

Tiawanaku. Four poems by Judith Santopietro



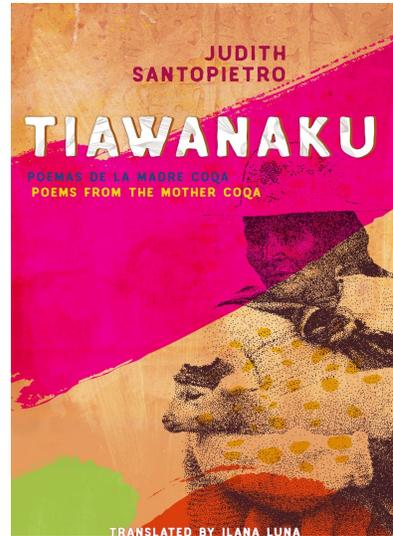
Judith Santopietro © Elena Lehmann

Judith Santopietro was born in Córdoba (Veracruz, México) in 1983, though she was also raised between Ixhuatlán del Café and Boca del Monte, native communities in the Altas Montañas to which her family belongs. There she first heard stories about *nahuales*, *chaneques*, flying women, and other extraordinary beings from the Mesoamerican world. Her mother tongue is Spanish; nevertheless, she has learned Nahuatl for political reasons and to honor her foremothers who dreamed and lived in that language. Judith holds a Master's degree from the University of Texas at Austin and has carried out research residencies in the Sierra de Zongolica and Tecamate (Veracruz), the Teresa Lozano Long Institute of Latin American Studies (Texas), and the University of Leiden (The Netherlands), as well as in New York and Bolivia.

She has published the books *Palabras de Agua* (Instituto Veracruzano de Cultura-Praxis, 2010) and *Tiawanaku. Poemas de la Madre Coqa* (Hanan Harawi Editores, 2017)—the first version in Spanish—, as well as the essay “Migrantes nahuas celebran a Santiago Apóstol: un ejercicio de comunalidad en Nueva York” (Universidad Autónoma de Chiapas, 2017/ Leiden University Press, 2016). She was awarded the Lázara Meldiú National Poetry Prize in 2014 and was a finalist for the International Literary Prize “Aura Estrada” in 2017. She has published in the *Anuario de Poesía Mexicana 2006* (Fondo de Cultura Económica), *Rio Grande Review*, *La Jornada* and *The Brooklyn Rail*, and has also participated in numerous festivals, including PEN America's *World Voices Festival* in Nueva York, 2018.

Her passions are the project *Iguanazul: Literature in Indigenous Languages*, photography, participating in traditional rituals and dance, birdwatching, and leafing through her rice paper book of poetry from the Tang Dynasty in Chinese ideograms. Currently, she is writing narratives of migration about indigenous communities in the US.

📍 @judesantopietro



Excerpted from *Tiawanaku. Poemas de la Madre Coqa* © Judith Santopietro
English translation © Ilana Luna

The Nazca Lines

In winter I see the Nazca lines from afar they are very precise signals to the deities
who laugh at me
they see me frozen stiff and ignorant
The desert crumbles gently
the purple sky grows faded at dusk
that makes twenty-two hours of a noise coming from the bus's aged equipment twenty-six hours of
climbing these precipices
of shrinking on these barren plains thirty hours in the freezing cold
my head is spinning I vomit
this soroche isn't eased even by the coqa leaf.

MOTHER Coqa ecstasy and lye

leaf that nourishes us with such divine lineage your blood gallops through the
nervations leaf that reads the future of a people drenched in moon and lightning
Mother on the north-south border powder for snorting
beneath the flashing light at Bar Route 36

kuka cocaine rock line white Goddess your names reverberate
in an equinoctial procession
pijchar insalivate the leaves with baking soda in the chewing grind up the alkaloids

light up then the lye

mill the cactus quinoa corn cob until you see ashes

annihilated Mother in the corners
offerings and deluge over the encampments
that bring back the missing with portraits and posters Mother Coqa
Massacre of All Saints
the smell of the blood of camelids water wars
the smell of the blood of the forgotten

the aromatic petroleum wars effervescence of the mouth
foam that's inhaled like sand from the salt flats rail blow white horse
that you excavate your epidermis
you exacerbate the anguish in the slave's head no more asphyxiation in the mines
Mother Coqa
the words shape you differently
 coke snow devil's dandruff molecules bubbling on your lips
 bump baking soda rock sniff pijchar acullicar chacchar
used-up leaf that numbs the umbilical cord show us your sap
mother of green alkaloids glorious coca paste.

The Morphology of Stone Goddesses

I flee and don't flee because I always carry this pain inside this wailing that unravels my wholeness I
flee and don't flee because each dream I'm always in the same rotten neighborhood I sing and flee I
pray and flee from all places I go and don't go to the edge of lake Titikaka I cross and don't cross the
Ica desert the Nazca Lines: I look out the window of this unheated bus and there is only grassland desert we
move through the middle of nowhere little houses made of mud potatoes that survive without water
without nature amid the morphology of stone goddesses.

About the translator



Ilana Luna is a nomad at heart, and has lived on both coasts of the U.S. (Pennsylvania, New Hampshire, California); Miramar, Bs. As. Argentina; Mexico City and currently calls Phoenix, Arizona home, where she is an Associate Professor of Latin American Studies at Arizona State University. She has been a mother, a lover, a poet, singer, novelist, educator, activist, cooking enthusiast, and translator for the last two decades. She holds an M.A. and Ph.D. in Hispanic Languages and Literature from the University of California, Santa Barbara, and came into her unrepentant and intersectional feminism at an early age, culminating in an undergraduate degree from Bryn Mawr College, in Pennsylvania, where she was born. She is also a life-long cinephile, and writes about women filmmakers in Latin America (and the world). She is the Programming Director of Femme Revolution Film Fest in Mexico City, and has written *Adapting Gender: Mexican Feminisms from Literature to Film* (SUNY Press, 2018). Among many loose publications of poets and essayists, she has also translated several books of poetry, including Juan José Rodínas' *Koan Underwater* (Cardboard House Press, 2018) and Giancarlo Huapaya's *sub verse* workshop (Lavender Ink, 2019).

More about Judith Santopietro

- *Tiawanaku. Poemas de la Madre Coqa.* [Print. Bilingual Edition](#)
- [Los Inadaptados. Serie web de videopoesía.](#)
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