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The Takanakuy: Performing Justice and Reconciliation in Cuzco, Peru

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In the Chumbivilcas Province, in the Peruvian Andes, every December 25th, members of the communities fist-fight each other to settle conflicts, either personal, familial, territorial, etc. Both men and women, adults and children enter the ring. Sometimes opponents agree to fight at the takanakuy in advance, whereas other times one challenges another to a fight at that same moment. Participation is voluntary, so nobody is forced to fight. Fights often last only a few minutes, and the referee watches very closely, making sure the fighters follow the rules: no biting or hair pulling or kicking a grounded opponent. Every

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fight starts and ends with either a hug or a handshake, and many times the former rivals share a drink to seal their new-found friendship. It is expected that through the takanakuy communities will achieve greater peace. That is why it is a celebration. Besides the fighting, the festival involves singing, dancing, eating and drinking, all of which bring the communities together.

Most debates around the takanakuy have focused on violence and bloodshed and have overlooked both the celebratory and reconciliatory dimensions of the festival. These discussions have participated in the depiction of indigenous peoples as the exotic other, which has contributed to the distrust and exclusion of these populations. It is the purpose of this paper to go beyond the portrayal of the takanakuy as a practice of bloodthirsty or naïve people. How does the takanakuy strengthen community bonds? Does the takanakuy foster a community built on “bodily empathy”? How important is bodily experience to notions of justice and reconciliation in the Peruvian Andes? This paper argues that the body is at the center of the takanakuy, but not as site of violence, rather as the site where justice and reconciliation are performed. Thus, borrowing Diana Taylor’s terminology, the body turns into an archive that preserves the memory of past disputes but mainly of resolutions and renewed bonds. The history of the communities, their disagreements and their settlements, is written and continues to be rewritten in the bodies of their members through the takanakuy.

1. Debates around the Takanakuy

Not much has been written about the takanakuy in the social sciences or the humanities. Although the festival has been more popular in mass media, it has often been portrayed as an example of the “backwardness” of the highlanders. A recent short television documentary on the takanakuy – broadcasted in the *Al sexto día* news magazine – describes it as an “eccentric” and “painful” Christmas celebration. The nine-minute long documentary consists of fighting scenes with sound effects that last more than eight minutes, and only in the last ten seconds the narrator mentions that the festival brings together the members of the communities. Thus, the singing, dancing, eating and drinking that also take place during the takanakuy are pushed into the background in order to highlight the “violence” of the fights. Even though the narrator does point out that the fights are subjected to specific rules, the documentary aims to either repulse or to fascinate the viewer with the spectacle of punches and kicks. Besides, the documentary does not include a single interview with the participants of the takanakuy, preventing them from having a say in how their practice is presented to a larger audience.

In recent decades, the takanakuy has been questioned by both state and clerical authorities. In 2014 documentary director Manolo Alcalde accused TV Perú, the public broadcasting television network, of censoring his feature *Takanakuy: cuando la sangre hierve* (2014). TV Perú had promoted the documentary, but later decided not to broadcast it. According to Alcalde, the

then Minister of Women and Vulnerable Populations, Carmen Omonte, had played a big part in this decision. Omonte denied the accusations. However, her ministry issued a statement condemning the participation of children in the takanakuy: “Although the state is respectful of cultural practices, these situations could have an immediate effect on the emotional life of the children and even be a cause of post-traumatic stress disorder” (quoted in Perú.com)¹. Alcalde responded that, even though children do participate in the takanakuy, the adults make sure that they do not harm themselves.

On the side of the Catholic Church, Father Geremias Pashbi Collins, former parish priest of Santo Tomás², asked the local authorities to move the takanakuy to a different date, since Christmas is not a day to fight, but rather to celebrate with love. He describes the takanakuy as a massacre: “so, how was it possible that a Christian people, that goes from the temple, from worshipping the Baby Jesus, goes outside to massacre, until killing their neighbor, not with a sense of justice, like customary justice stated, but with hate, with knives, with kicks, leaving the dead there” (quoted in Laime 154). Focused on the “violence” and the “bloodshed”, Father Geremias fails to notice that reconciliation and community-strengthening are big parts of the takanakuy. According to local author and indigenous-rights activist Victor Laime, Father Geremias attempted in different ways to discourage the parishioners from participating in the festival:

¹ All translations from Spanish are my own.

² Santo Tomás is one of the eight districts of the Chumbivilcas Province, in Cuzco.

he refused to conduct mass for the *carguyuyq*, he threatened them with excommunication, and he organized another celebration with hot chocolate and raffles at the same time of the fights. However, none of these attempts stopped the people from participating in the takanakuy (Laime 53).

Due to the limited literature on the takanakuy, it is crucial to turn to scholarly publications on other ritual battles in the Peruvian Andes, for example, the *chiaraje*, in which participants use both fists and stones. In these works, it is possible to identify two main approaches to ritual battles: one that underlines the “otherness” of the Indians that participate in them, and another one that denies the exceptionality of these ritual battles and situate them within a universal paradigm. Sociologist Maria Isabel Remy offers an overview of the scholarly publications that represent the first approach. For her, these scholars present themselves as mediators between the two cultures, and as protectors of the Indian populations, whose practices and beliefs they claim to understand. However, inadvertently or not, they perpetuate the exclusion of indigenous peoples and reproduce dominant power relationships. Even though Remy does not include in her analysis the documentary film *Rituales guerreros: el tupay en Chiaraje* (1996), by Luis Figueroa, because it is subsequent to her article, it is a clear example of this approach. When some of the *comuneros* express their regrets for having allowed the crew to film the ritual battle, anthropologist Juan Ossio, one of the main characters of the documentary, replies: “We defend [your custom] so the powerful ones, the strong ones do not interfere and come to ruin

things for you . . . We defend you.” In this way, Ossio presents himself as mediator and protector of the Indians against the dominant sectors of society that intend to ban their ritual battles. This attitude is reminiscent of the *indigenista* intellectuals in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. In literary scholar Jorge Coronado’s words, “*indigenismo* operates through an acutely unequal dynamic between its producers, often mesocratic intellectuals, and its objects of representation, indigenous peoples . . . early twentieth century *indigenismo* excludes in its practice and circulation even while it vociferously imagines the inclusion of indigenous people in its representation” (160-1)³. In a similar vein, the social scientists Remy talks about in her article claim to vindicate indigenous peoples but often deny them the opportunity to have a say in how they are represented.

According to Remy, many scholars have understood the *chiaraje* as a ritual to promote fertility. For instance, for anthropologist Diane Hopkins, the “bloodshed” that happens during the battle is necessary to ensure a good harvest. However, Remy argues that the *chiaraje*, which takes place in January during the rainy season, does not coincide with either the time of sowing or harvest. Furthermore, the main economic activity in the region where the *chiaraje* is practiced is cattle ranching, not agriculture (Remy 265). That is why, following Remy, there is no evidence that connects the ritual battles to the

³ *Indigenismo* is actually a more complex movement than what these words describe. However, the social scholars that Remy criticizes are influenced by this vein of *indigenismo* that operates through a top-down dynamic.

agricultural rituals. Another problem that Remy finds in this approach to ritual battles is that it often overlooks the festive features, that is, the eating, drinking, singing and dancing. Many scholars make a distinction between the festive side and the sacrificial side of the *chiaraje* and associate the former with the mestizos and the latter with the Indians. In other words, whereas the mestizos participate in the *chiaraje* as a way to strengthen community bonds, the Indians “seek to produce deaths”, since “the result of the battle can only be effective through death” (Gorbak, Lischetti and Muñoz, quoted in Remy 267). Nevertheless, Remy argues, from her own fieldwork, that it was a mestizo who told her about the deaths, the bloodthirsty *pachamama* and the good harvest, and on the contrary a *campesino* to whom she spoke emphasized the playfulness of the battle. Ethnomusicologist Miguel Arce Sotelo supports this view. According to him, participants describe the *chiaraje* as a game rather than a battle: “It is nice to go to fight, it is a game that excites”, “I will go in the game”, “It was a nice battle, it was a very nice game”, “We have played with stones” (quoted in Arce Sotelo 173). Therefore, similarly to the portrayal of the *takanakuy* in mass media, this first approach to ritual battles overlooks their festive features to focus instead on the “violence” and the “bloodshed”. Thus, these scholars contribute to the depiction of the Indian as the exotic other.

In contrast, another group of scholars denies the exceptionality of the ritual battles and, influenced by René Girard’s *Violence and the Sacred* (1972), interpreted them as rituals that allow the expression of violence but within a

limiting and controlling frame. Following Girard, anthropologist Harold Hernández states that violence is a universal and permanent phenomenon. Violence arises because desire is mimetic, that is, people tend toward the same objects of desire. That is why ritual sacrifices are necessary to defuse the crisis and bring peace back. For Hernández, the takanakuy follows this same logic. In his words, “the takanakuy is the good violence that expels the bad violence. And in this sense, there is a cathartic function to the fights.” In this view, the takanakuy is similar to sports in the sense that it works as a mechanism to control violence. Following sociologist Norbert Elias, a group of scholars that participated in a round table on the takanakuy⁴ point out that, even though sports are focused on competition, there are specific rules that limit the impact of violence. For this reason, sports –especially combat sports such as boxing and wrestling– are a representation of a fight, but not a real one. According to these scholars, the takanakuy is an “incipient sport”: “It does not show the sophistication of the rules of modern sports, which contain or limit violence to its minimum expression, but there are limits: the referees, the audience, the relatives of the opponent, that can punish with indiscriminate violence the one who dares to break the rules” (104). Even though to use the adjective “incipient” to describe the takanakuy in relation to “modern sports” may be problematic, these scholars

⁴ The scholars that participated in the roundtable are historian Manuel Burga, art historian Gustavo Buntix and lawyer Juan Carlos Torres. Harold Hernández was the moderator. Even though it is unclear who wrote the introduction to the transcription of the discussion, it was probably Hernández since some of the ideas expressed in it echo his article “Takanakuy: el anti Eteocles y Polinices.” The introduction is quoted in this paper.

aim to reduce the distance between these practices. In a sense, the “violence” that repulses the detractors of the takanakuy is not that different from the one present in much more accepted sports. Therefore, under this logic, societies that practice ritual battles as the takanakuy are not necessarily more violent. However, these scholars add that the takanakuy is much more than just a sport since it does not limit itself to the fights. Certainly, to understand the takanakuy as just a sport is to miss a whole dimension of it: the celebration of reconciliation and integration.

Although Remy does not believe that Girard’s theory on violence and sacrifice can be perfectly applied to ritual battles since the selection of the victim that Girard describes does not work that way in ritual battles as the *chiaraje*, she finds the universality of his proposal useful to question the opposition between the “civilized us” and the “barbaric them”. In her words, “it would not be ‘them’, the Andean peasants in our case, the exotically violent for obscure reasons like the thirst of their gods. In the diverse societies, the form and the degree of formalization of violence rituals differ, but not the fact of producing a particular space for socially controlled violence to express itself and, as a result, exhausts itself” (270). Through her analysis of ritual battles, Remy aims to show that Andean culture is not eccentric or exotic, and that it does not require mediators or protectors.

Even though to situate ritual battles within a universal paradigm may be problematic since the regional and local peculiarities tend to be disregarded, it is important to understand this approach in its historical context. Remy’s article

dates from the early 1990s, that is, the time of the Peruvian internal armed conflict. Although Remy is reacting against a long tradition of social scientists influenced by the *indigenismo* movement, she is specifically responding to the commission headed by Mario Vargas Llosa that investigated the murder of eight journalists in Uchuraccay. For Remy, the portrayal of indigenous peoples found in scholarly publications on ritual battles is reproduced in the report prepared by this commission. In the report, people of Uchuraccay are depicted as “noble savages”, peaceful by nature but capable of a terrible violence for “magic-religious” reasons (Remy 272). Similarly, in several scholarly publications, the participants of ritual battles are portrayed as willing to kill their own neighbors just to satisfy the bloodthirst of their gods and to ensure a good harvest. The main problem with these representations of Indian peoples is that they have profound effects in both social and political lives, most commonly distrust and repression against these populations (Remy 271).

To conclude with this section, it is important to mention an article by anthropologist Deborah Poole. Even though it only briefly refers to the takanakuy, it is one of the few works that discuss the particularities of the Chumbivilcas Province, often described as *tierra brava*, that is, wild land. Poole draws attention to who has been behind the portrayal of the *chumbivilcano* as an icon of a violent and unrestrained masculinity. For her, there has been a continuation between the work of the *gamonal*, the *indigenista* and the *foklorista* regarding the construction of discourses and forms of social subjectivity.

Therefore, the *gamonal* is not only an economic agent, but an important cultural one, responsible in big part of the creation of the masculine icon of the *guapo peleador*, that is, the brave fighter (Poole 295). Positioning himself as an intermediary figure between the state and the peasants, the *gamonal's* power rests in physical coercion but also in the language of masculinity, that bridges the gap between the Indian-peasant and the mestizo-*gamonal* (Poole 290). As for the *indigenistas*, caught in their double condition as members of the agrarian elite and intellectuals interested in vindicating regional culture and autonomy, they saw in the *chumbivilcano* a rebel Andean spirit (Poole 289). In *El nuevo indio* (1930), *indigenista* José Uriel García depicts the *chumbivilcano* as the prototype of the new Indian due to his virile features forged by the extreme weather of the *punas*. For him, autonomy and rebelliousness, the attributes of the new Indian, are present in the *chumbivilcano*. However, there is also a risk that these positive features turn to crime and delinquency. That is why for the *indigenistas* it is imperative to channel these masculine energy and rebelliousness (Poole 291). Even though Poole describes the *takanakuy* as a spectacle of masculine bravery, she adds that it is crucial not to naturalize the field of cultural representation, but to rather inquire for the origins of these traditions. It cannot be denied that there is a performance of masculinity in the *takanakuy*. Many participate in the fights to show off their physical aptitudes and courage. Nevertheless, what is important to bear in mind is that the association of the *takanakuy* with “violence” and

“bloodshed” is connected to the portrayal of the *chumbivilcanos* as a virile and energetic people that nevertheless tend to crime and delinquency.

2. The Takanakuy: A Festival of Reconciliation and Integration

As seen, the debates around the takanakuy and other ritual battles have focused mostly on “violence”. Not much has been said on the bodily and sensory experiences lived during the festival besides physical pain. Even though it is not the purpose of this paper to delve into how the senses are organized and experienced in the communities that practice the takanakuy, it is important to bear in mind that the festival is not all about fighting. For instance, regarding the dancing, a *chumbivilcano* explains: “Perhaps this is the moment when my people become one . . . Here there are not partners. Here there is a community dancing to the rhythm of a prayer, feeling like grains of the same ear, but it is also the moment to be on one’s own, to let the body loose to feel it more than ever” (quoted in Alcalde).

According to Laime, in Santo Tomás people prepare for the takanakuy weeks in advance: they make *chicha*, walk the image of Baby Jesus around the town, etc. The takanakuy begins with the celebration of mass at the cathedral. Around seven in the morning, people gather at the cathedral’s atrium to have *buñuelos*, that is, fried dough balls. Then they head for the temple dancing to the rhythm of the *wayliya*. In the *wayliya* usually a group of three to six young women sing, and men accompany them with a violin, a harp and jingle bells.

After mass, people head for the bullring, where the fights take place. The following day, December 26th, the fights continue, and since it is believed that Jesus has grown up and is already a child, the children play with him with *ch'uchus*, that is, black seeds from the jungle. On December 27th, back in their communities of origin, people celebrate having participated in the takanakuy with food and drinks. They also remember the festival together and share anecdotes and laughs. By dusk, they all go back to their homes. Therefore, although most discussions about the takanakuy have focused on “violence” and “bloodshed”, the festival actually ends in a reconciliatory note. Furthermore, the singing, dancing, eating and drinking that also take place during the festival play a crucial role in bringing the communities together.

Even though Girard’s theory on violence and sacrifice is helpful to understand how the takanakuy defuses crisis and brings peace back to the communities, it is important to turn to the theories Quechua people have elaborated themselves. In her ethnography of the people of Sonqo, Catherine Allen explains both the *tinku* –ritual battle– and the broader concept of the *tinkuy* –encounter–. As for the *tinku*, it is defined as a ritual battle that aims to create social unity: “In a seeming paradox, ritual often achieves this integration of individuals, groups, and Sacred Places through competitive and violent encounters like the *tinku* (ritual battle) . . . Rituals provides a limiting and controlling context for the expression of this oppositional tendencies-whether in peaceful collaboration or in violent battle” (35). For instance, in the Qoyllur Rit’i,

“which serves to integrate *ayllus* over a large region”, the element of competition is very strong, since every band and dance troupe tries to outdo the others (Allen 204-5). However, “it is exactly the competition-the clash of *ayllu* with *ayllu*, province with province, *puna* people with valley people-that explodes in a huge jingle of sound and blaze of color, in an intensity of activity and noise” (Allen 205).

In the *takanakuy*, it is also possible to notice this interplay between competition and integration, central to the *tinku*. Even though the fights are between two people instead of two *ayllus* or provinces, the conflicts at the core of the fights several times go beyond the strictly personal. Furthermore, according to Laime, both the family and the *ayllu* of the fighter experience the fight as their own. Families attend the fights and root for their own. When a fighter wins a battle, the victory extends to all his/her family. In the case of the *ayllu*, the winner fighter becomes the favorite son/daughter of the community and the chosen one to hold a local position since it is believed that he/she will be able to defend the *ayllu* and to maintain order (Laime 59). Besides, dance troupes also participate in the *takanakuy*, and similarly to what happens at the Qoyllur Rit’i they try to outdo the others with finer costumes, better movements, etc. According to Allen, “Many characteristics of the Andean *ayllu* . . . are expressed by means of the *tinku*: the *ayllu* coheres as a faction and defines its boundaries while simultaneously being incorporated into an *ayllu* of a higher order. By its very nature, then, the *ayllu* needs the *tinku* to define itself, for the encounter

affirms the community separateness while integrating it with other *ayllus*" (206). Precisely, in the takanakuy, when the *ayllu* roots for its own, it affirms its boundaries but at the same time recognizes itself as part of a larger community, the participants in the festival. Finally, Allen underscores the vitalizing force of the *tinkuy*, understood as the encounter of two opposites: "In both violent and peaceful modes, *tinkuy* signifies a mixture of different elements that brings something new into existence" (207). In the takanakuy, the fights renew the bonds between individual people, as well as families and communities. Every fight ends with either a handshake or a hug, and most of the times the former rivals drink together to seal their friendship. Laime describes the aftermath of the takanakuy: "After the fights, there are no unpredictable rivalries or nostalgic regrets or hopes of vengeance, but the hope of being able to compete in the festival one more time" (57). Borrowing Allen's words, the takanakuy "function[s] as a particularly hard collective push to keep the flow of life moving on" (210). It will not be until the following year that *comuneros* meet again to renew their worn-out-bonds.

It is precisely the dimension of justice and reconciliation that has not been explored much in the scholarly publications on the takanakuy. People participate in this fighting festival to settle conflicts. In Chumbivilcas, there is a general distrust of the judicial system since it is believed that the *mistis* have the power to interfere in the processes (Laime 60). Besides, to file a lawsuit against somebody requires an investment of time and money, and the resolution may not be

satisfactory. Laime makes a comparison between settling a dispute in the courts of law and doing it in the takanakuy. Regarding the former, *chumbivilcanos* complain of the large sums of money that they are required to pay to lawyers: “Who is going to file a lawsuit to make the lawyer richer; the judges, they just want money” (quoted in Laime 61). Moreover, judicial processes often take a long time, and as the lawsuit proceeds new conflicts arise between the parties (Laime 60). When a final decision is made, it often benefits the party that invested more money and spread more calumnies. Therefore, in the end, there is no resolution to the dispute. On the contrary, there are only disconformity, resentment and plans for future revenge (Laime 60). So, people cannot really move forward with their lives. In contrast, if *chumbivilcanos* decide to settle the conflict in the takanakuy, the fight only takes a few minutes. If the loser is not happy with the result, he/she is allowed to ask for a rematch for the following year. Therefore, in the worst scenario, the opponents will live in peace for a year and fight each other in the following takanakuy. However, in several cases, the loser accepts the defeat, and the former rivals make peace. Not only does the loser not seek revenge, but the winner does not abuse of the loser either. According to Laime, the new-found peace is not short-lived but lasts for at least a few years: “since the day that we fought each other, now he respects me, now we say hello to each other, now he is a nice guy, now we are in peace without problems” (quoted in Laime 61).

As seen, in the takanakuy the body is the site where justice and reconciliation are performed. In her book *Intimate Enemies: Violence and Reconciliation in Peru*, anthropologist Kimberly Theidon reflects upon practices of communal justice in the aftermath of the internal armed conflict. In many of the communities affected by the war, the offenders were not external to them, but rather fellow members. Following lawyer Martha Minow, Theidon points out that “restorative justice presumes the presence of a community and of relationships worthy of repair” (229). In the rural villages in Ayacucho, for the offenders to rejoin their communities, there are public rites of confession, punishment and pardon. In the words of a *comunera* from Carhuahurán, when the repentant offenders came back to the community, “the authorities whipped them in public. They were whipped with *chicotes* [braided leather whips with flayed ends] warning them what would happen if they decided to go back. Whipping them, they were received here” (quoted in Theidon 235). According to Theidon, confession and repentance, as well as corporeal punishment are key components of communal justice in these rural villages. Even though in the takanakuy there is no confessing, apologizing or begging, the infliction of some form of physical pain, even if it is minimal, is a condition for reconciliation. For Theidon, both words and actions are crucial in the rituals of justice she describes; however, in the takanakuy words do not seem to play a major role. In fact, from the testimonies collected by Laime, it seems that words keep the wheels of antagonism turning. That is one of the reasons why people do not go to court to

settle a dispute: one person's word against another do not achieve anything, unless it is more hostility. According to Theidon, "there is a theory of memory at work in these rituals, based on an understanding of memory as both redemptive and dangerous" (245). The repentant offenders are forced to remember in order to confess but are also compelled to forget in order to leave their criminal past behind and rejoin the community. In the case of the takanakuy, it could be said that like memory words are understood as dangerous too since they can lead to never-ending quarreling. Finally, another similarity between the takanakuy and the rituals Theidon studies is that both aim to "the social containment of vengeance" (251). As seen, in the takanakuy once the new-found friendship is sealed with a handshake, a hug and/or a drink, there is no room for vengeance. In the words of a *comunero* from Santo Tomás, "What I have to say is that until now there has never been complaints about the Christmas fights, even if people have been badly hurt, they have always shaken their hands, some hug each other and have a couple of drinks together" (quoted in Laime 151).

Because the takanakuy is an alternative form of settling conflicts to the courts of law, it has drawn criticism from state authorities. In his article "Enactments of Power", Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o draws attention to the struggle between the arts and the state, especially to their battle over performance space:

If before the emergence of the state the domain of culture embodied the desirable and the undesirable in the realm of values, this was expressed through performance. The community learned and

passed its moral codes and aesthetic judgements through narratives, dance, theater, rituals, music, games, and sports. With the emergence of the state, the artist and the state become not only rivals in articulating the laws, moral or formal, that regulate life in society, but also rivals in determining the manner and circumstances of their delivery. (11)

It can be said that there is a struggle between the takanakuy and the performance of justice by the state. According to Dwight Conquergood, “Justice- to paraphrase Victor Turner-lives only in performance . . . Justice can be seen only when it is acted out. All the interlocking rituals of criminal punishment – arrest, detention, interrogation, trial, conviction, incarceration, execution— are performed so that citizens can see ‘justice done’” (343). Even though the rituals of criminal punishment performed by the state have changed over time – as shown by Michel Foucault in *Discipline and Punishment: The Birth of the Prison* (1975) –, it is through them that the state enacts its power. Although Andean communities do not completely reject the legal procedures of the modern state, but rather practice multiple legal strategies (Theidon 229), those procedures by themselves are not satisfactory in their search for justice and reconciliation. In both communal and national practices of justice, the body is at the center. However, in the rituals of criminal punishment performed by the state, the body is a site of violence, repression, coercion and surveillance. What is at the heart of the

struggle between the communities that practice the takanakuy and the state is how justice should be performed.

In her article on the walk to Qoyllor Rit'i, anthropologist Zoila Mendoza argues that in Andean Quechua culture concept-feelings⁵ are better learned and remembered through the kinesthetic, auditory and visual aspects of human experience. One of pilgrims' main motivations to do the long walk to the sanctuary is achieving *pampachay*, "which means 'leveling or flattening the ground' and has been translated since the sixteenth century as *perdonar* or *perdón* ('to forgive' or 'forgiveness')" (Mendoza 130). In their walk to Qoyllor Rit'i, dance troupe members climb uphill, carry big rocks on their backs and receive lashes, with the accompanying music, "to cleanse themselves from their 'sins' and effectively reach the *pampachay*" (Mendoza 140). It can be said that in the takanakuy participants also achieve *pampachay*, or forgiveness, through fist-fighting to the rhythm of the *wayliya*. They do not only cleanse themselves from past wrongdoings, but also from the resentment and the desire for revenge for the offenses committed against them.

In the communities where the takanakuy is practiced, the body is a kind of archive of settlements between fellow members. In her book *The Archive and the Repertoire: Performing Cultural Memory in the Americas*, Diana Taylor states that both the archive and the repertoire are systems of knowing and transmitting

⁵ Mendoza uses the compound term *concept-feelings* "to emphasize that thought and feeling are always together and that we need to avoid the body-mind dichotomy that has plagued the humanities and social sciences for too long" (130).

knowledge. The archive contains supposedly enduring materials, such as documents, literary texts, archaeological remains, etc., whereas the repertoire includes embodied practice/knowledge usually thought of as ephemeral, for instance, dance, ritual, singing, etc. It is commonly believed that the archive is unmediated and resistant to change, despite the fact that the objects located there underwent a process of selection and classification. The archive transcends spatial and temporal distance, whereas the repertoire requires presence, that is, people “being there”, participating in the transmission of knowledge. Even though the archive and the repertoire are thought of as opposites, Taylor points out that they usually work in tandem. For instance,

By wearing the small photo IDs around their necks, the Madres [de Plaza de Mayo] turned their bodies into archives, preserving and displaying the images that had been targeted for erasure. Instead of the body in the archive associated with surveillance and police strategies, they staged the archive in/on the body, affirming that embodied performance could make visible that which had been purged from the archive. (Taylor 178)

Similarly, in the takanakuy the body turns into an archive that preserves the memory of past disputes but mainly of resolutions and renewed bonds. Even though the fights only take a few minutes, and, in this sense, they could be thought of as ephemeral, the resultant peace is long-lasting. It is precisely what makes living in community possible. For the people who participate in the takanakuy, the official archive containing legal documents is associated with

manipulation, unfairness and hostility, whereas the archive in/on the body is what brings them together.

Final Thoughts

As seen, there has been a big controversy around the takanakuy: mass media depict it as a spectacle of punches and kicks; clerical authorities attempt to ban it; state authorities condemn the participation of children in it; etc. Even though not much has been written about the takanakuy in the social sciences or the humanities, in the literature on similar ritual battles as the *chiaraje* there are also opposing points of view. On the one hand, some scholars highlight the “otherness” of the indigenous populations that participate in them. On the other hand, other scholars deny the exceptionality of the ritual battles and situate them within a universal paradigm. Following René Girard’s theory on violence and sacrifice, they understand ritual battles as mechanisms to put violence in a limiting and controlling frame. Even though this second approach has to be understood in its context –that is, as a response to intellectuals influenced by *indigenismo*–, it may be somewhat problematic as it does not take into account the regional and local particularities, or the bodily and sensory experiences beyond physical pain.

Despite the fact that Girard’s theory is helpful to understand the takanakuy, it is also crucial to turn to the theories Quechua people have elaborated themselves, for instance, the concepts of *tinku* and *tinkuy*. In the takanakuy, there is an

interplay between competition and integration, and it is exactly the encounter/the clash of the opponents that brings something new into existence: a new friendship, a renewed community. Finally, the takanakuy is similar to rituals of justice that aim to reintegrate offenders into the communities. The body is the site where the concept-feeling of *pampachay* or forgiveness is practiced, remembered, taught and learned. Thus, the body turns into an archive of disagreements and settlements between fellow community members.

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