Treasures of the Mama Huaca: Oral Tradition and Ecological Consciousness in Chinchaysuy

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by

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The cycle of Mama Huaca legends has continuing relevance to the indigenous and mestizo peoples of Chinchaysuyu, the vast northwest quadrant of the former Inca Empire, whose principal cities were Tomebamba (Cuenca) and Quito. The fearsome hag of the heights and guardian of the mountain and its treasures is a persistent figure in the Andean imagination. She inhabits a highly animated landscape in which mountains and lakes are assigned not only gender, but differing degrees of wealth and wildness (Muñoz-Bernard 1990). The moral legends in which Mama Huaca is a protagonist are also intimately connected to local topography and sacred sites, linking her to hemispheric narrative traditions (Basso 1984, 1988).

1 Field work for this project was carried out in Azuay province in southern Ecuador, between June and December of 1992 with the support of a Fulbright-Hays Fellowship. Special thanks to Juan Martínez Borrero, the Centro Interamericano de Artesanías y Artes Populares (CIDAP), the Instituto Azuayo de Folklore, the Fulbright Commission of Ecuador, and the Latin American Institute of the University of New Mexico.

However persistent, legends endure precisely because they continue to be performed as oral narratives in a dialectical composition process drawn from two sources: a textual sphere of episodes, motifs, and voices and a contextual sphere comprised of the social, linguistic, and physical setting of the performance (Briggs 1988:21). Although the legend has a higher degree of narrativity than other more conversational genres of oral literature, it is still dialogic, and sufficiently imbedded in conversational discourse that its meanings and interpretations are generated from within the performance. The contextual sphere of the Mama Huaca must be examined to determine how this ancient character functions in a contemporary setting.

Deeply rooted in native Andean mythology, the Mama Huaca stories have particular resonance as an expressive vehicle for social and cultural anxieties both ancient (the fear of incest, and the trauma of the conquest) and current (the perpetual crises and grinding social inequities of Third World capitalism, and the alarming degradation of the highlands ecosystem in many sectors.)

In a primal sense, the Mama Huaca embodies the raw and awesome vitality of the Andes. As a monster, she represents the disjuncture between nature and culture, the subversion of the process of domestication and acculturation. When nature overwhelms culture in this manner, a dangerous regression occurs: the orderly relations and obligations between human beings break down and the social world disintegrates. The monstrous Mama Huaca emerges to eat lost children, abduct and seduce men, and
inordinately reward individuals who have transgressed spatial boundaries and social norms. The psycho-social analysis of these legends has convincingly proceeded to this juncture (Gutiérrez Estévez 1985).

But as a viable contemporary legend cycle, the Mama Huaca continues to generate new meanings and address new sources of anxiety so fundamental that the paradigm of mythic signification must be re-examined. What happens when culture overcomes nature, when the process of domestication so totally overwhelms the natural world that the ecosystem itself begins to disintegrate? This disastrous disjuncture again summons the Mama Huaca into popular discourse. In this inverse situation, she becomes the embodiment of the primal energy of wilderness in its complementary function as the vital force that underlies and vitalizes culture (Taussig 1987). When this force is extinguished, the Mama Huaca withdraws and is thenceforth evoked in an elegiac mode. This new phase in the legend cycle is not evident in the motifs or deep structure of the story, but in the contextual sphere of its actual performance. Let us proceed toward such a performance in a remote but well known village in the heights of southern Ecuador.
LAS ALTURAS DE JATUMPAMBA

In places, the road to Jatumpamba is so steep, it seems as if the mountain itself wishes no one to venture there anymore. With every bend and rut, a fine dust swirls up like smoke. This sector of the Río Paute watershed is semi-arid, caught in the grip of a rain-shadow (INHERI-CREA 1980 and 1981). The tantalizingly green mountains to the west and south drain the clouds before they arrive. Here, the lack of vegetation in the eroded fields and pastures is notable. Once, within the memory of the older people, substantial forests of large pacachos and huabuisays (Podocarpus taxifolia) trees grew in the area (Sjoman 1989:25). Now, a few clumps of straggling eucalyptus and rows of vigilant pencos or century plants (Agave americana) are the only barrier, the last defense against the imminent collapse of the mountainside. Above, the view from the deserted plaza is impressive: up from the gorges and hills to the west across the Río Paute soars the immense monolith of Cojitambo; in the distance to the north lies the colonial mining center of Azogues; on the southern horizon hovers the greenish valley of Cuenca, blessed with its four rivers.

Jatumpamba is a village of potters, famous for its graceful cántaros - large double-eared water jars still fashioned with the pre-Hispanic double pounding technique known in Quichua as

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3 Jatumpamba (Quichua for Pampa Grande) is a village perched on a high, narrow plateau east of and 2000 feet above the Paute River in the Cantón of Azogues in the southern province of Cañar, Ecuador.
huactana and in local Spanish translation as golpeado. The European potter’s wheel was rejected in Jatumpamba (Sjoman 1989:33). The porches and patios of the houses are stacked with drying pots. The women work inside the houses. Few men are to be seen. As soon as they are old enough to work, they go to the banana plantations and shrimp farms of the coast. A few have daily jobs down in the city. In past years they made roof tiles before the firewood ran out. They used to plant corn and beans, but the exhausted fields no longer bear fruit. People here are "campesinos," a ill-defined but commonly used social / cultural / occupational category somewhere between indígenas (Indians) and cholos (mestizos). Only the older generation still knows and hesitantly uses Quichua. The young are dominant in Spanish.

"HA VIVIDO UNA MAMA HUACA... EN ESA PEÑA" [137-139]

As I sit alone in the plaza, an old man (still in his fifties) comes by to accompany me. Sr. Juan José Ortiz speaks quietly and deliberately. He chooses the topics, the origins of Jatumpamba and the changes of the past few decades: the erosion and deterioration of the land, the decline of agriculture, and the search for work in the city:

22 JO: "Yes, then that is why it is named Jatumpamba [uh, huh].
23 That is what...
24 That word can never...
25 be lost, because those are already words
26 established before [yes].
27 And we respect that,
28 and that other we respect too,
29 how the first generation has come to be
30 here in this community.
31 Here in this community before, it was forested, [yes].
There have been trees, there have even been beasts,
wild animals, [yes],
but when there were few people living here already
to live back then this has been,
the descendents kept increasing
and the forest began to deteriorate.
And before it produced in abundance
foods from here, like grains,
vegetables, new fields.
It must be that with time the soil is used up
it deteriorates and like the forest is deteriorating
the páramo is also wasting away [yes]
There is no dwelling place for the plants.
And since the people are abundant, we leave more,
since the soils are,
are deteriorating,
now we are even cutting down the trees..."⁴

(Version H-1a / Juan José Ortiz / Jatumpamba, Provincia del Cañar, Ecuador / Collector Lamadrid 1992 / my translation, original in Appendix A)

As we talk, he makes sweeping gestures toward the arid landscapes below. We have conversed for less than five minutes. I have nodded a few times and attentively mumbled "si" and "no" to maintain my side of the dialogue. I ask about the patron saint of the church as my gaze is inadvertently drawn to some large boulders on the hillside above the town. I confess to him that I am interested in boulders. Without hesitation he responds:

⁴ Interview with Juan José Ortiz, October 24, 1992, Jatumpamba, Cañar. These transcriptions follow the basic ethnopoetic analysis developed by Briggs (1989). They are absolutely verbatim and faithful to the most minute details of the audio recording. Each numbered line corresponds to the phraseology, rhythm, and breath pacing of the speaker. Indentions indicate levels of discourse. Capitals indicate the use of more volume. Brackets [] show the brief responses or back-channel cues of the interlocutors. Material between parentheses () has been included to clarify meaning.
"Condorquingre\textsuperscript{5} we call that cliff. [yes]
There has lived a, a Mama Huaca
that has, it's that she is an enchanted woman."

(Unprompted, he continues to relate to me the local version of
the Mama Huaca legend. To paraphrase here it would be to
relegate it to the annals of local legendry as just another
familiar version (it will be examined in detail later). The
story is so well known in these parts, that since the 1960's,
local folklorists have ceased collecting it. The synopsis,
decontextualized, reconstituted, and reordered (as is commonly
done in textually centered studies) is already contained in this
composite rendition by Martínez Borrero:

"A noise is heard that comes from the mountain, for sure
someone went to visit the Mama Huaca and probably took a
guagua auca (unbaptized child) to exchange for two cobs of
pure gold... Some guys struck out one day, because as they
climed the hill, they found a real old woman that offered
them a bunch of beautiful corn cobs, all yellow gold. It is
said that they grabbed them and ran and when they arrived
below, they see that it was really goat shit and old
bones... Another one had climbed another hill and seen a
stone door and gone in to see, and finds a world of golden
things (1983:2-4)."

(my translation, original in Appendix C)\textsuperscript{6}

\textsuperscript{5} Cerro del Condorquingre. From the Quichua: hill of the
Condor's crossing or slope of the Condor; from quingray - slope
or crossing. Or hill of the Condor's zig-zag flight; from quingu
- sinuous, zig-zag (Cordero 1968).

\textsuperscript{6} The original Spanish text of this compilation is
significant in its attempt to recreate the tone of popular speech
in Azuay, with its frequent use of diminutives and regional
words of Quichua origin.
Although it successfully evokes popular speech, the Martínez Borrero text is essentially a literary recreation written for Identidad: Revista de Cultura Popular, a widely distributed state-sponsored magazine whose purpose was to promote interest in popular culture. Historically, folklorists have used an even more elliptical shorthand style as the standard method to register a legend or tale and facilitate further analysis. In a drastic dissection process, after the telling, the collector discards the "circumstantial" factors to tease out the "essential" narrative components.

The folklorist then can analyze types and motifs to speculate on origins and diffusion of oral narratives. Likewise, the structural anthropologist examines a comprehensive collection of variant texts to speculate on underlying mythological discourse. Such analyses have provided valuable insights into the geographic distribution of the Mama Huaca cycle (Hartmann 1984); into the local Andean articulation of the basic nature/culture opposition and fundamental social tabus (Gutiérrez Estévez 1985); and even into folk medicine (Muñoz-Bernard 1986).

However, these approaches have revealed little of what these narratives mean to contemporary participants in the tradition or how that tradition is evolving. Text-based methodology effectively devalues and dehistoricizes oral literature to the point of quaint banality. The illusion is created that this
tradition is static and stultified, and that its practitioners
are colorful but passive purveyors of anachronistic folkways.

Briggs articulates this critique, saying:

With respect to the study of verbal art, text-centered
approaches that held sway until recent years provided a
powerful tool for hegemonic cooptation of the self-
expression of dominated peoples. When texts are divorced
from contexts, folklore is reduced ipso facto to the archaic
as a relic of past ages that is cut off from life in the

On the other hand the wealth and refinement of the literary text
is obvious in its texture which empowers it to stand alone as a
"sublime" cultural artifact. The creativity, social
consciousness, and durability of the folkloric text lies in its
contextuality.

In performance the legend texts are correlated by the
narrator to larger contexts that extend concentrically from
interpersonal, social, and historical relations to more global
perspectives of ecology and cosmography. This cycle of Andean
legends has been and continues to be a vehicle for the
articulation of the people’s consciousness of their culture,
society, and place in the natural world. Reichel-Dolmatoff has
correctly identified the globality of this kind of discourse in
his assertion that:

Aboriginal cosmologies and myth structures... represent in
all respects a set of ecological principles...[which]
formulate a system of social and economic rules that have a
highly adaptive value in the continuous endeavor to maintain
a viable equilibrium between the resources of the
environment and the demands of society (1976:308).

It must be clarified that the above words were written
specifically in reference to indigenous and aboriginal myths,
which are the preferred sources for such cosmological studies. Since mestizaje (cultural synthesis or mixing) is so difficult to define, few attempts have been made to decode the mythical structure of the discourse of mestizos or cholos (Martínez Borrero 1993). What emerges in the present study is a relationship between mestizo oral narrative and ecological consciousness.

Many of the campesino communities in southern Ecuador, including Jatumpamba, fall into this perplexing middle category. Accordingly, some European elements, including fragments from the Hansel and Gretel tale, have apparently been assimilated into some of the stories in the Mama Huaca cycle, but the amalgam is so well melded that it has to be considered on its own terms. Arguedas himself suspected that many Peruvian indigenous legends in this cycle had European roots (Arguedas 1953:228), although later studies have shown that the witch who eats lost children was an inhabitant of the Andes before the coming of the Spanish (Hartmann 1984:655).

What more aptly characterizes the Andean cultural process is not its autochthonous "purity," but rather its exceptional ability to integrate and synthesize disparate cultural currents from within its own horizons as well as from beyond the ocean sea (Dover 1992:1).

Before returning to the individual performance in Jatumpamba, more must be said about the body of Mama Huaca texts: the resonance of the Huaca concept itself, and the other variants
in the cycle. A summary of interpretations will also be useful as a starting point for the new insights that further ethnopoetic analysis can offer.

HUACAS: FROM THE SACRED TO THE CURSED

As with other indigenous Andean theological concepts, the *huaca* is almost impossible to adequately translate from Quechua / Quichua into European terms without considerable linguistic archaeology (Harrison 1989:32-54). To confound matters further, *huacas* were redefined during the ideological and theological imperatives of the Incas' *Tahuantinsuyu* (empire of the four directions), and later targeted for eradication by the extirpation campaigns of the Spanish Imperial Church. Such theocratic engineering has modified such concepts and simultaneously inspired resistance to the revisions. Whenever the *huaca* is mentioned, there is a semantic resonance that rings through the layers of its meaning. The term is burdened with conflicting sacred and diabolical connotations and charged with the trauma of two layers of conquest and domination.

For pre-Hispanic Andean cultures, *huacas* were focal points in an essentially sacred and animated landscape, holy sites with singular geographical features like springs, boulders, lakes, caves, and mountains. In native cosmologies these were points of emergence of the ancestors, holy places of worship and sacrifice (Sherbondy 1992). *Huacas* were also the resident male and female spirits, divinities, and man-made images inhabiting these places.
People in each vicinity were even said to bear a physical resemblance to the local **huaca**, a belief which has persisted into present times (Muñoz-Bernard 1979 and 1986:162). **Huacas** were fed, sung to and danced for in reciprocal exchange for their blessings (Garcilaso de la Vega [1609] 1963, v.2:47-48).

During the expansion and consolidation of the Inca empire, the state cult to the Sun was imposed. In their own origin myth, the Incas claimed direct kinship to the Sun as descendants of Manco Capac, Mama Ocllo, and their six brothers and sisters who emerged from caves south of Cuzco. One of the sisters, Mama Huaco, was the first person to plant corn (Molina [1573] 1943:67). As the solar cult spread, devotion to local **huacas** was not repressed. On the contrary, the local deities and their images were taken in solemn procession to a special temple in Cuzco to be duly honored and admitted to the pantheon (Hernández Príncipe [1621] 1923:62-63). **Huacas** were also integral to the physical and political organization of space and were strung together in **ceques**, imaginary lines radiating from ceremonial and administrative centers like **Cuzco** and in all probability, **Tomebamba**, marking the geographical and ethnic divisions of **Tahuantinsuyu** (Zuidema 1982:427-446).

In early Spanish colonial times the **Extirpación de idolatrías** (extirpation of idolatries) campaigns aggressively sought out **huacas** to destroy them, especially if they were in the form of wooden and stone images or ancestor mummies. Within a half-century after the conquest, in the **Taki Ongoy** religious
rebellion, roaming huaca spirits declared war on the Christian trilogy and saints that had replaced them. Dislodged from their graven images, they were hungry from not being fed and as a last refuge, possessed the bodies of living people who danced frenetically to honor them and personally received the same offerings and sacrifices that were previously made to the images (Albornoz [1584] 1967, Arriaga [1621] 1968).

In later colonial times after the extirpations, the term huaca became synonymous with the buried treasure of pre-Hispanic tombs (Cordero 1968), and huaqueros or treasure hunters paid the same quinto real tax to the crown that gold miners did. There was no distinction made between mineral gold and the elaborated gold of artifacts. In Chinchaysuyu there were few large scale public burnings of ancestor mummies and images as in the south, but the systematic desecrations wrought by the huaqueros had the same effect of cutting people off from their past and destroying the complex oral narratives, hymns, and verses associated with each particular mummy and image (Salomon 1987). Over the centuries, due to the insistent influence of Christianity and the persistence of pre-Christian beliefs, the notion of huacas as sacred sites was totally inverted in the popular spiritual consciousness. Now they are considered to be dangerous and enchanted places where evil spirits and beings lurk. The folk belief in antimonios or noxious emanations rising from these sites is still current (Muñoz-Bernard 1986:158).
In the contemporary oral tradition of Chinchaysuyu, the notion of huaca is loaded with multiple and ambiguous layers of meaning: sacred/cursed places, their mythical denizens, and the fabulous but dangerous treasures to be found there. The Mama Huaca is a complex and ambiguous creature as awesome as the geography she inhabits. Although she shares features with monstrous females in other mythological traditions, in the Andes she can never be considered apart from the places she inhabits.

Other important variants of this story must be examined now, so a complete panorama of the cycle may be indexed as a regional repertory against which the individual performances may be contrasted in detail.

MAMA HUACA AND HER SISTERS

This pan-Andean cycle of hag legends and tales includes the treasure stories of the inscrutable, sometimes benevolent Mama Huaca of the southern Ecuadorian sierra (Cañar, Azuay, and Loja provinces); the heinous, two-faced Chificha of the north (Imbabura province); and the loathsome Achikee, devourer of children (of the central Peruvian highlands). The latter two are presumably etiological legends that explain certain aspects of Andean ecology: the origins of the spiny or poisonous plants and harmful insects of the sierra.

Most variants of the Achikee legend were collected in the Peruvian Departments of Ancash, Huánuco, and Junín, and have been commented on by several generations of Peruvian folklorists
including Javier Pulgar Vidal, Toribio Mejía Xesspe, Fernando Izquierdo Ríos, and José María Arguedas (Hartmann 1984). This version of Mejía Xesspe is representative:

In a time of famine, a man and his wife decide to abandon their children in a deserted place. The children wander lost until they reach the house of an old woman. That night the boy has to sleep with her. His sister hears him moaning and in the morning finds his bones. She flees with his remains. The animals of the region like the deer, the fox, and the condor help her escape, so she won't fall into the hands of the old cannibal, the Achikee. When there is no other escape, a chain dangles down from heaven so the girl can climb up. A rope also appears for the Achikee, but a field mouse (pericote) gnaws through it. As the old woman falls to her death, she screams out a curse: "May my arms turn into gigantones (organ pipe cactus), my hair into huallancas (straw thorn cactus), my hide into century plants, my teeth into pato-casha (sheath thorn cactus). May thorns sprout from my blood." She fell into the boulders and according to her wish, in every direction the earth was covered with spines in all directions.


Only one of numerous variants attributes the origins of any useful plants to the Achikee. She is almost unanimously identified with useless or harmful vegetation associated with the overuse, overgrazing, or degradation of Andean ecosystems.

The Chificha monster of Imbabura province in northern Ecuador in many versions is destroyed (as in Hansel and Gretel tales) by children pushing her into an oven. Like the Achikee, she is identified with plagues, both vegetative, and insect, that spring from her ashes. Elsie Clews Parsons (1945), Roswith Hartmann (1984), and Fausto H. Jara and Ruth Moya (1987) have all published versions of the tale. In this recently collected text, the Chificha kills a woodcutter by tearing out his heart. As in
other versions she dies by burning, but in a modern twist, here she is incinerated in a gasoline fire:

"An Indian had gone to the mountains to get firewood, and so forth to do some chores there in the mountains, and one, one morning he finds the Chificha. Then, she grabs him, she steals his heart, and then eats the heart. And then, the body is already without life, already dead. And that body disappears and the Chificha returns converted in that body that is already dead, that man. Converted into that man she returns to the house where his wife was. The woman was worried that he didn't return, the husband returned the next day, but it wasn't the husband, but rather the Chificha turned into the husband. When she arrived, she was combing his head and there the woman was delousing him, the husband. When she parted the hair behind, and she realized that behind the head had another face. That had, rather, two faces. Then there she realized that it was the Chificha. She was quiet, without saying anything; she went outside and poured gasoline on the house and the man was inside, or rather the Chificha. Then she poured the gasoline and burned the house. When they burned the Chificha, at the moment they burned her, she screamed, "Piqui mitu cusha." It means "I will make fleas, I will turn myself into fleas." And "Mulpi shata pulgi," which means "And the fleas will spread to all places." And from thence forth fleas exist."


Since most collectors of these legends have been more interested in questions of origins, diffusion, motifs, and tale types, little information concerning performance contexts is available. But in view of the closing episodes of both Achikee and Chificha, speculation on the state of the natural world seems like a

7 This version is transcribed verbatim in block (rather than ethnopoetic) style, because the performance was elicited and therefore is not in full performance context. Mercedes Maldonado (an Otavalo Indian) is a bilingual school teacher resuming the Chificha story that her pupils from Chuchuquí, Cantón Otavalo, told her (December 9, 1992).
reasonable or even probable frame for contextual commentary and interpretation.

A major preoccupation in the literature is the similarity of many of these Andean legends to the Aarne-Thompson (1961) Tale Types #327 and #327A, or what is popularly known as the Hansel and Gretel tale from the Brothers Grimm collections. Can these resemblances be attributed to the introduction of the European tale by the Spanish, or is this assimilation a product of a more complex cultural mestizaje? Since some of the tales of northern Perú have no native names for the witch, and since she lives in a sugar house there (just like she does in Europe), some investigators have adopted the former thesis (Arguedas 1953:229). But the wide distribution of the tale complete with Quechua/Quichua names and other autochthonous features has led other researchers to believe that a cycle of native Andean tales existed that paved the way for the wide acceptance and diffusion of #327A (Hartmann 1984:655).

In any case, one of the three principal episodes of the Mama Huaca cycle in southern Ecuador features her in her child-devouring role, as in the following version collected by Eulalia Vintimilla:

A widower remarries and his new wife orders him to abandon his son and daughter in the mountains. He takes them deep into the mountains where he leaves them. But the brother who was walking behind, had left a trail of tortilla pieces, which he and his sister followed back home, to the dismay of the stepmother. The next day the sister walked behind and ate the pieces of the tortilla that her brother threw down. There was no trail so they were lost. After walking a long way, the boy climbs a tree and spies a black house with smoke coming out of the chimney. There the Mama Huaca had
been making tortillas, and there were stacks of them cooling. The hungry children stole and ate some. The old woman, even though she was blind, sensed the theft. When she said three times the words "cuniga-ricunga-mise," the children laughed, and she grabbed them. She treated them and fed them well, with mote, tortillas, and guinea pig. One day with the excuse that she is making chicha for the visit of her son, she asks them to get some water. Meanwhile she prepares the kettle where she plans to cook them. When the children are getting water, they see a woman dressed in white (the Virgen), who warns them what will happen. Back at the house, the children make the old woman climb up a ladder from which she falls into the boiling water. She dies and the house four chained dogs that were guarding it disappeared. All that was left where the house was were objects of gold, combs, bars, habas, and ears of corn. The children return home, the father gets the gold and they become rich.


In another prevalent and representative episode, the Mama Huaca does not simply wait for lost children to stumble upon her; she actively seeks out men whose work as herdsmen or potato farmers leads them out of the shelter of valleys into the windswept, craggy heights of her domain. She forces them to cohabit with her and satisfy her sexual desires, although she is so covered with thorny hair that the experience is a painful one for her captives, whose struggle to escape is often aided by the weasel, as in this version collected by the storyteller Rodrigo Astudillo:

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8 Since the Martínez (1983), Vintimilla (1968 and 1970), and Astudillo (1993) versions are not verbatim transcriptions, for the purpose of ethnopoetic analysis, they have to be considered as essentially literary artifacts, even though all three collectors have tried to evoke both the vocabulary and style of oral delivery.
A man had a potato field up high in the mountains. One day when he noticed that someone was stealing his potatoes, he went back home to get his rifle to scare the thief. While he was hiding in a tree, an old woman came to dig up the potatoes. He cried "thief, thief," and she came under the tree. When he tried to shoot, the gun wouldn't go off. After a long while jumping from branch to branch, he fell from the tree into the basket of the Huaca. She took him back to her cave where she fed him very well, but some things were raw and others were without salt. Huacas don't like salt. After a few days the Huaca left the cave to get firewood and forgot to close the cave completely with a big rock as she usually did. He escaped running and since it was late in the day only made it as far as the house of a weasel, who let him hide there. When the Huaca came looking for the man, she asked the weasel if he had seen him. "Yes, and I will show you where he is if you take out this thorn in my behind." When she did, the weasel pissed into her face and blinded her. That's the way the poor man escaped from the Huaca. In gratitude to the weasel he returned with a sack full of cushos (grubs and larvas). But, having been with the Huaca, fur grew all over his body. That's what happened to the man who denied potatoes to the Huaca.


A third episode category has to do with people receiving gifts from the Mama Huaca. Sometimes they stumble upon her while wandering in the high mountains, and in other cases they specifically seek her out for favors as in the Jatumpamba version H-1a already cited. In this version also collected by Astudillo, a young girl gets very lucky and is rewarded by the Huaca:

There was a family that always went up to the mountains for firewood. One day the father told his oldest daughter to go get some. When she had gathered some together, the Huaca appeared to her and she began to cry bitterly. To get her to stop, the Huaca gave her a plate of yuca, but the girl kept crying. The Huaca took her to her cave and kept giving her wonderful things to eat, but she kept crying. "I want to go home," she kept saying. When the Huaca realized the girl didn't want anything except to go home, she felt sorry for her and sent her on her way, but gave her an orange when she left. On her way home, the orange got heavier and heavier,
but luckily she didn't throw it away. She arrived at the house without the firewood and told her parents what had happened with the Huaca and took out the orange to show her parents. That orange was pure gold and thanks to the gift of the Huaca, everything improved for that family.


Sometimes referred to as Mama Guardona - from the Spanish guardar, to guard (Muñoz-Bernard 1986:164), this Huaca jealously guards her wealth, distributing it unequally to a select few. Her choices are based on her own whims as in this case, or on special affinities with the recipients. Such is the case of the guaguas aucas, since they are unbaptized children and share her pre-Christian status.

In an insightful analysis of motif elements and structural symmetries, Hartmann (1984) convincingly demonstrates that these seemingly diverse tales and legends are indeed facets of the same cycle, although the Mama Huaca seems more generous and less maleficent than her sisters. Gutiérrez Estévez (1985) questions this apparent generosity, pointing out that the unequal distribution of wealth is as noxious in the social sense as brambles and cactus are to agriculture. In any case, this cycle of legends is definitely Andean, clearly distinguishable from the European complex of witch lore, except for the overlap of Tale Type #327A.

Spanish immigrants also brought to the Andes a fully developed repertory of witch and devil lore rooted in their own European popular culture (Arguedas 1953, Silverblatt 1987:159-
They projected these beliefs onto the recently conquered people and landscape, and the people in turn developed their own caricatures of this lore (Howard-Malverde 1985). For the newcomers, there was no better explanation for the curious native Andean devotion to stones, springs, rivers, mountains, the sun and moon. Behind every *huaca* the influence of the devil himself was perceived. As in Europe, women who possessed knowledge of curing or displayed any devotion to pre-Christian beliefs were assumed to be witches. In the decades following the conquest, there were many accusations of witchcraft, and many women fled the forced settlements and took refuge in the high *punas* and *paramos*, far from the influence of priests, where they would be free to devote themselves to feeding and maintaining the *huacas* (Silverblatt 1987:197-209). The wild and uncultivated heights were a space that became increasingly associated with the power of women. Many mountain spirits are male, including the *Wamanis* deities of the Peruvian highlands (Isbell 1978:59) and the *Urcu Yayas* (mountain grandfathers) of the legends of Cañar province (Gutiérrez Estévez 1979). But in the oral tradition, the overwhelming majority of these mythological creatures are female.

**NATURE, CULTURE, AND INCEST**

The primordial qualities of the *Mama Huaca / Urcu Mama / Achikée / Chificha* stories led Manuel Gutiérrez Estévez (1985) past the etiological explanations (versions H-4, H-5) and treasure tale moralizing (versions H-1a, H-1b) of the legend
cycle into an exploration of its deep structure as mythological
discourse.

In these legends, the Mama Huaca is associated with all that
is wild and untamed in the Andean environment, both natural and
social. She lives in the most inhospitable parts of the sierra,
even though these places are sometimes in close proximity to
inhabited, cultivated, civilized zones. Her appearance is
frightful. She is dressed in rags and covered with spines. Her
diet is particularly primitive. She hates salt and eats children
when she can. She is the keeper and protectress of all the
animals of the mountain. In caves, inside mountains, and at the
bottom of high lakes, she stores her ancient treasures that once
belonged to the Incas and other tribes who buried them when the
Spanish came. This hoard includes golden personal objects such
as combs, as well as ears of corn, habas and other domestic
plants, which are nothing less than canopas (also called illas in
modern Perú), the ceremonial images that represent the original
spirits of these plants (Albornoz [1584] 1967:18, Isbell
1978:151). Through these artifacts, she is also identified with
the remote, pre-Christian past of the gentiles and their cults.
Interestingly, the Huaca's hoard of Version H-1b included the
canopa of an orange, a Spanish introduction to Andean
agriculture.

On the fundamental axis of the nature / culture opposition,
the Mama Huaca falls on the natural side, but represents the
disjunction between the two poles (rather than the ordered
progression between one and the other). Her habit of luring lost children to her lair to eat them and abducting men to satisfy her voracious sexual appetite identify her as the monstrous mother-wife, the incarnation of incest in its most radical and basic manifestation (versions H-2, H-3).

The offering of guaguas aucas takes on special significance in this light (version 1-a). In the remote past, on special occasions or in times of special need, still-born fetuses or even children were indeed included in sacrificial offerings to the huacas, along with chicha, llamas, and guinea pigs (Hernández Príncipe [1621] 1923:27, Muñoz-Bernard 1986:168). But the presentation of new born children to the mountain spirits as in the Mama Huaca stories is a way of involving them in the mutual obligation of compadrazgo or ritual kinship, the most potent social defense against incest (Gutiérrez Estévez 1985:354-355). In this way, the disjunctive forces leading back into a chaotic natural state are effectively arrested by erecting a structure that leads back into the domesticated cultural domain.

The concept of individual wealth vs. collective poverty also takes on a new light here. The Mama Huaca only gives wealth and power to those who have transgressed the social and geographical boundaries to penetrate her domain. The price of their transgression is their subsequent social marginalization. In a community that places its highest value on reciprocality and communalism, individual wealth is not only asocial, but dangerous, since it exposes its owner to envidia (envy), the most
powerful single source of social discord and spiritual illness. The inequity of possessing individual wealth at the expense of collective poverty is a curse, the social equivalent of brambles and stinging insects. As in the Jatumpamba version H-1a, to the baptized adult, the golden ears of corn have the social value of sheep guano.

But this analysis, as penetrating and profound as it is, makes a basic assumption: that the Mama Huaca and her wild untamed, mountain, will always be there in permanent, static juxtaposition to the cultural world of the villages and farms below. Gutiérrez Estévez concludes with these words:

As for the common man, this option [dealing with the Mama Huaca] is neither possible nor desirable. The people that we know, those who are not characters in Mama Huaca stories... have already come to accept the domestication of culture and the proper interchange of social life. Before their houses is the mountain, and there permanently before their gaze, with fear and desire, are nature and incest, collective sterility and individual abundance, the Mama Huaca." (Gutiérrez Estévez 1985:371, my translation).

What if the Mama Huaca herself were to disappear? The huaca or sacred site she inhabits has already been effectively desacralized and cursed. What if it were to be so further degraded by the forces of domestication that it lost forever its wildness?

"ANTES...ALLA HA VIVIDO UNA MAMA HUACA [136-138]... YA SE AMANSO, CREO QUE SE PERDIO TODO LO ANTIQUE" [266-267]

The actual performance of the Mama Huaca de Condorquingre (H-1a) is embedded in references to the previous and actual state of the ecosystem that surrounds Jatumpamba. One of the key verbs
used to describe the physical process of environmental over-
exploitation is *decae* (to deteriorate, to decay). The other key
verb *amansar* (to tame) describes the cultural conceptualization
of the same process:

JO: Yes, rather in ancient times it has been like the Incas
have come to work, they have passed through here,
and according to, I have known about it since childhood
since I too have known something of what was before.
There were many, many wild animals.
As in that place (the cliff) there were foxes,
there were many rabbits, little animals of the hills,
but there were good forests,
there were many deer.
And the forest started deteriorating, deteriorating
since we are occupying everything
the mountain is deteriorating
so those little animals have disappeared.
And in turn our grandparents told us about it
that before there have lived in that cliff,
Condorquingre we call that cliff. [yes]
There has lived a, a *Mama Huaca*
that has, it’s that she is an enchanted woman
that has lived there and she is called the *Mama Huaca*,
it has been, that she lives in that rock by enchantment
Then for that woman have been these deer,
they have been animals for her,
foxes, that means dog, for that *Huaca*,
so, so [uh, huh] and the rabbits
this has meant guinea pigs for that woman.
Then in ancient times they spoke to her, they say
they have even entered there that cliff,
from inside the rock a person has seen
how they enter it, it depends on your luck
I don’t know how, but they entered to
to see from curiosity
and then they found themselves inside the rock,
inside the rocks,
and there were before, piles of yellow corn cobs [ah],
and that’s what there was,
that yellow ear of corn was gold, it is said, [yes]
that were gold, it was not just grain,
not just cobs, but rather gold,
but the person who has luck,
or as they say this has how it has been,
the babies that haven’t been baptized yet,
those are what we call "auca"
when you go to present that baby,
they say this has been done,
those who have been given that golden ear of corn,
but the person that has none, has no luck then,
after they come out of the rock,
outside they say that it was really a piece of guano
of sheep [yes].
That's how they tell it.
That is what the old ones talked about,
but later we came, more people,
more people, going up to that cliff,
we went curious to see
and tourists came to see,
they went, they... (inaudible), now nothing is heard,
everything has been tamed,
that cliff [yes],
has been tamed,
in ancient times that cliff has even moved,
those rocks have gone back,

They moved,

They moved, they say,
but now not anymore,
they say it could be enchantment..."

(Version H-1a / Juan José Ortiz / Jatumpamba, Provincia del Cañar, Ecuador / Collector Lamadrid 1992 / my translation, original in Appendix E)

What also characterizes the performance of Sr. Ortiz in Jatumpamba is the use of what Briggs calls the "Antes Frame" (anteriorty frame), a narrative device that lends a distinctive authority and interpretive framework to several oral genres including "folk historical discourse," as well as legends (Briggs 1988:59-99). The use of the "Antes Frame" is not to be confused with the age-old commonplace of Spanish literary tradition "todo tiempo pasado fue mejor" (all past times are better), as in the classic verse rendition of medieval poet Jorge Manrique. What is often mistaken for folk ruminations about the "good ole days" is actually a well defined oral genre, a specifically structured form of pedagogical discourse that establishes a dialectical
juxtaposition between past and present with a penetrating critique of the latter.

The "Antes Frame" discourse is often aligned to popular millennial concepts that have Biblical roots and concern the coming Apocalypse. The radical changes of contemporary life styles and values are associated in a generalized and specific sense with the ever approaching end of the known world. In Chinchaysuyu, there is a curious folk millennialism in the region that has its roots in the apocalyptic mysticism of Joaquín de Flora, a 17th century Cistercian monk whose teachings were popular for a time among Franciscan missionaries (Muñoz-Bernard 1986:13). According to the folk conceptualization, the world has passed through three ages or "siglos," that of Dios-Padre (God the Father), that of Dios-Hijo (God the Son), and that of Dios-Espíritu Santo (God the Holy Spirit). The Incas lived in the age of Dios-Padre, and buried themselves alive with their treasures, believing that when the invading Spanish left they would come back to life. This age came to an end with a flood. The next age of Dios-Hijo was the age of Adam and Eve, which came to an end with a huge earthquake and landslide that left the mountains in their present form. The age of Dios-Espíritu Santo is the time of the present, whose inhabitants are called "renacientes" (the "reborn"). In this age, everything will supposedly come to an end in a rain of fire (Muñoz-Bernard 1986:14). The fact that the campesinos of Jatumpamba and the entire region commonly refer to themselves as "renacientes" according to this scheme is
evidence that their sense of contemporary events is to some degree colored by this apocalyptic thinking.

In the oral discourse that falls within the "Antes Frame," the specific trope most commonly used is not chronology, but rather "triplex signs," a system of designators which have a metonymymical relation to the world of the past, that also stand as metaphors or icons which evoke that world in relation to the present (Briggs 1988:74-81). In the Jatumpamba performance, besides the character of the Mama Huaca herself and her vanished animals and forest, the most fundamental signs within the Antes Frame are the oro, the ancient golden treasure of the Mama Huaca, and the cerro or cliffs and mountains above the village. Both are intimately connected to her powers.

The narrator establishes a symmetrical set of oppositions between the "mazorcas de oro" (golden ears of corn) vs. "guano de borrego" (sheep guano), and "cerro bravo" (wild mountain) vs. "cerro manso" (tame mountain). The opposition between treasure and excrement serves as an index of acculturation and Christianization. The gold of Condorquingre is available only to the unbaptized. (In versions H-1 and H-2, it is also available to those intrepid or lucky enough to survive an encounter with the Mama Huaca). Baptized adults are able to perceive its glimmer, but not to possess it. The opposition between the mountains is chronological. The "cerro bravo" or animated mountain of forests, wild animals, and glowing rocks belongs to times past and the "cerro manso" or devastated and barren mountain
to be seen above Jatumpamba now is a sign of the present era and its tribulations. The use of the Quichua verb *chungar* (as loaned into Spanish) indicates a sexual relationship between the mountains in the past, with obvious connotations of fertility:

232  
233  JO: "...then when it glowed at night
234  the Cojitambo Mountain with this one,
235  they say they were
copulating, let's see,
236  they are playing between,
237  between the mountains...

238  
239  EL: Are the mountains communicating?
240  JO: Yes, that they are, communication between the mountains
241  It is like with the volcanos that have turned out
turned out mean, that's what's said about the mountains
242  What was before is here also when you go to that cliff
243  it has been known to make it dark,
244  to make it cloudy,
245  to make it rain,
246  it doesn't permit
247  people to go near that cliff [uh, huh],
248  but now I believe that
249  the mountain is also getting poor
250  it is getting tame
251  now, nothing will happen
252  now little will happen,
253  even, even children will go there
curious to get close to the cliff
254  and nothing happens. [uh, huh]
255  It is already tame,
256  I think that its ancient qualities are lost."

(Version H-1a / Juan José Ortiz / Jatumpamba, Provincia del Cañar, Ecuador / Collector Lamadrid 1992 / my translation, original in Appendix F)

In other studies and contexts, when the verb *amansar* (to tame) is used in relation to *cerros*, it can mean a number of things, including the mountain allowing itself to be penetrated by a road and travelled, and the mountain allowing itself to be cultivated
The wealth of a mountain may also be differential. A mountain may be rich, either with treasure, or with the agricultural products that it produces. In the case of Cerro Condorquingre in Jatumpamba, we have the history of a mountain that used to be bravo and rico, both with the treasure of the Mama Huaca, and with the crops that used to grow there. But all that is within the frame of Antes. Now, it has been tamed and forever impoverished by the destruction of its forest, its wildlife, and the erosion of its soil.

ELEGY AND LAMENT

All the legends in the Mama Huaca cycle have to do with disjuncture and disequilibrium in the relations between nature and culture. A narrative space is created for popular reflections on disruptions in the social realm (incest, wealth and poverty) and the natural realm (harmful plants and insects, ecological destruction). In Perú, where the process of desertification of the sierra is well advanced, the monstrous Achikee is invoked as the mythical culprit. In Ecuador, where the process is still in its incipient stages, the Chificha and Mama Huaca are already part of the popular consciousness of the

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9 Olmedo Zhien Maita, Zapata, Cantón Girón, Provincia del Azuay. Personal interview with Enrique R. Lamadrid, November 11, 1992. Extensive discussion of the relative wealth of cerros, including their competitions, and the degree of tameness "cerros bravos" vs. "cerros mansos," etc.

10 The Mama Huaca narratives collected by Suárez (1988) are also characterized by a very consistent use of the "Antes Frame."
ecological problem. Like her Peruvian sister, the Chificha is blamed for bringing plagues into the world. While she is not a malefactor in the same sense, the Mama Huaca’s link to wild nature makes her an inherent indicator of disequilibrium or disharmony in the natural world.

Because of the over-exploitation of the local ecosystem, the Mama Huaca has abandoned the Cerro Condorquingre above Jatumpamba for now and perhaps forever. The inventory of motifs and episodes associated with her was as complete in Jatumpamba as anywhere else in Chinchaysuyu. But as seen in the performance context, her presence or absence has become an index and metaphor for the condition of her previously wild domain. She is still present in the oral tradition of the local renacientes in her full ambiguous and terrifying splendor, but just as a memory. As the narrator says, "Creo que se perdió todo lo antiguo [267]" (I believe everything of old is lost). The ancient treasures are gone, the forest and its animals are gone, the Mama Huaca is gone.

Her huaca, her sacred spot, has been overcome by the forces of domestication (and desertification). The animals of the mountains that once gathered around her are gone. The rocks no longer glow and communicate with each other. Their vital force is gone. The wildness from which culture transforms and derives its vitality has been vanquished.

In Jatumpamba, the stories of the Mama Huaca are told as an elegy, as a past tense etiological lament for the destruction of
this small corner of the Andes. But the horizons far to the west and south are tinged green with vegetation. Over there where the devastation is less and a glint of wildness remains in the hills, do the cholos still warn their children about the Mama Huaca? Is her presence still immediate where her animals yet abound? Or as the last patches of cloud-forest recede, will she too withdraw into an ever more remote narrative past?
APPENDICES

A)
22 J0: "Sí, entonces por eso se llama Jatumpamba. [ah, ah].
23 Eso es lo que...
24 Esa palabra nunca se puede...
25 perder, porque ya son palabras establecidas
26 anteriormente [sí].
27 Y respetamos eso
28 y lo otro hay que respetar también,
29 de lo que como se ha venido la primera generación
30 aquí en esta comunidad.
31 Aquí en esta comunidad antes ha sido montaña, [sí].
32 Ha habido árboles, hasta ha habido fieras,
33 animales salvajes, [sí],
34 pero cuando ha habido poca gente que ya vive aquí
35 para vivir entonces ha ido,
36 la descendencia se iba creciendo
37 y el monte se fue decayendo.
38 Y antes abundantemente producía
39 alimentos de aquí, así como grano,
40 hortalizas, terrenos nuevos.
41 Sería que ya con el tiempo se va usando el terreno,
42 se va decayendo y como el monte se va decayendo
43 tampoco el páramo se va retirando [sí]
44 No hay hospedaje para las plantas.
45 Y como la gente vamos abundando, vamos saliendo más,
46 ya que el terreno se va,
47 va decayendo,
48 o sea que ya hasta los árboles vamos botando..."

(Version H-1a / Juan José Ortiz / Jatumpamba, Provincia del Cañar, Ecuador / Collector Lamadrid, October 24, 1992)

B)
137 "... Condorquingre llamamos esa peña. [sí]
138 Allá ha vivido una, una Mama Huaca, ha sido,
139 que vive en esa peña como encanto."

(Version H-1a / Juan José Ortiz / Jatumpamba)

C)
"Se oye un ruido que viene de la montaña, segurito que alguien
fue a visitar a la Mama Huaca y a lo mejor se llevó una guagua
auca para cambiarla por dos mazorcas de oro purito... Unos se
habían chasqueado un día, porque subiendo por la loma, se han
encontrado con una bien vieja que les había ofrecido un mundo
de lindas mazorcas, amarillitas de oro. Estos dice que cogen
y corren con las mazorcas y cuando llegan abajo ven que ha
sido caca de chivo y huesos viejos... Otro había subido a otra
loma y viendo un portón en la piedra se mete a ver, y encuentra un mundo de cosas de oro..."

(Martínez Borrero 1983:2-4)

D) "Un indígena, había ido al cerro a coger leña, y así a hacer algunas tareas allá en el cerro, y una, una mañana se encuentra con la Chificha. Entonces, le coge, le roba el corazón, y se come el corazón. Y entonces, el cuerpo ya se queda sin vida, muerto, ya. Desaparece ese cuerpo y la Chificha regresa convertida en ese cuerpo que ya está muerto, ese hombre. Convertida en ese hombre regresa a la casa donde su esposa. La mujer preocupada que no regresaba, regresó al otro día el esposo, pero no era el esposo, sino la Chificha convertida en esposo. Cuando llegó, estuvo peinándole la cabeza y allá la mujer estaba desesperándose, al esposo. Cuando abrió el pelo por atrás, y se dio cuenta de que atrás de la cabeza tenía otra cara. Que tenía, o sea que, dos caras. Entonces allí se dio cuenta que era la Chificha. Ella calladita, sin decirle nada, salió para afuera y le regó gasolina a la casa y el hombre estaba dentro, o sea la Chificha. Entonces regó gasolina y le quemó la casa. Cuando le quemaban a la Chificha, en el momento que le quemaban, la Chificha gritaba, "Piqui mitu cusha." Significa que "me voy a hacer pulgas, me voy a convertir en pulgas." Y "mulpi shata pulgi," significa "y las pulgas han de dispersar para todos los lugares." Y de allí es que existen las pulgas."

(Version H-5 / Mercedes Maldonado / Otavalo, Provincia de Imbabura, Ecuador / Collector Lamadrid 1992 / verbatim)

E) JO: "Sí, o sea que antiguamente ha sido como los Incas han venido a trabajar, han pasado por aquí, y según y sí yo lo conocía desde, desde niñez, que yo también he conocido algo de lo anterior. Había muchos, muchos animales salvajes. Como en aquel lugar había raposos, había muchos conejos, esos animalitos del cerro, pero había buen monte, había harto venado. Y el monte se va decayendo, decayendo como todo vamos ocupando el montecito se va decayendo entonces esos animalitos se han desaparecido. Y luego de eso de vuelta nos contaban nuestros abuelos que antes han vivido aquí en esa peña, de Condorquingre llamamos esa peña. [sí] Allá ha vivido una, una Mama Huaca
que ha, es que es una mujer como de encanto
que ha vivido allí y se llama Mama Huaca,
ha sido, que vive en esa peña como encanto.
Entonces para esa mujer han sido estos venados,
han sido animales para ella,
raposos, que significa perro, para esa Huaca,
así, así [ah, ah] y los conejos
ha significado que es cuyes para esa mujer.
Entonces antiguamente le conversaron, dizque
han sabido de entrar allí en esa peña,
adentro en la peña han sabido ver una persona
lo que adentraban, es que dependía de la suerte
no sé como, es que dentraban a
a ver de curiosidad
y es que se encontraba dentro en la peña,
dentro en las piedras,
y son más antes pilas de mazorca amarilla [ah],
y eso ha sabido ser,
esa mazorca amarilla ha sido oro, dice, [sí]
ha sido oro, no ha sido grano,
no ha sido mazorca sino casi de oro,
pero a la persona que da suerte,
o sea que eso dizque ha sabido,
a la criatura que no ha sido bautizada todavía,
que es, que llamamos "auca"
cuando va a entregar a esa criatura,
dizque han sabido,
los que han sabido dar esa mazorca de oro,
pero a la persona que no, no da suerte, entonces,
después que sale de adentro de la peña,
afuera dizque ve ha sido un pedazo de guano
de borrego [sí].
Así han sabido decir.
Es que conversaron los antiguos,
pero después ya empezábamos nosotros, más gente,
más gente, apéganle en esa peña,
iban de curiosos a ver
y venían turistas así a ver,
se iba, se... (inaudible) ya no se oye nada,
todo queda amanzado,
esa peña [sí],
ya queda amanzado,
antiguamente esa peña hasta ha sabido mover,
esas piedras han sabido retirar,

EL: Se movían,
JO: Se movían, dizque,
pero ahora ya no,
dizque puede ser encanto..."

(Version H-1a / Juan José Ortiz / Jatumpamba)
(F)

232 JO: ". . . entonces cuando se brillaba de noche
del Cerro de Cojitambo con el de acá,
dicen que están
chungando, ya vamos,
están jugando entre,
entre los cerros...

238 EL: ¿Y están comunicándose los cerros?

239 JO: Sí, eso sí, verá comunicación de cerros.
Es como una cosa como los volcanes que han salido
salido bravos, asina se dice de los cerros. [ah, ah].
Lo que antes será aquí también cuando va a esa pena
ha sabido poner a oscurecer,
a neclar,
y poner a llover,
no permitía que
apague la gente allí en esa pena [ah, ah],
pero ahora ya yo creo que
el cerro también se va haciendo pobre
se va amansando
ahora ya, ya no pasa nada
ahora el que menos,
hasta, hasta niñitos van a estar allí
de curiosos a apagar en la pena
ya no pasa nada. [ah, ah]
Ya se amansó,
creo que se perdió todo lo antiguo."

(Version H-1a / Juan José Ortiz / Jatumpamba)
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