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. Furthermore, some studies have begun to acknowledge the subtle, but significant, ‘faultlines’ or ‘boundaries’ that can divide the seemingly contiguous face of communal identity. 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, and land tenure disputes, between

3 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. 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.

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. 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 indigenousness, 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. Similarly, archaeological heritage sites, such as Tiwanaku, are vital to Bolivia in no small part because of a burgeoning tourist

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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 Qhunqu 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 Qhunqu 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 Qhunqu 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 Liquiliqui. This act generated some polite debate among the museum workers, most of whom preferred Likiliki or Liqiliqi over Liquiliqui. 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.\textsuperscript{8}

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).\textsuperscript{9} 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 ‘Liqliqi’ 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 ‘Liqliqi’ 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


\textsuperscript{9} Delgadillo Rivera, Paloma Clavijo, Las Historias de Qhunqhu.
older orthographic model to spell ‘Liquilíqui’. 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”. 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. 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’. 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.

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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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’.14

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.

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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” și că „nici o localitate nu este o unitate omogenă din punct de vedere social șă cultural”. Dacă luăm afirmațiile lui Dick la valoarea lor aparentă, această lucrare examinează impactul globalizării (așa cum este ea definită de Appadurai, MacCannell și alții) și multivocalitatea din construcția unui muzeu arheologic din Valea Desaguadero, Bolivia. Lucrarea se concentrează asupra pozițiilor adesea contradictorii adoptate de trei fațțiuni cu privire la ortografia numelui comunității, așa cum apare el pe o pictură murală din muzeu, șă sugerează faptul că, în timp ce multiple fațiuni pot „apărține” aceluiași muzeu, acestea pot să nu împărtășească întotdeauna aceași istorie. În plus, unele dintre aceste istorii pot fi compromise în procesul de creare a unei naratioi coerente a unui muzeu.

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

15 Dicks, Heritage, Place, and Community, p. 148.
17 Appadurai, Disjuncture and Difference, p. 1.