

PREFACE ENDING THIS BOOK WITHOUT NAZARIO TURPO

The book that follows this preface was composed through a series of conversations I had with Nazario Turpo, and his father, Mariano, both Andean peasants and much more. I met them in January 2002, and after Mariano's death two years later, Nazario and I continued working together and eventually became close friends. On July 9, 2007, Nazario died in a traffic accident. He was commuting from his village, Pacchanta, to the city of Cuzco, where he worked as an "Andean shaman" for a tourism agency. He liked the job a lot, he had told me; he was a wage earner for the first time in his life, making an average of \$400 a month — perhaps a bit more, considering the tips and gifts he received from people who started a relationship with him as tourists and ended up as friends. His job had changed his life, and not only because Andean shamanism is a new colloquial category in Cuzco (created by the convergence of local anthropology, tourism, and New Age practices) and therefore also a new potential subject position for some indigenous individuals. It made him very happy, he said, to be able to buy medicine easily for his wife's leg, which was rheumatic because of the constant, biting cold in Pacchanta, which is more than 4,000 meters above sea level. To be able to buy and eat rice, noodles, and fruit instead of potatoes, the daily (and only) bread at that altitude; and to purchase books, notebooks, and pencils for his grandson, José Hernán (a charming boy, who was twelve years old when I last saw him, immediately after Nazario's death) — that made him feel good.

On many counts, Nazario was living an exceptional life for an indigenous Andean man. His labor was crucial to the benefits that tourism generated in the region, and the lion's share of the profits from his work went to the owner



Nazario and Mariano saying good-bye. January 2003. Nazario's job as an Andean shaman had recently begun.

of the agency that hired him. Even so, Nazario's takings were better than the vanishingly small income people in Pacchanta (and similar villages) get from selling alpaca and sheep's wool for the international market at ever-decreasing local prices. Also unlike his fellow villagers (common Indians to Cuzqueño urbanites), Nazario was a well-known individual. When he died, I got a flurry of e-mail messages from people in Cuzco and from the many friends and acquaintances he had in the United States. Some of them wrote obituaries. Illustrating the power of globalization to connect what is thought to be disconnected, an obituary commemorating Nazario's life appeared in the *Washington Post* a month after he died (Krebs 2007); that same day, there was a post about his death in *Harper's* blog (Horton 2007). I also wrote something akin to an obituary and sent it to several friends of mine to share my sadness. Parts of what I wrote appeared in a newspaper in Lima (Huilca 2007), and a monthly left-leaning political newspaper called *Lucha Indígena* published the whole two pages (de la Cadena 2007). I want to introduce this ethnographic work with that piece, to honor Nazario's memory and to conjure up his pres-

ence into the book he co-labored with me. I had thought we would write the book together; it saddens me that we did not. Here is what I wrote when Nazario died; it is my way of introducing Nazario and his father to you.

NAZARIO TURPO, INDIGENOUS AND
COSMOPOLITAN, IS DEAD

On July 9th [2007], there was a traffic accident in Saylla, a small town near the city of Cuzco. A minibus crashed; so far sixteen bodies have been found. A friend of mine was among them; he was very well known in the region, and was admired by people in several foreign countries. He was known as a “*chamán*” in the city of Cuzco, and as a *curandero* or *yachaq* (something like a curer of ills) in the countryside. My friend’s name was Nazario Turpo. He spoke Quechua, could write a little Spanish although he hardly spoke it, and would have been considered an extraordinary person anywhere in the world. He was exceptional in the Andes, because unlike other peasants like him, life was being gracious with him—it even seemed as if his grandchildren’s future could change, and be somewhat less harsh than their present. The most outstanding part of it all was that he was well known—a historically remarkable feature for an Andean herder of alpacas and sheep. The *Washington Post* had published a long piece about him in August 2003. Around the same time, *Caretas* [a Lima-based magazine that circulates nationwide] had a story about Nazario, including several pictures of him in its glossy pages. By then he had already traveled several times to Washington, D.C., where he was a curator of the Andean exhibit at the Smithsonian’s National Museum of the American Indian (NMAI). An indigenous *yachaq* mingling with museum specialists in Washington, D.C., was certainly a news-making event in Peru.

Nazario took real pleasure relating to what, to him, was not only new but immensely unexpected as well. Complexly indigenous and cosmopolitan, he was comfortable learning, and completely at home showing his total lack of awareness of things like the inside of planes, the idea of big chain hotels (and their interiors!), subways, golf carts, even men’s bathrooms. He asked questions whenever he had doubts—just as when I or other visitors asked questions when learning how to find our way around his village, he said. (Weren’t we always asking how to walk uphill, find drinking water, hold a llama by the

neck and avoid its spit, wade a torrential creek—even how to chew coca leaves? It was the same, wasn't it?) Back at home, his travels provided stories that he told Liberata, his wife, and José Hernán, his twelve-year-old grandson (who I suspect was his favorite). His journeys abroad also intensified his appeal to tourists, and what had started as an occasional gig with a creative tourism entrepreneur gradually became a regular job. Relatively soon, and through New Age networks of meaning, money, and action, Nazario saw his ritual practices translated into what began to be known as Andean shamanism. During the peak tourist season, from May to August, his job became almost full time, as it required commuting from the countryside to the city at least four times a month, for five days at a time. When he died, he was on one of these commutes, half an hour away from his final destination: the tourism agency where the following day he would meet a tourist group and travel with them to Machu Picchu, that South American Mecca for foreign visitors. Those of us who travel that route are aware of the dangers that haunt it; yet none of us imagined that this exceptional guy would die so common a death in the Andes, where, as a result of a state policy that has abandoned areas deemed remote, and a biopolitics of neglect, buses and roads are precarious at best, and frequently fatal.

Nazario was the eldest son of Mariano Turpo, another exceptional human being, who had died of old age three years earlier. They all lived in Pacchanta—a village inscribed in state records as a “peasant community” where people earn their living by selling (by the pound and for US pennies) the meat and wool of the alpacas, llamas, and sheep that they rear. Pacchanta is in the cordillera of Ausangate, an impressive conglomeration of snow-covered peaks where an annual pilgrimage to the shrine of the Lord of Coyllur Rit'i takes place. Local public opinion has it that around 60,000 people attend the event every year; I know they come from all over Peru and different parts of the world. The zone is also known locally as the area where Ausangate, an earth-being—and a mountain that on clear days can be seen from Cuzco, the city—exerts its power and influence. In the '60s, leftist politicians visited Pacchanta with relative frequency, lured by Mariano Turpo's skillful confrontation against the landowner of the largest wool-producing hacienda in Cuzco—it was called Lauramarca. Mariano was a partner in struggle with nationally famous unionists like Emiliano Huamantica, and socialist lawyers like Laura Caller. Back then, the journey usually took two days. It started with a car ride from the city of Cuzco to the town closest to Pacchanta (Ocongate), and then

required a combination of walking and horseback riding. Changes in the world order have affected even this remote order of things: currently tourists arrive [in Pacchanta] from the city in only five hours, ready to trek the paths that cut through imposing mountains, lagoons of never-before-seen tones of blue and green, and a silence interrupted only by the sound of the wind and the distant hoofs of beautiful wild vicunas. This idyllic scenery is not the result of conservationist policies, but rather of a state politics of abandonment, which is at times shamefully explicit. But the new visitors do not seek the revolution like the previous ones; until his death, they were lured by Nazario's complex ability, which he had learned from his father, to relate with the earth-beings that compose what we call the surrounding landscape.

I was lured to Pacchanta by Mariano's knowledge. If tourists learned about Nazario through networks of spiritualism generally identified as New Age, my networks were those of peasant politics, development NGOs, and anthropology. Mariano had built and nurtured complex connections during his years as a local organizer, and though the individuals changed as people grew old, and politics and the economy changed too, the networks survived. When I arrived in Pacchanta, it was not politics that wove those networks, but tourism. They continued to connect the village to Cuzco and Lima—but this time links also existed with Washington, D.C., New York, New Mexico . . . and through me, in California. As they had been from the beginning, Cuzco anthropologists were prominent in the networks, which did not surprise me given their hegemonic (and almost exclusive) interest in "Andean culture."

I admired Mariano profoundly. He was very strong, extremely courageous, and relentlessly analytical; although he did not intend it, I constantly felt dwarfed by him. An exceptionally talented human being, it was, without a doubt, an honor to have met him. His cumulative actions—physically confronting the largest Cuzco landowner, and then following up this confrontation legally and politically through union organizing among Quechua speakers—had been crucial at effecting the Law of Agrarian Reform in 1969, one of the most important state-sponsored transformations Peru underwent in the last century. Mariano was undoubtedly a history maker. Yet, in contradiction with the far-reaching networks he built, the national public sphere—leftist and conservative—had always ignored this local chapter of Peruvian history. As a monolingual Quechua speaker, Mariano's deeds could amount only to local stories—if that. And of course he had stories to tell; those were the ones I had gone after and listened to for many months.

His community had chosen him as its leader, among other things, because he could speak well—*allinta rimay*, in Quechua—and because he was a *yachaq*—a knower, also in Quechua. This resulted in his unmatched ability to relate assertively with his surroundings, which included powerful beings of all sorts, human and other-than-human. Mariano used to describe his activities as fighting for freedom—he said the word in Spanish, *libertad*—against the landowner, who he qualified as *munayniyuq*, someone whose will expresses orders that are beyond question and reason. Being a *yachaq*, Mariano had the talent to negotiate with power, which in his world emerged both from the lettered city and from what we know as nature; the *hacendado* also drew power from both but was also firmly anchored in the first. To negotiate with all aspects of power, and enable his own negotiations with the lettered world, Mariano built alliances; his networks ramified unpredictably, even to eventually include someone like me, a cross-continental connection between the University of California, Davis, and Pacchanta—and, of course, to Lima and Cuzco. The networks also cut across local social distances and included individuals who did not identify as indigenous in the nearby villages, the hacienda, and the surrounding towns. Reading and writing were crucial assets that Mariano strived to include—and he also found them at home. Mariano Chillihuani—Nazario’s godfather—could read and write, and was perhaps Mariano Turpo’s closest collaborator; his *puriq masi*, “companion in walking” in Quechua. The two Marianos traveled to Lima and Cuzco, talked to lawyers, hacendados, politicians, state officials, and, according to many, they even had an audience with Peruvian President Fernando Belaúnde. “They always walked together,” Nazario recounted, “my father talked, my *padrino* read and wrote.” That means that together they could talk, read, and write.

Mariano and Nazario’s knowledge was inseparable from their practice; it was know-how, which was also simultaneously political and ethical. And not infrequently, these practices appeared as obligations with humans and other-than-humans: the failure to fulfill certain actions could have consequences beyond the practitioner’s control. Their political experience enabled them to communicate with and participate in modern institutions; their ethical know-how worked locally, and traveled awkwardly because not many beyond Ausangate’s reach can understand that humans can have obligations to what they see as mountains. Some of the obligations are satisfied through what the anthropology of the Andes knows as “ritual offerings”; the most charismatic and currently popular among tourists are *despachos* (from the Spanish verb



Nazario's death was covered by *La República*, one of the most important nationwide newspapers; the title means “The Altomisayoc Who Touched Heaven,” and the piece contributed to Nazario's prominence as a public shaman. It also featured an excerpt of my writing—the obituary that I also present here. The smaller photographs, taken at the inauguration of National Museum of the American Indian, in Washington, D.C., are mine.

despachar, to send or dispatch). These are small packets containing different goods, depending on the specific circumstance of the despacho and what it wants to accomplish. Mariano and Nazario were well known for the effectiveness of their dispatches, the way they offered them, what they contained, the places they sent the offering from, and the words they used to do so. The popularity of despachos even reached former President Alejandro Toledo, who, in indigenist rapture, inaugurated his term as president with this ritual in Machu Picchu. Nazario Turpo was among the five or six “authentic indigenous experts” invited to the ceremony. The invitation had reached Pacchanta through Mariano's networks, which as they had in the past, included state officials. This was 2001, however; multiculturalism was the name of the neoliberal game, tourism its booming industry, and “Andean Culture” one of its uniquely commodifiable attractions. Mariano was too old for the journey, so Nazario went instead. “*I did not perform the despacho,*” he told me, “*I cured Toledo's knee. Remember how he was limping? After I cured him he did not limp anymore.*” He did not explain how he did it—and I did not ask. I imagine that he did

what he knew, like when a U.S. traveler fell when she was climbing a small hill near Nazario's house. After carefully lifting her, he wrapped her body—actually bandaged it—in a blanket to prevent her bones from moving and hurting even more. Once in the bus, he took care of her all the way from Pacchanta to the city. I met the woman during what would be my last sojourn with Nazario in his village; she assured me that Nazario's treatment had helped. That she went back to the remoteness of Pacchanta was proof to me that she believed what she said.

Nazario was aware (indeed!) that, depending on the circumstances, many knowledges, things, and practices were more effective than what he knew and did. Once I asked him why he was not able to cure José Hernán, his grandson, who was suffering from stomachaches. He looked at me, and with a you've-got-to-be-kidding-me smile said, *Because up here I do not have antibiotics*. But learning, in this case about antibiotics, did not replace Nazario's healing practices; rather, it extended his knowledge: knowing about antibiotics meant to know more, not to know better. Following him, I learned about the complex territorial and subjective geometry that his practices cut across; their boundaries are not single or simple. His practices indeed may be incommensurable with the "extraneous" forms of doing and thinking that they have cohabited and negotiated with for more than 500 years. Yet, most complexly, Nazario's practices—and those of others like him—variously relate to these "different" forms of doing without shedding their own—or as I said above, thinking that "now they know better." An anecdote may provide a concrete illustration. As part of the inaugural ceremonies for the NMAI in Washington, D.C., the indigenous curators were invited to a panel at the World Bank, and Nazario Turpo was of course among them. Nazario gave his presentation in Quechua and requested funding from the Bank to build irrigation canals in his village. The water was drying out, he explained, "due to the increasing amount of airplanes that fly over Ausangate, making him mad and turning him black." I do not know who told him what, but later at the hotel he explained to me: *Now I know that these people call this that the earth is heating up; that is how I will explain it to them next time*. And half seriously, half jokingly we talked about how, after all, in Spanish to heat up, *calentarse*, can also mean to be mad. In the end, I was sure that Nazario's will to understand "global warming" was far more capacious than that of the World Bank officials, who could not even begin to fathom taking Ausangate's rage seriously. Nazario certainly outdid them in

complexity; he had the ability to visit many worlds, and through them offer his as well. Today all those worlds are mourning because Nazario is no more.

Nazario was not only a co-laborer in this ethnographic work. He was a very special friend; we shared pleasurable and strenuous walks and talks between 2002 and 2007. We communicated across obvious boundaries of language, culture, place, and subjectivity. We enjoyed our times together — thoroughly. We laughed together and were scared together; we agreed and disagreed with each other; and we also became impatient with each other when we failed to communicate, which usually occurred when I insisted on understanding *in my own terms*. *I have already told you enough about suerte — you cannot know what it is, how many times do I have to explain suerte to you? You do not understand, and I am repeating, and repeating*, he told me the last December I saw him, in 2006. And I pleaded: “Just one more time, I will understand Nazario, I promise.” But of course I did not understand, and I cannot remember if he repeated the explanation or not. This is what Nazario had said: *Apu Ausangate, Wayna Ausangate, Bernabel Ausangate, Guerra Ganador, Apu Qullqi Cruz, you who have gold and silver. Give us strength for these comments, these things we are talking about, so that we have a good conversation. Give us ideas, give us thoughts, give us suerte now, in the place called Cuzco, in the place called Peru*. Then he looked at me and said, *If you want you can now chew coca, if you do not want to, do not do it*. But I intuited that it would be better, I would have suerte if I did it, and I wanted to explore that intuition. Suerte is a Spanish word whose equivalent in English is luck, and I was not asking for a linguistic translation — I do not need it. Rather, I wanted to understand the ways in which Nazario paired suerte (was it luck?), thinking, and the entities that he referred to as Apu, which are also mountains, and whose names he had invoked before starting our conversation. Among *tirakuna*, or earth-beings — a composite noun made of *tierra*, the Spanish word for “earth,” and pluralized with the Quechua suffix *kuna* — Apu (*apukuna* is the plural) can be the most powerful in the Andes.¹ Nazario’s refusal to explain again was one of many significant ethnographic moments — those moments in our conversation that slowed down my thoughts as they revealed the limits of my understanding in the complex geometry of our conversations. In this geometry, *tirakuna*



The author and Nazario say goodbye in the town of Ocongate as Nazario gets ready to take the bus to the city of Cuzco where a group of tourists awaits him. July 2004. Photograph by Steve Boucher. Used by permission.

are other-than-human beings who participate in the lives of those who call themselves *runakuna*, people (usually monolingual Quechua speakers) who like Mariano and Nazario, also actively partake in modern institutions that cannot know, let alone recognize, *tirakuna*.²

My relationship with the Turpo family started with an archive—a collection of written documents that Mariano had kept as part of an event that lasted for decades, which he explained as the fight he engaged in against a landowner and for liberty. When we worked with the documents, Mariano would always start our interaction by opening an old plastic bag where he kept his coca leaves and grabbing a bunch. After inviting me to do the same thing, he would search in his bunch for three or four of the best coca leaves, carefully straighten them out, fan them like a hand of cards, and then hold them in front of his mouth and blow on them toward Ausangate and its rela-

tives — the highest mountains and most important earth-beings surrounding us. This presentation of coca leaves is known as *k'intu*; runakuna offer it among themselves and to earth-beings on social occasions, big or small, everyday or extraordinary. Offering *k'intu* to earth-beings, Mariano was doing what Nazario had also done when I asked about *suerte* (and he refused to explain): they were welcoming *tirakuna* to participate in our conversations. And they were doing so hoping for good questions and good answers, for good remembering, and for a good relationship between us and all those involved in the conversation. Nazario's refusal to explain *suerte* sent me back to this moment, for Mariano's practice suggested a relationship between the two of us, the written documents, and the earth-beings. All of us — including the documents and *tirakuna* — had different, even incommensurable, relations with each other, yet through Mariano, we could engage in conversation. Mariano's capacity to mediate highlighted an interesting feature of our relationship. On the one hand, he could interact with *Ausangate* and the other *tirakuna* who could influence our conversation, and he had also learned, at least to an extent, the language of the documents. On the other hand, I could read the documents and access them directly; I could access *tirakuna* only through Mariano and Nazario and perhaps other runakuna. With my usual epistemic tools, I could not *know* *Ausangate* — not even if I got lucky.

Nazario's refusal "to explain again" highlights the inevitable, thick, and active mediation of translation in our relationship — and it worked both ways, of course. I could not but translate, move his ideas to my analytic semantics, and whatever I ended up with would not, isomorphically, be identical to what he had said or mean what he meant. Therefore, he had already told me enough about *suerte* to allow me to get as much as I could. Our worlds were not necessarily commensurable, *but* this did not mean we could not communicate. Indeed, we could, insofar as I accepted that I was going to leave something behind, as with any translation — or even better, that our mutual understanding was also going to be full of gaps that would be different for each of us, and would constantly show up, interrupting but not preventing our communication. Borrowing a notion from Marilyn Strathern, ours was a "partially connected" conversation (2004). Later in the book I will explain how I use this concept. For now, I will just say that while our interactions formed an effective circuit, our communication did not depend on sharing single, cleanly identical notions — theirs, mine, or a third new one. We shared conversations across different onto-epistemic formations; my friends' expla-



A cross marks the place of the traffic accident where Nazario Turpo died. September 2009.

nations extended my understanding, and mine extended theirs, but there was a lot that exceeded our grasp—mutually so. And thus, while inflecting the conversation, the Turpos' terms did not become mine, nor mine theirs. I translated them into what I could understand, and this understanding was full of the gaps of what I did not get. It worked the same way on Mariano and Nazario's side; they understood my work with intermittenencies. And neither of us was necessarily aware of what or when those intermittenencies were. They were part of our relationship that, nevertheless, was one of communication and learning. For Nazario and Mariano such partial connections were not a novel experience; their lives were made with them. I will not dwell on this

now, for this historical story of partial connections is what the whole book is about. For me, however, the realization that a “gappy” circuit of connections was what I would write *from* (and not only *about*) was an important insight. It made me think back to Walter Benjamin’s (1968) suggestion of making the language of the original inflect the language of the translation. But of course I had to tweak this idea too, for following Nazario’s refusal to explain more, I could not access the original—or rather there was no original outside of our conversations: their texts and mine were coconstituted in practice, and though they were “only” partially connected, they were also inseparable. The conversation was *ours*, and neither a purified “them” (or him) and “us” (or I) could result from it. The limits of what each of us could learn from the other were already present in what the other revealed in each of us.

Rather than chapters, I have divided this book into stories because I composed it with the accounts Mariano and Nazario told me. Story 1 presents the conceptual, analytical, and empirical conditions of my co-labor with the Turpos; I intend it to take the place of the usual introduction. The rest of the book is divided into two sections of three stories each, both preceded by a corresponding interlude. The first one introduces Mariano Turpo; his political pursuits with humans and earth-beings are the matter of the following three stories. The second interlude presents Nazario, whose activities as “Andean shaman” and local thinker occupy the rest of the book. Ausangate, the earth-being that is also a mountain, occupies a prominent place in our joint endeavor for it made our conversations possible in its “more than one less than many” (see Haraway 1991 and Strathern 2004) ways of being.



The road to Mariano's house. January 2002.