



Mal paraje and *mala hora*: remarks on the naturalistic violence towards Andean medical knowledge

El *mal paraje* y la *mala hora*: notas sobre la violencia naturalista hacia el saber médico andino

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ABSTRACT The local notions of *mal paraje* [bad place] and *mala hora* [bad time] are key to explaining many illnesses in Andean medical knowledge. Notwithstanding the relevance of these notions ethnographically, neither anthropological research nor biomedical knowledge has properly dealt with these local distinctions, and have largely relegated them to the shadows. Our aim is to examine the origin of this shortcoming of anthropological and biomedical knowledge production. Our hypothesis is that such shortcoming is related to the implicit use of certain naturalistic theoretical presuppositions, both from the point of view of social sciences and from the point of view of biomedical research, producing symbolic and epistemic violence against Andean medical knowledge which we call *naturalistic violence*. In methodological terms we examine ethnographic data from the Aymara community of Camiña (Tarapacá, Chile) and the literature produced on this topic. We focus on the notions of *mal paraje* and *mala hora* using the content analysis technique. We conclude that the main naturalistic obstacles include the treatment received by territorial entities, the relationships established among these entities and human beings (reciprocity), and the conceptions of space/time present in the diagnosis of a disease.

KEY WORDS Cross Cultural Care; Traditional Health Systems; Chile.

RESUMEN Las nociones locales de *mal paraje* y *mala hora* son claves para explicar los orígenes de muchas enfermedades en el saber médico andino. Pese a su importancia etnográfica, ni la investigación antropológica ni el saber biomédico han tratado adecuadamente estas distinciones locales, relegándolas muchas veces al olvido. Nuestro objetivo es explorar el origen de esta limitación de la producción antropológica y biomédica. La hipótesis es que se relaciona con la utilización implícita de ciertos supuestos teóricos naturalistas a la hora de abordar este fenómeno, tanto de parte de las ciencias sociales como de los saberes biomédicos, lo que produce una violencia simbólica y epistémica contra el saber médico andino que denominamos *violencia naturalista*. Respecto a la metodología, se analizó información etnográfica sobre la comunidad Aymara de Camiña (Tarapacá, Chile) y la principal literatura producida. Centramos nuestro análisis en las nociones de *mal paraje* y *mala hora*, utilizando la técnica de análisis de contenido. Concluimos que los principales obstáculos naturalistas se manifiestan en el tratamiento que reciben las entidades territoriales, las relaciones que se establecen entre éstas y los seres humanos (reciprocidad), y las concepciones de espacio/tiempo presente en el diagnóstico de una enfermedad.

PALABRAS CLAVES Salud Intercultural; Sistemas de Salud Tradicionales; Chile.

INTRODUCTION

The *Yatiri* occupy a special place among healers with Andean medical knowledge. Etymologically, *Yatiri* means “one who knows,”⁽¹⁾ and although it is difficult to define what the *Yatiri* know, locally they are distinguished from other healers by the specific knowledge they hold. Among Andean healers, the *qullirinaja* have a special understanding of bones, nerves and wounds; the *yerbateros* know about herbs and the balance of heat and cold; and midwives know how to prepare women for labor, assist the process of childbirth and provide care in the periods after. While the *Yatiri* may share much of the knowledge of these other healers, their distinguishing feature is their knowledge of how to treat a series of problems known generally as “spiritual”: *fuerzas del mal*, *embrujos*, *sustos*, *pérdida del ánimo*, *agarraduras*⁽²⁾ [evil forces, bewitchment, frights, spirit loss, capture of the spirit], etc. The *Yatiri* knows how to uncover the causes of these problems through the reading of coca leaves or cards.

One of the specific elements this healer must manage in establishing the etiology of an illness or disease is the knowledge of *malos parajes* [bad places] and *malas horas* [bad times]. In general, those who live in Camiña are aware of the importance of both expressions, as they know the topology and temporality of places in the region, know how to identify the presence of territorial entities, practice relationships of reciprocity with such entities, and identify the connections entities possess with certain illnesses or diseases. In this way, for example they know of the immense mountain Laymisiña, the primary *mallku* (sacred mountain) that protects the community and announces through its nocturnal sounds the death of one of the members of the community. They also know where the mortuary remains of previous human groups – called *chullperíos* – are found, that they should not travel through such places, and that they must carry out libations [*hacer las veces*] with an in-tact spirit and full stomach in order to avoid being possessed by

a *chullpa*. They also know of the spring of the rooster and that they should not pass through there at the *mala hora*, as the rooster might suddenly appear and cause a “fright.” Although this general knowledge of the inhabitants of Camiña allows them to identify the presence of *malos parajes* and *malas horas* in the origin of disease, it is the *Yatiri* who know how to treat such illnesses.

When the *Yatiri* carry out the diagnosis and treatment of these illness, they must identify certain places that possess a specific spatial and temporal significance. *Malos parajes* refer to the place where the person suffered a fright, or where their spirit was captured (ay. *katjata*). They are places known as “fierce,” recognized long since as such, and appear as more voracious or less domestic forms than the rest of the entities that make up the Andes.⁽³⁾ *Malas horas* refer to certain days, moments of the day or occasions that are identified as favoring misfortune. For this reason a common expression is “*que sea en buena hora*,” may it occur in good time, manifesting the desire for actions to occur as hoped.

Aside from the importance such notions possess for the Andean community, many biomedical and anthropological characterizations categorize this type of knowledge as a form of not-knowing, a mere belief, or simply exclude such notions from their descriptions. Our aim is to analyze the origin and principals behind this situation. Our working hypothesis is that this limitation is due in part to the fact that the description these disciplines carry out of the knowledge of *mal paraje* and *mala hora* tends to reproduce the assumptions of naturalism. The latter can be understood as a conceptualization of the real that implies the existence of a nature that obeys certain laws and is devoid of the intentionality that human beings possess.^(4,5,6,7) The force of this ideology is such that it can be considered part of the common sense of the Occidental world. Nevertheless, the utilization and imposition of this ideology in the face of phenomena such as those analyzed in this work can easily turn into invalidation and delegitimization, producing a type of symbolic and epistemic violence⁽⁸⁾ that we call *naturalistic violence*.

METHODOLOGICAL ASPECTS

To explore this hypothesis we utilized ethnography as our primary methodological strategy. The field material was collected between 2011 and 2012 in the Aymara community of Camiña. The *comuna* of Camiña is found at the base of the Andes in the Region of Tarapacá, northern Chile, and has around 1,200 inhabitants. The primary economic activity is cultivation of maize, carrots, garlic and greens. The current population of Camiña is the result of two processes of internal migration, from the high plateau of Colchane to Camiña and from Camiña to the urban coasts (Iquique, Arica and Antofagasta). It is a population with religious heterogeneity, including Andean-Catholic and Evangelical-Pentecostal traditions.⁽⁹⁾

The data analyzed form part of doctoral research that sought to describe and analyze existing medical knowledge and the processes of articulation and configuration of relations of hegemony and subalternity.⁽⁹⁾

The methodological design was specifically structured to understand each type of medical knowledge. We used participant observation as the primary data collection technique to access Andean, Pentecostal, biomedical and self-care knowledge. The objective of this technique was to obtain direct information regarding the care practices of health problems based in each type of knowledge practiced in their place of reference (house of *Kollire*, homes of healers, Pentecostal church, rural health care post).

A total of 68 interviews were carried out with representatives of different types of medical knowledge: 10 representatives of Andean knowledge, 13 of Pentecostal knowledge, 7 of biomedical knowledge, 28 of self-care practices and 10 belonging to the category "other informants." Among these, 14 described their religious affiliation as Pentecostal, 8 as Adventist, 42 as Catholic, 1 as atheist and 3 declared not having a religious affiliation. Additionally, 32 were women and 36 men. Only 2 were under 20 years of age, 16 were between 20 and 40 years

of age, 23 were between 40 and 60 years of age and 31 were over 60 years of age. The central topics of the interviews were the different diseases experienced by and known to the interviewees, with special attention placed in their development, causes and care practices. The information collected was subjected to an initial comparative analysis regarding the different ideological characteristics of medical knowledge. The ideological features acting as obstacles or facilitators of the articulation among concrete aspects of medical knowledge were then analyzed, as were the contribution of such articulations in the hegemonic position of a certain type of knowledge. Additionally, a review and critical analysis of the literature specialized in Andean medical knowledge was carried out. In the analysis of the ethnographic and bibliographic information, we used a theoretical perspective based in critical medical anthropology and the ontological turn of contemporary anthropology, as well as the content analysis technique. The different stages of analysis and the constant reflection regarding the multiple levels involved allowed for the necessary methodological triangulation. According to international guidelines regarding human protection, informed consent was obtained from participants and the study was approved in compliance with all the ethical requirements of the PhD program of Universitat Rovira i Virgili.

With this article we seek to contribute to the reflection regarding the difficulties in the study of different types of medical knowledge in the field of intercultural health, and problematize some implicit assumptions present in social studies and contemporary common sense, that make it difficult to adequately characterize and comprehend that knowledge. Although the naturalistic obstacles presented here do not make up the entirety of the epistemological difficulties faced by researchers, we consider them to be some of the most general and naturalized limitations within academia and more broadly, Occidental common sense.

This text is structured as follows: initially we describe in a general way the notions of

territorial entity and Andean reciprocity, using pertinent ethnographic and bibliographic information; secondly, we offer a synthesis of the principles of naturalism that tend to be employed in the discussion of both notions; thirdly, we expand in greater detail on the notion of reciprocity in Andean medical knowledge so as to analyze the notions of *mal paraje* and *mala hora* as part of local knowledge that operates with a logic different from that of naturalism; and lastly, we reflect upon the primary obstacles naturalism presents in the consideration of these Andean notions.

RESULTS

Territorial entities and Andean reciprocity

In the year 2011, Camiña experienced one of the greatest rainstorms in recent memory. The people claimed that in one day it rained what it should in the whole year. The inclement rains widened the historic rivers descending from the mountains, loosening rocks and producing mudslides, destroying homes, flooding the village churches, ruining crops and tearing up the riverbeds. The sound of the thunder joined with the sound of the rocks tumbling, filling the people with terror. If it weren't for the fact that the downpour occurred in the afternoon, many people likely would have died, among them the eldest of the community given their difficulty in moving. After the storm was over, many voiced that the catastrophe was due to the abandonment of the community's "customs." Under the influence of the evangelical Pentecostal church, which considered such practices idolatry, many people of Camiña had stopped their payments to the *pachamama* [earth mother], who in turn showed her anger through the rainstorm.

This type of experience is common among the Aymara of Tarapacá and demonstrates the importance placed in the relationship with territorial entities. In order to understand this relationship, it is crucial to highlight that these

entities cannot be considered in a generic way. A key element in the Andean experience is the knowledge of the specific entity of one place in particular, something that can be appreciated in the following narrative regarding the treatment of *agarradura* carried out by a *Yatiri*.

GM: *The agarradura is easier... For example, a person says to you: "cure my son, he's captured by the agarradura." You have to ask: "Where? What happened? What was he doing? Why was he captured? What is the place called?" So then the person is going to tell you: "in such and such a place." You ask for a white lamb. If you can't get a white lamb it can be a white rooster, ok? ... So then once they've given you the white lamb or the white rooster, you have to grab it and with your patient there, you have to signal him with the lamb or rooster. If it's a rooster you have to turn it upside down. You grab the rooster's neck and turn it upside down, and one end of your patient. [...] And once the rooster is dead you have to put it there on the table, you have to prepare a table, a table of *esta* or *awayo*, anything like that. It can't have anything black, because this is an *agarradura*, so it can only have white or flowered things. So they've already told you the place, where he was captured, given you the first step to work, where it happened, you already know that. So you have to go there at night. First you have to get your remedies ready, You need *copal*, *incense* and *bisterio* and you put four in pairs.*

C: *How's that?*

GM: *One bisterio, two bisterio, three, four bisterio. Two bisterio in pair, two in pair. Yes, four in pairs, they say. That has to be ready with *qolla*, and your ointment. All that has to be ready, in a cloth all tied up. Right, so that little bundle you have to put right here [on the chest], right close inside, that's where you have to put the cloth, all tied up [...] So then the gentlemen has to give three gasps:*

"huh, huh, huh." You have to go with the package. Of course the gentleman has to do it three times, and with that little package you go, ok? Where he is captured. They already told you where ... that's where you have to go. So you have to be strong [...] because now you are at the place where the person has been captured. You have to go there and ask for forgiveness from that place: "Forgive him, Virgin" or "Forgive him, stream." What place is it? What name does it have? Forgive him. And with that you have to take this and burn it, right there. (GM, 70 years of age, Yatiri, Aymara, Catholic, farmer)

As can be seen in these narratives, according to Andean cosmology nature is capable of establishing and sustaining social relationships. It does not participate in social relationships solely as an object, but rather does so actively as an actor immersed in a web of reciprocity. Here we understand reciprocity as a relationship of correspondence among actors whose exchange is subject to certain obligations.⁽¹⁰⁾ Although important criticisms of the concept of reciprocity exist regarding its contribution to the concealment of inequity^(11,12) and the construction of an ideology of moral norms,⁽¹³⁾ we consider it a useful concept because it satisfactorily characterizes the elements and the logic of Andean medical knowledge. Additionally, it substitutes a series of subordinate concepts such as worship, magic, suggestion, projection, etc., which offer little to the comprehension of the types of relationships we are seeking to describe. This does not mean that we posit reciprocity as a foundational symbolic matrix for all types of exchanges. We use it because it restores the transitivity characteristic to the relationship between human beings and territorial entities, which should always be contrasted empirically according to the case under study, contributing in this way to the denaturalization of the "reification of Andean divinities."⁽¹⁴⁾ This is relevant in theoretical terms because one of the most difficult aspects to consider under

the umbrella of naturalism is the existence of a social relationship among territorial entities and people, especially in the direction going from the natural to the social.^(6,15) Here we must remember the clarification of the Aymara leader Ramón Conde in the 1980s:

We, the Aymaras, do not "worship" but rather carry out *ayni* or *mink'a* in reciprocity with the protective beings... What we do is, because they are our elders, we reward them with *ayni*, we *mink'a* because the *Pachamama* gives us her fruits.⁽¹⁶⁾

How can we characterize the repertoire of reciprocity with the territorial entities? We uphold that it is not enough to affirm a vitalist perspective.⁽¹⁷⁾ We have to go a step further and take on the social character of the relationships established and, more specifically, the logic of reciprocity that articulates them.^(6,7,18,19,20,21,22) In this way, for example, it is not enough to indicate that territorial entities eat, but rather it is necessary to understand that they participate as dinner guests in the banquets they are offered.⁽²³⁾ They are not simply places where the soul is lost, but rather, many mountains, for example, really capture (*ay. katjata*) the soul and on occasions can even have sexual relationships with their victims. They do not only hold mineral riches, but negotiate access to these riches in exchange for offerings, among them, human lives. They do not just relate reciprocally with humans, but are also disproportionately demanding ("voracious") in these relationships. They do not just interact through symbols and practices, but can also establish diverse forms of dialogue, especially with the *Yatiri* and under specific conditions.⁽¹⁴⁾

Paradoxically, although it is possible to describe a repertoire of reciprocity in the Andean region,⁽²⁴⁾ the territorial entities also have certain characteristics that situate them closer to pole of the a-social: they present in situations as wild, uncontrollable and at the margins of the social (*puruma*).⁽³⁾ However, that which escapes control, the wild, appears to us to be less a characteristic of

the entities than an emerging property of their subjection to reciprocity, an inevitable result of reciprocity as a non-deterministic, non-mechanical logic. Contributing to this are the specificity of those taking part in the interaction, their relational history, the variations in acknowledgement, the ambiguity of the territorial entities, and the vicissitudes of the concrete actions of reciprocity, which can be well or poorly realized (according to all the variables mentioned). This lack of control is not a deficiency of the “technique” by which the relationships are established, but rather a characteristic of the type of reciprocity, which does not necessarily presuppose connaturality or equivalence.⁽¹⁷⁾ At the same time, it allows us to see how the condition of a-sociality does not necessarily coincide with the absence of reciprocity.

The logic of Andean medical knowledge^(25,26) rests in the construction of these relationships of reciprocal correspondence among humans and territorial entities, composed of a broad repertoire of practices that include elements as diverse as acknowledgement, commensality, dialogue or affectivity, in a complex webs of reciprocity. Inasmuch as each of these relationships contribute with their portion of indetermination, it becomes absolutely irrelevant to demand of them the efficacy and determination characteristic of naturalistic assessments, developed based on a cosmology that reduces and excludes the intentionality, will and historicity from nature. At this point, it is necessary to briefly outline the main precepts underlying naturalism, so as to then move forward in the description of the specificity of the phenomenon of reciprocity in Andean medical knowledge in contrast with a naturalistic logic.

Naturalism

According to authors like Viveiros de Castro and De Martino, we understand naturalism as the supposition of the existence of a sphere of reality (nature) ruled by its own laws (natural laws) and operating separately, autonomously and independently of the domains in which intentionality,⁽⁶⁾ human action,⁽⁷⁾ agency,⁽²⁷⁾

or historicity operate as the sphere of human decisions.⁽²⁸⁾ In this way, naturalism banishes subjectivity, intentionality, will and historicity from the natural world, with these properties coming to be defined as characteristics of culture or, alternatively, the supernatural. The production of a concept of nature ruled by natural laws without human intervention has given rise to two other domains: that of the social and that of the supernatural. While the first is related to the world of humans and language, the second is a transcendent sphere associated simultaneously with the positivist concept of nature and the Thomasian Christian notion of grace.⁽²⁹⁾ So is settled what De Martino has called “the paradox of a culturally-conditioned nature.”⁽²⁸⁾ According to Viveiros de Castro, in naturalistic logic “only social relations can exist, that is, contractual relations or those instituted among subjects, within human society.”⁽⁶⁾

What is important to highlight is that naturalism has become an exclusive logic that operates and has historically operated as a source of symbolic violence,⁽⁸⁾ in which all thought or experience that does not share this notion of nature is invalidated, labeled an erroneous or illusory worldview. Durkheim expressed in this way such naturalistic violence:

Once this principle is established, anything that pertains to these laws necessarily appears to be beyond nature, and so beyond reason; for what is natural in this sense is also rational, those necessary relations expressing only the way that things are logically linked. But this notion of universal determinism is very recent; even the greatest thinkers of classical antiquity were never fully aware of it. This idea is a triumph of the empirical sciences; it is their basic postulate and has been demonstrated by their progress.⁽³⁰⁾

According to Descola, naturalism has become our own mode of identification, permeating both our common sense and Western scientific practice. In this context, it has been transformed into a natural presupposition that structures our epistemology and, more

generally, our perception of any other mode of identification: “[other modes of identification] appear to us as intellectually interesting but false representations, mere symbolic manipulations of that specific and circumscribed field of phenomena that we call nature.”⁽⁷⁾

Although at present there exists abundant critical literature regarding the naturalism generated by what is called the ontological turn in anthropology,^(6,7,30,31,32) these essential principals are sufficient to understand the heart of the proposal, which has been used amply by the social and biomedical sciences to characterize a series of diseases and illnesses in the Andean region. Following we will synthetically describe the conception present in Andean communities regarding the relationship of reciprocity that they establish with the territorial entities to understand and treat the illnesses associated with *malos parajes* and *malas horas*. This will allow us to comprehend the obstacles naturalism presents when approaching this complex phenomenon.

Reciprocity and Andean medical knowledge

After reaching a generic understanding of the concept of reciprocity that operates in the Andes, it is necessary to make some specifications regarding how reciprocity works within Andean medical knowledge.

First, our ethnographic evidence allows us to visualize that treatment practices are closer to reciprocity than to “worship” of divinities. Indeed, Fernández has shown that the center of Aymara “worship” rituals is the celebration of a “feast” to which the “guardian beings” are invited to eat the culinary offerings prepared by the *Yatiri* according to their specific tastes.⁽²³⁾ In exchange, the *Achichilas* return the spirit of the person captured, offer “luck” for the year, contribute to the abundance of the crops, chase away hail, offer water as a reciprocal gift, etc.

Second, reciprocity is a logic that does not require technical control. Understanding that Andean medical knowledge operates through reciprocity allows us to comprehend more justly the complexity of the problem

of its efficacy. If the latter is subject to relations of reciprocity, the inefficacy attributed by naturalist logic can be understood as a result of the lack of connaturality and equivalence and, of course, of the character of the interlocutors who have been characterized as ambivalent or ambiguous.⁽³³⁾

Lastly, we want to highlight the importance of dialogue within Andean medical knowledge, which has been stressed by a number of authors.^(16,34,35) Reciprocity should not be understood only as an exchange of shared gifts, but rather includes the place held by dialogue among people and territorial entities.^(10,16,34) Considering this faculty of the territorial entities makes it possible to understand why they have been described as ambivalent or ambiguous. Given that the etymology of the word ambiguous means “in discussion,”⁽³³⁾ we can consider the territorial entities to be ambiguous because their positive or negative character is not previously defined by an essential identity, but rather this characteristic emerges in relationship with ritual reciprocity and the conversation (dialogue) held with them. In this way, their behavior corresponds to and is modified by the concrete relationships of reciprocity established with humans, open to the voracity or whims of both parties, as well as the dynamics of recognition in the framework of the history of mutual relationships.

Indeed, one of the defining characteristics of the *huacas*⁽³⁶⁾ was their capacity to dialogue with humans. Today the territorial entities dialogue with the Andean residents in different ways: through the intimate dialogue of the person with the place, during vigil, during dreams, through the ritual public dialogue in different celebrations, or through a *Yatiri* when asking for health or luck. The *Yatiri* have singular recognition from the territorial entities that underlies their efficacy. Or, stated another way, only once a *Yatiri* is recognized by the entities are they able to converse with them literally: con-verse, whose etymology in Spanish evokes “to find oneself in a place” and “to occupy oneself with something.”⁽³³⁾

Taking into consideration these three specifications of the phenomenon of reciprocity within the Andean medical knowledge, we can understand the importance that *mal paraje* and *mala hora* possess within local knowledge, as well as the limitations of naturalistic logic in comprehending the illnesses associated with these phenomena.

Mal paraje and mala hora: a local, non-naturalistic knowledge

When asking the people of Camiña why they experience certain illnesses like *susto*,^(37,38,39) *agarradura*^(2,9,40) or the sickness of the *gentiles*,^(9,41) many explained that these came about after having been in or passed through a *mal paraje* at a *mala hora*. As we discussed previously, these types of illness are treated by the *Yatiri*, practicing a knowledge that contains conceptions of space and time that go beyond naturalistic logic. We will start with the first: *mal paraje*.

In Camiña there is a true topology of *malos parajes*, as a knowledge of space exists based on the identification of certain places recognized as dangerous, characterized by their voracity or fierceness. As we have pointed out, these *parajes* should not be understood as spaces devoid of intentionality. Rather, they are specific territorial entities with whom it is recommendable to establish relations of reciprocity.⁽³⁶⁾ The *parajes* are capable of giving and receiving with varying levels of demands, voracity and generosity, in a non-mechanic way, under the sign of recognition or caprice, in connection with the history of established relations and the present moment. The sense of equanimity of the *parajes* does not assure that the results will always be those that were hoped for, but are always englobed within the webs of reciprocity, even when many members of the community intentionally reconfigure the exchange with them given their ideological shifts, as occurs today with the expansion of the Pentecostal religion.^(42,43)

Taking these specifications into consideration, and in light of our ethnographic work,

we have been able to identify three meanings associated with the notion of *mal paraje*. First, *mal paraje* refers to the territorial entities that form part of the Andean imaginary. In Camiña, these fierce places are often springs inhabited by *serenos*; waterfalls in which invisible troupes of musicians can be heard; *malkus* where the devil appears personified as an ostentatious man on a horse; spaces like the Laguna Roja where stories tell of the misadventures of those devoured by the place; *chullperíos* or stretches of funerary constructions that speak to the existence of previous peoples. *Mal paraje* can also be an infrequently used road where misfortune may strike, certain places in the mountains where it is known there are ancient burial grounds, or entrances to the insides of the mountains where mineral riches may be accessed.

To contemplate the specificity of a set of entities so apparently heterogeneous, it is useful to appeal to the concepts of *Taypi* and *Puruma* in the Aymara culture.⁽³⁾ In this way, *Taypi* refers to the age and space of central value to the community, because they constitute its origins. *Puruma*, on the other hand, refers to certain spaces and times characterized by their liminal condition. In general, this concept is connected to death, which borders life, and the wild, which borders the social, although more specifically it has been associated with the fierceness of places according to Bouysse Cassagne and Harris⁽³⁾ as well as Martínez-Soto.⁽⁴⁴⁾ Based in these categories it is possible to consider why certain places are fierce in a non-naturalistic way: they are entities, spaces or times that make reference to the origins of the community/territory or the boundaries of the social, the human and life itself. Neither of these two conditions imply being outside the relationships of reciprocity.⁽³⁾

Secondly, *mal paraje* may refer to the presence of a malignant spirit. Concretely, this would be a place where the devil or one of his complicit spirits lives or frequents. In this second sense, *mal paraje* refers to the Christian imaginary of the devil, represented as a sulfurous male goat popularly called *el cachudo* [the horned one]. Ethnographically,

we have seen that all the places of the territory it is known that the devil frequents are *malos parajes* (for example, the “devil’s slope”, “the spring of the rooster”, etc.).

As can be expected given the process of colonization experienced by these societies,^(14,45) a conceptual superposition of both of these meanings of *mal paraje* exists: frequently the presence of the devil is recognized in the territorial entities and therefore the majority of the territorial entities have been demonized. In this way, the *malos parajes* coincide with the places where colonization and Evangelization have historically demonized the local territorial entities, superposing them with the figure of the devil and establishing mutual implications among both traditions.^(2,45) The expression *mal paraje* reflects in this way a polarization; because of this demonization, the territorial entities cease to be ambiguous within reciprocity and become exclusively negative entities (bad, fierce or ferocious).^(44,45) It is also important to highlight that the notion of *mal paraje* contains a certain conceptual excess; if for the Christian ideologies the devil may be present in any place, the concepts of *Taypi* and *Puruma* remind us the importance of specific territorial anchorage to understand why certain places (and not just any) are *malos parajes*.

To understand the last meaning attributed to *mal paraje* we should highlight that, although there is detailed local knowledge about the territory that allows identifying certain places as fierce, ferocious or connected to the devil, it is also true that not all *malos parajes* are predictable or clearly identifiable *a priori* under this categorization. That is, a *mal paraje* can be discovered as such because it is the place where a *mala hora* occurred. This evident relationship between *mal paraje* and *mala hora* obliges us to describe this second local concept.

When Don VF was passing through with his goats he never imagined that there were *chullpas* in his way. Only that night, when he couldn’t sleep, did he suspect that he had passed through a *gentilar*. The visit to a *Yatiri* allowed him to recognize that that was what

had happened, simply because of his lack of knowledge of those *parajes*. Now, it was not the first time that VF had been to that place and on the other occasions nothing had happened. What occurred in that specific moment that had a negative effect for him? He went through the place at a *mala hora*.

These types of narratives are very frequent when investigating the health problems that the *Yatiri* treat and it is necessary to analyze the local meaning they possess. In addition to the description of the *malos parajes*, we can say that, in a first meaning associated with *malas horas*, they can be understood as threshold times. They are times or moments that mark the passage from one time of day to another, like noon and sunset, called *oscurana* [darkness] by the residents of Camiña.

C: And him ... who might that person have been?

MC: The devil, man. And that bit of time was the *mala hora*, spending time there during the *mala hora*, she went there by herself and there she saw the horned one.

C: I’ve heard that here they talk about the *mala hora*, what’s that?

MC: It’s the time when evil roams.

C: It’s not just a specific time ...?

MC: It can be any time, at 12, at 7 when it’s getting dark, that time is always the time [the devil roams], and at 12 exactly too, 12 noon. Those times are always tricky and so is 12 at night...and that’s when he presented himself. (MC, 62 years of age, Aymara, Catholic, farmer)

Secondly, another dimension of the *malas horas* is that they are more likely to occur on certain specific days. Tuesdays and Fridays are days especially susceptible to actions occurring in *mala hora* because, as one informant commented, on these days the malignant spirits are more alive, are stronger and can attack.

Thirdly, *mala hora* is also the time when “the devil runs loose,” where “evil roams” or where “malignant spirits” appear. That

is, the notion of *mala hora* is also nourished in one of its meanings directly by the traditional Catholic Christian imaginary, to refer to those times in which the devil, in his different manifestations, or his allied spirits make themselves visible. In the multitude of manifestations possible, there is an important local reference, as the devil can appear as a deformed animal with anomalies (like two heads), a black rooster, a lizard, a snake, etc.

CJ: *But if they frighten you in buena hora it's no problem, but if at that time it's mala hora, and you get scared, they grab you, they make you sick, and you go crazy.*

C: *When is mala hora?*

CJ: *We don't know. Only the spirit knows if it's mala hora or buena hora. When it's buena hora nothing happens. You can see that animal, pick it up, kill it or just let it be, however you want.*

C: *But if it's mala hora?*

CJ: *Then you should be afraid... if you kill that little animal, you're worse off, if it's mala hora it's worse for you... And then, you'll get sick... Oh! You're sick and you get recaída, you can't eat well.*

(CJ, 90 years of age, Yatiri, Aymara, Catholic, farmer).

A last meaning we have found for this term is associated with the improper practice of "customs" (rituals) with which the relationships of reciprocity are established with the territorial entities. For example, if the customs are not carried out with respect, if the order of ritual actions is modified, if while naming the *mallkus* who inhabit the territory an important one is missed, the anger of one of the territorial entities or idols of the Catholic pantheon can be triggered. In this case, it is understood that the mistake was made at a *mala hora*.

Given the multiple meanings of *mala hora*, we can now better situate a last meaning for the expression *mal paraje*. In this way, a *mal paraje* can be any place in which *mala hora* occurred: the site of the encounter with the devil, the place where the reciprocity practices with the territorial entities failed, the area where one was crying at sunset, or

the specific place where a *chullpa* entered into a body. All of these are *malos parajes*.

Without failing to acknowledge that all the meanings of *mal paraje* and *mala hora* have equal local value, we believe that this last meaning is especially useful for considering the non-naturalistic specificity. When the *mal paraje* cannot be situated *a priori* based on topological knowledge, but rather is discovered retrospectively in conjunction with a *mala hora*, this is about not just the interrelation of two notions within Andean medical knowledge, but also the interrelation among the people of Camiña and the territorial entities. Both notions allow us to understand and act regarding a set of situations in which the territorial entities exercise their agency in a way that does not respond to the human objectives and expectations. The concrete use of these notions is carried out in the framework of relationships among beings who acknowledge one another, converse, share a relational historicity, and can be voracious, and whose confluence allows for mutual production through reciprocity practices. For this reason, in the knowledge that organizes these practices, we consider the notions of *mal paraje* and *mala hora* to be fundamental, as they reveal this relationality and invite critical questioning of the violence present when the naturalistic presuppositions are reproduced.

FINAL CONSIDERATIONS: THE OBSTACLES OF NATURALISM

Based on the analysis carried out in this article we can highlight that the primary naturalistic obstacles in the study of Andean medical knowledge manifest themselves in the treatment received by territorial entities, the type of relations established among these entities and human beings (reciprocity), and the conceptions of space/time present in the diagnosis of a disease: *mal paraje* and *mala hora*.

In general, the rationality of knowledge embodied by the *Yatiri* has become the object of naturalistic violence because it does not

share the same elemental presuppositions. This violence has been a constant historically in the consideration of Andean medical knowledge. It should be recalled that an important part of the colonial strategy of extirpation of idolatries consisted of the imposition of the natural/supernatural dichotomy onto the Andean tradition where, for example, the *huacas* were considered inanimate objects and/or possessed by demons.⁽¹⁴⁾ It should also be recalled that the voracity and greed of the *huacas* was historically observed through the movement of *Taki Onqoy*, where they appropriated the body of believers, desperate at having been excluded from the exchange of reciprocity with human beings. Hunger, thirst and voracity are expressed, then, through the frenetic dances of believers, possessed by the desire of the *huacas*.^(46,47)

These examples show the violent production of a hegemonic consensus that today has become common sense in medical knowledge and part of the social sciences,^(48,49) according to which the Andean territorial entities are simply beliefs, the result of ignorance, naiveté or deception. From this point of view, the idea of talking to the mountains, feeding them or giving them something to drink is another form of idolatry or another illusory religion, but certainly not a valid type of knowledge. In this way, naturalism has become one of the primary ideological tools contributing both to invalidating this knowledge and denying the curative efficacy of the associated ritual practices.

Given this logic, the notions of *mal paraje* and *mala hora*, absolutely central to the local explanation of disease, have been extirpated from research and social consideration in general, as they presuppose conceptions of space and time intimately tied to the complex network of reciprocity established by the communities with the territorial entities

that populate the Andes. It is for this reason that in the majority of research on the etiology of the problems treated by the *Yatiri*, the explanations are attributed to a “weakness of spirit,”^(50,51) something perfectly translatable into naturalist logic as a predisposition for disease. But far removed from this logic, and in a much less simple way than is usually assumed, the explanation that makes use of the figures of *mal paraje* and *mala hora* emerges as an eminently relational interpretation, in which spatiality and temporality exist and act in relationship (reciprocity) with humans in a complex and situated way. This complexity is something that the people of Camiña understand well and that we are just beginning to comprehend, among other reasons because we still do not know the history that has shaped these phenomena in Camiña and their connections with related phenomena in nearby parts of the Andes.

Nevertheless, we can uphold that if naturalist conceptions are constructed starting from an assumption of a-sociality for the domain of the natural world, it is difficult for them to help us comprehend the type of relationship that the Andeans establish with the territorial entities, reciprocity, or the figures of *mal paraje* or *mala hora* when constructing a diagnosis and treatment for many of their illnesses. This article has attempted to put into evidence this situation, demonstrating the obstacles of naturalistic violence habitually embodied in biomedical knowledge and the social sciences when confronting the complexity of the conceptions present in the pluralism of Aymara Andean medicine, seeking in this way to open a new path for interpretation. We consider that only when this symbolic and epistemic violence is recognized will it be possible to articulate a discourse of opposition, criticism and, eventually, transformation.⁽⁵²⁾

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