



The Pachakuti Mesa Tradition

Oscar Miro-Quesada

APACHETA AKNANAKUY: SACRED STONE RELATIVE CEREMONY FOR EVOLVING HUMAN REVERENCE ON EARTH



Building an apacheta brings people together in reverent, prayerful ceremony to remember our relationships with all life through prayerful offerings of gratitude. Physically, apachetas are piles of rocks, or cairns, found throughout the Andes that mark the high points of mountain passes from whence all water flows downward, nurturing the landscape. Yet much more than this, apachetas are understood as guardians and teachers, as powerful allies and relatives. Like the apus, which their graceful stone structure mirrors, they channel energy from the heavens into our beloved Mother Earth.

In the Pachakuti Mesa Tradition, we build apachetas as “acupuncture” points that strengthen the flow of energy running throughout the earth by means of our offerings and our prayers. In addition, building an apacheta provides opportunities for us to unburden ourselves as we transfer our troubles into the stones that we leave on these earth altars. Our “seed thoughts” of healing intention are made manifest by our purity of heart, our deep compassion, and our care. We tend and feed apachetas with haywas of cornmeal, tobacco, coca leaves, fragrant waters, and more. Because we also receive as we give, apachetas are also places we may journey to as pilgrims to tap into the renewing energy of Pachamama’s energetic grid.

An apacheta may be built by a single individual or a group. There may be a single group intention that guides the process, although individuals in the group often create their own intentions as well. Common intentions for creating apachetas include building and strengthening ayllus, learning to live in a state of gratitude and grace, committing to walk more softly on the landscape, and awakening compassion in the world.

In the Pachakuti Mesa Tradition, apachetas typically have twelve foundation stones, symbolizing the twelve sacred apus that don Benito most frequently prayed with, as well as a stone in the center that serves as an anchor. These are supplemented by other stones, often brought by community members from faraway places, to link ayllus together energetically.

To create an apacheta, first center yourself and align with all who are present to create a single body and common purpose. Standing in a circle together while holding hands is a good way to proceed. Then consecrate the ground as you do when creating a Pachakuti Mesa. Offer a few drops of Florida Water to open sacred space, draw a circle with blue cornmeal, an equilateral cross with tobacco, and place a perfect, three-leaf kintu in the center.

On the consecrated ground, lay the base of the apacheta. Select five substantial stones to include a stone for each of the cardinal directions and one for the center. Imbue each stone with the energies of Pachamama, Mamakilla, Wiracocha, Inti, and K’uychi, respectively. Next, select two stones to place in the southeast, the





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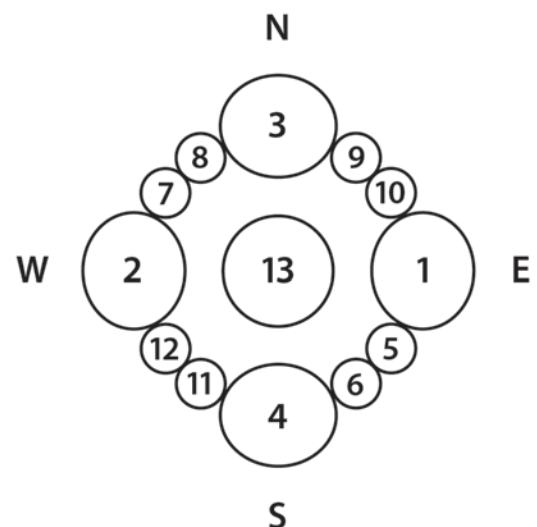
northwest, the northeast, and the southwest, respectively. These twelve apu stones, plus the anchor in the middle, complete the circle. Once the base is formed, other stones are added, intuitively placing these according to where each stone “wants” to go. If many community members are participating, encourage each to bring stones to add to the altar. The top of an apacheta (called the ushnu) is built to be flat in order to accommodate offerings made by passing journeyers or by those caring for it. The apacheta is intended to evolve over time, to reflect the additions of beauty that are offered.

When you construct an apacheta, you are committing to tend it as well. Over time, an apacheta will change its form. Wind and water, earth-tremors and passersby may all contribute to this change. These changes are not accidental but point to energy shifts that can be read. When approaching or caring for an apacheta, it is important to do so in a state of awareness and receptivity. The apacheta will communicate with you what it needs.

When you have constructed an apacheta, and when you return to tend it, you will nourish the spirits and spiritual connection it provides. Common offerings are water, Florida Water, cornmeal, tobacco, sage, flowers, incense, feathers, and more. Remember to gently blow, or phukuy, your prayers into the material objects that will carry these, just as don Benito taught me to do. Remember, haywa offerings are about honoring and remembering your relationship with each spirit in material form.

Caring for an apacheta often means reassembling and adding stone energy, as well as clearing old debris. Often, items from your mesa will call to you to be offered to an apacheta. Since these are already infused with all the love and attention of your sacred altar, the energy these add to the apacheta can be very helpful, for healing the whole. When you have completed the process of constructing or feeding the apacheta, call in the directions by toning just as you do when you open your Pachakuti Mesa. Remember also that there is no “right” or “wrong” way to give offerings. The most important thing is to always trust and follow your heart.

1. Remember to make an offering to the spirits of the land with tobacco or cornmeal. Ask for permission and their protection before entering the space.
2. Select a location that feels right and consecrate the ground the same as with your mesa. (You can also create and bury a despacho beneath the ground of your apacheta.)
3. Ask four large “grandmother/grandfather” stone relatives for their assistance. Place them in the cardinal directions placed slightly outside of the circle to denote their significance.
4. Select eight fist-sized khuyas and place two between each of the “grandmother/grandfather” cardinal direction stone relatives, forming the circle.



5. Place one large “foundation” khuya in the center of the apacheta base. Ideally, this khuya should embody the collective ayllu’s “intentional sombra” whose energetic template is anchored during a group apprenticeship gathering or any large gathering of people or ceremonial event... if this is a “public” apacheta.

6. Place stone relatives in the order shown on the diagram to form the base.



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7. Start placing other stones along the perimeter and interior, stacking upon each other in layers. Top each layer with flat stones to provide a foundation for the next layer. Fill in the holes with smaller stones. Stones from other sacred locations are good to use as well to connect the energies.
8. Find a “cone” shape or pointed stone to anchor the center. This piece is called the “Chaupin Picchu” or “Taqe Rumi” and it should be placed on the flat “ushnu” stone so as to be the receiver/transmitter of Mamapacha’s energy body (kallpan kurkuq), various cosmic forces and ceremonially awakened powers from other pilgrimage Apus and sacred bodies of water (Mamacochakuna).
9. The size of the apacheta is not important. You will know when it is complete.
10. Once it has been constructed, activate it by toning the Pachakuti Mesa directions 3 times each.
11. Stand with your left palm to the heavens, right palm toward the ushnu and allow all spiritual forces to flow into your crown, the nape of your neck, and your left palm as you direct them out of your right palm into the apacheta. Maintain an open and loving heart space.
12. Sacred sound, traditional musical instruments and song are excellent to use for raising the vibrational frequency and supporting your prayers.
13. Feed the apacheta with clear spirits (cane-based alcohol or rum), tobacco and corn meal and place flowers on it. This is done at the time of construction and when doing ritual feedings thereafter.
14. Always make an offering to the “Winged One” and/or Estrella (“star”) who is the guardian of the mountain (Apu) as well as to the Tirakuna, inhabiting the stone outcroppings along the ridge of the mountain (Incense for the Apu and animal products for Tirakuna).
15. Be open to direction from Great Spirit!
16. Apachetas are living beings and should be fed regularly – either in person or in absentee fashion while sitting at your Pachakuti Mesa ground. Often times we will assign or encourage folks to volunteer to be the caretakers and make periodic pilgrimages.
17. Apachetas are wonderful places to do seasonal ceremonies and gatherings.
18. When finished, you can “close” your ceremony (but do not close the apacheta) by chanting the directions one time each. You want the apacheta to remain open at all times.

