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Debate

Mountains, Kurakas and Mummies: Transformations in Indigenous Andean Sovereignty

Cerros, Kurakas y Momias: Transformaciones de la Soberanía Indígena Andina

Peter Gose

Abstract
This essay argues that Andean mountains have not always embodied indigenous sovereignty as they do today. The lordly titles that mountains now bear were, until the second half of the colonial period, held by ancestral mummies and living indigenous political authorities in a previous configuration of power. Case studies show how that earlier regime “returned to the earth”, a development which eventually led to the rise of mountains as sovereign entities. This essay explores the processes by which this complex transition occurred and emphasizes the insurrections of 1780-4, which replaced the earlier regime with a more democratic community-based authority, to which modern mountain lords correspond.

Keywords: mountains; mummies; power; Andes; pachakuti

Resumen
Este artículo sostiene que las montañas andinas no siempre han encarnado la soberanía indígena. Los títulos señoriales que tienen hoy las montañas estuvieron en manos de las momias ancestrales o de las autoridades políticas hasta la segunda mitad del periodo colonial. Varios casos muestran cómo aquel régimen anterior “volvió a la tierra”, un desarrollo que llevó eventualmente al surgimiento de las montañas como entidades soberanas. Este trabajo explora esta compleja transición, y enfatiza que las rebeliones de 1780-84 reemplazaron el régimen temprano por una autoridad basada en un sistema comunitario más democrático, que se correspondía con los modernos señores de las montañas.

Palabras clave: cerros; momias; poder; Andes; pachakuti

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Introduction

Indigenous Andean understandings of sovereignty have long taken the form of localized divine kingship, in which a lordly figure not only embodies political authority but orchestrates the circulation of life across the landscape such that power and fertility become inseparable. The form in which this lordly power manifests itself has varied significantly over time, however. This essay explores those transformations during the colonial period. The basic argument, which I have made at length elsewhere (Gose, 2008), is that an early colonial regime characterized by hereditary rulers (kurakas) and the worship of their mummified ancestors gave way to a late colonial regime in which mountains subsumed these previously separate manifestations of political power and ancestral authority. In the process, mountains appropriated such lordly titles as apu, wamani, mallku, etc. that earlier belonged to the founding ancestors and living rulers of regional political jurisdictions. As the ethnographic record shows in extensive detail, mountains came to personify state power but link it to the indigenous peasantry’s concerns with agrarian fertility. When viewed historically, this ethnographic pattern introjected previously independent human powers into the landscape. Arguably, mountains represent an indigenous sovereignty that, according to the Andean epochal formula of the pachakuti, “returned to the earth” within which it may be subordinate but is still ongoing and capable of returning to dominance. Indeed, the ambiguity of contemporary Andean mountain lords is that they seem to embody both the latency and the towering geographical presence of indigenous power.

Three groups of questions will organize this discussion. First: from what baseline did these transformations occur? In what encompassing regime did indigenous hereditary rulers and ancestral mummies once exist as entities independent of their later subsumption by mountains? What role did mountains play in that earlier regime? Second: by what historical processes did indigenous sovereignty “return to the earth” during the colonial period? Was a catastrophic event involved, as in Andean epochal narratives, or (as I propose) did a multitude of developments combine to produce this result? Finally, I will return to the ethnographic record as an outcome of these long historical processes, and explore whether contemporary mountain deities are really the result of a pachakuti that pushed indigenous sovereignty underground.
Point of Departure: Precolumbian and Early Colonial Ayllus

Before, during, and after the Inka empire, Andean society consisted of localized ancestor-worshipping polities called ayllus. The cult of mummified ancestors formed the core of Andean religion during this time (Zuidema, 1973: 16, Conrad & Demarest, 1984: 89-90), but it was equally a political and economic phenomenon. Ayllus were descent groups that worshipped a founding ancestor who gave it a corporately held resource base (usually land) and a genealogical reference point for calculating rank within the group (Isbell, 1997: 98-9). Descent-based ranking coincided with territorial subdivision to create a segmentary system, in which larger ayllus hierarchically incorporated smaller ayllus as components (Isbell, 1997: 115). Thus, ayllu designated units of varying size within a system of recursive segmentary distinctions (Gose, 1993, 1996a). To these territorial groupings corresponded a ranked hierarchy of political offices, one of which was paramount in the polity as a whole. Each of these offices gave its holder a specific title, but the Inkas usually called them all kurakas (elders).

These grandees were exempt from tributary labour and directed that of their peasant subjects. They oversaw the internal affairs of their group such as the formation of domestic groups, the allocation of land, public works, dispute resolution and ritual, and represented it to the outside in diplomacy and warfare. Kurakas’ power arose from control over these key mediations of group life: it was largely governmental and collectivist in idiom but nonetheless conferred significant personal privileges on the office holder. Various administrative, military, and priestly positions proliferated around their office, all with some exemption from tributary labour. Either the kuraka’s immediate kin or talented commoners might occupy them, which could exacerbate or ameliorate the class-like nature of the distinction between kurakas and their subjects. The balance struck here varied but seldom excluded commoners entirely. Notions of shared descent from, and dependence on, ancestral deities undoubtedly contributed to notions of a common good that inhibited the development of class sensibilities. Yet that same ancestral ideology simultaneously underscored the ayllu’s internal hierarchy and imposed several sumptuary markers that rigidly separated kurakas from their subjects including rights to polygamy, ritual sponsorship, the use of a stool of office (tiana), and to receive worshipful gestures of obeisance (mocha) also due to mummified ancestors (Martínez Cereceda, 1995). The privilege of being carried in a litter marked the elite end of this spectrum, and applied to both living rulers and ancestors, thereby further equating
them (Martínez Cereceda, 1995: 91-101). Ancestors amplified kurakas’ social distinction into full-blown sacralization. By extension, they made divine kingship into the basic cultural model of sovereignty for Andean political units of all sizes.

Andean ayllus were above all descent groups. They mummified their dead and conserved them in caves, where they formed a kind of parallel society with whom the living interacted primarily during seasonal rituals (Doyle, 1988: ch. 4; Mills, 1997: ch. 2). The premise was that the mummified dead mediated the access of the living to distant sources of water key to agrarian practice (Gose, 1993). During seasonal events of ancestor worship, the living drank copiously on behalf of the dead and even danced with them on their backs, hoping for agrarian fertility and oracular communication in return (Doyle, 1988; Gose, 1996b). As the head of an ayllu, the kuraka sponsored and officiated in these rituals, thus linking his socio-political power to the broader circulation of life that ancestors mediated. Indeed, the kuraka’s own ancestors formed a direct link back to the founding ancestors (mallki) who were thought to have initially colonized the ayllu’s territory, established an agrarian patrimony there, left descendants, and turned themselves into deities, often by spontaneous petrification. These acts were highly interrelated (Isbell, 1997: 82, 98-9). The patrimony sustained the descent group, which expressed its dependence and unity by worshipping the founding ancestor, whose role as a deity was to ensure the patrimony’s productivity and the descent group’s health, increase and prosperity. Founding ancestors bore lordly titles (apu, wamani, mallku, etc.) that passed down the chain of descent to the living kuraka. The directive, animating qualities of the kuraka within the ayllu thus derived from the founding ancestors, with whom the kuraka was a privileged mediator.

Founding ancestors epitomized not only the ayllu’s patrimony and sovereignty but its relations with the outside. Indeed, one defining feature of the mallkis is that they always came from somewhere else and journeyed to the places where they were to found descent groups. Seasonal events of ancestor worship recalled these journeys in several narrative forms. Ballad-like songs (takis) were probably the most prominent. Their basic format was an itinerary, starting in Lake Titicaca or the Pacific, maximal paqarinas (dawning points) where the primordial ancestors of all Andean localities came into being and began their dispersal towards the localities they were to colonize. From these sites, they travelled underground or were taken up into the sky, only to resurface or be deposited by lightning-strike at secondary paqarinas, themselves usually large lakes (like Chinchaycocha or Choclococha), from which further dispersal occurred. As they entered
a region on their subterranean or celestial journeys, progressively smaller cohorts of ancestors would typically rejoin the earth’s surface on a mountain top, also a paqarina, from which they further dispersed. On arrival in a locality “some came out of caves, others from mountains, others from springs, others from lakes, and others from the feet of trees”. From such terminal paqarinas, ancestors built settlements and agricultural infrastructure or conquered other groups already in the area. Thus, they created a patrimony to sustain the localized descent groups (ayllus) they established. With these exemplary deeds accomplished, they ended their days as human beings, frequently by turning into stone, an act that signified deification and a permanent accumulation of life, not ordinary mortality.

Several characteristics of mountains as paqarinas are worth noting for future reference. First, mountains alone did not define paqarina landscapes nor were they the highest-ranking parts of them. Rather, mountains were a threshold or mid-point between the distant and prestigious origins of the ancestors in large bodies of water and the local polities they established at the end of their journeys. Second, the whole of a mountain was seldom salient as a paqarina, since the latter was always a fleeting, localized ancestral contact with the surface of the earth, an outcropping or a lightning-strike in a journey that was otherwise subterranean or celestial. The relevant site was usually a specific shrine (waka), not the mountain as a whole. Many accounts locate these shrines on the peaks of mountains, some normatively. Often they were built around a more particular feature such as a cave or crag. More precisely, the term waka meant “holy place or object” and therefore referred not only to shrines but also to the sacred relics they contained, typically ancestral mummies or statues including sculpted or unmodified crags on the mountainside, all of which represented the founders of local groups. Albornoz mentions the snow-capped volcanoes of Arequipa and Southern Ayacucho as paqarinas, and stipulates that the Inka gave them retainers (mitimaes), fields, herds, gold, silver and cloth, and rebuilt many of them (1967: 20-1). Presumably he did not rebuild the mountains themselves but statues or architectural sites on them, which probably represented the ancestors and their points of emergence. Similarly, Albornoz burned paqarinas on mountains (Millones, 1990: 265-8, 274-8, passim), suggesting that they consisted of wooden constructions or statuary. Third, mountains, like all other paqarinas, were not understood as primordial geology indifferent to and outlasting human action, but were made by the ancestors’ acts of emergence, their rivalries and prodigious feats of strength. Mountains were not agents here but the product of the ancestors’ subterranean burrowing and emergence.
Alternately, celestial contact could create mountains, as in Cauri when an ancestor fell from the sky onto a high plain, which swelled up like a globe, and ultimately became a mountain. In ayllu-based regimes, the landscape took the ancestors’ imprint but remained distinct from and subordinate to them. Consequently, it did not bear ancestral titles like apu, which were confined to high-ranking kurakas and mummies. Fourth and finally, founding ancestors never entirely emerged with the land, despite undergoing petrification. Extirpation accounts affirm that ayllus transported their ancestors’ bodies or statues, usually in litters, from their shrines of storage to other ritually significant sites. Under the Inkas, Andean people carried their wakas on localized pilgrimages and rituals, to imperial oracular congresses and into battle, or had them taken hostage and held in Cuzco. Thus, the imperishable transformation of the ancestors did not imply fixity upon the landscape, and in no way precluded their ongoing participation in significant journeys across it. Through such mobility, ancestors remained political actors capable of further intervention in worldly affairs.

Colonial Transformations

Under the Inkas, ayllu organization as described above remained fundamental as a system of indirect rule through local hierarchies and the kurakas who oversaw them. To be sure, the Inkas also devised and imposed their own specifically imperial institutions on the non-Inka ayllus they conquered. But they could never have expanded as rapidly and as far afield as they did without utilizing what they found in place, nor, as members of the same milieu, would it have occurred to them to do otherwise. Thus, they subsumed local tributary relations into their own revenue system, local ruling hierarchies under their own governors, and local deities into their own pantheons as a line of least resistance. With the collapse of the Inka state and the Spanish invasion following the death of Wayna Qhapaq around 1528, two decades of extreme violence ensued during which Andean society essentially underwent a segmentary retraction to ayllu-level organization that provided the only functional governance. When Pizarro took the first tentative step towards the foundation of a colonial state by assigning encomiendas in Cuzco, he explicitly paired particular conquistadores with provincial Andean kurakas in a system of indirect rule through indigenous political units that institutionalized elite inter-ethnic alliance (Pizarro, 1926, Urteaga, 1920: 36). Spalding (1984: 108) and Stern (1982: ch. 2) show that encomenderos largely relied on their kuraka counterparts to extract their subjects’ labour, and could not
prevent them from becoming important economic players in their own right. Contemporary Spaniards were perfectly aware of this reality, and routinely complained that the kurakas were the main beneficiaries of the Inka state’s collapse, taking its lands, sumptuary privileges, and haughty bearing for their own. For all its centrality, however, ayllu organization remained largely invisible in Spanish accounts during the first four decades of their invasion. A system predicated on conquest found no honour in publicly proclaiming dependence on indigenous institutions, and some advantage in withholding insider knowledge of them to fellow Spaniards, who were competitors in the plunder economy.

Only with the Toledo reforms (1569-1581), most notably reducción, did indigenous ayllu organization start to become visible, and worthy of documentation, mainly as an obstacle to colonial policy. Most modern commentators understand reducción somewhat reductively as church-based settlement consolidation, which for Toledo and his contemporaries was merely means to the end of rational persuasion, religious conversion and political subjugation: the primary meanings of reducción at the time. The policy’s foremost announced goal was to improve Indians’ evangelization (Levillier, 1921-26 III: 492, IV: 111-2) but also to introduce them to what Spaniards called policía: organized public life. By relocating and rebuilding Andean towns, advocates of reducción hoped to reconstruct their inhabitants similarly, and to replace indirect rule with Spanish fiscal, administrative, and religious organizations. Early-modern Spaniards, whose intellectual culture strongly linked ideas of urbanism, civilization, and religious propriety (Pagden, 1982: 18, passim), readily saw an intimate connection between consolidated settlements and the true faith. Thus, viceroys could assign reducción to the ecclesiastical as opposed to the secular branch of government (Levillier, 1921-26 IV: 397). Reducción’s true referent was the ethico-political agenda that underwrote settlement consolidation as a physical operation. It condensed the entire Spanish colonial mission of civilization, the desire to thoroughly reconstruct indigenous life around Iberian standards. Not surprisingly, it collided with the ayllu as an impediment to its own realization and treated it as an already-existing order that it had to understand in order to overcome. Indirect rule, by contrast, had no such epistemic imperative and arguably worked best by discouraging such inquiry.

When reducción put parish priests in a better position to observe their Andean flock on a daily basis, the challenges this policy faced soon became clear. No sooner were these new settlements established than, in many areas, they began to empty as indigenous tributaries drifted away to escape the tasa and mita obligations that Toledo
assigned as part of his overhauling of Andean society. Priests and *corregidores* blamed *kurakas* for hiding tributaries but soon their own extractive demands emerged as a cause of indigenous flight. A discourse of “crisis” and “failure” arose around the *reducciones* even as they were being implemented and continued for over a century. It redefined the pre-existing power of *kurakas* and their informal alliances with local Spanish authorities as “corruption” that defrauded the Crown of revenues and subverted its reformist initiatives (Gose, 2008: 128-139). A further elaboration was to link indigenous flight to the persistence of idolatry, now understood in spatial opposition to the reducciones. The primary culprit was Indians’ attachment to their “pueblos viejos”, which typically belonged to minimal *ayllu* segments and held their ritual apparatus: a *paqarina*, ancestral burial caves, a set of mumified founding ancestors, etc. (Arriaga, 1621 [1968]: 219-20).

Once construction of a *reducción* began, Indians were to destroy their “pueblos viejos,” not only to salvage building materials but also to make the new settlement definitive and irreversible. Yet people continued to work their fields and pastures near the old towns, and often tried to rehabilitate them, for which they were treated as idolaters even when they built chapels and maintained active cofradías there (Gose, 2008: 138-9). Thus, *reducción* and the extirpation of idolatry became intimately related, as Toledo himself had intended them to be (Toledo, 1986: 135-6, 245-9).

Burial was an early and continuing flashpoint in this struggle to consolidate the *reducciones* against the “pueblos viejos”. Reducción was, among many other things, a mortuary regime dedicated to the Christian salvation of its dead subjects through the spiritual ministrations of the living, most notably burial near the altar where they could benefit from the eucharist (Gose, 2008: 123-8). Yet many accounts in the decades immediately following reducción describe Indians clandestinely removing the bodies of their dead from where they had been interred in the floors of their newly-built churches and taking them to *ayllu* mortuary caves associated with the pueblos viejos where they could join the larger community of *ayllu* ancestors. Sometimes, bodies circulated between churches and these distant mortuary caves, participating in both ancestral regimes, whereas others, people established new mortuary caves above the *reducciones* for the *ayllu*’s Christian dead. Andean parishioners even presented ancestors from the mortuary caves for baptism, in what appears to have been an attempt to unite an ancestral community divided by Christianity (Gose, 1995a, 2008: 139-155, 212-227). Perhaps more than anything else, this struggle over burial established a concentric spatial antagonism between the *reducciones* and their immediate periphery,
initially represented by the pueblos viejos but later by the countryside in general and more specifically mountains (Gose, 2008: 161-5), all equally godforsaken and threatening to the true faith.

The differentiation of Christian from pagan burial caves reflected this antagonism, but also suggested that Christianity was nonetheless beginning to animate the landscape. Thus, in 1656 the extirpator Noboa reported that:

quando cubren las casa asen mocha [reverencia] a los idolos malquis llamados Pomachagua Tunsuilllac [y] Yngavillac porque tienen tradicion que estos malquis fueron los primeros progenitores deste ailllo Julca Tamborga que tubieron su origen y nasieron del serro grande de este que es pegado a este pueblo de Mangas que llaman apuhurco [señor cerro] San Cristobal (Duviols, 1986: 341-2).

Here San Cristóbal seems to participate in two landscape regimes simultaneously. On the one hand, it was the paqarina from which three ancestral brothers emerged, and the site of a cult to their mummies and statues, as were several other mountain paqarinas in the same locality (see Duviols, 1986: 340-3). On the other, its name and location on Mangas’ immediate periphery suggests that it was becoming Christianized, probably by the placement of a large cross (visible from town) on its peak, and perhaps by housing Christian burial caves. San Cristóbal seems to have reconciled these contending regimes by adopting the title “lord mountain” (apu urqu). In this historical period, apu normally applied only to senior ancestors and kurakas within a region. Later, mountains adopted this title as they absorbed ancestral functions that mummies and idols embodied, as they still do here. By taking on their lordly title, then, San Cristóbal was not so much replacing these mummified brothers as drawing them into Christianity. Reciprocally, San Cristóbal’s sainthood became fully ancestral in the process.

Elsewhere in the same year of 1656, reducción’s antagonism to the ancestral landscape was not so easily reconciled, and generated its own “idolatries” as in the following report from an unspecified town in Huamanga:

en esta prouincya de Vilcas donde quedo confirmando y descuuierto unos rastros grandes de ydolatria en una doctrina donde vn yndio se finjiyo ser Santiago y dixo a los de su pueblo que se ausentaren de el porque se auia de asolar y destruyr con que todos lo desampararon y me a ynformado el cura de ellos se fueron a vn zerro a ofrecer sacrificio.12

This outburst resembles the traditional ancestral narrative of Pariacaca, who destroyed valley towns with the highland arsenal of
rain and hail (Taylor, 1987: ch. 6). Yet it occurred in a late- or post-extirpation setting, with few or no mummies, “idols,” or pre-Columbian settlements left to articulate a *ayllu*-based alternative. Lacking these traditional idolatrous foci, the mountain emerged as the site and perhaps even the object of an activist devotion that aimed to destroy the valley town. That goal neatly inverted the extirpation of idolatry’s destructive forays into the countryside, and so was intelligible within its own present, without need of ancestral narratives. Whatever this mountain’s status may have been within a *paqarina*-based ancestral regime, its opposition to the valley town was clearly what mattered in this context. This mobilization confronted reducción’s morally dichotomized geography which presented the town as a beacon of Christian righteousness and the surrounding landscape a repository of idolatrous darkness. It clearly opposed the church-based settlement, but not through an unreconstructed idolatry. Rather, its leader proclaimed himself Santiago and operated from the mountain, asserting the Christian status of the despised periphery but also its power to destroy the centre. In short, we are dealing with a transformed and evolving idolatry here, one that was coeval and intertwined with missionary Christianity, and contested its stigmatising of the undomesticated landscape in terms that were partially Christian.

This same opposition of mountains to church-based towns figured in a 1661 dispute between Juan de Salazar Montesinos, parish priest of Ambar, and don Juan Rodriguez Pilco, the indigenous governor of Cajatambo. They had already been quarrelling for several years when matters escalated after Indians performed a mock baptism and mass during the *qashwa* dancing that followed the priest’s celebration of Corpus Christi. Each party blamed the other’s faction for these sacrilegious acts but the outcome was settled in advance when an idolatry inspector, Juan Sarmiento de Vivero, was assigned the case. Sarmiento clearly took the priest’s side and appointed his sacristan and compadre Agustín Capcha as “fiscal mayor de todo el arsopispado” in which capacity Capcha launched a barrage of accusations that shifted blame for the *qashwa* dancing onto Rodriguez Pilco’s faction. The main insinuation was that a group of five “hechiceras” (including the kuraka’s mother and aunt) had arranged the dance and performed amorous magic associated with it (García Cabrera, 1994: 395, 408-412, 415, 455-458). A subsidiary suspicion was that the dance was really a disguised ancestral idolatry:

<p>puedo denonsiar todas las osansas que usan los endios de sus antividades como son a ponerse a baylar con las mugeres cantando en sus lenguas alabandoles a los hombres por sus desendentes o cerros o</p>
punas desindo que fue nasidos de tal cerros o punas y que las dichas mugeres con los tamboriles en las manos tocando y cantando con ella= Y asemismo tienen de costumbres los endios de ponerse a baylar en los dias de fista en una osansa de antividade que se llama guacon con unas mascaras lo mas feio que se puede de ber puestas las cara con unos combes que les cirven de camiseta” (García Cabrera, 1994: 459).

These cerros and punas were clearly paqarinas. Unlike Bernardo de Noboa in the neighbouring towns of Cajatambo during the same years, however, Capcha documented no traditional commemorations of ayllu ancestors or their journeys through a chain of origin points. Try as they might, he and Sarmiento did not manage to shift the dispute into an extirpatory register and it remained one between a priest and an indigenous governor, each determined to remove the other from office by defending Catholic rectitude.

In describing this struggle, the priest attributed to Rodriguez Pilco the following appeal to his people as their hereditary governor:

venid aca qual es mas dificultosso mudar este cerro que esta en frente o esta torre de la yglesia y auiendo dicho los indios que el cerro que no era posible mudarle por ser fijo y muy grande y que la torre aunque con dificultad la pasarian a otra parte les respondio vien abeis dicho pero adbertid que este zerro que desis que es inmudable y fijo soy yo que soy buestro casique y gouernador que naci aqui y e de morir aqui y nadie me podra echar de aqui y essa torre que desis que con algun travajo la passareis a otra parte los curas que aunque con dificultad los echamos a otra parte con pleitos y capitulos y assi ved si es mejor tener al curaca por amigo que a de vivir y morir con vosotros o al cura que se va mañana o lo podemos echar de aqui.13

In a pitched battle for allegiances, Rodriguez Pilco is thus alleged to have rhetorically modelled his own power and permanence on the mountain. If this account still aimed to smear Rodriguez Pilco as an idolater, it was no longer by presenting the mountain as the site of an ancestral cult, as Capcha did above, but rather by opposing it to the church tower in town, associated with the priest.

Thus the construction of church-based towns seems to have singled out mountains from pre-existing paqarina landscapes and brought them to the fore as their pagan antithesis (Gose, 2008: ch. 5). Prior to the colonial reducciones, as origin points on the journeys of founding ancestors, mountains were not images of permanence as they are here, but relatively mutable objects of catastrophic ancestral deeds (Gose, 2008: 168, 174, 178-179, 240-241). Only by contrast to the newness of the colonial reducciones then, did mountains come to signify the primordial. So the rhetoric attributed to Rodriguez Pilco here is more Spanish than indigenous, but above all colonial in how it reflects this
reordering of Andean landscapes. As Monsalve (1998: 393) correctly notes, this passage does not prove that in the 1660s, kurakas’ authority had already fused with mountains as it was to do towards the end of the colonial period. However it does exemplify some of colonial pressures that were ultimately to effect that transformation including compulsory Christianization, the reorganization of spatial and settlement regimes, persecution of indigenous religious practices, erosion of indirect colonial rule through hereditary indigenous authorities, endless divisive factional struggles, etc. Thus, Rodriguez Pilco’s very claim to immutability openly acknowledged his own people’s wavering loyalty and so enacted the increasingly fragile and less traditional nature of his power. Despite putting up a convincing defence, he lost the case and was exiled from Ambar for six years, during which time he lost the indigenous governorship. By the 1680s, however, he had returned and regained it, as shown in further disputes with priests. Neither as solid as the mountain nor wholly absorbed into it, his power continued to reside in a beleaguered hereditary office that he fought tenaciously to retain.

A further variation on the theme of decomposing traditional solidarities emerges from a case in the town of Pomacocha, Canta, in 1650. As so often happened, the case arose from a quarrel among Andean people. Pedro Curichagua accused Juana Ycha of witchcraft, illicit worship, and divination. Apparently, she had threatened Churichagua’s son, who was having an affair with her daughter. Within three days proceedings against her began: the investigating priest Antonio de Caceres impounded her meagre belongings, captured and brought her before him. In her confession, she described herself as a widow, and admitted to learning “brujería” from Catalina Suyo and Alonso Caxa Guaranga, starting about ten years previously. Caxa Guaranga promised to teach her how to cure the sick by privately consulting and feeding a quarter-sized silver “idol” of a person seated on a mold-casting (piña), which represented Apoparato, the trial’s featured “demon.” Early in Ycha’s apprenticeship, however, Caxa Guaranga died, leaving her and Catalina Suyo as this deity’s only priests. Ycha and Suyo mention no collective rites for Apoparato: they approached the deity only for individual patrons (mingadores). The most frequent requests were from women who wished to make men enter or stay in conjugal relationships. Nearly as common were requests for the deity to cure sicknesses, intervene in difficult births, or find lost property. Other requests came from a man who wished to change tributary jurisdictions, another who wished to avoid prosecution, a coca vendor anxious to make sales, a native tax-collector seeking an Indian who owed him tribute, and woman who wished to
depose her unpopular son-in-law Francisco Pomacondor as *kuraka*. According to Ycha, Apoparato generally granted these requests if appropriate offerings accompanied them. Ycha also made offerings to maintain her relations with Apoparato. Strikingly absent are any descriptions of collective, semiannual *ayllu* observances for Apoparato, although people called him “yaya [padre] o criador” and requested favours that ancestral deities typically provided.\(^\text{15}\) Possibly selective testimony concealed collective *ayllu* rituals here, but probably they no longer existed. The *kuraka* Pomacondor’s collaboration with the prosecution suggests he disliked such rituals, and his attitude can only have hardened when testimony revealed that idolaters schemed to remove him from office. Pomacondor’s antipathy could well explain the absence of corporate support for Apoparato’s cult and this *kuraka*’s personal unpopularity within his *ayllu*. When indigenous political authorities and corporate structures no longer sponsored or cohered around *ayllu* rituals, only these more individual forms of worship sustained the deities.

Lack of a collective cult seems to have underwritten Apoparato’s occasionally violent behaviour toward Ycha. He came to her periodically as a whirlwind that transformed into a dark Indian man in a black cape: he demanded food and corn beer and would rage and beat her if she did not serve them promptly. While Alonso Caxa Guaranga was still alive, Apoparato ate and talked quietly with him, and did not beat Ycha like this. During nocturnal visits, Apoparato sometimes took the form of Ycha’s dead husband, and slept with her if her grandchildren were not present, ejaculating a cold yellow fluid. Leading up to the trial, other more recently deceased kin joined him, also to demand food and drink that she could scarcely provide. Ycha noted that Apoparato worked her fields when no men, Spaniards, or priests (whom he feared and avoided) were present, revealing his thin black legs and rooster-like feet. She then returned to the beatings he gave her and the destitution she experienced since becoming his priestess. Ycha dwelt on his stinginess, and refusal to give her any of the silver he sometimes brought in a sack, perhaps to elaborate his statue. She could not recruit others to serve Apoparato, and so remained trapped in this increasingly onerous office.\(^\text{16}\)

Silverblatt (1987: 185, 1988: 184-185) invokes Andean people’s material impoverishment and the breakdown of reciprocity with their ancestral deities under Spanish colonialism to explain Ycha’s estranged relation to Apoparato. She argues that Andean people accepted their deities’ demonization because their own relations with them became highly problematic. Griffiths (1996: 116-119, 126-127, 131) and Mills (1997: 228-240) dispute this interpretation. They note that
Apoparato still acted as a tutelary deity, and regard his demonization as an imposition of the investigating priest. I think both positions are largely correct, and the drama of this case derives precisely from Apoparato’s traditional ancestral functions on the one hand, and the collapse of his ayllu-based cult, with its corresponding resources and specialists, on the other. By treating Apoparato as a traditional ancestor whose cult was in decline, we can reconcile these interpretations. Only the most senior ancestors in a region held his prefixed title of apu or lord (Doyle, 1988: 52-4). The requests that Ycha referred to Apoparato are all typical of those that Andean people made of their ancestors. His appearance as Ycha’s dead husband suggests that he still oversaw ayllu mortuary processes. The quasi-conjugal relationship Apoparato maintained with Ycha was also typical of that between other Andean deities and their chosen women that many idolatry documents and chronicles describe. Priestesses like Ycha were part of most Andean deities’ traditional retinue. However, the rest of this entourage was missing, particularly after Alonso Caxa Guaranga’s death. Ycha admitted that she had not mastered all of the divinatory techniques he practised, which may partly explain Apoparato’s more abusive stance toward her after his death. That nobody else would replace either Caxa Guaranga or Ycha suggests a cult in crisis. People still wanted these specialists’ services, but no longer supported them sufficiently to attract new recruits. The paramount question was how to provide for such a deity when there were no longer fields or flocks dedicated to its sacrificial maintenance. Ycha’s increased ritual responsibility and material destitution speaks eloquently to this point. She and other followers may not have demonized him definitively, but their relationship certainly changed in a less harmonious direction. It was less a question of reciprocity breaking down than of it shifting into a negative mode, in which the ancestor asserted an ongoing relationship punitively, when his living adepts failed to maintain his cult adequately. These circumstances destabilized the deity’s behaviour, but also his physical form and geographical location, which are remarkably pliable in this document.

Apoparato existed as a silver idol, a whirlwind, and an Indian man, but also appeared through a pair of spiders, and the coals of a fire. Various adepts worshipped him in their houses, Pomacocha’s irrigation canal and two different mountains (Julcan and Cochayoc). When asked if she hid any other illicit practices or worshipped any mountains, Ycha replied that she did not but once went to Mt. Julcan to invoke and give Apoparato offerings on a straw surface. When asked if she and Catalina Suyo had a pact with him there, she replied that they only fed him. One midnight while she was imprisoned in
church during the trial, Apoparato appeared to her. Ycha said she was now in the hands of God, and he replied “yo quiero volver donde estoy arriba de Cajapalca a un zerro grande que tiene una cocha o laguna enzima”. He had previously asked her to accompany him to this place, but she refused.17

When rebuffed by one of his last remaining mediums, Apoparato significantly announced his wish to “return” to his mountain of origin, probably the paqarina from which he first emerged. With an eery awareness of his fate, he may have been announcing his immanent transformation into a mountain deity there. That his name contains the prefixed title apu by which mountain deities in the Cuzco region are known today, tempts this presentist reading. In nearly all mid-colonial cases, apu refers to an idol (or a mummy) in a regime of ayllus and paqarinas, but here, that regime’s disintegration is so patent that we can no longer assume its salience. Even if Apoparato was merely returning to his paqarina, this may have been the mechanism by which a new landscape of mountain deities swallowed a previously independent ancestral manifestation. While no such transformation occurred on Ycha’s watch as priestess, this farewell clearly marked the end of an era, and hinted at the beginning of another.

A clearer case of ancestral deities returning to the earth occurred in Santiago de Maray in 1677 (see Gose, 2008: 227-232). The local priest, Juan de Esquivel y Aguila, presented a detailed picture of ayllu-based ancestor worship including seasonal sacrifices for rain, good agricultural conditions, and at the harvest. A regionally important ancestor, Caruayacolca, also had his shrine and an active cult in this locality. Nonetheless, Maray had been subject to prior rounds of extirpation in which it lost most of its ancestral mummies, and had replaced them with stone monoliths as objects of worship. By 1677, witnesses consistently described Llaullactullu, the local founding ancestor whose mummy was burned in 1614, as their pacarina.18 This term suggests an identification with the landscape underlined by his intimate relation with a spring and mountain. Apparently people conflated the ancestor with his point of emergence on the landscape, and might even have thought he disappeared into it. Such metonymy occurs elsewhere in the idolatry corpus, and Doyle treats it as a normal part of Andean ancestor worship (1988: 94-95). However, the sequence of events in Maray suggests that the Extirpation could have caused this conflation. We must explore that possibility before accepting Doyle’s interpretation.

Significant evidence elsewhere in this document suggests that the landscape was taking on functions that ancestral mummies previously embodied. The latter still existed, at least in Llaullacayan’s shrine, but
previous rounds of extirpation and defensive relocation had destroyed many important bodies. Other important shrines such as Caruayacolca’s had no ancestral mummies but were replete with surrogate stone monoliths. Gonzalo Paico, one of the three *ayllu* priests accused of idolatry, mentioned making offerings to the mountains Caruayacolca and Guampucani before consulting his *mallkis*, who then appeared to him as a man and a woman in dreams. He also added that mountains and rivers gave good advice about where to find lost objects because they “tenian correspondenzia con el mar y los caminos y que unos a otros se avisavan de lo que por ellos pasava y que los zerros a quienes ymbocava se lo dezian a sus malquis para que se lo avisasen.” Here the landscape actively interceded with the *mallkis* who no longer occupied the locality. The document confirms that impression elsewhere when a witness said the sun transported the souls of the dead to where their *mallkis* are, presumably their distant original *paqarinas*. Everything suggests that extirpated ancestors had somehow returned to the earth through their *paqarinas*, perhaps retracing their original subterranean journeys. To the extent that the ancestors were no longer present, the landscape assumed agency: previously the passive infrastructure of ancestor-focussed narratives, it now acted in their stead. Thus, while making offerings to the sun for a patient, Paico intoned “arroyos puquios zerros tierra que aveis entrado a hazer mal en el cuerpo deste enfermo salid fuera y tornad sano a este enfermo”. Similarly, when asked if she were an idolater, María Quillay answered affirmatively, confessing to worshipping the sea, the earth and all springs.19

How far did the landscape’s absorption of the ancestors extend? Griffiths (1996: 207-208) believes that mountain deities existed in Maray by 1677, and even states that Paico addressed them as *apu* (lord), a term that appears nowhere in the document. This amounts to a claim that this document features an ethnographic pattern of mountain worship, in which landscape features wholly absorbed ancestral functions previously embodied in mummies and statues. Although just such a process eventually occurred, it is at best incipient in this document. Some mountains do figure as agents, but many retained their traditional role as *paqarinas* or sites for shrines and idols. The most important of these mountains, Caruayacolca, took its name from the crag-statue that represented the petrified body of that founding ancestor. This mountain continued to house an entirely traditional ancestral form, whose presence precluded any development of the mountain as an autonomous, quasi-ancestral agent. Moreover, the proliferation of stone monoliths in the document suggests that when previous extirpators destroyed ancestral mummies, people probably
remade them in this form (see Doyle, 1988: 66). This strategy contrasted with that of letting the landscape swallow previously distinct ancestral forms in that it kept the latter present in the locality and therefore available for ayllu-based worship. Both strategies were present, but not equally. Those that conserved or reconstructed the ancestors in forms distinguished from the landscape predominated, as did the corporate forms of worship they articulated.

In 1697, the Aymaraes-Cotabambas region, now part of the Peruvian Department of Apurímac, provides an unambiguous break out of this earlier regime into one in which mountains indubitably embody the ancestral functions previously invested in mummies and statues. At earlier moments, this area generated the Yanahuara (1596) and Moro Oncoy (1599) movements, both of which featured separatist prophets who acted on mountains, and identified them as places of proper ancestral worship, as opposed to Christian towns in the valleys worshippers. Atop a local mountain, however, the Yanahuara prophet exhorted the people of Piti and Maras to destroy a cross and erect an “idol” in its place (Ramos Gavilán, 1621: 56-58; Calancha, 1639 [1972]: 712-720; Torres, 1657 [1972]: 63-65). Thus, no matter how important the opposition of mountain to valley town may have become, the “idol” remained the focus of ancestral worship: as of 1596, mountains had yet to supplant idols in this regard. During the century after this movement, this area largely escaped extirpation of idolatry campaigns but in 1697 a spontaneous local denunciation revealed a remarkably transformed ancestral panorama in Haquira (see Gose, 1995b).

Several disgruntled indigenous neighbours reported an indio forastero named Pasqual Haro for trying to increase his herds, ensure his work’s success, and cure the sick through sacrifices of llamas, corn beer, coca, sanco, rock scrapings and coloured powders. He prepared these offerings on various surfaces: gunny sacks, carrying-cloths (llicllas), straw, and a stone “altar,” complete with a cross and images of the Virgin and San Juan, to intercede with the mountains who received the sacrifices. Several local mountains figured in the trial, but Haro had particular affinity with one named Asoca, whom he addressed as “lord” (apo). He also invoked and sacrificed to more distant and influential mountains like Salcantay and Qoropuna. One witness described Haro as an oracular medium for several local mountains, and someone who helped and advised other householders in making offerings to them. Besides curing the sick, he kept toads, which he allegedly used in witchcraft. Once, he diagnosed a sickness as the result of a waka entering a person’s body, but the reference is clearly to Mt. Asoca. The document mentions no other wakas, nor any ancestral mummies, monoliths or statuary, and is remarkably modern
in its ritual vocabulary and sensibility. Mountains are the only deities the document records, and they clearly dominate the local pantheon.

One hundred and one years after the Yanahuara movement, mountains were no longer merely sites of ancestral observations but their primary object. In the intervening years, mummies and idols had apparently disappeared as objects of veneration, and with them, *ayllu*-based forms of worship. A 1689 parish survey of the Bishopric of Cuzco reported four *ayllus* for Haquira, with only seventy men of tribute-paying age but over eight hundred women. The Huancavelica mita was killing many men and causing others to flee, as did the *corregidores* and their forced purchases of goods. Haquira’s *ayllus* had once grouped into larger moieties that formed the parishes of San Pedro and San Martín de Haquira, but the latter had become so depopulated that it ceased to have any functional *ayllus* and the priest of San Pedro called for their amalgamation (Villanueva, 1982: 35-37, 40-41). As *forasteros*, Haro and his neighbours lacked any local *ayllu* affiliation. His innovative form of worship reflected that fact: the saintly images and mountain deities that Haro and his followers venerated belonged to a more fluid religious universe no longer organized around corporate descent groups. Outside an *ayllu* framework, they offered the same ritual services that *ayllu* functionaries typically provided: witchcraft, curing, and sacrifice for the fertility of flocks and fields. This suggests that Haquiras’ decimated *ayllus* may have been on shaky ground as ritual units, and that Haro was filling a void. As an unaffiliated practitioner, furthermore, Haro threatened the local *kuraka*, who orchestrated his denunciation to the parish priest and so initiated the investigation. Instead of reinforcing the *kuraka’s* authority within the *ayllu* format, Haro’s services attracted a personal following of his own, one that the *kuraka* tried to quash with these idolatry charges. Clearly this new form of worship both presupposed and promoted the *ayllu’s* breakdown as a ritual unit, to *kurakas’* detriment above all.

This is the earliest clear transition from a mummy- and idol-based ancestral regime to one based on mountain deities currently known in the historical record. Extirpators were probably not responsible for this change, which had already occurred by the time they intervened. Rather, the main cause was the *ayllu’s* reduction to its tributary function and the consequent rise of *forasterismo*. To the extent that it became a purely tributary unit, the *ayllu* could no longer command ritual loyalties, and collapsed as a ritual entity. The individual and domestic concerns it once addressed remained, however. New forms of worship arose in their place, and reinvented notions of ancestorhood around mountains and saints. Later, and by different
routes, the same transformation was to occur elsewhere. Ayllu collapse and residential mobility were nonetheless key processes by which new forms of worship could spread. As both colonialism and indigenous responses to it promoted migration, they not only undermined loyalty to ayllus, but promoted interregional communication and new social bonds. This case gives the first solid glimpse of what that new synthesis would be.

An Ethnographic Conclusion

The seventeenth-century sources discussed here collectively show an erosion of traditional ancestor worship in Andean ayllus under Spanish colonialism, but only the beginnings of a new ancestral regime focussed on mountains instead of mummies. Among the factors responsible for this erosion were reducción, the extirpation of idolatry, the conversion of ayllus into merely tributary units, forasterismo, and the growing alienation of kurakas from their erstwhile kin and subjects. It was not until the eighteenth century, however, that the last of these developments reached the breaking point, as hereditary kurakas increasingly came under attack both from the Spanish crown and their own people, culminating in the great Andean rebellions of 1781-4. By the eighteenth century, the colonial will to reform Andean society through reducción and the extirpation of idolatry had largely dissipated, resulting in a relatively impoverished record of ayllu religious activity, ancestor worship included. Nonetheless, the sources currently known show a continued decline of mummies and statues as objects of veneration and further indications that mountains were taking over their ancestral functions (Gose, 2008: ch. 7). After 1781-4, this transition appears to have been completed and in retrospect, this great insurrection can be considered a pachakuti that produced a new order despite royalist victory in the short run. That hereditary kurakas and traditional ancestor worship both met their demise at this moment suggests a close functional relation between the two. The cult of mumified ancestors clearly had legitimated kurakas’ power, so when the latter was under attack from below, it is little wonder that people also rejected the former. Long after the extirpators had given up, Andean people finally accepted their critique of mummy worship, but for their own anti-colonial reasons.

The result was the end of indirect colonial rule through indigenous social forms, a blow from which Spanish colonialism in the Andes would never recover. Andean ayllus fundamentally transformed themselves when they overthrew hereditary kurakas and the worship of mummified ancestors. Whereas previously they had been internally
hierarchical and class-ridden descent groups, they became co-residential direct democracies in this late colonial upheaval. Tributary relations with the state did not entirely disappear in the process, but came to articulate emergent forms of indigenous republican citizenship. As the sovereignty of these renovated communities transferred to mountain lords, it generated a quasi-ancestral shadow state modelled on actual holders of state power but unlike them, one that remained deeply grounded in subaltern Andean interests in agrarian fertility and the circulation of life (Gose, 2008: ch. 7). This relocation of sovereign indigenous power in the landscape and beyond the living human community diminished the possibilities for direct collaboration with colonial power that characterized so many kurakas. It also allowed a more critical stance towards republican state power but at the cost of the withdrawal from it implicit in this telluric transformation. In short, it was a strategic retreat that at least partially took the form of a pachakuti in which a previously dominant order was driven underground where it persists in a latent and subaltern form capable of resuscitation.

Contemporary Andean people, however, express this notion of an epochal break not in relation to the mountain lords but rather the mummified dead that still remain on their territories. Variously known as gentiles, machus (grandfathers) or chullpas (tomb-dwellers), they view them as remnants of an earlier humanity banished by the rising of a Christian sun that desicated (i.e. mummified) them and drove them into the earth’s interior through springs and caves, where they envy the living and conspire to re-take the earth’s surface from them. Andean people now avoid and ridicule these mummies instead of worshipping them as their ancestors did. They invoke notions of idolatry, heresy and sin to explain why the sun eradicated the gentiles and so underline Christianity as the moral-historical boundary that separates them. Thus, some contemporary Andean people take offense at the notion, which researchers often advance, that they descend from the mummified chullpas found on their landscape (Abercrombie 1998: 117). By rejecting these mummies, stripping them of their ancestral functions, and identifying them with a previous epoch, Andean people conformed to the fundamental requirements of missionary “conversion”: accepting Christianity but also rejecting “idolatry.” Yet it is equally clear that this internalization of the Extirpation occurred in fundamentally Andean terms, through the retention of the past as a subordinate lower moiety (Gose, 1996a; 2008: 283-294).

Mountain lords, by contrast, predominantly associate with the celestial realm, as their avian titles, including wamani (hawk), mallku (condor) and condor mamani (condor-hawk), suggest. From that
position, their association with the Christian heaven, abode of the saints and God, and the sun that punished the gentiles is paramount. Indeed, the mountain lord’s racially white appearance may derive primarily from the iconography of the saints, and only secondarily from their parallelism with state functionaries. As idealized ruler-proprietors who use their power to adjudicate agrarian fertility and their subjects’ health, mountain lords not only update earlier Andean scripts of ancestorhood and divine kingship, but in so doing necessarily occupy and order the earth’s surface and interior. They receive sacrifices of surficial life forms and are expected to generate new life from within the earth’s interior, and thus oversee a circulation of vitality that connects their “Christian” heights with more terrestrial processes (see Morote Best, 1956; Earls, 1973; Gose, 1986). Thus they fuse traditional ancestral forms of material sustenance with spiritual tutelage in a Christianized version of divine kingship, performing all the important tasks that ancestral mummies once did, but as political authorities in a Christianized republican order. By rearticulating ancestral functions around communal assemblies and town councils, Andean people gave the mountain lords a democratic inflection that mummies lacked. This shift directly registers the historical overturning of kurakas’ local rule and consigns it to the epoch of the gentiles. Nonetheless, the mountain lords remain lords and interact with their subjects in the hierarchical idiom of sacrifice, just as they must operate within the infernal interior world of the gentiles. As dominant figures in the current order, mountain lords do not simply occupy an upper position but use it to drive totalizing circulations of life across surficial and interior domains, where they must also be present.

When Andean ancestral sovereignty went telluric during the 18th century, then, it did not go entirely or even primarily underground. By rearticulating itself around mountains, it retained an upper position associated not only with Christianity but the current political order. Yet it also maintained a certain critical distance from that order through its ancestral advocacy for Andean people and its synthesis of life across the morally-coded vertical Andean cosmos. To that extent, the mountain lords continue to impose a divine kingship formula on the republican present, according to which political power is only legitimate to the extent that it promotes the abundance and circulation of life. The great genius of Andean politics has been to carry forward these traditional ancestral expectations into the present, to fuse them with actually-existing state power and not allow them to be marginalized or driven underground.
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Notes


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