

# Introduction



This book explores how barter creates social and economic values by addressing a particular kind of Andean exchange: *cambio*. This trade is a core transaction in fairs that gather lowland cultivators and highland herders in the Southern Andes. Such fairs are usually embedded in the celebration of a Catholic feast day, which also entails sportive, religious and political dimensions. Similar festivals are held throughout the cordillera, where fairs arise in conjunction with religious ceremonies, many times constituting a fundamental asset of the celebration. In fact, this case is not peculiar to the Andes, as the condensation of economic transactions in the frame of a religious celebration is found in many cultural and historical contexts.

Anthropological theorisation of ritual practices has nonetheless been built on a conceptualisation of religious practices as disjoined from mundane economic interests. The opposition is based on the premise that the formalities of ritual revere the collectivity, while exchanges of necessities are chiefly individual. Anthropologists have crafted the concept of ceremonial exchange to account for those transactions at the interface of the economic and the ritual. Ceremonial exchange was the cornerstone of Bronisław Malinowski's detailed account on the Trobriand *kula*, in which he argued against the stereotype of the primitive economic man. In his typology of local forms of exchange, Malinowski opposes the pure gift to 'trade pure and simple' as extremes of a continuum of transactions that are not always clearly distinguished. Adjacent to trade, he identifies the category of 'ceremonial barter with deferred payment'. This includes the *wasi* that he defines as 'a ceremonial form of exchange of vegetable food for fish, based on a standing partnership, and on the obligation to accept and return an initial gift' ([1922] 2002: 143). He thus describes these ceremonial barterers as made of 'payments' and 'gifts', stressing that they are compulsorily accepted, without negotiation over the terms of the transactions. Malinowski adds that huge quantities of fish obtained through *wasi* are



**Figure 0.1.** Panorama of the main fair in the Argentinean Andes: the Manka Fiesta in La Quiaca, Argentina, October 2007. Photograph by the author.

intended for ceremonial purposes, thereby suggesting a nonutilitarian character of ceremonial exchange. This character is prominent in the case of the prestigious shell ornaments circulating in the kula, which he posits as the other instantiation of ceremonial barter.<sup>1</sup>

In contrast, *cambio* is an exchange with a strong utilitarian dimension. Its core goods are meat from the highland and maize from the lowland, two keystones in the exchange partners' diet. The instrumental purpose is manifest in *cambio* interactions, which typically unfold as follows:

Cultivator: handing out a sample of maize grains, calls to a herder offering meat: Shall I take one [lamb] for maize? Let's take it? For maize, that one?

Herder: Go and bring then; bring maize.

Cultivator: Of course, I will bring you a complete [measure]. Me myself I will bring [the maize] to you. How would you bring it? Give me a little one [lamb]. I will bring you [the maize], madam.

Herder: Go for the maize. Go for the maize. Go to bring it. Bring more [maize] and I give you the lamb.

Cultivator: Show me the lamb. Is it fat? More or less?

Herder: It's a lamb! Bah, these people. With them . . . no! Your [maize], is it big? You must give me a bag full and a bit more. . . . The lambs are fat; they are big.

Cultivator: Now, if you want roasted maize, I also have.

Herder: No, no, no. I want white [maize].

Cultivator: Pure white. Let's go then. I will 'invite' you extra fruits. Sure, let's go. I will give you some fruits, so that we will know each other for the next year.<sup>2</sup>

This book sets out to examine the embeddedness of such barter within a broader religious celebration. In this light, cambio practices challenge the distinction drawn between ceremonial barter and trade pure and simple, outlining a notion of ceremonial exchanges that includes overtly instrumental transactions of necessities and involves negotiation.

Since Malinowski's ethnography of the kula, ceremonial exchanges have attracted much attention and played a key role in the building of economic anthropology. Marcel Mauss's ([1925] 2002) seminal essay *The Gift* further stressed the relevance of those transactions framed by social obligation to understand the fabric of 'primitive' societies. For this purpose, Mauss systematised Malinowski's ethnography, with data from disparate cultural settings ranging from ancient Hindu or German law to the North American Kwakiutl or the New Zealand Māori. But Mauss himself never used the term 'ceremonial exchange'. He instead described these economies using terms such as contractual and economic rituals, rituals of hospitality, ritual services of honour, rituals of giving, rituals of reimbursing, rituals of compensation, rituals of payment or rituals of the purchase. Claude Lévi-Strauss ([1947] 2002: 68) aligned himself with Mauss in using 'ritual of exchange'.<sup>3</sup> The notion of ritual exchange, favoured by these French thinkers (see also Maunier [1927] 1998), is nonetheless used to refer to the transactions called ceremonial in other instances.

Most scholarship on economic anthropology has used the term 'ceremonial (or ritual) exchange' as a synonym for Maussian gift-giving, leaving aside Malinowski's interpretation of barter with deferred payment. The term has been used to describe material circulation across the continents, such as the Kabyle *taoussa* in North Africa (Maunier [1927] 1998), the Gunwinggu *dzamalag* in Australia (Berndt 1951) or the Tikopia rituals in Polynesia (Firth 1939). Still, after Malinowski, Melanesia became a hot spot for ceremonial exchange studies, accounting for complex systems of material circulation to such an extent

that the *kula*, the *moka* or the *tee* have come to epitomise this concept (e.g. Godelier 1996; Leach and Leach 1983; A. Strathern 1971; M. Strathern 1988). In their entry in *A Handbook of Economic Anthropology*, Andrew Strathern and Pamela Stewart draw exclusively on Melanesian data to define ceremonial exchanges as ‘systems in which items of value are publicly displayed and given to partners on a reciprocal basis over time. Typically, these occasions are marked by dancing and festivities’ (2006: 230). The authors later analytically differentiate this mode of exchange from trade, outlining a distinction between ‘trade (= barter, commodity exchange) and gift exchange (= ceremonial exchange)’ (2006: 235).

This typology prevails in most scholarship on economic anthropology. In her theoretical model of barter, Anne Chapman states that ‘barter is of an entirely different nature than ceremonial gift exchange because, precisely, it involves no extra-economic factors’ (1980: 35). In one of the very few sustained ethnographies of barter, R. H. Barnes and Ruth Barnes observe a direct transaction of necessities that they exclude from the category of barter in virtue of its ceremonial character. Celebrating the launch of a newly built boat, they affirm that the exchange of fish, meat and salt for agricultural produce, ‘without bargaining or set rates, is ceremonial in character and thus strictly speaking not barter’ (1989: 412).<sup>4</sup> Jonathan Parry and Maurice Bloch also take this association for granted in their penetrating introduction to *Money and the Morality of Exchange*. They argue against the opposition between gift and commodity exchange, pointing to the possibility of ‘a shift from barter to ceremonial exchange’, and vice versa (1989b: 10).

This book sets out to challenge this polarity by exploring the unfolding of ceremonial barter in an Andean ethnographic context. Thereby, I side with a still-emerging body of literature that has recently called our attention to the transcendental dimensions of essentially instrumental economic transactions (Gudeman and Hann 2015; Højer 2012; Miller 1996; Tassi 2010). My purpose is to question a well-established opposition between economic interests and religious abnegation, which is not relevant to understanding economic morality and practices in this Andean context.

## The Barter Myth and Its Reality

In the commonly accepted sense of the *Oxford English Dictionary*, barter is an ‘exchange (goods or services) for other goods or services’ – that is, a modality of exchange that unfolds in all kinds of societies.

Ethnographic studies mention barter transactions as part of economic systems on all continents. Malinowski's ([1922] 2002) description of a Trobriand trade expedition, Paul Bohannan's (1955) study of the Tiv economy, Lévi-Strauss's (1943) account of exchange meetings among the Nambikwara and Caroline Humphrey's (1985) examination of direct Lhomi transactions have become classic examples. Barter documentation also covers temporal depth. Archaeological data speak to the existence of barter networking in old civilisations across the world: from the Andes to the Amazon, in pre-Columbian Mesoamerican societies, between North American native peoples, across Australia and Melanesian archipelagos or from central Asia to Siberia. Used with different intensities, barter was combined with other modalities of exchange and distribution. Yet, in Greek antiquity, it has been appraised as a key ingredient in satisfying domestic needs under the division of labour, paving the way for Plato's ideal Republic (see Humphrey 1985: 48).

Far from being a feature of ancient economies, nonmonetary trade also flourishes in industrial societies. Direct transactions that were recurrent in postcommunist societies have attracted the attention of regional specialists (see Cellarius 2000; Hivon 1998; Humphrey 2000; Seabright 2000), who have acknowledged that barter practices existed before the fall of communism. The huge barter network that flourished in Argentina in the aftermath of the 2001 crisis offers another example of direct exchange becoming structural in a society facing economic rupture (Ould-Ahmed 2010; Pearson 2003; Saïag 2013). Although their scale is incomparable to the Argentinean case, analogous initiatives mushroomed throughout Latin America from Mexico to Chile, including Brazil or Peru, around the same time. They shared similarities with the local exchange trading systems (LETS) that develops in Europe (Latouche 2000), the United States (Gudeman 2001: 160; Hart 1986: 642) and other capitalist centres (Servet 1999). While it might be worth discussing the relevance of a barter appellation for each of these transactions, we nonetheless notice that barter not only continues in subsistence societies but is also used to overcome money's scarcity and instability within advanced capitalist economies.

Yet nonmonetary transactions are not restricted to contexts of crisis and marginalised spheres of exchange. Websites flourish to facilitate interpersonal swapping<sup>5</sup> in industrialised societies, or even to boost companies' business.<sup>6</sup> In the United States, Bartercard's homepage proudly invites its visitors to 'join a business network with 54,000 cardholders worldwide who trade over \$40m every month'.<sup>7</sup> As suggested by this headline, nonmonetary business also entails international trans-

actions. The United Nations in the late 1970s acknowledged the latter as an ‘important means of global trade’ (Horowitz 2010: 112). In the 1980s, Keith Hart referred to a Group of Thirty report which estimates that barter at that time represented 8 to 10 per cent of international transactions and half of the arms trade (1986: 642). Nonmonetary business involves national states themselves. Today, such trade is notable between developing countries that lack dollar reserves. These strategies spread during the 2008 world food shortage and ensuing inflation, resulting in massive direct exchanges of grains between countries in the South. Clearly, direct exchange unfolds in all kind of economies, involving actors from any social and cultural profile.

However, the pervasiveness of barter is overlooked by a still-prevailing imaginary of barter as a feature of ‘primitive economies’. This representation, within and beyond academia, is anchored in an established ‘myth of barter’ as the savage origin of money – the famous story of the universal invention of money by exchange partners striving to overcome the impediments of barter transactions. The myth narrates an earlier age when people started to specialise in a given productive activity in which they proved particularly efficient. Wanting to exchange their products with their neighbours, they faced the so-called problem of the double coincidence of want. Not only did they need to find someone who wanted their goods. That person also needed to offer something they were interested in. From this age of barter emerged the use of monetary devices intended as a medium of exchange that the seller would accept and be able to use once the coveted goods was available.

This myth crystallised in the eighteenth century, notably under the influence of Adam Smith. In the *Wealth of Nations*, first published in 1776, Smith offered a classic version of the story, positing a propensity to barter as a universal feature of human nature. ‘Nobody ever saw a dog make a fair and deliberate exchange of one bone for another with another dog’, he famously observed. Smith saw this inclination to exchange as the drift towards the division of labour:

This division of labour, from which so many advantages are derived, is not originally the effect of any human wisdom, which foresees and intends that general opulence to which it gives occasion. It is the necessary, though very slow and gradual consequence of a certain propensity in human nature which has in view no such extensive utility; the propensity to truck, barter and exchange one thing for another. ([1776] 1991 1:12)

However, from Smith’s point of view, barter ‘naturally’ entangled with the division of labour was inefficient in circulating surplus production:

But when the division of labour first began to take place, this power of exchanging must frequently have been very much clogged and embarrassed in its operations. One man, we shall suppose, has more of a certain commodity than he himself has occasion for, while another has less. The former consequently would be glad to dispose of, and the latter to purchase, a part of this superfluity. But if the latter should chance to have nothing that the former stands in need of, no exchange can be made between them. ([1776] 1991 1:20, quoted in Graeber 2011: 26)

The story ends with people starting to stock things that they know others will want to purchase, transforming these objects into currencies.

In this tale, Smith and his followers depicted a sphere of economic transactions evolving independently of any social or political influence. While downplaying the role of politics and other institutions in the creation of money, they legitimised the emergence of a new discipline that would be concerned with disclosing stable and universal rules (Servet 1994). In this light, it is the very myth of barter that gave rise to the autonomous discipline of economics. To date, this narration on the origin of money is still offered in handbooks on economy and circulated by government and public institutions (Dodd 2014: 20). As David Graeber affirms in his monumental volume on debt, ‘the story of money for economists always begins with a fantasy world of barter’ (2011: 23).

The myth of barter is a fantasy in the sense that we have no historical evidence that any barter society ever existed. Caroline Humphrey introduced her seminal article on barter in 1985 by refuting the veracity of the barter myth: ‘No example of a barter economy, pure and simple, has ever been described, let alone the emergence from it of money; all available ethnography suggests that there never has been such a thing’ (1985: 48). Anthropological and historical accounts of premarket societies describe a variety of systems of exchange, but nowhere was barter the chief modality of economic integration within a given community. Anthropologists have described an array of economies of distribution and redistribution such as collective food stocking, compulsory game sharing and inter-ecological displacement, where the direct exchange of goods was only one form of transaction in a broader economic system. Furthermore, while the barter myth puts forward the double coincidence of wants as the main drawback for *Homo economicus*, this is not a universal dilemma. Studies in small-scale society show that people know what kind of goods their fellow needs and offers (Dodd 2014: 19; Heady 2006: 266; Humphrey 1985). Graeber further observes that, when people are known to each other, the double coincidence of want is easily overcome by deferred counter-prestation (2011: 36).

There is thus no convincing argument that barter should provide a ground for the emergence of money.

### **Barter and the Creation of Social Ties**

Even though the asocial feature of barter has been empirically challenged, classic anthropological literature depicts barter as being restricted to punctual exchanges with strangers and potential enemies. The image of silent trade in which two unknown persons swap their goods without exchanging a word encapsulates this idea of barter requiring no social foundation. While this figure of transaction has come to epitomise the asocial aspect of barter, nonverbal barter transactions are rare exceptions. In fact, this stereotype is empirically denied by ethnographic descriptions of intense bargaining preceding barter. Malinowski gave a detailed description of straightforward haggling in *gimwali*, in contrast to the more distinguished *kula*, where the exchange partners pretend to not even notice the counter-gift thrown on the ground with disregard ([1922] 2002: 145).

In all events, classic scholarship dismisses barter transactions as happening at the margins of social groups. Some even see it as intrinsically embedded in agonistic interactions. Lévi-Strauss's (1943) portrait of the Brazilian Nambikwara's encounter has become exemplary of alterity in barter transactions. In this Amerindian society organised in small communities, Lévi-Strauss described how material transactions occasionally happen between two unrelated groups. Once a messenger settles the meeting point, men of both sides hide their women and children in the bush. The two chiefs proceed to a ceremonial speech praising the other camp. Afterwards, the men lay down their arms and start singing and dancing together. Only then are the exchange negotiations launched, taking the form of intense haggling. When equivalencies are agreed upon, the goods are hastily seized. According to Lévi-Strauss, these interactions are fertile ground for conflicts, often degenerating into fights. The trade meeting nonetheless closes with a festival, where women are welcome. Yet, Lévi-Strauss notes, interplays of seduction triggered by dances and chants have been known to trigger quarrels in which people have been killed. Lévi-Strauss concludes that respecting ritual prescriptions aims at securing a climate of peace and trust for conducting safe trade. Conviviality is intended to reduce the chances of war, which could break out at any time between the barter partners who, it is assumed, have every reason to struggle in order to increase their personal benefit.



Such descriptions converge within classical texts in anthropology, classifying barter as an expression of commodity exchange deemed to prevail at the edges of social communities, in contrast to reciprocated gifts, which are embedded in kinship and stable alliances. Already supported by Karl Marx ([1867] 2013) and Georg Simmel ([1900] 1990), this approach pervades *The Gift*, in which Mauss ([1925] 2002) contends that, in so-called archaic societies, exchanges underpinning social structures do not take the form of barter. They take the shape of gifts that are ‘apparently free and disinterested but nevertheless constrained and self-interested’ ([1925] 2002: 4). Mauss famously argued that social ties in ‘primitive societies’ are structured by the constant circulation of goods and services, governed by a threefold obligation of giving, receiving and giving in turn. When postulating the necessity of a counter-prestation, Mauss emphasised that these transactions are not done for material benefits; they are instead expected to foster enduring social alliances between people who themselves stand for broader communities.

As opposed to Maussian gifts, barter is depicted as an asocial type of instrumental transaction. Marshall Sahlins (1972) defends this perspective in *Stone Age Economics*, in which he classified barter as negative reciprocity, which corresponds to the strict defence of self-interest – along with cheating, bargaining or theft – and is opposed to generalised reciprocity driven by generosity and sharing. In his social geography of economic exchange, barter is posited as ‘the most economic. The participants confront each other as opposed interests, each looking to maximise utility at the other’s expense’ (1972: 195). In her attempt to establish a universal model of barter, Chapman followed this current. According to her theoretical abstraction, a transaction corresponds to ‘pure barter’ if ‘an economic interest creates the relationship between the two parties which are trading, and if no third factor intervenes’ (1980: 40). Here, barter interactions are regarded as being driven strictly by economic ambitions and lacking social consideration. Generalising Karl Polanyi’s ([1944] 2001) famous formula to all barter exchanges, Chapman describes it as ‘not embedded in society’ (1980: 49). In his book elaborating the argument of a heuristic polarisation between gifts and commodities, Christopher Gregory takes a similar approach: ‘The simple barter exchange of commodities presupposes . . . that the transactors are strangers, aliens’ (1982: 42; he refers to Marx).

In his important volume on *The Social Life of Things*, Arjun Appadurai draws on his predecessors to advance a definition of barter as ‘the exchange of objects for one another *without* reference to money

and with maximum feasible reduction of social, cultural, political or personal transaction cost' (1986: 9; emphasis in original). He thereby intends to distinguish barter both from commodities that refer to money and from gifts with increased social cost. More recently, Graeber, who devoted a chapter to the fallacies of the aforementioned myth, affirmed that barter 'ordinarily . . . takes place between strangers, even enemies' (2011: 29; corroborated by Dodd 2014: 20). The few anthropological textbooks that address barter also put forward this analysis. Patrick Heady's entry on 'barter' in *A Handbook of Economic Anthropology* reads: 'the prime focus of interest for the exchange partners is in the goods and services themselves rather than the social relationship arising from the exchange' (2006: 262). In this vein, 'barter' is understood as an interested transaction strictly aimed at acquiring necessities, while 'gift' emphasises generosity, as the donator gives up wealth in order to nurture social ties.

While we are warned that intellectuals in the eighteenth century made up the story of barter as a strictly economic transaction devoid of political and social component, anthropologists still seem to struggle to extricate their conceptual tools from the foundation myth of the discipline of economics. Many ethnographic examples that describe barter as imbued with conflict and hostility are available, yet the analytical focus on conflict should not be allowed to obscure the climax of festivities that features the meetings at stake as well, many times also involving feasting, dancing and sex. That barter involves strangers is an interpretation that the empirical data do not support. Does the shared participation in complex rituals in which barter is embedded, such as those described by Lévi-Strauss, not suggest that the exchange partners share a common set of norms and values? That barter happens between acquainted persons is a fact that Humphrey has already stressed: 'The most important fact about barter is that it takes place between individuals who are socially "understood", whether they belong to the same or different "ethnic groups"' (1985: 60). Barnes and Barnes corroborate this observation in Indonesia. Taking an ethnohistorical approach, they document a narration that locates the origin of a weekly exchange meeting in the migration of a villager who settled on the coast after he got lost during a fishing expedition (1989: 404). Once established, he urged cultivator relatives from his homeland to come and exchange their produce for fish. In this case, barter emergence is thus entailed in community ties.

In their groundbreaking collection, Caroline Humphrey and Stephen Hugh-Jones draw on ethnographic data from disparate cultural contexts to demonstrate that barter partners tend to nurture enduring

social relationship: ‘As our papers show, this “sociable” or non-commercial aspect is a prominent feature of many non-Western barter exchanges too and one which goes against the popular anthropological stereotype’ (1992b: 6). When insisting on the social dimension of barter, Humphrey and Hugh-Jones not only acknowledge social ties pre-existing the transaction. They further contend that barter ‘is one kind of exchange which creates social relations in its own mode.’ Yet, sustained anthropologies of barter are scarce, and we still lack ethnographic descriptions that carefully set out the array of relationship that barter creates. Pervaded by the assumption that barter takes place between poorly articulated or hostile communities, existing literature largely fails to account for the nature of the social relationship that bind those who partake in barter or for the unfolding of social life as it relates to barter transactions.

This book tries to fill this gap, explaining how social relationships are created through direct instrumental transactions and how these relationships differ from those produced by other kinds of material transfer. Therefore, it documents the social fabric in which barter networks are enmeshed in the Argentinean cordillera, where direct exchanges are at the same time antagonistic and creators of enduring social relationship. Because *cambio* partners are in principle quits at the end of their transactions, it provides a fruitful case that sheds light on the concrete practices through which social bonds are woven through instrumental and immediate reciprocity. This enquiry further shows that, in this Andean setting, barter participates in the constitution of a new kind of relationship, which is conceived in the idiom of kinship.

### **Barter and Value Creation: Crafting an Anthropological Category**

While scholarship in economic anthropology continues to elude their conclusion, Humphrey and Hugh-Jones’s contention that barter and gift share more commonalities than had previously been acknowledged has been accepted. The problem is that, seen in this light, barter constitutes a highly contextual category beyond any definition – except the core acceptance that it is a ‘direct exchange of goods or services for each other without the use of money’ (Heady 2006: 262). Hence, in the literature, the absence of money remains the major characteristic of barter. The heterogeneous range of transactions embraced by this conceptualisation runs the risk of making barter a blanket category filled with forms of exchange specific to every locality. Indeed, one wonders

what the commonalities are between, say, swapping yam for fish in the Amazon and Yugoslav Airlines procuring airplanes for jewellery and fabric worth millions of dollars.<sup>8</sup> What do these transactions share besides the fact that they do not involve the circulation of cash? Are so-called barter systems about barter at all when they are based on the use of local paper money or credit cards? Said otherwise, is the very notion of barter a useful anthropological concept by which to grasp all these transactions, or shall we better read some of them as a nonmonetary expression of commodity exchange?

This book coincides with Humphrey and Hugh-Jones in deeming a notion of barter necessary to disentangle the complex diversity of material transactions. In contrast to these authors, who refuse any fixed definition (1992b: 1), I think that semantic precision is required to build a pertinent concept. An essential feature of barter, as pointed out by Humphrey and Hugh-Jones, is that 'objects exchanged have direct consumption values for the participants' (1992b: 7), so the transaction fulfils reciprocal interests that each partner has for the other's object. The relevance of this feature has been underestimated in the anthropology of economic exchanges. Yet, this book argues, it allows one to conceptually distinguish barter from commodity exchange and the reciprocation of gifts. Furthermore, the understanding of the value system that emerges from this particularity provides a way to grasp its social dimensions.

Although Andean ethnography has rarely contributed to anthropological theories of economic exchange, studies such as those carried out by Olivia Harris (2000) or Tristan Platt (1988, 1995, [1982] 2007) indicated the potential of Andean data for contributing to these debates. Scrutinising Andean types of reciprocity, these authors delineated local shapes of trade and their articulation with social relationships. In her essay on the sources and meanings of money, Harris refutes any systematic difference between monetary transaction and barter in the Bolivian highlands, affirming, 'only the context will determine which it is, and this context includes both the social relationship of those exchanging and, more importantly, where the transaction takes place' (1989: 243). Emilia Ferraro continues this argument in her recent examination of *trueque*, an Ecuadorian type of barter between peasants and personalised traders who use money and agricultural produce to establish the exchange value of their commodities. She argues that the use of money is not the most relevant feature for grasping the particularities of this transaction, which stands 'between barter and commodity without fitting comfortably into either category' (2011: 172).

As announced at the outset, this ethnography focuses on another kind of Andean direct exchange known as *cambio*, literally 'exchange' in the Spanish spoken in the Argentinean cordillera.<sup>9</sup> The examination of *cambio* stresses the significance of the nonmonetary character of the transaction. Although I agree with Harris and Ferraro that the material use of money does not determine a transaction per se, money rarely has direct use value. Monetary exchange thus departs from the consumption purposes of barter highlighted above. Further, the study of *cambio* shows that money's rejection as a main scale of value is a fundamental issue that needs to be addressed. The rejection of monetary calculation opens the field for another regime of value, which compares two different goods with respect to internal balance, with only minor reference to an external, abstract scale of measurement. Internal balance has been pointed to as another feature of barter. Humphrey and Hugh-Jones warned us that consumption value in barter is negotiated 'but not with reference to some abstract measure of value or numeraire' (1992b: 1). However, bemused by the common meaning, scholars continue to classify as 'barter' direct exchanges that follow market prices. In this regard, Andean ethnography can make a significant contribution towards delineating the concept of barter.

Furthermore, examining barter's regime of value proves fruitful to tease out its social dimensions. In *cambio*, social ties are enmeshed in the restriction this model of value imposes on the nature of the products that enter this sphere of exchange. Indeed, *cambio*'s scale of value relates to a reciprocal transfer of agricultural products that circulate in opposite directions and shape the identity of the partners who consume identical food. This social performativity also relates to the sources of morality embedded in *cambio* equivalences, which are said to be inherited from ancestors. In this light, the following exploration of Andean exchange shows that, as well as epitomising interpersonal complicities and ensuing obligations, this modality of barter enacts a sense of a shared descent between the partners. This examination of the regime of value posited by *cambio* partners suggests that this transaction manifests an implicit ethnic identity that is not verbalised by existing categories (whether claimed or assigned). Hence, this book contributes to an understanding of how groups create themselves through economic exchange and underscores the importance of barter in this process. This aspect has hitherto been underestimated in the literature, where such social performativity remains attributed chiefly to gift-giving.

My analysis of the *cambio* regime of value draws on Nancy Munn's (1986) work on value transformation in Papua New Guinea. In this

masterpiece, Munn identifies the act of food giving as a most basic value template in the creation of subjectivities, based on the potentiality of nurturing guests in establishing one's fame beyond the here and now. She then goes on to describe more elaborated practices of value transformation such as kula expeditions. Her dynamic theory of value builds on Charles Sanders Peirce's phenomenological notion of qualisigns, referring to embodied qualities imbued with moral values in a given social context. This concept shall help us to understand how qualities of agricultural produce at fairs are icons of the virtues of the people who produce and consume them, and how subjective qualities are collectively acknowledged through their public circulation.

Munn's theory has been recently singled out for its fruitfulness in thinking values as, ultimately, the appreciation of acts (Graeber 2001: 50). Munn clarifies that values are determined by an act's potential to extend intersubjective space-time – that is, the space-time of influence opened between self and others. Accordingly, extension refers to 'the capacity to develop spatiotemporal relations that go beyond the self, or that expand dimensions of the spatiotemporal control of an actor' (1986: 11). Those practices involving extended displacement in space, and possible connection to past and future times, are particularly prone to trigger value transformation. In Melanesia, gifts of food and shells during kula maritime expeditions are one such privilege media of value creation – shells still more so, Munn explains, because of their material qualities: as compared to perishable food destined to rapid disintegration, kula valuables are enduring materialities, which are charged with their own biography through time.

I argue throughout this book that, in the Andean context, instrumental exchange of edible goods between people coming from an array of ecological niches constitutes a value template comparable to the gift-giving explored by Munn in the Massim society. Unlike Gawan sailors to whom elevation to fame is the ultimate purpose (see also Damon 2002: 107), these Andean peasants do not verbalise fame as a target when they transport their harvest to a fair. Displaying plentiful and desirable produce on such a public stage nonetheless contributes to raise one's renown as a prolific cultivator, or herder, and generous kin. Andean peasants associate this potential chiefly with the *fuera* (strength) encapsulated in both human and nonhuman organisms: the quality of their produce instantiates the vitality they have been able to devote to agricultural labour, which is a morally loaded activity in this rural society. An analysis of the circulation of agricultural produce at fairs from this perspective reveals that cambio items are appreciated in light of qualities that index their producers' and consumers' value.

Beyond subjective virtues, material circulation at fairs produces values that entail collectives in their totality, notably by positing a community as a fertile terroir for the production of any desirable good. We shall see that, in their encounter, the protagonists assert shared social values that draw their society together. This ethnography thereby contributes to the ongoing debate in the anthropological study of value, on the possibility of arriving at a theory that would encompass its moral and economic dimensions (Graeber 2001; Lambek 2008, 2013; Otto and Willerslev 2013). I see the study of agricultural produce's value as particularly revealing in this regard because it stands at the intersection of natural resources and crafted objects.

At fairs, regimes of value are paradoxically tangible through the expression of a 'structural nostalgia' for old reciprocities that the vices of modernity are believed to have corroded (Herzfeld 2005). During their negotiation, the protagonists regularly allude to the equity that featured in their elders' transactions, whom they refer to as *abuelos* (grandparents). Yet, these lamentations also epitomise a gap between present barter, and an ideal one attributed to the elders – that is, a process of social change. I will use nostalgic tropes to tease out the morality of cambio at fairs. Such tropes are not only descriptive; I will also bring out their performative effects. Drawing on Edward Casey's (2011) phenomenological approach to commemoration, I will discuss the new form of sociability created by this specific kind of recall. In his landmark book, Fred Davis (1979) underscores the propensity of nostalgia to sustain social identities in a context of rapid social change. In the same vein, nostalgic utterances at fairs delineate social belongings, drawing the lines of an 'ethnic economy' (Harris 2000: 112) that experiences growing regional integration.

## Barter in the Ritual Economics

So, this book furthers Humphrey and Hugh-Jones's claim to the social anchor of barter by examining the relationships that are created through material circulation. Yet, cambio does more than establish a relationship between human participants. It further contributes to social regeneration by virtue of its communicative engagement with Catholic saints and ancestors incarnated in the environment, a fact that I will highlight by exploring fairs' embeddedness within religious festivals. Ethnographic examination of fairs' interactions shows that cambios are also addressed to nonhuman beings, thereby participating in the reproduction of the cosmological order.

The cosmological dimension of economic interactions has already been documented in different Andean contexts. Harris's (2000) work on the exchange system of the Bolivian Laymi people was conclusive in this regard. Observing the role of reciprocity in securing propitious interactions with ambivalent nonhuman entities, Harris emphasises the importance of exchange in enhancing fertility. Chief among offerings by Andean peasants are the *pagos* (payments) to telluric entities. These consist of the most 'cherished' foods and drinks, together with coca leaves and other ritual ingredients, which are buried in sacred sites. That the very word *pago* refers to offering is revealing of a conception of exchange as a vector of communication with nonhuman beings. It is noteworthy that, in the Argentinean cordillera, *pago* is barely used and instead replaced by the word *invitación* (invitation).

Harris, as well as Platt (1995), has also pointed out the cosmological dimensions of monetary transactions. Recent ethnographic insights from disparate Andean contexts have confirmed the cosmological entailment of commodity exchanges. Cecilie Ødegaard's (2011) work on the sources of danger and prosperity in Peru throws light on how people and material circulation bears cosmological implications. In a context where the landscape is imbued with an agency of its own, she emphasises the importance of reciprocal transfers to negotiate with these ambivalent forces and transform estranged spaces into benevolent places. Drawing on ethnographic data from La Paz in Bolivia, Nico Tassi (2010) argues that *cholo*<sup>10</sup> traders posit abundance as a cosmological value, which is used to establish fertile communication with nonhuman beings and to stimulate productivity.

In the 1970s and 1980s, several specialists in Andean economies used the concept of ritual to underscore the peculiarities of the instrumental transactions they wanted to describe. However, their allusions to ritualised exchange have taken on multiple, and sometimes incompatible, acceptations, which I will introduce in chapter 5. In all cases, this notion is used without conceptual clarification as though its meaning went without saying. Such semantic fuzziness reflects a broader theoretical lack in economic anthropology. This failure was already noted in the 1950s by Ronald Berndt regarding another geographical area of studies, as he deplored: 'The term "ceremonial exchange" has, from time to time in Australia, been loosely used' (1951: 156). The confusion addressed by Berndt relates to the fact that not all transactions performed in the course of a major ceremony are ceremonial per se. For more conceptual rigour, he urges reserving the term for describing systems of exchange in which 'the goods themselves are an integral part of this manifestation.' Others, like Christina Toren, opted for a broader



sense, ‘to cover all exchanges that are accompanied – as it were compulsorily – by ritual formulae’, ranging from effusive thanks to imposing speeches (1989: 148). She insists that money can be involved in such transactions. Salhins stressed yet another dimension of ceremoniality related to the sacrificial dimension of gifts that are addressed to non-human beings. In his famous interpretation of *The Spirit of the Gift*, he contrasted secular exchanges with ceremonial transactions involving priests who are responsible for the forest’s abundance (1972: 158).

Alongside the ceremonial context, another widely accepted feature of ceremonial exchanges is that they are not intended for economic purposes. Lévi-Strauss concludes about the reciprocal pouring of wine in a French restaurant, apprehended as a ritual of exchange, that ‘from an economic perspective, nobody wins, nobody loses’ ([1947] 2002: 69, my translation). This point is epitomised by the similarity of the objects featured in ceremonial exchanges: usually the same kinds of items are reciprocally given. These are not swapped immediately, however. Delayed counter-gift endows same-for-same transactions with a sense of generosity, and the time interval provides an opportunity for trust to be manifested (an important point in Pierre Bourdieu’s perspective on the gift, already pointed out by Malinowski [1922] 2002: 143). All authors agree that ceremonial exchange is not intended for material profit, but aims instead at strengthening the social fabric underlying the ceremony in question. Strathern and Stewart state that ‘the main point here is that delayed exchanges of wealth maintain relationships’ (2006: 230). The purpose of ceremonial exchanges is to build alliances. This point is corroborated by Hart, who conceived ceremonial exchange as ‘a temporary social framework created in the relative absence of society’ – a transaction that he contrasts to barter as ‘an atomised interaction predicated on the presence of society’, thereby reverting to the idea of barter as a stranger’s contract (1986: 648).

Yet, the opposition between trade (with or without money) and ceremonial exchanges is not consensual. As mentioned earlier, Malinowski listed ‘ceremonial barter’ in his typology of Trobriand exchanges ([1922] 2002: 143). He had been careful to provide a definition, to avoid the drift nonetheless lamented by Berndt a few decades later. In a footnote, he clarified himself, writing that an act is ceremonial if: ‘(1) public; (2) carried on under observance of definite formalities; (3) if it has sociological, religious, or magical import, and carries with it obligations’ (2002: 73). He posited kula transactions in this category of ceremonial barter while also qualifying them as gifts. Mauss strictly classified kula transfers as gifts, and it is under this category that the kula became a keystone in the emergence of an economic anthropology. The idea of

ceremonial barter was not addressed in his *Essai*, and after him, the discussion has hovered between gifts and commodities, the notion of ceremonial exchange being associated with the former.

Despite Berndt's call for theoretical clarification, the dzamalag performed by the Gunwinggu people in Northern Australia whom he described also resulted in further incoherent interpretations. In the 1940s, he observed it as follows. When Gunwinggu people host visitors for trading purposes, they gather together and sing and play music to initiate the dzamalag. Women from each community successively offer fabrics to the men from the other moiety, hitting them as an invitation for sexual intercourse. After having sex, men please their welcoming hosts with beads and tobacco that women deliver to their husbands. Then comes the local men's turn to be invited to sexual relations through erotic jokes and gifts made of fabrics. They also gratify their partner with tobacco and beads, which the visiting women hand over to their spouses so that the goods have come back to their original givers. After a collective dance mimicking warfare, the men put down their arms and share a feast. In addition to this exchange of same for same condensed within a ritual meeting, dzamalag are composed of giving ceremonies of utilitarian goods, for which no immediate return is expected (1951: 160). Berndt is rather vague about the concrete modalities of dzamalag transactions, which he qualifies as 'exchange' or 'distribution' without clarifying how equivalencies are agreed upon.

Graeber emphasises the relative lack of sociability during these meetings. He classifies them as 'ceremonial barter' and uses them to develop his argument that barter takes place between strangers (2011: 32). Stephen Gudeman also acknowledges dzamalag as a form of 'ceremonial exchange', but he develops a more ambivalent analysis of its social fabric. 'The community aspect of the exchange as an end itself yet for the sake of ensuring trade; carrying out trade is also an end, yet for the sake of making community' (2001: 124). Gudeman admits that this figure of trade creates a new community, albeit an evanescent one that is doomed to disappear soon after the exchanges are concluded. I wonder, however, if Gunwinggu people are performing barter with their visitors or whether dzamalag is not a ceremony of reciprocal gifts. Berndt never uses the word 'barter' in allusion to what he calls 'ceremonial economics'. Hence, we find here a confusion similar to the one found in the kula, whereby ceremonial exchanges are understood as barter or gift according to the author's interpretation.

Further confusion stems from the fact that, while ceremonial exchange is sometimes used as a synonym for systems of reciprocal gifts, it has been demonstrated that not all gifts are in fact ceremonial (Yan

2006: 246). In contrast to the *kula*, the *potlatch* or the *moka*, which are typical examples of ceremonial giving, regular presents between kin, or blood gifts, are not regarded as such. In his article published in 1938, Homer Barnett already drew a distinction between formal gifts composing the *potlatch* and ‘informal gifts expressive of friendship and goodwill’ (1938: 353). Although widely used by anthropologists, the concept of ceremonial exchanges indeed constitutes a fuzzy category that refers to an array of transactions peculiar to each author. Some even consider commodity exchanges as potentially ceremonial. From his symbolic study of a rural market in Madhya Pradesh, India, Alfred Gell concluded that ‘market is a ceremonial as well as a commercial occasion’ (1982: 471). Other authors share his view, although the criteria sustaining their argument are not always congruent (see Angé 2018; Miller 1996; Tassi 2010).

This book brings together insights from religious and economic anthropology to better frame the concept of ceremonial exchange. Herein lies another important contribution that Andean data have to offer to the understanding of economic exchange.

## Barter as a Civic Ritual

As I announced at the outset, this book aims to contribute to a still-marginal body of literature addressing the ritualisation of nonetheless instrumental transactions. It should now be clear that I am not primarily interested in the economy of ritual addressing the kind of expenses involved in ceremonies and how they are distributed among the participants. Rather, I am concerned with how economic actions are ritualised. As they are embedded in religious ceremonies, barter fairs illuminate the relationship between mundane instrumental transactions and cosmological concerns. However, I am convinced that the theoretical framework outlined here should also be capable of accounting for secular ritualisation of transactions imbued with political or social concerns. I thus take rituals not only as repetitive acts composing religious rites but also as ‘acts of commitment’ (Gudeman and Hann 2015: 6) to religious, political or social values that transcend individual concerns.

To develop this argument, I will compare the fairs emerging as part of a religious celebration with those organised by development and heritage institutions. This comparison shows that these fairs, which I propose to call institutional, produce civic value related to the reproduction of national ethnic groups. The last section of this book thus

sheds light on another process whereby barter participates in the creation of social fabrics, partaking in national formation. According to Rodney Harrison, official heritage refers 'to a set of professional practices that are authorised by the state and motivated by some form of legislation or written charter' (2013: 14). These practices are framed by the authorised heritage discourse, unravelled by Laurajane Smith, which 'takes its cue from the grand narratives of Western national and elite class experiences, and reinforces ideas of innate cultural value tied to time depth, monumentality, expert knowledge and aesthetics' (2006: 299). Following these authors, I will view heritage not as a restricted set of material and immaterial items but instead as a stance towards objects that are considered the embodiment of the past and thus are the target of particular management and representations. Here, again, I will examine nostalgic tropes to enlighten discrepancies on the transmission of barter. Comparing longings verbalised by heritage stakeholders with those mentioned by cambio partners will allow me to grasp the cultural interplay at stake in institutional fairs.

As Smith convincingly argues, heritage must be apprehended as a performance 'that embodies acts of remembrance and commemoration while negotiating and constructing a sense of place, belonging and understanding in the present' (2006: 3). However, as she further notes, in existing literature, the link between heritage and identity is usually taken for granted, and the mechanisms through which this link is established still need to be clarified. The case of Indigenous barter in Argentina shows how the performance of heritage concretely contributes to the crystallisation of ethnic identities and to the display of multicultural objectives.

The turn towards multiculturalism, common to many Latin American nations,<sup>11</sup> intends to reverse previous policies of forced cultural assimilation in the interests of a new appraisal of ethnic identities asserting pre-Columbian roots. Effective or not, discourse on the composition of ethnic nationalities destabilises prevailing cultural configurations as well as mutual esteem between different social groups. In this sense, advocacy of a multicultural nation prompts a sense of cultural uncertainty that Harrison (2013) has identified as a driving force in the modern proliferation of heritage creation. The heritagisation of barter sheds light on how some forms of economic exchanges are used for displaying national multiculturalism and hence constitutes one of the means through which these cultural tensions are expressed and negotiated. Linda Seligmann has unravelled how linguistic and material exchanges in the Peruvian marketplace 'constitute a politics of culture and ethnicity' participating in the formation of national and

subnational identities (1993: 187). We will see that barter fairs, including their safeguarded expressions, indeed provide a case in point, for examining the devices by which the state intends to assert social categories, as well as ‘the creative appropriation of constitutional multiculturalism’ by concerned populations (Wroblewski 2014: 78).

## People in the Book

In January 2005, I moved from Belgium – my native country – to the *puna*, as Argentineans call the extension of the altiplano on their territory. This highland steppe spreads over five departments in the province of Jujuy<sup>12</sup> and extends towards the provinces of Salta and Catamarca to the south. With my partner at the time and our newborn daughter, we settled in a small village presented on the welcome sign alongside the main access road as the ‘native community of Yavi, legal person n°002260bs’. In most Argentinean highland departments, Indigenous communities (as they are legally called) are uniformly listed as belonging to the Kolla<sup>13</sup> people.

The legal status of Indigenous emerged in Argentina with the amendment of the national constitution in 1994, consequent upon previous acceptance of the International Labour Organisation Convention 169 on Indigenous and Tribal Peoples, with which the Argentinean government recognised the juridical existence of native groups on its territory. In the 2001 population census, the Kolla people numbered 70,500 citizens. They are the second largest of the thirty native ethnic groups whose legal existence was legally recognised, after that of the Mapuche. In this context, Kolla is a microethnic referent encompassing all pre-Incaic local communities, and therefore it is a ‘generalised designation for the whole native population of the Andes in Jujuy’ (Karasik 2010: 258, my translation).

Apart from the juridical status, and the subsequent right to own land, the nation-state was to assert its intention to recognise Indigenous communities as legal entities, with their own identity and history.<sup>14</sup> As the first sentence reads, the constitutional amendment aims at ‘acknowledging the ethnic and cultural pre-existence of Argentinean Indigenous peoples.’ To date, the constitution of this multicultural society is still in progress. Relations between Indigenous communities and the state are conflictive, and Indigenous communities remain politically and economically marginalised. Large areas of Indigenous land still need to be delivered, while Indigenous policies aimed at reducing exclusion in terms of health, education and economic oppor-

tunities remain 'protectionist and tutelary, which ultimately infringes upon respect for these populations' autonomy and auto-determination' (Mombello 2002: 11, my translation; for cultural and symbolic exclusion, see Karasik 2010). The legal recognition of Indigenous People's preexistence to the Argentinean State should nevertheless be considered as a key turn in the national cultural politics, where the state has historically attempted to erase Indigenous strands of the population through physical extermination or cultural assimilation (Sturzenegger-Benoist 2006), focused as it is on its European components.

In this southern Andean region, ethnicity in the countryside is framed by people's belonging to kinship-based communities, which facilitate land use as well as access to an array of shared resources like water, wood or medicine plants. Even though some 30 per cent of registered Kolla people dwell in urban areas,<sup>15</sup> ethnic identity remains associated with the countryside and agricultural production. Such an association between indigenusness and agricultural activities is also a self-ascribed characterisation, as attested by Telesforo Benitez, an elderly shepherd from the Chalguamayoc community, when a journalist asked him what it means to be Kolla: 'Kolla agriculture, we will never abandon it, he concluded, because we really are Kolla.'<sup>16</sup> As is common in the Andes (Harris 2000: 30), attachment to land also points to its existence as an incarnation of remote ancestors, among which Pachamama, or Mother Earth, is an overarching feature. She is regarded as the mother of every earthly being and as the force that keeps them alive. Telesforo vividly explained: 'The earth is like a mother's breast. The baby sucks it and that's how he grows', he told me. Furthermore, Pachamama encapsulates peasants' notion of historicity and spatiality, since she is conceived of as the time and space in which human life unfolds. According to this social geography, common in the Andes (Radcliffe and Westwood 1996: 109), indigenusness relates to the countryside.

Public discourse wipes out the heterogeneity of Kolla people, drawing fixed boundaries at odds with the actual fluidity of ethnic configuration. 'Indigenous people' is a legal status resting upon self-identification and direct Indigenous descent.<sup>17</sup> This classification stands in contrast to the category 'Creole', which is not a legal status but a social category. Following Gabriela Karasik, a Creole is someone who 'is neither a descendant of immigrants, like most rural villagers in the country, nor Indian, although he has an Indigenous ascendant somewhere and is usually dark skinned; it involves a sense of *métissage*' (2006: 469, my translation). As used in northern Argentina, this term is similar to the concept of *mestizo* in other Andean regions. Even though Creole and

Kolla people use racial tropes to identify each other, there are no biological boundaries between them. Most of the peasants registered as Kolla trace Spanish descent, as attested by their Castilian patronyms. Nor are evidently cultural practices and cosmologies objective criteria, since people who reject Kolla identity worship Pachamama, while members of Indigenous communities make pizzas and appreciate tango music on the national radio. For decades, state-sponsored acculturation strategies have attempted to smooth over ethnic particularities by means of symbolically and physically violent campaigns. Many citizens have come to see themselves as Creole because they have set aside practices they associate with the indigenosity of their ancestors. The border between these social categories is thus highly subjective and shifting, as ethnic configurations usually are (Banks 1996). In this context, fairs are outstanding instances where ethnic categories are played out through social interaction.

Among Creole populations, those whose direct European filiation is attested by the whiteness of their skin are categorised as *gringos*. However, there are very few of them in this northern region of the country, and they are mostly migrants who have settled in the main towns for professional reasons. This is how people in the village identified me, as well as my daughter and her father, who is from the province of Salta. This transcontinental category imbued with distrust refers to white people. When I arrived, my neighbours in Yavi thought I was a *Porteña*, as inhabitants from Buenos Aires and the region around La Plata River are called. *Porteños* epitomise the idea of whiteness, as do, by extension, inhabitants from southern cities chiefly inhabited by descendants of European migrants. In the nineteenth century, national policies triggered important waves of immigration from Europe in view of occupying sparsely populated territories. Prosperous Argentina attracted hordes of migrants having suffered political and economic crises on the Old Continent.<sup>18</sup> The massive arrival of foreigners, coupled with the disastrous demographic decline of Indigenous peoples, resulted in the proudly claimed picture of Argentina as a white, European nation. According to government statistics, more than 80 per cent of present-day citizens are direct descendants of Europeans.

If we were the only *gringos* in Yavi, we were not the only foreigners. Situated at five kilometres from the international border, the village also features an important population of Bolivian origin. Migration from Bolivia, particularly from the nearby provinces of Tarija and Potosí, has been constant in regional history since precolonial times. The numbers are hard to estimate, since most migrants have adopted Argentinean nationality. In most cases, even local people have lost track

of these flows. National identities are complex and nonexclusive in this border region, where double nationality is a common strategy for Bolivian people who want to benefit from Argentina's welfare programme. Women frequently cross the border to give birth in Argentinean hospitals so they can register their children in both countries.

As well as referring to members of rural communities in the Argentinean cordillera and to urban migrants who manifest Indigenous filiation, the term *Kolla* is also used in Bolivia as a pejorative term for highland people, in contrast to those living in the lowlands, who are called *cambas* (Karasik 2006: 477). Yet, *Kolla* is assigned to all Bolivian autochthones when they are in Argentina – a common situation, as Bolivian peasants constantly travel across the border for economic or social obligations. Argentines are also keen on crossing the border in search of economic ventures. They keep an eye out for any opportunities international trade may provide. At the end of the twentieth century, Argentinean herders engaged in a highly profitable traffic of Bolivian cattle, which they drove all the way through the puna. Most common are shopping trips by border dwellers who cross over to find cheaper commodities, mostly coca leaves, but also foodstuffs, clothes, household utensils or mobile phones. Although their intensity depends on the exchange rate between Argentinean and Bolivian pesos, the international flow of people and commodities is constant. I used to cross the border myself at least once a week to purchase exotic fruits and coca leaves. I always enjoyed spending time in the market of Villazón, especially on Sundays, when I used to sit down and knit with cultivators coming from surrounding communities to sell their harvest. It was a meeting point for acquaintances from the community of Chosconty, situated in the *quebrada* (valley) at 2,500 metres above sea level on the bank of the San Juan del Oro River. I knew these women from Argentinean fairs, where they brought their fruits and maize.

However, I did most of my fieldwork in Chalgumayoc, a village of herders standing some 4,000 metres above sea level, 25 kilometres east of my own domicile. I decided to centre my research there, as I was intrigued by their economic life: they continued to practice semi-nomadism within the territory of their community while simultaneously being constantly connected with the nearest city of La Quiaca. Because they were so devoted to their flocks, my neighbours in Yavi depicted them as the archetype of the *gente del campo* (people from the country) and exceptionally attached to the *costumbre de los abuelos* (habits of the ancestors). An NGO with which they were affiliated also painted them as such. During the first two years of my stay in the puna, I worked as a volunteer in this NGO dedicated to the commer-



cialisation of agricultural products from the puna. It is in this context that I first met people from Chalgumayoc. The staff proudly pointed out that this village was the first provider of meat for the association's butcher shop, but at the same time jealously complained that some of the members were keen on selling their meat at the market. True or not, this stereotype of traditional *campesinos* (people from the country, small peasants) firmly inserted into the local trade network caught my attention, and from February 2007 onwards, I spent most of my day-time hours in the community.

There were a few households where I knew I was always welcome to lend a – clumsy – hand with their daily tasks, and I liked to drive my hosts to the city whenever they needed to sell meat and stock up on commodities. The house of Telesforo and his wife, Sylberia, was my favourite place. I met this old couple in February 2007 when I was invited to celebrate Carnival with them by the head of the community, who wanted me to witness an authentic festival. Their four daughters had come all the way from Buenos Aires and Salta to participate in the seven-day Carnival merrymaking and to help their parents with the hard summer job of cattle branding. At around 70 years of age,



**Figure 0.2.** A flock of sheep in their pen adjacent to a household in the highlands of Chalgumayoc. Photograph by the author.

the couple was used to living on their own, taking care of two herds of some hundred llamas and sheep. I also enjoyed spending time with other families, whom I will introduce, as well as my neighbours in Yavi and friends in Chosconty. This multisite fieldwork, which took in the Bolivian lowlands, the intermediate zone surrounding Yavi and up to the Argentinean highlands, opened a perspective on communities from the three main ecozones represented at fairs.

### Outline of the Book

Chapter 1 outlines the ethnographic context in which fairs are deployed. Drawing on Chalgumayoc, I focus on those features of peasants' daily life that are significant for understanding the sociocultural dimensions of Andean barter. With this aim in mind, I explore the polymorphism of the idea of community, which refers to a kinship network, a territorial space, a legal status, an economic institution and shared nonhuman partners. I then trace the network of material transfers in which households from the Chalgumayoc community take part. This includes valley people and city dwellers, who also meet at fairs. The last part of the chapter addresses aspects of the local economy, highlighting peasants' conceptions of growth and prosperity and how they strive to establish benevolent relationships with nonhuman beings that participate in the regeneration of life forces.

Chapter 2 is a historical chapter, which takes us back to precolonial times, briefly recalling the frame of pre-Hispanic economic organisation in which markets were negligible. I trace the origins of contemporary barter fairs, underscoring their European roots. The last historical section outlines the ongoing process of heritagisation of barter, pointing to the current appraisal of fairs as an Indigenous cultural practice that needs to be safeguarded against the threat of modernity.

I then provide, in chapter 3, a panoramic view of a contemporary fair in the village of Yavi, attended by Chalgumayoc herders and Chosconty cultivators. A description of the spatiotemporal setting stresses the embeddedness of fairs within a broader religious celebration. I also examine the social identities that are played out at fairs. And finally, I describe the types of produce that are put in motion, as well as their entanglement in the identity of their producer and consumer.

Chapter 4 examines the different transactions that compose the fairs. Following local categories, I distinguish between *cambio* (exchange), *negocio* (business) and *invitación* (invitation), the latter being either consumed by humans or offered to deities. For each modality of

material transfer, I discuss the regime of value and underlying social interplay. While tackling different types of transfers at fairs, this chapter delineates the emic notion of barter.

Exclusively focussed on *cambio*, chapter 5, the final one, explores the different ways in which barter contributes to the production and reproduction of social life. I first tease out how this specific transaction participates in the formation of subjectivities, both physically and symbolically. I then point out the cosmological dimensions of *cambio* at fairs and its potential to substantiate transcendental value. In so doing, I propose to see it as a form of ritualised barter, aimed at producing material and cosmological values. While referring to the enactment of a code of exchange inherited from ancestors, the use of the notion of ritual does not mean that *cambio* is an untouched tradition inherited from ancient times. Fairs are embedded in a broader socio-economic environment that directly impacts barter practices. In the last section, I shed light on the process of heritagisation of fairs, showing how they are used to shape new sociocultural configurations by negotiating Indigenous people's integration on the national stage. For this purpose, I examine nostalgic tropes used by heritage partakers and compare them with peasants' nostalgia, thus unveiling the nuanced moralities of barter.

## Notes

1. Malinowski nonetheless acknowledges the specificities of the *kula* as a 'remarkable form of trade' that would deserve its own category (2002: 144).
2. This dialogue was recorded at the 2008 Easter fair in Yavi, a village in the Jujuy Province of Argentina. The original language was Spanish. All dialogue translations are mine.
3. Note that Lévi-Strauss uses 'ceremonial exchange' as well as 'rituals of exchange', contrary to Mauss, who does not use the former.
4. That money can both be physically involved in barter (Humphrey 1985: 62; M. Strathern 1992: 175) and circulate as a gift is not specific to Andean economies, as has been observed in diverse cultural settings. Such works challenge most basic definitions of barter as an exchange of one thing for another without the use of money.
5. See e.g. U-Exchange, <http://www.u-exchange.com>.
6. In France, see e.g. France Barter, <https://www.francebarter.coop>; in the United States, see e.g. Barter Business Unlimited, <http://bbubarter.com>
7. See <http://bartercardusa.com>.
8. This example is mentioned in Andrew Horowitz (2010: 112).
9. In her Ecuadorean fieldwork, Ferraro (2011: 172) mentioned a kind of barter called *cambeo*, the local pronunciation of *cambio*. Although she

did not dwell on that specific transaction, the few features listed match the Argentinean cambio discussed here.

10. The term cholo is used in different regions of the Andes to refer to urbanised Indigenous people.
11. See e.g. Garcia (2005) and Wroblewski (2014) on the Peruvian and Ecuadorian situations, respectively, or Sieder (2002) for a regional overview.
12. Yavi, Santa Catalina, Rinconada, Susques and part of Tumbaya.
13. Colla, Coya and Qolla also exist in Argentina. Kolla is the official spelling used by state institutions. In keeping with their option, I acknowledge that the state originally imposed this ethnonym on defeated populations.
14. Information from the webpage of the National Institute of Indigenous Affairs (INAI).
15. According to the government's 2001 census, which is the latest to date (see [www.indec.gov.ar](http://www.indec.gov.ar)).
16. Extract from *Pueblos originarios. Kollas*. <http://www.descargas.encuentro.gov.ar>.
17. <http://www.desarrollosocial.gob.ar/Uploads/i1/Institucional/6.InformacionEstadistica.pdf>.
18. Between 1857 and 1930, the national population grew tenfold, reaching twelve million by the end of this period (Sturzenegger-Benoist 2006: 85, 95). Most of the settlers came from Italy and Spain, but every European nation took part in this movement, from Portugal to Russia, including Greece and Belgium.