

WHAT'S IN A NAME (OR THREE)?:  
ORTHOGRAPHY, MULTI-VOCALITY AND IDENTITY  
IN AN AYMARA ARCHAEOLOGICAL MUSEUM

*Introduction*

There is an ever-growing body of research which suggests that museums can be a useful tool for negotiating and promoting identity and vocality within native communities.<sup>1</sup> Additionally, some studies have begun to acknowledge the subtle, but significant, 'faultlines' or 'boundaries' that can divide the seemingly contiguous face of communal identity.<sup>2</sup> Despite this acknowledgement, however, far too little consideration has been paid to the significance of competing voices within indigenous museums, and even less has been done regarding the affect of globalization on this vocality. This paper examines the renovation of an archaeological museum in Qhunqhu Liqiliqi, in the Desaguadero Valley of Bolivia, and addresses issues of multi-vocality and 'community' vernacular within the context of globalization.

*Regional and Cultural Background*

The *marka*, or town, of Qhunqhu Liqiliqi lies roughly 100 km southwest of La Paz, in Bolivia's Desaguadero valley. It is situated in the heart of the *ayllu* of Qhunqhu Liqiliqi, one of many *ayllus* (community-centered, geo-political alliances) that fall within the wider jurisdiction of Jesus de Machaqa, the regional capital. The *ayllu* system predates the previously imposed hacienda system of land ownership, although its antiquity is not precisely known. It is clear, however, that land is of exceptional importance to the Aymara, owing to its sacred character and its pastoral utility<sup>3</sup>, and land tenure disputes, between

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<sup>1</sup> M. Ames, *How to Decorate a House: The Renegotiation of Cultural Representation at the University of British Columbia Museum of Anthropology*, in Laura Peers, Alison Brown (eds.), *Museums and Source Communities: A Routledge Reader*, London, Routledge, 2003, p. 171-180; A. Bloch, *The Museum at the End of the World*, Philadelphia, University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004; P. Boniface, P. Fowler, *Heritage and Tourism in 'The Global Village'*, London, Routledge, 1993; M. Clavir, *Preserving What is Valued: Museums, Conservation and First Nations*, Vancouver, UBC Press, 2002; M. Kahn, *Not Really Pacific Voices: Politics of Representation in Collaborative Museum Exhibits*, in *Museum Anthropology*, vol. 24, 1, 2000 (henceforward: Kahn, *Not Really Pacific Voices*), p. 57-74; C. Kreps, *Museum Making and Indigenous Curation in Central Kalimantan, Indonesia*, in *Museum Anthropology*, vol. 22, 1, 1998, p. 5-17.

<sup>2</sup> Fredrik Barth (ed.), *Ethnic Groups and Boundaries*, Boston, Little, Brown and Company, 1969 (henceforward: Barth, *Ethnic Groups and Boundaries*), p. 9-38; B. Dicks, *Heritage, Place, and Community*, Cardiff, University of Wales Press, 2000 (henceforward: Dicks, *Heritage, Place, and Community*); J. Levy, *Prehistory, Identity, and Archaeological Representation in Nordic Museums*, in *American Anthropologist*, vol. 108, 1, 2006 (henceforward: Levy, *Prehistory, Identity, and Archaeological Representation*), p. 135-147.

<sup>3</sup> T. Abercrombie, *Pathways of Memory and Power*, Madison, University of Wisconsin Press,

and within *ayllus*, are not uncommon. The boundaries of these *ayllus* shift to some degree annually, sometimes resulting in a palpable tension between communities. These disputes often result in fissuring that generates new kin-based geographic alliances that may lead to the production of new *ayllus* or changes in the boundaries of existing *ayllus*.

There are nearly two million Aymara throughout South America, and nearly one-third of Bolivia's population are native Aymara-speakers.<sup>4</sup> Historic relations between the predominantly Spanish or *mestizo* authorities and the Aymara could be described as turbulent at best, and recent efforts by the Bolivian government to include and promote indigenous interests and identity have been met with mixed enthusiasm and success. Nevertheless, efforts to recognize and proclaim the significance and dignity of Aymara peoples and their ancestors are gaining momentum.<sup>5</sup>

It would be inappropriate to discuss Aymara cultural identity without acknowledging the impact of globalization on contemporary Aymara communities. Appadurai and others have suggested that globalization unfolds as an interactive and syncopated process of cultural and economic homogenization.<sup>6</sup> While the agents of globalization, such as anthropologists, tourists, and industrial capitalists, have had their influence on the indigenous population, the cultural identity of the Aymara has experienced a revitalization which has challenged and impacted Bolivian attitudes toward indigenism, national identity and national and local economies. For example, the introduction of an Aymara phonetic alphabet in 1968 by Juan de Dios Yapita Moya has greatly resisted the previously unquestioned authority of the Spanish orthography, allowing a greater degree of Aymara autonomy, legitimacy and scholarship.<sup>7</sup> Similarly, archaeological heritage sites, such as Tiwanaku, are vital to Bolivia in no small part because of a burgeoning tourist

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1998, p. 3; M.J. Hardman (ed.), *The Aymara Language in Its Social and Cultural Context* [Social Sciences Monograph #67], Gainesville, University of Florida, 1981 (henceforward: Hardman, *The Aymara Language*), p. 3-17.

<sup>4</sup> Hardman, *The Aymara Language*, p. 3, 6.

<sup>5</sup> A. Orta, *Burying the Past: Locality, Lived History, and Death in an Aymara Ritual of Remembrance*, in *Cultural Anthropology*, 17, 4, 2002, p. 471-511; K. Healy, S. Paulson, *Political Economies of Identity in Bolivia 1952-1998*, in *The Journal of Latin American Anthropology*, vol. 5, 2, 2000, p. 2-29.

<sup>6</sup> A. Appadurai, *Disjuncture and Difference in the Global Cultural Economy*, in Mike Featherstone (ed.), *Global Culture: Nationalism, Globalization and Modernity*, London, Sage Publications, 1990 (henceforward: Appadurai, *Disjuncture and Difference*), p. 296; D. MacCannell, *Empty Meeting Grounds: The Tourist Papers*, London, Routledge, 1992 (henceforward: MacCannell, *Empty Meeting Grounds*); K. Meethan, *Tourism in Global Society: Place, Culture, Consumption*, Palgrave, Houndmills Publishers Ltd., New York, 2001, p. 4.

<sup>7</sup> Juan de Dios Yapita, *The Aymara Alphabet: Linguistics for Indigenous Communities*, in Hardman, *The Aymara Language*, p. 262-270.

industry. However, these sites, and others, are also constant reminders of a vibrant and rich Aymara past that existed well before colonization.

*Projecto Jach'a Machaqa and the Museo Max Portugal*

The archaeological research project *Jach'a Machaqa* began in 2001 under the direction of Dr. John Janusek (Vanderbilt University). Excavations were focused on, but not limited to, the site of Khonkho Wankane, a Late Formative (200 BC-500 AD) ceremonial and residential center located less than 2 kilometers south of Qhunqhu Liqiliqi's central plaza. Additional excavations were carried out at the nearby Pukara de Khonkho, and as far away as Iru Huito, situated about 20 kilometers north from the site of Khonkho Wankane.

The Museo Max Portugal was built in Qhunqhu Liqiliqi by DINAR (the Bolivian national arm of archaeological research) in 1997, to house materials procured by recent excavations conducted throughout the Desaguadero Valley. The museum serves not only as a heritage museum to the community, but also as a repository for artifacts from the site of Wankane that are awaiting analysis. In the summer of 2006, Projecto Jach'a Machaqa was commissioned to renovate the museum, which had suffered considerable weather damage, and whose collections and aesthetic appeared somewhat haphazard and confusing. A majority of the community voiced a desire that the museum should be redesigned and promoted as a marketable attraction in hopes of generating a viable, and profitable, tourist industry that they believe their town desperately needs. I was allowed to spearhead the museum project and began working with local residents on the renovation.

Following the initial structural repairs of the museum, we set out to create a museum interior that would meet three criteria. First, it had to be distinctive, and should reflect something of the uniqueness of Qhunqhu Liqiliqi's heritage. Second, it was to be attractive to tourists. Third, it needed to be a teaching museum that could be effectively used by local educators and students. Distinction was achieved through the creation of a museum logo, based on iconographic entities found on the Jinchu Kalla monolith at the site of Khonkho Wankane. A new color palette was chosen to replace the previous one, which was thought to be more attractive to western aesthetic sensibilities than the earlier color scheme. Lastly, exhibits were curated to reflect a general Andean chronology, and were supplemented by thematic didactic panels focusing on topics such as life and death, politics and ritual, and colonial-contact and conflict. In addition, educational murals were painted on the walls, including a map of the regional *ayllus*.

*The Ayllu Mural and Multi-vocality*

It must be noted that a great deal of research can, and should, be done on the collections at the Museo Max Portugal, particularly as they pertain to issues of patrimony, identity, and especially the anthropology of landscape.

The *ayllus* of the Desaguadero Valley consider themselves and their land to comprise a 'body' similar to the human form. Though Jesus de Machaqa is the regional capital of the *ayllus*, the town of Qhunqhu Liqiliqi is considered the 'head' of this 'body'. While such research is outside the scope of this paper, it would be worthwhile to examine changes in the imagined physiology of the landscape over time, as well as the relationships between the parts of the regional 'body' and how this ideology has impacted the patrimony of material culture and identity. However, it is the creation of the *ayllu* mural that concerns me here, so I will briefly discuss the nature of the painting and the orthographic dilemma that frequently interrupted the renovation process.

The *ayllu* mural, positioned across the entrance hall from a mural of Bolivia, is entitled *Los Ayllus de la region de Qhunqhu Liqiliqi*, and is, not surprisingly, a visual representation of the current (or nearly-current) *ayllus* that surround Qhunqhu Liqiliqi. While most of the renovations had, until that point, gone unhindered by disputes, the first rendition of the mural was generating complaints before the paint could dry. It seemed that some of the Aymara who were working in the museum were uncomfortable with the title, specifically the spelling of Qhunqhu Liqiliqi. This portion of the title was immediately painted over and replaced with Qhunqhu Likiliki.

We continued painting, but soon another of the workmen approached the mural with a puzzled look on his face. "That is not correct" he told me, and commenced to paint over the existing words, replacing Qhunqhu Likiliki with Qhunqhu Liqiliqi. This act generated some polite debate among the museum workers, most of whom preferred Likiliki or Liqiliqi over Liqiliqi. Confused, I decided to ask the project directors for advice on how to ameliorate what was becoming a persistent contention between community members. They explained to me that the original spelling on the mural (Liqiliqi) best reflected the new orthography, and was therefore the most correct. Ultimately, two spellings were included in the mural, providing some degree of satisfaction for all involved. Different spellings were relegated to the title of the mural (Qhunqhu Liqiliqi) and the name of the town (Qhunqhu Likiliki).

#### *What is the Significance?*

A broad range of people of different ages and levels of education participated in the museum project, and it would not be surprising to find that some members of the community were less familiar with the new Aymara orthographic standard than others. However, the differences in spelling reflect more than varying levels of familiarity with an orthodox orthography. Semantic differences can account for much of the confusion surrounding the mural in the Museo Max Portugal. Orthography can reflect cultural and

hegemonic ideologies, world view, and histories, both shared and personal.<sup>8</sup>

Interviews conducted in 2004 by the Bolivian non-governmental organization Tejiendo Redes clearly demonstrate that orthographic variations underscore semantic differences regarding local residents' perceived histories (Delgadillo Rivera and Paloma Clavijo 2006).<sup>9</sup> When posed the question 'why the name Qhunqhu Likiliki?' respondents answered differently, and with great detail and clarity. Almost all of those interviewed posited that 'Qhunqhu' was onomatopoeic, referring to the noise made by exploding dynamite. This interpretation relates to stories popular throughout the *ayllu* of Qhunqhus' utilization of dynamite charges to attack or repel a plethora of enemies, though others suggest that the dynamite was discharged for the purposes of mining silver and gold. This explanation is not surprising, considering the wealth of stories and legends surrounding the mining of gold and silver throughout the Andes. Another version renders an explanation that locals, when questioned by the Spanish about the meaning of 'Khonkho' (old orthography), were afraid to admit that their town produced gunpowder and so feigned that the *marka* and *ayllu* were named after the sound of thunder.

Variations in the spelling of 'Likiliki' reflect further differences in perceived histories and fall into three categories. According to Aymara dictionaries 'Lik'i' means 'fat', which wields great symbolic significance in Aymara ritual and ideology. In this instance, 'fat' also suggests the life-force and the seat of consciousness. However, 'Lik'ilik'i' can also refer to 'feed', specifically llama feed. One informant disclosed that the name 'Likiliki' arose out of 'Lik'i imana' (place where llama feed is kept, or guarded). In personal communications, I have been told that 'likiliki' can mean 'vitality', and is meant to emphasize the explosiveness of the onomatopoeic word 'Qhunqhu'.

Some of those who favored 'Liqiliqi' stated that this word refers to a species of bird, also called 'teruteru', that was once common to the town. These birds congregated near a colonial-period church at the site of *Chaucha de Khulamarka*, and issued a distinctive cry, which is what the name 'Liqiliqi' derives from. The significance of this bird, symbolic, economic, or otherwise, is unknown at this time.

Those who have not been taught the new orthography may rely on the

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<sup>8</sup> T. Delgadillo Rivera, P. Paloma Clavijo (eds.), *Las Historias de Qhunqhu: Narraciones de abeles y abeles*, La Paz, Centro para Programas de Comunicacion, 2006 (henceforward: Delgadillo Rivera, Paloma Clavijo, *Las Historias de Qhunqhu*); A. Jaffe, *The Second Annual Corsican Spelling Contest: Orthography and Ideology*, in *American Ethnologist*, vol. 23, 4, 1996, p. 816-835; Idem, *Ideologies in Action: Language politics on Corsica*, Berlin, Mouton de Gruyter, 1999; B. Mannheim, *The Language of the Inka Since the European Invasion*, Austin, University of Texas Press, 1991; A. Miracle, J.D. Yapita, *Time and Space in Aymara*, in Hardman, *The Aymara Language*, p. 33-56.

<sup>9</sup> Delgadillo Rivera, Paloma Clavijo, *Las Historias de Qhunqhu*.

older orthographic model to spell 'Liquiliqui'. It is normal for old orthographic norms to linger as new orthographies gradually transplant themselves into the popular consciousness. What is more, many of the older generation of ethnic Aymara have had little, if any, schooling. Therefore, a predisposition to a written form or style may be due to long-term exposure to the visual elements of words rather than a taught or pedagogical structure. Taken together it seems as though there is not one correct way to write the town's name, nor is there one definitive, authoritative history.

*Conclusion and Suggestions for Further Research*

In *Heritage, Place and Community*, Bella Dicks explains that "They [local residents] are also its [a museum's] objects, in the sense that vernacular heritage claims to represent them and 'their' history". However, Dicks goes on to state that "Local cultural space is divided along faultlines that are impossible fully to map, but which are made inevitable by the fact that no locality is a socially and culturally homogeneous unit".<sup>10</sup> What is more, in the seminal collection of essays entitled *Ethnic Groups and Boundaries*, Fredrik Barth suggests that it is precisely these sorts of subtle divisions and boundaries between and within groups that may provide greater insight into the production and structure of group identity.<sup>11</sup> The significance of diverse voices that collectively form a community, therefore, seems obvious.

Why do competing voices within diverse communities often get snubbed in the contest for vocality in museums or heritage centers? Janet Levy has explained that a reluctance to identify distinctions within minority or at-risk communities by some may arise from the fear that pointing out such distinctions may threaten their stability. However, she refutes this position by reminding us that where cultural differences are masked, power differentials often remain, but become hidden within the privileges of 'normalcy'.<sup>12</sup> Others have warned that collaborative efforts in museums implicitly compromise vocality, clarity, value systems and truth claims, and suggest that drastic changes may need to take place regarding the nature of authority and power within museums.<sup>13</sup>

In his discussions on aesthetics and perception, Pierre Bourdieu draws upon his concept of *habitus*, a culturally informed manner of 'correctly' displaying art, as well as 'correctly' viewing it. "The work of art considered as

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<sup>10</sup> Dicks, *Heritage, Place, and Community*, p. 148, 161.

<sup>11</sup> Barth, *Ethnic Groups and Boundaries*, p. 9-10.

<sup>12</sup> Levy, *Prehistory, Identity, and Archaeological Representation*, p. 137.

<sup>13</sup> M. Kahn, *Heterotopic Dissonance in the Museum Representation of Pacific Island Cultures*, in *American Anthropologist*, vol. 97, 2, 1996, p. 336; Idem, *Not Really Pacific Voices*, p. 71; M. Ames, *The Politics of Difference: Other Voices in a Not Yet Post-Colonial World*, in *Museum Anthropology*, vol. 18, 3, 1994, p. 15.

a symbolic asset ... only exists as such for the person who has the means to appropriate it, or in other words, to decipher it" (Bourdieu 1968:206). It seems possible that the museum curator, designer, or docent seeking to translate and streamline information that is outside of the normal conditions that inform the visitor's (and especially the tourist's) daily life, might compromise vocality for clarity. The result is that the integrity of a diverse community's identity may be jeopardized in exchange for one that is pre-fabricated, conforms to an anthropological aesthetic, and is prettied for what John Urry might refer to as the 'tourist's gaze'.<sup>14</sup>

While admittedly facile, the example of the mural in the Museo Max Portugal should remind us that struggles for vocality and identity can appear in unexpected places. Museum professionals should be committed to working with a multitude of individuals, not just community leaders, to produce reflexive, informed and dynamic exhibits that do justice to the complex and multitudinous facets of indigenous communities. Future research might focus on overcoming the obstacles that limit vocality, and should further investigate the nature of the museum aesthetic and possible alternatives to traditional museum exhibits and didactic resources. Additionally, it is important to recognize that museums are 'bodies', in the sense that they often interact with visitors, communities, and even other museums. Therefore, further research should focus on the dynamics of these interactions, and how they may affect identity, vocality and patrimony.

#### *Acknowledgments*

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<sup>14</sup> J. Urry, *The Tourist Gaze: Leisure and Travel in Contemporary Societies*, London, Sage, 1990.

CE SE AFLĂ ÎNTRUN NUME (SAU TREI)?  
ORTOGRAFIE, MULTIVOCALITATE ȘI IDENTITATE  
ÎNTRUN MUZEU ARHEOLOGIC DIN AYMARA  
Rezumat

Bella Dicks a sugerat apartenența comunităților la muzee „în sensul în care moștenirea populară pretinde a le reprezenta, precum și pe istoria lor”<sup>15</sup> și că „nici o localitate nu este o unitate omogenă din punct de vedere social și cultural”<sup>16</sup>. Dacă luăm afirmațiile lui Dick la valoarea lor aparentă, această lucrare examinează impactul globalizării (așa cum este ea definită de Appadurai, MacCannell și alții<sup>17</sup>) și multivocalitatea din construcția unui muzeu arheologic din Valea Desaguadero, Bolivia. Lucrarea se concentrează asupra pozițiilor adesea contradictorii adoptate de trei facțiuni cu privire la ortografia numelui comunității, așa cum apare el pe o pictură murală din muzeu, și sugerează faptul că, în timp ce multiple facțiuni pot „aparține” aceluiași muzeu, acestea pot să nu împărtășească întotdeauna aceeași istorie. În plus, unele dintre aceste istorii pot fi compromise în procesul de creare a unei narațiuni coerente a unui muzeu.

Cuvinte cheie: globalizare, *ayllu*, comunitate, muzeu, ortografie, multivocalitate, identitate, *habitus*.

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<sup>15</sup> Dicks, *Heritage, Place, and Community*, p. 148.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 161.

<sup>17</sup> Appadurai, *Disjuncture and Difference*, p. 1.