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# LA MÚSICA Y LOS PUEBLOS INDÍGENAS

A MÚSICA E OS POVOS INDÍGENAS  
MUSIC AND INDIGENOUS PEOPLES

COORDINADOR: CORIÚN AHARONIÁN (1940-2017)

EDICIÓN: FABRICE LENGRONNE

**CDM**

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1ª edición, 2018.

Edición digital, 2018.

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Impreso en el Uruguay.

ISBN 978-9974-36-366-3 (edición impresa)

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# DANCING IN THE FIELDS: IMAGINED LANDSCAPES AND VIRTUAL LOCALITY IN INDIGENOUS ANDEAN MUSIC VIDEOS<sup>1</sup>

## Introduction

In 2004 I returned to Bolivia, after a gap of two years, and – as usual – visited my *caseras* (familiar vendors) in the music shops and stalls in the mining town of Llallagua (northern Potosí) and the cities of Potosí and Sucre. I had been regularly buying cassette recordings of regional music aimed for a low income indigenous (*originario*)<sup>2</sup> market from many of these same stalls since my first trip to Bolivia in 1986. However, I now found that the audio cassette tapes that had always fronted these stalls had entirely disappeared from view; a market remained for them, but they had been hidden away on shelves at the back of the shops. In pride of place, at the front of these shops, were now a host of music videos featuring regional music offered in plastic presentation cases with colour printed paper inserts that resembled DVDs. Yet these optical discs were not DVDs, they were VCDs (Video Compact Discs) – a

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<sup>1</sup> My grateful thanks and appreciation go to the many musicians and producers in Bolivia who gave their time to talk to me in this research. Special mention goes to the family of the late Gregorio Mamani, and to Carmelo and Daniel Gutiérrez of CG Records. Thanks to Helena Simonett and James Butterworth for their editorial comments. I also gratefully acknowledge the support of the British Academy (<http://www.britac.ac.uk>) and the UK Arts and Humanities Research Council (<http://www.ahrc.ac.uk>). This text has been first published in *TRANS-Revista Transcultural de Música/Transcultural Music Review* 20, diciembre 2016.

<sup>2</sup> For the sake of simplicity, clarity and better comparison with wider international contexts I use the label 'indigenous' in this paper. However, in highland Bolivia both rural and urban indigenous people often prefer to be referred to with the term *originario* ('originary' or 'native'); from an international standpoint this is effectively interchangeable with 'indigenous'.

cheaper technology of the global south, albeit of lower picture quality and capacity, which enabled video to be recorded onto CD discs (Stobart 2010, Wang 2003). With the escalation of media ‘piracy’ and mass duplication of these discs, plastic presentation cases are frequently abandoned. Instead, most stalls offer the majority of their VCD discs in small plastic bags alongside a colourful printed paper label (*lámina*) detailing the video disc’s contents (Stobart 2010, 2014). As of the time of writing (2015), the VCD – although often incorrectly referred to as DVD – remains a primary format for regional music recording in this part of Bolivia<sup>3</sup>.

Subsequent conversations revealed that the first VCD music video of regional music from this part of the Bolivian Andes was produced in 2003; a video of charango songs (*charanguada*) by Walter and Segundita produced by Wilson Ramírez of *Banana Records* (Cochabamba). Even though the quality was poor, the recording was an immense success and by the time I had returned to Bolivia in 2004, it had become almost unthinkable for a regional indigenous artist to produce a recording without video images. For much of the audience of these styles of music, this was their first domestic encounter with ‘digital’ technology; a shift from the ‘analogue’ audio cassette to ‘digital’ audio visual VCD<sup>4</sup>. These discs, which rapidly reduced in price due both to competition and the effects of media ‘piracy’, could be played on cheap hardware in the form of a VCD player that could be plugged into a television. In short, a new thriving market for audio visual entertainment opened up for low income and largely indigenous populations of the region, especially urban migrants from rural areas. This demand was met by high levels of music video production by low-income artists of the region. Some of this took place in existing studios al-

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<sup>3</sup>In Stobart (2010), I predicted that as home disc copying became more affordable, the tendency for Bolivian vendors to be supplied with pirated discs from Peru (smuggled into the country via the frontier town of Desaguadero) would diminish. However, recent discussions with vendors in Sucre (2015) reveal that the majority of pirated VCDs (and MP4 compilations of multiple VCDs) continue to be supplied from Peru. Importantly, this includes all the forms of Bolivian regional music video discussed in this paper; music videos that were originally recorded in Bolivia.

<sup>4</sup>The audio CD was (and remains) largely restricted to middle and upper class consumers and genres, due to its high cost.

ready dedicated to cassette productions of regional and indigenous music, such as GC Records or Banana Records in Cochabamba. In other cases, artists set up their own low budget studios, as in the case of Gregorio Mamani (1960-2011) – an innovative indigenous music entrepreneur and cultural activist from the rural community of Tomaykuri, near Macha, Northern Potosí, with whom I worked closely for 11 months (2007-2008), based in the city of Sucre (Stobart 2011).

Of course, Bolivian indigenous music video did not develop in a vacuum and there is nothing new about music video as a genre. In Euro-American culture, popular music accompanied by (analogue) video images has been mainstream since at least the early 1980s, with familiar earlier examples including Queen's *Bohemian Rhapsody* (1975)<sup>5</sup>. Undoubtedly, aspects of the Bolivian digital music video phenomenon build on Euro-American popular music and music video production conventions, such as the 3-5 minute song (Straw 1993: 6), the 8-12 track album, and the tendency to foreground the star. There are also characteristics of music video, as a genre, shared by Bolivian music videos which distinguish it from other forms of audio visual production. As Carol Vernallis has highlighted in her book *Experiencing Music Video* (2004), music video is not subject to the same narrative constraints or demands for continuity as, for example, a feature film. Thus, whereas an unprepared switch of dress or jump from one location to the next in a film scene can provoke a suspension of belief, in music video the viewer is undisturbed<sup>6</sup>. Indeed, like Vernallis, I found that frequent unprepared switches of location or of an artist's clothing were employed to enrich the sensory impact of music videos. It was clear that the sense of continuity was carried by the music, as if standing in as a kind of narrative. Thought provokingly, Vernallis suggests that the way music video jumps from one location to the next "resembles what we do when we listen" (2004: 44). This insight complicates notions of locality. How do we understand place,

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<sup>5</sup>For edited volumes dedicated to music video see, for example, Frith, Goodwin and Grossberg (1993), Beebe and Middleton (2007).

<sup>6</sup>Similarly, whereas film often attempts to hide edits, many music videos draw attention to them and are characterized by disjunctive edits (Vernallis 2004: 30-31).

and people's relationship to it, when faced by such a multiplicity of locations?

Despite these overlaps with Anglo-American music video, I nonetheless maintain that for many Bolivians the move from analogue audio (cassette) to a digital audio visual (VCD) format in around 2003 represented a radical shift in the ontology of recorded music. To reiterate, within little over a year it became almost inconceivable for a regional artist in this part of the central Bolivian highlands to produce a music recording *without* video images. Although many repercussions flow from this transformation of music from *audio* to *audio-visual* – some of which I explore in other writings – here I focus on the characteristics of the video images and how these relate to particular musical genres. In particular I ask: why are natural landscapes so ubiquitous in such music videos? Why do so many of these music videos depict the performers dancing in the fields? While landscape and the natural world are by no means absent from Euro-American popular music videos, they rarely seem to feature so prominently as in these Andean examples. An exception would appear to be the Icelandic popular music videos, discussed by Dibben (2009), in which artists – such as Bjork – closely connect the nature imagery they employ with environmentalism and often conflate nature with nation. However, despite Bolivia's high profile as the host of the 'World People's Conference on Climate Change and the Rights of Mother Earth' in 2010 and 2015, environmental concerns are almost entirely absent from these music videos and associated discourses<sup>7</sup>. While nationalistic associations with landscape might be seen to underlie the production of some of these Bolivian videos, there was little sense of conflating nation with the kind of 'pure untouched nature' invoked by Bjork for the case of Iceland. Nonetheless, it should be stressed that numerous music videos of indigenous and folk musics from other parts of the world feature natural landscapes, even if to

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<sup>7</sup>The well-known artist from the region, Luzmila Carpio, does however strongly identify with environmental issues. Unlike the music videos discussed here, her music is largely destined for a middle class and international audience. Carpio is based in Paris where she also served as Bolivia's ambassador to France (2006–2010).

date this has attracted limited scholarly interest<sup>8</sup>. My hope is that this paper will encourage others to turn a critical ethnographic eye to this theme.

More specifically, in this paper I wish to explore how the presence of landscape in these music videos relates to genre, social class, history and particular forms of imaginary, encapsulated in what I call an *Andean arcadia*. How do the landscapes depicted in such videos relate to perceptions of particular music/dance genres and to actual places or localities? To explore these questions I focus on a series of popular, regionally-produced musical styles which are principally consumed by low-income and largely indigenous audiences. The selected music videos range from indigenous rural expressions to urban popular genres, such as *cumbia*. What these videos have in common – besides the frequent inclusion of landscape – is that they are often produced within the same studios (e.g., CG Records and Banana Records) and sold from the same shops or stalls, located in urban peripheries rather than centres. In other words, these genres inhabit a similar market niche: popular, low-income, and largely indigenous. This is not music produced with the aim of appealing to an international ‘world music’ audience. However, before looking more closely at these regional productions, let us place Andean music and landscape into a wider frame.

### **Imaginary landscapes**

In the global imagination, Andean music has long been connected with landscape. One of my own formative encounters with Andean music in the United Kingdom was through the BBC wildlife documentary *Flight of the Condor* (1982). The images of snow-capped peaks, soaring condors, and of the region’s extraordinary natural diversity, were accompanied by the evocative sounds of quena, panpipes, charango, guitar, and *bombo* drum – the standard line-up of the Andean *conjunto*; a grouping and style that has monopolised global conceptions of Andean music since

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<sup>8</sup>For exceptions, see Post (2013).

the 1960s<sup>9</sup>. The music was played by *Inti Illimani*, a Chilean group (founded 1967) who were exiled in Italy following the coup of Augusto Pinochet in 1973. Key moments in the development of this style of global Andean music, which is so accessible and evocative to European ears, can be traced back to 1940s Buenos Aires and 1950s Paris (Rios 2008). Indirectly, these developments drew on deeper histories of Andean *indigenismo*, most notably in Cusco, Peru (1910-1930), a movement in which mestizo and elite intellectuals took an interest in indigenous culture, for example, shaping indigenous musical resources to European aesthetics and presentational performance styles (Turino 1984, 1993; Mendoza 2008, Poole 1997)<sup>10</sup>. Influential *indigenista* intellectuals, such as José Uriel García, were inspired by environmentally deterministic ideas from European aesthetic philosophy and interpreted Andean culture as the product of the telluric (or spiritual) power of the natural landscape (Poole 1997: 183). Around the same time in Bolivia, a group of intellectuals, calling themselves the *místicos de la tierra* (“mystics of the land”), and following the lead of Jaime Mendoza with his 1935 novel *El Macizo Boliviano* (“The Bolivian Massif”), also began aestheticizing Andean landscape as part of a nation building project (Sanjinés 2004: 69-70, 82-92, Rossells 1996: 87-90). Andean music’s connection with landscape was at the heart of such processes, as is potently invoked in iconic images such as *Tristeza andina* (“Andean sadness”, 1933) by the Cusco-based *indigenista* photographer Martín Chambi (1891-1973)<sup>11</sup> (Fig. 1).

This – evidently posed – photograph depicts a barefoot indigenous man, alongside his *llama*, playing the quena flute in a majestic mountain landscape (Coronado 2009). Suggestive of sublime landscape-inspired moments from European musical romanticism (Grey 1997: 70), the lone player appears to be in a kind of melancholic reverie as he contemplates the scenery, suggesting a lyrical

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<sup>9</sup>For more discussion of the Andean *conjunto*, see Rios (2012).

<sup>10</sup>For the case of Bolivian *indigenismo*, see Bigenho (2005, 2006).

<sup>11</sup>It is important to stress that Chambi was of indigenous background and that the indigenist romanticism of this photograph, from which modernity is expunged, is not typical of his other work (Coronado 2009). Indeed, his approach might be seen to have had more in common with that of Valcárcel than García (Poole 1997: 191).





Fig. 1. *Tristeza andina* ('Andean sadness'). Photograph by Martín Chambi, 1933. (with permission of the Martín Chambi Photographic Archive, Cusco, Perú).

and expressive musical meditation (Rossels 1996: 92)<sup>12</sup>. Even if this image effectively evokes (and perhaps even helped inform) the kinds of sentimentality – expressed in sweet and mellow sonorities – with which the urban quena is played, it has little in common with rural practices. Indigenous people usually blow these kinds of notched flutes strongly, stressing upper harmonics, and producing strident sonorities that Europeans often perceive as ‘harsh’ (Stobart 2013: 26-27).

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<sup>12</sup>The Bolivian folklorist M. Rigoberto Paredes (1870-1950), reflecting on the sadness of indigenous music, gives a less sentimental – but equally distorted – take on this kind of scene: “The retarded life of the Indian and his mistrust of a better future, are also an influence and consequently he tends to get witlessly drunk and distract himself by playing his quena in the shade of some moss covered boulder, while his herd grazes or he rests after agricultural work; everything is suffering. This same environment which surrounds him is sad; he lives in the midst of monotonous nature, desolate, untamed and suited for tedium or becoming bored” (Paredes 1981 [1949]: 103-104).

While several of the LP records of the pioneering group *Los Incas* – founded in Paris in 1956 – depict indigenous Andean people or landscapes, none of group’s core members were from the Andean region nor had spent significant time living there. These and other groups helped construct an Andean imaginary of indigenous sounds and sights that circulated widely among global audiences, but which had little in common with Andean indigenous realities. In turn, these cosmopolitan imaginaries ricocheted back to the Andes and in Bolivia, in particular, resonated richly with middle class *indigenista* sensibilities, gradually becoming incorporated into national musical practices and a national identity (Wara Céspedes 1984). Combined with much musical creativity, expressivity and virtuosity, these international influences crystallised in groups such as *Los Jairas* (founded in La Paz in 1966) in what became labelled ‘neo-folklore’ (Arauco 2011: 190) or “Pan-Andean” style. *Los Jairas’* European aspect was most vividly embodied in the influential Swiss quena player Gilbert Favre, whose performance style has influenced generations of Andean quena players (Bigenho 2012: 37-38). The legacy of this cosmopolitan Andean musical aesthetic is evident in numerous internationally touring groups; Bolivian examples include *Los Kjarkas* – often dubbed the “Beatles of the Andes” due to their immense popularity – or *Rumillajta* who toured the United Kingdom for several months each year during the 1980s and 1990s. Like so many other bands performing in this style, *Rumillajta’s* stock of publicity photos include depictions of the group wearing ethnically evocative dress in an Andean natural landscape, backed by snow-capped mountain peaks. Promotional blurb also stresses their music’s association with nature and the landscape<sup>13</sup>:

“Hauntingly beautiful and powerfully evocative [...] closely tied to nature [...] Whispering panpipes and melancholic flutes give way to glittering strings, soaring quenans, and the earth moving, primordial bass notes of the big pipes” (promotional blurb from cover of CD *Atabuallpa, Rumillajta*, 1993).

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<sup>13</sup> Many of the members of *Rumillajta* are good friends, as well as outstanding musicians. My examples aim to outline general tendencies in cosmopolitan Andean music and not to critique particular musicians or bands.

There is nothing unusual about this kind of conventionalised imagery and discourse. International audiences have come to expect touring Andean musicians to look and sound indigenous and failure to conform to such imaginaries can to easily lead to complaints from the “authenticity police” or lost bookings (Bigenho 2002). In turn, such imagined indigeneity is commonly assumed to be closely linked to the natural world; indeed, according to David Castillo (2011: 6) – “Images of close-to-nature (or nature bound) Indians are but the gold standard of colonial discourse going back to Columbus’ Diaries”. In reality, most of the Bolivian musicians and dancers who tour internationally are from urban middle-class backgrounds; a minority speaking indigenous languages. When at home or not performing it would be unthinkable to wear the kinds of clothing associated with rural ‘Indians’ that their stage attire evokes. Despite the rhetoric and efforts to level Bolivia’s highly uneven social landscape by Evo Morales’ pro-indigenous government (in power since 2006 and currently in its third term), inequality and prejudice remain vivid daily realities. Variation and complexity regarding the idea of indigeneity (or, better put, ‘indigenities’) have increased immensely since the early 2000s when it became common for urban dwellers to self-identify as, for example, ‘indigenous’, *originario* or Aymara, whilst often at the same time distancing themselves from rural indigenous people or ‘indians’ (Canessa 2012). It is notable that a significant number of people from rural backgrounds have entered positions of authority in the government. However, as a group, rural indigenous people continue to be associated with ignorance and backwardness, whilst often being characterized as the greatest beneficiaries of the Morales government. Regional artists from humble rural or urban migrant backgrounds, who had not had the opportunity to tour internationally, have begun to question the way that urban middle-class artists have consistently represented indigenous people internationally. This alleged ‘appropriation of identity’ was highlighted to me by Gregorio Mamani – who lived for the first thirty years of his life in the rural community of Tomaykuri, near Macha, Northern Potosí:

“We’ve accessed various videos of Los Kjarkas and other artists who have given tours around Europe [playing the] indigenous

[*originario*] musics that we bring out. We are the authors in the *ayllus*, in the communities, [of the music they play] wearing our outfits, distorting our musics a bit and stylising them. There they are, touring around, and nobody says anything. How long is this usurping of duties going to go on?" (Gregorio Mamani, April 24, 2008).

For example, a video of *Los Kjarkas'* popular song *T'una Papita* (*tinku*) features a stylised and romanticised caricature of a rural community in Northern Potosí. The stomping binary rhythm of the song (a *tinku*) invokes the indigenous practice of ritual fighting (*tinku*) from this region of Bolivia (Stobart 2006: 134). While the dancers' outfits are stylised versions of regional indigenous dress, the music and choreography are urban inventions; a combination widely encountered in metropolitan folklore parades. In contrast to the regionally orientated low-budget videos discussed later, it is clear that the slick, professional quality of this production and its widescreen format are aimed for national and international audiences:

📺 *Los Kjarkas – T'una Papita HD*:  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=g40DAUDOkYg>,  
uploaded June 29, 2009 (accessed Oct. 10, 2015).

## **An Andean arcadia**

The bucolic merrymaking depicted in this video, and in others discussed below, has rich resonances with what might usefully be understood as a form of *Andean arcadia*. In making this connection, I draw on ancient Greek, Roman and various later arcadian imaginaries, including Renaissance music and literature, and eighteenth and nineteenth-century European landscape painting<sup>14</sup>. The initial assemblage I invoke, drawing selectively from these various sources, is that of an idyllic unspoilt wilderness or pastoral scene,

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<sup>14</sup> Among numerous examples see Silvestri and Aliata 2001, Williams 1975, Schama 1995, Montealegre 2013, Gerbino 2009, Ruff 2015, Prince 1988. Paintings to compare with Andean landscapes include Thomas Cole's *The Arcadian or Pastoral State* (1836), which depicts an idyllic rural scene backed by a mountainscape.

which is timeless, untouched and pure – whilst also cloaked in pastness and nostalgia. Its inhabitants do not work; they are in harmony with nature and are without avarice or pride, having remained uncorrupted by modernity<sup>15</sup>. In particular I wish to stress the close parallels between these arcadian imaginaries and those of the ‘noble savage’, rural Indian or *indio permitido* (‘permitted or authorised Indian’). This latter term, coined by the Bolivian anthropologist Silvia Rivera, invokes the kind of docile indigenous person – so applauded by metropolitan and dominant global culture – who is thought to live in harmony with nature while maintaining picturesque indigenous culture and dress<sup>16</sup>. Rivera contrasts this with the *indio alzado* (‘belligerent or hegemonic Indian’) who threatens the *status quo* by embracing modernity and claiming rights, equality and equal opportunities. (For example, like Gregorio Mamani, protesting about the ‘appropriation of identity’). Through claiming rights in this way, the *indio alzado* risks unpopularity and accusations of a lack of indigenous authenticity. According to Rivera, the “kind of racism” at play in the notion of the *indio permitido* “is among the most tenacious because it is masked behind a discourse of valuing indigenous culture” (interviewed in Farthing 2000: 7). Alongside this critical edge to my invocation of a mythic arcadia, there is a more playful and musical aspect. The imaginary mountainous pastoral landscape of arcadia developed

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<sup>15</sup> According to Simon Schama, there are two essentially irreconcilable, ideas of arcadia. The first is wild, dark, and full of desire and madness, evoking the bestiality, incitement to panic, and pandemonium of Pan. This links back to early Greek accounts of Arcadians as an originary race that sprang from the earth, sheltered in caves or simple huts, subsisting on acorns and the milk and meat of goats. The second (which builds, in particular, on Virgil’s fourth eclogue) is pastoral and idyllic, a place of beauty and leisure, where the earth produces grain and fruit without human labour. In this reinvented arcadia, “Pan’s indiscriminate insemination has now become the spontaneous fecundity of nature itself” and the wild notes of his panpipes become melodious fluting (1995: 526-530). For Schama, each of these “landscapes of the urban imagination” answers different needs, but also they suggest different kinds of physical and ethical spaces; on the one hand, unruly wilderness, alongside a sense of integrity, and on the other, pastoral civility and harmony (1995: 525). These ongoing tensions, he suggests, continue to shape our relationship to environment and landscape, just as perhaps they can be seen to influence imaginaries of indigenous people, and the impact of *indigenismo* on Andean music discussed above.

<sup>16</sup> The term is perhaps best known through adoption by Charles Hale (see Hale 2004 and Hale and Millaman 2005).

by the Ancient Greeks<sup>17</sup> was ruled by the god Pan, who – as well as being intimately connected with music, dance, merriment, lust and fertility – is especially associated with the panpipes<sup>18</sup>. Although not featured in the music videos discussed below, the panpipes are, of course, a stereotypically Andean instrument<sup>19</sup>. Thus, these panpipe connections are really just an aside<sup>20</sup>. My primary intention here is to use this ancient arcadian trope to help us think more critically about the construction and circulation of imaginary musical landscapes. Initially we might approach these as romanticist, exotic or nostalgic constructions of a bucolic pastoral world from which the viewer/auditor is somehow separated, for example due to urban residence or class affiliation. Such artificial representations of rural or rustic life may also be conceived as spaces of refuge. For example, early Byzantine arcadian *vistas* appear to have been the creations of urban worlds seeking comfort in nature (della Dora 2016) rather than rural ones living with the land.

Another way to bring out this difference in perspective and experience is in a contrast between ‘landscape’ and ‘topography’. ‘Landscape’, as developed within traditions of European painting, references a particular way of contemplating the natural world (and potentially cultural objects within it), where the viewer is often distanced or somehow disconnected from it (Silvestri and Aliata 2001, Cosgrove and Daniels 1988). Although this approach has come under attack for failing to address dynamic, multisensory, and interactive aspects of our relations with landscape (Tuan 1993, Ingold 2000, Solomon 2000), I propose that this distancing

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<sup>17</sup> A term also linked to a Greek province of the same name.

<sup>18</sup> Earlier Greek iconography sometimes shows Pan playing the double-pipe *aulos*, but later representations from Roman times onwards often show him with panpipes – a connection well known from the *Syrinx* myth.

<sup>19</sup> Despite the wealth of archaeological evidence attesting to the long term importance of panpipes in many Andean cultures, this instrument did not become a regular member of the cosmopolitan Andean *conjunto* until the mid-1970s (Wara Céspedes 1984:228).

<sup>20</sup> As a further fun aside, this link between arcadian mountainscapes and panpipe music (played by a dog!) is featured in hilarious recent Mars television advert (2015). See ‘Mars Werbung mit Hunden – Mars advertising with dogs’: <https://you.tube.com/watch?v=dZcRI-Apke0>, uploaded Apr. 2, 2015 (accessed Jul. 2, 2017). With thanks to Griffith Rollefson for drawing my attention to this.

and vision-based approach remains useful from a music video perspective. In order to bring out the interactive and multisensory aspects of relations with the environment I instead use the concept of ‘topography’. This stresses the experience of dwelling and actively engaging in intimate, sensorial and reciprocal relationships with features of the (natural) environment (Curry 2005: 683). Nonetheless, we should be wary of simply reading such interactions as being “close to nature”. For example, as Andrew Canessa (2012: 161-162) observes, rural Andean people “are intimately connected to the mountains and streams and the land that sustains them: they are not, however, in the least bit close to ‘nature’ since, for them, ‘nature’ and the ‘natural’ are not beyond culture”. In short, the ontological distinction between ‘nature’ and ‘culture’ – so fundamental to European thought or to the very idea of going for a walk to enjoy nature and the views – would make little sense to many rural Andeans (*ibid.*). How then are such distinctions in experience played out in Bolivian music videos? What difference does the social position of the producers or editors, and their relationships to the land and the musical genres, make to these representations? We might also ask, as has Steven Leuthold (1998: 124) in his discussion of documentaries and feature films by Native American filmmakers: how much should the inclusion of ‘nature imagery’ (or landscape) be understood as (a) the assimilation of larger society’s romanticist imagery of indigenous people, and how much as (b) the special relationship indigenous people have with the land? With these ideas in mind, I now explore a range of music videos produced in the Bolivian cities of Cochabamba, Sucre and Potosí for audiences of low income and largely indigenous regional populations and migrants<sup>21</sup>.

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<sup>21</sup> Some of the largest markets for these videos are found among people who have migrated to Santa Cruz, Chapare, Oruro and El Alto. In pirated forms, many such videos also undoubtedly circulate outside the country, in cities such as Buenos Aires.

## Production and genre

Most of the ethnographic work I undertook for this eleven-month research project involved working closely with the indigenous musician Gregorio Mamani. As a technologically unskilled assistant, I helped him produce three music videos in his home studio (Stobart 2011, 2014). However, I also interviewed personnel from several other more established small-scale studios who produce work for a similar low-income and primarily indigenous market. Of special importance to this paper are the perspectives of CG Records, a Cochabamba-based studio founded in the early 1980s which produced audio cassettes for many years before the advent of VCD music video technology. In 2008, CG Records consisted of the father and son team of Carmelo Gutiérrez (acronym in the label's name) and Daniel Gutiérrez, both educated urban mestizos whose home and studio was located in a comfortable leafy suburb.



*Fig. 2.* Carmelo and Daniel Gutiérrez of CG Records, Cochabamba, 2008. (Photograph by Henry Stobart).



They proudly showed me the Sony HDR FXI (HDV) Camcorder they had recently purchased and Daniel explained that they usually like to work with two video cameras and edit with Adobe Premiere 1.5. In matters technical, Carmelo deferred to Daniel who – in his early to mid-twenties at the time – had studied at Cochabamba’s ‘Escuela Superior de Ciencia y Artes’, which offered courses in audiovisual production. This educated background and formal technical training contrasted vividly with that of Gregorio Mamani who had attended a rural school until around the age of eleven or twelve and in his studio work, which largely relied on cheap second-hand equipment, was entirely self-taught (Stobart 2011). Carmelo Gutiérrez outlined the variety of musical genres CG Records produced:

“We do all kinds of work, [this consists] more or less of autochthonous [*i.e. rural indigenous*] music, Andean music, regional, tropical and also Latin American. Well, everyone has different tastes [...] but mostly we dedicate ourselves to the music of Northern Potosí” (Carmelo Gutiérrez, CG Records, Jan. 24, 2008).

To my knowledge, recordings of wider Latin American and ‘Andean’ music (the cosmopolitan *conjunto*, *neo-folklore* or Pan-Andean style discussed above) scarcely feature in CG Records’ catalogue. Much more significant are the numerous productions of rural indigenous (or ‘autochthonous’) musics and ‘regional’ *charanguada* music from Northern Potosí, alongside *tropical* or *cumbia* music. Reflecting the shared production and marketing niche of these genres, I focus on four main styles/categories of music video for the remainder of this paper:

**(1) Rural indigenous music**<sup>22</sup>. These videos were referred to as *cultura* (‘culture’) by a music vendor friend, and represent local indigenous cultural practices found among rural communities. Examples include the *pinkillu* flute music and *qunquta* (large guitar) songs of the Carnival season, and the *charango* (small guitar) songs associated with *tinku* ritual fighting at harvest time in May. The aesthetics and mainly Quechua lyrics of this music often make it challenging for metropolitan ears and recordings for regional au-

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<sup>22</sup> Common terms to reference these rural people and their expressions include: *originario* (‘originary/native’), *campesino* (‘peasant’), *indio* (‘indian’) or *autóctono* (‘autochthonous’).

diences (initially audio cassette) were rare until the early 1990s. Gregorio Mamani was an important pioneer with his group *Zurazura* (Stobart 2011) and influential subsequent groups include *San Marcos*, directed by Zenón Mamani.

**(2) Charangueada.** These are regional *huayño* songs, in Spanish or Quechua, accompanied by the *charango*. The style is typified by a distinctive form of melodic *charango* strumming (*kalampeada*), using metal strings and a diversity of tunings. However, a solo plucked *charango* (*puntiado*) is also sometimes used, alongside accompaniment by one (or two) Spanish guitars, and occasionally a double bass. A number of well-known *charangueada* artists, associated with towns and villages of the Northern Potosí region, emerged during the 1970s and 1980s and achieved immense regional popularity as recording artists (e.g., *Los Pocoateños*, Alberto Arteaga, Bonny Alberto Terán). Since the presidency of Evo Morales (2006), many such artists have stressed their indigenous status, especially in the face of perceived exclusion by urban-based mestizo music rights associations. However, the roots of this musical tradition are associated with the *cholo* and *mestizo* populations of rural towns, who have tended to differentiate themselves from (and have often disdained) the musical practices of rural indigenous communities.

**(3) Female vocal groups.** These are multi-voice female groups who usually sing in unison and dance in formation, accompanied by men playing the *charango* and guitar (*charangueada*-style), or the *charango* alongside *cumbia*-influenced instruments, such as the electric bass guitar, keyboards, and drum machine. A pioneering group in this *cumbia-huayño* fusion is Potosí-based *Las Conquistadoras y los Reyes del Charango* ('The [female] Conquerors and the Charango Kings'). There are countless imitations of this line-up, where the women's dancing in *pollera* skirts highlights their *cholita* status: a form of dress closely associated with indigenous origins but, as with the case of *charangueada*, not necessarily with rural peasant communities.

**(4) Cumbia or Tropical.** Nothing about these popular music groups or their music – which features standard electronic instruments – marks them as regionally indigenous or directly links them

with rural landscapes. The roots of *cumbia* are typically identified with Colombia, but the strongest influences shaping Bolivian *cumbia* have tended to come via Mexico and Peru (Bigenho 2002: 29-31). Among Bolivia's upper and middle classes, this immensely popular music is commonly viewed with utter disdain and as a dangerous form of pollution to national music (*ibid.*). However, in recent years Argentine *cumbia villera*, in particular, has become more acceptable to the middle classes, especially among the young (Alabarces and Silba 2014). As my final example, I will briefly mention a video of the Potosí-based group *Amadeus* (also see Bigenho 2002: 36-37).

For these various genres of music video, the standard practice was to record the music in advance in the studio – typically using multi-tracking – and then, in selected locations, to film the musicians and dancers miming to the recorded soundtrack (Stobart 2011). In assessing the reasons why these music videos so often feature landscape, it should be stressed that filming in the countryside – compared to hiring a costly urban venue, using multiple cameras, and paying for expensive lighting – is a relatively low budget option. Nonetheless, Gregorio Mamani found the cost of hiring taxis to travel to the countryside for location filming a major economic challenge, and introduced 'green screen' techniques partially to avoid this expense (Stobart 2017). Perhaps the most valued aspect of my role as an unskilled assistant took the form of driving filming parties to rural locations free of charge – a highly appreciated form of reciprocity.

### **Representing *cultura* and virtual localities**

It is hardly surprising that landscape should feature so prominently in videos of rural indigenous music as the festive practices of rural communities almost always take place outside in the countryside. It is the only practical option; people's homes are often widely dispersed and dwellings too small and cramped to consider such forms of collective performance indoors<sup>23</sup>. During feasts peo-

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<sup>23</sup> External acoustic space, with few reflective surfaces, also impacts on musical practices and aesthetics; wind instruments are blown strongly, strummed metal strings predominate, and women sing in high tessitura (Stobart 2013).

ple may also dance for many miles across the landscape, singing and playing instruments as they go, as they make a tour of community boundaries, undertake pilgrimages, or visit particular homesteads (Bigenho 2002: 174-177, Stobart 2006: 250). The lyrics of the songs they perform on such journeys may also reference a range of features of the landscape (Solomon 2000). Links between music and landscape are made especially explicit in rural discourses about *sirinus* or *sirenas*, spirit beings that are typically associated with specific places in the landscape, such as waterfalls, springs, rocks or caves<sup>24</sup>. While living over several years, during the 1990s, in the rural community of Kalankira in the Macha region of Northern Potosí, I was often told that all music ultimately comes from the *sirinus*. And, just as music comes from these spirit beings of the landscape, it was also often played back as *consuelo* or “consolation” to the powers of the “animated” landscape that ensure human welfare (Stobart 2007). On many occasions I joined friends in Kalankira to play music in the landscape; focusing our attention on particular rocks, corrals or other places that were seen to ensure the welfare and reproduction of the herds, rather than on any human audience; i.e. the kind of ‘topographical’ relationship described above. Intimate interactions between music and landscape or other aspects of the natural world, often shaped by animistic understandings are, of course, by no means unique to the Andes<sup>25</sup>. But they also raise questions about how such relations might be represented in music video and about agency in the production process. Who shapes what appears, or does not appear, on a music video?

Wilson Ramírez, the director of Banana Records (Cochabamba) explained to me how when producing a music video of rural Carnival music for Zenón Mamani, an indigenous musician originally

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<sup>24</sup> The musical powers of *sirinus* are made especially explicit in the final credits track of Gregorio Mamani’s 2008 VCD of Carnival music (see Stobart 2011). See: ‘Gregorio Mamani, Zura zura – Carnaval 2008 – Final Credits track’: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=t1RnJLwYons>, uploaded Jul. 27, 2010 (accessed Dec. 28, 2015). This stresses Mamani’s view that to be a true indigenous artist you need to believe in the *sirinu* (*sereno*) and highlights how *sirinus* are said to live in and emerge from waterfalls.

<sup>25</sup> Examples from other parts of the world abound; see for example, Feld (1996), Levin (2006), Pegg (2001), Marett (2005), Magowan (2007).

from rural San Marcos in the Macha region of Northern Potosí, they took him to “their rural provinces to film in the hills”. Many of the videos of Zenón Mamani’s group ‘San Marcos’ feature these kinds of rural practices and, in some respects, remain quite faithful to the kinds of scenes I have witnessed when living in a community in the Macha region of Bolivia (Stobart 2006). For example, one track from his 2011 Carnival video begins with a dialogue in Quechua between two women who urgently try to cook food for the arriving dancers, but are delayed by damp firewood. The dancers and players of *pinkillu* flutes and *pututu* trumpets are then seen in various rural locations, including crossing a river:

☐ San Marcos Zenón Mamani:  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7PhvsK5Kihk>  
uploaded June 17, 2012 (accessed Oct. 12, 2015).

The rural locations featured in this music video are likely to suggest to the viewer that the action is taking place in the rural communities around San Marcos, in the valley regions of the Macha region, where Zenón Mamani was born. However, few Cochabamba-based production teams could realistically justify the time and expense of journeying to San Marcos; a trip of well over eight hours along very poor roads, which become almost entirely inaccessible during the rainy Carnival season<sup>26</sup>. I was particularly struck by this sense of ‘virtual locality’, where landscapes stand in for others, when a mestizo producer friend in Sucre asked me to help out in the production of a Carnival music video entitled *Carnaval de Poroma: Grupo Originario Poroma, Sacabamba*. This title explicitly identifies the location of these Carnival celebrations as the indigenous rural community of Sacabamba in the municipality of Poroma (Province Oropeza, Department Chuquisaca), which shares close cultural similarities with nearby San Marcos. Before I

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<sup>26</sup> However, Hilaria Portales – who partners Zenón Mamani in most of his San Marcos videos – now undertakes much of the filming for their music videos. It is thus possible that images from San Marcos will increasingly appear in their productions. During a recent visit to their home in La Paz (2015), they showed me still photographs they had taken in San Marcos using a friend’s camera.

was called in for the filming, the *pinkillu* group had been recorded in a studio in the city of Sucre. It was their first experience of being recorded and the studio's first attempt at recording this style of rural music; a project undertaken free of charge with an eye to the future of offering services to other indigenous groups wishing to record.

- 📺 2 Pinquillos – “*Carnaval de Poroma*”:  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ot01T4jU7mM>  
uploaded Jan. 17, 2012 (accessed Nov. 20, 2015).

The producer – who had decades of experience as a professional internationally touring Andean musician – confessed to me that he had no idea about the required aesthetic for these flutes, having never previously taken any notice of this music (despite its ubiquity in the rural communities of the region). Much to the unease of the players, the *pinkillu* flutes were multi-tracked individually, and the female singer – brought in from the countryside – required days of coaxing before developing the confidence to sing into the microphone. While the images on the video might suggest rural Poroma, in reality I was asked to film them in an area of rough ground, bordered by fields, on the edge of Sucre and close to the (old) airport. Most of the dancers who appear on the video lived in Sucre and were probably first or second generation migrants from the countryside – a minority originally from Poroma. Several of the women had considerable difficulty putting on the woollen *almilla* dresses and *aksu* back-cloths typical of the Poroma (and Macha) region, explaining that they had never previously worn this form of indigenous clothing. During filming the city of Sucre periodically appeared in the background of shots and I was requested to film an airplane flying low overhead, but in the final video – created by a mestizo video editor – the shots of neither the city nor the airplane appeared. These would presumably have identified the actual location of the filming, invoked modernity, and shattered the illusion that the action was taking place in the timeless rural arcadia of Poroma.

### Comparing production perspectives

The need to maintain perceived authenticity in the images of rural indigenous music videos – as well as those of *charanguada* music – was a common topic of concern among mestizo producers to whom I spoke. Both Daniel and Carmelo Gutiérrez were very clear about what should and should not appear in indigenous music videos:

“I need to search out the things which are original to the place, the most important. [...] I can’t grab and put in a person wearing jeans, see? Yes, in his [indigenous] jacket, waistcoat, but not in shirt and jeans. It is not logical, it can’t go in” (Daniel Gutiérrez, CG Records, Jan. 24, 2008).

“[When an indigenous artist says] “I want to film here”. Well, we have a look and say to them: “This is no good. It’s not suitable for the music – for this indigenous [*originario*] music”. Many want to [film] in the town square, in the wide main street [*prado*]. No way! Why? This [music] does not belong to this place. So we have to show our landscapes [countryside], our valleys, our flowers [...] this is what we have to show” (Carmelo Gutiérrez, CG Records, Jan. 24, 2008).

As both father and son stress, images that might suggest modernity – such as jeans or urban locations – were off limits and to be carefully avoided. According to Carmelo, such music should be placed in the countryside, and feature images of flowers and the valleys – a reference to the lush vegetation and trees of lower altitude locations. In the light of these concerns to maintain authenticity and avoid urban images, it is interesting to see what happens when the filming and editing process is undertaken independently by a person such as Gregorio Mamani, who strongly self-identified as indigenous. As an indigenous producer, Gregorio Mamani’s perspective might be seen as that of an ‘insider’ to these forms of rural music<sup>27</sup>. It was also clear that he had a good sense about what the indigenous audience for his music videos would find appealing,

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<sup>27</sup> However, it is also important to stress that as a personality Gregorio Mamani was highly idiosyncratic and his relationship with his community of origin was extremely complex.

novel and engaging. The first music video Gregorio Mamani created entirely independently was released in early 2008 and featured Carnival music (Stobart 2011). It was also the first in which I assisted and, out of the three I helped him produce, by far the lowest in technical quality. Like the other Carnival videos discussed above, this track features *pinkillu* flutes and is simply named “Pinkilleada”:

- 📺 Gregorio Mamani, *Zura zura – Carnaval 2008* - track 1  
“Pinkilleada”:  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PLudi85vWcM>  
uploaded July 27, 2010 (accessed Nov. 15, 2015)

However, unlike the two previously discussed Carnival videos, which reflect the work and perspectives of mestizo video editors, Gregorio Mamani makes no attempt to erase urban imagery. Rather, the video moves between urban and rural settings, as if enjoying these juxtapositions. Following footage of folklore-style parades in urban Sucre and Tarabuco, he incorporates shots from various rural locations, including Carnival in Tomaykuri. Over these sequences, he sometimes uses chroma-key (green screen) technique to superimpose images of his wife singing and dancing in an *almilla* dress. The video also features various novelties; the ‘golden llama’ (a giant model of a llama on wheels, with a moving head, made by Gregorio’s son David), a giant *machu* size *pinkillu* flute, and Gregorio wearing a gorilla suit in imitation of a *sirinu* – a type of Carnival spirit associated with music (Stobart 2011). These various images would surely horrify the mestizo video producers with whom I talked, and be perceived as highly incongruous to this kind of indigenous music. Nonetheless, the rural indigenous people with whom I watched these videos seemed more entertained than disturbed by such juxtapositions.

### **An indigenous Andean arcadia?**

It is perhaps too easy to ascribe arcadian imaginaries purely to middle class urbanites and global perceptions of Andean music. Surely everybody constructs imaginary worlds of particular forms,



shaped by their life experiences. What I have been attempting to do in the paper is to explore some of the social, historical, and cultural processes through which these imaginaries are created. I also wish to complicate the idea of arcadia as a purely urban construct and to revisit Carmelo Gutiérrez's insistence that landscapes of lush vegetation and flowers should appear in indigenous music videos. While living over extended periods in the rural community of Kalankira, I found that music was intimately connected with ideas about human life and death, seasonal transformation, and agricultural production (Stobart 2006). In particular, the performance of *wayñu* music on *pinkillu* flutes – featured in the above-mentioned videos – was restricted to the months between the Feasts of All Saints (1 November) and Carnival (February/March) and associated with attracting rain and crop growth. In addition this music was intimately associated with the souls of the dead, who were said to constantly sing, play and dance *wayñu* music in *alma llajta* ('land of the souls'), which was situated far to the West, just beyond vision of the human eye (although potentially viewable through a telescope). This imaginary musical landscape of *alma llajta* was described to me as perpetually green, and decked in flowers and weeping willow trees (2006: 206); a kind of perpetual Carnival, which in this part of the Andes is the climax of the agricultural year when flowers are abundant. Might we conceive of this imaginary world as a kind of indigenous arcadia? An idyllic, flower-decked, and timeless musical landscape, which brings to mind "England in perpetual Maytime", as invoked in Sir Philip Sidney's 1580s poem *Arcadia* (Schama 1995: 531)<sup>28</sup>.

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<sup>28</sup> From a more historical perspective, we might also wonder whether these indigenous imaginaries were influenced by classical and Renaissance ideas of arcadia, which were widespread in the popular culture of early modern Spain (Irigoyen-García 2014). Hints of arcadia are suggested in *alma llajta*'s pairing of death with nature (Panofsky 1955: 295-320, Love 1992) and in the way that people impersonate 'devils' by wearing black goatskins over their legs during the final ceremonies of Carnival (e.g., Harris 2000: 39). Caution is necessary in identifying this half-goat, half-human figure with the god Pan and arcadia, given the demonization of Pan's satyr-like goat aspect and horns, and their adoption in Christian devil iconography (Cardete del Olmo 2015). However, neither should we forget the impact of the city of Potosí on indigenous people of this region; a place of trauma and wonder that they were regularly forced to visit to undertake labour for the *mita* (1575-1812). This dynamic intercultural melting pot was

Music videos that feature lush vegetation and flowers, and that avoid images of modernity – that would have been unfamiliar to the ancestors – emerge as surprisingly true to this kind of indigenous Andean arcadia as perpetual Carnival. On similar lines, people in Kalankira were insistent that distinctive Macha style ‘woven clothing’ (*away p’acha*) should be worn for Carnival; a jacket, waistcoat and woollen trousers for the men, and embroidered *almilla* dresses, *rebozo* shaws and colourful woven *aksu* backcloths for the women. People compared the gradual clothing of the landscape in vegetation over the rainy growing season with people’s weaving of new Carnival dress over the same period, the two bursting vividly into flower at Carnival (Fig. 3). From this perspective, Daniel Gutiérrez’s insistence that people wear their jackets and waistcoats – and never jeans – for Carnival videos, appears culturally apt and well attuned to the indigenous imagined arcadia of *alma llajta*.

However, people in Kalankira were also insistent that for the feast of the Holy Cross, at harvest time in May, ‘purchased clothing’ (*ranti p’acha*) should be worn<sup>29</sup>. For men, this typically consisted of industrially-produced jeans, jumpers, and two scarves (crossed over the chest), alongside colourful protective leggings (*sika botas*) made locally, but often purchased. Instead of wearing day-to-day

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(<sup>28</sup>) the site of the world’s richest silver mines and frequently hosted lavish celebrations that included representations of the classical gods (Stobart 2006: 10). Arcadia certainly formed part of this mix, as evidenced by the eclogue *El Dios Pan* (“The God Pan”) from the second part of *Parnaso Antártico* by Diego Mexía de Fernangil (c. 1565-1634), a Spaniard who spent his final twenty years of life in the city. His text takes the form of a humanistic dialogue that proposes persuasion – rather than force – for evangelizing indigenous people. It draws parallels between Pan, as the god of shepherds and Christ as the “Good shepherd”, connects the name Pan with pan (‘bread’ in Spanish) as the consecrated bread of Christ, and identifies Pan’s status as god of Arcadia with that of the Christian god, who was also seen as god of Arcadia for having made two *arcas* or ‘arks’: Noah’s ark and Moses’ ark of the covenant (Dean 1999: 17, Rodríguez-Garrido 2005). Tracing the goat skin leggings of Carnival dancers back to Pan and arcadian imaginaries of the Renaissance is perhaps speculative but not so far-fetched given the ongoing legacy of other humanistic influences in indigenous culture (Gisbert 1980).

<sup>29</sup> This may relate to the way that during this season people begin to travel outside their communities to undertake seasonal labour or engage in trade. This contrasts with the rainy season when travel is difficult and people need to stay within their communities to tend the growing crops.



Fig. 3: Carnival dancers in Kalankira; home 'woven clothing' and vegetation were said grow through the rains and burst into flower at Carnival, 1992. (Photograph by Henry Stobart).

black woollen *almilla* dresses, women usually wear pleated *pollera* skirts and blouses, all acquired through commerce. This harvest feast is best known for the *tinku* ritual fighting that takes place between groups from surrounding rural communities in the town of Macha, attracting many curious tourists and film crews each year (Stobart 2006: 134). During the feast men play *julajula* panpipes and there is much singing and dancing to a distinctive and highly rhythmic genre of *charango* song called *cruz*, which is associated both with courtship and with men keying up to fight (Stobart 2006: 86, 111-116). Gregorio Mamani pioneered commercial recordings of *cruz* songs in the 1990s and with the arrival of the VCD included images from the Macha *tinku*, an example followed by subsequent artists. For example, the track *Pisqha Waqacian* from Zenón Mamani's VCD *Fiesta Macheño*, which was produced by Banana Records:

- 📺 Zenón Mamani – “*Pisqba Waqacian*”:  
[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gYLi3\\_gsE9U](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gYLi3_gsE9U)  
uploaded Nov. 3, 2008 (accessed Nov. 11, 2015).

The video images used in this track are divided between those of Zenón Mamani’s group of dancers, evidently brought together especially for the video, and shots taken from the actual feast of the Holy Cross in Macha. The male dancers brought in for the video are wearing Carnival-style woollen jackets, waistcoats and trousers, together with *montera* fighting helmets and scarves crossed over their chests; the women appear in the woollen *almilla* dresses and *aksu* backcloths of Carnival. Much of the video footage was also shot in the countryside, perhaps evoking the way that groups often walk for many hours through the hills from their communities to Macha, carrying their community cross as a kind of pilgrimage. However, in the shots of *tinku* fighting from the actual feast in Macha (e.g., at 57 s) the men can be seen wearing jeans and jumpers. (They are without *montera* helmets, which were temporarily banned by the authorities in the hope of curbing the dangerous stone throwing aspect of *tinku*). At 2 m 20 s, a group of women can also be seen dancing in a circle, performing the coordinated jumps typical of the *cruz* genre; all are wearing *pollera* skirts. It is unclear how much the wearing of distinctive Macha dress by the dancers for the video was the decision of the producer and how much that of Zenón Mamani himself. The point I wish to highlight in this case is the gap between the ethnic imaginary constructed for the video and the indigenous reality of the feast and its associated discourses. It is also quite possible that Zenón Mamani – like many other such artists – has simply assimilated romanticist imagery of indigenous people (Leuthold 1998: 124) or strategically essentialised himself as an *indio permitido* (Spivak 1988, Hale 2004).

Despite some of the above complexities, including the need to construct ‘virtual localities’ to stand in for actual places, I have tried to show that landscape imagery is often entirely appropriate for rural indigenous music videos. It simply extends performance contexts, sometimes making them “more handsome than they would

otherwise be” (Vernallis 2004: 83). After all, this is where rural music happens: outside in the landscape. But we might go further and emphasize the interactions or ‘interanimation’ (Basso 1996) between people and the places they inhabit (Stobart 2007), stressing the notion of ‘topography’, and the sensorial intimacy this implies, over a more distanced notion of ‘landscape’. But to what extent is it possible with the audio-visual medium of video, which necessarily forces us to act as spectators, to experience these kinds of multisensorial relations or ‘the gathering power of place itself’ (Casey 1996: 44)? Are such sensations ultimately only possible if the viewer/auditor builds on prior emplaced and participatory embodied experience and knowledge of these cultural expressions? These questions, however, are really beyond the scope of this paper (see Pink 2007).

### ***Charanguada* and rural nostalgia**

The second category of music video to which I now turn is *charanguada* songs. These are accompanied by the *charango*, in a distinctive strummed-melodic style typical of Northern Potosí, often alongside Spanish guitar(s) and occasionally a double bass. As noted above, this music is closely associated with the small towns of the Northern Potosí region, even though most recording artists live in cities, such as Cochabamba, Potosí and Sucre. In the provinces, these songs – also termed *huayño* – are typically performed in *chicha* (corn beer) bars or during *fiestas* among *vecinos* (literally ‘neighbours’), a term applied to the inhabitants of these small towns to distinguish them from the people of the rural communities. In their videos, recording artists frequently invoke the provincial towns or villages from which they, or their parents, migrated to the city. For example, in the song *De mi pueblo he salido* (“I left my village behind”) the singer nostalgically about leaving her parents behind, remembering her siblings, and of the wish she is unable to fulfil of returning to the village of her birth.

📺 *Florencio Flores – De mi pueblo y [sic] salido:*  
[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=L8aZDfpaK\\_4](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=L8aZDfpaK_4)  
uploaded March 18, 2011 (accessed Nov. 13, 2015).

The entire song is set in the pastoral setting of a maize field with hills in the background. Dancing in colourful *pollera* skirts, the singer and the other female dancers communicate their identity as *cholitas*. This suggests aspects of indigenous and provincial background, but also of being more worldly than women who wear *almillas* in rural communities (as seen above for the case of the Feast of the Holy Cross). This touching song would have particular resonances for the numerous young women who migrate to the city to work in domestic employment (Van Vleet 2005, Peñaranda, Flores, and Arandia 2006). In the video the maize field appears to function as timeless and placeless rural background, a ‘virtual locality’ that stands in for the memories and experiences of many migrant audiences. We might wonder whether, for such migrants, a more specific location would reduce the song’s emotional potency by diminishing the potential to construct personal homecoming imaginaries, or individual virtualities of the imagination (Boym 2000: 50).

On his VCD *Mis Raíces* (‘My Roots’), Jorge Oporto suggests more specific locations when he musically revisits the rural region of his youth, especially the hilly valley areas around San Pedro de Buenavista and Torotoro. Although in the track *Torotoreñita* (‘girl from Torotoro’) it is hard to identify the specific location, the vistas are reminiscent of the hillsides around San Pedro de Buenavista; the idea of attractive landscape (‘beautiful vista’) even incorporated in the name of this small rural town. Once again the song is highly nostalgic, evoking the romances of youth in a kind of rural idyll, as couples dance in a field surrounded by beautiful hilly landscapes. However, in this timeless Andean arcadia, romance reigns supreme and (unlike the wilder version of Pan’s arcadia and the reality of much *charanguada* performance) lust is entirely absent:

📺 Jorge Oporto – “Torotoreñita”:  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JaufvN2p1AY>  
uploaded March 1, 2014 (accessed Nov. 12, 2015).

### Feasting the eye? – Landscapes and colours

While *charangueada* songs of the provinces are sometimes performed outside, at community and family festivities, they are unlikely to involve dancing in a field<sup>30</sup>. *Charangueada* performance in larger towns and cities, if not in family gatherings, is usually highly amplified and takes place in *coliseos* (dance halls or sports stadia) or in town squares, sometimes to mass audiences (Fig. 4). While filming in such spaces can help communicate the popularity of the artist and audience responses<sup>31</sup>, Carmelo Gutiérrez (CG Records) was critical of record production companies that film a whole video in the same venue. In the following quotation, he expresses disapproval for certain videos produced by the Cochabamba-based record label *Lauro*, one of Bolivia's three large-scale labels until its collapse in 2003 (Stobart 2010: 31-32):

“The experience of commercialisation has also taught us a great deal, for example, when a customer comes and says to us “there’s no countryside”. There are many videos – and not to make *Lauro* look bad – where *Lauro* have taken a group, put them in a hall, and filmed the entire video, all the songs, with the same background.

“But our work is not like this. Today we film in Santibáñez [25 km from Cochabamba], tomorrow we go to Tiquipaya [10 km], and on the following day we show another type of landscape. It takes three days, more or less, to undertake these kinds of work. For a *charangueada* [VCD] three days, another day in the tropical valleys or different places; in other words we change the sectors. Thus, it is the combination of landscapes, colours, background – all these things. So to be able to present a better vision to people, we combine these things in Daniel’s video editing – mixing all these things” (Carmelo Gutiérrez, CG Records, Jan. 24, 2008).

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<sup>30</sup> One exception is the Carnival ritual of collecting greenery from the fields which is performed in certain small towns of the region as well as in rural communities. However, this would usually be accompanied by a specific Carnival music-dance genre, such as *salaki*, rather than *buayño*.

<sup>31</sup> Gregorio Mamani sometimes asked me to film him when he was entering or performing to large audiences in festival stadia and later incorporated short clips of such moments into his *charangueada* music videos.

Here, Carmelo Gutiérrez appears to be making an argument for visual variety and richness; the need for varied landscapes that involves jumping from one location to the next. This seems to accord with Vernallis' suggestion that music video "draws us into a playful space where attractive objects are distributed across the visual field" (2004: 45). Combining diverse fragments of landscape in music video editing is also evocative of much older processes of constructing arcadian imaginaries. In their discussion of the picturesque, Miranda and Castro relate the image of arcadia to "the selection of fragments from nature which, combined, would produce a perfection impossible in the real world" (2003: 104)<sup>32</sup>. Even if from Tim Ingold's 'dwelling' perspective "the landscape is not an external background or platform for life" (2000: 54), in the sphere of Andean music video production a "background" to music and dance is precisely how such landscapes were presented and produced. We might also wonder how much people's perception of landscape as "a topologically ordered network of places" (Ingold 2000: 54) holds true in the case of music video, where it is the music (not people's "taskscape") that connects and brings a sense of continuity to the diverse landscape fragments. Indeed, it is striking how *syncretis* – Michel Chion's (2000: 205) term for our universal capacity to perceive a union between simultaneous sonic and visual events – naturalises relations between images and music, a point made especially clear when the sound of a music video is muted.

It was not just the producers who stressed the importance of including natural landscapes as backgrounds in music videos; many *charanguada* artists also clearly shared this aesthetic. For example, Fausto Ramírez (who regularly accompanied Gregorio Mamani on the guitar) related the prominence of landscape in music videos to the "joy of green mountainsides", observing how consumers of this music always like to be entertained, by a backdrop of "beautiful flowers, plants, or agricultural products, like some great fiesta". This bucolic image again invokes arcadian imaginaries, where – as in all Andean fiestas – labour is absent. On similar lines, the famous *charanguada* artist Alberto Arteada – who has been making recordings since the 1970s – waxed lyrical about the beautiful land

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<sup>32</sup> This almost precisely quotes Silvestri and Aliata (2001: 88).





Fig. 4. Audience in Coliseo Minero in Potosí during a *charangueada* festival, 2007. (Photograph by Henry Stobart).

scapes of the valley regions of Northern Potosí, especially the bluffs around Colloma. While talking of his desire to film in these landscapes, he also directly linked them to his migrant identity: “Those parts are beautiful and I want to take advantage of this [in my videos]. I’m from this Northern Potosí area and I’m only residing here [in the city of Sucre] temporarily because my children are studying here”. This stresses *charangueada*’s identity as ‘music in movement’, caught between provincial and urban spaces and steeped in nostalgia. Here we find resonances with José María Arguedas’ famous 1958 novel *Ríos Profundos* (“Deep Rivers”), in which the Andean landscape serves as a kind of “umbilical cord” for Ernesto, the central character (Vargas Llosa 1989: 238). It is at the core of his identity and connects him back, often via music and memories, to the “lost paradise” of his youth among indigenous peasants (Kopf 2011: 105).

Another aspect of the visual abundance or excess of these music videos is the expectation that artists and dancers will frequently change clothing. In a single song I have sometimes seen a singer wear as many as five different coloured *pollera* skirts. Alberto Arteada was not enthusiastic about this aspect of the production process, and stressed to me of the effort of having to keep changing clothes. What he then goes on to say about the relative amounts he was paid respectively for the musical and filming aspects of a VCD production raises interesting questions:

“It’s not easy making a DVD [VCD]<sup>33</sup>; you are playing in one shirt, you have to change and do another take with the other shirt. I’m not sure whether you have spotted this in my DVDs with a different shirt, different trousers? [...] So it’s pretty taxing.

“I sold all my rights as author [with the songs we recorded]. Thus he paid me separately for the recording and the filming. [...] For the recording I was paid 1000 bs (c. £100) and for the filming 1500 bs (c. £150), plus travel expenses” (Arturo Arteaga, Sucre, Feb. 20, 2008).

That Arteaga should be paid 50 % more for filming than for the audio recording seems very surprising and troubling from a musician’s perspective, especially given that music videos were originally developed in order to sell the song (Berland 1993: 25). It is worth reiterating that this amount included not only the recording process, but also the rights to the song, most of which would have been Arteaga’s own compositions. What might this tell us about the relative value ascribed to the visual and audio dimensions of music videos? However, this picture may be skewed in the Bolivian context where extreme levels of music piracy often mean that negligible profits can be made from VCD recordings. Also, only very well established artists are now paid any fee at all for recording; most pay studios to produce their music videos and use them for promotional purposes to gain paid live performances (Stobart 2010).

Gregorio Mamani was a particularly outspoken critic of music piracy, as is evident from his many campaigns and the anti-piracy

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<sup>33</sup> People often inaccurately refer to VCD recordings as DVDs. DVDs are commonplace in Bolivia, especially for pirated international films, but not usually for the production of the kinds of music described here.

screen text on his productions (Stobart 2014). As a *charangueada* artist (the sphere in which he originally made his name) he was, in certain respects, unusual as he came from a rural community, rather than a provincial town. Indeed, Alberto Arteaga – whilst at the same time being the president of the region’s indigenous charango player organization – even jokingly referred to Gregorio Mamani as ‘indio’, implying backwardness (Van Vleet 2005: 110-111). The first track, *Amiga Mia*<sup>34</sup> from Gregorio’s 2008 VCD *Exitos de Ayer y Hoy* (‘Hits of Yesterday and Today’) suggests much less rural nostalgia than the previous *charangueada* examples, but no shortage of sentimentality and kitsch.

☐ Gregorio Mamani – “*Amiga mia*”:  
[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=\\_jwxjgkqyrA](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_jwxjgkqyrA)  
uploaded Sept. 18, 2012 (accessed Nov. 11, 2015)

The video depicts an incongruous love affair between Gregorio (in his 40s) and a pretty *cholita* (in her early 20s), and shows the musicians and dancers in various locations, including a park in Sucre and a flower-covered hillside in the countryside<sup>35</sup>. Moments of humour appear (48s) when a dancing woman in tight jeans, pink tee shirt, sunglasses, and with long hair appears superimposed over the scene on the flowery hillside, against screen text of *amiga mia* (‘my girlfriend’) and *amor* (‘love’). The in-joke was that this was Gregorio’s wife, who day to day always wore a *pollera* skirt and never jeans, and her hair in plaits. This, together with the kitsch stock transitions and flowers from the video editing software, unsettles any sense of a timeless arcadia or idealised romantic relations; we are just confused, but also amused.


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<sup>34</sup> This is a reworking of the song *Hualaycho Bandido* by Eduardo Chávez (Peru): <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RUHVüifF2sk>, uploaded Oct. 29, 2009 (accessed Dec. 22, 2015).

<sup>35</sup> This follows an awkward opening where the guitarist on the video was required to mime the solo guitar, having not played on the recording.

### Urban cholitas and heart throbs – “as if it was in the past”

The *cumbia-buayño* fusion group *Las Conquistadoras* (‘The [female] Conquerors’) of Potosí have long been a sensation, giving rise to a host of copycat groups. The cover of their 2007 VCD even states: “we’re always imitated but never equalled”<sup>36</sup>. Usually such groups consist of four *cholitas* in colourful *polleras* who sing together in unison and dance in formation (alongside a few men playing instruments). However, unlike similar Peruvian groups, such as *Las Seductoras Muchachitas de Amor* (‘The Seductive Girls of Love’), who periodically swap their *polleras* for bikinis, these Bolivian groups tend to opt for modesty and firmly keep their clothes on. *Las Conquistadoras* are accompanied by the “Charango Kings” – a slightly aging boy band – who respectively play charango, electric guitar, bass guitar/keyboards, and drum machine, creating what I was told was a “modern sound”, which “much appeals to the young”. The fact that these largely electronic instruments so often appear on videos in rural locations, with no power cables in sight, raises questions about why *Las Conquistadoras* are so often presented dancing in the fields. This is clearly not an extension of their usual performance context (Vernallis 2004: 83). Rather, like mass audience *charangueada*, they are usually encountered in large *coliseos* (dance halls or sports stadia). This juxtaposition in imagery between fields and modern urban settings is particularly well expressed in the song *Amor por internet* (‘Love via the internet’) from their 2010 music video. Here, the action playfully alternates between an internet café and the fields surrounding the verdant city of Cochabamba<sup>37</sup>:

 Las conquistadores – *Amor por internet*:  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8nzhy77VLAI>  
uploaded Jan. 7, 2011 (accessed Nov. 10, 2015).

<sup>36</sup> The names of a few of their imitators include: *Las Lindas Encantadoras de Potosí* (‘The Beautiful Enchantresses of Potosí’), *Las Golondrinas de Bolivia* (‘The Swallows of Bolivia’), *Las Inseparables y los Príncipes de Charango* (‘The Inseparables and the Charango Princes’), *Las Rosas del Amor y los Emperadores del Charango* (‘The Roses of Love and the Charango Emperors’).

<sup>37</sup> For more discussion of this song, see Bigenho and Stobart (forthcoming).

On the one hand, the song and its images communicate the empowering and forward looking narrative of women from humble indigenous rural backgrounds accessing digital communications technologies. A few years earlier, women of this class would have felt deeply uncomfortable entering such spaces, or may well have been refused access. On the other hand, we might wonder how much the *cholitas*' connection with rural roots is played out through images of dancing in a field and their *pollera* skirts. The importance of these aspects to this group's market niche was highlighted by Daniel Gutiérrez:

"If you were to put the Conquistadoras in [urban-style] dresses they would immediately be rejected by the market. It's as if it was in the past with their *pollera* skirts, because they are from the countryside [...] they are *cholitas*; they don't wear [urban-style] dresses. This is the thing. People are accepting because of who they are, because of what they sing; they are pretty *cholitas* who dance nicely" (Daniel Gutiérrez, CG Records, Jan. 24, 2008).

The way Daniel connects these women's form of dress with rural identity and a sense of pastness is striking; imaginaries that would also seem to link to arcadian landscapes. Although involved in the producing these kinds of music videos, his class position probably meant that he would not usually have consumed such music himself, nor dated these kinds of *cholitas*. Social distance seems to be played out here in much same way as distance is implicit in vision-based notions of landscape.

### **Cumbia unplugged**

As a final example, we turn to a VCD of *cumbia* (or *tropical*) music by the Potosí-based group Amadeus. Landscapes are certainly not an extension of this music's usual performance context, nor is there anything indigenous about this group or its music, which features standard electronic instruments (guitars, keyboards, drum machine). However, it is enjoyed by plenty of rural indigenous and migrant populations. Amadeus is often hired to provide dance music for festivals and weddings in the provinces and people who had been playing local indigenous musics all day often then happily dance cumbia into the early hours (Bigenho 2002: 37). CG Records

have made many recordings for Amadeus and periodically also depict them dancing in fields, their electronic equipment unplugged as they mime to the music. Carmelo Gutiérrez explains:

“In just the same way, for Cumbia, we select landscapes. Now these are a bit more unusual, for example, with the group Amadeus from Potosí we went to the salt flats of Uyuni. We showed all the salt flats so that people could see what we have in Bolivia. There are many who don’t know them, who don’t know what Bolivia has, and we set out to demonstrate this. [...] [It is] so beautiful, with a white background, a white shirt, it looks really good. With some groups we also use swimming pools quite often. In addition, countryside is really important for us, because we have seen international groups who, for example, do everything with a stage and audience. A stage with girls, models, so we don’t like this very much”. (Carmelo Gutiérrez, GC Records, Jan. 24, 2008).

As evident from the video of Amadeus’ song *Vete y no vuelvas* (‘Go and don’t come back’), they do not entirely dispense with girls; indeed, compared to the previous videos discussed, the imagery is much more sexualised, as typical for cumbia. *Pollera* skirts are also absent:

📺 Grupo Amadeus de Potosí – “*Vete y no vuelvas*”:  
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4bO-J7gB3B4>  
uploaded Sept. 18, 2003 (accessed Nov. 15, 2015).

Rather than suggesting an arcadia, the presence of landscape is almost educational; an introduction to the geysers that are located in an inaccessible part of Potosí department, which – for economic reasons – is visited far more by international tourists than by Bolivians. Images of Amadeus miming beside the geysers are alternated with shots at the salt hotel on the Uyuni salt flats, and on the steps of the fairy-tale castle of the Glorieta, on the outskirts of Sucre. There is also a sense that the production team are simply enjoying the texture and quality of these different locations and the visual interest they provide, adding their own creativity to complement and bring additional interest to the music.

## Conclusion

“Audiences don’t much like it if you’ve filmed with a single background. They find this very monotonous. [...] Our objective is always to show two things, one the artist, the other the landscape. Ultimately this is the objective”. (Carmelo Gutiérrez, CG Records, Jan. 24, 2008).

The arrival of digital technology in the form of the VCD (Video Compact Disc) in the early years of the new millennium had far-reaching consequences for popular music production and consumption among low income and largely indigenous people in the Bolivian central highlands. In this paper, I have questioned how we should understand the ubiquity of landscape imagery in the music video production boom which swiftly followed the appearance of this technology. Should we partly understand it as a kind of ‘Andean arcadia’ of the urban imagination; a pastoral-musical idyll, unpolluted by modernity, and inhabited by people in harmony with nature? Or should we stress more intimate, sensorial and topographic aspects of the relationship between the musicians depicted and the land with which they interact? I hope to have shown that these questions provoke complex responses and open up further questions regarding, for example, the genres in question; the knowledge, economic potential, and subject positions of the actors; alongside the potentialities and constraints of music video as a genre.

It is hardly surprising that videos featuring rural indigenous music and dance are set in rural landscapes, thereby reflecting or extending the usual performance context. This does, however, raise questions about how the intimate relationships that people often maintain with localised features of the landscape might be expressed and communicated through the medium of music video. In reality, it is often unfeasible to travel to an artist’s home territory, so filming is commonly undertaken in rural spaces close to cities. So, how should we understand these ‘virtual localities’ in music videos that – for good pragmatic reasons – often stand in for actual places? Are these only a problem if they clash with our experience of the place purportedly represented (e.g. Poroma). Do fields, hill-sides and other forms of vegetation often look so similar from one

place to the next that they remain essentially unrecognizable, as if non-places? I have questioned, in the context of Florencio Flores' nostalgic *charanguada* song, whether these kinds of placeless rural backgrounds might prove more effective for the creation of diverse personal homecoming imaginaries than would more specific and recognizable locations. Nonetheless, in Amadeus' *cumbia* video, the places were highly specific and even labelled.

As we have seen, in the creation of a music video for the market, various levels of mediation are involved that are controlled by diverse actors, some close to and some distant from the specific culture in question. For example, the indigenous artist/producer Gregorio Mamani – a cultural insider – relished juxtaposing urban and rural imagery in his indigenous music videos. We also saw how in a *charanguada* song he wittily superimposed a woman in jeans and sunglasses, an image that would have horrified many urban mestizo producers. As relative cultural outsiders, who would not usually consume these kinds of music themselves, such producers often expressed concern about maintaining authenticity. While this sometimes appeared to romanticise or exoticise rural culture, as a kind of Andean arcadia, I have also shown how – for the case rural Carnival music of Northern Potosí – this imagery coincided with a kind of indigenous arcadia; the perpetual Carnival of *alma llajta* ('land of the souls').

From a cynical perspective, it might be argued that what we see in the ubiquity of landscape in many of these music videos is simply colonial continuity; the romanticization of nature-bound Indians. In such video vistas, are we simply witnessing the legacy and ongoing circulation of historical, cosmopolitan and global imaginaries of an Andean arcadia, built on early twentieth century *indigenista* ideas – rooted in European aesthetic philosophy – about music emerging from the telluric (or spiritual) power of the Andean landscape? From such a perspective, these influential and nostalgic constructions – which are also often assimilated by indigenous people themselves – evoke an imaginary indigenous pastoral landscape peopled by uncorrupted and authentic Indians – *indios permitidos* – who are kept at a safe distance and pose no threat to the *status quo*. On the one hand these videos – especially those



featuring indigenous rural genres – may be seen to have an important decolonising role through giving visibility and value to indigenous culture. However, on the other, presenting such musical expressions in romanticised arcadian pasts might be seen to contribute to the maintenance of colonial hierarchies.

For a less cynical approach, and here I draw on the examples of *Las Conquistadoras* and *Amadeus (cumbia) in particular*, we might simply see in these music videos a celebration of the richness and beauty of Bolivia's diverse natural environments. Might we even talk of an Andean music video aesthetic? – there are certainly many parallels with Peruvian music videos aimed at a similar market niche. For Carmelo and Daniel Gutiérrez, placing these various music genres in natural landscapes – rather than a single hall – was an aesthetic choice, which they perceived as a challenge to the conventions of mainstream music video. Despite these producers' essentialist attitudes to authenticity, the care, creativity and sense of commitment they dedicated to selecting and juxtaposing landscapes was striking. They exuded unmistakable pride in their work, in which depicting musicians dancing in the fields or in other forms of landscape was a way to keep their videos visually rich and varied.

Finally, let us turn to their insistence that the market would reject their videos if they failed to include landscape imagery. This same desire among consumers for a backdrop of hillsides, beautiful flowers, plants, and agricultural products – “like some great fiesta”, was also highlighted by Fausto Ramírez. While the inclusion of landscapes clearly appealed to the (class based) aesthetic sensibilities of mestizo producers (perhaps via the arcadian route discussed above), there is also a sense that these videos' visual excess resonated with an aesthetic of abundance shared by their largely indigenous audience. According to Nico Tassi (2010), this aesthetic or “postulate” of abundance, which he has analysed in the context of urban Aymara festive practices and markets, serves to motivate exchange and productivity. Within this Andean indigenous worldview, expressions of excess or abundance – especially in festive practices such as music, dance, eating and drinking – are understood to stimulate reciprocity and forms of circulation between

human, material and spiritual domains. So, in the ubiquitous landscapes of these Andean music videos, do we find a tripartite coming together between the arcadian sensibilities of mestizo producers, the aesthetic of abundance demanded by indigenous Andean consumers, and the visual excess expressed as multiple locations that, according to Vernallis (2004), characterizes music video as a genre?

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