Chapter 5
The Antlers of a Trilemma: Rediscovering Andean Sacred Sites

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Abstract The zoomorphic metaphor of deer anatomy explains Andean identity as a coupled environmental system. This is a result of mystic realism or magic pragmatism, which often obscures participation of the local cultures of the Andes cordillera, particularly in (re)defining their Andean self with strong biocultural anchors. Just like the antlers, the trilemma of Andean identity exemplifies the need for a deeper understanding of the stewardship of ecological processes that has been molded to fit geographical and cultural demands of ancestral societies. Quechua traditional ecological knowledge serves as guiding principles to define and implement sacred sites in the region that cherishes its heritage landscapes. (*Kichwa* is the phonetic writing of 'Quechua' (in Peru) or 'Quichua' (in Ecuador, Bolivia, Chile, and Argentina), the language of the Andean people (*runa simi*). I avoid the hegemony of Castilianized words, as I support the recovery of local identity and the invigoration of vernacular culture, including the use of the non-written language of the *Inka.* In this text, I use *italics* to highlight the phonetic *Kichwa* alphabet, while Spanish terms appear inside single quotation marks for emphasis. Scientific names are also italicized.) The relationship of the triangular representation of cultural identity, associated with the binary concept of opposite values or *Yanantin*, and the driver that accentuates spiritual dimension or *Masintin*, the development of ritualized practices observing natural phenomena creates the wholeness among Andeanity, Andeaness, and Andeanitude. By explaining the syncretism observed in contemporary societies of the Andes Mountains, the creation, (re)creation and (pro)creation of harmonious implications between people and the environment are realized. Finally, to assess actual and potential contributions of the discourse in the sacred narrative of biodiversity conservation for Earth Stewardship, several sacred sites exemplify the application of the new trend for biocultural heritage as the driver for cultural landscape management and sustainability scenarios in the Andes.

Keywords Andes • Heritage landscapes • Identity • Sarmiento's trilemma • Sacred site conservation • Traditional ecological knowledge

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"*mallki, wak'a, apukuna, pakarina, machay, ushnu, tumi, waman, waylaka, yanantin, tinku, takanakuy, masintin, warachikuy, raymi, chakana, wiphala, tupak.*

Too much to say, to few words to use. I rather vow to silence and meditate…"

Don Segundo, *Utawalu runa yachak* (2013)

5.1 Introduction

Much has been said about Andean identity linked to the mixture of Native and non-Native members inhabiting one of the longest stretch of mountainous landscapes in the world, as if the appropriation of space warrants a homogenization of their many cultural manifestations through a plethora of linguistic, artistic, social, economic, ecological, and belief systems (Bordsdorf and Stadel 2014). There is, of course, primacy in linking environmental ethics with biodiversity conservation in indigenous societies as a way to reverse planetary degradation (Chapin et al. 2011; Rozzi et al. 2012). Indeed, many of the original people of the Americas have been portrayed as custodians of one of the richest hotspots of life in the planet. This requires a long-term commitment to Earth Stewardship grafted onto the mountain landscapes of South America (Rozzi 2012). I posit that Andean identities should be constructed, represented, claimed, and contested with care, using different lenses. One way to aid in building identity discourses is offered by the incorporation of traditional ecological knowledge (TEK) in the understanding of landscape dynamics, focusing on the intersection of nature, science, politics, and religion (Gudynas 2011). This approach makes explicit the sacred geographies of Andean peoples, and both will inform and contest argumentation towards the application of a bodily metaphor (Bastien 1978). This metaphor uses a shamanic symbol, the 'venado' or whitetail deer of the Andes (*Odocoyleus virginianus tropicalis*), one of forty subspecies listed for the Virginia deer, that is often found in mountain landscapes of Colombian, Ecuadorian, and Peruvian tropandean ecoregions. Just like the 'tarugo' (*Hippocamelus antisensis*) of the Central Andes or the 'huemul' (*Hippocamelus bisulcus*) of the Southern Andes, whose bucks or stags exhibit pointed horns that, on a yearly basis, bifurcate or trifurcate according to age, the 'venado' provides the analogy of its antlers as representing dendritic patterns borne of rhizomic processes of yearly renewal and constancy. The metaphor of deer antlers helps to understand how one unit of entity—such as the Andes—could encapsulate the notion of three variant components—such as Andeanity, Andeaness and Andeanitude, in the renewal cycle of the trilogy that explain 'the Andean' based on body, mind, and spirit (Sarmiento 2013a). The so-called Sarmiento's trilemma fusses three streams of identity in one (Fig. 5.1). It is used to accentuate the incorporation of the sacred into the realization of knowledge and practices of biocultural heritage worth protecting for sustainability scenarios (Sarmiento 2012). In this chapter I seek to engage coupled dynamics of socio-ecological systems (SES) methods with reified variants of fluid ethnic identities (*sensu* Cánepa 2008) that collectively represent the sacred geographies of the Andes, with special emphasis on the revival of Amerindian

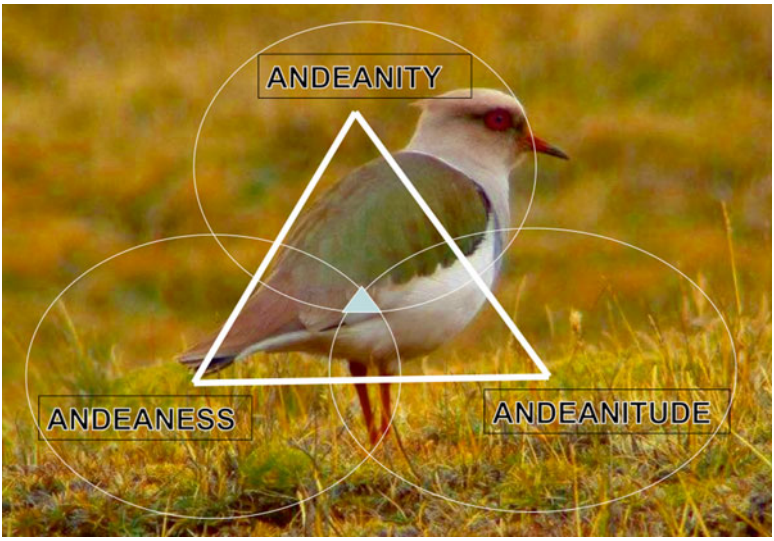

Fig. 5.1 Sarmiento's Trilemma is the representation of the bodily metaphor of Body, Mind, and Spirit. It is applied to understanding Andean identity by the dynamic interaction of Yanantin, the complementary dualism of the physical and the psychological, with the influence of Masantin, the enthusiastic synergy of the spiritual. These interactions determine that Andean identity be negotiated between *Andeanity* for physical, *Andeaness* for psychological, and *Andeanitude* for spiritual realms. The background image depicts the Andean lapwing (*Vanellus resplendes*), an endemic Andean species that carries an intricate biocultural heritage (Photo: Fausto Sarmiento)

traditions and the incorporation of sacred sites conservation concerned with heritage cultural landscapes (Cachiguango et al. 2001; Sarmiento 2013b).

Cultural landscape narratives reflect increased participation of local and indigenous communities associated with a protected area of national or international importance, particularly considered emblematic as world heritage sites for listing within the Heritage Convention (Rössler 2006). Landscape itself is a term increasingly used to describe a manageable unit of the SES that integrates art, science, economy, religion, and philosophy into a concrete, tangible element of regional planning and sustainable development. The incidence of ecology on society and vice-versa (Odum and Sarmiento 1998) has prompted a (re)formulation of conservation territories and a (re)conceptualization of political ecology as the explanatory of farmscape transformation in the larger cordillera of the Andes. This about-face of nature/culture divide has, in reality, helped to include landscape and inscape in the arsenal of deep ecologists at the end of the twentieth century (Naess 1995) and landscape ecologists at the beginning of the twenty-first century (Naveh et al. 2002). Moreover, it is part of the lingo of today's environmental ethicists (Rozzi 2013).

5.2 Detaching Deer Discourses

> … the deer travels around the range looking for food…The snow is deep but he goes from place to place singing. They sing all things in the song; name every place he stops, everything that he eats…. (Isabel Kelly 1965, p. 67)

The deer continues to be an animal of multiple uses in the Andes, not only for its venison for food and hides for clothing provided as material goods, but also for the mythology associated with the characteristic behaviors of the animal, with ethograms that motivate ethnoecological insight. In Mesoamerican cultures, a deer day had been included in the calendar, and throughout the Andes, a deer dance is typically associated with the fertility and vivacity of young lovers (Harrison 1989). Bingham and Roberts (2010) point to the swiftness of the deer, as well as to its shy and aloof nature, to connect the animal with visualization of hallucinogenic revelations in shamanistic practices of cleansing. Often when in concentration or trance, respectively, most erudite 'maestros' (*amautakuna*) or teachers of *Pisak,* near *Kutsku* in Peru, and wise 'curanderos' or medicine men and women (*yachaqkuna*) of the *Iluman* region of the *Imbabura* watershed in Ecuador, would use the bodily metaphor of bucks while explaining the renewal cycle of life (*pachakutic*) or would mimic the witty nature of stags while performing ceremonial cleansing. The condition of being quick and somewhat apart from the scene when needed is attributed to the essence of a buck's behavior revered in ritualized bathing with wild plants and flowers. Some *Yachak* still retain the traditional antler sign hanging by the doorway, but most keep the seeds of the deer's eye climbing shrub (*Mucuna pruriens*), along with obsidian, candles, liquor, and cigarettes, readily available on their tool tables for conjuring the future.

Behavior mimicry for the layperson is only the visible manifestation of the common symbolism of the deer. The fact that mature antlers from large stags are cherished for the deeper symbolism of the triad that belongs to the same entity, that keeps renewing itself year after year, is important to the initiated. It represents a thought closely related to the Catholic view of henotheism, whereby the holy trinity associates three different gods into one (the bodily lamb, Christ; the idea, Father; and the spirit, the Holy Ghost). This is interpreted as an approximation to much older monolatry philosophies from Egyptian and Sumerian faiths that linked this tripartite entity to the pyramidal shape with a resplendent eye to illuminate not only the mental map, but also the physical landscape and the intimate corners of the soul.

Andeanists (Urton 1988; Webb 2012) believe that traditional Andean societies possibly have been influenced by bilatry, represented by the *Inka* mythology of *Yanantin*: the belief of complementary dualism, now conceived as binaries of simple thought, such as light/darkness, male/female, inner/outer, in/out or good/bad, as the expression of Andean harmony (Platt 1986). Furthermore, in seeking to harmonize opposites, the notion of *Masintin* is key to understanding that the process of finding harmony is important in making the complementary dualism work. Imperfect relations lack *Masintin*; despite *Yanantin* being clearly present, the difficulty to create, (re)create or (pro)create harmonically, makes it necessary to have *Masintin,* so the pairs become coupled in a perfect fit or *Ayni* (Webb 2012).

Geographers and other Andeanist scholars have approached religion as causality of Andean identity and also have pointed to the important contribution of miscegenation and syncretic rites (Cachiguango et al. 2001; Borsdorf, In Press). Anthropologists of different disciplinary lineages (Murra et al. 1986) have explored the notion that the ability to pair opposites requires admitting the presence of in-betweens. A few references exist to this Andean trait from the material world. The *Waylaka* is half man, half woman. *Waylaka* represents more than the ability of a transvestite to dress like a *Chinchiru* woman who behaves like a strong young male from the *Kutsku* area, because *Waylaka* stumbles upon the plaza waving a white flag on a pole and places it on top of a *mujun*, a pile of dirt setting the boundaries of the in-betweens. Another important example comes from the *mallki*, the mummified body of ancestors that are kept in people's dwellings. They are in-between the dead and the alive, forming a triad that explains the Andean philosophy of space and time (*pacha*), having the past in front (where it can be seen) and the future behind (where it cannot be seen). The mummy (*mallki)* is the personification of animistic guidance given from the other world to followers in this one. For example, former emperors (*Sapa Inka*) were always mummified and kept in the main temple of the capital city (*kurikancha*) or in the most important places (*wak'a*) located on mountaintops, on top of pyramidal structures (*ushnu*), or on the main corner of fortress buildings (*machay*), often in trapezoidal niches in the wall, emulating the shape of *Inka* windows. On ceremonial mountain festival days, these mummies were paraded in the streets for prayers and other celebrations around Andean townships. When foreigners arrived, they were taken to the 'room of knowledge' or *rixsiwasi*, with the goal of consulting the *mallki* who became an oracle, foretelling the reaction of the community towards the newcomers. Often decorated with jewelry, fine clothing, pottery full of fermented corn drink (*chicha*), and food grains (*tarwi, kinwa*), the decorated *mallki* was placed in the most important room of the house (*pacarina)*. This is a place of adoration and reverence, where heirlooms and cherished llama figurines, feathers, and other elements considered of value for the afterlife, such as coca leaves (*kuka*) and lime, are guarded. Having the in-betweens, therefore, becomes a fact of life, just like zombie categories that are taken from time to time as needed to fit current paradigms of development (Gudynas 2011). Thus, the ability to break the dualism by having a spiritual in-between, helped to translate the Catholic tradition of the sacred Trinity to understanding the essence of being Andean, reflecting a negotiation between the body and the mind as *Yanantin*, negotiated by the spirit as *Masintin* (Webb 2013). For instance, in colonial times, religious processions by Catholic priests and non-native pious parishioners, gained popularity and fervor amongst the natives; their tradition of parading mummies, made religious processions an important bridge of syncretism. Non-natives and natives alike walked the streets chanting to Roman Catholic gods, saints, and colonial statues of the virgin Mary, while the deeper connection was observed by the indigenes in the longing for their Andean oracles *mallki, pachamama,* and *intitayta* with substitute representations of *Masintin* expressed in statues or paintings of the 'Escuela Quiteña' taken from the altars onto the streets (Vásquez 1998).

Effective pairing of material elements requires the acceptance of immaterial world forces that explain the ultimate pairing process. I posit here that syncretism has pushed the idea of the Trinity further into the triad created by the poles of *Yanantin* with the catalysis of *Masintin,* and that the effective interweaving of Catholic and pagan imageries of saints and semi-gods reflect syncretism in objects of adoration. I also argue that this attribute of a spiritual dimension bringing coalescence to dualism also explains the easiness of imbuing Catholic myth into the Andean cosmological vision of *Masintin* and the facility with which thousands of indigenous souls were easily converted into the Catholic faith. Thus far, it has been problematic to link the exotic white dove (*Streptopelia risoria)* or the white lamb (*Ovis aries*) as symbols of the Holy Spirit to the Andean worldview. The substitution of the lamb by the white alpaca (*vicugna pacos*) conveyed a strong sense of classism, because white alpacas were solely owned by the royal class or 'orejones' of the *Inka* elite and were used exclusively by the higher courtesans; nevertheless, it was easy to relate the Holy Spirit to the deer. Despite the fact that animistic religions have tended to confer human qualities to animal behaviors, the deconstruction of deer discourses makes it possible to understand the symbolism of the antlers of 'venado' (*Odocoyleus virginianus tropicalis*), the feet of the mule deer or *suchi* (*Masama rufina*), the cries of the dwarf deer or *pudu* (*Pudu mephistopheles*), the white puff of the flagging deer's tail, the seeds of the deer's eye shrub, and the fetuses of *llamas* (*Lama glama*), as evocative of *Masintin*; hence, the spiritual dimension. Thus, this trifecta allows the *Yanantin* dilemma of opposites between mind and body to be interpreted not only dialectically, but also with the triangular Sarmiento's trilemma that fits the trialectic of Andean identity making.

The solving of the trilemma requires that either antagonistic dualism of war (*takanakuy*) or complementary dualism of dance (*tinkuy*) be experienced (Webb 2013); but these would not be successful without the *Masintin* that prompts the trifecta. When the appropriate balance is found, peaceful coexistence or harmony between opposites is often called *Ayni*, or the 'Andean Way.' It is very important to begin work or other important tasks with a 'despacho' ceremony or *Yachay*, a kind of blessing of offerings (*pagapu*) when starting a job, to bring the female (*pachamama*) and the male (*intitayta*) into harmony. If the *ayni* is achieved in personal life, the realization of a balanced existence of the entire family (*kawsay*) is plausible. However if the entire *Ayllu,* or even the whole nation, reaches *Ayni* in all important facets of life, then the greater good life (*Sumak Kawsay*) is achieved. Current narratives of sustainable development include the ideography of *sumak kawsay* as the target of progress, the way to achieve the 'Buen Vivir' into a sustainable future (Gudynas and Acosta 2012).

5.3 Mountain Myths

> All mountain landscapes hold stories: the ones we read, the ones we dream, and the ones we create. (Michael Kennedy 2010, p. 1)

There are several elements that form part of the Andean worldview. Most of them are built from the ancestral chaos that was ordered by *Wairakucha*, the most

important figure of the Andean pantheon. It was 'Viracocha' who created the sun (*inti*) venerated by the *Inka* as the primordial source of energy, the moon (*killa*) and the stars (*chaska*). In another vein, the *Wairakucha*, translated as the 'murmur of the water', or the 'sacred breath' of the sea, lake or spring, reaches the mountain air that mixes elements of the environment in their adiabatic forcing, in an orderly sequence to end chaos between fire, earth, water, and air (Kusch 1962). Northern Chilean folk often associate the images of clouds shrouding the denudated slopes of the Atacama (*Kamancha'ka*) as the perpetual dialogue of the elements, as if the murmur of the water keeps the 'Lomas' vegetation of the dry coastal ecosystems working in harmony. The upward flow of thermal winds, for instance, is often a good omen that will allow the coming of iconic birds, such as *kundur (Vultur gryphus), warru (Geranoaetus melanoleucus),* and *karak'ara (Phalcoboenus carunculatus),* three of the most important mystic avian epic semigods. This is contrary to the bad omen of katabatic, downslope winds that bring shrouding clouds rushing into the brooks, ravines, or even valleys during the night, allowing evil creatures (*tutasupay, sacharuna* or *macha'chig*) to wander around the mountains.

Another component of the Andean cosmological vision relates to the effect of incoming rainfall and the accompanying lightning strikes from the cumulous clouds of the tropical circulation. I have argued elsewhere (Sarmiento 2002) that the lack of scientific reference to natural fire in the Andes is striking, and possibly explained by the fact that the majority of electrical storms are cloud-to-cloud. However, the presence of fulgurite on some mountain tops evidence that cloud-to-ground episodes are indeed possible. Yet, no reported natural fire from a lightning bolt (*illap'u*) hitting the forest exists, hence my argument for the anthropogenic driver of landscape change in the highlands remains (Sarmiento 2000). Newcomers to a mountain site are often exposed to unexpected rain, landslide, flood, or equipment failure if they have not been harmonized with *pagapu,* the mountain god. To avoid upsetting this telluric force of the *Apu*, it is advisable to maintain a respectful acceptance of this bad luck as a mystic chastisement (*Yahshish'ka*) for not having observed the ritual.

The concept of gold ore (*kuri*) as the 'sweat of the sun' reflects the hard work required for getting the mineral from placers and other mining sites. In the same vein, the concept of silver ore (*kulk'i*) as the 'tears of the moon' found in deep caves and other mining sites of the mountains (*kuya*), has been utilized as a metaphor for Andean identity, due to the fact that mineral richness was the motivating factor of European colonization of the region that caused much effort and pain (sweat and tears) on the part of the indigenes (Pizzey 1988).

In the Andes, the idea of the existence of sacred sites has been articulated best by the presence of elements associated with origins, mainly mountains (*urku*), water (*kucha*), or caves (*machay*). The spirit of the mountain (*apu*) requires payments or offerings to calm risks or to pacify conflicts: this occurs regularly, such as by the suicidal phenomenon of the Andean lapwings (*Vanellus resplendens*) diving into some lakes, or the rare nesting of the Andean hillstar hummingbirds (*Oreotrochilus estella*) inside some caves; these are considered to be offerings to *Katekil* (lake god) or *Micakil* (cave god). However, in extreme cases extemporaneous offerings (*kayay*) are required; these include positioning household figurines into a room of the house that ritually faces the dawn (*pakari*). These also include building structures

associated with the solstice/equinox cycles. Their purpose is to capture the influence of the sun (*intiwatu*) on the apex of the ceremonial buildings (*inkapirka*), or on the secluded plaza within the stone forts (*pukara*) that protected isolated villages or resting settlements (*tambu*) along the network of trails (*chakiñan*), wider roads (*chaupiñan*), and more formal paved ways to market places (*katuñan*), or the long imperial *Inka* mountain highway (*kapakñan*), reportedly crossing from southern Colombia to Central Western Argentina (Sarmiento 2003; Sarmiento and Hidalgo 1999).

High impact natural events, such as earthquakes, volcanic eruptions, or episodic drought resulting in heavy damage or imminent mortal danger, required extraordinary offerings (*wakayay*) to placate divine wrath, including animal sacrifices, or even human payments of female child priestesses who were trained from an early age for this very purpose (*kapakucha*). Infanticide by child sacrifice is a widespread practice dating from antiquity, not only in the Andes, but also in Mesoamerican and Caribbean cultures. Child sacrifice, as illustrated by 'Juanita'—the ice maiden found on top of Mt. Ampato, who was killed with a blow to the head and left on the summit, was restricted to being a major offering to the mountain spirits (Ceruti, in press). Other ice maidens now have been discovered, along with remnants of traditional offerings of *inka* mummies and sacred figurines, textiles, feathers, and pottery (*kapakuchina*), on top of sacred mountains along the cordillera.

5.4 Telluric Tutelage

> The souls of the ancestors come to dwell on their summits, and people fear the volcanic eruptions, storms, and droughts with which the mountain spirits punish ritual omissions and transgressions. (Constanza Ceruti In press)

As a representation of the spirit of the mountain that allows elemental harmony, the use of mountain spirits permits the notion of *Apu* as the telluric presence that guards the fate of the people living in their vicinity. A mountain could become an *Apu* exerting esoteric influence on each of the different sites, such as the *Utawalu* and the *Kayampi,* both of which are *Kichwa* ethnic groups living on different slopes of Mt. Imbabura, and settled on opposite shores of *Imbakucha* lake in Ecuador (Sarmiento et al. 2008). *Apu* is the god of safety, the protector of the kinship (*ayllu*), or the guardian of the good fortune of the valley's inhabitants. Each mountain edifice (*urku*) is represented by specific textiles woven as belts (*watu*), with pictograms of the main characteristic of the area, i.e., figures of animals, plants, or landscape features, a vivid tradition still kept by the women of *Chinchiru* and around the different villages of *Pisak*, the sacred valley of the *Inka*. The members of the *Ayllu* are compelled to use the same design in clothing and garb, such as the hat worn by young walkers (*chullu*) on mountain hikes, or the hat worn by senior officials or married women (*k'umpu*) to the market place, plaza festivities, and for bartering (*tiangix*), or the hat worn by single young women (*iñaka*) as a flat cover on their heads signaling their prompt initiation into adulthood. With the influence of the

modern world, even fedora hats are now used as cultural markers for some groups that show a much more urbanized flair and networking abilities, such as the market-oriented (*mindala*), globe-troting 'Otavalos' (*Utawalukuna*) of northern Ecuador. However, a more elaborated physical ritual is the initiation rite of young males (*warachicuy*) that includes an exuberant display of red and golden fabrics for shorts (*wara*) and colorful coats (*kushma*). Several guardian mountains in the region (*apukuna*) can be taken as members of the pantheon where a sacral feature, or more importantly, sacred mountains, are located, such as Mt. Ausangate in Peru, surrounded by other lesser mountains in the range (Sallnow 1987). Ritual processions to the mountain with offerings to placate maladies or to stimulate fortune are observed yearly during the *Kyllur Rit'i* festival in the *Sinakara* valley of Peru, coinciding with the Catholic observance of 'Corpus Christi' every June (Randall 1987). The pilgrims, dressed as masked parishioners, perform either as trickster clowns or policemen (*ukuku* or *chapa*), with other pilgrims performing as old settlers or hill keepers (*machula* or *ñaupa machu*), form long lines ascending to the glaciers. There they pray, sing, dance, drink, and play. In the past, they used to fight; however, the Catholic Church banned this fighting practice decades ago. Many pilgrims also break chunks of ice to bring the 'holy water' to their families in the valley floor (Ceruti and Reinhard 2005).

The mountain air (*wairaurku*), as opposed to the murmur of the water (*wairakucha*), could become temperamental and influence the people of Andean valleys in a different fashion. Sometimes the good spirit (*tin*) could blow warm spells that make people sick with hot disease cured by the *yachak* with cold drinks and showers. Other times, the bad spirit (*xiagra*) could blow cold spells that make people sick with chills that are cured with hot infusions or direct blows of fire from the mouth of the *yachak*, along with insults and beatings with stinging nettle, herbs and, shrubs that will return warmth to the patient. Here, the antlers are used ritually to pinch the patient's back with their tips or knocking the patient's legs with the antler's trunk, in order to counter the effects of either *tin* or *xiagra.* Sometimes, unwanted pregnancies are blamed on the diabolic mountain spirit (*supay*), thought to be witty and playful like a fawn or a small doe, or some immaterial presence, such as the rainbow (*kuychi*) or the groundwater seepage (*macha'chig*) in cloud forest areas (*sacha*) where the deer hides before going to the highland grasslands (*jallka*) and cold, windy meadows (*sallka*).

The antlers also were used to represent the shifting of day and night along an axis of stars that readily can be seen along the milky-way in the clear skies above the drier plains of the *Puna* region. This is the opposite of the cloudy skies of the shrouded, fog-ridden slopes of the *Paramo* region. This constant rain (*para*) and drizzle (*garwa*) explain the *Paramuna* of moist mountains on the northern ranges. Again, crepuscular periods were considered as in-betweens for light and darkness *Yanantin,* hence, important rituals took place in ceremonial centers at dusk or dawn, as it is exemplified by the *Utawalu runakuna's* initiation rites in the *Piguchi* waterfall of Ecuador, or the mythical replenishment of cold mountain water into the sacred vase (*puyñu*), and more mundane domestic cups (*pilchi*), at the ceremonial baths of *Kundurmachay*, near the *Saksawaman* ruins.

5.5 Recent Ruins Rediscovery

> The time has come for the people from outside to understand, without wrongful translations, what is our view of the territory and why the violations to our Law of Origin are so serious. (Amado Villafaña 2009, p. 1)

Throughout the Andean realm, archaeologists increasingly are finding sites deemed to be mountain ceremonial centers. Hidden underneath a cloth of montane forests or covered by layers of pumice or volcanic ash, these sites were considered simply ruins from the perspective of the Western scientists who could not fathom the existence of major monumental architecture in areas so deep into the montane tropical cloud forest ecosystem. Perhaps because of the Western nature-culture dichotomy, the shift from an ecocentric preservation paradigm towards a new biocultural conservation practice, requires a (re)reading of the landscape of ruins.

For many indigenous groups in the Andes, from the northern tropics to the southern (sub)antarctic, reifying abandoned 'rock piles' as manifestations of ceremonial places, serves to (re)invigorate the identity of indigenes by (re)creating the notion of the "sacredness" of these sites. In the northern Andes, in the cloud forest belt of the Tairona National Park in northern Colombia, the ruins of the lost city have been (re) stored under the tutelage of the Kággaba -*Kogui* elders, who along with three other indigenous nations (Wiwa -*Arzario*, Wˆntuka -*Arwaco* and Kaku' chucwa -*Kankuamo*), referred to from colonial times as 'Tayrona'. These groups have inherited the Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta territory, now officially recognized as a national park and indigenous reserve or 'resguardo'. The discovery of the 'Ciudad Perdida' ruins have (re)vived the identity of the *Kogui* to the point that they have become the guardians of the 'sacred city' where the older brothers and the spirit of the mountain endures (OGT 2009).

Ecuadorian sacred sites are also experiencing (re)newed protagonism, such as the ruins on the summit of 'Catequilla' hill in the middle of the world, protected by the forts of *Rumikuchu* and of *Nibli,* along the *Wayllabamba* river gorge. Despite ancient rituals to the shade-less presence of the equator, marked by ancestral solar-tracker wells that had allowed ritualized practices honoring the sun, many of today's practitioners of New-Age philosophy climb, as on a pilgrimage, to the forgotten hilltop, now considered as sacred site, in order to offer prayers for equilibrium, harmony, and peace. The same process is observed in the province of Cañar, where the ruins of Cojitambo, near Azogues, have drawn crowds of New Age believers in the mystic power of gold, quartz crystals, and grains of mercury, and who firmly believe in magnetic forces congruent with the tall stone wall of the north face of the outcrop and consider *Kuritambu* a sacred site of the *Kañary* nation. Also, in the northern province of *Imbabura*, ritualized respect for the sacred tree (*pinllu*) of the *Utawalu runakuna* or 'lechero' (*Euphorbia laurifolia)*, is practiced above the fort (*pukara*) of Reyloma (Fig. 5.2). The white sap exuded from the tree is believed to have healing properties, thus making this place one of the most hallowed indigenous sites of Ecuador (Sarmiento et al. 2008). These rites or *pagapu,* are associated with the

Fig. 5.2 The sacred tree of the *Utawalu runakuna* is an Euphorbiacea (*Euphorbia laurifolia*), known in Spanish as *lechero* and in Kichwa as *Pinllu*. Associated with the bodily fluids of reproduction in humans, the white latex is ceremoniously collected and used in medicinal applications. Connected with the fertility of the group, it receives the pagapu of byproducts of birth or even fetuses that are respectfully buried in the soil around it. It also receives, as payments by lovers, coins pressed onto its bark for prayers and wishes for good relations and prolific marriages. It is revered on top of the man-made fortress or *Pukara of Reyloma*, literally the hill of the king. Often referred to as *Yayitu* or *Taitiku*, it is the point of convergence of telluric forces of the *Imbakucha* watershed, being the highest point between the two tall mountains that frame the Otavalo-Cotacachi territory, between the male or *Taita Imbabura* volcano and the female or *Mama Kutakachi* volcano (Photo: Fausto Sarmiento)

fertility of newly weds, but also can include the burying of fetuses, placentas, and other matter associated with births or abortions in order to placate the fertility god (*wayakil*).

In Peru, several sites that were considered only as ruins in the past are (re)taking center stage as places of spiritual power, esoteric wisdom, or other sacral property. The best known example is *Machu Picchu.* This archaeological site was long held to be the ruins of *Inka* buildings hidden in the cloud forests, but *Machu Picchu* officially is recognized as a Historical Sanctuary, a sacred site in the *Inka* citadel of the isolated mountaintop. The sanctity of the site is highlighted by awe-inspiring vistas

of the river below and the vertical cliffs. Other nearby sites include 'Choquequirao', 'Sacsahuaman' or 'Ollantaytambo'. Many sites of earlier origins, such as the *Chachapuya* site of Gran *Pajatén,* in the Rio Abiseo National Park, bring the notion of sacred constructions and ceremonial uses of the challenging relief of the cloud forest belt of the verdant Amazon. Even earlier, on the Pacific side of the northern *Supe* and *Casma* valleys, the oldest urban complex discovered in the *Caral* pyramid, calls the attention of researchers to the ancient tradition of adoration to mountain sacred sites (Moseley 2001).

In Argentina, traditional gathering places for ceremonial or festive purposes, such as in the 'Quebrada de Humahuaca' for carnival, retain the notion of holly spaces. *Umawaka* has always been a crossroads for many groups since antiquity, protected by *the pukara* of *Tilkara* and highlighted by the colored slopes of *Purmamarka.* Further to the south, in the 'valles calchaquies' of the Tucumán province, the 'Ruinas of Quilmes' stand as mute testament to the fleeing of the *Kilmi,* one group of the *Diaguita* people, to a restricted colony in an Indian reservation near Buenos Aires. Today, often branded by a popular beer name and the largest middle-class neighborhood namesake, few people are aware that the descendants of the *Diaguita* have (re)invigorated their identity and (re)claimed the ruins into a Sacred City of Quilmes. A similar situation is illustrated on the other side of the continental divide, where *Kichwa* communities in *Tukunci* and *Likan Antay* communities in *Chiu-chiu* and *Aiquina-turi* respectively, are linked spirituality to sacred sites. On the other side of the divide, the *Chango* people might reflect the ancestral tendency of petroglyph depictions that copy the larger geoglyphs of the *Nazca* culture with its lines; however, thousands of years earlier, ritualized mummification and the existence of sacralized places for ceremonial burial, such as in 'Chinchorro', illustrate the Andean notion of sanctified sites. Indeed, Latcham (1936) traces mummification through millennia from Chinchorro to the *Inka*.

Finally, the sacred dimension is also present in the *Mapuche,* who call themselves the "people of the earth" and whose language *Mapudungun* is still spoken amongst their communities; they continue to follow the medicine woman or *Machi* as spiritual guide for their well-being. *Rehue* or sacred trees often indicate the vicinity of the sacred dwelling (*ruca*) of the 'curandera'. Because of their long-standing conflict over land-rights, even from before the *Inka* conquest to the south, particularly after the 'Araucanization' of Patagonia, *Mapuche* leaders (*lonko*) remain protagonists in the conflict over indigenous land tenure rights.

5.6 Andean Hierophanies

> The bottom line for us is that all of our territory is sacred in the sense that it is deeply, powerfully imbued with spiritual reality. To take any particular location and call it "more sacred" makes little sense within a worldview where our interactions are with all of our environments, and all are sacred. (Randall Borman In Press)

It is difficult to describe Andean sacred sites from the perspective of Amerindian people, not only for the huge diversity of cultural backgrounds and philosophical and religious affiliations, but also because the notion of sacredness is highly intertwined with the notion of identity (Sarmiento et al. 2005). Unlike Judeo-Christian doctrine that puts people above the non-human entities of the planet with intangible existence after death in eternal heavenly existence or damnation, Amerindian doctrines rely on the notion that people are part of other tangible and intangible elements, of the web of life, in a process that cyclically converges towards new beginnings (*pachakutik*).

Borman (in press) calls attention to an overarching sentiment of a consecrated environment, the challenge for the revival of indigenous lifescapes relies mostly in the articulation of their sacredness with the overall Westernized beliefs via syncretism. Alternatively, the application of syncretic principles in daily chores and in yearly ceremonial observances of cleansing or divination is essential. In as much as the invasion of missionaries continues unabated towards indigenous territories, not only indigenous territories but also vernacular epistemographies are endangered by acculturation and secularization (Verschuuren et al. 2010). The fact that no artificial building is identified as the place to experience the manifestation of god, the communication with spiritual power does not convey the need of a constructed temple, thus there is no need for monumental architecture or a centralized power holding sanctuary in a citadel. For instance, mountains are abodes of gods and their telluric power is a manifestation of the need of respect, even reverence. Entering a sacred cove of the Cofan, where fish tree stumps survive centuries of exposure to the tropical forest of the headwaters of the Napo River in Ecuador, is equivalent to entering the holy basilica of the 'Virgen de Guadalupe', the largest Catholic sacred site in the region. A cursory search of sacred sites in Latin America, for instance, will include listing the most important sites of Catholicism and some Evangelical shrines and cathedrals.

5.7 Beyond Belief

> Sacred natural sites are increasingly recognized for making a positive contribution to the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity globally. (Bas Verschuuren 2010, p. 3)

The Andes Mountains hold a diverse array of ecosystems and cultures in a mosaic of topographic and ethnographic palimpsest that pretends to unite a heterogeneous nature into a homogeneous cultural denominator. Many of the cultural landscapes of the region are considered Socio-Ecological Systems (SES) which function under global stressors of environmental change that must be carefully steered towards positive, sustainable, and transformative end points of development via Earth stewardship (Chapin et al. 2011). Sacred sites are thus generalized by ecoregion (tropandean, isthmian, equatorial, central, southern, Patagonian, Magellanic) and also by climate (humid, dry) or by political boundaries (country-based within the region, or

provincial-based within a country) and are seen as ultimate socio-ecological transformative landscapes (Rhoades et al. 2008). In fact, there has never been a monolithic Andean identity, thus the appropriation of sacred spaces to turn them into places of sacred power has never been done in the same way in the region. However despite the milieu of choices and roots, a unifying tendency of radicular syncretism, or even a dendritic ritualization of pilgrimage, offerings, sacrifices or actual payments, are obviously present in the determination of Andean sacred sites (Sarmiento 2003). Biocultural heritage narratives of the present mountain communities require the affirmation of an indigenous sentiment of respect for the land and for the overall maternal homerange (*pachamama*) of their indigenous nations and the agreement to maintain traditional cultic practices amidst the powerful winds of change prompted by current society's ruling class. Many indigenous nations coped with this in colonial times with syncretism, but it remains to be seen if the proliferation of modern technologies employed to impose globalized ideologies will be detrimental to sacred natural sites.

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