

# Cities of Rivers, Mountains, and Serpents: Non-Human Territorialities in Jaime Saenz and José María Arguedas

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## Abstract

In this article, I draw on Tupac Amaru Kamaq Taytanchisman (1962) by José María Arguedas and *Imágenes paceñas* (1979) by Jaime Saenz to illuminate the ways that serpents, rivers, and mountains bear upon the spatial organization of Lima and La Paz. I contend that for Saenz and Arguedas, entities such as the Amaru or the Illimani influence the production of non-human territorialities, reorganizing the structures of urban spaces and the lives of the citizens within them. Both texts make visible non-human territorialities through a process I call "territorial writing." This kind of writing employs a variety of literary strategies (narrative time, characters, and figures) to visualize human and other-than-human vinculum as part of Andean cities. From this vantage point, "territorial writers" perceive urban geographies as territories in which different ethnic groups interact with powerful non-human entities or deities.

## Keywords

*Andes, indigenous ontologies, Jaime Saenz, José María Arguedas, non-humans, territoriality*

## Resumen

A partir de un análisis de las obras *Tupac Amaru Kamaq Taytanchisman* (1962) de José María Arguedas e *Imágenes paceñas* (1979) de Jaime Saenz, este artículo explora las formas en que las serpientes, los ríos y las montañas influyen en la organización espacial de Lima y La Paz. Sostengo que para Saenz y Arguedas, entidades como el Amaru o el Illimani influyen en la producción de territorialidades no humanas, reorganizando las estructuras de los espacios urbanos y la vida de los ciudadanos dentro de ellos. Ambos textos visibilizan territorialidades no humanas a través de un proceso que llamo "escritura territorial". Este tipo de escritura emplea una variedad de estrategias literarias (tiempo narrativo, personajes y figuras) para enfatizar que las relaciones entre humanos y no humanos son características fundamentales de las ciudades andinas. Desde este punto de vista, los "escritores territoriales" perciben las geografías urbanas como territorios en los que diferentes grupos étnicos interactúan con poderosas entidades o deidades no-humanas.

### Palabras clave

*Andes, Jaime Saenz, José María Arguedas, no-humanos, ontologías indígenas, territorialidad*

Is it possible to compare the works of José María Arguedas and Jaime Saenz? What are the points in common and the differences between both Andean writers?<sup>1</sup> *Imágenes paceñas* [Images from La Paz] is a frequently omitted book in Saenz' scholarship. Academics almost completely ignored this collection of chronicles, probably because of the year of its publication: 1979. That year Saenz also published *Felipe Delgado*, his most famous narrative piece. However, in opposition to the sociological dimension of *Felipe Delgado*, I demonstrate that *Imágenes paceñas* illustrates a cosmological or ontological network between *paceños*, rivers, and mountains that contests anthropocentric rationalities in Andean countries. In Elizabeth Monasterios' words, this book serves as "a harsh judgement of Modern thought" (2002, 334).<sup>2</sup> In the 1962 poem *Tupac Amaru Kamaq Taytanchisman*, the first

<sup>1</sup> Regarding the relations between Arguedas and Bolivia, we can mention his text *La ciudad de La Paz. Una visión general y un símbolo* (1987). Furthermore, the Aymara intellectual Fausto Reinaga quotes Arguedas in his *Manifiesto del Partido Indio de Bolivia* (12 and 20).

<sup>2</sup> Unless otherwise indicated translations are my own.

publication in Quechua by the Peruvian intellectual José María Arguedas, I identify a similar challenge to Modern/Western thought. Less analyzed in Arguedian studies, the poem demonstrates the crucial role of powerful non-human entities such as the Amaru or Serpent God in the indigenization of Lima. Seeing that his people —the *runa* or Quechua migrants— plan to settle in the capital city permanently, the Amaru guides the appropriation of this space.<sup>3</sup> He motivates Quechua subjects to reorganize Lima and disseminate their messages to younger generations of *limeños*.

In this article, I draw on *Tupac Amaru Kamaq Taytanchisman* and *Imágenes paceñas* to illuminate the ways that serpents, rivers, and mountains bear upon the spatial organization of both Lima and La Paz. I contend that for Saenz and Arguedas, entities such as the Amaru or the Illimani influence the production of non-human territorialities, reorganizing the structures of urban spaces and the lives of the citizens within them. Paraphrasing the French geographer Claude Raffestin (2012, 129), non-human territoriality is “a system of relations [...] a system of exchanges and, consequently, a system of flux of all sorts” between multiple living beings in local and migrant geographies. Saenz and Arguedas perceive Andean cities as centers of relational ontologies “between humans and humans, humans and plants, humans and animals, and humans and material things” (Arnold 143). The poem and the chronicles are informed by the indigenous principles that make Lima and La Paz more than modern or anthropocentric spaces. In invoking Quechua and Aymara systems of knowledge and territoriality, Arguedas and Saenz produce a decolonial thinking that makes visible ancestral ways of inhabiting urban geographies.

Arguedas and Saenz’s texts make visible non-human territorialities through a process I call “territorial writing.” This kind of writing employs a variety of literary strategies (narrative time, characters, and figures) to visualize human and other-than-human vinculum as part of Andean cities. From this vantage point, “territorial writers” perceive urban geographies as non-human territorialities in which different ethnic groups interact with powerful entities or deities. For example, Saenz reminds us that La Paz is “governed by the Illimani, the Mururata, and the Huayna-Potosi, which are the most magnificent giants in the Highlands” (10). Both Arguedas’ poem and Saenz’s chronicles describe Andean geographies as living embodiments of powerful non-human

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<sup>3</sup> In Quechua, *runa* means human being, but it also refers to the ethnic status of Quechua subjects. Meanwhile, the Amaru is a powerful serpent that inhabits subterranean worlds. According to Steele and Allen: “serpents are associated with places of transition and transformation [...] are also identified with rivers, lakes and the ocean” (96).

forces, highlighting the complexities of Quechua and Aymara relational ontologies. These works understand Lima and Paz as assemblages of multiple ontological existences, moving beyond the logic of anthropocentrism. Engaging with the process and discourses of subaltern insurgencies in Bolivia and Peru, Saenz and Arguedas remark the “poetics of Andean conflict”—to borrow a notion discussed by Elizabeth Monasterios in her comparative analysis of both authors (2007, 556). Such a conflict relies on the discrepancies between mestizo/criollo and indigenous ways of life.

Experiences shared by Quechua and Aymara subjects both past and present provide the main frame of reference for my proposal regarding non-human agency in metropolitan geographies. However, studies of Andean ontologies and materialism, especially the work of scholars such as Marisol de la Cadena (2015), Anne Lambright (2015), and Tara Daly (2019), also offer an entry into elucidating what other-than-humans are and how they relate to human subjects to create a decolonial spatial thinking. My comparison between Saenz and Arguedas depends primarily on two axes: ontological interconnectedness and the end of indigenism. What Saenz describes in *Imágenes paceñas* is a radical relationality that refuses the dualism of Western thought that typically separates nature from culture (Escobar 2008, 111-112; Descola 87). It is not a coincidence that mountains and rivers are leitmotifs in the most memorable chronicles written by Saenz. According to Monasterios: “beyond any kind of costumbrismo or folklorism, Saenz’ work is nourished by the most hidden roots of the Andean world” (2001, 136). Thus, texts such as “Killi-Killi Mountain,” “Llojeta,” and “The Choqueyapu River” show us that indigenous ontological relatedness is a fundamental part of the *Paceño* lifestyle. In the same vein, the poem written by Arguedas describes a cosmic circuit in which the poetic voice uses a tremendous amount of energy, intensity, and corporeal vitality to offer a prayer to the Amaru, one of the most powerful of Quechua deities. The Amaru’s potency, transmitted to the *runa* migrants by the lyrical voice, is fundamental for andeanizing Lima.

Arguedas and Saenz both underscore the agency of indigenous subjects in Andean countries beyond the literary and national statements of *indigenismo* and *mestizaje* (Tarica xxi-xxii; Alfaro 2020, 68). The attention Saenz dedicates to the *aparapita* expresses his disapproval of the works of indigenist writers and scholars (García Pabón 2008, 10). Almost a decade before, Arguedas fought to empower Quechua migrants in Lima despite racial and exotic representations from *Limeño* intellectuals (Daly 2019, 96; Archibald 79; Elguera 2020, 126-127). Both authors recognized their works as fulcrums for vindicating disenfranchised groups. In his bilingual *Katatay*, Arguedas started

his poem “Huk Doctorkunaman Qayay” with these verses: “Manas imatapas yachaniñachu, atrasus kayku; huk umawansi umaykuta kutichinqaku. [...] Huk ducturkunas chayta nin; kikin allpanchikpi miraq, wirayaq, qilluyaq ducturkuna.” (50) [They are saying that we are brainless, an obstacle to development; they are trying to change our beliefs by other rationalities [...] It is affirmed by some scholars, some doctors that gain weight in our farms, getting old in our lands]. To Arguedas, these academics did not recognize the survival of indigenous communities beyond the frames of modernity. Similarly, in his famous 1968 essay “El aparapita de la Paz,” Saenz asserts, “As the poets, the letter men have ignored him [the aparapita] [...] The papers of sociologists never talk about him and the folklorists also forget to take note of his life” (24). Of particular interest is that in Saenz’ work, the *aparapita*, as an Aymara migrant in La Paz, challenges indigenous stereotypes in the Bolivian social sciences, literature, and in the national imaginary at large (Monasterios 2001, 19).

I am acutely aware that Arguedas and Saenz’ ethnic origins could delegitimize my interpretation of “non-human territorialities.”<sup>4</sup> In this research, I draw principally on texts by two non-indigenous intellectuals who are prominent figures in the Peruvian and Bolivian lettered cities.<sup>5</sup> However, as Antonio Cornejo Polar and Silvia Rivera Cusicanqui note in *Writing in the Air* (1994) and *Ch’ixinakax utxiwa* (2010), respectively, Andean societies lie in tangled and dynamic relationships between diverse social groups. In *Beyond Human*, for example, Tara Daly argues that Andean plurality should be thought of as a substratum shared by indigenes and mestizos, rather than something experimented only within one specific ethnic group (6). However, despite their non-indigenous roots, Saenz and Arguedas foreground the practices and knowledge of native peoples, exemplifying in their works what Raquel Alfaro calls a “reverse mestizaje” (2020, 68), or intercultural intellectual insights beyond elite narratives of whiteness or acculturation.

As Antonio Cornejo Polar mentions, reading *Tupac Amaru* in Spanish only is a limitation (1976, 170). Therefore, I analyze this poem by following its original version in the Quechua language. As part of my project to translate this text for anglophone readership, I present some quotes in English. Furthermore,

<sup>4</sup> Arguedas grew up in a mestizo family from Apurímac. Meanwhile, Saenz was a descendant of a white and middle-class family in La Paz.

<sup>5</sup> In his posthumous book, Ángel Rama proposed the term “lettered city” or *ciudad letrada* to understand the role of writers, intellectuals, and journalists in the construction of social hierarchies in Latin American countries.

I include here excerpts of my own translations of *Imágenes paceñas*.<sup>6</sup> Considering the ways in which Saenz and Arguedas describe Lima and Paz, I divide this article in three sections. First, I define what I understand by non-human territorialities and territorial writing. In attempting to understand Arguedas and Saenz' urban depictions, one must look at Quechua and Aymara onto-epistemic practices. In dialogue with the work of Anne Lambright (2007, 123-124) and Waskar Ari (16-17), I consider that the Amaru, the Illimani, and the Choqueyapu River are cosmic and political beings that defy the spatial planning proposed by technocrats in Lima and La Paz. In the second section, I provide specific examples of how the Amaru intervenes in Quechua migrants' struggles for spatial, racial, and social justice in the Peruvian capital. Finally, I explore Saenz's perspectives on the impact of mountains and rivers on *Paceños'* lifestyle, tracing continuities and differences between these chronicles and Arguedas' poem.

## Arguedas and Saenz: Writing Andean Territories

Henri Lefebvre (73-74), Edward Soja (182-183), and Milton Santos (196-197), the most significant scholars on spatial theory, describe a readable city in terms of anthropocentrism. According to these authors, only humans construct, control, and inhabit spaces, especially in contexts where developers and policymakers impose a neoliberal urbanization. By contrast, I propose that Arguedas and Saenz understand the spatial aspects and organization of Lima and La Paz as Andean territories in which multiple beings interact through prayers, physical movements, reciprocal activities, and economic transactions (Tassi 120-121). Therefore, rather than use terms such as "space," and "place," I prefer to employ the notion of "non-human territorialities" to explain the ontological dimension of these cities.

On the one hand, "space" refers to the creation of hegemonic and anthropocentric cities. As Deleuze and Guattari (541-542) remind us the State apparatus constructs cities to legitimize political power and control over population. On the other hand, "place" connotes a geographical alternative to reorganize social relations in capitalistic spaces (Massey 121). It became a central term in confronting urban development on a global scale. For example, Arturo Escobar argues that "a reassertion of place, noncapitalism, and local

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<sup>6</sup> Only three of Saenz's books have been translated to English: the anthology *Immanent Visitor* (University of California Press, 2002), *The Night* (Princeton UP, 2007), and *The Cold* (Poor Claudia, 2015).

culture against the dominance of space, capital and modernity [...] should result in a theory of postdevelopment that makes visible possibilities for reconceiving and reconstructing the world from the perspective of place-based cultural and economic practices” (2001, 194). Nonetheless, scholars only conceive “place” in connection with human concerns like cultural identity and social movements to resist projects of neoliberalism (Dirlik and Prazniak 10).

Different intellectuals have analyzed territories and territorialities from anthropological lenses. For example, American geographer Robert D. Sack circumscribes territoriality to a human practice, “a geographical form of power” (55), which “provide[s] a versatile instrument for control” of peoples and resources (153). In this regard, territories are national properties, in which State agents impose sovereignty over citizens and natural resources through the use of specific laws. As one of my principal aims is to problematize such Western assumptions, I label the term “non-human territorialities” to underline the active role of serpents, rivers and mountains in the occupancy of Andean cities. If hegemonic spatial rules refuse indigenous presences, these writers emphasize that Amerindian practices of territoriality characterize the urban lifestyles of Lima and La Paz. As Saenz insists: “La Paz is an Andean city, neither European nor North-American [...] nobody can deny La Paz is an Andean city and it should prevail as well” (*Imágenes Paceñas* 11). At this point, it is important to mention the work of Simón Yampara, one of the foremost contemporary Aymara intellectuals. Yampara identifies contrasts between both Western and Andean cultures: the former conceives of territories as physical soils, commercial and salable property; the latter affirms the material and spiritual dimension of territories, recognizing their status of “natural-biotic community” (17). By the same token, the cusqueño teacher Justo Oxa explains how a non-human entity such as the Pacha Mama [Mother Earth] nurtures and protects Quechua or runa people (240-241). In dialogue with Oxa’s conceptualization, it is possible to Andeanize a Claude Raffestin statement from 1987 as follows: “[andine territorialité] n’est donc pas seulement constituée par des relations avec des territoires concrets mais encore par des relations avec des territoires abstraits [non-humains]” (6). [Andean territoriality] is not only constituted by relations with concrete territories but also by relations with abstract [non-human] territories].

However, Arguedas and Saenz also remind us that territorialities are more than ontological or cosmical practices. Territoriality also relates to sociopolitical struggles for indigenous rights in Andean cities. In this regard, it is worth mentioning the research of the geographer Karl Offen. Studying the struggles of Afro-Colombians in reclaiming territorial tenure, Offen looks at

territoriality in a political sense. His understanding of Black demands in the context of dispossession inspires me to examine how Quechua and Aymara peoples confront urban hierarchies in Lima and La Paz. In *Tupac Amaru, runas* sought to eradicate the racism of Limeños in their new *llaqta*, or territory. Similarly, Saenz tries to preserve Aymara territorial practices in the face of urban policies fomented by Banzer's dictatorship and his followers.<sup>7</sup> In line with Sharlene Mollett (13-14) and Zakiyyah Iman Jackson (216), I note that my category of non-human territorialities also involves fights for spatial justice in the context of racial violence and social stratification. Arguedas and Saenz intentionally reveal the struggles of indigenous people by reinventing or recovering territories controlled by dominant classes.

Arguedas and Saenz show us the complexities of "non-human territorialities" through what I call the process of "territorial writing." In this article, I define by "territorial writing" a literary technique that features networks between the Amaru, the Illimani, or the Choqueyapu, and human groups from a variety of social and ethnic strata, namely mestizos, migrants, villagers, or foreigners. Influenced by Quechua and Aymara traditions, Arguedas and Saenz conceive their writing as a strategy to vindicate native cosmopraxis or native practices of relationality (De Munter 634), highlighting that multiple ontological worlds constitute our shared reality. Therefore, the aim of territorial writing is to help us "recognize the embedded nature of the human in the material environment" (Daly 2019, 164). Such writing defies the so-called "Modern Constitution," or the rationality that imposes a complete separation between nature and culture (Latour 13). Instead of accepting this statement, territorial writers recover other memories, world-making practices and even a non-linear sense of history (Alfaro 2015, 199).

Arguedas and Saenz employ a repertoire of literary figures to illuminate the assemblage of multiple beings and worlds in urban geographies. For example, the reader may identify the use of hyperbole in expressions such as "Kay hatunkaray kiriqkimanta" (*Tupac Amaru* 14) [From your ghastly wound] or "the hostilities of the dreadful progress" (*Imágenes paceñas* 45). These authors also utilize poetic similes to emphasize radical ontologies as we can see in these quotes: "lloqlariq mayu hina, puriq nina hina, mana usiaq sisi hina" [as deep rivers, as lively fire, as fierce Amazon ants] (*Tupac Amaru* 14); "the mountain [...] as a resonant body and a mirror" (*Imágenes paceñas* 89). Finally,

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<sup>7</sup> In "El contra-orden de Jaime Saenz en la urbe andina" Aramayo (2016a) suggests the connections between Banzer's urban plans and the spatial perspective proposed by Saenz in *Imágenes paceñas*.



both writers exhibit a predilection towards metonymies to explain how non-humans comprise Andean territories. In this Arguedian phrase, “Llaqta y tika waytas [...] chay wasi ukusi sonqosian” [the flowers and blossoms of my land are here, living intensely in this house], the plants are part of a vast territory and travel from native villages to new surrounding areas in Lima. Meanwhile, Saenz writes: “On rainy days, because of a vertiginous impulse in the Chuquiaguillo peak, [the Orkojahuirá river] increases its flow rates in a very dangerous way” (107). In this quote, the Bolivian narrator identifies rivers as portions of sacred mountains and as part of an ontological circuit that connects the heights with the city.

The notions of “non-human territorialities” and “territorial writing” can be better understood within the frame of “pluriversal studies,” which focuses on the interaction of multiple worlds. Arturo Escobar (2020, xiii) describes these connections as “relational ontologies,” or “radical relationality,” which “refers to the fact that all entities that make up the worlds are so deeply interrelated that they have no intrinsic, separate existence by themselves.” In a text from 1949, Arguedas refers to this relatedness as follows: “physical nature and the living world, animals, men, and plants, appear with a ligature so intimate and vital that in the world of these stories everything moves in a kind of musical commonness” (1957, 180). Expressions such as “ligature” and “musical commonness” describe the ties between a myriad of living beings. With regard to this dynamic connectivity, Mario Blaser asserts, “The starting point for the relational ontology is a network [...]. What gets translated (moved, circulated) among the threads that compose this network is the ‘vital energy’ that gives (corpo)reality to the imagination” (151).

Related to this notion of “relational ontology” is the following passage in Arguedas’ poem: “Rupayllañan kan, amaru cheqniyllañan kan, supay weraqochakunapaq, sonqoypi” (*Tupac Amaru* 10). [In my heart, I feel an intense fire, a fierce aversion inspired by the Serpent God, against the execrable Lords]. The verse provides a window into how the Amaru animates Quechua compartments, especially during migration from villages to the capital city. The poetic speaker, the *camasca* transmits to Andean populaces the energy, the *rupay* [fire] and *cheqniy* [aversion], provided by the Serpent God. As Leslie Bayers states, “the natural world is described as a vessel that transmits energy from Tupac Amaru’s body to that of the community” (118). Such transmission makes ontological relatedness possible and promotes indigenous resistance against *Limeño* colonial hierarchies. Animating the claims of Quechua migrants, the Amaru’s power promotes an “ecology of

knowledges” or, in other words, a thinking that recognizes the contribution of “different kinds of knowledges [...] to build a more democratic and just society” (de Sousa Santos xx). In this venue, the poem is an invitation to identify how indigenous peoples reshape Lima through interactions (prayers, rituals, reciprocity) with non-human entities such as the Amaru.<sup>8</sup> Recognizing the pluriversal design of *Imágenes paceñas* and its intentional plan for translating non-human practices of territoriality through literary chronicles defies the manner in which Saenz scholars have traditionally analyzed his work. Academics who deal with Saenz's urban representations have repeated biographical tropes, namely those of the mysterious, eccentric, or inebriated poet of the *Paceño* nightlife (Lanza Lobo 72-73). Instead, I propose Saenz was a territorial writer that emphasized the relevance of indigenous onto-epistemic practices in the urban organization of La Paz. The interchanging of human bodies and non-human agents configures the Andean grammar of this geography, as Blanca Wiethüchter perceives in a noteworthy essay included in the first volume of *Hacia una historia crítica de la literatura en Bolivia* (2002, 41) and in her poetic work (2012, 157). When Saenz refers to La Paz as an Andean city, he talks about the “spirit guide that inhabits the mountain [Illimani],” rites, ancestral traditions, magic, and superstitions. Here he acknowledges the impact of Aymara ontologies and epistemologies upon *Paceño* sensibilities and customs, even in their most quotidian scenarios: “in a patio, in the ruined surface of a wall, in the wasted stairs that are useless to anyone, in that site where yesterday we could find a house” (9). In chronicles such as “Montes Avenue,” and “San Francisco Square,” Saenz remarks how ineffable and sublime sensations transform these places into something more than urban constructions. In other words, the author alludes to the impact of indigenous worldviews on the *Paceño* spatial organization. For example, he

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<sup>8</sup> It is also important to point out here that what Arguedas invites us to think about is not a sociological or economic reading about the Amaru or Serpent God. Marisol de la Cadena notes that many intellectuals and activists specialized in modern politics minimize the role of other-than-humans, or *tirakuna* in Quechua language. As a result, “*tirakuna* [Earth beings] are cultural beliefs and, as such, weak matters or political concern” (2012, 275). Similarly, Eduardo Viveiros de Castro claims that many anthropologists are unable to examine native worlds without imposing Eurocentric categories. He clearly states: “we only see one thing [...] we only see ourselves” (12). Such a statement signifies an ontological challenge to sociological or factual interpretations of reality. Therefore, *Tupac Amaru Kamaq Taytanchisman* underlines the complexity of indigenous ontologies and epistemologies beyond the hegemony of anthropocentric assumptions or “One-World World” —to borrow a term coined by the British sociologist John Law (6).

depicts how the *chola paceña* indigenize urban geographies. In the text titled “The Rodriguez Market,” Saenz considers that the *chola paceña*, a symbol of Indianness in the city, “is the wheel and the motor of this immense and complex apparatus, she addresses and promotes a tangled mechanism that involves legions and legions of human beings” (59)<sup>9</sup>. Indeed, this excerpt can provide a window through which to speculate about the role of market women in the spatial reorganization of this city (Barragán 296; Aramayo 2015).

The chronicle entitled “Presence of the Mountain” reveals just how much Aymara territorial conceptions impact the ways that townspeople occupy La Paz, especially in populated areas. For this reason, it is important to underscore the meaning of Aymara names such as Illimani, Laikakota, and Orkojahuirá. These words originate from the prehispanic history of La Paz. Accounts like *Descripción y relación de la Ciudad de La Paz* (1586) by Diego Cabeza de Vaca and *Crónica de la Provincia de San Antonio de los Charcas* (1665) by Diego de Mendoza use Aymara terms in a narration where non-humans interact with, and have a material impact upon, the organization of human societies. According to MacCormack, since prehispanic times Andean populations have considered that “the plains and the mountains, the sky and the water were both the theatre and the dramatis personae of divine action” (146). In this regard, non-human actors such as the Illimani influence *Paceño* modes of being and belonging by virtue of their vital materiality and cosmological power. From Saenz’s viewpoint, the city is under the mountain’s sway, as we can note in this paragraph: “The prodigious spell that offers us the contemplation of the city — its beautiful planes in Llojeta, El Calvario, El Alto, and other zones, the monumental majesty of his mountains, viewed from profound planes and governed by the Illimani” (123). But the projects of urban development reduce the power of non-human beings. According to Saenz’s perspective, the urbanization of La Paz signifies the homogenization of Andean cultural and political differences. In one excerpt, he affirms: “All this magnificence might be reduced to nothing and La Paz might be converted into a city like others” (123). Therefore, the territorial writing of Saenz impugns the validity of an Eurocentric ontology, “that of the universal world of individuals and markets [...] that attempts to transform all other worlds into one” (Escobar 2016, 20).

The authors, while similar, also have important differences. For instance, Arguedas conceives of non-human agency as fundamental to decolonizing

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<sup>9</sup> Regarding the representation of the *chola paceña* in Bolivian literature, see Soruco (157) and Elguera (2018, 142).

Lima. The Amaru motivates the negotiations, spatial appropriations, and political struggles of Quechua migrants. In this regard, it is plausible to affirm that Peruvian peasant movements between 1950 and 1960 inspired this poem. During those years, Arguedas contributed to an “epic of expropriation” (Beckman), denouncing repressions, dispossessions and social injustices promoted by armed forces and national authorities. As a result, *Tupac Amaru Kamaq Taytanchisman* connects ontological and political thinking in order to confront the Peruvian colonial establishment. Meanwhile, Saenz considers that non-humans are the most defining element of *Paceño* urban life. He was preoccupied in preserving Illimani, the Choqueyapu and the Orkojahuirra from the urban planning implanted by Hugo Banzer's dictatorship in the 1970s. Therefore, *Imágenes paceñas* presents non-human beings as indexes of memories, traditions, and ancestral knowledge that survive even in contexts of spatial destruction. At first glance Saenz seems unconcerned about Andean sociopolitical issues. According to Elizabeth Monasterios “In Saenz’ work the Andean conflict is not analyzed in an implicit manner. It is even possible to think that this writing is opposed to any genuine preoccupation for Andean matters” (2007, 556). Notwithstanding this supposed position-taking, I consider that *Imágenes paceñas* is a fundamental book for understanding Saenz’ discussions of Bolivian identities and his battles against military urban projects.<sup>10</sup>

## Arguedas and the Amaru's Empowerment in Lima

“Kay weraqochakunaq uma llatanta, ñoqayku, asllamanta tikrasianiku” [We are here in the principal town of the great Lords, we are here removing it little by little] (18). With these words, the indigenous mestizo writer José María Arguedas marks the arrival of quechua subjects, or *runakuna*, to Lima. These lines are from his poem *Tupac Amaru Kamaq Taytanchisman*, written in Quechua, or *Runasimi*, and published in 1962. This text portrays how Quechua subjects, devastated by governmental and military repressions in their

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<sup>10</sup> Latin American dictatorships promoted the modernization of their countries. In Peru, Juan Velasco Alvarado planned to transform the city of Cusco into a center of tourism and economic development. In the 1970s Brazil, Emílio Garrastazu Médici ordered the colonization of the Amazon through the construction of the Transamazon highway. In Bolivia, Banzer planned monumental constructions in line with populist political strategies. For instance, he justified land invasions to organize the Bolivarian Games in 1977. In the Supreme Decree N° 11748 (1974), he ordered the expropriation of 35 hectares in the Alto Irpavi plateau.

communities, had to migrate toward Lima, the center of power of the dominant classes or the *weraqochakuna*. In this metropolitan space, Quechua people insert their epistemologies, politics, and modes of sociability to confront the colonial violence of the “execrable Lords.” Considering this struggle, my main argument is that *runa* migrants travel to the city in the company of the non-human beings that inhabit their homelands, namely the Amaru or Serpent God in the Arguedian poem.<sup>11</sup>

Structured in the format of a prayer, *Tupac Amaru* consists of two sections that articulate Quechua conceptions of territoriality and migration. In the first sequence, a *camasca*, or Andean religious specialist, pronounces a solemn invocation to the Amaru.<sup>12</sup> In accordance with the title’s poem, *camasca* derives from *kamaq*, a word that alludes to the energy that a human subject receives from a powerful entity, such as an *illa* (thunder) or a *wamani* (mountain)<sup>13</sup>. In the poem, the *camasca* receives energy or vitality from the Amaru, as he offers invocations and requests the support of this non-human being. In the second segment of the poem, the *camasca* mentions his migration to Lima. Pressured by land usurpation, he and other *runakuna* migrate to the capital city, settling in racialized spaces such as the Comas plateau. Within this new urban environment, the *camasca* continues to invoke the Amaru’s power. Indeed, rather than a detrimental experience, the *camasca* recognizes that his condition as a migrant offers him the opportunity to re-territorialize Lima according to the Amaru’s commands. To be sure, he plans to transform such a hegemonic space into a *llaqta* or Quechua territory in which *runa* migrants do not refuse the *Weraqocha* or Castilian

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<sup>11</sup> It is important to note that until now, few scholars have read Arguedas’s works from indigenous ontological and epistemic frames. Marisol de la Cadena, in her interesting reading of *Todas las sangres* [All the Bloods], notes that Demetrio Rendón Willka proposes “the inclusion of indigenous forms of knowledge in nation-wide projects” (2005, 20). Meanwhile, analyzing Arguedian poems and novels in “El aire de Arguedas de la década de 1960” (2012) and *Beyond Human* (2019), Tara Daly understands the role of the air element “as a potential plane from which to think about relational ontologies.” Finally, Christian Elguera’s article “Ontological Migrations in José María Arguedas’s *Tupac Amaru Kamaq Taytanchisman*” (2020) considers that this poem comprehends Andean displacement in Peru 1960s beyond the anthropocentric lens of social sciences.

<sup>12</sup> Arguedas knew this style from his studies on colonial Quechua literature. See Arguedas’ essay “La literatura quechua en el Perú: Las oraciones e himnos de origen católico” (1948), and his Spanish translations of *Apu Inca Atawallpaman* (1955) and *Dioses y hombres de Huarochiri* (1966).

<sup>13</sup> Regarding the role of the *Wamani* in Arguedas’ fiction, see Elguera (2021, 28).

culture. Instead, these migrants learn Western languages and techniques in order to negotiate political agency in Lima. For example, the *camasca* declares to the Serpent God:

Castellanutapas rimasianiñan  
 maquinatapas, waranqa ruesdayoq kaqtapas, kuyuchisianiñan  
 sutikin ñoqaykuwan kuska wiñan, kallpachakun.  
 (Tupac Amaru 20)

[I speak the Castilian language  
 I control the machine and work with thousands of wheels.  
 With us, your name becomes enormous and strong]

This passage presents migration as a dynamic process that connects Quechua and *Limeños* cultural practices. However, Arguedas suggests that the success of Andean highlanders in the capital city will be possible only if they preserve relationships with non-human beings. By preserving their networks with the Amaru in Lima, the newly arrived migrants re-conceptualize spatial rules and hierarchies. In this vein, the poem underscores the indigenous migrant's decisiveness in transforming Lima into a *llaqta*. But what kind of migrants are featured in the poem? The insightful contributions of Antonio Cornejo Polar help me to identify the differences between the migrants represented in *Tupac Amaru* and other works by Arguedas. Cornejo Polar's article "Condición migrante e intertextualidad multicultural" describes migrants who have lost their cultural ties as a consequence of displacement. Living in alien spaces, their identity is ambivalent. However, in *Tupac Amaru*, *runa* migrants preserve and reinforce their cultural and political practices in the host settlements. As a result, in the poem the migrant is not "un sujeto disgregado, difuso y heterogéneo" (Cornejo Polar 1995, 104) [a divided subject, dispersed and heterogenous]. Instead, the *camasca* and their comrades are *runas*, members of the Quechua people that construct homes in Lima and speak Spanish, using modern technologies in factories. But their modes of life are undoubtedly indigenous. *Runa* migrants continue with their traditions "as a singular substratum, as an ethos" (Arguedas, 1985, 18).

In poems such as *Tupac Amaru*, "Katatay" ("Trembling," 1966), and "Huk Doctorkunaman Qayay" ("Invitation to some doctors," 1966), the Quechua migrant is a vigorous individual, proud of his culture, "who no longer conceives of himself as a 'waqcha' or orphan, a passive and isolated subject vulnerable to assimilation" (Mazzotti 104). Therefore, Arguedas' poetry

troubles/disrupts the representation of Andean migrants as acculturated subjects.<sup>14</sup>

Migrants occupy Comas in accordance with the Amaru's instructions, activating a variety of non-human presences around Lima. To illustrate this process, I will briefly discuss these following verses: "Llaqtay mayu, llaqtay sombra, llaqtay tika waytas, llaqtay hatun cruzzi, chay wasi ukupi sonqosian; qori qentis llipipisian techo wayrachampi, pukllaspa" [The river, the shadow, the flowers, the great crucifix of my town, are living intensely in this house, and a hummingbird flapping in the wind, playing on the ceiling] (*Tupac Amaru* 18). The scene provides a way of thinking about Lima as a beyond human territoriality in which animals and flowers are more than abstract or literary characters. The repetition of *Llaqtay* [from my town] four times constitutes an anaphora, a literary figure that highlights how rivers and flowers move freely between Andean *pueblos* and urban settings, promoting the indigenization of the Peruvian capital city. Thanks to the stimulus of the Amaru and other selves, *runa* migrants confront *Limeño* spatial colonialism and produce their own territory, "a world of many worlds," a term borrowed from De la Cadena and Blaser (4-5). In this venue, *Tupac Amaru* "is the most intense manifestation of the foundational process of this new reality," announcing "a world that comes with invincible strength" (Cornejo Polar 1990, 298).<sup>15</sup>

<sup>14</sup> Regarding migrants that refuse their identities, Arguedas writes: "all the students from the mountain districts who went to study there [the coastal cities] tried to learn as quickly as possible the coastal ways in speaking, walking and dressing" (1957, 29).

<sup>15</sup> Even in his novel *El zorro de arriba y el zorro de abajo*, which depicts a plan of modernization that promotes the alienation of highlanders in Chimbote (Lambright 2007, 247), Arguedas underlined the support of non-human beings to marginal Andean migrants. For example, Don Ángel, a migrant from Cajabamba considered a "typical *Limeño*," evokes the flying of a hummingbird during his childhood, recovering his lost identity for a brief moment (140). Don Diego, who represents the fox from below, animates El Tarta, a stuttering fisherman, in the brothel "Gato Negro" (159). This fox also vitalizes Don Esteban de la Cruz, who suffers from a severe lung illness (203), and Don Cecilio Ramírez, who had claimed: "I've never, ever had hope" (285). In this way, the *yunga atoaq* (the fox from the Coast) protects the life of *runakuna* and strengthens their struggles for spatial, racial and social justice.

## Jaime Saenz and Relational Ontologies in La Paz

It is reasonable to connect Saenz' work with historic places in La Paz during the 1970s.<sup>16</sup> In *Imágenes paceñas*, the reader follows the perambulations of the writer around typical settings. The book's two sections ("Places" and "Peoples") describe Saenz's interactions with *Paceños*, their memories, practices of everyday life, and ways of inhabiting the city. The author visits the Illampu avenue, the zone of El Gran Poder, the Killi-Killi mountain, and other cityscapes of native significance. He recalls that La Paz' population "is constituted, primarily, by Aymaras and descendants of Aymaras" (11). In this light, Elizabeth Monasterios observes that Saenz describes "Aymara residents in this city as incompatible characters to the cultural elites" (2002, 332). In connection with this point, in their introduction to the English version of *Visitante profundo*, Kent Johnson and Forrest Gander observe that "Saenz enacted in his writing and personal relation a fierce compassion and solidarity with the destitute, the desperate, the disenfranchised" (XVI-XVII).

But we cannot reduce the relations between Saenz and La Paz to factual or social aspects only. Saenz traces another understanding of the city beyond "the idea of a single all-encompassing reality" (Law 2). The new urban-Andean grammar traced by Saenz highlights that ontological multiplicities permeate every zone in La Paz, even non-indigenous realms. From my perspective, a book such as *Imágenes paceñas* affirms the continuity of Amerindian knowledge and practices in this Andean city. In this light, Saenz re-signifies the dominant spatial narratives of La Paz and reveals how it is possible to discover indigenous ontological footprints in this "motley society" [sociedad abigarrada], to borrow an influential term coined by the Bolivian intellectual René Zavaleta Mercado. By focusing on streets, parks, popular neighborhoods and other zones, Saenz shows us the ways in which ancestral or cosmological semiotic codes overwhelm cultural *Paceño* geographies. As such, the Bolivian capital is a body constituted by multiple connections between humans and non-human entities in accordance with Aymara perspectives. Both Arguedas and Saenz

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<sup>16</sup> We can distinguish the ways in which academics have understood Saenz' conceptions of this city by dividing them into two broad camps. On the one hand, there are those who see Saenz as affirming bohemia, death and darkness (García Pabón 1998, 214-218; Velásquez 160-161; Lanza Lobo 73; Gander and Johnson 1-3). On the other hand, there are those who read Saenz' prose in dialogue with Andean traditions (Aramayo 2016b; Sanjines 160-162), and those who see in Saenz' work an intimate relationship between Bolivian cityscapes and Aymara worldviews (Monasterios 2001, 134; 2002, 332; 2007, 556).



engage with Andean worldviews that state the non-human potency of impact on human bodies and spaces. For example, Saenz considers that any traveler animated by the forces of the Llojeta mountain can perceive a variety of sounds from La Paz. Here “staying for a long time near a boulder, with a sensitive and astonished ear, a walker can listen to the suffering, screams, voices and moans felt by the city” (91). Stimulated by the power of Llojeta, the walker feels a plethora of sensations and worlds.

Eduardo Viveiros de Castro, in a discussion of indigenous cosmologies in Brazil, says that translation “connects the two discourses [Amerindian thought and Western anthropology] to the precise extent to which they are not saying the same thing” (20). According to Saenz, indigenous subjects and national developers invoke divergent modes of spatiality. Bolivian authorities conceive landscapes in terms of soil and pollution. Meanwhile, indigenous inhabitants—and traditional *Paceños*— see such geographies as powerful entities. In opposition to the commodification of space, Saenz accentuates spatial differences and seeks to produce alternative spatial thinking in a context of urban destruction, which Porteous has called “topocide.”<sup>17</sup> In this vein, Saenz rediscovers Aymara footprints or virtualities inscribed around the city. In view of the arguments by Gastón Gordillo in *Rubble: The Afterlife of Destruction* (2014), I observe that Aymara virtualities are presences or indexes that survive genocides and epistemicides in colonized spaces. For centuries, *Paceño* dominant classes planned the elimination of indigenous affects, memories, knowledge, and territorial practices. They rendered indigenous nations invisible. Despite this colonial project, indigenous and traditional modes of living persist in La Paz. Recalling deleuzian definitions of virtuality (2004, 263-264), the main characteristic of this state rests precisely in its nonlinear time. *Paceños* such as Saenz can activate virtualities at any moment, activating the potential of these ancestral virtualities while walking around the city. In this way, *Imágenes paceñas* echoes an indigenous temporal conception that connects past and present beyond official chronologies (Rifkin 46).

Materializing native virtualities through writing signifies one of the most important aims of Saenz’ chronicles. As an example, I propose an analysis of

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<sup>17</sup> In Porteous’s words, topocide means “the deliberate killing of a place” (1988, xi). In other work, published with Sandra E. Smith, Porteous uses the term “domicide” to explain the “deliberate destruction of home against the will of the home dweller” (2001, 3). According to these definitions, topocides or domicicides, I observe, are not restricted to urban geographies. In the present days, we can identify projects of home destruction in Andean and Amazonian geographies.

"Presence of the mountain," the first text in the book. Here Saenz shows us another spatiality where Illimani reigns over *Paceño* urban life. The author underlines that Illimani's spirit animates a variety of places and peoples in La Paz. The non-human being adored by Aymaras is the irrefutable sovereign of this Andean geography. In this way, Saenz vindicates ancestral knowledge in a context of profound racism toward indigenous cultures. Cognizant of the Illimani influence on *Paceño* ways of living, he points out: "From Illimani, the sky is watched by someone; it is the space of the mountain rather than a mere mountain [...] The citizens of the highlands, the *Paceños*, know this true; it is not the mountain that is contemplated from here. It is the presence of the mountain" (17). Expressions such as "space" and "presence" highlight that Illimani is not a static or inert mountain. Instead, it transmits power and energy to places and walkers in this Bolivian city.

In other occasions, nevertheless, Saenz recognizes the impossibility of rescuing Aymara cultural codes. He asks constantly for the Tambos, an indigenous place in which diverse Andean traders organize social and economic activities. Saenz remembers how indigenous travelers occupy these areas according to ancestral modes of solidarity. In "The Illampu street," the writer shifts the reader's attention to the interaction of bodies, memories, affects, and territorial interactions. In his territorial writing, Saenz employs an anaphora or a repetition, "where are the Tambos of Illampu streets?" (43), to rescue Tambos from the urban destruction promoted by Banzer's policies between 1971 and 78. When Saenz wrote and published his chronicles, the project of urban development implanted by military leaders extended to the democratic transition. In this regard, the implicit critique of Saenz to this Bolivian dictatorship and their remnants adds another layer of complexity to *Imágenes paceñas*. Saenz defended traditional neighborhoods and streets in order to open up a space for decolonization. Writing a book about places and people menaced by developmental projects means choosing a counter-hegemonic position, one that defies dictatorial policies of urbanization. Banzer planned to destroy popular and indigenous legacies in La Paz, promoting the construction of buildings, banks, offices, and hotels. These projects implied the demolition of numerous houses and properties and provoked the eviction of thousands of residents in the urban area (Medeiros 166 and 171). Aranibar also mentions an interest for erecting tallest edifices such as "Torre de las Américas" and the "Alameda" building (97). Regarding this tendency of spatial planification, Saenz repeatedly stresses how the erection of hotels alters *Paceño* ways of living.

But it was not only these projects of building which menaced *Paceño* geographies. The destruction of the rivers, such as Choqueyapu and Orkojahuira, occurred simultaneously with the urbanization of La Paz. What were the conditions of the indigenous rivers in La Paz during the 1970s? Metropolitan development transformed these rivers into ruins of modernity. For urban planners, the Choqueyapu became an obstacle and it was consequently canalized (Medinaceli 45). Throughout the years, the modification of streets and the construction of buildings turned the Choqueyapu into a reservoir of trash and a hub of pollution—in other words, into a geography of ruins, of damages and debris, that developers annihilated for decades (Stoler 7). Erecting a new-fashioned city during Banzer's dictatorship destroyed the Choqueyapu landscape. Following Lefebvre's arguments, we can identify how the program of "peace, order and work"—the Banzer motto—destroyed aquatic environments. The French author describes the extermination of a place as follows:

The first dimension is material planning, which is quantifiable and measurable in tons of wheat, cement, or steel [...] The second dimension is financial planning, which uses financial balance sheets and involves the study of production cost at the highest levels [...] The third has to be spatiotemporal. It assumes the establishment of localizations, the knowledge of networks of commerce, flows, the study of centers of production and consumption, on the terrain (171).

Certainly, Banzer was not the first to promote this kind of planning. In 1913, Emilio Villanueva planned the canalization of the rivers in La Paz. For Saenz, however, the developmental measures during the military government had a permanent effect in ruining the Choqueyapu River. In this regard, the chronicle affirms: "Fluxing around the city, every river is contaminated by rubbish and debris [...] It is the case of Choqueyapu, which streams throughout La Paz, saturating the skies with musty, intense odors, reminding us of our human condition" (105). In this passage, the chronicler is afraid of ecological destruction. Here the great menace is the building of a modern city which is uninhabitable to non-human beings and underrepresented *Paceños*. Faced with this environmental and social ruination, Saenz recovers the indigenous meanings of the river for an urban audience. The writer conceives the Choqueyapu as a powerful entity that organizes spatial practices around people. He understands that the respect for the river is not an absurdity but instead reflects an ontological interconnectivity. In the following quote we can perceive this relatedness: "Every *Paceño* views [The Choqueyapu]

with veneration and even with fear. And this fear —deeply entangled with superstitions, rites, and the soul of ancestral traditions—meets the secret cult that such a river received in an unconfessed and obscure manner" (103).

Saenz's book reveals how indigenous ontologies can structure a defiant geography that complicates the cultural landscape of La Paz. According to Lorraine Leu's work on black geographies in Rio de Janeiro, a defiant geography interrupts the urban spaces produced by dominant social groups (179). In La Paz, technocrats and armed forces, who promoted many topocides (Porteous, Leu), transformed Choqueyapu into an urban debris or a waste territory. In comparison to this ruination, the chronicler rescues the sacredness of this river and other non-human beings. Thereupon, it is plausible to observe that Saenz is categorically confronting the urban policies promoted by the former dictator Hugo Banzer. In this respect, I bring to light the fact that *Imágenes paceñas* resists and criticizes the demolition of *Paceño* traditional places. Many chronicles document Saenz's fight against modern urban projects planned by state officials. Although focused on La Paz, the following quotes could also apply to the Arguedian fear of Peruvian capitalist development:

In the current days, a fast and brutal transformation impacts the Andean *urbe*, which is dominated by an unstoppable icefall of progress. It is like a fierce hurricane that has started to devastate and ravage streets, houses, and city squares from their base (*Imágenes paceñas* 13).

We are attacked by a mercantile spirit that threatens to destroy our cultural heritage (41).

With the construction of new buildings, with the demolition of the old places [...] the only possible consequence is the destruction of *Paceño* streets and the city (45).

The defiant force of Saenz' writing also relies on forms of memorializing the city. For him, rivers and mountains in La Paz are Aymara cultural memories, reminisces of ontological relations and traditions devastated in the name of progress. For example, Saenz reminds the reader of a popular practice that connects human bodies and the Orkojahuirá river: "the innumerable streams are useful, as other suitable places, to the activities of the washerwomen who, precisely, congregate in this place. They are a legion that brush and wash the many clothes that are received, cleaning and shining multicolored garments in the calm riverbanks" (107). Modern developers aligned with dictatorial policies sought to exterminate this ontological relationality because they perceived it

as an interruption to progress. But in *Imágenes paceñas*, Aymara ontological practices are not nonsensical traditions or vestiges from the past. Saenz strives to demonstrate how Aymara knowledge systems transform a modern city into a non-human territoriality in which indigenous people and even mestizos interact with a plethora of ontological beings.

At this point, the reader must take into consideration the meaning and history of Choqueyapu. It refers to an important Aymara town allegedly called *Chuquiapu* in the time of the Inca Empire (Crespo 12-15). Following the accounts of Mendoza (32) and Cabeza de Vaca (65), it is plausible to suggest that Choqueyapu, before the conquest, was identified with a Lord animated by a local mountain (*apu*). As a symbol of power, gold was plentiful in his territory. In light of such abundance, local people conceived these Lord's dominions as fertile soils or farms (*choque*). Inca Garcilaso de la Vega underlined the political and economic significance of this place as follows: "Thence he [The Inca] turned east towards the Antis, reaching the valley now called Chuquiapu, meaning 'chief or leading lance'. Here he established many colonies of Indians, realizing that these hot valleys were better for growing maize than all other provinces" (*Royal Commentaries*, Book III, Chap. VII, 148). During the colonial administration, the river demarcated two delimited spaces: the neighborhoods of Spaniards and those of the Indians. In "El cerco de La Paz" (1781), a famous Florentino Olivares painting, we can see how the Choqueyapu travels across the city, demonstrating the key role of this aquatic being in the urban life of *Paceños* (Fig. 1).

In his chronicle, Saenz connects the sound and the meanings of Choqueyapu and Chuquiago (the Aymara name of La Paz), emphasizing the relations of heterogeneous ontological realms as we can note in this passage: "It is plausible to say that Choqueyapu —originating in the Andes and descending from the peaks of Chacaltaya with all its magical and legendary resonances— is the city [Chuquiago] in liquid state" (103). But Saenz also underlines the influence of this river in the life of Paceños through the literary figure of personification. The river is a person that travels from Chacaltaya to the city, accompanying pedestrians in his perambulations. Therefore, the first section of *Imágenes paceñas* starts in the Illimani and ends in the Laikakota peak.<sup>18</sup> In dialogue with Victoria Saramago's article on João Guimarães Rosa

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<sup>18</sup> The name of the Laikakota mountain evokes the power of Andean religious specialists, so-called *layka*. Guaman Poma de Ayala asserts that the name *layka* alludes to a sorcerer that speaks with the devil (fol. 277). In contrast, Gamaliel Churata explains that it refers to the primordial and wise ancestors (325). To this writer, the *layka* is a character that

(137-138), I contend Saenz produces a non-human territoriality following the mobility of the Choqueyapu. As the river streams, the Andean walker transits in company of powerful nonhuman beings, juxtaposing social and ontological spheres, encompassing the worlds of Paceños, mountains, and rivers.



**Figure 1: El Cerco de La Paz de 1781**  
**Florentino Olivares, 1888**  
**Source: Museo Municipal Casa de Murillo**

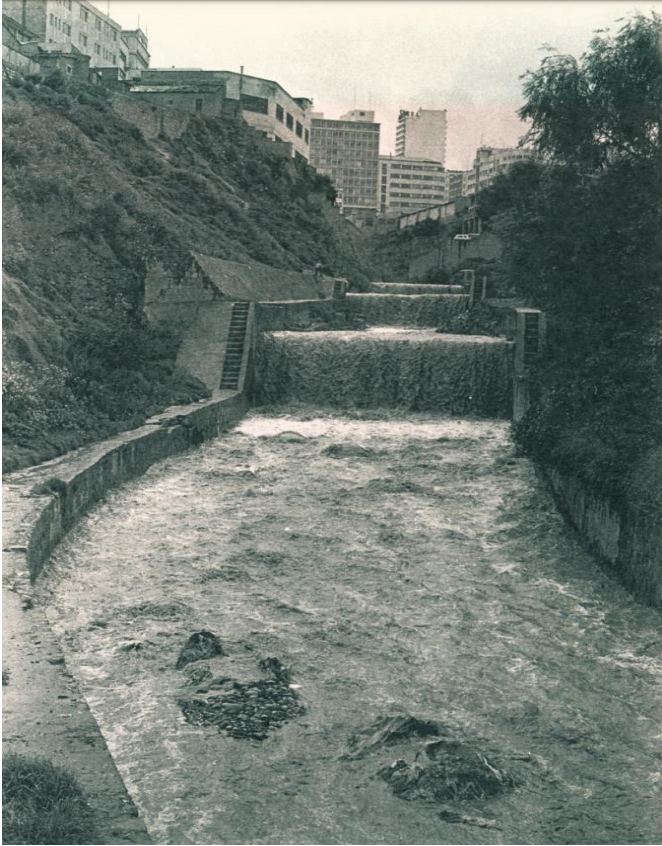
In this regard, I want to remark on the function of the photographs taken by Javier Molina. These visual texts are like incarnations or embodiments of non-human beings into the city. The Choqueyapu pictures in particular presents a world of many worlds in which the relatedness between non-human beings and townspeople occurs in daily activities. The river passes through this Andean city, circulating around pages 102 and 104 (Fig. 2).

Such an image depicts the movement of the river from indigenous communities to urban spaces. The Choqueyapu River still flows across the Paceño streets. However, by the 1970s this body of water had hardly preserved any ancestral value to Bolivian citizens. Thus, Saenz reminds urban residents that they must preserve their reverence to rivers and other non-human beings. The chronicler points out:

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interacts with nature on a profound level. Finally, in Saenz's chronicle, the Laikakota is the "great and sovereign mountain" that invokes and nurtures "the most strange and hermetic beings around the world" (129).

Without doubt, the simple and genuine fascination that water provoked in Altiplano people has been the main motivation for our contemporary cult to Lake Titicaca. Likewise, the highland mountains —with an eternal ice that seeks the highest levels— represents water in solid state. Accordingly, they are gods that govern the destiny of the Earth and the life of humans (103).



**Figure 2: Photography of the Choqueyapu River by Javier Molina**  
Source: Javier Molina Archives

## Conclusions

This article proposed that ontological relationships between human and other-than-human beings are ongoing processes that constitute Limeño and Paceño urban lives, based on *Tupac Amaru Kamaq Taytanchisman* and *Images from La Paz*. Therefore, understanding Lima and La Paz from only one anthropocentric perspective would impede us from perceiving the fluid connections between serpents, birds, rivers, mountains, and their human neighbors. In this light, I consider that *Tupac Amaru* signifies a watershed moment in the political thinking of Arguedas. In contrast to his ideas of mestizaje and Andean cultural adaptability in the decade of 1950, this poem proposes an indigenous empowerment marked by non-human participation in decolonial movements. In dialogue with Quechua systems of knowledge, the poem describes the Amaru as a political actor obeyed by the migrants rather than an abstract figure or a fictional character. In *Images from La Paz*, the political dimension of non-humans is no less explicit than in the Arguedian poem. Saenz remarks on how urban planning, especially in the Banzer dictatorship, has resulted in the erasure and massacre of indigenous places and memories. In response, Saenz's writing defies spatial modernization and emphasizes an Andean grammar that materializes Aymara histories, virtualities, and relational ontologies within urban geographies. In this light, he supports the survival and agency of disenfranchised people into the spatial hierarchies of La Paz. By describing the interactions among human and non-human inhabitants, Saenz engages with indigenous world-making practices, modes of being, and onto-epistemic assumptions. To Bolivian policymakers and elites in the 1970s, indigenous subjects did not have rights and were invisible presences. Nevertheless, Saenz recognizes their empowerment in the capital city through their attempts to territorialize streets and markets according to native perspectives. The relation of places and peoples (Aymaras, descendants of Aymaras and even mestizos like Saenz) forge an ontological "motley society" in which non-human agents are also occupants that participate in the Paceño urban life. In brief, Saenz and Arguedas' works rely on Aymara and Quechua pluriverses, cultural meanings, and footprints inscribed into racialized and marginalized areas in La Paz and Lima, respectively. Both authors evoke the significance of powerful non-human beings, namely serpents, mountains, and rivers, to demonstrate the continuance of Ameridian cultures beyond the topocides promoted by colonial urban policies in Andean countries.



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