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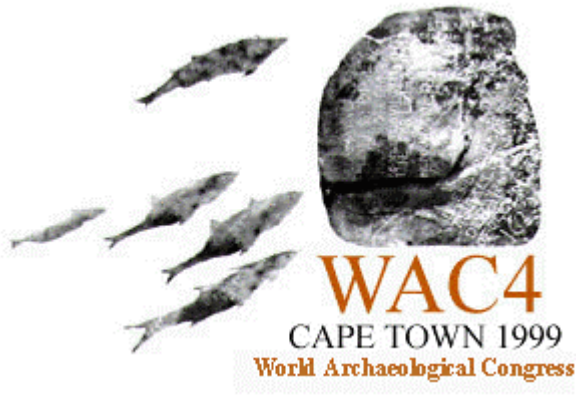

Symposium: Contested Landscapes & Landscapes of Movement and Exile

Landscape and Commerce: Creating Contexts for the Exercise of Power

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In recent years there have been several influential publications within Anthropology on the subject of "landscape" (Bender 1993; Hirsch & O'Hanlon 1995; Ingold 1993; Tilley 1994). The aim of all these studies has been to show that habitual western understandings of landscape are limited by that central paradigm of western philosophy which insists on a categorical polarisation of nature and culture such that agency resides with human beings while the natural world is passively acted upon. This approach renders humanity external to the landscape. Thus we tend to discuss the relationship between human beings and landscape in terms of human capacity to view, survey and map the territories in which they live, imposing meanings on particular landforms or determining land use through the activities done to or on the land. In this extreme culturalist view, human agency imposes meanings on a landscape from the outside. The point of view creates the object of human attention, just as human action shapes this object for particular ends but the landscape itself has no agency in this process (Viveiros de Castro 1998).

One of the alternatives to such an approach is to emphasise the importance of "lived environment", and to highlight the historicity of landscape. The focus here is more concerned with the relationships between persons and the environments in which they live and work. The Australian literature has been particularly influential in these debates because of the importance placed on movement through the landscape, both by human beings and by those human ancestors who through their movements actively constituted the environments in which contemporary peoples live. The Australian case has been informative because of the ways in which recent land claims have revealed the distance between understandings of the aboriginal peoples and other Australians. While both sides might agree on the historicity of landscapes there is less agreement on what such historicity entails. The crucial point of difference concerns aboriginal beliefs about the dynamic relationship between the ancestral past and contemporary human practice. The land carries this relationship and requires attentive

engagement if that relationship is to be kept alive. Land is more than the space on which humans make their mark.

These ideas would be familiar to Andean people. One of the most salient generalisations that can be made about this diverse region concerns the regular attention that people pay to the animate forces of the earth and of the mountains. Indeed, the relationship between humans and these forces is a continuous source of anxiety and stimulates the incessant ritual activity that characterises so much of what we think of as the cultural distinctiveness of this region. Whenever people drink alcohol, drops are sprinkled on the earth and flicked into the air in the direction of the mountains. Similarly whenever people chew coca they take their three best formed leaves and wave them in the air, quietly muttering the names of local mountain spirits (*Apus* and *Awkis*) and of the earth spirits, (*Pachamama* and the *Tirakuna*). For many Andean people the landscape self-evidently has agency and must be actively engaged if that agency is to be directed favourably towards human endeavour. In this respect it is important to understand that the personhood of hills and pathways is not a metaphorical extension of human attributes. Personhood is literal. The reading of the signs that the landscape affords is less like the reading of a map and more like how we try to interpret the feelings of those around us by looking at facial expressions and bodily postures. It is in this respect that pathways, animals droppings, and the remains of burnt offerings are scrutinised, for humans need to understand the motivations and moods of the superhuman beings alongside whom they live.

The anxiety associated with these practices is rooted in the disturbing knowledge that the relationship between humans and the spirit world are weighted against the humans. These spirits are human-like and able to enter into productive mutually beneficial relationships in which both sides sustain the needs of the other through exchanges of food, drink, music, talk – the stuff of human sociality. However spirits are also capricious and destructive, powerful and thus able to destroy life as well as sustain it. In their relationships with the spirit world, people are thus constantly engaged in both drawing the spirit beings into social relationships and in attempting to ascertain the extent to which any particular manifestation of the spirit world is amenable to such attention. People thus pay considerable attention to the corporeal nature of spiritual beings. To know whether a being that you meet on a path at night is capable of sociability you need to know what and how its eats, how it relates to others, what it is made of inside. Feeding, drinking and sex are the principal modes of interaction with the animate forces of the landscape (not the spiritual contemplation encouraged in the Christian relationship between deity and human subject). The relationship between humans and these forces is physical, sacrificial, a manifestation of hierarchical yet mutual dependency (Gose 1986). Understanding ultimately comes through continual close engagement, and the shamanic experts are those whose experience has given them the opportunity for particularly close relationships. Knowledge of the land and its agency is thus not primarily the result of contemplative activity but of active engagement.

This sense of connection to the environment is one that has been exploited in the history of this region by those attempting to exercise political domination. Several centuries ago, the Inkas used the landscape to trace political relationships with subjugated ethnic groups, establishing connections between the centre of empire and the outlying regions through sacred site lines, known as the “ceque system” (Zuidema). Subjugated peoples would be required to make ritual journeys that established powerful symbolic connections between centre and periphery, reinforced by their material instantiation in the form of sacred rocks, sites of sacrifice,

connecting landmarks. The Spanish in turn attempted to inscribe people's everyday surroundings with images of their power. Their attempts to reconfigure the landscape involved planting crosses on hilltops, and using materials from Inka sacred sites to build Christian places of worship. It is thus clear that the meanings attributed to particular landscapes have themselves emerged in complex contested interactions between persons and in active relation to the places in which they move, live and work. It is also clear that in these processes human beings cannot be characterised as external agents of change, for persons and their environments are mutually constitutive. The *Pachamama, Tirakuna, Apus,* and *Awkis* embody a connection between the present day and the distant past and according to local accounts it is the agency of these forces as much as of those who relate to them that has enabled their persistence

My interest in this paper is to think further about how we might analyse these dynamic relationships between humans and their environments while still being able to talk about social change and the contested exercise of power in the region. My worry with much of the current anthropological critique of western "landscape" thinking, is that attempts to break away from the constraints of dominant western ontology force people into positing alternative, non-western ways of thinking which tend to the ahistorical. In the Andean region, where the landscapes are so obviously the sites of historicity and memory of political and cultural confrontation an appeal to "tradition" or cultural otherness is clearly inadequate. Why do these ideas about the animate landscape endure and in what sense do they endure? Inspired by Anna Tsing's work on Indonesia (Tsing 1995) I started thinking about the relationship between tradition (in this case the pervasive and enduring sense of an animate landscape) and marginality in people's understanding and experience of power. To refocus on power allows room to think about both history and contestation. In recent years, scholars have begun to look at the emergence of the Andean region as a "marginal" and "traditional" place. Orlove's discussion of how the mountainous region of Peru came to be understood as geographically and culturally distinctive, homogenous, and problematic for the modernization and development of the nation is instructive in this regard. Images of passive nature and passive tradition are used to characterise marginal places and marginal peoples. In the light of this work we need to think more about the agency of "tradition", and the capacity of people to reproduce a sense of enduring connection to the land as an integral aspect of their contemporary modern lives, even when such connections play into outsiders' image of marginality.

Ocongate, a town of some 1500 people, is a district capital in the province of Quispicanchies, in the Department of Cusco, Southern Peru. This town is connected to the city by a road that it itself an important landmark in the region. Migrant labour moves between the highland city of Cusco and forested lowlands of Madre de Dios where workers are always needed for lumber and gold extraction. The local landscape is dominated by the powerful snow-mountain of Ausangate, a peak revered for many hundreds of years throughout the region. Less renowned, but no less important locally is the ruined "settlement" of Cupi (most probably a pre-Inka burial site) where ancestral bodies have been found, mummified, alongside the remains of what are generally deemed to have been pre-human lives. The economy of this region is mixed. Most people are engaged to some extent in agriculture, particularly the production of maize and potatoes, and in animal herding; cows and sheep in the lower valleys, llamas and alpacas in the high tundra pastures known as the *puna*. There is also much commercial activity and many people leave the town to work in Cusco or Madre de

Dios. This mixed economy also presents a dilemma for those who simply assert a passive model of enduring tradition. The classic Andeanist literature documents the relationship between people and the landscape in terms of traditional agricultural and herding activities. However in Ocongate it is clear that the move to commerce does not desplace these relationships, and it is this continuity that I wish to explore.

August 1st is the day on which the Pachamama earth force is celebrated and on this day people ask for good fortune in the future by making libations and burning offerings (*despachos*) to feed the earth and call forth good fortune. They make miniatures of objects that they would like to possess and through these request evidence of concrete material benefit as well as a more general sense of well-being in all aspects of their lives. Those with the skill to do so attempt to read the future by casting coca leaves, by leaving smooth patches of sand to see what animal prints appear by morning or reading the shapes that emerge when molten lead is thrown into a cup of water. It was the observation of these rituals that alerted me, to the huge range of activities that people conceptualise as occurring through connection to the land. As libations are made to the earth the focus is not exclusively on requesting that the fertility of the soil be activated for the coming growing season, it is also called on to offer protection and good fortune for all activities that take place on the earth – agriculture, business and travel. This focus on the earth is one that links members of a family – those who stay and work the fields, those who travel on 90-day contracts into the rain forest, those who move from valley to puna in the meat and wool trade, those who stay in the village tending shops or stalls in the market place. All these activities depend to some degree on an active relationship with the land. The *despachos* offered on the 1st August are treated as equivalent to the offerings made on behalf of animals on their special days, but the objects of attention and of libation are material goods, even money. Women libate the money in the tills of shops or in the secret cranny of the store room where it is kept safe. There are many aspects of these activities which are of interest. Here I want to highlight the ways in which these rituals bring together agricultural and commercial activity and also reveal how both movement through the landscape and located activity (such as house building, agriculture or shop-based commerce) require attention to the land.

There are two key points that I want to draw out here. The first refers back to the remarkable continuity of this understanding of the agency of landscape in the Andean region. Even if we limit ourselves to the changes of the last 50 years it is clear that such continuities co-exist with major social and cultural changes in other areas of people's lives. This area has seen the building of a major road and a huge rise in out migration and though migration; people have lived through the demise of the local haciendas, the formation of co-operatives and the parcelization of land to communities and individuals; the establishment of primary schools throughout the district and the growing strength and use of the secondary school has made it possible for all young people to imagine themselves as working in the professions either locally or in the city. There has been a significant move from agriculture to commerce as the mainstay of economic activity, such that on my return to the village this past summer people said that Ocongate would be more appropriately named Hongkongate. They now have electricity, television and a telephone that works! Nevertheless the land and the mountains continue as tangible forces who continually require attention and to whom reference is made for the fruitful outcome of all human activity.

I recently returned to Ocongate after nine years absence to find electricity, an improved road, a new primary and secondary school, a refurbished plaza and new town hall. There was more open access to political office and a growing interest both

regionally and locally in a local pilgrimage site, the shrine of the Senor de Qoyllorrit'i (Christ of the Snow Star) and the reassurance that "nothing changes, people still get drunk". For me what was visible was change. For my friends and *compadres* by contrast it was important to let me know that despite the changes they continued to maintain strong relationships with the mountains and the earth. You cannot drink well in this place without drawing these beings into your drinking circles, they must be offered drink and drunkenness implies the possibilities for continuities of substance between human drinkers and spiritual forces.

The changes that people did remark on and show me on return visits often concerned properties that others had extended, fields that had been taken over, buildings that had gone up. The ownership of land is an important way in which landscapes change for ownership requires either visible evidence of on-going work or fences, walls and surveillance. Such changes effect the movement of others through the land, where paths lead, which terrain they run over, where animals can graze, where herders have to watch with care to avoid trouble even fines from straying animals. Ownership is manifestly related to the exercise of power, but ownership in and of itself is no guarantee of productivity. Indeed the problem with closing off your land is that productivity is entirely dependent on relationships with others for despite Gudeman and Rivera's claims that land is a store of wealth whose productivity is activated by God (Gudeman & Rivera 1900), in the Ocongate region at least the productivity of land is dependent on the ability of the owner to bring others to that land to invest their labour and their goodwill. One of the main reasons that there are no longer large profitable land-holdings in this region is that there is a scarcity of agricultural labour. People who need cash prefer to work in timber or gold extraction or in the construction industry. Smaller land holdings are maintained through networks of labour exchanges and through regular offerings to hill spirits and earth powers. Small businesses are run in the same way, even maintaining a house requires similar relations to human and super-human neighbours. In this respect it is important to understand that there is as much preoccupation about wresting productivity from land, herds, businesses or houses as there is in securing such assets as possessions. In agricultural contexts there is a marked distinction between the open sociality required for productivity and the closure that marks the transition to harvest and storage of the product (Gose 1996, Harris 1982). These contexts are far less easy to distinguish in most commercial activity. Most of what commonly passes for "mestizo" business relations are however conducted under the same dynamic – it is just that those involved are always simultaneously "planting" and "harvesting", seeking to extend the relationships and networks that bring them the goods which they then need to hold and guard as property.

I spent some time on my last visit to Ocongate travelling up and down the main road with some friends who control the Cuzqueno beer franchise in the region and was thus able to observe quite closely how this particular business works in practice. While it is clear that the family who run this business make good money from those they sell to, I was not convinced that Bourdieu's characterization of the "violence of credit" was entirely appropriate for it leaves out of account how those who are being sold the goods have considerable leverage in the credit business. Bourdieu's point was that those who have the economic power to lend money and goods are also in the position to demand an advantageous return on their investment and thus control those to whom they lend. However this particular discourse of power/domination obscures the other ways in which relationships are made, the ways in which obligations are incurred and avoided. For example the traders with whom I

was staying were clear that the success of the beer trade was dependent on gold prices. This is because when the price of gold was high, the migrant workers came home with good money and spent it on beer. When the price was low the money was spent on other things or perhaps did not appear at all. Whatever the debt, it would not be paid in these circumstances. There is thus a clear awareness that success in this kind of commerce depends on forces beyond the control of any of those involved. The business is also very labour intensive as finding people to get them to pay their debts is a time-consuming affair. The trader has to calculate when his clients will have the money to pay and cannot call in his debts to suit himself. Even when they did locate clients they might have to negotiate only a part repayment of the debt. The traders appreciate how difficult it is for their clients to make money. For only 2-4 soles profit per case they had to put up with all the hassle of drunks in their shops and carry the risks for broken or damaged bottles. It was clear that in many ways the trader is dependent on the good will of his customers. It is not a business for somebody who needs cash flow. The fact of owing money does not in itself constitute an obligation to repay and the "best customers" are those who have a clearly established and on-going relationship to the traders, that is kin, compadres and ahijados. The down-side of this strategy is that while the relationship is more stable and the trader thus has more possibilities for the collection of his debt, the relationship is also more complex in terms of their sense of mutual obligation and responsibility. Many an alcohol business has foundered on a trader's inability to avoid giving away his entire stock to kin and compadres that he could not refuse. Thus these traders find themselves in a situation where they are constantly going out, making relationships, maintaining contact with people, looking for ways not simply to extend their client base, but to make sure that they know where people are, what their personal circumstances are, whether they are travelling, planning any kind of celebration, likely to have ready cash. The sociality required for successful trading is as demanding as that required for completing the agricultural cycle. However, these traders simultaneously live in very enclosed and demarcated spaces. The sociality is on their terms and they are not readily available for visits or for demands to be made on them. The house of the trading family that I have been discussing was a veritable fortress, which we kept finding ourselves locked into in error. If the family had gone out on business we had to wait for someone to come and let us out. The compound was secure in ways that agricultural compounds never are. The yards of peasant houses always have easy ways in and out for animals while traders' dwellings are as secure as they can make them with high walls and padlocked gates.

As I observed these traders in action I began to understand more about the intense relationship that these same people have with the shrine of the Senor de Qoyllorrit'i. This shrine is a very important landmark in this region drawing tens of thousands of pilgrims to the area for the Corpus Christi festival. The festival is the most significant trading opportunity that most people from the town of Ocongate experience during the year and as many as can take advantage to sell food, drinks and other goods to people both in the village square and at the shrine itself. However, these same people are distressed by their consequent inability to take part in the pilgrimage itself and it is because of this that the September festival of Exaltacion has grown considerably over the past decade. Others have written about the play trading games that take place at this shrine (Sallnow 1987). All manner of objects are bought and sold in games that encompass agriculture and pastoralism to higher education, trade in transport and electronic goods and even straight forward financial speculation. All these activities are also carried out in direct relation to the sacred site

itself, parallel to the ways in which people play with miniatures on the day of the Pachamama on August 1st. The bank into which people make their fictitious (although precise) deposits and withdrawals is the rock on which an image of the virgin is located. At other moments in the pilgrimage this rock is itself revered, knelt to and kissed by passing worshippers. Perhaps the most significant difference between this event and the offerings/requests that are made of the Earth forces on August 1st is that these games at the shrine are played between strangers and have more of a sense of building up trading connections, enacting commerce within the pilgrimage/commerce frame of the wider event. My interest in this relationship between commerce and agriculture has less to do with the fact that pilgrimage shrines are frequently the sites of intense commercial activity than with the ways in which the ritualized performance of trade to ensure future prosperity gives us some clear insights into how commerce is not thought of as an activity which takes people away from the land. On the contrary commercial activity involves people in movements across the land and in relationships to the forces of that landscape.

For both humans and landscape forces then, power manifests itself in the ability to act, in agency and agency requires relationships between persons. These relationships constitute both the possibility and the limits of power. Even the all-encompassing power of the spirits and landowners is fragile in this dependency. Spirits need feeding, local elites and the gamonal classes from the past needed labour and clients to constitute their power in the locality, traders need relationships of both trust and respect with clients. The Christian powers do not escape such dependencies either. The Senor de Qoyllorrit'i, needs pilgrims and dancers (Sallnow 1987). When he originally appeared in the region and his image appeared on a rock around which a chapel was built, he would "escape" the location and wander in the surrounding countryside. Only when he was assured that dancers would come from the puna highlands and from the indigenous tribes of the rainforest was he prepared to stay put in one place. The fragility of powerful beings, the landlords, the traders, the Christian deities, the animate forces of the landscape is of course relative and obscured by the huge emphasis on power as the ability to act and to make others move on your behalf. When it suits them, their agency is very dramatically demonstrated in ways that reinforces awareness of their power over others. But the nature of the difference between the human powerful and the forces of the landscape is one of degree not kind. In previous decades and in the living memory of many people the landlords of the region exercised this kind of power. The powerful require relationships with those who have less power, but they are also able to call the tune. The danger inherent in power is that the powerful will force the relationship if necessary precisely because they require more than themselves for productivity. Where reciprocity is not forthcoming the powerful can steal with impunity. (Skar 1995).

But there is another dimension to power which I would like to explore further here. And that is the relationship between location and movement in the expression of power. In one way this relationship is obvious. If power is located, others will have to move to have access to that power. Named locales (or persons) are linked by paths along which others move to attend to them. Ausangate the powerful Apu stands in one place and dominates a whole region. The Christ figure at Qoyllorrit'i, the image of his body etched in the rock has become the focal point for numerous pathways that pilgrims tread from their diverse points of origin. The landlords of the great haciendas lived in the mansions that marked their status and their central location as they sought to control both production and markets in the region. Even today the fortress houses of the traders, located adjacent to the town square demand that they be treated as the

focal point for commerce in the locality and that the services that support the public life of the village – police, judges, town administration, schools and medical facilities are ranged around them and constitute their places of residence as central in the locality. This relationship between location and movement is thus also about the ability to manifest fixity and to draw people into relationships with you that constitute your place as central and defines the marginality of others. This dynamic is one of the ways in which people's everyday actions constitute the powers that surround them. People make offerings to the hill spirits and travel to visit the Christ figure to keep them productive and in place. They bring them things and people from different regions so that they do not have to travel themselves to find what they need. The relationship with the Sr. de Qoyllorrit'i is very explicitly negotiated in these terms. He requires the presence of dancers from the rain forest and from the high *puna*. If they do not come he himself will leave his located shrine. But the hill spirits and the earth also require things that are not readily available in the locality. The despacho has to contain items that are brought from far away, vegetable matter from Amazonia, sweets, silver paper, and most importantly coca and alcohol. These relationships thus require a degree of movement and it becomes clear that who moves is crucial in this whole process.

The issue of how people move through the landscape is another area which has seen much change in recent decades. In the times of the hacienda the use of horses and later bicycles was reserved as a mark of status and those deemed unworthy of such means of transport would be subjected to abuse by the landlord's henchmen who jealously guarded these privileges for themselves. In more recent years the acquisition of motor transport has been one of the main ways in which rich alpaca herders or returned migrant workers have demonstrated their economic wealth and challenged the stereotypical association between *puna* dwellers and traditional life-styles. Women are also beginning to make similar challenges. On my latest return visit I discovered that one of my *comadres* had acquired a pick up which she was using as a taxi service between the town centre and the village several miles up the road where she lived. The fact that she owned the pick-up was less remarkable than the fact that she drove it, complaining loud and hard to anyone who would listen that she should have been born a man. She said she had a man's character and a man's capacity for work. Her husband muttered that he wished she'd been born a woman. The point I want to make with these examples is simply that modes of transport and possibilities of moving around in certain ways have strong gender and ethnic connotations, which those who find themselves defined in this way, enjoy subverting as and when they can. The attraction of owning a motor vehicle is its inherent claim to status and the possibilities that the ownership of transport affords for circumventing the control of trade by wealthy townspeople. This latter point is perhaps the more significant one for differences in status can be marked in other ways and the old pick-up of my *comadre* is not regarded as equivalent to the huge new Volvo truck that my trader friends use on trips to Puerto Maldonado. Particular forms of transport are significant for the kinds of networks that they enable you to build up, the kinds of trade and the levels of trade in which you can become involved. The successful traders can move goods in bulk, can occupy the positions of wholesalers and can command huge distribution networks. As I have suggested the powerful have always been those with the ability to move things around – the Inkas magically moved stones with the crack of a whip, they commanded armies of people to transport the goods they required and to build the monuments that then demonstrated power. In more recent times the large landlords built huge houses and filled them with European goods. They "worked"

massive land-holdings because of their ability to move people around and to transport the goods to the most profitable market places. The local elites of most recent times have a more ambiguous position. These are people whose family wealth was built up through the coca and alcohol trade of the early decades of this century. The movements of the traders were balanced by building up land holdings in particular locations, usually by seizing land from less powerful neighbours. Today's elite traders are the children of the men who made large profits in the semi-clandestine business of moving these valued goods from one region of the country to another and they continue this business in the still semi-clandestine domain of Amazonian trade – sometimes transporting fuel, beer and passengers, at other times using connections and guile to bring out protected hardwoods, gold and other contraband items. origins) is rare

However this tension between movement and locatedness reveals the limits to power. The fragility of local elites is manifest not only in their dependence on local relationships but also in their need to travel to other more central centres of power to manifest their difference from those around them. The necessity of association with the location that is their seat of power also undermines their status in the wider social realm that they move in. They are caught in their own marginalizing logics. If marginalities and exclusion are defined by those who have the capacity to show themselves to be at the centre, there is a problem for local elites whose centrality depends to some extend on their capacity to move long-distances, a capacity that reinforces the fear that their centre is in fact someone else's margin. The problem is clearly demonstrated by their need to send their children away from the town to be educated. By doing so they also reveal that the place where they have built up their sense of power and influence is also one that is lacking what constitutes power in more central locations. The landscapes that enable the exercise of power in one context do not extend beyond these territories. For the landscape encapsulates local understandings and experience of power and therefore does not travel.

The classic understanding of Andean tradition states that to be "runa" (the Quechua term for person) is to be human, to speak Quechua, to be of a place (located) to live under the rule of reciprocity, and to sense loss. The contemporary Andean peoples with whom I worked might formulate what it means to be human in rather different terms. For them Andean people are located in an out of the way place (urban or rural) and thus forced to travel, speaking Quechua and thus needing Spanish, involved in both reciprocity and in private accumulation, conscious of the power of hierarchical difference and the personal loss in relation to such power, and clear about the need for both autonomy and co-operation. If we take the lead from the wider literature on landscape and focus on landscape as lived being, then we should expect relationships with the landscape to incorporate the complexity of lived relationships and the ambiguity of power that these entail.

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