Animism, Relatedness, Life: Post-Western Perspectives

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Both present academic theories and local native peoples' beliefs and practices are the result of complex colonial histories, and sometimes even evolved in curious interactions. Nevertheless, it should be kept in mind that scientific and local native theories are usually on opposite sides of the colonial border. In this article I explore the colonial and decolonizing potential of the 'animistic turn' in archaeology, focusing on my own trajectory of research. Following Latin American post-colonial writers on 'border thinking' (thinking from the border instead of about it), my account here can be described, in short, as a move from research on animism to research from animism.

Animism as a category has its origins in nineteenth century imperialist evolutionary anthropology (Tylor 1871). As with many other anthropological chronotopic classifications, animism was understood by European anthropologists as a first step in the history of religion. The use of classificatory categories of Otherness within general theoretical frameworks was (and still is) a way to introduce time distancing, a negation of contemporaneity between those who write (study, classify and theorize) and those who are represented in writing (and are thus studied, classified and the objects of theory) (Castro-Gómez 2005; Fabian 1983). The focus on religion as a way of measuring the distance between Europeans and conquered peoples was a sixteenth-century development of Iberian colonialism in the Americas (Dussel 1992; Todorov 1993). In that first phase of modernity the colonized Other was described in terms of their distance from the true faith, and either forcedly converted or annihilated by the extirpators of idolatries, who were usually the same clergymen that wrote detailed descriptions of the colonized heathen religions (Thomas 1994). As one of the foci of the extirpators' campaigns, the tombs and vestiges of the ancestors (things that became known as 'the archaeological record') were thoroughly described and then destroyed (Duviols 1977).

Within anthropology, animism was abandoned as an analytic category as the crudest forms of uni-linear evolutionism became *démodé* (and politically incorrect). It was not until a couple of decades ago that animism obtained a new lease of life, as anthropology began to focus on the diversity of theories and experiences of personhood as part of its contribution to the questioning of the modern individual and subjectivity (Gell 1998; Ingold 2000; Latour 1993; Strathern 1988; Weiner 2001). Such an 'animistic turn', part of the greater post-modern and anti-essentialist move away from rigid binary oppositions typical of modernity, is probably one of the most important contributions of anthropology to the criticism of (Western) social theory. The new anthropological animism enables dialogue with 'local theories' since it shares some fundamental assumptions, such as the reality of the existence of the non-material aspects of things/beings/worlds, the non-essential character of asymmetries between beings, sociality and personhood as not restricted to humanness, and the existence of a broad and deep connectedness between beings in the world. The animist debate has recently emerged in the discipline of archaeology, with added significance. Animism implies a potential challenge to some of the hard-core assumptions of the discipline, including its reliance on materiality as an essential aspect of beings in the world and the idea of historical time as lineal. Archaeology's interest in animism should be considered of primary importance. On one hand, and if taken as a serious theoretical platform, it could push a post- and de- colonial critique of the discipline. On the other hand, if methodologically controlled by an unchallenged western epistemology, it could serve as a colonial recapitulation of the same disciplinary framework as well as its expansion over previously unrecognized areas of research.

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Figure 1. *A meat cache in Archibarca.*

Both present academic theories and local native peoples' beliefs and practices are the result of complex colonial histories, and sometimes even evolved in curious interactions. Nevertheless, it should be kept in mind that scientific and local native theories are usually on opposite sides of the colonial border. In this article I explore the colonial and decolonizing potential of the 'animistic turn' in archaeology, focusing on my own trajectory of research. Following Latin American post-colonial writers on 'border thinking' (thinking *from* the border instead of *about* it: Mignolo 2003), my account here can be described, in short, as a move from research *on* animism to research *from* animism.

A focus on foci

In the context of a regional survey conducted in 2003 in the Archibarca area of the Antofalla Kolla-Atacameño community, Catamarca Province, Argentina,[1] a young student came to me with a drawing of a cluster of circular stonewalled structures. Fascinated with what in the sketch seemed to be the remains of a hamlet, I immediately went to the place only to find that nothing like it existed. Prompted by the recording sheet to give geometrical labels to complete her description the student had had no choice but to invent a cluster of circular structures. Here and there some small- and mid-sized boulders had been gathered in a single spot, irregularly placed one by the other, and sometimes piled (Fig. 1). These un-structured structures did not even appear to be human made. They seemed to exist precisely to challenge the archaeological surveyor's assumption that every part of a human-made building — and especially if made of stone — should be structured in some way (note that in Argentina the word usually used in archaeological surveys for any kind of archaeological feature is *estructura*, that is, 'structure'). They were roughly two metres in diameter, and no more than *about one half metre* high. Casting an eye about the plain, more stony spots like this one could be seen, sometimes clustered, but generally isolated. By walking from one to the next, and so on, and then conducting a detailed survey of the sites, they were found to be generally associated with one or several pieces of raw stone for flaking, sometimes partially flaked, sometimes not. Because they seemed to attract one's attention visually I decided to call these sites 'foci', later changing that name to 'meat caches' as suggested by the people of Antofalla, a nearby village. To fully understand how I arrived at the notion of 'meat caches', and my research on them, requires additional contextual information.

The Archibarca region is a high altitude basin, ranging from 4000 m above sea level (asl) at the terminal Archibarca lake to 6500 m asl at the summit of the Antofalla volcano, encompassing *c*. 80 km². Fresh water runs along the Torre creek from the eastern end of the basin towards the Verde Lagoon, from where a semi-continuous plain of short grasses extends, with the occasional occurrence of a freshwater spring, to the Archibarca terminal salt lake at the western end. The region is completely treeless, and the only firewood resources are *añagua* (*Adesmia* sp.) bushes that grow

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Figure 2. *An upland trench in Archibarca.*

sparsely on the middle slopes of the surrounding mountains. Pasture is limited to the plain. As well as plentiful waterfowl, several hundred vicuñas inhabit the area, grazing on the plain and sleeping in the highlands where rock outcrops provide shelter. Vicuña groups descend to the springs every morning and return to the highlands during the afternoon or evening. The main non-human predators are foxes (*Lycalopex* sp.) and the occasional mountain lion (*Puma concolor*). While regional palaeoenvironmental studies coincide in indicating a dry period (6000–4000 BP), followed by the onset of present climatic conditions, recent research has pointed to great local diversity. Lacking local palaeoenvironmental data, little can be said, other than that there is some evidence of a contemporary dry period that probably started several decades ago, while the general present-day environmental conditions were probably established four millennia ago (Núñez *et al*. 1995–96).

The intensive surface survey of the lower Archibarca basin covered 1939 hectares. The survey design placed priority on the plain, where freshwater and fodder concentrate, on the presumption that the location of human habitation and vicuña feeding areas would determine the location of human/camelid interaction. While this assumption proved partially correct, its limitations are discussed below. Three hundred and thirty-three sites were detected, and a *sui generis* typology was formulated for their description, basing the names of site types on morphological criteria and/or folk categories of present-day inhabitants of the area.

More than one third of the sites (n = 121) were classified as *meat caches*, which consisted of several natural boulders roughly piled or placed close together. Covering from 1 to 3 m^2, architectural intentionality is usually not obvious, and the *meat caches* can easily be mistaken for natural outcrops, which several may actually have been. A main feature of a *meat cache* is being equipped with one or two obsidian, basalt or opal cores, and sometimes lithic debitage. *Meat caches* focus visual attention in large, barren flats or on gentle slopes. One of these sites, Ab193, was excavated, and an assemblage of camelid hide, vicuña and llama wool and cordage, and an orange-dyed woollen flower (such as those usually used in herd propitiatory rituals) was found.

Trenches, or hunting blinds (Fig. 2), represent more than one sixth (n = 61) of the sites. These consist of stonewalls, 1 to 2 m long and from 0.3 to 1 m high, describing an arch closed in the direction of the dominant wind (northwest). *Trenches* are usually located on slopes or hills, and allow for wide-angle visual control. A person hiding behind a *trench* would be able to observe the approach of a group of vicuñas without being seen or smelled by the animals, giving the hunter an advantage. The majority of the *trenches* are at mid-altitude elevations, near preferred vicuña trails, and could have been used to ambush the animals as they returned to their sleeping areas in the hills in the evening. Wind and topography kept the hunters unseen and their scent disguised until the proximity between human and vicuña provided an encounter suitable for hunting with stone tool technology.

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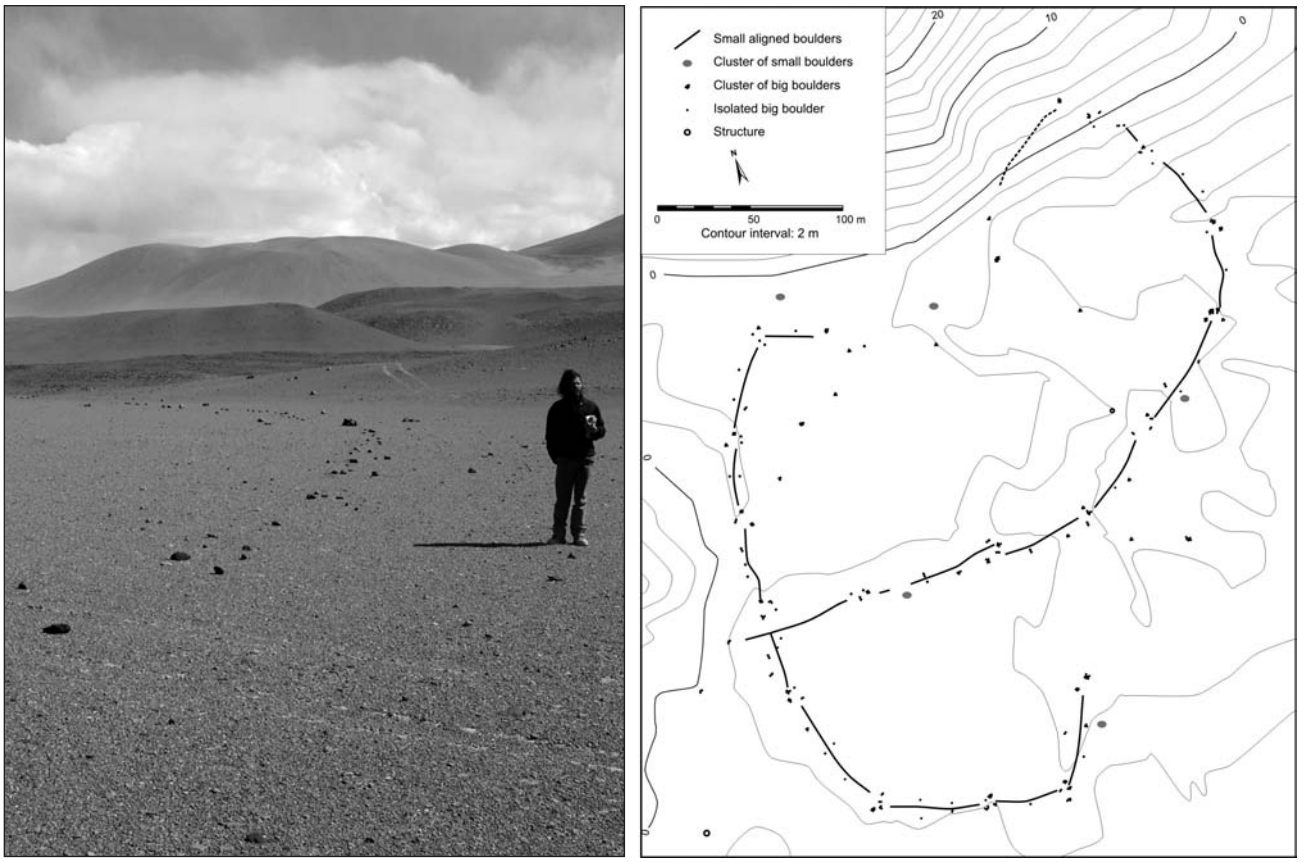


Figure 3. *A stone line (and its plan) in Archibarca.*

One site type, *lines*, was only marginally revealed (n = 3) by the survey. *Lines* (Fig. 3) are very large features, or webs of features, that reach several hundred metres in extension. They are composed of segments formed of mid-sized stone boulders spaced 1 to 1.5 m apart. The boulders are not particularly visible at a great distance, but the linearity of the features is unavoidable once one is positioned near them. Each segment, *c.* 55 m long, is followed by one or two further segments, in the same or a new direction. The space between segments is occupied by a complementary stone disposition: three larger and separated boulders forming a triangle. *Lines* do not form closed figures, and cannot be strictly considered as enclosures. The obtrusiveness of these structures is neither designed to contain herd animals nor to be seen from great distance or altitude. The stone alignments are visible only from the ground and in proximity. These sites are easy to identify only once one has the (non-obvious) notion of their existence. That difficulty, together with the slightly displaced location of lines regarding the main locational factor assumed in the survey design (i.e. fresh water) have conspired against the quantitative representation of *lines* in the survey results. *Lines* are located on plains, in depressions and on slight slopes in the intermediate spaces between grazing/drinking and sleeping areas.[2]

The rationale for the 'foci' interpretation was as follows. When hunting vicuñas, people would have needed to know the location of the closest raw stone for making cutting edges. It would probably have been inconvenient to have walked to some of the several obsidian, basalt or opal quarry areas or lithic scatters (almost one sixth of the surveyed sites are lithic scatters, some of them with associated architecture). Thus, the hunters simply cast their gaze around the particular spot where the animal fell, easily identifying one of the stone piles as a dark spot on the bright, light-coloured sandy plain, walked a few minutes and selected the appropriate stone for flaking the needed cutting edge (Fig. 4). Of course, to say 'simply' is an over-simplification, for the whole landscape had to be previously provided with this furniture. But what I would like to underline here is that the *meat caches* were detected as archaeological only when an interpretative account of them had been elaborated. Moreover, the first rationale for the foci was functional. Even though we had noticed the dark stony spots many times, it was only when they

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Figure 4. *A cluster of meat caches in Archibarca.*

could be included within a contextual narrative that they were identified as 'something'. It was while discussing the possibility of considering those dark stony spots as potential archaeological sites that the student leading one of the surveying teams returned with her assignation of a geometrical shape (i.e. the way she could think of the meaningfulness of the feature in the language of the surveyor's manual). That identification was closely related and eventually gave way to the capacity to delegate function to the thing. Only once an 'intention' had been conceptualized, did the foci appear as archaeological sites. This functional account fairly quickly proved to be similar to an animistic interpretation.

Flowers for (or from) the animals ('owners')

As previously mentioned, a package of vicuña and llama hides, wool and cord (made of llama wool, vicuña wool and mixed llama and vicuña) was found beneath the stones at site Ab139 (Fig. 5). Together with the hides, a *chimpu*, that is, a flower made of coloured wool attached to the llamas back for marking ownership during the 'feast of the animals' *(*the *'señalada')*, was recovered. Having participated in several *señaladas*, and also having researched the domestic relationship between humans and llamas and vicuñas, this find evoked several meaningful bodies of experience (for one among many ethnographies of a *señalada*, see Dransart 2002). The *señalada* is a family feast. Animals (llamas and/or sheep) are corralled together after a libation to *Pachamama* (from *pacha*, earth, but also time/space, and *mama*, mother) in the centre of the corral and a smoky bush is lit; a pair of animals is then married, decorated with flowers (*chimpus)* and coloured wool, given (prepared) food and alcoholic drink, and each is marked on one ear. After every unmarked animal undergoes the same procedure, people and animals dance around the corral. The animals are always treated with loving care, caresses and even kisses. Whether they look beautiful or not with their flowers and coloured wool is a constant matter of concern and comment. The particular person in charge of taking care of the animals is honoured in his or her relationship to them, and is acknowledged as the breeder, that is, the person who cares, loves and owns them. The *señalada* feast ends with abundant food, drink, dancing and gaiety.

Almost the same procedure is followed for llamas and sheep, but never for vicuñas. Vicuñas are *Pachamama*'s flock, and an analogous relationship between the human breeder and llamas exists between *Pachamama* and vicuñas. Contrary to the predictions of an easy dualism, it is not the case that vicuñas are wild or natural, but that they are cared for, loved and owned by a non-human breeder, *Pachamama*. For example, in the Aymara classification of wild animals in Qaqachaka, Bolivia, vicuña, guanaco and llama are within the same category of 'bred by the earth' (*uraq uywa*) (Arnold *et al*. 1992). *Pachamama* is also the mother who cares for, loves and owns people. The *señalada*, being the feast of the animals of the family,

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Figure 5. *A package of hide and woollen cords found under the stones of a meat cache in Archibarca.*

is at the same time a conversation with *Pachamama*. While watching over the beauty and health of the domestic animals *Pachamama* is also caring for and desiring the reproduction of their owners, that is, the human family, who is thus her flock.

The beings thus related are not defined by their intrinsic or essential features, but because of their relationships. Turning the focus from the related beings/objects to the (practiced and expected) relationships, a local episteme[3] begins to emerge. I call this episteme *uywaña*, since the Aymara language root *uyw-* embraces a whole semantic constellation including the acts of care, love, having respect and being fearful, nurturing, as well as meanings such as the owners, the sacred mountains, the sacred water springs, the herders, and the herd animals (Haber 1999; 2007b). The people in Antofalla are monolingual Spanish speakers, so in fact an Aymara language word such as *uywaña* is foreign to the local world. But the relationships practised in Antofalla match Aymara (and Quechua) linguistic semantic relationships in ways not allowed for by the Spanish language, maybe because my (and academic) Spanish and Antofalla Spanish come from completely different colonial histories with differently constituted semantic contents. My use of an Aymara language word for my academic writings was intended as a translation of the locally practised episteme. Van Kessel & Condori Cruz (1992) use the same word *uywaña* as an Andean equivalent to the western concept of 'technology'. In philosophy, Kusch coined the phrase 'economy of protection' ('economía de amparo'), which I find in many senses equivalent to *uywaña* (Kusch 1975), albeit with a different emphasis.

The fact that Quechua and Aymara semantic relationships are much more relevant for understanding local epistemes than Spanish language semantic relationships says a great deal about the intercultural context of meaning within which local life worlds reproduced and created themselves under coloniality, including the link between public utterances and those that had been silenced. Local languages were alternatively forbidden by the state and church and marginalized under school-based cultural hegemony. By using an Aymara word I intend to call attention to this very fact, as well as to the concomitant point that the linguistic categories naturalised by academic disciplines are themselves naturalizing the hegemonic episteme. For instance, by simply naming vicuñas 'wild animals' a particular dichotomous classification of living beings in relationship to human intervention is implied; and the same can be said of naming water, stones and bushes as natural resources. At the same time, considering the relationship with vicuñas as an economic strategy naturalizes the functional independence of spheres of life (religion, economy, technology, and so on) central to the Western episteme. By using an Aymara word I intend to introduce reflection on the naturalizing effects of language, particularly relevant in the context of discussing hegemony over local epistemes and the potential counter-hegemonic effect of writing from the borders of hegemonic culture.

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I use the verb *uywaña* to convey the meaning of the relationship of breeding, caring for, or raising, that is the model practised for the relationship between beings: parents care for children, a peasant family cares for their agricultural fields, people care for *antiguos* (archaeological sites or objects), mature people care for older ones, people care for *Pachamama*, *Pachamama* cares for her flocks (both vicuña and human), Mother Maize cares for the family, as Mother Potato does too, and so on. These are at once reciprocal and asymmetrical relationships; one of the related beings is always more powerful than the other. Nonetheless, it remains reciprocal because something is expected in return. The relationship is not harmonious because there is always the possibility of imbalance and revenge in the form of climatic calamities, illness, and even death if the expectancy of reciprocity is not properly fulfilled. And, because the aim of this regime of care is to breed life, one's own life in the first place (the breeder's life is after all much better if she eats at least some of the creatures she has bred), at the end of our life it is *Pachamama* herself who eats us (Haber 1999; 2007a,b; Kusch 1975; Martínez 1989; Van Kessel & Condori Cruz 1992).

When 'animism', considered as a generally applicable theory, is seen from the perspective of the local episteme a complex network of relationships comes to light. Focusing on the relationships instead of on the related things or beings, 'animism' is revealed as a local theory of relatedness. An understanding of this theory and its implied regime of care is crucial for re-inscribing archaeological interpretations within local knowledge. Within the local episteme of *uywaña* relations, those defining ownership and privileged access can also be described. For instance, the *señalada* ritual is both a conversation with the 'gods' and a claim to ownership of animals. In a similar way, planting a tree (Antofalla is a 'naturally' treeless area) and caring for its growth implies a series of dedicated acts of care as well as a claim to ownership of the land where the tree (and eventually a house, irrigation canals, and agricultural plots) can be seen. Social, political, religious, and economical and health issues are indistinguishable within the *uywaña* episteme, as they are within Antofallan livelihood, which is one of the main points of resistance of the local theory to academic manipulation.

A focus on vicuña hunting

Up to this point, my research could be seen as a traditional archaeological and ethnographical survey, and in certain senses it remains the case. However, probably due to my background in research on native concepts of domesticity, some non-obvious patterns started to arise from my archaeological data.

When I showed all the pictures taken during the field season to the village people in Antofalla, I had the opportunity to discuss my 'focus' interpretation with them. 'That looks like a meat cache' ('*escondite de carne*'), was the response I received to my photographs. I never found or expected to find meat underneath the piled stones of the *meat caches*, and the people I asked weren't able to assure me that meat was actually hidden there. Nevertheless, their comment prompted the idea that these sites were related to vicuña hunting. Even though some official representations of local culture stress that vicuña hunting is forbidden, greater intimacy reveals that this is not actually the case.

Vicuña (*Vicugna vicugna*) are one of two wild species of South American camelids. Being 'wild' is usually assumed to imply that they are part of a natural realm separated from humans, that they live in a natural environment, and that they do not depend on humans for long-term reproduction. Vicuñas in Archibarca, a particularly sparsely inhabited area, appear to fulfil these requirements. As with other South American camelid species, vicuñas have fixed territories for sleeping and grazing. They are daily water drinkers, following their own paths down to pasture each morning, returning later in the day. If they detect a threat, such as the scent or shape of a predator, a storm, or a strange sound, the dominant male vocalizes loudly and through sounds and gestures provokes the whole family group into flight. Under stress, such as when fleeing from a perceived danger, vicuñas can run extremely fast and climb through steep terrain, while always conserving their group structure. The lead vicuña may suddenly change direction perpendicularly if prompted by a strange feature of the terrain. Vicuñas are extremely hard to hunt with stone-headed projectiles, characterized by their short range and relatively low harm potential. Thus, vicuña hunting is not simply a matter of projectile design or hunter ability; human predatory interaction with vicuñas cannot be characterized as humans imposing their will and control. Vicuñas are able to impress their actions on the course of events. They are able to perceive hunters at greater distances than the range of the projectiles; they can run faster and through harsher terrain than hunters. They also move in groups — if one group is in flight, other groups in the area also bolt. Vicuñas, then, are not essentially part of a natural realm, living in a natural landscape, but purposive and sentient agents (at least in relation to humans), inhabiting a place made through their continued interaction with predators (particularly humans).

Even though vicuña are defined as wild animals by western science (and in European languages in general), they are the flock of the Earth deity ('Santa Madre Tierra' or *Pachamama*) according to local knowledge.

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To hunt a vicuña is something other than gathering a resource from the untamed wilderness (this would be meaningless in Antofalla); instead it is a kind of negotiation with *Pachamama*, the owner (Haber 2002; 2007a,b). During carnival, *Pachamama* appears to people as a vicuña, wearing *chimpus*, approaching people, and looking directly into their eyes. Vicuña cannot be hunted in carnival season, nor during August or on Fridays, as these are periods when *Pachamama* is hungry and fertile and doesn't want to give up a vicuña. Hunting during these seasons would be considered a theft and revenge from *Pachamama* would be expected. Tales of hunters found shot with their guns placed at walking distance from their corpses after having gone vicuña hunting on a Friday are commonly heard. Even hunting during allowed times might necessitate sharing part of the prey with *Pachamama*, and if people from another family are present a good share of the animal should be given to them. Parts of the vicuña, particularly the feet, require specific types of disposal, under stone boulders or buried in the ground. Specific arrangements for disposal of vicuña feet have been detected at archaeological sites since the fourth millennium BC (Elkin 1996; Haber 2006). Camelid bones are dominant in every animal bone assemblage in the region in all periods and environmental and topographical settings. When specific determinations within these assemblages allow the proportional contribution of each camelid species to be weighted, vicuñas prove to be the majority (from 90 per cent in the Middle Holocene to 70 per cent in the First Millennium AD) (Haber 2006; 2007d). Bone assemblages from agricultural villages in lower altitudes (3300–3700 m above-sea-level) in the same Antofalla area were made up of 70 per cent vicuña and 30 per cent llama bones (Haber 2007a).

While the hunting landscape of Archibarca is certainly very difficult to date given that it is mostly surface and distributional data, one occupational site (Ab1) was excavated, consisting of an indefinite number of temporary occupations behind a rocky outcrop (that served as a wind breaker). Within two metres of the outcrop a series of slab-lined house-like outlines were found, containing hearths, domestic refuse, and deposits of vicuña feet and vicuña foetuses. Radiocarbon dates for the Ab1 site[4] show an occupational span covering the first millenium BC and the first half of the first millenium AD. Such a time span is to be understood as a minimum for the site itself and for the landscape in general, given that several finds known regionally to correspond to older periods are conspicuous both on the surface of Ab1 and associated with hunting sites (meat caches and trenches). Thus, while the time scale of the hunting landscape of Archibarca cannot be known with any satisfactory detail at the moment, it was probably used with low intensity during a considerable period of time. Even notorious changes in hunting technology have not implied the replacement of this landscape, for it is common to find Remington gun bullets together with stone projectile points in the surface of the same hunting trenches.

If one considers vicuña hunting as one of the long-term patterns in the area, the Archibarca landscape can be described as a *trap*. A *trap* is a device constructed by humans to attract prey. Because it has to be effective, the *trap* includes the knowledge that its constructors have of their intended prey, such as behaviour, size, reactions, vulnerability, abilities, and so on (Gell 1996). The landscape of Archibarca can be understood with these considerations in mind. *Trenches* were to hide hunters from vicuñas returning upslope to their sleeping areas in the afternoons. Prevailing northwesterly winds protected the hunters from detection. Vicuñas ascending the slope had less visual range than humans behind a blind uphill from them. It is probable that *lines* (and maybe with additional attachments, such as coloured woollen threads) were perceived by vicuñas under stress (wounded or in flight) as a sign and prompted them to avoid those structures. In addition, vicuñas may have been provoked to change direction, bringing them closer to the hunter's range. It is probably the case that *lines* were devices for inducing vicuña mobility, either under stress or as part of their daily patterns of movement. Thus, the encounter between human and vicuña was not placed in an abstract vacuum where the human employs her or his hunting technology, but inserted in an already inhabited environment of previous interactions and mutual knowledge.

The same conversation provides an understanding of the placement of good quality stone for flaking cutting edges at the *meat caches*. However, it is only when one thinks about the structure of anticipation in which the whole landscape of Archibarca is embedded that the name 'meat caches' becomes meaningful. It is not necessarily meat that is hoarded in these spots, but the cutting edges necessary for butchering a hunted animal. There are hundreds of these structures dispersed throughout the landscape, because no hunter could predict the actual spot where the vicuña would eventually collapse. Moreover, the time elapsed between the placing of the raw stone material and its actual use for manufacturing cutting edges is unpredictable: it could be as short as a day or as long as a couple of millennia. While the relation between raw material cacheing and cutting-edge use seems to be purely functional, the quite probable incongruence between the time scales of the cache and that of the human body implies something other than mere functionality. It would have been more

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often than not the case that the raw material placed by a particular hunter remained unused at the end of that particular hunt, while the raw material placed by another, probably unknown, hunter at a different time was actually used for butchering the prey. The time scale of such a landscape structured in anticipation is far longer than the time scale of social practice. Placing raw material is neither just an anticipation of a future personal need, nor the need of another known hunter. It seems to imply an 'other', not just someone like myself who places the raw material, but a bigger Other related to all the vicuña hunts that take place at any time and at any place in the entire landscape. Indeed, if one considers the time-scale incongruence together with the time reversal of the functional chain, where the cutting edge comes first and the need for it will eventually come later, the whole structure of anticipation departs from a functionally driven practice and approaches a propitiation ritual. Given that the stone is placed in anticipation of the hunt, but not necessarily of this hunt in particular but of the hunt-in-general, it is the cutting edge that seems to be soliciting the prey to come and yield to the butchering of its carcass. It is not the meat that calls for the cutting edge, but the other way round. It is not simply that the hunter goes after the prey, but that the hunter makes the prey allow itself be driven to the hunt. Raw material caching seems to mobilize desires more than effects, even though the effect of the particular ways of mobilizing desires seems to be — at least some times — the fulfilment of hunting desires.

Meat caches focused visual attention simply through the gathering together of several stones. The association of *meat caches* with lithic material for the manufacture of sharp edges for processing carcasses can be considered as a particular form of providing the landscape with its necessary furniture. *Meat caches* anticipate not only the eventual use of the lithic raw material, but also the successful hunt that would, in time, make the tools necessary. Thus, it is understandable that a special deposit, a ritual offering, was placed below the stones of one of the *meat caches*. Even the local name 'meat cache' can be considered consistent with the anticipation or propitiation of vicuña hunting. The landscape must be provided with attractions, both for the vicuña, to make them want to encounter their hunter, and for *Pachamama,* to make her want to deliver an animal. The aesthetics implied in the relationship among hunters, animals and *Pachamama* accounts for the beauty of Archibarca. It is not a beauty to be seen simply with the eyes; it is not a tourist aesthetic. Rather, like the woollen flowers on the backs of the llamas, or the brightness of obsidian and the colours of opal placed by the rocks of the *meat caches*, it is a conversation with the gods, that is, with the earth, the vicuña, and the flaking stone, both as concrete and cosmological beings. The Archibarca landscape demonstrates the extent to which vicuñas are not natural objects (i.e. outside the human domain) but are incorporated into the world of humans, as much as humans are incorporated in their world.

Post-colonial contexts, archaeology and local theory

In the late 1970s, a group of German zoologists and veterinarians undertook a study of vicuñas, determining that they were near extinction and in need of specialist management (Hoffmann *et al.* 1983). During the violence of the Argentinean military government, when 30,000 people were 'disappeared' for political reasons, vicuñas were protected for ecological ones (Catamarca Provincial Decree Nº 475/1979). Hunting was forbidden under a MAB (Man And Biosphere) UN-regulated scheme, and hunters were incarcerated, prosecuted, and terrorized, ending a several-millennia-long conversation between local people and vicuñas (Haber 2002; 2007a,c). During the present decade, the overpopulated vicuña flocks are being sheared by state agencies and private companies licensed by the state, while local people work for them for a salary, or are simply excluded. In the present context of the prohibition of vicuña hunting for the local population, it is to be expected that local people are extremely cautious about their relationship to vicuña. The dominance of Argentinean law does not imply simply a repression of local deities but also the kind of relationship expected with them. Local theories of relatedness are considered superstition, folklore and ignorance while a western notion of relatedness based on individualism, control over nature and market place mediated relationships is hegemonic (Grosso 2008; Haber 2007b, 2007d; Kusch 1975; van Kessel & Condori Cruz 1992).

The essential modern divide between 'culture' and 'nature' is at the very heart of the scientific view of llamas and vicuñas. While both species are cross fertile and share the same genetics, biological disciplines classify them as, respectively, domesticated and wild. The hegemonic notion underpinning domestication is that of culture gaining control over nature, which, derived from European linguistic and cultural backgrounds, has little in common with Andean perspectives on interaction between Andean people and Andean camelids. A central focus of traditional regional archaeology in recent decades has been the process of llama domestication. It remains an important topic (together with social complexity and similar evolutionary themes) in literature, symposia

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and research projects (Olivera 1997; Yacobaccio 2004; Yacobaccio *et al.* 1994). Notwithstanding the strong evolutionary and ecological emphasis that predicts a tendency toward llama domestication and llama herding as the main long-term economic activity, early agriculture and heavy reliance on vicuña hunting have been confirmed archaeologically (Elkin 1996; Haber 2007d; Quesada 2006). Nevertheless, the academic view of llama as the domesticated species and vicuña as the natural one, and the inclusion of this divide within a long-term lineal process by archaeology, contributes to the hegemonic representation of vicuña coming increasingly under the control of humans. It is clear that this representation is coupled with conservationist ethics and the management culture. Thus, disciplinary policies such as that implemented by the national and provincial states prohibiting vicuña hunting and repressing local peoples as agents of interaction with vicuñas, gain legitimacy.

Modern Western ideas about nature as an essential non-human realm and culture as a human creation gaining progressive control over nature, imply a lineal directional temporality, expressed in western history as evolution, progress, increasing rationality, expansion of democracy, and/or secularism, and so on. Technology, domestication, and science are focal concepts in this conception of time, and academic discourses are a crucial part of this core idea. While this conception is originally a provincial creation of Europe, its universalization has turned this idea of time into a politics of space, what Mignolo considers the 'dark side of modernity' (2003), and Quijano calls 'coloniality' (2001), and is the explanation of the long-term reproduction of colonial relationships (beyond political institutionalized control). In the particular case of vicuñas, it seems clear that the exclusion of local people from their long-term traditional relationship with vicuñas was effected through the assumption of normality of western ideas regarding nature and society's relationship with it, including assumptions regarding lineal time and empty space. Academic disciplines including biology, but also archaeology and its narrative of progressive control of nature, domestication, technological progress, and increasing political differentiation, were and still are instrumental in the dissemination and support of such ideas. Because science, the state and multilateral international organizations are considered to be 'in charge' of the relationships with natural beings, during the last 30 years this colonial intervention appears to have given way to the development of state regulated vicuña ranching schemes and Pachamama has been replaced by the state and the market place as the dominant powerful agents in the relationship with vicuñas.

Animism and archaeology: a departure

A possible critique of the argument I have presented on landscapes of anticipation is that it really only works for those with the eye of faith; other advance preparations have no such implications, such as saving money to pay taxes. While I agree that 'the eye of faith' is required, it could be argued that such is always the case with arguments that rely on an internal understanding of cultural phenomena, such as the phenomenon of saving money to pay taxes. In the latter case there is also a Big Other implied, but the State rather than Pachamama. While it is quite commonly the case that as a citizen of a particular state one could doubt that the money paid in the form of taxes will be returned during one's lifetime, or returned in the proper way (i.e. not lost to corruption, or used to fund colonial warfare, the repression of social movements, and so on), one is nevertheless prepared to design a personal strategy to get the money to pay taxes. This unquestioned practice can only be understood with the eye of faith — faith in state power is the very touchstone of the state as a powerful agent (and consider the 'animistic'-like assumption of experiencing the state as if it were an agent to which one could develop obligations and expectancies). While the experience of living within a world dependent on communication with an agent as powerful as the state probably conveys a sense of naturalness to tax paying practices within the citizen-state relationship, it cannot be said to be beyond 'the eye of faith' in a way that the relation between hunters and Pachamama in the vicuña hunting practice is not. In a similar vein, Bruno Latour bridges the supposed difference between western and 'primitive' peoples by considering the animistic-like relation of westerners with technological objects (Latour 1993). At the same time, the 'animistic turn' referred to in the beginning of this paper (see also other contributors to this issue) has re-examined the previous negative attitude towards animism and considers animistic relations to be a focal area of interest for research world-wide. While both attitudes depart from the previous modern view of animism supported by classical colonialist anthropology, subservient to a disciplinary strategy in relation to otherness that implied its transformation, it remains open to debate to what point they are involved in the recapitulation of colonialism. On the one hand, Latour's argument that '[o]ur past begins to change' when 'we stop having been modern, because we become retrospectively aware that the two sets of practices (thought to divide moderns from non-moderns) have always already been at work in the historical period that is ending' implies an incorporation of formerly Others' epistemic regimes within a 'we' (that can be assumed to

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be the west) and fails to acknowledge the universalizing project of Western modernity supportive of European colonialism. The west has indeed been modern and much blood has been (and still is) shed in the name of European modernity. A more responsible attitude towards history from western intellectuals should be expected. On the other hand, the 'animistic turn' seems to discover with certain admiration the animism of Others and to declare this as a focus of academic interest. However, this discovery and validation of 'difference' occurs within an essential dichotomy us/others. Consequently, hegemonic positions are not challenged and others are put under scrutiny from an assumed place of normality. The naturalness with which a 'western experience' of the world is turned into a context of normality from where other's worlds are nominated, labeled, judged, and eventually intervened in is part and parcel of the coloniality of knowledge and the reason for its invisibility.

The assumption that specialized knowledge is able to provide an understanding of, and to control the relations among, beings in the world while local knowledge is dismissed as un-scientific, un-systematic, irrational and eventually gathered under the rubric of folklore and/or ethnography, is part and parcel of the same colonial scheme that has characterized both European expansion in the Andes since the fifteenth century and western science. In this light, the introduction of anthropological theories similar to animism or even openly animistic provides a position from where to understand local epistemes. But, again, animism as an anthropological analytic category itself is implied in the assumptions of the colonial episteme, as I have sketched in the case of vicuña. Both the discourse on vicuña hunting as essentially a matter of ecology and the discourse on the relationship with the owner of the vicuñas as essentially a matter of religion assume distinctive and separate segments of the real world: ecological science on the one hand, religion or culture on the other. Western linguistic partitioning of the world (and its disciplinary reinforcement by science) leads to an understanding of others' lives as divided into different realms (each of which can be explained within a particular field of discourse, or discipline). Such a 'god's eye view' through which animism and its related theories are seen, studied and classified implies what Castro-Gómez (2005) has called the 'zero point hybris', that is, the fiction that science describes the (colonial) relations in the world from outside colonial relations.

Archaeology is one of the disciplines implicated in the epistemic violence carried out on local knowledge. Archaeology puts in terms of knowledge of the past, research and conservation what from local life are relationships with potent and demanding beings, the *antiguos*. *Antiguos* are only 'past and dead' in the sense of living in a different state of time-space (*pacha*) and not in a preterite (perfectly past) sense. Prior to an excavation I conducted near Antofalla village, a local inhabitant made the appropriate libations and asked the site to 'breed' many beautiful, ancient things for me. What is implied is that archaeological things (the raw material of the discipline of archaeology) are not the remnants of a distant and perfect past, waiting to be manipulated methodologically in order to gain knowledge of that past yet with no animist theory at hand. No such distant and dead past exists. Archaeology as a practice (including my own practice described here) interferes with the *uywaña* episteme.

State and private interventions on communal lands make use of archaeology and other academic disciplines in the formulation of projects, laws and investments. Thus, the colonialism implied in power relationships is supported by the coloniality of knowledge implied in epistemic violence (Haber 2007b). Archaeology as a discourse contributes to colonial interventions but, as shown here, can also be counter-hegemonic. But, this is simultaneously the greatest risk of incorporating discourses on animism into archaeology: it could take on the guise of a global theory that explains local lives, with renewed potential for colonial intervention. In the hands of archaeology as a discipline of knowledge animism represents a new challenge to local lives. But it also can assist archaeologists to become part of the relations that make up local worlds and to acknowledge the relevance of local epistemes.

Animism, as a powerful theory that provides a deep understanding of human—non-human relationships, has become incorporated into the pool of theoretical-methodological devices that western (scientific) archaeology calls on to research the past of colonized peoples. As demonstrated above, when archaeology engages in dialogue with, learns from, and is transformed by, local theories of relatedness instead of neglecting them, it can develop insights that are both more accurate and locally relevant. Research on vicuña hunting, as illustrated by the fragment of research on the *meat caches* of Archibarca, demonstrates a long-term interaction between local people and vicuña embedded in culturally profound understandings and meanings. However, 'animism' is generally iterated and articulated from outside the relationships thus called animistic. A focus on relationships implies the inclusion of my own relationships with local people, local worlds and the political and colonial contexts, and the contextualization of my own writing across colonial difference. To learn about local epistemes within local theories

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of relatedness does not have the same consequences for subjectivity as a detached research could. Because one gets involved in life relationships while trying to understand how relationships 'are' and 'should be', and because subjectivities 'become' (are made) within those long-term relationships, it is probably not the knowledge obtained that is the most relevant outcome, but rather the capacity to acknowledge and be acknowledged within those relationships. As Sillar (this volume) aptly emphasizes, animism always retains a local scope and has local contexts of relevance. Probably the most important aspect of such a local tethering is that animism is a long-term dialogue of resistance to colonial discourses and policies. Given the coloniality implied in the intercultural context of such a dialogue, subaltern and hegemonic understandings are mutually translated by the acknowledgment of the coloniality of power. In Antofalla, the most important aspect of animism is not its explanatory and/or methodological power, but the fact that it is a local theory that depicts an epistemic and ontological landscape *from where* to think and write local resistance to globalization/colonization. When 'animism' is understood as locally grounded and practical context (i.e. doubly translated, Grosso 2008), and the position of academic scientific 'knower' is displaced by being related in life (and not just in knowledge) to the local episteme, a space is opened for dialogic practice and counter-hegemonic self-transformation. If such is the case, 'animism' changes from the object of study to the place for thinking through the intercultural context of post-colonial interventions. This paper started with an apparently inconsequential field research situation regarding a fairly insignificant archaeological site, and branched out to encompass a whole web of relatedness. My writing, which follows one thread of a set of relations that I actually followed, shows in its form what it intends to say about its content: that animism in the place from where I am writing exists within a complex and culturally specific web of relations among beings. This implies that whether to start from *meat caches* or any other being is only a matter of contingency, for sooner or later the thread would lead the writing to relatedness, *uywaña*, and thus to the coloniality of knowledge[5]. The literary form of this paper also shows (within its limitations) my own transformation as a researcher and as a person through my history of research and relationship to animism in the local context. To accept the local episteme as the place for thinking (and the home address of writing) implies rewriting archaeology away from its hard-core (modern, western) assumptions (materiality as soul-less, time as linear). If it were true that 'we' had never been modern, the move here described would be easier and, from the context of the colonial border, probably meaningless.

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Notes

1. Antofalla is located on the northwestern border of Argentina in the high altitude desert known as the Puna de Atacama.
2. A complete survey of the larger Antofalla valley basin (607 hectares) conducted in the years following the Archibarca survey indicated some areas with a similar hunting landscape, including *meat caches*, *trenches* and *lines*.
3. Understood as a 'system of understanding'.
4. Lp-1881 1830±80 BP; Lp-1547 1485±80 BP; Lp-1582 1730±50 BP; Lp-1756 1930±70 BP; Lp-1762 2070±70 BP; Lp-1778 2150±70 BP; Lp-1883 2200±60 BP; A-10682 2335±70 BP; Lp-1884 2430±90 BP; and the outlier date Lp-1540 6020±80 BP.
5. I have followed other departures in other cases, including stone spades in agricultural villages (Haber & Gastaldi 2006), houses (Haber 2007b), vicuñas feet (Haber 2007d), and veins of metal ore (Haber 2007c).

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