

PERFORMING
AT
QOYLLUR-RITI



With my
dance group



Procession
with the
sacred
glaciers
in the
back.

Dear Jack and Ralph,

Saludos! I apologize for waiting so long to get back to you about the *Qoyllur Rit'i* festival and how it all went. Last semester was a tough one for me with disruptive re-modeling happening in my apartment, ending up in a fire on December 23rd. I lost most of my belongings, (the worst was my dear cat), however, in crises like this one, one tends to get back in touch with what is really important: life, friends, family, health, etc. Because of the re-modeling I had all of my thesis materials and computer at a friend's, so that is still intact.

I will always have the memory of being *mayordoma* at *Qoyllur Rit'i*. Everything went amazingly well, and I learned so much more about the beloved Peruvian people by having participated in the festival rituals from the *inside*. There were a lot of duties involved with being *mayordoma*, so I was busy for three weeks non-stop. Two weeks prior to the festival I was checking on costumes, picking up all *h'urkas* I had promised to me (drinks, pigs, sheep, etc), meetings with my dancers, rehearsals with the musicians, etc. Once the festival started things just seemed to flow. The highlight, for me, was experiencing the rituals as both *mayordoma*, (carrying the *demanda*, or ritual icon) and *quenista* (flutist accompanying the dancers). After many days of performing these repetitive rituals, and getting little to no sleep at high altitude, I experienced, what I call a "transformation." I went from feeling like the conscientious gringa-outsider, trying to perform my duties "just right," to feeling like I was one with my dancers. I felt a strong sense of communion and love for my group. This, for me, was the most valuable part of the whole experience.

Now I'm back at the University of Idaho, writing up my thesis on *Qoyllur Rit'i*. After doing some anthropological readings on ritual, I've come to find that personal transformation through repetitive, communal ritual is not uncommon. This is to be the heart of my thesis, as well as history, significance and change at the festival, the role the music plays within the Andean mythology, song transcriptions, etc. I am very excited that my committee is encouraging me to write about the "spiritual" aspect of the festival.

I'm also working on a video documentary about the festival, which we hope to complete by the end of the year. I knew how unusual my situation was at *Qoyllur Rit'i*, so with some friends who are also film-makers having done extensive work in the Andes, we decided to make a video. It's a lot of work, but very interesting learning about the whole film process: shooting, editing, narration, etc.

I completed my masters in flute performance in December, and will complete this second masters in music history this fall. After that I'll take a break, before I consider a Ph.D. in ethnomusicology.

Last October I presented a paper at the National Conference for the Society for Ethnomusicology at Indiana University on my experience as foreigner fulfilling an inside role at *Qoyllur Rit'i*. It went well, and I was very encouraged by the field of ethnomusicology. I felt right at home, and I love the marriage of anthropology with musicology. It is truly a way for me to integrate my music passion with my love for mountains and indigenous cultures.

This May I'll return to Peru to guide for Wilderness Travel, and go to *Qoyllur Rit'i* again, but not as *mayordoma* this time!! I will play my *quena* with the musicians though, to experience the music and dance ritual again!

I thank you once again for your generous donation, which helped my group be fully equipped and comfortable at the 1998 *Qoyllur Rit'i* festival.

love,
Holly