



Seminar

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Searching for the New Human: Glacier Melt, Anthropogenic Change and Self Reflection in Andean Pilgrimage

Tuesday, 15 September 2020, 2:15 p.m.

Due to the precautions imposed by the current Corona pandemic, the Thunberg Hall will be closed to the public until further notice.

You are therefore invited to join the seminar via Zoom instead:
<https://uu-se.zoom.us/j/69588482725>

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ABOUT KARSTEN PAERREGAARD

Karsten Paerregaard received his PhD (1990) and Danish doctoral degree (2009) in Anthropology from the University of Copenhagen, where he was Associate Professor for a number of years. From 2012 to 2017, Paerregaard was Chair Professor of Social Anthropology at the University of Gothenburg, where he worked until 2020. As Professor Emeritus, he continues as an active researcher. Paerregaard has spent eight years conducting field research in Peru, where he is Honorary Doctor at the National University of the Center of Peru. Paerregaard has also been Visiting Professor at University of Florida on two occasions, and in 2010-11 he was Research Fellow at Woodrow Wilson Center, Washington DC.

Paerregaard's publications include almost 100 books and articles that mostly deal with three research themes: culture/rituals, migration/identity and climate change/water management and the multiple ways in which these intersect. Among his most prominent works is a trilogy of ethnographic monographs examining Peruvian migration: one describing how Andean people move from Peru's highlands to its major cities; another how Peruvians migrate to the US, Spain, Italy, Japan, Argentina and Chile; and a third how migrants maintain ties to Peru through remittance sending. More recently, Paerregaard has studied how climate change causes water scarcity and creates social conflicts in Peru. The focus of this research is on how Andean communities perceive and respond to climate change and how the institutional setting promulgated by Peru's new water law shapes the country's water governance.

At SCAS, Paerregaard will complete a book manuscript that reviews field data from the past 35 years in Peru and examines how Andean people change their migration practices and remold their culture to adapt to climate change.

ABSTRACT

Arguing in favor of anthropology's humanity centered research tradition, my presentation examines how the encounter with human remains on the bedrock of retreating glaciers shapes not only the notion of divinity and power underpinning Andean pilgrimage but also the pilgrims' identity as a species. The presentation asks: How do the pilgrims account for their own and other humans' impact on Andean glaciers? How does the pilgrims' experience of anthropogenic change challenge their ideas of human/non-human interactions? And, lastly, who is the new human emerging from this experience? My point is that climate change both secularizes the world, as the pilgrims know it, and lends them a new experience of transcendence. By causing glacier retreat climate change strips Andean mountains of their divine powers. But by disclosing other people's leftovers on the glaciers' bedrock, it also offers the pilgrims a new perspective on humans' role as the planet's steward.