

Tinkuy Film Synopsis

Created in the stunning Vilcanota Range of the Southern Andes of Peru, 'Tinkuy' brings us to a world in the process of emerging from the clouds. Atop craggy passes and in valleys still free from roads, alpacas outnumber people, condors carry good fortune on enormous wings, and families subsist on potatoes they collectively coax from vertical mountain slopes. Within this landscape is the Community of Q'eros, comprised of five indigenous communities balanced on the edge of the sierra and the fertile jungle below. From their perch at 14,000 feet, the Q'eros believe that they are the last existing population directly descended from the Incas, attributing their survival of the Spanish Conquest to protection provided by their sacred mountains, the Apus.

When the Q'eros speak of the outside invasions today, however, they note that they are losing the power to call upon the Apus as their ancestors did. Instead, young Q'eros are looking to each other to advocate for their community and stop the bulldozers, the miners, and the helicopters full of bioprospectors. They seek protection from these modern invasions by increasing community organization and engaging with outside institutions through petitions and meetings. The arrival of the video camera, and eventually the knowledge to be able to use it independently, has opened broad avenues of access for their activism. Through online distribution, they hope that an international reach will make the camera a tool of political representation, access, and a means of recruiting support from sympathetic and powerful audiences on a global scale.

One of these young Q'eros is Fredy Flores Machaca, a twenty-three year old campesino, community advocate, filmmaker, and our guide throughout our journey in Q'eros. For three weeks Fredy leads us over passes and through valleys to the five communities of Q'eros, initiating discussions about the forces threatening the nation while at the same time introducing the concept of using film--and one day self-produced film--to support the communities in their efforts. Among the issues raised: the two roads that are approaching the communities from opposite directions; the imminent tourism that is sure to accompany these roads; the gold and petroleum mines that are beginning to operate on community land; the traditional customs that are disappearing, and related to this, the exodus of community members to nearby towns where they can pursue modern lifestyles. In this way, the film both creates and records a community dialogue at a crucial moment in the Q'eros' interaction with the outside world, allowing the voices of the communities to guide its focus and its message.

As an infamously closed community, the very fact that the Q'eros allow these discussions to be documented by outside filmmakers is an indication of the changing times. Both the Q'eros and the audience, however, are aware that permission to film has been granted with the expectation that the product will support the nation's efforts to advocate for itself. Further expressing their commitment to this goal, the filmmakers lead video production workshops in each of the communities they visit with the objective of empowering the Communities of Q'eros to one day produce its own films. We watch as Fredy, both filmmaker and indigenous Q'ero, teaches basic filming and computer skills to his *campanarios* and explains to them the potential that film has as a political tool and as a means of preserving traditional customs and values that are quickly disappearing. Thus while the filmmakers, their technology and the video workshops are an intrusion of the outside world in themselves, we understand that the Q'eros are already using some of these outside forces to strengthen the community and their voices. Similarly, community members talk of the improved quality of life that tourism and the roads will provide: access to sugar, salt, and other staples, as well as an income to supplement their subsistence lifestyle.

As community members discuss their future and interact with the newly introduced technology, the tasks ahead seem enormous. Are the Q'eros naive or wise in welcoming tourists, roads, and even the filmmakers? Will the Communities of Q'eros have the political strength and cohesiveness it needs to direct development toward its best interests? Like the filmmakers, we are caught within the process of change that is coming to Q'eros. The Q'eros have allowed us into their isolated communities so that they might be heard, but what will we do with their words? In the Quechua language that is spoken in Q'eros, 'tinkuy' means "a meeting of two worlds." The process of creating 'Tinkuy' fully embodies this word by bringing together of technology and tradition, but so does distributing its finished product to a global audience. Despite their wariness of outsiders, the Communities of Q'eros has decided to take its chances by agreeing to make this film. The potential for its benefit is huge; the alternative of remaining silent is almost certainly worse.

Mana Studios in collaboration with the Communities of Q'eros
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