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***Quechua Oqrakashqa:
The Effects of Mining Consor-
tia and Globalization on Local
Quechua Communities in the
Peruvian Andes***

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Karen Sue Rolph is a specialist in traditional ecology and place names in the Andes. Her research, together with several colleagues, includes findings on the loss of biotic vocabulary among youth, and evidence that Quechua, moribund in the region where she studied, is now fluently spoken only by elderly females there. Karen Sue is the elected editor for the Society of the Study of the Indigenous Languages of the Americas, an international linguistics organization now in its thirtieth year.

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Introduction

Mining consortia play an important part in improving Peru's world role in the export of precious and base metals and minerals. But as with all extractive operations, these industries frequently overlook the cultural effect mining production has on traditional communities. One of the most debilitating socioeconomic factors affecting recipient communities of global mining operations is language use which imparts meaning to project successes from the standpoint of a host nation, international investors, and on-the-ground actors. Language use means nothing short of having the ability determine to whether local community members will become interlocutors with global resource extraction, and whether local communities will 'have a place at the table.'

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights was translated into Quechua leaflets nearly two decades ago, but because less than one percent of the population can read Quechua, the copies find no readership.¹ Now decades old, the Declaration states that the conscience of mankind is outraged by the contempt shown toward members of the human family. The Declaration vows to uphold "fundamental human rights, in the dignity and worth of the human person" (1948, preamble). Article 2 of the Declaration condemns discrimination based on language, gender, race, or social origin. Language always has social origins; it is frequently linked to race and ethnicity, and for the purposes of this paper, it is also linked to gender.

The relationship of language to gender is no small problem, considering that the majority of the world's indigenous languages are predicted to become extinct in the next half century. This paper explores local indigenous language and gender dynamics as they play out in the Peruvian Andes, an area of increasing interest to global mining consortia. Anti-indigenous social forces continue to reduce the presence and significance of Quechua speakers, as elsewhere in South America (Núñez et al, 2010).

Geophysical Bases for Culture and Consortia

The *Callejón de Huaylas* or Huaylas Valley in north central Peru has a history of mining, and in recent decades mining has increased as foreign consortia sought working agreements with the nation, through which the benefits of international development and structural adjustment were modeled.

Peru is rich in mineral resources, and the Huaylas Valley is no exception; in it, gold, silver, copper, lead, iron, and zinc have been mined in some instances for centuries. Dating from the Nineteenth Century, *La Relave*, in the *Callejón* is a huge site of former mining operations. The site is visually characterized by tailings and pilings formed into huge platforms on the edge of the small, bio-toxic town of *Ticapampa*. Now barren, the area is called "*Metalsupi*," meaning, "odor of metal-produced noxious gas."² Recently, prospecting has been under way in the quest to satisfy the demands of an increasingly mobilized world technology. For example, molybdenum, often found with other minerals, may become a useful extractive resource for the region.³ The global search is on for lithium as well, the element prized for use in storage batteries. There is already massive expansion into mining these two elements at lower elevations, most notably the Atacama Desert, a geopolitical zone farther south, shared by Chile, Peru, Bolivia, and Argentina.

The Huaylas Valley is nested in the continental *Cordillera de los Andes*, and the capital city of the Ancash Province is Huaraz. It lies directly east of Casma, a coastal city north of Lima. From coastal Lima to the Huaylas Valley, the road is severe and winding, and spectacularly rises to several thousand meters in elevation. Huaraz has become a hub of highland trade and business, as mining industries grow and crops are grown to send to market in Lima. Huaraz and its surroundings are characterized by fabulously beautiful

¹ Quechua vocabulary varies widely, and there is no agreed spelling standardization.

² [Metal-] is Spanish, and [-supi] is Quechua for 'odiferous gas.'

³ On its website it says: "Located at the Peruvian Andes, Antamina is a mining complex that mainly produces ore concentrates of copper, zinc and molybdenum." <http://www.antamina.com/en/index.php>

snowscapes and high mountains, such as Huascarán, a volcanic peak more than 22,000 feet high (UNESCO 2006).

In the intermountain valleys of the greater region lie distinct ecological zones from which civilizations rose. In low altitude zones, citrus and avocados are produced; at intermediate elevations maize and alfalfa are grown; and at high elevations, many tubers thrive. At the center of native culture is Peru's extraordinary variety of *papakuna* [potatoes - *papas*] and indigenously cultivated native tubers whose names have been neither Hispanicized nor Anglicized, such as *olluco*, *oca*, *yacon*, *camote*, and *mashua*. Potatoes and quinoa fill a niche export market. But market demand for potatoes are not those indigenous ancient potato varieties on which civilization evolved, but rather, genetically modified potatoes, varieties produced in laboratories. At higher elevations, there remains *pun*, with *ichu* grasses, but the area is largely depopulated of alpaca, vicuña, and even *kunturkuna*, large Peruvian condors.

Amid the magnificence of natural vistas, unique ecological zones, and indigenous rural populations, are global, capital-driven mining companies. Barrick Gold of Canada and Antamina, a Japanese, British, Canadian, and Peruvian consortium, also headquartered in Canada, have invested in mining operations in the Huaylas Valley. Company towns, built to protect international elites and their families live in *urbanizaciones* such as El Pinar, above Huaraz, and La Alborada, a few miles northeast of Huaraz. The Rio Santa, is a mighty river even in the dry season, with many smaller rivers draining into it, and runs through the Callejón, separating two major cordilleras. The highway and rough roads to Lima run mostly on the east side of the Rio Santa, taking raw minerals to the coast for processing.

Weather in the Cordillera is diurnal rather than seasonal, with the temperature change from day to night being greater than the seasonal temperature variation. Dryer periods extend from May to September, and the rainy season from October through April. Crops are harvested during both seasons, tubers are marketed mid to late in the wet season, and grains are harvested during the dry months. The region is characterized by strings of small villages, the 'rural hinterland' (U.S. Library of Congress, 2012) where farming is a way of life, though these regions are increasingly depopulated (Rolph, 2006).⁴

Torrential rains cause flash floods, landslides, and avalanches. The entire city of Yungay was buried in 1972 when an earthquake in Lima triggered a massive landslide that began with a glacier breaking loose from its high and steep location; as it picked up momentum, friction melted the ice. It is estimated that some 17,000 people were buried alive. In the 1950's, Huaraz was also inundated with an *aluvión* as the city was buried in several feet of mud, and debris. These natural disasters are deeply etched into the cultural memory of the region's indigenous people, and they have a supernatural dimension. Blasts from mining operations are feared to have the potential to cause landslides.

The Setting – Mining and Language Loss Intermingle

Some 12,000 ago, Guitarrero Cave was occupied by human groups (Lynch, 1980). Located alongside and overlooking the Rio Santa, the cave reveals that humankind, many thousands of years ago, practiced plant domestication and cultural creativity in the Huaylas Valley. Recent research found mining areas contain scattered ruins dated roughly 2500 years Before Present. With the exception of Chavin de Huantar, a UNESCO World Heritage site, ruins fall to mine prospecting and forever disappear into the rubble crushed for minerals (2009).

The Chavin site interests tourists, who must travel through Huaraz to get to the renowned ruins with underground galleries. Tourism thrives in the cordilleras. Mountaineers love trekking and want to visit the world's highest tropical volcanic peaks. Tourism and mining have led to a two-tier economy, a convenient and comfortable tier for those with international affiliation, and a hard-scrabble, hand-to-mouth tier for local communities. In addition to mining and tourism, Huaraz is home to several international non-profit organizations, and increasingly, to deglaciation academic projects. This is because the region is now distinguished as the location of the world's most rapidly disappearing glaciers. Well aware of the rapid melt

⁴ The Andean Highlands <http://countrystudies.us/peru/25.htm>

off, hushed Quechua speakers hesitate to comment on what is becoming of their ancient cultural sacred icescapes, as outside forces ask them nothing, these traditional bearers of snow and icescape wisdom. Nothing the Quechua *hablantes* have to say of glaciers appears in the news or is heard on the radio.

Language Attrition and Mining Consortia Dynamics

As mining and related industries represent modernity and are on the ascent, Quechua language use in the Callejón de Huaylas is another story. Quechua, now spoken by increasingly fewer indigenous communities, is moribund (Rolph 2006). An ancient language, it is becoming two or more languages; mutual intelligibility between Ancash and Ayacucho Quechua has nearly disappeared. The two major branches of Quechua share descent with another ancestor language, Aymara, which is also losing speakers. Ancash Quechua is now considered to have fewer than 20,000 monolinguals in an ethnic population of 300,000.⁵

Ancash Quechua is not mutually intelligible with more local Quechuas either, such as Quechua spoken in Cajamarca, Chachapoyas, or San Martín.⁶ These Quechuan islands of language, cannot communicate well with each other—about their language, their plight, glacial melt, tourism, or mining. Many of these dialect and descendant languages are still not well understood, yet they face a continuing decrease of competent speakers.

The Summer Institute of Linguistics (SIL) world language classification project recognizes thirty-one distinct varieties of Quechua in Peru alone, with pre-conquest 'Classical Quechua' classified as extinct (2009). Research by Casa Inkarna Investigadores found that the only fluent Ancash Quechua speakers in the region are middle-aged monolingual females (Alberto Alberto, Pers. comm., 2004, Rolph, 2006).⁷ These aging females are the repository of a language spoken for hundreds of years, as communities built magnificent architecture and water works, agriculture and crop domestication rose, and as populations continued to survive colonial domination. Of these local language groups, we still don't know what was encountered during the reign of the Inca.

One of the most unspeakable effects of globalization on the Quechua-speaking community, once known for ancestor worship (Guaman Pomo, 2006) and emulation of mother and mother deities, such as *pachamama* [mother earth] and *choclo mama* [maize mother] is the newly landed mother shame [*mami puka yantsu* – colloquial context: 'mother red face (shameful)']. Once honored, these indigenous mothers and grandmothers are now eschewed as the hidden relations from whom children and others attempt to distance themselves. Why is this? It is because a national and insurmountable stigma toward traditional language, dress, and beliefs is underway. What is the status of this problem? Global capital and landed engineers may not observe uneasy behaviors. They seem little aware that in an effort to impress the enviable, well-heeled tier of landed gentry, Peruvian nationals disparage their indigenous and therefore impoverished origins. Mining consortia, concerned with labor costs, not social costs, seem unaware of their impact on Quechua.

Indigenous groups on a global scale suffer displacement amidst the building of hydroelectric plants, dams, and roads to and from markets. These facts are too numerous to elaborate in a short paper, but we know that forces that undermine indigenous land tenure and enhance landed and capitalization entitlements are common and lead to social and market changes that are disruptive.

One of the first institutional priorities established by mining interests in the Callejón, was housing for its foreign born and educated, light skinned engineers and their families. These professionals and their families resemble the national personae whose emulation is represented in every form by the media, and in economic symbolism. Quechua women with long braids, dark skin, petite stature, and who cannot read or write, can in no way hope to be invited into the lives of foreign nationals. With indoor toilets, conven-

⁵ See also: Lewis, M. Paul (ed.), 2009. *Ethnologue: Languages of the World*, Sixteenth edition. Dallas, Tex.: SIL International. *Ethnologue* is the global standard for language classification.

⁶ The *Ethnologue* formal classification for Ancash Quechua is Huaylas Ancash Quechua (qwh – Quechua I).

⁷ The Alberto Alberto surname is a result of cousin marriage, which is still practiced, though less frequently than decades ago.

iences, and even potable water being unavailable to them, Quechua-speaking women form a population considered unsuitable even for house service, and even less for cultivating and caring for children. Their Spanish-speaking daughters and granddaughters, if attentive, may gain housecleaning roles as long as their families remain invisible. But because Quechua monolingual and even many bilingual women cannot read or write in any language, they're stuck in lives of hardship, planting the fields. They try to make a meager income selling herbs and garden vegetables in a market where they are scarcely able to communicate what it is they are selling to anyone except the desperate women on either side of them and across the road from them doing the same thing. As they age, and pass away, fluent Quechua is buried with them. Inferior economic status dooms a language to disuse (Blommaert 2003).

Walking through the market is like walking through any local yet globally impacted market in the world today. Globalization is recognized by linguists as a major threat to indigenous languages (Maurais and Michael 2003). Colorful consumer goods and farm products are offered at bargain rates, and the poor compete with each other over the sale of a pair of shoes or a few *mandarinas*. Here, higher prices are paid to those who speak Spanish, and the larger businesses are as surely owned by Spanish speaking merchants, as the one-hundred pound sacks of potatoes are carried on the backs are Quechua *hablantes*.

Loss of Voice - *Noqawan karnin penqakun* – Disgraced Mothers

Quechua-speaking grandmothers and mothers are hidden around corners, kept out of sight, encouraged to remain silent, as the Huaylas region continues to increase mining production, enjoy tourism, and lend passing attention to the quaint charms of indigenous ethnic attire and crafts. One observer commented, "*Tienen miedo hablar*" [They're afraid to speak]. Quechua speaking women feel they are "...*menos que todos*." [less (important) than 'all others'] (Anonymous-1, 2012).⁸ Another observer spoke of how a Spanish-speaking young woman is seen to treat elder female relatives, "...*abandonar o ignorar a su madre y su abuela*" [... abandons or ignores her mother and her grandmother] (Anonymous-2, 2012).

Conversations with Quechua speaking women bring about comments such as:

Atska qelletam ganayan minacho uryaqcuna [Those who work in the mine earn a lot of money - *Los que trabajan en la mina ganan mucho dinero*] (Anonymous-3, 2012). It is known that Quechua speakers and their relatives will not be invited to work for the mining consortia. Women go silent rather than risk their family members' ridicule. They avoid conversation, are so profoundly silenced, one whispered, hiding her speech, "*Noqawan karnin penqakun*" [I'm ashamed to be me – *Estando conmigo se avergüenza*] (Anonymous-4, 2012). As an indigenous woman reflects on her fate as a Quechua speaker, she says, "*Noqapis uryamanchi yachaq karnenqa*" [I too, would have work if I had studied something - *Yo también trabajaría si hubiera estudiado algo*] (Anonymous-5, 2012).

These are the wives and mothers whose *qowankuna* [husbands] and *ollqu wawkuna* [sons] must hide, and depart, heading for the market, seeking day labor anywhere it can be found. Imagine the stress in a home where husbands and sons and daughters do not want mothers to speak their language and insist that only Spanish be uttered, lest their indigeneity become apparent and erode any small traction they may have gained in society with the forces of economic inclusion. Young people from Quechua-speaking homes dream of becoming meaningful to society, owning a home in an urban area, and for their children, completing school. Daughters and sons dream of leaving the farm, of becoming professionals.

However, the reality is that there are increasingly more single mothers (*madres solteras*), lower marriage rates, and higher divorce rates than in the past (*Fondo de población de las Naciones Unidas* 2011). Because birthrates among young unmarried mothers remains high, children are likely to live with Quechua speaking grandmothers, in turn to be stigmatized, and mothers must forever hide the source of parenting of this Quechua child, who grows up eating potatoes, dried *maiz kanchakuna*, and from time to time, guinea pig meat. Due to poverty, animals such as cows, sheep, and chickens are rarely consumed (Morales 1995), but are sold to butchers and restaurants for tourists and mining company employees to eat.

⁸ We have guaranteed our speakers anonymity as a condition of quoting and explaining what they say.

Made of water, onions, and potatoes, *Papakashki* soup is a primary food. Thin porridge, *avena*, made of oats and water is consumed most days. The beverage, *chicha*, once an ethnic curiosity made with fermented corn now becomes a déclassé beverage avoided by outsiders.

An additional untoward by-product of mining in the region is the increase in bordellos, which can operate legally in the Callejón. The Spanish speaking monolingual women who come to serve the mining community *poblaciones*, are said to come from the coast, and are said to in no way represent the young women of the region. Far from coastal relatives, girls can tell their families that they are working as secretaries or in domestic service. While provinces accept legalized prostitution, and require frequent medical check-ups, to see the corruption of innocent girls into the ranks of sex for money is to minimize the effect that this work has on girl's lives.

When an indigenous community member seeks work from any of the mining middlemen who serve as placement agents, they must make every effort to hide their residence and appear to be as integrated into modern society as possible. Because only about five percent of male Quechua speakers are monolingual (Rolph, 2006), they learn from a very early age to become integrated into Spanish speaking communities of laborers. A non-literate laborer is valued far less than a laborer who can produce a legitimate drivers' license. On the other hand, along with readily available false documentation of education, medical and dental degrees, there are readily available false IDs for heavy equipment driving—all for a price. Because a successful tractor operator, for instance, must be capable of understanding new cut grades and calculating angles by degrees, Quechua-speaking males quickly became ostracized. They are reputed to have no common understanding of technological methods, to lie, and to get drunk on the job (Pers. comm., Arani-bar 2001, 2004). This again, calls for laborers who speak reliable Spanish.

Geophysical Knowledge – *Quechua manam sirwintsu* [Quechua does not serve]

The idea that Quechua speakers are ignorant about sheers and grades is surprising, given the extensive vocabulary that exists in their language to describe all kinds of verticality in their indigenous homelands.

Hillside farming adaptation is not a simple knowledge set. Ancient and new terraces scattering across the region, attest to careful work with soil amendment and irrigation engineering, some going back hundreds of years. If you want to speak in highly refined geophysical nomenclature, Quechua is an ideal language for transmitting detailed traditional soils, erosion, slope, hydrology, and even cloud science. Nonetheless, to walk outside of these indigenous rural communities, is to step into the world of Spanish, a world in which, much of this dense vocabulary does not exist. This is regrettable because anthropological linguistics studies have long affirmed that significant semantic domains, such as verticality in the Andes, are linked to correspondingly rich cultural foci (Frake 1980, Bock and Levelt 2002). Quechua speakers are documented to have proper name terms for boulders, bends in creeks, and every outcrop, small spring, and footpath (Fajardo, pers. comm., 2006).

Conclusion

Mining engineers could learn from Quechua speakers, who are experts on torrential rains, cloud science, flash floods, and landslide science. Among Quechua-speaking women, international communities have an opportunity to honor these women, rather than to ignore them. In every instance, internationalists would find intelligent and caring human beings living in marginalized ethnic communities. Quechua merits receiving national and institutional uplift, even as Lima elites stigmatize their indigenous compatriots in the hinterland. Because foreign elites do not subscribe to the same dislike for indigenous (*Indio*) roots that Limeños do, there is opportunity for social good.

Snowy icescapes, glaciers once considered too sacred to visit, are now traversed by environmental scientists, studying the rapid deglaciation that is underway. Glacial retreat was measured at twenty percent loss in 2005 (Gonzales), and has hastened alarmingly in the last several years. Quechua speakers have survived great upheavals and displacement by physical forces. Large scale landscape transformation, has in the past, been seen as the act of a greater power. Today, dynamite blasts and air filled with smoke and ash

are another matter. Fragile micro-habitats disappear, bogs and water-logged places become sooty, all as temperatures continue to rise, and the kind of rain needed to sustain crops falls less frequently.

Quechua speakers are the repository of Murra's 'vertical archipelago' and 'culture complex' (1975) along with being geo-cultural land-use pattern experts. Families are fragmented under the present social pressures. Internal conflict exists, on the one hand, to pass into modern society and become a meaningful part of a dynamic and growing economy. Desire to overcome stigma and poverty, and on the other hand, and to remain part of a family, culture, and indigenous roots is equally strong.

It's time to try to bring about the good in globalization for the betterment of communities like Andean Quechua speakers. Innovation and a broader conversation need to be undertaken in the spirit of Article 2 of *The Universal Declaration of Human Rights*, inviting those silenced to come to the table.

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