



Deities and Spirits in Andean Belief

Towards a Systematisation

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Abstract. – Most people who live in the rural Andes have considered themselves Christians for several hundred years, and their religion combines traditions of Andean and Christian origins. In order to understand the basic concepts of life in the Andes I will study the deities and spirits who inhabit nature and how they affect human beings. Apart from major deities (Pachamama, the *apus*) there are other beings, the spirits: dangerous and evil ones hovering in liminal space and time as well as benevolent ones who help the deities. By systematising materials and studies from Peru, I will show that, although words and certain concepts are blended in what may be called Andean Christianity, the (super)natural world is essentially Andean. [*Andes, Quechua, 20th century, religion, deities, spirits, Christianisation, cultural blending*]

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1 Introduction

In this study I will present some essential concepts of the perception of the Andean natural world and

its interpretation in spiritual terms and use examples to illustrate how these interrelationships with nature work. The questions I raise and which I see as a basis for further discussions are how far these phenomena can be systematised, where Andean and Christian influences are detectable and how this can be interpreted.¹

The Andean highlands² are inhabited not only by humans and animals, but also by many other beings, powerful and dangerous. The mountain deities, the

1 The data are mainly from late 1960s and 1970s Quechua-speaking southern Peru. This was the period when most studies were published; more recent work is sporadic, but shows that little has changed. Much of what has been written about these beings was in the framework of a Christian understanding and mission, by anthropologists many of whom were also Catholic priests; most of these writings were published in the journal *Allpanchis*. It is interesting to observe that the writings of the Catholic missionaries-anthropologists do not categorise Andean religious beliefs and practices as inferior to Christian ones, but are mainly descriptive within a “neutral” framework. The narrations from southern Peru, some folk narratives, others descriptive accounts, by the indigenous villagers of Pinchimuro in “Kay Pacha” (Gow y Condori 1976) as well as the narrations made by Délétroz Favre’s (1993) consultants in Coaza balance and largely confirm this information. There are also many folk stories whose characters and events centre on these spirits and their interactions with human beings (for example, Payne 2000: 201–249 for dangerous beings, such as *condenados*; 251–271 for helping spirits). For a brief summary see Marzal (1996: 83).

2 The Andean countries (Ecuador, Peru, Bolivia) comprise an ecologically and culturally complex area which consists of vertical micro-climatic zones where human settlements reach from sea level to 4,800 m altitude. The common traits of traditional highland culture are a highly developed agriculture with terraces and irrigation systems (maize, potato, quinoa)

apus, and the “World-Mother,” Pachamama, occupy dominant positions in the natural environment which determines people’s lives and destiny. The basic relationship with them is that of reciprocity and complementarity,³ essential to guarantee personal and social wellbeing. Apart from these deities, a large number of spirits, most of them malignant or at least dangerous, live in the Andean mountains. Although I will refer to the deities and the spirits as supernatural beings, in the Andes no clear distinction is made between what we call religion and the secular – life is considered a unity, determined by human **and** spiritual forces.

Christianity was taught from the very beginning of the colonial era in Quechua and other indigenous widespread “general” languages,⁴ mainly through the translation of the catechism, sermons, confessionaries, etc. The result of the cohabitation of Christian and Andean religion is what has been called “Andean Christianity” and formulated in an “Indian Theology.”⁵ When the Andean countries became independent from Spain at the beginning of the 19th century, the influence of the Catholic orders, which had dominated the conversion and religious life, decreased, and in many cases the secular clergy took over (cf. Andrien 2001: 84–190). And although there is an increasing influence of Protes-

tant churches, and despite many economic changes and political upheavals the Latin America countries have remained largely Catholic.⁶ It is in this context that contemporary Andean belief has developed.

2 Divine Beings: Pachamama, Patron Saints, and the Christian God

The highest mountain peaks are inhabited by beings who are imagined as endowed with divine power: these *apus* communicate with humans and are conceived of as behaving like them; they are creators and at the same time reflect the human social order and economic system. They are also related to the ancestors; they can take the shape of animals or human beings and in this way interact with other mythical beings and humankind. Thus, for example, the *apu* in form of a condor may talk to people through a religious specialist.⁷

Whilst the *apus* can be considered localised deities, Pachamama is rarely imagined as a concrete person; her power is also firmly rooted in nature, but she is present everywhere – therefore, I see her as the principle of life rather than the “World-Mother” (literal translation) or a specific deity. As the rituals carried out for her show, Pachamama is located beneath the earth in mountains, close to mines or in stones of certain shapes. She is often related to irrigation systems and springs, lakes and rivers as well as to mysterious grottoes or dangerous sites; she is also said to reside in *pacarinas* (from *paqari-*, “to be born”) which people imagine to be the ancestors’ and herding animals’ places of origin (Mariscotti de Görlitz 1978: 31–35, 57–84). The narrator of a story about Pachamama emphasises her productive force by using terms such as *kuyda*, “to take care of,” and *uywa*⁸, “to nurture small children and animals.” She is alive: she has hair which is the pasture, and blood and milk flow inside her. He adds that she is really like our mother. It is important to respect her and work on her at the times due to her, otherwise her sadness and wrath may cause harm. The same consultant makes it clear that she herself

and animal domestication and breeding (llama, alpaca, guinea pig), complemented by European products and animals. For descriptions of Andean ecology see Pulgar Vidal (1996) and Gade (1999: chap. 2; esp. pp. 36–38).

- 3 Family and territorial groups (*ayllus*) are the basic units of social organisation. An *ayllu* can range from a relatively small kingroup to a whole social unit such as a village or district and can be defined by access to land or common descent (see Allen 1988: chap. 3). Interpersonal and social relationships within the *ayllu* are characterised by complementarity and reciprocity (*ayni*). This refers to the sharing of work among family members and neighbours, which is repaid in kind (Allen 1988: 92–94).
- 4 Today’s official language is Spanish which was brought to the Andes by the 16th-century conquerors. Of the many indigenous languages only Quechua (ca. nine million speakers), Aymara (ca. three million speakers), Chipaya (ca. 1,200 speakers), and Jaqaru (ca. 740 speakers) are spoken in the Andean highlands at present (cf. Lewis et al. 2015: <<https://www.ethnologue.com/language/que>>; <<https://www.ethnologue.com/language/aym>>; <<http://www.ethnologue.com/language/cap>>; <<https://www.ethnologue.com/language/jqr>> [12.06.2016]).
- 5 For a summary of Andean religion see Marzal (1996) and Albó (1996). Sallnow (1987) gives a sketch of the pre-Columbian Andes (chap. 2) and contemporary religious features (chap. 3, 4); also see Ricard Lanata (2007) for rituals and curing; Gose (1994) for the interrelation of religion and agriculture; and Gose (2008) for the historical and colonial angle. The teaching of the Christian faith in native languages is discussed in González and González (2008: 54 f.) and Dedenbach-Salazar Sáenz (2008: 35 f.). On the “teología india” see Irrázaval (1996) and Gorski (1996).

6 For a history of the Catholic Church and Protestant Churches see González and González (2008: chap. 5–10).

7 See *The Huarochirí Manuscript* (1991 [ca. 1608]), e.g., chap. 2 and 5 and *passim*, for myths about pre-Spanish times. For contemporary sessions of communication see Casaverde Rojas (1970: 214–218) and Platt (1997).

8 I use the official orthography for the Peruvian Quechua dialect as established in 1975, but with three vowels (Cusi-huamán Gutiérrez 1976: 35–52; Valderrama Fernández y Escalante Gutiérrez 1992) and pluralise nouns with an English “-s.” Literal quotations maintain the particular spellings of the authors.

does not bring bad luck to people, but she warns them (Gow y Condori 1976: 10–12). In folk belief it was obvious to connect Pachamama and the Virgin Mary; both are seen as symbols of human fertility as well as responsible for that of crops and animals. This parallel is evident in many apparitions of the Virgin in Spain in the 16th century, some of which go back to the Middle Ages. Where such an apparition or image occurred – often to a poor farmer – a shrine would be built. The places used to be at rarely visited sites, such as mountains, caves, or wells (see Dedenbach-Salazar Sáenz 2013b: 166 f., 188).

In addition to these Andean powerful beings, since colonial times every community has a patron saint, often in form of the mythical revelation of Christ or a saint as the “Lord of ...” or the Virgin or a saint as “the Lady of ...” The saints would first appear miraculously and have become the protectors of the community which celebrates them once a year (Casaverde Rojas 1970: 126–132; cf. Marzal 1996: 71–77, 96 f.). The most important regional festival in Peru is that of the Lord of Qoyllur Rit’i (Snow Star), where 90,000 people from a wide area come together for Holy Trinity Tuesday to make a pilgrimage to the mountain peak of Ausangate. The celebrations include traditional indigenous dances as well as the veneration of Christ at the chapel and culminate in bringing down pieces of ice – evidence of the blending of Christ and the *apu*.⁹

It is not only typical of Latin America, but also of Spain, that the saints are closely related to native or folk religion (Dedenbach-Salazar Sáenz 2013b) and, like God, can be seen as deities (rather than orthodox intermediaries) who have considerable influence on people’s personal and social life.

Meteorological phenomena, such as hail, *chiqu-chi*, snow, *rit’i*, and lightning, *qhaqya* (Illapa in Inca times), and the celestial bodies, especially the sun, *inti*, and the moon, *killa*, were all major *wakas*¹⁰ in Inca times and are still present in contemporary Andean faith, but are less important in their influence than the *apus* and Pachamama (Núñez del Prado Béjar 1970: 94–98). The Christian God is part of the Andean pantheon, but people have different concep-

tions of him. He is seen as creator and almighty, but also as an invisible spirit. He may appear as an old man in rags to test people’s faith and cause earthquakes to punish them. However, more often than an active deity he is a *deus otiosus*, although his punishment of disrespectful or disobedient people reminds us of the Andean deities described in an early colonial document who did the same.¹¹ The deity’s punitive reaction can be seen as a characteristic of reciprocity in Andean religion, but it also reminds us of the God of the Old Testament whom the colonial missionaries portrayed as wrathful.¹² Thus, the contemporary image of God may well be influenced by Christian missionary teaching and Andean traditions. On the other hand, in the Andes Christ is not a central part of the reciprocal system and is conceived of as a deity of justice and may be invoked as such, but he is not always part of the Christian Trinity. Depending on the characterisation people will give of God and Jesus, they sometimes have traits of a trickster.¹³ There are also different perceptions of the Holy Ghost. In Chuquisaca (Bolivia) he is a saint with his special festival day; he works miracles and (not unlike a Guardian Angel) protects people (Wrisley 1973: 162–164).

The distinctive nature of all the deities and of Pachamama is their ambiguity: they can be benevolent, but when not treated respectfully they can become angry and wrathful and cause people to fall ill or a community to suffer a natural disaster. Therefore, within the Andean conception of reciprocal interaction (*ayni*), people communicate with them, often with the help of specialist intermediaries and through offerings. And although the mountain spirits and Pachamama received Christian counterparts in the saints and the Virgin, their basic role in life has remained Andean.

3 Spirits

Besides the mentioned supernatural beings or deities there are also spirit-like beings that populate

9 Sallnow (1987: 228). In 2011, the pilgrimage was included in the “Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity” (UNESCO 2011).

10 A *waka* can be any element or feature found in nature and considered to have particular force and power, referring to both the physical manifestation of the supernatural force (e.g., a mountain peak, a stone) and the force or being itself, either as an abstract concept of a numinous being located in these features of nature, or a man-made object representing it (e.g., a statue). In pre-Hispanic times, some *wakas* were important oracles.

11 According to the consultants of Marzal (1970: 37 f.). *The Huarochirí Manuscript* (1991 [ca. 1608]: Cuniraya, chap. 2: pp. 46–48, and Huatyaquri, chap. 5: p. 56); *New Jerusalem Bible* (1985: Genesis, chap. 6 [the deluge]: <http://www.catholic.org/bible/book.php?id=1&bible_chapter=6>; chap. 19 [Sodom]: <http://www.catholic.org/bible/book.php?bible_chapter=19&id=1>, respectively [12.06.2016]).

12 The Lima Council’s 20th sermon, for example, warns the indigenous parishioner (in Quechua) that the liar will go to hell and burn in its fire forever (*Tercero cathecismo* 1985 [1585]: 588 / fol. 120v).

13 See for example the story about “Child Jesus, Yarn Spinner” (Payne 2000: 263–271).

the Andean world. I understand spirit¹⁴ as an entity which can be described, as Jung put it, as a substance, a dynamic principle, alive, a breathlike presence, and although as such disembodied, it lends itself to personification (Jung 1972 [1954]: 5–8). In the Andes, it can manifest itself as a physical being: a re-embodied entity which is not good or evil as such. Andean spirits are “liminal”¹⁵ as they do not live in the space and present time defined by and for humans, i.e., houses, villages, cultivated fields, etc., but dwell in places which are not clearly assigned to human activities, and they can also be related to another era. People meet liminal spirits when they cross the threshold from social space and present time to that “in between” which lies beyond “civilisation” and culturally accepted spheres.

3.1 Liminal Spirits: Ambiguous, Dangerous, and Evil Beings

Whereas the *apus*, Pachamama, and the saints can be benign or harmful, depending on human behaviour towards them, these liminal spirits are unhappy and can, therefore, cause illness and death. People meet them when they come close to their space, such as rivers or tombs. Rather than communicating with them, as is done with the *apus* and Pachamama, one tries to avoid them so as not to come to harm, although occasionally offerings are made to placate them (Gow y Condori 1976: 68).

For example, the *sirenas* – not unlike the Western sirens – reside in wet places, under waterfalls or in rivers and attract people with their songs; humans will then be enchanted by them and get lost in an unknown world, fall ill or even die. On occasion musicians will leave their instruments in the *sirenas*' places so that they can be tuned by them. In some folktales the *sirena* is also a helping

spirit.¹⁶ In some communities the *sirena* is equated with the *sagra*, a being related to the shadow-world and the ancestors and sometimes used as a synonym for *supay*; neither of them was traditionally related to evil, but the Devil of Christianity is translated as *supay*.¹⁷ Whilst the *sirena* seems to be of ambiguous character, other spirits are conceived of as purely harmful.

The European *duende*, which can be translated from Spanish as “goblin” or “demon,” was said to infest houses.¹⁸ In its Andean understanding it is the child who died before being baptised. A connection to the Spanish meaning could be that the Andean *duende*, like the European, is a small being set on causing mischief or even major problems.¹⁹ Casaverde Rojas' consultants described the *duendes* they had encountered as small persons who in one case caused the narrator a boil, which could only be healed by a specialist; in the other case, the *duende* loosened the ground causing a landslide (Casaverde Rojas 1970: 176–179; cf. Núñez del Prado Béjar 1970: 94). Like *sirenas*, they are often related to water. I consider their spaces liminal, because they are conceived of as the threshold to the world inside or below, *ukhu pacha*.²⁰

As we have seen, certain European elements are present in some spirits, but others are firmly rooted in Andean belief. The *machu* ancestors reside in house- or tower-like structures, the *gentiles wasis* (ancestor houses) or *chullpas* and can, for example, cause harm to children who play close to them. The wind of the ancestors, *machu wayra* or *suq'a wayra*, can cause illness, and those affected have to be cured by a *paqu* (a healing specialist). One of the illnesses caused by them is called *susto*, “fright,” also

14 Already in early European translations of Christian texts from around A.D. 400, in the concept of the Trinity the Germanic word “Geist,” “spirit,” was used although it had “considerable pre-Christian supernatural significance, meaning the essence of the departed” (Murdoch 2016). The Devil as a fallen angel incorporates the ambiguity of an “evil” spirit (cf. Jung 1972 [1954]: 9). Thus, “spirit” can include both the spirit as liminal being, but also the Holy Spirit as a kind of divine essence. This shows how the concept went through different cultural adaptations and modifications, but spirits in Europe and in the Andes can share liminal, disembodied, and re-embodied attributes. Therefore, the word “spirit” is the most adequate one to be used in this context.

15 Since its coinage by van Gennep in his theory on the rites of transition, liminality has become widely applied in different contexts and is characterised by spatial and temporal dimensions (Thomassen 2009: 16f.).

16 See Casaverde Rojas (1970: 175), Michaud (1970: 13), and Payne (2000: 251–261); in one tale it is made explicit that good spirits appear to good humans whereas the evil ones to bad persons (Payne 2000: 260f.). Cf. Ricard Lanata (2007: 130–135).

17 Cáceres Olazo (1970: 21–25). For a summary of the historical development of the concept see Dedenbach-Salazar Sáenz (2013a: 92–94).

18 Diccionario de Autoridades (1976/III [1732/III]: 347) – the print edition has been consulted.

19 Allen y Albó (1972: 55) document that the Aymara from Achacachi, Bolivia, believe that natural disasters can have their origin in that a child was aborted or died when not yet baptised.

20 Sánchez Garrafa (2006: 261) mentions mountain tops, lakes, and springs as “liminal points” between this world and the world below.

Ukhu pacha is part of a threefold concept which also includes *kay pacha*, “this world (space and time),” and *hanaq pacha*, “the world above” (due to Christian influence equated with heaven) (see Casaverde Rojas 1970: 207–210; cf. Marzal 1996: 85).

known in Spain, which in the Andes has its origin in the theft of the person's soul (*anima*).²¹ Other malignant influence comes from the *suq'a* beings – the male *suq'a machu* and the female *paya machu* – who cause illness due to sexual wrong-doings of the victim.²²

The souls of the dead, *alma*, roam for a long time, but only those who committed incest or another serious crime, appear as *condenados* who can cause illness or death for those who meet them.²³ It is interesting to note that *condenados* often reside in high mountain areas (Fourtané 2015: 119–124) and are, therefore, somehow related to the *apus*; not unlike a possible connection of the *sirenas* with Pachamama – both inhabit liminal spaces. Usually at night and often personified as women, *condenados* are mostly encountered by other sinners.²⁴ It becomes clear that the term is taken from Spanish, and possibly some of the meaning flowed into what must also have been an Andean perception, a

phenomenon which I suggest calling convergence (Dedenbach-Salazar Sáenz 2013b: 162).

However, not all the spirits who are present in dangerous places are manifest in physical beings who appear to a person. Sometimes it is the effect they can have which makes people believe that a dangerous spirit resides in a feature of the natural environment, for example, in the case of the *anchanchu* that caused pastures to be so boggy that animals would die there, or the river, *elemento*, which made a person sick when he fell over in it and thereby “disturbed” it (Gow y Condori 1976: 68, 69).

These examples may suffice to show that the spirits – although not always malignant as such – tend to cause harm when one happens to meet them. Only offerings to the *apus* and Pachamama can undo this damage.

3.2 Deities' Spirits: Protecting and Helping Beings

Apart from the more ambiguous, but sometimes helpful *sirenas* there are only a few purely benign spirits. The *angeles de la guarda*, the “guardian angels,” are children who died when already baptised and protect human beings when they sleep. God makes guardian angels by forming them from clay (Cáceres Olazo 1970: 26). The other benign spirits are small invisible men and women who watch over the vicuñas (wild camelids valued for their wool); they are also called “*inkas*.”²⁵

Other spirits closely related to the *apus* and the healer called *altomisayuq* are the *parajes*. And in order to comprehend their role we have to understand that the Andean concept and practice of healing does not only refer to the curing of illness, but also in more general terms to (re-)establishing the balance between humankind and deities or spirits, which may have become upset by a person's misbehaviour or disobedience of social rules.²⁶ Among the healing specialists, called *paqus*, the *altomisayuq* is the highest and most reliable person to consult because he can talk with the deities.

The text which will give us some information about a healing ritual and the role spiritual helpers play in it is the narration of a man who had witnessed how his father had become seriously ill with

21 Baer et al. (2006: 142); Michaud (1970: 15 f.); Núñez del Prado Béjar (1970: 88 f.).

22 Núñez del Prado Béjar (1970: 83–87). *Machu*, “old man,” *paya*, “old woman”; *suq'aya*- means “to become malignant or harmful” and is derived from the verb *suq'a*-, “to beat” (Lira 1945: 924 f.). The *suq'a pukyu*, “malignant spring spirit,” can cause respiratory disease. Possibly Western and Andean influences come together in the water-related spirits, the mentioned *sirena* and the *suq'a pukyu*.

23 In ancient and contemporary Spain, the soul of a dead person who is in purgatory and has not yet arrived in heaven or hell is called *alma en pena*, whilst the *condenado* is condemned to hell (Fourtané 2015: 76). The Andean *condenado* is more similar to the *alma en pena* because he can be saved (78, 219); sometimes the terms are used interchangeably (88) reflecting a complex syncretism (233).

In the teaching materials in Spanish, Quechua, and Aymara published by the Church in Peru in the 16th century (and which were later reprinted and used for centuries), terms derived from *condenar*, incl. *condenado*, were frequently employed and refer to condemnation for one's evil deeds, based on any kind of sin (Fourtané 2015: 214 f.). It is therefore easy to understand how the word *condenado* and its negative meanings came to be part of the linguistic inventory of the Andes. It has to be pointed out in this context that the translation into Quechua omits the Spanish word and only says that the sinner will suffer forever or go to hell (*Terceiro catecismo* 1985 [1585]: 395 / fol. 24r; 410 / fol. 31v; 741 / fol. 197r). Thus, it seems that the Spanish word was used frequently, and through it Andean and Christian concepts became somehow connected.

The “souls in pain” known in Spain are vagrant souls of the dead who can cause disturbances, but they are not, like those in the Andes, causes of disaster and death for the persons concerned (Erkoreka 1991; Fourtané 2015: 106–109). For how to pacify a *condenado* see Asunta's testimony (Condori Mamani and Quispe Huamán 1996: 121–123).

24 See Gow y Condori (1976: 54 f.); cf. Payne (2000: 199–206, 237–249). See Fourtané's comprehensive study on the *condenado* (2015).

25 See Aranguren Paz (1975: 108). These may be related to the *engaychus*, wild animals or rocks in the form of animals which foster animal fertility (Núñez del Prado Béjar 1970: 90–92).

26 For Andean healers and curing practices see Casaverde Rojas (1970: 211–225); Núñez del Prado Béjar (1970: 104–106); Marzal (1971: 257–266); Garr (1972: 169–171); Gow y Condori (1976: 71–80); Délétroz Favre (1993: 27–35).

a deep-seated cough, a *pulmon resfrio*, “cold of the lungs”²⁷, how his mother consulted several traditional healers; and how he was finally cured.²⁸

The first healer the family consults thinks that the illness is caused by lightning and orders the man’s wife to take a burnt offering to Apu Qanchinisu, the mountain deity. But the man becomes even more sick and his wife consults a second healer, a *paqu*. He rejects the first healer’s interpretation, that “evil air” which comes from the ancestors’ graves must have caused the illness. According to him, what was only a deep-seated cold was treated in the incorrect way and thus the “wrongly twisted thread of the spindle cannot be undone anymore.”²⁹ However, he recommends the family to consult the highest-ranking healer, an *altomisayuq*. It is interesting to see that the *altomisayuq* despises the earlier consulted *paqus* as *layqas*, evil witches. Whilst the first two healers recognise that the mountain deity has to be addressed, it is only the third healer who engages in direct communication with the Apu. He has a canopy prepared in front of the door for the beings called *parajes*, and then he and the family wait for them. After expressing their anger that a witch had been consulted and not the *altomisayuq*, they order the family to buy and use certain remedies. At the end of three healing ceremonies, the *parajes* show by dancing and ringing their little bells³⁰ that they are content with the result.

In the narrator’s words:

Hinaspa, chay paquqa niwarqanku: “Kunallanmi, parajekunata suyayurqusunchis; punkuta allinta tolderawan antipuertarquychis; Diospa partinmantata parajekunata suyaykusunchis, valeykusuntaq: icha hanpi kashanmanraqpas”.

Then the *paqu*-healer said to us: “Now let us attentively wait for the *parajes*; we will put up a good canopy in front of the door; on God’s behalf we will wait for the *parajes*, and we will implore them: maybe there could even still be a remedy.”

Kinsa kaq kutinpiñataq kutimullarqantaq; hinallataq parajenkunapas chayamurqan aswan kusiona.

And he [the healer] returned a third time; then his *parajes* arrived as well, very cheerfully.

Llapaykuta rimaykuwaspanku, vinonta tragon-tawan, kukatawan hallpaykurqan.

Greeting us all, they chewed coca and took wine and liquor.

Chaypitaq kusikuymanta, campanillankuwan lla-panku chay parajekuna tusuykurqanku kusikuymanta, unquppa qhaliyasqanmanta.

And there, joyfully, they all, the *parajes*, danced, with their little bells, very joyfully, because the ill man had recovered.

It is interesting that the narrator talks about the healer’s *parajes*, but also about the *parajes*’ healer.³¹ This shows that the relationship between the healer and his helping spirits is a very close one. At the same time, it may imply that the *parajes* are manifestations of the Apu himself or that they act on his orders.

These *parajekuna* (literally Spanish “place [in the landscape]” plus the Quechua plural marker *-kuna*) are what we may call place spirits. Other documented cases can help us gain a clearer picture of the communicative situation. Thus the *apus* and Pachamama seem to speak through the *altomisayuq* or appear in the shape of certain animals, for example a condor.³² In this case, the healer enlists helping spirits who may be manifestations of the Apu and

27 Heavy colds with complications were (and still are) common causes of illness, be they ascribed to “normal” or “supernatural” factors. In the 1960/70s the most frequent causes of death were “[evil] air,” influenza, and cough (Christinat 1972: 76 f.).

28 The text was recorded by Leslie Hoggarth in the 1960s (Anonymous 2004). The narrator’s parents lived in the province of Canchis, department of Cuzco, in southern Peru.

29 A healer told Délétroz Favre (1993: 29 f.) that a witch can “twist” one’s life: “When we notice that we are ‘twisted’, spun by a witch, nothing we do moves forward” (transl. SDS; “Cuando nos encontramos ‘torcidos’, hilados por un brujo, nada avanza de lo que hacemos”), and a differently twisted thread of wool has to be used to undo this.

30 These remind us of the altar bells which are rung with consecration. Of course, bell-ringing is a universal apotropaic tradition; in Christianity in the Middle Ages bells were also used to deflect harm, e.g., caused by the Devil or natural disasters (Martí 2003: 311 f.).

In an invocation of the *apus* which accompanies an animal fertility offering, one *apu* is addressed as *campanillayoc*, “owner of little bells” (Casaverde Rojas 1970: 146). In an Aymara curing ceremony the healer suspends a little bell from the truss of the ceiling. During the following darkness the bell rings and a noise from the roof can be heard, as if a cat had jumped onto it, and a small voice starts speaking to the ones who are present (Salazar Recio 1972: 94).

31 When quoting their conversation about the remedies which have to be bought, the narrator says: “hinallataq *parajenkunapas* chayamurqan”, “then his [the healer’s] *parajes* arrived as well”; “chayta nispa, *paquntañan rimaykuspa: ...*”, “having said this, *speaking to their paqu*, they [the *parajes*] said: ...”

32 Casaverde Rojas (1970: 214–218); Ricard Lanata (2003: 265, 268); Platt (1997).

help him to communicate with the deity. In a different context, a consultant interviewed by Ricard Lanata says that, in mythical times, they were the *apu* transformed into a human being, and he uses the word *paraje* as a synonym for “mountain”: *Huq parajekuna, chay urqukuna runa kasqaku* (The other *parajes*, those mountains, were people). When Ricard Lanata says to him that the mountains can still nowadays transform themselves into condors in order to enter the *altomisayuq*’s house, the interviewee answers: *Chay parajekunaqa huq kawsaq, ispiritiyuqsiyá kanku. Chayqa tukunkuman* (Those *parajes* are living beings, it is definitely said that they have/own (a) *spirit*. Therefore they may transform themselves) (Ricard Lanata 2003: 265; translation SDS). In an Aymara curing ceremony Salazar Recio describes how the healer “invoked the powerful mountain deities, the mountain deities that protect the house, and the places, to ask them for pardon” (*hacía invocaciones a los achachilas, a los uywiris y a los lugares*³³ para pedirles perdón – Salazar Recio 1972: 90–99; quote p. 92). Here again it becomes evident that the mountain is identified with the *parajes*.

However, there seems to me to be a difference between the transformation of the *Apu* in the mentioned descriptions and the appearance of the *parajes* in our narration. In the cases referred to above it is possible that the healer represents the *Apu*’s voice and words and, in theoretical terms, can therefore be seen as a shaman operating in an altered or unusual state of consciousness and being possessed by a spirit.³⁴ In the case of the *parajes* in our text it is more difficult to understand the spirits as an identification of the *Apu* and the healer as “possessed by the spirit,” because the narrator talks about them as beings that speak and dance, and he uses the narrative past employed for witnessed actions and events. Thus, the healer seems to be an intermediary between the people and the *parajes*, who are the *Apu* or sent by him. However, one should not forget that spirit possession is a social phenomenon rather than a solely personal one and completely different from the experience a Westerner may have, and that what to us may need categorisation, for the people involved in it is the manifestation of the deity in different ways.³⁵

What is clear is that, in contrast to most other spirits I presented above and who are of threatening

and malignant nature, these *parajes* are benevolent and helpful, either intermediaries between the healer and the deity or a manifestation of the deity itself. Thus, what makes the benevolent spirits different from the other ones is that they do not belong to an unhappy person or hover in liminal space or time; rather they are protectors sent by divine beings or even represent them. The *angeles de la guarda* are God’s, the *vicuña*-protecting *inkas* are apparently related to the ancient kings, and the *parajes* to the *Apu*. Therefore, the benevolent spirits are different in their character and relationship to humans and they are identified or at least closely related with divine beings.

4 Andean Religion

4.1 Deities and Spirits

We have seen that most spirits are best avoided. Seemingly without motive they can cause harm, although this is often explainable through the human beings’ inadequate behaviour when they have, for example, transgressed certain taboos or invaded their space. The *apus* and Pachamama are different from these spirits in their dimension of power and the intentional and direct communication humans have with them. Moreover, the spirits are hardly ever addressed in offerings and prayers, but the deities and Pachamama are asked to undo the harm the spirits may have caused. Whilst the deities are related to prominent features of nature and landscape and to social groups, the liminal spirits are linked to particular features of the land or to certain individuals, for instance, the *sirena* to a river and the *condenado* and the *duende* to dead persons. However, some spirits have a connection to the deities, i.e., the space they inhabit is connected to that of the divine beings: Pachamama is linked to water and humid places, and so are the *sirenas*; the *apus* and minor mountains, the *awkis*, evoke the ancestors called *awki* (Lira 1945: 72), and the *suq’a* spirits seem to be linked to those.

Due to their power, which is conceived of as larger than that of the Christian almighty God in orthodox Christianity, the *apus* and Pachamama are often blended with saints or at least integrate certain aspects of them in their behaviour: they are deities who influence human personal and social life.

The spirits, on the other hand, are mostly dangerous liminal beings or in some cases they are benevolent: they are forces which influence and determine human life. They are related to the deities because the dangerous ones can be pacified when

33 Spanish *lugar* is a synonym for *paraje*. For the Aymara terminology see van den Berg (1985: 11, 198).

34 Crapanzano (1987: 12); see Platt’s interpretation (1997: 200 f.).

35 Crapanzano (1987: 14); Salazar Recio (1972: 96–99) for the importance of the family in the curing session in the Andes.

the religious specialist calls on higher beings, and the benevolent ones assist the divine powers. They are spirits in the sense that they are manifest either as a “breathlike disembodied” presence or they are re-embodied in physical beings, such as a white-clad *condenado* woman or a *duende* in the shape of a small person.

What deities and spirits have in common is the harm they can cause to human beings. They affect a person or society in the form of illness, misfortune, death, or disaster. The underlying cause can be, in case of the deities, a person’s carelessness or lack of respect; in case of the spirits transgressing taboos or committing crimes. What has to be done in almost any case in order to mitigate these effects and restore personal wellbeing or social balance is the communication with Pachamama or the *apus*, bringing them offerings.

4.2 Blending Words – Blending Cultural Practices?

Whilst it is obvious that the century-long cultural blending and hybridity is responsible for amalgamations on the conceptual as well as expressive level, it is impossible to find out the exact underlying historical processes. Their complexity is reflected in the language used. In most cases, a Spanish term does not necessarily imply a Christian meaning or may only remind us of a Western origin, as is the case, for example, in the names for the spirits called *duende* or *condenado*: underlying Christian meanings were blended with Andean ones and with Spanish regional folk meanings, giving an Andean concept a Spanish name (which may vary in different places).

In his analysis of the southern Peruvian terms for rituals Albó suggests different explanations for the usage of Spanish words; one is a possible “camouflage” which may help to explain these phenomena (Albó 1996: esp. p. 270). This, which I would even call subversion (Dedenbach-Salazar Sáenz 2013a: chap. 5.5), may have been a reaction in colonial times when the extirpation of idolatry campaigns persecuted and prohibited the practice of the indigenous faith (Gareis 1999; Mills 1997). As seen in the above examples, the Andean population adapted Spanish terms to an essentially native phenomenon, or indigenous terms were filled with Christian meanings, probably first by the missionaries who tried to convert the indigenous people by using their native languages. Consequently, the incorporation of Christian phenomena into the Andean faith is found in practices, such as dances, and in theological concepts, for example, Pachamama as a Trin-

ity of “Pacha Tirra, Pacha Ñusta, Pacha Virgen”³⁶, manifesting herself not only as a multiple deity but also as incorporating Andean, Inca, and Spanish time. The result is a specific Andean religious terminology which reflects the presence of both beliefs. However, although some phenomena have received Christian denominations, in terms of their meaning and significance they remain essentially Andean. Thus, in the case of the deities and Pachamama, there is an inclusion of Christian saints into the Andean cosmological conception. The *condenado* is a life-threatening Andean dead person rather than a soul going through purgatory. In very few cases the Catholic necessity to translate a Christian concept has led to a change in the meaning of the Andean one, for example, *supay* has become Devil. It also occurs that Christian concepts, like that of the *angel de la guarda*, acquire features where they become helping spirits of the deity. The majority of phenomena, however, have either kept their native denomination (like the ancestor *machu* spirits) or have superimposed a Spanish term on what has remained an Andean concept, as we can see in the case of the *parajes* whose only relation to Christianity is their name, possibly the bells they ring and the fact that the healer calls on them “on behalf of God” (*Diospa partenmanta*),³⁷ but on the whole the healing ritual is close to a shamanic one.³⁸ As part of the communication with the Apu and “his” *parajes* or with Pachamama, the system of healing rituals has essentially remained indigenous.

In all cases, these concepts are testimony of several hundred years of contact with Christian religion. Sometimes orthodox belief was incorporated in a concept and blended with different stories, as with the mentioned guardian angels. More often, though, it must have been the influences of popular culture brought to the natives by Spanish merchants, soldiers, or barbers – “simple” folk³⁹ who

36 Gow y Condori (1976: 10); Quechua *pacha*, “world,” *ñusta*, “Inca princess”; Spanish loans *tirra*, “tierra,” “earth,” *virgen*, “virgin.”

37 This reminds us of Marzal’s referral to the *altomisayuy* being struck by lightning on behalf of God (1971: 258).

38 See a summary of shamanism by Eliade (1987). Platt (1997: 202 f., 224) shows how in the case of the session he witnessed the European form of legal and administrative organisation has been carried into what he terms the “shamanic” session.

39 Although for administrative (and ideological) reasons the Spaniards established a “republic of the Indians” and another “republic of the Spaniards,” there were many contact points between the indigenous people and the colonisers. These were especially evident in labour and economic relations; thus, the Spanish created the *encomienda* (indigenous workforce “entrusted” to a Spaniard) or the *repartimiento de bienes* (the forced distribution of goods) (cf. Andrien 2001), and numerous documents give details about the kind of mostly

almost certainly believed in phenomena which the Church called superstition (Castañega 1946 [1529]; Ciruelo 1978 [1540]).

With respect to the deities, the system of reciprocity and complementarity has been maintained until the present: humans interact with the deities and expect that these reciprocate in order to keep or re-establish balance.

As far as some spirits are concerned, it is possible that their liminal and mostly dangerous character (only few are ambiguous like the deities) is due to the fact, that at least some of them seem to be of European origin. They have intruded into the Andean way of communication, but not become an integral part of its reciprocity. Like the Europeans they are incalculable outsiders who have the power to cause damage when one does not take care.⁴⁰ On the other hand, the place spirits have only received their name from Spanish, but remain closely associated with the indigenous healers and the *apus*.

It is therefore evident that on the whole – although Christian beings or certain aspects of them have been integrated into Andean beliefs and practices – the basic tenets of the latter are still valid and show the integrative power they continue to have after almost 500 years of culture contact.

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exploitative contact. Among the sources are, for example, the detailed documentation of inspections carried out for tax purposes (e.g., the 1567 *Visita hecha a la provincia de Chucuito*, 1964) and the accusations raised by the indigenous chronicler Felipe Guaman Poma de Ayala in 1615/16 (2001–04) about the colonisers (e.g., “the itinerant Spaniards on the royal road” [in chap. 21], “the chapter of the trustees of Indians, or encomenderos” [chap. 22], and “the chapter of censure, reprimand, and satirical dialogues” [chap. 26] – Guaman Poma de Ayala 2001–04).

- 40 The actions of other harmful beings refer explicitly to non-Andean malignant influence, for example, the *nak'aq*, the “slaughterer” (also *wirachunchu*, *pishtaco*; *kharisiri*, *kharikhari* in Aymara), sucks the bodyfat from a person and is often a foreigner or missionary (Michaud 1970: 15; Núñez del Prado Béjar 1970: 89f.; Briggs 1994) and has been interpreted as the “‘racialized’ outsider” (Canessa 2000: 705).

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