The puzzled tone in the voice of Aníbal Durán, school principal in Cusipata, rings in my ears as I remember him explaining that the children of the Chillihuani herders, who descend to the valley to continue their schooling, are always at the top of the class. "They are curious, self-confident, and always respectful," he adds. The other teachers agree. Yet for outsiders this is hard to believe. The families of these children are llama and alpaca herders who live in small adobe huts without electricity or running water. Their isolated village has neither streets nor stores, newspapers nor mail service, and only a few families own a book. Far from the mainstream of society, the Chillihuani herders feel more at home among the high peaks of their snow-covered mountains than among the population in the valley.

"It's a puzzle," the principal and teachers repeated throughout 1984–1985, when I studied the organization of irrigation among agriculturists along the hillsides of the Vilcanota Valley. Herding children made news in specific areas of study and in other activities as well. Since mathematics is the favorite topic of virtually all children in Chillihuani, it was not surprising that a fifth grader from the small school of 164 children took second place in a provincial math competition that included several larger towns. When Alicia, the third daughter of the healer Juan Mamani and his wife Luisa, lived in Cuzco with a *comadre* (godmother, Sp.), she held second place in her grade after only one year in the city. The children of Chillihuani won all the dancing contests in the district of Cusipata for three consecutive years. These and other achievements are unexpected, as competition is not encouraged in this egalitarian society high in the Peruvian Andes.

Yet despite the achievements of the members of this society, their superb organizational skills, respectful behavior, and the successful upbringing of their children, these high-altitude pastoralists have been subjected to a negative stereotype. Outsiders tend to judge them on the basis of their simple living conditions and adherence to tradition. The herders live in small adobe huts, wear homespun clothes, speak Quechua, the language of their Inca ancestors, and chew *coca* leaves. (*Coca* leaves, which have been sacred to the Incas, are still used in rituals and social interactions and release important nutritious elements when chewed.)

When I first met the herders who had descended to the valley to exchange

their goods at the Sunday market in Cusipata, I realized that the stereotype had been imposed out of total ignorance. I was struck by the elegant and respectful demeanor of the highland herders. Their culture and religious ideology also stirred my interest. Whenever I participated in fiestas in the valley, my friends and *compadres* (godparents, Sp.) explained that celebrations and rituals are much more traditional in Chillihuani, where they reach back to Inca and pre-Inca times. Others spoke about powerful shamans who live close to the permanent snow.

Life in Chillihuani sounded intriguing. I liked the people I met on the rare occasions when they descended from their high mountains, and I desperately wanted to visit their village. But I did not dare to ask, knowing that high-altitude communities close themselves to outsiders and harbor a "legendary distrust of strangers" (Flannery, Marcus, and Reynolds 1989:5).

When I returned to the Andes in 1988, my *compadre* Antolín introduced me to Juan Mamani, one of the healers from Chillihuani. As we talked about the upcoming fiesta, he spontaneously invited me to celebrate the ancient Pukllay fiesta with him and his family in his remote village.

Chillihuani was more than I had ever imagined. Fourteen years after I had first set foot in the Andes, where I had traveled widely and was engaged in anthropological research and applied work in a variety of places, I did not expect to encounter such a unique village, unique in terms of people's respectful behavior, their wisdom and worldview, and their strong adherence to tradition.

Chillihuani stands apart not only from villages in the valley but also, in some ways, from other herding societies I have known. Visitors, such as the priest who ascends to many high mountain villages once a year, and merchants who travel with their llama caravans through the settlements along the high routes from as far as Bolivia, stress that Chillihuani's herders are more respectful and cling much more to ancient traditions than do people elsewhere. They also take more pride in their appearance. Teachers who have worked there throughout the years agree with these comments. They say that the children are also much better behaved, more curious, and more creative in their approach to different tasks than children elsewhere. Several teachers stated that all this makes it worthwhile to endure long ascents and difficult living conditions in this remote village.

Strong adherence to traditional values and unwritten moral laws fosters solidarity among the herders within an atmosphere that, despite extreme poverty, radiates energy and exuberance, especially during fiestas. This does not mean that sorrow is absent, or that conflict never arises. Problems do exist

and conflict does flare up at times, but it is resolved with remarkable efficiency. Chillihuani does not fit the stereotype of the downtrodden Andean village so often referred to in the literature.

During the first years of my research among the high-altitude herders I focused primarily on rituals of respect as they are practiced during fiestas and in everyday life (Bolin 1998). Throughout these years I observed that children demonstrate respectful behavior at an early age, and I decided to study in greater depth the ways by which respect, the key value of this herding society, is instilled in children. When I asked the healer Juan Mamani and his wife Luisa what is most important in the upbringing of their children, both replied simultaneously, "We must always teach them respect."

Children constantly amaze me by the manner in which they combine politeness and responsibility toward family and community with curiosity and surprising scholastic abilities. It is equally intriguing to observe how parents socialize their children by combining their youngsters' individual needs with those of a community that depends on capable and compassionate young people to assure the survival of all in a marginal environment.

Childhood in high-altitude communities in the Andes differs considerably from childhood in mainstream society. In these remote regions, children's culture is not separate from that of adults. There are no children's stories, songs, or dances. Children participate in the adult world from an early age and soon become important members of society. They learn virtually everything they need to know through observation. It has been revealing to follow young children through adolescence—which is not a time of social and emotional upheaval but rather is considered the best time in people's lives—as they take over many of the rights and responsibilities of adults.

As one lives with Chillihuani families, it soon becomes evident that the ways children are raised in this village are highly beneficial to both family and community. Still, there are puzzling issues that are not easily understood by outsiders. I tried to get a deeper understanding of the strategies that are used to bring children to respect their social and physical environment, to be self-sufficient at a young age yet at the same time cooperate harmoniously within the community. I also tried to make sense of the ways children achieve within their society and beyond while always remaining dignified, respectful, and non-competitive. To come to grips with these seemingly contradictory questions, I focused on the following central issues:

> Given a marginal environment with periods of hunger, disease, early death, and extreme poverty, what can parents offer their children that will put

them on their way to becoming contented and well-adjusted individuals—honest, hardworking, and always ready to lend a helping hand? How can parents make children realize from an early age that they must acknowledge with gratitude what they receive to sustain their lives and that they must give, in return, to comply with the unwritten law of reciprocity?

Since children's culture as we know it does not exist in Chillihuani, where children are rapidly integrated into the world of adults, how do their personalities develop given the lack of a "childhood"?

As Chillihuani children learn almost exclusively by observation, how do they come to master complex tasks, such as playing an instrument or weaving intricate patterns into cloth?

How is it possible that in an egalitarian society, where the competitive attitude is minimal, children excel at work and play within their society and beyond its borders?

In Western society mathematics has been labeled a phobia for both students and their parents. Why would the boys and girls of Chillihuani be fascinated by mathematics and excel in that subject even before entering school? How is this interest in mathematics awakened and maintained?

In Chillihuani, both children and their parents consider adolescence to be the best time in their lives, while in North America it is seen as a time of conflict, rebellion, and power struggle between parent and child. What child-rearing strategies produce adolescents who are gentle and nonaggressive, yet self-confident and courageous even in the face of great danger?

In the chapters that follow I try to shed light on these issues as I present the concerns and strategies of the Chillihuani herders about child rearing and the maintenance of a dignified society. These people know that the perpetuation of their culture depends on the contribution children make in support of their families and for the benefit of the community. They understand that the continuation of life in their high mountains requires ancient ways of instilling respect in every new generation. The behavioral norms they show us are significant not only for their own community, but also for people elsewhere who want to build a society of respect on our all-too-disrespectful and rapidly disintegrating globe.