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Emotivity and excess of spirits in the Andes

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In the Quechua community of Coipasi (Bolivia) relations between the living and the dead (*almas*—souls) swing between excess and containment, remembrance and distancing. The aim of this article is to show that the emotivity of the spirits plays a fundamental role in these relations. Like all matters pertaining to the nature of spirits, this emotivity is excessive but also, and most importantly, it appears to the extent that the souls of the dead feel alienated from family and community social practices. This is reflected in the local notion of “nonremembrance” (*mana yuyacunchu*). I therefore suggest that an ethnography of the emotivity of spirits offers a better understanding of such common concepts in the anthropology of the Andes as commensality, excess, and the very notion of the soul.

Keywords: Andes, the dead, spirits, excess, emotivity

In the Quechua-speaking communities of the central Potosí Department, Bolivia, there is an enormous variety of spirits related to the dead, of such diversity that it is complicated, if not impossible, to draw up a typology. Nevertheless, the inhabitants of the Coipasi ayllu¹ at least distinguish between *almas*² and those they call bad spirits

or *sajra espíritus*. In general terms, one might say that both refer to the states in which humans can find themselves after death. In their understanding, and especially in the relations the living establish with these spirits, the emotions of both play a fundamental role, as do the practices and the various experiences of which they are part.

In this text, I shall show the underlying complexity of the relationship Coipasians establish with their dead and the role played by the idea of “nonremembrance” (*mana yuyacunchu*) as an expression defining the emotional state in which the souls of the dead might find themselves upon feeling part or not part of the group’s activities. In the community, people do not speak of “forgetting” but of “nonremembrance,” since the dead are not considered to be completely forgotten. The Quechua term *yuyay* refers to the ability to use memory to recall something that is not present at the time.

This emotivity of spirits, as we shall see, pertains to their condition, but it also becomes effective in the world of the living because both living and dead are involved in activities that are somewhat more than social practices as they are associated with a series of subtle experiences. The aim of this article is, therefore, to propose a form of ethnographic approach to emotivity and experience in

1. Coipasi is a small Quechua-speaking community in the center of the Potosí Department. It heads the ayllu of the same name and its members are farmers and, to a lesser extent, herders. In Coipasi at least, “ayllu” is understood as the set of communities forming a historic network of exchanges of products but, in particular, of the family relations established among these communities (“ayllu is family,” they told me). Elsewhere (Muñoz Morán 2017b: 217), I have indicated how, in Coipasi, the idea of ayllu is constructed in relation to three elements: space-territory, a common bond, and shared experiences. I have undertaken research in Coipasi since 2011, with long stays between 2011 and 2016, and shorter visits between 2014 and 2018. Conversations with Coipasians were predominantly in Spanish, although there were many others in Quechua which were subsequently transcribed and translated.
2. Although it is not usual, the Spanish term *alma* (soul) is sometimes replaced by that of *k’acha espíritus* (good spirits). In this text I shall use the word soul when referring to the spirit entity, which I refer to below, and *alma* for

all manifestations that the soul as a person’s entity acquires after death.



the Andes in which the main focus is on the dead and spirits. I hope to demonstrate how the relations between them and the living are defined by states of excess and how they periodically appear in every sphere, from the ritual to the sensorial.

Coipasians understand that spirits are able to feel emotions which, being excessive, can be dangerous, so they engage in a whole series of ritual practices which, sustained by cosmology, allow them to relate with the spirits, and by means of excess as well: commensality, drunkenness, rituality around death, and the omnipresence of sound or words. Rather more than the normal amounts of food and drink and a greater number of ritual activities than usual are required. Excess, then, is not understood as something out of the ordinary. Hence, it is not surprising that it is simply seen as the proper way to relate with certain spirits. Excess can be therefore defined as all the nonroutine and inordinate practices that are engaged in to facilitate relational fluidity with these spirits, because excess is their natural state and, accordingly, their condition.

Ethnography of these practices in a funeral context makes it possible to establish where the limits of the commonplace lie. It will be necessary to go beyond recognition of human activity and incorporate, as Coipasians do, spirits and their capacity for emotion. In brief, as we shall see, this means extending the bounds of the social sphere to beyond the human (Latour 2005).

Remembering the deceased

To say that after the death of a person in Coipasi days and even weeks of frenetic rituality begin is, I admit, a truism. After the death of Doña Silveria on a winter night in 2016, her relatives were already there at daybreak and had started readying one of the rooms in the house for the wake. As they worked, they told each other about what happened during the night. In particular, they remarked that, just before Doña Silveria died, her goats all huddled in a corner of their pen. As her daughter Benigna explained, “My mother used to chase them to get them together, so when she died they were like that. She would have said goodbye to the goats by herding them together.”

Doña Silveria’s body lay on a table by the door. Beneath the body and covering it were several blankets, including a *lliqla*.³ No part of it had been left uncov-

ered. Her black hat, an item worn only by the old women of the village, was over her face. Different objects, “her favorites,” had been placed around the body. In her case, there was an old comb and *mote*.⁴

While the women closest to the deceased gathered in the yard to peel potatoes for the copious meals of the coming days, the visitors arrived. With each arrival there were moments of pain and sadness, especially among the women, who went over to the corpse and lifted the blankets and hat so they could see Doña Silveria’s face. Some of them caressed it. The most common gesture at this point, which is repeated until the coffin is laid in the tomb, is to embrace the body of “the expired” (*finada*) with the mourner’s hat. This is always done hat in hand, the arm at the level of the face but not touching it. They do this crying or saying a few words.

As soon as possible, in this case within a few hours, a coffin is found in which to place the body. Once in the casket, the body keeps the upper blankets that previously covered it. In addition, flowers are added at chest level and a Bible at neck level. The hat still covers the face.

Visitors were constantly coming and going. Refreshments were served,⁵ the women prepared food, and people sat chatting in groups in the yard. Don Juan, the husband of the deceased, moved in and out of the room, almost always smiling.

Lunch this first day consisted of rice with meat and vegetables. After lunch, activity focused on preparing the six goats (*chivos*) that were killed that very morning to provide food for the coming days. The men are in charge of readying the meat (Figure 1) and the women take care of everything else. Organizing the food, meat included, took about three hours. After dinner in the

3. The *lliqla* is a smaller blanket of more elaborate weave and decoration, which is exclusively used by women.

4. *Mote* is dry corn with which one of the community’s best-loved dishes, also called *mote*, is prepared. The corn is softened and cleaned with water and ashes to remove the husk that covers it. It is then cooked and added to soup.

5. The dead woman was evangelical, which means that soft drinks and not alcohol are offered. The quantity of soft drinks, also known as “sodas,” consumed over the next three days was so great that the bottles almost filled one room of the house. There were certainly many more than those drunk at other events. In this case, at least half the bottles were not consumed and, weeks later, they still occupied a good part of the room. Doña Silveria had converted to Protestantism a few weeks before her death, and had done so deliberately so that no alcohol would be consumed at her burial. I knew of at least one other such case in the community.



Figure 1: Men preparing the slaughtered goats. Photography by the author.

evening a large number of people appeared, and this was when the most emotional moment of the day occurred, in a full room with the most important ceremony led by the evangelical brethren. Many visitors had to follow the service from the yard, and even the area surrounding the house was packed with people. At about 10:30 p.m. everyone went home, except for members of the nuclear family.

The burial took place the day after the death. While the women cooked the day's hearty meals, from 6 a.m. onwards, the men dug the grave in the cemetery. Except for people who were very close to the deceased, this activity is reserved for immediate family members. Alcohol,⁶ coca, and cigarettes are constantly circulating as the men take turns digging the grave where the coffin would be lowered. The atmosphere in the cemetery is jovial. There is chatter, jokes are told, and even relatives buried there are spoken of cheerfully. There is also a lot of reminiscing about *la finada*, with comments about her tastes, preferences, and a few anecdotes. The good things are associated with her *alma*: for example, the possibility of a good peach harvest as Doña Silveria

6. Somewhat circumventing the vigilance of the evangelicals, the relatives decided to drink some alcohol, although the quantity was so small as to be insignificant.

was especially fond of peaches. Then again, as her son mentioned, there was my unquestionably unusual presence, which was exclusively due to the fact that his *mama's alma* wanted me to be there.

The lunch before going to the cemetery is the most important meal of these days. All the inhabitants of the village gather in the house as this is considered their farewell to the dead. This meal is the best example of what, in this text, is referred to as excess, since the house is so full of people that there was nowhere to put a plate down. People are standing, eating in the yard, on the walls, in the animal pens, and outside—anywhere they can find a place. The food is served, with a first course of noodle soup, and a second course of meat from the goats slaughtered the previous day accompanied by rice, carrots, onion, tomato, and hot peppers. Both courses are offered at least twice and all the guests have brought bags to take away the food they could not eat.

After lunch, the funeral cortege sets out to take the coffin to the cemetery. The church bells peal nonstop during the procession. In Coipasi, the nuclear family of the deceased can opt not to enter the cemetery, as happened in this case. They make their farewells to their loved one at the gate, with tremendous expressions of grief. The community authorities wait with these relatives outside the cemetery. Inside, while the evangelical



brethren “say goodbye to the body” in a ceremony lasting about thirty minutes, some people make the most of the occasion to tidy up graves and burn off stubble. The cemetery gates are always closed, except for burials and All Saints’ Day, which is why occasions like this are an occasion for tidying up each family’s graves.

Once the burial is completed, everyone leaves the cemetery, which is now engulfed in flames and smoke from the burning stubble (Figure 2). Refreshments are offered at the gate to all those who are leaving, and outside, in a line, the relatives, now calm, are waiting to say thank you. The cemetery is closed after the last person leaves. The relatives cannot enter, and everyone goes home.

The third day is the one reserved for the *tajsi*, the “lavation” (*lavatorio*) or “washing the clothes.” It begins around 10 a.m. with a light meal after which the women of the household take all the dead woman’s clothes into the yard where they are divided into two piles: one for burning and one for washing. The latter is for things that are to be saved, the most valued, for whatever reason. Things of lower quality like blouses, shirts, and a



Figure 2: The grave of the deceased in the cemetery, enveloped in smoke. Photography by the author.

couple of hats, go onto the first pile.⁷ From what is saved, each person chooses what she most likes and makes a bundle. Once at the river, without any kind of preamble, those with bundles to wash set about the task (superficially wetting the clothes), while those bringing clothes to burn immediately light the fire. As the clothes are drying and the fire burns down, they relax for a moment, with jokes and banter (Figure 3). Large quantities of coca, soft drinks, and tobacco are consumed.

Shortly before 1 p.m. a ceremony begins in which the heads and hands of everyone present are washed so, as they say, the water will wash away their sorrows. This done, they get ready to play *palamar*.

The game of *palamar* is played by two teams: in one, the sons, sons-in-law, and myself and, in the other, the rest of the family members. The objective is to throw a stone, trying to get it as close as possible to a small white stone eight meters away, surrounded by an open space ringed by larger stones. It is played in pairs and each participant has three throws (Figure 4). The first team to score twelve points (each stone landing closest counts as one) wins the round, the game being to achieve the better of two throws. At the end of the game, the participants go back to the house where they eat an abundant meal of dishes similar to those of the previous day.

Theoretically, relatives cannot go to see the grave until a month after the burial, in what is known as *killamisa*. I say “theoretically” because in Doña Silveria’s case, they go to the grave just a week later because some of her children who live in the city of Santa Cruz want to visit it before leaving. The *killamisa* is brief and consists of an intimate visit by the nuclear family. After a moment of emotion and grief on coming to the grave, there is a longer period of tidying it up, followed by an extended session of prayer and small speeches, after which emotional words by some of those present, especially the men, conclude the *killamisa*. Now it is time to share refreshments and “*ch’allar a la mama*” (sprinkle mama). All those present say goodbye after having consumed all the drinks, especially people who are leaving the community. They

7. Seen from the perspective of Philippe Descola’s proposal (2012: 33) of an animate “continuum,” which some authors have applied to the Andes (Bugallo 2020), clothing is part of the body and, therefore, possesses at least some of the attributes of entities with spirits (Allen 2015: 31; Muñoz Morán 2020b). Only thus can we understand why the clothes that are saved are those which, like blankets and *lliqllas*, have never had direct contact with the deceased’s body. All the rest is burned, including hats.





Figure 3: Clothes drying as the fire burns down during the *tajsi*. Photography by the author.

approach the head of the grave once again and, weeping, say a few words, embracing it with their hats.

The next occasion to say farewell to the deceased is the following All Saints' Day. I have already described the ethnography of this occasion in another publication (Muñoz Morán 2017a) but I believe it is worth recalling that it follows some of the patterns already outlined for the wake and the burial: a large number of people, on some occasions almost the whole community, and a great excess of food and drink. If anything, the excess on All Saints' Day is even greater since it is a day that all households observe to a greater or lesser extent, and food and drinks are always served. There are more meals in many more homes, with a constant slaughter of animals; drinks in every house that is visited or at the various graves in the cemetery; altars, also called tombs,⁸ are enormous and

8. This is an altar with several levels. Each tier is the responsibility of a family member, normally children or godchildren. Hence, the number of levels and the height depend on how many relatives want to be responsible for constructing it. Each tier is covered with a black cloth on which are placed several pyramids of bread of different types (*tauqa*) and colors. There are also other objects including bottles of alcohol, plates of food, and chieftains' staffs. A crucifix crowns the uppermost tier.

overloaded; not only is palamar played but also *chunq'a* which involves throwing a large white stone so that it does not roll, and *tocola*, a stone divided into two parts by a red cord, in the upper part of which there is a hole into which a coin is thrown from distance. In brief, during the days of All Saints' festivities, one sees meals, celebrations, and people drinking or playing in every corner of the village.

Funerary excess

Studies of what might be called "indigenous excess" have always been marked by an early colonial categorization and comparison with lean times. Hence, to speak of something excessive among indigenous people harks back to colonial thinking which understands it as going beyond the limits (by classification: what is not Western and therefore frowned upon) of the normal (the Western and well considered). After comparing it with their own ways, chroniclers in America labeled the way of drinking of indigenous people of the Andes as excessive. By extension, all festivities and excessive consumption on such occasions were also considered immoderate so that those involved, Indians, were judged "irrational, irresponsible, and lacking any sense of profitability" (Saignes 1993a: 6). From its earliest days, the discipline of anthropology was attracted by excess or, more specifically, by



Figure 4: Playing *palamar*. Photography by the author.

the ways in which “primitive societies” balanced excess. These studies sought to dissociate themselves from the classificatory systems used in previous colonial chronicles and accounts. They shunned “irrationality” and looked for the “profitability” of excess. Indigenous peoples were not irrational, as they were excessive for a reason.

The pioneering work in this regard was Marcel Mauss’s essay *The gift*, which inquired into exchange and reciprocity as mechanisms of social control but, above all, into how, beyond the material, there existed symbolic and cosmological reasons for human relationships with objects (for example, what he understood as the *hau*, the “spirit of things,” among Maori) ([1925] 2002).⁹ Decades

later, Eric Wolf proposed that among the peasantry of Mesoamerica and Java social equilibrium was achieved by the so-called “economy of prestige” and, more specifically, management of productive surplus and the accumulation of a “ceremonial fund.” Wolf argued that, once minimum demands had been met, “peasants” put into circulation this accumulation of goods and their excessive spending. However, this practice was also complicated by limited access to land and resources (Wolf 1957). The idea of a principle of indigenous scarcity was expanded by George Foster a few years later. With his concept of “the image of limited good,” Foster referred not only to the means of production but also to the fact that,

9. “Even pure destruction of wealth does not signify that complete detachment that one might believe to be found in it. Even these acts of greatness are not without egoism. The purely sumptuary form of consumption (which is almost always exaggerated and often purely destructive), in which considerable amounts of goods that have taken a long time to amass are suddenly given away or even destroyed, particularly in the case of the potlatch, give such institutions the appearance of representing purely lavish expenditure and childish prodigality. In effect, and in reality, not only are useful things given away and rich foods consumed to excess, but one even destroys for the pleasure of destroying. For ex-

ample, the Tsimshian, Tlingit, and Haïda chiefs throw these copper objects and money into the water. The Kwakiutl chiefs smash them, as do those of the tribes allied to them. But the reason for these gifts and frenetic acts of wealth consumption is in no way disinterested, particularly in societies that practise the potlatch. Between chiefs and their vassals, between vassals and their tenants, through such gifts a hierarchy is established. To give is to show one’s superiority, to be more, to be higher in rank, magister. To accept without giving in return, or without giving more back, is to become client and servant, to become small, to fall lower (minister)” (Mauss 2002: 95).



for him, the Purépecha people of Tzintzuntzan (Michoacán, Mexico) had limited access to “land, wealth, health, friendship and love, manliness and honor, respect and status, power and influence, security and safety” (1965: 296). Anthropologists thereby understood indigenous excess as either for ceremonial and symbolic exchange or for economic and social equilibrium. Behind this anthropological interest in excess—the colonial classificatory or the comparative ethnological system—there is undoubtedly a comparison with Western economies and societies.

In this article, I do not start out from a system of classification to understand the characteristics of excess but avoid categorizing this term. Neither do I use another category, scarcity, as its counterpart since, as Andrew Abbott has noted, “the notion that excess of one thing is scarcity of another arises in a simple intuition” (2014: 8).

In the Andes, interest in “indigenous excess” has focused on commensality (Allen 2002; Salas 2019), drunkenness (Saignes 1993b; Molinié 2005), ritual excess around the deceased (Harris 1983; van den Berg 1989; Fernández Juárez 2001; Albó 2007), or during certain festivities like carnival (Gérard 2010). These studies speak of excess aiming at the satisfaction of other beings, the need to socialize, reproduce, or relax power structures, and the opportunity to be a community. In other words, they are about the *why* of excess, once again countering “irrationality” and “profitability.” But little or nothing is said about *what* excess is.

With regard to excessive commensality, Catherine J. Allen says that, in Sonqo, “house-hold rituals include eating, drinking, chewing coca, and making music to excess in order to bring different aspects of the animated cosmos into contact with one another and thus maintain the flow of life” (2002: 128), but also that it is through ritual (“drink, dance and yell together”) that community is created (2002: 148). Guillermo Salas takes up these ideas by highlighting the importance of commensality in kinship relations in the Peruvian Andes. He says that it is through cohabitation but mainly through food exchanges that, beyond consanguinity, other beings are incorporated into kinship networks (2019).

However, the approach to excess that interests me here is that indicated by Francisco Pazzarelli (2020), which refers more to a condition than to a category.¹⁰

10. Along these lines, as we shall see below, we can situate the earlier work of Alejandro Ortíz Rescaniere (1993) about how excess is typical of Andean spirits and his suggestion that this is why, as happens with animals or close kin, it is appealing to have amorous relations with them.

Pazzarelli states that among shepherds of Huachichocana, Puna Jujeña (Argentina), relations among beings, especially among humans and animals, are thought about on the basis of excess, in such a way that animals, whatever they are, are all wild and, more specifically, are prone to excess and to taking their behavior beyond the limits of what is socially permitted. Humans, therefore, constantly aim to control and domesticate such excess. To my mind, what is most interesting about Pazzarelli’s theory is that it states that something similar happens with a person’s *ánimu*: it is always tending to break the social norm, to go beyond the limits of what is admissible and hence to excess, so men are constantly trying to rein it in and to control these excesses of their main soul.

In a large part of the Andes, at least among Quechua speakers (the *runas*),¹¹ *ánimu* is the word used for referring to their main soul. In Coipasi, people understand that the *runa* consists of the body, the *ánimu* as the most important soul, and, some people say, also the *espíritu* or *espíritu* (spirit). The *ánimu* is common to all living beings and the *espíritu* is exclusive to the *runas*, since this is what makes them able to speak, to communicate and thus to be social. When it becomes ill, the *ánimu* tends to leave the body and, with death, to separate definitively and become *alma* which is, as I have mentioned, the generic form also used in the Andes to refer to the entities the dead turn into.¹²

To return to Pazzarelli’s concepts, after a person from Coipasi dies, the *ánimu*, once detached from the body to become *alma*, sets off on an irreversible path to the world of excesses that is not human. Excessive postmortem rituality would then be at once recognition of and a concession by humans towards this world but, above all, of the state in which the *alma* finds itself (Muñoz Morán 2016). In other words, it is an acknowledgment by humans that relations with the deceased must proceed on other terms, namely terms that are, by nature, unbounded, partly exceeding norms and the known social order. As I have indicated, it has been noted that, in Andean rituality,

11. *Runa* is the Quechua term for referring to persons or, more concretely, people. In principle, they, Quechua speakers, are the *runas* but, in fact, it is inclusive and can embrace all beings that have the same ontological characteristics.

12. In earlier texts I have described in detail the composition of the Coipasian person and his or her relationship with spirit entities (Muñoz Morán 2014, 2017b, 2020a).



including funeral rites, people eat and drink more than usual since this is a way of satiating the appetite of the deceased and of being closer to them.¹³ Since I agree with this, I believe it is worth trying to be a little more precise.

What is properly human is the social part of the ritual, which is to say the excess of gathering and concentration, and the emphasis given to kinship, family, and community relations: in short, the excess in social relations which resonate and are emphasized during these days. The dead are bidden farewell in society and, rather than in the intimacy of the family, in that of community excess. This is related to what Salas defines as excessive commensality, “a powerful bodily experience” in which members of the group “mutually feed and care for each other” (2019: 89). What Salas is suggesting, along the lines of the work by Marisol de la Cadena (2015), is that this caring for each other includes other beings, beyond the human social group. Inclusion of these beings is achieved in the part of the ritual that is not human: excess of food, drink, songs or prayers, laughter, and tolling of bells.¹⁴ This uncommon excess is how the dead are feted. Their departure is thus prepared so that the alma can recognize what it is leaving behind. I understand, then, that the excessive ritual has the aim of honoring the dead. Almost in the manner of a funeral trousseau, the alma takes an excess of sociability with it but already adjusted to terms of the world to which it now belongs.

Now, what is the purpose of the feasting? Why do people want the dead to have this social excess? The aim is to mitigate, as much as possible, the affliction of the alma. It is here where it is possible to understand the Coipasian notion of “nonremembrance.”

13. Andrew Canessa mentions that in the Wila Kjarka Ayмара community, the people eat in excess only at the time of All Saints, “because All Saints marks the beginning of the season of hunger and death (death rates are higher in the rainy season), but also because commensality and the act of sharing cooked food highlights the community identity” although, besides eating for themselves, they are also eating for the dead (2020: 360).

14. Excess of sound is also characteristic of these death rituals. In communities accustomed to silence, prayers, bells, laments, and weeping resound on these days as do, of course, conversations and words. As Pitarch has indicated in the case of Tzeltal spirits of Chiapas, Mexico: “The world of spirits and souls is a dark landscape and an incessant noise, while the solar world inhabited by humans is ideally a bright and quiet domain” (2018: 86).

Nonremembrance of *almas*

On several occasions, I heard from Coipasians that many *almas* hurt people because “they don’t remember anymore” (*mana yuyacunchu*). Since they are not remembered, the *almas* become upset and resentful, which is why they can hurt people.

Well, of course. That’s why I don’t remember my mama anymore. She can punish me too . . . Of course. Yes, sometimes too when work isn’t good. Or I go wherever and don’t earn anything. You see? Nothing. So, that’s why you always have to remember, they say. You have to say prayers or, if not, have mass said. (Francisco Potosi)

But it is not only a question of ritual forgetting but also, and especially, of keeping the dead in mind, of remembering them, and their names. “Of course, we don’t remember the names they had. Now I’m forgetting that too. This is what takes us up, then.” By “take up,” Don Francisco is referring to the harm these hurt *almas* can do.

With the frenetic rituality of burials, or at the *killamisa*, or at the time of All Saints the aim is precisely to avoid, or to control as much as possible, the overwhelming emotivity of the *almas*, their grief and malaise.¹⁵ Grief is probably the best way of describing the state these hurting *almas* are in. It is one that is related to the pain of loss which, as Martha Nussbaum says, “has this double aspect: it alludes to the value of the person who has left or died, but it alludes as well to that person’s relation to the perspective of the mourner” (2003: 31).

In Coipasi, the *almas* have emotions as the living do, but this is common among other Amerindian groups. Nussbaum affirms this for deities, and one might think in similar terms regarding the Andean spirits.

Whether we believe that bodiless substances exist or nor, the reason it makes sense to imagine a bodiless substance having genuine emotions is that it makes sense to imagine that a thinking being, whether realized in matter or nor, could care deeply about something in the world, and have the thoughts and intentions associated

15. In the *Diccionario de Quechua cochabambino*, it is mentioned that the term *yuyariku* refers to “ritual that is focused on recalling the memory of someone who has died.” In fact, it seems applicable to any ritual held after someone’s death (Herrero and Sánchez de Lozada: 1305–1306), as is the case of the *killamisa* in Coipasi.



with such attachments. And that's all we really require for emotion. (Nussbaum 2003: 60).

But perhaps, as Pedro Pitarch suggests for the Tzeltal, there are cosmological reasons behind this emotivity of the spirits. He says that the very condition of spirits is precisely that of constantly showing excessive emotivity (Pitarch 2015, 2018). That is to say, Tzeltal spirits do not present a sentiment because they are remembered or not, but because this is their “natural condition of existence.” This is the opposite of the state of humans who try to control and even suppress their emotions so as not to run the risk of becoming a spirit (Pitarch 2018: 85).

This excessive condition of spirits was already noted by Ortiz Rescaniere when he emphasized that a good part of what he called “extraordinary loves” in the Andes are based on the attraction people feel for this excess. This is how incestuous relations with animals or spirits are understood. In his view, this emotional excess is built on surfeit: “loving another too different from oneself (animals and monsters); and loving another too much like oneself (incest, because homosexuality is not seen as a dangerous aberration)” (Ortiz Rescaniere 1993: 140). The important thing, he goes on to point out, is seeking normality, “the basic social relationship—the couple (and, by extension, the whole social relationship),” in the middle ground, “not too far, and not too close” (1993: 143).

I understand that there is no attraction for excess in Coipasi because, as I shall go on to argue, there is no recognition of spirits, almas, or the dead being excluded from this social relationality. Accordingly, excess is not desired but incorporated into normality (ritual). This is why, apart from the “natural condition” of which Pitarch speaks, the almas in Coipasi are resentful because they do not feel part of the social group. Remembering their names, but also what they used to like, or the people they were fond of, is also part of remembering. So, remembering is not only the ritual excess that seems quite temporary, but it is also thinking about them and, especially, thinking of them as part of society, the family, the community, and the ayllu. This is why remembrance of the almas is especially centered on activities pertaining to the social group, with experiences like going to the *chacra* (smallholding), taking the animals to graze, a good harvest, or behavior of the animals. For example, in the days after Doña Silveria's death, Don Juan, her husband, dreamed that his wife was going with him to the *chacra*. It is also why her son, Don Bernabé, while looking at his peaches, told me that his mother loved a *mojochinchi* (dried peach) and therefore they were sure to have a good crop that year.

This means that the almas remain present in the form of experiences while the living remember them. And these experiences are always related to social activities because the almas have no manifestations beyond dreams. They are a good thought or a good deed, among other things.

Not remembering them, not recalling their names or social status, results in a farewell to the soul. Salas has recently pointed out that “old corpses” are forgotten because “they are not cared for by their relatives.” Hence, contrary to what is usually said in the regional literature (see, for example, Rivet and Tomasi 2016), these corpses, unlike the recently deceased, are not dangerous (Salas 2019: 104). In Coipasi, however, neglect of the grave and of the deceased person does not necessarily imply either forgetting or the nonpresence of the alma. But if the dead feel that they are not remembered, this does make them dangerous.

When, after a long time, the almas are no longer present, they go somewhere that is not clear in local conception. In general terms, it is said that they go to heaven, but it is also mentioned that they could be “in a ravine or on the hill, or sort of like this, let's say like this little village, like this one. Without an owner” (Marcial Sequeli).

As we have seen, an alma that is not remembered and hurt by this can “take up” its relatives. But, in fact, it is not expected that it would do major damage. Great harm, including illness and death, can be caused by the *sajra espíritu*. In principle it would seem that this transformation into bad spirits would only affect those almas belonging to people who behaved badly during their lives, since they are forced to suffer forever an intermediate state between the here and now and final rest.¹⁶

The *sajra espíritu*, unlike the almas, do manifest themselves. They can be winds (*wayras*), but also animals or strange beings. They are anything but human.

Evil spirits, that's what they are then. An evil spirit can turn you . . . an evil spirit can turn you into two things: it can

16. There is a large body of literature on lost souls in the Andes, especially with regard to the condemned (*los condenados*). These are the dead who can leave their graves after being buried to wander in torment around the local area (normally the ayllu where their relatives live). In reality, they are lost souls that have been punished for infringing some kind of local norm (see, for example, Robin Azevedo 2008: 144–46; Allen 2011; Rojas Zolezzi 2013).



turn you into a whirlwind; it can turn you into a person; it can turn you into an animal; it can . . . it can, it can, this . . . well, many things. And then men believe it and that's why they go crazy. And then and now, the evil spirit and then, well it turns into everything. They're spirits, not humans like us. They're spirits.¹⁷ (Guillermo Huaranca)

Nussbaum mentions that, by contrast with humans, in nonhuman beings thoughts and emotions do not need materialization in order to take shape (2003: 60). In Coipasi at least, the *sajra espíritu* and their grief do take material forms and appear as human sensations. It is usual to hear Coipasians speaking about the many sensations they have when they come across these spirits. However, they are not described in the form of emotions, for example, being terrified, feeling afraid and weak. They are described by their repercussions in the body: hair standing on end, loss of sphincter control, the body feeling swollen, or weepy eyes. In fact, these sensations are what help to perceive in subjective terms what is being confronted (any type of *sajra espíritu*) and thus to face the situation with “courage” (*coraje*) and, in the last instance, to survive, even if falling ill.

Elsewhere, I have described how this principle of the relationship between “nonremembrance” and the *sajra espíritu* is especially significant with the *chullpas*, the remains of an extinct humanity from a long time ago (Muñoz Morán 2020a). I want to draw attention to this relationship in particular since, as Don Marcial Sequeli says, it is very important for understanding “nonremembrance.” “Of course, *sajra alma* are [the *chullpas*]. They don't remember anymore . . . nobody. Who's going to remember this anymore? . . . So much time, they wouldn't have been family and they're not alive anymore.”

In these words of Don Marcial, one senses the importance of the community and the family for remembrance. The formula that combines family nonremembrance with a huge distance in time, by contrast with Salas's views, mentioned above, is ideal for understanding why the *chullpas* become seriously ill in the community.¹⁸

17. “Of course. This is what attacks you then. This one isn't going to present itself to you in person, no. Air, don't you see? Because they don't remember anymore, no . . . before your grandparents. How long will it be?” (Francisco Potosí).

18. I have written elsewhere about how, in Coipasi, the *chullpas* are not considered to be the remains of ancestors be-

ÓSCAR: And why? Why will they get sick?

MARCIAL SEQUELI: Well, of course, they don't remember anymore. So, it'll be that.

ÓSCAR: They don't remember what?

MARCIAL SEQUELI: Their relatives, they don't come anymore. Then, anything . . . what will it mean too, right?

Experiences with *almas*

The *sajra espíritu* are unremembered *almas* of the past, belonging to people who were not good when they were alive. They are therefore constantly in torment, and present themselves to the Coipasians in many forms, among them bones of the ancients, winds, ants, dogs, diffuse shadows, and dark figures. Unlike the case of *almas*, these are not social experiences but real manifestations. Nevertheless, the appearance of these entities is related to experiences, in this case, chastisement for bad behavior. Accordingly, one might come across *sajra espíritu* in very different forms when walking alone at night, when drunk, or coming home from a party, stealing, committing adultery, sleeping in places where one should not be, and when, in the case of children, playing with things they are not supposed to touch. In other words, in this case, and unlike that of the *almas*, the experiences are not associated with the entity, but the entity, the *sajra espíritu*, becomes present through the experience. And, moreover, by contrast with experiences pertaining to *almas*, those associated with the *sajra espíritu* refer to what is socially penalized.

Sometimes, there is even a tense encounter between the two. This is barely perceptible, at least for the ethnographer, as it can be a bad wind that makes the animals sick, or a hailstorm that destroys the crops. Something like this happened during the days that followed Doña Silveria's burial. Recall that, at the time, her son, Don Bernabé mentioned that they were sure to have a good crop of peaches that year as his mama liked them very much. A few days later, while Don Bernabé and I were preparing to clean the irrigation ditches in his peach orchard, he informed me that two trees had been attacked and destroyed by a type of ant known as *chakas*. These ants are of a specific, very harmful kind (of the *Attini* family and can be of two types, the *Atta*—leaf cutters— or *Acromyrmex*—pruners) as they devour many of the

cause there is no common genealogy recognized as being shared with them. There is only concern for a shared humanity (Muñoz Morán 2020c).



local crops. It is said that they live in large anthills and are especially dangerous as they are considered to be *sajra espíritu*. One cannot urinate near them or get angry in their environs. Wayras (winds) rise out of these anthills and cause serious illness.¹⁹

In Coipasi, then, distinguishing between spirits and their characteristics is determined by their emotivity. And this emotivity, which is to say, whether they are happy or afflicted, is due, as I have shown, to two factors. The first is that which seems to be the very condition of the spirits, a condition in which excess becomes present and includes affective excess; the second, however, is the activation and presence of this excessive emotivity of spirits when they feel they are not remembered by the living. Having them present in social activities, being part of collective experiences, is to remember them. Not having their name present or slowly limiting their presence in these practices is “not remembering them.” When they are not remembered, some of these *almas* act on the living, always doing so by means of behavior that is well outside the social norms.

Perhaps, as Nussbaum suggests, emotions are closely linked with experiences, inasmuch as the amount of time spent with someone establishes “habits and memories involving that person.” The sense of emotions is marked by the interpretation and evaluation of these experiences (Nussbaum 2003: 84).

In Coipasi, I have never heard talk of forgetting the dead or forgetting the *almas*. This situation, forgetting *almas*, is simply inconceivable. Spirits (good and bad) cannot be forgotten because, first, they are always present in their many forms or experiences and second, because the stories of practically all of them are known. Hence, this is not a question of forgetting but of “nonremembrance.”

It might be easier to understand if we turn to the Quechua expression *mana yuyacunchu*. *Yuyay* is a term associated, in its many meanings, with reason and virtue, but also ability to summon a memory after losing it.²⁰ It is also used when one wants to indicate that one sud-

denly remembers something, something that seemed to be forgotten, but that in fact was not: *yuyariy* (Herrero and Sánchez de Lozada 1983: 1306) or *yuyariq* (Academia Mayor de la Lengua Quechua 2005: 771). Hence, speaking about *mana yuyacunchu*, or of “nonremembrance” refers not so much to forgetting as a definitive, irreversible act but to the problems in being able to remember something that is there. Like something lost, when one knows it exists but cannot find it.²¹ As Nussbaum also says, thoughts associated with the dead are always present even if they change form (2003: 81). In Coipasi, it is not a matter of ceasing to think about the *almas* or literally forgetting about their presence and the practices associated with them. The important thing is to make them participants in these practices. To put it in ethnographic terms, what will actually cause Doña Silveria’s *alma* not to be remembered, and thus her spirit form to become present, is that she, as *alma*, stops feeling evoked every time the peaches are harvested because her children have, in fact, stopped thinking of her constantly (although they can sometimes) when engaging in this activity.

This association in anthropology between spirits and experiences is not unusual (Sax 2019, for the Andes). Godfrey Lienhardt said that among the Dinka of what is now South Sudan, the experience appeared as an image of divinity (*Power*). Dinka spirits exist inasmuch as they are experienced (Lienhardt 2003), and experience does not appear as “a problem demanding a philosophical explanation but a fact immanent to being” (Schmidt 2017). Although Lienhardt raised, in a very novel way at the time, the principle of continuity between humans and spirits, the former are, in any case, the ones that guide experimentation.

Present-day anthropology has alerted us to the need not to limit the social (Viveiros de Castro 2003; Latour 2005) or the human (Descola 2009) exclusively to men. These ethnographies “have confirmed that, in these societies, humanity is not a category but a condition. A

19. Don Macario Mamani told me that his blindness is the result of witchcraft performed by his uncle on his entire family. The sorcerer allied himself with the *chakas* (in this case, Don Macario speaks of *chakas* as manifestations adopted by the “devil”) and, one day when Don Macario urinated near them a *wayra* began to blow and slowly blinded him. Alison Spedding identified this *chaka* malady (Spedding 1992).

20. For example, in his vocabulary of the Quechua language of 1608, González Holguín, spoke of *yuyay cumuni* as “pass-

ing through memory” (2007: 400). In modern Quechua dictionaries *yuyay* appears as always related with loss of memory which is transitory and remediable (Herrero and Sánchez de Lozada 1983: 1307–1038; Academia Mayor de la Lengua Quechua 2005: 771–72).

21. On one occasion, a woman from Qaqachaka told Denise Arnold and Juan de Dios Yapita that she did not manage to remember some songs. The Aymara expression she used is *chuyma ch'aqa*, which the authors translate as “lost heart” (1999: 176).



condition shared by different beings” (Ventura, Mateo, and Clua 2018: 19). If spirits can have a social life (Espirito Santo and Blanes 2014), spirits and the dead can feel, become emotional, grieve, and suffer. In short, emotions are not limited to humans (Hardman 2000; Pitarch 2015).

Conclusions

The importance of the sensorial and feelings in the anthropology of experiences has already been noted by Turner and Bruner (1986), but always restricted to the activities of humans. My proposal here is to rethink this relationship between practice and emotion. This leads us, first of all, to take up Lienhardt’s ideas of incorporating experiences of spirits or the dead (the Andean *almas*) but incorporating does not simply mean seeing them as representations or images of human origin, but as worlds in themselves and social actors (Latour 2005) that are capable of acting as humans do.²²

Coipasi’s *almas* or evil spirits are locally defined by their emotions. Some, the former, have good feelings on most occasions as they are still part of the experience of the living. Moreover, they themselves are experiences and not manifestations. They are remembered, are present, and are a nice thought or good company. But, as time goes by, their presence is increasingly residual until there comes a point when, without being forgotten, they feel they are unremembered. It is when the living no longer have them present in the practices and they cease to *be in* and *to be* experiences.

It is then that the *sajra espíritu* appear on the scene, the ones “they don’t remember, my friend,” as Don Francisco says. Then, care must be taken with them because they can have serious effects on the living. It is not resentment, because in Coipasi it is understood that there is no annoyance or anger among the spirits. We might think about such anger if we limited the relationship with them to ritual oblivion. Ina Rösing called this “offering debt,” in the sense of nonreciprocity by humans (1994).

But “nonremembrance” refers more to pain and grief felt by these spirits on being slowly removed from the

practice of social life but also emotionally. The consequence is also illness, as happens among the Lohorung of Tibet (Hardman 2000), although not as reprisal in this case. What prevails among the Coipasians is control of emotional excess. The living must control their own emotions, as the Tzeltal do, in order not to become equal to spirits (Pitarch 2015: 86), but they must also control the effectiveness of the emotional excess of the spirits. Ritual excess during funerals or at the time of All Saints is, as I have shown, related with this emotional excess. During these days, the living allow their emotions to get out of control because this is the only way they can approach the natural state of spirits, namely emotional excess. But this emotional overflow must come with a context that is equally abundant in practice, and this is why people eat, drink, play, and talk in excess. In this way we can better understand the relations that the living and the dead (the *almas*) of the Andes establish among themselves, relations swinging between excess and containment, between remembrance and distancing.

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22. The different spirits and their manifestations that are the focus of the present article are not understood as representations but as real social agents and, without a doubt, ontologically similar to the *runas*. Representations are images created on the basis of the need to explain the symbolic, and they are highly complex from the Western standpoint (de la Cadena 2015: 99), almost like metaphors (Sandor 1986; Wagner 1986).



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