

*Draft 2.2 Edited 2/10/21. Corrected "Pachacamma" to "Pacchantapampa"*

In the chapters [My First Trip to Peru](http://salkawind.com/blog/archives/2133) (salkawind.com/blog/archives/2133) and [My Second Trip to Peru](http://salkawind.com/blog/archives/2164) (salkawind.com/blog/archives/2164) I introduced many of the people (Américo, Gayle, Arilu, Maria, Miguelito, and the Q'ero) and the places (Cusco, Paucartambo, Salka Wasi, Mollamarca, and Apu Ausangate) that play such essential roles in these stories of my trips to Peru. While I hope that the current chapter can stand on its own, I think you will get more out of it if you have read the previous two chapters. The blog post of this chapter contains many photographs of the trip, which I have--for now--not included in this pdf version.

## My Third Trip to Peru A Most Romantic Journey

*Romantic:* [2] Exotic, adventurous, mysterious, in harmony with nature, having a strong effect on the emotions.

My third trip to Peru was the most romantic of all of my trips to Peru. Don Américo had offered to take Bob, Gina, Judy, and me--The "Apu Chim"--to Ccochamocco, a very remote Q'ero village high in the Andes. Our starting point, the city of Cusco, is 4,000 miles from my home, sitting in a valley at 11,000 feet, with the Andes towering beyond. When I am in Cusco, I already feel like I'm at the boundary between the Western world as I know it, and some other, very different, reality. To get to Ccochamocco we had to leave Cusco and drive for five hours on a dirt road further up into the mountains. When we got as close to Ccochamocco as we could by road, we mounted horses and rode for two days, over two 17,000 foot summits, to reach the village, at 15,000 feet, sitting at the feet of majestic Apu Wamanlipa. There the Q'ero villagers live lives still fully immersed in the Andean Cosmivision, the ancient and beautiful Andean way of perceiving and interacting with the Cosmos.

When I first met don Américo, the Q'ero would walk five days from Ccochamocco to Cusco to sell their wares and buy what goods could not be produced in their village. In Cusco they would stay either at Américo's home or at a house he had rented for their use. Tom Best, through whom I first met Américo, told me the following story. Once, when Américo was in the United States, he phoned his daughter Arilu back in Cusco. During the conversation Américo asked her which of the Q'ero were staying in Cusco at that time. When he heard that don Pascualito was there, he exclaimed in surprise, "What is he doing in Cusco? I thought he left for Q'ero four days ago!" When Américo hung up he told Tom that Pascualito had left Cusco four days earlier, but that after walking two days back towards Ccochamocco, he realized that he had left his watch at Américo's house. So, Pascualito had turned around and walked back to get it. Américo laughed and added that the watch doesn't even work. In listening to Tom's story, I was struck by the concept of a life where turning back after two days of walking, to fetch a watch that doesn't work, makes as much sense, if not more, than continuing on.

A few years later Américo told me another story about Pascualito and that watch. Américo and his son Gayle had arranged to meet a group of the Q'ero, including Pascualito, at a remote summit high in the Andes. Américo and Gayle caught a ride in the back of a pickup truck that dropped them off at the summit. The truck drove off and the two of them looked around. It was at the time and place agreed upon for them to meet the Q'ero, but no one was in sight. After waiting for several hours they decided

they had better start moving down to a lower elevation and seek some shelter. They walked down the dirt road a few miles and came across an abandoned adobe hut. Going inside they found the Q'ero sitting there. Américo exclaimed "Where were you? You were suppose to meet us at the summit hours ago!" Don Pascualito looked at his (broken) watch, and answered, "No, we are right on time!"

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Before I describe my third trip to Peru I would like to talk a little about what was going on in my life academically. This has to do with another thread I like to weave into my writing that has to do with the integration of the Andean Cosmovision and the Western worldview.

About the time of my third trip to Peru, I had begun to work on how I could share what I had learned of the Andean Cosmovision with the people of my Western culture. I had two motivations. One was that I had found that this path nourished important aspects of my Being--those parts of myself that value beauty and love and having a meaningful life--that were not being attended to by my Western society. I wanted to share the beauty of this approach with others who might like it as well. The other motivation was that I had come to believe that the Andean Cosmovision could offer a part of the solution for altering the trajectory of Western society toward a future of greater health and beauty for the planet, and away from the abyss of environmental disaster toward which we are careening. I hoped that my position as a professor at a university could serve as a leverage point for me to make a difference in my society.

I had earned my Ph.D. at a research university. At research universities, the hiring, promotion, and the awarding of tenure to professors is largely based upon the quantity of their research (i.e. 'publish or perish'). When I entered my Ph.D. program in psychology I was surprised to discover that a researcher can't just go off and explore something interesting in the field. To succeed as a researcher one has to step into the specific topics currently being explored in the discipline, and work exclusively there. The topics one is allowed to explore within a discipline define the current "paradigm" of the field.

I had been drawn to the field of psychology by my interests in humanistic psychology (the study of the full potential of our existence as human beings) and the psychology of consciousness (including altered states of consciousness). The closest fit to my interests I could find in graduate school was the field of cognitive psychology, the scientific study of perception, attention, memory, and consciousness. I found that once I was in graduate school, I had to do a lot more of fitting my interests to the current paradigm than expanding the paradigm to fit my interests. I had grown up as (among other things) a 'boy scientist' and I did enjoy being a scientist within field of psychology. Still, I found that graduate school had moved me away from my deepest interests in psychology. For reasons that are important to me but would be too big of a digression to explain here, by the time I finished my Ph.D. program I had lost all my respect for research in psychology and was generally disillusioned with academia itself. As my father--whom I loved and respected--was a dean and a university professor, I thought this was saying a lot.

In looking for a career I could make out of my degree, I accepted a faculty position at a small teaching university. At teaching universities, faculty are hired, promoted, and granted tenure, based primarily upon the quality of their teaching. We were still expected to stay current with developments in our field, but with bigger teaching loads compared to faculty in research institutions, we were not required to do original research. While I was disillusioned with the state of research within psychology, I do

love teaching, and therefore it is something I can excel at, and my career as a professor of psychology progressed nicely. And, freed from *having* to do research that fit within the current paradigm, I began to do research in the areas in which I was deeply interested.

My university had small, faculty-development, grants that they could award to faculty to help them stay current in their field or to engage in original research. They awarded me with grants to help defray the costs of my first two trips to Peru. As part of the deal, after I returned from each trip I gave a presentation to the university community about my research in Peru. I have found that writing or giving presentations on a topic forces me to think much more deeply about it. It was during my preparation for those presentations that I came up with my general conceptual framework for thinking about, and talking about, the Andean Cosmovision. I provide a brief description of that framework below.

1. A society's worldview is based upon a set of assumptions about the basic nature of reality. These assumptions are rarely brought to light to be examined because...well...they are assumed to be true.
2. Science and Western religion have some important differences. Indeed, I spent significant time in my courses laying out the differences between the two. Both science and Western religion, however, have arisen within the Western worldview, and thus they share some basic assumptions about the nature of reality.
3. The Andean Cosmovision--my term for the worldview found in the indigenous people of the Andes--is based upon a different set of assumptions and thus is *fundamentally* different than the Western worldview. The Andean Cosmovision is not conceptual in nature, it cannot be described or encompassed with words. Translation from the one worldview to the other is not possible. This means, among other things, that the Andean Cosmovision cannot be understood through the spectacles of either the scientific approach or Western religion.
4. The assumptions that form the foundation for a society's worldview will make it easy for the society to excel at some things while making it difficult for the society to excel at other things. This is an unavoidable aspect of worldviews. The assumptions underlying the Western worldview make it easy for us to excel at technology and at accumulating information, but make it difficult for us to actually experience our connection to nature and the rest of the Cosmos. The assumptions underlying the Andean Cosmovision make it easy for the individuals in that society to experience their connection with nature and the Cosmos, but I doubt they would ever have gotten around to inventing the internal combustion engine.
5. Western society is in a car speeding toward the edge of the cliff of environmental disaster, while we sit in the back seat playing with or arguing over our toys and test tubes. When we sail over the edge, no saying we are sorry will make any difference, and we will take much of what is beautiful in this world with us. The good news is that we have all the knowledge and technology we need to head toward a future of greater beauty and health for this planet. Incredibly, however, given a choice between a future of greater health and beauty on this planet; or a future of mass extinctions, ecological devastation, war, injustice, and poverty; the momentum of Western society is towards the latter. While we have the information and technology we need for a more beautiful future, we apparently lack the heart to head in that direction. The Andean worldview has the heart, but not the technology. Rather than selecting one worldview (Western or Andean) over the other, the solution could be to integrate the two worldviews, giving us both the means *and* the heart to change our society's trajectory. This was the state-able goal of my research in Peru as I presented it to the university. I also had, and

have, some goals that are ineffable as they lay outside the Western worldview. These have to do with love, beauty, and meaning. These goals, while I could not express them explicitly, were implied in my presentations. My university did not hold them against me.

My presentations to the university faculty and students on my work in Peru were well received. In general, I found that the faculty at my teaching university were more broad-minded, more interested in interdisciplinary studies, and less interested in staying within the current paradigm than the faculty in my graduate school.

A few days after I gave the presentation that covered my second trip to Peru, four students walked into my office and sat down. They informed me that they were not leaving my office until I agreed to teach them more about the Andean Cosmovision. I was both amused and touched, and I agreed. First I made sure they understood that I could not tell them much about the Cosmovision, that it was something that could only be explored experientially through meditation. They agreed. We began to meet on Saturday mornings, driving out of town some 10 miles to a nice, isolated, spot in the desert, where we engaged in some of the Andean meditations I had learned from don Américo.

I got a great amount out of leading the students through those meditations. A bit of that, perhaps, was simply that their interest and participation validated to me that the path I was walking had value. A lot of it, though, came from what I learned by teaching the meditations to others. To help them enter into the states of consciousness for which the meditations were a portal, I would had to first enter into those states myself. There was also the extra oomph that comes from meditating with a group of people who are all doing the same meditation. Both of these deepened my own experience of the path. After the meditations we would compare notes on our experiences, and from that I learned a great deal about the meditations from hearing how they affect various people. These meditation classes marked the beginning of my truly sharing this path with my society. Since that time I have taught several hundred experiential workshops and classes on the Andean Cosmovision.

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On our third trip to Peru Bob, Gina, Judy, and I were joined by two more people. One was Bob's girlfriend Nancy, who had never been to Peru before. The other was a woman named Sally. Some months before the trip, Arilu had contacted us and asked if we would be willing to let another person join us. Arilu informed us that Sally had previously brought a few groups to Peru to work with don Américo, and that she was very interested in going to Ccochamocco with us. Arilu stressed that the decision of whether or not to include Sally was up to us and that it would be ok if we said no. The four of us talked about this for a bit before we decided. We were a little hesitant to let someone whom we didn't know join our group. The four of us--the Apu Chim--were very compatible and we had shared some life-changing experiences in our first two trips to Peru. We also had a very "horizontal" relationship with each other, in that none of us was the leader, none of us ran things or made decisions without consulting the others. Sally--on the other hand--was used to being the group leader when she brought others to Peru. We decided, however, to err on the side of being inclusive and welcome Sally, particularly as it seemed like it was kind of like a favor to Arilu as well.

We didn't express our original concerns to either Sally or Arilu, but after we told Sally that she was welcome to join us she wrote to us to let us know that she had no pretensions of being in charge, that she just wanted to be part of the gang. I thought it was considerate and kind of her to have anticipated

our concerns, and take steps to ease them. I subsequently added that to my repertoire of how I want to interact with the world.

This trip to Peru was during my summer break at the university. I didn't have to rush in and out of Peru to minimize the time I would be away from teaching. I thus arrived several days before we were scheduled to meet with Américo, to enjoy once again hanging around, exploring Cusco, and immersing myself in its culture. The hostel where Arilu had arranged for us to stay was a pleasant, family-run, and inexpensive hostel, not far from the Plaza de Armas. It was located on Avenida Pardo--a street that runs (more or less) parallel to the Avenida el Sol--and about six blocks from the Plaza.

Avenida Pardo is quieter than Avenida el Sol. Quieter, but not quiet. In Cusco there is traffic noise during all but the wee hours of the night, and the windows in most of the hostals are single-paned and don't close tightly. Street noise is just part of the ambience of Cusco. I have subsequently stayed in hostals located along the Avenida Pardo on many of my trips to Peru. Pardo has less foot traffic and fewer shops than the Avenida el Sol, and I don't feel quite as safe walking down it from the Plaza de Armas at night, so I will often walk down the Avenida el Sol until I get close to the hostel and then cut over to Pardo.

For some of its length Avenida Pardo has a wide median which serves as a plaza. There, in the early evening, I have often see groups of teenagers--dressed in Levis, sweat shirts, and sneakers--practicing indigenous dances, laughing and chatting and generally acting like teenagers everywhere. If I'm walking by I usually stop, or if I am in my room I will sit and look out the window or stand on a balcony, and enjoy watching them practice. Then, in the next day or so, they appear in their traditional clothing, dancing and singing in one of the many parades or celebrations in the Plaza de Armas. As I watch and listen to these young people singing and dancing their traditional songs, in their traditional clothing, in the Plaza de Armas, it feels as if they open a portal that connects my heart with the ancient, eternal, energy of the Andes.

Shortly after I arrived in Cusco, Américo dropped by the hostel to welcome me. As usual, I had arrived exhausted from the journey and burned out by the energy, time, and money it took for me to return to Peru, and I was still primarily existing within the Western worldview. But then I was with Américo, and my energy, particularly in my heart area, began to blossoming again, and in talking to him I knew that being there at this particular time on this particular adventure was perhaps the most beautiful thing going on at that moment on the planet. One of the many "pinch-me" moments I have had in Peru.

Bob and Nancy arrived in Cusco the following day. This was the first time Nancy had been in Cusco. Cusco--particularly on your first visit there--hits you like a ton of bricks; the noise, the traffic, the diesel fumes, the very high altitude, and just the general energy of the City and its culture. In addition, right after they arrived, Arilu phoned to let us know that, sorry, but she had forgotten to include in her estimate of our expenses the cost of purchasing gas for the bus we were going to rent. This added--not a lot but a noticeable amount--to the costs of the trip, which we were all a bit strapped to meet anyway. This was all too much for Nancy, and Bob told me that she was in their room, with the covers pulled over her head, crying herself to sleep. I thought that this was a very reasonable response to the whole thing.

For the next few days (Nancy had recovered) we had the fun of exploring Cusco, revisiting some of our favorite places (e.g. having a cappuccino on the balcony overlooking the Plaza de Armas) and

discovering new places. Bob found a musical instrument shop located in a small courtyard off the main streets. It was full of hand made instruments, many of them shaped like animals. They looked to be of ancient design, like something the Inca's might have played, but they could very well have been of modern inspiration. The point was that they were unique and interesting and not something that could be found in the tourist stalls. I purchased a ceramic flute shaped like a turtle. I also bought a ceramic jaguar that had a tube rising from its back like a chimney. Blowing down the tube creates a high pitch note that sounds to me like something that could call in the animal spirits. All I know is that when I, much later, wined it in my house, my two cats jumped to their feet and looked around in alarm. Of course, other things do that to them as well.

On that trip I was able to take a big step forward in how I could communicate with my family back home, which was a big thing for me. On my first trip to Peru the only way I could contact my wife Betsy, other than by post card, was to phone her. This was in the days before cell phones. To help me phone Betsy, Arilu took me down to the phone company where I had to pay in advance, take a number, and wait 40 minutes for my turn to use one of their telephones. By this third trip, however, the internet had stretched tentative threads into Cusco. Wifi was not around yet, and the hostals didn't have internet, but there were small shops in Cusco where I could plunk down a little bit of money and use one of their computers to access email. These places displayed signs with "@" outside their doors.

The place I liked was located at the end of the Avenida el Sol. The Avenida doesn't quite make it to the Plaza de Armas. When you reach the top of the Avenida el Sol you run into a 'T' intersection and have to turn right on Mantas for 50 feet to reach the Plaza de Armas or left towards Plaza San Francisco. If you go straight instead and cross the street you run into a line of stores along Mantas. Among those shops was a small, run-down, tourist gift store, and in the back of the store, down some steps into a dimly lit basement, were six computers. For about 80 cents an hour I could sit and access email.

Being so far from home in such a different culture where I spoke so little of the language was still exciting and a bit scary for me. One of the challenges I faced was that their keyboard was different than the ones in the U.S. The all important '@' sign, for example, was nowhere to be seen. I found someone who could show me the three-key press combination needed to get to it. Emails were still a little new to me too, and I realized as I sat in front of the screen that I had no understanding of how to access an email program on a computer in Peru. I had always accessed email through programs on my computers at home and my office where I had email applications. Someone helped me with this too, and this is when I first found out about Google mail. Finding a place and successfully pulling off accessing email was an adventure (and I was a little proud of myself).

I was happily sitting there in the basement writing emails to my family when I heard live music...Andean parade music...lots of horns and drums. I ran upstairs and out to the sidewalk to find a big parade was passing by. A large statue of a saint, sitting in a chair, was being carried on the shoulders of a score of strong-looking men. Behind the litter a band of horns and drums walked, blaring out Andean music. Looking back down Mantas towards the mercado I could see a long line of statues of saints, females and males, being carried along, each followed by a band. The streets had become packed, nothing but humanity for as far down the street as I could see in both directions. The statues of the female saints were being carried demurely, but the statues of the male saints were jauntily rocked right and left and back and forth so that they danced as they went along. It was noisy, it was crowded, it was festive.

When the opportunity arose I dashed across the street to a restaurant where I had spotted an empty table next to the window facing the parade. I plunked myself down there, ordered a beer, and settled into a very nice time watching the parade go by. It was one of those unplanned high points of traveling. Many years later--when I took a group of friends to Peru--I was sitting in that same restaurant with my friend Karen, telling her about how it seems like every time I visit Cusco I see a parade. Five minutes later a parade came by.

After we had been in Cusco for several days, it was time for us to meet with Américo and start our adventure together. Before we headed to Q'ero, Américo took us to Salka Wasi for a few days. I believe that this was both to give our bodies a chance to acclimate to the high altitudes we would face in getting to Ccochamocco, and to tune our energy for our visit with the Q'ero. The finer the state of our energy the more we would be able to harmonize with the energy of the Q'ero, and the further they would be able to take us in ceremony. I say that "I believe" this was the agenda for Salka Wasi. Américo simply invites us to do things and we go along.

We took the now familiar route up into the Andes, past Huancarani, and down into Paucartambo. Both in Incan times and Colonial times, Paucartambo served as an important gateway connecting the energy of the jungle with that of the high Andes. It is sleepy, adobe, town huddled on the foot of the mountains and perched on the bank above the Paucartambo River. I asked Américo how many people live there, and he said he thought about 7,000, if you included the many people living outside the town on the slopes of the nearby mountains.

Instead of turning right and heading up the side of the mountain towards Salka Wasi, we turned left and drove downstream along the river for a few miles to Molino. Molino is a place that Gayle has been fixing up. It was an old, abandoned, mill made of adobe that had once belonged to one of his relatives. It is situated at the confluence of two rivers, the large Paucartambo River and another, smaller, river that cascades down from the mountains that line the Paucartambo valley.

On our first two trips to Peru we had stopped at Molino to have lunch on the way to Salka Wasi. Gayle had at that time completed work on a dining room, with a long wooden table and windows overlooking the river. On this trip we were going to spend a night in Molino before heading up to Salka Wasi. The main building that had the dining room at one end also had three other rooms that had been turned into bedrooms. Like Salka Wasi, the rooms were simple, clean, and cheerful; with a few Andean knickknacks sitting in the deep adobe windowsills, colorful Andean woolen blankets on the beds, and candles for light.

Gayle has an incredible artistic touch when it comes to architecture and landscaping. Everything about Molino is both rustic and beautiful. The walk down from where we parked the bus was lined with flowers on both sides, and in places flowering vines arched overhead. The path led through an adobe outbuilding with two rooms. One room was where Maria (from Salka Wasi) lived with her children when she was cooking for guests in Molino, the other room--through which the path led--was larger with a big wood-fired domed oven that in the olden days served as the bread-baking oven for the people in the surrounding communities. There were flowers growing everywhere on the grounds around the building, and Gayle had recently planted scores of fruit trees and an organic garden. There was also a flat stretch of grass between the building and the river, where we could meet and meditate. The whole place is a mixture of salka (undomesticated energy) and those domesticated things that make the human heart hum. It is as if Mother Nature had taken up gardening there. And there is the

ever present roar of the Paucartambo River just a few dozen yards away, a noise that permeates the soul.

Before moving on, there is a story I would like to share about Américo and Molino. When they began working on Molino, Américo did not have the same close relationship with the communities around Molino that he had with Mollamarca (the village next to Salka Wasi). He was concerned about what they might think about someone coming in and fixing up Molino. I believe that he was worried that they might be jealous, covetous, or suspicious. This is how he handled it. He instructed the groundskeeper at Molino to unlock the door to the dining room, and lay out wine and bread on the table, every Thursday afternoon. Américo then let it be known in the surrounding area that anyone who wanted to was welcome to stop by on Thursdays, check out the place, and help themselves to some wine and bread. He did this for several years.

Bob and I were given the room where Américo stayed when there were no guests at Molino. It was a rather large room with two beds. Américo's nice saddle was stored in the room, perched on a wooden saw horse. The room had a door to a balcony overlooking the river. I don't know where Américo stayed while we were there, he had given the best room to his guests.

We arrived at Molino before lunch. Américo had an errand to run in Paucartambo, and asked us if anyone would like to join him and have lunch there. I said "sure!"

For lunch we entered one of the restaurants situated next to the road as you approach Paucartambo from Cusco, and overlooking the river. All the people there looked like they were locals. It was a pretty simple place. The tables had thick, clear, sheets of plastic taped to them as table cloths. The host put down a plate and spoon in front of us, along with a few squares of toilet paper to serve as napkins. The walls were decorated with old beer posters. Several flies were wandering around on the tables and walls. There was no menu. Américo ordered us both a bowl of soup. While we were waiting for our meal a dog wandered in and made the rounds of the tables looking on the floor for scraps. When the host returned he drove the dog out of the restaurant, but it came back a few minutes later. Our soup arrived, a watery looking thing with some questionable-looking meat, but Américo said it was safe to eat. We were also given a crust of bread each.

It suddenly struck me, quite strongly, that I was very much in the real Peru. Not one of the places in Peru that have adapted to meet the tastes of tourists, but in a small restaurant, in a small remote town, high in the Andes, eating lunch with the locals. It was a facet of Peru that few tourists get to see. I looked at Américo and said, quite sincerely, "Thank you Américo. This is wonderful. I really feel like I'm getting to experience Peru." He gave me a pleased look, and responded, "That is great, Oakley. So many people come to Peru just for the mysticism, and they aren't really all that interested in actually getting to know the place." It seemed an important moment to me in my relationship with Américo.

The next morning, as we were having breakfast, Américo asked me which I liked better, Molino or Salka Wasi. I really like Molino, with its river energy and flowers and comfortable temperature. It is a place that succors the human body and heart, and it has the ever present roar of the great river to cleanse the soul. Salka Wasi is more secluded and at a much higher altitude. When I am in Salka Wasi I feel like I am standing in the Cosmos. At night I can almost touch the stars. I feel more intimately connected with the Andean people there (the people of Mollamarca) than I do anywhere else in Peru. It is a place where my consciousness expands easily into the Cosmos. I explained that to Américo, and



then concluded that while I like Molino very much, I like Salka Wasi more. He paused, and then said quietly to me that he does too.

After breakfast, we all walked from Molino up to where Dante and our bus were waiting for us. Dante then drove back through Paucartambo and onto the dirt road that climbs the side of the mountains, rising high above the river, to the village of Mollamarca and Salka Wasi.

We spent three days and nights at Salka Wasi: meditating in the garden, meeting with Américo in the mornings and afternoons, eating delicious local food crafted by Abolino, having the women of the village come down to sell us their handcrafted wares, taking walks along the mountain side or down to the river, and spending the early evening hours writing by candlelight, chatting with each other, or listening to Américo tell us stories of his life.

One time Américo was traveling in the Andes on horseback with some friends from Italy. It was getting dark and then it began to snow. Américo was lost and growing anxious about leading his friends to safety. In the dim light of dusk they rode up to an old man who was sitting on a stone. He was wearing a hat and his head was bowed so that his face could not be seen. Américo approached him and said "Papa, excuse me, but can you direct us back to the road?" The old man slowly raised his head and looked up at him. The man's eyes were silver and glowing. Américo and his friends fled. They traveled further on. It was getting darker and still snowing. Then, an old, indigenous, Andean woman appeared through the snow, coming seemingly from nowhere, and approached them. She informed them that it was dangerous place for them to be. Américo explained their situation to her. She said nothing and turned and walked away, singing in Quechua, and the snow stopped. They found their way back to the road.

While we were staying at Salka Wasi, Maria did some more amazing energy work on us. We gathered in the living room. It was late afternoon and Salka Wasi had no electricity so the only light was what came in through the expanse of windows facing the garden and out to the canyon beyond. We were bundled up for it was cold. After we had been waiting for a while Maria and one of her daughters entered the room, dressed in their indigenous clothing. We had awaited them in respectful and anticipatory silence. Maria worked on us one at a time. When it was my turn she had me take off my shoes and stand on a spray of flowers that she had laid on the floor. She then tucked the end of a ball of yarn under one of my feet. Softly speaking in Quechua she then wound the yarn around and around my body, working from my feet up to my head. When she reached the crown of my head, she had me lean over (as I am quite a bit taller than she) and blew a blessing down into my body through the top of my head. Then, speaking more forcibly in Quechua, she worked her way back down my body, repeatedly and sharply breaking the coils of yarn that were wrapped around me. When she was finished, she gathered up the broken strands of yarn and gave them to her daughter, who collected them into a ball and took them outside and gave them to a man who was waiting there.

When Maria had finished with all of us the man ran down the mountain to the river and cast the ball of yarn into the Paucartambo River. That was his designated role. After the ceremony, Américo told us that Maria had broken the energetic coils that bind us and that keep our salka energy imprisoned. The yarn would now float down the Paucartambo River to the jungle, where it would glide into the Amazon River, and then be carried on a 4,000 mile journey to the Atlantic. When the yarn reached the ocean then our energy would be freed. It was a beautiful ceremony.

After our stay in Salka Wasi we traveled back to Cusco for a night to resupply, and then we took off the next morning on our journey to the Q'ero village of Ccochamocco. By the way, I wish that I could report more of the activities and experiences of Bob, Gina, Judy, Sally, and Nancy in this adventure. It has been many years since that trip (over 20 years as I write this) and they are now in my mind woven inseparably into the larger tapestry of what happened. What I have available in my memory and in my notes are the echoes of my own thoughts and experiences of the time, and these are what I can share with you.

That morning, Dante and his bus picked us up at our hostel and on the way out of town we dropped by Américo's house in Cusco to be joined by Américo, Arilu, Gayle, and two of Gayle's friends who were coming along to help; Fernando (who was to join us on later trips to Peru), rojo (a friendly red-headed young man whom I had not met before), and Javier (who was to serve as our Spanish-English translator). As usual, Américo was our Quechua-Spanish translator.

We drove for five hours on a dirt road that took us from Cusco further up into the high Andes, through small villages perched on the slopes of the towering mountains, beyond the context of the Western world. In the late afternoon we pulled into a dirt parking area just past the village of Pacchantapampa. Américo had asked us to bring tents and sleeping bags and everything we would need to camp. We setup our tents, and Bob and I spent the time before dinner visiting with (more like hanging out with as we did not speak Quechua) the children who had come from the village to check us out.

While we were there I approached Américo about a problem I was having. Throughout the previous year I had been experiencing intermittent tingling and weakness in my right leg. Occasionally I found walking to be painful. I had seen a number of doctors about this and had undergone a whole slew of tests. None of the tests uncovered the cause of my symptoms. Despite not knowing the nature of the problem I had decided that I was going to be able to handle the trip to Peru. In Pacchantapampa I asked Américo if he could look at my leg energetically, and "see" what the problem might be. He stepped back and looked at me for a while and then announced that he could see nothing wrong at the energetic level.

The significance of this was that, to Américo, my willingness to head up into the high, remote, areas of the Andes; far from the nearest road; with a gammy leg; was an exhibition of significant courage on my part. I have come to discover that Américo values courage--not bravado nor machismo nor foolishness--but a willingness to take the risks (physical, emotional, intellectual) that can arise while pursuing a path of heart. Several times in the years after this trip he has asked--during some conversation with others where this would be relevant--for me to tell them about my heading to Q'ero with a bad leg. At first I was concerned that I had miscommunicated with him at the time, and that perhaps I had made my leg sound worse than it was. I attempted to check this out with him and correct his impression if necessary. But in doing so, I realized that my actions had been indeed significant to him. Over the subsequent many years of our friendship, there have been occasions, when in looking back, I have realized that Américo had been gently testing my courage, or at least, that circumstances had given me a chance to exhibit it. These are deeply significant to me, and I will share them when we get to them in later stories of my times with Américo.

The next morning at Pacchantapampa, four Q'ero arrived to accompany us to Ccochamocco: Américo's close friend, the venerable don Pascual (The "Merlin of the Andes"); don Domingo (he of the ready and beautiful smiles); don Bonito (who was to be our official 'host' in the village); and a fourth Q'ero

(whom I didn't know and whose name I do not recall). Our horses also arrived that morning. The horses were managed by a campesino named Matus--who was not from Q'ero--and he had brought with him a couple of additional men as helpers.

After breakfast we mounted the horses and followed a dirt trail up the bottom of a canyon high up into the mountains. Américo, Arilu, Bob, Gina, Judy, Nancy, Sally, and I rode horses. Several more horses were loaded up with all the gear. Everyone else walked. Gayle and his friends carried backpacks.

Every few miles, as we worked our way up the long canyon, we would pass a lone dwelling surrounded by stacked stone walls. It led me to wonder what life was like for these people, living in such isolation, miles from their neighbors, far from any roads, high in the Andes of Peru. We spent the day climbing higher and higher up into the mountains. Occasionally we would stop and take a break, sitting on the sparse, stiff, chicha grass, in the cold air and warm sun.

Our horses were the typical Andean variety, barrel chested with short legs. In the photos of that trip, Bob and I look outsized for the horses, our legs seeming to almost drag on the ground. I would, at times, get off my horse and walk, but I found that after 50 yards or so I was so exhausted by the thinness of the air that I would have to climb back onto my horse. I noticed, about then, that not only was Gayle walking the whole way, and carrying a backpack, he was also wearing ankle weights.

Towards the end of the day, we reached the first of the two summits of our journey. The land around us was stunning at 17,000 feet. Looking back in the direction from which we came, there stretched in magnificent splendor were Apu Ausangate and the other Apus that were his wife and daughters; majestic, awe inspiring, rugged peaks of stone, under a roof of high, dark, clouds. The Apus stood in great clarity in the thin air, seeming close enough to touch, marching off into the distance in a land of beautiful desolation.

It was, perhaps, the most incredible view of my life. It was also very cold at 17,000 feet, the wind was blowing, and it was time to move on. We headed down the other side of the pass.

Around suppertime we reached the floor of a high valley and Américo announced that we would be setting up camp there for the night. He said this location was called "Ancasi (Where Eagles Perch)" and that it marked the beginning of the Q'ero lands. The valley held just a few houses and some alpaca corrals marked off by stacked-stone walls.

We setup our tents while Arilu, Gayle, and his friends cooked dinner. As it got dark we sat, leaning against a stone wall, relaxing from the long day's journey and talking with Américo. He informed us, much to my surprise, that he had not notified the elders of Ccochamocco of our coming, nor asked their permission for us to visit, and that thus he could not guarantee that we would be welcome. As that information percolated through my mind he added, "But, I have been visiting this village for over 20 years. They know that I would not bring anyone whose heart was not open. Everything should be fine."

The next morning we climbed up to the second pass, also at about 17,000 feet. The terrain was less rugged here, lined by towering hills rather than rocky peaks. As we plodded on I noticed that don Domingo was now carrying a boom box (a large, portable, battery-operated, music player) on his shoulder. It raised again for me the issues around the Western world sweeping up the Andes like a

tsunami and what I could do help when it crests the hills surrounding Q'ero. It was clear to me that my task was not to stop the West (beyond my power), nor recommend to the Q'ero that they keep it at bay (not my business), but to help them retain what they value in the face of it. This being against, perhaps, all odds, given the history of what happens when Western economic and religious powers move into an indigenous culture. What to do was not clear to me at the time, but I can't imagine how anyone with at least half a heart wouldn't care. I was resolved to do something.

Around midday we reached the second summit, called "The Llamas Neck". It was much less spectacular than the first, being just a saddle between two high hills. We paused there for a lengthy lunch break. As we were sitting there munching on bread and cheese, Américo pointed out that the Q'ero were sitting all huddled together. He said that they always do that to keep warm. I can't remember who thought of it, but we decided that we wanted to show them a Western variation of that. So, we introduced to them the "Choo-Choo" formation. We all (the Westerners and the Q'ero) lined up sitting down as if we were riding a long toboggan, and then when everyone was situated we showed them how to move their arms as if we were powering train wheels, chanting "choo-choo" amidst a great deal of laughter.

There are several Western shaman training centers that work with the Q'ero (having the Q'ero do ceremonies with the groups that the centers bring to Peru). At the time, there was a turf war among the training centers concerning who would get to "have" the Q'ero. Américo has always sailed in under the radar of these politics. The Q'ero are simply his friends, and have been for all of his life, and he just quietly arranges to get together with his friends. On my most recent trip to Peru, the Q'ero told me that one of the things they love about working with Américo is that when they work with the others everyone is so serious, and when they are with Américo they laugh a lot.

After our lunch break we headed over the pass to the land beyond. The pass was an apocheta. There are various definitions of the term "apocheta". When you pass over the shoulder of an Apu in the Andes you will find a tall pile of stones. These stones are left there by travelers who have used the stones to connect their energy with the Apu. Such a pile of stones is called an apocheta. An apocheta can also be thought of as a portal between two different geographic energies. If you have ever traveled through the mountains, and coming around a corner or over a pass you suddenly see the plains stretching out before you, that is an apocheta also, a place where the energy of the geography changes. When traveling by truck with the Q'ero, when we pass through an apocheta they will thump on the roof of the truck and Américo will pull over. The Q'ero then get out with their flutes and their mesas and have a little ceremony to mark the change of energy and to request permission to enter the new land.

Just past the summit the trail began to drop sharply, and there, to our right stood majestic Apu Wamanlipa, towering high above us. Wamanlipa is the Apu that has the village of Ccochamocco within its realm. We stopped to honor it, and ask permission to enter its domain. Then we continued down the path.

We were soon enveloped in clouds, a common occurrence in the late afternoon in that part of the Andes. It was cold and it started to rain. We made our way down the side of the mountains as quickly and as we safely could. When we reached a flattish place, just before a hill, Américo announced that we had arrived. Ccochamocco, he informed us, was just on the other side of the hill. He added, however, that we shouldn't just barge in there, and that we should wait until tomorrow morning when our meeting with the people could be done in an appropriate manner. Bob and I asked him if it would

be ok for us to climb to the top of the hill and look at the village from there and Américo said that would be fine.

So, Bob and I climbed to the top of the hill. The hill was covered with chicha grass growing between scattered rocks. It wasn't a very tall hill but we were at 15,000 feet, and we huffed and puffed a great deal getting to the top. There, just a couple of hundred yards away and somewhat below us, was the village of Ccochamocco, nestled on a slope at the foot of Apu Wamanlipa. It was a small village of stone huts. There were no phone or electric wires in the village, no vehicles or machines of any sort, just some colorful clothing set out to dry, several alpacas, and a few people moving quietly around the houses. It was a scene from beyond the edge of the world, it was incredible.

After soaking it in for a while and taking some photos, Bob and I walked back down to where camp was being set up. Our group had stopped by a small, circular, alpaca corral walled by stacked stones. Américo was talking to its owner, who had granted us permission to setup camp there. We Westerners, and Américo and Arilu, put up our tents within the corral. Gayle and his friends set their tents up outside the corral. The Q'ero who had travelled with us had gone on to the village.

Soon after our tents were up, as the light of day was waning, a delegation of Q'ero arrived from the village. Among them were some of the Q'ero who had traveled with us, including don Pascual, as well as some village elders that were new to us. Introductions were made. A very old and venerable looking Q'ero was introduced to us as don Fabio, whom we were informed was don Domingo's father. Américo was very pleased that Fabio happened to be in Ccochamocco. He was, Américo informed us, one of the highest and most revered of the Q'ero paq'os (an "alto mesayoq"), and he would be leading our karpay ceremony. A few children from the village had come with them.

We all sat around in a small circle by the alpaca corral. Coca leaves were brought out, as well as sacred tobacco (in the form of unfiltered Marlborough cigarettes), and a bottle of pisco (brandy). As the bottle was passed around the circle we each filled its tiny cap with pisco, offered a few drops to Pachamama, and then drank the rest of the capful. This meeting was an important first step in our visit, a chance for the elders to determine whether or not our energy was compatible with their own.

After the elders returned to the village a man named Andres approached Américo. Américo turned to us and said that Andres had offered to guard the energy of the alpaca corral during the evening. I'm not sure why I raised an eyebrow (metaphorically) about this offer, whether I sensed that Américo wasn't convinced, or whether I just suspected this was a way to get some ayni from us, but we said ok. I did find it interesting, and perhaps relevant, that the next morning those who stayed in the tents outside the corral talked about how incredibly cold it had been during the night, while those of us in the corral thought it wasn't that bad. We were a little shaded from the wind inside the corral, but it didn't seem like that was enough to explain the difference.

The next morning I awoke just as it started to get light. I zipped open the door to my tent, poked my head out, and looked around. Javier spotted me and came over to ask if I would like some coffee. Oh man! Waking up in a camp at 15,000 feet and being offered coffee first thing, it doesn't get much better than that.

I got dressed--in many layers to keep warm--and clambered out of my tent. The sun had just risen, and most of our party were still asleep. I sat on a rock, sipping my coffee, and began writing in my journal.

After a few minutes, I looked up from my writing, and there, just a few feet away, a young girl from the village was standing, staring at me. She had apparently walked over from the village to check us out. Just at that moment Sally, leaned out of her tent and took our picture...bless her heart...it is one of my all-time favorite photographs.

I gave the little girl a smile that blossomed from my heart. She seemed to be shy and yet wanting to connect with me. We couldn't converse. I still didn't know more than a few expressions in Quechua, and they all escaped me at that moment anyway. But having been the father of young children I knew how to communicate with her with my tone of voice and expressions and gestures. I greeted her and told her how happy I was to meet her. I looked at her necklace and told her how pretty it was. She came over and sat next to me on the rock, and I put my arm around her, and together we watched the camp wake up and the morning begin. Sally took another picture of us. The little girl and I sat there, in heart-felt companionship, in silence, in salka, for about half an hour. It was one of the high points of my life. At times I wonder how she is now, what effect if any did our meeting have on her, is she having a good life? I hope so.

Many, many, years later I was giving a presentation on my work in Peru to faculty and graduate students in the psychology department at the University of Utah (a research-oriented institution). When I finished telling them the story about the little girl, the head of the experimental psychology program said, "That is a nice story Oakley, but did anything important happen during that trip?" Earlier in my life I would have been offended or worried (about my acceptance by the department), instead I was amused...one of the benefits of having more years under my belt.

Don Américo wasn't around during breakfast that day. Somewhat later he joined us at camp and informed us that he had had an important meeting that morning with don Fabio. As part of the larger context around having the karpay ceremony, in that meeting Fabio had to demonstrate to Américo that he was capable of doing the level of energy work that the karpay required. This was necessary even though Américo knew don Fabio and his impressive abilities. Américo, for his part, had to take responsibility that we were all energetically prepared to participate in the ceremony. He told us that there would be consequences for him if we were not, although he didn't specify what those were. He then informed us that everything went well and that the karpay would be held the next day. First we needed to meet the people of the village and being the process of meshing our energies. That was today's agenda.

About an hour later Américo led us around the hill and into the village of Ccochamocco. We sat down on the slope next to don Pascual's house. It was a small rectangular abode with walls of stone and a thatched roof, like all the houses in the village. Américo disappeared inside, and after a few minutes he came out with Pascual and we walked out of the village to a flat area where all the villagers were sitting in a circle awaiting our arrival. There were around 45 villagers; children, women, and men. They made room for us in their circle and we sat down.

Américo started things off by making a beautiful speech about the significance of this moment, speaking first to the Q'ero in Quechua and then to us in Spanish, which Javier then translated into English. Some of the men and women of the village then spoke, as did each of us. Smiles were spreading and hearts were opening. We then gave the Q'ero some presents we had brought with us. Américo had suggested that we not bring toys that required batteries--as obviously it would be hard for them to get replacements--so for the children I had brought some yo-yos. (I just now looked at the

internet to see how to spell yo-yo and discovered from wikipedia that a Greek vase painting from 440 BC shows a boy playing with a yo-yo). While the meeting progressed I noticed that Javier had taken some of the children aside to show them how to yo-yo. Someone else had brought peel-off stickers of hearts and butterflies and hummingbirds and stars. In the photos of us all together you can see that some of the women and children applied the stickers to their cheeks and foreheads to good effect. It was a happy and amiable gathering with lots of smiles and laughter.

On the agenda for after lunch was a soccer match between Gayle, his friends, and the men who tended the horses on one team, and the young men of Ccochamocco on the other. It was the most surreal sports competition I have ever witnessed, and I suspect one of the most surreal on the planet. The young men on the Ccochamocco team appeared wearing fluorescent pink uniforms, which I was told had been a gift of someone from Germany. The soccer field itself was, at best, *flattish*, with some tree-poles stuck in the ground to mark the goals. The boundary on one side was a ravine with a stream at the bottom of it. When the ball went out of bounds in that direction one of the players had to dash down and retrieve the ball before it made significant progress towards the Amazon. The game official was a gentleman from the village, wearing his traditional clothing...and a wristwatch and whistle. The Q'ero elders sat imperturbably on a hill watching the game, calmly chewing coca leaves, and showing no inclination to do "the wave".

Later that afternoon, an hour or so before dinner, Américo approached me and said that one of the Q'ero would be willing to do some energetic work on my leg. Javier, who knew a little bit of Quechua, offered to accompany me.

Javier and I took the short walk to the village and there we were met by a young man named Nicholas, his wife, and two children. They welcomed us into their house. Like don Pascual's house--like all houses in the village--it was a small, rectangular abode with walls made of stacked stones and a thatched roof. It was rather dark inside, lit by the early-evening light coming in through a small window and by a small fire burning in a stone enclosure on the floor. The house smelled, not unpleasantly, of smoke, for the smoke from the fire did not easily escape through the hole in the roof. The wife tended a pot heating over the fire. I looked around as Nicholas prepared to perform his ceremony. The only metal objects I could see in the house were a knife and the pot (I had noticed a metal shovel outside). It seemed to me that these people were living an almost stone-age existence. I felt greatly honored to have been invited into their house.

Nicholas had me take off my shoe and sock, and roll up my pants leg as far as I could. He then began to bathe my leg with the medicine that had been heating in the pot, while talking softly to my leg in Quechua. This continued for perhaps fifteen minutes. When he was finished I thanked him and his wife most sincerely and gave them some money as *ayni*.

As Javier and I walked back to our camp Javier turned to me and said that I had comported myself very well in there. I truly had no idea what I had done to earn that compliment, but I appreciated it. I did not notice any improvement in my leg after the ceremony, but then it wasn't really bothering me much all that much during the trip either. Sometime after I returned from Peru it was determined that my leg was suffering from a long-term lack of adequate arch support, and my problem was resolved with shoe inserts.

The next morning we had the *karpay* ceremony on the slopes of Apu Wamanlipa. The Q'ero and don

Américo went up the mountain early to prepare for the ceremony. An hour later, Gayle and his friends led us from the village up the slope of Apu Wamanlipa. The morning sunlight lit the mountain. Below us, clouds from the far away jungle were working their way up the valley, as they do almost every day. As we walked up the side of the mountain, we could see way above us, as just small dots, some of the women of the village waiting for us. We slowly climbed and climbed and eventually met the women. Then, as a group, we turned and headed still further up. We rounded a high shoulder of the mountain, and there, at the bottom of the Apu's final peak, we found the others waiting for us. They were sitting in a small, natural, circle of stone, about 10 yards in diameter (which Américo referred to as 'the cup of the mountain'). In silence, partly in respect and partly due to awe, we joined the circle of Q'ero sitting there. Already my consciousness was starting a major shift into some new realm.

I put my daypack down behind me, pulled out my sitting pad, and sat down. Américo welcomed us and gave us a few instructions. We were to feel free to leave the ceremony temporarily if we needed to go pee and he also told us that we could take photos if we wanted, except at times when he would let us know that it would be inappropriate. I didn't want to take photos, I didn't want to distance myself by becoming an observer of the ceremony rather than a Being in the ceremony.

As the Q'ero pulled out their sacred objects and began working with the coca leaves I moved into a deeper and deeper altered state of consciousness. By the time they came around to each of us, moving their mesas down our bodies to clean our energy, blowing down into the crowns of our heads while speaking Quechua, I was in an altered state that equaled in intensity my experiences with psychedelic drugs...yet qualitatively different.

When the karpay ceremony concluded, everyone was in a pleasant, light, happy mood. After relaxing for a bit we all headed back toward the village. This took us over a flat, high, stretch that was wet and mossy...rather like a peat bog but rockier. By then the clouds that were born in the jungle in the morning had risen high enough to envelope us. The world was gray, and everyone and everything more than a score of yards in distance disappeared into the mist. I finally took out my camera, and took the most amazing, mystical, photographs of my life. I chose one of these to serve as the cover of my (first) book.

When we returned to camp we sat in camp chairs and were treated to a capful of Pisco and some chocolate pudding. We were all so light and relaxed. As we were chatting, Américo turned to me and asked, "How can you publish standing under the stars? How can you publish standing under the sun? How can you publish standing in the cup of the mountains?"

After we recovered for a while, we were invited to a party being given in honor of the day by the villagers. It was held in a flat area near the soccer field. I sat on the ground with my back against one of the stone buildings and was soon offered chicha, a type of corn beer, that had been made by the women of the village. The making of chicha was one of the sacred duties of the acclas ("chosen women") in the days of the Incas. Américo let us know that drinking the chicha was purely optional, which perhaps in this case was meant as a warning, but I had some anyway. It was rather terrible, very sour and thin. I later discovered that part of the process of making chicha involves the women chewing corn and then spitting it into the mash.

The next morning we began our journey back to Cusco. We made it about half way to Pacchantapampa and camped for the night. Gayle and the crew had carted up a collapsable table and



chairs for our use on this trip. They put them up that morning for breakfast, and we sat around the table, dressed in our warmest clothes, in an unbelievably isolated side canyon, way, way up in the Andes, having oatmeal and coffee. The food wasn't fancy, but the view and the ambience were astounding.

The next day we made it back to Pacchantapampa and our bus, and drove to Cusco. The night after that, we had an end-of-trip dinner with Américo, Arilu, and the guys. This has become a tradition, which I have kept up in all of my trips to Peru. Arilu suggests a place that is nice enough to be special but not too expensive, and we eat and drink and laugh (a lot), enveloped in affection and happiness, still high from the Andes, and released from the rather intense energetic demands of being on an adventure in Peru. Did I mention lots of laughter, and love? They are not the goals of the trips, they are the natural byproduct.

This was the most romantic of all of my trips to Peru (see the definition of "romantic" at the beginning of this story) and perhaps the most rewarding to my heart. It was also exhausting, I lost twelve pounds during the two weeks of the trip. This was also the last trip to Peru of the Apu Chim, I have not seen Bob or Judy since we parted in the next day in Cusco. Gina and I came down to Peru together for our fourth trip.

I have taken many trips to Peru to work with Américo since that journey and many things have changed. Don Fabio died a month after our visit. Don Pascual died a few years later. Don Domingo disappeared into the abyss. He was apparently walking along the edge of a cliff and fell, all they found in the river below were his poncho and his flute. There is now a paved road to Ccochamocco.