



Qolquepunku Glacier stands above the slopes of the Sinakara valley at, 18,209 ft above sea level on the Vilcanota mountain range, in the oriental chain of the Central Andes. The glacier is the focal point of the festival of, Qoyllur Rit'i,(Quechua, pronounced, koi-your-ree-tee), the largest Syncretic indigenous religious pilgrimage in the Western Hemisphere.

Drawing tens-of-thousands of people from Peru and northern Bolivia, Qoyllur Rit'i is the most important event on the Andean religious calendar, where native people come to celebrate the winter Solstice and the return of the Pleiades ("snow star"), to the southern sky, along with an Andean-Western adapted worship of the Lord of Quyllur Rit'i, the post-colonial Catholic church side of the story.

Currently Qolquepunku is a dying glacier, along with many others in the sub-tropical mountain range below the Equator that makes the Andean region. Ohio State University Glaciologist, Lonnie Thompson called it, "terminal" in 2009. This occurs when the natural balance of seasonal thaw and glacial regeneration is no longer possible, due to global warming causing climatological change set-off by the accumulation of carbon dioxide (co2) in the Earth's atmosphere.

Also known as the, "greenhouse effect", co2 accumulation is recognized as the unwanted fossil fuel bi-product of carbon emissions that started at the dawn of the industrial revolution in 1760, and for the subsequent 80 years, until today with the emergence of new carbon based economies such as in China and Brazil.

I photographed the Ausangate region, Qolquepunku and Qoyllur Rit'i in, 2006, 2007 and 2009. All 06 and 07 work was shot with a Hasselblad 500CM film camera, and in 09 with an added Hasselblad CFV II digital support back.

Jorge Vera, 2013