using these techniques, but most likely no depth of understanding or experience will result either (especially with the *qosqo* energy work).

The *Kawsay Pacha*: The World of Living Energy

It was May 1997, and the sun was setting over the grand ruins of Ollantaytambo, the Temple of the Wind. Modesto Q'espí Lonasqo and Isidro Q'espí Marchaqa, two young Q'ero pampa mesayoqs, had just released sacred coca leaves into the wind. Earlier, I, too, had performed this prayerful ritual, gently blowing my finest energies through my breath into the coca leaves. Then, standing on the uppermost platform of the temple and facing into the wind, I had raised my hands above my head and let the coca leaves flutter into space, the wind carrying my energy and prayers into the cosmos. Now, the ceremony complete, I stood off to the side, observing don Modesto. He was tiny, about five feet tall, as most Q'ero are. Lithe and handsome, he carried himself with dignity, moving with grace and gentleness despite his withered right leg. I watched as he turned his youthful, brown face up toward the pink-hued sky, where Mama Killa, the moon, was visible even as Inti, the sun, was sinking behind the mountains. Juan, my teacher and a fluent speaker of Quechua, listened as don Modesto pointed toward Mama Killa and told a brief story. Juan waved me over. "He knows Mama Killa," he explained. "He just told me that one day Mama Killa embraced him, carried him into the sky and back in time, to a time before the Runa, human beings, walked the earth." I was

taken aback. Since I had met don Modesto, only days before, I had felt a subtle connection to him, and now I understood why: I, too, had been embraced by Mama Killa.

Years ago, on my first trip to Peru, I had immersed myself in the sacred, ancient baths at Aguas Calientes under the moon and stars. Sometime during my meditation I had left my body, and my spirit had been drawn by the luminous arms of Mama Killa into her energy field. Tranquility. Sweetness. Expansiveness. Limitlessness. Stillness. Grandeur. I had no words to describe the exquisiteness of the experience. Now, the memory alone was enough to raise goose bumps. I asked Juan to inquire of don Modesto if Mama Killa had spoken to him, bestowed any teaching upon him. Juan asked the question and replied, "No. He says she was silent. And the world that existed before the Runa also was silent."

I restrained my impulse to reach out to don Modesto and hug him. Instead, I asked Juan to tell don Modesto of my own mystical union with Mama Killa. As Juan translated, don Modesto's eyes remained fixed on mine. His face was unreadable, absolutely expressionless, but his eyes were bright and intense. When Juan finished my story, don Modesto reached up and embraced me, tenderly patting my back as he whispered in my ear. Juan, leaning close, translated: "You are my sister. My sister of the moon."

ONE

In the Land of the Inkas: An Overview of Andean Mysticism

“The Q’ero live up where the rains begin, where the clouds originate,” says Q’ero-trained mystic Américo Yábar. “They live in the ravines, where the pumas also live. They live where the children grow up enfolded with the natural, cosmic vision.” To anyone who has made the arduous horse trip to Q’ero, Américo’s words ring true, for the mist-shrouded villages of Q’ero step up the slopes of the central Andes, from the lowest village at the subtropical level, to the picture-postcard-pretty ceremonial village of Hatun Q’ero at about 11,000 feet above sea level, to Chua Chua, a cluster of twenty or so huts at more than 14,500 feet. Throughout the year, the five hundred or so Q’ero migrate from village to village according to the cycle of planting, sowing the corn at the lowest level and planting potatoes and herding alpaca and llama at the highest. Despite the utter normality of their agrarian life—a life of relentless toil and precarious subsistence not unlike that of most other indigenous peoples of the Peruvian Andes—the Q’ero are distinct, set apart from their contemporaries because they, more than any other indigenous population in the Andes, have preserved the ancient spiritual practices.

“The Q’ero people,” describes writer César Calvo, “to this day dress like Inkas, converse like Inkas, and live like Inkas.”¹ Calvo was writing in the early 1980s, but today, more than twenty years later, the Q’ero mystique remains. They no longer live in such stringent isolation, yet the Q’ero retain their reputation as the keepers of the ancient ways because they have preserved the indigenous belief system not only of the Inkas but of those who came before them. They call themselves the “grandsons of Inkari,” the mythical first Inka, who founded the *Tawantinsuyu*, the Inka empire, and who bequeathed to the Q’ero the spiritual tradition. The Q’ero *paqos*^{VIII} are the most respected practitioners of the Andean spiritual path. Paqos from all

over the Cuzco area, even though they may have been fully initiated by teachers from their own region and lineage, still journey to Q'ero to receive the *karpays* (the initiation rites) from Q'ero elders.

Although the Q'ero are recognized masters of the Andean spiritual tradition, the tradition itself is widespread and flows deep within the veins of the indigenous population. To understand not only the Q'ero, but all native Andeans, one must first attempt to see through their eyes and feel with their hearts a nature that is alive and responsive, in which spirit suffuses the physical world, from the highest, snow-capped peak to the deepest, vine-tangled jungle. From the paqo who makes a ritual coca-leaf offering to a mountain spirit before he seeks its counsel, to the villager who spills a few drops of *chicha* (a beer-like drink made from maize) on the ground during a festival to slake Mother Earth's thirst before his own, to the pregnant woman who claims the rainbow impregnated her when she inadvertently saw its reflection in the river, Andeans share an interconnectedness with the cosmos that is at once humble and profound.

Andeans are born into a world that they believe is as conscious of them as they are of it. "The great message of the Andes, the greatest belief of the Andes with respect to humanity," claims Américo Yábar, "is our approximation of spirit with nature, with Pachamama, with the wind, sun, and stars. This is the constant invitation of the Andean world—that the world is populated by spirit." This invitation toward being conscious of a living cosmos should be accepted by all people, he says, because "there are no better teachers than life and the spirits of nature, for theirs is an open language. Through them we become aware of how entrapped we are by our [rational] minds. Through them we can also become aware that every decision is one of feeling, speaking, and moving on this planet with heart."

To immerse yourself in the ancient spiritual tradition of Peru, it is necessary to divest yourself of mind and center yourself in heart. I first glimpsed this truth during my initial meeting with don Mariano Apasa Marchaqa, when he predicted that I would one day write this book. It took more than three years for me to move sufficiently from my head to my heart to fulfill his prophecy, but one of my Q'ero-trained teachers, Juan Núñez del Prado, learned this lesson more quickly—on his first meeting with a noted kuraq akulleq, don Benito Qoriwaman.¹ Juan says, "It all began for me when I was very young, doing my academic work. I was trying to do a report about social structures and I was working in a little town near Qotobamba. At that

time I was totally a rationalist and an atheist. For me the [supernatural] beliefs of the Indians were just another religion.

“But then I had the opportunity to go work in several communities, almost all in [the area around] Qotobamba, and I discovered that there was a very structured system of beliefs, of supernatural beliefs, that were applicable to a large area and not only to one or two little communities. It was a much broader system than I thought, and I discovered it belonged to a greater area of the Andes. My interest was raised, so I asked my mentor to change my special research area from the study of social structures to that of the religious system. I thought there must be something special going on to preserve such an ancient system until these modern times. So I returned back to Cuzco to study, to look for the structure of that religious system. What I found was amazing!

“I found a very complex structure of ‘priests.’ They were on the shamanistic path, where you depend only on your personal experience. I discovered a kind of underground church—with priests, initiations, practices, and prophecies.

“Of course, as an academic, my first thought was of gaining prestige through uncovering and explaining this system. For that reason, I sought to meet the highest priest in the hierarchy. I learned that there were two masters in the valley, one in the north and one in the south. I met the master of the north, and he taught me many things. Then I began looking for the other master, the master of the south. One day I met a fat, little man; he was an Indian, dressed in dirty clothes, and he lived in a little house, very little and uncomfortable, and the name of that man was don Benito Qoriwaman.

“At that time I couldn’t speak Quechua well, so I hired the services of an assistant, Manuel, to serve as translator. I took him with me to meet with don Benito. We also carried traditional gifts for the master—a bottle of *pisco* [alcohol] and a little packet of coca leaves. When we met with don Benito, he had an incredible twinkling in his eyes, and he invited us into his house to share these gifts. We sat at a little table, and he poured a little cup, the size of a shot glass, of pisco. As we began our talk, don Benito passed the little cup of alcohol. We drank that and we start talking, using the assistance of the translator, Manuel. Soon, don Benito passed another tiny cup of pisco, and then he started to talk directly to me, instead of to Manuel, using a mix of Spanish and Quechua. I talked with him in Spanish and using the few Quechua words I knew. Then he passed the third cup of pisco.

“After the third tiny cup, he looked me in the eyes and he started to talk to me in a very strange language, not Spanish, not Quechua, not Chinese—not any language I recognized then, or since. The incredible thing was I could understand everything he said. What’s more, I could speak this same strange language—fluently! We had a long talk, two hours of talking like that. And what was even more strange was that I could see what he was talking about, as if there were a movie camera in my brain projecting images!

“But during that time, everything seemed normal. I asked don Benito many things, and he provided me a lot of information. It was like reading a book in two hours. It was fantastic!

“Finally don Benito brought the meeting to an end. I got up to leave, and that’s when I discovered that Manuel was totally drunk. He could usually drink a bottle of whiskey without feeling the effects—it’s like lemonade to him. But at that moment, he was completely drunk, from three tiny cups of pisco! I had to carry him out of don Benito’s house, and as I was carrying him, I woke up—or something like that. I suddenly knew what had happened, and I knew that something very, very strange had happened there.

“After that, my intellectual paradigm was blown. Before that experience I was an academic, doing intellectual research. After that experience, I became a disciple of don Benito. I discovered he had something very, very, very important to teach me. That experience changed my life.”

THE SENTIENT WORLD

Juan’s training, like my own, began with instruction in sensing the energies of the *kawsay pacha*, the world of living energy. For an Andean paqo, the world of nature is alive and responsive, and the cosmos is a vibrating field of pure energy. The *kawsay pacha* expresses itself in two fundamental types of energy: *sami* and *hucha*, which are described in greater detail in chapter 2. Briefly, however, *sami* is refined or ordered energy, which is the type of energy that suffuses the natural world in its pristine state. *Hucha*, in contrast, is heavy or disordered energy, and it is produced only by human beings. We each are in constant interchange with these energies, in a reciprocal relationship with the *kawsay pacha* called *ayni*. *Ayni* is the seminal operative principle of behavior and of being in the Andes. In the social structure, *ayni* expresses itself as a system of communal, shared labor, where, for example, farmers help work each other’s fields. *Ayni* also is a guiding moral principle,

similar to the Christian concept “do unto others as you would have them do unto you.” In this light, *ayni* operates within a moral and personal code of conduct. Within the indigenous spiritual cosmology, however, *ayni* takes on even greater significance, for it is an implicate, creative principle of the natural world.

In the *kawsay pacha* you are in constant interchange with either heavy or light energy. You mediate this energy through your own energy body—your *kawsay poq’po*, which literally means “energy bubble” in Quechua. Your *poq’po* surrounds and connects with your physical body, and you mediate energy through it at a chakra-like center near your navel. This “spiritual stomach” is called the *qosqo*. Like your physical body, your *poq’po* has a skin, an outer layer that acts as a filter and protective barrier. I will discuss the *poq’po* in more detail in the next chapter, but the important point here is that it is through this energy body that we interchange energy with other people and with nature spirits in acts of *ayni*. Because we are fundamentally energy beings and we live in a world of living energy, we can never act outside the sphere of *ayni*’s influence—we can only be conscious or not of its operating force in our lives.

In the Andes, the *kawsay pacha* is dominated by two primary spirit energies: *Pachamama* and the *apus*. *Pachamama*, the Earth, is the first mother, the true mother, the spirit mother. From her we have all been given form and substance, and it is largely her will that determines the quantity and quality of our worldly sustenance. It is to her, and to the spirits of the rain and the hail and the other elements that exist within her domain, that Andeans owe the very conditions of their lives. Therefore, every action they undertake is necessarily an act of *ayni*, or reciprocity, with *Pachamama*. Before any food is eaten or liquid is drunk, a portion is offered to the Earth Mother. Before a spade is thrust into a field or before a river is crossed or before a thousand other mundane actions are undertaken, an offering is made to the Mother. Every day Andeans perform countless acts of thanksgiving or propitiation to *Pachamama*, and every day *Pachamama* bestows her gifts—a healthy child, a multiplying alpaca herd, a productive harvest—or metes out her challenges.

Pachamama also provides multitudinous reference points from which Andeans orient their lives. One is a person’s *itu*, or the energetic entry point of a person’s transition from the world of spirit to the world of the physical.^{II} This special energetic portal is the natural formation—a mountain, rock

outcropping, lagoon, river, or the like—that is physically closest to the place of a person’s birth. As Américo Yábar explains it, the *itu* is the energetic space that first touches the energy filaments of your physical body, and from that initial energetic touch, you are part of a physical and spiritual interchange with the living power of nature, with *kawsay*—the animating energy.

In central and southern Peru, the *itu* is most often a mountain, but a mountain is rarely simply a mountain. It is an *apu*—a sacred being, a lord that not only gives presence to the physical mountain but also controls the dialogue with the *paqos* who are in “service” to it. All *paqos* are in service to one or more *apus*, which comprise the highest level of nature energy and are the most important spiritual guides within the Andean sacred tradition. It is through the *apus* that *paqos* receive wisdom, counsel, and healing knowledge. Their “service” to the *apus*, however, should not be construed as “servitude.” As Américo explains, “Every living thing in the universe has a relationship of service. To know, first you must serve. This vocation of service doesn’t mean that you take an attitude of servitude or submit your energy to others—absolutely not. But a teacher has to feel whether or not you can serve by visualizing your command of energy.” As the consummate tutelary spirits, the *apus* choose which *paqos* they will dialogue with, and not the other way around.

When an *apu* determines that a *paqo* has acquired personal power commensurate with the *apu*’s own power, then it may call that *paqo* into service. The call most often comes in the form of a dream or vision during which the *apu* talks to the *paqo*, offering to be his or her master and teacher.^{III} For a *paqo*, to receive the call of an *apu* is to receive an *estrella*, which is the Spanish word for “star.” Juan Núñez del Prado explains that the *paqos*’ use of this term may have been borrowed from the conquistadors and their colloquialisms *buena estrella* and *mala estrella*, meaning, respectively, “good luck” and “bad luck.” To be called by an *estrella* means that a *paqo* has found his luck, his guiding spirit.

Since the spirit of an *apu* cannot be seen directly, it often appears in the guise of an animal or person. Its most common animal appearance is as a hummingbird, bull, condor, or puma. It most frequently appears in human form as a man in white or shining clothing that comes to a *paqo* in a dream or, less frequently, in a vision. Because a *paqo* may be called by more than one *apu*, he may have several *estrellas*. But each call does not have to be

answered. Paqos are free to refuse to accept an estrella, although to do so can imperil not only that paqo's health and even his life, but also may adversely affect his family. (See, for example, [chapter 10](#).) Once accepted, however, the estrella becomes the conduit through which the paqo communicates with the apu. As a paqo becomes more powerful, so do his estrellas, because he is able to dialogue with more and more powerful apus. Conversely, as the power of his apus increases, so does the paqo's ability to empathize with larger and larger groups of people, and so his ability to "push the kawsay"—to consciously influence the world of living energy in service to others—grows on a commensurate scale. (Western students of the Andean tradition commonly refer to pushing the kawsay as "working energetically.")

Despite their awesome power as tutelary spirits, all apus are approachable by paqos at any level of training, even if a paqo is not in service to them. The apus are there to be of use when the need arises. Hence, they are always held in the highest respect and are honored in countless ways by paqos. For example, whenever I arrive in Cuzco, one of my first priorities is to pay homage to the apus and open a dialogue with them. I make an offering to the apus of the Sacred Valley (the area including and immediately surrounding Cuzco) and connect with them energetically, asking their permission to work in the area and for a blessing to aid in my work. I remember once stopping along the Inca Trail, during the very first day's trek, to "introduce" myself to the Apu Veronica—or as she is called in Quechua, Waqaywillka, the Mountain of the Black Light. I was hiking under her gaze and I petitioned for her assistance in the physical challenge that I knew lay before me. After my appeal to Apu Veronica, I felt protected during what turned out to be an excruciatingly painful trek, and days later, just when I thought I could not take another step, an apparition appeared to teach me how to "walk the rocks." A gift from Apu Veronica? Who knows? I simply know that after my "lesson" by this phantasmagoric Inka, I flew down the steepest part of the trail without hesitation or fear, making up hours and miles. Instead of walking dead last, as I had been for three days, I ended up following the first group of trekkers, the leaders, through the Gate of the Sun into Machu Picchu.

Paqos interact with apus in magical ways that widely affect the lives of those around them. They may call upon an apu for a blessing, for good weather for crops, to impart healing power, or for protection. The Q'ero tell several stories that describe the awesome powers of these lords of the

mountains. In Urubamba, don Juan Pauqar Flores told us about a powerful Q'ero paqo who, in his words, was “almost as God.” The story was told to him by his grandmother, but the other Q'ero had heard other versions of it as well, and each contributed details.

This paqo's name was Garibilu Q'espí, and he lived in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. He was an *alto mesayoq*—a paqo who could invoke the power of the apus for any purpose. In his time, the story goes, disease and pestilence, such as smallpox and yellow fever, had come to Q'ero. Although the diseases were recognized as having been transmitted from mestizos traveling through the area, the Q'ero also considered them energies connected with a particular apu, who was the “owner of all the sicknesses.” Many people were dying, don Juan reported. “They were dying in the fields and near the rivers, falling like mice. Only a few children survived—the children who drank the milk from their dead mothers, only they survived.”^{IV} The situation throughout Q'ero was desperate. There were so many sick and dying people that there were none to remove all the bodies. “When the animals came, the pumas and other carnivores,” don Juan explained, “the people still living could not prevent them from eating the dead people.”

Soon Garibilu Q'espí himself fell sick from yellow fever, which had been sent by this same apu. He became desperately ill, even suffering from convulsions. But Garibilu Q'espí was a great paqo, and he recognized that the apu had sent the disease as a tool. In the Andes, everything, even disease, has an energetic connection, and in this case, the yellow fever sent by the apu as a sickness became, in the hands of a master paqo, a tool that was ultimately used for the good of the community. Don Garibilu recognized that the yellow fever had the power to save Q'ero, so he gathered all his power and used this disease to “eat” all the other pestilences in Q'ero. Using his energy body, he energetically incorporated all the diseases into his own body and, using his qosqo, or spiritual stomach, he “digested” them through the power of the yellow fever.^{VII} Then he turned toward the apus and invoked their names, including the one responsible for the diseases. To these apus he commanded, “You will take this pestilence back!” The apus complied, taking back the yellow fever and, with it, all the other diseases that were ravaging Q'ero. Soon don Garibilu and the others recovered, and Q'ero was saved from extinction.

“In this way,” don Juan concluded, “a new thing was done by this alto mesayoq, Garibilu Q’espi. This was a good, ancient [kuraq] akulleq.”

The Q’ero also attribute the apus with saving them from the Spanish conquistadors. In 1532, Francisco Pizarro and approximately 168 men managed to conquer the Inka Empire, a nation of millions.² The story of the Conquest is told and retold in many fine accounts, but there is one battle that may not be recorded anywhere in the history books. It is the battle for Q’ero, waged by one great alto mesayoq with the help of his apu against a contingent of Spanish soldiers, and it is the one battle the Spaniards lost. The following story was told jointly by don Juan Pauqar Flores and don Agustín Pauqar Qapa.

At Wiraqocha Pampa, a highland plain not far from Q’ero, the story goes, an alto mesayoq was tending his llamas when he spotted Spanish soldiers. This alto mesayoq, also named Garibilu Q’espi, left his llamas and escaped undetected up the mountainside, headed as fast as he could toward the lower villages of Q’ero.^V He alerted everyone he saw along the way to the imminent arrival of the Spaniards, and these Q’ero fled in terror. When the Spaniards finally entered the first Q’ero village, they found it empty, and they found themselves in trouble, for there was no one to give them food and water and other supplies that they desperately needed.

Meanwhile, the apus began calling to Garibilu Q’espi. They instructed him to follow their directions in order to save Q’ero. “You must go to the mountain above Wiraqocha Pampa,” they told him. “There, you must build a *saiwa* [a column of stones]. When you leave, we will kick the *saiwa*, and the stones will fall on the Spaniards.”

“When the Spaniards came,” don Agustín explained, “they made a lot of abuses. They killed many animals and made their bones into their staffs. There were mounds of bones in Q’ero. Seeing that, our grandfather [ancestor], this alto mesayoq Garibilu Q’espi, climbed to the highest hill.” There he followed the apus’ instructions, building a giant column of stones. When the Spaniards come back down through the pampa, don Juan and don Agustín explained, the apus did just what they promised. “Three clouds became clean in the sky and produced lightning. The lightning struck the *saiwa*, and all the hills fell down and crushed the Spaniards. Only a few soldiers survived, only those who were high up the mountain.”

Don Agustín shook his head slowly, seriously, considering don Garibilu’s feat. “If there had been more Spaniards, surely they would have killed all the

Q'ero. After this [battle], the Spaniards decided to never return back to Q'ero. They came nevermore," he said. "If these things had not happened as I say, we would not be here."

As don Agustín fell silent, don Juan leaned forward and spoke softly, as if he were revealing a secret. "The proof of this battle was found by Martín Waman, who died long ago. He found a piece of a Spaniard's gun at Wiraqocha Pampa. This thing really happened! This *alto mesayoq*, Garibilu Q'espí, must have been a powerful paqo, because through his invocation the apus made the stones fall onto the Spaniards." Then don Juan concluded with a characteristic Q'ero flourish, invoking a modern simile and provoking a hearty laugh all around: "Garibilu Q'espí defended the Q'ero like a lawyer defends a client in the courts!"

In the hierarchy of apus, each level is distinguished by the relative strength and range of the apus' influence. The least powerful are the *ayllu apus*, mountains that influence a small community. *Ayllu* is a kinship term in Quechua that refers to a group of people joined by blood or communal ties. Just as an ayllu is the smallest civic unit in the Andean, so an ayllu apu is a sacred mountain whose energy influences the smallest geographical area. Examples are the apus Pukín and Pikol, which govern the San Jerónimo and Santiago neighborhoods of Cuzco, respectively. Next is the *llaqta apu*. *Llaqta* means "town" in Quechua; thus a *llaqta apu* influences a geographical region that encompasses a group of towns or villages. The apus Saqsawaman and Wanakauri are each *llaqta apus*.^{VI} Finally, there is the *suyu apu*, which is an apu that influences a large region; the word *suyu* means "quarter" in Quechua. Apu Ausangate and Apu Salqantay are *suyu apus*. The first three levels of the *alto mesayoq* path correspond to the three hierarchies of apus and so are named after them.

THE ANDEAN PATH

In the Andean tradition, there are two types of paqos: the *pampa mesayoq* and the *alto mesayoq*. When a person receives an *estrella*, he must determine, often with the help of an experienced paqo, which of these two paths he is being called to follow.

Pampa mesayoqs are expert ceremonialists, the keepers of the earth-based rituals and knowledge. They are healers, with a thorough knowledge of herbal medicines. They also are expert at coca leaf divination and may use

the coca leaves to read a person's energy and the condition of his or her life and to diagnose illness and determine the proper cure. Pampa mesayoqs are masters at making *despachos* and performing the ceremonies connected with them. A despacho is a ritual bundle, made of white paper that is filled with dozens of natural items—seeds, grains, incense, candy, starfish arms, flowers—and then buried or burnt as an offering to Pachamama or the apus or used for healing or other specific purposes, such as divination. There are more than two hundred different kinds of despachos, and although a single pampa mesayoq is not expected to master the intricacies of every type, he is expected to master their basic uses as thanksgiving offerings and healing tools. When despachos are used in divination, the color and direction of the smoke that rises as they are burned often reveal the state and condition of the energy body and heart of the person or group for whom the despacho was offered.

Although pampa mesayoqs primarily are in service to Pachamama—Mother Earth—they also serve the apus, often having several estrellas. The pampa mesayoq acts as a conduit, on behalf of the person who has sought his service, for the healing or divinatory energy of the apus, and he receives important indirect counsel from his estrellas, usually in dreams or visions. However, a pampa mesayoq as a rule does not have *direct* communication with supernatural energies. That is the province of the alto mesayoq.

Like pampa mesayoqs, alto mesayoqs are called to the sacred path by receiving an estrella, and they undergo rigorous initiations and apprenticeships, often more than a decade long. They acquire the same knowledge and many of the same skills as pampa mesayoqs, but then the paths diverge, for alto mesayoqs go on to experience the nature energies and spirits *directly*. They can dialogue directly with the estrellas of the apus to which they are in service, and their power is commensurate with the levels of these apus. Therefore, the lowest level of the alto mesayoq hierarchy is the *ayllu alto mesayoq*, who incorporates the power of the tutelary spirits of ayllu apus. Next is the *llaqta alto mesayoq*, and then the *suyu alto mesayoq*, each in service to that respective level of apu.

The culminating level of alto mesayoq is the *kuraq akulleq*, which means “elder chewer of coca leaves.” In Q'ero, as of 2004, there are only two kuraq akulleqs, don Mariano Apasa Marchaqa and don Manuel Q'espí. Kuraqs have the capacity not only to incorporate the energetic power of Pachamama and to engage the tutelary energies of the most powerful apus,

but they can also touch the energies of the cosmos and work these energies on a truly planetary scale. Kuraqs also are sometimes called *hanaq qawaq*, which means “highest seer,” because they can access the most refined energies, which come from the *hanaq pacha* (the upper world). Some rare kuraq akulleqs are even said to be able to summon the Creator itself, who is called *Kamaq* at a universal or cosmic level and *Pachakamaq* or *Wiraqocha* when referring to the creator of the world. A kuraq akulleq’s estrella is often called *Taytacha*, which is the manifestation of the divine within the physical. This is generally a term of respect and affection: *tayta* is the formal word for “sir” or “master,” and “cha” is the suffix for the diminutive, so *Taytacha* also indicates a partial or specific manifestation of the infinite divine into the physical.

Pachakamaq and *Wiraqocha* are ancient *Taytachas*, creators of the Earth. Since the introduction of Christianity, God or Jesus Christ has replaced them in many areas, and one often hears *paqos* and others appealing to the *Apu Jesucristo*. This creator energy also finds its equivalent in such distinctively Andean manifestations as the Lord of Q’ollorit’i and the *Taytacha Temblores*, the Earthquake Lord.

ANDEAN COSMOLOGY

Paqos are experts at mediating the energies of the three worlds of Andean cosmology: the *hanaq pacha*, *kay pacha*, and *ukhu pacha*. The *hanaq pacha* is the upper world, the multidimensional realm comprised solely of *sami*, the most refined energy. In Christian terms it is heaven, the abode of God, Jesus, and the angelic spirits. In psychological terms it is the superconscious, and transpersonally it is the sphere of the visionary and the prophet. Its Andean totem is the condor or the hummingbird, which are the messengers of spirit.

The *kay pacha* is this world, the physical world. It is Earth and Gaia. It is the world of spirit made manifest, and the sphere of consciousness, ego, and identity. The *kay pacha* is comprised of both *sami* and *hucha*—the light and heavy energies, respectively—because we humans, the dominant occupants of the *kay pacha*, sometimes act with *ayni* and sometimes do not. The totem of the *kay pacha* is the puma (jaguar), whose majesty emerges from the juxtaposition of beauty and danger, of grace and fear, of instinct and will.

Finally, there is the *ukhu pacha*, the lower world, which is comprised solely of *hucha*—heavy or disharmonious energy. As is explained more fully

in [chapter 2](#), *hucha* is not negative, bad, or dark energy. It is, instead, simply incompatible or disharmonious. Likewise, the *ukhu pacha* is not to be confused with the Christian hell or Catholic purgatory. The *ukhupacharuna*—people of the lower world—have not been judged and sentenced to a world of suffering; instead, they occupy the heavier energetic realm only because they have not yet learned to live in *ayni*.^{IX} At a psychological level, the lower world is the interior world, the sphere of the unconscious, the domain of the dreamtime. Its Andean totem is the snake, symbolizing the threatening yet potentially transformative nature of the deep.

Andean *paqos* access energy from all three worlds, yet they do not generally “travel” the three worlds in spirit flight as do the classical shamans described by such ethnologists as Mircea Eliade or as is taught by such teachers of South American shamanism as Michael Harner and John Perkins. Andean *paqos* work with visions and dreams, but they do so without the aid of psychotropics, shamanic drumming, or ecstatic dancing. There are several shamanic systems indigenous to Peru, found mostly in the jungles or along the northern coast, in which psychotropic plants, such as *ayahuasca* or *San Pedro*, are used. The *Q’ero*, however, do not use any of these means to access the world of spirit. Instead, they work in the dreamtime or use nature rituals. Over a long apprenticeship, they learn to read the coca leaves, to connect with their *apus* through the power of their *mesas* (bundles of sacred objects), and to receive counsel from the spirits of nature.

At any point along his path, a *paqo* is free to pass his knowledge to others, although it is usually the most experienced, and thus the most elderly, *paqos* who accept apprentices and transmit the *karpays* to other *paqos*. A *karpay* is an initiation ritual or an energetic transmission of the teacher’s own power and his spiritual lineage. It is a doorway, an initial opening to the sacred power, and thus each *paqo* grows into his power at his own speed in his own way. The path of a *paqo* is decidedly personal, although the body of sacred knowledge and the ritual practices are fairly uniform. As is true in most indigenous sacred traditions, an initiate of the Andean path acquires knowledge and wisdom through personal experience. If a teaching is not grounded in personal experience, it does not hold much value for an Andean *paqo*, so apprentices are encouraged to place greater trust in their own experiences than in the words of their teachers.

Paqos work energetically, either individually or in groups, within the realms of the three worlds, facilitating the flow of *ayni* between all three by

creating a column of energy—called a *saiwa*—that connects the three worlds. Andean prophecy, as discussed in [chapter 3](#), envisions a time when these three realms will coalesce into one: the hanaq pacha and ukhu pacha merging with the kay pacha to create one paradisiacal world here on Earth. We can each contribute to this spiritual transformation by living in ayni ourselves and by mediating the heavy and light energies of our own world. By cleansing ourselves of heavy energy, we facilitate the energetic evolution of our species.

THE ANDEAN PAQO'S TOOLS

One of a paqo's primary "tools" is the *mesa*, which means "table" in Spanish. The entirety of [part 3](#) is devoted to discussing the work of the mesa, so here I provide only a brief overview of its purpose and use. Within the domain of the sacred, a mesa is a *mesa de altar* and takes the form of a fabric bundle that holds the paqo's most sacred objects, much like the medicine bundles of North American Indians. Usually, a paqo conducts his ritual or performs a healing with the bundle closed, but occasionally he might open his mesa, using the outer fabric wrapping as a kind of altar cloth upon which he arranges his sacred "tools." Juan Núñez del Prado calls the sacred objects and mystical and shamanic practices of the Andes the "tools" of the tradition because the tradition is so grounded in practicality. Energy practices or rituals that do not clearly improve the spiritual and physical quality of our lives are not much valued in the Andes.

Q'ero mesas are very simple, often containing only a few ritual objects, although the mesas of shamans and healers from the northern coast of Peru can become quite elaborate. In the Andean regions, a mesa most often contains a small collection of *khuyas*, or stones of power. The word *khuya* means "affection" or "love," and these power stones are infused with a paqo's most refined energy, empathy, and impulse toward service to others. A mesa may contain other power objects, such as shells, crosses, crystals, meteorites, and animal parts (such as feathers or claws).

Generally, paqos carry one mesa, but they may have several. For instance, mesas are sometimes distinguished as belonging to the "right side" or the "left side" of the sacred work. The right-side mesa is associated with the sacred lineage, with the connection to the past, to the ancestors, to a paqo's teachers. It represents the stream of *kawsay*, the animating energy that

remains undiminished through time and that allows the paqo to call on the accumulated energies of all paqos throughout history to help him access the knowledge and power available in this world of living energy. Consequently, the right-side mesa contains khuyas that were passed on from teachers and colleagues, that were given to the paqo to mark initiations, or that were collected from sacred sites and power spots. The right-side mesa connects the paqo energetically with these masters and sacred sites and enables him to more easily “push the kawsay” of the universe.

A left-side mesa is one with a more specific, practical purpose, such as healing or conferring a specific initiation. The left-side mesa connects the paqo with the kawsay pacha, and it, too, is composed of khuyas that might have been gifted to the paqo by teachers or have come from sacred sites. But these khuyas are empowered to produce specific results. For example, crystals are regarded as powerful channels of kawsay, and so they are likely to be included in a left-side mesa that is intended for healing.^X

Paqos “charge,” or empower, their mesas by exposing them to the energies at sacred sites, by having especially powerful paqos bless them, and by occasionally “feeding” the khuyas within them by sprinkling them with pisco, a strong alcohol that is widely used in Andean ceremony.

The khuyas in a mesa may serve only one function or they may have many, often quite diverse, uses. For example, during the interviews for this book, I was given a khuya from don Julian Pauqar Flores’s mesa. As he gave it to me, he explained: “As you take this khuya, know it possesses the power to suck out hucha. Also impurities and difficulties. It will cleanse any hucha from your mesa that may accumulate there. Also with this stone you can awaken the apus and Pachamama. Always work with it and feed it on August 1 [the first day of the Andean sacred year] because this is the day Pachamama and the apus awaken. Call the apus and Pachamama to you and declare your new intentions by saying, ‘I am what I speak, not what I have spoken.’ This stone is also a stone of activation; its power is an activating power. When you are very busy and you cannot remember everything, do the ritual with this stone.” The ritual for the stone involves dipping it in lake or river water before using it to cleanse my energy body and repeating a simple incantation during the cleansing. I was warned never to use the khuya on myself and another person on the same day.

There was still another use for this khuya, one for blessing and protecting a person who is about to take a trip. The person who is about to embark

should ideally be naked, don Julian explained, but if that is not possible, at least the arms and legs should be bare. Facing the direction about to be traveled and while being cleansed with the khuya, the traveler should intone: “May the path that I take be walked. May the word that I speak be spoken. May the wish that I make be wished. May the walk that I do be done.” Don Julian cautioned me to perform this ritual before the day of departure, never on the actual day itself. As you might suspect, of several powerful khuyas in my mesa, this is the khuya with the most uses.

In addition to their mesas, few Andean paqos are seen without a *ch'uspa*, a woven or llama-skin pouch with a long string strap used for carrying coca leaves. Coca is ubiquitous in the Andes. Peasants chew it with a small piece of lime-ash to enhance its stimulating effect because it not only suppresses the appetite, which is useful in a society where food is precious, but it also stimulates the heart, thus helping them endure working at high altitudes. Tourists are routinely served coca tea to help them acclimate to altitude.^{XI} But coca is more than a medicinal; it is the sacred plant of the Andes, and there are many ways that it is used ritually. Almost everywhere in the Andes, one can observe the social exchange and chewing of coca, called *hallpay*.

When coca is used in ceremony, that is, in a sacred context, the act of choosing the leaves and chewing them is called *akulliy*. *Akulliy*, which is pronounced rather like “ak-wee,” is the Quechua verb from which the title for the highest level of the Andean priesthood—*kuraq akulleq*—is derived. (As you may remember, *kuraq akulleq* means “elder chewer of coca leaves.”) The practice begins by first forming a coca *k'intu*, which is a grouping of three perfect cocoa leaves that are laid one on top of the other or sometimes are slightly fanned out. Then, with a prayerful attitude, you blow your finest energies through the leaves and either chew the leaves or place them in a ritual offering, such as in a *despacho*. *Samiy* is a gentle blowing through the leaves by which you commingle your refined energy with the energy of the *k'intu*. *Phukuy* is a breath used specifically to establish an energetic connection between two persons or two entities, such as the paqo and an *apu*, through the medium of the *k'intu*. It is common to see paqos blow through a *k'intu* three times to link their energy with the three worlds. Ideally, you hold the *k'intu* in the tips of your fingers, using both hands. After the prayer has been made, you feed the leaves slowly into your mouth and chew them, or you offer the *k'intu* for use in a *despacho*. If you chew the leaves, you always discard them respectfully by returning the leaves to the natural

world—perhaps tucking them under a bush or placing them in an out-of-the-way place on the ground—when you are finished with them.

All despachos include k'intus, but the number varies according to the despacho's intended use. Generally, a despacho that will be offered to the apus contains twelve k'intus, which are arranged in a circle at its center. A despacho to Pachamama usually contains eight k'intus, also arranged in a circle at the center of the offering. However, the number and placement of k'intus in a despacho is a complex, and often personal, art form.

Coca leaves also are used for divination and healing. In divination, the person who is being “read” takes a large handful of coca leaves and lets them fall randomly onto a cloth, or the coca leaf reader tosses the leaves onto the cloth after the person being read has infused them with his or her energy. The reader then divines the answer to the person's question in the arrangement and condition of the coca leaves. For instance, a folded or torn leaf may signify ill fortune, whereas one that is tinged gold around its edge may signal good fortune.

In healing, the coca leaves may be read to determine the nature of a patient's disease and the best cure. Otherwise, the coca leaves are most often placed in the healer's mesa, and the mesa is passed over the ill person's body to cleanse his or her *poq'po*. The coca helps the healer draw *hucha*, or heavy energy, out of the person's body and energy field and bring in *sami*, or refined energy.

Let me close this overview of the Andean cosmos of living energy by relating a story that beautifully illustrates a Q'ero paqo's intimate relation to it and that prepares us to move in the next chapter to a deeper discussion of our own responsibilities as energy beings. I said toward the beginning of this chapter that to immerse yourself in Andean cosmology you must shift your awareness from your mind to your heart center. The following story, told to me by Américo Yábar, poignantly illustrates how difficult it is for some of us in the West to make that perceptual shift, yet how different our world might be if we could all only do so.

Several years ago, Américo agreed to meet with a noted neurosurgeon and a contingent of physicians and anthropologists who were studying indigenous healing practices. He brought with him one of his teachers, a kuraq who rarely left his village high in the Andes. Américo did not identify the kuraq as Q'ero, although he well could have been since Américo was trained primarily by Q'ero paqos. In any case, the meeting took place in a

hotel in Cuzco, where the neurosurgeon spent considerable time quizzing Américo about his healing techniques and those of the Andes region. He then turned his attention to the kuraq.

“The doctor asked the shaman,” Américo said, lowering his voice and speaking in a mock serious tone, “so, what it is you do?” The shaman did not answer the doctor right away, and the doctor repeated his question. Again, the shaman did not answer. After several queries, the shaman finally said, ‘If that question interests you so much, *you* must be the one to answer it.’

“The doctor said, ‘I am a neurologist. I can open your head and take out a tumor the size of a nut. Then I can sew your head closed again, and you will be able to walk. Can you do that?’

“The kuraq carefully considered the surgeon’s words for a few minutes, then he shook his head and said no, he could not. ‘I cannot do those things,’ the kuraq admitted, ‘but when you are dying, when you are growing cold and the doctors have given up on you, then I can go out into the cosmos and bring back your soul [anima]. I can put it back into your body, and then you may walk away again. Can you do that?’”

TWO

Children of the Sun: Engaging Your Energy Body

“Our work as humans,” says fourth-level Andean paqo Juan Núñez del Prado, “is to have a complete life, to have a real relationship with the Pachamama, with Mother Earth, to have a real relationship with everything in the world, with *everything*.” We can have a “real” relationship with everything, because everything, including ourselves, has *kawsay*—the vital, animating energy of existence. According to Juan, not only the trees, rivers, and mountains have *kawsay*, but “even the Empire State building has its own power. The problem is how to establish a good relationship with that [person, place, or object].”

Juan’s use of the word “power” raises an important point for Westerners—for all Westerners, not just those of us living in mystical relationship with the universe. Juan says, “In the Western tradition we are afraid of the word ‘power.’ We think that power is dangerous, that it is not good. But no! Power is only power. It is the difference between being able to do something and not being able to do it. If you want you can do good things. If you want you can do bad things, because for that you also need power. But if you want to do good things in your life and in the lives of those around you, you must have power. You need power.

“But power is only power,” he stresses. “You must decide how to use it not based on your ability to use it, but based on your moral rule. Sometimes you will *not* do something not because you do not have the power to do it but because you follow a moral rule that tells you not to do it. On the other hand, there are people who are prevented from acting not because of their moral rule but because they do not have the power to do it. They have no choice. Understand? The thing is to have the power to do everything! Then the next thing is to have the personal morals to know how to use or not use your power. But do not be mistaken—we are looking for power when we try to establish a connection with the living energy.”

LIGHT AND HEAVY ENERGY

Power in the Andean tradition is the ability to “push the kawsay,” that is, to be in *ayni*—in conscious interchange—with the *kawsay pacha*, the cosmos of living energy. To an Andean, the consciousness of this energy world dawns at birth and intensifies throughout a life so intimately aligned and interconnected with the energies of the physical and spirit realms that to deny their existence is not to exist at all. The *kawsay pacha*, however, is not a complex world. It is, in fact, quite simple, for it is composed of an animating energy that can be seen as a spectrum that moves from ordered energy to disordered energy. The most ordered energy is called *sami*, and it is energy in its natural, fundamental, unspoiled state. We also call this quality of energy “refined” and “light” energy. It is the vibration of energy that is most compatible with our own, for it is our original vibrational state, and so it empowers us. In contrast, at the other end of the spectrum, is a quality of energy called *hucha*, which is described as “heavy,” “disordered,” and “dense.” *Hucha* is less compatible with the human energy field, and so it tends to disempower us. However, as I will soon discuss, our perception of energy as *sami* or *hucha* is tied directly to the condition of our own, individual energy fields.

Sami suffuses the natural world, animating all living beings and imparting “power” to natural objects and places where it accumulates. Our natural state is to be filled with this refined, ordered, light energy. When we come in contact with *sami*, say at a sacred site or natural power place, we feel enlivened because this energy is compatible with the *sami* that infuses our own energy body. But the reality of our living in the material world, in the human world of emotion-driven thought and action, disrupts this ordered, refined flow of light energy, causing it to become disordered, heavy, and less compatible with us. Humans are the only beings that create *hucha*. Thus, our task as “lightworkers”—or as they say in the Andes, as “children of the sun”—is to become consciously aware of the ecology of our energy bodies and environments so that we can transform *hucha* into *sami* and live with greater well-being. The more *sami* we incorporate into our energy bodies, and conversely the more we cleanse our energy bodies of *hucha*, the more effortlessly and fully we live in harmony with others and the natural world. By increasing our level of *sami*, we move toward our natural state and concurrently raise our level of consciousness.

According to the Andean tradition, hucha is created only by human beings, and it manifests because we do not live in perfect ayni—reciprocity—with the kawsay pacha and with each other. It results from the flux of our interrelations with one another, from the very activity of being and living in the kay pacha—the very human, physical world. It is an emergent energetic property of our interactions with each other and with the natural world, generated by the power of our emotions, thoughts, and actions. At our current level of consciousness, we cannot seem to exist on Pachamama without creating disorder—without hurting others or undermining ourselves, without upsetting the harmony of our environment or threatening other species—and so hucha cannot be avoided. Thus, any space humans have occupied, in which they have lived their humanness, accumulates hucha. We can gather hucha strolling through a field of flowers just as easily as we can while pushing our way along a congested city street.

Most often, however, we both generate and accumulate hucha through our emotional interactions with others. Hucha is an energetic byproduct of our confused and conflicting emotions, of the conscious and subconscious feelings that drive our thoughts and actions. Although hucha is a type of energy we cannot help creating and attracting if we are living fully in the current human world, it is a density of energy we do not want to accumulate, for it turns the lightness of our energy body heavy like itself. It keeps us in energetic disorder so that we do not function optimally, and it prevents us from engaging with the kawsay pacha as fully as we can.

However, it bears repeating that hucha in and of itself is not “negative” or “bad” energy, which is one of the most difficult aspects of the Andean path for Westerners to grasp. We tend to generate it from what we consider our “negative” emotions and behaviors, but that is a moral judgment we make about ourselves, and I want to stress that such emotions and behaviors only “disorder” our energy fields; they do not generate “negative” or “bad” energy. As Américo Yábar explains, “Hucha does not have a moral category. You can think of it as ordered energy that becomes disordered. We feed that disordered energy to Pachamama, but it has no moral reflection.” Juan Núñez del Prado says, “In the West we are always trying to reduce everything to dualities, to positive or negative, to good or bad, to right or wrong. But heaviness is a relative thing. Density or vibration or color may be a better way or metaphor to understand hucha. For example, something may be a violet color, or it may be red. The energetic vibration of the color red is

lower than the vibration of violet, so you could say, then, that heaviness is red. Violet is more refined, but it is also cold. Red is warm. Radiators are red, they give warmth, but ultraviolet rays are violet and cold. Which is better, the violet or the red thing? It depends.”

What we tend to judge as “bad” about hucha are the *symptoms* of our accumulation of it. As already explained, hucha can be seen from the psychological perspective as the accumulation in our energy body of all that does not serve us: negative attitudes, untruthfulness, inability to love, self-destructive or hurtful behaviors, a poor self-image, and the like. If you are experiencing these conditions, either you are creating disordered energy yourself or you are in contact with an energy that feels heavy to you. As Juan explains, “Fear or pain—the emotions—from the Andean point of view are only symptoms of being in contact with hucha. Fear, for example, is an indication that you are in contact with something that is heavy for you. Incompatible types of energy feel heavy. But heaviness is a relative thing. What is heavy for you may not be heavy for me.”

The perception of hucha, as Juan points out, is relative to individuals—to the condition of their poq’pos and the energetic power they have at their disposal, to how well they can push the kawsay. This is a crucial point, for it helps us not to judge energy as evil, bad, or negative; and it puts the responsibility for the quality of our energy interchanges squarely on our own shoulders and not on someone else’s. Feeling hucha, or heaviness, indicates an *incompatibility* between the current state of your own personal energy and another energy. If, for instance, someone walks into a room and you immediately feel uncomfortable in that person’s presence, then from the Andean perspective, you are in touch with an energy that is not entirely compatible with your own energy. Other people in the room who come into energetic contact with that same person may not experience hucha at all. Because it is the state of your *own* energy that determines your interaction with the kawsay of others, what is hucha (incompatible energy) for you may be sami (compatible energy) for someone else.

The work of the Andes is to continuously monitor your own energy interactions and to make sami the dominant energy in all the flows of kawsay coming from you and to you. The shift from labeling disordered energy as “bad” and toward understanding it as “heavy” is imperative to living fully and consciously, open and receptive to the energies of others and the natural world. As Juan explains, if you make contact with an energy you conceive of

as negative, your likely reaction will be to protect yourself. But in that posture of protection, you close yourself off and risk turning your energy body into “an energetic jail.” According to the Andean view, it is rarely beneficial to withdraw from an interchange with the kawsay pacha. In fact, our goal is to always be in perfect ayni with the free flow of universal energy and to be able to handle any quality of energy we contact. When you shift your perspective to conceive of energy as heavy, rather than as bad or negative, then there is suddenly nothing to protect yourself from; you are simply recognizing an energy as incompatible with your own. Your awareness of this incompatibility allows you to act to transform the energy—to, in effect, lighten it by ordering the flow of the energy between the other entity or person and yourself so that it either becomes compatible for you or simply does not affect you. Even if the hucha feels too heavy for you to handle all at once, it presents no danger to you and there is no need to close off your energy body in the impulse toward protection. Juan likens hucha to a stone that you are trying to move in a garden. If the stone is too heavy for you to lift, you will have to let it lie until you become stronger. But the stone itself has no capacity to harm you.

For Western practitioners of the Andean path, any discussion of heavy energy and of making unrestricted and open interactions with the kawsay pacha inevitably brings up the question of evil. As already pointed out, within the larger sacred tradition, energy has no moral category, good or bad, although how one pushes the kawsay can potentially disempower others. For instance, a shaman and a sorcerer both work with energy (kawsay), but they push that kawsay with antithetical intents, according to their own moral systems, which may or may not be empowering to others. So, generally speaking, most paqos would not claim that there is an energy that is inherently evil, but they would admit that paqos might do harm by pushing the kawsay for their own selfish or devious ends.¹

Juan Núñez del Prado and Fredy “Puma” Quispe Singona are in agreement that what we tend to perceive as evil usually is energy upon which we have projected our own fears. Both claim that perceiving an energy as evil, dark, or harmful says more about the person than about the energy. The “devil” according to Juan is “one who creates division,” and any division we feel from the kawsay pacha is usually a result of our own internal state and not an inherent aspect of the world of living energy. It is, in effect, a projection of our shadow selves.

Puma declares that what appear to us as dark energies are often tricksters, or nature spirits who challenge or test us to help move us through our psychological or spiritual blocks and open us to opportunities. Although we might perceive these energy beings as mischievous or even menacing, they are here to help us empower ourselves. Trickster spirits are like gods in temporary disguise, appearing as demons to us only because we are blind to their empowering intent. Puma suggests that if you feel in command of your energy and strong enough to face your fear, then you should honor that which is fearful to you “as a revelation.”

Juan says we need to act “reasonably” with those energies we perceive as dark. Our initial reaction of wanting to protect ourselves from or else to fight “evil” actually makes it stronger, because that type of reaction reinforces the duality of our projection—that this is a bad or negative or harmful energy as opposed to a good or positive or helpful one. Energy cannot exert its will over us, Juan says, so those energies we perceive as evil cannot do anything to us that we do not consciously or unconsciously agree to. This is where the accumulation of personal power comes into play. Personal power, remember, is not about domination, but about command of your energy.

Juan suggests that a more productive response is to “open a dialogue” with an energy or entity that generates fear within us. Doing so creates the opportunity for our fear to fall away so that we can deal with the energy at a less emotional level and in a more energetically mature way. Our task as paqos, after all, is to cleanse heavy energy configurations, feeding the hucha to Pachamama and reordering the energy into sami. Our success in providing that sacred service is directly proportional to the personal power we have at our disposal—and that is dependent on the state of our own energy body.

Let me provide an example from my own life. About three years ago, I spent more than two weeks in the Amazon working with ayahuasca, a visionary plant teacher.^{II} Several times during that experience, I found myself facing what I perceived as dark energies or as energies that I could not categorize but that provoked fear in me. I was able to hold my fear in check and open a dialogue with some of these energies and entities, and those interactions transformed the energies into teacher spirits or revealed my own inner darkness, my shadow self. As a result of those interactions, I received valuable teachings and immense insight into the state of my own psyche and energy body. I was both illuminated and empowered. But with other energies

or entities that deeply frightened me, my spontaneous reaction was to command that they leave. They did, which was a relief then, but is a cause of regret now, for I know that I missed important opportunities for personal growth. One opportunity was a visit by a “spirit doctor,” whom I asked to leave because I lost control of my energy field and succumbed to my emotional body (fear). I often wonder what healing or teaching I might have received if I had dialogued with that spirit. Still, I understand now that both facing my fears and succumbing to them taught me enormously useful lessons and propelled me forward as a paqo learning to command my energy.

THE ENERGY BODY

We are energy beings, and we engage the world of living energy—we make *ayni* interchanges of *sami* and *hucha*—through our *poq’po*, our energy body. This body is a bubble of energy that surrounds and suffuses our physical body. It has an outer layer, like a skin, that prevents heavy, disordered energy from easily infiltrating deep into our energy field. However, if we do not cleanse the heavy energy from the surface of our *poq’po*, then *hucha* can accumulate, building up and seeping in more and more deeply. As this incompatible energy penetrates our energy field, it affects our physical, emotional, mental, and spiritual states. The deeper it goes, the more pronounced its symptoms and the loss of well-being may be.

For these reasons, among an Andean paqo’s first lessons as an apprentice are methods of cleansing *hucha* from and drawing *sami* into his *poq’po*. The capacity to cleanse, however, is predicated upon his first becoming conscious of *ayni*—of how he is in ceaseless energetic interchange with others and with the natural world. I remember one of my first experiences of the flow of energy, a flow that physically knocked me back from where I was sitting on a rock. I was at Machu Picchu with a group of fellow paqos, and we had split into two groups. One group had climbed Huayna Picchu; the other had stayed behind to meditate in the ruins. I chose a large, flat rock on the eastern edge of the ruins, a short distance from the rest of the group. Our instructions had been to exchange our energy filaments with the group up on the mountain. We were to “throw” our energy filaments up to those on the mountaintop, and they would cast their filaments down to us. At the appointed hour I was in deep meditation, sitting atop the large, flat rock. As I felt my energy building, I opened my *qosqo*—the primary energy center that

is located around the navel—and cast my energy up to my friends on the mountain. I cannot say I felt a tangible flow of energy traveling upward, but my intentions were clear and directed, so I trusted that I was making an exchange. What happened next dispelled any doubts. I was suddenly struck by a whooshing blast of blue air (I could see the brilliant color blue even though my eyes were closed) that came rushing down from the mountaintop. It felt like a giant blue bird had winged its way through me. I was physically propelled backward, and I had to throw my arms back to stop myself from being toppled off the rock. Later, I polled a few of my friends who had been on Huayna Picchu. They told me that they had agreed, as an aid to the energy transfer, to visualize themselves as giant condors of energy flying down the mountain toward our group below.

As paqos, our fundamental task is to maintain at all times the ecology of our energy environment. If our energy environment is not ordered and light, then it must be cleansed until it becomes replete with sami, which we can then use to help us acquire the personal power to push the kawsay in service to others. The cleansing practice begins with the self, then moves outward in a series of concentric circles to encompass larger and larger energy fields. After we cleanse our own poq'pos, for instance, we can begin to cleanse our immediate environment and the people with whom we are in close contact, such as family members, friends, and colleagues. As we accumulate personal power, we can direct cleansing even further outward, toward those with whom we have difficult relationships or toward whom we feel discomfort or animosity. We can even cleanse hucha from groups, communities, and entire populations. Finally, we can cleanse physical localities, such as a house where dense energy has accumulated or a landscape energetically suffering from the effects of violence, desecration, or pollution.

There are various methods of cleansing hucha. Paqos may work with specific tools, such as their mesas, or with a particular object, such as a khuya. They can feed their own hucha into their mesas, where it is transformed into sami by the power of the ritual objects within. If they are healing another person, they might run a mesa or khuya through the person's energy field to pull the hucha out. Coca leaves or other herbs also may be passed over the body, energetically trapping the hucha and drawing it from the person. However, the two main hucha cleansing techniques are entirely energetic and require no accoutrements: the simplest is the *release* of hucha

from the poq'po; the more intensive technique involves *digesting* the heavy energy.

These techniques are discussed in detail in the exercises of [part 4](#), but basically, the release technique—called *saminchukuy*—is a simple intentional practice during which you sit in a meditative state and visualize any hucha in your energy field being drawn down through your root chakra and into the earth. As the release occurs, you simultaneously draw in sami through the crown of your head, letting it wash through your energy field and physical body, completing the circuit of ayni. Sami is usually drawn down from the *hanaq pacha*, the upper world of Andean cosmology, a world composed entirely of sami because the hanaq pacha beings always act with perfect ayni. However, sami is also the elemental energy of the natural world and so can be drawn from just about any natural source.

The digestion practice, called *hucha mikhuy*, literally “eating hucha,” is more elaborate but is still a technique of intention. In this process, you open your qosqo, or spiritual stomach, and “eat” the hucha. You begin by connecting intentionally and energetically to your own energy field or with another person’s, and you draw any hucha into your qosqo. There, the flow of hucha is split into two streams, the hucha going down into Pachamama and the sami moving upward through your body to your head or crown chakra, in a columnar flow called *saiwachakuy*. During this cleansing process, you actually extract sami from the hucha just as your physical stomach is able to extract nutrients from food.

No matter which technique you use, you always feed hucha to Pachamama, who loves hucha almost as much as, if not more than, she loves the sweets and candies in despacho offerings. Hucha empowers Pachamama; to her it is food, not waste. In return for her energetic meal, she returns sami, refined energy, to the person doing the cleansing. “When we give hucha to Pachamama, we are giving her food,” Juan says. “When we are working with heavy energy, we are working with real, living energy, and this real, living energy empowers Mother Earth. She needs living energy, and if you release hucha to her you are empowering her. Also you are empowering yourself.”

A person does not have to know you are performing hucha mikhuy on his or her energy field for the cleansing to be useful or effective. Nor is close physical proximity necessary. Because hucha mikhuy is fundamentally an act of intention, its efficacy is not dependent in any way on time or space. Américo Yábar tells a story about the art of hucha mikhuy and his teacher, the

famed kuraq don Benito Qoriwaman, that illustrates the flexibility and practicality of the process. Américo was visiting don Benito one day when a group of tourists came to his house. “He was very famous,” Américo said of don Benito, “and people from all over came to consult with him.” On this particular day, Américo felt that don Benito was being imposed upon and so he tried to steer the tourists away. But don Benito stopped him and said, “Look at all the heavy energy they have.” After half an hour or so of conversation, Américo reported, the kuraq excused himself and left the hut. Américo followed him and found him doubled over, vomiting. When Américo asked him what was the matter, the kuraq replied: “Don’t worry. I just ate all their hucha, and I’m getting rid of it.” This story is typical and atypical: it is typical in that kuraqs and other paqos can work energetically on others without their knowledge; it is atypical in that performing mikhuy rarely affects the practitioner physically. Usually, the heavy energy can be fed to Pachamama without ill effect.

The cycle of cleansing hucha and of digesting it is completed by drawing sami into your poq’po and into the poq’po of the person being cleansed. As you release heaviness, you increase your lightness. But you do not have to do this only during a mikhuy session. You should always be cognizant of empowering yourself by drawing in sami whenever you need it or whenever an especially powerful source is available to you. Other people may be potential sources of sami. For example, anyone—but particularly apprentices on the sacred path—in the presence of a master paqo has the right to draw sami from the master. There is no need to ask permission to do this; it is a given that a great paqo, a kuraq akulleq for instance, is an open conduit to the most refined energies and that anyone is free to drink from this stream. In the Andean tradition, according to Juan, “if someone comes to me and tells me that he is more powerful or more enlightened than I am on the sacred path, then immediately I have the right to share that person’s refined energy. But if someone is my equal, then I have no right to his finest energy. I can only eat his heavy energy, to cleanse him of his hucha. But from the more powerful I can take sami. And from the mountains, who are our older brothers, we may take sami. And from Pachamama, we have the right to absorb the finest energy. But with an equal, no. We have only the right to digest his heavy energy and to give it to Pachamama.”

I remembered Juan’s counsel when I was in Q’ero, at don Manuel Q’espi’s house at Chua Chua. Don Manuel is the eldest kuraq in Q’ero and

one of the most respected elders in the region. I was part of a small group undergoing the *Karpay Ayni*, a ritual during which there is a transmission of energy from master to apprentice. As I sat in the small circle in the darkness of the small hut waiting for the ceremony to begin, I opened my qosqo, connected energies with don Manuel, and drank and drank and drank in his sami. I saw no indication that don Manuel was aware of what I was doing, but I felt energetically empowered and physically lighter as a result of sharing his sami.

BELTS OF POWER

Our qosqo is our spiritual stomach, the primary energy center at the area around our navel. To perceive energies or intentionally interchange energy with the kawsay pacha or another person, you have to learn to use this spiritual center, to sensitize yourself to how it operates and to bring it under your conscious control. Techniques for learning to work with your spiritual stomach are included in the exercises of [part 4](#). Here I want to discuss the larger energy configuration of the poq'po, your energy bubble, of which the qosqo is a part.

Although the qosqo is the primary energy center, it is only one of four major and three minor energy centers in the poq'po. These seven centers comprise an energy system analogous to the Eastern chakra system. The four primary energy centers are called *chunpis* in Quechua, which means “belts.” These “belts of power” extend around the body and each has one opening, a point or an “eye,” called a *ñawi*. Each *chunpi* is also associated with a color and an element.

The *yana chunpi*, or black belt, is located at the base of the spine, and it wraps around the lower hips and between the legs, forming what Juan calls a “pair of black pants.” Realistically portrayed, it would look more like a black diaper! Its “eye,” or point of energetic entry and exit, is called the *siki ñawi*. This belt is associated with the element of water and with the Black Light, the most powerful energy of the Andean tradition.

Next is the *puka chunpi*, a red belt that wraps around the body at the stomach level, at the area associated in the Eastern chakra system with the sacral and solar plexus centers. Its eye is the *qosqo ñawi*, which is usually located just below the navel. The red belt is our primary energy center and is

associated with the Earth (Pachamama) and, by some practitioners with the “blood of the Mother.”

Moving up the body, we come next to the heart center, which is the *qori chunpi*, or the golden belt. The eye of this belt is called the *sonqo ñawi*, which literally means “eye of the heart.” This gold belt is associated with love, empathy, and the finer emotions. It is associated with the sun and the element of fire.

Finally, there is the throat center, the *qolqe chunpi*, which is the silver belt. Its eye is called the *kunka ñawi*. The primary qualities associated with the silver belt are creativity and communication, its element is the wind, and its connection to the natural world is through the moon.

While these four belts—the black, red, gold, and silver—are the major energy centers of the body, there are three other points that are considered secondary centers—the two physical eyes and the area known in metaphysics as the “third eye.” This is the point in the middle of the forehead just above the brow line. The “eye” of this seventh center is called the *qanchis ñawi*. Together the two physical eyes and the third eye are seen as forming a fifth belt that extends across the forehead and around the head. This fifth belt is called the *kulli chunpi*, or violet belt.

A paqo who has been trained to transmit the power of the belts, to in effect open or activate the energy centers of another person’s energy body, is called a *chunpi paqo*. He uses a special set of five khuyas in an elaborate ritual to perform the chunpi initiation. However, beyond “opening” or “awakening” a person’s energy field, there is not to my knowledge any *systemized* practice of working with these belts, although later in this chapter, I describe some of don Melchor Desa’s work, which deals peripherally with the belts of power. In general, however, the puka chunpi—the qosqo, or spiritual stomach—is the most important energy center because it is through this center that we mediate kawsay and make ayni exchanges, and it is through our spiritual stomach that we perform the hucha mikhuy cleansing technique.

ENERGY PRACTICES AND RITUALS IN TRANSITION

Alarmingly, knowledge of these energy belts seems to be on the decline in the central Andes, as are the number of paqos able to perform the chunpi ceremony. As far as Juan Núñez del Prado and I are aware, there are no

chunpi paqos left in Q'ero. Even more unsettling is that none of the Q'ero paqos with whom Juan or I have worked are trained in the hucha mikhuy technique. The late don Benito Qoriwaman and late Q'ero master don Andreas Espinosa, teachers to both Juan and Américo, held the chunpi rite and the hucha mikhuy teaching, and they taught both techniques to Juan and Américo. But they did not pass these techniques on to any of the Q'ero I interviewed in Urubamba or to any other Q'ero I have worked with over the years. During the interviews, for example, when I queried the Q'ero specifically about the hucha mikhuy technique, they claimed they knew of no such energy digesting technique. For them, hucha can only be cleansed using a mesa, khuya, despacho, or coca leaves. "We do not eat or digest it," they agreed, letting don Mariano Apasa speak for them. "We just capture it, cleanse it from a person, and offer it to the apus. First, we take the hucha and after that we offer it up to the apus. Then the apus offer it to the *Taytacha* [a supernatural being, equivalent to the Christ energy], and the Taytacha decides how to get rid of it."

When Juan explained the hucha mikhuy technique to them, the Q'ero were amazed. They talked excitedly among themselves for a while and then said, "We think this is a good tool. We think that if you do this with another person, that person will become totally clean. We have shared with you the things we learned with our teachers. Because you have learned that practice, you must tell us how to do it! If you are able to share that technique with us, we will be very happy!" Juan promised to teach them, although I do not know if, in fact, he ever did. The first paqo I met who did know about digesting heavy energy through the qosqo was Fredy "Puma" Quispe Singona, whom I met in 2002 and who is not Q'ero.

Surprisingly, although the Q'ero are among the most respected paqos of the Andes, they have not managed to preserve all of the energetic techniques or shamanic traditions of their forebears. The reasons for this disruption in the sacred lineage are complex, and the explanation only begins with the reality that for the current generation of indigenous Andeans the pressure is to become less Indian and more Peruvian. It was only about thirty years ago that Peruvian Indians were allowed to become citizens. Since then, the pressures to abandon the indigenous practices have only become more intense, perhaps more so than at any time since the Spanish conquest. Juan Núñez del Prado reports that, throughout the Andes, elderly paqos have become the object of ridicule as the rest of the village acculturates into mainstream Peruvian

society. “I know of one paqo, don Jesús, who lives in a village near Pisac, who is totally isolated, because nobody believes him,” Juan says. “He performs the ancient ceremonies only for himself. Everybody laughs at him, at his ceremonies and techniques.”

When, after diligent searching, I found and purchased an authentic set of chunpi khuyas in Cuzco, I asked Juan where the set could have come from. His reply was telling, and rather depressing. He explained that as the elders age and pass on, there are no family members with sufficient interest to learn the ancient ways or heed the call of an estrella, so the families sell off the deceased paqos’ most cherished possessions, like the chunpi khuyas.

In addition to the pressure to acculturate as Peruvian citizens, the indigenous populations are feeling the effects of years of Marxist political and social practice. “Almost all the school teachers in Peru,” says Juan, “took Marxists positions over the last twenty or more years. They saw the indigenous mystical tradition and customs as lies, deceptions, and outright foolishness. The young people in don Jesús’s community laugh at him because they have been taught by their teachers that his knowledge is a foolish thing, nothing more than superstition.”

While the situation is not so dire in Q’ero, the current impulse is to question, if not to abandon, the old ways. “Q’ero is the place where the impulse to preserve the ancient ways is the strongest,” Juan says. “Yet in Q’ero there is an evangelical group, and for them the ancient ways are the ways of the devil. Two sons of don Manuel Q’espi, the highest paqo in Q’ero, belong to it. They see the mystical tradition as evil. Don Manuel himself was pulled into this new church. He became a member, but only for two or three months. Finally, he decided to abandon that church and to reincorporate the ancient ways. And his sons are angry with him because of this. Now he is passing on his knowledge not to his sons but to other relatives, in particular to a nephew, who was given the third-level initiation at Q’ollorit’i.”

Sometimes human nature accounts for the loss of traditional ways. For instance, don Manuel Q’espi once had a falling out with his colleague don Andreas Espinosa. As a result of their disagreement, don Andreas denied don Manuel the chunpi teaching. Juan Núñez del Prado, however, was shown the technique by don Andreas after only their second meeting as teacher and apprentice.

This state of affairs, while troubling, is not actually unusual within a living spiritual tradition. Such traditions are by nature fluid, and this malleability is even more pronounced in the Andes, where spirituality is grounded in practicality. Techniques change as the lives and the needs of the people change. Because a paqo does not have within his repertoire of techniques the same ones as his brother or sister on the sacred path, or as his ancestors, does not make him any less powerful or accomplished a paqo. Andean paqos generally do not work from a stance of competition or domination. Although there is a clear hierarchy within the spiritual tradition, cooperation is usually the operating principle of its practice. There is a psychological principle in Andean culture that beautifully illustrates the noncompetitive nature of the Andean mindset and the openness and availability of the ancient spiritual teachings. According to this principle, which is at heart an energetic teaching as powerful as any other, there are three levels of relationship: *tinkuy*, *tupay*, and *taqe*.

Tinkuy is the encounter, when two entities (two people, two animals, even two nations) first meet and their energy bubbles touch. *Tupay* is the next stage of the relationship, the sizing up or the confrontation between the two entities. In the Western world, the final stage of the relationship would be the outcome of that comparison; normally, one person would be proven superior to the other. But in the Andes, the final stage of the relationship is *taqe*, the joining of energies. In a classic example, which clarifies the important distinction between the Andean and Western notions of relationship, suppose two Indians are racing up a mountain. The third level, according to the Western mindset, would be reached when a winner is identified—whoever reaches the mountaintop first. But in the Andean tradition, the third level of relationship, *taqe*, is not a domination of one person over another, but a joining of energies, a union, a communion. So when one racer is declared the winner, it becomes the winner's duty—his or her highest honor—to teach the loser how to become a winner like himself. Américo says that *taqe* is the “complement of differences,” where the gifted person shares his or her talents with the less gifted to create two equally skilled persons.

We in the West are brought up thinking it is impossible that we can all reach the mountaintop simultaneously, but in the Andes, such an accomplishment is not only possible but preferable. The perceptual shift, basically, involves moving from the stance of competition to that of cooperation. Thus, although it may seem odd, and indeed unfortunate, that the

most respected paqos in the Andes have not preserved all of the ancient knowledge and energetic techniques, we must beware of imposing our own Western values and expectations on a culture where taqe, not power or competition, is the guiding principle.

HARMONIZING SIMILAR AND DISSIMILAR ENERGIES

Américo's phrase the "complement of differences" not only serves to define the stance of taqe, but it also helps us conceptualize the kawsay pacha in another useful way: as composed of similar or dissimilar energies. I have already shown how the *quality* of kawsay, the animating energy of the cosmos, can be seen as a spectrum that runs from sami (ordered, compatible, light energy) to hucha (disordered, incompatible, heavy energy) and discussed how it has no moral category attached to it. Yet the kawsay pacha is infinitely creative in its expression of energy. Energy can be configured, or manifested, in countless ways: as a person, tree, stream, rock, cloud, and so on. Andean paqos seek to perceive and experience as many of these "flavors" of energy, as Juan terms them, as they can. They seek to experience the different vibrational expressions of energy, as well as to sense the quality of that energy configuration in terms of its sami or hucha. Using your qosqo, you can be in ayni with a person, tree, stream, rock, or cloud, and during each interchange you will be able to experience what the "flavor" of the person, tree, stream, rock, or cloud "tastes" like. Tasting all the flavors of the infinitely creative kawsay pacha is not only possible, but desirable. As Juan says, we do not want to create an energetic jail of our poq'po through our fear of what is energetically or vibrationally different from us. (We do, however, want to be cautious and make sure our personal power is such that we can mediate dissimilar energy wisely and well.) In addition to developing the sensitivity to perceive different types of energy, we also must become sensitive to what are called the *yanantin* and *masintin* interchanges of energy. Yanantin is the alliance between or harmonizing of two *different* flavors or vibrations of energy. Masintin is the alliance between two *similar* energies.

Before we go into this concept any further, it is important for you to understand that being in "harmony" does not mean being in "balance." Balance is a dualistic term—we seek to equalize two things or, alternatively, to make them the same. Andeans, however, prefer to recognize inherent

differences, as in Américo's phrase "the complement of differences," and to preserve the individuality of the two entities. Within the kawsay pacha, for example, male energy is a vibration or flavor of energy distinct from female energy. One is not better, more powerful, or purer than the other. They are simply two expressions of the infinitely creative kawsay pacha. In the Andean tradition, as we encounter different flavors of energy, we strive to recognize the distinction and to celebrate it.

We all are immersed in countless yanantin and masintin energy exchanges every moment of our lives, and to be fully conscious as energy beings, we have to be aware of how our energies are forming or transforming the alliances between similar and dissimilar relations in our life. Contact with yanantin energies—with energies that vibrate in a fundamentally different way than your own—can create the conditions that result in hucha. For example, male and female are fundamentally dissimilar energy vibrations, so a man and woman are always in a yanantin relationship. Nature energies are also perceived either as masculine or feminine vibrations. Inti, the sun, is masculine; Mama Killa, the moon, is feminine. Yanantin vibrations can align to complement each other. When a perfect yanantin relationship is achieved—when the two different energies interact in complete harmony—that union is called a *japu*.

Other yanantin relationships may not be so clear cut, for they may appear to be more perceptual than energetic. A North American and a South American can be yanantin based on culture and ethnicity. A baker and a candlestick maker are yanantin based on occupation. Labor and management may be yanantin based on a hierarchical power structure. Each of these interrelations has the potential to become defined by their differences. But when we evaluate our relations from the mystical or energetic point of view, we are moved to seek alliance, to discover points of contact and similarity while still acknowledging and honoring the fundamental differences. This is the "complement of differences," and it is the doorway through which we can easily access the third level of Andean relationship, that of taqe, or joiner of energies, and operate from cooperation rather than competition.

We can do the same with our masintin relations. Masintin relations are those of sameness: two males are in masintin relationship, as are two females. Inti, the sun, and an apu, a lord of a mountain, are both male and thus are in masintin relation.^{III} Mama Killa, the moon, is in masintin relationship with Mama Qocha, the Mother of the Waters. Two accountants, three

surgeons, four salesclerks are all in masintin relation according to occupation. Two mothers can be in masintin relation according to their nurturing role. When we acknowledge points of similarity, then we can more easily form alliances. When a perfectly harmonized masintin relationship is achieved, the alliance is called *ranti*.

Thus, each of us shares many simultaneous yanantin and masintin relations with every individual in our lives. If we are aware of the yanantin and masintin aspects of the relationship and strive to harmonize these energetic interchanges, we can improve our interactions with the other person and avoid accumulating hucha. We cannot turn a yanantin relation into a masintin relation—what is different is different, what is similar is similar—but we can seek points of alliance and work to harmonize the energies, thus lessening the chance for creating hucha. New perspectives, new possibilities, new ideas, new alliances are created fluidly when we are conscious of the yanantin and masintin energies in our personal lives and in our interactions with the energies of the natural world.

MORE WAYS TO PUSH THE KAWSAY

Juan Núñez del Prado describes the work of the qosqo—of tasting all the flavors of energy and of cleansing hucha—as the work of his teacher don Benito Qoriwaman. He calls don Benito’s craft the “external” energy work, the practice of mediating the energy of the kawsay pacha. The chunpi work was taught to him primarily by Q’ero master don Andreas Espinosa, and Juan calls this the “skin level” work, because we are working to open the belts of power of our poq’po. As Juan explains it, the chunpi initiation is a catalyst, a bridge between the practical left-side work (as in healing and hucha mikhuy) and the right-side work (as in energetically exploring the kawsay pacha and attaining mystical communication with the spirits of nature). The teachings of his third mentor, don Melchor Desa, comprise what Juan calls the “internal” work, for it integrates all the other energy practices so we can learn to push the kawsay more effortlessly and effectively.

Pushing the kawsay is using our personal power to reach our full potential and, in the spirit of taqe, to empower others to reach theirs as well. Mastering such skills takes diligence and patience. But all of Andean practice is undertaken in the spirit of *pukllay*, or play. Juan describes the work as a “cosmic game.” To walk the Andean sacred path is to cultivate an

attitude of joy and wonder. If the sacred work ever becomes “work” then it is not the sacred work! Juan refers to the Bible and Christ’s teaching that we must become as little children. The kawsay pacha is marvelous, and we must behold it as such, notwithstanding the need for us to be sober in our accumulation of personal power in order to push the kawsay as cocreators and to develop the moral system to use it constructively and compassionately.

The Melchor Desa teachings are predicated upon the ability to discern energy clearly and objectively, without judgment, without overlaying the amoral kawsay pacha with projections of our own prejudices, fears, expectations, and the like. In Quechua, the verb *qaway* means “to see,” and a *qawaq* is “one who sees.” To be a seer is to be able to discern the quality of your energy interchanges and how they contribute to creating the very conditions of your life. The goal of the Melchor Desa work is to see clearly enough to fully empower yourself to create a life that expresses your greatest potential and finest gifts. Juan describes the goal this way. “We want to see reality *exactly* as reality is. We want to develop the capacity to accept it exactly as it is. This work is about moving beyond your personal expectations and wishful thinking. You learn to see the kawsay pacha as waves of energy. Then you develop the clarity and the maturity to choose which wave to ride, and you surf it effortlessly.”

Working as a *qawaq* means cleansing the lens of your sacred sight and opening the energy centers at your two physical eyes and your third eye. The primary task is releasing *hucha* from your third-eye area and filling that center with *sami*. As you develop your sacred sight, you concurrently work with the other belts of power to empower yourself in other ways, as described below.

There are three concepts from the Melchor Desa work that I would like to focus on here. The first is *rimay*. The Quechua noun *rimaq* means prophecy or oracle, and within the mystical tradition it is the aspect of sacred sight that is keen enough to discern your own or another’s destiny. *Rimay*—the verb form of this word—means to talk or to express yourself (especially about that which you have directly experienced). It is through expressing yourself that you in effect create yourself, or as Juan would phrase it, that you “manifest yourself.” This is the work of the *qolqe chunpi*, the silver belt at the throat. By cleansing *hucha* that has accumulated at the *qolqe chunpi*, you open the gate of your communicative energy. But to communicate who you are, to speak your truth, is not just about using words well and speaking with

integrity and honesty. Rimay implies expressing yourself authentically in thought, word, and deed. It demands absolute honesty and integrity. It requires that you lift the veil on your shadow self, exposing to the light of the inner eye the truth of what you expect from yourself, how you take care of yourself, what you have direct experiential knowledge of, how you act toward others, what you think about others. It is self-expression unmasked from psychological, egocentric screens. And it is self-expression generated in a holistic, integrated way, so all of your energies are working in harmony to reveal the essence of your sacred Self. As is the case with most of the work of the Andes, when you free yourself to authentically express your wholeness, you are also energetically releasing others to do the same. Ayni, after all, means reciprocity.

A complement to the work of rimay is that of *kanay*. Juan describes *kanay* as “remembering who you are and having the power to be it.” The meaning of *kanay* can best be illuminated for us if we first examine the Quechua phrase *Noccan Kani*, which means, literally, “I Am.” This is a powerful metaphysical declaration, and when you make it you are claiming more than mere physical existence or psychological individuation; you are claiming your essence, asserting that you have accumulated the energetic power to fulfill your sacred mission in the physical. It is a statement of personal authenticity and a claiming of complete energetic and personal freedom. Antón Ponce de León Paiva, the author of *The Wisdom of the Ancient One: An Inca Initiation*, writes that “Noccan Kani is all that exists” and that “when you discover it, you will live the true reality.”¹ That true reality is that we are all part of the One, and separation is an illusion. But we have forgotten the truth that we are not less than or separate from the All That Is, and in our remembering of who we truly are, we recover the capacity to create as gods—because we are gods.

As you bring that realization down to the “practical” level of the Andean spiritual work, it becomes the work of *kanay*, of discovering your wholeness, the god within, and living your fullness. One of the primary centers activated during this work is the *qori chunpi*, the gold center at the heart. This is the center related to *munay*, which is love grounded in will. In this context, “will” means energetic sobriety—action that is free of impulse, passion, and sentimentality. As you cleanse *hucha* from your heart center, your sacred sight grows ever clearer. As you see from the eye of the heart, your view of yourself and others is not obscured by preconceptions and illusions but is

clarified by the light of compassion. As you incorporate the teaching of kanay, you are freed not only to imagine the unlimited possible expressions of your Self but also to accumulate the personal power necessary to manifest them.

Once you have mastered kanay, you are ready to wield the power of *atiy*. The Quechua word *atini* translates to the phrase “I can do it.” After you learn to manifest your authentic self (kanay), then you are ready to consciously and masterfully push the kawsay in any direction you prefer. Juan calls *atiy* the power to “drive reality.” He explains that you are not controlling reality but are directing the flow of kawsay in ways that are more beneficial or harmonious for you and those around you. This power depends entirely on the personal power you have accumulated and have available to channel. *Atiy* is the work of the *yana chunpi*, the black belt at the *siki*, which is the root or bottom of the spine. This is the center through which we mediate our impulses, and to attain *atiy* one must channel undirected impulses, by which we waste our energy, into directed impulses. In effect, one learns to focus one’s psychological and physical energies with love and will.

The *atiy* energy work at the *siki*—the eye of the *yana chunpi*—is a little more complicated than the work of *rimay* and *kanay* at the throat and heart centers, respectively. The first task one undertakes when working with any of the *chunpis* is to cleanse them of *hucha* that may be accumulated there. This is how you start activating *atiy* as well—by cleansing the *yana chunpi*, releasing any *hucha* accumulated there to Pachamama and drawing in *sami* through the top of your head, or your crown chakra. In this case, however, once your *hucha* has been released, you continue moving energy, pulling *sami* down from all the other belts of power of your energy body, drawing the *sami* into the lower belt. When the center is fully activated by all this *sami*, then you reverse the direction of the energy flow, sending your *sami* back up in a column of light to the crown of your head. This cyclic movement of energy integrates all the *chunpis* and infuses your entire *poq’po* with *sami*.^{IV} It intensifies the energy of your *poq’po* so that you are more fully empowered to push the kawsay to manifest your desires.

INTEGRATING THE ENERGY OF THE THREE WORLDS

All of these energy concepts coalesce into a philosophic whole within the framework of Andean cosmology and prophecy. When we have sufficiently

refined our own energy bodies, then we can push the kawsay to change our world and to evolve consciously as human beings. It would not be an overstatement to say that the teleology of the Andean sacred path is to manifest heaven on Earth.

As outlined in [chapter 1](#), the Andean cosmos is comprised of three worlds: the *hanaq pacha*, *kay pacha*, and *ukhu pacha*. To briefly review, the *hanaq pacha* is the upper world of the most refined energy; it is composed entirely and solely of *sami* because the upper-world beings always act from perfect *ayni*. The *kay pacha*, our mundane, physical world, is comprised of both *sami* and *hucha*. This world is a constant flux of these two vital energies, because we humans are energetically and spiritually immature; we sometimes act with *ayni* and sometimes do not. The *ukhu pacha*, the lower world, contains only *hucha*, because the beings of this world do not yet practice the law of *ayni*. Thus, the lower world is one of heaviness.

However, we beings of the *kay pacha* have the capacity to interchange energies among the three worlds. In this way, when we feed *hucha* to Pachamama, in the *kay pacha*, we are able to draw *sami* down from the *hanaq pacha* in an act of *ayni*. As part of our work on the Andean spiritual path, we also work to bring *sami* to the beings of the lower world. It is part of Andean prophecy that these beings must be taught *ayni*, and that when they learn, the three worlds will coalesce into one, ushering in a golden age during which humankind will have the capacity to evolve physically and spiritually, fully participating in the evolutionary process and even directing it with the power of our refined consciousness.

The historical framework within which this prophecy fits concerns the two rival Inkas, the half-brothers Atawallpa and Waskar.^V Their power struggle for control of the Inka empire occurred concurrently with the Spanish conquest, and the civil war that resulted from their rivalry weakened the empire and no doubt made it especially vulnerable to the Spaniards. According to Juan Núñez del Prado, “because these two brother-kings did not have the capacity to collaborate, to act with *ayni*, they lost the empire.” Consequently, they were not able to pass on their inheritance of a stable Tawantinsuyu (empire) to their children, and they generated a lot of heavy energy because they could not act with *ayni*. When they died—Waskar during the civil war and Atawallpa at the hands of the conquistadors—they descended into the *ukhu pacha*. “All that heavy energy they generated captured the two Inkas,” Juan explains, “and pulled them into the lower

world.” The two Inkas now live there, and their task is to teach the lower-world beings how to perform ayni. “Our work in the kay pacha,” says Juan, “is to digest heavy energy, to cleanse our environment. The work of the Inkas in the lower world is to teach ayni.” When they and we have succeeded, then the lower world will rise into the kay pacha and the upper world will descend to the kay pacha, integrating into one cohesive and paradisiacal world.

We can contribute to the realization of this golden era not only by cleansing the kay pacha of hucha, but also by creating *saiwas*, columns of energy that connect the three worlds, allowing sami to flow freely through all three domains. Doing so is our act of ayni toward the two brother Inkas in the lower world. “We have the capacity to practice ayni with the Inkas,” Juan says. “They miss their contact with the upper world. We can establish that contact for them and pull cords of light, of living energy, down to empower them in their job in the lower world. Then, because of ayni, the Inkas must give us their qualities, so that we can become something like Inkas in this world.” To become like an Inka, according to Juan, is to raise your level of consciousness, to become a child of the sun, to step fully and consciously into your energy body.

In the next chapter we enter more fully into the world of Andean prophecy, a world where the Inkas—the sons and daughters of the sun—live and are awaiting a propitious time to return. This prophecy is a living prophecy; it is not so much a shared conceptual or mythic ideology as it is a flow of energy between and among us and the three worlds. We are living in the time of the *Taripay Pacha*—the Age of Meeting Ourselves Again. This is a time during which we can transform our relationship to the kawsay pacha, consciously evolving, stepping more fully into our energy bodies and generating heightened modes of awareness. Although we are not Andeans, we can utilize the energy techniques they can teach us so that we too can become children of the sun.

THREE

The Age of Meeting Ourselves Again

As a paqo on the Andean path, I am acutely aware of Andean prophecy, of the promise of a golden age during which we can step more fully into our energy bodies and manifest fantastic new levels of awareness on Earth. Therefore, one of my intentions as I interviewed the Q'ero for this book was to discuss the *Taripay Pacha*, the Age of Meeting Ourselves Again. According to the prophecy, this is a nineteen-year period—from approximately 1993 to 2012—during which humans have the potential to accelerate our accumulation of energetic power and to foster our spiritual evolution. But when I asked the Q'ero assembled before me in Urubamba about the prophecy, I was met with blank stares and confused looks. After much discussion I realized that the prophecy, which Juan Núñez del Prado had carefully pieced together from various sources, including the great Q'ero kuraq akulleq Andreas Espinosa, had not been passed on to these paqos, except in the most generalized way and in small concrete bits to don Mariano Apasa. In fact, the Q'ero insisted they have no capacity to foresee the collective future, and thus such prophecy is not possible. (See [appendix 2](#) for a full account of this exchange.)

I discussed this turn of events with Juan Núñez del Prado at the time of these interviews. Could it be possible, I asked him, that the Q'ero just do not want to reveal this knowledge? Perhaps, I suggested, they know about the prophecy but they simply do not want to discuss it with me. Juan insisted this was not the case. “You heard don Mariano,” he reminded me, “urging everyone to share their knowledge about such things. No, I’m afraid, like the process of [hucha] mikhuy, this knowledge was not passed on to these paqos.”

Later, in the United States, I asked Juan once again about the Q'ero's lack of knowledge of the prophecy. He replied, “I think that in the last generation you could find almost all the paqos of Q'ero carried the prophecy. But all

these people have died. The next generation are for the most part focused on other things, not on preserving the knowledge, techniques, or prophecy.”

Juan then offered an illustrative story that helped explain the additional challenge of discussing such philosophic subjects with literal-minded paqos, a challenge that had frustrated me to no end during the interviews. “Let me tell you something,” he said. “One day I went with don Manuel Q’espi to Moray. In Moray, there was a group of workers from the National Institute of Culture. They were fixing the ruins of Moray. I asked don Manuel what he thought about the work of these men. He told me, ‘They are fixing this place for the return of the Inka.’ For don Manuel, these were Inka houses, and they were working to restore them so the Inka could return. This is the way you find new information. The thing that is very interesting is that the workers did not have any [understanding] of this. They were simply doing their jobs because they received pay. But for an alto mesayoq, they were preparing the way for the Inka. So the alto mesayoq is coming from a totally different perspective. But with only this piece of information, you have the right to affirm the prophecy. It is real for this man [don Manuel]. The Inka is alive and going to return!

“You know,” Juan continued, making another point about the nature of ethnography, “in your records [from the Urubamba interviews] you have a part where the Q’ero say, ‘The Inka is alive. The Inka is alive, living in Paytiti.’ They never say, ‘We have a messianic prophecy that says the Inka is going to return. We are waiting. The Inka is alive, and we’ll restore his houses so he can come.’”

Juan’s voice trailed off as he let his point sink in. “In only a few cases will you get that type of [philosophic] information,” he continued. “But mostly with them [the Q’ero], someone will tell you, ‘The Inka lives in Paytiti and sees in the river what is happening with the trash we are putting in the river. The llama dung. We are his children . . . and so on.’ You need to interpret and infer from that.”

Despite the lack of knowledge about the prophecy from the six Q’ero I interviewed in Urubamba, there is an ancient and wide-ranging prophetic tradition in Peru that illuminates the Q’ero’s understanding of the kawsay pacha. The prophecy of the Taripay Pacha as recounted below was gathered by Juan Núñez del Prado during his nearly thirty years of inquiry as an anthropologist and nearly twenty as a paqo on the sacred path. His two primary informants were don Benito Qoriwaman and don Andreas Espinosa.

The specifics of the prophecy are retold here with the kind permission of Juan, and they are reproduced in large part from my discussions with him, with additional information from his Spanish-language, scholarly articles, which were published in Peru. This prophecy, while not intimately familiar to the Q'ero I interviewed, is a living message and unfolding promise that many Andean paqos are working to manifest during our lifetime. Even the Q'ero contribute, for like those of us working to cleanse our own energy environments and to raise the energetic level of the kay pacha, we all contribute to the manifestation of this golden age.

ANDEAN PROPHECY OF SPIRITUAL EVOLUTION

Juan Núñez del Prado is keenly interested in Andean prophecy, because as a paqo in service to others, he is always looking for ways to help others empower themselves. What better way to serve than to contribute to the spiritual evolution of humankind! Juan, like most of us, is familiar with other prophecies, especially those of the Hopi and Maya. (Interestingly, the Andean “end-date” corresponds with the famous A.D. 2012 end-date of the Mayan calendar.) One day, sometime in the mid-1980s, while talking with kuraq don Benito Qoriwaman, Juan asked him if the time of conscious evolution was upon us. Don Benito walked outside and gazed out over the Sacred Valley of Cuzco and at an apu that overlooks the area. “No,” he said. “It is not yet time.” When Juan asked how he knew this, don Benito pointed toward the Sacred Valley and said, “Its poq'po is only halfway up the apu. That time will not come until the [energy] bubble of Cuzco has reached the top of the apu.” Since don Benito has passed away, Juan has not spoken of the matter to me again, and I have never been able to see the bubble of Cuzco myself, so I do not know how high it has risen—or, if it has risen at all—since don Benito made that declaration. But we do have knowledge of a series of specific occurrences and dates that we can use to gauge the progress of the prophecy.

In the following overview of Andean prophecy, readers should keep three things in mind. First, the opening theoretical discussion is my own understanding, based on conversations with Juan Núñez del Prado and others, but the specific details of the prophecy are those Juan has gathered during decades of talking with paqos throughout the Andes. Second, this is *Andean*, not specifically *Q'ero*, prophecy, although some Q'eros, such as

elder don Manuel Q'espí, are keepers of portions of it. Finally, the reader should know that there are three levels of mastery that a paqo can aspire to that I have not yet mentioned but that are important to the prophecy. As I have already explained, there are two paths in the Andean sacred tradition, that of the pampa mesayoq and that of the alto mesayoq. There are four levels to the alto mesayoq training: ayllu alto mesayoq, llaqta alto mesayoq, suyu alto mesayoq, and kuraq akulleq. However, there are three additional levels of mastery to which a paqo can aspire, although there are currently no paqos working at these levels. They are levels that are part of the unfolding of the prophecy and they represent the potential evolutionary path of human consciousness.

An Overturning of Space-Time

From approximately August 1, 1990, to August 1, 1993, according to Andean prophecy, the world experienced a *pachakuti*, an “overturning of space-time.”¹ The word *pachakuti* comes from the name of the ninth Inka, Pachakuteq, who was largely responsible for building the great Inka Empire, expanding the empire by conquest from present-day southern Colombia to northernmost Chile. Inka Pachakuteq is also credited with codifying moral law into civil law and with masterminding a great building campaign—from the storehouses that dot the thousands of miles of roadways to the magnificently designed city of Cuzco to that famed citadel in the clouds, Machu Picchu. Through Pachakuteq’s vision and will, the relatively small Inka state was transformed into one of the most astonishing empires in the world. Accordingly, whenever society undergoes a momentous change, the upheaval or reordering is referred to as a *pachakuti*.

Within the prophetic tradition, the term *pachakuti* is applied to any cosmic transformation. Such a movement of energy, of consciousness, ripples through space-time, affecting every aspect of our sense of self-hood in time and space and of our sense of interconnectedness with the great web of being. A *pachakuti* signals a dynamic point of intersection in space-time between human consciousness and *kawsay*, the multidimensional creative principle and the animating energy of the cosmos, an intersection from which the arrow of time for each possible future is nudged in one direction or the other.

Such a cosmic reordering took place in the early 1990s, ushering in the formative years of the fabled Taripay Pacha, the Age of Meeting Ourselves

Again. This initial period lasted seven years, through the millennial year 2000, and was a window we opened on our future. Our choices at a collective level powerfully influenced which likely future we will manifest as the “end time” draws near. The great pull of our interconnected consciousness, our collective mind, continues to collapse the wave function, to use the terminology of quantum physics, to make one probability, one possible future, measurable in space-time—that is, reality. During this special vibratory period, human consciousness has the opportunity to evolve, resulting in our harnessing incredible healing powers, as detailed below in the discussion of the *Inka Mallkus*. This infallible healing capacity signals the “fifth level” of the sacred work, or the fifth level of human consciousness manifest on Earth, which will be heralded by the deliverance of a new karpay, or rite of initiation, called the *Mosoq Karpay*.¹ It does not yet exist, and all Andean paqos are awaiting it. One can think of the fifth level as conceptually similar to the Fifth World of the Hopi or Maya: as a new epochal cycle that initiates the formation of a new kind of human being. During this period, when our healing capacities are fully harnessed, we can begin to move out of the deterministic stream of physical evolution and into the more creative stream of conscious evolution. That is, the emphasis of life begins to shift from a physical expression to an energetic one. We will move closer to becoming true light beings, literal children of the sun.

Following this formative seven-year period is a twelve-year period during which humankind, if it has the energetic capacity and the spiritual will, can mature and evolve still further to manifest a new era of peace, harmony, spiritual renewal, and reconnection to the realm of nature. During this period the *Sapa Inka* and *Qoya*, enlightened political leaders who will be known by their visible glow, or aura, will govern the reunited Tawantinsuyu and become models for other world leaders. Interestingly, the word *Tawantinsuyu*, the Quechua name for the Inka Empire, means “four quarters.” Anyone familiar with Native American cosmology—or, for that matter, with the terminology of most mystical cosmologies—will recognize the correlation between the four quarters and the Four Sacred Directions, a concept that stands for the Whole, the Collective, the Cosmic. The reunification of the Inka Empire will be a physical reality according to the prophecies. But metaphorically, it signals an end to the boundaries of all kinds that separate us. It signals the possibility of a harmonious world culture and of a refined human consciousness that is receptive to and in harmony

with all types of consciousnesses, those of nature and those we cannot yet imagine.

Paqos—and sincere spiritual seekers of any tradition—are integral to this maturation process. In fact, it is Juan Núñez del Prado’s belief that within the Andean vision for the Taripay Pacha, anyone of sufficient spiritual awareness, of any ethnic heritage or cultural or religious background, can contribute to raising the vibrational energy and the spiritual consciousness to the level needed to complete the transformation and fully manifest this “plentipotencia.”

The Manifestation of Healing Powers

Andean prophecy as gathered by Juan over the past two decades details specific occurrences that will signal the unfolding of this new era. The first is the rise of twelve Inka Mallkus, or supreme healers called *tukuy hampeqs*. All paqos are healers, although they recognize that their abilities are often sporadic and inconsistent. Sometime they can heal and sometimes they cannot. They can heal some diseases better than others. The Inka Mallku, however, will be infallible healers, able to heal any ailment every time by the simple laying on of hands. This miraculous healing capacity, according to Juan Núñez del Prado, means that there can be no impostors to this, the fifth level of the Andean alto mesayoq path and the fifth level of consciousness. These twelve fifth-level paqos will manifest in very specific places and times. The first is to reveal himself—and it will be a male—at Q’ollorit’i, a sacred annual festival held at the base of a glacial mountain more than 16,500 feet above sea level. His manifestation is imminent, and he will travel from Q’ollorit’i along the ancient *seques*, or geographic and energetic lines that connect the sacred sites and *wakas*, toward Cuzco.^{II}

Simultaneously, the second Inka Mallku will manifest somewhere in the vicinity of the ancient temple of Wiraqocha at Raqchi. He too will travel the *seques* to Cuzco, where these two Inka Mallkus will recognize each other during the feast of Corpus Christi. At that time, the third Inka Mallku will reveal himself at the shrine of the Taytacha Temblores, the Earthquake Lord, in Cuzco, and there the three Inka Mallkus will unite.

Together this group of three will travel to Lima, where at either the sanctuary of Nazarenas or the sanctuary of Pachakamilla—the center of the cult of the *Taytacha Milagros*, the Lord of Miracles—they will recognize the

fourth Inka Mallku and the first *Ñust'a*, or female fifth-level paqo, who will reveal themselves simultaneously.

This group of fifth-level paqos will then travel by boat to southern Peru, to the sanctuary of the Virgin of Chapi in the city of Arequipa, where the second *Ñust'a* will reveal herself. They will travel on to Bolivia, where the third *Ñust'a* will make herself known at the sanctuary of the Virgin of Copacabana. From there the group of seven will travel to Puno, where they will recognize the fourth *Ñust'a* at the sanctuary of the Virgin of Candelaria.

After returning as a group to the Wiraqocha Temple, the most sacred temple in Peru and the site of the ancient ceremony to elect the Inka, these Inka Mallkus and *Ñust'as* must await the arrival of the final four fifth-level paqos—two Inka Mallkus and two *Ñust'as*—who will come from the north. Once all twelve fifth-level paqos are united at the Wiraqocha Temple, they will reenact the ancient ritual of the crowning of the Inka, thereby preparing the way for the manifestation of the Sapa Inka and Qoya.

The Manifestation of Enlightened Rulers

The Sapa Inka, which means “sole lord” or “supreme ruler,” and the Qoya, who is the Sapa Inka’s female equivalent, are a spiritually enlightened couple of the sixth level. They are recognized by the bright white or golden aura that surrounds their physical bodies. It is unclear if they will arise from among the twelve fifth-level paqos or from elsewhere, but together they will enter Cuzco, the ancient Inka capital, and reunite and extend the ancient Inka Empire, the Tawantinsuyu. From there, they will serve as role models, teaching political leaders how to govern with love and respect, and teaching all humankind how to live in harmony with nature. They will be capable of such teachings because they will be masters at pushing the *kawsay* and will be supreme *taqes*, joiners of energy, with expert capacity to unite *munay* (love), *yachay* (wisdom), and *llank'ay* (will). Thus they will be initiators of the culminating process of reinfusing the world with *sami* and of joining the three worlds—the *hanaq pacha*, *kay pacha*, and *ukhu pacha*—into one cohesive world.

As I have already explained, the Inka Mallkus and *Ñust'as* do not work alone in preparing the way for the emergence of the sixth level of human development. The prophecy suggests that all of humanity must help, that it is the collective consciousness that is important to this cosmic transformation. Therefore, whenever people anywhere or by means of any spiritual tradition

raise their spiritual awareness, cleanse themselves of hucha, and act from love rather than from self-interest, the energetic vibration is raised and the likelihood of a collective spiritual evolution is heightened. Consequently, each of us bears responsibility for the prophecy, and each of us has the ability to further its fulfillment. The prophecy suggests that persons of the fifth and sixth levels—the Inka Mallkus and Ñust’as and the Sapa Inka and Qoya—do not have to be blood descendants of the Inkas. In fact, they do not have to be Andeans at all. They can come from any ethnic, racial, religious, or cultural background. It requires only that they be beings evolved to the fifth and sixth levels of consciousness.

Once the sixth level has been manifested on Earth, then the “golden age” of the Taripay Pacha will unfold and the metaphysical city of Paytiti, where Inkari, the mythical first Inka, has been waiting, will manifest itself. The physical expression of the seventh level—the level of the Godhead or the Supreme Creative Principle, called the *Taytanchis Ranti* in some parts of the Andes—is then made possible. The prophecy does not outline the way that the seventh level will manifest itself on the physical plane, nor does it describe the abilities associated with this culminating level of human consciousness. However, the manifestation of the seventh level on Earth is not achieved by humans alone but through our collective, collaborative interchanges with nature. During the Taripay Pacha, an intricate web of interaction will be rewoven between the human and non-human, the physical and metaphysical, and the natural and supernatural, an interaction that was once the ordinary state of being in the dim recesses of history. Thus, the Taripay Pacha is not so much the creation of a new form as the remembering of an ancient form, when we lived in sync with the pulse of the cosmos instead of, as we do now, with the artificial rhythms of manmade time.

For these reasons, Juan has been working with certain Q’ero paqos to push the kawsay, or lay down the energy filaments, connecting the most sacred ancient sites of Peru and South America. They are, in effect, cleansing and reinvigorating ancient power places on the light body of Pachamama that have become encrusted or dimmed from disuse or desecration. They are, as they call it, “spinning” the chumpis of the Mother, just as in some Eastern energy traditions we are taught to spin our chakras clockwise to invigorate them. In early 1996 they completed connecting the energy belts of South America at a site in Bolivia. In October 1996, I was fortunate to be part of a small group, under the auspices of the Wiraqocha Foundation, which was

founded by Andean paqo Elizabeth Jenkins, that accompanied two Q'ero paqos to Hopiland. Before the meeting with the Hopi elders, we took the Q'ero to the San Francisco Peaks, where the Q'ero connected the sequas of South America to North America. In a moving ceremony, they joined the “spine of the Mother” via the sacred mountains of the San Francisco Peaks, and with that act the prophecy began to flow through the “nervous system” of the North. Over the next two days, during auspicious meetings between the Q'ero and their “brothers,” the Hopi, these two lineages renewed ancient spiritual ties, reuniting the energies of the keepers of the ancient knowledge of north and south.^{III}

And so the prophecy of the Andes reaches down to you from the isolated heights of the Peruvian mountains, where it has existed for centuries, perhaps millennia, in a state as enduring and pristine as the snows that blanket the apus. The prophecy and the nature wisdom contained in these pages are more than the beliefs of one culture; they are the living tradition of a people who know that the lifeblood of the cosmos is ayni, reciprocity. Every breath they inhale is preceded by the exhalation of Pachamama; every dream they dream influences the movement of the stars; every action they perform reverberates throughout the great web of being. “Sharing with strangers is the power of kawsay,” don Agustín says. But he knows, and you know, that in the great web of being there are no strangers. The gift bequeathed to you by the Q'ero paqos and their students who reach out to you through this book is not intellectual, nor conceptual, nor material—because it lives. It is a way of being. It *is* being. Because this consciousness lives in and through the Q'ero, their students, and other Andean paqos, it lives in and through *you*. And through you it will live in someone else—until, finally, as brothers and sisters, we recognize that, as don Juan Pauqar Espinosa said so eloquently, “we are human beings. The only difference is our clothing. But we are all human beings, with love for each other.”

Walking the Sacred Path: Interviews with the Q'ero

I was here at last—Machu Picchu, the lost city of the Inkas, the city in the clouds, the sacred citadel of the ancient paqos. I sat in the main courtyard under the single tree, called the Tree of Peace, in a circle of friends who had only the day before completed the arduous Inca Trail trek. We had walked in our Medicine Bodies, dying to our old selves and calling to us our new, shamanic selves. We had performed ceremony along the Trail and practiced working with our energy bodies. This work was new to me. It was 1994 and I had been on the Andean path only for little more than a year. I had a long way to go before I could even sense my energy body, never mind control it. Little did I know as I sat with my friends in Machu Picchu that I was about to be put to the test.

One of my teachers, Américo Yábar, was seated among us, and he began to talk, in his usual poetic way, about energy. He spoke only Spanish, so his words were translated, but still they retained their beauty. “We are not only flesh and blood,” he began, tapping his fist against his chest. “We only think we are. We delude ourselves, and our delusions construct our reality. They are the screen between what is and what we think there is. What are we really? Ahhh! There is a question!” Américo’s notoriously charming smile made his eyes sparkle.

Then his expression changed. Almost instantaneously, he became serious, and he thoughtfully stroked his thick, black mustache. "Ah, such an impossible question. But then we shamans love the impossible, don't we? We court the impossible as if it were a lover. Beautiful, no? Seductive, no?"

"We are energy beings. Luminous beings. And when we gain control of our filaments, we gain control of everything! I will show you, no? You will see, okay?"

I'm not sure most of us understood much of what Américo had said, but I was about to be put on the spot. I was sitting opposite him in the circle and he pointed toward me.

"Joan," he declared, smiling his mischievous smile, "you throw your energy filaments to me." He cocked one dark eyebrow, signaling a challenge.

I squirmed uncomfortably and shrugged my shoulders. "Whatever you say," I replied, attempting to mask my nervousness with nonchalance. Actually, I had reason to have more confidence than I felt, for just the night before I had had a sublime energy experience while meditating in the sacred baths at Aguas Calientes. I had become lost in the magic of the moon, merging with her, losing all sense of self and becoming one with the enigmatic energy of the cosmos. But now, in the harsh glare of daylight, my sense of myself as an energy being was nearly nonexistent, and the reality of the previous night's luminous experience was overshadowed by my stubborn skepticism.

Américo said nothing. He stared at me, stroking his mustache, his face a blank slate. He nodded his head once, that arched black eyebrow relaxing. The experiment was about to begin.

I sat cross-legged, my hands resting on my lap. I closed my eyes and breathed deeply. I focused my intention on my qosqo, the area just below my navel. I visualized a ball of energy, a brilliant sun composed of intertwined strands of light, and I imaginatively unfurled these luminous filaments and cast them out toward Américo. Or I should say I tried. I could feel myself straining, physically pushing the muscles of my belly outward. Soon I gave up. I knew within moments that I was going about this all wrong. I was trying too hard. I should have been "non-doing," using not my physical will but my shamanic intent. I was simply exercising my imagination, not my energy body. I felt defeated and embarrassed. I

was sure Américo was aware of my lack of success in the attempt, although he exercised Latin graciousness and talked around it, enrapturing us with a description of how he had cast out of his own energy filaments.

This had not been my first failure at gaining control of my energy body; it wouldn't be my last. In fact, in a few days I would be called before a Q'ero kuraq akulleq, who would tell me, point blank, that I had a lot of work to do before I could even hope to gain control of my energy bubble. Yet within two years I would achieve a measure of such control, and I would be sitting in front of six Q'ero paqos, interviewing them about their knowledge of the world of living energy. It is a very real world, one in which we all live as energy beings. But all that lay in the future. Sitting across from Américo in Machu Pichu, I was simply content to experience Peru for the first time, to begin that series of teachings that would begin to peel away my illusions of material realism. My teachers had warned me that this work would be like walking through a doorway to a new, perhaps unrecognizable world. They weren't incorrect; they were just too kind. In reality, the next few years were more like falling down the rabbit hole. Like Alice, I would be re-educated in a world beyond the scope of words and logic.

FOUR

Ancient Tradition, Modern Practice

As the Q'ero speak to you through these interviews, offering their insights and wisdom about the kawsay pacha, it is important for you to remember that few, if any, indigenous cultures survive “unspoiled” by contact with the modern world. In this respect, the Q'ero are no different from other indigenous groups. That is why the interviews start with Q'ero history. We actually covered this topic last during our four twelve-hour days of talking. But it is important to start with this information now so that readers can acquire at least a cursory understanding of how the Q'ero's struggle to retain their spiritual traditions cannot be separated from their struggle to survive as a people.

The conquest of Peru by the Spanish, following the pattern of most other colonialist enterprises, had a devastating effect upon the local populations. Between 1532 and 1572, the conquest and colonizing period, the indigenous population of Peru was reduced by eighty percent, from a high of about sixteen million people to about three million.¹ Like most other indigenous Peruvians, the Q'ero lost their land and, for all intents and purposes, their freedom under the Spanish. Land was carved up into huge estates upon which the indigenous peoples were obligated to work. In effect, they became serfs. To understand the Q'ero, one must understand their life since the conquest, which was a life of serfdom that continued unabated until the early twentieth century. It was only in the late 1950s that the Q'ero, with the help of a group of visionary anthropologists and journalists, were released from the shackles of the hacienda system. (See [appendix 3](#).) Q'ero was one of the first communities to overcome this colonial system, ten years before the landmark 1968 Agrarian Reform Law, which started Peru onto the path of real land reform.

Despite their more than four hundred years of bondage, the Q'ero retained their sense of community and their historical identity as the

grandsons of Inkari, the mythical first Inka. Their mystical system, however, had undergone an inevitable syncretization with the Catholicism introduced by the Spaniards. As the story of their recent history will make clear, the Q'ero feel no contradiction calling themselves Catholic even as they perform ancient ceremonies to establish their connections with the apus and Pachamama, make ritual offerings to supernatural beings, and interact with a natural world that is alive and responsive.

The Q'ero's willingness to embrace the best of both their ancient, animistic traditions and more modern Catholic ceremony and doctrine is a testament to their adaptability—an instinct, perhaps, that allowed them to retain, as few other communities in Peru have, their ethnic, cultural, and mythic ancestral memory. The Q'ero's reputation as the “keepers of the ancient knowledge” comes not only from among local populations in the south-central highlands of Peru, but even from such an unlikely source as the U.S. Library of Congress. In the library's encyclopedic tome on Peru—one of a series of statistical books about the countries of the world—the Q'ero are singled out as one of the few Andean communities to “preserve many ancient practices and lifeways.”²

This achievement can best be appreciated when considered in light of the Catholic Church's bitter campaign to suppress indigenous beliefs and practices, a campaign that included destroying mummies and ancient deities—which they replaced with saints—and building Catholic churches over the sites of Inka temples. In one year alone (1617–1618) it was reported that in a single coastal region of Peru, 603 wakas and 617 mummies were destroyed.³ By the end of the seventeenth century, Catholicism had been successfully imposed upon most of the peoples of Peru.

So, during the interviews my first area of interest was how the spiritual tradition had managed to survive at all.¹ I was curious to know if the *hacendados*, the feudal landowners, who were mostly mestizos and Catholics, had forced Catholicism upon the Q'ero and suppressed their indigenous beliefs and practices. Because the hacendados wielded control over every aspect of the indigenous populations' lives, I thought it likely that their ceremonial life—practices such as making despachos, performing coca divinations, making pilgrimages to important sites of initiation such as Q'ollorit'i—might have been forced underground. It was obvious that somehow the Andean people had managed to preserve their ancient traditions. I wanted to spend at least part of our interview time, precious

though it was, to open this line of questioning and find out how the imposition of a foreign religious system had affected the communities of Q'ero. I began by asking the five male Q'ero paqos assembled before me in Urubamba if the hacendado had forced Catholicism upon them.

There was a long discussion among the Q'ero as they considered this broad query. Then don Juan Pauqar Flores, the eldest paqo among them, answered on behalf of the group. "In the old times, we remember hearing stories about this, but none of us witnessed this. In the time of our grandfathers, the hacendado brought a priest to the hacienda. He paid the priest to come to supervise the religious festivals and then to return to his own town, Paucartambo. Our grandfather told us [he and his younger brother, don Julian] that once the hacendado invited the priest to come to Q'ero, to be like a missionary there. When he came to live in Q'ero, the people offered him part of their crops and livestock in return for his services. The missionary stayed in Q'ero, and the people supported him freely, of their own decision. But when the hacendado saw that they were supporting the priest, he was angry. He saw that this went against his own interest. He said that the people could only give things to him, not to anyone else, not even the priest. He forbade them to support the priest. So the priest returned crying to Paucartambo because he could not stay with us in Q'ero. This thing happened in the time of our grandfather.

"That was the only occasion when a priest was in Q'ero, when the hacendado invited him. After he left, we did the Catholic religious ceremonies and festivals on our own, because we wanted to continue them."

I was unconvinced that the Q'ero had so willingly embraced Christianity. "Did the hacendado suppress your own beliefs and ceremonies?" I asked again.

The group again discussed my question among themselves, often heatedly, and then don Juan Pauqar Flores recapped their discussion. They had addressed being force-fed Christianity and why they continue its practice today, not how their ceremonies may have been suppressed. "We were not obligated to do this [Catholic ceremony]," don Juan explained. "The obligation arose from the community itself. In the community there are elders who perform the ceremonies of the Church, and they say this is our [the younger people's] time to assume these responsibilities. It is our turn to step into, to take over, these obligations. If we do this it increases our social

standing; we can further ourselves. But these elders say, ‘Do this only if you have the qualities to do it.’ However, it is an obligation to the community.”

I was about to ask a follow-up question to the group when don Juan decided he wanted to talk about Catholic observances and Q’ero ceremony. We gave him free rein.

“Today in Q’ero, during Holy Week, we observe the religious festival of Santiago [St. James], which is the most important religious fiesta in Q’ero. In addition to the fiesta of Santiago, we observe another ceremony, the ceremony of the ‘Breast of the Virgin.’^{II} At the same time we also have another ceremony that is only for single people, for the unmarried men and women. In this ceremony there is a banner that is paraded around. These three ceremonies—Santiago, the Breast of the Virgin, and the Banner of the Single People—all happen during Holy Week.

“In the time of our grandfathers, there were other ceremonies. For example, the feast of Santo Domingo and the ceremony of *Qollena* [a festival honoring people who excel in their work or in other endeavors]. Now we don’t do these ceremonies.

“The other ceremony that we do continue is the pilgrimage to the sanctuary of Q’ollorit’i. In this pilgrimage we carry two different types of dancers: the *Qolla*, who represent the people of the high plains, and *Ch’unchu*, who represent the people of the jungle.”^{III}

The way don Juan talked of “continuing” the pilgrimage to Q’ollorit’i, I could only assume that even the authority of the hacendado had not prevented this most important of sacred duties. I had been to Q’ollorit’i in June 1995 and been overwhelmed with the energetic intensity of this most sacred of sites.^{VI} I had also been surprised at the obvious overlay of Catholic upon indigenous practices at Q’ollorit’i, which are evident even to the untrained eye. It may be beneficial to take a brief pause here to review the history and significance of the Q’ollorit’i festival, because the Q’ero hold a special status in relation to it.

Q’ollorit’i is one of the most important sanctuaries for an Andean paqo.^V Nestled at the base of a glacial range called Sinak’ara, which is near the holy mountain of Ausangate, Q’ollorit’i is where most paqos go to receive their initiations. There they cleanse themselves in sacred lagoons and make despacho offerings to the Lord of Q’ollorit’i himself. There are four principal wakas, or sacred sites, in the area beneath the glacier, the most important of which is a large stone upon which an image of Christ is visible.

The myth of the origin of this waka describes a mysterious shepherd boy who, in a flash of brilliant light, disappeared into this rock, leaving only the image of Christ behind on the rock's surface. Although the site is ancient, the Catholic authorities seized the opportunity to control the indigenous practices by constructing a sanctuary building on the site. Today, the rock, upon which the image of Christ has been enhanced with paint, is kept enclosed in glass behind a simple altar within the sanctuary. Even today, most paqos make a yearly pilgrimage to Q'ollorit'i, as do thousands of villagers and a few hundred tourists. There, the paqos perform their ancient initiation and cleansing ceremonies, and they call upon the Lord of Q'ollorit'i and Jesus Christ to bless them and their communities.

The Q'ero, because of their reputation as keepers of the ancient knowledge, are considered by the Q'ollorit'i pilgrims as the link to the ancient lineage of the Inkas and to Inkari, the legendary first Inka. As such, they occupy a special, reserved area on the outskirts of the sanctuary grounds, where a large waka, called the Q'ero Stone, is located. Because of their special status as paqos, as don Juan Pauqar Flores explained, "the Q'ero are the last to arrive at Q'ollorit'i and the last to leave." With their arrival comes the "spirit of the Inka," and before their departure, but after all the other pilgrims have left, they perform private ceremonies at the wakas and upon Qolqe Punku, an apu in the sacred glacial range. "This has always been," don Juan declared. "This is forever—from the time before our grandfathers, and it is how we do things now.

"But," he continued, getting us back to the subject of the Q'ero's observance of Catholic ceremony, "we never go to Paucartambo for the feast of Mamacha Carmen [a feast in honor of a Catholic saint, whose shrine is in Paucartambo]. This is a feast that belongs to the *mistis*.^{VI} We only go to Paucartambo to have our new president recognized, to receive the authority of Paucartambo [so their community president will be officially recognized]."

Here don Juan seemed to veer off into a narrative of the political structure of Q'ero, but it soon became apparent that his real subject was how the Q'ero blend colonial social structures with indigenous ceremonies. "The person who becomes our president," he explained, "invites the entire community—even the women and children—to eat and drink. He extends an invitation to the community to acknowledge his authority. The invitation is given twice: once when he assumes his charge and once at the end of the

Carnaval [a fiesta celebrated as part of Holy Week]. This invitation is not only the responsibility of the president, but of his two helpers also. They must invite all the people to a fiesta twice.^{VII} We eat, drink, and dance.

“Another part of the president’s invitation is very important. He must perform a set of rituals to the apus and to Pachamama. These rituals are for the spirits, asking for bountiful crops, for rain, for health for us and our animals, for a good year during the time of the president’s service, which is one year.”

As interesting as don Juan’s exposition was, it was still unclear whether these Q’ero paqos considered themselves Catholic. Juan decided to simply and unabashedly ask that question. “Do you consider yourselves Catholic?”

All five Q’ero immediately responded, nodding their heads emphatically. “Yes, we are Catholic. Totally Catholic.”

Despite having witnessed the Andeans’ curious blend of Catholicism and indigenous ceremony at sacred sites such as Q’ollorit’i, I was still struck by the Q’ero’s emphatic response. After all, the Q’ero are considered the most respected paqos in the Cuzco region. How could they be master practitioners of the sacred tradition and still so ardently believe themselves to be Catholic, especially since there was no longer a hacendado forcing a religious system upon them?

Ricardo Valderrama, an anthropology professor who was serving as my Quechua interpreter and who has for more than twenty years studied and recorded the stories of indigenous peoples throughout Peru, explained that there really is no conflict. “In Peru, to be Catholic is a very special thing, even for mestizos like myself. We are Catholic with the apus, with Pachamama. We go to Mass but there is no contradiction when we then do a despacho and invoke the apus.”

Juan Núñez del Prado, sounding suddenly more like an anthropologist than an alto mesayoq, explained that the Catholicism of the Q’ero, and of other indigenous peoples in Peru, is not the modern “official” doctrine espoused by Rome. It is instead the Catholicism of the sixteenth century, when many heretical beliefs flourished, asserting the possibility of personal revelation and an individual’s capacity for direct communion with God. It borrows from the doctrine of St. Francis, professing that God can be revealed in the hills, the trees, the animals, in all of nature. Many of these doctrines infiltrated the countryside at the time of the conquest, and they are

still alive today, inextricably wedded with the ancient indigenous mystical beliefs.

It was clear to me now that the Q'ero paqos sitting before me, and certainly their ancestors, had learned not only to survive in the often strange, usually confusing, and always threatening world of the conquistadors and of Spanish colonial rule but also had enriched themselves by borrowing from their oppressors certain spiritual concepts and ceremonies that they had then made their own. Because of my new understanding, despite its still limited scope, I no longer found it strange to hear the Q'ero equate an apu with Jesus Christ or to hear them use the terms "Lord of Q'ollorit'i" and "God" interchangeably.

Moreover, it seemed only natural that our next topic of discussion would take us deeper into the collective memory of the Q'ero, back to times far distant from their bondage under the hand of the hacendado, back to the very founding of Q'ero and to the bestowal of the mystical knowledge upon the Q'ero by the mythical first Inka, Inkari.

FIVE

The Grandsons of Inkari

For the Q'ero, as for many other indigenous peoples in Peru, the Inka lives. He not only lives, but he is patiently awaiting the day when he can triumphantly return to rule once again, restoring Peru to its ancient glory, liberating its people from their centuries of oppression, and cleansing the contamination spread by the foreign cultures who have remade Peru in their own images.

The Q'ero call themselves the “grandsons of Inkari,” the mythical first Inka, who founded the Inka Empire. They patiently await Inkari's return, as had become clear to me from Juan's story, recounted in [chapter 3](#), about his walk with don Manuel Q'epi through the ruins of Moray. There, Juan saw only workmen restoring the ruins. Don Manuel, however, saw the Inka's houses being repaired in preparation for his return. I also had heard Juan extensively explain his understanding of Andean prophecy: the rise of infallible healers; the return of the Sapa Inka and Qoya, who would serve as role models for a new kind of political leadership; the potential spiritual evolution of humankind that would flower into new levels of consciousness and fertilize the manifestation of new human abilities that depend upon our accessing our energy bodies more than our physical bodies. But for all my work in Peru and conversations with my teachers, I had heard little about the Q'ero's mythical forebear, Inkari. These interviews were my chance to fill this gap in my understanding of Q'ero mythical history and mystical belief.

The Inkari myth was first heard in Q'ero by Juan's father, anthropologist Oscar Núñez del Prado, and his colleagues during their 1955 expedition to Q'ero. Until then, the origin myth of the Inkas that had been recorded by cultural historians was largely restricted to the Manco Qhapaq legend.¹ According to this legend, at the dawn of time Manco Qhapaq, the son of the sun, emerged from a cave on an island in Lake Titicaca carrying a golden staff and accompanied by his sister-wife, Mama Oqllu, the daughter of the

moon.^{II} The two Royals gathered the people of the region, who had been living as savages, together into ten groups, or *ayllus*, and taught them the ways of civilization—weaving and farming. Then Manco Qhapaq and Mama Oqllu went in search of a suitable place to build their imperial city. Manco Qhapaq had been instructed by Father Sun to throw a golden staff from the top of a mountain. The place where it landed upright would be decreed the “navel,” or center, of the empire. Many times Manco Qhapaq threw the golden staff, and each time it landed askew. Finally, however, it sank upright into the rich soil of a fertile valley, and there Cuzco was founded. Once the imperial city was built, including the magnificent *Qoricancha*, the Temple of the Sun, Manco Qhapaq and Mama Oqllu set out across the empire to gather together all the people. Manco Qhapaq journeyed north and Mama Oqllu ventured south, proclaiming to all that Father Sun had bestowed his gifts upon this land for the good of the people. Gathering people from near and far in the region, they formed the Tawantinsuyu—the Inka empire—and set the course for the divine dynasty of the Inkas.^{III}

The Inkarí myth bears striking similarities to the Manco Qhapaq legend (as Oscar Núñez del Prado no doubt noted), except for one crucial difference—the Inkarí myth suggests the Inka still lives and is awaiting the proper time for his return. Núñez del Prado and other anthropologists, cognizant of the messianic quality of this new legend, began to search in other geographic regions for this myth. To their surprise, once they began looking for it, they found versions of the Inkarí myth not only throughout the central Andes, but throughout Peru and even in neighboring countries, such as Colombia, Ecuador, and, especially, northern Bolivia.^{IV} Suddenly, the creation myth of the indigenous peoples of the Andes ceased to be regarded as a sterile artifact recorded in sixteenth-century journals. It was now a vital, living legacy, a hope that still stirred the hearts of the indigenous peoples.

Explicit in the Q’ero version of the myth recounted below is the Q’ero’s claim that they are descendants of this first Inka—they are Inkarí’s grandsons. What is not explicit is their belief that Inkarí bestowed upon the Q’ero a unique and precious gift. According to Juan and Américo, the Q’ero claim that Inkarí bequeathed them the mystical knowledge, designating them keepers of the ancient knowledge, a reputation they retain to this day among Andean paqos. In contrast to the Q’ero, the people of Cuzco, the imperial capital, were bequeathed the administrative and political knowledge that allowed them to build one of the greatest empires of the southern hemisphere.

Don Julian Pauqar Flores was the bearer of the Inkari myth for the Q'ero assembled in Urubamba. He told me the tale of Q'ero's founding with reverence and solemnity. After the telling of the tale, other Q'ero added variations they had heard from their relatives and ancestors, or added details that don Julian had missed. For the sake of narrative flow, I have merged these details into the tale proper. What follows is the story, passed down generation to generation, of the Q'ero's royal line-age and of the origin of their identity as master paqos and as the bearers of the spirit of the Inka to such sacred festivals as Q'ollorit'i.

“My grandfather told me that Inkari had a golden staff,” began don Julian, “and he threw the golden staff from Raya Qasa [a border town between the high plains and the mountainous regions of south-central Peru]. As Inkari was trying to throw the golden staff, Qollari, the wife of Inkari, tickled him in his right armpit. Because she tickled him, the throw missed Q'ero. If the staff had hit the land of Q'ero, Q'ero would have been the qosqo [literally the “navel”—the center or capital city] of the Tawantinsuyu. But the staff missed Q'ero and landed in Cuzco, which became the capital of the Tawantinsuyu. And so Cuzco was founded. If this golden staff had landed in Q'ero, Q'ero would have been in a valley, rather than in such high mountains.

“In Cuzco, Inkari built a huge temple. He also built many houses, grand houses such as Saqsawaman. He built a solar clock in order to measure the towns.^V He went to Machu Picchu, and there he built more grand houses. Returning from Machu Picchu, he built Ollantaytambo [a town near Pisac at which is located a magnificent temple of the same name]. Then he remembered Q'ero. He said, “I will return to Q'ero to see my children.” The proof of Inkari's visit to Q'ero is two footprints in stone, which are still there in Upispata [a hot spring near Q'ero].

“After that, Inkari descended to the *quebradas* [the canyons], where he worked with gold. Qollari, the wife of the Inka Inkari, was weaving, just as the women today weave. On their way to the canyons where Inkari was working were a man and a woman *arriero* [hired porters who haul goods with their mules]. The woman *arriero* appeared from the right side of the river. The male *arriero* appeared from the hills. The woman said, ‘If God permits it, I will camp at Maratuni.’ Then she said, ‘If God permits it, I will camp at Kinsapampa.’ Then the woman said, ‘If God permits it, I will camp at Castilla Uno.’^{VI} Then the male *arriero* came with his animals and with his

assistant, who was riding a mule. Following them was a *tunki* [a brilliantly colored bird], who alighted near a lagoon and began to sing. The male arriero killed the *tunki*. When this happened, his assistant became enchanted and wandered to the lagoon, which consumed him. He remains enchanted in this lagoon to this day. And so only the mule arrived at the canyon where Inkari was working the gold.

“The Inka did not live very long in Q’ero. He was there only for a short time. Maybe he stayed only about a week. If he had stayed, he would have had to build a town. He was awaiting for the arrieros, and when they did not arrive, he left. He went to Ollantaytambo, and as he was building his house there, our God arrived.^{VII} God appeared as a man to Inkari and told him, ‘Inkari, I will give you more munay [capacity to love].’ But Inkari said, ‘What munay? I have my own munay.’

“God saw out of the corner of his eye that Inkari was herding rocks with a crop, like we would herd llamas. Inkari built houses this way, not doing useful work but saying to the stones, ‘You must become a wall!’ and the stones became a wall.^{VIII} But over time, the stones began to disobey Inkari. Seeing this and wanting to restore the stones’ abilities, Inkari remembered the person who had offered him more munay. Inkari now looked for this person, but the person had disappeared. And because of that, now men must carry stones only by the power of their own arms. We can no longer make the stones obey our will. If Inkari had received that additional munay, we could today build houses by commanding the stones to move.

“Inkari left Ollantaytambo and went to Paytiti [a metaphysical “male” city where Inkari resides; its “female” counterpart is Miscayani]. That is where Inkari now lives. Because of the will of Inkari, now the Vilcanota [a sacred river] carries the excrement of the llamas. When Inkari sees the excrement of the llamas, he cries.^X Because of all these things, we in Q’ero are known to this day as Inkas.

“My grandfather said that Inkari posted a paper on the door of the temple at Cuzco saying that he will return one day to Cuzco. If he returns to Cuzco, surely he will build houses like he did in the past [by commanding stones to move]. We will return to times past, to the days of the Inkas.

“We are the grandsons of Inkari.”

When don Julian’s story was translated from Quechua to English, I was mesmerized. The story’s simplicity, beauty, and austere reverence moved me deeply. For me the story was enough; I had no questions to ask, no curiosity

for more details. But the anthropologists with me were not so sentimental. Ricardo in particular wanted don Julian to elaborate. So after initiating a round of pisco, a strong alcohol that refreshed us all, I sat back, content to let Juan and Ricardo lead the questioning. Ricardo began by asking don Julian about the notice Inkari posted on the cathedral door. The Inkas had no written language, so a myth detailing an Inka conveying a written decree was intriguing. Ricardo was wondering if this was an anachronism. Don Julian's answer surprised us all.

"It is possible that he now knows how to write," don Julian began, "because our Inka is not dead. He is the person who does not die; he is immortal."

When we asked about Inkari's immortality, don Juan Pauqar Flores, don Julian's brother, broke in to offer us a variation on the myth. His version revealed further correspondences to the Manco Qhapaq myth and to historical events during the Spanish conquest related to the execution of the Inka Waskar by his half-brother, Atawallpa. At about the same time that Pizarro's army was pushing into Peru, the half-brothers Atawallpa and Waskar were battling for control of the Inka empire. Waskar was killed while being brought as a captive back to Cuzco, where Atawallpa was pushing his own claim as Inka to Pizarro.^{IX} A messianic legend grew up surrounding Waskar's death, relating how Waskar's head became separated from his body and rolled through a grate in the street into the ukhu pacha, the lower world. Waskar's head still lives there, awaiting the propitious day when it can be reunited with its body. When that occurs, the city-states of the ancient Tawantinsuyu will also be reunited, restoring the Inka Empire to its former glory. This Waskar legend was almost certainly a subtext for don Juan's variation on the Inkari myth.

"My grandfather told me that Inkari was in Miscayani, where he worked with the gold. The Spaniards came and found him. They asked why Inkari had the right to work with gold. Inkari escaped to Lima, but the Spaniards followed him. In Lima he was called Rey Ulanita [King Ulanita], and he was captured there and killed by the Spaniards. In that way, Inkari was killed in Lima because he was working in fields of gold. In Lima the Spaniards also killed Qollari.

"Now, the only thing I know is that the Inka is waiting in Paytiti, working the gold there. And Inkari, in Paytiti, is crying, telling himself, 'I don't know

how my grandsons are faring.’ So he cries, in Paytiti. This city is very far away, deep in the jungle.”

Ricardo asked where the city is in the jungle, and don Julian answered, demonstrating with his answer not only how pragmatic the Q’ero are but also how deeply held is their longing for the past and to be united with their beloved Inkari. “The city exists. This city *must* exist. Because of Inkari, the Vilcanota carries llama dung to this city. It must be lower than Q’ero, because a river does not carry things upwards. And Inkari is down there crying, because he sees the llama dung in the water and longs for us, his grandsons.”

Now don Mariano leaned forward, ready to offer his version of the myth, or so we thought. Instead, his ironic commentary left us all laughing, perfectly lightening what was becoming an overly intense interview. His commentary was all the more amusing because it was coming from a kuraq akulleq, a respected master paqo and leader of the community.

“If I had known when I was a child that I was going to have the opportunity to talk about these things,” don Mariano said, “then I would have listened better. But I was a child who listened to these things and they went in one ear and out the other! If I had known then that I was going to have this opportunity to speak with you, maybe I would have spent even a day learning these stories. I would have asked for these stories, even offering the elders a drink to tell me these stories!”

Don Juan shook his head in agreement and said, rather wearily, “The young people today do not want to hear these stories; they do not listen. I heard these stories when I was nine years old. Then my grandfather died. If my grandfather had lived, I would have had the opportunity to learn more of these stories.”

Suddenly the group became animated, one Q’ero talking over another. As translators, Ricardo and Anamaria straightened out the cross comments and reported that the younger Q’ero were saying of don Juan, “Of course, he knew his grandfather. But we did not know our grandfathers. We did not have the opportunity to speak with our elders.”

Ricardo surveyed the group of five male paqos and quietly asked, “If you are paqos and you don’t know these things, what will happen with your children?”

The Q’ero were silent for a moment, then don Julian spoke, soberly, ending the interview on a typically pragmatic Q’ero note that highlights the

fact that the Q'ero culture remains largely an oral culture even to this day. "I am teaching my grandchildren about these things. Whether each remembers depends of each person's capacity. But they must have interest in order to remember. If they have no interest, they will not remember."

Don Julian's comment brought home to me the import of our project, of recording at least part of the Q'ero spiritual tradition before it was lost. I was grateful for the opportunity to hear this primordial myth of the Q'ero's mystical history from the paqos themselves, especially after having heard their version of their recent historical and political past. Both perspectives helped me more deeply appreciate the initiation stories I had already recorded during the previous two days of interviews. I now better understood how the Q'ero could so easily and seam-lessly synthesize the best from both lineages—the Western, Christianized tradition of their conquerors and the animistic and magical tradition of their mythic forebears. The Spaniards may have founded Lima and birthed a nation, but Inkari had founded Q'ero and birthed a lineage of paqos. Each of the Q'ero who sat before me now had struggled to find his rightful place in both of these worlds, and their personal initiation stories, which follow in the next two chapters, reveal their individual journeys along the sacred path and into the heart of the mystery.

Pampa Mesayoq: Master of the Earth Rituals

A pampa mesayoq is a master of the nature energies, particularly of the feminine energies—those of Pachamama or the energy of the “cosmic Mother,” as Américo Yábar would characterize it. Pampa mesayoqs are initiated into the ways of the nature spirits and are responsible for giving them ritual acknowledgment. “The rivers, the trees, the rocks, the plants, the animals are all the province of the pampa mesayoq,” Américo claims. But pampa mesayoqs are in service to the community as well as to nature. Expert in making despachos, in coca divination, and at herbal and energy healing, they serve as intermediaries between villagers and the supernatural forces that affect every aspect of their lives. Pampa mesayoqs can treat a physical disease, diagnose a psychological or spiritual illness, propitiate the spirits to increase your good luck and fortune, or cleanse your house or your energy field of heavy energy.

Although pampa mesayoqs do not wield the same intensity of power or the same range of influence with the spirits as do alto mesayoqs, their initiation is no less rigorous. The same irreversible decisions, initiation perils, spiritual challenges, and personal self-scrutiny face them both. As the two initiation stories told below make clear, the pampa mesayoq’s power is awesome in its beauty and in its capacity to penetrate to the heart of the shamanic universe, where by taking the pulse of the metaphysical, the paqo learns to reveal the condition of the physical.

DON AGUSTÍN PAUQAR QAPA

Agustín Pauqar Qapa, then age 32, was the youngest of the five male Q’ero paqos I interviewed. A thin, boyish-looking father of five, Agustín quickly became identified in my mind as the paqo with “*the hat*.” Anamaria and Sandy laughingly agreed with my assessment that with his unadorned, floppy

brown hat and pointed chin, Agustín looked rather like Ray Bolger in his role as the scarecrow in *The Wizard of Oz*. Like that character, Agustín was one minute the thoughtful, soft-spoken man and the next the merry prankster. A characteristic Agustín moment, and this was only one of many, occurred one evening after dinner, when Ricardo began teaching Anamaria, Sandy, and me the Quechua terms for various parts of the human body. Eye, *ñawi*. Nose, *senqa*. Mouth, *simi*. Before long all the Q'ero were joining in. Head, *uma*. Hand, *maki*. Foot, *chaki*. Shoulder, *rikra*. Then Agustín offered *ñuñu*. Like the attentive students that we were, we three repeated the new word several times before we realized that Agustín had not pointed to a corresponding body part. To gales of laughter from the Q'ero, we learned we were saying “breast.” Agustín managed to sneak in “vagina” and “big breasts” before our lesson was over. We soon got even, when later that evening we gave an English lesson.



PHOTO BY SANDRA CORCORAN

However, when it came time to sit for his private interview to tell his initiation story, the prankster Agustín became “don Agustín,” a paqo whom Juan Núñez del Prado describes as “the most brilliant young pampa mesayoq in Q'ero.” Juan’s opinion obviously is shared by many Peruvians, for don Agustín is in high demand with the people of the Sacred Valley. At the conclusion of our interview session at Urubamba, we were to drop don Agustín in Cuzco, where, with the new sacred year about to begin, he had many regular clients waiting for him to conduct despacho ceremonies, offer prayers and blessings on their behalf, and even, perhaps, perform healings.

Our interview was a paradox. Of all the Q'ero paqos, don Agustín was the most inconsistent in the chronology of his narrative. It took many attempts to determine which karpay came in what order and who was in attendance at

these initiations. These details were never verified to my satisfaction, and I'm sure that if I asked don Agustín once again to tell his story I would detect still other inconsistencies. However, in other aspects of our interview, don Agustín more than lived up to Juan's high praise. The sensitivity of his observations and the beauty of his phraseology survived the double translation. The depth of his commitment to the sacred path is everywhere evident.

I had the opportunity to meet and work with don Agustín three or four times after our interview. On one special occasion he and don Juan Pauqar Espinosa came to the United States for two weeks in the fall of 1996 to meet with friends and supporters of the Wiraqocha Foundation and to meet with Hopi elders in order to join the energies of the North American and South American mountains, which form the "spine of the Mother." But I had very little unstructured time with him during this particular visit—or any other—and could clear up only the most important confusions in the details of his story. Therefore, I cannot claim that the sequence of the story that follows is *exactly* how events unfolded. What I can assure readers is that the meaning and spirit of these events were carefully reproduced, and I have no doubt the reader will reap many benefits from having shared this journey with so eloquent and sincere a guide.

"Our Holy Mother Mary was the first person to ever blow into the coca leaves.^I She was given the finest coca by God; it was not like the coca that I and other paqos chew but was of the finest quality. She blew into the coca and chewed it because her Son was lost. She was the first to work with the coca, and from that time to this day we, too, use the coca to invoke the apus.

"Mother Mary's chewing the coca is very much like the story we told you about the paqo Garibilu Q'espi, who cured many people by commanding the yellow fever, from which he suffered, to eat all the other diseases.^{II} He could do this because the apus and Pachamama were inside his body, and because he has his estrella. The apus chose him to be a paqo and gave him his estrella. In this same way, the father of my father was chosen by the apus to be a paqo. But he did not want it, and he died. My father was also chosen by the apus to be an alto mesayoq, but he, too, did not want to be a paqo. Because of his refusal, many of his children died. When he saw his children dying, he offered a despacho to a sacred lagoon, but this estrella did not have the power to solve his problem.^{III} After a time, my father also died.

“When I was young, I was very sick. When I was sick, I had a dream in which a *misti* appeared, a man dressed in white clothes riding a white horse. He was totally and absolutely clean. He said, ‘If you serve me from the tops of the hills, you will be well.’^{IV} This dream happened when I was nine years old. By then, my mother had a second husband, who was a paqo. My mother said to him, ‘See what you can tell from the coca leaves about the dream of my child.’ My mother’s husband read the coca leaves and said I was being called to the sacred path. He said, ‘This man in your dream is the apu. It is the apu who is calling you.’ After this dream, I meditated about whether I would take the responsibility for the sacred path or not. I was very young. I did not fully believe or accept this dream. I did not yet know how to chew the coca leaves. Still, as I got older I went to consult with many different paqos, and each one told me that I had been given an *estrella*.

“I did not do anything, but about one or two years later I had a second dream about this same *misti*, and this time he gave me a fruit. He said, “You will be the owner of this fruit.” But this fruit was not really a fruit, it was a flower. It was a fruit *and* a flower.

“I grew up and my thinking became more mature. About this time, I heard of a paqo named Bernabe Marchaqa. I went to meet with him. He was a pampa mesayoq, one of the best paqos of Q’ero. He told me these dreams were happening in my life because I was chosen to be a paqo but I had not accepted the call. He found that I had three *estrellas*, not just one. He knew that I was in the hands of three apus. I asked him where I should perform my *karpay*, at the Apu Waman Lipa or the Apu Ausangate. But he took me to Q’ollorit’i to receive the first *karpay*. In this initiation we offered a *despacho* for all the mistakes of my ancestors [for his grandfather’s and father’s refusals to heed the call of their *estrellas*]. We offered twelve *k’intus*. That’s the way I began to find my path. Not because of my will but because of Bernabe Marchaqa.

“When I performed my *karpay*, nobody [no spirits] came to visit my mesa, only the bull. We saw a bull, who approached us. But the bull is very dangerous. Bernabe Marchaqa said to me that the bull is too dangerous, and I must not accept it into my mesa. If I accepted this bull I would have become a very powerful alto mesayoq, but only for two or three years. If I rejected the bull, then I could only be a pampa mesayoq but I would have my power until the day I die.

“I meditated for some time after this karpay and decided to reject the bull and to become only a pampa mesayoq. I did not want to have only temporary power. So Bernabe Marchaqa and I performed another karpay. This one was also performed at Q’ollorit’i, and another powerful paqo was with us, the alto mesayoq Andreas Espinosa. During this karpay a bull again came to the place where we were making our offering. The bull is an animal who announces death. He calls death. Because of this we did not want to accept the challenge. To accept the messenger of the dead is a very dangerous challenge.

“The bull just showed up, and we could talk to him. But you cannot talk to a bull like you can talk to an estrella. With an estrella you can establish a dialogue. But you cannot with a bull. He talks to you only [and you cannot talk back to it.] That is why it is dangerous to accept the bull. The bull is sacred, but it represents the darker forces. Then Bernabe Marchaqa and Andreas Espinosa said that if I accept the bull I will have power for only two or three years. They suggested that I take the pampa mesayoq path and I would have power for my whole life. So I committed to being only a pampa mesayoq.

“After this my parents died.^V But I performed a third karpay with Bernabe Marchaqa. Andreas Espinosa told me to go with Marchaqa. He said, ‘Go to perform the karpay and I will call your estrella to come talk with you.’ It was during this karpay that I was told again that I had three estrellas: the apus Waman Lipa, Anqaschaki, and Qolqe Crus. Bernabe Marchaqa told me I had these estrellas, but he told me this from far away, not from close to me. This time the power did not come close because I was not totally clean, in clean clothes and having washed well. To meet an apu, you must be totally clean. I did not know this rule, and I went dirty to the karpay. This was a mistake. Because of this mistake, I did not meet my estrellas up close.^{VI} The apus also told me that because of this mistake I could not be an alto mesayoq. ‘You are going to be only a pampa mesayoq,’ they said.

“Later another bad thing happened to me because of this mistake. I met a woman, but this woman died almost immediately. We were together only three months. After my woman died, I did my final karpay to become a pampa mesayoq. Because of that karpay, I am a pampa mesayoq who reads the coca leaves.

“I will stop now to choose the coca leaves, to remember more details.”

After a few minutes of rest, during which he made several k'intus, blew his prayers into them, and then chewed them, don Agustín resumed his narrative. He began by offering some perspective on how one becomes a paqo.

“It was almost five years from the beginning to the end of my training. But I worked with Andreas Espinosa only for the initiation rituals. The first two karpays my [step-]father asked him to do for me. Bernabe Marchaqa was also there. Then my parents died. The last karpay was only with Marchaqa.”

Here don Agustín paused, then he intoned, as if offering us a cryptic mantra that would explain every nuance of the decisions he had faced in accepting his path as pampa mesayoq: “All the work I worked was not worked. All the wants I wanted were not wanted. Because of that I assume the responsibility that all the work I work must be worked, and all the wants I want must be wanted.”

Then, without missing a beat, don Agustín swept away the mystery of the moment by resuming his narrative in a most pragmatic manner. “You are not a paqo because you want to be a paqo. No! It is because the estrella chooses you to become a paqo. The estrella chooses you,” he emphasized. “Then you follow the will of the estrella. When you do that, you are rewarded with large herds, good crops, good health, and healthy children. You have a good relationship with your wife. You are able to perform successful healings.

“To receive your estrella, you must be strong. You must be able to receive the impact of the estrella. The estrella comes like a truck! Because I was strong I was able to open my heart to receive the power in my heart. That’s how I received my estrella.”

Don Agustín paused again, his initiation story complete. After a short break, I asked him just what the duties of a pampa mesayoq entail. The Q’ero I had already interviewed had tended to answer such broad questions very concretely, often giving only a mundane detail or two. It was difficult to get them to put their spiritual practices into any generalized context or to discuss their impact or significance. Agustín was no different.

“I do despachos for health, love, and for business,” he said, summing up his practice in one sentence. Then, remembering something more, he added, “And for the apus.”

“To honor the apus?” I asked, wondering what exactly Agustín meant. But Juan Núñez del Prado did not even translate my question. To him it must have seemed a naive and perhaps even ridiculous question, for he proceeded to

answer it himself. He often did this when he thought it was just easier to quickly educate me on a fine point rather than go through the rigors of the translation process, from English to Spanish and from Spanish to Quechua, and then back again. So Juan explained, “No, not exactly to honor the apus. When a paqo does a despacho for the apus, it is to establish his personal relationship with the apus.”

I asked Agustín for what reasons people come to him to perform a despacho, hoping my question would encourage him to tell a story or two about his work and the people who seek out his services.

“I do work for people who want to learn harmony—a couple or a family or people who want to work together,” he said. “Several times [when I was first a paqo] I thought I must only do the work of making offerings to my apus and Pachamama. But this is wrong. And my wife became sick, because I was performing my duties in the wrong way. After that, I learned that I must work for everyone. Because of [what happened with] my wife, I learned I had to integrate my work, working with Pachamama and the apus for health, love, business, as well as making offerings to the apus. I must do all this work.

“So after that I worked together with my wife. When I learned to work with her, I learned I could work with the left side. When we worked together, my wife worked with the left side and I worked with the right side. But when she could not work with me, I found that I could still offer a despacho with my left hand to Pachamama and with my right hand to the apus. So I learned to integrate the work.

“I must tell the truth,” he said. “These are all the things I did.”

Don Agustín’s pronouncement, so heartfelt, brought us all up short. His sincerity and intensity were almost overwhelming, and it deepened our gratitude that he, and the other Q’ero paqos, were allowing us to probe into their private worlds. We also recognized that such a pronouncement signaled that the teller of the tale desired a break. As don Agustín rested for a few minutes, I turned to Juan for an explanation of the left and right sides in Andean mystical work.

I knew that paqos could be trained on what is called the “left side of the mesa” or the “right side of the mesa.” Although the Andean understanding of the left and right sides relates to the Western concept of being left-brained (analytical, linear, and so on) versus right-brained (intuitive, creative, nonlinear), it also means more than that.^{VII} It refers to being trained in the “magical” (left) or the “mystical” (right) sides of the work. (See chapters 1,

7, and 15) The distinction is often hard to pin down in concrete terms and is described differently depending upon whom you ask about it. This is a topic that also often leaves Westerners thoroughly confused. But it is worth discussing at least briefly since the Q'ero paqos make several references to left-side work and right-side work.

Juan Núñez del Prado explained that in the most simple terms a paqo who works predominantly on the left side of the mesa is one who is “capable of handling the power and the vision in order to use it for practical purposes, such as healing.” A person working predominantly on the right side has been granted the teachings that give him or her the “capacity to actually meet and communicate with supernatural beings and energies.” Ideally, a paqo will integrate the two teachings and pull the kawsay, the living energy, from both sides of the mesa.

Another important element of the Andean notion of left and right is that men are considered to have a natural capacity for the right-side work, whereas women paqos have an innate capacity to work from the left. In the sacred world of the Andes, the left side is associated traditionally with “femaleness.” For example, the moon and the sea are considered to be on the left side whereas the sun and the mountains are considered to be on the masculine, right side. Juan Pauqar Flores had explained previously that women work almost exclusively on the left, which includes healing work, although they also have a natural capacity to commune with the spirits because all healing is done in concert with Pachamama and the apus to which one is in service. Those spirits aid the healer with diagnosis and selecting a treatment. Juan Núñez del Prado further explained this concept in Jungian terms: the right side can be equated with logos, which is the (left brain) rational mind and the propensity toward interpretation, analysis, reasoning, and other qualities that aid one’s ability to dialogue with the spirits. In contrast, the left-side work can be equated with eros, which is the (right brain) “impulse to life, the capacity to easily establish relationships, and the tendency toward wholeness and nurturing.” Developing your left side capabilities, then, enhances your intuition and imagination, heightens the quality of your dreams, and increases your ability to nurture others—qualities that help make you a compassionate healer. Thus, women paqos are considered to be naturally more adept at the work of the left side, whereas men generally are better at the right-side work. What a paqo must do to become a fully realized mystic is develop both capacities, that of eros and

logos, thereby easily working from both the left and right sides of the mesa. Don Agustín had honored his wife by relating how she had taught him to harmonize and integrate both of these capacities, so that he could offer assistance to people as easily with his “left hand” as with his “right hand.”

After Juan’s long explanation, we refocused on the interview, and I decided to continue the discussion of how a pampa mesayoq works with despachos. This complex ritual offering is the pampa mesayoq’s specialty, and it is the most frequently performed ceremony in the Andes. There is an almost dizzying array of despachos, more than two hundred different kinds. Each type of despacho is used for a specific purpose and consists of different quantities and types of *recados*, which are the individual ritual items and natural objects that fill the offering bundle. General despachos are sold prepackaged by specialists in Andean marketplaces, and despachos for specific purposes, such as love despachos, are made upon request. It takes years to master just the basic types of despachos. My questions to don Agustín attempted to determine how a pampa mesayoq decides which type of despacho to use for a particular situation and what might result from the despacho ceremony. For instance, how often are they successful? But somehow my meaning was lost in translation, and don Agustín launched into a description of how a general despacho is made. I reproduce that description here so that the reader will have some idea of just how complex the preparation of a despacho can be. (I did not reproduce the Quechua names for the Andean plants and seeds; instead, I simply used the defining description don Agustín or the translators provided.) What does not come through, unfortunately, is just how beautiful a despacho can be. The pampa mesayoq selects and arranges each recado with exquisite care. A completed despacho can be a work of art, or what a friend of mine describes as a “nature mandala.”

“For a despacho,” don Agustín said, “you need all the recados. Coca leaves, incense, sugar, everything in the packet [a prepackaged despacho that paqos and others can buy in the marketplace]. You use white paper, and on it you must put twelve k’intus and make the form of a cross with sugar. You must put in white and red carnations and red wine and pisco. You can put the twelve k’intus on white cotton. Over the incense and sugar, you put an aromatic plant, a grass, that comes from the coast. [You put in] a llama fetus, candies, raisins or grapes, another type of Andean seed, rice or noodles [uncooked], tiny silver and gold sheets of paper that are like little books,

gold and silver thread, a tiny flute of gold or silver, certain dried fruits, a magnetic stone, and a small crucifix. You can put in a type of clay and a crumbled-up coca leaf. Other types of seeds and plants. Vicuña fat. Yucca. Coca seeds.

“Over all this, to finish, you put another white and red carnation. Then you have a little shell that serves as a mesa and another little cross to close the door [complete the making of the despacho]. In one corner you put two tiny candles, one red and one yellow. There are also many little figurines of metallic paper or metal: stars, houses, people, keys and locks, stairways, animals. You choose from among these according to the purpose of the despacho.”

Don Agustín sat silent for a moment, trying to remember if he had left anything out. Juan took advantage of the pause to tell me that there were something on the order of 218 different items that may be placed into a single despacho.

Don Agustín, I believed, was going to tell us all 218! But we didn't have the heart to interrupt him, so he continued his list. “There are two kinds of people symbolized in those figures, single and married. There is also a figure with its two fists together, symbolizing the touch of power. There is also a figure of a little man made out of candy. When you have selected these, then you drip a little *trago* [a sugar-cane alcohol] over them. You sprinkle a little more red wine around the despacho. Then you fold up the despacho and tie it with white thread.

“There are two colors that are important to a despacho: red and white. For a despacho to Pachamama, you choose red flowers. For the apus, white.

“Then you burn the despacho and the fire carries [its power and prayers] to the apus. The fire is the vehicle that takes the despacho to the apus.”

I thanked don Agustín for his description of the contents of a despacho, then rephrased one of my original questions, which had remained unanswered: “How do you choose which kind of despacho to use in a particular circumstance? For instance, what are some of the ways they are used, say, in healing? Is there a story of one despacho ceremony that you could tell us?”

“The first way to use a despacho,” don Agustín explained, “is as an offering. This is a positive use. But if there is sin or something dirty [hucha] in your house, then the despacho is used in another way. The despacho cleans the hucha from your house. That's another kind of despacho.” Then unsure of

just what information we were seeking, don Agustín asked us, “Do you want to know exactly how that kind of despacho is made?”

“No,” I said, and thanked him for offering to share that information with us. “We don’t need to know that, but it would be good to know more about some of the ways a despacho works. For instance, do they always work, or can the offering fail? What are some of the outcomes of a despacho ceremony?” I was interested in how don Agustín interacted as a paqo, as a pampa mesayoq, within his community. Therefore I pressed these questions, and Anamaria and Ricardo patiently translated.

“If a person needs the service of one pampa mesayoq,” don Agustín explained, “then [he or she] goes to a different one.”

I turned toward Juan, asking if I had heard the translation correctly. He assured me I had. We asked don Agustín to explain the logic of this process.

“The other paqo reads the coca leaves for you to see if the problem or healing you want [from a particular pampa mesayoq] is for the ‘hand’ of that pampa mesayoq. If the coca leaves say this work is for his hand, then the person goes to that pampa mesayoq.”

I wanted to ask about conflict of interest between pampa mesayoqs here, but decided not to because I suspected I was imposing my competitive North American attitudes onto the Andean culture—and the question became moot anyway, because my persistent queries had obviously tired Agustín.

“This is complete,” he said. “There is no more now. I will speak more tomorrow if you want.”

Don Agustín’s was not the first in the order of Q’ero interviews, so I had grown used to a paqo calling an abrupt end to a session. The interviews tended to close one of two ways: abruptly, with a sudden declaration by a Q’ero that he or she was through talking for the time being; or else with the slow realization that darkness had fallen, our voices were giving out, and we were so mentally fatigued that we were losing our ability to form coherent thoughts.

In the case of the former, I used the breaks to organize my tapes, to go out into the beautiful gardens surrounding the hacienda for fresh air and some exercise, or, more often than not, to huddle with Juan and Ricardo to discuss the information and to plan strategy for the next session. The Q’ero often used the breaks to play foosball. Yes, foosball! There was a foosball table set up on a concrete pad in the courtyard of our rented hacienda. It took only a few

attempts at trying to figure out this curious game, and just a little coaching by Anamaria and Sandy, for don Agustín and don Juan Pauqar Espinosa to become aficionados. The Pauqar Flores brothers often joined in.

In the latter case, we were always hesitant to end the day's work, no matter how tired we were. The information we were getting was so incredibly interesting and there was so much more we wanted to ask that we would be loathe to call it a day. As you can imagine, since we had only four days in which to cover an enormous range of sacred knowledge, the pace of the interviews was intense. The Q'ero, used to working hard but not to talking a lot, found the interviews especially challenging. I suspect they had never talked so much in their lives!

Which brings us to the other pampa mesayoq, and the only female Q'ero paqo with us—doña Agustina Apasa. As a female in a decidedly patriarchal culture, she was less used to expressing her opinions and talking about herself than the men were, and she was recovering from illness, so I am grateful to this day that she agreed to be interviewed at all. Brief as her interview was, it revealed a side of the tradition that I had not until that point been exposed to—the intimate relationship between a female paqo and her spirit helpers.

DOÑA AGUSTINA APASA

When I first arranged, through Juan Núñez del Prado, to dispatch a messenger on horseback to Q'ero to ask if several paqos would agree to come down from their mountain villages to tell their stories for a book, I was hoping only that the Q'ero would agree to participate. Juan and I together formed a wish list of participants: we hoped to interview at least two alto mesayoqs (don Manuel Q'espí, don Mariano Apasa Marchaqa, or don Juan Pauqar Espinosa), one pampa mesayoq (don Agustín Pauqar Qapa), and the two Pauqar Flores brothers, who could talk about the history of Q'ero and the Inkarí myth with the most fluency. It was only later, after the messenger had been dispatched, that I realized our omission: there were no women paqos on our list. As I awaited the messenger's reply, I prayed that our omission would somehow be rectified. The only female paqo I knew was doña Agustina Apasa, the wife of don Mariano Apasa Marchaqa. I did not know if there were any others in Q'ero. When the messenger returned, having manifested our wish list, I was ecstatic and dismissed any unhappiness about

having no access to women paqos. Perhaps there would be another opportunity later to interview a female paqo, I told myself.



PHOTO BY JOAN PARISI WILCOX

Needless to say, it was with great delight that I discovered upon my arrival in Cuzco that doña Agustina had accompanied her husband. My prayers seemed to have been answered. However, by the time we arrived in Urubamba, two days after my arrival in Peru and perhaps a week after the Q'ero had left their villages, it was clear that doña Agustina was very ill. She was coughing in deep, chest-rattling fits, and she often clutched her chest as if in pain. For our first two days in Urubamba, she either sat quietly in a corner of the interview room listening or slept in her room. Sandy offered her a potent herbal remedy, whose awful taste was inversely proportional to its reputed healing efficacy, but doña Agustina took one sip, spit out the wicked substance, and refused to ingest any more. Finally, during lunch on the third day, we convinced don Mariano that his wife needed to consult a conventional medical doctor. After lunch, Juan, Ricardo, and don Mariano escorted doña Agustina to a doctor's office, where it was discovered she had pneumonia. Injections of antibiotics and various other medications were prescribed. Despite doña Agustina's terror at receiving the injections, they seemed to help. By the next day she felt well enough to spend an hour or so being interviewed.

Doña Agustina is a quiet woman who smiles readily but who often shrinks from direct eye contact. Nevertheless, when she was with us during the group interviews, there were occasions when she was not afraid to speak up for herself or to set the men straight in a dispute. Once, the men were debating whether they had any more information to tell us about a particular matter. Doña Agustina interrupted, and with a dismissive sweep of her hand,

she put an end to their discussion: “They do not know any more!” she exclaimed, laughing. “They have told you all they know.”

Doña Agustina was not called to the path of the pampa mesayoq in the conventional way, through a vision or a dream or the call of an estrella. Instead, her first husband decided she had the potential, and so he initiated her into the sacred path. Today, now married to don Mariano, doña Agustina still does not work alone. She assists don Mariano, who was present during her interview, by choosing the coca leaves and making despachos. Although doña Agustina’s story is unconventional, it is, nevertheless, extremely valuable, for it reveals her deep connection to the realm of spirit, where Pachamama directly advises her how to perform a healing. Her narrative, too, provides a unique insight into the powerful female spirits, the *ñust’as*. These are the ancient “princesses of the mountains,” the supernatural female energies who form couples with the lords of the apus, the male spirits who inhabit the mountains. Although her story is short, doña Agustina tells it with her characteristic simplicity and directness, and occasionally she unleashes her sharp sense of humor. “My [first] husband was a paqo, an alto mesayoq, and he performed three initiation rituals for me, asking for me to be given the power to choose the coca leaves. My husband said I must be a pampa mesayoq. He gave me the karpays. I did not receive an invitation to be a paqo in my dreams or any other way. It was my husband who taught me. He taught me to choose the coca leaves for Pachamama and for the *ñust’as*. My first husband died and left me. My present husband [don Mariano] gave me three initiations also.

“I only choose the coca leaves for Holy Mother Earth and for the *ñust’as*, the princesses,” doña Agustina explained. “Holy Mother Earth is distinct from the mama *ñust’as*, the princesses of the apus. When I perform healings I dream about the Lady of the Valley, who is the Pachamama. Pachamama tells me to perform the despacho this way or that way. I dream about the *ñust’as* also, who are ladies of the high snow peaks. They teach me how to perform the rituals for healing or what kind of healing is involved in the particular case.

“In my dreams, Pachamama is floating, dressed in the style of the women of the valleys. And the *ñust’as* are dressed in brilliant gold or silver clothing. Sometimes they are tenderly caring for a child. Sometimes they also come to me when I am choosing the coca leaves or making the despacho, and they do it with me. They teach me.

“Frequently, these beings appear together in my dreams. Because I am chosen to be a pampa mesayoq, I think that I will be together with these beings from now until the moment of my death.

“This is all.”

Doña Agustina adjusted her *lliklla* (shawl), drawing it around her shoulders, wrapping herself up tight just as she had so succinctly wrapped up her initiation story.

I thanked her for her story, then asked her how old she had been when her first husband had initiated her. She replied that she had been twenty years old.

Now that her initiation story was told, doña Agustina seemed hesitant to talk. I wasn’t sure if she was feeling shy around all of us and intimidated by my recording equipment or if she was naturally quiet. In an effort to get her to open up, I asked a deliberately broad question about how becoming a pampa mesayoq may have changed her life.

“Being a pampa mesayoq is good,” doña Agustina told us, “because before, I was often very ill. I think that this illness was cured because of my work with the ñust’as and Pachamama. Since I became a pampa mesayoq I have had good health.”

Ricardo spoke up, asking doña Agustina about the circumstances of her first husband’s death. This seemingly straightforward query prompted doña Agustina to reveal some significant insights into the perils of following the sacred path.

“My husband died very quickly. He was bleeding from the nose, the mouth. He was only sick one day, and he died. Because of that we could not heal him. If he had had a long illness, we could have used our power to heal him. But it was very fast. He died in one day.

“There were just the two of us. We did not have children. When this [her husband’s illness] happened, even our thoughts were hanged.^{VIII} He was an alto mesayoq. His death could have been a result of a mistake he made. The malignant, dark forces can eat you, can eat your energies.

“The next year I met Mariano,” doña Agustina said, moving quickly from the subject of her first husband’s death. “He gave me his karpays, and now we are working together.”

Juan, perhaps in an effort to lighten the atmosphere, made a comment, half in jest, about doña Agustina’s marrying well, since both her husbands were paqos.

Doña Agustina squared her shoulders and shot back, “I am sure that the lady ñust’as and Pachamama want all my husbands to be alto mesayoqs!”

We all had a good laugh before we resumed the interview. “How many female pampa mesayoqs are there in Q’ero?” I asked her.

“There are no other women pampa mesayoqs who have been given the karpays except for me,” she replied.

In a future interview with the male paqos, I would learn that there also are no female alto mesayoqs in Q’ero, although don Juan Pauqar Espinosa’s daughter has been called to the path and, before don Juan’s untimely death, he had pledged to support her training.^{IX} Generally, however, the present generation of women, according to these Q’ero paqos, do not want to face the challenges of the path. It isn’t that they are incapable of becoming paqos, but rather that they choose not to exert the effort. And so, we were told, there are currently no female paqos except doña Agustina in Q’ero. If I had known this at the time I interviewed doña Agustina, or if she had volunteered the information, our interview may have taken a different tack. I would have loved to have heard her defend her gender about their willingness to become paqos. But for some reason neither I nor anyone else that day thought to ask doña Agustina more about this curious lack of women paqos, so we lost an opportunity to explore an important topic. Instead, I asked doña Agustina if she felt there were any differences between a female and a male pampa mesayoq.

“There are some distinctions,” she acknowledged. “The woman pampa mesayoq works with the Pachamama and the ñust’as. The man works with the apus.”

Following up on this line of questioning, Sandy asked doña Agustina if there were any differences in the way female and male paqos performed the rituals. But doña Agustina answered the question only in the most personal way: “I always work together with my husband. I never work alone. We do despachos and healings together.” Implicit in that answer, however, was the assumption that because doña Agustina and don Mariano work together compatibly, there are few differences between how male and female paqos carry out the ceremonies.

Sandy put another question to doña Agustina, one that provoked a somewhat heated reply. She asked if doña Agustina had any difficulty managing her responsibilities both as mother and paqo. Doña Agustina replied in a rush of Quechua.

“One can see that there is no conflict,” she retorted. “Both are part of my total life.”

Juan provided commentary about her complete response, which never was fully translated. “She was surprised by the question,” he explained. “She said first that everything in her life is better because she is a pampa mesayoq. She is surprised. She said there is no conflict with being a mother and a pampa mesayoq.”

“Well,” asked Anamaria, “how does becoming a pampa mesayoq set a paqo, either a man or a woman, apart in the community? Are they seen differently, treated differently?”

“No,” doña Agustina replied. “It’s the same for both men and women, and we are treated no differently.”

At this point Juan donned his professorial hat and gave us a mini lecture. “In the Andes, or anywhere, all of life is a path. In your life you can choose any path. For example, another person may choose the political path. And even with the sacred path, you are just following a path. She’s just assuming a role as a paqo, but it is not separate from her daily life or identity as a mother. This is somewhat different from your culture, where there may be difficult role conflicts and hierarchies. This is even true here in some areas, for instance with my colleagues at the university. Some of them are preoccupied with how I can be an alto mesayoq and an anthropologist at the same time. They say to be both is to lose my objectivity. But for myself, there is not any conflict. Neither is there for doña Agustina. She is no different from someone who chooses to be a good sheep herder.”

I understood what Juan was saying, but I also knew that doña Agustina, or any paqo, was very different from the “average” man or woman. The very fact that one is a paqo no doubt sets one apart; why should the shamans of Peru be different from those of any other culture? There is no question that an alto mesayoq wields a lot of power in the community and is usually a rich man compared with his neighbors. Reason led me to believe that such distinctions were relevant to any paqo, even a pampa mesayoq. But I had not come to Peru to debate the sociology of the shamanic “priesthood.” Time was precious, and I wanted to hear more about doña Agustina’s life as a paqo. So I asked her to relate a story about a healing she had done. “How do the ñust’as and Pachamama help you to be a successful healer?” I asked.

Doña Agustina’s answer revealed her to be a very clever—and diplomatic—woman. “I always work with Mariano,” she began, giving her

husband his due before she sang the praises of the supernatural beings. “The ñust’as and Pachamama in dreams tell me how to perform the ritual: to choose a special kind of coca leaf, or how to pass the coca leaves over the body of the person, or how to touch the person to determine what the sickness is, or if we must bathe them with a specific herb. They also tell me how to offer a specific kind of despacho.”

Here Juan expressed verbally what I had just surmised, that it was really doña Agustina, not don Mariano, who was in control of the healing through her spirit guides. “I think doña Agustina really tells Mariano what to do!” Juan exclaimed. I was thinking, and I’m sure the others were, of an earlier comment one of the Q’ero had made about how women have the capacity to be the paqos with the greatest power. “We must ask Mariano if his wife tells him her dreams of Pachamama before they start the healing process,” Juan insisted. “We must ask him if this is so.”

Although doña Agustina could not have understood our English discussion, perhaps the repetition of don Mariano’s name set her wifely antennae buzzing, because suddenly she spoke directly to Ricardo, asking him to tell us something.

Ricardo translated: “She says she does not want to talk too much. Although if we have precise questions for her, she will answer.”

Juan, however, would not be deterred. “We must ask Mariano our question.” Since don Mariano was sitting nearby, quietly observing his wife’s interview, Juan took the opportunity and had Ricardo put the question to him.

Don Mariano’s response was as skilled as it was sincere. “There are no secrets between our hearts,” he said, rather gently putting us in our places. “If she has a dream she tells me, and if I have a dream, I tell her. We talk about our work. First we talk about it, then we perform the rituals together.”

Doña Agustina nodded her head in agreement. From their words and their body language it was clear to me that their work truly is a collaborative effort and their respect for each other was obvious and unquestioned.

“Is it possible to have them relate one specific case?” I asked. I had not yet gotten very far trying to get the Q’ero to tell us specific stories about their work. But I tried again, thinking specificity might provoke a response. “Perhaps of the *last* healing they did together?”

Ricardo put the question to them and translated their brief, even terse replies. “Mariano says that the last one was about a month ago, and doña

Agustina does not want to be specific about it. She says only, ‘When someone wants to be healed, we heal them.’”

That was good enough for me.

SEVEN

Alto Mesayoq: Master of the Hanaq Pacha

The alto mesayoqs of Q'ero, says Juan Núñez del Prado, are the most highly regarded in the Andes. Many of the alto mesayoqs from the Cuzco region journey to Q'ero to receive their final initiation. Even if they have received all the karpays from their own mentors, he explains, they go to Q'ero to be recognized and blessed by the Q'ero alto mesayoqs.

To be an alto mesayoq, according to Américo Yábar, is to “walk the edge of a sword,” for the alto mesayoq must always maintain his balance between the world of *paña*, the ordinary, and *lloq'e*, the non-ordinary. With his characteristic verbal flourish, Américo says, “In the unfolding of the non-ordinary world, *lloq'e* is what connects the alto mesayoq with the mystery and enigma, and what connects him with the unfolding of the unknown energies.”

Américo's terminology may be confusing to Westerners, partly as a consequence of his penchant for speaking poetically at the expense, sometimes, of precision. So, let me try to explain these two important terms more clearly in the context of Américo's comments. (Readers might want to refer back to the discussion of the left side and right side of the sacred work in don Agustín's interview in the previous chapter.) Literally, *lloq'e* is the Quechua word for “left” and *paña* for “right.” As the left side of the Andean path, *lloq'e* is the conduit through which we access the “magical” world and push the kawsay for “practical” purposes, such as healing. But it is considered the “non-ordinary” world because healing and other such “practical” sacred pursuits, such as divination, are consequences of using the right brain, the intuitive and imaginative side of the self (which, if you remember, is talked about in the Andeans as the “left side” because the left side of the body is controlled by the right brain). *Paña*, as the right side of the path, is the conduit for the mystical union, or direct communication, with the world of Spirit. Right-side talents are a consequence of the gifts of the left

brain hemisphere—logical and analytical thought, and so on. Because we use these talents for communication, this is the “mystical” side of the work, which involves communing with and even directly interacting with the spirits and energies of the *kawsay pacha*, for example, with the *apus*. It is considered “ordinary,” since these skills are more highly developed in most people than are the more “non-ordinary” skills of the intuitive right brain.

As we saw earlier, the concept of left and right sides in Andean mysticism is complicated, and one must be vigilant in defining the terms according to the context in which they are used. As Américo attempts to make clear, while immersed in the world of *lloq’*e**, the *alto mesayoq* learns to “see” and “communicate” with spirits in a way that is “non-ordinary,” using capabilities that go beyond those generally available to *pampa mesayoqs*. But he and others remind us that *paqos*—any *paqo*, whether a *pampa mesayoq* or an *alto mesayoq*—must learn to work both sides of the path, the right side (*paña*) and the left side (*lloq’*e**) to express the fullness of their gifts.

An *alto mesayoq*’s training typically begins only after he or she has received the call to the sacred path, such as surviving a lightning strike. Anthropologist Washington Rozas Alvarez writes, “The *apus* choose *paqos* through lightning, and it can choose any person. The person is chosen by being struck by lightning, whose first ray kills him, second dismembers him, and third resurrects him. Also, when a person is in any mundane place, like at his farm, lightening can call him by striking very close to him. He will feel chosen, *qoñiruna*, which means ‘person chosen by the ray.’ After this, he will look for a Master from whom to receive the *karpay*, which is the initiation.”¹

An *alto mesayoq*’s training is long and arduous, often spanning a decade. “Not everyone can go through the trials and tests just because they want to,” Rozas writes. “[I]n order to become a *paqo*, the *apus* choose from all of the apprentices who are on the path toward becoming a member of this sacred society, who are like priests. Many of them fall behind halfway through, and some at the door. Only the chosen ones are the ones who can go on to receive the *karpay*.”² Such training for the chosen ones has many prerequisites that involve not only spiritual and physical challenges but monetary ones as well. An apprentice provides payment to a teacher in money, alpacas, llamas, and personal labor and in such staples as coca, liquor, wine, candles, *despachos*, food, and *chicha* during the training period. These requisites can prove a

hardship for most Andeans, who barely eke out a living for themselves and their families from the stony soils of the high mountains.

Once consecrated, however, an alto mesayoq enjoys a privileged and respected role within the community. Because of the vision and wisdom he receives from his allies in the spirit world, particularly the apus, he is called upon to oversee the political and social welfare of the community, and he is often called upon to mediate disputes and settle conflicts. The alto mesayoq's main role, however, is shamanic. Through his dialogue with the apus and interchanges with the refined energies of the hanaq pacha, the alto mesayoq accesses the very fabric of space-time, where he is able to push the kawsay, the animating energy of the physical world, on behalf of those who seek his counsel. According to Rozas, alto mesayoqs of the second level (Ilaqta alto mesayoqs) are sometimes referred to as *Atum-Cheqaqs*, or “men of great truth”; and those of the third level (suyu alto mesayoqs) as *Atum-Aqulleqs*, or “great knowers.” Fourth-level alto mesayoqs—kuraq akulleqs—can access even more far-reaching energies, those of the cosmos and can work these energies on a planetary scale. Kuraqs may have awesome powers, from making the clouds part at will to being in more than one place at a time to prophesying the future.

According to Andean prophecy, as was overviewed in [chapter 3](#), there are three additional “levels” to the alto mesayoq path beyond that of kuraq akulleq, but there are currently no paqos working at these levels. These levels involve prodigious healing capacities, heightened levels of awareness, and refined modes of consciousness that have not yet manifested in space-time on Earth. Yet these three levels of being are part of an Andean prophecy that is unfolding at this very moment and in which we may all play a part to further the spiritual evolution of humankind.

DON JUAN PAUQAR ESPINOSA

The late alto mesayoq Juan Pauqar Espinosa was the first Q'ero I interviewed privately to get the personal story of a paqo. I was nervous and unsure of myself, despite all the good advice I had received from Juan and Ricardo and the experience I had gained during our group interviews. In many ways I was fortunate that don Juan agreed to go first, because of all the Q'ero he was the most at ease and personable. Despite being a powerful suyu alto mesayoq, don Juan was as mischievous as a puppy. He was quick

to smile, and his smile was irresistible, reaching from ear to ear as he utterly abandoned himself to whatever amusement was at hand. He and don Agustín were often in cahoots on some prank or joke. I remember an incident that occurred one evening at dinner that perfectly illustrates don Juan’s penchant for hamming it up.



PHOTO BY JOAN PARISI WILCOX

The Q’ero have prodigious appetites, and because food is scarce in their villages, they do not waste a single morsel. They certainly didn’t during our stay in Urubamba, where, if it was offered to them, they would finish any food left uneaten on a plate—whether they liked it or not. Each evening, dinner became almost an adventure, because the Q’ero were being exposed to a wide variety of unfamiliar foods and to such unfamiliar “culture” as cutlery. One night for dessert we were served strawberry Jell-O. The crimson Jell-O was itself odd to the Q’ero, but it came served in tall, stemmed, glass dessert cups. The cups of Jell-O sat untouched on the table, the Q’ero surreptitiously eyeing Sandy, Anamaria, and me to see how we actually went about eating this strange, jiggling food. I think it was Sandy who took the first taste. Still, none of the Q’ero followed suit. It was obvious they were very unsure of themselves.

Finally, don Juan decided he would take on the challenge of the Jell-O. With five pairs of Q’ero eyes intently focused on him, he carefully palmed the delicate stemware with one hand and picked up the dessert spoon with the other. Then he gently shook the cup. The Jell-O wiggled and jiggled, and don Juan burst into laughter. The other Q’ero, Sandy, Anamaria, and I laughed not only at the ludicrousness of the situation but because don Juan’s laugh was so contagious. His cheeks plumped up into brown apples as his smile streaked across his face, from eye to sparkling eye, like a comet streaking across the night sky. His expression simply radiated pure delight.

I couldn't decide if don Juan was deliberately hamming it up or really was having trouble, but his next move had us all in stitches. He probed the Jell-O with his spoon, gouging out a small gelatinous cube. It skidded this way on the spoon and that way on the spoon, his hand reacting as quickly as possible but always just a fraction of a second too slow. His tongue was plastered to his lower lip in the intensity of the moment, like a five-year-old's when he is learning to print his name. Finally, after another round of juggling, he managed to scoop—although slam dunk may be a more accurate description—the Jell-O into his mouth. The reaction of his facial muscles was instantaneous, so fast that I suspect they occurred independent of the motor centers of his brain. His face instantly screwed itself up—eyes scrunched closed, lips fused together, and cheeks pushing toward his forehead—into the most expressive “yuck” response I have ever seen. Everyone again erupted into gales of laughter—and don Juan proceeded to eat three servings of strawberry Jell-O.

During our interview, don Juan's penchant to play the clown was far less evident; still, he immediately put me at ease by calling me “sister” and expressing his belief that our project was very important to the Q'ero. He even toasted with a shot glass of pisco to our success. He then gave me a gift of a beautiful khuya from his mesa to connect our poq'pos. I have reproduced these private moments because they so beautifully express don Juan's spirit, and they demonstrate how natural it is for the Q'ero to reach out and share their love and wisdom.

Don Juan raised the shot glass of pisco and offered a toast: “I hope we will do this project with all success, these things we want to do.” Then he tossed the pisco back in one gulp and placed the glass on the coffee table. He reached over and retrieved his mesa bundle from where it sat next to him on the couch. He held the cloth bundle to his lips, closed his eyes, and began to pray. Ricardo whispered that don Juan was having a “personal interchange” with his mesa, the ritual bundle that contains the khuyas and other power objects that connect him with his teachers, human and nonhuman, and hence with his power.

Don Juan finally lowered his mesa to his lap and withdrew a small cloth from the confines of the outer wrapping of the bundle. He held the finely woven, gray and maroon cloth, which was carefully folded into a rectangle, flat on the palm of his hand, and began to speak.

“Dear sister, I will talk as an alto mesayoq, and for your work I want to offer you this.”

He moved the small cloth bundle toward me. I was sitting on a chair next to the couch, but I quickly moved to the couch, facing don Juan knee to knee.

“I give you this as a gift, so that you can carry something of me with you. This is to guard your khuyas. We are here because God has willed it. This gift is so you never have pain, so you are lifted up high. Take this so that you will always be well. As you grow on the path, I will be happy. With the blessing of the Holy One, we will grow together, because our God, Jesus Christ, has told us we must share the things we know. He said that we should not divide or keep our work separate. He said that everyone must love one another with the same heart.”

I was deeply moved by don Juan’s words, and as I accepted his gift I asked Juan and Ricardo to translate for me. “Tell him that as he is about to share his knowledge with us, I will carry his words with the same love with which I will carry his gift.”

“I will be very happy if you do this,” don Juan replied.

As the interview proper began, Ricardo translated our instructions—that we wished don Juan to tell us his initiation story in whatever way felt most comfortable. When he was finished we would ask questions. Don Juan needed no further prompting, and he began his narrative with a prayer.

“Oh Lord of the Heavens, I am an alto mesayoq because it is your will that I be on this path. Help me to talk about the things you have taught me. Let the words I talk, be talking. Let the work I work, be working, Lord, because it is your will. We are human beings. The only difference is our clothing. But we are all human beings, with love for each other.

“It is the will of God that I am an alto mesayoq. The will of God first showed itself to me through lightning. This happened when I was herding llamas in the pasture. I was just a boy when I was touched by lightning. I was only eight years old. My memory of that day is not clear, but when this event with the lightning occurred, I was watching the llamas. I was following them when I saw hail coming toward me. I saw the wind, which was coming to meet me. The moment the wind met me, the lightning struck. This wind entered me like a ghost. That is when the lightning struck. My hat was thrown from my head. It flew very far, and I thought I would die within one hour.

“When I awoke, I was completely disoriented. I got up and I started to walk. I walked straight and did not look to either side, and there in front of me I saw my mesa.¹ I only saw it. I did not touch it or carry it. If I had taken the mesa with me, I later learned, at that moment I would have become an alto mesayoq, for the mesa comes with much power.

“My father was a little ugly [bad tempered], so I did not tell him what happened. I did not tell my father because he would not believe me. Because I did not discuss this with my father, I did not know the meaning of this event or what to do. Afterwards, I learned that if something like this happens to you, you must eat all your food without salt and you must only go into houses without smoke, into clean houses. All these things must be done, but because my father did not understand these things and I did not tell him, I did not know I was supposed to do any of these things.

“With this turn of events, I told my mother. But my mother could not give me force [help me], because being a mother, she could not be above her husband. So we did not do anything. When I explained what happened to me to my mother, she understood it. But we didn’t do the right things. And so I very quickly became ill, with congestion in my lungs. I was ill for a long time.

“Then a paqo named Andreas Espinosa met [crossed] my path. He saw my path in the coca leaves. At that time, I was fourteen years old. Because I was fourteen years old, I had consciousness about what was happening. This alto mesayoq, Espinosa, said, ‘Because you are young and, therefore, strong, you must be ill for no [physical] reason.’

“Andreas Espinosa read the coca leaves and said that we must do a karpay. The coca said that after this karpay I would have a dream, and I would find in my dream what I would become in this life.”

Here don Juan jumped ahead in time, explaining the consequences of his choice to follow the sacred path. “With this karpay, I became healthy. I recovered my intelligence. This was good. From that time to now I have been well. Even though I do not have a lot of livestock, my life is good.”

Don Juan quickly resumed the chronological telling of his story. “Andreas Espinosa recommended that we go to perform the karpay and that then I would meet my mesa. He said I must go without fear, because if I go with any fear I will not meet my mesa. If I have no fear, it will be waiting for me. So I went, and I found my mesa.

“The karpay was performed in the name of Q’ollorit’i at a little snow peak called Waman Lipa, which is the spiritual equivalent of Q’ollorit’i. Later, we performed another karpay, and for it, Andreas Espinosa said that it was necessary that we go to Q’ollorit’i to become cleansed and purified. It was necessary for us to be *ch’uya kanaykipay*, to become totally clean [physically and spiritually].

“When he said this to me, he said that he cannot perform this karpay for me without payment. I must pay him one cow.”

Don Juan paused, perhaps to let the import of that price sink in. Juan Núñez del Prado whispered to me that one cow in those days was a fortune.

“I thought to myself,” don Juan said, resuming his story, “I thought instead that I would pay him one llama or one alpaca.

“We made an agreement that he would come one afternoon, but he never came. That was very sad. I was alone, without much family. My brother was a man of weak character, and nothing could be done. Very quickly I became ill. For one month and three weeks I was ill.

“And then some people arrived [in our village] and they took a picture of me. They gave me the photograph, and I gave it to my brother, for his own initiative, so he would go and find a consultant, another paqo, and ask him why Andreas Espinosa never came to perform the initiation. He went to a paqo, but this paqo was a pampa mesayoq, not an alto mesayoq. He should have gone to an alto mesayoq, but he went only to a pampa mesayoq.

“This pampa mesayoq explained why Andreas Espinosa did not perform the karpay. He explained the reason for my illness. He said that Andreas Espinosa did not perform the ritual because I did not pay him the cow. Then this pampa mesayoq offered a pago [despacho used as a ritual atonement or payment] for me. The pampa mesayoq said we must do two different kinds of despachos and we must use different recados [ritual items] in each.”

Here don Juan paused again. After a moment of silent consideration, he became philosophical. “About these words which I am saying—God knows what I am talking about. I cannot say more than the truth or less than the truth. I am saying the things I must say. To become an alto mesayoq is very expensive. There are many people who have the capacity to become alto mesayoqs, but because of the expenses, they cannot. I have a daughter who has the capacity to become a great alto mesayoq. I will bear all the costs for her. The cost is a cow, or an alpaca and a llama. And something in money. During the time you study, you must pay for food and drink, too.”

Having told the hard truth about the mercantile realities of the spiritual path, don Juan resumed his personal narrative. “This pampa mesayoq said that Andreas Espinosa did not have the force to complete the karpay. So this pampa mesayoq said, ‘Come with me to Q’ollorit’i. We will go together. There we will perform a despacho.’

“So I prepared for this. I cleaned myself, purified myself. When I arrived at Q’ollorit’i, I said inside myself the things I must say [offered prayers]. When I was carried by this pampa mesayoq to Q’ollorit’i, we first arrived at the Holy Place of the Virgin. We rested there.

“When you first arrive at Q’ollorit’i, you must go to the sacred lagoons to bathe and clean yourself. At the sacred lagoon, the pampa mesayoq bathed me, totally naked, just like I left the womb of my mother. After he bathed me, we went to the Holy Place of the Virgin. There we did a full despacho.

“Later, after we offered the despacho, we read the coca leaves. They said, ‘You are finding your path.’ And the coca also told me what was my mistake with Andreas Espinosa. They told me in what way I offended him. They said it was because of that mistake [not paying him the cow] that don Andreas did not complete my training.



The author and Juan Núñez del Prado with the Q’ero interviewed for this book. Pictured from left to right are don Juan Pauqar Espinosa, don Agustín Pauqar Qapa, Joan Parisi Wilcox, don Julian Pauqar Flores, Juan Núñez del Prado, don Juan Pauqar Flores, and don Mariano Apasa Marchaqa. PHOTO BY SANDRA CORCORAN



Don Modesto, a Q'ero pampa mesayoq, prepares to offer sacred coca leaves to the wind spirits at Ollantaytambo, the Temple of the Wind. PHOTO BY EILEEN LONDON



Machu Picchu. PHOTOS BY JOHN S. WILCOX



The valley beneath the glacier of Sinak'ara where the annual sacred festival of Q'ollorit'i takes place. PHOTO BY JOHN S. WILCOX



The author and her companions ride through the Andes toward the Q'ero villages. PHOTO BY JOHN S. WILCOX



The Q'ero village of Chua Chua. PHOTO BY JOHN S. WILCOX



Don Julian Pauqar Flores, a Q'ero pampa mesayoq who was once
“president” of Q'ero. PHOTO BY SANDRA CORCORAN



Kuraq akulleq don Manuel Q'espí, the elder of Q'ero, at Q'ollorit'i. PHOTO BY JOHN S. WILCOX



Fredy "Puma" Quispe Singona. PHOTO BY JOHN S. WILCOX



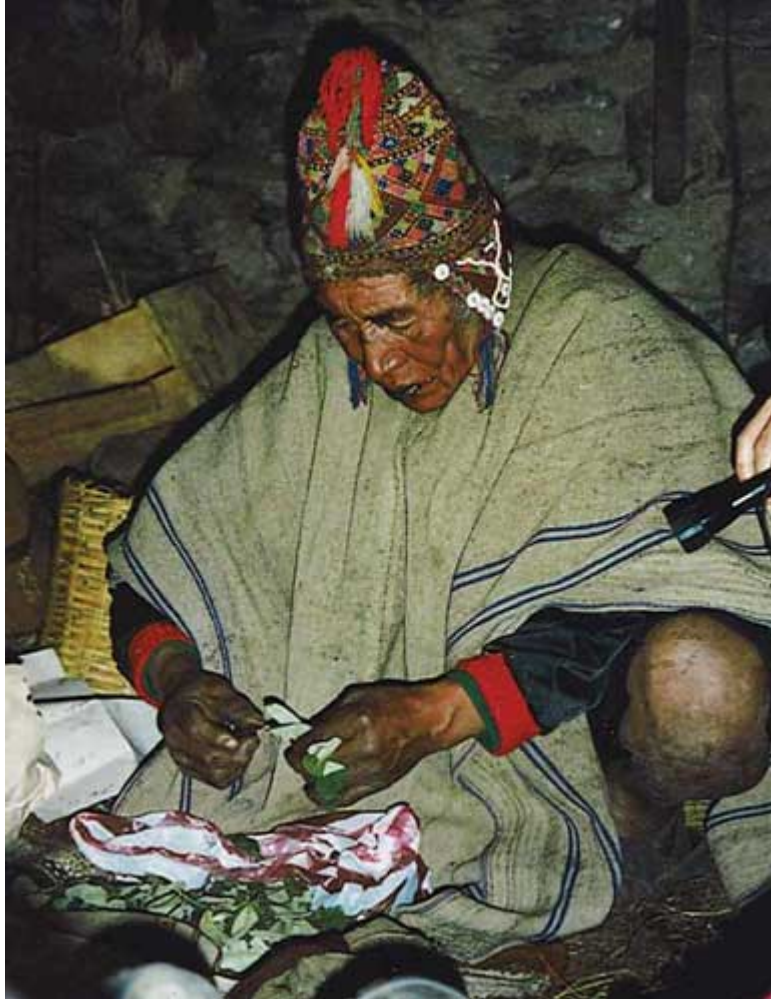
Don Juan Pauqar Espinosa gives the author a khuya from his mesa. PHOTO BY SANDRA CORCORAN



Don Manuel Q'espí gives the author the Karpay Ayni initiation at his house in Chua Chua. PHOTO BY ELIZABETH B. JENKINS



The author's mulla chunpis, which are used to open the energy centers of the body. PHOTO BY JOAN PARISI WILCOX



Don Manuel Q'espí performing a despacho ceremony of offering and thanksgiving to Pachamama (Mother Earth). PHOTO BY JOAN PARISI WILCOX



A despacho to Pachamama containing a variety of natural items. PHOTO BY SANDRA CORCORAN



Fredy "Puma" Quispe Singona plays an Andean flute during a visit to North

Carolina. PHOTO BY JOHN S. WILCOX



Fredy "Puma" Quispe Singona prepares to perform a despacho ceremony at the author's home in North Carolina. PHOTO BY JOHN S. WILCOX



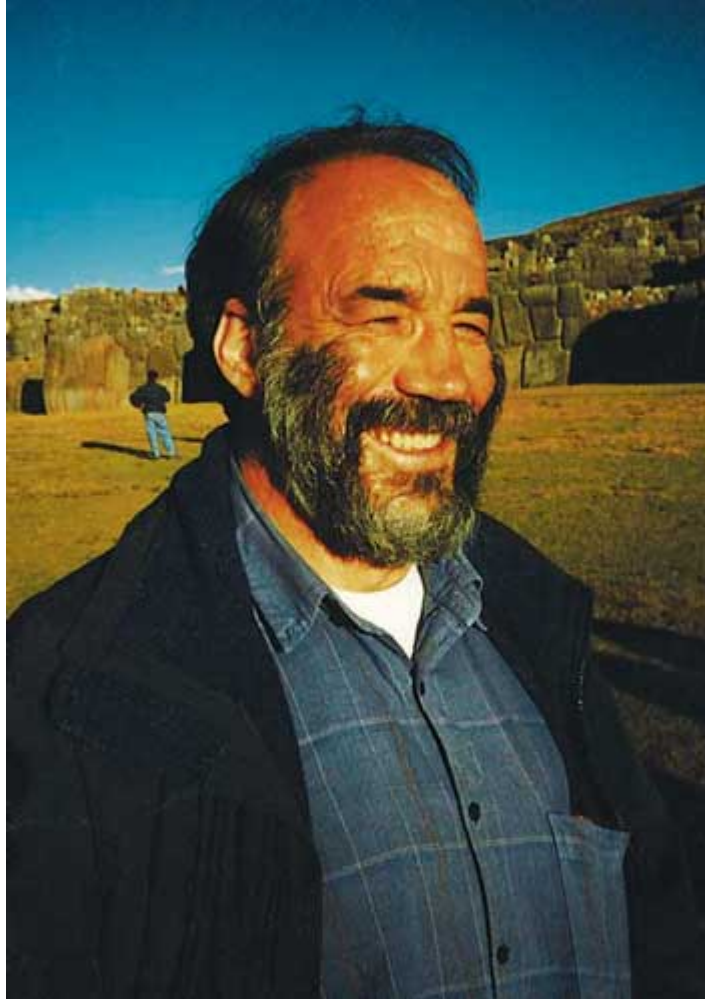
Don Manuel Q'espí (on right) with his advisor, pampa mesayoq Juan Pauqar Flores, at the Wiraqocha Temple. PHOTO BY JOAN PARISI WILCOX



Don Juan Pauqar Flores prepares a coca leaf k'intu for use in a despacho at the Wiraqocha Temple. PHOTO BY JOAN PARISI WILCOX



Isidro, a Q'ero pampa mesayoq, releases sacred coca leaves with pampa mesayoq don Modesto at Ollantaytambo, the Temple of the Wind. PHOTO BY JOHN S. WILCOX



Juan Núñez del Prado, an anthropologist and initiated kuraq akulleq, is the author's primary Andean teacher and assisted her with the interviews for this book. PHOTO BY JOHN S. WILCOX



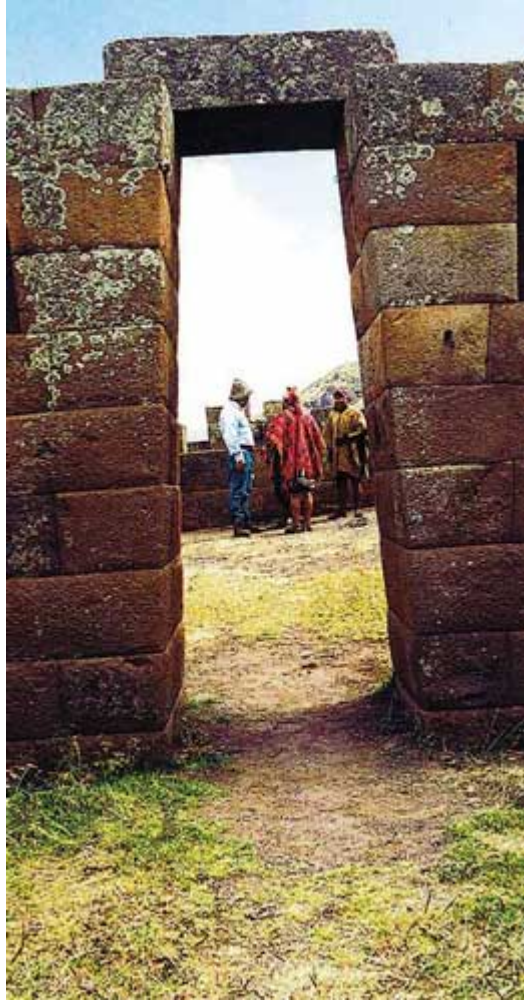
The author and Juan Núñez del Prado observe a despacho ceremony by don Martín Marchaqa Q'espí and don Lorenzo Q'espí Apasa at Tipón. PHOTO BY EILEEN LONDON



Juan Núñez del Prado works with the author's main energy center, the qosqo, during the Hatun Karpay, the Great Initiation. PHOTO BY SANDRA CORCORAN



Juan Núñez del Prado energetically bestows the sacred lineage to the author during the Hatun Karpay. PHOTO BY EILEEN LONDON



Two Q'ero paqos speak with Juan Núñez del Prado at Pisac. PHOTO BY EILEEN LONDON



Q'ero masters don Bernadino, don Sebastián, don Juan, and don Manuel Q'espi with Américo Yábar at the Wiraqocha Temple. PHOTO BY JOAN PARISI WILCOX



Américo Yábar, a mestizo who was trained and initiated as a kuraq akulleq by the Q'ero and who teaches the Andean sacred tradition around the world, at the Island of the Sun, Lake Titicaca. PHOTO BY JOAN PARISI WILCOX



The Apu Yanantin, symbolizing the union of two dissimilar energies. PHOTO BY JOAN PARISI WILCOX

“This pampa mesayoq also told me that alto mesayoqs can be proud and arrogant. And Andreas Espinosa was getting old. So Andreas Espinosa did not teach me, even though he later became my stepfather when he became involved with my mother for a year!

“This pampa mesayoq was named Martín Herrillo, and he had only one leg.^{II} God must bless this pampa mesayoq for what he did for me.

“After we performed all the despachos at the Holy Place of the Virgin, we went into the sanctuary of the Lord of Q’ollorit’i. Then the pampa mesayoq said, ‘You must have no fear. Everything is done, and now you must wait. The Lord of Q’ollorit’i will meet you in your dreams.’

“At that time, the chapel of Q’ollorit’i was only a small chapel, not like it is now. He told me I must wait alone inside the door of the chapel and

perform my despacho without any fear. This was in the middle of the night. I listened for noises, but I did not hear any. I took a sip or two of pisco to animate myself so I would not have any fear.

“It was the middle of the night when a big noise arrived on the roof of the chapel. Then I heard the ghost of the wind. There was noise on the roof like the hooves of livestock, but there were no livestock! It was clear it was the ghost of the wind, which suddenly arrived as a noise on the roof of the chapel.

“Then the ghost was wailing like the siren of an ambulance. I knew that this thing that had arrived must be the Lord of Q’ollorit’i himself! He talked to me, telling me, ‘Any Christian person who comes to you, you must give him your attention. Even if he is not a Christian, you must help him, too. And the times you come to me, you must come clean, free of any impurities. If you come like this, I will help you.’

“Then my brother came with the pampa mesayoq to see what had happened. My brother and this pampa mesayoq, don Martín Herrillo, they had become totally worried when they heard this noise. They thought that maybe a meteor had crashed, and maybe I was dead, because the noise was so loud. They came, and my brother said he was very worried about me. They arrived at the moment I was full of doubt.

“Then we went down [the mountain] to don Martín’s house, and even don Martín said he had been worried for my life. Don Martín read the coca leaves, and he saw that everything was all right. He said, ‘You are on your path, and you will be well.’

“Don Martín saw in the coca that everything was complete, everything was good. He told me I must also read the coca.^{III}

“Don Martín said, ‘From now on, you are *ch’uya*, totally clean.’

“Then I chose the coca leaves in a sacred way. I drank some pisco. Then don Martín said, “By now, you must be happy.’ Martín Herrillo saw that, which was the truth.”

Remembering this poignant moment with his teacher, don Juan suddenly and spontaneously began to sing. The song’s simple but haunting melody transfixed us, and we understood that we were witnessing an expression of profound love between paqo and master. Several of us were reduced nearly to tears as don Juan finished the song and told us simply but reverently, “This is my teacher’s sacred song, which he sang for me at that moment.”

After we had composed ourselves and thanked him for sharing his teacher's song, don Juan drank a shot of pisco and resumed speaking.

"Don Martín recommended, 'Now that you are ch'uya, don't forget me. You know that I am lame. See me. Help me in my fields. I do not ask payment, like the others. Give me what you will.' Then he sang his sacred song for me."

Don Juan paused yet again, this time to light a cigarette, which he absentmindedly puffed during the remainder of the interview.

"Don Martín also told me, 'When you talk about these things, you must talk alone. Because you can share your words in the wrong places. They can become confused.'

"Then we returned to my house, to drink and eat. After that, don Martín, the master, saw an alpaca in my flock that he admired. It was the best one. Because the master was very kind to me, I offered it to him, even though this was my most prized alpaca."

It was clear from the waning intensity of don Juan's voice and from his body posture that the interview was drawing to a close. It was late, time for bed, and there would be no time for follow-up questions. But we were very pleased with don Juan's sincerity and how forthcoming he had been in relating his initiation story. He had started his session by giving thanks to God, and now he closed it by acknowledging his teachers.

"I have a lot of gratitude to Andreas Espinosa, because he started this thing, even if he did not complete it. And I have a lot of gratitude for Martín Herrillo, because he completed my initiation as an alto mesayoq."

I have to admit to readers that my emotional bond with don Juan Pauqar Espinosa ran deep. His was the first interview I did, and I felt the depth of his commitment to the path and witnessed the sincere expression of his emotions during our talk. We also touched energy bubbles in an intensely personal way as he gave me his gift and blessing at the start of our session. Additionally, I was drawn to don Juan because he revealed something that is often not appreciated about the Q'ero—their humility. When I was first introduced to the Andean path in the United States, the teachings were presented as secretive (or, at least, newly revealed to those outside the remotest parts of the mountains of Peru) and were shrouded in an aura of exclusivity. That was not the tradition I found upon traveling to Peru.

What I found were compassionate and humble paqos who were eager to make me feel their equal, even though, energetically speaking, I was not (as don Mariano's initial assessment of my energy body, recounted in the introduction, makes clear!). Don Juan's interview only served to heighten my appreciation of just how open and grounded—and, as I said, humble—the paqos of Peru are.

With the benefit of time and deep reflection, I now know, more than eight years after that interview, that don Juan could have told his story any number of ways, yet he had chosen to describe his initial training as a paqo in the most modest of terms, and he had not even hinted at his considerable powers as a *suyu alto mesayoq*. He had mentioned his fears, his compassion for his disabled mentor, his gratitude to God and for his teachers, even for don Andrian Espinosa, arguably one of the greatest paqos of Q'ero but one who was not able to come through for don Juan in his training. Nothing in his story served to aggrandize himself or others—which is so typical of the Q'ero. In the summer of 2002, during Fredy “Puma” Quispe Singona's visit to my home, I felt an even greater appreciation for don Juan, for Puma revealed techniques that don Juan had taught him that I had no idea the Q'ero (or, at least, one Q'ero) knew of or practiced—techniques such as how to astrally travel to visit people in dreams and how to protect your energy body from the intrusions of others. During his interview back in 1996, don Juan could have attempted to impress me and the anthropologists with his knowledge, with his mastery of such arcane techniques, which Puma indicated don Juan probably possessed at that time. But he did not, and that spoke volumes about him. Now that he has passed on, I am saddened to think of what a fine teacher we have lost, although I know that his energy still persists in the *kawsay pacha* and is still accessible to those who seek to connect with it and have accumulated the personal power (energy) to do so.

DON MARIANO APASA MARCHAQA

Mariano Apasa Marchaqa was the unstated leader of the group of Q'ero who had assembled to tell their stories. Although he was not the oldest, he was the recognized elder because of his reputation as a gifted *kuraq akulleq*. Of all the paqos in Q'ero, only don Manuel Q'espí is held in higher regard than don Mariano, and there is even some dispute here, because don Manuel is

kamasqa, that is, he was “taught” the work of the sacred path by Christ, in a vision, not by apprenticing to master teachers.



PHOTO BY JOAN PARISI WILCOX

Don Mariano also is one of the most public of Q’ero paqos, because he has himself traveled to the United States and he works with two or three mestizo students of the Q’ero who bring groups to Peru—from the United States and Europe—to study Andean shamanism. Working with these groups has become a significant source of income for don Mariano, and this relationship has raised some eyebrows about his integrity. I must admit that, going into the interview, I, too, shared some of these doubts, and I planned on raising these issues with don Mariano.

However, I also felt a special fondness for him, because he was the first paqo I met, and at that first meeting he seemed to see into my heart. It was because of him, in some unexplainable way, that I was there in Urubamba, trying to help the Q’ero preserve at least a small part of their knowledge before it became distorted and sensationalized by misguided tour guides and overzealous Western teachers.

Don Mariano, however, is a hard person to get to know. He is open and sensitive, and yet there is a reserve about him that makes him less approachable than others. He can sit unmoving, his face utterly expressionless and inscrutable, for hours. Then the next minute he can be smiling, talking and laughing, reaching over to embrace you, thanking you for some small kindness. After a few shots of pisco, don Mariano can be everyone’s best friend.

Don Mariano also is almost painfully honest, and his ego does not seem to influence his sacred work. Whenever we asked a question that may have pointed out a contradiction in the Q’ero’s explanations, he would refuse to

reconcile that contradiction just to save face. For instance, in a long and complicated discussion about prophecy, it became clear that the Q'ero were denying any ability whatsoever to predict the future, even though other Q'ero paqos—such as the late kuraq akulleq Andreas Espinosa and don Manuel Q'espi—have held or now hold portions of Andean prophecy that predicts, very specifically, the potential spiritual evolution of humankind. Don Mariano insisted it was not possible to know about such things. I questioned him further, trying to pin things down by being concrete. When reminded of predictions he had made to me and others at Mollomarqa in 1994 and to Sandy when he read her coca leaves—very specific predictions that had come true—he acknowledged that he had indeed read the coca leaves or made such predictions. But still, he insisted, it is not possible to foresee the future.

With the help of Ricardo and Juan, I finally understood that the contradiction was colored by the fine points of semantics. There was a significant difference in the Q'ero concept of “future time” as it relates to an individual and the collective. And there is an important distinction to be made between seeing someone's future *potential*—the possibilities that are likely for that person in relation to the current state of his or her energy—and predicting the events that will actually unfold. This discussion is presented in detail in [appendix 2](#). I provide comment about it here to demonstrate how scrupulous don Mariano can be when representing the scope of his abilities.

Out of respect for his position as kuraq, I interviewed don Mariano last, after all the other Q'ero had told their initiation stories. We gave him free rein to tell his story as he saw fit, and we did not often interrupt him, preferring instead to hold our questions until he had completed his personal account. Like many of the other paqos, don Mariano began his interview with a prayer.

“God, I will talk about the wisdom you have given me. I will talk only about that. I will not talk about any other things. I will tell only the truth.

“Primarily things like this happened to me. When I was a young man, nineteen years old, I saw a condor flying around above me. Soon there were many of them following me wherever I went. Later, not only the condor, but the hummingbird began to follow me. They followed me all the time, the condors and the hummingbirds. I wondered why they were following me.

And later, after the hummingbird came to me, there came the bull. I said to myself, Why is this?

“I first contacted, and then consulted with, Bernabe Marchaqa, who is a good pampa mesayoq. I asked him why these animals were following me. I am the nephew of Bernabe Marchaqa; he is my blood relation, the brother of my father. So I asked him why these animals were following me. He read the coca, and he saw there that this [the path of the alto mesayoq] was the path for me. He said that he was not very good at reading the coca for people who are close blood relations. But he said that even though he was only a pampa mesayoq, he would give me a karpay. Then he gave me the karpay.

“At the time he gave me the karpay, the condor, the hummingbird, and the bull did not come to meet me in the right way, and they did not talk with me.

“I asked Bernabe why they did not come to me in the right way and why they were not talking to me,” don Mariano explained, “because after the karpay, even though they did not talk with me, they did not leave me in peace. Everywhere I went, they followed me. When I asked this, he told me, ‘This is happening because I am only a pampa mesayoq. Therefore, the condor, the bull, and the hummingbird did not come in the right way and did not talk to you. You must go to Andreas Espinosa, because he is an alto mesayoq and he is my contemporary.’

“Because of the recommendations of my old men [Bernabe Marchaqa and don Mariano’s grandfather], I went to don Andreas Espinosa. He performed another karpay for me, and this time the condor, bull, and hummingbird talked, but they did not talk through my mesa. They only talked through Andreas’s mesa.

“Andreas Espinosa gave me the karpay at Q’ollorit’i for three consecutive years. Even after performing these three karpays, these beings did not talk through my mesa; they talked only through don Andreas’s mesa. But don Andreas told me, ‘You must wait. You must persevere. Finally they will talk through your mesa too, and then you will meet each other.’

“Because I was done with the work with Andreas Espinosa, I went to consult with don Fabian Apasa, another alto mesayoq, who is from Qocha Moqo. With him I performed the karpay three times more. I worked with Fabian Apasa for three years, trying to learn the *wachu*.^{IV} But still the bull, hummingbird, and condor did not speak to me.

“Because neither Andreas Espinosa nor Fabian Apasa was able to help me speak directly with these beings, I went to don Manuel Q’espi. He said to

me, 'Let's go together to Q'ollorit'i to see the Lord of Q'ollorit'i. When we do this, the condor, the hummingbird, and the bull should stop lying to you.'^V

"And so when don Manuel took me to meet the Lord of Q'ollorit'i, the mesa of don Manuel spoke. The voices of these beings were speaking through his mesa, but little by little their voices began to pass over to my mesa. When this happened, Manuel Q'espí said to me, 'Good, now you must place your mesa on the right side of mine.' And when we put the two mesas together, side by side like that, the beings spoke first through the mesa of don Manuel and then through mine. They said, 'Let us go talk.'

"But when my mesa started to talk, a *kukuchi penitente* arrived and started to talk through my mesa. He arrived at my mesa, but not at don Manuel's mesa, because don Manuel is a very experienced and mature paqo."

Juan interrupted the interview at this point to explain to me that a *kukuchi penitente* is a person who has passed on but who cannot enter the *hanaq pacha*, the upper world, or heaven in the Christian tradition, because of the *hucha* he or she carries. When Juan finished his explanation, don Mariano resumed his story.

"After that, finally the right beings arrived at our mesas. The apus spoke through don Manuel's mesa, and they expelled the *kukuchi penitente* from my mesa and started to speak through my mesa as well." This time I stopped the interview, inquiring of Juan whether the animals who were speaking were really the apus. Juan nodded his head in confirmation, then explained that the condor, hummingbird, and bull were *estrellas*, or physical manifestations of the spirits of the apus. He also made sure I understood that don Mariano was finally able to dialogue directly with these spirits because the power of don Manuel's mesa opened the conduit for him. Don Mariano then resumed his initiation story.

"They talked to us from the two mesas. Often during a new paqo's work on the path, the *kukuchi penitente* will come to his mesa first, before the apus do. When the apus arrived at my mesa, they pulled the *kukuchi penitente* from my mesa. After that, only the apus spoke. When the apus pulled out the *kukuchi penitente* from my mesa, the apus said to me, 'Now we are finally meeting.' And so when the apus were in my mesa, little by little they began to speak more and more strongly.

"I worked with Manuel Q'espí for six years, and he gave me three *karpays*, and then he said, 'Now you are ready to do the *karpays* by yourself.'

“When I started doing karpays [working by myself as an alto mesayoq], I had an assistant, and every time I went to do the karpays, I would do them with him.^{VI} We also worked together with don Manuel Q’espi, because each year don Manuel goes to Q’ollorit’i to renew himself. To renew yourself is to perform a new karpay each year at Q’ollorit’i. Don Manuel does this every year. Part of doing the personal renewal karpay is bathing in the sacred lagoon at the glacier of Q’ollorit’i. It is called the Bañu Qolqe Punku [Bath of the Silver Door]. This is the place where the paqo takes his bath of renewal.”

Here don Mariano paused and refreshed himself with a shot of pisco. Then he resumed his narrative, making an aside about his own growth as a paqo before picking up the thread of the story about his continued work with don Manuel Q’espi. “After this time, I began to walk the path under my own power. To walk in the wachu was very difficult for me.

“When we went to Q’ollorit’i with don Manuel, we offered a karpay despacho at the side of the sanctuary, the temple of Q’ollorit’i. We offered twelve k’intus, which are placed around a shell. This is a karpay despacho. It is simpler than many other despachos.

“For five years, I have been working with my wife, going to Q’ollorit’i for cleansing and purification. At that time however, when I went to the Q’ollorit’i temple with my assistant and don Manuel, we went inside the temple first and offered candles to ask the Lord of Q’ollorit’i for power. We asked the Lord of Q’ollorit’i, ‘Lord, give us your munay, llank’ay, and yachay. Give us your will and love, your force.’” I recognized these Quechua words as the three stances of an Andean paqo, meaning, respectively, the capacity to love (munay), to perform physical labor (llank’ay), and to wisely use the knowledge gained through personal experience (yachay).

With the retelling of that prayer, don Mariano rather abruptly concluded his initiation story. There were many areas we wanted him to expand upon, and we spent the rest of the evening in a question-and-answer session. To begin, Ricardo asked which apus spoke through don Manuel’s and don Mariano’s mesas. Don Mariano explained he was able to communicate with the apus Waman Lipa, Santo Domingo, Q’anaqway, and Qolqe Punku. These apus, he explained, are the *Mamarit’is*, the snow-covered apus, the beings who are the mothers of the glacier Sinak’ara itself.

Juan was interested in don Mariano’s training with don Manuel Q’espi. “It is said,” Juan related, “that don Manuel has twice met with Jesus Christ in

person, at Wanka and at Q'ollorit'i. Have you ever had this experience?"

"Yes. This is the truth," don Mariano said, nodding his head in affirmation. "The times I have gone with don Manuel Q'espí to Q'ollorit'i we saw the Lord of Q'ollorit'i and we talked with him. When I went to the temple, we met and talked with the Lord of Q'ollorit'i. But I cannot tell a lie—I have never been to Wanka."

I was interested in knowing what the Lord of Q'ollorit'i, whom don Mariano equated with Jesus Christ, had said to him once their dialogue had been established. When Juan heard the question I wished to ask, he looked rather shocked, as if even thinking of probing into such a personal area was impertinent and potentially insulting. But feigning naiveté, I insisted that it was worth a try. "Sure, he might refuse to answer," I reasoned, "but I've asked off-the-wall questions before and we've received incredibly informative replies. Let's just try this question and see what happens." Juan finally assented and translated my question to Ricardo, who put it to don Mariano in Quechua. We were well rewarded for taking the risk.

Don Mariano leaned forward on the couch, his feet planted wide and his elbows resting on his knees. His clasped hands hung out over the space between his knees, his body language rather like that of someone who was enjoying shooting the breeze with a buddy. However, his posture became curiously contradictory: he was relaxed and informal, yet as he began speaking he leaned toward us in a manner insistent and emphatic, as if his body could lend weight to his words.

"The Lord of Q'ollorit'i said to me, 'Now I am giving you your estrella. And now you are going to heal people who have disease. You will help to make the livestock fertile and productive. And you will be able to push the kawsay. You will be one who can push the kawsay, the life force.'"

Because don Mariano had paused, we had assumed that he had reproduced the Lord of Q'ollorit'i's message in full. But he had not. There was more.

"'You must never do a bad thing to another human being,'" the Lord of Q'ollorit'i had said. "'You must never look with bad eyes at another human being. If you can do that, all your livestock will flourish, all the diseases you treat will be healed, and you will have a good life. Now you are consecrated.'" Once again, don Mariano paused briefly before concluding, "And now I am handling and working this consecration."

Ricardo asked don Mariano if the Lord of Q'ollorit'i ever appeared to him in dreams.

"Yes," don Mariano replied. "He always appears like a silver cross with a hand at each side pointing downward. When he appears, he only says a few words: 'I give you the knowledge. Anything you do, you must do well.'"

Don Mariano appeared to be finished telling his initiation story, and I was ready to shift the conversation to other topics, including what don Mariano felt about sharing this knowledge with North Americans and other tourists and seekers who have contact with him through his mestizo students. I asked how he viewed working with "Westerners," an inaccurate term, but one we used because it was an easy way to get our point across and is a term that to the Q'ero generally means any foreigner. I specifically asked if he understood why so many Westerners were coming to Peru seeking the mystical knowledge. Did he have a problem with that?

"I am always happy to meet Westerners, and I am happy with our work," he replied.

His answer was heartfelt, but I wanted to probe deeper. Juan cautioned me. "You are looking for something different. You want to know the *meaning* of this, but for him it is just the work. It must be shared. Let us ask him, instead, if sharing this work with Westerners is different from or the same as working with any others, with the peasants for instance."

Don Mariano's reply was almost immediate. "The Lord of Q'ollorit'i gave me the estrella. He gave it to me to do the work with Indians, mestizos, or anyone who comes to me. I work with any person who asks me."

I was still not satisfied that don Mariano understood my original question. Don Mariano worked with foreigners more than any other Q'ero. Each year their contact with Westerners was increasing, and I knew that some of the Q'ero, perhaps don Mariano included, would soon be traveling to the United States to teach and perform ceremony. I was curious to understand how don Mariano viewed the Q'ero's, and his own, increasing contact with the West and what he thought about the spiritual seekers of all kinds who were coming to Peru in increasing numbers.

"Let's try it this way," I suggested to Juan and Ricardo. "I don't know if this wording is going to work or not. But there are a lot of people now from North America coming to Peru looking for something they're missing in their lives or are curious about—the heart connection, to touch the kawsay, things like that. And this is don Mariano's opportunity to speak to them and to what

they're looking for. Ask him if he has any message for those people who come here seeking these spiritual teachings.”

Again don Mariano answered almost immediately. It was clear his answer was coming unedited from his heart. “If people come seeking the knowledge, I must share what I know with them. Because all people are children of God, and if someone is looking for this knowledge, I do not have the right to withhold it from him. It is not a good thing to withhold this knowledge.”

Having worked with don Mariano on a number of occasions, I know he practices what he preaches: he is open, loving, and generous with his knowledge. However, there was some speculation in the United States that don Mariano was being influenced by, even corrupted by, American money, that he was in effect a party to commercializing the sacred knowledge. Even I had felt such cynical concerns at one time. I had had many discussions about this with Juan. Juan had spoken openly, admitting that corruption was always a possibility. But he also cautioned that anyone having contact with the Q'ero, and with other paqos, had to evaluate their personal experience with their heart and through their qosqo—not through their intellect—and then reach their own conclusion without imposing their cultural judgments on the paqos. He had also admonished me, with his characteristic gentleness, that neither I, nor any other spiritual seeker, could afford to be sentimental about the Indians.

After hearing don Mariano's response to my question, I was more than satisfied that Western money was not the source of don Mariano's willingness to share his knowledge and was not a terribly corrupting influence, and while don Mariano took a short break, I said as much to Sandy and Anamaria, who had shared many of the same concerns. Juan, listening to my comments, helped us understand the origins of such conflicts and how our view of what a “shaman” should be is colored by our cultural heritage.

“We [non-Indians] have a paradigm about the religious experience,” he said. “We are looking for specific experiences; maybe the energetic transmission of the paqo's power or the experience of a particular ceremony, such as the *Karpay Ayni*. This is our paradigm. But here, in the Andes, for the Indian paqos, the sacred work is just sharing and establishing interrelations and interchanges with persons. The things that happen to the person are very personal. For example, with Sandy, when she received the pachakuti transmission from don Mariano, she felt the crown of her head opening and a

light entering her. Obviously, in the moment of that particular ceremony, the paqo opened her poq'po and she became available to receive the sacred light. That is her experience. It is the same with everyone—whatever your particular experience, you must trust it and try to learn from it, just as the paqo learns from his own experiences.

“That is one thing. The other thing,” Juan continued, “is that in our [Western] paradigm, a prophet must give a message to the world. But that is only one way. I respect that way. But there is also the propensity for a teacher to become a guru, to gather followers to whom he imparts his ‘secret’ knowledge. But here in the Andes it is different. If someone comes to a paqo looking for the teachings, that paqo will freely teach him the knowledge he has. And that is all. There are no secrets. Nothing is closed.

“Still, following the sacred path is a challenge. You must undergo different and difficult challenges. Like don Mariano, he spent one year with one teacher, three more years with another teacher, three more with a third teacher, and six more with Manuel Q'espí. He was *working* to become a paqo. This is an incredible thing—to find the right teaching. The right teacher for me could be one person. The right teacher for you could be another. But it's an effort. Don Mariano doesn't talk about it, but with each teacher I am sure he must have paid or performed a service for them. But the important matter is that he was looking for the gift, and finally he found it. It was available to him, and now he makes it available to others.”

As always, Juan's commentary gave us a broader perspective from which to understand the Andean mystical path. We were ready to return to don Mariano's story.

Ricardo had a complicated, and potentially sensitive, question he wished to put to don Mariano, and he wanted my permission to pursue it. A testy but diplomatic discussion followed.

Juan explained. “Ricardo is wondering if he should pursue a very complicated ethical line of questioning. He wants to ask don Mariano about the Lord of Q'ollorit'i's admonishment not to do bad things to another person, not to look through bad eyes at another person. Ricardo now wants to ask don Mariano about this, about how Mariano tells others what to do. Are you interested in that?”

I and my two women friends were unsure just what the point of Ricardo's question was. “He's asking about don Mariano's personal ethics?” Anamaria asked.

Juan nodded yes. “For me it’s not a . . . I’m not comfortable here,” Juan said. Then he turned to me, since these were my interviews. “It’s up to you. Ricardo wants to know if you want him to ask this.”

“Well,” I said, feeling torn between what I saw as Ricardo’s characteristic bluntness and Juan’s perhaps overly developed sense of propriety, “I wouldn’t censor anyone’s question.”

Juan would not let me waffle. “Ricardo is asking if you are interested in this.”

I made sure I understood Ricardo’s question, that he wanted to know if don Mariano had ever violated the Lord of Q’ollorit’i’s admonishment against doing evil to another person. “Juan,” I replied, now speaking ex-academic to academic, “I don’t know why I should be the censor. It’s his question.”

“But he wants to know if he should ask it on *your* behalf,” Anamaria said, making clear to me a distinction I had missed in the translations from Spanish to English.

“Oh! No, not on my behalf,” I said. “But if he wants to ask the question because *he* is interested, fine. I have no objection.”

Juan translated the gist of our discussion to Ricardo, and Ricardo asked his question.

Don Mariano explained, not seeming in any way offended by the query. “The Lord gave me a recommendation to never do a bad thing to another person. If I do not follow the Lord’s recommendations, I will make hucha for myself. If I don’t follow these recommendations of the Lord, my work will not go well, my crops will go bad, what I want I will not get. I will become lost.”

Ricardo followed up by asking if there are paqos who misuse their power to hurt people. If so, he asked, who are their allies? Do they have supernatural allies who grant them such power?

“Yes, there are such people,” don Mariano replied. “But they do these things because these are the things in their heart. It is the expression of their heart. These men who do bad things, obviously they do not talk with the apus or with God. Perhaps they pull power from the unclean places of the earth.”

Don Mariano thought for a moment, and then resumed speaking. “Only a man with a spoiled heart will go in the wrong direction. The places from which this man gets his power are the spoiled places.”

Then don Mariano turned to Ricardo and whispered to him. Both men broke out laughing. Ricardo explained, through Juan, that, confidentially, don Mariano had told him that even today there are some men like that in Q'ero. Then don Mariano asked Ricardo how he knew about such men. He chided Ricardo, suggesting that it takes one to know one! We all laughed, and sensing the mood change and the late hour, I uncapped the pisco bottle, declaring that we had had enough serious talk for one evening.

EIGHT

Kawsay and *K'ara*

It was with great anticipation that I sat down with the Q'ero for our open discussion on the sacred cosmology. The first three days of interviews had been fairly structured, focusing on recording personal initiation stories and gathering historical material about the Q'ero. Now was my chance to really interact with the Q'ero, to have a conversation in the best sense of that word. I had been traveling in Peru and studying the Andean path for more than three years at that time, and yet this was the first time I had a Quechua translator at my personal disposal so that I could talk to my Q'ero brothers and sister one on one. I had begun the interviews days before timid and uncertain, and I cannot claim that this day was any different. If anything, I felt a deeper sense of responsibility to “get it right,” and I also felt tremendous time pressure, for there was an enormous amount of ground to cover but only a handful of hours left in which to do it.

Still, the Q'ero and I had become friends over these three days. Even though we could not speak each others' languages, we had become comfortable enough during our conversations to drop formalities and genuinely be ourselves. We were no longer separated by the personas of master/student, native/foreigner, or any of the other labels and perceptions that make for distance in a relationship. Instead, we had become individuals, with distinct personalities. I could tell at a glance when doña Agustina was becoming miffed because she was not getting enough attention. I could tell when don Juan Pauqar Espinosa was bored, or when don Mariano was impatient, or when don Julian was becoming stiff from sitting too long. So as we launched into the most difficult but spirited part of the interviews—this free-ranging and more philosophical discussion of the kawsay pacha—it was in an atmosphere of respect, trust, and kinship that we talked.

During this discussion, my companions and I asked broad questions of the Q'ero and mostly let them determine the course of our conversation. The

logistics were daunting, with several Q'ero talking at once or in rapid succession. The interpreters had to be quick, and I, in an effort to capture speakers' words clearly, was shifting the large, rather heavy tape recorder from one side of the table to another until my arm was weary. Many times I had to halt a discussion so the interpreters could catch up. Obviously, these interruptions fractured the flow of conversation and sometimes derailed certain trains of thought. And the cross-conversation made writing this chapter especially difficult. Although I have striven to attribute information to its proper speaker, it would be too cumbersome to attribute every Q'ero response, as interesting as that might be for readers who would like to know just who said what. In the interest of a cohesive narrative, I sometimes have instead grouped responses and synthesized material into a coherent whole. You will be reading the actual Q'ero responses, but you may not be able to tell, in a few instances, just who said what. I trust the reader will agree that this occasional lack of attribution is a small inconvenience in what is otherwise a fascinating glimpse into the Q'ero worldview.

As we began, I asked Ricardo to explain to the Q'ero that I wanted to know about the “basics” of the sacred path—about sami and hucha, dreams and visions, the apus and Pachamama, about the fundamental beliefs and precepts that underlie the Q'ero's energetic connection with the natural world. The paqos were as eager to discuss such topics as I was to listen. They began by declaring, “Let us talk! We will talk about all the things we know.”

KAWSAY

Juan Núñez del Prado looked to me to determine our starting point, and after a moment's consideration, I looked to the Q'ero and said, “Let's start with *kawsay*.”

Kawsay, if you ask a Western teacher of Andean shamanism or one of the Q'ero's mestizo apprentices, would most likely be defined as “vital energy” or “living energy.” It is the energy that animates the cosmos. But for the Q'ero, as you are about to read, *kawsay* is first and foremost a perceptual stance that one may take to deal with the banal realities of the everyday world. Only after discussing *kawsay* in the most pragmatic terms did the Q'ero even attempt to move on to more philosophic definitions.

Within seconds of my question, definitions and examples of kawsay were flowing, almost faster than the interpreters could keep up. “Kawsay is, for example, if we have a dream about a mestizo gentleman riding a horse—this announces that we will have success in the things we are trying to do,” don Juan Pauqar Flores began, defining kawsay as something akin to good luck. Don Agustín followed don Juan, nodding in agreement and extending don Juan’s definition. “Kawsay is living well, walking well.” Don Juan resumed his example, picking up the thread of don Agustín’s definition. “Kawsay is living in harmony in the family, with the children, with your spouse, with your work, caring well for your herds. It is to do well in everything, and everyone can see that you are doing things well.”

Don Juan’s brother, don Julian, concurred. “Kawsay is living well in the family, doing things in accordance and in union, to work with the livestock and in the fields, to bringing order to all. It is having a conversation with your daughter-in-law or son-in-law and giving each other good words. It is making agreements, having a good dialogue, and sharing good words.”

Here don Mariano interjected his thoughts, first flipping the folds of his poncho back and leaning forward, elbows on knees. His words shifted the definition of kawsay from the prosaic toward the more mystical. “Kawsay is all the things we have said, but when I dream of a fox, this is a good announcement to me. When I have a fox in my dreams that is going up into the hills, this is a very good omen to me. For example, last night I dreamed of a fox and the meaning for me is that my wife is going to recover [from her pneumonia]. This means to me that like the fox I will be above this difficulty.”

Don Juan Pauqar Espinosa, until now content just to listen, also leaned forward from his place at the far edge of the couch to contribute his understanding of how kawsay announces itself in dreams. “If you dream of a baby, it announces good kawsay. When you dream of flowers, this means your herds will reproduce and flourish. So all dreams communicate something to you, and we should communicate these things with other people. I would have a conversation about such a dream with my wife or my children, because if I had a good announcement in my dream, after this dream we can all walk with happiness.”

“I agree that kawsay is living in harmony,” said don Agustín. “It is sharing food with another man, it is sharing drink with another man, it is even sharing with the pilgrims who have nothing at the moment they arrive to your

community. Sharing with strangers is the power of *kawsay*. It is living in harmony with all other people and caring for them as well. When you practice this, you will be loved by others.”

Don Agustín’s compelling definition stirred Ricardo to offer a story from his anthropological fieldwork in the Andes. “When I studied in a valley in southern Peru,” he said, “I was talking with my friends about Indian beliefs, comparing them with the Christian commandments. I asked them if the Indian tradition had what could be considered commandments. They said yes, and that the first one is to share with the person who does not have the capacity to ask you for help. This is a type of *kawsay*. If a stranger, a wanderer, comes to your house asking for food or drink, you must share with him or her. You must give that person a bed. Because it could be God himself who is coming to test you.

“They told me that once there had been an earthquake in the region where we were working,” he went on, “and only one village, Maqa, was damaged. In that town there had been a dog, scarred and diseased, in terrible condition. The villagers had expelled it. They hit it and kicked it. The dog finally left, and he wandered to another town. There he was given water and food and was helped. Because of that, the earthquake struck only in Maqa. Implicit in that legend is the lesson that God can come even in the form of an ugly and diseased animal to test your capacity for compassion.”

Ricardo wanted to ask the Q’ero about the negative signs that come to one through dreams, but we decided this would take us too far afield at this early stage in our discussion of *kawsay*. Instead, Juan asked the Q’ero about the meaning of *kawsay pacha*. He explained that when he had first met don Andreas Espinosa and asked to apprentice with him, don Andreas had said, “First, I must see your *kawsay pacha*.”

Three Q’ero responded, don Juan Flores, don Mariano and don Julian. “To see a person’s *kawsay pacha* is a test using the coca leaves,” they said, “to see if your will and your feelings are [aligned] in the right direction, to determine if you believe that you are trespassing or if you have a lot of doubt. Reading the coca leaves, don Andreas wanted to see if you had the capacity to follow the path or not, to see if you had the capacity to grow on the path. This is the way we see the *kawsay pacha*.” The verb the Q’ero were using was *qaway*, which means to see energetically, using one’s shamanic awareness, not one’s physical sight. It also implies a sense of magical diagnosing or examining.

I wanted to capitalize on this opportunity to examine kawsay from a more shamanistic perspective, so I asked the Q'ero if kawsay can be seen in things non-human—such as a tree, a river, a star, or an apu—and if so, how.

Don Juan Flores replied that “kawsay exists in Pachamama and the apus because they are alive. Even when we are chewing coca leaves,” he said, “we are sharing kawsay with Pachamama and the apus. Obviously, Pachamama gives us kawsay because when we work the land, she returns back to us food. This is kawsay. All the hills are alive; they all have kawsay. As well as the rivers. The water, the lakes and lagoons, the rivers—they are alive.”

Don Agustín and don Julian spoke up, aiding don Juan in his explanation. “With water there is life. We drink the water and we live. But not only do we drink the water, we share it with the animals and the spirits who fly [birds]. The plants grow with water; even the wild plants like herbs and grass take kawsay from water. The rain carries the kawsay to the plants, to animals, but in the rivers, there is not only kawsay; there is also hucha, heavy energy.”

Juan Núñez del Prado took advantage of a brief pause in the explanation to elaborate on the Q'ero's statement about hucha. “The rivers are ambiguous because they carry the hucha you have cleansed away from someone with your khuyas. Typically, you release this heavy energy into the river, so in that way you can find hucha in the rivers, but not typically in the lagoons or lakes, or in the rain.”

SAMI AND HUCHA

The segue to hucha seemed as good a time as any to direct the conversation to the two types of energy: sami and hucha. I suggested as much, and Juan and Ricardo concurred. They framed the question by asking the Q'ero about the practice of *saminchasqa*, a practice by which one interchanges refined energy with an apu or nature spirit by blowing into a k'intu (three coca leaves laid one atop the other or else slightly fanned out) or with a ritual offering of pisco.

The Q'ero talked among themselves for a moment, and Ricardo interpreted their varied examples of *saminchasqa*. “Blowing the coca k'intus to the apus is giving sami to the apus; it is the interchange of sami,” they explained. “During Carnaval [a fiesta], we perform *saminchasqa* on behalf of the animals. Drinking ritually is also interchanging sami. If you are chewing

coca in a sacred context, then you are giving sami. But if you are only chewing coca as you work, then you are doing *hallpay*, which is just to chew the coca leaves, like everyone else does.”

Ricardo was preoccupied with the meaning of the word “sami.” Traditionally among the Q’ero, sami is refined or light energy. But Ricardo explained that he had heard several different definitions over the course of twenty years’ anthropological fieldwork. In one context he had heard sami defined as a “blessing” or as “wisdom.” For instance, in a story very much like don Julian’s story of how God had offered Inkari more munay (love), Ricardo had heard from a native man he was interviewing that God offered to give the Inka sami. The Inka said to God, “But I have my own sami,” and he went off to the jungle without having accepted God’s offer of sami. The man who had told this story to Ricardo had said that if the Inka had received God’s sami, he would have acquired more power than he had with his own sami. So, Ricardo explained, sami, in this context, meant some special kind of wisdom and knowledge, a new kind of power, a finer power than the Inka already had. The Q’ero, on the other hand, were giving us a practical explanation. Ricardo, ever the anthropologist, was wondering if he would ever be able to pin down a precise definition of sami.

I found Ricardo’s commentary interesting for two reasons. First and most obviously, the more I knew about sami, the better I could formulate questions to put to the Q’ero. Second, and more importantly, sami is a fundamental concept in the Andean cosmology, and any new knowledge acquired about it is important not only to those of us seeking to record and preserve the ancient ways but also to those of us seeking a deeper understanding of our personal work along the sacred path.

In an effort to explore the topic of sami more fully, Juan devised a question in the form of an example that he hoped would move the Q’ero from the concrete to the more philosophical. “On the Day of the Living and the Dead, November 1,” he explained, “we commemorate our dead by offering them food, the things they liked when they were alive. When we offer these things to our ancestors, they come to eat. But they must eat only the sami, because you can see that they have left the food there. Nothing is moved. What is your opinion of this thing they are eating?”

Juan’s question proved fruitful. The entire group of Q’ero spoke at once, offering their interpretation of this scenario. When we sorted out their comments, it became clear that their consensus, as expressed by don Juan

Pauqar Flores, was that “sami is the essence of a thing. The souls come and eat only the essence.”

Ricardo shook his head slowly in assent, as if a new understanding were dawning. He thoughtfully stoked the several days’ stubble of beard on his chin. “My earlier story takes on more meaning with this explanation, because what was the offering of the Christian God to the Inka? He was offering his teachings, his wisdom, his words—which are his essence.”

Juan Núñez del Prado agreed that the definitions of sami as an “essence” or as an “essential gift” were very important. Then he added, “The type of concrete question we asked is a good way to open up these very complex categories.”

I was happy the anthropologists were happy, but I was interested in the Q’ero, not in the anthropological musings. “I don’t have those concrete examples, like the Day of the Dead, at hand like you do,” I said to Juan. “I’ll rely on you to formulate questions using examples like that, but let’s flip this discussion on its head for a moment and ask the same type of question about hucha.” Ricardo asked the Q’ero to define hucha.

“Hucha,” explained don Julian, “is speaking incorrectly, fighting, instigating conflicts.” When no other Q’ero offered a definition, I asked another question, hoping to elicit information about the “essence” of hucha. “How do they as healers cleanse hucha from people or things?”

Don Agustín began the discussion. “A person has hucha when dirtiness lands on him. If the hucha lands on a person, you must take it and pull it off him and put it in the river. The river takes it away.”

“If you don’t serve and honor Pachamama and the apus, then hucha lands on you,” explained don Mariano. “If hucha lands on you, bad things will happen in your life. You will have problems.”

“Is hucha heavy, as in heavy energy?” Juan asked.

“Yes, hucha is heavy,” don Agustín replied. “You have seen these people who carry packs on their backs for a living? They are carrying a lot of weight. You could say a person with hucha is carrying such a weight.”

Ricardo was interested in who attracts hucha and how. “Who is a person who carries hucha?” he asked simply.

Don Agustín and don Juan Flores huddled in discussion, with the other Q’ero occasionally offering a comment. Finally they said, “If you are caring for livestock, but a fox or a condor eats your livestock, then you must be carrying hucha,” they concurred. “Or when your llama falls over a cliff, or if

it drowns in a lagoon, surely you are carrying hucha. If a person has those kinds of problems, then we tell him he is a *huchasapa*, a person who carries heavy energy, and he must go and cleanse himself in the sanctuary of Q'ollorit'i, or he must go to a paqo to be cleansed of his hucha.”

“Perhaps this a good time to ask about *mikhuy*, because *mikhuy* can be a way to cleanse yourself or others of hucha,” I suggested. Juan agreed, and for a few minutes we discussed how best to ask this question. It had become obvious during previous days' discussions that the Q'ero did not practice the hucha *mikhuy* technique (digesting heavy energy), but we wanted to ask them directly about this practice to try to determine exactly what they did or did not know. We had also learned that if the Q'ero did not know of a technique or practice we asked about, they sometimes would struggle to answer or would speculate in an attempt to please us. The pressure on them to provide an answer was even more intense when we indicated that we knew how to perform a technique that, it appeared, they did not, such as hucha *mikhuy*. So we often phrased a potentially challenging question as if it were secondhand knowledge, which created an atmosphere in which it was easier for the Q'ero to admit their unfamiliarity with the subject at hand. In this case, we decided to use the “secondhand knowledge” approach but to open the subject with a request instead of a question.

“Someone told us that there are paqos who have the capacity to digest and eat hucha,” Juan said. “Talk about this if you will.”

Again, a group discussion ensued. Finally, don Juan Pauqar Espinosa and don Mariano spoke on behalf of the group. “We agree that it is possible to eat hucha. But we only cleanse it. We offer the heavy energy up to the apus. We do not eat or digest it. We just capture it, clean it from the person, and offer it to the apus. First, we take the hucha and then we offer it up to the apus. Then the apus offer it to the Taytacha [the supreme supernatural being], and the Taytacha decides how to get rid of it.”

Juan Núñez del Prado considered their comments, then said, “I would like to tell them that don Andreas and don Benito taught me hucha *mikhuy*. I will ask them what they think about this. But we must be clear about one thing—*they* don't eat hucha. They agree on this. They only cleanse it.”

Ricardo translated Juan's comments to the Q'ero, and then translated their reply in Spanish directly to Juan. Juan exclaimed, “It's a very practical answer! ‘We think this is a good tool,’ they said. ‘We think if you do this [hucha *mikhuy*] with another person, that person will become totally clean.

We have shared with you the things we learned with our teachers. Because you have learned that practice, you must teach us how to do it. If you are able to share that technique with us, we will be very happy!” Juan agreed to teach the Q’ero hucha mikhuy, and I decided that this was a good place for a break.

While the Q’ero and the others took some refreshment, I talked with Juan about how I should best continue the interview. “There are two other areas I want to talk about now, but I’m not quite sure how to do it since their answers are so practical. One is the related concepts of the *poq’po* and the *qosqo*, the energy body and the navel center through which energy is mediated. I’d like to try to get them to talk more philosophically, to explain these concepts in terms of the shamanic cosmology before we talk about actual practices involving them.”

Juan raised his eyebrows and lit a cigarette, two signs that I was indeed facing a challenge. “If the Q’ero don’t know how to digest heavy energy, then they will not know how to use the *qosqo* to mediate energy. Therefore,” he advised, “we will ask only about the general concept of the *qosqo*.”

“Well, maybe we should resume by asking about the *poq’po*, the energy body, first, since that must be where the hucha adheres when it lands on you,” I suggested. Anamaria, who had been patiently translating from Spanish to English all day and now joined our conversation, asked if there was a way we could ask about the energy body in terms of the physical body, yoking the metaphysical to the physical in a way the Q’ero might better understand. Juan considered her idea and suggested that perhaps we could use the concept of the *vultu*, the ghost. Don Juan Pauqar Espinosa had talked about the ghost in his initiation story, about the wind entering him like a ghost and about the ghost of the wind making noises on the roof of the sanctuary building at Q’ollorit’i. “He used the term ‘vultu’ for a field of energy yesterday, like a ghost,” Juan said. “Let’s start by using that word and let it lead us to the concept of the *poq’po*.”

When we regrouped, Juan went ahead and asked the Q’ero about their understanding of the energy body, the *poq’po*, by equating it to a ghost. Juan Espinosa’s answer, however, instantly dashed any hope we had for this approach. “The *vultu* was really the *apu*,” he said, correcting what he thought was our misinterpretation of his earlier story. The *apu*, not being able to be apprehended directly, he explained, takes various forms, and the ghost on the roof was really the *apu*.

“Just ask them outright if they know the term ‘poq’po,’” I said to Juan. I was a little exasperated with Juan’s and Ricardo’s academic approach, and I decided it was complicating matters unnecessarily.

Juan didn’t think my question was such a good one, and because I could not speak Quechua I could not control the situation. I wanted to ask the question simply and directly, but Juan suggested that he ask the Q’ero about the poq’po using an example from his experience. He then proceeded to ask a question to the Q’ero directly, with a little assistance from Ricardo. Neither I, nor Sandy nor Anamaria, knew what the question was. The Q’ero huddled in discussion, but it soon became obvious that Juan’s question had not been answered.

I was quickly growing even more unhappy with the situation, so I wrested control. “Listen,” I said, “try it this way. Simply ask them how kawsay is visualized? What it is they are seeing when they see a condor or puma in a vision or dream? If it’s not the physical animals they are seeing in a vision, then what is it they’re seeing? The animal’s poq’po, or energy body?”

Ricardo put the questions to the Q’ero and listened to their long reply. I could see Ricardo become more and more animated, his excitement growing. It seems we had finally hit pay dirt.

Sandy, Anamaria, and I were frustrated because Juan and Ricardo suddenly seemed oblivious to us; their impassioned conversation in Quechua effectively cut us out. Unable to stand the suspense, I finally interrupted them, pleading for a translation. Juan turned to me, almost triumphantly, and explained that in answer to my question, the Q’ero had used a Quechua word and explained a concept that neither he nor Ricardo had ever heard before: *k’ara*. We had just broken new anthropological ground.

K’ARA

“It appears,” Juan explained, the excitement of discovery still evident in his voice, “that the k’ara is something like the sami of a person, his or her essence. And *that* is what the Q’ero see [when they look at a person’s energy body]. Ricardo is going to probe for more information.”

Juan’s explanation seemed anticlimactic to me, especially considering the charged discussion in Quechua that we had witnessed. But I decided to be patient and let the anthropologists call the shots for a bit longer.

After an extended dialogue, mostly between Juan Núñez del Prado and don Julian, Ricardo reported that the Q'ero were saying that the k'ara is like a person's aura. "K'ara is connected to sami," Ricardo explained. "Sami is the essence of a person or thing, and the k'ara is the visible manifestation of sami. Hucha, however, has no visible manifestation."

Ricardo was still visibly excited, and we paused for a few moments so he and I could take some notes. He explained as he wrote that he had been searching for a clear definition of sami for twenty years, and now, because of sami's contrast to the k'ara, he felt he finally had a good grasp of what sami really meant. Despite my relatively limited knowledge of the shamanic system, I shared the thrill of discovery with Ricardo and Juan, but I honestly cannot say I fully shared their sense of enlightenment. Mostly, I was simply happy the anthropologists were happy.

When things finally settled down, we decided we had to probe further about just who has k'ara and what forms it can take. Juan asked if paqos—such as Garibilu Q'espí, the great Q'ero paqo who had saved Q'ero from devastation by using the yellow fever disease to "eat" all the other diseases—have k'ara. The Q'ero's answer, reproduced below, indicated that k'ara could be understood in at least two different ways: as an aura or energy body (in some cases almost like an etheric double of a person or thing) and as an inherent quality or power of a person or thing that could be invoked and utilized on behalf of others.

"Yes, Garibilu Q'espí had k'ara," don Juan Flores answered. "The moon has k'ara. The apus have k'ara, and by invoking the k'ara of an apu you can heal a person. Don Andreas Espinosa healed disease by invoking the k'ara of the apu. The apu has more k'ara than a paqo. My master, Andreas Espinosa, healed by invoking the k'ara of the condor and the apu. But I do not believe that ordinary men have k'ara."

Before we had a chance to inquire about don Juan's enigmatic final sentence, don Julian added to his brother's explanation: "Andreas Espinosa said to me, 'You must always carry the k'ara of the condor and the hummingbird.'"

Ricardo jumped in at this point to clarify an academic concern of his, whether k'ara is the same as or different from *kayk'ara*, a term that means crested or pointed. The Q'ero talked among themselves for a moment, their talk leading first to snickering and then to outright laughing. Don Agustín in particular seemed to think something was very funny. He partially covered

his face with his hand and eyed us women shyly in the space between his fingers. Sandy, Anamaria, and I turned toward Ricardo for an explanation.

Ricardo looked uncomfortable. “They said that what they speak of is not *kayk’ara*, it is *k’ara*.” he said, Anamaria translating his Spanish for us. We looked at Juan inquiringly. Something was going on and only we women were being left out. Finally, Juan revealed that the Q’ero had made an erotic joke as an example to Ricardo: a woman’s clitoris is *kayk’ara*, they said, not *k’ara*! We all laughed, and most of us, male and female, blushed. If I remember correctly, we paused the interview at this point for a round of pisco. Once refreshed, we picked up where we had left off, exploring the concept of *k’ara*.

“So they carry the *k’ara* of whatever animal they are working with, the condor for instance, or of the *apus* they are in service to?” I asked.

Juan Núñez del Prado answered for the Q’ero. “Yes, to carry the *k’ara* of something means to be with it.”

“Right,” I said. “Don Julian was told to carry the *k’ara* of the condor and the hummingbird. But someone else might work with the puma. Would they carry the *k’ara* of the puma, of whatever their ally or totem animal is?”

“It seems like that,” Juan replied

“Well, let’s ask and make sure.” I rephrased the question, and don Mariano answered for the group. We were surprised by his answer, but it was a pleasant surprise, because don Mariano provided an unexpected and fascinating tidbit of information. “No,” he said, “in the puma the important thing is not the *k’ara*, because the puma does not have *k’ara*—the puma has a tail.”

Although most of the others look confused, I understood exactly what don Mariano meant. I smiled with delight, thinking of a story Américo Yábar had told me about the puma’s power, a story I considered to be little more than an example of Américo’s penchant for hyperbole. I looked at Juan, and he was grinning as well. “To see the tail of a puma is very important,” Juan began. “Its power is in its tail, not in its *k’ara*. Américo Yábar has a story—”

“I was just thinking of that story!” I interrupted. “The story of when he was a little boy and an old man in a village in the mountains where he was staying took him to a decrepit hut and made him sit by a window. The teacher took his poncho and twirled it round and round through the air, telling Américo to watch the window closely, for he was calling a puma. The puma did come, and its tail flashed with light and color, twirling around outside the

window as the crazy old teacher twirled the poncho inside the hut. Américo said that was how he first learned that the puma's power is in its tail."

I mentally apologized to Américo for doubting his story. Then we pushed on, with Sandy inquiring whether the Q'ero worked with animal allies. Juan at first did not understand the notion of animal allies, so Anamaria explained that many Native North Americans worked energetically with animals who act as spirit guides, teachers, and protectors. It was clear there were some cultural confusion and language barriers that were preventing this line of questioning; and because I already knew that generally the Q'ero do not work with animal spirits like North American Indians do—instead seeing them as manifestations of their apus—I suggested that we hold off on the question for a while and stick with the issue immediately at hand—who and what does and does not have *sami* and *k'ara*. I was eager to follow up on don Juan's statement that he did not think the average person has *k'ara*. I was confused as to how we can all have a *poq'po*, or energy body, and yet not all have *k'ara*, the *sami* that is visible in our energy body. Ricardo put the question to don Juan Pauqar Flores, but his answer was vague.

"If a man has the capacity to share good information and establish good connections with other people, he has *sami*. If he does not have this capacity, he has less *sami*."

I tried my question again, asking specifically about who has *k'ara*. The Q'ero consensus was that "only great men have *k'ara*."¹

"Wow! Does this leave us common people with no visible energy body?" I asked.

Juan shook his head. "Yes, that's what they seem to be saying. Only great men or men on the path, *paqos*, have *k'ara*. But here is my opinion of what they are implying. Everyone has an energy field, and *k'ara* is a visible manifestation of that field, but only powerful *paqos* have enough *k'ara* for it to be *clearly visible*. It's kind of like the paintings of the saints, where they are shown with a distinct aura or halo around their heads. For the rest of us, it is too weak to be seen. But this is only my opinion."

Juan was using the words *k'ara* and *sami* almost interchangeably, but I believe he was only misstating what he meant because he had limited fluency in English. Actually, they are different things. If you have a lot of *sami* (light energy) in your energy field, then your "essence" can visibly glow—and you have *k'ara* (a visible aura). I know that was what Juan meant, although it is not exactly what he said.

“I wonder if k’ara is different from *kanchay*?” I mused aloud. “If I’m not mistaken, Oscar Miro-Quesada uses the term *kanchay* to mean light, or energy that actually shines.”^{II}

“Let’s ask them if the k’ara shines,” Juan suggested.

Don Mariano responded, picking up the thread of the conversation, and then just as quickly losing it. “The condor has a red k’ara. But the puma, in the night, you can see it shine, but that is not a k’ara, it’s the puma’s tail.”

“What is it that a qawaq sees?” I started to ask, knowing that a qawaq is someone who can see energy and auras, but before I could put my question to the Q’ero, Ricardo interrupted to tell us that the Q’ero were in disagreement. “Juan Pauqar Espinosa and Agustín feel bad to have to point out a disagreement with don Mariano,” Ricardo reported, “but they feel he has made a mistake. They say the condor’s k’ara is shiny white, not red.”

“There are two kinds of condors,” don Agustín explained, the index finger of his right hand tapping the weathered open palm of his left hand for emphasis. “The leader of the condors is the *apuchin*, and only the condor apuchin has a k’ara, not the others. It is white. Condors live in a group, and the condor apuchin is the leader of the group. Only the condor apuchin has k’ara.”

“What about the hummingbird? Does it have a color?” Sandy wondered aloud. “And what about the apus?” I asked. “They have the greatest power and the most k’ara, but do they shine in different colors according to the hierarchical level of apu?”

Juan interrupted our stream of questions with a commentary: “Don Mariano’s answer brought out a distinction between red and white light, and don Juan Espinosa and don Agustín established that the condor’s k’ara is white. Ricardo is pointing out this contradiction, so now we should ask if all the k’aras are white light. Do you want to ask about this, or do you want to ask your question about the colors of the apus?”

“Let’s just ask them if the k’ara comes in different colors, and if so, what colors,” I decided.

“There are different colors,” began don Juan Pauqar Flores. “The apus come in different colors. Some are white, others red, and still others black. People have different colors of clothing and the animals have different kinds of fur, so the apus’ k’aras have different colors.”

“He mentioned green, too,” Juan said, correcting Ricardo. “The order is white, red, black, and green.”

Don Juan continued with his explanation. “We can see the color of the different apus. There are some that are gold and yellow—there are actually two shades of yellow. We also see the color silver. All of these are the most powerful apus—they are not equal, there are differences among them.”

“Can we get some additional examples of different colors of k’ara?” I asked, fascinated with this line of inquiry. “What has a green k’ara, what has a red one? What’s the significance of the colors?”

The Q’ero talked among themselves for several minutes, don Julian and don Juan Pauqar Flores often counting on their fingers, as if listing something. “If the apu has the color white, that is a good sign; it has much kawsay,” they agreed. “It has an abundance of quality because white is the highest color. Red is next, then comes yellow and then black, which is much, much lower.^{III}

“White is above all the rest. White commands [has more power than] the colors gold and silver. Also green. An apu that is yellow is one that contains the minerals gold and silver within it. A pampa [highland plain] that contains these minerals also has a yellow k’ara.”

It actually took a lot of time and effort to sort the above information, and the Q’ero complicated matters by metaphorically equating the apus of various powers and intensities of k’ara to the Peruvian political hierarchy. Juan explained that white equates with the *alcalde*, red with the *regidor*, yellow with the *alguacil*, and black with the *contador* or *capitán*. At that time, I had no idea what he was talking about, and I did not take the time to pursue translations of these offices.^{IV}

However, I suspected a color correspondence of the k’ara with the *chunpis*, the four energy belts that encircle the human body. I wondered aloud to Juan if these belts might not somehow be associated with intensities of the k’ara or shifts in one’s capacity to utilize the k’ara, and he agreed this was a subject ripe for exploration. Then Juan explained a further complication: that the Q’ero had also grouped the colors of the k’ara with the “sides” of the sacred path.

According to the Q’ero, the colors white and red are grouped together, and yellow and silver are grouped together, and both these groups are considered on the right side of the path, connecting one to paña, the mystical realms and the side of the mesa from which one interacts directly with the spirits. Green and black are considered lloq’ë, or on the left side of the path,

which involves the more practical aspects of the sacred work and is the healing side of the mesa.

I was immensely interested in all of these equations, but I also recognized that I was in way over my head, especially since time was so short. I reluctantly decided to get back to basics, so I suggested we return to our discussion of sami and hucha. “Ask them if hucha is visible or has a color. I know they already said it doesn’t, but if not, then how do they know when someone has hucha?” The question actually put to the Q’ero was, “If a paqo has the capacity to see [qaway], then what does he see when he sees hucha?”

“When we look at the coca,” the Q’ero said, “if there are leaves folded over or broken, then we see that you have a mistake, you have hucha.”

“Using the coca is an indirect way to see the hucha,” Juan said. “Let’s challenge them and ask about seeing it directly.” He slightly reworded the question. “If one can see sami through the k’ara, then does hucha become visible there also?”

The Q’ero’s response was unanimous and emphatic. “We do not see hucha directly. We find it using the coca leaves.”

They talked briefly among themselves, and Juan filled us in of the gist of their conversation. “They are discussing their feeling that implicit in our question was the sense that there are people who have the capacity to see hucha. They feel a little embarrassed, because they do not have the capacity to see hucha.”

Juan talked to the Q’ero for a moment, and then turned to us, explaining, “I said to them, ‘This is not a problem, because people have different capacities. People are not the same. There is nothing to be ashamed of.’ But this just shows you the pressures that are being felt here.”

“I’m curious about pulling hucha from another person’s body, and I’m wondering about how we cleanse ourselves of hucha,” Anamaria said. “Are they saying we always have to go to another person?”

“Well, they have the capacity to pull the hucha using an object, like their mesa or a khuya,” Juan explained.

“And if they can’t mikhuy, then they must have to go to another paqo,” I surmised.

It was time for lunch, and as the Q’ero wandered off to the dining table, Juan took a moment to answer Anamaria’s question more directly. “There is a complex but very important point to be made here,” he began. “Sometimes a person receives, in the moment, the capacity to do something. Other times

that person does not have the same capacity. When trying to cleanse someone, for example, the act depends upon whose ‘hand’ is the right one at the time. For example, if someone comes to Ricardo for a healing but he cannot handle it and then that person comes to me and I can handle it, they say that this problem is for my hand and not for the hand of Ricardo. This depends not only on your personal power but it depends—” Juan suddenly broke his train of thought and took a different route in his explanation. “This is speculation on my part. But Andreas Espinosa was recognized as the highest paqo in Q’ero, recognized by everybody here as such. But in one case, in the case of don Mariano, one of his karpays was not for the hand of Andreas Espinosa; it was for the hand of don Manuel Q’espi. This fact does not deny the power of don Andreas. It just tells us that don Manuel had some capability with don Mariano that don Andreas did not have. And because of that, the karpay worked with don Manuel. This point is very important, because if you remember in don Mariano’s initiation story, the apus spoke through the mesa of don Andreas, but even so Mariano’s mesa did not speak. But when the mesa of don Manuel spoke, then Mariano’s mesa spoke as well. So even if you are a powerful paqo, if the thing is not for your hand, you cannot handle it. The problem is for the hand of another person. It is the same with cleansing hucha I think.”

As is usually the case with Juan, his explanation was more than a clarification; it was a teaching in and of itself. But we had had enough talking and teaching for one morning. We, too, were hungry and so we turned off the tape recorder and joined the Q’ero for lunch.

The Three Worlds

When we resumed the interview after lunch and a brief siesta, I decided to inquire about the three worlds of Andean mysticism: the upper world, called the *hanaq pacha*; the middle world, the *kay pacha*; and the lower world, the *ukhu pacha*. I had barely begun the interview when I was caught by surprise. As the Q'ero described the *hanaq pacha*, they revealed that there is a Land of the Dead, and its “doorway” is a volcano! As with the discussion of *k'ara*, I tossed aside my long list of carefully planned questions and looked to Juan and Ricardo for assistance. We essentially gave the Q'ero free rein. As usual, we were well rewarded, for despite our meandering through this new, and unfamiliar, territory, we were not only able to add to our understanding of Andean cosmology, but we were provided yet another unique glimpse into the hearts and minds of the Q'ero.

“The *hanaq pacha* is the house of the Lord, of God,” declared don Juan Pauqar Flores, leading off the discussion of the three worlds. The other Q'eros quickly offered their own comments. Their answers revealed how inextricably Christianity had woven itself into indigenous cosmology. “It is also the place where the children who have died go; they go to heaven. The *hanaq pacha* is another type of *llaqta* [town or city], different from where we live. It is the place where the souls of men live; the world of the *hanaq pacha* is the world of the heavens, it is the blue world above us.”

“Who lives there?” asked Juan. “The souls of dead babies, *paqos*, and the saints?”

Don Julian answered. “No. God is the only one who lives there. But when children die, the moment they die they transform into something like birds that fly up to heaven. Older people, men and women, when they die they go to a volcano that is near Arequipa.”

We were all surprised by this answer, even Juan and Ricardo. Ever the anthropologists, they dug for more information, trying to retrieve the name of this volcano of the dead. But the Q'ero would only tell us that it was near Arequipa, in southern Peru. However, they were eager to offer more details of this world.

“There are the souls of the dead in this volcano,” said don Agustín. “When you kill a sheep, the spirit of the sheep goes to the volcano. When you kill a llama, a cow, or a bull, the spirit of the animal goes to the volcano. The [human] souls in the volcano cry out, ‘They’re coming! They’re coming!’ The spirit of the sheep says, ‘Baaaaa;’ and that of the cow says, ‘Mooooo!’ and the spirits in the volcano hear them and cry out in happiness, ‘Good! Good! They are coming!’ This is because all the people there are thinking, maybe they are coming for me!”¹

“These [human] souls, when they first arrive at the volcano, they don’t have anything. Those souls who have been there for a long time, however, they have a house, lands, and herds. When the relatives of the dead person care for the tomb of the dead person, putting flowers on it and tending it, then that soul will have a good life in the volcano, a good house and lands, and other good things.

“When someone is a messenger from this world to the other, then the relatives of the dead person can send messages and supplies through this man or woman. Drinks, food like quinoa [a grain], and other things.”

“Where is this volcano?” we asked, “In the hanaq pacha or the kay pacha?”

“The kay pacha,” replied don Agustín. “But to this volcano town, only the soul of a dead person can go. A living person cannot go there. But still, to live in this volcano, your soul must climb the mountain, the sides of the volcano. It is very difficult. But only the soul arrives there; this is our shadow self.”

“Why must the soul climb the mountain?” Juan inquired.

“This mountain has a red peak [is a volcano], and living human beings try to climb this mountain but they can never succeed in this. No one can climb it. If you try to, you will fall down. You may even die,” don Agustín said.

“But why does the soul climb it?” we asked.

“At night, in your dreams, we can go to this mountain,” don Agustín explained, still not directly answering our question. “It is possible in our dreams.”

Juan again asked why the soul must climb the peak.

This time don Julian spoke up, explaining, ““When we die, the soul has no difficulty climbing this mountain, which we cannot climb when we are alive.”

“Are there other places where souls go after death, or only to the volcano?” I asked, wondering if souls might go to the ukhu pacha, or lower world. I was wondering if the Q’ero would equate the ukhu pacha with the Christian hell or purgatory. Anamaria asked the question in a different way. “Do both the good and the bad go there, to the volcano?”

Juan Pauqar Flores answered. “Everyone goes there. The good and the bad, but to be sure, the bad have more difficulty.”

Ricardo and Juan asked about how one is determined to be either “good” or “bad.”

Don Julian explained that “when we die, there is a door in this volcano. At the door is Saint Gabriel. A soul knocks on the door, and Saint Gabriel opens it. This is when the bad are recognized and sent back to the volcano.”

Don Julian’s answer seemed to indicate that the volcano was only a stopping point along the way to somewhere better, perhaps the hanaq pacha. The syncretism between the ancient, indigenous belief and Catholic theology was obvious, so we surmised that the hanaq pacha was equivalent to heaven. Still, we couldn’t be sure, so we asked for more details.

“The souls of the bad are sent back,” don Julian explained, “and the souls of the good are allowed to pass through the door.”

Obviously, we had not established that the door leads to the hanaq pacha. Juan Núñez del Prado explained the indigenous, although Catholicized belief that “if Saint Gabriel does not permit the dead person to pass, he or she must return to their tomb. Saint Gabriel is the messenger between this world and the next, and on All Saints Day, Peruvians pray to him to open the door for all their dead loved ones.”

Don Julian explained further. “When these dead return because of their mistakes, they return to their tombs. They spend much time there. These souls, they are vagabond souls. They are beings who scurry around and scare you. They are wanderers.”

Don Agustín added to don Julian’s explanation, seemingly surprised that we did not know this information. “When these vagabond spirits are rejected by Saint Gabriel, their relatives must ask the help of a good paqo, who must make the person acceptable to Saint Gabriel. To do this, the paqo calls the

soul and at the same time calls Saint Gabriel, and the paqo implores, ‘Accept him! Pardon him!’ If the paqo is powerful, Saint Gabriel will accept that soul.”

“What about a paqo?” Juan wondered aloud. “Can he pass easily?”

“The paqo, like any other person, leaves relatives behind,” don Julian explained. “When a paqo dies, his relatives must arrange for another paqo to do the same work for this paqo as he would do for any other person—make offerings to the apus and call to Saint Gabriel to accept the soul of the paqo.”

What about those souls who become wanderers? I wondered. What happens to them? I finally asked Juan, and he explained that these vagabond souls wander around on Earth, and if you accidentally meet one you can catch a sickness, called *uraña*, caused by fright and the shock to your nervous system. The disease takes the form of an ill wind, and you can be well one minute and deathly ill the next.

Don Mariano provided further information. “Some kinds of winds are the vagabond spirits’ voices. If they infect you, you get *uraña* and die. Some people have the capacity to identify a vagabond spirit. If someone identifies a vagabond spirit, he must call the owners of the soul [the deceased person’s relatives] and tell them that their soul is doing this. Then they must do the work with Saint Gabriel to change the situation.”

As fascinating as our discussion was, time was growing short and I wanted to move on to gather information about the *kay pacha* and *ukhu pacha*. But Juan had several more “little” questions: “The people in the volcano, are they happy? Sad? How is the way of life inside the volcano? Is this the final destination for souls?”

The Q’ero agreed that “there in the volcano the souls do not suffer—because they have their houses. Each soul has its own house.”

“Only the souls who are recent arrivals suffer,” said don Agustín, “because they don’t have a house.”

Don Mariano agreed, adding, “The danger is if the volcano erupts. The souls work to prevent this, because such an eruption could be the beginning of the end of the world. Otherwise, in their world, they live very well. They live in harmony.”

Don Agustín had other ideas. “The new arrivals have a time of *ñak’ariy pacha*, a suffering time, because they do not have houses. But they go to a Catholic priest, who performs a mass, and afterwards, they will have a house.”

Don Agustín seemed fixated on the houses of the afterlife, so we decided to switch topics completely. Wanting information on how the nature spirits occupy these various worlds, I asked if Inti (the sun) and Mama Killa (the moon) are in the hanaq pacha or the kay pacha.

Don Julian answered. “They belong to the kay pacha. But they must travel from one side of the sea to the other. They rise from the sea and go back to the sea.”

“What happens to the sun during the night?” Ricardo wanted to know.

“During the day the sun gives his light to us,” don Julian explained. “But then it must move on and give its light to other towns.”

“What about the rainbow?” I asked. “Is it in the hanaq pacha or kay pacha?”

“*K’uychi* [the rainbow] is at the same time in the ground and above,” don Mariano said. “The rainbow is in this world, the kay pacha, and also in the hanaq pacha. When the *Taytacha Inti* [Lord Sun] becomes sick, he has a rainbow around him. In this case, the rainbow is completely in the hanaq pacha. But usually the rainbow connects the hanaq pacha and the kay pacha.”

“In water, like in fountains, you can see something like a rainbow,” don Juan Pauqar Flores added. “This is a rainbow of the kay pacha. If you see this *k’uychi*, it is dangerous,” he said, holding up his hand as if to ward something off. “You can get an inflammation of the mouth or you can get eye disease.”

“What about the stars?” I asked, figuring that I might as well cover all the nature spirits of the hanaq pacha before I asked about those of the ukhu pacha.

Don Juan Pauqar Flores answered. “The stars are in the hanaq pacha, and they are young ladies who are dressed in their finest clothes. They are very elegant and dressed in many colors. In the heavens are not only the young ladies, but also the old ladies, like Venus. She is an old woman, old and large. Those like her are not young ladies—they are *qoyllurs*, not *ch’askas* [planets, not stars]. Where there are a lot of young ladies, there must be at least one old lady to care for them, to watch over them.”

I was delighted with don Juan’s answer, and although I had a million more questions about the hanaq pacha, the tick of the very kay pacha clock forced me to move on. I asked about the spirits of the ukhu pacha, the lower world, and once again don Juan answered.

“The ukhu pacha is lower than this world, lower than the kay pacha. There are some people who live there who are very small.” Don Juan gestured with his hand, indicating how small these ukhu pacha people are by holding his thumb and index finger about two inches apart. “And also there are *qowis* [guinea pigs] there.¹¹ A guinea pig to these tiny people is like a cow or a bull is to us! Ten or fifteen of these people, with great difficulty, can kill a guinea pig to get food.”

“Are there supernatural beings there?” I asked.

Don Julian took over, explaining the structure of the ukhu pacha in relation to the three worlds of Andean cosmology. “The whole world is like a house with different floors. The lower world is like one floor. The kay pacha and the hanaq pacha are other floors. The *ukhupacharuna* [people of the lower world] live underground, inside Pachamama. And just as we have businesses, selling meat in the market, some of them have businesses too. But they sell the meat of the guinea pigs. They run after the guinea pigs; they are small enough to fit into the guinea pig holes, so they can hunt them. But we live in the middle world,” he concluded.

“Can a paqo travel between these three worlds?” I asked.

“No,” answered don Juan Pauqar Flores. “We don’t.”

“Then how do you know about the three worlds?” Anamaria wondered aloud.

“That’s a good question,” I said, “But it may be too abstract.” I looked at Juan for help with formulating the question. Juan and Ricardo talked for a few minutes and then Ricardo put the question to the Q’ero. Because it was not translated, to this day I do not know exactly what the question was.

“We don’t have the capacity to go to the hanaq pacha or the ukhu pacha,” don Mariano answered, “but we can invoke the spirits of the hanaq pacha.”

Don Mariano’s reply was informative, but it raised other serious questions. “If the hanaq pacha is the place only of the souls of dead children and God, as they said earlier,” Juan remarked, “then what spirits could they be invoking?” Juan put his question to don Mariano, but it was don Agustín who answered.

“In the hanaq pacha is God, Jesus Christ,” he said. “We only invoke the power of God. Even a kuraq akulleq does not have the power to manipulate anything in the hanaq pacha.”

“Well, where are the spirits of paqos and saints and such?” Juan asked. “In what world are they?”

Don Julian answered first, rather hesitantly. “It cannot be in the ukhu pacha,” he said. “That is impossible. They must be in the hanaq pacha.”

“So the paqos and the saints are in the hanaq pacha?” Juan and I followed up.

Again don Julian answered. “The saints are *unanchasqa*.” Juan Núñez del Prado explained that to be *unanchasqa* is to be given an actual symbol of power, perhaps a scepter, or to have been warranted to act with power on behalf of a higher authority, such as by God. “In the beginning the saints were given the sign of power by God, by Jesus Christ, in the kay pacha,” don Julian continued. “He said they must live in the kay pacha. Jesus said, ‘Saint Juan, you must live in this church,’ and he was sent to that temple. So the saints now all have a place in a temple or chapel in the kay pacha.”^{III}

Juan suggested that this might be a good place to ask about the prophecy, about the spiritual evolution of the world. I agreed, and we had a long and challenging discussion with the Q’ero about prophecy, which I have partially reproduced in [chapter 3](#) and more fully in [appendix 2](#). By the end of that difficult discussion, we were all exhausted. It was clear that everyone was talked out and that the interview, having lasted more than five hours, was winding down. I had many more questions, but we were out of time. I remembered that we had not asked Sandy’s earlier question, about whether the Q’ero work with animal allies in the same way that many North American indigenous peoples do. I put that question to the Q’ero as our final question, and don Mariano replied for the group.

“No. Everything helps, but we do not have the capacity to establish a personal relationship with a particular animal. Only with the apus. We have the apus.”

KAWSAY PURIY: WALKING THE SACRED PATH

It seemed fitting that my interviews with the Q’ero would end with a restatement of their reliance upon and reverence for the apus, those most powerful of nature spirits. After four days of intense discussion, I now understood unequivocally that the apus were the primary energetic and spiritual links by which the Q’ero mediated the three worlds of Andean cosmology. The lords and ñust’as of the mountains, because they cannot be apprehended directly, often dialogue with the paqos who are in service to them through the estrellas, who appear as condors, hummingbirds, bulls, or

pumas. But no matter their symbolic manifestation, they are the supreme nature energies of the Andes, their spiritual majesty mirroring their physical magnificence. As I packed up the tape recorder and collected the more than fifteen tapes that were scattered across the table, I considered don Mariano's final comment. It stirred the memory of a story that most of us who walk the Andean sacred path have heard in one form or another. This is more than a story, however. It is really a teaching, a forewarning, and a parable of preparation. One version of the story is as follows:

One day a young paqo-in-training was walking down through the mountains. In the distance he could see someone approaching. Soon he could make out the figure of an old woman, slowly but methodically making her way up the steep path with the help of a wooden staff. When they met on the path—it being only wide enough to permit one person at a time to pass—they stopped to greet each other. “Where is it you are going, Mamacita?” the young paqo asked the elderly woman. She pointed toward the crest of the mountain. “Up there,” she said. “I live over that mountain.”

“You have come a long way,” the paqo said, observing her weariness.

“Yes,” she replied, “I have just come from a wedding.” As she spoke, the old woman caught the paqo's gaze and stared deep into his eyes. The paqo was mesmerized by the intensity of the old woman's eyes, but he soon became self-conscious and uncomfortable. He broke her gaze and nervously stepped aside to let her pass.

“Well, I'm sure you must want to be on your way, Mamacita,” he said. “Will you be all right?”

“Yes, I will be fine,” she replied over her shoulder as she once again set off. “I have made this journey many times.”

During the remainder of his journey home, the paqo couldn't stop thinking about the old woman. He knew there was nothing strange about meeting a solitary individual in the mountains. Such things occurred all the time, for there was no other way over the mountain but on foot. One often met solitary individuals herding llamas or alpacas. Still, the paqo couldn't shake the feeling that something strange, almost momentous, had happened in his meeting with the old woman but that he had failed to see it. He decided to tell his maestro about the old woman.

His maestro listened, and then patted the paqo on the back, almost as if he were consoling him. “My son,” he said, “you have missed a great opportunity because you could not see [qaway] what you were looking at. That was not a

chance meeting you had on the mountain. That was not an old woman who accidentally crossed your path. That was the apu! If you had truly been able to see her, you would have known it was the ñust'a, who appears to those she favors as an old woman returning from a wedding to her mountaintop home.^{IV} You missed a great opportunity, my son. For if one has the spiritual wisdom to recognize the Princess of the Mountain, she must grant one's wish."

As I wrote this chapter, Don Mariano's final remark—of having a sacred relationship with the apus, the lords and princesses of the mountains—sparked my memory of this and many other mystical stories I had heard over the years from Q'ero paqos and my mestizo teachers. These are marvelous stories and myths of how the puma calls its prey using its dream body and how a shaman reads the changing face of the rainbow.

According to William Sullivan, who in his seminal book *The Secret of the Incas* cracked the code of Andean cosmology and astronomy as encoded in Peruvian mythology, myth is a "vessel designed and fitted for essential cargo." Stories are "ark[s], whose builders had one and only one concern, the welfare of future generations."¹ The plethora of mystical information the Q'ero had related during the interviews—about the volcano of the dead and the glow of the puma's tail, about the k'ara of the apus and the lives of ukhupacharuna—all seemed "essential cargo" for the journey along the sacred path and into the heart of the kawsay pacha.

What my discussion with the Q'ero was really about, I now realize, was not the transmission of cultural or shamanic information, but the joining of energies—male and female, North and South, Western and indigenous, modern and ancient. We had truly joined energies, in the spirit of taqe. I had begun the interviews seeking factual information about Andean mysticism, but I had concluded them knowing that facts alone cannot provide a road map into the mystical and shamanic worlds. At most they are signposts to guide us in our practice, safe havens where we can momentarily place our trust before we make the next plunge into the unknown. No matter his skill as an alto mesayoq, don Mariano at heart has only his trust in his relationship with the apus to guide him during his journey through the shamanic world; yet through that relationship, because of that trust, he gains access to the cosmos, to spaces exterior and interior, to multidimensional realms beyond time and space. The apus are his doorway, a distinctly Andean one. But we can all

find a doorway. We have only to choose one, to trust it implicitly, and then to step through it into the fullness of being.

Our Heart's Fire: The *Mesa* and Healing

Kuraq akulleq don Mariano Apasa and his wife, pampa mesayoq doña Agustina, had just completed an engaging despacho ceremony. The ceremony capped a pleasant day at Hatun Q'ero, the ceremonial village of the Q'ero, where a group of eight of us were resting before continuing our journey on horseback to the base of a glacial mountain that is the site of the annual sacred festival of Q'ollorit'i. It was the summer of 1995, and I still considered myself a newcomer to the Andean path, although I had been studying the tradition for two years. But Q'ollorit'i would mark an important milestone on my spiritual journey, for it is the ancient site of initiation for the Q'ero and other Andean paqos. I did not know exactly what to expect when we got there. Nor did I know if I would have the physical and emotional stamina to immerse myself in whatever ceremony we might participate in there, for the trip so far had been grueling—absolutely the toughest physical challenge I had ever undertaken. The altitude was sapping our strength and causing intense headaches, the horse ride through the mountains was treacherous and physically punishing, and, to top it off, I had badly injured my knee and could hardly ride the horse, never mind walk.¹ I was grateful for this twenty-four-hour rest at Hatun Q'ero.

Earlier that afternoon don Mariano had appeared quite unexpectedly, and a bit mysteriously, from behind a thicket of bushes not far from where some of us were working with the energies of a river. Hatun Q'ero is not don Mariano's home village and no one had been expecting him. But Juan seized the opportunity for us to work with don Mariano, inviting him to come back in the evening for dinner and ceremony. He returned with his wife and toddler-age son. After dinner, he conducted a despacho ceremony as a blessing for our trip.

Now that the ceremony was complete, don Mariano sat cross-legged in the shadows in a corner of the communal tent and spoke in whispers to Juan, who translated don Mariano's request to us. "He asks that those of you who have mesas, pass them forward."

Five of the eight of us had mesas. We dutifully handed these to Juan, who placed them in a semicircle before the kuraq.

Don Mariano reached out and retrieved one of the cloth-wrapped bundles. He held it with both hands, brought it to his lips, and lovingly peppered it with kisses. Then he held the bundle a few inches from his lips and gently began to blow into it, almost caressing the mesa with the breath of his blessings and prayers. He was oblivious to us as we sat watching him intently, fascinated with this act of munay, or heart. The only thing that existed for don Mariano was the colorfully wrapped bundle of khuyas. As a kuraq, he had the ability to speak to and to listen to a mesa, and he slowly brought the mesa to his right ear and cocked his head, his face a study in concentration and receptivity. What were the khuyas telling him? We couldn't know.

One by one, don Mariano repeated his actions with each of the other four mesas. He remained silent until he reached the last mesa. As with the others, he covered it with his kisses and blessed it with his breath. But then, after listening to its message for a moment or two, he declared simply, "This is a mesa of power."

Juan translated don Mariano's statement and appended his own question. "Whose mesa is this?"

It was Eileen's. An environmental scientist from the Boston area, Eileen had been on the sacred path for nearly two years. This was her first trip to Peru. Juan asked her what the mesa contained. She explained that it held mostly khuyas from the American Southwest and from the Yucatán.

Without further word, don Mariano returned the mesa bundles. Then he turned his cinnamon-colored face toward us, and, being a man of few but direct words, counseled us with characteristic bluntness: “You are all paqos on the sacred path. Continue to work hard, and one day you may even become more powerful than me.”

Through don Mariano’s words and actions, I gained a new respect for mesas and the khuyas they contain. Until this evening, I had not really understood the mesa as a true repository for power, and I had held the work of the khuyas to be one of the more improbable aspects of the Andean path. Two weeks later, while on the Island of the Moon, I would receive specific training in the khuyas from Américo Yábar, a master of the stones of power. But it was don Mariano and his respect for our mesas that brought home to me the importance of the mesa work. Even though Eileen and most of the rest of us were novices, having been on the sacred path only for a few years, don Mariano had approached our mesas as if they were those of accomplished paqos, and he had sensed that they were accumulating power or had already done so. I knew that it was through our mesas that we, too, could more easily push the kawsay, the energy of the living cosmos. I understood that we were indeed beginning to acquire the tools of a shaman.

The Gifts of the *Mesa*

As we have seen, the mesa is a bundle of power objects that connects Andean paqos with their ancestors, the sacred sites at which they undergo initiations, and their helping spirits, especially the apus. The mesa is not a paqo's power, but it symbolizes his power. An Andean paqo can push the kawsay in his work—for example, during a healing—without the physical presence of his mesa, but he is seldom without it. His mesa is his most precious possession, almost a part of him. In fact, as you will soon learn from pampa mesayoq Fredy “Puma” Quispe Singona, a paqo's mesa is his “heart's fire.”

Puma recounts his initiation story and something of his background below, but allow me to introduce this most impressive of young paqos. Puma is from Chinceros, which is just outside of Cuzco. He speaks fluent Quechua and Spanish and possesses excellent English, some French, and snippets of who knows how many other languages. Puma commands a presence that is disproportionate to his physical stature: he is approximately five foot six, with a slight build, but his smile literally lights up a room. His gentleness of spirit is palpable, and his humor can be disarming. The comment most people make about Puma upon first meeting him is that they have never met anyone with such an open heart. His knowledge becomes evident almost from his first word, and although it is cliché to call someone wise beyond his years, it is true of Puma. But he is only in his early twenties, and he has the enthusiasm and curiosity commensurate with his age. Although he is an exquisite standard-bearer of the ancient Andean ways, he is a young man of the modern world. He is a fixture at the Internet cafes in Cuzco; he has a portable CD player and loves rock music; he savors a good party—although he thinks parties in the United States are quite boring because people mostly stand around and talk. He wants to dance, sing, and play his flute. He loves television and movies, and he understands the culture of the United States

quite well. I remember one car ride in which Puma leaned over the back seat to hug my husband and me, who were sitting in the front. “Did I tell you I love you?” he asked. My husband and I rolled our eyes. “Yes, only about ten times today,” I deadpanned. His face lit up with his amazing grin. “Oh well,” he quipped, “I must be having a senior moment!” I nearly choked from laughing. That’s quintessential Puma.

You will catch glimpses of that mischievous young man in this chapter and the next three. But you will no doubt also be startled, as I was upon first listening to him, at the depth of his knowledge and the maturity of his insights. Puma has been on the sacred path for most of his life. He was struck by ball lightning when he was six, marking his call to the path, and he was trained initially by his grandfather, don Maximo “Puma” Singona, a noted healer in Chinceros. Later, Puma came under the tutelage of several Q’ero paqos, including the late don Juan Pauqar Espinosa, and alto mesayoqs of other lineages and healers of other cultures, including a Hawaiian *kahuna*. Until he was grounded in Peru for a visa violation, Puma frequently traveled to the United States to teach others and to be trained himself by various elders who recognized his sincerity of spirit and invited him to sit with them. For several years he represented Peru at international youth conferences, and he has started his own organization to revive the ancient ways for the youngsters of Peru.

I taped most of Puma’s public talks and private teaching circles while he was in North Carolina for three weeks in the summer of 2002, and the information presented in this section are my transcriptions of those tapes. When I asked Puma’s permission to share these transcripts in this book, he was enthusiastic, for as he so often tells people, the gifts of the mesa are for all of us. His teaching reinvigorated my work in the Andean tradition, because at the time that I met Puma, I had not been working consistently with my mesa. I had detoured from the mountain tradition to the jungle tradition of Peru and was working with ayahuasca, a visionary plant teacher of the Amazon. Puma’s teachings helped me reconnect to my neglected mesa and deepened my energetic and emotional connections with the Andean path.

Puma’s teachings correlate well with the teachings of the Q’ero (he has trained with several Q’ero paqos) and of Juan Núñez del Prado and Américo Yábar, although neither of them explicitly teaches mesa work. Juan and Américo focus on the energy body, the qosqo, and other aspects of the sacred work, and only secondarily teach how to mediate energy through the mesa.

Puma provided specifics that helped me engage my mesa as a very real spiritual tool. I trust readers who have a mesa will find that, after reading Puma's counsel, they will begin to approach their mesa with a new depth of respect, feeling, and connection.

So here is the mesa teaching according to Puma. As you will see, he ranges far and wide in his teachings, touching on diverse aspects of the sacred work—from soul retrieval, to why words have power, to the four keys of walking the sacred path as a paqo. I have grouped subjects and edited for transitions, grammar, and context, but otherwise the voice is all Puma's.

FREDY "PUMA" QUISPE SINGONA

First, I will tell you a little bit of my story, of how I began working on this path of a paqo, of a medicine man, in our communities. Since I was a child, I grew up with my grandparents in the Chinceros community. My parents had left for the city, where they could work and have their own business. My grandmother, one day she said to my mother that she was too young to raise me, and because I was the first grandson, they wanted to have me always close and nearby. That is the tradition always—grandparents and grandchildren have to be very connected. The minute they break away, the family starts breaking apart. That was their belief. For that reason, my grandmother says, "Fredy has to stay with us."



PHOTO BY JOHN S. WILCOX

As I was growing up with my grandparents, like every other boy in the community, I learned about medicine plants and the apus and Mother Earth, who is Pachamama. Like everyone else learned, I learned. But when I was six years old, one day I was bathing in a river alone. My friends were not

there. Usually we would go as groups taking our herds, our animals, into the mountains. But this time I was alone. While I was in the river bathing, a huge ball of light came. Whoosh! In less than seconds I got very big. I was tall, very tall, taller than the Eucalyptus trees. I flew upward, and I was looking down at everything from above. It must have lasted about two to three minutes. It was a very short time. Then I saw myself, my physical body, in the river, and that is when I came back.

I was back in the little pool of the river we bathed in, and the water there was nice and clear, and I saw fish swimming around. But in this river there are normally no fish! So what happened is, I got out of the water right away and ran home. I did not care if it was early in the day. I brought all the animals back to the house, and told my grandparents that I did not want to go to the mountains anymore with the animals. My grandfather was very happy about all this! He said, “Finally, I know with whom I am going to leave my hands.” By that he means working with the mesa, healing, working with our apus and Pachamama. All of that ability, all of that knowledge, he was going to pass on to me.

So, that is when I began the specific training, a deep training working with Mother Earth and our apus, and with the plant spirits. I learned about our connection with kay pacha, the energy of this world, and with hanaq pacha, the energies of the upper world, of the cosmos. I started understanding little by little, working this way until more or less I was nine years old.

When I was nine, I moved to Cuzco, the city where my parents were, and where they said I should come now to grow up with my sister and them and have that family connection. Because if I lived longer in Chinceros and did not go with my parents, perhaps I wouldn't have seen my parents as my parents, because I did not grow up with them that much. So when I was nine, I was still in that perfect moment to connect again with them.

When I moved to Cuzco, I was in a totally different kind of training. I got to help my mother sell the belts she wove. While working in the streets with her, I learned Spanish and English almost at the same time from all the tourists that came to Cuzco. I spent ninety percent of my time in the streets, and perhaps five percent with my family and another five percent in my sleep. I came to a whole different way of looking at the world. I had these challenges come and had to interweave my experiences of the mountains and my training with grandfather with my experiences in the city. All of that prepared me to become a paqo, to be able to honor the different types of life

and different kinds of people and where they come from and how they live, what their beliefs are, the different types of religions, the different languages. Everything!

Of course, when I first went to Cuzco, I did not like Spanish so much. I have always felt it is a little bit cold. But when I heard English, I said I have to learn that language! Then, of course, I started to meet people from different countries and English was totally different in each place. For example, the way the English speak, the way the Australians speak, the way the people from New Zealand speak. So, I started not having an accent! It was very special training; it was a way of reconnecting myself physically with the world. Where spiritually I was connected through working with my grandfather, now I was connected to the larger world, the world of the city and all that.

My father and mother have played a very important role in my path. I have learned from them about family, about being in groups in society. What I have learned is that in a family, each person represents—if we talk about it in terms of, say, a weaving—each person in the family represents a thread of that weaving. If those threads are not well woven or evenly dyed in color, the weaving will change. If a thread in the weaving breaks, the whole design can be gone. So, for that reason, the mother and father are very important in making sure the threads are strong, their children are strong. They work to keep them united. But then, at the same time, we ask who also is making this beautiful weaving? It is Pachamama and our apus! So, I learned all this in Cuzco.

Then when I was about fourteen years of age, I went back to the mountains to live with my grandfather. Just one year before, my grandmother had died. I started thinking, “I should go to Chinceros to be with grandfather. He is feeling too alone and sad.” So, I went, and again I went into intense training with him. For example, until that moment I was not a keeper of a mesa, which is like a medicine bundle of power objects. I was not able to do despachos or pagos, which are offerings to the spirits of nature. So, in those years when I was six until I was about fifteen, it was a time of deepening my roots. Then, in that moment, at fourteen or fifteen, I was like the bamboo tree: I hear it deepens its roots for a while and you don’t see any plant, and then when the roots are good and deep, suddenly the plant appears and grows many feet very fast. It was like that with me. I was deepening my roots, and then when I restarted my training I grew up very fast. I became a known

healer with our elders, which in our community we keep a little bit secret. Chinceros is more exposed to the Western world; it is more exposed to the tourists and especially to the Catholic Church and religion. So, for that reason, to follow the Andean path, which somehow has remained very pure still to this day in Chinceros, it was a very delicate undertaking. We had to keep it secret. It was part of my mission, as well, as a young person, to receive part of that lineage and to strengthen its roots, to know that this lineage is still being learned.

Now, today, not only do I work with elders, but also I work with youth. We are focusing as well on children, which is very important. The earlier they learn, the better. I mean, we can always wake up spiritually one day, no matter how old we are. But also then we have so many assumptions, so much knowledge that we have to let go of, that we have become attached to, that might make it a little bit difficult in our spiritual path. For that reason, a lot of the path as a paqo is about letting go. Actually, it is a path for everybody nowadays. So, that is a little bit about how I grew up and learned from my grandfather.

The Mesa

Our mesa is what we call the medicine bundle. It holds stones from specific mountains. These stones are our stars, for they have been given to us by our apus, the mountain spirits.¹ In the Andes, we use what comes from the land, from Pachamama. An apu represents the spirit of the land, especially the mountains. Wherever we are, we are always with our apus. They are the male spirit of the land. Pachamama is the female part of the land, Mother Earth. We depend on them, in terms of our agriculture, our alpacas, the quality of our lives, and the direction of our path.

I will tell you a story about what the mesa means. It was a time of challenges and in all the communities there were not many people practicing ayni, and people did not have good health. People were very weak. People were always jealous of each other, envious. So Wiraqocha, our creator, sent the condor to look and see what was happening in this community.

This condor was supposed to come back with the news of what was happening. When he returned, he reported and Wiraqocha listened. Then the condor was sent back again to actually become a person, to become part of the community. But he was special. With only one touch he could change people—make them become very nice, big hearted, compassionate, healthy,

and so on. So a lot of people used to come to him to receive his miracles, his healing.

And so, this man, who was really a condor, as he traveled to other communities, he helped connect them in better ways, helped them to support each other, to make ayni work again. When he traveled, he would never say where he was from, who he was, nothing like that. Because if he said he was a condor, maybe people would not have had as much faith in him, as much enthusiasm for being healed. He always kept the secret that he is a being of magic, a condor who is a man.

Now, one day, when he was very old, he told one young man to go to a mountain, to a particular cave, and there he would find a stone. Whenever he carried this stone, the young man could heal the same way the old man did. That stone represented the condor-man's heart. It was only to this young man that the old man revealed he was a condor sent by the Creator and that he was going to leave his heart in this cave.

The young man, when he went to this cave to get the stone, was also told to take a small piece of cloth. So, when the young man went to this place and picked up the stone—the heart of the condor—the condor-man vanished! He left, and all that remained was this stone-heart, which was still bleeding. The young man wrapped the stone in the cloth and brought it to the community and told them, “This man was really sent by our Creator and he has left his heart for us here in this bundle.” He even told which mountain it was left on and everything. So, ever since, the people would go to the young man and they would be healed. They had only to be touched by this heart. This is a story about how our mesa is our heart.

The mesa is about remembering your personal power. Our power is often lost, and people do not know where to go inside to find it. They look outside. There may appear to be many places to find it outside, but these are merely reflections of what is inside. So, that is why our mesas represent the mountain spirits [who know our hearts, who help us remember who we are] and we can do healing, be powerful and respected people in communities. A lot of paqos are very simple people, really. But also very respected. Very mysterious. Very compassionate and helpful and capable of working with this power, which is really their personal power. Our mesa is the fire of the heart. It is the heart of the condor. It was sent by our Creator to us a long time ago. It tells us how to work the path and how, even without your mesa, you have personal power within you. In your lives, as keepers of your mesa, you have

a lot of homework. Begin with your community. Begin with your family. Begin with yourself first. That is very important, that healing inside.

But I will teach you about the mesa by telling you another story, one that has not been told in quite a few years. It is very special. It tells you again about the meaning of the mesa and about finding the power inside yourself. Let me say first that usually when we have our mesas out in our communities, we always ask Pachamama and our apus to join us in our meeting. These are our guiding spirits. The minute we bring our mesas out, our apus arrive to join us. So, we need to greet them. It is good to greet the apus with music, and then with a prayer. You will learn many important things about the apus and Pachamama and the mesa from this story.

There was once a man who was hit by lightning in the mountains. When the villagers found him, he was lying down still, almost half dead. The villagers who found him knew he had been struck by lightning, so they helped him get back to his house, and they brought a stone from near the area where he had been struck, which represented his first mesa. As the person was recovering and being taken care of, he was given this stone as his mesa. And the elder told him, “You were chosen by our apus to be a paqo. You are an alto mesayoq. Your mesa is that of an alto mesayoq.”

He received his initiation ceremony from this elder. The night he was supposed to have his first work with his mesa—he had to be in this special cave, a cave where one goes to be born to the sacred path. This man had to go there to be born as a paqo. He went up to this cave, and as he opened his mesa bundle, he started hearing voices—many voices, like you would hear people speaking in a meeting. But he heard only male voices. He opened his mesa and he started hearing these sounds, and all of a sudden people appeared around him. All these people who had been speaking. There is this man on the right with a long beard. Most of the other ones are young. But this man on the right has a long beard and wears a beautiful golden hat. The man on the left does not have so much of a beard, but he also is an older person. He is beautifully dressed.

These two say to him, “How have you been?” This was a greeting to the paqo, who was nervous because of all these people and voices. It was his first awakening with his mesa. So, then, in the middle of this group, appears a woman—a beautiful woman. She is beautifully dressed and very strong, with a large, strong body. She is very special and very powerful. She appears and also says, “How have you been?” But the paqo does not answer. Then the

woman, who is Pachamama, gives the welcome to the circle of men and to the paqo, saying to him, “Welcome to our circle.”

One of the apus says—for the men in the circle are all apus—he says, “Who are you?” to the paqo. The paqo answers by saying, “Felipe Wayta Huanaqo.”^{II} This is actually the true story of one of the alto mesayoqs of Chinceros!

So, he says, “I am Felipe Wayta Huanaqo.” But the apu says again, more forcefully, “Who are you?” The paqo repeats, “Felipe Wayta Huanaqo.” Then he starts thinking, worrying about why the apus are not receiving his answer. So he gives a different answer. “I am the son of Martín.”

But the apu asks again, “Who are you?”

This third time, Felipe thinks and thinks about his answer, and then he realizes, “Ah, of course! I am a paqo. That is supposed to be my answer.” So he says, “I am an alto mesayoq.” But still the apus reject his answer. They ask again, “Who are you?” Felipe does not know how to answer.

That is when Pachamama, the beautiful and strong lady in the circle, spoke. She says, “You see, sometimes not even *you* know who you are. But *we* know who you are.” Then they all started explaining his path to him, telling how he has been in the past, why they have chosen him as a paqo, the work he is going to do with them, and the principles he needs to live by. These are respect, love, supporting people, living in ayni, being part of the community, and so on.

Then Pachamama told him that this is true for each of us—only in our hearts do we know who we are. Very seldom will we be able to tell someone else who we are.

Felipe began to wonder about how he did not really know who he was, even though all these people in the circle seemed to know very well who he was. So, after the paqo was with his mesa up there in the cave, and having been told this by the spirits, he had a big revelation. He started having direct communication with the apus, the mountain spirits. He understood that from the time he was a child he never gave them much importance. The apus in the cave kept reminding him of that, saying, “You kept turning your face away from us. You did not listen to your grandfather. You kept not wanting to learn from him. And here we have chosen you in this way. You are meant to carry his lineage.”

So then they asked him about why he was there. He said that he was there because of his community, that as a paqo he represented his community. The

apus agreed. “Yes! But why else?” they asked. So, he said, “I’m here because of my parents. Thanks to them I am able to be here.” Again, the apus said “Yes!” But they wanted another answer, a deeper one. So they asked him again. What happened was at the end the paqo did not know what to say, just like before. Why was he there? He didn’t know. So the apus told him, “Only you know in your heart. Many people will ask you what you do, and you will try to tell them. But they cannot really know, because they cannot know your heart.

Only you can know your heart. And we can, too. Many, many people in themselves don’t know in their minds why they are here on this path, in this life. That can only be known in their hearts. Very seldom will they be able to share why they are here. You are the person who is chosen to remind them. You are meant to ask them. You won’t always get an answer, but when you look in their hearts you will know.”

So this conversation with the spirits in the cave went on and on and on, and they told the paqo about the nature of time, and about the places he would go, and why he was doing this work as a paqo and everything. Very, very deep questions were answered. He thought being a paqo was going to be so easy! He was enthusiastic to work, but he didn’t know very much. He thought it would be so easy. But now he knew he actually got a lot of responsibility—just with the mere fact of opening his mesa! He had the opportunity to begin connecting with the apus and they started reminding him, telling him “Not even you sometimes know who you are. But we know. We are always aware. We are always looking after you, watching over you.” And they started giving him homework right away!

So after he left the cave, he returned home. And one day when he left his house and he had his mesa on his back, in a bag he used to carry it, he went to the mountains and met a neighbor. He used to always speak badly of him. He looked at this neighbor and said, “I honor who you are. You have been a very good person to our family, helping us with the work of the harvest and everything. I want to thank you for that.” His neighbor was very impressed. This man had never greeted him before, had never talked to him this way, and all of a sudden he was speaking kindly. The paqo could change how he spoke because now, through his work with the mesa and the apus, he realized that he did not really know his neighbor, had never seen who he was.

Then again, as he was working with his community members, and before they had lunch, he had them all stop. He said, “First, we need to offer some

of our food to Pachamama. We are forgetting that.” The community members said to him, “You were never like this. Never remembered Mother Earth. And now all of a sudden you care for her.”

So that is how it goes when we work with a mesa. Our apus choose our paqos. I tell you this story because we get a lot of gifts from working with the mesa. But also a lot of challenges, too, because it is a big responsibility. And it is a path that can take you many, many years to learn. It is always changing. For example, my grandfather has worked two-thirds of this life as a paqo without being able to really see or speak with our apus. He always just made ceremonies and offerings to them, and he worked healing other people. He knew very well how to contact our apus, but he could not necessarily see them directly or hear them speak to him as if they were right in front of him. And only just recently, now that he is very old, has he been able to see and hear our apus. He is changed; even after all these years he makes progress. People change the way they are and then everything around them changes. That learning and changing is part of being a paqo. You are never done.

So, our mesa is our medicine bundle; it represents our power. Now why is it called “mesa?” That is the word that means “table” in Spanish. I remember one time when we were speaking in Q’ero with one of our paqos, and he said that our most serious decisions are made around the table. When you speak from community to community, between chiefs and authorities, they always speak in a formal way around the table. Important things take place around the table, and that is why this is called “mesa.” So, really, when we do the formal work, we only do it with our mesa.

Preparing a Mesa

A mesa might have stones, crystals, and other symbols of your power in it. All your power objects are wrapped in a beautiful cloth, to make a bundle. Whatever you put in your mesa, only put it in if you have a strong “Yes!” about it. For example, this stone [picks up a very large chunk of amethyst] would be beautiful for me to have in my mesa, because it is powerful and comes from a special apu. But it is not practical. It is big and heavy. I would not be able to carry it. I would not be responsible enough to carry this apu everywhere. Perhaps I wouldn’t be the best paqo for this stone. Maybe I would leave it at my altar at the house. So, it is not a strong “yes” for me to add this to my mesa. But if I have this smaller one [picks up a small piece of amethyst that is nearby], I could carry it in my mesa. It is beautiful and

powerful. It gives me a strong “yes.” It is not only about being practical but also about what you feel strongly in your heart. Which objects are connected to the heart of the fire for you? What gives that heat to you? That is how you decide what is in your mesa.

Now, you don’t only carry stones. In your mesa, there are specific symbols of power, perhaps of protection, confidence, courage, and qualities like those. These symbols are totally different for each person. Others are more universal. Let me give you some examples from the Andes. We have one symbol, which is the puma claw, which for us, in our culture, represents protection and courage. The fox is luck and also intuition. The bell is intuition. But they also can have personal meanings, specific to a single person. So choose what has meaning and says a big “Yes!” to you.

There is no real way to arrange your mesa. If you open it, then place the objects where it feels right for them to be placed. People set the energy of their mesa by the way they arrange the stones, but it is individual. As for the closed bundle, sometimes you can ask the apus how they want to be held—for some stones in your mesa are gifts from the apus and represent individual apus. One may want to be in one part of the mesa depending on how you hold it. Maybe to the left. Maybe to the right. Maybe in the center. You just need to ask them and they will tell you. Your mesa is your heart, so listen and it will teach you.

What I have given you—and what I will give you—is information. It is not something that is written in stone! It is basically the teaching of our elders and insights. It is almost as if it is a recipe for a meal. Until you have actually cooked it, you will not know what it will taste like. Once you know what it tastes like, you might not like it completely! So you might need to change the recipe. And next time you cook, you will do it the way you like it. A lot of the mesa work that I am telling you about is like that. It’s basic and important, but only in your practice will you be able to learn for yourself, by yourself. Learn well, then trust your own experience. Have confidence!

Activating Your Mesa

Many people here in the United States ask me about empowering their mesa. Let me talk about that for a moment. There is this work in Chinceros where we activate the mesa. Well, not only in Chinceros, but everywhere really. In Q’ero, too. They do the activating of the mesa. When we talk about activating our mesa in our community, the main work in the circle is that the minute you

open your mesa or have it out on an altar, all of our apus arrive. They are the mountain spirits, the main ones you work with in your mesa. You may work with different apus than I do. Then, of course, there is the spirit of the land where you live. So activating the mesa represents honoring these apus, greeting these apus, and also honoring Pachamama.

It is always very important that your mesa becomes a very powerful circle. You honor every apu in your mesa through a prayer, calling them into the circle, inviting them to come, by calling their names. So, sometimes with my grandfather, for example, he would say, “Apu Ausangate, Apu Salcantay, Apu . . . ,” and he would sometimes forget the name of an apu! He works with so many! So what happens is he has this prayer where he ends by saying, “To all of our apus whose names I have forgotten yet who I keep in my heart.” So it’s always very important to remember all of the mountain spirits.

Also, your mesa is connected with all other mesas, which I will talk about later. But for now, activating your mesa means connecting with all the other mesas of all the other paqos. But really, let me tell you, there is no such thing as our mesa *not* being activated at all times. It is like our apus are always there, always awake, always ready to work with us and always very aware of where we are and what we are doing. So when I speak of activating our mesa, it is a little confusing. Really it means calling its power for a specific reason, either for our own healing or for helping someone else or for a specific ceremony or something like that.

Remember, also, that this path is about respect. A lot of this path is about integrity. So, we can take it for granted that once we activate our mesa we will never send heavy energy to anyone through it. We can’t really. We can merely access the ley lines of energy that connect us to everything—these are called the seques—and activate our mesa and get connected to all the other mesas.^{III} Through these ley lines it becomes like two hundred or three hundred, or even two thousand or three thousand mesas working together! That does not necessarily mean that through this work together, you are going to influence someone else’s mesa. No. You are working only with your own mesa, so you don’t have to worry about affecting someone else’s mesa. Our apus work very carefully.

So, that is the work of activating our mesa, and always remember to do that—to honor Pachamama first and then the mountain spirits. Then realize the connection you have through your mesa to all the other mesas. In that way,

you will always remember you are working in a network—between communities, between family members, countries, and continents. Do not forget that you are never alone as a paqo.

The *Mesa* Carrier and the *Kawsay Pacha*

All paqos have a mesa, but not all paqos work the mesa in the same way. There are two roads on the path of being a paqo, and I will share a little bit about this knowledge. The two roads are the pampa mesayoq and the alto mesayoq, and I would like to share the responsibility that comes with each. A lot of alto mesayoqs are trained by their teacher, over a long period of time. Of course, as time goes faster, a lot of alto mesayoqs are trained faster now. It's interesting. We have a lot of paqos in Chinceros who are pampa mesayoqs but are now becoming alto mesayoqs. So fast!

In their work, it's a hard training with a lot of challenges. Even for the pampa mesayoq. A pampa mesayoq is a person who works with the community, with the land, with kay pacha, in the present, and with connecting people with their roots, strengthening those roots. An alto mesayoq is a person who is more focused on the path of a person in this life, on our spirit and how we are doing on our path. A pampa mesayoq can see a person's life, can follow the ley line of that life to see where it is going. But the alto mesayoq knows better how to support that person, at that level. An alto mesayoq has to work also with our apus, but at the same time not only the apus of our kay pacha, which is here, but with the apus of above in the upper world, the hanaq pacha—like with the constellations, the stars. They are like apus of the heavens. He knows different energies, different energy fields in the stars. He connects with them as well. So he is focused in the present and in the future. And, of course, the past as well. He has a very good understanding of the past because otherwise he would not be able to focus on the future.

So, for example, an alto mesayoq, before he even reads the coca leaves for you, he already knows why you came to see him. Before he even reads the coca leaves he knows how to heal you, to help you in your health, in your business, in your life, in everything. The pampa mesayoq is more in *training*

on the path—he is learning to connect, to respect, to understand that privilege of being able to see, being able to work with a person. So, really, a pampa mesayoq's path is one of training. Alto mesayoqs do more of the *working* of the path.^I He is putting into action what he learned, as a healer, spiritual guide, and especially as a guardian of the community. When we have an alto mesayoq in a community that means that whatever problems are coming, whatever difficulties are happening, we will always know how best to act, for we have an alto mesayoq to tell us. For example, many times some difficulty happens and the alto mesayoq says right away, “This is what we need to do. Make this kind of offering. This is what will change things.”

And yet, in my community, it was a little bit different, because there is a lot of influence from the Catholic Church. So an alto mesayoq or pampa mesayoq would not be as confidently showing up before the community. It used to be more of a secret. I remember, for example, when a lot of our elders had to meet in secret and did not call attention to themselves. They were actually saying, “We don't tell. We are nothing. Pay no attention to us.” For example, my grandfather was more known as a midwife and as a healer. He did know about plants. And that is what a pampa mesayoq needs to understand, too—working with plants. But an alto mesayoq no longer needs to use the plants; he has gone beyond the actual plant to the energy within it. Sometimes an alto mesayoq will use the essence of a plant through a prayer, and right away he will be able to heal. That is why we have different levels of alto mesayoqs. According to some people, a *hatun niyoq* is a person who only with his mere desires can heal you. That power disappeared just a few generations ago. Well, it still continues, but that is another thing . . .

On the alto mesayoq path there are heavy challenges, because many people do not know how to control their power. Eventually, some alto mesayoqs, when they don't have their strong roots, they go onto the path of harming other people, of having too much pride and so on. In a pampa mesayoq's path that cannot really happen. Because the minute that happens our apus stop working with that person. They take your powers away. Whereas with an alto mesayoq, he can sometimes take that power for granted.

The pampa mesayoq trains very hard. But with the alto mesayoq, training can take years or can be as fast as one second—being hit by lightning for example. It's like for one person, they have one insight and they are changed—which nowadays is happening more often.^{II} Pachamama is doing that. In

one minute a person has an important insight and all of a sudden he or she is given the gift.

MESA CARRIERS AND ANDEAN PROPHECY

Now many of you in the United States, and in Europe and other countries, are on the path and are working your mesa. That is as it should be. A long time ago I used to have this conversation with my grandfather where he would tell me, “No, I wouldn’t want to speak of the path to a white person, because of everything that happened in our past with the Conquest.” He said this even though he used to teach me about our ancestry and forgiveness and everything. When I came back from living in Cuzco, where I had made this white friend, and I wanted my grandfather to meet this friend, my grandfather said, “No.” But then he read the coca leaves and the coca leaves said, “Yes, this is his path.” He said something very powerful that day. My grandfather said, “Our apus want this meeting. It is not up to my will.” Then he understood and everything was changed.

The way he explained it to me was that we [Indians and whites] are almost brother and sister, and we were now sitting together in front of the mesa. You, the whites, left the mesa a long time ago. And you asked us to keep this mesa for you while you wandered away. You were supposed to come back to this teaching, and when you returned, we were united at the altar and can work together again, with our mesas. It is reciprocity. If some day we Andeans begin to forget or choose to wander away from the mesa like you did, then because you know it again, you will be the keepers of the mesa.

That is why you are in training. You will have to keep this mesa in a much better way even than we have. We have been forgetting, not paying so much attention over the past years. Many teachings have been forgotten in the Andes. But now we are teaching it to others, and it will not be forgotten again. When I come to you to visit I see so much enthusiasm! I see so much interest in learning, and in connecting with Pachamama and the apus. So you are going to be the next keepers of our mesas! We don’t know for how long, but when we look in the coca leaves, we see that we need to work together.

It is the beginning of the time of interweaving. Part of my work as a paqo is to strengthen the thread of this weaving. Because if one thread breaks, the whole design is gone. If one thread is not strong enough, that can mean the

whole weaving needs to be done over. So that is why, when you work with this mesa, you are strengthening yourself, preparing yourself to be the next keepers of the mesa, to be the next pampa mesayoqs. Although maybe there are already alto mesayoqs here! Our apus, in the Andes and here, are so powerful. And I talk to them. They are also at a different level of work from the old times. It's not like there must be pampa mesayoqs first. There can be alto mesayoqs right away! Time is speeding up! That is the way the apus want all of us to work together. That is the power they have given us.

Mainly in our work as keepers of the mesa, we are here to share our knowledge, to create this weaving together. We do this especially because pachakutis are coming very soon. These are times of change, which are coming very soon.^{III} We need to start preparing ourselves for that, like our ancestors did. They went through cycles as well. It is not the first time this is happening to us, changes in ourselves and in Pachamama. There are basic preparations that we take with our mesas. I will tell you this story, which is also very important for the mesa.

A long time ago there was the losing of the connections to nature. It was very cold. The fire that used to burn in the heart of each person and also in the community hearth was dying down, little by little, until it almost disappeared. People were always very cold. Very frustrated. Always fighting with each other, not helping each other. And the elder of this one community knew a prophecy—that one day the fire would be burning again. He knew that a *yanantin-masintin*, which is like the brother and sister connection or energy, was supposed to go to get the fire from a cave in the mountains to restore it to the people.

Well, there was a brother and sister who lived near the river, and they were so cold. Very cold. They didn't know what to do, and they decided they had to do something. They saw their families, their communities being so cold and they could not live like that anymore. So, they decided they were going to go to the elder for advice on what to do. They went to the elder and were told the prophecy about the heart of the fire, and about the cave where it burned, but about how difficult it was to access this cave. They could very easily be consumed by this primordial fire if they did not approach it carefully, with respect and courage. People had tried before to retrieve this fire, but they had failed. They had always gone alone. This was the first time a brother and sister would go together.

So, they went on this journey, through a jungle and mountains, past dangerous animals, and so on, until they came to the cave, which had a tiny, dark opening. Way deep inside was this fire. They approached and went in. There were bats and others things in the dark, scaring them. But they went in little by little, until they came to the fire. The brother said, “Let me approach it, and I will take some of it.” But the sister remembered how dangerous it was and was afraid for him. She said she would take the risk. So she approached the fire and took some coals and fire carefully in her hands. The coals were coming very nicely, and she was smiling, but then “Oww!” The coals burned her. The brother said, “No, let me do it.” So he took up some coals, and he was smiling, and then “Oww!” The coals burned him. They didn’t know what to do. They felt the cold, a cold wind coming down through the cave. They looked at each other, about to leave, and then they remembered the yanantin-masintin, which is about not doing things alone, so they both reached down together to get the fire, and they were able to. They were not burned, not consumed. They brought the fire to the elder, and he showed it to the community, and the fires in all the hearths were restored once again.

This elder then wrapped the glowing coals in a mesa blanket, and they stayed there, always burning, always ready to warm us, to burn as the fire in our hearts. This is the mesa. The mesa is the fire burning in our hearts.

I wanted to tell you this story because it is another story about the meaning of the mesa. The community was able to heal, live together in happiness, with heat, with no more darkness and cold. This is the work of the prophecy—and it is my work and your work.

THE MESA AS GATEWAY TO PERSONAL HISTORY

How does our mesa connect us with the kawsay pacha, the world of living energy, and with this world, the kay pacha? To other paqos? To the apus and Pachamama? To our past and to our future? This is very important—to understand how your mesa connects you to the cosmos.

We think we work with our mesa alone. But we don’t really. You have your mesa, but it is connected with others and may be connected with one other who is very special to your work. The mesa work is best done in partnership, in what we call yanantin-masintin.^{IV} It is about working together, not necessarily alone. This is very important to know about working with

your mesa, your medicine bundle—you must always remember that in reality you do not work alone.

Why are we not alone when we work with our mesa? First, because at the very moment you are working with your mesa, there are elders in Chinceros, or in Q'ero, or in Paucartambo, who are sitting working with their mesas. We must always acknowledge and honor that. And perhaps it is not only in Peru. It may be somewhere else. In England. In India. In Australia. Anywhere there are mesa carriers, all these mesa carriers are connected. We are people who are working in the center of the web, holding the heart of the fire in our mesas.

I have been learning to work with my mesa since I was six years old. But the first time I ever held a mesa of my own was when I was more or less fifteen. Until then, my grandfather kept my mesa for me. He is my yanantin-masintin, the person who is most closely connected with my mesa and works with me most often. So the second principle is that there is the person who balances your work. For me, this is my grandfather, who is the balance for me. The yanantin-masintin is usually a male and the female who work together, but it also represents the heavy energy and the light energy that we are always working with.

When we are keepers of our mesas, especially if we are alto mesayoqs, we have access—very special access—to parts of a person's life and being. Together the yanantin-masintin work in the healing of that person. Even if we are working alone at the moment, we can always call on that other person, our yanantin-masintin, for extra support and help. We call on their energy and they are with us, through the mesa. The reverse is also true. I can also help my yanantin-masintin get out of problems he may be getting into, for whatever reason. The yanantinmasintin is basic. It is like a mother and a father responsible for a child. In the same way, with paqos, they are responsible for their community, and for each other. So, there has to be a yanantin-masintin.

We are also connected to our ancestors, who work the mesa with us. This is very important to understand. You cannot know where you are going if you do not know where you came from. My grandfather is my lineage. You must go to your own ancestry. For example, when we talk about carrying the mesa, I have always been very careful to say this is a medicine bundle and this is specifically the lineage of my grandfather. But it is also the lineage of the Inkas, who are my ancestors. And the mesa goes back even more, to all our other ancestors. When you carry your mesa, you are carrying the lineage of

your ancestors and connecting even beyond the cultures as we name them now. So, it would be too much taken for granted to say it is the lineage of my grandfather only. Way back, it is even true that all our ancestors were connected.

I will tell you this story that explains even more about what I mean about ancestors. One day after I learned something in school, I was very angry. I went to my grandfather and said to him, "Those Spaniards! How could they have done what they did to our people?" I had learned a lot of things about this at school, and when I heard about what the Spaniards did in Peru and all over Latin America, to the Mayans and Aztecs, with whom we had connection as well, I felt that what they did was terrible. I had the question of whether I should hate them or not, and I was very upset toward them. Yet, when I told that to my grandfather, he said, "Why are you upset for yourself? You could have been one of those Spaniards in a previous time." So, really, when he talks to me about ancestry, he talks to me beyond one hundred years, beyond one thousand years. He goes back to the time when we were light like the stars. So we need to start changing the assumptions of our ancestry. Through revelations a lot of elders have received this message: your ancestry goes beyond the time you are thinking of in terms of your life and your own family blood.

Let me tell you another story, when I received a strong teaching about the importance of ancestry. In 1998, I was at this international conference, where I was invited to be with many different elders, healers from many different countries. The conference was the State of the World forum. I saw that I was the only young person there. All the healers were elders, from many countries and places: Hawaii, Alaska, Africa, Mongolia, Mexico, from these different places. As always, I developed a very confident relationship with our elders very quickly. Because when a young person comes with interest for learning, when a young person comes with respect, with that pure way of being, why wouldn't you want to accept that person? So always, I have that way of relationship.

At this conference, I met this elder from Hawaii. He was the person who most called my attention. We talked for hours and hours about our cultures, and he shared how a long time ago our ancestors used to travel together and everything. During our talk, he told me something, and it is something that I always say everywhere I go, and I always remind people of it. He told me that in the Polynesian culture, they always watch the stars to learn the

direction they have come from, because seeing through the stars is the only way we can get to where we are going. He said this because their path had been set, according to the place from where they began. As long as they are focused on that path, on where they came from, they will always get to where they are going. That is important for all of us to remember. As long as you know where you come from, you will get to where you are going. I understood that at all levels. I felt that within my heart. It is something that people here, in the United States, have forgotten. Even in our communities in Peru, we have to remind ourselves to remember our ancestry.

You may think there is a contradiction about what I am saying. About knowing who you are by looking at the stars. Didn't I already say that we must look within? Yes! But there is no conflict. When you look up at the night sky, are you looking out there at the stars? Are you sure? Are you sure they are out there? It looks like they are out there, but are they really? No! Everything is within! Totally! But also according to what our elders have always taught us, the sky is full. There are storehouses, there are alpaca and llama herds, there are communities, there are snow-peaked mountains, the apus—they are all out there in specific stars, in specific constellations. Some of our paqos and elders even have it mapped. My grandfather has a few power stars that he connects with and works with. They are out there, but they are always also within.

One of the things I differentiate with the Catholics of Peru, with Catholicism, is that God is within. Catholics and so many others see God out there, and we have to find God and bring Him into our hearts. They tell us that we don't have Him, and so we have to find Him and bring Him into our hearts. In the Andes, it is so different. When we work, we perceive that we are already within the heart of God. We have always been within God's heart. We are always there and we just need to remember it! There is a very special honoring and acknowledging there for each one of us. Our creator and Pachamama, and *Pachatata* [male earth energy] have a very special love for each one of us. You must acknowledge and remember that.

So for that reason, when we talk about space, we talk not only about what is out there but also what is very deep within ourselves, acknowledging who we are. We need to begin there, inside. Acknowledging who we are, where we come from. We must reconnect with our ancestors. Some people, when I talk about ancestors, they go back as far as grandparents or great-grandparents. Some people go back hundreds of years. But our ancestry goes

back far beyond that. It goes back as far as humans go. Everyone is our ancestor. Don't think about it but feel it. That knowing is inside your hearts. We must start acknowledging where we come from. Remembering who we are. You must look to your ancestry to discover your story, to learn what your challenges have been, where your gifts are. All this knowledge will lead you back to this moment, to right now, to right here, and you will "be" in a different way. That is the work of a paqo.

Now that I am older I see that when I worked with my grandfather when I was very young, when he trained me as a paqo, that was what the whole training was about—about remembering where I come from. Through that remembering my eyes will not be veiled by all the different assumptions that I learned in school or heard from people or just the things that I think about. I carry Inka blood. So all my lifetime I think I am Inka. But no! I realized that was not all true. Because when we think about our ancestry, we must go beyond five hundred years. We must go beyond one thousand years even. We are connected way, way back, almost beyond time. Many times I feel people are lost, especially when I hear people say, "I am not part of an indigenous culture or land." But before people were living in the United States and being the culture labeled "white" people, these people were native to a land. You were native to a land, and you were all indigenous to a culture. So, really when I started working with that, mostly, I acknowledged that each of us has a way to connect to our ancestry. For example, just by looking at the color of my skin, I might identify myself with the Mayan culture, the Egyptian, the Inkan. In this moment, right now, I am carrying that diverse lineage. In that same way, you also need to remember your ancestry. It will empower you, strengthen your path. It will show you much more clearly what your path in life is, and you will start recognizing inside who you are.

I told you the story of the paqo who meets the apus and Pachamama in the cave, and the apus ask him, "Who are you?" The paqo did not know how to answer that question. The apus and Mother Earth said to him, "That is because you only know it in your heart." The point of that story is that you will very seldom be able to talk of it. Some people might be able to see who you are if they are capable of looking into your heart. Most people will never know who you are. But really we are always somebody through our ancestry! Your ancestry is very wide, very deep. It is not only your family. It is humanity.

When we work with our mesa, we remember even back to the time when we fell from the stars, in a rain of light, as our prophecies tell us we did. We remember back to the times when Mother Earth sprouted these beings, these bright beings. There are a lot of stories that tell, for example, how we came from the water, so crystal clear, in harmony, living by helping each other, supporting each other. And yet, in that story of our history, part of our path was not to recognize each other. Part of our path was to separate from each other. Why? We needed to know our hearts but we forgot how to see into them. We needed to respect our connections, but we did not. We thought we had to be separate, even alone. But no! Now we know that is not true. We are remembering.

THE MESA AS GATEWAY TO OTHERS

When this paqo I told you about in the first story, Felipe Wayta Huanaqo, opened his mesa and the apus came, the apu on the right was Ausangate, the most sacred mountain in Peru. The apu on the left was Salcantay, the second most sacred mountain. And the woman was Pachamama. Every time you give an offering, you connect to the nature energies. You give to Mother Earth first, and then to the apus. You connect with them, and as soon as you begin to work with your mesa they are there. Whenever you work with your mesa, when you do a healing with your mesa, you begin by thanking Pachamama first, and then you call in and honor our apus. That is the order of the blessings. Always Pachamama first. Why? Let me tell you another story. That is the best way to teach!

A paqo had a dream that he was being followed by these old men, begging for money. They were his uncles! The paqo did not know what to do. The men were naked. They were hungry. The paqo said, “What do I do? These are people that I know! These are my uncles! They have land. They have herds. Why are they begging for money?” So he tried to escape, to run away, and he saw this lady, who was weaving. He went over to her and said to her, “Please hide me. My uncles are coming and they are begging for money.” The woman looked at him and said, “Are you going to serve them first? Or are you going to serve me first?”

In this dream, Pachamama was reminding the paqo that she is to be served first. A lot of pampa mesayoqs and alto mesayoqs have a very intimate relationship with Pachamama and our apus. And with other spirits,

like the oceans, lakes, streams. So, when we work with our mesa, we need to remember this. Pachamama first, and then our apus.

Our mesa is like being at the center of the web, with threads that connect you to specific power points on our planet and with Pachamama and the apus, so you can ask questions and receive answers. For the most part, once you start working with a mesa, your apus don't wait until you call. The minute you think about working with the mesa and the apus, they know and are coming! They come to your mesa very fast!

You must build that confident relationship in your work with Pachamama and our apus. Always be confident of them, trusting them. Be truthful with them. If you have to scream at them, scream at them. And then, at the same time, as you scream at them, remember that you must also work from respect, from your heart. Whether you do it with anger or love, you must always work with true feeling. Then you will be able to learn all the secrets of our apus, all the secrets of Pachamama.

I will tell you one of these secrets! Our apus say, nowadays, that healing has become so much more difficult, because it has to be at the individual level. A long time ago, the healing was done at the community level, at a family level. So many people could be helped at once. But now, it takes more time. For example, my grandfather used to pray with his mesa for at least two to three hours every night. He would do that from midnight to two or three o'clock in the morning. Now he prays six hours, because he knows more people and has to remember all of them. There are more things to pray for.

And also time is going faster, too! How do we get in harmony with that? We always need to remember that time is a being. It is an apu. We have to not think that we have so many things to do and not enough time. The minute you say that there is not enough time, you have very little respect for this being. So, for example, when you talk or think about time, whether it be long or short, do not take it for granted. Do what you need to do. Believe you have the time for everything! We often work with time in this physical realm in a mental way, so time is a concept, a thought. But when you work with your mesa, you work from your heart. So, when an alto mesayoq or a pampa mesayoq works with time in the mesa, it is a being. We need to have a confident relationship with time, just as we need confidence in all our work.

Although we have all these connections through our mesas, another thing to be aware of is that we very seldom open our mesas. It is a cloth bundle, and what is in it is like a secret. It is private. It's a special circle of powerful

beings that only the paqo, Pachamama, and the apus are part of. If you have a yanantin-masintin relationship with someone in terms of your mesa, then that person is also part of that circle. He belongs there. But anyone else is visiting! Anyone else must be invited into the circle.

So, for that reason, this circle has a specific energy, and the littlest thought or judgment or even your spoken words can influence the energy of the circle and your work with the apus and Pachamama. If they do not want a particular person in your circle, they will tell you, “If you ever work with this person again, I don’t want to be there! I know this person is like this or that and has to learn first before he can join our circle.” The apus talk to us like that! Directly! So, for certain people they might say, “Ah, no. Not with this person. Not now.” They do not always accept everyone into the circle. You must be sensitive to that. Use discernment with your mesa and who you invite into its energy.

But generally our mesa work is about establishing connections. In our communities, when we have our meetings with all the paqos, our mesas are always with us. They are always closed, at the center of our circle. They are only opened for specific purposes, maybe to create a specific bubble of energy. For specific things, then we open them. That is more or less what my grandfather used to do, make a circle with four other paqos. There weren’t that many paqos left in my community. It is not, for example, like in Q’ero, where many families have a son or grandson who is open to receiving the lineage. In Q’ero there are more paqos, more elders. This work is their daily life. They learn to work with the apus and Pachamama every day, even when they work harvesting potatoes. For them the sacred work is as common to life as brushing your teeth is here in the United States. It is just natural. But in Chinceros it’s a little more difficult. There is so much of the Western world there and the Catholic Church, which can cause problems for us and our paqos.^V

But I am losing the thread of my teaching. Let me return to the mesa. There is still another connection you make through your mesa—to your teachers. When I talk about working with a teacher, I do not mean that he is always with you. I do not mean he is with you every day, telling you, “Do this with the mesa. Do that.” No. Teacher and student might meet once a year, twice a year in intense work. A lot of their guidance—maybe ninety-five percent of a pampa mesayoq’s or alto mesayoq’s guidance—is from their dreams, their meditations. So, for example, when you work with the mesa

you must understand that the knowledge of every pampa mesayoq or alto mesayoq or knowledge offered by the apus or Mother Earth is available to you. Remember, when you work with the mesa you are not alone. You are connected with all other paqos. But it is the state of your own energy that brings through the teachings, in your dreams, during your private work. So do not worry—the information is there for you! There are ways of accessing it.

THE MESA AS GATEWAY TO THE COSMOS

I have talked about how the mesa connects you to your ancestors and to other paqos and to Pachamama and the apus. Now you must understand that once you have a mesa, you have access to special portals. You have access to the ley lines and can travel through these ley lines, which are streams of energy that we call seques. *Seque* is a Quechua word for storing something, but on the sacred path it means a ley line, which is a line of light energy that connects power places. We have these ley lines of sami that come from our qosqo, our navel chakra. But these ley lines are all over the universe. They are not only on this planet. The alto mesayoqs, the paqos who are trained to work with the cosmos, they know very well how to work with these seques. They know the seques like the palms of their hands!

As paqos we need first to begin learning where the seques go from our qosqo. They go out from us and connect us to many, many people and things with whom we are in relation—all the people in your life. So many people and places. Some people, for example, might feel connected to Machu Picchu. That is not a coincidence. Our ancestors knew where Machu Picchu was and that it was a very powerful place. Other people feel a strong connection to Egypt. It is the same thing. There is a specific energy line that connects you to a place, from your qosqo to that place of power. And then there are ley lines that connect you to members of your family, your friends, to others close to you. A person who understands this can balance himself and his seques. Relations will not be out of order because it is not like there is more energy connecting him to his son rather than to his daughter. He is equally connected, the same for everybody. That is what you need to do for yourself. You want to touch others' connections and those of power places and become as if you are the center and your seques go out in harmony in all directions. It is important to always remain at the center. In that way, at any time, no matter what, you can move easily in any direction, but always

remain grounded. It is very important not to get pulled too much in any direction, but to remain in the center. Wherever you move, you want to always come from the center. Because the minute my seques pull me off center, I am not here anymore. I am not in my power anymore. I am no longer clear of the meaning of my heart's fire.

We can cleanse these lines of energy when they are filled with hucha. We need to use those ley lines with our families, our community, with people close to us, and clear their heavy energy. That is the beautiful part of clearing heavy energy, because by doing it with one person, you are doing it for the whole family or the whole community. We need to remember that. This is the way it was done a long time ago, but people have forgotten. It's like we always focus on one person at a time only. But no, we are all connected in our relationships or community through these shared seques. The paqo learns how to do these things, to clear energy, to always be at the center of his or her energy. [The exercises in] Joan's book do a very fine job of introducing these cleansing techniques. You must practice them. It takes practice to work with your seques. They are like energy connectors, like threads in a web. Get to know your web very well!

Always remember that your qosqo and your mesa are the centers of the flow of energy through the cosmos. Everything that I am sharing with you about the Andean path—of the paqos' path, the apus, and Pachamama—is said in order to light up something within your heart. It is in order to strengthen your spiritual growth. Perhaps to take away, just a little bit more, any fears you have about your spiritual path. It is a privilege to share in this way with you. Only in this way, in reciprocity, in community, will we remember how to live, as we did a long time ago. Transformational times are coming soon and we must start preparing. You and me, you and all the elders of the communities of Peru—we are all connected on the path of spirit. Remember this—it is not just me speaking. They speak, too. In ceremony, we meet. In our hearts we are joined.

TWELVE

Mesa Carriers and Healing

Let us now talk about using our mesa for healing. In the Andes, especially in the rural communities, a lot of our healing work has to do with the plants and with ceremonies and prayer. The way we learn is usually by being able to use the energies and the powers of the universe to support and help someone who is in difficulty either physically, emotionally, or spiritually. In whatever difficulty they might be in, we help them, support them. As paqos, we use ceremonies and healing energy. What I mean by that is, in general, we allow a brother or sister to walk their own path, but perhaps we help them take away the veils that sometimes cover their eyes. Because of the veils, they don't see really where their gift is, where their path is. We might also clear away some heavy energy that is blocking their path or not allowing them to heal faster or easier.

As paqos, we work with the spirit of the land, Pachamama, our Mother Earth. We work also with the spirits of our apus, the snow-capped mountains. We work with the apus from the kay pacha, which is this world, and from hanaq pacha, which is the upper world, and from the ukhu pacha, which is the underworld. Our main focus is to understand the two types of energy, hucha and sami. Sami is that refined breath of life that our Creator gives, that finest of energy, that finest of light. That's the sami. And then we have the hucha, which is the heavy energy. It is here because we have created it. It is not found in nature but is created only by humans. That heavy energy many times blocks our path and does not allow our hearts to heal.

So, understanding these two types of energies is one way we can help a person who is in difficulty, perhaps having some illness, problems in the house, a lot of frustrations, anger, or worries. In the Andes, we have a belief that where there is a need for medicine, we must use it, *now*. And not for that one person, but for everyone involved. For instance, in a house, when a person twists an ankle, and the grandfather comes in and is going to heal the

ankle, the whole family lines up for that healing. Because while the grandfather is in the mood of healing, they all want to receive his energy! As healers, we make medicine for that ankle, but it is not like healing it at once; you need to take care of it, the bones, the muscles, the tendons inside. We might make a herbal medicine, and as the healer is preparing it, he or she has to know that it is not only for the person with the injured ankle. Others may use it, too. Other people will put it on their back. Some will put it on their knees. Everyone uses it while it is there. This is one example I share with you because when we do healing, we must not always think of only one person. We must also think of the whole family, of the whole community. This is very important to understand, because the way we heal is changing. Let me tell you how.

I would like to share that through meditation, through revelation, through the dreamtime, the spirits talk to us. They are telling us that it is getting more difficult to heal nowadays—because we have to do it individually. A long time ago, healing was done at a family level, at a community level. But we have become too separated from each other nowadays. It is true here in the United States, and it is true in the Andes.

For instance, in the Andes now, grandparents with their grandchildren—they now have almost no connection. A lot of parents with their children, instead of having connections, they start having separation. Children go too far away too early. What happens is, the mother, in the Andes of Peru, struggles too much. Why? Because she is left with the children, she has to do a lot of the work. For a man it is much easier to leave from the house, to find work, perhaps even to live with another woman. And, that is one difficulty in the Andes. As paqos and as Andean people, we understand a lot about the feminine energy. We work with Pachamama. We respect the feminine energy. And also, our apus, which represent the male spirit of the cosmos. Always there is balance in nature. But for us humans, this balance has been broken, or forgotten, or simply is just not acknowledged or honored. We sometimes forget that this change has happened and that healing must be different now.

Through the breaking of the family, especially by the breaking of the father and mother [divorce], that is why communities now struggle. The children are left alone too much, so they are not guided well. There is no safe place for the children to grow or to learn in a harmonious way to help each other. They don't live reciprocally. They live alone. They have to struggle. By their own sacrifice, they have to learn about their life and their path. They

have to learn to live. They do not just *live* life. They have to *learn* to live it first. And this is what I would like to share here, because this is one of the major aspects of our healing: redis-covering that connection, that recognition of us as human beings who are connected. We are a spiritual family, before all else. A lot of people are not even connected within their biological family. So, it is even harder to connect spiritually.

Nowadays, Pachamama is not being so patient anymore! Now Pachamama is going to start uniting our families together again more and more and more, whether we like it or not. She will bring us together one way or another! It is the time of the prophecies, and a lot of revelations are coming to the elders of our communities. We need to start learning to reconnect again with our spiritual path. Because later on, it is going to be most difficult to be who we are.¹ So, we must relearn these things now. Deep inside our hearts that light that shines has not disappeared. Pretty soon, when the time is here for it to shine, it is going to be very challenging for people who are not open, who are not flowing with the universe. They are disconnected because of their attachments. We get attached to ideas. To the littlest things. And, sometimes we create blockages in our own heart, in our physical body, in our spiritual body, in our energy field. We accumulate hucha.

One way to cleanse that hucha is to pass the mesa over the person's body [through the person's poq'po, or energy bubble]. It is like in our mesa we have a magnet that is pulling all this heavy energy, this hucha, from a person's body. The apus in our mesa work very hard. There are specific apus that especially work to take the hucha from people. I am not going to tell you which apus do what! You will have to find that out for yourselves as you work with your mesas. Remember, this work is like a recipe. As you practice, you will know what tastes best for you. You will receive special gifts. It is very beautiful how we can help this way.

Our body is energy, but it is also like a community, and every little cell is a person in that community. So, for example, this community, for it to work well, has to have good leaders. And those leaders are the heart, the liver, the organs like those that have specific functions. Then there are the muscles and tendons and all the cells—they are persons of this community and they have to be taken care of. So, we have some of our apus that work only with the leaders, and we have some that work only with the cells that are like community members. So, the hucha is taken away by your mesa. Your mesa is

closed and you run it over the person, pulling out the hucha. But you do not want to pull hucha to any part of your body or your own energy bubble, unless you know special teachings, like the hucha mikhuy. At first, let the hucha be taken up by the mesa, which will transform it into sami. You know how with a crystal the light arrives and it changes to seven colors. Same with the mesa. Hucha arrives and immediately is changed. It is healing energy, healing power. You work the same way with your qosqo, your primary energy center, which is at your navel, but that is an advanced teaching. For now we will talk only of the mesa. Hucha that arrives at the mesa is immediately changed.

You can do healing over long distances, too. You do not have to be with the person. For example, if I was pulling hucha with my mesa from someone far away, say in California, then I would work with my mesa open, because when you have it open there are more ley lines that can connect to the other person. The mesa becomes like the sun, with ley lines going out in every direction. But be aware that when the hucha comes, it does not come only from this person! It might come from his family or also from his close friends. Remember, healing is not only at the individual level. It can happen at the family level and community level. So, when you do long-distance healing, have your mesa open. That is basic. So what I am saying is that we as paqos have an understanding of distance that is a little different from the way others think of it. That is because of the seques, the ley lines of energy that connect everything. In only a matter of seconds you can connect with a person's soul or his guardian or apu through these seques.

In the Andes, we work like that especially on Tuesdays and Fridays. Those are the days that we feel are most powerful and when the apus and Pachamama are really open to working with us. The other days, the power is different. Pachamama and our apus are very busy! We need to ask permission to work with them on other days, but on these two days they are always available. Also, if you have a picture of the person you are healing long-distance that can help. If you say his or her full name in your prayer that helps, too. Or having an object from that person. All these things help, but they are not necessary.

What we want to do when working with our mesa is share in the way of the *ayni karpay*. The *ayni karpay* represents more or less sharing your initiation, or your happiest moment, or your most meaningful moment of life. It is giving that finest energy as a gift to another person. It can be given

through your mesa or done with a hug or in thousands of ways. But the intention of giving your finest energy is specific.

THE QOSQO'S PLACE IN HEALING

The qosqo is the most important gate in our poq'po. In our mesa work, to know what to purify and cleanse, how to heal and why we heal, we must first understand the energy field of a person. Interestingly, we have developed many ways to sense the energy field. Our ancestors knew how to see, feel, smell, hear that field. But now we usually know only one of those ways. Some of us see it. Others sense it better, and so on. But on the path of a paqo, and in understanding that there is this energy field, knowing only one way may not be enough. We want to develop others ways of knowing. We learn through our mesa, through working with our mesa. It teaches us.

As you know, the poq'po is the aura or energy bubble around our body, and it is filled with two qualities of energy—hucha and sami. Neither of them is positive or negative. They just are what they are. And yet, the heavy energy can create a lot of frustration, a lot of anger, sadness, difficulties, worries, and so on. The light energy supports you in whatever project you have going, with your family, in your healing work especially, and in your path. That path could be as a parent, a student, a teacher, whatever. That light energy supports you. That is why we need to define and recognize each type of energy, which one is to our benefit and which one challenges us.

Sami is the purest essence of the universe on its own. We work with sami. All of the paqos work with sami. Sami is the breath of life of our creator. So it encompasses everything. Sami is what our mesa receives from the universe and from Pachamama and the apus. Our mesa is like a vessel. Almost as if, literally speaking, when we have our mesa, it's as if we receive that sami and we drink it all through our body. It is like that.

Hucha is heavy energy, which does not support us but challenges us. It makes our path difficult. We create hucha so easily, with the mere fact of thinking. Say, with jealousy. With envy. With anger. In the littlest word or feeling we can create hucha. It is more powerful when you speak! Just the littlest thought can create hucha, but words have more power! For that reason, we need to understand both energies. It is not only in the Andean world that we understand these two energies. Everywhere it is known. Our ancestors knew this very well. The sami and hucha are two beings really. I

see them as beings. They are both guides and teachers. But we need to know when to work with which one.

A lot of people here in the U.S. have a lot of heavy energy. Why? Because of the disconnection in your culture. It is not only your hucha. It is also your ancestors' hucha that you still carry. It's part of your family's hucha. It's part of your leaders' hucha, in a community or a country. The paqo's work is to fill with sami every poq'po, every person's energy field. Part of his own task, as a person, is to remember to sense this sami or hucha at all levels. Many people's energy fields are not flowing properly. So, we must start opening up those portals, those gates. They are within us like a temple, like a palace. They have been closed, but we need to start letting light in, love, joy, happiness.

So, in a lot of our work as paqos and as healers, one thing we like to do is open those channels. Which brings me back to the qosqo, which is our main energy center. It is here, from the top of our stomach to our navel. This center is connected with the major power points in the universe. These are places that have been set, been consecrated, by our ancestors at different times, and by different beings, like spiritual guides. These power places are all over our planet, and throughout the universe. And we connect to them through our energy field, through our qosqo. But we must be aware and awake!

In our qosqo we have a system of seques, the ley lines of light that connect us to these power places. This qosqo works in the same way that our stomach does: when we eat, we are not aware of processing the energy of our food; we are not aware of taking care of our intestines, our liver, our kidneys when we drink. But everything is digested here; it is all processed here in our qosqo area. We receive the hucha here in our qosqo but we also learn to perceive it in our mesa, and by the mere fact of it arriving in our qosqo or in our mesa, this hucha is processed and it is transformed into sami, into light energy.^{II}

When I come here to the United States, I experience a lot of tension, and at times this area of my stomach is numb! My qosqo always feels full and I have not eaten anything! Why is that? There is a lot of heavy energy here. With the work of Pachamama, with the work of the spirits of the land, I purify and cleanse this energy. I digest it through my qosqo. You know how when light goes through a crystal, it changes it into other colors? I'm like that with the hucha. We are all capable of that. Within ourselves we have this power.

We receive this heavy energy to our qosqo, and whoosh! It is transformed! It is changed to sami, to light energy.

Think of yourself as a quartz crystal. I am a quartz crystal. Literally! I am Fredy Quispe Singona. It's my name. That is the name I was given at birth by my parents. But Quispe means "crystal" in Quechua, so literally I am a quartz crystal! And so are you. We are all energy beings. When I was little, my grandfather gave me this task: that I need to remember how to digest heavy energy, digest it spiritually. You do that by perceiving yourself as a crystal. The hucha—the heavy energy—arrives to you, and the minute it arrives to you, it is changed. It is transformed.

A lot of the practices of transforming hucha involve our mesa, which is a reflection of our hearts. It connects us with all our energy fields, the energy of the *tawantin*, which are the four energy fields. We see four major energy fields [chunpis] in the body, but they are similar to what you know as the seven chakras. Our mesa is a reflection of our energy fields.

But first we need to open our qosqo. We need to learn, to know, to remember—yes, to remember, not to learn!—that it is there, and then we need to start remembering to use it. The more practice we have, the better we will get. We digest energy like we digest food, without really knowing how, without really thinking how. We just do it. But we must remember to do it!

The qosqo is your spiritual stomach, but I must say this—I must take the liberty of sharing this: some people here in the United States are very judgmental about what they eat. There is a lot of confusion about food, especially with the people who eat meat versus the vegetarians, and the junk food versus the good food. You know what I mean? You worry that this food is harmful for you because of this or that. But food is not harmful! People have not understood eating at the level of the action—at least you are able to eat something! How many people do not have even a single piece of bread in one day? I share this so you are a little bit more careful about how you speak about food. Honor and acknowledge and be grateful for it, you know? Because food, however you are eating, whatever you are eating—it is light! It is light! And at the same time it can also be heavy energy. It can be hucha. But the minute it enters here [the qosqo]—we are so special—we can process all of that. But, then, a lot of hucha creates either diarrhea or constipation, depending on how we are in our lives and everything. So, to have a normal life we must start getting used to the idea that hucha and sami

are everywhere—they are natural. Here is the United States. In Peru. Everywhere, there is only hucha and sami.

This food, this light we eat is blessed by Pachamama, blessed by the universe. When you eat, acknowledge that spiritually you are also digesting energy. Just remember that. Perhaps you will start noticing some changes in the way you live, talk to people, in the way you are with people. You will notice some changes. It is impossible not to. Because the moment you make the acknowledgement that every action you do physically is also a spiritual action, then it is a very powerful healing. To this judgment that I shared about your perceptions of food, I hope I have not made you feel bad or anything. We just need to remember how we speak. Our ancestors did not speak this way, simply because they did not have McDonalds and Burger King then! They used to honor, always honor and be grateful. That is what we need to remember.

I will go back to speaking about healing again. Our mesa works the same way as the qosqo to cleanse hucha. When we receive the hucha, we can take it into our mesa, and when it arrives to our mesa, it is purified. That happens because in our mesa is the circle of apus, our mountain spirits. They are there with the energy of Pachamama, who is in the middle of the circle with us. Our apus—these mountain spirits—some are doctors, some are psychologists! They have their own work as well, these mountain spirits. Here, in the United States, if you have a difficulty, you go to a doctor, you go to, say, a psychologist. Well, in the Andes, we go to the mountains! Because, really, they have been guides for our communities; they are the doctors—in the Andes, when we need a doctor, we go to our apus! When we need anything, we go to our apus! When we feel weak, alone, tired, we go also to Pachamama, and there we lie down, rest, and breathe. Pachamama tells us this and this and this is what you need to do to strengthen yourself and live your life in a joyful way, a harmonious way. Also, our apus show us the path we have before us. They show us the way more clearly. Many times we allow veils to cover our eyes, and just because we have our eyes open does not mean we are seeing everything. Even with our physical eyes, we do not always see everything.

There are other ways to heal, to transform hucha. There is purification through smudging, through flower baths—we put yellow flowers, which represent the light, the sun, into boiled water and let it sit there until it is cool enough for our body, so it doesn't burn us, and we take a bath. That's

clearing. It's purification. By the mere fact of drinking water and acknowledging that our body has worked very hard to process that heavy energy, that is also another way of cleansing and purifying ourselves. There are many ways, but we rely on our qosqo and mesa as fundamentals.

To tell you the truth, you will know very well what you must do to purify. At the time you actually want or need to do it, at that moment you will know what must be done! I always kept asking grandfather one question about these techniques, "How?" I asked how I should do them, how I should do the healings. And grandfather, his answer was, "The question is not how, but *when?*" That is a very full answer! Healing begins not only with our intention, but with our enthusiasm, with our confidence. We must not wait until we think we are experts at how to do it! My grandfather always said to me that the power of a paqo is the power of confidence. It is the power of a warrior. Grandfather would tell me, "If you are going to work with our apus, if you are going to work with Pachamama, you had better work with confidence. If you don't work with confidence, then don't work!" And I tell you that as well. If you cannot work with confidence, then do not step onto the path yet. Maybe later, but not now.

MESA CARRIERS AND THEIR OWN ENERGY FIELDS

Another thing that I would like to share about the healing work is to be aware of protecting your energy field, your poq'po. Your energy bubble is more accessible and visible at night, before you go to sleep. It is easier to see at night. Your poq'po is around you, glowing.^{III} The minute you wake up in the light of day, when the sun comes up, the energy bubble is harder to see. And harder to feel in some ways, too. What happens, in the day, is it becomes a *group* bubble, a community bubble, a family bubble. Your field connects more strongly to all those you come in contact with, so it forms like a big group bubble. In that group bubble, all kinds of energy goes into your qosqo, especially heavy energy—the littlest thought of jealousy, the littlest thought of envy, and such things. That can create heavy energy around you, and in your field. And then the littlest thing that happens, it makes you angry. It might not really take that much to make you feel angry. The littlest thing can upset you, throw you off balance, when you have a lot of hucha in your field. You know that you are reacting in a weak way. You have better things to feel angry

about, where you might have no other choice but to feel angry. But because of a little heavy energy in your bubble, you are disturbed at the minor things!

So, remember, you need to cleanse your energy bubble. You need to work with it to learn more from it—and the best time to do that is at night. In the day, it is a group bubble. Work in healing others during the day, accessing their bubble. But in the night, it is a more personal bubble, so you work with your own energy more at night. You work with it, asking, How is my energy bubble? How does it feel? Does it still have heaviness from the day? Are the seques pulling me in one way or another, pulling me off my center? Probably your bubble needs a little purification and cleansing. You need to learn to work with it. Again, I tell you that Joan did a very good job in her book about showing you how to work with the qosqo and bubble. You must practice.

This is a little bit advanced, but still I will share with you one thing that comes to mind about protecting your bubble at night, when you sleep. One time I was in Q'ero, way up in the mountains where the direct descendants of the Inkas still live. This paqo, this alto mesayoq—I will say his name but he is not here anymore, he has passed over, and I speak his name with deep respect—Juan Pauqar Espinosa, who Joan interviewed for her book. (See [chapter 7](#).) He asked me once, “How can you get into your neighbor’s house, and know exactly what they are thinking, what they are feeling, without them knowing that you are in their house?” I was like, “Of course, through ceremony!” He said, “No.” So then I said, “Well, through imagination. Through thinking.” He said, “No.” So I said, “Well, what other way can you? You only have one body. You can only be in one place at one time.” He said, “Through dreams.” He was telling me the key to accessing a person’s dream. The key to entering a person’s energy bubble, their “house,” is through dreams while they are sleeping. This is the most clear way to see what their life is about, what they are thinking, and everything—because during sleep their energy bubble is very clear. They are not influenced by anything. Everything is pure at that moment. You can see what is what, whether there is heavy energy or light energy there. When don Juan was teaching me to enter into the dreams of people, I was saying, “Oh my God, what if other people can get into my dreams!” For that reason, then, I told him, when I sleep I am going to protect myself. And he said to me, “Yes, before you go to sleep, you must always protect yourself.” So, while we always want to be in ayni in our energy fields, working with energy also means sometimes putting up a shield. Because you are in your own energy bubble, but people can access it. You

just put up a shield, like a yellow or golden sun around your qosqo, pulling your entire field close to you and keeping your bubble private.^{IV}

I don't know if you can do that here, get into people's dreams, but we can up in the mountains, so I think that somebody must be able to do it here, too. And especially mothers can access their children's dreams. Grandmother always used to say to me after I came down from the mountains, after a day when it was hailing and cold. . . . I always loved cold water. I go right into it! I would come home all wet in the afternoon to my house, with a very strong fever or something, shivering. The next day I am new! I knew my grandmother was responsible for my health. I asked grandmother one time, "How did you do it?" Because I knew she had healed me. She said, "I did it in your dreams." She used to always tell me that she would heal me through my dreams. And she would always tell me that whenever she wanted me to know something, she would tell me through my dreams. And I kept sleeping during the daytime when I was watching the animals in the mountains just in order to know what my grandmother needed to tell me! And I got a surprise, because I found that not only was she speaking to me through my dreams, a lot of other paqos and healers also were speaking to me then, too! Many paqos are only guided through their dreams, through revelation. I had all kinds of conversations with beings in my dreams, about the apus, about Pachamama, about my work!

There is one person who is outstanding for me in my dreams. It happened only one time, and never happened after. It was a man who came to my dream with very, very powerful blue eyes and white hair, beautiful white hair. He talked to me about things that were to happen one day ahead, two days ahead, even years ahead. He told me what would happen. He told me what I would need to do. How I needed to do it. Always two choices he gave me. Two choices, which I will keep to myself in silence. Through that I started to learn how to differentiate my choices. I started to learn how when I do this, that happens; but when I do that, it is easier. It was not hard. It was like I could go through my life as a sleeper or I could live my life awake! So, through dreams, a lot of healing can happen.

When you wake up from a dream, what is the first thing you should do? Give thanks for it. Be grateful for remembering that dream. Honor that dream. It is seeded into your heart, and it is going to flower. Perhaps not that day, perhaps not that week or even that month, but most likely in the year. Or two or three years later. You will remember, "Ah! I had that dream!" When I was

small, I used to always dream of houses like these and places like these in the States. And at that time I had not even even gone to Cuzco. I did not know where these places were. I had never seen anything like I saw in my dreams, those houses, those buildings, those cities. But I dreamed of these strange places. In my dreams I was already here! How many years would it take for me to make sense of those dreams of childhood? Many, many years it took. Now that I am here in the U.S., I recognize everything, because my dreams prepared me. So be grateful. And the minute you are grateful and honor it, you will remember it better. It will not be hazy.

And know that dreams have more than one meaning. We can find many messages in them. It is like you ask one person, you get one answer. Ask another, you get a different answer. It is a gift! Ask about your dream for one whole day to many people and you get a whole lesson about life! It is like that. So, remember to honor your dreams and work with them. We have this general idea about dreams. . . . Well, one thing I like about how grandfather talked about our dreams, is, for example, if I saw my mother or father fighting, or me crying or being sad, he would always tell me, “Ah, that means it is going to be the opposite!” Like because it happened in the dream, it did not have to happen in waking life. That was the beginning for me of acknowledging that there is always a gift in a dream. Be grateful for it. Every day there could be a challenge, but every day there are gifts as well.

A challenge is like an apu—it can be a trickster. It comes with a mask. Fearful looking. Powerful looking. You might try to fight it, but the apu might be more powerful than you are. So if you just acknowledge that you are in front of this powerful being, without necessarily having to struggle with it, then the relationship changes. Honor the challenges and be grateful for them, even though you might not know what it is about. The dream is a being. A trickster perhaps. But when you give thanks and honor it, this dream, this apu, this trickster, then its mask disappears. It is like the trickster says, “Okay, it looks like you are not wanting to play anymore, so here is why I am here!” So, as with a friend, as with the apus, so with the dreams—they support us, and we must not take their support for granted. Never take for granted that they are our friends. You know that with a friendship, there are also challenges. It is like that with our dreams.

WORDS AND THE HEART'S INTENTIONS

Now another thing that is very basic in the work that I would like to tell you is that language is an important tool for healing. How we speak our words is very important. Where do these words we speak come from? Just from the thought? Or from a feeling? Or from an experience? We think of words only as thoughts and feelings, but consider this: grandfather once time told me that every word we speak is a spirit. A spirit! It is a being! I spoke of this earlier. Now I will speak about it more deeply. By choosing how you speak and what words you speak, you are choosing what beings you want around you. You call them to you through your words. That is very powerful. It changes everything.

Grandfather told me, “Puma, every word you speak becomes a being, with action and energy. According to how you choose to speak, you are choosing how you will be surrounded by these beings.” He told me this because I was starting to learn swear words! After that, I had a big teaching while working with my mesa about how and what I spoke. I became very delicate and very careful about what I spoke, especially when I spoke for someone else. Or with our apus. You must also remember that not everything, not all of our intentions, are manifested in our words. Some are beyond our words. So, really, our apus and Pachamama know much beyond what we speak.

So, why do I say this to you? Really, it is true that when we speak, we are surrounded by these beings. When we speak respect, when we speak love, we are representing those beings. We are the ambassadors of those beings. When we work with our mesa and we speak in prayer, we must always remember where we are coming from in our heart, what is our heart’s intention. The words that we speak and pray for each person are powerful in terms of how we can support them and help them. Many times when we are praying, especially for someone’s healing, we need to remember not to take for granted the privilege that we have of working with this person. It is an honor, because we have the privilege as paqos to access some important places way deep in their hearts. We need to have a lot of respect in order to support and help only the part that we are called to help, and not to change or interfere in their energy too much. That is also the practice of integrity, honoring that person’s heart and being. As healers and as paqos, the more we honor and respect the apus, the more challenges they give us. The more insights we can have. The more hearts we can access.

And especially grandfather said this to me because I was starting to learn swear words! He told me those are very powerful words. That if I ever understood what language is and the power of speaking, then I would see that swear words could actually be very important healing words. But they must be used carefully, at the proper time. People here use them too much. It has come to a point where there is no power when we speak them. Instead they drain us of power. In the United States, I noticed that many times if you want to acknowledge something that you do not like, you say “Shit!” But think of that word as a being. When we let go of what we have processed here in our qosqo, in our stomach, indeed that food will be something that we don’t use anymore ourselves. We release it and it goes to Mother Earth. But there it becomes useful again! She has a way of making it fertile. It feeds the flies and other beings that we need to honor and respect. In the Andes, we have learned that even when we give that [excrement], we must not always think that it is negative or unpleasant. Because that’s what the little bugs are going to receive, too. When [excrement] touches the earth, its energy changes. One word can have many energies! So remember: we must be aware of how we speak, because the minute we say the word, we have also invited that spirit into our lives.

Also, be very clear and aware of what you ask for in a prayer. Whether it is for a person’s healing or for your own growth. Especially in a prayer, language has a hundred times more power than when you normally speak. When you are just normally speaking, it has fifty times more power than when you are just thinking. So always be aware of how you are going to affect your life, your path later on, by the way you speak now. And how by affecting that within you and around you, your words are going to affect everyone else as well.

Different languages don’t change this lesson, this truth. Many times I used to hear people saying, “But you can say things in Quechua that we cannot say in English.” I used to accept that, because I didn’t know English very well. I said, “It’s true. Quechua is Quechua. It’s the best language! The most beautiful and powerful language!” And I always prayed only in Quechua. Then I started to think, when I came to the United States or went to other places, but these people don’t understand what I am talking about. How do they know I am not making fun of them! So I improved my English, and I see now that actually English is a more powerful language than I could have imagined. But my point is that it is by the way we use our words that we use

their power. Words are beings. So, I would like to encourage you to be aware of how you speak, especially in prayer. Be very aware of what you ask for during your prayer.

Now, another thing that is very important is how we speak of our cosmos, of Pachamama, of the apus, of every thing and every object. Here different languages do matter, because each language affects our perceptions, our relationship to the cosmos, in different ways. People in the English language say something like this, “I am wearing my poncho.” Or, “I am wearing this poncho.” You are the master of the poncho! You have it in your control to do with as you wish. In Quechua, we say, “The poncho is on Puma.” The poncho has its own spirit! It is not something that I am doing something with. It is something that is doing something to me! We are in relation in a different way. We have this *connection* to the thing that is more equal or balanced. Here, in English and in many other languages, you have a way of speaking that shows possession, that makes attachments. “My house.” “Your car.” That is the way your language is, so it is the way you think and perceive. And it is a way of perception that makes you very attached to things. But that does not have to be. You can balance your perception easily. Just change the words to say, “Our car.” It’s difficult here. It’s difficult to let go when you are very attached. This kind of language shift is very important for your healing.

Another example is that I noticed the word “people” in English does not have the intensity it does in Quechua. We say *runa* in Quechua, but it does not just mean people, it means a living being, a *ch’aska*, a light that shines, an individual star! That is what a person is in Quechua. But in English the word “person” doesn’t have that intensity of meaning. Thus, you have so many labels for people. In Quechua, a *runa* is a *runa*! It is nothing else but a *runa*! And that is so much! In all these ways your words have power.

DESPACHOS AND OTHER CEREMONIES

In the Andes, one very important part of our mesa and healing ceremonies is the preparation of despachos and pagos. They are offerings we make to the spirits of nature, for specific purposes [in the case of a despacho] or just to honor the beings and show our gratitude [in the case of a pago]. They are made in a similar way to each other. Each is a little bundle we make in paper, of grains, candy, coca leaves, different plants, confetti, conch shells, little snail shells that represent growth, little figurines that are symbols of

power, with flowers, with many other items that have meaning for us. We make a beautiful offering and then package it up in the paper, tie it with string, and then we bury it or burn it for Mother Earth or for the apus.

Most important for those of you beginning on the path is the pago, which is a token of your gratitude—your pure, pure gratitude.^V We as paqos are always in ayni, which is reciprocity, with Mother Earth and the apus and other nature spirits. We give thanks to Pachamama for being able to be here, to breathe, to laugh, to dance, to sing, to walk, to cry. Thanks to Pachamama we can be and do all these things. So, we give her a token of our gratitude. There's a lot of healing in giving thanks, genuinely, purely, with joy. It purifies your soul. Purifies your spirit. It strengthens you. Pachamama says, "Ah, my child acknowledge me! I will deepen his or her roots a little more." And our roots then become stronger. So, then you will grow tall and strong, and if big winds come, you will have deep roots and can withstand the winds, the challenges. So, we show our thanks like that, with a pago. We have so many gifts from Pachamama. So do this, give a little token of gratitude to your land, just pure gratitude.

In the same way that we acknowledge Mother Earth with a token of our gratitude, we also pray. When we make a k'intu, which is a set of three coca leaves placed one on top of the next, we put a prayer into it. We blow our energy into it with our breath and we make a prayer. So many people have forgotten to pray! We can pray for anything. I love the way children pray. We adults have to think about it—what we need to pray for. But children pray just what they feel, what comes in that very moment. Yesterday, I had this most amazing experience with a child of my friends. I am so grateful that she agreed to have a session with me, because children here in the United States are a little bit afraid of ceremony, afraid of ritual. They are not invited to it. There are not many role models. There is not so much of it exposed in their families. There is not much confidence.

It was so funny, because when I read the coca leaves for this young girl, I saw more or less what she had to do, and one of the things that I had to tell this little girl is "You take your life too seriously. Play more! Have fun!" That was difficult, to see a child so serious. But that is how children tend to be in this country. Also, whenever I read the coca leaves, I finally get to a point where I ask the person what else they would like to know, if they have a question to ask. This little girl asked me a beautiful question. I absolutely enjoyed it. She asked, "Will I ever have a dog?" Now, usually, I am looking

all the time in the coca leaves for people. So this question was a surprise. I said to myself, “How am I going to recognize a dog in these leaves?” So, I had to focus again in a different way and I looked at the leaves in a different way, and there was this little weird kind of shaped coca leaf that must have been a dog! It looked very, very wrinkled—the dog, I mean! It was a wrinkled little dog!

So, I had to tell her what I saw. And in the leaves I saw the dog but also something else. “You know what?” I said to her, “Your parents don’t want for you to have a dog. But you will have one. But when you have one, it is going to be your responsibility and you are going to be worn out!” She looked at me kind of funny. Children are so wonderful. She asked how I saw that. The whole time I was finding beautiful leaves for her, and then I saw the wrinkled leaf and some other leaves close by, that were wrinkled and folded, too. I showed her. And she asked me why are the leaves like that? And I had to tell her, “It is you worn out! From caring for that dog!”

Let me be serious again. The children must be brought to ceremony carefully. One thing you have to do when you are talking about ceremony or ritual to a child—you never make fun with it. It is a serious thing! You do not teach it as play. It is serious. I tell you this is because a lot of children are not aware of ceremony and ritual. Here in the U.S., they have already seen everything else, like TV and movies, and the world outside, but they do not know ceremony. Ceremony is quite an uncommon thing here. What we experience when we go into ceremony is a very intense and powerful feeling sometimes, but when a child goes into that same circle, he or she experiences it three, four, five times more intensely. So we have to be very aware of preparing them. We need to start focusing on the children. The earlier, the better. And do it smoothly, gently. And do not push them. Be gentle and wait for them to show real interest in what we are introducing them to.

For example, my grandfather, when he began to teach me his lineage of ceremony and healing, he could have very well chosen to teach his first son. This son is a very respected and respectful man. He lives in Lima, which is a big city. He wanted to go to the city and be a businessman—like everybody does. But one thing he forgot is that there is a tradition. There is, for example, grandfather’s knowledge and teaching, which is already in danger of disappearing. And his first son has a responsibility to learn—or at least to listen. But he, ever since he was small, was a rebel. He always was against it. When grandfather turned to me and began to teach me, he said that it was

good that I can begin when I am small. I was left to grow up with my grandparents from when I was two years old, after my mother stopped nursing me. So, we need to start early. The earlier, the better. It is always very gentle, very smooth. It's not like you have to obligate or push someone. My uncle did not want it, and his father, my grandfather, was happy with that. And sad with it too, because he did not know to whom he was going to give his techniques, or as we say, his "hands." We say about our mesa that it is our "hands."

I was born twenty-five years after [my grandfather's] difficulty. My grandfather kept working as a healer, as a midwife in my community. And one day I came home after having the very scary but powerful experience of having been struck by ball lightning, and my grandfather says, "Ah, our apus have chosen you." So whatever I was learning—about herbs, about plants, about Mother Earth, about the mountain spirits—was double in intensity, because grandfather was starting to invite me more often to the circle of ceremonies and rituals and starting to speak to me about it seriously, like it was a case of life or death, because he was getting old.

Later on, I discovered he was a trickster! Why? Because he was always giving me all this homework, but there was a lot of fun and joy in it. There was that internal strengthening, and identification, and internal growth spiritually that I was working toward, very seriously. I had to understand that it was serious before I really began to enjoy it. I had to understand that it was a sacrifice before I learned to enjoy it. What has happened in my family since is that my uncles, they now want to learn from my grandfather. They want to receive his hands as well! And they are now in training. They are looking for the joy in it. They see it. But it is not easy. There is a lot of inner work that is a sacrifice really. It is a sacrifice. It is not a very easy path. Why do we need to focus on that also? Because when people focus only on the joyful part of it, then when the challenges come, they give up too easily. They forget easily. Their practice has not grown strong roots. They have to be strong so that when the challenges come they don't become distracted. They don't say, "Oh well, I have this to do. I have that to do." I encourage you also that when you are on your spiritual path, don't focus only on the joyful part of it. Take it very seriously. But when there are challenges, remember that you are not alone. The minute we are keepers of a mesa, we are connected to all the other healers.

THIRTEEN

Finding Your Direction as a *Paqo*

I will share with you a few things about finding your path. For the last five hundred years, in the Andean culture, paqos have gone through all kinds of challenges, especially with the Catholic Church, with the Spaniards. They imposed one religion over a culture that had no religion separate from its social life, from everything that we did in our lives. The spiritual was not, and is not, separate for us from our daily life. But there is a darker side to our light, too. There is a darkness in our history, and it continues to this day. We have stories of paqos from the area of Puno, near Lake Titicaca, who challenged each other, and all of the sudden only with one ceremony they would leave you without one leg, or they would even take your life away! We have stories of people who take the fat of your body, which they do in a very skillful but dark way using their mesas. All of our work has to do with how we work with the universal energies. So we have fearful stories about paqos, too.

And when I was young, it was quite a challenge for me to accept that I was becoming one of them! Not a dark paqo, but just a paqo, beginning to walk this path. I didn't understand very well what the path was that I was going to follow. But then I learned that my grandfather was a pampa mesayoq, which is a paqo who has total connection with the mountains, Mother Earth, the plants, with the people here in this kay pacha, in this world. He does healing, divination, gives people initiations. But he was not an alto mesayoq, which is what I was hearing the stories about. Alto mesayoqs are powerful paqos who only with their desire are able to manifest something, even to moving mountains! I had been hearing about dark alto mesayoqs. But I accepted the path and grew more confident about learning with my grandfather. But the power is the power, and you should not forget that.

In this path, as a pampa mesayoq, what you begin to learn is again connecting with our ancestry and supporting other people without even telling them. How we do that is with healing, we have specific ceremonies for that and we use our mesa. For example, when we use the mesa on a person, this person becomes more rooted in his own power. That is what our mesa reflects to us—our own power. Through that mesa this person is going to heal, become clear in his life, have fewer difficulties, know better how to do his business, to take care of his family and his animals. This was the way I was learning to work with the mesa. But then, I saw a different way. Instead of just doing this just myself, working with my mesa on a person and not really telling the person what I was doing—instead I realized that the person can actually do it himself. People can actually carry a mesa themselves.

As I came to the acceptance that I am a paqo, that I am a pampa mesayoq, I saw that there are other ways to use this power, ways that are harmonious with the old ways, ways to support each other in a conscious way. For example, with the mesa, it is like the person who carries it is given a seed. Maybe I give it to you as a pampa mesayoq through teaching you or maybe you discover it for yourself, but it's like you have been given a seed, which you can plant in fertile soil. It's not like I must plant this seed here and then can only give you the fruits of that seed when it has grown and blossomed. No! How much better is it that you learn yourself to be responsible to take care of that seed and that you plant it and care for it until it blooms and you receive the fruits of it yourself! Now, that is the way of life for a paqo, too. When you learn something, when you receive any advice or message, whether from a person or a dream or a revelation, it is a seed. That seed is very powerful, but it needs to be planted. When it is planted and well watered and well taken care of, one day it blooms like a flower. And that blooming of the flower is yourself! You are the flower!

So healing is about helping others, but it is about growing into “who you are” first. Sometimes you must learn from other people what you are to yourself. That is a little complicated, so let me explain. I am always a little bit judgmental when I hear people say—I must be careful when I say this!—but I am a little bit judgmental when I hear people say, “It does not matter what people say about me. It does not matter what they think. They cannot upset me with their words.” I am telling you that in some ways it does matter! Let me explain why.

Usually when people say that, they say it when they have received some kind of judgment against themselves. They have been judged by another person. But they are not accepting that judgment. They are discarding that judgment. I understand that they are trying not to let the words of another person affect them. They do not want to believe what other people may think, which may not be true or correct. But I tell you that honoring judgments can be very good. Why? Because, when someone is judging me about what I do, I don't focus so much at first on the meaning of the words, and I don't focus on the person who said the words even—but I do focus on the fact that those words are coming *toward* me. Of what importance is that? I will tell you—as a paqo I know that the apus or Pachamama wanted those words to be heard by me! So I have to honor that, process that judgment, be grateful for that occasion. And when I do that, the teaching of that judgment, of the meaning of the words, can then become very clear. They can even heal something in me. It's like I can say, "Ah, Puma, this is what you are forgetting! Ah, Puma, this is what you need to do!" There is a lesson there from the apus or Pachamama that they have given to me through another person.

Then, by honoring that message, I have also just honored my brother or sister who spoke the judgment, for the way is clear for that person to wake up and to be aware from where within them that judgment came. There is an opportunity for growth for both of us.

Now, there is a more detailed way of doing this awakening and healing work with our mesa. People in the Andes still practice today what we might call the Black Magic. Those are the dark paqos I talked about before. For example, I am always judgmental about some ways that people make despachos. A despacho was originally made for healing, was originally made as an offering to Mother Earth. But now people use them for all kinds of things. For example, if you think you are in love with a person and you don't want to let him go, you can offer a despacho—bringing in some item of his clothing, doing the ceremony and working the energy so he will never leave you. These people really take the path for granted, take the power for granted. Indeed, it will happen sometimes. People underestimate the power of prayer. And, especially in the context of a mesa, which has an energy set not only by us but also by our ancestors. Our ancestors, the paqos of long ago, set a specific energy to be manifested whenever we pray with our mesa. Since the time of our ancestors that power is still there and yet people use it in this darker way. For me it is taking the path of power for granted to use it

to affect a boy or a girl who doesn't want to live with a person, to make him stay whether he likes it or not! To do that is not respecting the path. We are creating ayni for ourselves, which is like karma. What can happen is that the ayni doesn't come back to the same person but to his children or his grandchildren.

That is why, for example, in Chinceros nowadays we have the situation where paqos who have been dark in their powers find that their children cannot have prosperity, cannot have a harmonious life. It is not a coincidence. When we really look at it—for example, with my grandfather I worked on different people and I could see that there has been a whole lot of heavy energy left with them. Here you call it karma. That karma can go back to their children and even their grandchildren. So that needs to be cleared away, cleansed. For example, when a person remembers his ancestry, he goes through all of those stages. Maybe his grandparents or great-grandparents did this and that, and that is what is making their path difficult, not letting them see clearly or something. Or, for example, when we see some young men who are lost or don't know how to do better for themselves, who are weak in their decision-making, who have very little self-esteem. . . . Perhaps they have lost their power because of energies coming from things their ancestors did. That is why in the spiritual growth, in the path, you need to connect yourself with your ancestry and help other people connect to their ancestry as well. That is a key to healing.

Another message that I bring very strongly is that the paqo's way of life is harmony and love and happiness and respect for relationship with everybody—with people, plants, mountain beings, Pachamama. But especially between people. For example, a lot of our stories say to us that Mother Earth and our apus were left by our Creator to look after us. They know very well how our life is, what we are doing, what we are thinking when we do something, and everything. So, we don't need to trust them. It is not a matter of trust, because they *know*. Between people, with each other, it used to be that way, too. It used to be that I would know about each one of your lives, and no matter what you told me I knew beyond even that which you told me. But we have forgotten. We have separated so much from ourselves. Our ley lines of connection have become very weak; they have weakened to the point where some people have actually disappeared! That is why we need to . . . for example, between me and you, I don't have to trust when I tell you about our path or our traditions. I don't necessarily have to trust in you to give you this

information. Trust was a big issue some time ago—because a paqo had to actually know whether he or she trusted you before he told you or did not tell you about our path. But I do not have to trust now. We are in a time when, for example, I have to first honor and acknowledge the fact that you must first of all make a sacrifice to be here. You must have somehow had the intention to learn or open your heart to be here. Because I honor that, I do not have to trust. I know! I know I am meant to share this knowledge. I know I am meant to share this path. But for such a long time, it has been kept secret. It has even been getting lost. So, how much better is it now to sow the seeds in soil that is fertile.

In our communities, I cannot say that all of our young people are eager to learn. I cannot say that everybody wants to be a paqo and wants to learn the work of the mesa. I cannot say that. Because life is so different there, it is so connected to the land, but they have simply taken it for granted. People ask me why you North Americans, and others, can be paqos now. You are not Andean and yet I know that you are here with an open heart to learn the path. I say it is our story that connects us. You and I were once a brother and a sister, sitting before an altar. You left me there to keep this altar. You left to look around, to see life differently, to notice what it is outside of our altar. You wandered away from our mesa. But now you have returned. And you will be the keeper of our mesa now, too. You remember. And, maybe, if we in the Andes start to get lost as you once did, if we start to lose our way, then because of your experience you will support us. You will sit before the altar, keeping it, until we return. It is all ayni, reciprocity. It is serious to accept such a responsibility, for maybe one day you will have to call us back to our altar again.

Ayni is a whole way of being. Ayni, reciprocity, is a very powerful word. When we speak we are representing that word. We have to embody that word. Ayni is responsibility and respect. Ayni is love and compassion. Ayni is everything. And it is us. Reciprocity. In our bodies we have it, too. For example, we have it in our heart: our heart doesn't have to overfeed itself. Your heart is not going to take everything for itself. There is a balanced way of sharing between all the different organs. In our body there is a lot of different ayni. Our kidneys are helping in some way or another for our heart to be. Our heart is helping in some way or another for our liver to be. Our brain is helping in some way or another for all these organs to be. And all of this is in some way or another helping our brain to be. In the same way, we

are one body. If it weren't for each one of you interested in this path, I wouldn't be here. If it weren't for Pachamama, for our apus, for the plants, trees, or rocks, we wouldn't be here together. We are in so much ayni with each other! For billions of years now, and maybe even beyond that, we have been connected. Ayni is a whole way of being. We are in ayni with Pachamama, between each other, with our creator. We are in ayni with everybody.

And that reciprocity is also about continuing this way of living. For example, in Peru, something that we are always reminded of is that ayni is not only about being ready to support someone or only about willingness to be there for someone, but it is also being able to ask for help when you need it. That is very important. Then you know that when I help you, it is almost taken for granted that you too may one day help me. We take this relationship seriously, but we don't practice it so well yet, even in our own families.

Now, to conclude my teaching I will speak generally of four ways that the paqo approaches this work, the work of the sacred path, the work of healing with the mesa. If you take nothing else from my teaching, please take into your heart these four ways of working the path.

THE FIRST KEY: CONFIDENCE

The first key for this healing path is confidence. If you don't work with confidence, it is better that you do not work at all! That is what grandfather told me. If you are going to be a paqo, and you are going to work with our apus, you had better work with them with confidence. If not, don't work. It is that simple. It took me quite a few years to understand what that really means. Confidence is so easy! It is who we are really! The way I am with you, I almost take for granted your attention and your time as I speak with you. That is my confidence. That is our connection. Because it comes from respect, it comes from love for each person. So, that confidence is basic, and it is the first key.

THE SECOND KEY: COURAGE

The second key is courage. Many times, for example, children see energy or feel something and then right away they are told, "Ah, that doesn't exist. You are seeing or feeling nothing. It is not real." Sometimes the feelings are so

intense, and because the parents don't tell them or prepare them for feeling energy—and because of all these other stories that come from outside, like from movies and television—the children become frightened. We are creating fear within them, and they create it within themselves. So, we now have to learn courage, where once we always had it. We now have to learn to not have fear. We have to learn to understand, to connect.

Even in a paqo's life, there are a lot of challenges. When I was young and struck by the ball of lightning, it was a challenge. For two months or something like that, I had terrible dreams. It was so painful, to my heart, and to my body, and to my spirit. Every night I woke up, and I was crying. Crying myself awake. This was also training for me with Mother Earth and our apus—for me to sense things. But at the same time, if I had not had feelings of fear, if I had not had feelings of pain, I would not have understood how to feel for and heal other brothers and sisters who are also in pain, who also feel suffering. So, on this path of the paqo, or even if you are not a paqo, we all face fears and difficulties. You have times when you do not feel confident enough.

That is because you think you need to trust yourself. You do not need to trust yourself! You *know* yourself! Only you know yourself. Only the apus and Pachamama really know you. Others cannot really know you. When you understand that—the difference between trust and knowing—courage should be easy. Then it is so easy to express yourself, so easy to be who you are.

THE THIRD KEY: RESPECT

Confidence and courage go together with respect, the third key. Respect is basic. But it is another thing we have lost. For ourselves. For our families. For our communities. Totally for Mother Earth and nature! Even in the way we speak. We say “the” mountain. We objectify it. It is not an object! It is a being! It is a light being like us. We say “that” person. We see each other as objects. That is not only in English! I tell you, I started speaking like that in Quechua! I was learning English, so I was getting so used to the way of speaking, that one day Grandfather says to me, “What? Puma, what is happening? Remember! It is not the mountain. It is a being, and we have a name for him—it is apu. It is not ‘the’ apu. It is apu.” I was saying “kay apu” which is “this apu,” which was not respectful.

One of the ways I differed from grandfather is that in school I was taught to write and think in concepts. It was abstract. With my grandfather, I had to learn to actually experience things. I had to experience the concepts I made! So, for that reason, when I tell you about respect, it has been a path for me with challenges. I mean, for example, how do you respect a person in the street that has just, perhaps, hurt your father or taken something important, like your documents and your money and all the food you have? How do you respect that person? Remember when I talked about judgment? How our apus must have wanted this to happen. We must remember that even in challenges. With a thief, I don't focus on that person. I focus on Pachamama. I focus on the universe, and why this experience might be coming to me. I also would have to respect the being within the person who harmed me. I would have to know that this is opportunity for that person to wake up and heal. The experience might be very painful in my heart, but that is where the courage comes. And the compassion. Maybe I would be in the same position as the person who harmed me if I had experienced his way of living. Maybe I would be worse! Maybe I would have actually killed someone! So respect is an important way of living. And remind your brothers and sisters, children, and parents about it. Remind yourself of it. Take away all the *concepts* of respect you have and start *feeling*, start *experiencing* it.

How to practice that respect? Here is one way to begin. We practice it in the Andes, which is a very special secret, but I will tell you.¹ It is about knowing what family we are part of. Here, in the United States, people do not put much importance on age, although a long time ago they did. In the Andes we do not so much anymore either. Our ancestors did. They knew that in the family, respect is always from the younger toward the older. That's basic. The mere fact that someone has seen one more day than I have means that this must be respected. So, for example, in our families, honoring our elders, honoring those who are at least one day or year older—which for me was a big challenge because I have an uncle who is only one year older than me, but he had totally different privileges than I did. So I was always challenged and we grew up together—he is even smaller than I am! So it is a path to understand, a path to honor, to acknowledge. Remember, in that one day that person has seen more and that is to be respected.

But respect also means we understand our larger family. We know who the father of the sun is. It is Creator. If we know that, then we have to ask, “Who are *we* compared to that family? Are we part of this family, even of the

universe? Who are the stars and the moon and everything else?” The god Puncho, or Wiraqocha, or Pachakamaq, is our Creator. He is the oldest. He is invisible, but he is at the same time very obvious. Then there is Grandfather Sun. Then there is the ch’aska and qoyllur. These are two types of stars. One is the son and one is the father. The qoyllur is the father, and ch’aska is the son. And we are the grandchildren of the sun and the children of the ch’askas, which means the children of the stars. According to our ancestors, the Inkas are considered the sons of the sun. They somehow were elder beings to us, not necessarily at our level or in our age. They were the children of the sun, but we are the sun’s grandchildren. We are in this family. It is complicated to explain. You must discover for yourself. Just remember that the universe is a whole family. Ask yourself where are you in it? When you realize you are part of this great cosmic family, then you will have respect for who you are and for who another person is.

And respect is always connected to Mother Earth and nature. When I talked about that person in the street—who stole, say, my father’s documents, who took something very important from him—well, when I honor him in his potential to awaken, I also am honoring the “older beings” who are there, for that man is not just a person, he has apus. He must live somewhere, and there is a spirit of the land that takes care of him if he will only let it. That is his apu. And I must respect that. We are all connected to spirit guides, and to not honor a person is to not honor the potential awakening of that person. So, these are the many ways respect is part of the paqo’s path.

THE FOURTH KEY: LOVE

The keys so far are confidence, courage, and respect. Then comes love! Love embodies beautifully and very powerfully everything in a paqo’s life. His capacity for love is equal to his walk on the path. His love will manifest in different ways depending on whether he faced many challenges or not. There are some paqos who are very cold, who will not even smile at you. That does not mean that they don’t love you. There are others where the only thing they do is smile at you. It is a totally different way of manifesting love. A lot of people say that first comes love. But that is not true anymore. Unfortunately, we need to first train these others parts of ourselves before we can really reach the part of love. A long time ago, our ancestors lived these

challenges, too. There has been a time of forgetting. There has been a disconnection. And we need to reconnect.

With these four keys alone you can work well with your mesa. You will start to understand energy fields and begin to work with them at your will. These four keys are about hucha and sami, and how you work the healing energies. With all these four beings beside you—confidence, courage, respect, and love—you have all you need to know to become a most powerful paqo.

The Flight of the Condor: Putting Andean Practices to Work in Your Life

I sat across from Américo at Mollomarqa, his ancestral home high in the mountains above Paucartambo. “What is this energy we are learning to work with?” I asked him, questing more for information than wisdom. We were taking an afternoon’s break from our training, and I was not in the mode of a paqo seeking the techniques and advice that would advance my training, but in the mode of a writer hungry for information for an article on Andean shamanism. “Tell me about energy,” I urged.

At first, Américo responded enthusiastically to my question, and his words were translated as quickly as he spoke them. “The universe is a filament within which we as individuals are surrounded by the infinite. We are all points that are surrounded by the great infinite. We are dealing with questions and answers that move like the wind. We are in transit through this existence . . . touching the infinite light . . . connected to the cosmos with bridges of filaments.

“In respect to the ancient traditions, there are filaments that have been accumulated wisely in esoteric places and maintained through magic and the occult—an alchemical reaction! Our process of spirit has maintained

the vision of those lights. They are now willing to open, to illuminate the night, and especially the night of the planet. All the traditions have spoken, the powers have spoken, the myths have spoken, the Hindus, the Mayas, the Hopis—all the great traditions have spoken of this. The Andean lamas—who almost never come down from the mountains—maintain an incredible receptivity to the cosmos. They have an incredible but simple understanding of and connection to Pachamama. They are connected to the mystery and the enigma; they are connected to all the great spiritual traditions of the planet. They may not know formal names, but they know absolutely and correctly the goals. A connection exists from the Andes to the Himalayas, because they truly and authentically work with the spirit of the wind, which is the messenger from the mountains and of Pachamama. Therefore, we are oriented by those filaments. Those filaments, through an unconscious way and a superconscious way, are being put out at this time to the great altars of the world, the great mystical places of the world—it is the time of the gathering.

“Right now everything is truly connected because it is all a great ball of energy, of spirituality within the planet. The spiritual energies are all connecting to each other. What is actually happening is that the world’s spiritual energy is being moved, to the point that we can actually produce the will and intent of the world’s great teachers. Bubbles of energy are being connected by the will and intent of the great teachers, who know the prophecies. . . . There’s a development, a growth, of consciousness. It is not only a matter of individuals situating themselves, but of us collectively situating ourselves in a new place. It actually touches on that expanded consciousness.”


Soon, however, Américo stopped responding to my questions in a serious and thoughtful way. I was coming from a place of intellect rather than of heart, and it became clear to me as the interview progressed that he considered my change of focus arbitrary and artificial. So, he began to play with me, almost parodying my intellectual stance—and bringing the interview to a quick and awkward end.

A year later, however, I was in a completely different frame of mind—and energy body. I had been intently studying the tradition and energy techniques, and I had learned to make ayni exchanges with the energies of nature and to better control my own poq’po. It was as a paqo, not a journalist, that I undertook a month-long training in Peru. During the first

two weeks, I traveled to the Q'ero villages and Q'ollorit'i with Juan Núñez del Prado. For the last two, I traveled around Peru and Bolivia with Américo and four North American women paqos, all friends.

Américo was training us in the left side of the mesa, in the practical and magical arts, especially in the work of the khuyas. One day, on the Island of the Moon, he unknowingly finished his conversation about energy, answering my original question in a most emphatic way. It was an answer that I immediately understood as one of the most important teachings of my life, although it seemed contrary to previous teachings I had received.¹ My instincts were right about this counsel, as it was advice that sustained me, many years later, during a period in my personal life that felt like a shamanic test devised by the universe itself—a test I eventually passed.

“Everything we’re doing now,” Américo said, “[is meant to help us] arrive at our energetic body, accumulating energy from anywhere—and that’s the only avarice I allow my sisters. Do not waste it! Waste your money, spend your money, but do not waste your energy, do not spend your energy unnecessarily.”



FOURTEEN

Hucha Mikhuy: Cleansing and Digesting Heavy Energy

As you approach the exercises in this chapter and the others of [part 4](#), let me offer a few words of advice. First, remember that the spirit of the sacred work in the Andes is one of *pukllay*, of play. So although this is serious energy work, try to approach it with joy, knowing that the goal is to bring harmony and well-being to you and those around you.

Second, be persistent, yet patient. Mastering these techniques takes time, but you will never approach mastery if you don't practice, practice, practice. With the energy work of this chapter in particular, you may be tempted to skip over or rush through some of the exercises. There is no getting around the fact that you are asked to practice engaging your *poq'po* and sensing the *kawsay pacha* over a long period of time. But there is no moving forward as a *paqo* if you do not first have conscious contact with and control of your *poq'po* and your *ayni* exchanges with the energies of the *kawsay pacha*.

Finally, I considered changing the exercises for this new edition of the book, but when it came right down to it, I realized I knew of no better ways to learn the tradition on your own than by doing the exercises I have suggested, and in the order I have presented them. The chapters are arranged to lead you sequentially through more and more challenging exercises and you cannot practice the later exercises without first having mastered the earlier ones. You cannot learn to work with *khuyas* effectively until after you have learned to sense and control your energy body. Making a *despacho* requires you not only to be in touch with your own *poq'po* but also to be able to connect energetically with the *recados*, so that you can best intuit what needs to be added to the *despacho* and how it should be placed in the offering. Therefore, I urge you to work slowly and methodically through these exercises.

You can take notes of your experiences, perhaps by keeping a journal, even recording your growth as you gain more and more success with the

exercises. However, journaling can tempt you away from your heart and into your head, so I strongly suggest that you allow your memory to be your record-keeper. Trust your feelings, listen to your heart, feel from your qosqo—these are the best ways to stay energetically connected to the kawsay pacha and to gauge your progress.

Before you begin the exercises with your energy body, let's review briefly. Juan Núñez del Prado and many other paqos describe our energy body as the poq'po, the bubble. This energy bubble extends outward around your physical body and has a surface to it, like a skin. Your poq'po protects you, by mediating the amount and kind of energy to which you are exposed. For instance, your poq'po accumulates hucha, or heavy energy. There is no way to avoid this. But if you occasionally cleanse your poq'po, hucha has less chance to build up and affect your physical body. Juan identifies three primary tools from various spiritual traditions that he considers particularly useful for cleansing your energy body and empowering you: prayer, meditation, and hucha mikhuy. Hucha mikhuy is the process of “digesting” or “eating” heavy energy, but in the Andean tradition, you can also cleanse your poq'po by simply releasing hucha. Both techniques are described below. In either case, when you cleanse your poq'po of hucha, you also infuse it with sami, refined energy, which empowers you.

As Américo Yábar said, we want to expend our energy wisely. One way we can do that is by being cognizant of “dissimilar” and “similar” energetic relationships, called, respectively, *yanantin* and *masintin*, as discussed in [chapter 2](#). When we are attuned to the yanantin energy of a situation or person, then we can begin to identify what is different about us or potentially incompatible between us. We can be alert for and respond to energetic states that may cause problems in our relationship, creating hucha. From this awareness grows opportunities for discovering points of similarity and mutual contact from which we can begin to harmonize the energies to empower both parties. We can use the hucha mikhuy technique, for example, not necessarily to change the relationship—because many relationships, such as male and female, will always remain yanantin—but to cleanse the energy exchange of hucha that may result from having to engage such dissimilar or potentially incompatible energies.

All cleansing is mediated through the qosqo, the region around your navel that is your “spiritual stomach.” The exercises that follow will help you

locate your qosqo and begin to sense and control it. These exercises may appear deceptively simple. On the one hand, they *are* simple, for the primary activity is focusing your attention and intention. On the other hand, gaining *conscious* control of your qosqo requires more effort. Remember don Mariano's advice to me? It was, in a nutshell, "Work hard." His is good advice. The key to self-mastery is *practice*. It takes diligence and commitment to learn to sense and control your energy body. Therefore, truly master an exercise before you move on to the next one. The results of such mastery—being able to consciously push the kawsay to create harmonious energetic interchanges in your life—are well worth the effort.

I would like to point out, however, that creating energetic harmony in your life does not mean that you will have banished challenges and ambiguities from your life. Unpredictability and uncertainty are the twin faces of possibility and creativity. To use the words of author and consummate paradigm-shifter Dr. Deepak Chopra, we want the energy from the "field of infinite possibilities" to play through our lives, opening us to the magical potentials of ourselves that we may be incapable of even imagining within the domain of the rational. Energetic harmony, however, ensures that in the flux of the creative possibilities of our lives we maintain well-being and develop a conscious fluidity that allows us to embrace or flow through the unpredictability. In addition, we develop a spiritual alertness that allows us to see opportunities and to take risks, increasing our courage to make the most of opportunities for individual and communal growth.

ACCESSING YOUR ENERGY BODY

These beginning exercises are aimed at first helping you to feel and access your poq'po and to control your qosqo, your primary energy center. Then you will attempt to explore the kawsay pacha using only your energy body. Once you have achieved success with the initial techniques that attune you to your poq'po and to the kawsay pacha, you can go on to learn to cleanse your energy body of hucha and empower yourself with sami.

Exercise 1: Locating Your Qosqo

Sit quietly where you will not be disturbed (and make sure the ringer on your phone is turned off or the phone is otherwisely silenced). Take a few minutes to settle yourself, perhaps with meditation or a breathing technique, then

place your dominant hand over your belly, around your navel area, a few inches above the skin or clothing. Bring your awareness to the space between your hand and your stomach, feeling the warmth that is generated by your body. You should be able to distinguish a more or less circular area of energy, an especially concentrated warmth or perhaps a tingling sensation or a sticky, pulling feeling. When you do, perceptually note its edges and boundaries. This area is your qosqo, the energy belt of your poq'po that surrounds the midsection of your body. The eye of this belt usually is situated slightly below the navel, although it might be shifted to one side or the other. By sensing the density of energy in this area, you will be able to locate the center of this belt of power.

Once you have sensed the approximate parameters of your qosqo, begin to move your hand farther away from your skin or clothing, a little at a time. Sense the warmth extending outward. This is your poq'po extending outward and your qosqo opening, creating a larger energy center. You should practice sensing your qosqo and pulling it outward until your arm is *fully* extended. At this point, your qosqo is considered wide open.

Practice moving your hand outward from your body and back inward, expanding and contracting your poq'po, and opening and closing your qosqo. Remember, the qosqo can be visualized as a center with an eye whose pupil dilates as it lets in more light and contracts as it lets in less light. This eye can actually be opened or closed at any point in the extension of your poq'po. For example, your poq'po can be fully extended while the eye of your qosqo is barely open, so it mediates only small amounts of energy at a time. You might want this to be the case in a situation where you are probing, or "tasting," an unfamiliar or disharmonious energy. You would want to taste it cautiously, a little at a time. Usually, however, the two movements go hand in hand: as you extend your poq'po, you more fully open your qosqo.

When you have consistently achieved control of extending and withdrawing your poq'po at the qosqo chunpi, and opening and closing the eye of this energy belt using your hand, switch to using only your intention. Simply intend that your poq'po extend or contract. Command that your qosqo open or close. The next series of exercises, the Hours of Power, in which you practice sensing the energies of the natural world with your poq'po, will help you determine whether you have gained *intentional* control of your energy body.

THE HOURS OF POWER

The fundamental practices of Andean shamanism are not so different from the shamanic practices of other cultures, and in its reverence of nature it is not different at all. Work with almost any indigenous group and you will find that the fundamental shamanic techniques are ones that teach you to be aware of the essences of nature and your connections to them. It is crucial to learn to sense the energies of nature, and then to discern the nuances of energy between one place and another. It is easy to feel the difference between the energy of an airport and that of a city park, and between the city park and an isolated mountain peak. But it is another thing entirely to feel the difference between one park bench and another, between one niche in the mountain ledge and another only a few feet away.

The following exercises are ones that you may have come across countless times in many different traditions. They are exercises to sensitize you to the different energies of nature. However, you will learn to sense these energies using your *poq'po* and to mediate the energies through your *qosqo*.

I begin with an exercise I practiced many times with Américo Yábar, which he calls the Hour of Power. I have also practiced this technique, in a completely different way, with Paul Crane Tohlakai, a Navajo friend and teacher. I have not personally practiced all of the techniques exactly as they are described here, especially over the time periods described, but I have developed them for use in this book based on energy sensing techniques I have practiced in other ways and under different circumstances in Peru and elsewhere.

Américo and Paul both designate the periods of sunrise and sunset as the hours of power. These are the transitional times when the “veil between the worlds” is thinnest. We know that there is in fact no veil between the worlds, because in the *kawsay pacha* energy flows freely. However, because we are so adapted to—some might even say trapped by—the perception of a linear space-time, we tend to perceive seams in the fabric of the energy world. The transitional hours of sunrise and sunset are powerful times when these seams are most visible, and so we use this visibility to paradoxically lift the curtain of our perceptions to see the seamlessness behind the seams.

The sun, or *Inti* in Quechua, is a powerful generator of energies, and its energy is most obvious to us in the form of heat and light. Our sense of touch (hot/cold) and vision (light/dark) are drastically affected as the sun moves across the horizon. Américo, in his characteristic poetry, simply says, sunrise

and sunset are times when the “power of the world floods the spaces of our being.” And so a good place to start sensitizing yourself to the kawsay pacha is by working with your poq’po at sunrise and sunset. However, *Mama Killa*, the gentler energy of the moon, is the sun’s counterpart. It is the feminine complement to the sun’s masculinity, and is itself a powerful nature energy. An exercise to sensitize you to its energy follows those concerning the sun.

Exercise 2: Harmonizing with the Setting Sun

Practice this exercise for at least one month. It is also a good idea to practice it during different times of the year, perhaps for one month during each of the four seasons. Make sure you are settled comfortably out of doors at least ten minutes before sunset. Dress comfortably, according to the season. It is not important that your skin be exposed in any way. Choose a place that is as free of distractions as possible, and it is not a good idea to begin practicing this exercise on the shore of an ocean or lake, as the water energies, which are particularly powerful nature energies, may pull your awareness from the sunset. Let the sunset be the focus of your environment.

Settle yourself by meditating for a few minutes. If you do not have a meditation technique, then simply focus your awareness on your breath and try to empty your mind of everyday thoughts and concerns. Once you are settled and relaxed, attune yourself to your poq’po and bring your attention to your qosqo, opening this center a little at a time, focusing your inner awareness on the sun. (If you do not yet have intentional control of your qosqo, use your hand to draw it outward and fully open.) Keeping your eyes closed, feel the sun and its movement with your energy body. Try to sense the sun’s dimming, its sinking. Reach out with your energetic perception to “see” the effect of the sun’s changing light on the sky and landscape. Américo would say to reach out with your energy filaments, which extend outward like threads of light from your qosqo, and Puma would say to follow the seques that connect you to the sun. Continue gently probing with your energy body until you “feel” that the sun has gone down. Your skin will probably give you the first clues to the sun’s setting, as the air temperature may cool. And even with your eyes closed, you will be able to discern a lack of light. That’s fine. Attune yourself to what a sunset feels like physically. But also awaken all your other senses. What does the sunset look like through closed eyes? What does it taste like? Smell like? Notice these sensory impressions,

then release them and attune yourself to the energetic feeling you sense through your qosqo. After a month of sensing sunsets, you should be aware of the myriad nuances of the movement of energy of a setting sun.

Exercise 3: Harmonizing with the Rising Sun

Repeat the exercise above, for one month, during sunrise. How does the energetic “feel” of the environment change as the sun rises and infuses your world with its light and heat? How does a rising sun feel energetically different from a setting sun? Is there a different “taste” to the energy?

Exercise 4: Harmonizing with the Moon

This exercise takes patience and dedication. Choose a time of night when the moon is high in the sky, and over two consecutive months go outside at the same time of the evening and repeat the technique described above, only this time with the moon. Be sure to give yourself at least twenty minutes and keep your eyes closed as you sense the moon. Attune to your poq’po, open your qosqo, and see if you can sense the changing conditions of the moon. When does a cloud cross in front of it? Did you feel that shooting star to the left of it? (You may never know if there really was a shooting star, because your eyes are closed!) During the course of a month, how does the moon’s energy change with its phases? (It’s helpful to repeat this exercise for at least two months in a row.) How is the moon’s energy different from the sun’s? Can you “taste” the difference between a masculine nature energy (sun) and a feminine nature energy (moon)?

The moon, you will remember the Q’ero telling us, has a powerful k’ara. I will not be surprised if you find this exercise the easiest and most intense of any in this chapter. It was for me. As I recounted earlier in this book, I first merged with the lunar energy at Aguas Calientes, the ancient baths of the Inkas, in 1994. I was in the baths at night, doing ceremony with a group of Westerners. Our only light was from the milky glow of fat white candles stuck here and there in pools of wax on the concrete between the two pools. The night sky was brilliant with stars and the moon. At one point we each went to the edge of the large pool we were working in and began to meditate, our instructions being to touch the energy of the moon. “Throw your energy filaments to the moon. Connect with her magic. Become reborn in the light of the night,” Américo urged us. “Go! Go be with the mother of the stars, the mistress of the night.” After only minutes, I felt my poq’po enlarge and

illuminate. My qosqo opened wide, and my awareness was huge, immense. Soon I was pure awareness, and as Mama Killa and I merged energies I felt an infinite tenderness coupled with an intensity of bliss that was nearly overwhelming. I was utterly immersed in this bliss, and although I felt these emotions in a distinctly physical way, I was totally without body—until I was suddenly and explosively snapped back into my body by my teachers. “Seeing” (*qaway*) my energy body, the two of them had waded across the pool to me. One touched me on the chest, over my heart, snapping me back to physical reality. He whispered a personal comment in my ear about what they had just “seen” in my energy body and the quality of the work I had done over the last week, and then he gave me a simple instruction about my further training. I’m sure my teachers had good reason for pulling me back from my reverie and grounding me, and I was not resentful. Still, for hours, I remained filled with the most exquisite refined energy I have ever experienced. The spell of the moon was broken, but the essence of that experience is one that is always with me.

Exercise 5: Harmonizing with the Stars

Repeat this same sensing exercise for one month but instead of focusing on the moon, focus on the stars. You may choose one star on which to focus your energy “attention” or simply give yourself over to the entire field of stars. In urban and suburban areas, which receive so much artificial light as to drown out starlight, this may be a perceptually challenging exercise, at least to your rational mind. We want to see what we’re connecting with. Although energetically it does not matter if you can physically see the stars or not, it is preferable that they be visible, if for no other reason than their beauty, which inspires us to practice, practice, practice!

This is a glorious exercise in Peru, where the darkness of the countryside makes the night sky blaze with fist-sized stars. The Milky Way is a great glowing road across the hanaq pacha, the great Shaman’s Road in the shamanic tradition. Américo says that “the eyes of the shaman shine brighter and are more charged the more he is able to move the power of his filaments in the direction of the stars.” I have heard it said by an alto mesayoq from Lima that we each have one star that belongs only to us, which is the star of our destiny. If you can identify this star and incorporate its energy, then you can read the story of your present and future life in it. As you practice this energy-sensing exercise, can you find your star?

What you have been doing in these exercises with the celestial energies is experiencing the refined energies of the hanaq pacha, a powerful part of the kawsay pacha, through your poq'po rather than through your physical senses. You also have been exercising and sensitizing your qosqo. As you touch these energies, you inevitably pull refined energy into your energy body, increasing your capacity for power. As you can see, it takes time and effort to develop the perceptual power of your energetic body. But as you have also no doubt found, the effort is worth it!

KAY PACHA NATURE ENERGIES

You are now ready to taste some of the energies of the kay pacha. Although the sun, moon, and stars, because they are physical entities, can be said to be “in” the kay pacha, their energies, being celestial, are also associated with the hanaq pacha. A tree is definitely more of the kay pacha than a star. So now repeat the same basic perception exercise—eyes closed and sensing through the awareness of your poq'po and qosqo—with any object in or aspect of nature. Try a tree, a lake, a river, the wind, the rain, the snow, sand, grass, a flower. It may be beneficial, depending upon your development so far, to choose one object and practice with it repeatedly until you really have a sense of its energy vibration. Then move on to a different type of nature energy. As other energies present themselves, such as rain or snow, a perching bird or sleeping cat, take advantage of the opportunity to sense them. However, I recommend that you *not* choose an element of nature that is associated, by some people, with the ukhu pacha, such as a cave, a snake or spider, or a burrowing insect. There are particular nature spirits associated with various terrain, and some are “less friendly” than others, although that anthropomorphic judgment is not really fair. Words truly are inadequate to describe these energies, but it may be more accurate to say these energies are less “wieldy” for some people, especially if you bring a culturally based perception of negativity or darkness to these entities. Remember, there are no “good” and “bad” or “positive” and “negative” energies in Andean cosmology, just light/refined and heavy/dense. It is advisable to stay with the lighter, more refined energies for now, but trust your own judgment in this matter.

Exercise 6: Harmonizing with a Nature Energy

When you choose an object in nature that is an entity unto itself, such as a tree or a hill or a rock formation, do not touch it, if possible. For instance, if you have chosen a tree as the object of your exercise, do not sit with your back against it. Instead sit about three feet away from the trunk, facing it. For a less substantive nature entity, such as sand or rain or wind, immerse yourself in it. Push your feet into the sand, face into the wind or rain.

Settle yourself for a few minutes using whatever relaxation technique is most comfortable and effective for you. Then attune to your poq'po and open your qosqo. As you make energetic contact with the natural object, be alert to subtle changes of temperature or density at your qosqo area and to colors and textures that may “appear” in your inner vision. Do not try to analyze any of these sensations or visions, just experience them and let them go. Of course, if at any time you feel uncomfortable, pull your poq'po in closer to your physical body, close your qosqo until it is just a small opening, and end the exercise by cleansing yourself, feeding the discomfort down into Mother Earth. If you still feel uncomfortable in any way, lay down on the ground, belly to belly with the Mother, and release all your hucha out through your qosqo. Remember, when you release hucha you are feeding the Mother, and she is always hungry! As you release hucha, also pull refined energy in through your head or crown chakra.

An additional note if you choose eventually to work with a stream, river, or waterfall. In the Andes these water spirits, especially those of the waterfalls, are called *phasi runa*, literally the “people of the water vapors.” They appear to different people in different ways but are generally sensed as mischievous, joyful energies. Work with them especially to overcome inhibitions and to enhance creativity. Remember, too, that hucha can be released into river water, so you may sense the hucha of others that has accumulated there.

Once you have merged with or tasted a particular nature energy, and it may take some time (one of my friends on the Andean path also trained in the Native North American tradition, and as part of her apprenticeship she had to sit with one nature energy for an entire year before she could move on to another!), choose a new one and repeat this exercise. How many different nature energies can you taste? Do some feel more compatible with your personal energy than others? If so, examine the differences between compatible and incompatible energies, and be alert for those same clues in your energetic interchanges with the people in your life.

CREATING ENERGETIC HARMONY: *HUCHA* CLEANSING TECHNIQUES

Having practiced tasting the energies of the hanaq pacha and kay pacha, you are now getting a good, intuitive sense of your poq'po and its primary energy center, the qosqo. You no doubt are learning to control both by extending and withdrawing your energy field and by opening and closing your energy stomach. If you feel ready—and honor your feelings here as to whether you feel ready to proceed with more intensive energy work—you can begin to learn how to cleanse heavy energy from yourself and others in order to harmonize your energy relationships and interchanges. First, learn to release heavy energy.

You probably have accumulated enough hucha over the course of your lifetime—and we all accumulate more in countless ways every day—to keep yourself busy cleansing yourself for some time. Remember, only human beings generate hucha, and we all accumulate it as we interact in less than harmonious ways with others and so move out of equilibrium with our core self. Hucha is heavy energy, but “heaviness” is a relative term. What creates heavy energy for you may not create it for me. Juan Núñez del Prado tells the story of his work with kuraq akulleq don Manuel Q'espí at Machu Picchu, where they were working in the ruins of the sacred baths. Juan was sitting in one empty cistern, with don Manuel sitting higher up the terrace in another cistern and “anchoring” Juan in the practice. Juan turned toward don Manuel, wondering aloud if he would be bathed in don Manuel's hucha as the heavy energy flowed down and over him. Don Manuel's face crinkled with laugh lines as he dismissed Juan's concern, declaring that his hucha was sami to Juan! With humility Juan silently turned back and began the hucha cleansing practice, having learned a gentle lesson from master to student about the relativity of sami and hucha from person to person.

The most obvious ways to determine what heavy energy you carry in your poq'po is to acknowledge where you are experiencing physical pain or how you are carrying emotional discomfort or fear. Another way to identify hucha is to examine the yanantin and masintin relationships in your life. Anywhere these relationships are causing difficulties is an area ripe for energetic cleansing. When you have identified hucha, then you can consciously release this heaviness, feeding it to Pachamama, and simultaneously empower yourself by drawing in sami.

Exercise 7: Releasing Hucha

There are two flows of energy that are differentiated in the cleansing work. The first is the downward flow, where you release hucha out of your yana chunpi, the black belt at your root chakra area, while pulling sami into your crown. This creates a downward moving column of energy that is called *saminchukuy*. Sometimes we pull refined energy up from Pachamama through our root, sending it into a column up through our crown chakra to create a column of light that links the three worlds. This is called *saiwachakuy*.

The basic cleansing process of *saminchukuy* is the *release* of accumulated hucha, and it is quite simple. Andeans are practical people, and their rituals are usually devoid of anything that is unnecessary to the task. So, to release hucha, simply sit quietly, attune to your poq'po, and feed Pachamama your hucha, “intending” it to move downward and out of your poq'po through the eye of the root center (the siki ñawi) at the base of your spine. If you want, you can use the filaments of light at your qosqo, as if these filaments were luminous fingers, to reach out and delicately examine your poq'po. Wherever you find areas of heavy energy—where you sense or intuit a difference in your energy field, perhaps a place where the energy feels stagnant, hot, tangled, or even encrusted—then draw that hucha into the opening of your qosqo and let it be washed down and out your root chakra into Pachamama.

While you feed the hucha downward, simultaneously open your crown chakra (at the top, or crown, of your head), align yourself with the hanaq pacha, the upper world, and draw sami in through this chakra. Feel the sami suffuse your energy body. It is important that you not “empty” yourself during this cleansing process; therefore, when you release hucha, you *always* simultaneously fill yourself with sami. You will intuitively and energetically know when the process is complete. When it is, close your crown and qosqo centers, and honor Pachamama for her work on your behalf. You may want to make an offering of sugar or sweets, foods Pachamama loves.

Juan has told me that doing the *saminchukuy* cleansing for ten minutes a day for sixty days can trigger the opening to the qawaq abilities, where you can actually see people's poq'pos with your physical eyes. That should not be our goal with this practice, however, for the most important aspect of our training is not to develop metaphysical abilities, but to live as light beings. Our primary goal is cleansing hucha from ourselves and empowering ourselves with sami.

The hucha release process is flexible and can be individualized in whatever way is most comfortable and useful for you. Trust your experience. Listen to your heart and intuition, and don't be afraid to adjust the practice to better suit your situation or style. As Puma said, the practices are like recipes and you may adjust them to suit your own taste.

You may find that it will take many saminchukuy sessions to cleanse the hucha you perceive in only one part of your poq'po or associated with just one aspect of your life. Respect your intuitions and stay attuned to the feelings of your energy body. However, particularly heavy energy—old patterns and deep psychic wounds—may resist the release process and call for a more penetrating kind of cleansing, that of hucha mikhuy.

Exercise 8: Performing Hucha Mikhuy

Releasing hucha is one way to cleanse yourself. Digesting hucha is another, more advanced technique. Basically, the difference comes in the intensity of the cleansing and the way the energy is mediated through the qosqo. In the releasing technique described above, you are really cleansing the surface of your poq'po, the “skin” that acts as a protective barrier for your energy and physical bodies, where most of our hucha accumulates. In the hucha mikhuy technique, you cleanse hucha that has penetrated this surface—usually the most entrenched patterns and emotional pains, which you have been carrying for a long time. With this technique you also can reach out to others, cleansing their poq'pos as you digest their hucha. In some ways the hucha mikhuy technique shares similarities with the process Carlos Castaneda calls “recapitulation,” in which one retracts or recovers one's energy filaments from the people and events of one's life and so reclaims one's power.¹ Castaneda's recapitulation process is time-consuming and highly ritualized; hucha mikhuy is not.

Digesting heavy energy begins the same way releasing heavy energy does: you attune to your poq'po, open your qosqo, draw the hucha down from your poq'po and into your qosqo and then feed it out your root center and down to Pachamama. However, there are two main differences. First, the hucha you draw in through your qosqo may be your own or someone else's (or, even, from a place or an object). Second, instead of being connected to a source of sami, such as reaching up to the hanaq pacha to pull in sami through your crown chakra, during hucha mikhuy you extract sami from the hucha energy stream itself. In effect you split the single flow of energy into two

streams, one of hucha and one of sami. You then release the hucha downward to Pachamama and direct the sami upward through your spine or energy centers to your head, creating a column as in *saiwachakuy*. You are pulling refined energy from the flow of your own or someone else's hucha, empowering yourself (and Pachamama) as you cleanse yourself or another person. *This double flow of energy is the key to knowing when you are actually digesting hucha as opposed to simply releasing hucha.* If you do not feel the double flow, then you are not digesting energy.

No doubt you are right now asking yourself two questions: Is hucha mikhuy difficult to learn? And, how can sami be extracted from hucha? I, too, asked those questions and was provided enlightened answers by my teachers. The answers are linked, so bear with me as I answer them in a linear fashion. First, let me address the question of difficulty. Simply put, no, hucha mikhuy is not difficult to learn—simply *command* your qosqo to do it, and it will! As for our other question, we have to remember that hucha is energy—it is just incompatible or disharmonious energy. Américo Yábar would call it disordered energy. It is not bad or useless or contaminated energy. The hucha that someone else carries may indeed be sami for you, just as don Manuel's hucha was sami for Juan Núñez del Prado. Juan likens hucha to food: our physical stomach knows how to digest food without our telling it to, and from that food it will absorb nutrients and expel anything that is indigestible. In response to both questions, Juan told me, “You do not have to teach your physical stomach to digest the food you eat. In the same way, you do not have to teach your spiritual stomach to digest hucha. Just command it to!”

Still, some of us are allergic to certain foods, and our bodies do not respond well when we ingest them. Can we be “allergic” to someone else's hucha? Yes and no. If you attempt to mikhuy someone's energy and you cannot detect the split stream or you feel sick, that may mean that the other person's energy is so incompatible as to be indigestible for you *at the present time*. Try again later, perhaps after you have cleansed more of your own hucha and so strengthened your own energy body with additional sami. Remember Juan's metaphor of the stone in the garden? If you feel the stone is too heavy for you to move, just leave it until you are stronger or until you can get help. Working with hucha is the same.

Enough explanation. It is time for you to try hucha mikhuy—starting with yourself. Sit where you will be undisturbed, settle yourself for a few minutes with meditation or breathing, attune to your poq'po, and open your qosqo.

Now command your qosqo to eat your hucha. Sense the hucha energy flowing in from your poq'po through your qosqo, and the stream splitting—the heaviness flowing downward to Pachamama and the light energy, the sami, flowing upward to your head. Continue practicing this until you can clearly feel the double flow of energy. If you do, you are *digesting* your hucha.

Because mikhuy can cleanse at a deep energetic level, it may take several sessions to cleanse only one area of your poq'po. If you begin to feel lightheaded, that may be a sign that it's time to stop this particular mikhuy session. You may be drinking in too much sami! If you really go overboard, you may even feel a little drunk. As always, listen to your energy body and your physical body and respect their feedback. If you feel lightheaded, then open your crown chakra and release the excess sami, intentionally sending it to someone you know who may need it.

Sometimes, if you are touching a particularly deep wound in your life, you may need to be assisted by another person who is well trained in the hucha mikhuy technique. Again, remember that stone in the garden? If you cannot lift it, you may need someone else's help. If you are cleansing a deeply held, painful energetic wound, you may need someone else's assistance to get the hucha moving or simply to provide emotional and energetic support. This person can facilitate the process by mikhuying you as you mikhuy yourself. He or she can also monitor your emotional reactions and physical state as you digest your hucha, and can support you by sending you sami from his or her own energy body or from the hanaq pacha.

Now that you have practiced digesting your own hucha—and you have *mastered* that technique haven't you?—you can begin to think about performing mikhuy on others.

Exercise 9: Performing Hucha Mikhuy on Others

Hucha mikhuy generally achieves three outcomes: it feeds Pachamama what she loves best, hucha; it energetically cleanses the other person, lightening him or her; and it empowers you. However, mikhuy has nearly unlimited uses, most practically for divesting a tense or troublesome situation of its heaviness. When you mikhuy with good intentions—why else would you digest anyone else's hucha?—you are in effect spreading peace and joy. Juan told me of one situation where he used mikhuy to make a bad situation bearable. He was in line in a bank in Cuzco, which was crowded with angry customers. It seems the government had experienced a fiscal crisis and had

not paid government workers for several months. Now they had partial paychecks in hand and the bank was packed to overflowing. Juan described the lines of vocal and impatient customers, including the one he was standing in. He began to mikhuy the energy of the people in his line. Soon, he said, on either side of him were lines of grumbling customers, but the people in his line were smiling and passing the time in pleasant small talk.

So, when would you perform mikhuy on others? Any time heavy energy is accumulating: whenever you feel a relationship is out of harmony, during an argument with a spouse or coworkers, when your child is uptight and tense from worrying about an exam. The relationships and situations that may be made more harmonious through mikhuy are endless. However, you should *begin learning to apply this tool by practicing on people emotionally close to you and with whom you have a positive and nurturing relationship*, perhaps a good friend or a family member. The better you know the person and the more securely and lovingly bonded you are with him or her, the easier it will be to cleanse that person of hucha.

The mikhuy technique is the same as described above, except you open and extend your qosqo to touch the other person's poq'po. Open your qosqo a little at a time, gaining a sense of the other person's bubble slowly and in increments that are comfortable for you. Once you have connected to the person's poq'po, command your qosqo to digest the other person's hucha and feel the double flow of energy (the hucha moving down to Pachamama and the sami flowing to your head).

As with most energy work, to perform hucha mikhuy on another person, that person neither has to be in close physical proximity to you, nor does he or she have to know you are performing this cleansing. Undoubtedly, however, he or she will feel the empowerment that results from the cleansing. Let me repeat that: he or she will feel the empowerment that results from the cleansing. Mikhuy is an act of munay, of love and empathy. I stress this point because someone once asked me how mikhuy differed from "energetic vampirism." It should be clear to you by now that mikhuy is an act of selflessness, not selfishness. It never drains another person, only empowers him or her, Pachamama, and the person performing the technique. It is an act of compassion, empathy, and of service—of ayni (spiritual reciprocity).

After you have perfected your mikhuy technique on people to whom you are emotionally connected, move to people with whom you have fewer

emotional attachments, to those who are emotionally neutral for you, such as someone from your place of work, an acquaintance, or a neighbor.

Finally, when you feel ready, begin to mikhuy those people who push your buttons. Who do you think is the biggest jerk alive? Which person raises your blood pressure by just walking into the room? Who is your worst enemy? Anyone to whom you feel a strong aversion is someone with whom you have probably generated hucha. You no doubt need to cleanse your own bubble before you attempt to cleanse his or hers. But once you have cleansed yourself, go ahead and cleanse this person's poq'po. Then watch and see how your relationship changes.

Juan tells a story from his own life that illustrates how powerfully mikhuy can change the dynamics of an unhealthy personal relationship. He had a colleague at the university who was openly hostile to him. The man was jealous of Juan and was loathe even to be in the same room with him, never mind talk with him. Juan's feelings toward this man were mutual. Unfortunately, they worked in the same department and were forced to share an office, along with many others. They disliked each other but there was no way they could avoid each other.

After years of slights and cold shoulders, Juan—now on the sacred path—learned the hucha mikhuy technique and decided this colleague was the perfect candidate on which to test this technique. He began by releasing his own hucha, and then he performed mikhuy on this man's poq'po. For eight months or more, Juan patiently practiced mikhuy on this man. Nothing changed—until one day, as the two passed in the hall, the man spontaneously said, "*Buenos dias!*" to Juan, something he had not done in all the years of their working together. The man caught himself, stunned at the greeting that had escaped his lips, and he stopped short in the hallway. Juan strolled past him, waved his hand in greeting, and replied, "*Buenos dias!*" That spontaneous greeting broke the ice, and before long this man began to greet Juan when they arrived at the office in the mornings. Within weeks he invited Juan to attend a department meeting he was running. When the opportunity arose, Juan reciprocated. Soon the two were on speaking terms, and now, many years later, they are friends.

Exercise 10: Tasting Other Energies Through Mikhuy

Mikhuy is generally used to digest hucha, which is a distinctly human energy. However, as I indicated earlier in this chapter, it can be used to "taste" other

“flavors” of energy as well. Unlike the exercises that opened this chapter, where you touched nature energies with your qosqo, in this use of mikhuy you are actually taking these energies into your own bubble. I do not recommend that you try tasting unfamiliar non-human energies, at least not until you have truly mastered hucha mikhuy and so are adept at moving the energy through and ultimately out of your bubble. But once you have mastered the basic techniques of using your qosqo and of digesting energy, then you are prepared to begin exploring the kawsay pacha in a new way. Through mikhuy you can interact with energies in a deeper way than you ever have before, perhaps discovering, as many shamans do, that everything has some degree of consciousness—and even personality! When you touch your bubble to a campfire, for example, you may get a sense of what the elemental energy of that fire feels like, but if you interact more deeply with that energy, through mikhuy, actually taking the energy of the fire into and through your own bubble, you may discover that the fire is “alive” and wants to dialogue with you.

I relate one last story to illustrate just how powerful a technique mikhuy can be. This story was first told to me by a friend and an impressive paqo in her own right, Elizabeth Jenkins. I asked Juan about it, and he recounted it to me firsthand and gave me permission to retell it. It concerns an unidentified flying object, and Juan gave his consent hesitantly, for Peru is a center of UFO activity and has an ardent UFO community. Juan has no desire to participate in debate about the UFO phenomenon. However, his experience is unique and not only demonstrates the power of the mikhuy process but raises many provocative questions about the possible nature of at least some UFOs.

Juan had been driving his VW Beetle when he spotted the unusual flying object moving slowly just above the horizon, over the valley surrounding Cuzco. The object was huge, silver, and cigar-shaped—obviously not an airplane or blimp. Fascinated, Juan pulled over to watch it. He stared in excitement and disbelief, visually following the metallic craft as it floated slowly over the valley. The longer he observed the craft, the more Juan was sure that he, an agnostic when it comes to the UFO phenomena, was having a real UFO experience. As he tracked the object, he remembered the teaching of don Benito Qoriwaman, who had told him that everything is energy and that he should taste and experience every kind of energy he could. Well, Juan reasoned, a UFO is energy and he wasn’t likely to get another chance to taste this energy—so he opened his qosqo and began to mikhuy the UFO. To his

surprise, it began to grow smaller and smaller. As he “ate” the UFO, he felt energy accumulating within his body, building to an intense pressure in his skull, until finally he had digested the entire UFO! It had completely disappeared.

Juan described the result of his experiment with disbelief and humor. “I felt as if my mind was blown!” he exclaimed. “I’ve never taken LSD, but I walked around in a mental haze for four days, as if I had eaten many doses of LSD!” When I asked Juan what he thought the UFO actually was, he said the only conclusion he could reach is that it was “a blob of free energy,” simply another, although unusual, manifestation of the infinitely creative kawsay pacha.

Language of the Stones: Working with *Khuyas*

I was at Sullistani, where the great circular funerary towers of the shamans reach like stone dreams to the hanaq pacha. I was with Américo and four friends, and Américo has just instructed us to walk around the area and open our qosqo until a stone called to us. He was teaching us the khuya work of opening to the ancient teachings from the stones themselves. We did as we were instructed, each going our separate ways among the huge stone towers and with both our physical and spiritual eyes on the ground. The funerary area is perched atop a wide flat promontory that overlooks Ullamayu Lake. The ground is dirt and loose stone, with occasional grassy areas studded with large angular boulders that might once have been worked for use in the towers themselves.

I wandered the area until a stone seemed to throw a cord of light out and attach to my qosqo area. I asked the stone's permission to work with it, and energetically I felt a positive response. I gave thanks as I picked it up and wandered back the way I had come, returning to two large, almost rectangular boulders that were situated about three feet apart. I wanted to sink my body down in between them and rest with my back against one and my legs up on the other. As I approached the stones, Américo saw me and quickly came over. "Here," he said in Spanish, "you must work with this stone." I was caught off guard. I wordlessly opened my palm to show him the stone that had already called to me, but he shook his head. "This one," he said, pressing a nondescript stone he had found into my other palm. "This is the one you must work with."

I promptly pocketed the stone that had called me. I would take it with me and work with it another day. I eased myself down between the two long boulders, and once I was comfortable I looked at the stone he had given me. It did not really speak to me, either visually or energetically. But, still, I thanked the stone for coming to me and informed it that my maestro had asked me to work with it. Then I closed my eyes and entered a meditative

state, holding the stone cupped in my palms against my qosqo. In only minutes I entered another world, pulled back in time and into another state of being.

I was still at Sullistani, but far back in time. In front of me, hovering in the air, was a dark reddish-brown pottery cup—a *k'ero*, or ceremonial cup. It was cylindrical, widening at the top, and without adornment. I watched as it morphed into a figural cup, decorated with colorful representations of condors.

Then another form took shape—that of a frail, old man. The cup dematerialized before my eyes and then reappeared in the old man's hand. He was at least in his seventies, and his body was thin and sinewy. I knew immediately that he was a *paqo*. He carefully put the cup on the ground and began stripping off his clothes, which were little more than a pullover, armless shirt and calf-length pants, both of plain, dark, handwoven cloth. I realized the sun was about to set and the temperature was dropping, but the old man did not seem to notice. He had a small jug of *chicha* with him, and he filled the condor cup with great solemnity.

As the sun began its descent below the horizon, a realization dawned on me. He had come here to die. I watched as he raised the condor cup to make an offering to the sun, the spirit of the condors, and the coming night. I eavesdropped on his thoughts as he silently prayed that the condors would come and feast on him, pick his bones clean, enjoy a fine meal with what was left of his physical body. He then tipped the cup, offering a few drops of *chicha* to Pachamama, giving thanks for his life and offering prayers for the well-being of his people.

By now the sun was gone, and the old man was shivering. Suddenly it started to rain—although it was hardly more than a mist—and I could sense that the old man was physically miserable with cold. Because I could share his thoughts, however, I also knew that he was ecstatic at the feel of the rain on his body. I could sense how appreciative he was, for it rarely rains in this arid part of Peru and the old shaman accepted the rain as a great blessing, as a sign of cleansing and that his prayers had already been accepted by the gods. He drank what *chicha* remained in the cup, then dashed the cup upon the ground, where it smashed into many pieces. He picked up a piece and sliced into both of his thumbs. Then he smeared the blood on the pottery shard, on his cheeks, and onto the stony ground.

He fumbled around a bit as he walked a short distance to two large, long stones that were a few feet apart. They were the very stones between which I was now meditating! He eased his naked body down onto the cold ground between them, resting his back against one, just as I was. His movements were slow and deliberate, and I suddenly realized that the old man was nearly blind. He closed his eyes and waited for death to claim him. He no longer wanted to live. I sensed he was distraught about something in his community, and he was ready to drop his physical body and reclaim his spirit body. I suddenly intuited that there were people—perhaps family members or apprentices—down at the base of the hill, keeping vigil for the old man throughout the night, expecting to climb the hill at first light to recover the old one's body.

Suddenly the scene shifted. The sun was up and already the day was warming. The old man opened his eyes. He was confused at first, and then astonished. Somehow he had survived the frigid night. It seemed miraculous that he was alive. He slowly and stiffly rose and turned toward the sun, thanking Inti for his life, accepting that it was not yet his time to die. He had despaired the night before, but now his inner light had returned. He offered a long prayer to Inti for the restoration of his life and spirit. When his ritual was complete, he found his clothes and dressed, then gathered up the shards of the ceremonial cup and lovingly wrapped them in a cloth and made his way down the hill.

As he disappeared from sight I envisioned him returning to his village, and I knew that he lived there, helping his people, for another three years. When he died, the same group of people who had been keeping vigil for him brought his body back to Sullistani. But they did not entomb him in a stone funerary tower.

I know where his body lies, but out of respect for the old shaman and for the spirit of the khuya through which I was able to bear witness to these events, it is a secret I am keeping.

Stones and rock formations are afforded a special status in Andean shamanism. It's not surprising that the feature that is most ubiquitous in the Peruvian environment—stone—also is an energy the shamans have come

to know intimately. Over the millennia, stones have counseled Peruvian shamans well, and so stones of power, called khuyas, have many uses in a shaman's mesa. Their primary use is as healing tools, as an aid to cleanse hucha from the body. As you have already read in this book, many Q'ero have not been taught the hucha mikhuy technique; rather, many of them use khuyas to cleanse hucha from a person. But stones are also repositories of information, and an Andean paqo is always alert to a stone that wants to speak to him. As you also know, most Andean paqos carry mesas that are comprised primarily of khuyas. The energy of a sacred site can be carried through a stone the paqo acquires at that site. Khuyas are also passed on from teacher to student. If a paqo wants to sit in council with that teacher, all he has to do is work with the stone that once belonged to that master.

The exercises below will help you begin to heed the call of khuyas that might want to speak to you or become part of your mesa. You will begin to learn to identify stones of power, learn from them, and work with them for healing.

RECOGNIZING A KHUYA

Américo Yábar is a recognized master of the khuyas. He can speak for hours, days even, about stones of power. I have been fortunate to work with him in places like the Island of Moon, which is known as the island of the female shamans and is located in Lake Titicaca, where the shore is covered with the most exquisite stones imaginable. The sheer numbers are amazing, but what really overwhelms you is their diversity. It's hard to believe that so many different kinds of stones can be jumbled together on one isolated island in a landlocked lake.

There are almost as many uses for a khuya as there are types of stones. Américo can list the kinds of khuyas and their uses until your head spins: *ch'aska rumis*, star stones with which you work with light energy; a special black stone used to heal heart problems; spiral-shaped stones used to charge energies or to extract hucha, and on and on. By connecting your bubble with a stone's energy field, then listening to it and examining it closely, letting your imagination and intuition "read" the stone, you can discover how to use its energy.

"A stone is a field of energetic action," says Américo, "of magical action that you express, that you sustain in the language that the stone is connected to

—to the moon, or to Pachamama, or to Mama Qocha [ocean or large lake]. The stone gives you a description of the field of consciousness and a field of magical action—you must follow it, pronouncing it as you experience it. Because it is like poetry. And poetry, we must all remember, is the antecedent of shamanism. They are both a doorway. And you play, and you play, and suddenly you go in. You go to the other side! And sometimes it's very hard to come back. Because when you do, nothing tastes as good! Because you have accumulated energy, you've become a specialist at lending it. So that's our work!"

Khuyas are shamanic tools, and they require special attention. Although you can decorate your living space with stones, the ones you use as khuyas should be kept wrapped in cloth. You can then work with an individual stone from the bundle or the entire bundle itself, as in working with a mesa. Khuyas also like to be “fed” every once in a while. To feed a khuya, you sprinkle it with pisco, wine, or some other kind of alcohol. Américo, Mr. Flamboyance himself, says khuyas especially like to drink fine cognac! I also usually smudge a new khuya, even one that a teacher has given me. Smudging a stone, with the smoke from sweetgrass, sage, or natural tobacco, cleanses it and makes it ready to unfold its new, and unique, relationship with you. But before you can work with khuyas, you have to first acquire them and then establish a relationship with them. As you approach them, remember that within the shamanic tradition they are considered living beings, fully conscious and able to communicate and teach.

Exercise 1: Messages Inscribed in Stone

Not all stones are natural khuyas, but all have the potential to be. Stones with strong energy, with left-side energy that can be used for practical purposes such as healing, usually make themselves known—all you have to do is listen. If you are like most people, you have probably collected pretty or unusual stones as you walked the woods or the beach. Somehow we all feel the pull of stones, even if we have no explanation for our affinity for them. If you have any special stones that you've collected over the years, use them for this exercise. Otherwise, pay attention as you walk out-of-doors (or even indoors—one of my most important khuyas was jumbled in among scores of fist-sized stones decoratively lining a planter in a mall in Arizona!) and listen for a stone that is calling you or drawing your attention. Open your qosqo to receive the stone's invitations. The call can be as overt as a

visceral or energetic pull to your physical body or it can be as subtle as your eye simply being drawn to one particular stone in a pile of many stones. When you have received such an invitation from a stone, then collect it, leaving an ayni offering behind: a pinch of tobacco or sage, a strand of your hair, whatever—it is the intention of thanksgiving that counts.

Once you have received the invitation of a stone, you are ready to begin establishing a dialogue with it, to begin to receive its teachings. Initiate this work by sitting quietly with the stone and holding it cupped in both hands against your body or at your qosqo. Establish an energetic link with the stone for a few moments, gaining a sense of its energy. Don't project your energy into the stone; instead, simply open your qosqo, allowing yourself to receive the stone's energy and to perceive its qualities. Once you have established an energetic link with the stone—this might happen in a matter of seconds or of days—then begin to acquaint yourself with it by visually studying it in careful detail, letting your eye find its own way over the surface of the stone. Allow the stone's shape, size, texture, and coloration to stimulate your imagination. Be open to the images, emotions, and other perceptions that arise. For example, perhaps the stone has a face in it. Who does it remind you of? Perhaps it takes you back in time to an event from your life. Allow yourself to fully enter that memory.

Américo would tell you that once you “enter the subtleties of the stone's existence and its essence” the images you receive and forms you may superimpose onto the stone are not coincidences. It is from these usually visual images that “the messages begin,” according to Américo. “Touch the stone,” he would urge you, as he did me. “Focus your attention on the lines and take it to you. Then you will begin to receive the message of an entirely different energetic body. It is very important to take into account the physical form and the projections of the stone. Understand that in the stone, in its form, are expressed subtle memories of other times that get lost in the night. That's why you see faces, images in the stone, markings, impressions, and so many other things and situations that come to be and are expressed in the dark folds of the stone.” At this point in the practice, you should become visually and kinesthetically intimate with the stone. You can even run the stone over your body (does it feel different on the soles of your feet, the palms of your hand, the skin of your throat or face?) or even taste it (make sure it has been washed!).

Let these images and the form of the stone guide you to its use as a khuya. Some khuyas are used in healing specific maladies—heart problems, blood maladies, depression, anxiety, and so on. Other khuyas have more general applications, such as cleansing hucha or releasing energy blockages. Many reveal mantras or rituals that should be used with them. While only a particular khuya can tell you for what purpose it needs to be used and in what ceremonial way—you will discover these messages in the next exercise—Américo has taught that there are also fundamental, almost universal, physical forms that equate certain khuyas with particular healing practices. Allow your visual and energetic examinations of the stone to guide you to your particular khuya's use, but generally:

- A spiral or circular projection or protrusion indicates both a charging stone and an extracting stone. You can “charge” people’s energy bodies by using this stone at their temples or at their chunpis to infuse sami. You can extract heavy energy from their energy body and into the khuya at these same points.
- A smooth stone of any shape that is composed of obvious layers, especially circular ones, is a good meditation stone. It can also help ground and center anyone with an excess of disharmonious energy. Simply have that person hold the khuya and imagine or intend that he is releasing all his hucha into the stone, or run it through the person’s field to draw out the hucha. Rinse the stone in water or touch it to the earth to release the hucha from the stone when you are done working with it and before using it again.
- A stone with a natural hole all the way through it is a powerful guardian and teaching stone that may hold many powerful secrets and reveal many of the mysteries of life. Use it as a dreaming stone as well, allowing a powerful dream or desire to slip through the hole into consciousness or into manifestation in the physical.
- A stone with square or rectangular lines on it is a doorway stone, and it can be used to help you shift to higher levels of awareness and refined perception, manifest new possibilities, release resistances, and allow blocked energy to flow freely again.
- A stone that has three almost identical markings—three protrusions, three “doorway” lines, three layers—is a three-worlds stone. It can be used to harmonize your abilities to work with the energies of the three

worlds: the ukhu pacha, kay pacha, and hanaq pacha. It also represents the three “stances” of an Andean mystic—munay (love), llank’ay (physical work and strength of will), and yachay (wisdom grounded in experience)—and so can help you harmonize your abilities in these three areas of life.

- A triangular stone can be a three-worlds stone or one that mystically connects you to the apus. This latter association is especially relevant, of course, if you discovered the khuya in the mountains.
- A stone that has a face in it, whether human-looking or otherwise, can be a teaching stone or a guardian stone, providing very specific instruction or protection. If the khuya is in the shape of an animal, insect, or bird, connect with the energies and symbolic disposition of that creature to acquire those characteristics in your own life or to transmit those qualities to others as you use the khuya on them.

Once you have identified the khuya’s purpose(s), let it also tell you how to work with it. Some stones transmit their power by simply being held during meditation; others want to be run through your energy field; still others may want to be held close to the body or kept under a pillow during sleep.

Practice sensitizing yourself to many different stones before you move on to the next exercise or attempt to heal with a khuya. A typical method of working with khuyas in healing is explained in exercise 3 below. But first, there is more to learn from your khuyas.

THE KHUYA AS TEACHER

Not all stones have intricate markings or features. Some are plain, polished, and smooth; they are generally nondescript. However, any stone that calls you has a meaning and message for you and is willing to be put into service as a khuya. After you have visually and tactilely examined a stone, and received any images from it, it is time to listen to it in a deeper, more profound way. Only the stone can tell you how it can best be used. And in the case of a guardian or teaching stone, only the stone can reveal its message to you. To listen to a khuya, to hear at least one of the stories it has witnessed in its long existence, to discern its use in your shamanic practice, and to discover its teaching in your life, you simply place the stone over your qosqo and meditate, opening your awareness to the stone’s.

If you are a newcomer to the Andean path, you probably will find it more comfortable to approach the khuya meditation from the “left side” of your perceptual body, from the magical side of the mesa. Most khuyas, because they are used for practical purposes such as healing, naturally work with the left side. Américo says, “The important thing is that you approach the stone with your left side open, and that you link your memory with the memory of the stone and allow the stone itself to tell you its qualities.” Having your “left side open” means nothing physical—it does not mean that you hold the stone on your left side or with your left hand or even that you intend to be in your right brain (the left side in Andean terms), although you will indeed be using your imagination and intuition when connecting to the story and discerning its teaching. It simply means that perceptually and energetically you are intending to interchange energy with the stone for the left-side, magical purposes, which in the Andes, as I have said, is *practical* work, such as healing. These are the easiest messages to discern from a khuya. You could just as easily approach the khuya from the right-side if it is a khuya that seems useful for right-side work. For instance, your teacher may give you a khuya, perhaps as part of an initiation, whose primary purpose is to link your mesa to the teacher’s and to his or her lineage. That kind of energetic interchange is a mystical connection, one of communication rather than of application, and so is said to be of the right side. Left-side and right-side work can become confusing for beginners on the Andean path, but suffice it to say that a khuya can have one or more specific left-side (practical) uses and also have a right-side (communicative) use. But it is easiest to begin by approaching khuyas from the left side, and that is what you should be doing now.

Exercise 2: Stones Speak

Sit with the stone, meditate to quiet your rational mind, and touch your bubble to the stone’s, opening yourself to perceiving the khuya’s energy. Let images, colors, and symbols float through your awareness. Unlike the last exercise, where you sought to interpret a jumble of images, in this exercise do not become attached to any of your impressions, perceptions, or feelings. Do not judge or try to interpret them. Just let them drift through your awareness. Soon you will slip deep into the space of receptivity, and you will truly touch the khuya’s bubble. You will begin to hear the khuya’s message. That message may be auditory or it may be a visual, like a movie

running inside your head. It may even be kinesthetic, with sensations and feelings suffusing your body. When you are in that space beyond your rational thoughts, the stone will reveal its story and/or how best to use it in healing or shamanic work; all you have to do is be open and aware enough to receive that instruction. Both Américo and I would advise that you listen not with your head but with your heart. “Khuya,” after all, means “affection” in Quechua, and your first bonding with a khuya, your first energetic interchange and revelation, can be as sweet as meeting a beloved.

An alternative, or adjunct, to the above exercise is to sleep with the stone under your pillow or pressed against your qosqo. Ask it to tell you its story, to reveal itself and its qualities, during the dreamtime. Sometimes it is best to “meet” a khuya using both techniques, as we tend to listen differently through our subconscious self, which is “awake” during sleep, than through our conscious self. I have found both techniques equally powerful. I slept with the khuya don Mariano gave me under my pillow for almost a year. Through it, don Mariano counseled me, most often in the form of dreams, and helped me make important decisions at crucial points in my early training along the Andean path. But I first heard a khuya’s story by meditating with one held at my qosqo, as I related in the story of my meditation at Sullistani at the beginning of this chapter.

KHUYAS AS HEALING TOOLS

Khuyas, as described earlier, are one of the major healing tools of Andean paqos. They use healing and power stones to cleanse hucha from a patient’s body. You too can try this. First, identify a stone that has healing capabilities (see exercises above, and note that it may take you some time to receive a khuya that directs you to use it in healing). Then prepare that stone by “charging” it—by infusing it with sami, the refined mystical energy—as described below. You should perform this charging ceremony before any new stone is used for healing, although you can periodically charge a well-used khuya using the same method. (Actually, you can charge any khuya for any purpose using this technique, but it is especially good for healing. If your intended use is not healing, simply substitute the other intention at the appropriate point in the ceremony.)

Exercise 3: Healing with Khuyas

To charge a khuya, center yourself, entering a meditative state of awareness, then hold the stone up toward the hanaq pacha, skyward, in your right hand. Your hand is becoming a living mesa, or altar, allowing you to directly touch the mystical energies and connecting you to the right-side work of communicating directly with the spirit realm. Then “intend” sami into the stone, feeling the flow of refined energy sweeping into the stone. Now move the stone down and into your left hand, making the transfer at about shoulder height. Your left hand is the left-side of the living mesa, the side of the magical energies, where practical, healing work takes place. As you move the stone down into your left hand, intend a transfer of healing energy from the right side of the mesa to the left, that is, transform the mystical energies into the magical. Now, with the stone in your left hand, touch it to your heart center and infuse the stone with munay, the power of love grounded in will, through which all healing takes place. The khuya is now ready to be used in an actual healing.

Ask your “patient” to lie down or stand in front of you and to enter a restful, receptive, and meditative state. Prepare yourself by centering yourself or meditating for a few minutes while holding the healing stone cupped in both hands. You can blow your prayers or intentions through the stone toward the hanaq pacha. Then open your qosqo and tune in to the patient’s energy body. If the problem is psychological or emotional, still scan the patient’s energy body, as described below, to see where the stress or dysfunction is being held in the physical body. And, if you do not know the actual problem, by scanning the person’s bubble you will discover where heavy energy has accumulated and so is potentially causing a problem. Then, beginning at the patient’s head, run the stone slowly over the person, perhaps touching him or her, perhaps not; only you can determine what the proper technique is by staying in energetic interchange with the khuya through your qosqo. Run the stone down the person’s field in slow, sweeping motions, touching the khuya to the floor or ground for a moment at the end of each sweep. By touching the stone to the ground, you feed the hucha it has collected to Pachamama. You can also rinse the stone in water (river or lake water is best). Continue cleansing the patient’s energy body, paying particular attention to any areas you feel are particularly dense or encrusted with hucha. Tell the person to visualize the heaviness leaving his or her body and entering the stone, and ask him or her to visualize refined energy streaming into the crown chakra. When you are done, cleanse the healing

stone once again by touching it several times to the ground (indoors, the floor), rinsing it in water, or by smudging it. Never use the same stone on more than one person without first cleansing it between sessions.

Manifesting Intentions Through a *Despacho*

I was feeling nervous, and unsure of myself, even a bit inadequate. I was about to make and offer my first despacho for a group of newcomers to the Andean path. The group of six were my first real students. I had agreed to teach them the rudiments of the Andean tradition over a long weekend. Having always avoided the role of teacher, I had dreaded this day. But it was inevitable. Nearly five months before, I had talked privately with my teacher Juan Núñez del Prado, asking him what the next level of my training should be. His answer had surprised me. “I have taught you all I know. Your training is complete—except now, to fulfill your initiation to the fourth level, you must pass on the knowledge. You must now teach it.”

I instantly rejected Juan’s counsel. First of all, I knew he was being kind, if not outright modest. He had decades of experience on the sacred path, and he had loads more to teach me. Second, I was a writer. I would pass the teachings on through the written word, not the spoken word. But Juan rejected that explanation. “You must teach,” he told me again.

The universe, or my Higher Self, soon saw to it that teaching opportunities came my way. Finally I relented and agreed to teach a small group of six people in Reston, Virginia. The weekend had gone well, and I was closing the training by teaching about despachos. I was about to make and offer an apu despacho. But I felt unworthy. No false humility here. I truly felt unsure of myself. I had seen despachos made dozens of times in the Andes, and I had assisted my teachers in making them. But I had never made one entirely by myself. I was confident I could explain the meaning of most of the recados, the ritual nature items, as I placed them in the despacho, but I was nervous about making it correctly and of having the energetic intent that would open the apus to receiving it.

Then, as my husband assisted me in sorting the recados, I remembered a story Juan had once told. He had been working with don Benito

Qoriwaman, receiving despacho training. Don Benito had demonstrated the proper selection and placement of the ritual items many times to Juan, and Juan, having traveled the Andes and worked with other paqos, had observed hundreds of despachos being made. When don Benito finally commanded that Juan make and offer his first despacho, Juan felt confident of his ability. He carefully constructed the nature mandala that is a despacho, sure that his technique was impeccable. But he had hardly finished when don Benito brushed the despacho aside, spilling its contents, and declaring it unfit as an offering to the apus. Juan, stunned, had no idea why he had failed, and don Benito offered no explanation. Time and time again, Juan prepared a despacho, and each time don Benito rejected the offering.

Finally, in anger and spite, Juan began to throw together a despacho. "I'll show him!" he said to himself, impulsively and angrily selecting and placing items in the despacho. Finally, the offering was complete, and Juan folded the paper and tied the bundle closed. He waited for don Benito to reject the despacho once again. Instead, don Benito smiled with satisfaction. "Wonderful," he declared. "Finally! Finally! Instead of trying to make a despacho like I do, you have made one of your own, filled with your own intent, energy, and passion."

Juan instantly understood that—while there is a technique to making a despacho—what is most important in such an offering is the authenticity of the maker and of his or her energy. The only correct way to make a despacho is the way you make it, not the way your teacher does. Juan's lesson became mine, and I proceeded to make a beautiful despacho—and an authentic one.

Don Agustín Pauqar Qapa explained some of the many ways a pampa mesayoq makes and uses despachos. You may remember that there are more than two hundred different kinds. General despachos to Pachamama or the apus are usually offerings and thanksgivings. They also may be pagos, or payments, used to atone for a mistake or misjudgment. Despachos also have very specific purposes: to heal, to attract wealth, to enhance one's love prospects, to foster business success, and so on. We in the West cannot

simply go to the marketplace, as an Andean can, and order a love despacho or a prosperity despacho, but we can, nonetheless, use despatches to align ourselves with our intentions.

THE PRINCIPLES OF INTENTION AND EMBODIMENT

In the Andes, embodiment plays a significant role in manifesting one's desires. At the sacred annual festival of Q'ollorit'i, where more than fifty thousand pilgrims gather at the base of a glacier more than sixteen thousand feet high, there is an area set aside specifically for making dreams come true. In the Andes, the sacred work is referred to as *pukllay*, or sacred play, so my traveling companions and I called this area at Q'ollorit'i the "play area." If one wanders into it, one is entering into the land of dramas and dreams, a place where even though people are lighthearted and laughing, their intentions are decidedly serious.

Legend has it that if you enact your heart's desire—be it a new truck, a business, a visa to the United States, a marriage partner, or a baby—you will be granted your wish if you see the Lord of Q'ollorit'i in a vision or a dream, or if your request is made with sufficient ardor to be heard by the spirits of the apus. The enactments are so serious that vendors sell any accoutrements that might be needed to embody your dream: a land deed, play money, a plastic wedding ring or truck, a miniature house. As you wander the area, you might be pulled into a drama, to act as a stand-in for the desired lover, the real estate agent who will sell that dream house, or the immigration official who will stamp that prized visa.

You, too, can engage in sacred play, embodying your dreams and desires using a despacho of intention. In one of the exercises below, you will see how I combined the Andean despacho offering with intention and embodiment techniques to manifest my dreams. While we in the West have neither the recados (ritual items) nor the knowledge to make a despacho as an Andean paqo would, we can adapt their use to our own culture without changing the intention of the original ceremony. The instructions and stories below will help you use these beautiful nature offerings in your own life.

Exercise 1: Making a General Despacho

You can make a despacho of thanksgiving or gratitude to send your prayers to Pachamama or to the apus (whichever mountains in your area you feel

connected with) by adapting the ritual items from an Andean despacho with those that are native to your area. The generic elements of an Andean despacho are listed below, with suggestions for easily obtainable substitutions.

I always begin ceremony by preparing myself with meditation, smudging with sage or sweetgrass, and/or by praying to the six directions (the four cardinal directions, Mother Earth, and Creator). A despacho ceremony is no different. So after you gather all the items you need, stop for a moment to prepare yourself to enter sacred space.

To determine which items you will need, you first have to determine how you will offer the despacho—by burning it or by burying it. The smoke of a burning despacho takes your offering to the apus; burying a despacho honors Pachamama. However, depending upon your circumstances, it is perfectly legitimate to make a despacho to Pachamama and burn it. The difference is not in how you offer the despacho but in what items are used in its preparation and to which spirit you are directing your attention and intention. Most despachos contain a half shell, like that from a clam or scallop, and a cross at their center. The shell represents the feminine energies and the cross, placed in the “bowl” of the shell, represents the masculine. Generally, there are two important distinctions between an offering to the apus or to Pachamama—the color of the flowers and the number of k’intus—as outlined below. Note that although each of the two types focuses on the masculine or the feminine energies, you should place items of both energies in every despacho to harmonize the energies:

- Apus: An offering to the apus contains white flowers and twelve k’intus. It usually does not contain very much food. Choose ritual items that represent masculine energy or the hanaq pacha (sky or upper world).
- Pachamama: An offering to Pachamama contains red flowers and eight k’intus. It contains lots of sweet foods, such as sugar, cookies, and candies. Choose ritual items that represent the feminine energies and the kay pacha (earth or this world).

The description below for making a despacho is one of many, many possible formulas, and it is a Westernized adaptation of an Andean despacho. Let your intuition guide you in this ceremony. Here I present the fundamentals

of the procedure, but you can be as creative as your heart leads you to be. When you offer an item to the despacho, you may want to infuse it with your finest energy by gently blowing on it three times before you place it in the despacho.

A despacho always starts with a rectangular piece of white paper. Next, place a shell at the paper's center with the "bowl" of the shell facing up and the widest part facing away from you (always use a half shell). The shell represents the feminine, the cosmic circle, wholeness. Always offer an item to the despacho with focused intention, with mindfulness. Next offer the cross, which represents the masculine energies and the four sacred directions. It is placed in the bowl of the shell. The k'intus are the next crucial component. Because you will not have access to sacred coca leaves, you can substitute any ceremonial plant leaf, especially fresh bay leaves, laurel leaves, or olive leaves.

Holding the leaves in your fingertips, form a k'intu of three leaves, stacking one leaf atop another and making sure the leaves are as healthy and perfect as possible. The veins of the leaves, each leaf's underside, should be facing down. Hold the k'intu up and pray over it, blowing your prayer through the k'intu in a soft breath. You make as many k'intus as you need for your intention. Usually twelve k'intus are offered to the apus, because there are twelve sacred apus in the Andean area and because twelve is the sacred number of Peru, representing the twelve royal *panacas*, or lineages of the Inkas, among other things. Offer eight to Pachamama. As an adaptation, you could offer four k'intus if you want to honor the sacred cardinal directions, or six for the six directions.

As you make the k'intus, place them in the despacho, moving clockwise around the shell. Or, if you want to make them all before offering any of them, note that once a k'intu is made, it should not be placed on the ground. Tuck it between two fingers held tightly together while you make the others. In the Andes, this is the way paqos usually "store" the k'intus as they make them and until they are ready to offer them. A paqo may have five, six, or more k'intus tucked between the fingers of one hand while he skillfully and deftly makes more.

Next, you will offer the flowers, or, if you prefer, you can wait and lay them on top of the finished despacho just before it is closed. Offer red flowers to Pachamama and white flowers to the apus. If red or white flowers are not available, any color will do, especially pink or purple flowers for

Pachamama and yellow flowers for the apus. No specific number of flowers is required, and you can offer the entire flower, sans stem, or pull the petals from the flower and arrange them in beautiful circular patterns around the center of the despacho.

When the shell, cross, k'intus, and flowers have been offered, you can begin to lay in the other objects, being very mindful of which item you are selecting, why you are selecting it, and praying over it before you place it in the despacho. Some items that find their way into most despachos are:

- White cotton to represent the clouds.
- Colored threads or yarn to represent the rainbow.
- Tiny squares of silver and gold foil or shiny paper. Silver represents the feminine energy and the left side of the sacred path; gold represents the masculine energy and the right side of the sacred path. Usually squares of both colors are placed in a despacho.
- Tiny metal or paper figures representing people, animals, keys, houses, and so on. These are the items of power that Puma talked about and they are selected according to the reason for the offering or thanksgiving. You may remember that Puma described a fox and a bell as representing intuition, and a puma claw as representing power. Since these tiny figures are not readily available outside of Peru, you can omit them, or you could draw what you need or cut small figures or symbols out of magazines.
- Sacred plant items, such as seeds, grains, grasses, herbs, and so on. You can consult books of herb and plant lore to find the symbolic meanings of many plants and seeds. Sage, sweetgrass, and natural tobacco are also appropriate offerings.
- Food items to feed the spirits, especially raw rice or crackers for the apus and brightly colored candies and sweets of any kind for Pachamama, although add a little bit of both sweet and more substantial foods to either kind of despacho.
- Alcohol of some kind—usually pisco in Peru but also wine—is sprinkled over the despacho periodically. You could sprinkle water as well.
- Small stones or stone fragments, especially crystals or minerals, and a magnetic rock if you can (or a piece of rock that is iron-based). Meteorites are very powerful offerings.

- Fragments of natural items, such as starfish arms, animal fat, a bit of fur or animal hair, a claw. Consult an animal lore book to discover the symbolic meanings of various animals, and do not hurt or harm any living thing in an attempt to secure matter for an offering.

Place anything else you want into the despacho, always being tender with the item being offered and taking care to intuit how and where it should be placed. Despachos are always works of art. Take your time, and work through your energy body rather than your rational mind.

When you have completed making the despacho, it is time to close it—to “close the door” or “close the mouth” as some paqos would term it. There is more than one specific method to folding a despacho. Some paqos fold the sides in first, usually the left side first, followed by the right. (Note: You are actually working with the pointed tips of the paper’s corners.) Then fold the bottom of the paper up over the center of the despacho, forming the “mouth,” and finally fold the top of the despacho down to “close the mouth.” Another common method is to fold the despacho closed as you would a mesa cloth. First fold the bottom up, then the sides in, then the top down. Then tie the despacho closed with string or yarn: white for an apu despacho, red for a Pachamama despacho, although like everything else I have said, you can also use whatever color yarn you desire if it has specific meaning for you. A common string combination is yellow (or gold) and white (or silver), the colors representing the masculine and the feminine.

If you are working in ceremony with other people, the person who made the despacho can now take the despacho bundle, cover it with cloth, making a mesa bundle, and run it over the bodies of all the participants, blessing them with the power of the despacho and asking them to release their hucha into it before it is offered. If the despacho-maker has a mesa, the offering should be kept wrapped in with the mesa until it is offered. When it is time to make the offering, the despacho-maker then takes the despacho to the fire or to the place where it will be buried and offers it.

MAKING YOUR DREAMS COME TRUE

Embodying your desires is a powerful way to focus your intentions and push the kawsay. I have taken the Peruvian penchant for embodiment and the power of the despacho ceremony and combined them. As Puma has said, we

need to respect the meaning of the despacho ceremony and not use it toward selfish ends, such as trying to lure a lover back or trying to manipulate someone else's energy. But our training as paqos is to learn to push the kawsay, to choose a wave of reality and learn to surf it to bring more harmony into our lives. My husband and I used the power of the despacho to do just that, and our results were so powerful that I have passed this method on to others. I will use our own situation as the primary example of how making an embodiment despacho works and then I will provide a second example that demonstrates the power of embodying intentions.

My husband and I moved back to my home state of Massachusetts in 1988 and bought a condominium at the pinnacle of a tremendously inflated real estate market. Unfortunately, the market soon fell and we, and thousands of others, were left with property whose value had fallen below the balance of our mortgage. A few years later, when we decided we wanted to move, we were left with next to no options. Several attempts to sell the condo failed, and real estate agents were not even interested in listing the property. About the same time, we decided we wanted to go to Peru to hike the Inca Trail. We were in training as paqos and we wanted to enter Machu Picchu our first time in the same way the shamans of old did, after walking in our Medicine Bodies and dying to our old selves along the Inca Trail. The trip was expensive because we had to gear up almost from scratch. We needed everything from hiking boots to a four-season tent. I put that desire in the sacred pipe, a Native American practice, during a New Year's eve ceremony, but I still didn't see how it would be financially possible. There were several other desires high on our list at that time, but selling our property and going to Peru were the two most important ones. So we decided to prepare an embodiment despacho. This is a powerful tool, and we did not undertake it lightly, but this seemed the appropriate time to ask the cosmos to help us push a little extra kawsay our way. Basically, we wanted to manifest a "miracle" or two!

On a raw March afternoon, we opened sacred space, placed the white paper upon the carpet in our living room, and carefully and mindfully began to construct our offering. We decided we wanted to "gestate" our dreams in the womb of the Mother, so we prayerfully prepared a Pachamama despacho that we would bury. We didn't have a shell, so we started with the k'intus. We offered eight k'intus of fresh bay leaves. In went the red flowers, the sweets, and so on. Then we began adding our personal embodiment recados.

First, we put in a picture of Machu Picchu and asked to be able to afford to go during the coming year and to have the physical and spiritual stamina to walk the Royal Road to this sacred citadel as paqos. Next we concentrated on the desire to sell our condo. We began by putting an extra key to our front door into the despacho. For good measure I had cut our address out of the phone book, and I placed this scrap of paper in the despacho as well. We asked the universe to provide us the key to a new home at a new address, wherever it was “meant” for us to be. Then we put in a dollar bill, asking for the financial means to fulfill our desires. I put in an old wristwatch, and we asked to be taken off our time and to be put in sync with the universe’s time. My husband offered prayers for a new job and then added his business card to the despacho. We put in several items more and then closed the despacho.

Even though it was a frigid March day, we bundled up and drove to a nearby state conservation land area, where we hiked in with our qosqos open, letting our energy bodies lead us to the proper place to bury our offering. I had a small garden trowel with me so we could bury the despacho. We walked for a long time, not paying attention to trails. We often found ourselves turning into the sun, weak though it was. At one point we walked through a burned-out area, noting the metaphorical significance of the previous year’s new growth that was just becoming visible. Finally, my husband pointed to a rocky ledge—actually he pointed down over it—saying this is where we had to bury the despacho. I was hesitant about climbing down this steep and slippery grade, snow patches still dotting the rock. But my qosqo told me he was correct, this was the place, so we carefully climbed down. When we reached the ground on the other side, we soon discovered that the trowel would do us no good. The ground was frozen solid here. Still, we called in the six directions and meditated for a minute, preparing ourselves to somehow make the offering. Then we started prying at the rocks that were strewn around, hoping that one or two would lift free and we could at least cover the despacho. But the rocks were frozen solid and wouldn’t budge—except for one. One rock lying next to a pile of rocks moved, and to our delight it revealed a little cave in the rock mound. My husband pushed the despacho bundle into it—it just fit. It was as if this space were made for our offering. So we made the offering and then, as we closed sacred space and hiked from the area, we detached from the form of the outcome. To detach means that while you hold the “space” for your intentions, you don’t fixate or ruminate about the actual manifestation of your

desires. You let the universe perform its magic, letting Pachamama gestate your intentions and birth your desires into manifestation. The form that manifestation takes may be quite different from any you envision, so you must trust in the infinite wisdom of the universal energies (and your Higher Self) to know best what you need for your personal growth.

By early May, through a series of coincidences that are too long to explain here, the opportunity for us to go to Peru to walk the Inca Trail in a spiritual way had presented itself. We scraped together the money to outfit ourselves and we began to train for the high-altitude trek. I received an unexpected and lucrative freelance writing assignment, so we were able to amass all but \$2,000 of the money we needed to go to Peru.

But there still had been no movement on the sale of our property. We did not have the condo on the market, so we knew we were giving Spirit a huge task in finding a buyer for it. We should not have doubted. One evening in early June, just after dinner, the telephone rang. My husband answered. It was a real estate agent “cold-calling” people in our condo building with units of our description, inquiring if they were interested in selling. He had a client, a recent widow, who wanted a particular type of condo unit in our building, which was nearly brand new and was handy to public transit. She had cash, so no banks would be involved. The only catch was we had to be out in three weeks, so she could move in immediately after closing the sale of her house. No problem, we said, come on over. She came over, she loved it, she offered us a price no real estate agent said we could get considering the market. We signed the purchase and sale agreement on July 4, Independence Day, and before long the sale was complete. After we paid off our mortgage, we had exactly \$2,300 left, just what we needed for our trip. We flew to Peru in August and took our first step on the Inca Trail at Chillca. At the end of the trek I met don Mariano, who predicted that one day I would write this book. Every single desire we embodied in that despacho manifested within about a year.

Since that time, I have passed this technique on to others, especially students in workshops. But usually I am not privy to how, or indeed if, these despacho offerings actually produce results. Once in a while, however, I do get feedback, as the next story reveals.

In the late 1990s, I was working in a business setting as a writer and became aware of the disappointment one of my coworkers and her husband were experiencing in their lives. They desperately wanted children but could

not have them. The adoption process had frustrated them to no end. Several times they had come close to adopting a newborn, only to have the adoption fall through at the last minute. Seeing my coworker's distress after another such failed attempt, I approached her privately and explained my training in the Andean tradition, which she was vaguely aware of, and told her about the Andean penchant for embodying desires. I suggested that she and her husband might want to make a despacho of intention. She seemed open to the idea, told her husband about it, and they decided to push the kawsay on their own behalf.

I explained the despacho-making process, and they followed my instructions to the letter. As embodiments of their desires, they created both a mock birth certificate and adoption papers, listing themselves as parents. They also wrote up a "new addition to the family" announcement, and put in other items of the same vein to physically represent their desires. Then they offered these items in a despacho and buried the offering bundle in a ceremonial manner in their backyard. They completed the ceremony right around the time of the fall equinox, which is an auspicious time for making an offering to Pachamama, as fall and winter are a time of going inward and "gestating" desires. Then, as I had instructed them to do, they tried to detach from the outcome, allowing Mother Earth to work her magic and push the kawsay without their worrying about or fixating on the solution she might provide. In late winter, they received a call from the adoption agency about a newborn girl that was available for adoption. Amazingly, to them at least, within a few days of the spring equinox—the time of blooming and new life—they signed the adoption papers and took their daughter home!

Exercise 2: Making an Embodiment Despacho

The general techniques for making your own embodiment despacho are contained in exercise 1 and in the stories above. Because each person's desires and dreams are uniquely personal, I hesitate to outline a single method for constructing an embodiment despacho. You simply need to open your qosqo and make an *authentic* despacho. Begin by following the general format for any despacho (white paper, perhaps a shell and cross, flowers, and so on). Then embody your intentions and desires in any way that resonates for you. However, the two steps I insist you not skip are:

1. Carefully sort out your desires before making the despacho.

2. Detach from the form of the outcome after you offer it.

The universe works in mysterious ways, so they say. But you have to be prepared for the outcome the universe determines. What I did not tell you in my husband's and my embodiment despacho story is how we found our new home, which turned out to be an apartment. It was spacious and situated on beautiful grounds, once an apple orchard. But we did not especially like it because it was part of a huge complex. However, we had had only three days to find a place in this particular area because out of the blue my husband got a new job, his dream job. Professionally, socially, and spiritually, our new location was a boon, but an apartment in a huge complex is not exactly what *we* had in mind when we asked for a new home. And on the way to getting there—to this new job and residence—we looked our dream land in the eye and had to walk away. Walking away from an opportunity to buy a beautiful spread of land with a community of spiritually minded people in Arizona was the hardest thing we ever did, but our poq'pos said "No!" loud and clear, and we had to listen. Actually, it was only a few days after we paid attention to our poq'pos and withdrew from the land purchase that the real estate agent called and we sold our condo.

Therefore, as you prepare your own unique embodiment despachos, be prepared to be detached from the form of the outcome. Pushing the kawsay, living in mystical union with the cosmos, means living with conscious fluidity. You have to always acknowledge that the universe may have plans for you that currently are not even a glimmer in your eye . . .

You are now ready to prepare your despacho of intention. As you consider which desires and dreams you wish to manifest, I will leave you, and close this book, with the words of Américo Yábar. He gave me this message in Lima in 1995. I had just spent an amazing month in Peru, the two weeks working with Juan Núñez del Prado journeying to the Q'ero villages and Q'ollorit'i, and the two weeks on an incredibly wild and profound adventure all over Peru and into Bolivia with Américo and four women friends. One day, near the end of our trip, Américo abruptly took my tape recorder out of my hands and left the room where we had all been sitting talking. He came back fifteen minutes later, returned my recorder, and said only that he had recorded a personal message for me. I would like to share this (translated) message with you now, for it not only offers good advice for anyone about to perform ceremony to embody a desire, but it expresses the

attitude of Andean paqos in a way only Américo can. He speaks from the heart, as do the Q'ero and Puma and Juan and all the others who have reached out through these pages to you. Read and reread these words, and remember them, for they reveal the stance of the shaman and the heart of the Andean paqo:

“To the stars of the morning, only give love. Love opens your consciousness. It gives you jewels that touch the heart. Fear paralyzes you, makes you unable to act. The more paralyzed you are, the more fear you have. It's a vicious cycle.

“The fragrance of the flowers is abstract and is connected with love. Love gives you wings. It turns you into an eagle. It allows you to see from high above, and at the same time it makes your body humble. It helps you relax in life. It gives you courage to experiment in life in all its different dimensions.

“Love is a *k'uychi*. It's like a *k'uychi*—a rainbow in which are clearly visible all the different colors of feeling, which transport your heart to the hanaq pacha. A rainbow contains all the colors of life.

“Think of liberty. Think of the infinite. Don't think of small things, of trivialities. Trivialities are very small, they're very silent—so silent that they are like cockroaches scurrying around. Fear always makes you think small, but love never thinks small. Love is able to sacrifice everything. Just think of the impeccability of the eagle flying into the wind, into the unknown, into the mystery.

“And also have humor—that laughter under the stars, that laughter by the sea. Grasp the grandest emotions of life. This is the sense of humor that ought to be man's future religion. Don't allow miserable opinions to sway your vision of the world and of life.

“Be happy. Be happy. Be happy.

“Believe in love, in life, in God.”

APPENDIX 1

The Q'ero as Shamans and Mystics

In this book, I call the Q'ero and their cosmology both mystical and shamanic, which may be confusing to those readers who are familiar with the academic distinctions between the two concepts. Generally, shamans are able to enter an altered state of consciousness at will, to “travel” the multidimensional universe and retrieve information for prediction, healing, insight, and so on. Shamans may use ritual, dance, drumming, psychotropic substances, and other techniques to induce the altered state. They may travel outside their physical body to other realms of existence, where they may meet totem animals or spirit guides from whom they receive guidance and information. Usually, a shaman undertakes the spirit journey or performs a specific ritual for a well-defined purpose, striving for a particular outcome.

Mystics, on the other hand, generally are those whose spiritual pursuits are solitary and whose goal, if they may be said to have one at all, is to experience a profoundly personal transcendental integration with the natural world and the larger ground of being. In that contemplative moment, the ego is overcome, the boundary between self and other dissolves, and one experiences unity consciousness. Mystics, therefore, usually are not associated with magical practices and rituals (other than, perhaps, inward-reaching disciplines such as meditation and yoga). Nor are they necessarily seeking guidance, wisdom, healing, or other specific objectives as a direct result of the transcendent experience, although such outcomes are often associated with an experience of mystical union.

The Q'ero, and other metaphysicians of the south-central Andes, technically could be called shamans, for they undergo rigorous training and formal initiations into the metaphysical work, often perform ritual for an intended purpose, and commune with nature spirits with the intent of receiving a teaching, guidance, or other information not otherwise available to them. However, Andean practice, and Q'ero practice specifically, is

fundamentally much more mystical than it is shamanistic. The Q'ero do not purposely enter altered states of conscious with the express intent of journeying or retrieving information. They do not employ the shamanic techniques of drumming or ecstatic dancing; they do not use psychotropics to induce altered states, as, for example, do the shamans of Amazonian Peru. Instead, the paqos of the south-central Andes develop their energy body. They learn to interchange energy with the kawsay pacha, the cosmos of living energy. Their goal is to always be in ayni, or reciprocity, with all the other energies of the kawsay pacha. Therefore, they seek mystical union more than shamanistic control of the multidimensional world of energy. From that mystical union, they, like the lamas and gurus of the East, often develop suprahuman abilities—but the development and use of these abilities is not the *intent* of their practice.

We can best understand the Q'ero, and the Andean tradition in general, within these anthropological definitions by acknowledging how these metaphysicians blend mystical practices with a shamanic world-view. This is most clearly expressed in their concept of harmonizing the left and right sides of the mesa, as discussed in various sections in this book. To review, paña, the right side of the sacred path, is the mystical aspect of the work—direct, personal communion with nature and the energies of the cosmos. It is, ultimately, a transcendent work. Lloq'e, the left side of the sacred path, is the work of the magical, the practical techniques and rituals that are undertaken for specific purposes and for seeking specific outcomes, such as divination, healing, and rainmaking. As such, the Q'ero metaphysical cosmology, and the larger Andean sacred tradition, is at once mystical *and* shamanic.

APPENDIX 2

Lost Knowledge: The Q'ero and Andean Prophecy

To understand certain portions of the Q'ero interviews and the logic behind some of our questions concerning the prophecy, a little background information may be necessary. As was explained in more detail in [part 2](#), the Q'ero and most other indigenous peoples of Peru have over the past several hundred years incorporated beliefs and traditions from their Spanish occupiers and the Catholic Church. The Catholicism of the Q'ero, however, is not the doctrine one finds in the modern, mainstream church. It is, instead, a unique blend of Peruvian indigenous cosmology with sixteenth-century Catholic dogma and certain heretical teachings. One such borrowing is the Joachimist division of human history into three overlapping eras of increasing spirituality: the Age of the Father (roughly, the period detailed by the Old Testament), the Age of the Son (the time of Christ), and the Age of the Holy Spirit (a future period of monastic contemplation). Theologian and cleric Joachim of Fiore's three epochs are based on a complex, apocalyptic, and ecclesiastical scholarship of the twelfth century that I will not reproduce here and that has not, to my knowledge, survived in any meaningful way in Peruvian Christianity today. However, Andeans use distinctly Joachimist terminology to describe three ages of their own history—the *Dios Yaya Pacha*, the Age of the Father; the *Dios Churi Pacha*, the Age of the Son; and the *Dios Espíritu Santo Pacha*, the Age of the Holy Spirit—and, as Juan Núñez del Prado has discovered, they equate these ages with distinct stages of their own prophecy. The Age of the Father began with the founding of the Tawantinsuyu, the Inka Empire, and ended with the deaths of the rival Inkas, Atawallpa and Waskar. The Age of the Son began with the Conquest and ended sometime between August 1, 1990, and August 1, 1993, when the world underwent a cosmic transmutation, which in the Andes is called a *pachakuti*. This cosmic reordering ushered in the Age of the Holy Spirit, which is the age in which we currently live and is the *Taripay Pacha*, a

period extending approximately from 1993 to 2012 during which humankind has the potential to evolve spiritually and to manifest a kind of heaven on Earth.

When I queried the Q'ero about Andean prophecy, I began by asking them what they knew about these three ages. Don Mariano was the spokesperson for the group, which discussed my question for several minutes. "The time of God the Father was the beginning; the second time is the time of God the Son, when the world was destroyed by a great flood. Now we are in the time of the Holy Spirit."

"Someone told us," Juan Núñez del Prado said, "that the time of the Holy Spirit is the same as the Taripay Pacha. Is that so?"

Juan had purposely asked this question indirectly, as if it were secondhand knowledge to us. He did so because, as noted in [chapter 8](#), the Q'ero, eager to answer our questions, sometimes speculated in an effort to please us. If they thought we knew something that they did not, they would often struggle to find answers for us. However, if the knowledge seemed to be hearsay, then we were assured of receiving their honest and frank opinions.

After a few minutes of discussion, don Juan Pauqar Flores spoke, using a metaphor for time that involved the hours of the day rather the years of an epoch. "My father said that the time of the Taripay Pacha is the time of day when time will end. After the Day of Judgment comes the Taripay Pacha, when the living and the dead will be together. When this time [our present time] ends, we will live with the dead." Then he added, clarifying his answer, "The whole world is now in the time of the Holy Spirit, not just us Q'ero."

As soon as don Juan finished speaking, and while Ricardo and Anamaria were still translating, the Q'ero whispered furiously among themselves. Ricardo and Juan listened and brought us up to speed on the controversy. "They are confused," Juan explained. "They are saying 'perhaps,' 'perhaps,' because they do not know anything for sure. They are just speculating." Finally, don Mariano's voice rose above the others. "Don Mariano says to the others," Ricardo translated, "'If you know something about this, talk about it.'" But none of the Q'ero volunteered any additional information.

We discussed the situation among ourselves, about how we could best put unambiguous questions to the Q'ero. The double translation process and the peculiarities of the Quechua language were causing confusion and difficulty.

In addition, the Q'ero have very pragmatic modes of thinking, and overly broad or abstract questions often confounded them. Sandy suggested that we ask if signs or omens would indicate the Taripay Pacha to be imminent, speculating that this kind of question would elicit a concrete response that would reveal parts of the prophecy. Juan reworded the question, and Ricardo asked it: "If the dead people are going to join us when this time ends, then is this time near at hand?"

Don Juan Pauqar Flores responded for the group. "We do not know. We will only know this when the time arrives."

At this point I thought it best to make things really concrete. Juan had written an academic article, in Spanish, that gave an overview of the Andean prophecy and described various personages and places involved in the unfolding of the prophecy: terms like *Inka Mallku*, a supreme healer, twelve of whom are prophesied, and the *Sapa Inka* and *Qoya*, enlightened political leaders who would govern the restored Tawantinsuyu during the Taripay Pacha. I suggested asking the Q'ero about these specific terms, because they were inextricably linked with the prophecy. If the Q'ero recognized the terms, it was likely they knew more about the prophecy than they were willing to discuss with us. Juan thought that it was already obvious that they simply did not know about it and that further questions would be fruitless. But he humored me and translated my question to Ricardo, who put it to the Q'ero. "We have heard that one sign of the time of the Taripay Pacha is the coming of great healers called Inka Mallkus. Have you heard of such a thing?"

The Q'ero response tended to prove Juan correct—the Q'ero assembled before us did not know about the prophecy. Still, their answer provided some interesting, and amusing, cultural information. Don Agustín explained that an Inka Mallku "is when we are having a fiesta and we visit in groups. When a person goes visiting from one group to the other group, we call to that person, 'How are you, Inka Mallku?' or 'What are you drinking, Inka Mallku?' Or we ask 'Are you having a fine time, Inka Mallku?'"

When our chuckling subsided, Juan explained that don Agustín was describing the custom called *chanq'a*: during a festival one person makes a ritual visit from one group of partiers to another. The person who comes to visit your group is called an Inka Mallku, "mallku" literally meaning "ancestor" or "relative."

I was beginning to agree with Juan that this group of paqos did not carry the prophecy. I was surprised by this, especially that don Mariano, who had worked with both don Andreas Espinosa and don Manuel Q'espí, both of whom knew at least parts of the prophecy, did not seem to have much information for us. But I was not yet willing to give up. I suggested one more avenue of investigation—the coca leaves. Reading the coca leaves is the primary method of divination in the Andes. Perhaps we could elicit a response about the prophecy by asking if the coca leaves could reveal anything about the times to come.

Juan seemed unsure of my intention. He asked me to be specific. Was I asking about a personal future or about the Taripay Pacha?

“The collective future,” I explained. “Let’s just throw a general question at them about using the coca leaves for predicting the future of the world. Who knows—maybe they’ll laugh at me, but maybe they won’t.”

Juan discussed my question with Ricardo. He reported back to me that there was some difficulty with accurately phrasing a question about the “world’s future” in Quechua. It was not as simple a task as it seemed in English. Ricardo and Juan spent several minutes in discussion with the Q’ero before translating for us.

Finally Juan turned to me and explained. “They are discussing several terms that involve time. It is very interesting. They say that *qhepa pacha* is both future time or future world. Qhepa means behind, and for the Q’ero the future time is unknown, like anything that is outside of our line of sight or physically behind us. They explained that *ñawpaq pacha* is the past, or literally the time before us. For them the past is known, so it is said to be before or in front of us. Then there is the *kunan pacha*, which is the present time. Now I will ask them if they can know about the qhepa pacha from reading the coca.”

The group reached almost immediate consensus. “No,” don Mariano replied on the group’s behalf, “we cannot. That is not possible.”

At that response Sandy, Anamaria, and I looked at one another in disbelief. We had each witnessed don Mariano either reading the coca for an individual and making predictions or reading a person’s energy body and then making predictions. For example, don Mariano had read Sandy’s coca leaves in 1994 and foreseen her work with a partner in a shamanic healing practice. At that time, Sandy had a thriving private healing practice where she combined conventional psychotherapy with body work, and such a joint

venture was something she had not even considered. But within a year of don Mariano's prediction, she was indeed in a shamanic healing practice with another woman.

Moreover, as is described in the introduction to this book, Sandy and I had witnessed don Mariano make predictions after the despacho ceremony at Mollomarqa. One of those was that I would "bring the word of the Q'ero to the world"—a prediction that I did not understand then, but which I believe came true upon the publication of this book. There are other examples I, and others, could cite showing the accuracy of Q'ero predictions.

Although a skeptic might say that, on these occasions, don Mariano simply planted the seeds of ideas that we later nurtured into reality, I believe that don Mariano *can* read the future in the coca, and I was mystified that he seemed now to be denying his ability. After all, coca divination is a common practice throughout Peru, and these Q'ero paqos had already related to us the important role coca divination played in their own initiations and mystical activities. I asked Juan to ask don Mariano, directly and specifically, about his ability to read the coca leaves. Sandy and I explained our experiences to Juan, and Juan recapped them for don Mariano, choosing Sandy's coca leaf reading as the example.

Don Mariano listened intently to Juan's long explanation, and then he replied, "You are right. I did read her coca leaves. But even with that, one cannot see the qhepa pacha."

After some discussion, Juan and Ricardo agreed that a semantic misunderstanding was obscuring this entire discussion. "It is only my opinion," Juan explained, "but I think we are talking about two different levels of future." Then he explained his belief that don Mariano and the other Q'ero were trying to make a distinction between an individual's personal future and the collective future. The collective destiny is beyond the scope of the coca, he explained. The individual destiny is not.

Unfortunately, we were interrupted by the hotel owner at this point. Lunch was long overdue and he could no longer hold it. More unfortunate still, we never found the time to resume this line of questioning.

APPENDIX 3

In the Hand of the *Hacendado*

The world of the Q'ero cannot be understood without first understanding the effects of Spanish colonialism upon them and the syncretism of their ancient cosmology and Catholicism, however heretical. The Pauqar brothers, both pampa mesayoqs, had come down from Q'ero expressly to provide insight on these points. Juan Pauqar Flores, the oldest of the group, remembered well the time of his youth when the “hand of the hacendado” ruled, for he was ruled by it. Although all the Q'ero were present for this interview, don Juan Pauqar Flores related most of the Q'ero history that follows.

Don Juan leaned forward, his eyes narrowed to slits over his hawk-ish nose in an otherwise elfin face and the open palm of his right hand gesturing outward to punctuate his words. “It was very difficult during the time of the hacienda period because the hacendado, the owner of the hacienda [Luis Angel Yábar], was very violent and brutal. He would beat us. Now is a time of tranquility and quiet, but that was a time of beatings and insults. We were obligated to work for the hacendado, until Juan's father, Oscar [Núñez del Prado], came and liberated us from that slavery. When we opened our eyes [from our birth] we were under that system, but then Oscar came to us and told us that we can get out from under this system, that we can start the land reform here in Q'ero. We will be free from this slavery. He said that to us.”

Don Mariano Apasa Marchaqa leaned toward the tape recorder from where he was sitting at the end of the couch, at the end of the line of four Q'ero paqos. He talked in his usual husky but quiet voice. “I remember when I was a child and I saw Oscar arriving to Q'ero with a group of people. When he talked about liberating us, I thought to myself, ‘This must be the will of God, because we did not call him to us; he came here on his own.’”

Don Juan Pauqar Flores took over responsibility for narrative. “The time of the hacienda was very difficult and at times the hacendado was crazy. One

time he intentionally cut down a tree that fell and killed a man! The hacendado was an ugly person. Once he ordered me to go to the pasture to milk the cows and to make cheese. But he rejected the cheese; he broke the cheese over my head and smeared it all over my body! Then he demanded another cheese. I had to replace the rejected cheese, had to bring it from my own home, which meant that my family had none. He did the same with a sheep that died. He took the body, the flesh of the sheep, and beat me with it. Then he told me I had to replace that sheep with one of my own.

“I remember a time when I was working and the hacendado closed me into a room to beat me. He hit me with his fists on both of my cheeks, on my head, and both of my knees. Then he took a stick and hit me with that! The owner became tired from beating me, and just then his wife walked in and she stopped him. But this was the custom. We could not do anything about it. We were always beaten. The owner had affection for only a few men, and these he did not hit. But all the others, he beat them!

“I will tell you another story,” don Juan said, his baritone voice erupting from his diminutive body. “This thing happened in a place called Paucartica, where we were working for the hacendado. The ancient tradition was that we Q’ero wear long hair. So we wore our hair long, in a pony tail, as did the ancient Inkas. But one day the hacendado cut off everyone’s hair! He did this only to humiliate us! He made us weave our cut hair into ropes, and then he threw the ropes into the garbage!” Don Juan sat back, his hands clasped in his lap, letting his words settle into silence around us.

Juan Núñez del Prado leaned over to me and whispered, “This incident is so important to him that he even remembers the place where it happened!” Then Juan explained that the insult was a grave one, because the Q’ero’s long hair was an unmistakable distinction between them and the Spaniards, their conquerors. To lose their hair was to lose the last badge of their former independence and the link to their royal Inka lineage.¹

Don Juan Pauqar Flores resumed his story. “The violence was not only from the hacendado. The organizer of the work [the overseer] was cruel as well. He was used by the hacendado to carry out violence. But there is one good thing to say about the hacendado. He never [sexually] abused the women. This was only one hacendado. The others were different.”

Here Agustín Pauqar Qapa gently indicated that perhaps don Juan was not entirely correct. The Q’ero hesitate to publicly disagree with or correct one another. But don Agustín, in his characteristic soft-spoken manner, said,

“I remember hearing stories that there were sexual abuses. I heard that the owner would sometimes arrive at the hacienda, bringing with him bread, fruit, and liquor. Then he would take a woman to a room. He chose the most beautiful woman and forced her to have sexual relations with him. If she resisted, he would banish her and her whole family from the hacienda. Because of this abuse, there were a lot of men of Q’ero who took their families and ran from the hacienda. They ran away and were spread out over the area.”

Don Juan picked up this line of thought: “Another thing that happened with frequency, that caused men to leave the hacienda, was that during the time of the potato harvest the hacendado took all the potatoes for himself. Then he sent another man to our villages at Q’ero and he took all the potatoes we picked from our fields! We did not have any potatoes, so we could not live. We suffered much. This kind of thing caused many men to run away.”

When I asked what happened to the runaways, Juan Núñez del Prado explained that the hacendado would hunt them down and bring them back, often to very harsh punishment. There really was no place for them to run to, he explained, as the various hacendados controlled almost all the villages in the area. There were few free communities where one could openly live and support a family.

When asked about the obligations of the Q’ero to the hacendado, don Mariano explained that the Q’ero had to work both at the hacienda on behalf of the hacendado and in their own fields in the villages in Q’ero. It was very difficult, because the main hacienda was located at Paucartica, which is in the Sacred Valley surrounding Cuzco. But the villages of Q’ero are mostly in the mountains. So the Q’ero had to come to Paucartica to work, a walk of nearly four days. Obviously, they could not often get back to see their families or to work their own fields or tend their few alpacas or llamas. In addition, the hacendado would often hire the Q’ero out—in effect rent them—to other hacendados, to work on their lands. Most of the time the Q’ero were required to provide their own food while they were on the hacienda, as the hacendados were not obligated to either pay or feed their workers.

Don Juan spoke emphatically: “The hacendado kept the money. We were his slaves, his property.” But the hacendado was not only a ruthless proprietor, he was an unreasonable one, too. “Once I was ordered to work in the corn fields and to herd the goats,” don Juan said. “But we do not have goats in Q’ero, so I did not know how to herd them. When I did not herd them

well, the owner beat me. Another type of abuse that happened to me was when I was chosen to be a *pongo*.”

Juan Núñez del Prado explained the term. “A pongo is a system within the hacienda where a man must perform special obligatory service for a specified period of time with no pay. He must perform very specific types of labor for the hacendado.”

Don Juan resumed his story. “When I was a pongo I was ordered to process potatoes to make *moraya* [dried potatoes]. So the hacendado gave me the potatoes, but when I showed him the moraya I made from them, he claimed that I had not made enough, that it was not all there. ‘There must be more!’ he claimed. Then he ordered me to give him my own potatoes, from my own fields, to make up for the quantity he thought was missing. If I did not do this, he said he would have me thrown in jail!”

Don Juan was not exaggerating the hacendado’s power. Most hacendados’ influence extended into the political and civil systems of the surrounding towns, where they were assured the allegiance of the local police.

“This kind of thing happened not only with the moraya but with the sheep,” don Juan continued. “The hacendado would give a number of sheep to a pongo to care for, and he would decide that the sheep must double in quantity by the next year.” Don Juan left unspoken the punishment received if the flock had not properly multiplied. He hurried on, his voice urgent, to explain the abuses heaped upon pongos. “At another hacienda, in Paucartambo, where we often were forced to work, they had different types of pongos. There was a pongo who must make sure that the birds do not eat the fruits from the trees. He spent the whole day making noises to chase the birds from the trees. Another type of pongo worked in the kitchen. Another took care of the wells and drew water. He had to get one type of water for [cleaning] plates and another for cooking. He must carry the water for the kitchen and for the all the uses of the household. This pongo, the one in the kitchen, must cook, but he must not allow any smoke into the house. If there is smoke, he is beaten. Another obligation of the pongo is to feed the dogs. The hacendado would come to check that the dogs were given the meat, and not us. We were never given meat.

“Once when I was a pongo, I had to sleep in the main house at the hacienda.” Don Juan explained. “The hacendado tied a cord from my finger, in the room where I slept, to his own finger, in the room where he slept. He

did this so he could pull the string to wake me up. Not to summon me, but just so I could not sleep—only for that reason. I was always awake! I could not sleep! The hacendado was very old and could not sleep well. So he pulled the cord to keep me awake, too. To be a pongo was very hard, too much!” Don Juan leaned wearily back into the couch cushions, as if exhausted from his tale.

Don Mariano and don Agustín together picked up the story. They are both too young to have served as pongos, but obviously they had heard stories, perhaps from their own fathers or other older relatives, of how it felt to be called to this obligatory service. “When a person knows he is going to be a pongo, he is as terrorized as when a puma is about to attack. He would shake with terror!

“Sometimes when it was your time to do this service, it was a hard thing to do but you had no choice. You must do it or be punished. It was your obligation to do it. But sometimes, when your moment came to do this service, the hacendado would reject you. Then you must return to Q’ero. You must pay because you could not do your service.”

Don Juan perked up and took over the story again, speaking from personal observation. “There was a list of people who had to do their obligation. If you went but were rejected, you must pay from your own pocket for someone else to take your place. The price was usually one llama of your personal property.” He sat back to let this fact sink in.

Juan Núñez del Prado explained the significance of the hacendado’s price. “That was very expensive. Nowadays, they have a lot of llamas in Q’ero. But in the hacienda times, llamas were scarce. They were very precious.”

As if he understood that we now appreciated the significance of the hacendado’s demand, don Juan leaned forward to deliver the coup de grâce: “If you did not send a man who pleased the hacendado’s heart, the hacendado could take all your llamas and all your potato crop. If the hacendado rejected your replacement, he could take all your crops!”

Don Julian interrupted, putting an end to Juan’s exhortation, perhaps in an effort to soothe his older brother. “In the time of our grandfather,” don Julian said, “you had to serve as a pongo for one month a year. In our generation, things became a little better, because the service was only three weeks.”

Taking don Julian’s cue, I changed the subject, asking how the hacienda times ended, how the Q’ero gained their freedom.

Once again, don Juan spoke for the group. “The time of the hacienda ended with the arrival of other people, like the people that came with Juan’s father, Oscar.^{II} It also happened at the same time as another event—with the hacendado’s felling of the eucalyptus tree and the death it caused. The death of that man resulted in a legal investigation.”

“The case was in the courts for four years,” said don Julian. “During this time the villagers chose two men to represent them at the courts. Turibio Q’ero was chosen, along with Florenzo Apasa. They went to Cuzco to observe the court case. Because of their fear, their terror of the hacendado, they did not go into the town of Paucartambo.”

Juan Núñez del Prado provided the explanation of this cryptic remark. “When the Q’ero challenged the hacendado,” he explained, “the entire town of Paucartambo became the enemies of the Q’ero, for the hacendado controlled the towns. But to get to Cuzco, the Q’ero had to cross the big river at Paucartambo. There was no other way to go directly from Q’ero to Cuzco. However, because of their fear of the townspeople of Paucartambo, the Q’ero could not do that. They had to sneak across the river in the dark, at night.”

Don Julian continued, although he did not pick up the narrative exactly where he left off. “This person, Turibio,” he explained, “during the time of the court case, he fell in love with a woman from Pitumarka. He went away to live in this woman’s community. But before he did, he completed his responsibilities to Q’ero.”

Don Julian seemed proud of the representative’s show of integrity. Then he explained how that integrity had been assured. “During the time of the court case, the entire community of Q’ero made offerings to the apus and Pachamama for the success of the representatives of the community, so that they would have inspiration and be clear thinking and do the right things. So they would be free of all difficulties.”

Satisfied that he had accounted for the representative’s restraint at waiting until the court case was over before devoting himself to his new love, don Julian continued. “The two representatives of the community also went to Lima, three times. They went to the president of the Republic himself.^{III} We still have the photo of this meeting with the president.

“During the time of this court case, we in Q’ero provided the economic support. The rich and the poor gave five or ten *soles*: the poor people put in less money, and the richer people put in more to support the court case. We

[the people of the communities that make up Q'ero] had cows, but only a few, perhaps two or three. We had more alpacas and llamas.” Ricardo explained that implicit in Julian’s explanation was the understanding that the richer people would provide more money or more llamas or alpacas, because in the event of a favorable legal outcome, they would have more to gain.

Here don Agustín took the opportunity to explain the darker side of the mood within Q'ero. “The time of the hacienda did not end easily, but with much difficulty. The community, the men, divided into two groups: those who supported the hacendado and those who supported the communities of Q'ero. There was a lot of conflict and animosity. Those who were for the community, they became involved in the labor organization movement. They got in touch with Emiliano Waman T'ika.” Don Agustín’s articulation of the name Emiliano Waman T'ika (also commonly spelled Emiliano Huamantica) was like an invocation. Juan explained its significance: “Emiliano Waman T'ika was a famous and charismatic labor organizer in the Cuzco area. He organized the first federations of *campesinos* [peasants].”

Don Julian picked up the thread of the story. “This leader, Emiliano Waman T'ika, was at one time at Q'ero. This leader started an assembly at Q'ero. He said, ‘The hacienda time must end! You will see that you must throw the hacendado into the river and let the river carry him away.’^{IV} But when Emiliano Waman T'ika was at Q'ero, the hacendado sent a message to us, saying, ‘What is this shit doing in Q'ero?’ And to the people of Q'ero who supported the hacendado, he said ‘Throw out this shit!’ So all the Q'ero who supported the hacendado said we must expel this man. They did not succeed in expelling Emiliano Waman T'ika, but there was a fight between the two groups.”

Juan Núñez del Prado filled in the history of the coming of the labor movement to Q'ero. “There were four people who supported the Q'ero, doing all they needed to do in Cuzco. There was Emiliano Waman T'ika, from the Peasants Confederation; there was Demetrio Tupac Yupanqui, a journalist from Lima who went on that first anthropological expedition to Q'ero with my father; there was Mario Vasquez, an anthropologist from Lima who was also on the expedition with my father; and finally there was my father, Oscar Núñez del Prado. These four persons helped the Q'ero community realize their freedom from the hacienda system. All of this happened in a time when agrarian reform was still a utopia in the Peruvian system. The Q'ero, with the help of these four men, had the opportunity to

buy their land. This happened around 1958 and was one of the first steps toward agrarian reform in Peru. Widespread agrarian reform started in 1968, ten years later. And for a time Mario Vasquez actually became the vice minister of agrarian reform.

“This is an amazing story,” Juan continued, reverting to his professorial mode, “because Mario Vasquez started out working with Allan Holmberg, a North American anthropologist of Cornell University. They started an applied social anthropology program in Vicos. And there they bought a hacienda and eventually gave the peasants their freedom. With the help of the North American university, Cornell University! And Mario Vasquez was a friend of my father. My father started this in Q’ero and Mario Vasquez helped him. He and Tupac Yupanqui and this famous syndicate leader—Emiliano Waman T’ika—became something like a team. Vasquez and Tupac Yupanqui worked in Lima. Waman T’ika and my father worked in Cuzco. They established something like a team to challenge the hacienda system. They together organized this court case in Cuzco because of the death of this man [by the hacendado deliberately felling the eucalyptus tree]. They organized this meeting of the Q’ero leaders with the government and went with them to the government palace. Mario Vasquez also went to Q’ero, to check out the situation.”

Just then don Julian interrupted. “But this man, Mario Vasquez,” he said, “about five years ago, he was going to a hotel and he was killed. It is a dark thing.”

I was unsure of what don Julian was implying—either that Mario Vasquez had committed suicide or that he had been murdered. Our Quechua translator, Ricardo, explained the mystery. “The journalists reported that he put on his good suit, went to a hotel, and killed himself.” I asked Ricardo to query the Q’ero about the journalists’ reports. What did they think happened to Mario Vasquez?

Don Julian replied, very simply, “It is not clear.”

I pushed Ricardo to get an opinion from them. What did they *think* happened?

There was a short discussion among the five Q’ero paqos. Don Julian answered for the group. “We do not know what happened. We know nothing about it. However,” he said, “about the death of Emiliano Waman T’ika, it was written up in a newspaper that there was a car accident because of sabotage by the hacendado. He died going to an assembly [of peasants].”

Although they would not speculate about the circumstances of Mario Vasquez's death, it was evident that they believed Emiliano Waman T'ika had been murdered.

By this point, we were all exhausted. The discussion had gone on for hours and it had been a dark one, dredging up unpleasant memories for most of the Q'ero. I decided to begin to wind down the interview by asking about the outcome of the court case. It was not clear to me what the charge had been. So I asked Juan Núñez del Prado, who explained that it was indeed a murder charge. I asked Juan what the hacendado's sentence had been. "If I remember correctly," he said, "it was a totally ambiguous outcome from the court. They did not punish the hacendado. Although he was charged with murder, it was not firmly proved that the felling of the tree was not an accident. I think the hacendado only had to pay civil reparations to the family of the man who was killed."

Don Juan Pauqar Flores relayed the further significance of the case. "We won the court case because of the help of these four. But there were two outcomes. One was the outcome of the court case. The other was the decision by the government to finally buy the hacienda." The combined efforts of the Q'ero, Waman T'ika, Vasquez, Tupac Yupanqui, and Núñez del Prado had paid off. The government would put don Luis Yábar out of business, although he would not go quietly.

Don Juan continued: "Even after the government bought the hacienda, there remained cows and sheep from the hacienda in Q'ero. The hacendado said, 'The hacienda is in the palm of my hand. And my animals are part of the hacienda.' This [display of power and declaration of ownership] was seen by those associated with the hacendado, and they believed the power of the hacendado was intact. So Daniel Yábar bought the livestock from the hacendado and took all these animals away from Q'ero. Daniel Yábar bought these with his own money. Then we were finally free."

Juan filled in the logic beneath don Juan's conclusion. "The hacendado said he retained power because his livestock were still on the lands," he explained, "even though the government bought the hacienda from him. But finally he decided to sell his livestock to Daniel Yábar, who removed them from Q'ero. At that moment, with the extraction of the hacendado's animals, everyone felt that they were finally free from his authority."

The obvious questions were Who was Daniel Yábar? and Was he related to the hacendado, Luis Angel Yábar?

Again, don Juan Pauqar Flores answered. “Daniel Yábar was from Paucartambo, and he was a friend of the Q’ero. He was a government representative to Paucartambo. There were times when we were threatened with arrest and he helped free us. He did not allow the police in Paucartambo to arrest us, often only after much argument. He would tell the police, ‘These men are working for me!’ Then he would carry us safely to Cuzco in his truck. We do not know more about him.”

Juan Núñez del Prado explained again just how much power the hacendados exerted over civil officials. “There was something like an agreement between all the hacendados in the area, in towns like Paucartambo. They controlled the police. Because the Q’ero challenged one hacendado, they were under threat from all of the other hacendados when they traveled to places like Paucartambo. They could be arrested for no reason. But Daniel Yábar established himself as an authority figure, telling the police that the Q’ero were coming to work for him. In some ways, this was an agreement between the hacendados not to challenge each other. But some of them protected people like the Q’ero in order to go against another hacendado.”

Don Juan explained that with the eradication of the hacienda system, the communities of Q’ero came together. “In the time of the hacienda,” he related, “there were many internal conflicts and fights. But after the hacienda times, these conflicts ended. There were no conflicts between communities. It was a time of peace. The many communities integrated into one. We became one. We were dispersed, but we came together with one heart.”

Don Juan’s brother, don Julian, was less sentimental. “[Not long ago] I served as president of Q’ero,” he said, not as a boast but to let us know that he had been involved in the most important issues of Q’ero.^V “From the end of the hacienda times until now there were only a few internal conflicts. [Immediately after the demise of the hacienda system] a lot of people asked for rights to the land. They said, ‘This land belonged to my father and my grandfather. Now I have a right to it. It has been my family’s since the time of my great-grandfather. Therefore, this land belongs to me.’ So many people asked for land. Villagers had claims to the land from long ago. These conflicts had to be resolved by the community president.

“These conflicts still continue with the young people, but not yesterday or today [that is, they flare up even today but are not common problems]. Now they do not use violence to solve these problems. They do not injure or kill.

These problems emerge in the communal assemblies [village meetings], where people speak openly about their land rights. But now the solution is to look at the issue from all different sides, to see all the details, and finally all the conflicts are resolved. We talk about it now, instead of fighting about it.”

Footnotes

Author's Note to the Revised Edition

^I The fundamentals explained in this book come primarily from the lineages of Juan's other two teachers, don Benito Qoriwaman and don Andreas Espinosa.

Contributors: The *Paqos* and Others

^I Our research was generously funded by the Ringing Rocks Foundation.

^{II} The spellings of some of these names may be inaccurate. Most of the Q'ero are illiterate and the spellings given by Quechua or Spanish translators often are unreliable. I never did record don Sebastián's or don Bernadino's surnames.

^{III} Also commonly spelled Huascar, a Castilian spelling of the name of one of the half-brothers who co-ruled the Inka Empire at the time of the Spanish conquest of Peru.

Introduction: Crossing the Hummingbird Bridge

^I In Peru, practitioners of the ancient spiritual tradition of the Andes are called *paqos*. More specifically, the tradition acknowledges two categories of *paqos*: the *pampa mesayoqs* (who are known as keepers of the earth rituals) and the *alto mesayoqs* (who work more directly with the energies of the natural world, spirit world, and the cosmos). A *kuraq akulleq* is a practitioner who has reached the fourth level of mastery on the *alto mesayoq* path, the highest level achieved by any living *paqo*, although three additional levels are prophesied (see [chapter 3](#)).

^{II} See [appendix 1](#) for a discussion of these terms as they apply to Q'ero cosmology.

Chapter 1. In the Land of the Inkas: An Overview of Andean Mysticism

^I As mentioned in the Author's Note, in Peru, practitioners of the ancient spiritual tradition of the Andes are called by their Quechua name: *paqos*. The word "shaman" is not widely applied to them. Therefore, in the interest of accuracy and of avoiding New Age exaggeration, my mestizo teachers and I have struggled for years to find a synonym for *paqo* that is familiar to Westerners and yet still accurate. At first we used the word "priest," but we quickly grew dissatisfied because the term carries all kinds of connotations that are not applicable. Likewise, while other Western teachers of the Andean tradition are comfortable with "shaman" and use it without hesitation, it too is problematic because as an anthropological term it implies a set of practices quite foreign to the Q'ero. Further, the term "mystic," while accurate in as far as it goes, fails to convey the capacity the Q'ero and other Andean masters have to interact *directly* with the energies of the multidimensional universe.

Acknowledging that both “shaman” and “mystic” have some claim to accuracy, I occasionally have used these terms throughout the book and let all terms stand where they appear in quoted material, but it should be noted that “paqo” is the most precise. Additionally, Juan and many of his apprentices, including me, now generally refer to the tradition as a whole as the “spiritual arts of the Andes” rather than the “shamanism of the Andes.” Please refer to [appendix 1](#) for a full discussion of these distinctions.

II The late don Benito Qoriwaman was a noted healer and paqo from the Sacred Valley. He was not Q’ero but was a friend and teacher to many Q’ero paqos. Thousands of Peruvians and Westerners sought out don Benito for his healing gifts and wisdom.

III *Itu* actually is the Spanish term for this energetic site. The ancient Quechua term is *saiwa*. To be even more precise, if the natural formation is considered composed of “masculine” energy, it is called an *itu* (or *saiwa*); if it is considered feminine, it is called a *paqarina*. Sometimes the term “*itu*” is used generically to refer to any energy that is dominant at your place of birth or during your formative years, but in reality everyone has both an *itu* and a *paqarina* associated with his or her place of birth.

IV Because paqos are most often men, I use only the masculine pronoun for the remainder of this book. I have made this decision only as a matter of semantic convenience, and the reader should infer no bias against female paqos.

V I was unsure of just what the Q’ero meant by this statement, but there was no time to follow up and clarify their meaning. I was left with the feeling that even though the Q’ero expressed no scientific knowledge about antibodies, they were somehow implying that kind of cause and effect—that by ingesting their mother’s milk (before the mother died, of course), these children were able to develop antibodies against the disease. I have no idea if antibodies can develop so quickly, but no other explanation fits the statement. In addition, don Juan probably is exaggerating when he claims that only a “few” children survived the epidemic. No doubt he was attempting to emphasize the seriousness of the situation.

VI Sometimes during the telling of a story, one Q’ero would talk and the translators could easily follow. At other times, many Q’ero would weigh in, and the translators would have to sort out the cross talk and provided a summation of their discussion. Although in this summation, the translators used the terms “eat” and “digest” and referred to the “qosqo,” in all probability these were not words actually spoken by the Q’ero but are artifacts of the translation process. The Q’ero indicated that Garibilu Q’espi cleansed the various diseases plaguing Q’ero by drawing them into the stronger energy of the yellow fever and then taking that energy through his own energy body and releasing it to the apus. This is the technique of *hucha mikhuy*, the eating or digesting of heavy energy, as discussed in [chapter 2](#) and in parts III and IV. However, neither Juan Núñez del Prado nor I have met any Q’ero of the current generation who know this technique and so they could not have been using the terminology relating to it. What was clear in this story, however, was that Q’ero of past generations did know of this practice, or one similar to it, and used it.

VII Obviously not the same Garibilu Q’espi mentioned in the yellow fever story. There is a Garibilu Q’espi identified in the Q’ero lineage who has become almost a metaphysical figure, a “savior” archetype. Whether one of these two Garibilu Q’espis is that figure is unknown. Q’espi, which means “crystal” in Quechua, is one of the oldest and most illustrious names among the Q’ero, as is Pauqar. Both are traced back to Inka origins, and these surnames are quite common in the Andes, shared by many people who are not related by blood.

^{VIII} Saqsawaman, also commonly spelled *Saqsahuaman* or *Sacsahuaman*, is not a mountain but a huge fortress and ceremonial site that was built by the Inka Pachakuteq and is located on the outskirts of Cuzco. Its power is equal to that of an apu and it is the site of the Inti Raymi festival, the annual sacred festival honoring *Inti*, the sun.

^{IX} It is not clear to me just who or what the *ukhupacharuna* are within the larger sphere of the Andean cosmology. However, the Q'ero speak briefly to this issue in the interviews of [part 2](#), where they identify these beings as diminutive humans who live in an earthlike underworld.

^X Because crystals are such powerful conductors of energy, Américo Yábar cautions that we should not wear crystal jewelry, especially pendants that hang over the heart chakra, unless we are adept at working with and controlling energy.

^{XI} Although the leaves used in the tea, and in social and ceremonial contexts, are from the same plant from which cocaine is refined, sipping a cup of coca tea or chewing the raw leaves does not alter your consciousness and is not addictive.

Chapter 2. Children of the Sun: Engaging Your Energy Body

^I I am not well versed enough in the anthropological or religious history of the Andes to make any but the most cursory comments about the Andean view of evil. The Q'ero did not talk about it in any depth during our interviews. In a few instances when they touched on this subject, they equated hucha with “sin,” drawing from their exposure to Catholic theology. And don Mariano Apasa Marchaqa once indicated that some paqos pull energy from the “dirty places” on the earth (for example, those places in nature that have been polluted or desecrated and so are rife with hucha) and use it to exert their own will over others (see [chapter 7](#)). But this is as close as they came to discussing evil. Fredy “Puma” Quispe Singona also briefly mentions the concept of “dark alto mesayoqs” in chapter 13. The discussion I present above is based primarily on information from my private discussions with Puma and Juan, and their answers to questions asked by others during public workshops or teaching circles.

^{II} See *Ayahuasca: The Visionary and Healing Powers of the Vine of the Soul* (Wilcox, Rochester, VT: Destiny Books, 2003).

^{III} Although apu means “lord” and implies the male gender, and although most apus are considered male, there are female mountains, which are called *ñust'as*, or the “princesses of the mountains.” For example, Mama Simone, a mountain located on the outskirts of Cuzco, is a *ñust'a*.

^{IV} There is also a specific kundalini-like movement of energy, visualized as a serpent of light, that can be unleashed from the siki to further integrate all of the belts of power, but I will not discuss it here because it should be undertaken only when all the other work with the chumpis has been completed. The techniques presented here are a small part of the Melchor Desa teaching and techniques.

^V Also commonly spelled Atahualpa and Huascar.

Chapter 3. The Age of Meeting Ourselves Again

^I At least one North American teacher of Andean shamanism has claimed that the Q'ero are giving the Mosoq Karpay initiation. This is either a misunderstanding or misinterpretation on his part, for this karpay is part of the prophecy and has not yet been given to any Andean paqo. Or perhaps it is a

different ritual that coincidentally has the same name as the one of the prophecy, which is possible since “mosoq” simply means “new” in Quechua.

II A *waka* is any site or object that is considered a repository of sami or of the sacred. It is also commonly spelled *huaca*.

III It was no surprise to us to read in newspapers only weeks after the October 1996 meeting during which the “condor of the South” linked energy with the “eagle of the North” that California condors, relatively rare birds in North America, were released into the wild for the first time. An additional four condors were released in Arizona in December 1996, in an area where they were last seen in 1924. The news was carried on the major TV networks and in many metropolitan newspapers.

Part 2. Walking the Sacred Path: Interviews with the Q’ero

I Juan Núñez del Prado and Américo both teach that we should have such firm command of our energy that we are comfortable freely “tasting” the energies of the kawsay pacha. Américo, in contrast, was now advising us to be careful not to waste our energy. I finally realized there was no contradiction, for our goal is always to be *conscious* of our energy exchanges. By being conscious, and in control, we achieve efficiency in our energy work (both as we accumulate energy and as we exchange it with others) and so are never wanton with our energy expenditures.

Chapter 4. Ancient Tradition, Modern Practice

I As a reminder to readers, anthropologists Ricardo Valderrama Fernández and Juan Núñez del Prado served as Quechua translators during the interviews, and my friend Anamaria helped with Spanish translations. Another friend, Sandy, was present as well.

II This ceremony, we discovered upon further questioning, is one in which the people give homage to the Virgin for the spiritual sustenance she gives them and during which they pray for physical sustenance, as in abundant crops and healthy children.

III The Q’ero villages reach from the subtropical jungles to the high mountains, hence the range of dancers.

IV See “Journey to Q’ollorit’i: Initiation into Andean Mysticism,” which I cowrote with Elizabeth B. Jenkins and which was published as the cover story for the Winter 1996 issue of *Shaman’s Drum*.

V More commonly spelled Qoyllur Rit’i, which means, literally, “star of the snow.” In Quechua, *rit’i* means snow, and *qoyllur* can mean star, although it also refers to the planet Venus. The more common word for star is *ch’aska*. Juan Núñez del Prado claims that the term *Qoyllur Rit’i* is a corruption of the real name of the ancient festival, *Q’ollorit’i*, which means “pure white snow” (from the word *qoyllu/qollo*, which is an adjective that means luminous or resplendent and *rit’i*, snow). I spell the name of this festival according to Juan’s preference.

VI This is a colloquial term indigenous people use for “mestizo,” a Peruvian of mixed Spanish and Indian descent.

VII It is a huge responsibility for so few people to have to provide a feast of food and drink for the entire community. The Q’ero struggle to provide for their own families, so such an undertaking can be quite a hardship for the hosts.

Chapter 5. The Grandsons of Inkari

^I Also commonly spelled Manco Capac. To my knowledge there are at least forty versions of the Inka creation/Manco Qhapaq myth recorded in the Spanish chronicles. Mine is a brief synopsis drawn from the most common features of the various myths. The Inkari myth, as told by the Q'ero, shares elements with this Inka creation myth.

^{II} A common spelling variation is Mama Oclo.

^{III} As mentioned, the Quechua word for the Inka Empire is *Tawantinsuyu*. In Quechua, *tawa* means “four” and *suyu* means “quarter,” indicating that the empire was formed by bringing together the four regions of the world as then known by the founding couple. These words are joined by *ntin*, a grammatical unit that designates differing things being brought together in unity or merging to create an entity greater than the sum of the parts. You see this same construction in the words *yanantin* and *masintin*, the harmonizing of dissimilar or similar energies, respectively.

^{IV} The noted Peruvian anthropologist Juan Ossio has collected versions of the Inkari myth in *Ideologica mesiánica del mundo andino* (Lima: Edición de Ignacio Prado Pastor, 1973).

^V Don Julian may be referring to an *Intiwatana* (also commonly spelled Intihuatana), which translates as “hitching post of the sun” and is a carved rock used as a sundial and solar observatory. One of the most famous in Peru is located at Machu Picchu. Don Julian is suggesting that his ancestors somehow used the movements of the sun to determine distance, but we did not have time to explore this curiosity.

^{VI} It is unknown from don Julian’s retelling of the myth why the woman wanted to camp at these places, if God permitted her to, and what happened to her so that she never arrived to meet Inkari. I have not seen reference to this incident in any other version of the Inkari myth that I have read.

^{VII} He is referring, I believe, both to the Christian God, which for the Q'ero and other Andeans is often considered synonymous with Jesus, and to the ancient creator god, Wiraqocha. For the Q'ero there is no conflict in syncretizing the two.

^{VIII} The extraordinary precision of Inka stonework mystifies academics and others. Many structures were built with stones that weigh tens or hundreds of tons and that were so tightly fit together (and without the use of any mortar) that a knife blade cannot be slipped between the stones. No one knows for sure how a culture that did not have the wheel and that had only rudimentary tools could fashion and move these behemoths. Legend, however, tells us that the Inkas, and their forebears, knew how to overcome gravity and levitate stones and so could build their impressive structures with little effort. One particular method was by “singing” the stones up and into place. As the Inkari legend, as told by the Q'ero, illustrates, Q'ero oral history has retained a similar belief of their forebear’s powers.

^{IX} To provide readers with the subtext of this information: The llama dung is washed into the river, symbolizing the imperfection of the kay pacha and its hucha, which is at least partly a result of Inkari’s willfulness and hubris at refusing the munay offered by God. When Inkari sees the llama excrement, he is reminded of his grandsons, the Q'ero, who herd llamas, and he weeps with longing for them.

^X The civil war that ravaged the empire as a result of Atawallpa’s and Waskar’s struggle for control no doubt contributed to the ease with which Pizarro’s small force was able to conquer a nation of millions. Atawallpa was captured by the Spaniards and, despite the payment of hordes of gold and silver as ransom, was executed (garroted) by them.

Chapter 6. *Pampa Mesayoq*: Master of the Earth Rituals

^I Don Agustín used the word *phukuy*, suggesting that by blowing through the coca leaves, Mother Mary sought to establish an energetic connection with her son, Jesus.

^{II} The translators used the word “eat” here, but it is unlikely that was an exact translation. See [chapter 1](#) for the story about Garibilu Q’espi and the yellow fever epidemic in Q’ero to which don Agustín is referring here, and in particular, see the footnote to that story for an explanation of translation difficulties.

^{III} Don Agustín’s father was making a *pago* to the apus through the spirit of the lagoon. A pago is a “payment,” a despacho offered to make restitution or apology. He does so through the intermediary of lagoon spirits because it is customary either to feed hucha to Pachamama or release it into water, as in a lake or river.

^{IV} Juan Núñez del Prado explained that a misti to an Indian signifies a mestizo, or someone of fair skin coloring, which itself implies power and authority. Quite often Jesus, an apu, or other sacred personage appears in an Indian’s dream as a misti, signifying the call to the sacred path. For a mestizo, the opposite is true. The personage in the sacred dream is usually an Indian. The man in don Agustín’s dream is asking Agustín to serve him as an alto mesayoq would.

^V The implication is that without parents Agustín was left without support. It is expensive to become an alto mesayoq. The training, which can stretch over a decade or more, usually involves payment in livestock and cash to the teacher. It may also require the service of labor in the teacher’s fields.

^{VI} Juan Núñez del Prado explained that the estrellas talked “from a distance” not only because of Agustín’s mistake, but also because Bernabe Marchaqa, whose mesa the estrellas were talking through, was a pampa mesayoq, not an alto mesayoq, who can interact much more directly with the apus.

^{VII} One should be aware that the systems are compatible because each hemisphere of the brain controls the opposite side of the body, i.e., the left hemisphere of the brain controls the right side of the body. So, when Andean paqos refer to the right side of the work, their meaning is akin to what we mean when we speak of being “left-brained.” Conversely, when they speak of the left side of the work, they are referring to what we could call “right-brain” skills. Therefore, the systems are in agreement, varying only in which “topography” of the body is emphasized. Also see [chapter 7](#).

^{VIII} This is a metaphoric expression that reveals just how dire their situation was. To make a serious mistake on the path imperils a paqo’s very life. We were not able to determine what mistake, if any, doña Agustina’s husband made.

^{IX} I have been unable to determine if don Juan’s daughter ever began her training or what happened to her since her father’s death. Without don Juan there to support his large family, it is unlikely his daughter will ever have the means to train as an alto mesayoq.

Chapter 7. *Alto Mesayoq*: Master of the Hanaq Pacha

^I When a paqo is called to the path and accepts, he finds or is given a mesa—either by the spirits or by accumulating khuyas from teachers and power spots—that connects the paqo to his power.

II Anyone who has trekked in the Andes mountains, or even traveled them on horseback, knows how remarkable it is that an amputee, such as don Martín Herrillo, even with a crutch, could walk to Q'ollorit'i—which is in rugged mountains at an altitude of more than 16,500 feet.

III Because don Juan had personally met the Lord of Q'ollorit'i, he now had the capacity to read the coca leaves.

IV *Wachu* is a Quechua word that means something like furrow, but in this context it means the sacred path. It implies a complicated metaphor that equates the seeding of a furrow in a field you are trying to cultivate with cultivating your own power as a paqo. First you plant the seed, then as you work hard and gain experience, you grow tall and strong, like a mature corn stalk. It has similarities to the Native North American saying that when something or someone is infused with the sacred understanding and has a positive influence it “grows good corn.” The word is found in another phrase, the *kawsay wachu*, which is the cosmic field of vital, animating energy in which you plant and cultivate your own living energy, walking the sacred path as a paqo.

V What don Manuel means is that because these spirit beings follow don Mariano as if they want to establish communication with him but they don't actually do that, they are lying or otherwise being duplicitous.

VI It is quite common for an alto mesayoq to have a pampa mesayoq in service to him. For many years don Juan Ordoñez was don Mariano's assistant. Now doña Agustina, his wife, serves as his assistant.

Chapter 8. *Kawsay* and *K'ara*

I The translators consistently used the male pronoun, but readers should be aware that the Q'ero's answer implies that women can also have k'ara, or at least “great” women can. At one point during the interviews, the Q'ero mentioned in passing that women have the capacity to be the greatest paqos. But since at that time we had been involved in a group discussion about another topic, we did not detour our discussion to follow up on that comment. However, Juan had leaned over and whispered to me that the Q'ero must have been referring to doña Maria, who was considered one of the most powerful paqos in Q'ero in the early part of the twentieth century. (Regrettably, I did not record her name and do not now remember her surname.) This is another example of an interesting subject that we never got around to exploring because of time constraints and the difficulties of a translation process that involved three languages.

II Oscar Miro-Quesada is a Peruvian-born teacher of Andean shamanism who lives and teaches in the United States.

III Interestingly, the Black Light energy is often considered the highest energy and the most difficult to master. It is associated, for instance, with the sacred Urubamba River, whose ancient names include Willkamayu and Willkañust'a (River of Black Light and Goddess of Black Light, respectively). Obviously, this does not hold true for the k'aras of the apus, as a black k'ara indicates a low level of power.

IV I have since explored the correspondences the Q'ero made between the colors of the apus and these political positions, and there does not seem to be any significance beyond the understanding that apus, like political officers, are subject to a rank or hierarchy based on their perceived quotient of power. An apu's color connotes its level of power and, therefore, its place in the hierarchy.

Chapter 9. The Three Worlds

^I Don Agustín, of course, did not vocalize these animal sounds as a North American, English-speaker would, but I would be hard-pressed to try to reproduce the sounds in Quechua. The implication of his comments about the people in the Land of the Dead hoping the animals are coming for them implies the Andean reality that the size of your herd equates with your perceived status and wealth.

^{II} Guinea pigs are sacred animals in the Andes. They are raised in most homes, specially fed and well treated, and then are eaten on ceremonial days and during feasts. They are also sometimes sacrificed for use in divination.

^{IV} Don Julian is referring to the practice of each church or parish being associated with one patron saint. The saint, although a being of the hanaq pacha, is authorized by God to act with authority in his assigned parish in the kay pacha.

^V A common variation is meeting a drunk man of the road. If you use your sacred vision, you will know that this is no ordinary man but an apu, come to test you and possibly to grant your wish.

Part 3. Our Heart's Fire: The Mesa and Healing

^I Humor was the fuel that kept us going, such as the comment one of our group made that we had invented a new sport: mountain climbing on horseback. To read more about this trip, see “Journey to Q’ollorit’i: Initiation into Andean Mysticism,” an article I cowrote with Elizabeth Jenkins (see the bibliography).

Chapter 10. The Gifts of the *Mesa*

^I The stars of the mountains are the estrellas, the spirits of the mountains made manifest. Puma is suggesting that the khuyas in a mesa are also estrellas.

^{II} I have reproduced this paqo’s surname phonetically.

^{III} Ley lines are commonly understood to be lines of earth energy that geographically connect sacred sites throughout the world. However, Puma is calling the energy connections you make through your qosqo to the kawsay pacha and other people “ley lines,” and he uses this English term interchangeably with the Quechua word for these energy connections, which is “seques.” Another term you frequently hear to describe the energy connections made through your qosqo, especially if you work with Américo Yábar, is “filaments of light.”

Chapter 11. The *Mesa* Carrier and the Kawsay Pacha

^I Readers should be aware that Puma’s definitions of pampa mesayoqs and alto mesayoqs are a bit unusual. I have never heard it implied that a pampa mesayoq is an alto mesayoq-in-training. Usually, a paqo is called to one path or the other of the sacred work, and a pampa mesayoq is as complete in the training of his particular path as is an alto mesayoq. The major distinction between the two paths is the degree to which one can dialogue with the spirits, with alto mesayoqs able to interact with the spirit world more intimately and on a cosmic scale.

^{II} An example of this “instant knowing” is found in Q’ero elder don Manuel Q’espi’s initiation story. He is *kamasqa*, one who received his call to the alto mesayoq path not as the result of formal training but in an insight, in what he calls a vision of Jesus. During that vision he was given all the knowledge and gifts of the sacred path. From that moment on he was able to work as an alto mesayoq, and today he is one of the most respected kuraq akulleqs in the Andes.

^{III} Actually, we are in the midst of the TariPy Pacha, the Age of Meeting Ourselves Again. Readers may remember the dates of the Andean prophecy, while approximate, run from 1993 to 2012. Puma was speaking in 2002. See [chapter 3](#) for details of the prophecy.

^{IV} It is a common belief among the Q’ero and other Andean paqos that the “best” way to work on the sacred path is as a two-person team, ideally a male and female working together. While paqos do work alone on specific cases, they usually are in some kind of larger yanantin-masintin relationship, such as an alto mesayoq who has a pampa mesayoq as an assistant. And, of course, a paqo is always working together with the apus he is in service to and with Pachamama, and he is empathetically connected with all other mesa carriers, as Puma also discusses. These connections, too, can be considered yanantin-masintin.

^V Readers should be aware that the Catholic Church has a much more visible and direct presence in Chinceros, which is a large, more urban community on the outskirts of Cuzco, than it does in the villages of Q’ero, which are spread out in relative isolation in the mountains and accessible only by walking or on horseback.

Chapter 12. Mesa Carriers and Healing

^I Puma is suggesting that if we don’t grow and evolve of our own accord, Pachamama will force us to, perhaps by causing natural disasters or otherwise challenging us in ways that will require our “coming together” in order to survive. However, as far as I know, Andean prophecy does not explicitly predict dire “earth changes,” as these disruptions are so often called in apocalyptic literature.

^{II} Readers will note that the Q’ero do not cleanse hucha through their qosqos, only through their mesas. You could say that their mesas serve as substitute or external qosqos for Q’ero paqos. Although these two hucha cleansing techniques differ, their result—the cleansing—is the same.

^{III} The glow, or aura, that Puma refers to here may be the same glow that the Q’ero see as a person’s k’ara, although Puma never explicitly makes this connection. Readers may remember, however, that the Q’ero indicated that only great paqos and other spiritually advanced people have a visible aura. See [chapter 8](#).

^{IV} In [chapter 2](#), Juan Núñez del Prado and Puma both spoke about not making your poq’po into an “energetic jail,” closing it off when, for instance, you come into contact with an unfamiliar energy or one that you perceive as threatening or that makes you fearful. What they were emphasizing there was that we need to be aware of our judgments about energy as inherently good or evil. (Remember, energy is, according to this tradition, amoral. It is just energy, with no moral qualities attached to it). As paqos, we always want to be in complete control of our poq’po and able to interact freely with any energy of the kawsay pacha should we desire to do so. Puma’s comments about “protecting” our bubble are not in contradiction to that earlier teaching. He is speaking about our ability to protect the *privacy* of our energy bubbles. We are not protecting ourselves from harm or evil, only from intrusion into our personal space.

^V As we saw in the initiation stories of don Agustín Pauqar Qapa and don Juan Pauqar Espinosa [see chapters 6 and 7, respectively], a pago also is offered to make atonement for a mistake and to reestablish a good connection with the spirits.

Chapter 13. Finding Your Direction as a *Pago*

^I Puma has granted me his permission to use all of the material presented in [part 3](#), so readers can be assured that no “secrets” are being revealed without his knowledge. In addition, he is speaking a bit tongue in cheek here, judiciously admonishing us Westerners about our general lack of respect for our elders. The “secret,” however, extends to other kinds of relationships of respect, such as our not abusing the natural world and living in harmony with all other life forms. Respect is also necessary on a cosmic scale, as Puma goes on to say. In the Andes, it is said that that if we can identify our “guiding star,” literally the star of our cosmic ancestry, then we can know our destiny as a human being here in the physical world (see [chapter 14](#)). A basic tenet of belief in the Andes is “as above, so below.”

Chapter 14. *Hucha Mikhuy*: Cleansing and Digesting Heavy Energy

^I There is another practice in the Andes, called the *kutichi* ceremony, that is closer to a Castaneda-like recapitulation practice. During the *kutichi* ceremony, you perceive all the seques that are streaming out of your qosqo and where they attach to others and to your past. Then you detach all these cords of light so that you are left completely alone in your own energy body, at least for a few minutes. In that way, you are able to reintroduce yourself to yourself, as Juan terms it, and so can reestablish your power and regain your center. Juan tells me that pagos tend to do this cleansing ceremony once a year, usually around November 1, which is the Andean Day of the Dead.

Appendix 3. In the Hand of the *Hacendado*

^I In his tome *Inca Religion and Customs*, Father Bernabe Cobo records the following: “The Indians identify their honor with their hair to such an extent that the worst disgrace that one can inflict on them is to cut their hair.”

^{II} The first modern contact with the Q’ero was in August 1955, when anthropologist Oscar Núñez del Prado mounted an expedition with fifteen others to Q’ero.

^{III} Manuel Prado y Ugarteche was the president of Peru from 1956–1962.

^{IV} Waman T’ika here displays knowledge of the indigenous sacred tradition, for hucha is cleansed and carried away by water, especially rivers. He is suggesting that the hacendado is like hucha that must be swept into the river.

^V The community president among the Q’ero is rather like a mayor and is elected by the people.

Notes

Introduction: Crossing the Hummingbird Bridge

1. All quotes in the introduction are from Thomas Mails, *The Hopi Survival Kit* (New York: Stewart Tabori & Chang, 1996), 340–41.

Part 1

The *Kawsay Pacha*: The World of Living Energy

Chapter 1. In the Land of the Inkas: An Overview of Andean Mysticism

1. César Calvo, *The Three Halves of Ino Moxo: Teachings of the Wizard of the Upper Amazon*, trans. Kenneth A. Symington (Rochester, Vt.: Inner Traditions, 1995), glossary, s.v. “Q’ero.”
2. John Hemming, *The Conquest of the Incas* (San Diego: Harcourt Brace & Company, 1970), 27.

Chapter 2. Children of the Sun: Engaging Your Energy Body

1. Antón Ponce de León Paiva, *The Wisdom of the Ancient One: An Inca Initiation* (Woodside, Calif.: Bluestar Communications, 1995), 42, 45.

Chapter 3. The Age of Meeting Ourselves Again

1. William Sullivan, *The Secret of the Incas: Myth, Astronomy, and the War Against Time* (New York: Crown, 1996), 29.

Part 2

Walking the Sacred Path: Interviews with the Q’ero

Chapter 4. Ancient Tradition, Modern Practice

1. Estimates by demographic anthropologists Henry F. Dobyns and Paul L. Doughty as reported in Rex A. Hudson, ed., *Peru: A Country Study*, 4th ed. (Washington, DC: Federal Research Division, Library of Congress, 1993), 17.
2. *Ibid.*, 20.
3. Tony Morrison, *Pathways to the Gods: The Mystery of the Andes Lines*. (Originally published by Harper & Row, 1978; rev. ed., Chicago: Academy Chicago Publishers, 1988), 113–14.

Chapter 7. Alto Mesayoq: Master of the Hanaq Pacha

1. Washington Rozas Alvarez, “Los Paqos de Q’ero,” in *Q’ero: El Último Ayllu Inka: Homenaje a Oscar Núñez del Prado*, ed. Jorge A. Flores et al. (Cuzco: Centro de Estudios Andinos Cuzco, 1983), 147.
2. *Ibid.*, 151.

Chapter 9. The Three Worlds

1. William Sullivan, *Secret of the Incas*, 5.

Glossary of Andean Mystical Terms

I do not speak Quechua, but I do know and use the terms of the Andean sacred vocabulary. The definitions below are my understanding of the terms or are the definitions attributed by my teachers, both Q'ero and mestizo. The same is true for the approximate pronunciations I have provided. Other paqos may define and pronounce these terms slightly differently. In addition, there is no real standard for spelling Quechua words, so I have provided common variations for some words. One final note: the apostrophe that follows certain letters, for example “k” and “q,” in Quechua words is a guide for pronunciation, indicating a glottal stop that sounds almost like an explosive “click” at the back of the throat.

Akulliy [AK-wee] The act of choosing and chewing coca leaves in a sacred manner. The Quechua verb from which derives the term for the highest level of Andean *paqo*, the *kuraq akulleq*.

Alto mesayoq [AL-to may-SIGH-yok] One of two sacred paths in the Andean mystical system, the *alto mesayoq* works directly with spirits of the *kawsay pacha*, especially the *apus*, and can push the *kawsay* at a cosmic level. The three levels of *alto mesayoq*—*ayllu alto mesayoq*, *llaqta alto mesayoq*, and *suyu alto mesayoq*—correspond to the level of *apu* to which the *alto mesayoq* is in communication. *Kuraq akkuleq* is the fourth level of the *alto mesayoq* path.

Apu [AH-poo] A “lord of the mountain.” *Apus* are the spirits of the sacred mountains of Peru, considered the most powerful of all nature spirits. There are three levels of *apus*, listed here from least powerful to most powerful: *ayllu apu*, *llaqta apu*, and *suyu apu*.

Atiy [AH-tee] The power to push the *kawsay* consciously and to actually manifest your desires in the physical. Derivative of the verb *atini* [ah-TEE-nee] in Quechua that means “I can do it.” Part of a personal energetic evolution that starts with *rimay* (the power to see reality

without the screen of personal illusions and to express yourself authentically), moves to *kanay* (which involves the recovery of the memory of your authentic self as cocreator and the ability to be “who you really are”), and culminates with *atiy* (the power to actually push the kawsay with conscious intent to manifest your desires and affect physical reality).

Ayni [EYE-nee] The impulse toward sacred interchange and the spirit of reciprocity, which are fundamental operating principles in the social and mystical systems of Peru. In the social system, *ayni* is reflected in shared labor and equates somewhat with the Christian concept of doing unto others as you would have them do unto you. In the mystical system, *ayni* is the stance of the shaman and the basis of all ceremony and ritual, for the *paqo* is always making an “interchange” of energy with the spirit realm.

Chunpi [CHUN-pee] This Quechua word literally means “belt.” According to Andean mysticism, there are four major energy belts, similar to chakras, that surround the human body. These are the *yana chunpi*, *puka chunpi*, *qori chunpi*, *golqe chunpi*. The area of two physical eyes and the third eye form what is sometimes referred to as the fifth belt, the *kulli chunpi*. Each belt has its own eye, called a *ñawi*.

Chunpi khuyas [CHUN-pee COO-yas] A special set of five stones that are used to confer the *chunpi* initiation, an opening of the energy centers of the human body. Also called *mulla chunpis*

Chunpi paqo [CHUN-pee PA-ko] A *paqo* who had been initiated with the *chunpis* and is able to activate these energy centers in others. A *chunpi paqo* uses a special set of five *khuyas*, called *chunpi khuyas*, to activate the energy centers of the human body.

Ch’uspa [CHUS-pa] The woven or animal fur bag in which Andean *paqos* carry their sacred coca leaves.

Ch’uya [CHOO-ya] To be “clean,” that is, to be in a state of physical, emotional, and energetic cleanliness and purity in order to receive an initiation, perform ceremony, or communicate with the spirits.

Coca [COK-ah] The sacred plant of Peru; its leaves are chewed as a mild stimulant. It is widely used in the indigenous communities. Tourists

acclimate to altitude by drinking coca tea; peasants exchange coca as an act of friendship and greeting in social situations, and they chew coca when working to alleviate hunger and to increase their stamina. *Paqos* throw the coca leaves for divination and diagnosis and use coca in a myriad of sacred contexts, especially when making *despachos*. A common use of coca is in a *k'intu*, a fan of three coca leaves used in countless ways in ceremony.

Despacho [day-SPA-cho] An offering comprised of a variety of natural items, called *recados*, arranged ritually on white paper, prayed over and infused with *sami*, and then folded into a bundle to be burned or buried. Although there are many types of *despachos*, the two most common are to honor *Pachamama* or the *apus*.

Estrella [eh-STRAY-ya] The “star,” or spirit manifestation, of an *apu*. A *paqo* is called to the sacred path when he or she receives an *estrella*, that is, when he or she is summoned by an outward manifestation of the *apu*. *Estrellas* commonly take the form of hummingbirds, pumas, bulls, and condors. In dreams, an *estrella* may appear as a glowing man or woman in white clothing.

Hallpay [HAL-pie] The chewing of coca leaves in a social or non-sacred context.

Hanaq pacha [HA-nick PA-cha] Of the three worlds of Andean cosmology, this is the upper world, the place of the most refined energies. It is often symbolized by the condor.

Hucha [WHO-cha] Heavy, dense, or incompatible energy that accumulates in a person’s *poq’po*, or energy body. It is one of two kinds of *kawsay* and is created only by humans. It is not “negative” or “bad” energy; rather it is associated with those things that do not best serve us in our relationship with others or that are incompatible with our own energy. When *hucha* is cleansed from or released from your *poq’po*, it becomes food for *Pachamama*.

Inka Mallku [IN-ka MILE-koo] An infallible healer, twelve of whom will be revealed, according to Andean prophecy, during the first stage of the *Taripay Pacha*, signaling the manifestation of the fifth level of the

Andean priesthood and the evolution of human consciousness. There will be six males and six females (who are called *Ñust'as*).

Inti [IN-tee] Father Sun; the sun as expressive of the divine masculine principle.

Itu [EE-too] The Spanish term for a physical location or formation of masculine energetic power, such as a mountain, closest to where you were born and to which you are energetically connected. The ancient Quechua term is *saiwa*; the equivalent feminine energy place is called a *paqarina*.

Japu [HA-poo] The union of two perfectly harmonized *yanantin* (dissimilar) energies.

Kamaq [KA-mack] The supreme creative principle in Andean cosmology. *Pachakamaq* is the creator of the world.

Kamasqa [ka-MAHS-ka] A *paqo* who is called to the sacred path through a vision and acquires the mystical and shamanic powers without formal training.

Kanay [KAHN-eye] Having the energetic power to recover the memory of who you truly are and then acting in accordance with that authentic self. It is the power of *Noccan Kani*—the primordial “I Am.”

Karpay [CAR-pie] An initiation or ceremony during which power is invoked and energy transmitted or exchanged between *paqos*. A bestowal of the power of the ancient lineage.

Kay pacha [KEYE PA-cha] Of the three worlds of Andean cosmology, the middle world; the physical Earth; the mundane, everyday world and awareness, which is often represented by the puma.

Kawsay [COW-sigh] The vital, living energy that animates the cosmos and that is expressed as two fundamental qualities: *sami* (light energy) or *hucha* (heavy energy). A *paqo* is taught to “push” the *kawsay* for the good of others. Often spelled *kausay*.

Kawsay pacha [COW-sigh PA-cha] Literally, the “world of living energy,” referring to the cosmos as a flow of vital, animating light energy that we are in continual interchange with. Often spelled *kausay pacha*.

Khuya [KOO-ya] A stone that carries particularly fine or abundant *kawsay* and so is considered a stone of power; it is used for healing and/or communicating with the spirit world. Most Andean *mesas* are comprised primarily of *khuyas*. The word itself means “affection.”

K'intu [KIN-too] A fan of three perfect coca leaves used in rituals such as *despachos* and for praying or interchanging energy with others or with the spirit realm, especially the *apus* or *Pachamama*.

Kuraq akulleq [KUR-ack a-COOL-ya] Literally, the “elder chewer of coca.” A fourth-level *paqo*, currently the culminating level of the *alto mesayoq* path. The manifestation of the fifth, sixth, and seventh levels of the sacred path are part of Andean prophecy.

Llank'ay [YAHN-keye] Of the three “stances” an Andean *paqo* must integrate—love, knowledge, and labor—this is the physical capacity to perform labor. It is sometimes identified with the will, the power of intention, or the body. Also see *munay* and *yachay*.

Lloq'e [YOKE-ee] The “left” side of the Andean path that is associated with the feminine energies, the “non-ordinary,” and the “right-brain” characteristics of eros and intuition. The left side of the *mesa* connects one more closely to the “magical”—as opposed to the “mystical”—work, where one masters the practical aspects of the path, such as healing. A *paqo* must integrate both sides of the work to fully push the *kawsay*. The left side is associated with the color silver.

Mama Killa [MA-ma KEE-ya] Mother Moon; the moon as expressive of the divine feminine energy.

Mama Qocha [MA-ma COACH-a] Mother of the Waters, of the lake or sea.

Mamarit'i [MA-ma REE-tee] Literally, “mother snow.” Also a *ñust'a*, or princess, of the mountain, especially of a snowcapped sacred mountain. The female counterpart to an *apu*.

Masintin [ma-SIN-tin] A relationship of two similar persons, things, entities, or energies. By examining your *masintin* relationships, you can quickly see how to form energetic alliances or where there is the potential to attract *hucha*. A perfectly harmonized *masintin* relationship is called a *ranti*.

Mesa [MAY-sa] The ritual bundle containing sacred and powerful objects that a *paqo* assembles during his work along the sacred path and which he uses in ceremony and to heal.

Mikhuy [MEE-kwee] A Quechua verb that means, literally, “to digest” or “to eat.” It refers to the practice of cleansing and digesting *hucha* from a person, place, or object through one’s *qosqo*, or energy stomach. The *hucha* is fed directly to *Pachamama*, who composts it into *sami*, or refined energy. The technique of digesting *hucha*, or heavy energy, is called *hucha mikhuy*. Also spelled *miqhuy*.

Miscayani [MIS-keye-YAN-ee] A mythical city that is the feminine counterpart to Paytiti, the abode of Inkari.

Mosoq Karpay [MO-sock CAR-pie] Literally the “new initiation.” An initiation or transmission of energy that raises one to the fifth level of consciousness, which is the state of being an infallible healer, called an Inka Mallku. This state of being and the initiation to it are part of Andean prophecy.

Munay [MOON-eye] Of the three “stances” an Andean *paqo* must integrate—love, intellect, and labor—this is love and the capacity for empathy and selflessness. Also seen as the heart. Also see *llank’ay* and *yachay*.

Ñawi [NYOW-ee] In Quechua, literally the “eye.” There are four energy points or centers—rather like vortices of the chakras—in the human energy body, each called a *ñawi* and associated with a broad band or belt of energy called a *chunpi*. These points are the *siki ñawi* [SEE-ki NYOW-ee], which is at the base of the spine; the *qosqo ñawi* [KOS-ko NYOW-ee], which is at the navel; the *sonqo ñawi* [SOHN-ko NYOW-ee], which is at the heart; and the *kunka ñawi* [KOON-ka NYOW-ee], which is at the throat.

Noccan Kani [NO-kahn kah-NEE] Literally means “I Am.” Making this claim indicates that you have recovered the memory of your primordial connection to the All That Is and can push the *kawsay* as a cocreator. Also see *kanay*.

Ñust’a [NWEE-sta] Any feminine nature energy; a princess of the mountain, the female counterpart to an *apu*. Also a female of the fifth level of consciousness, the counterpart to an *Inka Mallku*.

Pachakuti [PA-cha-KOO-tee] An overturning of space-time or a period of cosmic transformation that affects Earth and human consciousness. Also spelled *pachacuti*.

Pachamama [PA-cha-MA-ma] Mother Earth; the animating energy of the physical earth; Gaia; the divine feminine principle.

Pago [PAH-go] A *despacho* that is offered in payment or atonement, often combined with an offering of food and *chicha* (a fermented corn drink).

Pampa mesayoq [PAHM-pa ma-SIGH-yok] One of the two paths of the Andean mystical system; a *pampa mesayoq* is an accomplished ceremonialist and master of the rituals that honor *Pachamama*.

Paña [PAHN-ya] The “right” side of the sacred path that is associated with the masculine energies, the “ordinary,” and the “left-brain” characteristics of analysis and logocentrism. The right side of the *mesa* connects one more closely to the “mystical” rather than to the “magical” work. It is the side of the *mesa* where one learns to communicate directly with the spirits. A *paqo* must integrate both sides of the work to fully push the *kawsay*. The right side is associated with the color gold.

Paqarina [pahk-a-REE-na] See *itu*.

Paqo [PAH-ko] The term, which in Quechua also means “male alpaca,” for a person who practices the ancient Andean spiritual work and walks the sacred path. A mystic and shaman.

Paytiti [pie-TEE-tee] A mythical jungle city where Inkari, the first Inka, lives and awaits the day he can return to reunite the *Tawantinsuyu*, the ancient Inka Empire. The masculine counterpart to the feminine mythical city of Miscayani.

Phukuy [POOHK-wee] A gentle breath through a *k'intu* intended to establish an energetic connection between the *paqo* and another person, place, or object.

Poq'po [POKE-po] A Quechua word meaning “bubble.” In the mystical system, this refers to the bubble of energy surrounding and infusing your physical body. Your energy body.

Q'ollorit'i [koll-yu-REE-tee] An annual sacred festival, perhaps the most important of the year, which is held on a glacial range in the high Andes. The presiding “spirit energy” of the festival is the Lord of Q'ollorit'i.

Qosqo [KOS-ko] A Quechua word meaning “stomach” or “navel.” The primary energy center in our body, located at the stomach area, through which we mediate *kawsay*.

Qoya [KOY-ya] The term for the sister-wife of the Inka. In Andean prophecy, the *Qoya* will rule with the *Sapa Inka* as a model political leader and represents the female manifestation of the sixth level of human consciousness.

Ranti [RAHN-tee] The union of two perfectly harmonized *masintin* energies.

Recados [ray-KA-doz] The items—such as coca leaves, seeds, shells, a cross, tiny gold and silver figurines—selected and ritually placed within a *despacho*.

Rimay [REEM-eye] Having the energetic power and spiritual sobriety to express your authentic self in thought, word, and deed without personal illusions but with compassion and humility.

Runa [ROON-a] The Quechua word for “human being” or “person.” Its meaning is infused with a sense of the sacred: that we are beings of living energy, light beings who originally came from the stars, the heavens, the Creator.

Saiwa [SIGH-wa] A column of energy, often one that energetically unites the three worlds (*hanaq pacha*, *kay pacha*, and *ukhu pacha*). Also the Quechua name for an *itu*, the masculine energy of the place nearest to where you were born. Also spelled *saywa*.

Saiwachakuy [SIGH-wa-CHAK-wee] Creating a column of energy that connects the three worlds (*hanaq pacha*, *kay pacha*, and *ukhu pacha*) or moving energy through your *poq'po* in a downward or upward motion to create a column of energy through all your energy centers.

Sami [SAHM-ee] Of the two kinds of *kawsay*, the refined energy that we draw in from the *kawsay pacha* and that we want flowing through our energy body. The energy that helps us achieve harmony and be in

effortless interchange with the cosmos. Light energy, ordered energy, and compatible energy.

Saminchukuy [SAH-min-CHAK-wee] The act of moving energy, especially *hucha*, down through your *poq'po*, out your root *chunpi*, and into *Pachamama* while simultaneously filling yourself with *sami* through the crown of your head.

Saminchasqa [SAH-min-CHAS-ka] The general act of blowing through a coca *k'intu* in order to interchange refined energy with the natural world or with nature spirits. Also one who performs a *sami* interchange.

Sapa Inka [ZAP-ah INK-a] The supreme male ruler or Inka. In the prophecy, the *Sapa Inka* will rule with the *Qoya* as a model political leader and represents that male manifestation of the sixth level of human consciousness.

Taqe [TAH-kay] In the tripartite conception of relationship (*tinkuy*, *tupay*, *taqe*), the third level, where one shares one's finest energy and capacities with others. A joining of energies that creates a state of being greater than the sum of its parts. Harmonizing the "complement of differences."

Taripay Pacha [TAR-ee-pie PA-cha] The "Age of Meeting Ourselves Again," during which humankind has the opportunity to raise its energy level and consciously evolve new modes of being. A golden age of harmony and well-being.

Taytacha [tie-TA-cha] A supreme divine being, usually seen as a masculine energy, with the equivalence of the Christ consciousness. In the Andes, the Lord of Q'ollorit'i and the Earthquake Lord are examples of *Taytachas*.

Tinkuy [TEEN-kwee] In the tripartite conception of relationship (*tinkuy*, *tupay*, *taqe*), the first level, where one first encounters another person or thing and touches it energy body to energy body.

Tupay [TOO-pie] In the tripartite conception of relationship (*tinkuy*, *tupay*, *taqe*), the second level, where one sizes up the other person or thing, usually in the stance of competition and domination.

Tukuy Hampeq [TOO-kwee HAHM-peck] A supreme and infallible healer of the fifth level of human consciousness. This level of healing capacity

has not yet manifested; it is part of Andean prophecy. See *Inka Mallku*.

Ukhu pacha [OO-khoo PA-cha] Of the three worlds of Andean cosmology, the lower or interior world. The place of the subconscious or unconscious and of dreams and intuition. Often symbolized by the snake. Also spelled *uhu pacha* or *uju pacha*.

Unanchasqa [OON-an CHAS-ka] One who has been given a sign of power from a divine being, such as Christ or the Lord of Q'ollorit'i. For example, a saint.

Waka [WHA-kah] A place or object that is infused with refined energy, a power spot, anything or place that contains *sami* energy and so is considered sacred. Also commonly spelled *huaca*.

Yachay [YAH-cheye] Of the three “stances” an Andean paqo must integrate—love, intellect, and labor—this is the power of the intellect grounded in experience. A mystic relies on personal experience, not book-learning or secondhand teachings, to acquire wisdom. Also seen as the mind, reason, and logic. Also see *llank'ay* and *munay*.

Yanantin [ya-NAHN-tin] A relationship of two dissimilar persons, things, entities, or energies. By examining your *yanantin* relationships, you can quickly see how to form energetic alliances or where there is the potential to attract *hucha*. Perfectly harmonized *yanantin* energies are called a *japu*. Also see *masintin*.

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