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# VOICES IN SILENCE: TOWARDS A SOMATIC LANGUAGE OF MEMORY AND CARE

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## ABSTRACT

This paper explores the effects of hospitality rites and the co-creation of common spaces as a means to achieve transitional justice in Peru, 20 years after the 1980–2000 internal armed conflict. It describes a tea ceremony in La Hoyada, a place used by the Army as a clandestine burial ground. A foreign act of hospitality breaks the temporality of the site; mindful actions create silence, and the voices of people are better heard. This work describes the development of an incipient methodology, an intimate language of presence, and how video recordings of participants' testimonies captured the feelings arising in a one-time silent event.

*Keywords:* transitional justice, tea ceremony, missing, Peru

## VOCES EN EL SILENCIO: HACIA UN LENGUAJE SOMÁTICO DE MEMORIA Y CUIDADO

### RESUMEN

Este ensayo explora los efectos de un rito de hospitalidad y la cocreación de espacios comunes como medio de justicia transicional, 20 años después del Conflicto armado 1980-2000. Describe una ceremonia de té en La Hoyada, un lugar utilizado por el Ejército como cementerio clandestino. Un acto de hospitalidad extraño rompe la temporalidad del lugar; las acciones conscientes crean un silencio, donde las voces de las personas se escuchan mejor. El ensayo describe el desarrollo de una metodología incipiente, un lenguaje íntimo de la presencia y cómo el video de los testimonios de los participantes captó los sentimientos surgidos en un acontecimiento silencioso y único.

*Palabras clave:* justicia transicional, ceremonia de té, conflicto armado, Perú

## VOZES NO SILÊNCIO: PARA UMA LINGUAGEM SOMÁTICA DA MEMÓRIA E DO CUIDADO

### RESUMO

O ensaio explora os efeitos dos ritos de hospitalidade e a co-criação de espaços comuns como meio de justiça transicional, 20 anos após o Conflito armado 1980-2000. Descreve uma cerimónia do chá em La Hoyada, um local utilizado pelo exército peruano como cemitério clandestino. Uma cerimónia estrangeira quebra a temporalidade do local; ações conscientes criam silêncio para que as vozes das pessoas possam ser mais bem ouvidas. O ensaio descreve o desenvolvimento de uma metodologia incipiente, uma linguagem íntima de presença, e a forma como a gravação em vídeo dos testemunhos dos participantes ajudou a captar os sentimentos que surgiram num evento único e silencioso.

*Keywords:* justiça transicional, cerimónia do chá, conflito armado, Peru

## VOICES IN SILENCE: TOWARDS A SOMATIC LANGUAGE OF MEMORY AND CARE<sup>1</sup>

— *Black Screen* —

*Alan Garcia never told us, “Forgive me. I made a mistake.” That is what all of us who were affected were waiting for.*

These words are the opening sequence of *Tea for Memory*, the video<sup>2</sup> register of a ceremony performed among members of the National Association of Relatives of Abducted, Detained, and Missing Persons of Peru (Asociación Nacional de Familiares de Secuestrados, Detenidos y Desaparecidos del Perú, ANFASEP) and the son of a state agent. This essay is an account of the second iteration of a more extended project that took place over burial grounds in La Hoyada, Ayacucho, the province most affected by the 1980–2000 internal armed conflict in Peru.

The basis for the project is the understanding that play, arts, rituals, and celebrations are tools for helping people rebuild personal and societal links unravelled by disasters and violence (International Organization for Migration [IOM], 2021). The project methodology is grounded in hospitality: an engineered performance device that creates feelings of rapport among people participating in it, focusing on the private rather than on a public or mass event. Hospitality is explored in the form of a Japanese tea ceremony. Thus, the project aims to test how the performance of hospitality can work as a tool for transitional justice, promoting memory and acknowledgement. The key to attaining this is presence and mindfully *being there* in a specific space and time.

This essay is based on field notes woven in a patchwork of images, narration, and poetry. The first set of notes describes (a) what the author understands by transitional justice and how performing arts contribute to it, (b) the context, (c) how the general aims of a tea ceremony are congruent with those of transitional justice, and (d) the steps we followed to build a shared space. The second section contains field notes on the tea ceremony in Ayacucho (focusing on tools, people, and space), aiming to spell out the aspects of a mostly silent event. It expands on the curating of the video, which is integral to this text, and on the presented testimonies.

### AIMING JUSTICE: TRANSITIONING TO MEMORY AND RECOGNITION

Transitional justice refers to “the full range of processes and mechanisms associated with a society’s attempts to come to terms with a legacy of large-scale abuses in order to ensure accountability, serve justice and achieve reconciliation” (United Nations Security Council [UNSC], 2004, p. 4). Thus, transitional justice requires multi-modal efforts to heal the self and society. Beyond judicial mechanisms, transitional justice can be interpreted as bringing people together, coming to terms with the legacies of the past and preventing society-dividing events from happening again.

1 An interview on the event described here was published as Ormeño, J. (2023). Reflections on Silence and Ritualised Hospitality. *Research in Drama Education: The Journal of Applied Theatre and Performance*, 28(1), 83-91.

2 The video is available at <https://vimeo.com/541302058>

Arts are tools for building trust and mending relationships between groups of people that had come apart. Aesthetics and non-verbal forms of conveying meaning “are especially well-suited to engendering creative thinking, opening people to a new awareness of themselves and each other” (Cohen, 2020, p. 2). Performing arts, particularly theatre, are a non-formal means of transitional justice (Ormeño, 2019).

In the Peruvian tradition of the last 50 years, theatre has allowed many people whose voices were stolen by violence to see themselves represented in the actors’ bodies and to reconnect vicariously with those feelings they had suppressed. “The work on the body’s memory is based upon the re-possession of one’s own experience for now and in the immediate future via a physical representation” (Losi, 2002, p. 35). Using the body and gestures allows people to overcome the limits of language and express things challenging to say for belonging to a person and people’s ways of being together. Actors channel the stories of people whose voices are in vulnerable positions or have been silenced. Performances amplify their voices and facilitate education about past events. In the case of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, a theatre troupe accompanied the public hearings and motivated people who would have remained silent to give their testimony (Lerner Febres, 2020).

Theatre and performing arts, in general, are instruments “of relationship, communication and creative expression for the construction, reconstruction and adjustment” (Losi, 2002, p. 7). Therefore, with performance, people not only remember but build new personal and collective narratives based on recognition (Ormeño, 2019; Losi, 2002). In addition to processing memory, performing arts may lead to re-establishing links between people and within people. Where war or disaster caused silence and distance, the corporeality or presence of performing arts may imply:

1. rebuilding the sense of self—putting the pieces together
2. rebuilding the social fabric:
  - a. acknowledgment (being heard by those who believe in our statements)
  - b. finding the place of the self in society by articulating a narrative

Performing arts are privileged tools in transitional justice processes because physical presence and empathy awaken memory and relatedness (Ormeño, 2017, 2019). In its developmental stage, the project in Restoring Links—exemplified by the *Tea for Memory* performance—looked for actions to accomplish transitional justice in a small private sphere. It took inspiration from Bourriaud’s (2002) relational aesthetics (Bishop, 2005)—which grounds artistic practice in the relationship among individuals—and Rirkrit Tiravanija’s *Soup/No-Soup and Curry* (2019)—where people gathered to share a meal. The project aimed to perform a hospitality act involving people with characteristics specific to a transitional justice context, particularly the Peruvian one, described in the next section. The artistic event would highlight the aspects of transitional justice that lead towards healing, the reconstruction of the self, and the social fabric. The performance would take the form of a tea gathering, following the creators’ experience with Japanese aesthetics (See *Communion Techniques and Field Notes: Preparation and Working with People* below).

### **ALAN GARCIA NEVER TOLD US, “FORGIVE ME. I MADE A MISTAKE.”**

That is what all of us who were affected were waiting for. During his first government, Alan Garcia was young, and in his second one, he had an interview at the Santa Rosa Hotel with President Angelica (may she rest in peace). He rubbed her shoulder and told her, “*Mamacita*, I made a mistake that time because I was young, and now, I am older and more mature. I know how to think, and now I have returned to give you all good compensation.” This was the conversation he had with President *mama* Angelica Mendoza.

The voice of Rodomila Segovia Rojas—a member of ANFASEP—indicates concrete people, time, places, actions occurring in Peru, feelings arising out of them, and the long aftermath, in which promises of redress have not been enough.

According to figures from the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Peru (Comisión de la Verdad y Reconciliación, CVR), 69,000 people were killed or went missing between 1980 and 2000; of them, 26,259 people disappeared or were killed by armed groups and state agents the Department of Ayacucho (CVR, 2014, p. 14). During the internal armed conflict, the Peruvian Army set up Military Base 51, known as Los Cabitos, 15 km from the department’s capital downtown. Los Cabitos was an operation centre that would help the Peruvian Government to secure control of the area. It became a centre for human rights violations. Only for 1983 and 1984, the CVR reported 138 cases that followed the pattern of “arbitrary detention, taking the detainee to a military facility, torture, selective liberation, extrajudicial execution and disappearance” (CVR, 2014, p. 220; Jave, 2017, p. 10). Bodies were dismembered and scattered in random mountain gorges and roads.

In 1985, the Army built facilities to incinerate bodies during the night in La Hoyada, the seven-hectare lot adjacent to Los Cabitos, used by them as a dumpster and clandestine burial ground. The incinerator became a machine for silencing personal and family narratives (Asociación Pro Derechos Humanos [APRODEH], 2014).

Missing people leave a hole in the social fabric, an empty space surrounded by broken threads that connect people’s lives (Edkins, 2011, 2015; Stockwell, 2014). When people are classified as *missing*, the tag marks an absence that can only be relieved when their locations and stories are disclosed, or when their bodies are found (Edkins, 2015).

In Ayacucho, the close relatives searching for their beloved ones also lived in fear. One person looking for a missing one could also go missing or get hurt. However, searching in groups reduced the risk. They joined other people and walked together following rumours about abandoned bodies in deserted areas and other places. They also knocked on the doors of police stations, military bases, and other authorities, demanding information (Ramos López, 2020). In 1983, a group led by Angelica Mendoza formed ANFASEP with the idea of learning about their relatives.







▲ *Figure 1. ANFASEP and Investigators Gather around the Gas Tank during an Excavation Journey in La Hoyada*

Note. From International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) 2009.

Twenty years later, ANFASEP and other organisations excavated La Hoyada and other sites. They found at least 109 bodies, including 54, which were complete. La Hoyada showed evidence of crimes: tied hands and feet, bullet impacts on the back of the heads, foetuses, and children (APRODEH, 2014). For the relatives, the trees and the soil were witnesses that listened to the screams of tortured people. They witnessed their relatives' fate. Thus, it became a site for remembering the missing, especially those never found. The excavation grids and the abandoned buildings are pieces of their memory. ANFASEP had the idea of building a memorial "for people to see, for future generations to remember what happened and not repeat atrocities. For people to know, for it to never repeat, and for us to remember" (García, A., personal communication, 24 January 2020; Ramos López, 2020, p. 126; for discussion on memorials, as cited in Hite, 2012, pp. 1–4; see Bagnall & Rowland, 2010). The quest for information and bodies continues to this day.

In 2013, ANFASEP's demands were met by authorities, who designated La Hoyada as a protected site. They also planned to build a memorial site (Ramos López, 2020). Mrs. Angelica Mendoza died in 2017 without being able to find her missing son. President Alan García's assurances of adequate reparation remained unfulfilled upon his death in 2019.



In 2021, the participatory designs for a memorial project led by Antonio Graña, Awaq Estudio, and Estudio Shicras were completed before our tea gathering. Government officials arrived on the same day of our event to announce the approval of the designs.

This is just a part of the history of the Ayacucho locals that welcomed us into their lives. We would travel with nothing other than our promise to listen to their stories, perform the ritual, and assist them in any way we could during our brief stay.

## COMMUNION TECHNIQUES

The Japanese tea ceremony consists of gathering around a cup of tea. It is related to the ritual of libation, present in many cultures. Sharing a drink is a sign of alliance and reconciliation. The cup of tea is an excuse or motive for these communion acts.

Tea contains caffeine, tannins, and amino acids that promote concentration and relaxation (Chen *et al.*, 2018). In Japan, one of its uses until the 14th century was maintaining Buddhist monks' concentration during their meditations. In that century, Sen no Rikyu and others systematised the tea-making procedures (Tanaka, 1973). Westerners call these procedures *ceremonies* because of their links to rituals. However, for Rikyu, *Chado* was about mixing tea and hot water. The task sounds very simple, but tea preparation is complex in practice.

The host uses powdered green tea (matcha) and follows a series of measured steps using certain implements. Many arts (painting, ceramics, calligraphy, poetry, textiles) and techniques (agriculture, architecture, metallurgy) converge in realising a one-time event in the service of hospitality (Channell, 2017). The specific procedures and etiquette are the sedimentation of gestures or actions that express one's true heart (Ueda, 2021). The host overrides their ego and collaborates with the guest to generate an environment of peace and harmony that revitalises the spirit.

The tea ceremony is usually surrounded by an outdoor space, typically a garden—symbolising the beauty of the natural order—that frames and contains the tea preparation area, where there are fewer elements and less cognitive noise. The balance of these spaces resizes human beings and reminds them of their place in the natural order. The host arranges the sharing area for the better enjoyment of the guests. The space demands nothing. It highlights or acknowledges the presence of the guests.

Different schools of tea point out concurrent objectives for the ceremony. For instance, the Urasenke School promotes “finding peace by sharing a cup of tea” (Sen, 1979). The Ueda school values discerning beauty and evoking the life essence shared by all living things (Ueda, 2021). The underlying intention is to co-create a space where hearts can speak and recognise each other, leading towards memory and creating rapport.

Transitional justice involves means for societies to overcome the evils of the past, including the possibility of law reforms and the public use of arts and rituals to create better societies (Cohen, 2020). Our goals are focused on small acts with concrete people. The performance of hospitality in the form of a tea ceremony coincides with our justice goals of creating a space that lets hearts speak their memories and have a restorative impact. The ongoing project relies



on foreign aesthetics to enhance the visibility of how we can show care and recognise each other as citizens sharing a history. The next section narrates the beginning of the project and the involvement with ANFASEP.

### **FIELD NOTES: PREPARATION AND WORKING WITH PEOPLE**

In November 2019, during the commemoration of the passing of Mama Angelica Mendoza—the ANFASEP founder—Mrs Adelina García and I spoke about CVR and ANFASEP’s role in the creation of the performance *Buenas Noticias* (*Good News*, directed by Alejandro Clavier). As we developed a sense of rapport, or maybe just out of courtesy, she kindly invited me to visit them in Ayacucho to *learn more*. I sincerely answered, “I will be there. Maybe I can join you for another performance.”

In ensuing communications, ANFASEP reiterated the invitation to meet them in Ayacucho. However, the pandemic lockdowns disrupted our plans and any possible events in 2020.

### **SILENCE**

Some pieces of a broken set in your pocket... A recollection.  
Identity bits [...] Come around in a weird harmony  
To re-weave [...] A new poetry.

(Caption fragments from *Hanabi*, 2019)

Silence could be a way of saying and creating space for people to talk and listen. In the video-performance *Hanabi* (2019), my co-creator and I used Japanese aesthetics inspired by the tea ceremony to elicit the consideration of one’s identity. The careful movement encompasses an aesthetic and a way of mindfully relating with objects that stir personal and family memories. Japanese aesthetics and visual rhythm aimed directly at those stories silenced out of fear when Japanese descendants changed their surnames to avoid incarceration and dispossession as the Peruvian Government had broken diplomatic ties with Japan at the end of World War II. In *Hanabi*, silence creates a space, where the public can hear the silence of the room and pay attention to details, discovering unspoken messages.

### **MAKING CONTACT AGAIN AND TRIP TO AYACUCHO**

We aimed for a concrete gesture of care with the ANFASEP people. Given the pandemic, any performance should fulfil some requirements: (a) include only a small number of people to reduce the risk; (b) be simple enough to reduce the burden of preparations; (c) be adaptable; (d) be focused on what we could build together; and, most importantly, (e) take place in Ayacucho (where their history occurred).

Given our previous experience with sensations arisen by Japanese aesthetics in *Hanabi*, we decided to use a simpler version of the Japanese tea ceremony as a framework for interaction.

The Japanese ritual is a performance that has a certain rhythm and follows curated movements that breach temporality. It is an invitation to mindfulness and creates an environment auspicious for hearts to express and mouths to speak. The mindful movement would convey care. This was a draft methodology for achieving transitional justice results at a smaller scale: (i) initiating and sustaining contact; (ii) performing an act of sharing/caring that shows acknowledgement of the other person(s). We would have to sit together and feel the work of hospitality underlying the external foreign appearance of the event, caring and allowing care to happen.

A proposal for a meeting to explain our idea reached the association in late 2020, followed by radio silence. At that time, during a gap in the mandatory lockdowns, we tested our idea at the Place of Memory, Justice, and Social Inclusion (Lugar de la Memoria, Justicia e Inclusión Social, LUM), a cyclopean building in the capital city that hosts exhibitions about the 1980–2000 Peruvian internal armed conflict. Our guest was Ana Correa, an actress, activist, and teacher representing people affected by the conflict and women in Peru.

We identified two challenges. First, we needed to get more acquainted with the location to reduce contingencies. Second, the records had to avoid only focusing on the host. Weaving trust and putting images along with words is essential. Another less expected lesson, corroborated in other private events, was that the silence of the ritual elicited memories in people. Silence invited to utter words. An implicit aspect of our methodology is (iii) to let people express their feelings, allowing silence to yield to utterances.

In early 2021, I shared with ANFASEP the video recording of the ceremony at LUM. Not long after, ANFASEP invited me to participate in their meetings for the first time as a silent participant, listening to their stories and current issues. The next time, I had the opportunity to introduce myself and our video *Tea for Peace*. The ceremony was alien to them, but they liked that Ana Correa took part in the event at LUM. They knew her from her interpretation of Rosa Cuchillo, a fictional character with a story like theirs. During our next meeting, they invited me to their place. We would have a week and a half to reach Ayacucho, provided that there were no new lockdowns.

Upon arrival, we visited the Association offices and a museum near downtown to show our respect. While I originally planned to hold the tea gathering there, their governing board left a message inviting us to have it in La Hoyada in two days. This would add another layer to our small act of care, for La Hoyada is not only a vast space but a place where bodies were destroyed, and stories of people erased.

Our methodology would have to grow to depict knowledge from the interaction between people and the site. Caring about people and voices would still be at the centre of our intent, but, in this case, there would be an opportunity to use the meaning sedimented in La Hoyada in a homoeopathic way, using silence to express, fire to create an invigorating drink rather than destroying (Cf. Lehrer & Al, 2011). The results of this curation would be more evident in the video recording.



## NOTES FROM LA HOYADA

*The yellow grass, hazy blue sky. It is 9 AM, and the day is dull. This is good, it is not so hot. Four women, three of them in Ayacucho's traditional attire, are sitting on a bench. They could be waiting for a bus, but there is no road here, only wild grass and thorns. Behind them, as a background, the field climbs up the hill towards a long ridge from which a military base overlooks the valley; people have also built small cottages. This would have been unthinkable twenty years ago. There is expectation.*

*A young person approaches to tell them it is time. They walk in line following a recently cleared path. It goes through the steadier areas of an excavation grid that cannot be seen clearly. Weed, cactuses, and thorns have grown during the pandemic. An abandoned building is now part of the background. A person dressed in green clothes has been waiting for them in the southwestern quadrant of a rug made up of Peruvian blankets called "Llicllas". A kettle with boiling water and a wooden chest rest in the Northwestern corner. The man in green uncovers some tableware after the women sit. The air is solemn, and people can hear the boiling water and the wind. The smell of wooden incense scatters with the gentle breeze. The person in green offers some sweets to the women.*

*The chest is opened, disclosing some tools that are placed according to old Japanese tea ceremony traditions. The preparation begins by purifying the tools. Only the sound of water is heard, as no one seems to be breathing. A mild tension. Water flows breaking the silence. The first bowl of tea is prepared as the main guest eats her sweet. A small black bowl with golden lines and small red applications that resemble flower buds. The man in green drops a silly joke, and the women smile one after the other. The tension lowers, but there is expectation. The bowl with its bright green content is offered.*

*This new flavour contrasts with the familiar one of the sweets. "It is very green," "Like fresh coca leaves," "Yes, warm and refreshing." Curiosity and expectation float as the next bowls are served. The women agree as they drink their tea. The first bowl returns, it is cleaned, and fresh tea is given to the youngest woman. The man has been nearly a vanishing presence until now, a mere gesture. Unable to hold a pleasant emptiness, his eyes shine as the faces of the women show contentment.*

*Not much is said, but there is a sense of rapport as if a lot were spoken without uttering a word. It had not been an hour since they were invited in, but time felt suspended. The man announces he will clean the tools. The cups are put away, the tools return to the chest, and its lid is closed, yet the silent dialogue of the heart lingers. An aid approaches carefully and hints that the long-awaited government officers have arrived. Hugs and laughter occur. Time flows again. People move to assist the authorities.*

This section aims to elucidate the diverse aspects of the intervention using the performative categories of people (character), costume, tool, and space. It also provides an account of the video recording including testimonies and how they contribute to keep the memory of a one-time event alive.



## EXPLICATING MEANINGS

Many things and people met during our gathering. With our presence, gestures, and will, we aimed to form a bond integral to transitional justice. Some pieces and symbols that came together changed their meaning; others reinforced it.

**People, tools, and outfits.** People taking part in the gathering brought along their stories and those of their families.

- *Adelina García Mendoza*. President of ANFASEP. On December 1, 1983, before sunrise, 25 army men broke into Adelina's home in Huamanga. After beating her husband, Zósimo Tenorio Prado, they took him. That was the last time Adelina saw him alive
- *Juana Carrión Jaules*. Board member and former president of ANFASEP. She comes from a family of artisans and weavers. Her brother, Ricardo Carrión, an Economics student, was detained on July 26, 1984. Her other brother, Teófilo Carrión, who served in the Army, was also detained on August 23, 1989.
- *Rodomila Segovia Rojas*. Social assistant of ANFASEP. On May 26, 1984, her grandmother, Maura Rodríguez, her uncle, Santiago Rojas, and her aunt, Francisca Najarro, and other people were captured by a non-state armed group near Seccelambras, a rural community in Ayacucho. Witnesses report that, after being accused of cooperating with the government, Santiago was tortured, and his throat was slit. Maura and Francisca, who was pregnant, were beaten and thrown into the river. Bodies have not been recovered.
- *María Elena Tarqui Palomino*. Secretary of ANFASEP. Her father, Ignacio Tarqui Ccayo, was captured, killed, and disappeared by state agents in 1988.
- *Javier Ormeño Castro*. Teacher and humanitarian. His father was a member of the police forces and, at times, the government-appointed authority in Chincheros. Members of his family were part of the military during the 1980s.

Tea masters state that a tea ceremony only requires tea powder and a container to mix it with hot water. In practice, the host will use various tools whose selection and handling become important ways of expression (Anderson, 1987). The effectiveness of communication would only be apparent during each performance. Some of the tools with their intended meaning are:

- A tea caddy in *negoro*. A lacquering technique that suggests that something is worn out.
- A tea scoop in the favourite shape of the Urasenke XV headmaster, conveying a wish for peace.
- Tiny white and purple flowers kept around the preparation area.
- A tea bowl fixed with *kintsugi*. This repair technique highlights the joints and broken parts, telling a story of an object that was put back together.
- A black iron kettle. Its pine motifs coincide with the name of the incense employed *old pine*. Pine has multiple meanings. It represents a path and a tree, linking the worlds of spirits and humans, and transcendence (Gardner, 1992).
- A tea whisk with red and white strings that are the colours of the Peruvian flag.
- Three guests wearing formal traditional Ayacucho's outfits and traditional braids. They also wear hats with broad black ribbons, silken skirts, and matching capes. The youngest guest wore a plain black shirt and pants; the hairstyle was simple and sober. The host wore a military green kimono. This time, the colour meant service rather than harm.





▲ *Figure 2. ANFASEP People Taking Part in Desserts Served before Tea*

*Note.* Still captured from *Tea for memory* (Mora, 2021).

**Space: La Hoyada as an Actor.** There is a certain quality of being in a place (Casey, 2003). Certain environments produce “specific atmospheres and experiences” (Horton Fraleigh, 2018, p. 13). The space and time configuration of places afford and elicit specific movements, feelings, and cognition from us. It is not magic. We perceive smells, lights, temperature, and sounds, and react to them. Affordance and elicitation are how places speak to us. If we have an idea of the history of a place, our preconceptions get filled with sensory impressions, materiality, and distance, disclosing the relationship among objects. Doing something, even walking, is a way to establish dialogue with a location. When people enter a place with their ideas and habits, they trigger processes that change what was there, and, in turn, they are also changed (Horton Fraleigh, 2018).

Coming together and preparing tea intended to create a bond between people and space. Bringing an alien aesthetic to La Hoyada created a gap (ma) in its temporality. A tea ceremony curates a place for stepping away from ordinary life. Silence elicits mindful movement and appreciation. As much as they elicit silence, time stops so people can express their hearts, bond, and rejuvenate. The transient space we created with ANFASEP was not empty. La Hoyada and its memories were also present in us.

While it is possible to prepare tea in various settings, tearooms offer a more controlled space for the experience. A standard tearoom measures 4.5 tatamis (roughly 2.70 x 2.70 meters), not including the preparation area (mizuya) or the tokonoma (alcove) used for displaying flowers and scrolls. According to study notes and Anderson (1987), the room can be divided into nine directions: four cardinal points, the in-betweens, and the centre. Each of them has a meaning inherited from divination cultures. The ceremony occurred over the incinerator area, where bodies and memories were destroyed. The fuel tank served as an empty tokonoma,

reminding us of the source of fuel that destroyed evidence. The military base is up north, up the hill. In the northeast, the military base access gate and road were used to bring bodies. There is a commemorative cross beyond, just at the end of the lot. The road, the gate, and the Valley are located in the south.

La Hoyada is located around 13 km northeast of the city centre. It is the area between the military base Los Cabitos at the north end of the airport and the Yanamilla prison.

*La Hoyada* means *depression* or *big hollow*. The airport landing track and the military base lay on a long ridge that allowed military control of the area. During the armed conflict, guards on sentry towers shot any person approaching. For this reason, the area was mainly uninhabited, but as excavations for retrieving missing people progressed, groups with diverse interests began to occupy the area.

Yielding to population pressure, with houses built on the excavation grid, the area of La Hoyada shrank to nearly one-third of its original size in 2005. A commemorative cross marks the southern border. People pray in front of it. It is said that the cross prevented further unlawful occupation of the excavated area. Certain recognition statements from regional authorities allowed building fences. Currently, the official area of La Hoyada stands at 7,054 hectares (70,543.780 sqm) with no real buffer zone (Jave, 2017).

Towards the north, the standing building is the gas tank that fuelled the incinerator. It has served as a reference point for excavations and as a meeting point.

The relatives of missing people consider La Hoyada a place for the souls, where they light candles and offer tobacco, coca leaves, and beverages. Crosses mark empty graves. This is clear when people talk to them. Coming here to remember, the relatives change the meaning of the place from pain and oblivion to a place of rest and memory that helps them heal their mourning. From what they tell, it can be inferred that these rituals, masses, and yearly events are a form of dialogue with the missing people who look after them. Keeping the memory alive in the absence of bodies and information helps them cope with the incertitude of death and continue living. La Hoyada is a living sanctuary inhabited by memories that speak as one is there and listens to its silence.

## **MAKING SILENCE TO SPEAK**

Video recording is an attempt to preserve something that, by its nature, is fleeting and unique. The original intention was to keep records as an accountability mechanism to the people involved. The video would tell the story of the event. It would allow ANFASEP and us to reproduce knowledge by amplifying the experience in the sense of sharing the events with more people in more places. This is important for the memory aims of transitional justice.

In making the record, we faced some challenges. The ceremony takes place almost silently and lasts from 20 to 30 minutes. The host silenced his voice to allow things to happen. His presence was limited to serving others. While this is manageable during the performance, a video of that length of silent shots had little chance of being observed in a global context, where videos are from 15 to 30 seconds long. Also, during the ceremony, there was a lot of



▲ *Figure 3. ANFASEP Governing Board Waiting for the Ceremony to Begin*

Note. Still taken from *Tea for memory* (Mora, 2021).

information arising out of the mere presence of these people. Most of the physical movements were indeed carried out by the host as he served tea, but the guests showed most of the emotional movements.

Rather than maintaining silence or accompanying movements with music or ambient sounds, as in a previous iteration, we used a selection of the testimonies that ANFASEP had asked us to record.

In the previous months, my co-creator and I listened to their testimonies on more than one occasion. Now they would be recorded. It was natural for their stories to be told in a place where they remember their missing relatives within a ceremony these women interpreted as a commemoration. ANFASEP people preferred La Hoyada to an indoor setting, and the video director agreed to that as long as the site had a meaning that added to the testimonies. With the idea of contributing to building an archive of the association's oral history, we provided them with complete and abridged versions of these recordings, which they could use for other purposes, such as the museum and applying for grants.

Given the previous remote interaction and candid approach, ANFASEP people felt comfortable sharing their testimonies in front of the camera. The director selected fragments that matched the ceremony rhythm and pace during the edition process. A background sound enhanced the sensation of gravitas or suspension, while the speech informed a potential



audience about the history of La Hoyada and ANFASEP. Here, the tea ceremony becomes a motif rather than a central piece of an act of remembering. Stories of victims, their relatives, and the site come to the forefront of the video. The following is a selection of the fragments included in *Tea for Memory: records of a performance at La Hoyada: He patted her shoulder and told her, “[...] now I have returned to give you all good compensation.”*

The first words of Rodomila Segovia ground the event into specific people, actions, and places. It speaks of years of neglect. The late president Alan García spoke with the founder of ANFASEP, mama Angelica Mendoza, ensuring her through a gesture of care that things would be different after years of slander. These people were victims of the conflict and were often accused by the authorities of belonging to terrorist organisations.

After the 2001-2003 Truth Commission, while there was some progress in eliciting atrocities and achieving redress for people affected by the internal armed conflict during the second term of Alan García (2006–2011), this was not perceived as sufficient. The construction of the Place of Memory (LUM) in Lima contributed to transitional justice but the site at La Hoyada remained unattended and even threatened by invaders.

*She knew her son was detained in the base...*

Other testimonies, such as one of Adelina García, convey the terrible truth that human rights violations occurred publicly, but people remained silent out of fear. In the case of the relatives, the feeling of denial came out of their hope that those atrocities were not happening to them. Other fragments, such as Juana Carrión's, narrate the story of the place, the aftermath, and difficulties in retrieving signs of their missing relatives.

*They hid them in this place... After some time, they took the bodies and burned them... Only 109 have been found.*

Listening to their heartfelt testimonies and the tea ceremony were little acts of acknowledgement that we used to build interpersonal bonds, contributing to the recognition between people and peacebuilding from the private sphere. This gathering was not simply for the sake of a tea ceremony. Our personal stories linked with the tea ceremony were instead a reason for a deeper exchange, a frame for building relationships. Space, time, feelings, and meanings converged in our meeting.

Our intention of performing a little gesture of care was fulfilled but could not end there. We put our best foot forward for the video to work as an amplifier of ANFASEP voices. This was our way of sustaining our actions despite our office jobs and lives in other cities.

Also available on Vimeo, YouTube, and other social media, *Tea for Memory: records of a performance at La Hoyada* has been disseminated in human rights and experimental film festivals in the Americas, Europe, Africa, and Asia. The video has Spanish, English, French, and Japanese subtitles. Quarterly, we inform ANFASEP about the festivals that the video has reached. We want them to know that their voices are heard, and their stories acknowledged in other parts of the world.

Just like the video recording, this essay is a way to capture the details and feelings of a one-time event. The next section describes the tea-gathering aftermath and the continuation of the project.

## LOOKING BACK AND LOOKING FORWARD

The tea ceremony held in 2021 was our way to answer ANFASEP's invitation, being there with them in Ayacucho, sharing their memories. The gathering could be considered homoeopathic medicine. It created a silent environment, a vacuum that allowed us to listen beyond words. The ceremony's contemplative aesthetic can be used for building links and dialogue among people, in line with the objectives of transitional justice. The created space showed the interconnectedness of the participants, their stories, and the burial site.

That very day, government officials announced the approval of the memorial site designs and the possibility of its construction. The participants expressed their wish to have another gathering after its completion. More importantly, we established a rapport that continues to this day.

The project has continued, maintaining the framework of mindful acts of hospitality, adapting to different contexts and possibilities. The working hypothesis is that mindful movement creates an environment of appreciation and rapport. While it is possible to keep holding the Japanese tea ceremony, the project has been able to integrate alternative ceremony tools, aiming to eventually replace the Japanese elements after identifying the structural ones. Palo santo and other aromatic woods have replaced incense, and meals include local produce. Smells and flavours awaken family memories and promote union among people. In the future, it would be possible to explore diverse cultural practices of sharing food and beverage that incorporate some normative social aspects (Pitelka, 2003).

Two grants from the Pontificia Universidad Católica del Perú and the Peruvian Ministry of Culture have allowed continuing the research in 2023, bringing small acts of hospitality to other situations in which transitional or restorative justice is required. Each encounter would have particularities.

The project has performed tea ceremonies with Venezuelan migrants who have arrived in Peru during the past ten years. They have formed a symphonic orchestra joining local musicians in a venture to promote culture as a contribution to society. Their testimonies reflect on their journeys and relationships with their beloved ones.

A tea gathering was organized for people living with HIV in Lima. There were conversations about partners, sex practices, stigma, support groups, disclosing their status to their families, and awareness-raising activities.

In Puerto Maldonado, there were ceremonies with the members of the Japanese Peruvian Association. Since their arrival to the jungle region in the early 20th century, this group of Japanese people have integrated with locals. Most of their descendants have lost traditions, ethnic features, and surnames. Yet, they manifested pride in belonging to a Japanese family and a community that preserves values such as trust and hospitality.





In March 2023, the project conducted a memorial performance at the ANFASEP museum, collecting stories from collaborators. Some members of the organization invited us to hold ceremonies at their homes. They expressed their feelings about the aftermath of the internal armed conflict in songs. During the International Women's Day, we tried dropping the tea ceremony aspect and served lunch to ANFASEP's female members.

The ceremony used works as a framework or tool for eliciting expression. After the events, participants reported feeling as though the movements created a bubble around them: "Despite the presence of others, it felt like it was only us." This feeling of presence is accompanied by a sense of relief.

The project is not over. Further reflection on the basic elements of hospitality is necessary. A related step forward would be starting discussions about colonial heritage or migration. After exploring the notions of space and presence, the concept of *ma* (rhythm) could be further explored as an interpersonal ethical construct (Tseng *et al.*, 2021). These would be new steps towards a poetic of care and memory.



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## FICHA TÉCNICA

# *TEA FOR MEMORY AT LA HOYADA* (*TÉ POR LA MEMORIA EN LA HOYADA*)

PERU – Video: <https://vimeo.com/541302058>

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### Director

Julio Mora

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### Producción y performance

Javier Ormeño

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### Guión

Javier Ormeño, Julio Mora

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### Participantes

Juana Carrión, Adelina García, Rodomila Segovia, Maria Elena Tarqui

**Nota:** Este video es parte de un proyecto que busca sanar espacios, corazones y memorias a través de actos de hospitalidad.

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