



Tropentag 2023
September 20-22, 2023

Conference on International Research on Food Security, Natural Resource
Management and Rural Development
organised by the Leibniz Centre for Agricultural Landscape Research (ZALF),
Germany in cooperation with Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin, Germany

M'inka, ayni and apachikuy: Social practices for food systems in crisis

Liza Melina Meza Flores^a and Claudia Heindorf^b

^a Faculty of Engineering, San Ignacio de Loyola University, liza.meza@usil.pe

^b Department of Agricultural Economics and Rural Development, University of Göttingen, Göttingen, Germany, claudia.heindorf@uni-goettingen.de

Declaration of version

The authors wish to clarify that the document presented here is a summarized and modified version in English of an article entitled “*La M'inka, el Ayni y el Apachikuy: prácticas sociales para sistemas alimentarios en crisis*” (Meza Flores & Heindorf, 2023), previously published in Spanish in the academic journal, *Revista Grifos*. This version is intended to provide a concise overview of the original work accessible to a wider English-speaking audience while respecting academic and ethical guidelines. This adaptation has been substantially condensed and restructured to suit the language and format requirements of this specific publication of the Tropentag 2023 guidelines. The original, more comprehensive article in Spanish remains accessible and continues to provide in-depth insights on the subject matter and should be considered as the original source.

Introduction

The COVID-19 pandemic has caused negative impacts on food systems worldwide, especially in low and middle-income countries like Peru (FAO et al., 2022; MIDIS & PMA, 2019). This crisis has unveiled risks, predominantly affecting vulnerable populations, as they face challenges testing their resilience (Bené, 2020; FAO et al., 2022). In Peru, there has been a noticeable rise in both food insecurity and poverty, underscoring the pandemic's socio-economic ramifications. Approximately 16.6 million people in Peru face food insecurity (FAO et al., 2022) and 9 million people live in poverty, with 41% of them residing in rural areas (INEI, 2023). To prevent food scarcity, rural communities in several parts of Latin America employ social practices in resource-scarce environments, thereby contributing to the improved productive capacity, agrobiodiversity conservation, and enhanced resilience of food systems (Fernández-Osco, 2000; Pomboza Tamaquiza et al., 2017; Torres Carrillo, 2002).

This article aims to provide insights on three selected social practices for food production and distribution, their relevance in the Peruvian context, and their potential to address food crises.

Methods

To gather information on three selected social practices in Peru, we conducted an exhaustive literature review. Additionally, to gain further insights and better understand the local perspective regarding social practices before, during, and after COVID-19, we conducted semi-structured interviews with key informants. We designed a semi-structured interview guide to assess the strengths, opportunities, weaknesses, and threats (SWOT analysis) of the selected social practices.

The key informants included farmers and entrepreneurs, offering a communal-level perspective, as well as representatives from organizations with extensive experience in working with farmers.

Results and Discussion

Social practices of community cooperation for food production: *ayni* and *mink'a*

Social practices such as *ayni* and *mink'a* play an important role in fostering community cooperation in food production. *Mink'a* represents a collective work aimed at ensuring the overall benefit of the community. *Mink'a* is applied in what is known as community labor, for example, to jointly clean roads or the maintenance of the irrigation infrastructure. *Ayni* entails reciprocal labor within the community intended to support specific families or community members in need (Altamirano Enciso & Bueno Mendoza, 2011; Fries, 2001; Fernández Osco, 2000; Roberts, 1974; Golte, 1997). *Ayni*, for example, includes the support for individuals or families to harvest or other activities that require intensive work. Both practices heavily rely on community social networks and contribute to the strengthening and maintaining the social community structures. These practices are typically passed down through generations and are also supported by NGOs.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, both practices played a crucial role in providing support and services to those in need. The entire community benefited from available local labor during lockdowns. Since the labor did not require compensation, it also allowed poorer families to access working labor. Out of necessity, the pandemic offered an opportunity to revitalize these social practices, highlighting their importance in addressing crises. *Ayni*, for instance, was important to support urban immigrants who returned to rural Andean areas at the onset of the pandemic, compensating for their lack of farming skills through the knowledge and support of the local community. However, it is essential to address the challenges of intergenerational knowledge transfer and the risk of cultural gaps between returning migrants and those who remained in rural areas.

Strengths	Weaknesses
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Strengthening and maintaining social community structures. · Increasing labor availability. · Support of vulnerable groups. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · No financial compensation · Aging of the rural population · Youth emigration ·
Opportunities	Threats
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Reactivation in times of crisis · Promotion by NGOs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Urban immigration during crisis · Lack of participation of returnees

Table 1. SWOT results for *mink'a* and *ayni*

Some weaknesses include the lack of attractiveness to younger individuals who expect a financial compensation for participating in *mink'a* and *ayni*, as well as the aging rural population. Further, children and young adults are often discouraged from pursuing agricultural work, fostering a negative perception of rural life among the youth and promoting emigration to the cities.

A threat for the continuation of this practice is the limited participation of returnees from cities in these practices. Therefore, these voluntary traditional practices are gradually fading and, in some cases, replaced by mandatory communal labor.

Social practices of inter and intra-family cooperation for food distribution: *apachikuy*

Social practices of inter- and intra-family cooperation for food distribution such as *apachikuy*, involve rural families in the Andes sharing and sending a part of their food production to their

geographically separated relatives, friends and acquaintances living in other communities or cities (Prada, 2020). This practice holds particular importance in ensuring that geographically separated known and loved ones have access to nutritious foods, thereby reducing their food expenditures, while also promoting the use and knowledge of local food crop diversity. Notably, this practice played a pivotal role during the pandemic, supporting the economically and food-insecure population in the cities who received food products from their friends and relatives in the rural areas, thereby fostering the rural–urban connection.

Strengths	Weaknesses
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Strengthening bonds between families and friends · Reduced food expenditures · Access to nutritious foods in urban areas · Support of food insecure populations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Changing consumption patterns in the communities · Aging rural population
Opportunities	Threats
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Strengthening of rural-urban connection · Integration to public policies 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Changing consumption patterns · Reliance on transport companies

Table 2. SWOT results for *apachikuy*

Despite receiving national and international recognition as an important element for contributing to food security during the pandemic, *apachikuy* is gradually becoming obsolete. One reason is the changing consumption pattern, especially among the younger generations living in the communities, and those who emigrated to the cities, who display a preference for fast food or ultra-processed food. Another threat to the continuity of this practice is the reliance on transport companies for delivery and associated costs.

Conclusions and Outlook

Mink'a, *ayni*, and *apachikuy* serve critical roles during times of crisis and can complement public strategies to enhance food security. They foster communities' agencies to address and prevent food crises. However, changing consumption patterns and demographic trends pose significant risks to the conservation of these practices.

Given their significance in sustaining food systems and supporting the most vulnerable groups amidst global emergencies like COVID-19, they require governmental and academic action to ensure their continuity. Due to the limited research exploring the impact of these social practices beyond their history and general description, we recommend conducting more in-depth research to assess their application and measure their impact on food security. This will provide a well-founded basis for recommending their broader integration into future food system policies and for fostering the resilience of food systems.

Acknowledgments

We extend our heartfelt gratitude to the valuable contributions of the interviewed stakeholders: Elsa García Gamboa from Fundo Chumpe Autosostenible, Jesús Javi Espinosa from Kushi Wallpa and spokesperson for Slow Food Protectora de la biodiversidad Tamyá Ancash, Franklin Ríos Zuñiga from Ecoyary, Sandra Soria Albinagorta from Eco Kallpa and representative of the Participatory Guarantee System, and Yerssey Caballero Palomino, Director of the Abancay Program at the IDMA NGO. Furthermore, we express our appreciation for the support, feedback, and suggestions provided by Dr. Anuschka van't Hooff.

References

1. Altamirano Enciso, A. J. & A. Bueno Mendoza. (2011). El ayni y la minka: dos formas colectivas de trabajo de las sociedades pre- Chavín. *Investigaciones sociales*, 15(27), 43-76.
2. Béné, C. (2020). Resilience of local food systems and links to food security - A review of some important concepts in the context of COVID-19 and other shocks. *Food Security*. 12(4):805-822.
3. FAO, IFAD, UNICEF, WFP and WHO. (2022). *The State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World 2022. Repurposing food and agricultural policies to make healthy diets more affordable*. Rome, FAO.
4. Fernández Osco, M. (2000). La ley del ayllu: justicia de acuerdos. *Revista Tinkazos: Revista boliviana deficiencias sociales*, 9-30
5. Fries, A. M. (2021). *De la chacra al fogón*. Proyecto Andino de Tecnologías Campesinas(PRATEC), Lima.
6. Golte, J. (1973). *Bauern in Peru: Entwicklungsfaktoren in der Wirtschafts-und Sozialgeschichte der indianischen Landbevölkerung von der Inka-Zeit bis heute* (Vol. 1).
7. INEI. (2023). *Evolución de la Pobreza Monetaria 2011-2022 Informe Técnico*. Lima.
8. Meza Flores, L. M. & Heindorf, C. (2023). *La M'inka, el Ayni y el Apachikuy: prácticas sociales para sistemas alimentarios en crisis*. *Revista Grifos*, 32(59), 01-18.
9. MIDIS & PMA (2019). *Mapa de vulnerabilidad a la inseguridad alimentaria ante la recurrencia de fenómenos de origen natural, 2018*. Lima. 198 p
10. Pomboza Tamaquiza, P. P., Navarro Garza, H., Pérez Olivera, M. A., & D. Flores Sánchez. (2017). Prácticas organizativas mixtecas asociadas con la seguridad alimentaria y su patrimonio. *Revista mexicana de ciencias agrícolas*, 8 (SPE18), 3697-3710.
11. Prada, R. (2020). *Sistematización de la práctica Apachicuy*.
12. Roberts, C. C. (1974). *Der Zusammenhang zwischen Bodenreform und wirtschaftlicher Entwicklung: der Fall Peru* (No. 83). Duncker & Humblot. Berlin: 179p
13. Tittone, P., Fernández, M., El Mujtar, V.E., Preiss, P. V., Sarapura, S., Laborda, L., Mendoça, M.A., Alvarez, V.E., Fernandez, G.B., Petersen, P. & I. M. Cardoso. (2021). Emerging responses to the COVID-19 crisis from family farming and the agroecology movement in Latin America—A rediscovery of food, farmers and collective action. *Agricultural Systems*, 190, 103098
14. Torres Carrillo, A. (2002). Vínculos comunitarios y reconstrucción social. *Revista Colombiana de educación*, 43(2), 43-68.