

Beyond the Sacred Valley:

Ayahuasca Pilgrimage in Peru

Submitted by

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Abstract

This dissertation employs the concept of ‘ayahuasca pilgrimage’ to examine ritual healing practices and aspects of everyday social life for spiritual seekers residing in the town of Pisac, in the Sacred Valley of the Peruvian Andes. Ayahuasca is a plant medicine ‘brew’ with origins in the shamanic traditions of Indigenous and mestizo people of the Amazon. In recent decades, ‘ayahuasca tourism’ has attracted increasing numbers of foreigners to Peru, who travel there in search of spiritual and deeply personal healing experiences. Ayahuasca has expanded outside of the Amazon, as exemplified in the town of Pisac that has become a place of pilgrimage for those interested in ayahuasca, as well as Inca heritage, local ‘mystical tourism’, and numerous New Age healing modalities. Such practices, and the emergence of the transient ‘gringo community’ that has developed around them, raise critically entwined issues of cultural appropriation and social inequality, particularly in relation to the local population, examined through themes of ‘contestation’ addressed in this work. As explored here, ayahuasca pilgrimage encompasses liminal ritual events including qualities of *communitas* that are oriented around personal healing and transformation. Participants also view healing as entailing a process of ‘integration’ that bridges ritual and everyday life, requiring individual responsibility towards enacting change. While including deeply meaningful and often efficacious experiences for those involved, such journeys entail tensions arising through perceived social inequalities and cultural differences with locals, that members of the ‘gringo community’ contend with yet have few solutions to. On these terms, ayahuasca pilgrims inhabit an ambivalent position as outsiders. This thesis provides anthropological insights into the formations of spiritual tourism and the ‘gringo community’ in Pisac. This work contributes to scholarship on ayahuasca, pilgrimage, tourism, and lifestyle migration ethnography.

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Statement of Authorship

Except where reference is made in the text of the thesis, this thesis contains no material published elsewhere or extracted in whole or in part from a thesis accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma. No other person's work has been used without due acknowledgement in the main text of the thesis. This thesis had not been submitted for the award of any degree or diploma in any other tertiary institution.

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PART I: Preliminaries

1. Introduction

Containing a vast array of heritage sites amidst a majestic mountainous landscape, the Sacred Valley of the Incas has become a major tourist destination in Peru. Here, in recent decades, the town of Pisac has become a place of pilgrimage for spiritual seekers interested in ayahuasca shamanism and Andean mysticism, amongst New Age practices and diverse healing modalities. These personal journeys occur within the context of local cultural and spiritual tourism, which in Pisac has seen the emergence of a transient community of ‘gringos’, as they are commonly referred to locally.

Based on long-term ethnographic fieldwork, the concept of ayahuasca pilgrimage is employed here to examine the ritual practices and intersecting aspects of social discourse and everyday life that define this spiritual tourism and ‘alternative’ lifestyle community in Pisac. Ayahuasca pilgrimage is demonstrated to be motivated by a desire to experience ritual and ceremonial events for purposes of healing and personal transformation. Fotiou (2010) has examined ‘shamanic tourism’ in Iquitos as a form of pilgrimage, given liminal elements of ‘crisis’ oriented around healing and self-transformation. Likewise, Winkelman (2014, p. 10) has briefly discussed ‘Western ayahuasca pilgrimages’ as a spiritual quest towards self-transformation, and for addressing existential concerns. Expanding on such observations, in this thesis such events are described as involving a ritual ordeal that includes collective qualities of *communitas*. This exploration of the personal healing journey also extends to the indeterminate ‘integration’ process that continues afterwards in everyday life, when participants return ‘back home’ to typically Western countries from which they commonly originate. As examined in Pisac, these ritualised events provide an example of neoshamanic practices that have expanded outside of the Amazon in recent years, often conducted by foreigners and non-local ‘shamans’.

Despite sincere intentions and personal motivations for healing, ayahuasca pilgrimage is also a journey that entails ‘contestation’ – significant tensions, contradictions, and sometimes conflict that arise out of ‘living in other peoples’ backyard’, as one participant put it. Along

with keenly felt cultural differences, socio-economic inequality is revealed to underpin such tensions, perpetuating historical ethnic and class divisions in Peru, along with problematic appropriations of Indigenous heritage, identity, and ‘traditional’ practices.

In this thesis, ayahuasca pilgrimage engages with a suite of theoretical perspectives, drawn primarily from the disciplines of anthropology and tourism studies, through which to examine and seek to better understand what has transpired in Pisac. At times it entails moments of ritual liminality and *communitas*, as they are identified and analysed in the ayahuasca ceremonies and ‘medicine retreats’ that participants attend. Indeed, these type of spiritual healing events, as extending to other traditions, practices, and ‘sacred sites’, exemplify why ayahuasca pilgrims are motivated to travel there in the first place. Conversely, these very personal and often deeply meaningful experiences commonly exist within a broader scope of what it means to be a member of the transient ‘gringo community’ in Pisac. Importantly, although the majority of ayahuasca pilgrims are foreigners, in this thesis it is a term that extends out to other ‘outsiders’ as they are discussed by participants, particularly relating to ‘non-local’ Peruvians, several of whom are significant participants within this work.

Corresponding with scholarship on pilgrimage, participants discussed here as ayahuasca pilgrims are not so much one distinct type of traveller, but rather encompass a less clearly defined cohort of tourists, transients, non-locals, and expatriates. Despite the application of classic iterations of pilgrimage theory, including that of liminality and *communitas*, this thesis engages in a flexible approach towards conceptualising ayahuasca pilgrimage, one that is rather less ‘deterministic’ (Eade & Sallnow 1991, p. 3) that Victor Turner has been accused of regarding these ideas. This thesis corresponds with more recent critiques regarding the way pilgrimages have come to be seen as including a wide range of meaningful forms of so-called ‘sacred’ and ‘secular’ travel, as such, ‘rigid dichotomies between pilgrimage and tourism, or pilgrims and tourists, no longer seem tenable’ (Badone & Roseman 2014, p. 2). As Pisac, and the broader fieldsite of the Sacred Valley reveals, there are not always ‘clear-cut distinctions between pilgrimage sites and tourist attractions’ (Collins-Kreiner 2010a, p. 453) in the contemporary world.

While it appears that shared interests and counterculture ideals provide some level of interpersonal intimacy for pilgrims in Pisac, as will be shown, the ‘gringo community’ is diffuse and often contested. Yet, these contested aspects of their individual and collective

presence are rendered increasingly complex in terms of their relation to the local population. As a contested ‘tourist site’, what has transpired in Pisac not only reflects long standing ethnic and class inequalities within Peru but is also situated within the context of ‘diverse’, ‘intersecting’ and often unequal mobilities of different ‘people and places’ in a world increasingly experienced through immense travel and technologies (Sheller & Urry 2006, p. 207). As will be examined, the ‘gringo community’ is markedly transient, affecting cross-cultural social integration. Along with other issues identified, these aspects of the gringo community are perceived as problematic and often a cause of tension and misunderstanding, both between its members and with ‘locals’ alike.

On one hand, ayahuasca pilgrims engage with ayahuasca and other spiritual tourism practices in ways that are perceived as efficacious, personally challenging, deeply meaningful, and ‘authentic’. Yet, regarding the ‘gringo community’ more broadly, many ayahuasca pilgrims can be seen to walk a sometimes uncomfortable and contradictory path that cannot simply be limited to marginal realms of ritualised practices and spiritual healing. Their own critical awareness and at times moral economy of behaviour in relation to their individual and collective presence in Pisac, only seems to reaffirm perceived cultural differences and inequality rather than remedy them. Perhaps at best, many seek to mitigate contestation rather than achieve social integration, and effectively remain outsiders.

Following a brief chapter outline provided below, this Preliminaries section continues with a discussion of my personal involvement with ayahuasca and other ‘plant medicines’ that have in part motivated and shaped this ethnographic project. This includes a set of critical reflections regarding the benefits and challenges of conducting research within this field. An outline of the research methodology follows, describing key research practices, modes of data collection, contexts of participant observation, interview themes and lines of inquiry, as well as a discussion about ethics relevant to this study. Lastly, essential information is provided about the broader fieldsite of Cusco and the Sacred Valley, including a discussion of local history and culture, geography and topography, and tourism as it relates to the unique aspects of the place itself, including Inca heritage and local traditions. A detailed focus on the fieldsite of Pisac is provided, as including a snapshot of everyday life for ayahuasca pilgrims living there.

The six chapters to follow are presented across two parts: Background; and Ethnography. The first chapter begins with an overview of ayahuasca scholarship, detailing its shamanic origins

in the Amazon, to contemporary uses in syncretic, neoshamanic, and clinical contexts. This chapter also charts the linked theoretical developments of pilgrimage and tourism, including the key concepts of authenticity, liminality, *communitas*, and contestation that frame the ethnographic arguments that follow. The theoretical and conceptual parameters of pilgrimage (and tourism) allow for a diverse yet intersecting application of theory from which to unpack complex aspects of the personal healing journey and everyday social life, as ayahuasca pilgrims experience them.

The second chapter shifts the focus to the place itself, providing important context from which to situate the contents of the ethnographic chapters to follow. This chapter outlines ways that cultural heritage and its linkage to Indigenous identity have long been the locus of contestation in the Andes, revealing acute power inequalities throughout its colonial history and into the present day. As seen here, Inca heritage has been central in the formation of local and national identity politics since the early 20th century. These developments, arising out of the *indigenismo* movement, have relied upon a romanticisation of the Inca past, while in some cases separating out representations of an ‘imagined Inca’ with those of their contemporary Indigenous descendants. As will be shown, these historical contestations of place have been central in development of local cultural and spiritual tourism.

Part three includes four chapters and comprises the core ethnographic content of this thesis. First, ‘Javier’s Medicine Retreat’ presents a close examination of the ritual healing processes at a plant medicine retreat in Pisac. Oriented around the ceremonial use of ayahuasca and the dieting of an additional ‘master plant’, the retreat is identified as a liminal event for participants engaging in personal healing. The retreat embodies qualities of ‘ritual ordeal’, including temporal and spatial separation from regular social life. An analysis of ritual discourse employed by Javier, the shaman leading the retreat, reveals ways that he ‘frames’ (Fotiou 2020) the ritual events on psychospiritual terms, with individualism, *communitas*, and animism established as significant themes.

Chapter four explicates the vernacular adage of ‘doing the work’, a phrase that is commonly used by shamans and participants when discussing ‘ayahuasca integration’. Describing how healing is viewed as an ongoing process that bridges ritual and everyday life, integration is seen to require individual effort and responsibility towards ‘enacting change’ and making the most out of the ‘opportunities’ ayahuasca presents, affecting what are understood to be

meaningful and efficacious outcomes. Given the emphasis on individual responsibility in ayahuasca integration, this chapter assesses several important themes regarding neoliberalism, assessed in relation to the healthcare ideology of ‘victim-blaming’ and notions of ‘empowerment’ that require consideration when discussing approaches to ayahuasca integration back in everyday life.

A small group of foreign and non-local Peruvian individuals have been especially influential in the growth of neoshamanic ayahuasca healing retreats and other forms of spiritual tourism that has seen Pisac emerge as a ‘centre’ for spiritual seekers. Chapter five presents an analysis of personal narratives of two key figures in Pisac, focusing on multiple and intersecting ways they appeal to diverse expressions of authenticity. Their appeals to authenticity, while sincere, raise concerns about critical issues of power and representation that reinscribe historical contestations of heritage and identity through cultural appropriation and the reinvention of tradition. The unique personal histories of Diane Dunn and Diego Palma, who have been influential in the emergence of mystical tourism and ayahuasca tourism, respectively, are illustrative of wider trends in spiritual tourism, and in many respects, they are exemplars of the ayahuasca pilgrim’s journey. Analyses presented in this chapter reveals that although both Diane and Diego appeal to multiple instantiations of authenticity, Diane’s narrative primary relies on an objectivist search for the authentic Other, while Diego locates his own ‘truth’ on existential terms of the authentic self. Their narrative appeals to authenticity are insightful regarding what they do and why they do it. Although displaying high levels of sincerity, these appeals can also be seen as ways that they legitimate their emplacement as practitioners within their respective spiritual tourism fields and the ‘entrepreneurial ecosystem’ in Pisac.

The final chapter explores how foreigners in Pisac experience, negotiate, and reflect upon being ‘gringo’. As commonly used throughout Latin America, this vernacular identity category refers to foreigners, and more specifically, non-Latin Americans. As the ethnographic perspectives in this chapter will illustrate, ‘gringos’ are critically reflective about perceived issues, tensions, and conflict within their community, but more importantly perhaps, as existing between themselves and locals, seen as representing a chasm of differences and disconnection in many ways. Building on the work of St John (1999) and Levy (2007), the gringo community is examined here as a heterotopia, a counter-site existing somewhere in-between the ‘real’ and ‘unreal’. Engaging with literature on lifestyle migration, analysis reveals how ‘gringos’ legitimate their emplacement in Pisac through a discursive moral economy. In this sense, this

chapter presents in-depth perspectives and analyses of everyday life for ayahuasca pilgrims, offering unique insights into a community of foreigners (and to some extent seen as extending to ‘non-locals’) living in the Peruvian Andes, and contributing to wider research on tourism and lifestyle migration in Latin America.

2. Project conception

Ayahuasca and other ‘plant medicines’ discussed in this thesis have been an important part of my personal life since 2012. Given their importance in subjectively shaping the ethnographic work presented here, I believe that my own experiences with these plants, and subsequent motivations for undertaking this study in the Sacred Valley, deserve some attention from the outset. Indeed, as I soon discovered during fieldwork, my own journey shared many commonalities with those of my research participants, who of course have been central to the creation of this thesis.

I first heard of ayahuasca from a friend while living in London, United Kingdom, during the mid-to-late 2000s. Although I was told very little about it, I quickly became intrigued. Looking back, it felt like a seed had been planted in my mind. Several years later, my partner and I had returned to Australia and moved to the city of Melbourne, by which time I was a budding anthropology student. As my understanding of the discipline grew, equally did my personal interest in ayahuasca and shamanism more broadly. In 2012, two years into my undergraduate degree, we planned a six-week trip around South America, primarily motivated by the desire to attend ayahuasca ceremonies outside of Iquitos in the Peruvian Amazon. I did some research online and found an ayahuasca centre that seemed reputable. The centre was owned by a well-known Indigenous shaman who had become somewhat famous for working with foreign clients. After beginning our trip in Colombia, we made our way south via Lima, and soon found ourselves at the ayahuasca centre where we would attend six ceremonies.

In similar ways to many of the participants discussed in this work, my ensuing experiences were incredibly challenging, beautiful, and unbelievable in their otherworldly scope, superseding the inevitable expectations that I had arrived with. I returned home feeling lighter, changed in subtle yet significant ways that would continue to unfold for some time. As participants often described to me, I felt like I had had a direct spiritual experience during those

formative ceremonies, and afterwards felt healed and transformed in mysterious ways that intrigued me and filled me with a deep sense of gratitude. A year later I returned to Peru on my own. After hiking the five-day Inca trail to Machu Picchu in the southern Andes, I returned to the same ayahuasca centre in Iquitos for a month-long intensive retreat that involved working with ayahuasca and ‘dieting’ a ‘master plant’. Returning home, I began my honours years at university and went on to write a thesis on ayahuasca.¹ After graduating a year later, I applied for the PhD program. My desire to return to Peru was strong. By this point I had felt a great deal of personal benefit from my experiences with ayahuasca. Through my studies I had also become intrigued by the complex history, culture, and expansion of ayahuasca use in more recent times. Additionally, through my personal experiences, I had met some interesting people and was excited at the prospect of conducting long-term fieldwork in Peru.

Accepted into the PhD program with a scholarship and additional research funding provided by my university, I had the means in which to carry out an ethnographic project in Peru. My initial proposal was to conduct research in Iquitos. Indeed, when I departed for Peru that had remained the plan. Yet, I decided to begin my trip in Cusco where I would study Spanish for several months before travelling on to Iquitos. I attended a small school in San Blas where I met many fellow travellers and made some good friends. During this time, I quickly became aware that many foreigners were seeking experiences with plant medicines in the Cusco region too.

During my spare time, I explored Cusco as any tourist would. After several weeks, I also travelled to nearby Pisac in the Sacred Valley. It was much quieter than Cusco, but the town centre was buzzing with tourists and locals. I was immediately struck by the surrounding mountains that were beautiful and majestic, and grand in their magnitude. Through numerous conversations with foreigners and a little research of my own, I soon discovered that Pisac was the place to find ayahuasca. Several weeks later I returned. In a serendipitous turn of events that I describe in chapter three, I attended an ayahuasca ceremony with a foreign shaman called Javier Regueiro.² Over the following weeks I returned to Pisac several times, attending one more ayahuasca ceremony and two San Pedro ceremonies with Javier. During this time, I

¹ *An Anthropological Analysis of Ayahuasca: Healing Paradigms, Science & Spirituality (Identifying Neo-Enchantment)* (Seddon 2014).

² Javier was of Spanish descent, born and raised in Switzerland.

became increasingly intrigued by Javier's approach to working with plant medicines. I also felt a growing interest in Pisac, which I began to consider as an additional fieldsite.

After a sequence of events that are described in detail in chapter three, I decided to include Pisac into my project. Initially, I aimed to carry out a multi-sited ethnography across the Iquitos and Pisac locales, but the latter had already begun to pique my interest and dominate my thoughts. As planned, I travelled to Iquitos in January of 2016. Although vastly different to the Andean town of Pisac, the lowland 'jungle city' of Iquitos also attracted legions of foreigners and spiritual seekers who were interested in having experiences with ayahuasca, some who had gone on to live there for extended lengths of time. In Iquitos particularly, it was common that foreigners wanted to become shamans themselves. Many developed working relationships with Indigenous or mestizo 'teachers' who they would learn from and often assist during ceremonies.

Although I had been to Iquitos several times before, I had spent little time in the city itself. This trip, however, provided me with some essential insights into what was occurring with ayahuasca tourism there, which later proved to be important when comparatively assessing what I would observe in Pisac. After three months in Iquitos, I began to realise that to delve deeper on what I was observing and beginning to understand about the place, would require much more time than a multi-sited ethnography would allow for. Although I felt I had achieved a great deal in Iquitos already, it became clear to me that I ran the risk of spreading myself too thin by following the plan I had. So, I made the decision to return to Pisac and focus entirely on that location. My motivation to do so was not only driven by my interests in ayahuasca use in Pisac but was equally stirred by my intrigue about the place itself, the mountains, the sense of a vibrant foreign community of spiritual seekers, and my curiosity about local culture and Inca heritage. These reasons pointed towards Pisac being an interesting and unique location to carry out research. Although this ethnography is primarily located in the Sacred Valley, and particularly Pisac, my time in Iquitos proved incredibly insightful. As such, this work remains informed by those experiences, observations, and the people I met there.

As can be seen, my personal involvement with ayahuasca proved to be a key motivation for this work. Indeed, many of the ideas and concepts that inform this thesis are in part shaped by my personal experiences. The context of conducting research as an 'ayahuasca insider', let us say, did present challenges along the way. There had been times where the sense of having

‘gone native’ to some extent seemed a little concerning from a research standpoint. Strangely, given the similarities I shared with my foreign participants, although I was halfway around the world, at times it felt like I was almost doing ‘anthropology at home’, rather than a study of ayahuasca in Peru. In this sense, I found myself becoming as Crick (1985, p. 71) has put it, ‘self-conscious about the ethnographic process’ and indeed about my ‘anthropological self’. Yet, as Anderson (2021, p. 223) has identified in doing ‘anthropology at home’ there is a potentiality that arises through the ‘haphazard storm of uncertainty and discomfort’ during fieldwork, where ‘deeply felt methodological concerns and personal crises’ can be ‘transformed into nuanced analytical thought’. Through experience and self-reflexivity, one hopes to find a balance between a sense of being almost too close at times, and learning when and how to pull back. This research then, as Voloder (2008, p. 28) has succinctly put it, has involved ascertaining the boundaries between self-indulgence and insightful reflection, ‘to allow the inclusion of the self to inform the study without overwhelming it with the researcher’s presence’. This has been a work-in-progress that has transcended fieldwork and extended long into the ‘writing-up’ stage, eventually arriving at the methodological and analytical approaches presented here.

Upon reflection, what felt like an uncomfortable closeness at times has proven ultimately necessary for deepening my ability to research and understand the topics explored in this thesis, and for connecting to the viewpoints and experiences of research participants. In this sense, the process of carrying out and producing this ethnography has been one of remedying the illusory distinction between subjectivism and objectivism, arriving as Madden (2010, p. 26) has suggested, at making them ‘partners’, key to any good ethnographic account. Likewise, I agree with Mishor (2016, p. 26) who has pointed out that any deficiencies in objectivity in research due to ‘personal agenda’ are far outweighed by what such an agenda may enable. This position is something of a confession on my part. As can be seen, my motivations for undertaking this work were certainly oriented around personal interests and direct experiences with ayahuasca that began several years before fieldwork was undertaken. Yet these motivations were closely married to the ethnographic pursuit I wished to follow; understanding the role of ayahuasca in the lives of foreigners who sought healing experiences in Peru and examining the social and cultural dimensions of such journeys within context of the place itself. Indeed, I wonder how it could be any other way? I was equally driven forward within my discipline, which in turn, has provided me with a wealth of personal opportunities and experiences that I could hardly have imagined. What has unfolded has proven to be a pilgrimage of my own, in part, mirroring

the lifeworlds of the ayahuasca pilgrims presented in this work, in part, as an anthropologist, following the long and dusty road towards producing this ethnography.

3. Research methodology

Fieldwork in Peru was carried out between 30th September 2015 and 14th February 2017. From September 2015 until early January 2016, I lived in Cusco while studying Spanish. During this time, I also spent three weeks attending my first medicine retreat with Javier in Pisac. From mid-January to early April 2016, I lived in Iquitos in the Peruvian Amazon, where I divided my time between the city and several ayahuasca centres. I returned to Pisac in April 2016 where fieldwork was conducted until February 2017, when I returned to Australia.

Research practices employed were entirely qualitative. The primary participant data has been taken from in-depth and largely unstructured (but guided) interviews. These were mostly conducted with English-speaking foreigners, and to a lesser extent, with Peruvians and South Americans in both English and Spanish. In a small number of cases, personal questionnaires were emailed to participants. These were sent to people that I was unable to interview while they were in Peru, as was the case with participants during Javier's medicine retreats. Others were contacted with follow up questions regarding 'ayahuasca integration' for example, as discussed in chapter four regarding the ongoing healing 'process' following a medicine retreat, as it is understood by participants. Several Skype interviews were also carried out for similar reasons.

Participant observation occurred in two distinct sites. Firstly, in the day-to-day immersion in the fieldsite of Pisac and the Sacred Valley. Secondly, as an active participant in the ayahuasca and plant medicine retreats and ceremonies I attended. In Pisac, I initially attended two ayahuasca ceremonies and two San Pedro ceremonies with Javier. Over the remaining course of fieldwork, I attended four medicine retreats with Javier that included ayahuasca and San Pedro ceremonies: December 2015; April, September, and December of 2016. While living in Pisac I also attended several San Pedro ceremonies with Miguel Mendiburu Saavedra. Due to its prominence as a plant medicine, the ceremonial use of San Pedro became an important experience during my time in Pisac, and with some guidance from Javier, I continued to develop an understanding about its ceremonial use until I departed. For analytical clarity and

thematic focus, I decided to primarily examine ayahuasca in this thesis, although San Pedro is discussed at several junctures. It is a topic I intend on returning to in the future, particularly given the relative lack of scholarly attention it has received compared with ayahuasca.

An important note should be made regarding data collection during the medicine retreats I attended. Due to the qualities of ritual ordeal and personal challenge that define these events, conducting research within the liminal context of the retreat, as it is argued to be in this thesis, often proved difficult for several reasons. As I too was a participant, the changes to everyday ways of being facilitated by attending ceremonies, drastic changes to diet, disrupted and reduced sleep, and drops in energy levels, for example, had an impact on my ability to think clearly at certain moments and observe details that would otherwise be relatively straight forward. At times this was a cause of frustration. Yet to fully immerse myself into the experience and participate in the healing process completely, I felt it important to prioritise my personal engagement with the plant medicines, along with my fellow participants. Similarly, conducting interviews with people in such a context seemed inappropriate and ethically problematic, especially given the combination of altered states of consciousness and intense self-reflection and healing being engaged in. Therefore, in these contexts I primarily relied on brief and scribbled fieldnotes, which I later consolidated and expanded upon through memory and reflection, along with follow-up interviews. Regarding ceremonial events and integration meetings, as described in chapter three, my notes were primarily thematic and did not record specific details about the personal behaviour and biographies of my fellow participants. On these terms, the identities and personal information about fellow retreat participants have been carefully protected. Throughout the thesis, all interviewees, except for one participant as noted, have consented to their real names being used.

In Iquitos, I attended a retreat with Javier's teacher, Don Francisco Montes Shuña, a *Capinahua* shaman who had been running his own ayahuasca centre, *Sachamama*, for many years. This proved comparatively insightful for observing the similarities and differences between their practices and discourses. I also visited several other local shamans who worked within the urban and community locales around Iquitos, however, these experiences are excluded from this thesis given my focus on the Sacred Valley.

I conducted over forty interviews, averaging one-and-a-half hours in length. Commonly, interview questions were driven by an interest in participants' personal 'journeys' to Peru; what

their motivations for drinking ayahuasca were and how those experiences proved to be significant, challenging, and potentially transformative in their lives. I asked participants how they had heard of ayahuasca, when and why they first travelled to Peru, and how subsequent experiences had impacted their lives. Given the varied amount of experience participants had with ayahuasca, I was also driven to understand how they conceptualised notions of ritual healing and the post-retreat process of ‘ayahuasca integration’, which are examined in detail in chapters three and four.

Although ayahuasca was a key theme in most interviews, the phenomenological aspects of participants’ direct ceremonial experiences were not a key focus of inquiry. There were two reasons for this. Firstly, Javier’s integration meetings, held the morning after each ceremony, offered detailed and comparative insights into personal experiences. As chapter four argues, however, it was the way participants made sense out of these experiences in context of their broader lives that was of greater significance and was of most interest to me within the context of my research. Secondly, my priority was to utilise interview time to ask participants questions about living in Pisac and the Sacred Valley, gaining an understanding their personal knowledge, insights, and feelings about the place itself, and as chapter six explores, how they navigated their emplacement as outsiders in relation to the local community. This chapter reflects my awareness, and at times guilt, about the relative exclusion of local voices in this ethnography, as it addresses cultural differences and inequalities that foreigners perceived as causing tension between themselves and locals. Yet, from early on I realised that I could not possibly achieve everything I ideally wished, and after some consideration, I settled on ‘the gringo community’ as my primary participants. Several Peruvians living in the Sacred Valley were interviewed, although all were non-locals, either from Lima or Arequipa. While potentially seen as a drawback or gap in this thesis, it does nevertheless mirror the social reality as experienced by my research participants, as critically examined in chapter six regarding the heterotopic gringo community in Pisac.

Several key participants interviewed were shamans. Others had worked as ‘facilitators’ or ‘assistants’ at an ayahuasca centre for some time. As mentioned earlier regarding Iquitos, some foreigners desired to ‘serve medicine’ or ‘be of service to the medicine’ in varying capacities. Some had a relative lack of knowledge and experience in working with plant medicines, yet offered ceremonial experiences, informally ‘holding space’ for friends or acquaintances. Others such as Javier in chapter three, or Diego in chapter five, accommodated regular flows

of ayahuasca tourists in a more formal and structured capacity. Despite the fraught usage of the term ‘shaman’ it is employed in this thesis simply because of its use by my participants. Yet while it was commonly used, some recognised it as being problematic when applied self-referentially by foreigners, one participant considered it ‘self-indulgent’. Mostly, however, it was a term employed in general conversation, part of the *lingua franca* of ayahuasca pilgrims, hence its application herein.

Common interview themes focused on personal spiritual development, healing, and self-transformation. These themes were often discussed in relation to ayahuasca or other plant medicines, yet they were related to real-life events, personal histories, trauma, shifts in worldview, and life changes such as leaving a job, ending a relationship, letting go of what was seen as destructive or negative behaviour, or moving to another town or country, in some cases Peru. The need to seek out and conduct ethnographic interviews began as a source of trepidation, but quickly proved to be immensely rewarding, richly detailed, insightful, and enjoyable. As a result, this thesis aims to highlight participants’ narrative voices, even if it has only been possible to incorporate a relatively select portion of interviews directly. Indeed, what has been excluded has been equally important for informing, validating, and clarifying the broader ethnographic perspectives presented herein. In a word, the narratives in this thesis are *representative* of the commonalities and diversity of the wider research participants who have contributed to this work in some way. Foreigners in Pisac sometimes appeared as a diffuse and elusive community yet also shared many similar perspectives on key topics. Through coding and data analysis, these narrative insights have revealed important inductive themes that have been central to the contention of each ethnographic chapter. Similarly, the diverse personalities, positionalities, experiences, and reflections of participants can be observed in the unique narratives presented throughout. Indeed, as examined in this thesis, the ambivalent dialectic between the individual and the collective is fundamental to the discourses of identity, healing, *communitas*, and community as they were encountered by myself as an anthropologist-participant, and as described and analysed ethnographically throughout.

Finally, outside of the often eventful and intense spaces of a retreat or ceremony, life in Pisac and the Sacred Valley was relatively quiet, and days were often slow and uneventful. Given this I would seek out social spaces where I could network and meet fellow ayahuasca pilgrims. For example, I would often attend an astrology class held at Ulrike’s restaurant in Pisac. In part, I had a general interest and curiosity about the class, but it was also a pleasant event for

socialising. It proved to be useful for meeting participants, who in turn, introduced me to others. Facebook also proved to be an important platform and tool for connecting with participants. I utilised the community page ‘Spirit Events Sacred Valley’ to post a notice about my research and invited anyone interested to contact me, which they did. I also used Facebook to send messages to new contacts and for arranging interviews. Hiking in the mountains was also an enjoyable social event where I met several participants that I would later interview, some became good friends.

Lastly, I must admit that the perpetual concern I had about not having enough data during fieldwork fuelled my motivation to be proactive and think creatively about conducting research at times when I wondered what to do next. Ultimately my concerns proved to be unwarranted as I collected much more data than I could have possibly used. Perhaps this reflects just how much I underestimated the importance of my own voice and observations at the time, which became increasingly clear and more apparent the deeper I got into the writing of this thesis.

4. The ethnographic locale

This section provides some preliminary details about the wider ethnographic locale of Cusco and the Sacred Valley, including most prominently, Pisac. Strictly speaking, research was not carried out in Cusco, yet the city itself is irrevocably connected to Pisac and the Sacred Valley, hence the attention it has been given at certain junctures in this thesis. Cusco is more thoroughly examined in chapter two regarding ways that Inca heritage and Indigenous identity have been formative in the emergence of spiritual and cultural tourism in the region, and indeed nationally. Suffice to say that living in the small town of Pisac inevitably meant spending a considerable amount of time in Cusco, which was approximately thirty minutes’ drive via minibus. Like most participants, I would commonly travel to Cusco on a weekly basis to run errands, purchase goods unavailable in Pisac, have lunch, meet friends, or to simply wander around for the day. The following brief discussion serves to provide some basic geographical, topographical, historical, social, and cultural context about Cusco, the Sacred Valley and Pisac, from which to move forward in presenting the ethnographic chapters in this thesis.

The city of Cusco is in the southern Peruvian Andes, nestled within a spacious valley at an altitude of 3400 meters above sea level (masl.) and is situated approximately 300km north-west

of the Bolivian border and 600km south-east of the Peruvian capital, Lima. The region of Cusco -covers a large area, stretching hundreds of kilometres in a northerly direction, where the highland topography descends into lowland tropical jungle. To the south, it borders the region of Arequipa, and to the west, Puno and Lake Titicaca. Cusco is situated in the *cordillera*, a vast mountain range that extends the length of South America, from Colombia to the southern tip of Patagonia in Argentina. Terrain in the Andes can vary from snow peaked mountains, some reaching over 6000 masl., arid hills, lush semi-tropical forests, dissected by great valleys, rivers, and lakes. Many cities, towns, and small communities are located across the Andes, with the latter often situated in relatively isolated locations.³

Prior to the Spanish conquest in 1532, the Inca empire had reached its ‘apogee’, having extended its rule from Peru to present day Colombia, through Bolivia, Argentina, and Chile (Bauer 1998, p. 2). There had been over 4000 years of pre-Columbian cultures living in the Andes before the emergence of the Incas.⁴ The Wari, for example, occupied the Cusco region for several hundred years prior and are believed to have had a considerable cultural influence on the Incas (McEwan 2006, p. 65). Many dialects were spoken across the Andes, however, it was *Quechua* that became the *lingua franca*, an occurrence that was further influenced by conquest and colonisation.⁵ Also known as *Runasimi*, *Quechua* is widely spoken in the Andes, sometimes as a first language before Spanish or the only language amongst monolingual Indigenous communities.⁶ Despite the far reaching reign of the Inca empire at the time of the conquest, its peak up until that point had lasted about a century.⁷

As of 2021, the population of Cusco was approximately 480, 000 (World Population Review 2021), largely comprised of *Andino* (Indigenous/native Andean) and mestizo (‘mixed blood’),

³ I acknowledge the problematic usage of terms such as ‘isolated’ and ‘remote’, particularly in relation to Indigenous communities. Usage here is primarily for comparative purposes. Remote communities are often located at some distance from townships, cities, and other communities, but also given the steep mountainous terrain, often at much higher altitudes that can be difficult to travel to, with limited road access.

⁴ Pre-Columbian cultures include *Wari*, *Tiwanaku*, *Nazca*, *Moche*, *Chavin* and *Chimú*. Between Ecuador and Bolivia, more than ten pre-Columbian cultures preceded the Incas before they began building the first foundations of the city of Cusco in the thirteen or fourteen centuries (Métraux 1965, p. 19).

⁵ For a more detailed discussion see Itier (2011, p. 63) who discusses, for example, how one variety of ‘southern *Quechua*’ as used in urban and semi urban networks ‘came to serve, as a result of colonisation, as the language of communication both between Indigenous populations speaking many different native tongues, and between them and the Spaniards... This form of *Quechua* became the *lingua franca* as it spread to new regions in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries’.

⁶ Other dialects still spoken across the Andes include *Aymara*, *Puquina*, *Muchik* and *Uru* (Gutiérrez 2016, p. 101)

⁷ This period is marked by the beginning of the reign of the Inca emperor *Pachacuti* and the expansion of the ‘Inca state’ until the time of the conquest. (For a brief timeline of the Incas see: Oxford Reference 2021).

European/Indigenous ancestry) inhabitants. Others have moved to Cusco from lowland locations such as Puerto Maldonado for employment opportunities. There are many *Limeños* (native residents of Lima) and other non-local Peruvians who have moved to Cusco and the Sacred Valley, running hostels, hotels, restaurants, and providing other services within the tourism industry. Similarly, increasing numbers of ‘expats’ have become involved in local tourism economies, often within the New Age spiritual tourism niche.



Figure 1: Cusco facing east, 2015.

Since the early 2000s, tourism development in Peru has contributed to stable economic growth with annual GDP growth rates of up to 10% that almost quadrupled from 2001 to 2015 (Baumhackl 2019, p. 98). The arrival of international tourists has risen by ‘an average of 8% annually – by 42% from 2011 to 2016’ (Baumhackl 2019, p. 99). As the former capital of the Inca empire, Cusco has been noted for its ‘dominant position in Peru’s tourism hierarchy’, central to the ‘obligatory program’ of a trip to Peru (Baumhackl 2019, p. 99). Cusco was listed as a UNESCO heritage site in 1983 (Silverman 2013, p. 128). Although a tourist destination itself, Cusco has become known as the ‘gateway to Machu Picchu’ (van den Berghe & Flores

Ochoa 2000, p. 7).⁸ In part, this is because Cusco is the location of Alejandro Velasco Astete International Airport.⁹ Codina, Lugosi and Bowen (2020, p. 3) have differentiated local tourism in terms of ‘independent day visitors’ and ‘organised group tours’. Commonly, tourists arrive in Cusco and acclimatise to the altitude for several days before travelling on to Machu Picchu via the towns of Sacred Valley.

A UNESCO heritage site since 1983, and nominated as a ‘seventh wonder of the world’ in 2007 (Zan & Luciani 2011, p. 157), Machu Picchu is by far the singular most popular reason tourists travel to the area, and according to Baumhackl (2019, p. 104) ‘all other motives were subordinated to this highlight’.¹⁰ Promperú (cited in Baumhackl 2019, p. 103) has identified that travellers to Peru are young, ‘64% were under the age of 35, 46% older than 34 years’. Significant numbers of international visitors herald from countries such as Argentina, Brazil, Spain, Germany, Japan, and Australia, yet Chile followed by the USA provide the highest numbers (Baumhackl 2019, p. 103). The most prominent contributor of foreigner currency and thus comprising ‘the main market’, was the USA who totalled 17.9% of tourists (Baumhackl 2019, p. 103). Tourist visas are granted upon arrival and can vary from a few weeks, up to six months. Long-term visitors will commonly renew their visas by travelling to nearby Bolivia or other South American countries, gaining additional time on re-entry, often doing this numerous times.¹¹

⁸ Machu Picchu is geographically located just outside of the Sacred Valley, in the north, at around 2400masl. Rediscovered by Hiram Bingham in 1911, Machu Picchu became a symbol of ‘Incaness’ (Arellano 2008) in Peru in the early 20th century and its discovery sparked global interest in Inca heritage, giving rise to the first waves of tourism in the area, themes further examined in chapter two.

⁹ At the time of writing, a ‘controversial’ new international airport at Chinchero, a small town approximately 25 kilometres north-west of Cusco, had begun construction. Plans for the airport go back to the 1970s. In 2019 International researchers including anthropologists, archaeologists and historians signed a letter to the then President Martín Vizcarra, seeking to suspend construction with concerns that the ‘surge in development and tourism will destroy archaeological sites and some of the very cultural riches the visitors come to see’ (Wade 2019, p. 568). Garcia’s (2020, p. 157) recent article addressed the ‘various disruptions, conflicts and fractures’ that the sale of the land for the airport has triggered locally. Garcia (2020, p. 157) examined the construction of the airport within context of ‘new identity politics’ - the ‘erosion of the peasant community model’ and the ‘formation of new social groupings in context of tourism and neoliberal development’.

¹⁰ Complexities of heritage site management, exploitation and impact of the tourism industry, and neoliberal developments have seen Machu Picchu’s status as a heritage site come under threat (Zan & Lusiani 2011, p. 157).

¹¹ Overstaying a tourist visa usually entails a US ‘dollar a day’ fee upon departure. In Pisac it was common that ‘gringos’ overstayed their visas for extensive time periods. During research, it appeared there was a crackdown on overstaying visas, and there were often warnings circulated when ‘immigration police’ were in town checking passports.



Figure 2: Machu Picchu in the fog, 2017.

Approximately 30 kilometres north-east of Cusco, the Sacred Valley is easily accessed via Pisac. The valley runs through an expansive enclave of impressive mountains that are located within the midsection of the much larger Urubamba Valley. The Sacred Valley follows the winding Urubamba River, which traverses its length, accompanied all sides by steep mountain peaks, some of which rise well over 4000masl.¹² Accounts vary regarding the boundaries of the Sacred Valley, but in approximate terms it can be considered to extend its length between San Salvador in the south, to just below Machu Picchu further north.¹³

The Sacred Valley has been described as the ‘heartland of the Inca empire’ given the importance it is believed to have had for the Inca (Salazar & Salazar 2016). Much of the

¹² The river that runs through the Sacred Valley is known by several different names, including the Urubamba River as mentioned, as well as the Vilcanota River. It is also referred to as *Willka Mayu*, as used by the Incas, which means sacred river in *Quechua*. It is believed this name for the river was adopted by the early tourist guides of the 1950s and in turn gave rise to the term *Sacred Valley* (Gade 2016, p. 131). The river had cosmological significance for the Incas who perceived it like a ‘river of stars’; ‘it was as if the valley and its river were a double or reflection of the milky way in earthly space’ (Salazar & Salazar 2016, p. 67).

¹³ Geographer Daniel W. Gade (2016) who has done considerable research in the area holds a similar view, and suggests the Sacred Valley has a mid-section of 65km. Other accounts have the valley begin at Machu Picchu and extend past San Salvador to Sicuani (Vargas 2001, p. 14). Tourist maps often depict the Sacred Valley as including Machu Picchu and running to Pisac.

valley's length can be travelled by one main road which closely follows the Urubamba River. This road is a thoroughfare for locals and tourists moving between the many towns and small communities, for either work or leisure. Throughout the day a network of *colectivos* (minibuses/vans) operate between Cusco and the various towns along the valley. There are vast Inca archaeological sites throughout Cusco and the Sacred Valley that have made the area a unique place to visit for legions of national and global tourists.¹⁴ Many visitors also engage in adventure tours throughout the surrounding mountains, particularly hikes to famous mountain peaks such as Ausangate or Salkantay. Mountain biking is also an attractive tourism activity. In the Sacred Valley, community tourism is popular, yet the 'contentious politics' of development strategies pursued by government, industry, and the volunteer section have equally been noted (Knight et al. 2017, p. 347).

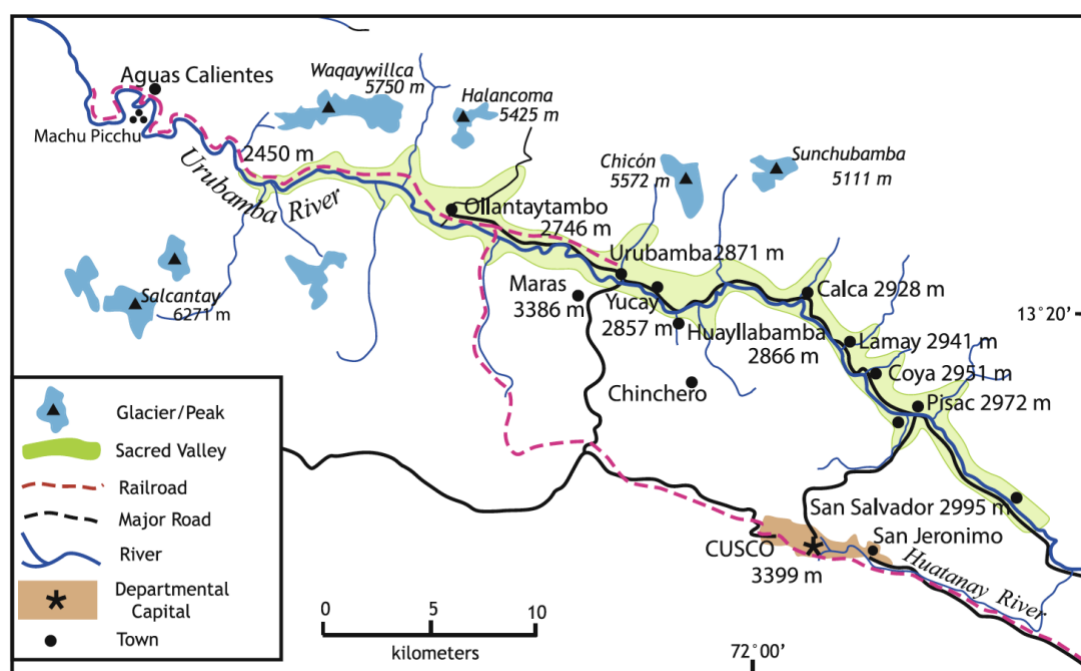


Figure 3: Map of the Sacred Valley (Gade 2016).

Many towns in the Sacred Valley share colonial architectural features including a central plaza, church, and small grid-like layout of streets comprised of traditional adobe buildings.¹⁵ Increasingly, contemporary structures in towns utilise materials such as cement, bricks, and

¹⁴ The world bank (2022) estimated international tourist arrivals in Peru at 5, 275,000 in 2019. Notably this dropped to 1,119,000 Covid levels in 2020.

¹⁵ Often the central plaza in a Peruvian town or city is called *Plaza de Armas*. Examples are found in Lima, Cajamarca and Arequipa, as well as locally in Cusco, Calca, and Ollantaytambo. This nomenclature can also be found across Latin America more generally.

steel, while adobe structures retain prominence in many of the Indigenous communities located in the higher Andes. ‘Native’ occupants in these communities are often referred to as *campesinos*, people who primarily work the land in subsistence farming and agricultural practices.

Historically, the Sacred Valley has long been an important place for agricultural practices given its rich soils and temperate climate. It is believed that the Incas produced food on the vast stone wall terraces of the archaeological sites. There is still a good deal of food produced in the valley, including fruits, vegetables, wheat, barley, and potatoes, which are despatched to Cusco and various towns daily (Gade 2016, pp. 166-167).¹⁶



Figure 4: Pisac from above, 2016.

Pisac is located along the banks of the Urubamba River in the Sacred Valley.¹⁷ The district of Pisac is situated within the Calca province and includes many communities that are primarily

¹⁶ The potato was domesticated in Peru thousands of years ago with recent estimates of ‘native potato varieties’ between 2000 and 2500, being an example of ‘Peru’s mega biodiversity’ (Scott 2011, p. 22).

¹⁷ The *Quechua* spelling (although originally an oral language) *P’ísaq* translates to partridge (Villasante Ortiz 1995, p. 154). Other reports have suggested that this was also the name of a local man, Cristobal Písac Topa,

inhabited by Indigenous populations.¹⁸ It is bound by majestic mountain peaks, each distinctly rising above the valley floor. Pisac is surrounded by farmland and small communities located along the river and up into the higher mountains. Pisac was built circa 1571, upon principles of colonial settlement as Indigenous populations were ordered into *reducciones* – nucleated villages built in the decades following the conquest (Vargas 2001, p. 235).

Like other towns, Pisac is situated around a central plaza (Plaza Constitución) where the church of the Apostle San Pedro is located. The plaza is the location of the artisanal markets that attract many tourists. Historically, women from different *ayllus* have long travelled to Pisac from their communities to sell fresh produce, as well as to obtain materials such as kerosene, sugar, salt, and matches (Vargas 2001, p. 235). A few minutes' walk from the plaza is a produce market where patrons can buy fruit, vegetables, meat, flowers, eggs, and Andean cheeses, amongst other things. On Sunday mornings produce markets are also held in the main plaza. As is common in the streets of most towns, and in Cusco, women commonly set out their produce on the ground, often on a small tarpaulin, sitting amongst themselves and selling to passers-by, who in Pisac, are often foreigners.



Figure 5: Fresh produce, Sunday markets, Pisac, 2016.

interrogated by Francisco de Toledo's secretary Gabriel de Loarte who wanted to learn about Inca life in the different *ayllus* in the early 1570s (Vargas 2001, p. 61).

¹⁸ Indigenous communities of the District of Pisac include Viacha, Sakaka, Amaru, Ampay, Cuyo Chico, Paru Paru, Cuyo Grande, Qotataki, Cotobamba, Pampallacta, Mask'a, Lloklla, Chahuaytiti (Vargas 2001, p. 240). Wanda is located on the opposite side of the Urubamba River.

Pisac attracts tour groups who arrive by the bus load, often parking in several of the main streets and congesting the thoroughfare. Tourist groups spend time wandering the markets and streets of Pisac before taking the short bus trip up to the Inca ‘ruins’, as they are often referred to. Independent tourists can either hike up to the ruins or take a taxi. Most of the businesses in the plaza are oriented around the tourism trade. Many markets stalls have bargain priced goods, such as cheap alpaca sweaters, ceramics, Andean textiles, and artworks. Some, however, sell genuine antique items and ‘authentic’ handmade textiles such as *mantas* and *ponchos* crafted with alpaca wool and natural pigments.¹⁹ There are also shops that cater for a slightly upscale tourist market, selling expensive baby alpaca sweaters and jewellery.

The importance of the plaza to tourism trade in Pisac cannot be overstated. For example, Codina, Lugosi and Bowen (2020, p. 13) have discussed the ‘contestation of the communal space’ of Pisac’s plaza, examining how ‘local actors ascribed multiple, shifting, affective, economic and political meaning to the plaza, and the qualities of place determined how they could extract value from tourism’. Pisac’s growing popularity as a ‘tourist destination’ has also seen ‘artisans and jewellers’ migrate to the area for such reasons (Codina, Lugosi and Bowen 2020, p. 13). Regarding ‘tourism governance’, Codina, Lugosi and Bowen (2020, p. 16) have noted that most traders have ‘lost trust’ in the district municipal council’s longstanding promises and inability to enact place-specific policies. Such inaction has resulted in the allowance of ‘entrepreneurial actors to exercise power over place, including the plaza, and over how they extracted value from it at the expense of others’ (Codina, Lugosi and Bowen 2020, p. 17).

The town is flanked by farmland used for cultivating maize, yet in recent years land has been utilised for building hotels, guesthouses, and homes for foreigners and non-local inhabitants. Tourists will commonly stay in the town centre, but there are several options within proximity. This is notable in *la Rinconada*, a stretch of road just outside of town, where there is a hotel and a cluster of small adobe houses that serve as long-stay accommodation. This area has become known as ‘gringoville’, due to the number of foreigners living there. According to one participant, Sean West, foreigners living there disliked the term and renamed it ‘*casas de munay*’, a mix of Spanish and *Quechua*, translating to the appellation, ‘houses of love’. Sean heard that this had amused the locals as it sounded like a *bordello* – a ‘brothel’.

¹⁹ A *manta* is a ceremonial Andean textile.



Figure 6: Artisanal markets, Pisac, 2016.

Many shops in Pisac sell artisanal goods, hand painted ceramics, as well as musical instruments such as drums, flutes, pan pipes, and *charangos*.²⁰ These shops cater to New Age spiritual seekers that flock to Pisac, selling crystals, incense, ‘hippie’ clothing, trinkets, or plant medicine paraphernalia. Several shops advertise ‘shamanic’ items for sale. *The Shaman Shop*, for example, sold a variety of items such as *rapé*, *mapacho*, San Pedro powder, *sananga*, *agua florida*, *shacapas*, *kuripes*. *Rapé* is a tobacco snuff used throughout South America, particularly associated with the ‘jungle’ traditions, but has become popular with foreigners; *mapacho* is ceremonial jungle tobacco (*nicotiana rustica*); San Pedro powder is a dried powdered form of the San Pedro cactus; *sananga* is used for many purposes including eye health, commonly associated with ayahuasca and other plant medicines; *agua florida* is a popular flower water used in plant medicine ceremonies; *shacapas* are jungle ceremonial instrument made of dried leaves; *kuripes* are the device used for administering *rapé*.

Numerous cafes in Pisac function as hangouts for foreigners. Ulrike’s restaurant was the largest and most popular. Prices were comparatively cheap, and the menu offered foods such as yoghurt, fruit juice, eggs, burgers and fries, and ‘Peruvian’ alpaca steak, for example. Events were often held upstairs at Ulrike’s such as the astrology class that was mentioned above. As

²⁰ A *charango* is an Andean lute. Turino (1984, p. 253) has explained that the *charango* ‘assumes an important place in several distinct Peruvian musical traditions, notably that of Andean peasants, of mestizos, and more recently that of urban folklore “revivalists”’.

discussed in chapter six, Ulrike's was a popular place for foreigners to work, and some would spend most of the day there. Notice boards at Ulrike's and other cafés commonly had advertisements for 'spiritual' events and workshops that Pisac has become known for. These range from yoga and reiki classes, to massage, plant medicine retreats, and local traditions that are associated with mystical tourism, which will be discussed further throughout the thesis. One restaurant called Sacred Sushi, only opened on Sunday, and served a healthy vegetarian menu. Although attended by tourists, it was popular with expats and long-term transients, and was a place to meet friends or simply a good place to bump into people you knew.

Although the town offered numerous places for foreigners to meet and socialise, often people kept to themselves or would gather for events such as a plant medicine ceremony, a sweat lodge, or socialise by going on hikes or spending time by the river. While renting a bungalow from Paz y Luz, my partner and I would occasionally have dinner with several of our neighbours, including Javier, or visit with other friends for a night fire. Such events were usually low key and sporadic.



Figure 7: Notice board, Ulrike's restaurant, Pisac.

PART II: Background

Chapter 1: Framing Ayahuasca Pilgrimage

This thesis employs the concept of ayahuasca pilgrimage to examine the ritual healing practices and intersecting aspects of social discourse and everyday life that define the spiritual tourism and alternative lifestyle community residing in the town of Pisac. Before going on to explore these themes ethnographically, the following two chapters provide relevant background material, including a review of literature and key theoretical perspectives relevant to this study.

This chapter begins with an essential overview of ayahuasca, from its shamanic origins in the Amazon, to its development as a form of spiritual tourism. It also examines the expansion of ayahuasca use, both within and outside of South America and across syncretic, neoshamanic, and more recently, scientific, and clinical contexts. Following this, a literature review of pilgrimage studies charts theoretical developments in scholarly work, and key contributions found in early tourism studies. Importantly, this includes a discussion of Victor Turner's seminal work on rites of passage, *communitas*, and pilgrimage, and more recently, critiques of Turner's universalistic approach that move towards rethinking pilgrimage in less deterministic ways. This literature review on pilgrimage also introduces key concepts of authenticity and contestation that are later explicated in the ethnographic chapters. When used in a fluid and interchangeable way, the concept of pilgrimage continues to offer a wealth of possibilities for examining the motivations, experiences, and broader social implications of travel. In this thesis it provides a versatile and expansive framework for examining the diverse, complex, and sometimes controversial aspects of contemporary forms of travel engaged in by foreigners in Latin America, more broadly.

1.2 Ayahuasca

1.2.1 Ayahuasca overview

Ayahuasca²¹ is a psychoactive plant mixture that has been used in traditional shamanic contexts throughout the Amazon regions of South America. The word ayahuasca belongs to the *Quechua* language and translates to ‘vine of the dead’ (Beyer 2010, p. 208) or perhaps more commonly, ‘vine of the soul’ (McKenna 2004, p. 112).²² The ritual use of ayahuasca has played an important role in the religious and cultural life of Indigenous and mestizo people of the Amazon; across Peru, Colombia, Venezuela, and Brazil (Luna 1986; Metzner 2006). Historically, knowledge is limited regarding the origins of ayahuasca,²³ however, Indigenous groups are believed to have engaged with it for individual purposes, collective ritual, and for social reproduction (Labate, Cavnar & Barbira-Freedman 2014, p. 3) for hundreds or perhaps thousands of years (Metzner 2006, p. 1).²⁴ While traditional uses vary, Dobkin de Rios (1972, p. 45) described its use in the ‘rainforest’ as pertaining to: The supernatural, magic and religious ritual; divination to obtain guidance, prophesy; witchcraft, to cause illness; treatment of disease, to determine cause and effect a cure; pleasure and social interaction.

Ritual use of ayahuasca commonly involves a shaman engaging with the vast ethnopharmacopeia of Amazonian plants from an animistic perspective. Humanity from this view is not restricted to being human in the Western sense of personhood, but may include animals and spirits (Vilaça 2005, p. 448).²⁵ Ayahuasca shamanism is exemplary of Amazonian notions of ‘relationality’ pertaining to both the surrounding environment, which is considered to be alive with spiritual and supernatural forces, and within the complexity of social life that these forces are considered to be intrinsically part of.²⁶ To put it another way, ayahuasca exists

²¹ Also known as: *yajé* or *yagé*, *caapi*, *natem* (Luna 1986, p. 57); *natema*, *nepe*, *kahi* (Dobkin de Rios 1972, p. 43); Also, *hoasca* (Grob et al. 1996), *daime* from Santo Daime church; or more recently *aya* amongst Westerners.

²² ‘Aya = dead person, spirit; waska = vine’ (Luna 1986, p. 57).

²³ This view pertains more to a Western perspective, or historicising ayahuasca. In the Amazon, native understandings tend to engage with a mythological and animistic worldview regarding ayahuasca’s origin, sometimes depicted in visionary paintings, see the work of Pablo Amaringo (Luna & Amaringo 1999). (In Iquitos, Don Francisco Montes Shuña showed me paintings he had made representing this story, which he told me were derived from information received during many ceremonies with ayahuasca).

²⁴ A commonly held view is that pan-Amazonian ayahuasca use extends back thousands of years, however, more recently scholars such as Gow (1994); Brabec di Mori (2011; 2014); Shepard (2014) have posited that the ‘tribal’ spread/use of ayahuasca has been much more recent, particularly influenced by the impacts of colonialism across the Amazon.

²⁵ For further on this topic see: Viveiros de Castro (1998) on ‘Amerindian perspectivism’; Bird-David (1999) on ‘personhood’ and ‘relational epistemology’.

²⁶ For a fine example, see Reichel-Dolmatoff’s (1997) study of the *Tukano* in Northwest Colombia.

within a world of ‘non-human personhood’, a set of relations, or between what Hallowell (1960, p. 45) has referred to as, ‘other than human persons’.

The various pharmacological constituents that comprise the ayahuasca ‘brew’²⁷ deserve attention given the synergetic interaction that occurs between the various plants that produce its psychoactive effects. There are two main plants commonly used to make the ayahuasca brew. Often known as the ayahuasca vine or simply ayahuasca, *Banisteriopsis Caapi* is a liana that belongs to the *Malpighia* family and grows wild throughout the jungle regions but can also be cultivated (Evans Schultes & Raffauf 2004, pp. 21-24). The other commonly used plant is *Psychotria Viridis*, a leafy bush more often known as the *Chacruna* plant. This plant belongs to *Rubiaceae* or Coffee Family (Evans Schultes & Raffauf 2004, p. 31) and contains the active ingredient *N, N-Dimethyltryptamine* (DMT), which often induces a strong psychoactive state of consciousness, enhancing the effects of the ayahuasca vine. Normally, DMT is rendered inactive when orally ingested. This happens because of a *monoamine oxidase-A* (MAO-A) enzyme in the human stomach that oxidizes DMT molecules (Cavnar 2011, p. 11). The *Chacruna* plant, however, becomes orally active when mixed with the beta-carboline alkaloids (harmine, harmaline, tetrahydroharmine) found in the ayahuasca vine (McKenna et al. 1984, p. 195). This occurs because these alkaloids contain an MAO-A inhibitor (MAOI) that facilitates the oral activation of DMT in the *Chacruna* leaf (McKenna 2004, p. 112). Ingesting the plant mixture induces an altered state of consciousness (ASC) that can last on average from four to six hours. Other plant add-mixtures are common, which will vary between shamans, cultural settings, and traditions.²⁸ Ayahuasca is usually brewed over a small fire in a large pot for several hours, a process which again varies significantly. What is produced is often cooked down to a dark, potent, bitter, astringent, and sometimes viscous liquid.

The spectrum of psychoactive effects that ayahuasca produces can vary. The contents of ceremonial experiences, as they occur from person to person and within cultural contexts, are equally variable. As discussions in chapters three and four will reveal, experiences often pertain to personal biographical themes and depend on an individual’s intentions for drinking ayahuasca. Also, the way a shaman will structure a ceremony and discursively frame experiences prove to be integral to notions of efficacy and positive outcomes. There are,

²⁷ Sometimes called a ‘tea’.

²⁸ As an example, Beyer (2010, p. 207) purports that add mixture variations can range between fifty-five to one hundred and twenty.

however, reoccurring commonalities across individual experiences and cultural contexts. Broadly speaking, ayahuasca is often known to induce ‘otherworldly’ visionary states, strong somatic sensations, deeply personal reflections, healing, and an engagement with spirits or supernatural beings.

In his book *Antipodes of the Mind* (2010), Benny Shanon has charted the phenomenology of the ayahuasca experience in what he distinguishes as ‘traditional’, ‘syncretic’, Western ‘therapeutic’, and ‘independent’ contexts. Shanon (2010, p. 56) found that participants commonly experienced the following sequentially during a ceremony: Initial feelings of ‘internal invasion’, something crawling through one’s inner parts, often experienced as ‘snakes engulfing them from within’ (Shanon 2010, p. 56). After around 40 minutes, participants often reported vomiting or ‘purging’,²⁹ ‘pouring out the depth of their soul’ (Shanon 2010, p. 57). This was followed by feelings of relief, seen as a sign of ‘substantive’ progress and even ‘personal transformation’ (Shanon 2010, p. 57). At around 90 minutes the most intense inebriations were felt, visions were strongest, and experiences were ‘tough’ and ‘frightening’, with a sense of little-to-no self-control, feelings of going mad or a fear of dying (Shanon 2010, p. 57). During the final phase, visionary states were generally reduced in intensity, experiences usually became ‘mellower’ and feelings of ‘serenity’, ‘peace of mind’ and ‘bliss’ often ensued (Shanon 2010, p. 58). Shanon (2010, p. 58) stated that while the basic schema above is typical, it is by no means ‘universal’. Other common physical effects participants may experience (as confirmed in the findings in this thesis) include diarrhoea, crying, yelling, yawning, spitting, body aches, shaking, discomfort or soothing feelings across the body. These are often associated with intense emotional states, physically purging ‘trauma’ and spiritual cleansing, themes discussed in more detail in chapters three and four. Westerners new to ayahuasca may find themselves experiencing something that extends beyond the material sphere of daily reality, often for the first time.³⁰

²⁹ Known in the Amazon as ‘*la purga*’ (the purge), a common, although not always essential feature of the experience, however, is seen as a powerful aspect of the energetic/spiritual healing process in certain instances, for physically and spiritually expelling negative emotions or aspects of illness and disease. For a recent discussion on the healing efficacy of ‘purging’, see: *Purging and the Body in the Therapeutic Use of Ayahuasca* (Fotiou & Gearin 2019).

³⁰ Preconceived expectations regarding a ‘typical’ experience are fraught, often supplanted with something vastly different. For example, participants may experience no effects of the medicine until a ceremony has almost finished, to be suddenly overcome with intense effects, as is usual at the beginning of a ceremony. Various participants have reported having ‘another ceremony’ once they returned to their room or ‘tambo’ after a ceremony has closed, when they experience a second wave of the medicine. Also, while the amount of ayahuasca required for each person is usually carefully measured by a shaman, the ensuing effects can vary considerably from one

Traditional shamanic uses of ayahuasca have been distinguished across ethnic lines. Luna (1986, p. 57) has listed 72 ethnic groups belonging to 20 different linguistic families who use ayahuasca. The term *vegetalismo* refers to the practices of Indigenous and mestizo shamans, but in Peru, it usually refers to mestizo shamans (Beyer 2010, p. 197). There are some variations regarding the use of this term. As Labate (2014, p. 192) has pointed out, distinguishing between Indigenous and mestizo practices is often difficult ‘since their origins are frequently historically intermingled, and both remain in constant mutual dialogue’.



Figure 8: The author preparing the ayahuasca vine, Iquitos, 2016.

In *vegetalismo* practices, the spirits that reside within the plants are often known as ‘plant teachers’.³¹ They are considered the source of knowledge and possess the power to heal (Luna 1986; Luna & Amaringo 1999, p. 2). A shaman will often engage in a long and arduous process of isolation while ‘dieting’ different plants, including ayahuasca, to learn from them, receive their power, and to develop a relationship with them.³² *Vegetalistas* who work with ayahuasca develop the ability to call upon and use these plants when treating or aiding a patient. By engaging with plants in this way, *vegetalistas* not only claim to become stronger and wiser, but gain other abilities, such as, to ‘see the cause of illness, and even inside the body of his [sic]

ceremony to the next. For example, a participant may have a very strong experience from drinking a small amount, while in a following ceremony require several cups and still feel only mild effects.

³¹ Also similarly known as *Doctores* (Doctors).

³² Known as ‘*la dieta*’. A process traditionally connected with the learning/training of a shaman, now one which has become common amongst Western participants who seek in-depth healing and/or training/knowledge.

patients – X ray vision – is also prevalent’ (Luna 1986, p. 161).³³ Thus, plant diets (*dietas*) are widely acknowledged as an essential part of becoming a *Maestro* shaman.³⁴

The ceremonial use of ayahuasca usually occurs at night. While it would be remiss to try and describe cross-cultural and inter-ethnic ceremonial practices concisely, there are several common features worth mentioning here at the outset. Firstly, are the ‘medicine songs’ known as *icaros* that shamans will sing intermittently for an array of purposes throughout a ceremony. *Icaros* are believed to be powerful for healing and for influencing the experiences of participants. Some shamans describe learning *icaros* directly from plant teachers during a *dieta* or ceremony, afterwards having completely memorised the song (Luna 1986, p. 107).³⁵ It is also common for shamans to learn *icaros* from other shamans, particularly within the pedagogical context of a student-teacher relationship. Beyer (2010, p. 66) has written that the main function of an *icaros* is to ‘call spirits, to cure objects and endow them with magical power, and to modulate visions induced by ayahuasca’. Similarly, whistling is an important part of an ayahuasca ceremony. Whistling is also used as an incantation, to evoke plant spirits, spiritual forces of nature and the spirit of ayahuasca (Katz & Dobkin de Rios 1971, p. 324). Shamans will often use a *shacapa*, a bundle of dried leaves, often used rhythmically to accompany the singing of an *icaros*, but also as a tool used to heal a participant during a ceremony. Maracas and drums are similarly used while singing *icaros* or whistling. Further ceremonial descriptions will be examined in chapter three.

1.2.2 Ayahuasca tourism

Ayahuasca shamanism has developed as part of the wider tourism boom in Peru in recent decades, attracting growing numbers of foreigners seeking ‘authentic’ experiences with ‘traditional’ jungle shamans. What has become known as the ‘ayahuasca centre’ has emerged as the locus for this tourism in the Amazon.³⁶ These places are usually situated in a remote or semi-remote location, providing basic accommodation and plant medicine ceremonies that

³³ A similar analogy was given to me by one shaman/participant, Luz Maria, who discussed the process of working with ayahuasca in a ceremony like ‘turning on the light in a room’.

³⁴ *Maestro* translates to ‘teacher’, however, it also pertains to someone knowledgeable and experienced, with expertise.

³⁵ Also learnt in dreams (Bustos 2008).

³⁶ Also referred to as an ‘ayahuasca retreat’ or ‘ayahuasca lodge’.

incorporate ritual aspects of Indigenous shamanic traditions. In some centres, other activities such as yoga or massage are offered. It is common for foreigners to be able to choose between attending as little as one ceremony or staying for much longer lengths of time. Often, participants engage in a *dieta*, now a common feature of ayahuasca tourism. Some centres are owned by local shamans or families, while others are owned by foreign ‘investors’ who employ Indigenous or mestizo shamans and local workers in the day-to-day running of the centre. Ayahuasca centres can vary considerably. Some have very basic amenities and limited creature comforts. They may offer cheaper rates for long-term stays and for those engaging in a *dieta*. Large ayahuasca centres can resemble a holiday retreat or eco-lodge, provide ‘mod cons’, and have a more relaxed approach towards dietary restrictions and social interaction. Some centres welcome large groups and corporate cohorts from the Global North, charging many thousands of US dollars per person for relatively short stays.³⁷

The beginnings of ‘ayahuasca tourism’ can be found within the ‘psychedelic’ cultural milieu of the West during the 1960s and 1970s.³⁸ Although the scientific discovery and extensive field study of ayahuasca were made earlier, by ethnobotanists Richard Spruce, and later Richard Evans Schultes, the first well-known Westerner in search of ayahuasca was poet and author William Burroughs, whose correspondences with Allen Ginsberg during his travels were chronicled in *Yagé Letters* (1963). Burroughs’ book was part of the nascent counterculture and psychedelic movement of the 1960s. Other authors such as Carlos Castaneda and Michael Harner further inspired a generation of ‘psychedelic tourists’ and young ethnographers who would travel to the Amazon in search of ayahuasca and its attendant Indigenous cultures (Brabec di Mori 2014, p. 208). Since the early 1990s, the ayahuasca tourism boom has continued to grow, influenced by the proliferation of ayahuasca centres and websites, documentaries and films, and the broader development of the tourism industry in Peru.³⁹ Ayahuasca tourism has been part of a global resurgence of interest in shamanism, alternative healing practices, New-Age spirituality, and Western scientific studies on the efficacy and therapeutic potential of ayahuasca and other psychoactive substances.

³⁷ As an example, a recent internet search (January 2022) found costs of over three thousand US dollars for a ten-day ayahuasca retreat. Comparatively, this price is almost quadruple what I paid for my first ayahuasca retreat (consisting of a similar itinerary and number of ayahuasca ceremonies) almost a decade ago in 2012. Prices for some of the more ‘basic’ centres alluded to above can be half this amount or less.

³⁸ Arguably global to some extent, this was most concentrated in the USA.

³⁹ The growth of tourism in Peru correlates with the decline of civil unrest and terrorism associated with the *Sendero Luminoso* (Shining Path), a communist guerrilla organisation. For related discussions, see: Starn, Degregori & Kirk (2005); Baumhackl (2019).

Ayahuasca tourism has been criticised for its commodification of Indigenous traditions directed at a foreign market of ‘spiritual seekers’. Dobkin de Rios has pointed towards the dangers and troubling implications of ayahuasca use in this context, regarding ‘tourists on a never-ending search for self-actualisation and growth’ (Dobkin de Rios 1994, p. 1). She has argued that the search for ayahuasca ceremonial experiences represents a form of ‘drug tourism’, being a ‘figment of the imagination’ and ‘fantasy of Western consciousness’ (Dobkin de Rios 1994, p. 1). Issues of exploitation have been noted regarding ‘native healers’, ‘neo-shamans’ and ‘charlatans’ who take advantage of the ‘commercialisation of spiritual states of consciousness,’ often with negative outcomes for ceremonial participants (Dobkin de Rios 1994, p. 2; Dobkin de Rios & Rummrill 2008, p. 72). While these observations continue to be of concern, some scholars have taken a more positive view towards understanding ayahuasca tourism. Winkelman (2005), for example, conducted research at an ayahuasca retreat to examine motivations and benefits of participants’ experiences. Part of Winkelman’s (2005, p. 210) aim was to assess whether all ayahuasca tourist experiences were limited to what Dobkin de Rios (1994) called ‘drug dilettantism’. Contrary to ‘hedonistic’ motivations, Winkelman (2005, p. 215) found that most participants placed importance on their ‘personal spiritual development’ towards ‘obtaining personal direction in one’s life’, which he considered to be evidence of the ‘positive cultural and personal effects’ of their experiences. Analyses such as these offered by Winkelman are equally important for understanding participants’ motivations, yet the political economy of ayahuasca tourism, including critical questions concerning the commodification of Indigenous traditions and the structural inequalities that enable and perpetuate this, remain salient within ayahuasca tourism practices.

Cross-cultural interactions within ayahuasca tourism have been noted for their exploitative dimensions, resulting in the cultural appropriation of local Indigenous and mestizo traditions, as ayahuasca has expanded into a global industry. Regarding tourists themselves, there is often a paradoxical contradiction between how they see themselves within this sphere and how they see the impacts of other ‘tourists’. For example, Prayag et al. (2015, p. 2) have noted how some participants see themselves as ‘good’ spiritual tourists, while viewing others as ‘bad’ recreational users of ayahuasca – ‘drug tourists’. Such a moral economy of behaviour is common and reflects the often-contradictory ways that foreigners legitimate their own emplacement within the sphere of ayahuasca shamanism, themes that are returned to in the ethnographic chapters five and six. Without question, ayahuasca tourism has emerged out of an appropriation and commodification of Indigenous traditions, often excluding, and in some

cases, negatively impacting local Indigenous people. Yet, to comprehend these implications more fully it is necessary to understand ayahuasca's expansion beyond the Amazon. This is particularly important given the context of my own fieldsite in this thesis, being an example of 'ayahuasca diaspora' over the past several decades.

1.2.3 Globalisation of ayahuasca

In part, the globalisation of ayahuasca has occurred due to the developments in tourism discussed above, however, the recent history of its expansion is more complex. This section focuses on several diverse and specific contexts in which ayahuasca has become globalised, these being: religious/syncretic, Indigenous style (cross-cultural *vegetalismo*, neoshamanism), experimentalist (psychonaut), and scientific/therapeutic.⁴⁰ Due to its psychoactive properties, the use of ayahuasca transnationally has been complicated by prohibitive drug laws, with ensuing issues and implications. As such, some important points regarding its legal status globally are also discussed below.

First emerging in the late 1920s, several 'Brazilian religious churches' began using ayahuasca as a 'sacrament'. These churches have played a significant role in the globalisation of ayahuasca, particularly set apart from the more traditional shamanic contexts. The 'rubber boom' of the early 1900s saw vast movements of urban Brazilian workers encounter Indigenous people of the Amazon (Feeney & Labate 2014, p. 114; Beyer 2010). Once the rubber market collapsed, some returned to urban centres having acquired knowledge regarding the use of ayahuasca (Feeney & Labate 2014, p. 114). One of these migrants was Raimundo Irineu Serra who started the first 'ayahuasca church' in the early 1930s called *Santo Daime*, which blended 'folk Catholicism', 'spiritism', aspects of 'Afro-Brazilian culture' (Beyer 2010, p. 289), European esotericism, and Indigenous shamanism (Feeney & Labate 2014, p. 114). Other ayahuasca churches followed. *Barquinha* was established in 1945 by Daniel Pereira de Mattos, followed by *União do Vegetal* (UDV) founded in 1961 by Jose Gabriel de Costa (Tupper 2008, p. 299).

⁴⁰ Scuro and Rodd (2019, p. 1080) define neoshamanism as: 'a set of discourses and practices involving the integration of Indigenous (especially American) shamanic and psychotherapeutic techniques by people from urban Western contexts'.

Particularly since the 1970s, these ‘ayahuasca religions’ have spread throughout Brazil, with innumerable groups emerging across the country (Labate 2012, p. 88). *Santo Daime* underwent a ‘rapid expansion’ during this time, having ‘internationalised’ in the following decades, becoming a ‘heterogeneous, transnational phenomenon at the cutting edge of modern religious, scientific, and legal scholarship’ (Labate & Loures de Assis 2017, p. 57). This development was partly influenced by foreign ‘spiritual seekers’ who began visiting *Santo Daime* congregations in Brazil during the 1960s and 1970s (Feeney & Labate 2014, p. 115). The 1980s saw *Santo Daime* members begin to travel overseas for ritual performances, and by the early 1990s, branches started to appear around Europe; in the Netherlands, Germany, Spain, and by the mid 1990s, France, Italy, Canada, and the US (Labate & Jungaberle 2011; Feeney & Labate 2014). *Santo Daime* has congregations in over 30 countries (Labate & Feeney 2011) due in great part to the interests of New Age movements and the ‘missionary propensities’ of some *Santo Daime* leaders (Feeney & Labate 2014, p. 115). Assessing the globalisation of ayahuasca within this context, Labate and Loures de Assis (2017, p. 73) argued that the Global South has become an exporter of diverse and distinct religions, with Latin America taking on a surprising level of agency in the ‘global religious scene’.

Although there have been diverse appropriations of ayahuasca as it has developed outside of the Amazon, to a great extent ‘Indigenous and mestizo cultural logics of ayahuasca’ and their ‘myths of origin’ continue to play an important role in notions of ‘identity’ and ‘legitimacy’ in such contexts (Labate, Cavnar & Gearin 2017, p. 3). Ayahuasca ceremonies are often formed around ‘Indigenous-style’ rituals for Western clients, a practice that has been labelled ‘cross-cultural *vegetalismo*’. Tupper (2008; 2009, p. 118) has described this as a ‘sociological trend’ that presents an array of philosophical and practical issues. A demand for authentic shamans to travel to countries such as Australia, the US, and across Europe has ensued. This involves conducting clandestine ceremonies due to punitive drug controls, as discussed further below. What has become more common, is the emergence of neoshamans or neo-*ayahuasqueros*, Westerners conducting Indigenous-style ceremonies. Trichter (2010, p. 141) has pointed out some problematic aspects that such practices can entail in Western countries, as including lax ethical guidelines:

There are many disparate ceremony leaders from various cultural traditions, and different schools of thought, each with idiosyncratic variations on ceremonies that make standards and regulations of ayahuasca ceremonies and ceremony leaders’ conduct difficult, if not impossible, to maintain.

While this is the case, it is worth pointing out that even in Peru similar issues exist. What is perhaps more important to reiterate, is that the globalisation of ayahuasca is greatly shaped by the increasing prevalence of ‘white’ or ‘gringo’ shamans developing cross-cultural *vegetalismo* practices in their own countries. The emergence of this trend has been labelled a form of ‘biopiracy’, with Westerners being accused of ‘pushing aside Indigenous or mestizo healers to take over their rituals’ (Dobkin de Rios & Rummrill 2008, p. 137). Additionally, these appropriations have been argued to take on a ‘fragmentary nature’ of Indigenous knowledge, leading to further marginalisation (Fotiou 2016, p. 171).

Diasporic ayahuasca practices that have emerged out of the nascent tourism industry have also been referred to as ‘ayahuasca neoshamanism’. Such practices are considered to share similar ‘cultural criticism’ found in New Age spiritualities (Gearin 2015, p. 3). Additionally, neoshamanic practices have come to include an eclectic and diverse range of practices, ideologies, healing modalities and philosophies that have been integrated into ritual and ceremonial events. Like ‘traditional’ shamanism, neoshamanism is not a ‘homogenous entity’ (Wallis 1999, p. 46), but rather reveals ways that foreign or ‘gringo’ shamans employ personal choice in picking and choosing how to construct ceremonies or retreats for foreign participants. The term ayahuasca neoshamanism is used throughout this thesis to refer to ayahuasca practices in Pisac. This term is particularly important for describing how eclecticism and individualism collide with notions of Indigenous beliefs and cosmology. Given the needs of foreign participants for making sense out of their ceremonial experiences and integrating them into daily life, ayahuasca neoshamanism, as illustrated in chapters three and four, often encompasses a psychospiritual approach towards benefit maximisation.

The subsequent globalisation of ayahuasca has been part of a recent revival in interest in ‘psychedelics’ in the West. This has resulted in various practices and forms of ‘experimentation’ with substances such as LSD, psilocybin mushrooms, mescaline, and ayahuasca. For example, Ott (1994) described the ‘psychonaut’⁴¹ as a ‘voyager’ who uses *entheogenic*⁴² substances to explore altered states of consciousness. Ott (2011) considered

⁴¹ Originally coined by the German writer and explored of altered states of consciousness Ernst Jünger.

⁴² *Entheogen/s* has become a popular term for psychotropic plants such as ayahuasca. First used by Ruck et al. (1979) it has become a preferable term to ‘hallucinogen’ or ‘psychedelic’ as it places emphasis on the spiritual context of use and the shamanic ‘ecstatic’ states imbued; *Entheos*; the Greek root word meaning ‘god within’ and *gen*; ‘becoming’, refer to entheogenic plants or substances that produce visions and are used in ritual practices’ (Ruck et al. cited in Seddon 2014, p. 14).

various types of psychonauts; as applicable to ‘white shamans’, either the ‘dangerous *farceurs*’ or the ‘good and dedicated people involved’, and the ‘independent psychonaut’, otherwise described as an ‘experimentalist’. In *Ayahuasca Analogues* (1994), Ott explored plants outside of the Amazon that can be used to achieve similar psychoactive effects through combining plants with the same pharmacological constituents as ayahuasca, as discussed above.⁴³

The investigation of ayahuasca analogues is illustrative of ‘the scene’ of experimentation involving individuals that are ‘home-brewing’ and imbibing psychoactive plants in non-ritual or ‘non-structured contexts’, sometimes buying ayahuasca or analogues online for such purposes (Tupper 2009, p. 119). While ayahuasca and its analogues have become part of the global psychonaut’s apothecary, unstructured or unsupervised use is relatively limited, given the adverse effects such as vomiting, as well as the difficulty and cost of purchasing and preparing it, compared to other substances such as psilocybin or LSD, for example (Tupper 2011, p. 13). Dobkin de Rios and Rummrlil (2008, p. 75) have criticised the popularity of ayahuasca with ‘New Age baby boomers’, suggesting that it is a quick way to ‘explore inner reality’ and in context of its illegal status in places like Europe and the United States, they argued that it presents a ‘lure of the dangerous and forbidden’. While this may be the case for some, it is reductionist to claim all Westerners feel this way, particularly given the ordeal of the ayahuasca experience. This also applies to the punitive laws regarding its illegal use in many countries outside of South America. While arguably this may be seen as reflective of the dangerous allure of Ayahuasca for some, the consensus seems to be much more in favour of personal freedom to engage with such substances rather than an attraction to clandestine ceremonies.

Across the various contexts in which ayahuasca has expanded globally, there have emerged ongoing issues regarding its legal status, as informed by international conventions and national law. In a recent ICEERS⁴⁴ briefing, Sánchez and Bouso (2015) have outlined the challenges involved in the classification and control of psychoactive substances such as ayahuasca and

⁴³ Comparative ethnopharmacological research investigating plants from Australia, the middle east, and North America that constitute similar pharmacological properties as ayahuasca. Ott has discovered more than sixty plants like the ayahuasca vine (re: ‘MAOI-alkaloids similar to harmine’) and seventy DMT (‘or other tryptamines’) containing plants; ‘accordingly there exist at least 4000 combinations of 2 plants which can yield an “ayahuasca-analogue”’ (Ott 2011, p. 109).

⁴⁴ *International Centre for Ethnobotanical Education, Research, and Services* (ICEERS): ‘is a non-profit organisation dedicated to transforming society’s relationship with psychoactive plants. We do this by engaging with some of the fundamental issues resulting from the globalisation of ayahuasca, iboga and other ethnobotanicals’ (ICEERS 2020).

other ‘traditional’ plants such as peyote, as they defy the classic dichotomy between ‘medical’, ‘scientific’, and ‘recreational’ uses (Sánchez & Bouso 2015, p. 5). This is due to the expanding contexts in which they are now being used: ‘traditional, Indigenous, religious, therapeutic, and personal growth settings that are not precisely categorised as purely ‘medical’ or ‘recreational’ (Sánchez & Bouso 2015, p. 5). International drug conventions of 1961, 1971 and the 1988 convention against illicit or narcotic drugs and psychotropic substances, included countries such as Mexico, Peru, the United States, and Canada⁴⁵ who submitted various ‘reservations’ upon signing. These reservations were made for allowing exceptional use for traditional groups and within limited territories ‘that need to be protected as a cultural expression and which were not at risk of being expanded and reinvented in other places’ (Sánchez & Bouso 2015, pp. 6-7). Regulation within these reservations have been criticised for several reasons: Firstly, if traditional use is predicated upon a ‘long history’ of use, it assumes that historical practices are more authentic and thus legitimate than contemporary ones; limiting traditional cultures to a specific territory also reveals the convention’s view of ‘culture as static’, assuming their inability to extend their influence to other populations or territories; lastly, it inherently assumes that ‘Western pharmaceuticals are more efficient and safer than traditional plant uses’ (Sánchez & Bouso 2015, p. 8).⁴⁶

Organisations such as ICEERS play an important role in addressing the criminalisation of psychotropics and other ‘teacher plants’. The ICEERS *Ayahuasca Defense Fund* (ADF) program works towards addressing legal challenges by bringing together drug policy experts, lawyers, legal strategists, and academics, for purposes of legal defence of people under prosecution. It works internationally towards education, aiming to providing clarity amid confusion and misinformation about ayahuasca with the intent of influencing policy reform, towards a human-rights based public policy (ICEERS 2020).

⁴⁵ Brazil was ‘conspicuously absent’ in submitting such reservations upon signing the 1971 convention (Sánchez & Bouso 2015, p. 8).

⁴⁶ One context in which the globalisation of ayahuasca has been notable relates to the Brazilian churches of Santo Daime and UDV. Even within Brazil, there have been legal issues around the use of ayahuasca as these churches expanded into urban congregations, however, in 1991, the Brazilian government determined that its ritual use outweighed risks and Santo Daime and UDV were given the legal rights for the sacramental use of ayahuasca (Tupper 2008, p. 299).

Following the confiscation of 30kgs of ayahuasca in New Mexico the UDV were threatened with prosecution by the US government. However, the UDV argued that not only was ayahuasca safe, but sought tolerance for its use as a central practice of their faith under the first amendment of the US constitution and international treaties and domestic law, as of 2006 the supreme court legalised the use of ayahuasca for the US branch of the UDV (Dobkin de Rios & Rummrig 2008, p. 121).

A final aspect of ayahuasca globalisation is that of scientific research for investigating efficacy and therapeutic potentials in both ritual and clinical/controlled contexts. The research of traditional medicines for curing addiction and addressing conditions such as anxiety and depression, despite legal challenges, has had a resurgence over recent years, with clinical trials being conducted. The first scientific study of its kind was carried out in 1993 by the UDV who invited a multinational group of biomedical researchers to study the psychological and biomedical effects of ayahuasca, which included phenomenological assessment of ASC's, psychiatric diagnostic interviews, personality testing, and neuropsychological evaluation (Grob et al. 1996, p. 88). Findings included a remission of psychopathology, and significantly, concluded that there was no evidence of personality or cognitive deterioration (Grob et al. 1996, p. 86). More recently, researchers have studied the effects of ayahuasca in a range of contexts, with the treatment of addiction of significant focus (Mabit 2007); psychometric measures of ayahuasca effects for alleviating anxiety, 'hopelessness' and 'panic-like' symptoms of Santo Daime members (Santos et al. 2007); before and after assessment of first time users of ayahuasca in urban Brazil (Santo Daime/UDV), assessing positive outcomes and changes (Barbosa et al. 2009); potential for ayahuasca, psilocybin, and LSD for treating drug dependency, anxiety, mood disorders, particularly in treatment resistant patients (dos Santos et al. 2016);⁴⁷ placebo controlled trials using ayahuasca for treatment resistant depression (Palhano-Fontes et al. 2019); and evaluation of patient outcomes engaging with psychoactive 'ethnobotanical substances' at Takiwasi, a 'residential addiction treatment centre' employing Western and traditional Amazonian methods (O'Shaughnessy, et al. 2021, p. 1).⁴⁸

1.3 Theorising pilgrimage

This section examines important scholarly work concerning pilgrimage, tourism, notions of sacred and secular travel, and typologies of travellers as relevant to the ethnographic chapters to follow. It begins by reviewing early theoretical contributions that considered differences between pilgrimage and tourism as contrasting forms of travel. Tourism, for example, has been critiqued for lacking 'meaning' and 'depth', seen instead as a 'staged' and inauthentic sphere

⁴⁷ Also see Harris' recent work *Listening to Ayahuasca: New Hope for Depression, Addiction, PTSD, and Anxiety* (2017).

⁴⁸ Also see: Presser-Velder (2012); Loizage-Velder and Verres (2014) for research on substance abuse; Frecska, Bokor and Winkelman (2016) regarding therapeutic potentials.

of travel that has often negatively impacted local people. As will be discussed, however, making binary distinctions between pilgrimage and tourism can be problematic, especially in the contemporary world of mass global travel. Instead, pilgrimage can be seen to encompass complex and diverse types of travel that people engage in, often for multiple and sometimes conflicting reasons.

The work of Victor Turner has been central to social scientific studies of pilgrimage. Further developments in pilgrimage studies have critiqued Turner's deterministic use of *communitas* which he argued to be a defining feature of pilgrimage. Instead, scholars have argued that 'contestation' (eds Eade & Sallnow 1991) provides a more flexible and diverse approach towards discussing pilgrimage, a concept that is central to some of the key ethnographic discussions presented in this thesis. The following discussion of this literature reveals that pilgrimage and tourism, sacred and secular, centre and periphery, *communitas* and contestation, liminality and social structure are better seen as dynamically related, 'interchangeable' and coexisting within contemporary forms of travel, and particularly in relation to specific places. In this sense, as it is used in this thesis, pilgrimage usually infers tourism; ideas of sacred or religious journeys may include so-called secular moments, and themes of contestation and *communitas* can be equally identified across various contexts, places, and individual and collective experiences.

1.3.1 Pilgrimage and early tourism studies

Over recent decades, pilgrimage studies have garnered increasing interest from anthropologists, however, prior to the 1990s, it was an area of research that was lacking in ethnographic attention and theoretical development. In part, this limited attention has been because pilgrimages were often categorised as 'exceptional practices, irregular journeys outside habitual social realms' (Morinis 1992, p. 2). Others have pointed out that anthropology has traditionally tended to focus on 'spatially bracketed phenomenon', that is, localised, defined communities, whereas pilgrimage often transcends 'geographically confined groups' (Preston 1992, p. 32). Early work that has been influential in the study of pilgrimage, particularly in the 1970s, belonged to an emerging discourse on different types of tourism (Collins-Kreiner 2019, p. 146), especially regarding the motivations and experiences of tourists themselves, as well as their impact on local communities.

Several contributions have been prominent in shaping theoretical perspectives of ‘the tourist’ at a time when global travel was expanding. In *The Image* (1987) Boorstin described ‘tourist attractions’ as ‘pseudo-events’, having ‘little significance for the inward life of a people, but wonderfully saleable as a tourist commodity’ (Boorstin 1987, p. 103). Boorstin (1987, pp. 11-12) argued that pseudo-events were inherently ‘artificial’, having an ambiguous relationship with reality. According to MacCannell (1999, p. 10), Boorstin was critical of tourists because they were ‘satisfied with superficial experiences of other people and other places’. Yet MacCannell argued that tourists did in fact seek out ‘authentic’ experiences. He described how the tourist’s ‘quest for authenticity’ occurred through various ‘stages’ or ‘social spaces’, from ‘front to back’ (MacCannell 1999, p. 105).⁴⁹ The front is where ‘hosts and guests’ meet, the back is where hosts retire in-between performances (MacCannell 1999, p. 92). The more a tourist seeks authenticity within the ‘tourist space’, the less likely they are to experience ‘intimacy’ and ‘participation’, which he argued could only be achieved by ‘penetrating’ into the ‘real life of the areas’ they visited (MacCannell 1999, p. 106). The influence of MacCannell’s work has been important for reconsidering notions of the ‘tourist setting’ and towards framing the search for authenticity (Belhassen, Caton & Stewart 2008) regarding tourists who are looking for something different (Collins-Kreiner 2010a, pp. 442-443). As explored in chapter five, the search for authenticity can be analysed across multiple and intersecting ‘types’ (Wang 1999), as relating to ayahuasca pilgrim’s motivations, expectations, and experiences. Similarly, chapter six examines how the notion of penetrating ‘real life’ as MacCannell (1999) suggested above, is fraught, and more so reveals how pilgrimage places are contested, as will be explained below.

Research during the 1970s explored the scope of tourism in relation to the ‘sacred’ or ‘religious’ dimensions of travel, and towards defining different ‘typologies’. Graburn (1989, pp. 22-23) looked at ‘modern’ tourism as having antecedents in older forms and institutions of travel such as pilgrimage, similarly giving meaning and purpose to people’s lives in a new way by providing a ‘ritualised’ break in routine and to ‘relieve the ordinary’. This view of tourism as having self-transformational potential, marked the beginnings of what would later emerge as a ‘dedifferentiation’ of tourism and pilgrimage (Collins-Kreiner 2010a, p. 443). Cohen’s (1979b) earlier work, for example, revised the opposing views of both Boorstin and MacCannell, through charting the ‘phenomenology of the tourist experience’. Cohen pointed

⁴⁹ Building on Goffman’s (1959) model of ‘everyday life’.

out that a singular tourist ‘type’ did not exist. Instead, he argued that different people desired different ‘modes of tourist experience’ that were dependent upon ‘different types of relationships which obtain between a person and a variety of ‘centres’’ (Cohen 1979b, p. 180) denoting the locus or aim of travel, in some cases, analogous to an ‘elective spiritual centre’ of a pilgrimage journey (Cohen 1979b, pp. 189-190). Cohen’s emphasis on ‘the centre’ derives most notably from the work of Mircea Eliade and Victor Turner. It is the latter, however, who has been most influential in the theoretical development of pilgrimage studies.

1.3.2 Victor Turner and pilgrimage

Turner’s contributions to the study of pilgrimage have antecedents in his earlier work on rites of passage that focused on the various ‘stages’ of ritual practice as originally described in *The Ritual Process* (1969). In this seminal work, Turner built on van Gennep’s (1960) theory of rites of passage which posited that ritual events inferred a change in ‘state’ occurring through three transitional phases: separation, a liminal period, and reincorporation (Turner 1969, p. 64). This ritual process required a ‘detachment’ or separation from the ‘social structure’ of everyday life. Turner (1969, p. 95) referred to this liminal phase as ‘antistructure’, an in-between, differentiated ‘realm’ where initiands are ‘neither here nor there’, their positions are ‘betwixt and between’, having ‘indeterminate attributes’. This process sees them ground down and ‘fashioned anew’ for their ‘new station in life’ to follow (Turner 1969, p. 95). When the passage is consummated, the initiand returns to social life once more ‘stable’, yet ultimately changed (Turner 1969, pp. 94-95). Turner applied these ideas of ritual process to religious pilgrimage, including the concepts of ‘the centre’ and *communitas*.

Turner believed that pilgrimages possess an ‘initiatory ritual character’ occurring outside of social structure (Turner 1973, p. 204). Turner’s work on pilgrimage was influenced by Mircea Eliade’s concept of a ‘centre’ or ‘centre of the world’; a place rich in symbolism where the sacred manifests (Eliade 1969, p. 39). One sets off on a journey encountering potential dangers and challenges as they move away from the structured social centre towards the ‘threshold’ or pilgrimage centre (Turner 1973, p. 214). Turner posited that pilgrimage centres are peripheral places; ‘centres out there’, but he also pointed out that due to an increasing popularity of such sites, peripherality may in turn become the ‘setting for new centrality’ in a social sense (Turner 1973, p. 229).

The unique social dynamics of pilgrimage were explored by Turner through the concept of *communitas*. *Communitas* is defined by ‘homogeneity’; a ‘generalised social bond’ that differs considerably to normal social proscriptions and rules of society (Turner 1969, p. 96). Turner (1969, p. 96) asserted that a structured society is founded upon hierarchy; class, caste, or rank, and a ‘politico-legal-economic’ positionality that separates members in terms of ‘more or less’. Conversely, he described *communitas* as an egalitarian ‘modality of social relationships’ that uniquely contrasts the dimensions of structured ‘common living’ (Turner 1969, p. 96).

Turner did, however, draw some distinctions between rites and pilgrimages. Rites of passage were considered *liminal* phenomenon that were predominantly observable in ‘tribal’ or ‘early agrarian’ societies (Turner 1974, p. 71). Turner (1969, p. 125) extended the diversity of such phenomena to include a range of ‘neophytes’ from ‘small nations’ to ‘holy mendicants’, ‘dharma bums’, and ‘good Samaritans’ – those that ‘fall in the interstices of social structure; are on its margins; occupy its lowest rungs’ (Turner 1969, p. 125). Pilgrimages, however, while resembling the ‘ritually liminal’ were more specifically categorised as ‘quasi-liminal’ or ‘liminoid phenomenon’ (Turner & Turner 1978, p. 253). Turner defined liminoid as primarily oriented around individualism – ‘produced and consumed by identifiable individuals’ (Turner & Turner 1978, p. 253). In contrast to the obligatory quality that he ascribed to liminal rituals of ‘tribal’ societies, liminoid phenomena were described as voluntary, ‘freer’; ‘a matter of choice’ (Turner 1974, p. 86). Turner (1974, p. 86) also associated liminoid with ‘capitalist and democratic-liberal societies’, ‘personal-psychological’, *ludic* or ‘playful’ phenomena.

Perhaps the most enduring similarity between rites and pilgrimages in Turner’s work is that of *communitas*, as it expresses a homogenisation of status, a simplicity of dress and behaviour, the shared goal of the journey towards a centre, and themes of healing and renewal (Turner & Turner 1978, pp. 253-254). In pilgrimage studies, however, *communitas* has emerged as a contentious concept. As discussed below, scholarship in the decades following Turner’s work has acknowledged its enduring importance while equally recognising its deterministic limitations, instead opting for a more flexible theoretical approach within contemporary pilgrimage studies.

1.3.3 Developments in pilgrimage studies

During the 1980s, research and theoretical development of pilgrimage became blighted by inertia (Collins-Kreiner 2016, p. 325).⁵⁰ In the early 1990s, however, a special issue of *Annals of Tourism* (1992) focused on theoretical and typological perspectives of pilgrimage and tourism, signifying a discursive shift towards new thinking on the subject. In this issue Smith (1992) discussed how the ‘pilgrim-tourist’ path can be both ‘sacred or secular’, pointing towards issues in differentiating between either form. In the contemporary context of global tourism, identifying categories of travel has become difficult, in part at least, because tourists and pilgrims often share the same infrastructure. Both forms of travel arguably require income, include leisure, and have been informed by the increasing ‘privatisation’ of religious practice (Smith 1992, p. 14). Smith (1992, p. 15) pointed out that given the ‘secularisation of religion’ in the West, pilgrimage and tourism are much more diffuse and should instead be thought of as ‘parallels’; interchangeable forms of sacred and secular travel, potentially chosen depending on need, motivation, and the appropriateness of one’s circumstances.

Similarly, Cohen (1992a, p. 47) argued that Turner’s search for a ‘universal structure of pilgrimage’ was characterised by a ‘culture-bound’ preoccupation with Christian forms, which inevitably disregards ‘the differential institutional context created by the religious conceptions according to which a given pilgrimage centre is constituted’. Cohen (1992a, pp. 36-37) suggested there are ‘formal’ centres that are oriented around serious religious obligation, merit, and salvation, and ‘popular’ centres that are usually informal, ‘folksy’, ‘ludic’, yet equally possessing an efficacious reputation for fulfilling a pilgrim’s requests. The purpose in defining these centres distinguishes both their positions, and the direction that a pilgrim will travel to them. Cohen therefore argued that movement towards a given centre is more multifaceted than Turner allowed for, revealing different kinds of travellers with contrasting motivations, experiences, and as occurring in various contexts. Cohen (1992b, p. 59) stated that ‘modern mass tourism’ is a ‘metamorphosis of both pilgrimage and travel’, pointing out how secularisation has reduced the ‘symbolic significance’ of pilgrimage, rendering it less distinct from tourism. As will be discussed below, binary distinctions of sacred and secular travel are often ill equipped in accounting for spiritual and transformative experiences found across the diverse forms of global travel.

⁵⁰ Notable exceptions, see: Pfaffenburger (1983); Morinis (1984); Sallnow (1987).

1.3.4 Contestation in pilgrimage

Eade and Sallnow's *Contesting the Sacred* (1991) has proven an influential departure from Turner's so-called 'deterministic model' of *communitas* in pilgrimage studies. Instead, contributions to this edited volume argued that contrary to homogeneity and equality, pilgrimages are often 'an arena for competing religious and secular discourses', conflict, counter-movements, separateness, and division (Eade & Sallnow 1991, p. 2). The authors pointed out that although *communitas* may indeed be identified within a pilgrimage, it would be remiss to assume that a 'uniform' meaning is experienced by all those involved (Eade & Sallnow 1991). In their view, Turner's strict articulation of *communitas* obfuscates the diversity and complexity of pilgrimages, by trying to define them within a narrow functionalist view, rather than allowing for a description that accounts for the wide range of 'mutual misunderstandings', motivations, and actions across a multitude of actors (Eade & Sallnow 1991, p. 5). By pointing out the limitations of *communitas* and instead identifying 'contestation' at pilgrimage sites, Eade and Sallnow present a more complex and diverse view of pilgrimage practices, places, and indeed pilgrims themselves.

Eade and Sallnow critiqued the concept of 'the centre', which in following Eliade and Turner had come to be seen as the '*raison d'être* of pilgrimage'. They argued that while an 'archetype of a sacred centre' may be encountered by some pilgrims, it is a 'rarefied generalisation' that does not account for profound differences (Eade & Sallnow 1991, p. 6). Eliade's view of 'devotional magnetism' that a shrine exerts over pilgrims is also rendered problematic, instead they suggested that while a shrine may emanate 'intrinsic religious significance', it also provides a 'ritual space for the expression of diversity of perception and meaning, which pilgrims themselves bring to the shrine and impose upon it' (Eade & Sallnow 1991, p. 10). The arguments presented in Eade and Sallnow's publication have been considered as notable by scholars given their contribution towards studying the diverse expressions and expansive understandings of contemporary pilgrimage journeys (Morinis 1992; Reader & Walter 1993; Badone & Roseman 2014).

1.3.5 Reconsidering the sacred/secular distinctions in contemporary pilgrimage

As tourism has expanded over the decades, so too has the variety of meaningful ‘journeys’ people have come to take. So-called ‘secular’ journeys have gained particular attention for encompassing a diverse and fascinating sphere of travel, where one ventures beyond the regularity of daily life, contingent upon a wide range of motivations and beliefs. One example is offered by Rinschede (1992) who has explored ways that global mobility has impacted forms of ‘religious tourism’. While on one hand religious motivation for travel is argued to have decreased somewhat, Rinschede (1992, p. 65) has noted how it has simultaneously interconnected with other types of tourism, such as holiday and cultural, and social and group tourism (Rinschede 1992, p. 65). For example, organised pilgrimages to religious sites commonly include tourist activities and day trips as part of their travel ‘program’ (Rinschede 1992, p. 53). In this case, a pilgrimage journey may comprise both ‘religious’ and ‘secular’ practices as part of an itinerary.

In *Pilgrimage in Popular Culture*, Reader and Walter (1993, p. 22) have argued that ‘official’ ‘sacred’ places are not necessarily required for constituting a meaningful pilgrimage journey per se, as in fact, ‘the secular world...is as much a potential setting for pilgrimage as the more clearly religious’. Reframing secular travel has opened new perspectives for describing meaningful journeys beyond being reduced to categories of leisure, even when they might be playful trips to Disneyland, or attending large festivals such as Burning Man in the Nevada desert.⁵¹ As new forms of so-called secular travel have emerged, concerns have been raised regarding conflict at pilgrimage sites, exacerbated by a growing and diverse number of people who converge upon them.

Due to the expansion of various forms of travel, studies have highlighted ‘conflict’ and ‘impact’ when religious pilgrimage sites have become secular tourist attractions (Nolan & Nolan 1992, p. 77). Bruner (1991) for example has discussed the consequences of ‘transformational tourism’, brought about through the pursuit of the ‘exotic’ and ‘authentic’. Although Bruner acknowledged each situation may render different outcomes, he argued that despite the claims

⁵¹ This can also be identified relating to people, and a cult-like reverence for certain pop idols and concomitant places that are attributed with significance in relation to them. For example, ‘cultural heroes’ such as Elvis Presley, who has posthumously attained a kind of ‘sainthood’ status. Taking the pilgrimage to *Graceland*, his former home and resting place has a religious-like meaning for many who make the journey (Reader & Walter 1993).

made in tourism brochures, the tourist returns little changed, rather, it is the ‘native’ who experiences profound changes due in no small measure to the impact that tourism has on their lives (Bruner 1991, p. 248). Similarly, Digance (2003) has considered how a global ‘resurgence’ of pilgrimage has resulted in increased contestation at sites due to growing popularity. Issues of ‘contest’ have arisen out of a demand for ‘access and use of sacred sites’ by divergent actors, often resulting in conflict (Digance 2003, p. 143). The growth of secular pilgrimage is particularly linked with the rise of New Age movements globally, leading Digance (2003, p. 155) to suggest that further research is required regarding ‘equality of access’ at contested pilgrimage sites, which is complicated by the way in which they are situated within the growth of the mass tourism industry. This can be inherently problematic given the ‘tensions’ that can arise between ‘traditional’ owners and ‘new’ pilgrims (Digance 2003, p. 155). As Pisac has become a place of pilgrimage for global spiritual seekers, some who reside there for extended periods of time, similar tensions arise regarding contested sacred sites that have become part of the mainstream tourism industry, as will be discussed in the following chapter regarding Inca heritage and formations of local tourism. Additionally, foreigners are often aware that their everyday presence and engagement with sacred sites and ritual practices such as ayahuasca impacts locals, which they reflect upon and contend with, as discussed in the final chapter.

1.4 Chapter conclusion

Exploring the concept of ayahuasca pilgrimage in the Sacred Valley offers a unique ethnographic example of the expansion and reinvention of ayahuasca outside of the Amazon. Through a detailed overview of ayahuasca across historical, touristic, and globalised contexts, this chapter has provided the reader with an essential understanding of ayahuasca as a central topic within this thesis. In particular, the themes presented here provide a jumping-off point from which to proceed into chapters three and four which explore ritual and non-ritual aspects of ayahuasca neoshamanism in Pisac. The discussions on ayahuasca tourism, neoshamanism, and the cultural milieu of ‘psychedelics’, experimentation, and critiques of New Age appropriation are also informative for the chapters that discuss the personal narratives and perspectives of entrepreneurial practitioners such as Diane and Diego, and the community of ‘gringos’ in Pisac that has emerged in great part due to the expansion of ayahuasca shamanism outside of the Amazon in recent decades.

This thesis seeks to examine the ritual, ceremonial, and healing experiences of ayahuasca pilgrims residing in the Sacred Valley. The theoretical and conceptual parameters of pilgrimage as discussed in this chapter, provide a dynamic application of theory from which to unpack key aspects of the personal healing journey, as well as for examining and contextualising everyday social life as experienced by ayahuasca pilgrims. It endeavours to understand the implications of their presence in the town of Pisac, specifically, where aspects of community are rendered complex, given the ways that ‘transient’ foreigners and indeed ayahuasca are significantly separated from the local community. Considering these diverse aspects of ayahuasca pilgrimage across personal healing and wider social contexts in which they occur, the interconnecting themes as discussed in this literature review on pilgrimage bring together several concepts and ideas that will be returned to throughout the thesis. For example, Javier’s medicine retreat in chapter three is examined as a liminal ritual event, including *communitas*, and notions of the sacred or spiritual. Such events and including other New Age practices and formations of mystical tourism, have turned Pisac into a pilgrimage place for spiritual seekers. As such, wider social implications regarding their presence are equally important, revealing how personal healing journeys cannot be limited to marginality, but result in contestation, ensuing tensions, and implications regarding the presence of foreigners and other ‘non-locals’, as will be described. On these terms and as examined throughout the chapters to follow, ayahuasca pilgrimage encompasses ritual liminality and *communitas*, it is equally liminoid and playful, oriented around individualism, personal desires, and freedom. Notions of sacred and secular are diffuse, and typologies of pilgrim, tourist, transient, expat, and even ‘non-local’, often intersect and conflate. These diverse participants navigate their individual journeys and experiences, often returning frequently, staying for long periods of time, or even taking up permanent residence there, sometimes inserting themselves as practitioners and entrepreneurs, as will be discussed in chapter five.

The experience of intimate interpersonal connections and shared interests facilitated by spiritual tourism events may result in the generation of unique social bonds, as particularly identified in the medicine retreat, as will be discussed. Yet the broader realities of ‘outsiders’ living in Pisac reveals how contestation, as introduced in this chapter, is central to understanding the implications and diverse experiences of ayahuasca pilgrims, as relating to their individual and collective presence. As this thesis reveals, everyday social life, notions of place, and cross-cultural relations are often characterised by various themes of contestation that foreigners are aware of and contend with regarding their own emplacement in multiple ways.

The following chapter provides a detailed background discussion of the contestation of place in Cusco and the Sacred Valley. Inca heritage and identity politics are shown to be historically embedded in ethnic and class inequalities in Peru. These have been formative in the development of cultural and spiritual tourism both locally and nationally, which have greatly shaped the social and cultural landscape that ayahuasca pilgrimage, and tourism, have more recently emerged within.

Chapter 2: Situating Ayahuasca Pilgrimage: Contested Place

2.1 Introduction

Inca heritage and Indigenous identity have long been the locus of contestation in the southern Andes, revealing acute power inequalities throughout its colonial history and into the present day. Inca heritage has been central in the formation of local and national identity politics since the early 20th century. These developments, arising out of the *indigenismo* movement, have relied upon a romanticisation of the Inca past, while in some cases separating out representations of an ‘imagined Inca’ with those of their contemporary Indigenous descendants, who are often looked down upon. This reflects the ongoing ethnic and class inequalities of Peru’s colonial history, yet similar power dimensions can be identified in formations of cultural and spiritual tourism in Cusco and the Sacred Valley. These historical contestations, as they are referred to in this chapter, reveal how distinctive waves of colonialism in the Andes have arguably harnessed and reconfigured local heritage and identity to their own ends. Importantly, cultural and spiritual tourism have been both a product and beneficiary of this history, and have been argued as reinscribing issues of power and representation within the context of global mobilities and neoliberal reforms within Latin America over recent decades.

Ayahuasca aside, Cusco and the Sacred Valley have become attractive destinations for ‘spiritual tourists’ due to growing global interest in Inca heritage, ‘sacred sites’, and Andean traditions. Literature discussed in this chapter reveals how New Age proponents engage with romantic representations of Indigenous tradition and people, while arguably ignoring and perpetuating inherent social inequalities that shape their everyday lives. The interrelated themes of Inca heritage, Indigenous identity, and spiritual and cultural tourism discussed here, provide insight into how Cusco and the Sacred Valley have been historically contested and shaped by waves of colonialism.

2.2 Contested place

The following discussion outlines key theoretical perspectives on place, pointing out how notions of heritage and identity are formed by local and global power relations. This section demonstrates the importance of the concept of contestation in pilgrimage as outlined in the previous chapter. In considering Cusco and the Sacred Valley as a contemporary pilgrimage place oriented around sacred heritage sites and existential healing experiences, this chapter expands on the discussions of contestation examined above, by looking at how such places not only have multiple meanings and are experienced in diverse ways but are also the locus of asymmetrical global mobilities, discourses, and long-standing inequalities.

The 1990's saw a renewed interest in research and theory of place and space across anthropology, philosophy, geography, history, and sociology (Low & Lawrence-Zúñiga 2003, p. 2). Cultural geographers have played an important role in rethinking place through neo-Marxist cultural critiques and engaging with postmodern theorists such as Harvey (1989) and Soja (1989) (Feld & Basso 1996, pp. 3-4). Many perspectives in cultural geography have been influenced by Michel Foucault's work on spatial notions of power, control, and repression, as seen in his writings on the panopticon (1979) and heterotopias (1986) (Feld & Basso 1996, p. 4). Subsequent work in anthropology has tended to move beyond 'the sense of rootedness in place', towards 'theorising place largely from the standpoint of its contestation and its linkage to local and global power relations' (Feld & Basso 1996, p. 4). From this perspective, place is reconsidered beyond static borders, including diasporas and global mobilities, and central concerns regarding tourism.

Exploring the 'dilemmas of place and voice', Appadurai (1988) and others (1988) have critiqued understandings of place as simply 'culturally defined locations'. By including 'voice', scholars have emphasised issues of 'representation' regarding the 'multiplicity' of voices 'concealed beneath the generalisations' of ethnography (Appadurai 1988, p. 17). Appadurai (1988, p. 20) has argued that given anthropology's unique 'brand of ventriloquism' in 'speaking for' Others, problems of 'power' and 'representation' within the discipline require ongoing attention. Similarly, Rodman (2003, p. 204) has critiqued 'anthropological constructions' of place as 'just space'.⁵² Building on Appadurai's 'problem of voice' which she

⁵² Rodman's article *Multilocality & Multivocality* originally published in *American Anthropologist*, in 1992.

discussed through the concept of ‘multivocality’, Rodman (2003, p. 205) has called for more attention to be given to ‘multilocality’. As with voice, Rodman argued that places are both ‘local and multiple’, as for each inhabitant place has a unique reality and meaning that are forged in ‘culture and history’. Multilocality addresses the way individuals can develop ‘reflexive relationships’ with place as a ‘physical landscape’, thus having ‘polysemic meanings’ and the possibility to be experienced ‘quite differently’ (Rodman 2003, p. 212). In this sense, place is not only about setting and social construction, but infers dimensions of power through spatialised and lived experience (Rodman 2003, p. 206).

Given global flows of modernity and the predominance of movement and travel, representations and experiences of place are arguably in flux more than ever before. Appadurai’s (1996, pp. 48-49) notion of ‘ethnoscape,’ elucidates this point through considering the ‘dilemmas of perspective and representation’, deterritorialisation, boundaries and identities. Ethnoscape refers to:

The landscape of persons who constitute the shifting world in which we live: tourists, immigrants, refugees, exiles, guest workers, and other moving groups and individuals constitute an essential feature of the world and appear to affect the politics of (and between) nations to a hitherto unprecedented degree (Appadurai 1996, p. 33).

Similarly discussed by Gupta and Ferguson (1992, p. 18), conditions of the ‘deterritorialised age’ requires moving ‘beyond culture’ towards understanding how ‘spaces and places are made, imagined, contested, and enforced’.

Hirsch and O’Hanlon’s (1995) have engaged with the view of ‘landscape as a process’. Authors have argued that there is no ‘absolute landscape’, but rather a series of relationships ‘between place and space, inside and outside and image and representation are dependent on the cultural and historical context’ (Hirsch & O’Hanlon 1995, p. 23). From this perspective, landscape is conceptualised as an interrelated series of moments and perspectives; a ‘cultural process’. This view acknowledges an interrelationship between the everyday life and that of an ideal and ‘imagined existence’. Hirsch and O’Hanlon (1995, p. 3) have discussed this through ‘foreground’ and ‘background’, that is, the ‘actuality of everyday social life’ and a ‘perceived potentiality’. As such, landscape relates to space, place, image, representation, inside and outside, and is thus a process existing across the foreground and background of social life. In a similar way, ethnographic chapters five and six explicate notions of ‘real’ and ‘imagined’,

social and liminal, dystopic and utopic, as they play out for foreigners in Pisac in multiple and unfolding ways that they are often acutely reflective about.

As the various perspectives here have revealed, places are much more than static settings, but are spatial convergence zones of diverse voices, interpretations, representations, power relations, and cultural processes. As such, Feld and Basso (1996, p. 5) have noted that ‘ethnographies about place and places are increasingly about contestation’. Understanding ‘multiple views of place and their meaning’ is not only useful for recognising the role of place in the construction of identity, but for addressing how ‘local places’ are ‘threatened by pressures from an increasingly globally interconnected world’ (Low & Lawrence-Zúñiga 2003, p. 18). These themes will be explored throughout this chapter regarding cultural heritage and identity, tourism, and the impact of neoliberalism. Low and Lawrence-Zúñiga (2003, p. 18) defined contested spaces as ‘geographical locations where conflicts in the form of opposition, confrontation, subversion, and/or resistance engage actors whose social positions are defined by differential control of resources and access to power’. As this chapter will demonstrate, the Cusco region has long been a contested site, constantly created, reinvented, imagined, and idealised across ethnic and class lines, and more recently, within the context of Inca tourism and New Age Andean spirituality.

2.3 Inca heritage and identity: *Indigenismo* & *Incanismo*

Inca heritage and identity in the Andes have been greatly shaped by the *indigenismo* movement of the early 20th century, and later what became known as *Incanismo*. This section discusses Inca heritage and identity as relating to ethnicity and class, colonialism, and more recently, the formation of cultural and spiritual tourism. The *indigenismo* movement has influenced cultural nostalgia and romantic representations of indigeneity, towards the creation of the ‘Peruvian nation’ that has been formed around the legacy of an ‘imagined Inca’.

Indigenismo was an urban middle-class movement that began in Peru in the late 19th century, reaching its peak between the 1920s and 1940s. As a political movement, the influence of *indigenismo* on the remaking of local, regional, and national identity has proven significant. *Indigenismo* was formed around an idealisation of the Inca empire, and a mythology of pre-Hispanic communities formed around communal landownership, known in *Quechua* as the

ayllu (Molinié 2004, p. 238). For urban mestizo intellectuals known as *indigenistas*, this movement embodied a leftist protest ideology. They championed the virtues of Indigenous civilisations, romanticising their egalitarian and benevolent past, while simultaneously vilifying the tyranny and exploitation of the Spanish and European colonialists that they considered ‘the scourge of the Americas’ (van den Berghe & Flores Ochoa 2000, p. 10). Efforts of the *indigenistas* were directed at mobilising Indigenous populations, promoting participation in staged performances of identity through regionalist campaigns (Arellano 2008, pp. 39-40). Importantly, it has been argued that in Cusco, *indigenismo* has been a ‘prelude’ to ‘cultural tourism’, transforming the former Inca capital into the ‘cradle of Peruvianess’ situated upon the glorification of the legacy of the Inca (Arellano 2008, pp. 39-40).

Incanismo (Flores Ochoa 1995) is a more recent term used to describe notions of identity oriented around national heritage and tourism in Cusco. *Incanismo* is a ‘local variant’ of *indigenismo* that emphasises Cusco’s status as the centre of what was once the vast Inca empire. According to van den Berghe and Flores Ochoa (2000, p. 11) living in the former Inca capital offers *Cusqueños* a sense of [cultural] superiority over other Peruvians; ‘especially the *criollos* of the coast, where the current capital, Lima, is located’. Argued as a way of reversing social hierarchy, the remaking of Cusco as a cultural centre ‘turns *Limeños* into provincials’ (van den Berghe & Flores Ochoa 2000, p. 11). Mestizo proponents of *Incanismo* have rallied for better living conditions and rights for Indigenous populations, yet equally it offers them a ‘nostalgic ideology’ to identify with, in contrast to some of unpleasant realities of living in Cusco, such as corruption, underdevelopment, and inequality (van den Berghe & Flores Ochoa 2000, pp. 11-12). While such nostalgia has been instrumental in both recreating and reconnecting with notions of Inca heritage and identity, it has also been criticised for essentialising and excluding Indigenous people in the process. This has been especially evident in the development of Peruvian national identity and cultural tourism.

According to Molinié (2004), the invention of the ‘Peruvian nation’ has been constructed, in part at least, around representations of the ‘Imperial Indian’, which the *indigenista* movement has greatly contributed towards. Molinié (2004, p. 235) suggested that *indigenismo* represented a considerable shift away from the earlier post-independence movements such as ‘Bolivarisation’, which called for the ‘liquidation of Indigenous heritage that was reputedly an archaism unworthy of a modern nation’. The *Indigenistas*’ representations of a ‘civilised Indian’, however, constructed an image of the nation’s glorious imperial past, some of which

it is argued had to be reinvented for the occasion (Molinié 2004, p. 236). Molinié (2004, p. 237) suggested that discursive representations constructed an identity built upon a 'national fantasy', one that transformed Indians into 'imaginary creatures' that could be identified with. Molinié (2004, p. 327) argued that these idealised and imagined 'Indians' [sic] of the past significantly contrasted 'real' Indigenous people, who are often 'despised'. Such discourses turned the Indian into a 'fictitious entity' that mestizos could identify with, which only increased 'as the idealisation of the Inca empire blossomed' (Molinié 2004, p. 240).

For many mestizos in Cusco, learning *Quechua* has become a source of pride. Being fluent in *Quechua* affirms a regional identity that is in contradistinction to the monolingual coastal population (van den Berghe & Ochoa 2000, p.12). van den Berghe and Ochoa (2000, p. 12) argued that there is a contradiction here in the way that some of the 'elite' *Cusqueños* draw a line between the glorious Inca past, and the contemporary *Quechua* speaking Indigenous population who are the 'living representatives of that society whom they often see as sadly degenerate, ignorant, backwards peasants mired in abject poverty, and addicted to alcohol and coca'. Ethnic and class tensions are similarly corroborated in chapter five, as foreigners share their thoughts on issues they perceive between *Limeños* and 'locals' living in Pisac.

In the early 20th Century, several events were pivotal in the development of regional and national identity politics, the revival of Inca heritage, and the emergence of early tourism. In 1908 a new railway line connected Cusco with Buenos Aires, Argentina. This brought about many social, cultural, and political changes, resulting in an economic boom and a flow of new inhabitants seeking trading opportunities (Arellano 2008, p. 41). There was also Hiram Bingham's (re)discovery of what he called, 'lost city of the Incas', Machu Picchu, on the 24th of July 1911. Bingham's so-called 'discovery' would become one of the most significant archaeological finds of the century and according to Arellano (2008, p. 42), its regional importance cannot be overstated:

The consequences of this discovery represented an enormous upheaval for *Cusqueño* identity. The discovery of Machu Picchu awakened the interest of archaeologists, explorers and foreign travellers in general, and it serves to reinforce local awareness of Inca legacies... Machu Picchu contributed in initiating a new Andean version of *Indigenismo* where intellectuals started rediscovering 'the Indian'.

By 1940, air travel increased accessibility to Cusco, however, it was the large-scale destruction caused by an earthquake in 1950 that further transformed archaeological and cultural tourism

in the area (Arceneaux & Zhang 2009, p. 14). Half of the buildings in Cusco were destroyed or severely damaged during the earthquake. This event was seen as an opportunity to modernise and redesign the city. The involvement of UNESCO in the preservation of pre-colonial and Inca sites proved pivotal in the development of early tourism (Arceneaux & Zhang 2009, p. 14). While this was seen as an opportunity to create new infrastructure and foster economic development, the decision-making on how to rebuild Cusco became an area of dispute between various interest groups (Silverman 2002, p. 884). This politicisation of Inca heritage continues to be a focal point in contemporary tourism in Cusco.

Discussing ‘Inca tourism’, Silverman (2002, p. 881) pointed out how the archaeological past has been converted into a tourist project of contradictory, negotiated, and contested relationships constructed by various groups: the Peruvian government, foreign tourists, city residents, and Indigenous people. Converting Peru’s archaeological past into a tourist destination has occurred through a ‘dehistoricisation of history’, a process of essentialising the past to create an image of a ‘new Inca Cusco’ (Silverman 2002, p. 887). Silverman (2002, pp. 888-889) argued that these processes are situated within the class and ethnic inequalities of postcolonialism, however, also pointed out that while this ‘hyperauthentic imaginary’ is imposed from the State and top-down levels, the very involvement of local people has also modified this vision. This can be seen at Cusco’s *Inti Raymi* festival.⁵³ *Inti Raymi* is an example of the ‘involvement of the local people in the creation of a living Cusco.... [At] the same time, *Inti Raymi* shows the tight relationships between local history and national and international interests’ (Silverman 2002, p. 889). Others have similarly observed that festivals such as *Inti Raymi* are much more than cultural celebrations and are part of a ‘political strategy to enhance Cusco’s influence in national politics’ (Arceneaux & Zhang 2008, p. 14). The historical underpinnings of the ‘Inca heritage revival’ (Arellano 2008) as influenced by the *indigenismo* movement, prove to be essential for understanding contemporary tourism in Cusco and the Sacred Valley. The impact of neoliberalism in both Peruvian politics and cultural tourism has had various implications worth mentioning.

⁵³ In Cusco the *Inti Raymi* festival held at Saqsaywaman is a large event held on June 24th each year. Known as the ‘sun feast’ by the Incas, this event was held on the solstice, during a ‘double month’ period in their solar calendar that was dedicated to the state cult of the sun (Sallnow 1987, p. 38). *Inti Raymi* attracts tourists and religious devotees and is an example of cultural revivalism in the area.

Over recent decades Latin American governments have shifted towards ‘trade liberalisation, financial deregulation, tax reform, and privatisation’, in other words, a ‘neoliberal development rhetoric’ of which ‘economic activities’ such as tourism fit within (Steel 2013, p. 237). Arceneaux and Zhang (2008, p. 16) argued that in Cusco, not only does cultural tourism offer little opportunity for Indigenous groups, but for *Cusqueños* who have infiltrated the ‘Indigenous subjective arena’, they now compete with a growth in foreign investment, as well as the government’s attempts to implement liberalising regulations. The latter have been particularly opposed, resulting in the mobilisation of both Indigenous and mestizo people, protesting proposals to privatise heritage sites. In the early 2000s a series of strikes resulted in the southern Peruvian ‘revolts’ between June 14th-19th, which Hill (2007, p. 439) noted, ‘marked a decisive moment in the consolidation of solidarity against the state through *Incanismo*, framed within the ongoing struggle between the neoliberal state and local populist leaders resisting neoliberal privatisation’.

While I was studying Spanish in Cusco towards the end of 2015, protests were held in opposing the privatisation of heritage sites. To a great extent the city shut down, roads and railway lines were blocked, as people marched in the streets. These marches essentially closed the flow of tourism and halted transit to Machu Picchu for several days. Those opposed to the privatisation demanded a repeal of a Decree which would award 10-year licences to private companies for ‘cleaning, security, restaurants, and museum services at archaeological sites’, which number somewhere between 19,000 nationally (Peru Reports 2020). In Cusco, however, the politics surrounding the protests proved divisive. For example, the president of the chamber of tourism, Roger Valencia, said the protests violated the rights of tourists wanting to visit Machu Picchu while also punishing the majority of Cusco residents whom he claimed did not oppose the law (Peru Reports 2020). At the national level, culture minister, Diana Alvarez, stated that protestors in Cusco had clearly not understood the capacity of private investment in restoring archaeological sites, as exemplified in other parts of the country (Peru Reports 2020).⁵⁴ Such events demonstrate a continuity of contestation and conflict around Inca heritage sites. This is evident across urban and rural spheres at the local level, but also through national and regional top-down decision-making processes that have been shaped by neoliberalism at the State level.

⁵⁴ Article refers to *Huaca Pucllana* in Lima and *Huaca del Sol y de la Luna* in Trujillo (Peru Reports 2020).

2.4 New Age Andean spirituality: Mystical tourism

Aspects of Andean heritage and identity discussed in this chapter so far, have become entwined in the global New Age movement that now permeates tourism in the Andes. Given the vast array of ‘sacred sites’, Cusco and the Sacred Valley (and in particular Pisac) have become unique and attractive destinations for ‘spiritual tourists’ (Gómez-Barris 2012, p. 71). The spiritual tourism industry in Cusco has been described as marketed on the ‘mystical power of the Andean landscape, of Indigenous shamans, and of Inca and pre-Inca archaeological sites’ (Hill 2005, p. 1). This form of tourism has become commonly known in the area as ‘mystical tourism’ (*turismo mistico*) and has raised questions about ‘cultural exchange’ and the impact of appropriation and commodification of the ‘spirituality’ of Indigenous communities (Gómez-Barris 2012, p. 68). Of concern, is the way that the ‘globalised New Age movement intersects with the political-economic, historical and cultural space of the Andes’ of which ‘race and class’ are central (Hill 2005, p. 2). McCoy (2011, p. 421) has argued that tourism in Cusco has come to embody the ‘historically repetitive trope’ of ‘racialised hegemonic discourse’, brought about through the commoditisation of heritage and identity, as the city has adapted as a cultural centre and tourist destination. Mystical tourism is argued to exist within the continuum of ‘colonial hierarchy’ (Wilson 2017, p. 1) as ethnic and class conflict are further perpetuated within the sphere of neoliberalism, tourism, and New Age spirituality.

Mystical tourism in Cusco and the Sacred Valley has been influenced by Andean mysticism, and a mix of ‘rural, urban Indigenous, mestizo beliefs and ceremonies with foreign New Age beliefs’ (Owen 2006, p. 38). Andean mysticism is most often associated with traditions of the *Q’ero*, an Indigenous community living in the high Andes. *Q’ero* are considered holders of Andean wisdom, knowledge and power, and tour groups are now regularly invited to visit *Q’ero* communities for folk healing, and ceremonies such as the *despacho* and *quintu* (Owen 2006, pp. 38-39), practices further discussed in chapters three and five. *Q’ero paqos* (priests), also sometimes known as shamans by foreigners, are also invited to hold ceremonies and events in spiritual tourist hubs such as Pisac.

Michael Hill’s ethnographic research in Cusco focused on the complex intersections of New Age spirituality and Andean mysticism raising important questions regarding power and representation, postcolonial identities, and the ‘globalised nation-state’ (Hill 2010, p. 283). Hill (2005) discussed how ‘white’ and ‘mestizo’ fantasies, appropriations, and commodification of

Andean mysticism have become entwined in the neoliberal political economy of tourism in Peru. Hill argued, for example, that *Incanismo* has been a sphere appropriated by many diverse actors in Peru's history, pointing out that more recently it has become part of a 'New Age cultural romanticism' within the broader expanse of global tourism. Hill's (2010, pp. 253-254) critique of New Age mystical tourism has been directed at both foreigners and mestizos who perpetuate racialised inequalities and essentialist discourses from privileged positions.

The popularity of the New Age movement amongst urban mestizos can be traced to the 'utopian strains' of the *indigenismo* movement (Hill 2010, p. 268). Hill (2010, p. 268) argued that New Age discourses present a glorification of 'all things Inca' which ideologically separate 'being Inca' from an 'ascribed ethnic identity'. Instead, the Inca are perceived in terms of a 'state of spiritual evolution' (Hill 2010, p. 268). In the process, urban mestizos have taken on roles as 'cultural intermediaries between Indigenous sources of spiritual wisdom and eager mestizo and gringo New Age audiences' (Hill 2010, p. 269). In drawing a parallel to the *indigenismo* movement, Hill pointed out that the contemporary generation of mestizos draw upon Andean spiritual traditions to gain a foothold in the political economics of tourism and the New Age movement (Hill 2007; Hill 2010, p. 269). Given this, he described New Age Andean cosmology as a 'postcolonial mestizo formation' that is in part 'utopian' and 'idealised', while arguably denying the historical trauma of conquest and the subjugation of 'millions of Amerindians' (Hill 2010, p. 281). In the process, *Quechua* people are 'essentialised as containing immutable and natural, even genetic, spirituality, thus reinscribing racialised boundaries' (Hill 2010, p. 282). Hill contended from his own ethnographic findings that mystical tourism and New Age political economies convert *Quechua* spiritual or cultural capital into economic capital for mestizos and whites, while too little is done to alleviate the ongoing patterns of racial inequality (Hill 2005; 2010, p. 282).

According to Hill (2010, p. 264) mystical tourism and New Age movements in Cusco offers an intriguing view of 'ethnic identities, mythic histories, globalisation, and religious practices in the Andes'. The development of 'New Age religion' is clearly more than a tourist import copied by locals, instead locals, particularly urban mestizos, are central to the production of mystical tourism and the New Age movement in Cusco (Hill 2010, p. 264). Hill's discussion of New Age Andean spirituality outlines a complex history of regional and national politics that play out across ethnic and class lines within the growing sphere of global tourism. In the postcolonial context of Andean tourism, history appears to inevitably repeat itself, as notions

of Indigenous spirituality and Inca heritage are in some ways separated from contemporary ethnic realities, in favour of hegemonic appropriations of identity and tradition. Arguably then, mystical tourism exemplifies a continuity of historical conflict and waves of colonialism that have been at the centre of Indigenous heritage and identity, and are now being influenced by global New Age spirituality.

In considering Eade and Sallnow's (1991) notion of contestation at pilgrimage sites as discussed in the previous chapter, Hill (2005, p. 8) pointed out how 'mystical tourism in Cusco has similarly become a field of 'contestation', of competing discourses and conflicts. The New Age context of Andean spirituality centres around convergences of 'differing motivations to produce and consume representations and visions of a mystical Andean world' (Hill 2005, p. 8). Andean pilgrimages such as *Qoyllur Rit'i* have become convergence sites not only between diverse Andean constituencies, but between Andean pilgrims and those who Hill (2005, p. 5) referred to as 'mystical tourist pilgrims'. Such events exemplify how foreigners converge with rural and urban Andean populations, engaging in, and to some extent reshaping and reinterpreting Andean religion and tradition through a 'hybridised' New Age-oriented perspective, likely to be distinctly different from Indigenous and mestizo understandings.

In Cusco, Hill (2010, p. 273) identified what he calls the 'dystopic' side of mystical tourism industry, alluding to the everyday realities and 'emotional confrontations with inequality' that lie beyond the 'utopic' romanticism of Andean traditions, themes that are returned to via the work of Levy (2007) in chapter six. According to Hill (2010, p. 272), there is a balancing act for mestizos and foreign tourists in Cusco, as they 'navigate the racial and class politics of their appropriations of *Quechua* identity' (Hill 2010, p. 272). What he points towards, is a complex field of emotions that lie on the 'underside of exoticism, essentialism and appropriation' (Hill 2010, p. 272). In other words, tourists and mestizos, rather than being oblivious to their place of privilege, arguably struggle and contend with racialised poverty and inequality they witness, while simultaneously appropriating Indigenous spirituality and tradition. These themes are examined at length in chapter six which explores how foreigners living in Pisac contend with their own privileged emplacement as 'gringos', which bring to the fore differences, inequalities, and a sense of disconnection with 'locals'. In a similar way to Hill, analyses of the heterotopic gringo community in Pisac reveals a contested site, where foreigners are critically reflective of, and contend with, their individual and collective presence, somewhere between the 'dystopic' and 'utopic'.

2.5 Conclusion

This chapter has outlined how various forms of tourism in Cusco have earlier antecedents in the historical contestations of heritage and identity. Historically, power relations have proven central in these inscriptions, as seen not only across Indigenous/mestizo populations in Cusco, but more broadly between Andean and coastal class divides. More recently, Inca heritage has become further contested between several distinct but intersecting interest groups; Indigenous, mestizo, State, private, and foreign practitioner/tourist. While Inca heritage can be geographically located in the former Inca capital of Cusco and extending to the nearby Sacred Valley, it has simultaneously been displaced and appropriated within the context of Peruvian national identity politics, which in turn, has proven central in the formation of cultural tourism.

Andean tourism has developed around the uniqueness and charm of Cusco and the Sacred Valley, including Inca heritage sites and traditions such as religious festivals, pilgrimages, and Andean mysticism. Low and Lawrence-Zúñiga (2003 p. 23) have pointed out how ‘tourist sites’ are often contested spaces as they exist at intersections of social, political, and economic influences. Unique to Cusco, however, are the distinctive waves of colonialism that have arguably harnessed and reconfigured local heritage and identity to their own ends. As shown, this has included a romanticisation of pre-Columbian Inca history, often strategically removed from the contemporary daily realities of their Indigenous descendants.

On a national level, colonial and postcolonial issues of power and representation have proven replete in the construction of the ‘Inca nation’ with Indigenous people often conspicuously excluded. Tourism itself has been both a product and beneficiary of this history, reflecting how ‘tourist landscapes are often developed and marketed under the aegis of national and international economic and political institutions which lie outside the control of local residents who work in and inhabit these spaces’ (Low & Lawrence-Zúñiga 2003 p. 23). What this chapter has shown, is that this not only pertains to Indigenous populations, but also to urban mestizos given neoliberal and globalised developments.

As Low and Lawrence-Zúñiga (2003 p. 23) have stated, tourism often brings hosts and guests into contact through the marketing of ‘traditional culture’ aimed at satisfying tourists’ desires for experiencing ‘imagined’ communities and ‘authentic landscapes’. While this is indeed the case, although to varying degrees, this chapter has sought to illustrate how the (re)making of

heritage, identity, and culture, as critiqued regarding New Age spiritual tourism in the Andes, has much older antecedents as discussed regarding the *indigenismo* movement. Yet, central to these discussions, are the ways that ‘meanings of place and identity’ in Cusco and the Sacred Valley are closely tied into notions of power and representation. Clearly, these inequalities are now exacerbated by global mobilities. As this thesis will show, regarding the ‘gringo community’, Pisac has become a ‘transnational space’ that inhabits ‘people on the move’ (Low & Lawrence-Zúñiga (2003 p. 25). Pisac exemplifies localised contestations; tensions and conflict, inequality, representations and appropriations of Indigenous identity and heritage, and a sense of difference and disconnection that foreigners perceive between themselves and the local Andean population. This is also apparent regarding ayahuasca tourism, which most locals have little to do with, but has had a significant impact on the town itself.

In recent years, scholars discussing the ‘mobilities turn’ in tourism studies have emphasised issues of power, discourse, and practice, as clearly resources that ‘not everyone has equal access to’ (Sheller & Urry 2006, p. 211). The ‘mobilities paradigm’ has critiqued ‘static’ or ‘sedentarist’ limitations of *a priori* social scientific research by emphasising the interconnectedness of places, taking the now common starting point that ‘nowhere can be an island’ (Sheller & Urry 2006, pp. 208-209). As Cusco and the Sacred Valley have emerged as a ‘transnational’ centre for cultural and spiritual tourism, stark contrasts between those ‘on the move’ and those who are not are laid bare.⁵⁵ What has been seen in this chapter, is how the (re)creation of the Cusco region as a unique heritage site is ‘similar to other spatial tactics, in that it creates illusion in order to further ideological goals and defend a particular reality’ (Low & Lawrence-Zúñiga 2003 p. 34). Sheller and Urry (2004, p. 1) have pointed out that not only do places have ‘multiple and contested meanings’, but in considering ‘tourism mobilities’ it is worth questioning to what extent places are remade to attract ‘people on the move?’. Indeed, findings in this chapter suggest that the answer to this question is, significantly. What will be further discussed in chapters five and six, is the degree to which people on the move also remake the places themselves. Such considerations are salient in towns like Pisac where foreigners not only visit for short stays, but often live there for many months at a time, some permanently.

⁵⁵ Unless by mechanism of force, as discussed by Sallnow (1987; 1991) regarding contestation of Andean pilgrimage sites.

Inca heritage and identity politics have not only been central in the formations of cultural and spiritual tourism but have been strategically remade in the construction of the ‘Peruvian nation’. This chapter has revealed how historical waves of colonialism have perpetuated social inequalities and power struggles located within the stratified context of Peruvian society. Furthermore, the emergence of *indigenismo*, although championing for Indigenous rights, has been shown to rely on a romanticisation of the Inca past, resulting in a separating out of the ‘imagined Inca’ and the contemporary Indigenous population, who are often looked down upon.

The following chapter describes and analyses a specific example of ayahuasca neoshamanism and ritual practices in Pisac, one that proved to be a centrally informative and a rich ethnographic research context during my fieldwork. In many respects, Javier’s retreat exemplifies the intersecting themes outlined so far. It is an example of diasporic ayahuasca practices that have developed outside of the Amazon within the context of spiritual tourism for purposes of personal healing and transformation. It is illustrative of the type of liminal ritual events that foreigners are seeking, and indeed providing in Pisac. On the other hand, we can consider such ritual events as being far removed from the lives of most locals, exemplifying what is discussed later in the thesis, regarding a perceived sense of cultural difference, conflict and tension that arises, in part, due to the emergence and popularity of such events for foreigners.

PART III: Ethnography

Chapter 3: Javier's Medicine Retreat

3.1 Introduction

The following chapter examines Javier's medicine retreat, held at his property on the outskirts of Pisac in the Sacred Valley. Paying close attention to ritual procedure and healing activities, including as described by Javier, this ethnographic discussion provides an example of ayahuasca neoshamanism practices that have emerged in Pisac over recent years. As is the case with Javier who was born in Switzerland to Spanish parents, these practices are often conducted by foreigners, or in some cases, non-local Peruvians. The retreat is demonstrated to be a liminal event, possessing qualities of 'ritual ordeal' that includes a temporal and spatial separation from regular social life. Participants undergo an intense process of 'working' with plant medicines, specifically ayahuasca, for healing purposes. Attending the retreat requires that participants follow strict rules and proscriptions while engaging in ritual and ceremonial events under the guidance of Javier.

Following an opening vignette that describes my first meeting and subsequent ayahuasca ceremony with Javier, this chapter goes on to examine the various activities and events that comprise Javier's medicine retreat. Following the work of Fotiou (2020), this chapter identifies the strategic ways that Javier's ritual discourse 'frames' participants' experiences in meaningful ways towards benefit maximisation. Fotiou's ethnographic research on 'shamanic tourism' in Iquitos has acknowledged that ayahuasca 'reinvention' (Labate, Cavnar & Barbira Freedman 2014, p. 4) has occurred through a convergence of local shamanic practices and Western ideas of spirituality and healing, towards the creation of 'highly dynamic practices' (Fotiou 2020, p. 224). Javier's retreat will be analysed through a tripartite framework of interrelated themes that have been identified here: individualism (personalisation); *communitas* (collectivism); and animism (ontology). On these terms, Javier's discourse and his careful curation of a ritual structure, are shown to employ a psychospiritual approach, argued here as illustrative of the diverse yet ritually constructed contemporary ayahuasca neoshamanism practices that have emerged in Pisac, and more broadly outside of the Amazon in recent years.

This chapter offers both descriptive and analytical insight into the type of ritual healing events ayahuasca pilgrims are travelling to Pisac for. Argued here as a liminal event, the purpose of the retreat is for healing and personal transformation with plant medicines. Identifying the importance of Javier's discursive framing reveals how his role in supporting foreign participants within a ritual context, extends beyond that of ceremonial performance, towards that of convenor, interlocutor, and mediator of individual and collective experiences.

3.2 Meeting Javier Regueiro, Pisac, October 31st, 2015

Meeting Javier was the kind of memorable moment one hopes for during fieldwork. It was a meeting that turned out to be the most significant of my sixteen months in Peru. It was a day suffuse with serendipity and adventure and set in motion a sequence of events that greatly changed my research project. Following a visit to Pisac a couple of weeks earlier, I decided to return with the intention of attending an ayahuasca ceremony. This was an unusually impromptu approach for me, as all my previous experiences with ayahuasca had been planned well in advance. Despite harbouring a few reservations, I thought I would go to Pisac and simply ask around. If I got a good feeling, I would explore it.

I had trouble contacting the hostel I wished to stay at, so I settled for another just outside of town called Nidra Wasi. Soon after checking-in, I met a young German woman who had been in Pisac for a while and was quite familiar with the area. After talking for some time and mentioning my research plans, I asked her if she could recommend any shamans in the area. She believed there was someone down the road who held ceremonies and drew me some directions.

Her drawing was sketchy at best, nevertheless, off I went. I soon ascended a small rocky path leading up from the main road. As I did so, it struck me how strange it was to be wandering around looking for a shaman's house. Climbing further up, I started to get the feeling that I was not quite 'on the right track', and while I began to question what the hell I was doing – I kept going. A little further up again, I met an Englishman and we got talking. When I told him what I was doing, he said that as far as he knew there were no shamans living in any of the surrounding houses. I felt disappointed, but

perhaps a little relieved. He then began to tell me about a foreign shaman he knew living close by whose name was Javier. From where we were on the mountain, we could see his house; 'the one with the large fire circle in the garden' he said, pointing. He went on to tell me that he had attended several ceremonies with Javier and said that he was very good, 'held space well' and offered thorough support and guidance.⁵⁶ He added that Javier only held small ceremonies of nine or ten people, which appealed to me.⁵⁷ Lastly, rather than knock on Javier's door, he said I should go and speak to the manager at Paz y Luz hotel next to his house, as they accommodated many of the guests that attended his ceremonies.

Now following another set of directions, I made my way down the mountain and soon found another dirt road and headed towards Paz y Luz. The walk offered an expansive view across the valley. It felt exhilarating being in such a beautiful place, but I was now feeling animated, 'perhaps I would be attending a ceremony this weekend after all'. At Paz y Luz I met Laura, the manager at the time. She told me that Javier was in Cusco for the morning and would be back in the afternoon sometime. Laura told me to email Javier and took my details.

I returned to Nidra Wasi feeling a mixture of excitement and apprehension. After emailing Javier, I spent a few hours hanging around the hostel and talking to a few guests and the owner, Daya. After telling Daya about my potential ceremony, he said he knew Javier, 'yeah, this guy is good' he said, adding, 'he takes a bit of a Western psychological approach'. I was intrigued and took this as another positive sign. Still, I was hoping to meet him first.

A few hours after emailing Javier, I still had no reply. After taking some rest, I checked my email to find he had written back: 'I am coming to Paz y Luz to see you. Hopefully I will catch you around. Tonight is my only ceremony this weekend. Blessings, Javier'. I realized he was under the impression I was staying at Paz y Luz and would obviously not find me there. His ceremony began at six, I only had about ten minutes. 'It's too

⁵⁶ 'Holding space' is a commonly used term that relates to the way a shaman will conduct a ceremony, work with the medicine, and support the participants.

⁵⁷ It appealed to me as I had attended large ceremonies in the past which I found to be too loud, overcrowded, chaotic, and distracting given large numbers of people.

late' I thought, 'maybe it's a bit rushed'. Even so, I quickly grabbed my backpack and started off for Paz y Luz. Arriving at the gate, Laura buzzed me in and directed me to Javier's, 'the gate with the big star on it' she said, directing me towards the other side of the hotel.

Arriving at the gate, I walked inside, seeing several buildings, but no sign of anyone. Again, I felt hesitant, 'what am I doing?', I thought. I walked towards what looked like the main house and peered inside but saw no one. Looking around, I gingerly made my way around the back of the house, where I saw a small building with double doors, instantly I knew, 'that's it'. As I approached, I heard the quiet hum of people inside. I peered through the gap between the doors and could see some movement. A waft of sage came from inside. I was now feeling nervous, close to turning around and leaving, but before I knew it, I knocked loudly.

A moment later the door opened, it was Javier. He was holding a large mapacho cigar, his head shaven bald, wearing a light blue t-shirt and green camouflage trousers. I glanced a few tattoos, earrings. He looked me up and down expectantly. 'I'm Mike' I told him, 'I sent you the email earlier'. 'Ah yes' he replied, going on to tell me he had gone looking for me at Paz y Luz. After a pause he said, 'I'm sorry but the ceremony has already begun. You will have to come back another time'. Disappointed, but not dissuaded, I told him that I had a strong feeling to 'sit with the medicine' that day and hoped he could reconsider.⁵⁸ Again, a pause ensued. After taking in a long, deep breath, he began to ask me some questions: What previous experience I had with ayahuasca? What were my intentions for drinking ayahuasca that night? When was the last time I ate? Had I recently taken any drugs? Was I on any medication? After we talked a little, he said 'okay,' and allowed me to join the ceremony. He instructed me on some protocols and led me inside where a space was made for me along with the other participants already seated on their mats.

The room made an incredible first impression. The walls were adobe with a smooth finish, painted sky blue. On several walls there were paintings of chacruna leaves and large silver stars. The most impressive feature was the glass ceiling which offered an

⁵⁸ 'Sit with the medicine' being a commonly used phrase for drinking ayahuasca/attending a ceremony.

expansive view of the darkening sky and surrounding mountain tops. I said hello to the people next to me before Javier resumed the proceedings. Suddenly, I was in the ceremony. I would soon take my turn to go up and drink a cup of the dark brew.



Figure 9: Javier's ayahuasca temple, Pisac, 2015.

The ceremony that night was quite unlike my previous experiences with ayahuasca in the jungle. In part, this was due to the stark environmental differences between the Andes and the jungle. It was also my first ceremony with a foreign shaman. Although modelled on Indigenous practices, the neoshamanic context of Javier's work, as I describe it in this chapter, had a different feel. Lying there in the hours following the ceremony the thought of including the Sacred Valley in my ethnography first came to mind. In my fieldnotes on November 1st, however, I wrote, 'on reflection I'm inclined to think that might be a bit fanciful'. In the same entry, I also noted how the title 'Beyond the Sacred Valley' came to me during the night, which I immediately liked and has inevitably stuck.⁵⁹

⁵⁹ As well as signalling towards the fieldsite of the Sacred Valley, and the perceived sacredness of the place itself, the conceptual potential of 'beyond' resonated with the idea of both ayahuasca and its attendant pilgrims/tourists being exogenous to the area. Also, the otherworldly parameters of the ayahuasca experience also encompassed

Perhaps the most distinct aspect of Javier's work with ayahuasca was to be found the following morning during the group 'integration' meeting. As this chapter will explain, this proved beneficial on a personal level, as I was given the opportunity to share my thoughts and feelings about the ceremony with the group. Additionally, Javier's discursive insight and personalised support towards framing my experiences was more in-depth than I had previously experienced. Hearing other participants share their experiences as Javier offered his thoughts, also proved equally insightful and informative.

As mentioned in the preliminaries section, over the following few weeks I attended several more ceremonies with Javier in Pisac. During these visits, I got to know him a little more and familiarised myself with Pisac, which I further considered as a possible fieldsite. Javier mentioned that he would be holding a three-week medicine retreat, a *dieta*, in December, although at that time it was full. Prior to the retreat, one of the participants pulled out and Javier offered me the spot. I initially turned it down, as I felt I needed to focus on completing my remaining Spanish classes in Cusco. Yet, after a few days, it became clear to me what I wanted to do. Ultimately, as I later wrote in my notes, 'I didn't come to Peru to learn Spanish'. So, I signed up. On reflection, the day I met Javier put into motion a sequence of events that greatly changed the trajectory of my fieldwork. Participating in the *dieta* and subsequently attending three more retreats with Javier over the course of fieldwork have all contributed to the descriptive and analytical contents of this chapter. It was during this first *dieta* that I came to the decision that Pisac offered a wealth of ethnographic and personal opportunities that I wished to explore, and the idea of spending more time with Javier's was a defining factor in this decision.

3.3 The medicine retreat

Although the ritual practices of ayahuasca neoshamanism often include unique and eclectic elements, they commonly conform to a generalised structure. This chapter describes the ritual structure of Javier's medicine retreat that requires participants to strictly adhere to certain rules and proscriptions throughout its duration. The retreat can be understood as a liminal ritual event, oriented around the ceremonial use of shamanic plant medicines that are greatly removed

the notion of beyond-ness (beyond the material sphere) that appealed to me. In this sense the leading title had a suggestiveness that encapsulated several key themes central to the thesis.

from everyday social life. Central to the creation of this ritual structure is Javier's employment of ritual discourse. This is argued here to strategically frame participants' experiences on psychospiritual terms towards efficacious outcomes. As the final discussion of the chapter will further examine, the retreat is analysed through a tripartite framework of interconnecting themes that have been identified above. In summary, these key aspects of Javier's retreat are argued here to exemplify ayahuasca neoshamanic practices, that while diverse, are illustrative of the ritual healing experiences ayahuasca pilgrims are travelling to Pisac for. While removed from everyday life to a great extent, the emergence of such ritual events has contributed in turning Pisac into a pilgrimage place for foreigners seeking spiritual healing experiences.

3.3.1 Overview

All the participants of the numerous medicine retreats I attended with Javier were foreigners. Each retreat was led by Javier and although he conducted shorter retreats on his own, which he called 'mini retreats', he typically worked with an assistant. Luz Maria, a Peruvian shaman originally from Lima, assisted Javier in the San Pedro retreat held in April 2016. Javier's friend Katya, who lived in Cusco, assisted during the December 2015 *dieta*. Likewise, in the September 2016 retreat and the December 2016 *dieta*, Javier's good friend and neighbour James assisted. Unlike Luz Maria, Katya and James did not assist in a healer/shaman role, instead they were there to support Javier and participants as required. During their respective *dietas*, for example, Katya and James cooked all the food for participants.

Javier's property was the primary ritual space and the locus of most of the retreat events.⁶⁰ Apart from occasional exceptions, all the ritual and ceremonial activities, as well as the individual and group meetings were held there. Javier's house was located just outside of Pisac, along the Urubamba River. His land was situated amongst a small enclave of guest houses, private homes, and the Paz y Luz hotel, covering an area of about half an acre. His property included his home, a guest house, an outdoor ceremonial space called a *maloca*, where the San Pedro ceremonies were held, and the ayahuasca temple.⁶¹

⁶⁰ Exceptions were had, such as the ritual opening of two retreats I attended, which were held at Tipón, an Inca archaeological site on the outskirts of the Sacred Valley. Also, in a retreat that was assisted by Luz Maria, one San Pedro ceremony was held on her land further along the river.

⁶¹ At ayahuasca centres the *maloca* is usually ascribed to the ceremony building. In Javier's case, the *maloca* was used for San Pedro ceremonies.



Figure 10: Javier's garden, 2016.

In most cases, participants stayed next door at the Paz y Luz hotel. Paz y Luz was comprised of several adobe buildings, each with a small number of rooms. There was also a restaurant, an office, and the home of the hotel owner, Diane Dunn. Accommodation included individual and double bedrooms with an en suite. Each building included a small common area with a kitchenette, seating, and a fireplace. During the retreats, these areas were often utilised for spending time with other participants, for example, sitting by the fire and drinking herbal tea, occasionally this happened following a ceremony. Paz y Luz also had three small bungalows for longer-stay guests, one of which I rented from April 2016 to February 2017.

As will be explained in further detail below, the *dieta* was a more intensified type of medicine retreat, however, both followed a similar ritual structure. Both were primarily oriented around attending plant medicine ceremonies, various ritual activities, and individual and group meetings. Although differing, the *dieta* and the regular retreat required participants to adhere to strict rules and proscriptions leading up to, during, and after the event. The following section describes the *dieta* model in greater detail, providing insight into participants' ritual and ceremonial experiences. Central to this discussion is Javier's ritual discourse which is shown to frame individualistic and collective experiences towards maximising the benefits of personal transformation and healing.



Figure 11: Paz y Luz hotel, 2016.

3.3.2 The *dieta*

Argued here to be an experiential liminal event, the *dieta* involved profound changes to everyday ways of being of social life. Javier's participants engaged in a process of 'working with the medicine', as it is commonly referred to, through attending ceremonies and ritualised events. This included individual and group meetings, while maintaining a strict adherence to the rules and proscriptions, as described below. Under Javier's support and guidance, participants engaged in a process of 'healing' and 'learning' with plant medicines often being emotionally, physically, and existentially challenging throughout, thus possessing a quality of 'ritual ordeal'.

At the beginning of each *dieta*, Javier held a group meeting explaining the process involved in working with plant medicine, outlining the rules and proscriptions, as well as the schedule information. From the first group meeting, the importance of Javier's ritual discourse was evident. As noted earlier, Javier's psychospiritual approach towards healing and transformation encompassed an individualised approach, often discussed in terms of personal histories, while also framing the *dieta* within the ontological context of plant spirit intelligence and agency, as overviewed in chapter one. During the *dieta*, Javier's role functioned much as that of a ritual leader, however, the ongoing individual and group meetings also saw his role extend to that of convenor and mediator.

The opening of the *dieta* occurred over the space of two days, followed on the third day by the first plant medicine ceremony.⁶² The first group meeting was usually held in the garden, in a small circular ceremonial space Javier had named, ‘Little Moray’, after the Inca archaeological site, Moray. In this meeting, Javier began by introducing himself. He would talk a little about his personal background, and how a visit to Peru to drink ayahuasca in 2004 soon led him to move to Pisac and make a commitment to ‘be of service to these medicines’, as he put it. After Javier spoke, each participant would take their turn introducing themselves.

The opening meeting was often long, reflecting the emphasis Javier placed on explaining the many facets of working with plant medicine during a *dieta*. An important feature of Javier’s opening discourse was the way he situated himself within the context of the group. Excluding the retreat rules and proscriptions, this related to his personal points of view that he would constantly be sharing with participants throughout. He would inform the group that ultimately what he had to say was ‘just my opinion’ as he often put it. Javier told participants that they should feel free to ‘take it or leave it’ as they wished. As will be returned to later, this discursive framing was important, as he included himself in how he desired participants to situate their own opinions and beliefs in a mutually respectful way amongst the group. Arguably this was a strategic way to moderate interpersonal group dynamics and a way to mediate *communitas*. During group meetings, Javier encouraged participants to speak in the first person ‘I’ rather than the plural ‘we’ when sharing their personal experiences or offering their points of view and understandings about plant medicines. This framing proved quite effective in accommodating diverse opinions and situating the one amongst the many in an amicable and less threatening way.

In the opening meeting, Javier emphasised the power and importance of the surrounding environment. Javier believed that the *dieta* was supported by the energies of the surrounding mountains (known locally as *Apus* – mountain spirits/Gods). He explained that even without the use of plant medicines, the surrounding location was a ‘powerful place, a place with a lot of medicine’. As described in chapter two, Javier’s discussion of the *Apus* as ‘doctors’ and ‘teachers’ as he further described them, exemplifies how neoshamans (and foreigners more broadly) in the area have come to engage with, appropriate, and incorporate aspects of local

⁶² When the retreat involved ayahuasca and San Pedro ceremonies, the latter was usually held first. Javier believed this was often a ‘gentler’ medicine for beginning the ceremonial work.

tradition. Chapter five returns to these themes by exploring notions of authenticity and the hybridisation of Andean tradition within mystical tourism practices, as well as neoshamanic ayahuasca practices as conducted by Diane Dunn and Diego Palma in Pisac.

For participants who were unfamiliar with the Andes, Javier's description of the animate and powerful landscape introduced them to aspects of Andean tradition that they could draw upon in both framing and understanding their own experiences within the context of the surrounding environment and 'energies' they encountered.⁶³ Participants would sometimes recollect having felt a connection to the spirit of a mountain, usually during a ceremony, but in some cases in-between, for example, during a dream or walking by the river. These experiences were commonly described by them as feeling like they had received 'healings', 'teachings' or had connected with the 'wisdom' of a mountain, *Apu*. In some cases, participants reported feeling the presence of the ancestors of the surrounding lands.⁶⁴

The opening meeting would inform participants of what would be required of them during the *dieta*. This included an understanding of the participatory nature of the *dieta* and how to make the most out of their experiences to come. Javier would outline the rules and proscriptions of the *dieta* and explain why they were important. The *dieta* was described as a process of 'limiting exterior sensory input' so that participants could focus on going 'inwards'. This included limiting interpersonal contact. During the *dieta* participants were advised to avoid any contact with outsiders unless absolutely necessary. If physical contact was made with people outside of the *dieta*, Javier asked participants to inform him.⁶⁵ Even physical contact with other participants was advised to be kept minimal. The reason given, was that participants would become acutely 'sensitive' during the *dieta* and more energetically 'open'. Participants were told to stay within the bounds of Paz y Luz or Javier's property, but he did encourage short walks along the river where it was generally quiet.

Spending time with other participants was not discouraged. Instead, Javier warned participants about the tendency to look for distractions outside of one's own solitude, in which case he

⁶³ Foreigners who have spent any extended time in the area, however, or have visited numerous times will have commonly become familiar with the notion of the *Apus*. Learning the names of the *Apus*, visiting them, and discussing experiences in relation to them and/or the Inca sites situated on them are in common parlance.

⁶⁴ Participants may also report of visions, messages or insights relating to Inca culture/imagery, for example, communicating with an 'Inca priest'.

⁶⁵ Javier explained that this is not to suggest anything negative about people outside of the *dieta*, rather, those engaging in the *dieta* 'are simply in a different process'.

suggested they might want to ask themselves, ‘what am I avoiding?’. This would later be discussed in terms of ‘resistances’ that participants might encounter, such as intentionally or unintentionally avoiding personal issues or aspects that required attention and healing. Outside of the ceremonies, participants often talked about the difficulties that arose through the elimination of everyday activities. The use of any media; internet, email, phones, movies, social media were all advised against. Javier pointed out that by eliminating these ‘distractions’ participants could better focus on why they were there. Additionally, continued use of everyday media and devices were considered not only disruptive, but potentially harmful, given the sensitive state participants were in.

Although in this sense the *dieta* was intimately personal and individualised, Javier equally emphasised that it was a collective experience. During the opening meeting, he described the retreat as a ‘co-creation’. Including himself, he framed the retreat as not one of ‘hierarchy’ but of ‘sharing’, whereby ‘we are all equals’ and ‘all each other’s teachers’, as he put it. He explained that during the coming weeks participants would inevitably ‘trigger’ one another at times, ‘possibly’ he said, ‘it will be me’. He regarded such moments as an ‘opportunity’ to observe one’s own reactions and to see what ‘others are mirroring back to us that we may be in judgement about’. This provided participants with a strategy for dealing with interpersonal conflict that might arise. Arguably, while this strategic framing did not eliminate issues or occasional tensions that inevitably arose, it did mitigate them. Javier’s view of ‘benefitting from each other’s presence’ and for explicitly framing the retreat on egalitarian and co-creative terms, went some way to framing what is discussed further in this chapter, as ritual *communitas*. On these terms, *communitas* can be understood as not just a by-product or potentiality, but strategically created through ritual structure and discourse.

Food and diet were arguably the most notable features of the *dieta* rules, and often the most challenging for participants on a daily basis. As noted earlier, all the food was cooked by an assistant. Meals were prepared without salt, sugar, onion, garlic, or any chilli or spices. The *dieta* was primarily vegetarian, excluding any processed foods, dairy, fruit, bread, caffeine or any drugs and alcohol. A typical meal would be boiled rice or quinoa, vegetables (cooked and raw) and boiled eggs. Two meals were served on non-ceremony days and one in the morning on ceremony days when fasting was required for the rest of the day. During the San Pedro ceremonies that ran from 8am until 5pm, a light lunch was provided.

Javier described the *dieta* as a purification process and warned participants that they would experience psychosomatic changes and drastic reductions in energy levels, particularly as the retreat moved into the second and third weeks. Having no salt, sugar, or caffeine, as well as greatly reducing one's intake of food often proved challenging for participants. This was exacerbated by the physical and emotional 'purging' during the ceremonies, particularly ayahuasca. Javier described the cleansing process of the *dieta* as 'purging the old waters and allowing the new'. Due to the elimination of salt, Javier informed participants that the body's ability to retain water was reduced and reminded everyone to stay hydrated by drinking plenty of water and herbal teas. As well as being central to the cleansing process, the elimination of regular foods that included caffeine, sugar, and salt, for example, was described by Javier as another way of eliminating distractions. Javier asked participants to speak to him immediately if they 'broke their diet' in any way. He explained that doing so usually signalled a deeper-lying issue for the individual, but also pointed out that it had consequences for the group.⁶⁶

During the opening meeting, Javier would discuss the process of working with ayahuasca and San Pedro. 'Both medicines' he said, provide an opportunity for 'exploring our inner landscape with curiosity', but the main message of the plants is that of 'letting go'.⁶⁷ This concept exemplifies Javier's psychological framing of the *dieta* process. Letting go also applied to the post-retreat 'integration' process, as discussed in the following chapter. Javier emphasised several points on this concept: 'letting go is not about trying to get rid of' or necessarily about 'fixing anything'; letting go requires 'patience' not 'force', 'like an apple falling from the tree, effortlessly'; letting go can meet 'resistances', which in turn, requires 'willingness' on the part of the participant.

Javier described ayahuasca as a powerful medicine for letting go of things like judgements, guilt, and shame, but explained that it was primarily a medicine for helping people deal with their 'deepest fears'. During group meetings, participants would often recollect coming face-to-face with overwhelming and deep-lying fears, particularly when the psychoactive effects of the medicine were at their peak. Javier framed this common experience as follows: Rather than

⁶⁶ In the Amazon, breaking the *dieta* is often spoken of as dangerous and can not only affect the process of learning or healing with a plant, but some plants are believed to 'retaliate' causing harm. Breaking the *dieta* can also be a sign that a shaman lacks sufficient commitment or self-control and may end up following the easier path of *brujeria* (witchcraft) (Beyer 2010, p. 59).

⁶⁷ As the following chapter will show, 'letting go' is not unique to Javier, but is a common concept among ayahuasca drinkers.

averting one's fears, ayahuasca helps people embrace their fears, 'which allows it to come out of us'. As an example, arguably one of the most common fears Westerners describe having is that of dying. It has been observed that ayahuasca participants often experience the sense of dying during a ceremony. This is sometimes considered a 'symbolic death', or otherwise understood as an 'ego death' (Doyle 2012; Wolff et al. 2019). Psychologist Rachel Harris (2017, p. 237) has written that 'ayahuasca recalibrates our relationship to death and dying', potentiating a 'greater acceptance of the mystery of death'. Some participants reflected on these experiences as helping them let go of their need to feel like they were always 'in control'. During group meetings following a ceremony, participants described how these ceremonial ordeals were terrifying at the time but often felt cathartic and healing afterwards.

Javier described San Pedro as a 'heart opener' that teaches people how they can experience life through 'the heart' rather than just 'the mind'. He explained to the group that the heart symbolises aspects of 'feeling' which he associated with finding 'love and acceptance' for oneself and others, rather than being 'in a place of judgement'. As well as potentiating such a change, Javier also informed participants that San Pedro 'teaches us how we can embrace all parts of ourselves'. In both individual and group meetings, Javier reemphasised these ideas continually.

The *dieta* involved each participant engaging with a 'master plant'. Although this term applied to the ceremonial medicines, ayahuasca and San Pedro, each participant additionally 'dieted' a specific master plant. In the Amazon, shamans choose from a vast ethnopharmacopeia of medicine plants, discerning which plant a participant should diet.⁶⁸ Javier, however, offered three master plants to diet: Tobacco, San Pedro and the rose. For participants dieting tobacco, a juice was imbibed several times daily. Participants were also required to smoke *mapacho* cigars throughout the day as a way of further connecting with the plant. Those dieting San Pedro and the rose, would also drink a small dose of the plant at certain times of the day and were encouraged to visit the rose or San Pedro gardens at Javier's property, making a tobacco offering if they desired. Participants who knew *icaros* were also encouraged to sing to their

⁶⁸ To illustrate, I visited Javier's teacher Don Francisco Montes Shuña at his centre *Sachamama* in Iquitos in March 2016. After initially dieting a cleansing plant known as *ajo sachá*, Don Francisco told me he would communicate with the plants during the following ceremony to decide what plant I would diet next. Afterwards, I was informed this would be a large and very old tree called *chonta caspi*. He also showed me how to prepare and process the medicine from the bark of the tree, made into a liquid which I would drink daily, involving ritualised blowing of *mapacho* smoke, and daily visits to the tree itself in the forest.

plant on these visits or at other times. These ritualised activities were framed in terms of ‘nurturing a bond with the plant’.



Figure 12: *San Pedro in bloom, Javier's garden, 2016.*

Javier's approach to dieting a master plant is an example of how ayahuasca neoshamans appropriate aspects of Indigenous tradition in creating ceremonial events for foreigners. As was the case with Javier and indeed many foreign shamans, he learnt about dieting a master plant from his teacher in Iquitos, Don Francisco Montes Shuña. Equally, however, it is an experiential process that Javier himself and indeed his participants must experience first-hand. This aspect of working with plant medicines was briefly discussed in chapter one, which overviewed the animistic context of Amazonian shamanism. Viewing plants as powerful spirits, teachers, and doctors has become common amongst foreigners who directly engage with them in ritual and ceremonial contexts.

Javier's psychospiritual approach towards 'healing' and 'learning' during the *dieta* was oriented around participants developing a 'relationship' with the plants and 'receiving teachings' from them. In framing the *dieta* this way, he explained that participants would get out what they put in. Through 'nurturing a relationship' with the plant, Javier said it would become 'a friend' and the energies of the plant would stay with participants always and could even be called upon in times of need. An analysis of these themes is included in the final discussion of this chapter.

The day after the opening meeting, participants were asked to return to Javier's for the ritual 'opening of the *dieta*'. This sequence of ritual events began with a series of prayers or invocations made to the 'four directions'.⁶⁹ This involved Javier 'calling' the spirits or 'energies' of each cardinal direction, beginning in the south and moving clockwise, finishing in the east (that is, south, west, north, east). As he spoke, he would blow *mapacho* smoke three times as part of the prayer. This was described as an offering and a blessing, with the smoking of the *mapacho* said to carry prayers into the realm of the spirits. Each direction had a totemic quality. In the south Javier called 'the great serpent snake'; the west, 'mama-sister puma'; the north, 'the ancestors', 'grandmothers and grandfathers'; and in the east, 'the condor'. Following this, a similar offering was made to '*Pachamama*', the Andean term commonly associated by Westerners with 'Earth Mother'. This involved Javier crouching, touching the earth and blowing smoke into the ground. Lastly, Javier would stand up and make a prayer to the 'sky fathers', blowing smoke upwards. As Javier went around each direction, he called upon it 'to support us in this process', asking for their teachings, protections, and gifts. After this, Javier visited each participant, blowing *mapacho* smoke on the crown of their heads, hands, and back.⁷⁰ This symbolically marked the beginning of each person's *dieta*, which was then considered to be 'open'.

Following this, Javier conducted several Andean-style rituals. Participants were firstly instructed on how to make a *quintu* offering using coca leaves. Afterwards, a *despacho* ceremony was carried out. As described by Javier, the *quintu* firstly involved placing three coca leaves, held between the thumb and forefinger. Participants were then invited to (silently) make any prayers or offerings they wished. Once this had been done, participants were instructed to hold the three leaves in the air, blowing on them three times. This process was replicated two more times, so when each participant was finished, they had nine leaves.

Afterwards, each participant then added their *quintu* to the *despacho*, an extant and often complex Andean ceremony. In the Andes, the *despacho* involves a systematic and elaborate process of prayers, offerings, and symbolically rich gestures. Sallnow (1987, p. 115) has referred to the *despacho* as a formal offering for 'giving back to the nature spirits'. Bolton and Bolton (cited in Greenway 1998, p. 150) referred to the *despacho* as a 'multipurpose ritual'.

⁶⁹ Also, 'the four winds'.

⁷⁰ The blowing of *mapacho* particularly for healing and in ceremony is often referred to as *soplado* (from the verb *soplar*; to blow) in Peru.

For example, they described a ‘preventative *despacho*’ as a payment to the earth in return for ‘good fortune, health, fertility, and happiness’ (Greenway 1998, p. 151). They also described a ‘sacrificial *despacho*’ in relation to a ‘pre-existing problem, such as theft or an illness’ (Greenway 1998, p. 151).⁷¹ Arguably, Javier’s interpretation of the *despacho* fits within the ‘preventative’ type mentioned above, as he broadly described it as a ritual expression for ‘giving back’ to the earth, *Pachamama*, nature and spirit, for what one receives. In this sense, Javier also explained that the *despacho* offered a way of ‘becoming conscious of the energies of this place and receiving their support’, as well as for expressing one’s respect to the land in which the *dieta* was being carried out. The *despacho* was constructed on a *manta* and involved the careful process of placing offerings of foods such as dried nuts, quinoa, maize, as well as flowers, *agua florida* and the coca leaves in a careful manner.⁷² Javier would then sing several *icaros* as part of the offering. After which the *despacho* was wrapped like a parcel, a gift, and later burned and buried in the earth.

Following the *despacho*, Javier held a ‘rebirthing ceremony’ which would last over an hour.⁷³ This involved participants lying down in the *maloca*, and following Javier’s instructions, being guided through gentle breathing exercises. Although a ceremony unto itself, rebirthing was also described as a way to emphasise the importance of being aware of one’s breathing, particularly useful during the tense moments of the plant medicine ceremonies to come. Javier would point out that ‘breathing is our number one food source, yet it is the one thing that people often deny themselves enough of’. During the plant medicine ceremonies, particularly at the beginning when participants were often nervous, emotional, or afraid, Javier would always remind them to focus on their breathing.⁷⁴

This was later followed by a ‘flower bath’, a purifying and cleansing ritual common in Amazonian retreats and *dietas*. Beyer (2010, p. 183) has explained that the flower bath (*baño de flores*), also known as a cleansing bath (*la limpia*), has numerous functions for Amazonians, including the treatment of sick or feverish children, bad luck, or misfortune (*saladera*), or for

⁷¹ For further elaboration on the Andean *despacho* see Greenway’s *Objectified Selves: An Analysis of Medicines in Andean Sacrificial Healing* (1998).

⁷² Sallnow (1987, p. 131) describes a *despacho* contents as a ‘bundle of maize kernels, coca leaves, llama or alpaca fat, and other ingredients, which is burned to the names of specific spirits on special occasions’.

⁷³ Javier learnt breathing techniques and rebirthing training in northern California at Body Electric School of Massage (Regueiro 2017, p. 178), created by Joseph Kramer, who is a sexologist and teacher of erotic bodywork.

⁷⁴ To illustrate the importance he placed on breathing, Javier would joke that he had considered placing a neon sign in the ayahuasca temple that simply read ‘Breathe’.

protecting against sorcery, and bringing good luck. The flower bath was comprised of various plants and flowers from Javier's garden. One by one, each participant, wearing swimwear or appropriate clothing, would have the flower water poured over them by Javier and were then instructed to air dry afterwards, not showering until the following day to allow the energies of the plants to remain with them.⁷⁵ This marked the end of the opening rituals and preparations for the first ceremony and the setting of intentions would then begin.

The day before each plant medicine ceremony, participants would discuss their 'intentions' with Javier in private. These conversations were aimed at developing, focusing, and clarifying their desires for the upcoming ceremony. Javier described setting one's intentions regarding what participants wanted to 'take into the ceremony', 'ask to receive from the medicine' or simply what they wanted to 'look at'. In earlier email correspondence with participants, Javier would outline important dietary preparations, for example, the elimination of certain foods and substances as the retreat neared. He would also encourage participants to begin to consider what they 'realistically' wanted to 'achieve' from the work to come. In doing so, Javier explained that the process of working with the plants effectually began when they 'signed up'. As integration meetings would reveal, each participant's personal intentions often evolved considerably throughout, even if they had arrived with something specific they wanted to heal or look at. To illustrate, during one conversation a participant asked Javier about the process of setting intentions and working with plants. Javier's response was 'well, you may ask the medicine to look at something. It says okay, but first you may need to go here, here, and here'. The ongoing experiences, feelings, thoughts, emotions, and the healing process more generally, informed participants from moment to moment, revealing new insights that influenced how they, under the guidance of Javier, developed their intentions throughout.

3.3.3 The ayahuasca ceremony

The ceremonies are the central locus of healing and transformation, facilitated and experienced through the psychoactive effects of the plant medicines. The ceremony proper often facilitates intense powerful visionary states, hallucinations, and 'non-perceptual cognitive effects' such as 'personal insights, intellectual ideations, affective reactions, and profound spiritual and

⁷⁵ One notable difference between Javier's flower bath and those I have engaged with in the Amazon jungle, is that the latter were all self-administered.

mystical experiences’ (Shanon 2010, p. 13). In conjunction with post-ceremonial support and integration, as examined in the following chapter, these experiences are considered to potentiate efficacious healing and personal growth. Ceremonies are often an existential ordeal, being physically and mentally challenging. While the potential healing power of ayahuasca and San Pedro are arguably comparable, ayahuasca tends to induce much more uncontrollable and disorientating effects.⁷⁶

During these liminal experiences, participants were often completely unaware of themselves or their surroundings, particularly during the early throes of the ceremony, which at times could become almost chaotic.⁷⁷ In such moments participants could feel overwhelmed and vulnerable, requiring help from Javier, or support from the assistant. Particularly for participants new to ayahuasca, the sense of losing control was confronting and frightening yet was equally dealt with differently from person to person.⁷⁸ Additionally, even for those with considerable experience, each new ceremony continued to present them with new challenges and difficult moments.

Javier’s ayahuasca ceremony followed a carefully designed sequence of ritualised moments: the opening and eventual closing of the ceremony; detailed ritual discourse towards framing the ceremonial setting, reiterating rules and ceremonial decorum; the use of ceremonial music; the use of *mapacho*, *agua florida* and other shamanic instruments. Each participant had their own mat, alpaca blanket, pillow, and vomit bucket. Javier and the assistant sat upright along the furthest wall where the ceremonial altar was located. The ceremonial structure and discourse can be related to the concept of the ‘container’, a term commonly used by foreigners referring to the way a shaman will ‘hold space’, or ‘work with the medicine’.⁷⁹ Arguably, Javier’s ceremony was rendered meaningful and authentic due to its solemnity and formal rituality, which also pertained to its performative and participatory nature.

⁷⁶ Javier had the opinion that both medicines were equally powerful, but opinions vary considerably.

⁷⁷ This applies not only to Javier’s ceremonies, but to ayahuasca ceremonies more broadly. It pertains not only to an individual’s inwards visionary, cognitive or physical experiences, but can outwardly result in a person losing control, yelling, screaming, or thrashing about, even speaking in tongues.

⁷⁸ For a recent ‘heuristic study’ of ‘subjectively relevant experiences’ with ayahuasca, see: Wolff et al. (2019).

⁷⁹ Similarly, these ideas also relate to Timothy Leary’s famous ‘set and setting’ of a psychedelic trip. ‘Set’ or ‘mind set’, relates to being informed, prepared, and could include what I have discussed as setting one’s intentions. Setting much more relates to the container, the ceremonial practices, space itself, performative devices as well as the abilities, discourse, and work ethic of the shaman.

Typically, participants would meet at Javier's at six o'clock. As the *dieta* moved into its second and third week, the pre-ceremonial atmosphere became palpable, and a collective sense of nerves and weariness often mired the proceedings. The pungent smell of white sage hung thick in the air, as participants moved silently into the temple. Once participants sat down, the ceremony began with Javier discussing the protocols and rules.⁸⁰ This was followed by the opening of the four directions and the blowing of *mapacho* smoke, as described earlier. Javier then visited each participant, blowing *mapacho* smoke on the crown of their head and hands. He would then feel their pulse, sometimes offering a few words of advice. Commonly he would remind participants to focus on their breathing or reiterate one or two brief points relating to their intentions. Javier then returned to his altar to prepare himself and the medicine. This involved blowing *mapacho* smoke into his hand and swirling it around his head three times, then repeating the process twice more. After gently shaking the bottle of ayahuasca he then blew *mapacho* smoke into it three times. Following this, he whistled a short incantation into the bottle then replaced the lid.

One by one, Javier asked participants up to the altar as he poured ayahuasca into a small wooden cup. As they sat down, he invited them to put their 'intentions into the cup'. This was done in silence and required participants to repeat their intentions that had been set the day before. Participants often incorporated prayers or sentiments of gratitude, as they wished. Javier advised drinking the ayahuasca quickly, but sometimes participants struggled to swallow it. For some, the astringent and bitter taste instigated a gag reflex. Occasionally, a participant would vomit the contents of the cup. In most cases, however, they made it back to their mat, rinsed out their mouths with water, and spat the contents into their vomit bucket.

Commonly, participants reported feeling the effects of the medicine after twenty to thirty minutes. Some described the effects coming on almost immediately, while for others, it took much longer. In some cases, participants required an additional cup. Typically, after everyone had drank, a short silence would ensue. Javier would then begin singing an opening sequence of *icaros*. Around this time participants would start to stir; the retching sounds of vomiting, yawning, or groaning were common. A typical experience as reported by participants during the initial throes of the medicine can be broadly described as follows: a slowly building somatic

⁸⁰ Such as using the bathrooms, no drinking of water, needing assistance, no talking or communicating with other participants, remaining close to the temple if people go outside and so on.

sensation descending over the entire body; the gradual emergence of visual imagery, organic or geometric patterns and shapes, vibrant colours; a quickening of breath; a sense of warmth or comfort; conversely, shaking, discomfort, shivering, restlessness.⁸¹ Participants have described sensing the presence of figures or otherworldly entities at this early stage; images of beings helping or healing, with the feeling of being in ‘surgery’ also reported. These experiences are common in ayahuasca ceremonies and relate to the animistic concept of *doctores*, as discussed in chapter one. Similarly, Beyer (2010, p. 21) has described how extraterrestrial doctors (*doctores extraterrestres*) or celestial spirits, are common in mestizo healing ceremonies often helping to heal or providing diagnosis. Luna (1986, p. 161) has discussed how several *vegetalista* informants reported similar experiences in dreams during a *dieta*, ‘either symbolically, sweeping their bodies with a broom, or by operating on them like a Western doctor’. During the early stages of the ceremony, participants described releasing ‘heavy energies’, receiving healings, then often reaching for their bucket and ‘purging’ violently, afterwards feeling relief.⁸²

Following the *icaros*, Javier played music through his iPod and a small portable speaker. During this time, he visited each participant and asked them if they were ‘feeling the medicine’. In some cases, participants required another cup. As the ceremony proceeded, Javier intermittently moved around the temple and sang an *icaros* to each individual. The *icaros* and its accompanying instrument such as a drum, shacapa, or maracas, rendered different effects, as mentioned in chapter one. In Javier’s book *Ayahuasca: Soul Medicine of the Amazon Jungle* (2016) he discussed the importance of ‘sound’, describing *icaros* as an ‘essential tool’ in the healing process.⁸³

During the height of the ceremony, participants reported being immersed in visions, intense feelings, emotional release, physical discomfort, purging, or having received important

⁸¹ This rudimentary description is derived from listening to participants recall their ceremonial experiences during Javier’s integration meetings following a ceremony, corroborated by my personal experiences. Similar subjective descriptions of the early stages of a ceremony can be found in Shanon (2010); Labate and Cavnar (eds) 2014c; Wolf et al. (2019).

⁸² The notion of ‘heavy energies’ pertains to the perception of ayahuasca as energetic healing; ‘spiritual surgery’, ‘cleansing heavy energies’ or ‘dense energies’, see: Gonzales et al. (2021).

⁸³ According to Javier: ‘It is a synergy in that ayahuasca and the *icaros* are used complementarily: Sound enhances the effects of the medicine, and ayahuasca opens the consciousness to a degree to where sound becomes an effective healing tool, capable of rearranging energy patterns, from the atomic and physical to the subtle levels of the soul and spirit’ (Regueiro 2016, p. 121).

‘lessons’ or ‘teachings’ from the medicine. Participants would later describe these moments as often confronting, painful, confusing, or frightening, but equally revelatory. After such moments passed, there was also a sense of feeling lighter, relieved, or having gained insight and healing. Although challenging, participants also described these experiences as liberating. As the end of the ceremony neared, the effects of the medicine usually became subtler. Participants would become more aware of themselves and their surroundings and regain their faculties to varying degrees. In most cases extreme vomiting had ceased but diarrhoea often persisted.

Around ten o'clock Javier would say ‘*bueno* my friends’ signifying the end of the ceremony. Then, calling out each participant’s name, he would ask them if they were comfortable with him ‘closing the ceremony’. For those able, he requested that they sit upright. Following this, he walked around to each person pouring a little *agua florida* into their hands, which they typically rubbed over their hands, neck, and temples, or wherever they chose. Javier then explained the post-ceremonial protocols, such as remaining quiet inside and outside of the temple, and resuming drinking water, slowly. Javier then recited a closing prayer, followed by a closing *icaro*. Then he would ‘close the four directions’ blowing *mapacho* smoke. Afterwards, recorded music would be played for an hour or two. Participants were welcome to stay in the temple if they wished, and often several participants would spend the entire night. Most, however, departed for their rooms within a couple of hours. Javier would return several times, firstly packing up his altar and instruments. Sometime later he would return and check-in with whoever was remaining, asking them if they needed anything before he went to bed.

3.3.4 Integration meetings

Integration meetings were held the morning following a ceremony, when participants were given the opportunity to share their experiences with Javier and the group. The concept of integration has been given increasing attention by shamans, facilitators, ayahuasca centres, and researchers in recent years. In broad terms, ‘integration’ refers to the time following a retreat, when participants need to integrate the healings and insights gained, on everyday terms. Javier described the integration meetings as a ‘way to kickstart this process’.

Commonly, integration meetings began at 9:30am and were held inside Javier's house. Participants arrived still reeling from the ceremony. Many were exhausted, having had little-to-no sleep. Once everyone had moved inside and taken a seat, Javier began by reiterating that integration 'was the most important part of the process' of working with plant medicines. The meetings were organised so that each participant took their turn reflecting on the ceremony, sharing their thoughts, as well as expressing any concerns. Equally, this was a good time to ask Javier any questions they had. On this point, Javier explained that one of the aims of the meeting was to 'dispel any confusion' that participants had. By listening to everyone, he said it allowed him to better understand 'where they are at' in their healing process. Often, participants spoke at length about their experiences. At certain junctures Javier would interject, offering his thoughts or advice. Participants typically began by stating what their intentions had been, and then describing how the ceremony had unfolded. It was often difficult for participants to recall all the details, but in most cases, they managed to relay significant themes and how they felt those experiences were meaningful, efficacious, or potentially confusing.

These group meetings proved beneficial and cathartic, both individually and collectively. The act of sharing with others, presented participants with an opportunity to begin to understand their own experiences with more clarity, while hearing others talk was often described as helpful and insightful. This also extended to Javier's discourse. Although he directed his comments towards whoever was talking, his commentary usually returned to broader themes about healing and the process of working with plant medicines that were relevant to the group as a whole. Integration meetings were highly intimate, as participants often shared deeply personal and often painful experiences that were brought up during the ceremony, often relating to their personal biographies. Emotions were raw during the meetings and participants often felt incredibly sad, angry, or confused, and crying was common. Equally, participants experienced 'breakthrough' moments, feeling elated, joyous, and relieved. Meetings ran for several hours, often with a short break so everyone could get some air.

3.3.5 Closing the *dieta*

After the final ceremony there was a day of rest. On the following day there was a group meeting, and afterwards the *dieta* would be formally 'closed'. These proceedings had a feeling of finality, with some participants departing in a few hours, either returning home or conducting

some further travel, commonly a trip to Machu Picchu. During the final meeting, Javier would speak at length about the importance of the process ahead, making extensive recommendations and outlining the importance of adhering to various rules and proscriptions for the following few weeks while participants remained in a sensitive state.

Due to the detoxifying effects of ayahuasca and the *dieta* more broadly, Javier explained that ‘we are now like babies, and it is important to not overwhelm the digestive system’. For two weeks he advised: no fried foods; nothing hot, chilli or spicy; no drugs or alcohol (considered destabilising and dangerous); sexual abstinence; no caffeine or chocolate; and moderate dairy intake. As participants were in an especially sensitive state, Javier warned that regular activities and environments could affect them in unusual ways and advised everyone to be discerning. He suggested that people ‘take it easy’ and be ‘sweet with what you take in – food, energy, people’. He also recommended limiting exposure to media and technology, for example, being mindful of what music one might choose to listen to.



Figure 13: Javier closing the retreat, with the assistant James looking on, 2016.

Javier then went into specific detail on the process of integration, which as noted, will be examined in the following chapter. Once he had finished talking, participants would sometimes share their thoughts and feelings with the group, often expressing their appreciation to Javier, the assistant, and their fellow group members. Afterwards, each participant had their *dieta* ‘closed’. This involved the blowing of *mapacho* on their heads, hands, and body, and drinking a spoonful of lemon juice, garlic, and salt. This symbolically marked the closing of the *dieta*. This was followed by a breakfast at Javier’s house, a welcome meal which included regular foods like bread, fruit, spreads, salt, and oil.

Often close bonds were established between participants during the *dieta*. An exchange of contact details was common, with those remaining in the area sometimes making plans, such as having dinner together. Goodbyes were often emotional and included hugs and group photos.

3.4 Analysis: Key themes of Javier’s ritual discourse

The ethnography above has described the key features of Javier’s medicine retreat, focusing specifically on the *dieta* model. As shown, Javier’s ritual discourse proved to be important and strategic for creating meaningful experiences for participants. The following discussion analyses some of the key ethnographic themes identified in this chapter, building on recent literature that examines the importance of ‘ritual discourse’ in framing ayahuasca experiences in meaningful ways (Fotiou 2020). As discussed below, Javier’s ritual discourse can be seen as a strategic way to facilitate trust and create a safe space for participants to ‘do the work’. Three main themes of Javier’s ritual discourse have been identified and will be analysed below: individualism, as pertaining to personalised psychospiritual notions of healing and self-transformation; *communitas*, relating to the collective interpersonal dimensions of the retreat; and animism, concerning ideas of plant spirit agency and dieting a master plant. Javier’s *dieta* is argued to be a strategically curated liminal event, framed on psychospiritual terms towards benefit maximisation.

Javier’s *dieta* is an example of the ‘unique style’ (Fotiou 2020, p. 237) commonly employed by ayahuasca neoshamanic practitioners. As noted in chapter one, these ‘Indigenous-style’ (Tupper 2009) practices derive from Amazonian traditions that have greatly shaped ayahuasca

tourism and diasporic neoshamanic practices. Javier's *dieta* also draws from local aspects of mystical tourism and New Age spirituality more broadly, as was discussed in chapter two.

Analysis has identified that discourse in ritual healing occurs on 'multiple levels' (Csordas 1983). In discussing the therapeutic efficacy of transformative ritual, Csordas (1983, p. 346) has argued that 'healing is contingent upon a meaningful and convincing discourse that brings about a transformation of the phenomenological conditions under which the patient exists and experiences suffering or distress'.⁸⁴ Following Bateson's (1972) concept of 'framing' and Goffman's (1974) development of 'frame analysis', more recently Fotiou (2020) has looked at how a shaman's discourse frames experiences within a ritual structure. Fotiou (2020, p. 226) has argued that these ayahuasca rituals have been designed to be transformative and increase meaningfulness. In application of this approach, the following discussion analyses several key themes in Javier's discursive framing of the *dieta*.

Emphasising the importance of Javier's ritual discourse in the ethnographic sections above, has revealed multiple ways that his role as the ritual leader encompassed much more than ceremonial performance. In this way, Javier aimed to create a safe and effective 'container' for participants to 'do the work'. His ongoing communication in group and individual contexts throughout the *dieta*, was arguably a strategic way of facilitating trust between himself and participants. To illustrate the importance of this point, Kavenská and Simonová (2015, p. 356) have noted that 'negative experiences' in ayahuasca tourism practices can often arise from a lack of trust in the shaman or a feeling of 'bad vibes'. They argued this may result in potential harm to participants if they feel they are in a dangerous or unpleasant situation, or feel exposed (Kavenská and Simonová 2015, p. 356). On the other hand, by abiding to a set of rules, the ritual use of ayahuasca 'under the guidance of experienced *curanderos* is safe and has a positive impact on people on a bio-psycho-socio-spiritual level' (Kavenská & Simonová 2015, p. 358). Of course, this will ultimately be determined on whether a shaman is perceived by a participant as trustworthy or not. Yet Javier's commitment to supporting participants '24/7' during the *dieta* did create a supportive environment that participants appeared to feel safe in. To contrast this, at several ayahuasca centres I have attended in Iquitos, the shaman was almost never seen outside of the ceremony proper. Several participants expressed a sense of dissatisfaction with

⁸⁴ Csordas (1983, p. 346) goes on: 'It can be shown that this rhetoric redirects the supplicant's attention to new aspects of his actions and experiences or persuades him to attend to accustomed features of action and experiences from new perspectives'.

the lack of interaction and communication with the shaman. This has been similarly noted by Harris (2017, p. 62) who reported that only 10 percent of her informants said that ‘leaders or shamans’ were available for guidance or consultation after a ceremony.

At the beginning of this chapter, Javier’s discursive framing was described as psychospiritual. As discussed above, this related to assisting participants in making (psychological) sense of their experiences on everyday terms, as well as setting intentions, benefitting from integration meetings, and as particularly relevant to personal biographies that were central to everyone’s healing process. This term also encompasses the spiritual context in which Javier framed the *dieta*, evident from the opening meeting. It is an example of how ‘words used’ can frame the use of plant medicines within a sacred context, turning what could be interpreted as ‘drug consumption’ in other cultural contexts, into a meaningful and ‘sacramental act’ (Fotiou 2020, p. 226). Even before discussing the agency of plant medicines, Javier described the importance of the surrounding environment (the *Apus* and energies) in supporting the work to come. The opening *despacho* ceremony offered participants an experiential means to actively engage in a spiritual worldview that Javier described as a ritualised act of ‘giving back’ and being ‘respectful’. Indeed, Javier’s creation of a ritual structure for the entire *dieta* (from the opening to the closing) demarcated a sense of sacred time and space that participants collectively engage in as ‘co-creators’. On these terms, the ‘spiritual’ or ‘transformative’ aspects of the *dieta* were not only potentiated through the ‘heightened state of awareness brought about by ayahuasca’ but importantly, through the ‘structure of the ritual and the discourse surrounding it’ (Fotiou 2020, pp. 228-229). Below, Javier’s ritual discourse will be further analysed through the tripartite themes of individualism, *communitas*, and animism, as outlined in the introduction.

The identification of individualism has been noted in contemporary ayahuasca practices. Labate (2014, p. 185), for example, has pointed out that the shamanic use of ayahuasca has become one ‘modality’ amongst many for understanding the ‘reflexive modern self’. Neoshamanism and New Age practices have been identified for their characteristics of ‘modern individualism’ through ‘psychological and therapeutic goals’ (Langdon & Santana de Rose 2014, p. 84). Gearin (2015, p. 66), who has conducted ethnographic research on ayahuasca neoshamanism in Australia, has identified the importance of individualism within ritual

practices.⁸⁵ Similar to Javier's emphasis on going 'inwards' and limiting interpersonal contact, Gearin (2015, p. 64) noted that 'social interaction' was often limited in neoshamanic rituals. Instead, participants had a mutual understanding of the 'introspective and private' nature of one another's 'ayahuasca journey' (Gearin 2015, p. 64). In discussing DMT trance-states, St John (2018, p. 62) has similarly referred to such rituals as 'hyper-individualised, and private'. As discussed earlier regarding the 'opening meeting' of the *dieta*, Javier asked participants to speak in the first person when sharing their opinions. He also informed them that what he shared with them was ultimately just his 'opinion', and they were free to disregard it as they chose. Likewise, Gearin (2015) identified different perceptions of 'truth' among ayahuasca participants during group integration meetings. For example, he noted how individualism was 'accompanied by a multiplicity of perspectives and truths informed by the drinker's inner visions and the perspectives tend to be couched in a relativist frame...considered to be equally authentic' (Gearin 2015, p. 64). Similarly, Javier's framing of the retreat as 'non-hierarchical' and 'co-creative', proved strategic in mediating mutual respect. During the meetings participants were provided with a space where they could share their experiences and opinions without being constantly challenged by one another, particularly in terms of what may be true or not. As Gearin (2015, p. 66) has noted, such an approach goes some way to maintaining 'personal autonomy' towards comprehending and explaining experiences, which he argued to represent an 'expressive form of individualism'.

As outlined earlier, the psychospiritual approach Javier employed involved a process of psychologising towards maximising therapeutic outcomes. This aspect of the *dieta* was overtly individualistic, as participants were encouraged to explore personal themes that arose through the setting of intentions and within the ceremonial experiences. Reoccurring themes that arose during the integration meetings broadly related to past trauma, fear, guilt, shame, faith, blame, feelings of abandonment, resentment, anger, judgment, and forgiveness, for example. Although Javier described the *dieta* as a sacred and spiritual event, he also encouraged participants to frame the visionary and otherworldly contents of their experiences in relation to personal themes. For example, Javier discussed dieting a master plant in animistic terms of building a

⁸⁵ For a comparative discussion see: 'It's all you! Australian Ayahuasca Drinking, Spiritual Development, and Immunitary Individualism' (Rodd 2018). Rodd (2018, p. 325) assessed ways that neoshamanic ayahuasca culture can be both an escape and reproduction of the 'culture of narcissism' associated with modernity. He conducted research at Australian ayahuasca ceremonies, and considered how participants' experiences reflected, in part, how the 'ayahuasca terrain' has been potentially 'colonised' (Rodd 2018, p. 343). Rodd (2018, p. 343) asked whether or not there can be a 'new appreciation of difference without domesticating and destroying that difference in the name of an immunitary self? Or is it just all you?'.

relationship with the plant but rendered it meaningful as a way of exploring one's 'inner landscape' as he put it. Similarly, he explained that one may 'receive teachings' from 'plant teachers' during the *dieta*, but believed the outcome was dependent on how much effort one put in. For example, Javier considered one of the main teachings of the plants as that of 'letting go'. This was described as a process that required 'willingness', 'patience', and 'work', on behalf of each participant. Individualism on these terms required effort towards setting one's intentions and finding meaning in the ceremonial experiences and thus maximising the 'opportunities' of dieting a master plant. It has become common practice that shamans now place emphasis on setting intentions, partly as a way of stressing participants' agency in the process which is also important for the post-retreat integration process (Fotiou 2020, pp. 230-234).

Javier's discourse during integration meetings was arguably the most important. These discussions aimed at framing ceremonial experiences in meaningful ways. Javier described integration meetings as providing participants with the 'tools' to maximise benefits of the *dieta*, and to assist them when they returned home and began the integration process. The integration meetings also exemplified an interplay between individualism and collectivism, proving to be a unique space where several aspects came together. As discussed, these meetings were framed on individualistic terms regarding opinions and personal experiences. Yet in doing so, the meetings also allowed participants to feel safe in sharing their thoughts, feelings, and intimate details within a context of mutual respect. As such, integration meeting, as argued here, proved to be key in the formation of ritual *communitas*, as will be examined below.

The identification of *communitas* in ayahuasca experiences has been noted when the context of use follows a ritual structure focused on 'personal transformation' (Fotiou 2010; 2020). Recent studies by Kettner et al. (2021, p. 1) have explored the notion of 'psychedelic *communitas*' towards assessing 'acute relational experiences of perceived togetherness and shared humanity, in order to investigate psychological mechanisms pertinent to psychedelic ceremonies and retreats'. Others such as Roseman et al. (2021, p. 1) have argued that the use of ayahuasca in a group context requires phenomenological research to extend towards investigating 'intersubjective and intercultural relational processes'. Exemplifying Javier's non-hierarchical framing of the retreat, Furst (cited in Fotiou 2010, p. 269) has identified a 'democratisation of the shamanic experience' even though the shaman is still perceived as the

mediator (Fotiou 2010, p. 269). Although Javier was clearly the ritual leader, he explicitly stated that during the *dieta*; ‘we are all equals, all each other’s teachers’.

As noted, ceremonial experiences were individualistic and private in terms of personal intentions and intra-visionary states of consciousness. Yet the collective sense of having shared a ‘ritual ordeal’, often further realised during group and interpersonal communications, facilitated a unique ‘social bond’ (Turner 1969). Similarly, Kettner et al. (2021, p. 14) have argued that it is not only the ‘psychopharmacological agents that can enhance individual wellbeing and personal growth but may do so by fostering a sense of community, interpersonal trust and tolerance’, where the potential for positive change extends beyond that of the individual. As an example, Roseman et al. (2021, p. 5) study has assessed the potential for ‘peacebuilding’ among Palestinian and Israeli ayahuasca participants. They have argued that a perceived *communitas* may ‘provide a momentary dissolution of separate identities and create an opportunity for people to relate to each other through shared humanity’ (Roseman et al. 2021, p. 5).

The synthesis between intra-subjective and inter-subjective experiences is discussed by Tramacchi (2000) who has identified *communitas* in the ‘collective rituals’ of ‘rave and doof’ events. In discussing the ‘anatomy of collective ecstasy’ that arises from an ‘interplay’ of liminal forces, Tramacchi (2000, p. 210) has argued that a ‘collective ritual which incorporates potent psychoactive sacraments can stimulate profound subjective individual experiences, but they are simultaneously a socially dynamic collective force’. On one hand, the collective aspects of Javier’s retreat arguably emerge through an organic interpersonal relationality, such as simply becoming friends with someone. Yet, Javier’s discursive framing of the *dieta* as a collective experience emphasised its importance, being a strategy towards mutuality, egalitarianism, and relevant to the individualistic healing process.

Although the ceremonies were a group event, they were primarily ‘hyper-individualistic’ (St John 1999). ‘Emotional release’ has been noted as a phenomenologically ‘meaningful experience’ within ayahuasca ceremonial contexts (Wolff et al. 2019, p. 297). The integration meetings the following morning, however, arguably provided a collective space where participants could begin to process their ‘raw’ emotions that were still being felt. During the meetings, participants had the opportunity to hear exactly what their fellow participants were going through, in some cases it offered a deeper understanding and empathy towards one

another. As an example, participants could sometimes become annoyed with someone who was being noisy or disruptive during a ceremony. During the integration meeting, however, this person may explain that they were completely unaware of what they were doing or were having a particularly challenging experience that they would then try and describe. As noted earlier, hearing about one another's ceremonial experiences in terms of personal healing, proved greatly beneficial. In some cases, participants could relate to one another's experiences or life stories.

During the opening meeting Javier mentioned that his retreat was 'modelled' on jungle shamanism. As discussed in chapter one, Indigenous and mestizo use of ayahuasca has been described as a way of entering into contact with the 'unseen side of reality' (Luna 2011, p. 9). In the opening vignette of this chapter, Daya described Javier as taking a 'Western psychological approach'. While Daya's assessment has proven accurate to a certain extent, the animistic qualities of Javier's *dieta* (and how he framed it) requires further explication, given the psychospiritual approach he is more accurately argued to employ here.

Most participants were not unfamiliar with the spiritual or animistic cosmology that has become explicitly linked to ayahuasca tourism and neoshamanism, and it was common that they were motivated to drink ayahuasca for such reasons. Although Javier placed importance on the spiritual and animistic dimensions of the *dieta*, he also advised participants against becoming too focused on the otherworldliness of visionary states. One point he reiterated several times was to not to get 'too lost in the mythology of ayahuasca', particularly relating to visionary content. His advice was to prioritise and find 'meaning' in such experiences rather than becoming too distracted or even confused by specific aspects of the visions.⁸⁶ Arguably, Javier's ritual discourse went some way to mitigating participants' overemphasis on themes that he saw as veering too far from their intentions and efficacious healing process.

The expansion of ayahuasca tourism over recent decades has seen thousands of Westerners have what is often referred to as a 'direct' or 'core' religious experience within a 'non-ordinary' or 'altered' state of consciousness. Often these experiences relate to entering the world of spirits or engaging with otherworldly beings and places. For foreigners, such experiences may result

⁸⁶ A similar point was also made by Luz Maria who stated that the 'visions are also a purge that is happening in the mind, because we print everything in the mind'.

in shifting *a priori* ontological perceptions about the nature of existence, arguably challenging the ‘cartesian self-deception’ (Harvey 2006) of Western thinking. In his phenomenological study of ayahuasca, Shanon (2010, p. 165) identified that common questions arose about the nature of ‘reality’. He found that most ayahuasca drinkers believed that such experiences were ‘too fantastic to be merely the product of the imaginative power of their own mind’ (Shanon 2010, p. 165). The relevance of such findings reflects the need to shift away from explaining primitive ‘belief in spiritual beings’ (Tylor 1871), towards exploring a ‘respectful debate’ about different worldviews, particularly those of Indigenous people (Harvey 2006, p. 11). For example, Bird-David (1999, p. 68) has critiqued the ‘modernist’ dualistic concepts of body and spirit, instead arguing for a ‘plurality of epistemologies’. Such considerations are pertinent at a time when animistic worldviews are becoming diffuse among Westerners having direct experiences in ceremonies and traditional practices once considered the reserve of the ‘primitive Other’.

Interestingly, the globalisation of ayahuasca through tourism and diverse diasporic practices, arguably offers one of the most intriguing and promising fields of ontological study. Western participants now have multiple ways, either at home or away, to engage with shamanism often situated within a ‘radically different epistemology’ (Luna 2011, p. 10). Javier’s *dieta*, provides an example of ontological shifts that may occur, not only influenced by his discursive framing but through the experiential means of dieting a master plant and attending ayahuasca ceremonies. Moving forward it is suggested here that a ‘dialogue of worldviews’ on these topics would be beneficial for continuing to address ‘Western science’s’ prejudices which are largely ‘ignorant about the possibility of acquiring actual information about the natural world in non-ordinary states of consciousness’ (Luna 2011, pp. 10-11). This has been similarly stated by Shanon (2010, p. 165) who contends that ‘if’ a ‘supernatural realm’ exists as reported, then many questions require consideration, such as, what is the relationship between it and the ‘physical’ world. If as researchers, we are to take seriously participants and indeed our own ayahuasca experiences that affirm a non-physical or ‘spirit world’ then the continued interdisciplinary study of ‘plant intelligence’ potentiates one useful framework to do so. Indeed, such a field is further intriguing given the healing potential attributed to ‘visionary plants’ (Doyle 2012, p. 28).

3.5 Conclusion

This chapter has provided an ethnographic account of Javier's medicine retreat. It has also explored the multiple ways Javier's ritual discourse frames participants' experiences. Both contribute to the creation of a meaningful and potentially efficacious liminal event, focused on personal transformation and healing with plant medicines. The combination of ritual structure and discourse results in a unique event where all participants engage in 'structured performance' that differs greatly from the everyday world (Wojtkowiak 2018, p. 469). On these terms 'ritual participation' is shown to hold a transformative potential given the 'unique cultural context of meaning-making' such events entail, not only representing certain beliefs and attitudes, but shaping, creating, and strengthening them through 'ritual action' (Wojtkowiak 2018, p. 463).

This chapter has identified and analysed three interrelated themes of Javier's discourse. Individualism has been shown to be central in the framing of healing and personal transformation, evident in the setting of ceremonial intentions, the hyper-individualistic and liminal ceremonial experiences, and the focus on 'personal autonomy' in the integration meetings. The ordeal of the ceremony and the collective aspects of the integration meetings have also been shown to form a unique 'social bond', explored here through the concept of ritual *communitas*. Wojtkowiak (2018, p. 469) has argued that the 'greater the collaboration in ritual – or, the higher the participation in terms of following and engaging in the ritual protocol – the stronger its transformative potential'. In part, these collective features of the retreat are acknowledged as occurring through an organic interpersonal context, but more specifically, are identified as being strategically framed by Javier through notions of 'co-creation' and 'non-hierarchy' from the beginning.

In considering the animistic dimensions of working with plant medicines, this chapter has described how the *dieta* is framed by Javier and directly experienced by participants in terms of building a relationship with plant spirits. As the following chapter illustrates, such ontological shifts can be identified in participants' views of *ayahuasca* integration which continues into everyday life as plant spirits are seen by some as integral to their ongoing healing process. On these terms, considering the ontological dimensions of participants' ritual experiences beyond the intra-subjective and phenomenological visionary content of the

ceremonies alone, offers insightful understandings of how such experiences inform new ways of attending to everyday life for participants.

Chapter 4: Ayahuasca Integration: “Doing the Work”

4.1 Introduction

The previous chapter examined the medicine retreat as a liminal event focused on healing and personal transformation, strategically created and mediated by Javier through neoshamanic ritual practices and discourse. Classic theory of ritual process, as developed by van Gennep (1960) and Turner (1969), have posited that a return to social life following ritual events, infers a change or transformation to have occurred for initiands. Contrary to returning wholly changed, however, this chapter examines multiple ways that shamans and participants view ritual healing as an ongoing and indeterminate process that continues following a retreat or ceremony. This post-ritual time is commonly referred to as ‘ayahuasca integration’, when the healings, teachings, and insights received from ayahuasca are integrated into everyday life.

This chapter explores the vernacular adage of ‘doing the work’ commonly used by shamans and participants when discussing ayahuasca healing and integration. As shown here, doing the work requires individual effort and responsibility towards enacting change and affecting what are understood to be meaningful and efficacious outcomes. As will be shown, integration strategies are enacted by shamans and participants alike, towards maximising the ritual and healing benefits of ayahuasca, through an ongoing and open-ended process following such events. Given the emphasis placed on individual responsibility in the ayahuasca integration perspectives offered here, an assessment of neoliberalism across biomedicine and spiritual healing is included. Building on the literature, findings in this chapter suggest that there are notable differences regarding individual responsibility in ayahuasca integration discourses and practices, and how it is understood in biomedical health practices, particularly relating to personalisation, empowerment, and victim-blaming ideologies. Having said this, some considerations are offered that acknowledge the slipperiness of oversimplifying a biomedicine/spiritual healing binary. This relates to complex ways that shamans, participants, or integration therapists, for example, may embody to varying extents, the so-called neoliberal ‘cultural trope of individual responsibility’ (Wacquant 2009) that could result in victim-blaming and disempowerment.

This chapter builds on several integration perspectives, beginning with those of Javier and Luz Maria, who exemplify how contemporary neoshamans seek to inform and support participants

for the integration process that lies ahead. Javier and Luz Maria offer unique perspectives on integration, yet equally place emphasis on individual responsibility and effort. Integrating the teachings of the plant medicines on everyday terms is seen as an empowering and creative way of making the most out of the opportunities that ayahuasca provides. As will be shown, this may include a change in attitude or behaviour, such as becoming more self-aware, or focusing one's intentions through what are described by some participants as small acts of everyday ritualising.

Marta and Vanessa were participants in two separate medicine retreats. Almost a year after their respective retreats, they reflected on the integration process. As examined in this chapter, both described returning home feeling healed and changed, yet through their new-found awareness they discovered that further changes were required, which proved challenging at times. In addition, John and Rob were two ayahuasca pilgrims living in Pisac who discussed their views on ayahuasca healing and integration. Both exemplify the view that integration is the most important part of 'the work', and each individual is primarily responsible for their own healing. Given the recurring importance of enacting 'change' on everyday terms, an analysis of participants' perspectives will be presented through an application of Csordas' (1988) model for identifying 'incremental change'. As will be discussed, enacting change is considered a significant marker of success and source of empowerment for shamans and participants alike.

Due to the importance of individual responsibility and notions of self-empowerment in ayahuasca healing and integration as examined throughout this chapter, a discussion of neoliberalism in healthcare is included. Beginning with a literature review, this discussion charts the impact of neoliberal notions of individual responsibility in biomedicine, shown to have increased aspects of depersonalisation and victim-blaming while ignoring structural power dimensions. As explored through scholarship here, spiritual healing practices are often argued to represent an alternative view of individual responsibility to the that of biomedicine, yet it is problematic to claim that neoliberalism does not infiltrate 'alternative' or 'spiritual' health practices and ideologies. This chapter argues that notions of individual responsibility identified in ayahuasca integration does appear to have different connotations to biomedicine, namely regarding the discursive emphasis on self-empowerment and qualities of personalisation in integration strategies and support mechanisms. Having said this, several counterpoints are presented, demonstrating how notions of self-empowerment and individual

responsibility in ayahuasca integration discourse may vary depending on the individuals involved, including shamans and participants, as well as the neoliberal social context that people return to following ritual events. On these terms, it is worth considering the potential difficulties in actualising change, for example, how an individual's health seeking behaviour may be impacted by social determinants of health. Additionally, individuals commonly engage in medical pluralism practices which can present contrasting ideologies, some that tend towards victim-blaming and depersonalisation. This chapter illustrates how ayahuasca healing does not occur in a ritual vacuum and that participants commonly understand the process following such events as the most important part, as Javier states, 'the real ceremony begins when the ceremony ends'.

4.2 Ayahuasca integration and healing efficacy

Given ayahuasca's increasing popularity with 'spiritual seekers', Trichter (2010, p. 132) has emphasised the importance of integrating 'spiritual healing rituals into Western concepts of psychological health' for maximising benefits and minimising potential 'distress' and 'harm'. Understanding the importance of ayahuasca integration is reflected in the work of many contemporary shamans, ayahuasca centres, researchers, and professionals, who seek to prepare and support participants for the time following a retreat or ceremony. As this chapter will demonstrate, a central tenet of ayahuasca integration is the belief that healing is a process that requires individual effort and responsibility.

Integration support may include one-on-one psychotherapeutic 'integration sessions', academic and written publications, or group and individual meetings during a retreat. These are considered here as formal integration sources. Conversely, informal contexts may include talking to friends or fellow ayahuasca participants, referring to internet sources, or developing personal practices on a daily basis. For example, *Temple of the Way of Light* (2020) is a large ayahuasca centre in Iquitos that offers 'pre-retreat' and 'post-retreat' sessions with an 'integration facilitator'. These formal means of support are also supplemented by a general overview of information on the importance of integration on their website. The following quote is taken from their webpage entitled 'integrating ayahuasca':

It is what you do with the teachings and insights that you get from the medicine, as well as how you take care of yourself and make the changes in your life that are consistent with your continued healing (Temple of the Way of Light 2020).

Their webpage illustrates how some ayahuasca centres offer multiple sources of support, from formal sessions with a facilitator, to a brief overview emphasising the importance of integration for enacting change following a ceremony or retreat.

Loizaga-Velder and Loizaga Pazzi (2014, p. 133) have conducted over fifteen years of field observation assessing the therapeutic value of ayahuasca ‘rituals’ and ‘integration’. In their research of ayahuasca assisted treatment for substance abuse, they discovered that participants who attended complementary psychotherapy sessions found them helpful for deepening their understanding of their ayahuasca experience (Loizaga-Velder & Loizaga Pazzi 2014, p. 148). They reported that ‘therapists’ and ‘traditional healers’ agreed that ‘qualified assistance’ for integrating ayahuasca experiences was ‘a critical factor in achieving sustained treatment results and minimising undesired effects’ (Loizaga-Velder & Loizaga Pazzi 2014, p. 148). Alluding to more informal approaches, they also noted that some participants chose not to engage in psychotherapeutic support and instead relied on ‘inner resources’ and ‘informal social contexts’ (Loizaga-Velder & Loizaga Pazzi 2014, p. 149). Similar views have been identified by psychologist Rachel Harris (2017) who has advocated for the benefits of ayahuasca integration therapy. Through extensive interviews, however, she found that many people rejected ‘mainstream psychotherapy’, believing that Western therapists lacked sufficient understandings without having experienced ayahuasca themselves (Harris 2017, p. 62). Instead, they opted for alternative means (Harris 2017, p. 62) such as journal writing, prayer, meditation, time in nature, and a healthy diet (Harris & Gurel 2012, p. 212). Similar strategies are exemplified further in this chapter as everyday means for enacting change. Although ayahuasca integration can be understood on psychotherapeutic terms, as illustrated in the previous chapter, the process of healing commonly retains a spiritual significance.

Defining fixed notions of efficacy within a non-biomedical context of ‘traditional medicines’ has proven challenging from a Western perspective. This is because spiritual healing is often understood to have a ‘processual nature’ regarding cultural constructions of health and efficacy (Etkin 1988, p. 318). Waldram (2000, p. 611) has pointed out that even when ritual activity renders some level of immediate success, like when an ‘object’ is removed by ‘sucking’, as often occurs in shamanic ceremonies, healing itself is commonly seen as a longer process

without a specific end. In this sense, the importance given to ayahuasca integration not only correlates with psychotherapeutic approaches that have been applied to ritual healing but is in fact seen to be an inherent part of the spiritual healing process itself.

As the participant perspectives in this chapter will demonstrate, healing is not always determined by a condition that requires fixing or for finding an immediate ‘cure’. This has been illustrated by Glik (1990, p. 163) who found that people who had ‘spiritual healing experiences’ often erred away from the specifics of what was being healed in biological terms:

Such data is evidence that normative systems of thought and action give spiritual healing its persuasive and therapeutic power for participants. These findings lend support to hypotheses that healing must be understood in terms of treatment of lifestyle (Pattison 1974), the realisation of meaning attributed to a symptom (Bourguignon 1976) or the awakening into a religious worldview (Csordas 1983), rather than the treatment of pathology.

Instead, healing can be described as ‘redefinition process’ that occurs through newly emerging events and realisations, often resulting in changes in an individual’s outlook (Glik 1990, pp. 162-163). As explored in this chapter, enacting change through individual effort is seen by participants to be empowering and efficacious. In spiritual terms, this is viewed as a way of actualising the teachings of the plants themselves, for example, as revealed through the ritual ayahuasca experiences described in the previous chapter. This is articulated by one participant, John, later in this chapter, who explains how ayahuasca ‘teaches us how to heal ourselves’. As argued here, ayahuasca integration (and healing) is a psychospiritual process that is dependent on effort, notions of change, and time. In part, participants’ perceptions of healing efficacy and perceived success can be identified through a ‘small turn in thought and feeling’ (Kirmayer 1993, p. 176). This idea is explicated later in the chapter through an analysis of ‘incremental change’ (Csordas 1988).

4.3 Integration discourse: The shaman’s view

This section explores ayahuasca integration from the perspectives of two shamans, Javier, and Luz Maria. Both agree that integration is the most important part of the process of working with plant medicines. While each discuss different integration strategies, they equally demonstrate how healing and personal transformation are contingent upon individual

responsibility towards enacting change in everyday ways. It is argued here that Javier and Luz Maria seek to empower participants and maximise the opportunities that ayahuasca has provided them. On these terms, ‘the work’ is viewed as an ongoing process.

4.3.1 Javier: “Letting go in life”

The previous chapter discussed how Javier’s ritual discourse framed participants’ experiences on psychospiritual terms. Javier described integration as the most important part of working with plant medicines, and a continuation of the healing process that began during the retreat. As with the retreat, he placed emphasis on individual responsibility which he described as an ‘empowering’ way to integrate plant teachings in everyday life. Javier’s view that ‘the real ceremony begins when the ceremony ends’, is illustrative of the importance he placed on integration as an extension of the healing process that continues after the retreat activities have concluded. Exemplifying his psychospiritual approach, Javier said that integration was supported by the plants but equally emphasised that individual agency was key towards enacting change.

Javier told participants that without integrating their experiences, what was ‘received’ during a ceremony was ultimately meaningless in his opinion. As noted, the integration meetings were an integral part of the retreat process on individual and collectivist terms. In helping making sense of ceremonial experiences and ‘kickstarting’ the integration process, these meetings helped to prepare participants for the often-challenging time ahead, as Javier explained:

The importance is about any confusion people are carrying from their experience, or less than complete understanding of what happened. Then it’s important to dispel confusion and frame the experience in a way that’s positive. Integration is the most important part of this process and the most challenging. By having these meetings, we stress the importance and get it kick-started.

Although they were primarily focused on the ceremonial experiences, integration meetings were also framed as a bridge between ritual and everyday life.

Javier described integration as an ‘open-ended process’ that requires ‘patience and humility’. He warned participants about forcing things and instead advised, ‘letting the pieces fall into place’. Equally, he pointed out that participants would need to ‘make the space and take the

time to honour what might come up’. This form of self-awareness was often associated with personal healing themes such as guilt, shame, and trauma, as discussed in the previous chapter. The concept of ‘letting go’ which was described as the most important teaching of plant medicines during the retreat was equally applied to the integration process. For example, Javier discussed how newly formed insights (gained during a retreat) needed to be integrated into everyday life if participants were to ‘evolve’ and ‘heal’. Javier explained that while letting go during the retreat could prove difficult and ‘meet some resistances’, letting go in life could ‘often be more challenging than letting go in the ceremony’.

Javier’s emphasis on ‘letting go’ is an example of how ‘change’, achieved through individual effort, was seen as a marker of success. Javier said that enacting change would require ‘time’ and ‘patience’ and explained that people often ‘feared change as much as they desire it’. He corresponded this with the notion of ‘meeting resistances’, as he similarly discussed regarding the *dieta*. Regarding integration, however, he advised participants to ‘be gentle’ with themselves in such instances, as what sometimes appeared as a ‘failure’ to enact a desired change, could instead be reframed as an ‘opportunity’:

Going back can push some buttons and we can fall back into old ways that don’t serve, which can bring up a reaction. Don’t beat yourself up too long. This can offer an opportunity to be creative – to act differently.

As a way of arguably inverting a sense of failure a participant may encounter, Javier suggested that difficult moments could effectually become ‘our greatest gifts’. Javier’s discourse on integration reveals how he extended his support beyond the immediacy of the medicine retreat, towards preparing participants for the all-important ‘journey ahead’.

As seen in the previous chapter, individualism was a central theme in the ritual healing process. Arguably, this theme is even more pervasive during integration. Like many ayahuasca healing concepts, the adage ‘doing the work’ bridges ritual and everyday life. Regarding integration, doing the work requires self-responsibility and agency towards affecting change and maximising efficacious outcomes. While doing the work is important during a retreat, it is arguably more pertinent following, when participants no longer have the close support of the shaman. Javier explained doing the work as follows:

As we can’t expect the room to do the meditation for us, we can’t expect another human being to do the work for us. Plant medicine people (shamans) are only there to support us in this process, the process is for us to go through.

Here, Javier describes each participant as the active agent in their own healing process. Javier believed that plant medicines helped people to look at themselves. He also warned that sometimes people will see things about themselves that they do not like during the process and revert to blaming others rather than taking responsibility, ‘we start blaming this or that, but it doesn’t take us anywhere – it’s Jupiter’s fault, its whatever’s fault except my responsibility’. He pointed out that by ‘educating’ and making people ‘aware’ of these ‘patterns’ it could help them ‘deal with them’ when they occurred.

Javier has written numerous books on plant medicines, which he described as ‘comprehensive and practical guides’.⁸⁷ Although Javier emphasised the importance of individual responsibility, he also believed integration was supported by the plants themselves. For example, Javier has written that the plants will ‘lead us right where we need to go and guide us through what we need to do in order to heal’ (Regueiro 2016, pp. 164-165). His point here corresponds with the notion of nurturing a relationship with the plants during a retreat, which he said could then be taken forward into the future. Integration may involve moving into ‘uncharted territories’ and ‘exploring new ways of being’ (Regueiro 2016, pp. 165-166), which he discussed in terms of the ‘journey’ metaphor.

Ayahuasca pilgrims often discussed working with ayahuasca through the metaphor of their personal ‘journey’. In this sense, working with plant medicines, healing, and integrating experiences become inseparable to life itself. In his book, Javier discussed the ‘hero’s journey’ to emphasise the importance of what happens after returning home following ‘the adventure’ of the ritual experience:

It allows us to finally visit a magical place filled with treasures. We leave this place with many precious jewels in our hands and return to our lives. If we bury these treasures, they will not be of much use and they will be soon forgotten. Information alone is not power: the use of such knowledge is really what empowers us. How we translate the teachings and lessons received by the medicine can be enticing or daunting depending on our willingness to change (Regueiro 2016, pp. 166-167).

Although the ceremonial experiences may be ‘magical’, Javier pointed out that ultimately, one must return to their lives with the ‘treasure’. Joseph Campbell (2008, p. 167) referred to this as the ‘the boon’, the ‘life-transmuting trophy’ which the hero is to then share with the world,

⁸⁷ See: Regueiro (2016; 2017).

often a difficult task. Javier described this as a potentially empowering part of the journey. Yet, he cautioned that without any ‘willingness to change’, and without integrating the ‘teachings or lessons’ (the jewels and treasure) on everyday terms, ‘there is no real healing’ as he put it.

As a continuation from the previous chapter, Javier’s integration discourse proved to be key in how he offered support to participants. He emphasised that integration was the most important part of the healing process. This inferred that the notion of ‘working with the medicine’ was not limited to the ritual sphere but extended onwards into everyday life. The efficacy of the healing process was predicated on individual effort and agency towards enacting change in one’s life to fully benefit from the teachings of plant medicines. Thus, while Javier sought to extend support to participants by educating and informing them of the importance of integration, it was ultimately considered their own responsibility.

4.3.2 Luz Maria: “Little rituals”

As noted in the previous chapter, Luz Maria assisted Javier in the April 2016 San Pedro retreat. The following was taken from an interview conducted later that year, at her home in Pisac. Amongst many other topics, she talked at length about the use and misuse of plant medicines. Luz Maria explained the importance of integration through her notion of ‘little rituals’. She described them as ‘concrete’ and ‘tangible’ ways to integrate plant medicine experiences into daily life.

Luz Maria believed that integration was ‘the most important part’ of working with plant medicines. When conducting ceremonies, she held an integration meeting that she referred to as ‘the circle of tobacco integration’. During these meetings she said participants would take turns holding the tobacco pipe and sharing their experiences. In these meetings she would take the time to inform her participants of things they could start to do ‘to nourish’ what they had received. Like Javier, Luz Maria explained that ‘your life is your real ceremony’. She said that ‘it is what you do with the information’ upon returning to everyday life that is the most important aspect of ‘working with medicine plants’.

As discussed here, little rituals are a conceptual shift away from ‘high’ rituals, exemplified by the medicine retreat in the previous chapter. The work of Grimes (1982; 1995) is useful for

describing these differences. As well as giving attention to ‘high’ ritual moments of formal action, Grimes (1982, p. 540) has argued that ‘low’ or ‘deformalised’ ritual strategies are worth serious attention. Taking the verb from the noun, *ritual*, Grimes described ‘ritualising’ as meaningful acts of doing or creating. In this sense, ritualising is an ongoing process that Grimes (1982, p. 540) referred to as a ‘nascent genre of action’. He argued against defining all rituals as a way of ‘classifying the world’ and instead called ‘attention to their originaive moments’ rather than their ‘originated’ or ‘traditional’ categories (Grimes 1982, p. 542). Grimes (1982, p. 542) described such moments as often lacking any of the ‘structural qualities’ for them to be considered formal rituals within a given culture. Similarly, although Luz Maria conducted (high) plant medicine rituals, her emphasis on (low) everyday acts of ritualising were believed to be equally important strategies for implementing change.

Luz Maria explained that even small or mundane activities such as ‘doing the dishes’ could be seen as meaningful ways to ritualise daily, depending on how one directed their ‘intentions’. Driver (1991, p. 13) has discussed ‘the little ones’ as ritual acts of daily familiarity such as making the bed, having table manners, or visiting Grandma. Driver (1991, p. 13) considered that these everyday acts represent something basic to the human condition, yet because of their daily familiarity people do not notice how greatly their lives are affected by them. Luz Maria, however, emphasised their importance. She described little rituals as a way of directing the ‘right intentions in life’: ‘To integrate into your life daily reminders, either image, smell, meditation, a practice of yoga, chanting, reading a nice book, having good company’. Although she discussed little rituals as action-oriented, her emphasis on ‘intentions’ also reveals them to be conscious-oriented, that is, requiring awareness of what one is doing and thinking, as she said. The emergence of a new awareness was correlated with the opportunities that arose from plant medicine experiences as she explained:

Now that I’m conscious of how bad I was eating, okay, now you start to eat well and give your body new things. Or now you see you’ve been hating this person for no reason, so now instead of sending bad thoughts, you start to send good thoughts.

On these terms, little rituals potentiate ways of enacting change through both ritualised doing and directing one’s intentions; possibilities to act or think differently in small everyday ways.

Although Luz Maria described little rituals as everyday (low) acts, such as reading a book or meditating, she also discussed how ritualising had the potential for creating (high) ritual acts:

Look for concrete things, that's why the ritual in all the countries and cultures is so important, because the ritual is a concrete thing, a tangible thing you are doing for connection; for your prayer, for your reminder, to nourish. You have the fire, the water, the stars, the night, the moon. There are many things you can start to integrate into your life as your own rituals. "Oh, there's a full moon, let's do a fire for the full moon. Oh, the new moon, I do my prayer for this new cycle." You slowly start making your own connections, practices, so you can maintain all the experiences, vibration, and bring it into your life.

As tangible, action-oriented integration practices, little rituals can be seen as a way for individuals to actively direct their intentions on a daily basis. Creating one's 'own rituals' is seen as empowering creative action towards affecting change in manageable and meaningful ways.

Luz Maria described little rituals as 'tools', tangible ways to 'nourish' experiences with plant medicines. Although she gave several examples of little rituals, she did not prescribe them specifically, but rather sought to illustrate what they could be, and how one could direct their intentions and awareness, in either action or thought. As discussed here, ritualising is viewed as an empowering strategy for bridging formal ritual experiences and everyday life in meaningful and potentially efficacious ways.

4.4 Integration discourse: Retreat participants and Pisac pilgrims

Having discussed the unique perspectives of two ayahuasca neoshamans, Javier and Luz Maria, this section first turns to the perspectives of Marta and Vanessa who attended retreats with Javier.⁸⁸ Almost a year later, I contacted them individually to enquire about their experiences since the retreat. They reflected on their integration process since returning home and described how they felt changed upon returning home, but more importantly, how they had been actively engaged in creating change based on new-found perspectives and feeling different. Following this, two foreign residents in Pisac, John and Rob, discussed integration through the theme of 'the work'. As long-term ayahuasca drinkers, John and Rob are examples of ayahuasca pilgrims with relatively extensive experiences and insights. Both emphasised that integration requires

⁸⁸ Marta attended the 2015 *dieta*; Vanessa attended the September 2016 medicine retreat.

individual responsibility towards efficacious healing and change. They also described how the healing process is supported by ayahuasca ‘in real time’, as Rob put it.

4.4.1 Returning participants: Marta & Vanessa

Marta was 26 and living in Beacon, New York. In December 2015 she attended Javier’s *dieta*. Marta told me that her family had moved to the United States from Ukraine. Both her parents were doctors and she said she had always had an interest in ‘helping and healing’. Marta’s vocation in the Arts gave her flexibility to regularly attend ‘spiritual events’ and ‘meditation gatherings’. She said that her travel plans were usually motivated towards aiding her ‘personal development’ in some way. In 2015, she ‘felt the call’ to travel to Peru and engage with plant medicines for the first time.

Marta felt that her previous ‘spiritual work’ had helped prepare her for drinking ayahuasca. For example, she believed that the concept of ‘integration’ was an essential part of many spiritual experiences. Marta exemplified self-awareness and responsibility towards integration, describing how challenging moments presented her with an opportunity to look at herself:

For me, spirituality is not some abstract idea that is just fun to read about. I strongly believe in living the spiritual truths that I become aware of. Whenever I am not in a state of joy and fulfillment, I do my best to take an honest look at my belief systems and thought patterns to see what needs to be examined.

Marta’s perspective reveals ways that individual responsibility for integration is often framed in terms of what one becomes aware of, then enacting that desired change. She discussed ‘spiritual truths’ in terms of action. These arose through her own observations and sense of awareness. For example, becoming aware of not being in a place ‘joy and fulfillment’, presented Marta with an opportunity to be ‘honest’ with herself and identify what needed to be examined, as she said.

In the following, Marta offers an example of how the healing process is often seen as a continuum between the medicine retreat and everyday life. Although she felt changed upon returning, she also became aware of the need to make further changes in her life, which she acknowledged had been difficult:

Coming home from the retreat was definitely a big deal. There was so much healing that occurred, and I felt like a new person. The way I saw the world was much lighter and easier to navigate. At the same time, I felt that I no longer fit into the old ways of living, and necessary changes needed to be made, which wasn't easy.

Marta's perspective is insightful given the nuanced ways she understood her own healing as an ongoing process. Her healing experiences during the retreat were correlated with then returning home and feeling changed, like a 'new person', as she said. She identified how her perspective of the world had become 'lighter and easier'. Yet, she acknowledged that further changes needed to be made as she no longer fit into 'old ways of living'. Returning home feeling healed, exemplifies ways that participants may feel immediate changes. While arguably evidence of initial ritual efficacy, this is often just the beginning. Marta added that almost a year after her retreat, she felt like she was 'still processing'.

Vanessa, 40,⁸⁹ was born in Spain and lived the United Kingdom. She studied medicine and worked as a medical consultant in London. At the time, she had been finding her job unfulfilling due to the high pressure her role involved. She also felt frustrated about the limitations placed upon her regarding how she was allowed to assist her patients. In general, she had been feeling dissatisfied with her lifestyle in London. She was introduced to ayahuasca through her partner who had previously visited Javier and had had a 'significant experience', as Vanessa put it. Both Vanessa and her partner attended Javier's retreat in September 2016.

Vanessa described her integration process as involving the need to make changes that she felt might appear insignificant to others, but were very important to her, as enacting them made her feel better. Like Luz Maria's little rituals, Vanessa described small every day changes she had made. Similar to Marta, these had arisen out of a new sense of awareness. She also described big life decisions she and her partner had made since returning home:

I feel different in a subtle but obvious way. I am suddenly much more aware of the negative impact of human beings' consumerism on the world, and I am actively changing my behaviour to make it more ecofriendly. We are nourishing ourselves with more quality food. I am starting to do things I always wanted to do but was always too tired to do, trapeze, hula hoop. We have made the decision to leave London and move to Brighton. We knew for a while that we were unhappy there, but we just made the

⁸⁹ In 2016.

decision when we came back. We are now doing all that has to be done to make that happen.

Vanessa's perspective on integration shows how small things such as eating better, pursuing hobbies, and exercise, were considered significant markers of success. She also observed ways that she had become 'aware' of global issues and subsequently sought to enact changes in her own behaviour accordingly. Reflecting ways that ayahuasca is seen to create opportunities, Vanessa noted how she had more energy to do things like hula hoop that she had been previously too tired to do. Moving to Brighton is an example of big life decisions that ayahuasca participants often make upon returning home, such as quitting a job, or ending a relationship.

4.4.2 John: "It teaches us how to heal ourselves"

John was from the United States and had been living in Peru for several years when we met in 2016. John was the manager at Paz y Luz for much of the time that I was renting my bungalow there. I would often see him around and sometimes we would discuss our recent plant medicine experiences. Prior to living in the Sacred Valley, John had worked for some time as a facilitator at one of the large ayahuasca centres outside of Iquitos.

The following is taken from an interview we conducted one afternoon in the restaurant at Paz y Luz. John thought that people often mistakenly attributed ayahuasca healing to the shaman or the plants, but he believed that it was ultimately down to the individual to heal themselves. As he explained, he felt that 'true' healing was contingent upon integrating the teachings of ayahuasca in everyday life:

You go back to your life and that's where the work is, really. People think ayahuasca cures them, but it doesn't, it teaches them how to cure themselves. And that's what I believe is probably the most important thing to understand about it. The shaman is not going to cure you, the ayahuasca is not going to cure you, to heal you, it doesn't work that way. It shows you how to heal yourself. It helps you reconceptualise events in your life, experiences in your life, traumas, but doesn't do the healing. A true healer doesn't do the healing, it teaches us how we heal ourselves, or we don't. Some people hold on to the idea that the shaman has to heal them and generally when I've seen that it's a pretty rough struggle for them. It comes in on a subconscious level where we don't have

those defence mechanisms and barriers to the medicine and then we go back to our lives and it filters up into our conscious mind and our reality changes. The mystics have said it for thousands of years and the physicists are proving it today that we create and experience our reality in the very same moment, and that everything we experience internally reflects in our external reality. So, the medicine comes in and helps us change internally and slowly.

John's view of doing the work offers an example of how participants with extensive experience understood ayahuasca healing as an actively engaged-in process that is dependent upon what transpires following ceremonial experiences. John observed that many people who drank ayahuasca arrived with an expectation that the shaman would do all the healing for them, which he said often resulted in people having a 'pretty rough struggle'. Although he placed the responsibility for healing with the individual, like Javier, he also described it as a process that included the plants; it 'shows' and 'teaches' people how to do this themselves back in everyday life; 'it comes in and helps' people change from inside. In the following, Rob offers a similar view of how ayahuasca supports the integration 'work' by presenting 'opportunities' in 'real time'.

4.4.3 Rob: "Out here on the walk"

Rob, 42, was from Australia and had been living in Peru about a year when we met in early 2016. Through a mutual friend, Rob and I shared several hikes in the surrounding mountains and would often discuss some of the challenges of integrating ayahuasca experiences. In an interview at my bungalow in late 2016, Rob explained how his first experiences with ayahuasca in Australia had created significant changes in his life. Exemplifying the 'big decisions' mentioned earlier, Rob explained how those experiences eventually led him to leave his career that he was unhappy in and move to Peru.

Although living in the Sacred Valley, Rob regularly worked with a shaman called Jorge who lived in northern Peru. Rob explained how his experiences with Jorge had resulted in a process of 'letting go' which he described as 'facing myself and letting go of my old life'. As will be seen below, Rob's view of integration was to some extent influenced by Jorge's discourse on the subject. Echoing the perspectives so far, Rob also emphasised the importance of taking

opportunities presented by ayahuasca back in everyday life, which he described as doing the work, ‘on the walk out here’:

So maybe you do three or four ceremonies with him, and then he says, “the work is out here”. The way spirit of ayahuasca works, is she’ll create opportunities for growth in real time on the walk out here, with the conversations you have, the amends you have to make with yourself, with your friends and your family – the mother will present those in real time, guaranteed, 100% every time. There will be an opportunity, sometimes they’re subtle, can be metaphoric, can be really, really distinct, but they are the moments to grow when they are presented, and that’s the spirit of the mother working through us. The next thing, when you exercise that opportunity, if you really make amends and get in touch with what’s playing out and going on, then something is lifted and you have an expansion in your consciousness. Then the next time you sit in ceremony she’ll show you the next little bit you are ready for, but without those practices happening out here on the walk, people sit back in ceremony, and they’ll just be stuck in a loop and won’t really break through the next little bit. She’ll clean you and do all the things that her spirit does to you, but the deep work won’t really present itself as clear if you don’t take the opportunities to work.

Rob described the need for individual effort in taking the opportunities that arise ‘on the walk’. He believed that these opportunities were created by the spirit of ayahuasca who he explained was ‘working through us’, as he put it.

Rob’s perspective of ayahuasca ‘working through us’ exemplifies how he saw integration as an embodied manifestation of spirit in everyday life. He discussed integration in terms of personal responsibility, but importantly felt that ‘the walk’ is not taken alone. He explained that ayahuasca created ‘opportunities to work’ and ‘opportunities for growth’ ‘in real time’. Rob warned that attending more ceremonies without having taken advantage of these opportunities could mean becoming ‘stuck in a loop’ without any forward momentum or personal development. Unable to ‘break through the next little bit’ limits any ‘deep’ healing afforded by the spiritual connection with ‘the mother’. Alternatively, Rob explained that acting on the opportunities offered by ayahuasca could result in making amends with oneself and expanding one’s consciousness.

4.5 Analysis: Therapeutic efficacy and incremental change

The integration perspectives presented so far have revealed how ayahuasca healing is not seen as limited to ritual activity alone but greatly determined by everyday ways of enacting change. Although the integration process was understood to be supported by the spirit of ayahuasca in ‘real time’ as Rob explained, it was widely believed that the individual was ultimately responsible for affecting change and maximising efficacious outcomes. To further expand on notions of change in ritual healing integration, the following analysis applies Csordas’ (1988) model for identifying ‘minimal conditions of therapeutic efficacy’. Csordas’ model includes three themes: experience of the sacred; negotiation of possibilities; and actualisation of change. These will be briefly described and then applied to an analysis of several key themes identified in the integration perspectives above.

Csordas conducted research with participants who engaged in Catholic Pentecostal ritual healing. Using ‘experiential data’, Csordas explored ways that ‘incremental change’ could be seen as a marker of ‘therapeutic efficacy’. By considering how the therapeutic process extends beyond the ritual or clinical setting, Csordas (1988, p. 121) argued it could offer a more ‘balanced and pragmatic’ understanding of healing. In addition to the three themes mentioned above, Csordas (1988, pp. 121-122) explicated incremental change through three aspects of analysis: *procedure*, as it relates to ‘altered-states’, otherwise described as the ritual or ceremonial dimensions; *process*, being the ‘nature of participants’ experiences, such as change in thought, meaning, insight and emotion; and *outcome*, as relating to participants’ satisfaction of healing and notions of change. Given that ‘procedure’ more directly relates to ritual experiences as discussed in the previous chapter, the analysis below is limited to process and outcome.

The ‘experience of the sacred’ is concerned with ‘individual variations in the experience of the sacred that may influence the course of therapeutic process’ (Csordas 1988, p. 133). Above we have seen how participants often understood ayahuasca healing on sacred terms by developing a relationship with the spirit of the plants. This involved receiving their teachings and healings as well as taking the opportunities they presented in everyday life. For example, Javier discussed how building a relationship with the plants involved ‘trusting’ that they would support and guide participants to where they needed to go and what they needed to do to heal. More explicitly, Rob stated that ‘the spirit’ of ayahuasca, who he referred to as ‘the mother’,

presented opportunities in ‘real time’. In this sense, Rob experienced the sacred ‘on the walk out here’ as he put it. In his view, if one took advantages of these opportunities, ‘something could be lifted’ and there could be an expansion of consciousness, as he said. Similarly, John discussed how ayahuasca ‘filters up into our conscious mind’. He further explained that the ‘energies of the spirits love manifesting through us into our reality’. Corresponding with Javier’s view that plants support participants in times of need, John said that ‘when you call to them for help, they answer every time. I’ve never experienced them saying “no, no, we’re too busy today”’. Importantly, Csordas (1988, p. 134) has pointed out that an experience of the sacred does not necessarily mean an experience of the ‘supernatural’, but instead, a ‘transformed way of attending to the human world’. This is a pertinent point when considering an experience of the sacred outside of the ritual proper. As Rob, Javier, and John illustrate, these experiences are often understood on everyday terms, such as presenting opportunities through guiding, teaching, and supporting.

In Csordas’ analysis, the ‘negotiation of possibilities’ theme explored how the creation of alternative strategies potentiated ‘new pathways’ for ‘becoming unstuck’, ‘overcoming obstacles’ or getting out of ‘trouble’ (Csordas 1988, p. 134). These alternatives involved changes to the ‘assumptive world of the afflicted’ in ‘real and realistic’ ways (Csordas 1988, p. 134). Luz Maria’s little rituals offered an example of ‘real and realistic’ (Csordas 1988) possibilities to enact change through directing one’s intentions through action and thought. Even through relatively mundane and everyday activities, she described ritualising as ‘tangible’ and ‘concrete’ ways of creating ‘new pathways’ as Csordas (1988) put it. Luz Maria also believed that by ‘nourishing’ the experiences with plant medicines, one could move through the ‘doors’ in life rather than becoming ‘stuck’.

Marta displayed an aptitude for creating alternative strategies through her self-awareness. She placed importance on observing how she felt and acted, seeing such moments as an opportunity to assess herself with ‘honesty’, looking at things like her ‘belief system’, for example. In this sense, she found new ways to ‘overcome obstacles’ (Csordas 1988) that she identified as impeding her ability to live a joyous and fulfilling life, as she explained. Vanessa on the other hand, simply stated that making small changes after returning home proved to be important and empowering. Eating better, being more eco-friendly, and engaging in hobbies were seen as markers of success and positive change. Vanessa’s alternative strategies ‘were real and realistic’ (Csordas 1988) ways that she enacted changes that she felt had a significant impact

in her life. Csordas (1988, p. 134) referred to the negotiation of possibilities and the discovery of alternative strategies as being ‘pragmatic means’ for change. Although notions of ayahuasca integration may have sacred or spiritual meaning, it is also the realistic and everyday ways that participants actively engage in their own meaningful process of healing or enacting change that are revealed here to be equally important.

Csordas’ final theme, ‘actualisation of change’, referred to the ‘principal evidence for incremental change’; ‘what counts as change, as well as the degree to which that change is seen as significant by participants’ (Csordas 1988, p. 135). As the participant perspectives revealed, actualising change was seen as the responsibility of each individual, however, doing so was also acknowledged as difficult. Javier outlined this and suggested that moments of perceived ‘failure’ to enact change could instead be reconceptualised as an opportunity to act differently. On these terms, ‘what counts as change’ (Csordas 1988) could extend to one’s attitude towards oneself. For example, Javier emphasised that letting go of ‘self-judgements’ and acting differently could be viewed as an important way of integrating the teachings of the plants. Both Marta and Vanessa discussed returning home feeling changed, but equally, they emphasised how this was an ongoing process that required finding ‘new ways’ and ‘letting go’ of old ones. John on the other hand, identified the ‘principal evidence’ (Csordas 1988) of change through a synthesis of individual effort enacted ‘back in your life’ and the way that ayahuasca ‘filters up into our conscious mind’. For John, change began ‘internally’ which then transformed one’s ‘external reality’ depending on the work put in.

Applying Csordas’ three themes of ‘incremental change’ to the experiential data of the integration perspectives has proved a useful analytical model for considering the therapeutic efficacy of ayahuasca healing as a ‘open-ended process’. Csordas argued that while focusing on individual experience may not contribute towards any definitive ‘clinical’ view of a ‘cure’, incremental change, as applied to the analysis of ayahuasca integration here, suggests that in many cases at least, ‘there is no therapeutic outcome, only therapeutic process’ (Csordas 1988, p. 136). Given the views presented here that integration is the most important part, understandings of ayahuasca healing as a process that bridges the ritual sphere deserves much more attention moving forward.

Healing often entails existential and life-changing insights that are challenging to quantify in biomedical terms, and indeed such assessments may often miss the point. As noted in this

thesis, psychospiritual themes of healing extend across sacred or spiritual experiences, psychological reflection, emotional content, biographical material, and physical or somatic conditions and responses. As noted earlier, ayahuasca healing often extends beyond notions of curing specific ailments or conditions. As integration continues to be given due attention, gaining further insights into how participants think, act, and understand ‘doing the work’ as a process that cuts across ritual and everyday life, remain fruitful. Indeed, if integration *is* the most important part of ayahuasca healing as argued here, then it raises some important questions regarding individual agency and empowerment in such processes. The following section explores these features of ayahuasca integration through a discussion of neoliberalism which has impacted how individual responsibility in health seeking and healthcare practices are understood and experienced.

4.6 Considering individual responsibility in ayahuasca healing and integration

Neoliberalism defies a single definition (Hilgers 2011) and is often seen as a ‘contested’ and ‘elusive’ concept (Wacquant 2009). In broad terms, however, we can consider several views applicable to the discussion of individual responsibility and the notion of ‘doing the work’ throughout the ayahuasca integration process. Wacquant (2009, p. 306) has described neoliberalism as a ‘transnational political project aiming to remake the nexus of the market state, and citizenship from above’. Hilgers (2011, p. 352) has noted that anthropologists tend to share a distinctly ‘empirical vision’ of neoliberalism, outlining how it applies to radicalised capitalism, deregulation, restricted state intervention, opposition to collectivism, and individual responsibility. An important note on the latter theme, is that notions of ‘freedom’ and ‘self-realisation’ that are inherent in neoliberal ideology, ‘disregard any questions of the economic and social conditions that make such freedom possible’ (Hilgers 2011, p. 352). In consideration of these starting points, it is also worth noting that neoliberalism has many strands. The lens through which it is analysed, be it cultural, social, political, economic, or ideological, render diffuse definitions and understandings which may not be ‘mutually compatible’ (Flew 2014, p. 49). Conversely, there has also been a ‘tendency to reify neoliberalism’ (Gamble 2001) as an ‘all-purpose denunciatory category’ erring on the side of ‘paranoia’ and ‘conspiracy’ at the cost of considering possibilities of ‘diversity’ and ‘innovation’ (Flew 2014, p. 53).

To ‘narrow the focus’ (Flew 2014) on the connections between individual responsibility and neoliberalism, several points are worth mentioning. Foucault’s theory of governmentality has been widely applied for identifying insidious forms of ‘self-surveillance’, when biopower may be ‘internalised’ by individuals in destructive ways (Bourgois & Shonberg 2009, p. 1). Individual responsibility or ‘the self as enterprise’ has become a tenet of ‘the neoliberal art of governing’, leading ‘subjects to perform actions that reinforce their own subjection’; ‘the increasing instability of living conditions increase individuation, competition, and personal responsibility and force individuals to act and understand themselves as the entrepreneurs of their own destiny’ (Hilgers 2011, p. 358). The pervasiveness in which individuals come to embody this ideology has been similarly discussed by Wacquant (2009, p. 308) who described one of the ‘institutional logics’ of neoliberalism as:

The cultural trope of individual responsibility which invades all spheres of life to provide a “vocabulary of motive” – as C. Wright Mills would say – for the construction of the self (on the model of the entrepreneur).

As a subtext to the following, there must be some account of ‘power’ when defining responsibility of health and illness, particularly when notions of guilt and blame are assigned.

In recent decades, neoliberalism has become a pervasive force that has affected drastic changes in social policy. As well as influencing healthcare reforms through decentralisation and privatisation (McGregor 2001, p. 83), neoliberalism has been central in the ideological shift towards self-responsibility for health, raising ethical issues that have proven widely controversial (Minkler 1999). Yet, while the notion of self-responsibility has become a ‘concept of modern times’, it is not a new idea. To illustrate, Maier (2019) has outlined three basic analytical distinctions. Firstly, earlier ideas of self-responsibility were oriented around notions of ‘virtue’ as members of a ‘holy community’ (Maier 2019, p. 28). Secondly, the ‘modern concept of self-responsibility’ during the 19th and 20th centuries, arose out of democratic regimes, education, work requirements, and welfare, in other words, Western capitalism (Maier 2019, pp. 28-29). Maier (2019, p. 39) also described a more recent ‘hyperindividualistic version’. This is when forms of self-responsibility are cut off from ‘former linkages of solidarity’ (Maier 2019, p. 29). Maier (2019, p. 29) argued that this version has become dominant in discourse and practice. In defining the premise of neoliberalism, McGregor (2001, pp. 83-84) has gone so far as to suggest that humans will ultimately favour themselves over others, where the public good and community are replaced by individual responsibility, and people are left to ‘find their own solutions’. An individual’s agency in

effectually doing so, as discussed below, is also influenced by social and political factors that may hinder their health seeking behaviour and affect beneficial outcomes.

In assessing ways that responsibility is placed on the individual in the ‘health marketplace’, Donahue and McGuire (1995, p. 47) have asked ‘to what extent the burden of guilt or blame should be placed on the individual or social environment’ they find themselves in. They have suggested that ‘the political economy in which health systems operate strongly influences peoples’ perception of responsibility for their health but may not structurally empower them to satisfy their health needs’ (Donahue & McGuire 1995, p. 47). For example, Clavien and Hurst (2020, p. 175) have pointed out that individual responsibility for an ‘unhealthy lifestyle’ is a ‘matter of degree’ that varies across personal life histories and can be affected by factors beyond an individual’s grasp. As will be examined further in this chapter regarding integrating ayahuasca experiences once participants have returned home, it is worth considering how structural forces may potentially inhibit an individual’s sense of responsibility and affect one’s sense of empowerment and agency.

Despite the critiques of how neoliberal ideology has permeated healthcare, notions of self-responsibility are also considered to have an important role in informing individuals towards better health related choices. For example, Clavien and Hurst (2020, p. 190) have suggested that by moving away from the ‘moralising discourse’ of neoliberalism, there is potential for developing a ‘practical responsibility’ for choosing a healthier lifestyle which can be ‘empowering’ for individuals. In discussing ‘multiple’ determinants of health, Wikler (2002, p. 47) argued for a ‘peripheral role’ of personal responsibility in health policy. While acknowledging the ‘overemphasis (and punitive interpretation) of personal responsibility’, Wikler (2002, p. 54) maintained that critiques should not ‘undermine efforts to inform individuals about the health consequences of their choices and to provide opportunities to make healthier decisions if the individuals so desire’. Wikler (2002, p. 54) has also warned that in emphasising what people can do to stay healthy, there may be a risk of overexaggerating an individual’s power which could result in them blaming themselves if they fall ill.

Having said this, Wikler (2002, p. 54) suggested that there should be no ‘double message’ in health promotion and ‘neither self-blame nor the blame of others need figure in personal responsibility for health’. While acknowledging that such an approach is somewhat of a ‘minefield’ which requires ‘caution’ (Wikler 2002, p. 55), Wikler (2002, p. 54) argued that

personal responsibility for health can be ‘part of a program of “positive freedom” or “empowerment”’ through an understanding of how one’s actions can have a positive impact on health. It is argued here that a similar view is found within the integration perspectives of ayahuasca healing and integration presented in this chapter. Notions of individual responsibility were discussed by shamans and participants as an empowering way to continue to maximise the healing benefits of the ritual ayahuasca experiences. Often, they were presented in small and everyday terms that were considered meaningful and manageable for individuals.

Assessing notions of empowerment in alternative health practices has been given attention in recent decades. Stuart McClean’s (2005) qualitative research at a ‘spiritual’ and ‘energy healing centre’ in the north of England has critically assessed ways that healers focus on individual responsibility. McClean (2005, p. 628) argued that complimentary alternative medicine (CAM) has been perceived as both a ‘cause and response’ to the ideology of ‘individual responsibility in health’. In his research, McClean (2005, p. 628) observed that healers’ notions of individual responsibility were not so much about overt ‘victim-blaming’ in the parlance of neoliberal ideology but rather illustrative of the wider contemporary ‘movement towards the subjectification and personalisation of public life’ which he identified as a feature of postmodernity. Identifying the connections between individual behaviour and notions of health in CAM, McClean (2005, p. 629) suggested that that ‘esoteric’ and ‘New Age therapies’ have very different approaches to health, illness, and the body that need to be considered. Furthermore, the focus on the individual in these contexts was argued to exemplify a response to the ‘depersonalisation’ of biomedical practices (McClean 2005, p. 630). He argued that personalisation in spiritual healing illustrates how illness and disease are linked to ‘individual biography’ in meaningful ways to make sense of it, an approach which is fundamentally different to ‘scientific knowledge’ (McClean 2005, p. 637). In other words, spiritual healing is considered to employ an individualistic approach through the personalised and subjectified involvement of the patient. Similar practices were identified during Javier’s medicine retreat. Javier’s psychospiritual approach placed an emphasis on ‘individual biography’ (McClean 2005) that was central to setting intentions for the ceremonies, and for the process of making sense of those experiences and for moving forward and integrating them once participants returned home.

The identification of victim-blaming is one way in which to consider how individual responsibility has a different meaning across biomedicine and spiritual healing contexts. McClean (2005, p. 630) argued that CAM practices at the healing centre contrasted the victim-blaming and depersonalisation that has been observed in biomedical practices, however, he also acknowledged ways that ‘blame’ was still part of the ‘healing ideology’ to some extent. A significant distinction, however, is to ask in what ways trends that are oriented around ‘blame’ have ‘empowering or dis-empowering consequences?’ (McClean 2005, p. 633). Arguing that the healing centre and more broadly ‘fringe and spiritual-based’ CAM’s can be viewed as ‘de-politicised’ spheres, McClean (2005, p. 634) suggested that these ‘highly individualistic’ contexts can be seen as a strength of CAM towards increasing a patient’s ‘agency and choice’. While the potential for victim-blaming exists, individual responsibility is more purposefully directed to ‘promote creativity and empowerment’ providing a greater sense of agency (McClean 2005, p. 644). Whether or not notions of blame are empowering or disempowering for individuals could equally be applied to analyses of ayahuasca retreats and means of integration support. This is useful for assessing positive or negative outcomes for participants, but equally, for identifying variations in discursive framing offered by shamans, integration facilitators, and therapists that may tend towards victim-blaming or disempowering views about individual responsibility for healing.

While arguably facilitating agency, choice, and empowerment, the notion of a ‘de-politicised’ healing context as mentioned by McClean (2005) is arguably unattainable and problematic given the way individuals may embody neoliberal ideologies to varying extents. This is further complicated by the fact that spiritual healing does not occur in a vacuum but rather exists as one option for individuals who actively engage in ‘medical pluralism’ practices. Thus, while individual responsibility in spiritual healing may be directed at empowerment and agency and seen as a stark departure from neoliberal approaches in biomedicine, there are several issues worth considering. McClean (2005, p. 635), for example, pointed out that while spiritual healing is viewed as oppositional to the biomedical objectification of ‘disease’ and the emphasis on the ‘material body’ there is some ‘interplay’, as both may inadvertently ‘discount social determinants’, which in either case may lead to ‘victim-blaming’ (McClean 2005, p. 644).

In discussing ‘discourses in self-healing’ of CAM, Broom (2009, p. 71) has similarly pointed out that patients’ therapeutic trajectories are ‘complex and contradictory’. While on one hand

increasing a sense of control, power and autonomy, Broom's (2009, p. 71) research revealed problematic notions of self-healing and hyper-positivity involving the imposition of restrictive self-discipline on patients. Given a common lack of integration into Western healthcare, CAM discourses of self-healing, self-actualisation, and self-responsibility were argued by Broom (2009, p. 83) as effective to a point, however, found there are often difficulties in actualising these models; 'engendering a restrictive and illusory presentation of the self'. Broom (2009, p. 84) argued that while governmentality is largely associated as an 'apparatus of the state' there is evidence that similar processes can occur within CAM therapies. Importantly, the author pointed out that it is not necessarily that such forms of 'governance' are '*prima facie* bad', but that assumptions of agency and individuation should be checked regarding 'disciplinary devices' and 'methods of imposing self-governance' (Broom 2009, p. 84). What was suggested by Broom (2009, p. 84) and indeed applicable to discourses on ayahuasca healing and integration as will be discussed below, is that there remains a need for critical thinking that develops from insights based on individual experiences towards a more accurate assessment of what is occurring.

Examining individual responsibility across biomedical and alternative/spiritual contexts has been useful for several reasons. On one hand, biomedical healthcare is often identified with depersonalisation and victim-blaming, as well as with forms of governmentality that reflect wider neoliberal trends in society at large. Alternatively, spiritual, CAM, and New Age healing practices have been argued through the literature presented here as often fostering empowerment, agency, and creativity, being focused on personalised and subjective approaches to health and well-being. Similarly, the integration perspectives presented in this chapter have revealed multiple ways that both shamans and participants engage in strategies towards enacting change on everyday terms. 'Doing the work' is thereby understood as an ongoing agentive process of self-healing, which as the individual perspectives have shown, is understood by participants as one of the main teachings of ayahuasca.

Integration perspectives of both shamans and participants similarly correspond with observations of McClean (2005) that as a form of spiritual healing, discourses tend to focus on personalisation, empowerment, and offer support networks for mitigating harm and maximising ongoing benefits. Ayahuasca integration strategies were often discussed on everyday terms; making the most of opportunities, being gentle with oneself in times of perceived failure as Javier said, or as Luz Maria discussed, through daily acts of ritualising.

Both Rob and John explained how healing was the responsibility of the individual once they had returned to everyday life, however, they also believed that ayahuasca supported the healing process and presented opportunities ‘in real time’ as Rob said. Participants like Marta and Vanessa exemplified how small and everyday markers of change felt empowering and were seen as efficacious and meaningful on individualistic terms.

Having said this, given the pervasive ‘cultural trope of individual responsibility’ (Wacquant 2009) identified with neoliberalism, several issues require consideration. Creating a binary opposition between spiritual healing as empowering at one end, and biomedicine as victim-blaming and disempowering on the other, tends towards reductionism. As mentioned earlier, shamans and those offering integration support may possess stark ideological differences, with some individuals, for example, employing a depersonalised approach, resulting in victim-blaming to varying extents. On these terms, generalising about ayahuasca healing as empowering can be problematic and would be best assessed within context of specific research, towards critically assessing notions of empowerment, for example. Another salient consideration is that once participants return home there may be a myriad of influences and structural forces that affected how they frame/reframe their understandings of individual responsibility potentially through a neoliberal lens or health system as they negotiate their personal health ongoing. The degree to which participants embody neoliberal notions of self-surveillance or victim-blaming ideology may indeed vary depending on each individual, as well as the socio-economic and cultural contexts they not only herald from but are likely returning it. In other words, one’s agency to enact certain desires for change may be inhibited by social constraints and economic disadvantages.

The way shamans help frame participants’ experiences, as well as the array of formal/informal integration support will clearly influence how they navigate moving forward. In this sense, while the emphasis on individualism is oriented towards personal self-empowerment, as pointed out earlier by Broom (2009), ignoring wider social determinants of health could be a potential risk impacting efficacious integration, possibly leading to victim-blaming and disempowering self-governance.

As ayahuasca is increasingly engaged with by people from many parts of the world, the considerations outlined above are a salient reminder that spiritual healing does not occur in a ritual vacuum. This is particularly important given the emphasis that is placed on the integration

process as the most important part. There are complexities involved in ritual healing practices, and more broadly in ways that individual responsibility may be either empowering or disempowering. On these terms, acknowledging the slipperiness and potential hazards in framing notions of individual responsibility are important when considering, as Broom (2009) pointed out above, potential difficulties in actualising change. As exemplified in McClean's (2005) research above, analyses of ayahuasca integration strategies that emphasise empowerment would benefit from assessing neoliberal tendencies towards victim-blaming, particularly as individuals will return home to profoundly neoliberal social spheres that in many ways do not support the same ideology that ayahuasca healing and integration broadly aims to encompass and encourage.

4.7 Conclusion

This chapter has examined the concept of ayahuasca integration, commonly discussed by participants here as the most important aspect of ayahuasca healing. Through an examination of the adage 'doing the work', as used by shamans and participants alike, integration is seen to require individual effort and responsibility towards enacting change and maximising the healing benefits of ayahuasca. On these terms, healing and personal transformation are understood as an empowering 'open-ended' process that continues in everyday life.

Javier and Luz Maria presented participants with several strategies for integrating. Javier employed some of the familiar themes from the medicine retreat. For example, pointing out how 'letting go' in life was often more difficult than letting go during a ceremony, Javier recommended that participants exercise 'patience and humility', suggesting that moments of perceived failure could instead be reinterpreted as 'opportunities' to act differently. Luz Maria offered the concept of 'little rituals' as everyday acts or ways to direct one's intentions with more self-awareness. She described little rituals as concrete and tangible ways of nourishing the ceremonial experiences and for creating change.

Both shamans and participants alike placed emphasis on the notion of enacting change as a key marker of success. Applying Csordas' three themes as a model for analysing incremental change was useful for identifying how existential, spiritual, and everyday notions of change were seen by participants as meaningful in multiple ways. Additionally, this analysis was

important for correlating the findings in this chapter with wider research on ritual healing, argued in terms of assessing ‘therapeutic process’ rather than ‘outcome’.

The final discussion on neoliberalism in healthcare and health seeking has provided a wider context from which to consider the findings in this chapter. Some initial distinctions of individual responsibility across biomedicine and spiritual healing were outlined for analytical purposes. As revealed through the literature, biomedicine has been noted for depersonalisation, victim-blaming, and disempowerment due to the impact of neoliberal ideology and forms of governmentality in health services and health seeking practices. Conversely, CAM, alternative, and spiritual healing modalities were shown to be oriented around personalisation, individual biographies, and empowerment. Participants’ perspectives on ayahuasca integration in this chapter have similarly revealed that individual responsibility for enacting change and continuing the ongoing healing process were often understood to be empowering. ‘Doing the work’ broadly correlated with the view that ayahuasca taught people how to heal themselves. Although the onus of responsibility was on the individual, participants also felt that they were supported by the plant spirits back in everyday life. Additionally, as mentioned at the beginning of this chapter and illustrated in the personalised approach offered by shamans like Javier, formal and informal means of integration support were designed to attend to an individual’s needs during the often-difficult time following a ceremony or retreat. On these terms, findings here suggest that as a central tenet of ayahuasca healing and integration, discourses on individual responsibility differ from biomedical notions, due to the emphasis on empowerment and personalisation. Arguably, these perceived differences are in part what attracts foreigners to ‘alternative’ or ‘spiritual’ healing modalities.

Having said this, some warnings about the potential pitfalls of oversimplifying spiritual healing have been included here. This pertains to the insidious capacity of neoliberal ideology that may result in victim-blaming and disempowerment, depending on the perspectives of the individuals involved, either shamans, integration therapists, or participants themselves. It was also pointed out that individuals would likely be engaging in medical pluralism health seeking practices that cut across spiritual and biomedical spheres once they returned home. On these terms, considering social determinants of health and individual constraints prove important when assessing the scope and purpose of ayahuasca integration, particularly regarding notions of empowerment and agency. While it has been shown that there are some significant differences between biomedical perspectives on individual responsibility and those identified

in this chapter, ayahuasca healing does not occur in a vacuum impervious to the ‘cultural trope of individual responsibility’ or indeed wider socio-economic forces, particularly given that integration, and thus healing as a process, continues when participants return to social life.

Chapter 5: Narratives of Authenticity in the “New Rishikesh”

5.1 Introduction

In the last few decades, Pisac has become a place of pilgrimage for spiritual seekers interested in multiple forms of tourism that are tied to Inca heritage, Andean mysticism, and ayahuasca neoshamanism. The Lonely Planet (2020) travel guide recently labelled Pisac ‘the international airport for the cosmic traveller’, attractive to New Agers in ‘search for an Andean Shangri-La’.⁹⁰ Javier expressed a similar view in a conversation shortly following the first medicine retreat I attended, when he referred to Pisac as the ‘new Rishikesh’.⁹¹ Drawing a parallel with India, Javier explained how Pisac had similarly come to attract many Westerners seeking spiritual healing. Although Pisac embodied cultural and geographic Otherness for many spiritual tourists, what has transpired there has been largely influenced by foreign and non-local Peruvians (often *Limeños*) who have become practitioners within the various forms of spiritual tourism.

What has unfolded in Pisac exemplifies a wider diaspora of New Age discourses and concomitant spiritual tourism. This includes an ongoing appropriation and ‘reinvention’ of cultural imagery and traditional healing practices, including in this case, ayahuasca shamanism and Andean mysticism. Such practices are often conducted in ritually stylised and romanticised terms, as reflected in New Age discourses and spiritual perspectives that lie at the root of diasporic practices. Considering this context, this chapter examines the personal narratives of Diane Dunn and Diego Palma, demonstrating how they came to be involved in their respective fields of mystical tourism and ayahuasca tourism in Pisac. Their narrative appeals to authenticity are reflective of personal meaning-making and sincerity regarding what they do and why they do it. Yet, these appeals can also be seen as ways that they legitimate their emplacement as healers/entrepreneurs within their fields of spiritual tourism.

⁹⁰ Shangri-La, discussed as a mythical Himalayan utopia by James Hilton in *Lost Horizon* (1933). An imagined, remote, and idyllic place in the mountains of Tibet that has come to symbolise an earthy wonderland, a ‘garden of Eden’. A place of eternally young inhabitants surrounded by magnificent landscapes shrouded in mysticism (Llamas & Belk 2011, p. 257).

⁹¹ Rishikesh is in northern India, located along the Ganges River. Since the 1960s it has attracted Westerners seeking yoga workshops, meditation retreats, gurus, and spiritual enlightenment. The Beatles famously stayed in Rishikesh for several months as guests of the Maharishi Mahesh Yogi during the 1960s, learning transcendental meditation.

The personal narratives of Diane and Diego are presented through ethnographic description based on in-depth fieldwork interviews conducted in Pisac. Primarily applying the work of Wang (1999), these are followed by interpretive analyses that identifies their narrative appeals to multiple instantiations of authenticity, including objectivist, constructivist, and existential types, considered here as engaging with a ‘spectrum of authenticity’. Although they both make multiple appeals to authenticity, it is argued that Diane’s narrative is primarily focused on objectivist notions of the authentic Other, while Diego relies more on existential appeals, identified in relation to the authentic self.

As spiritual tourism practitioners, Diane and Diego diversely situate themselves within the entrepreneurial ecosystem that has come to shape New Age and spiritual tourism practices in Pisac. Engaging with the critical work of Michael Hill (2005) and Macarena Gómez-Barris (2012), Diane is seen to represent an example of cultural appropriation and romanticisation of Indigenous practices and imagery. Through their own research in attending Diane’s workshops, these scholars have critiqued such events in terms of their hybridised quality, lack of narrative explanation, cultural appropriation, asymmetrical exchange, and mystical objectification. By contrast, Diego focuses on existential and personal transformation through the pursuit of ‘truth’. Rather than appealing to the objectified authentic Other, Diego’s eclectic approach as a self-confessed ‘spiritual shopper’ and his propensity towards individualism are considered here within the context of the ‘expansion’ and ‘reinvention’ of ayahuasca neoshamanism. These ‘new traditions’ have been noted for processes of ‘detraditionalisation’ and ‘retraditionalisation’ brought about through the creative and ‘self-validating’ subjective certitude of ayahuasca diaspora practitioners (Dawson 2017). As a form of business, ‘ayahuasca entrepreneurship’ has been critiqued for its separation from local economies and unequal neocolonial relations (Peluso 2017).

On these terms, their evident sincerity does not disentangle Diane and Diego from broader concerns about power and representation that arguably reinscribe historical contestations of heritage and Indigenous identity through cultural appropriation and the reinvention of tradition. While the narratives of Diane and Diego are unique regarding their specific roles, practices, and personal stories, they are equally representative of the beliefs, desires, and experiences of the broader sphere of spiritual seekers and non-Indigenous practitioners who reside in Pisac, and indeed more broadly. These narratives offer insight into the often contradictory and complex ways that foreigners like Diane and non-locals such as Diego, legitimate their

emplacement in diverse yet often sincere ways, yet do so within the problematic entrepreneurial ecosystem of cultural appropriation, and the reinvention of Indigenous healing practices as they have expanded outside of their more traditional contexts.

5.2 Spectrum of authenticity

Although ‘contested’ and often criticised for lacking ‘clarity’, the concept of authenticity retains considerable value in tourism studies (Kelner 2001; Taylor 2001; Moore et al. 2021). Drawing strategically from the literature, the ‘spectrum of authenticity’, as it is described here, primarily builds on Wang’s (1999) typology of authenticity, as briefly mentioned above. By including several counterarguments and more recent perspectives on authenticity to those presented by Wang, a conceptual framework is developed for identifying and analysing multiple and coexisting ‘types’ of authenticity in the personal narratives presented in this chapter.

Conceptualising authenticity in tourism has undergone significant changes since the early contributions of Boorstin (1987) and MacCannell (1973; 1999). Cohen explored multiple types of tourism (1979a) and the phenomenology of tourist experiences (1979b). He assessed *a priori* assumptions about (in)authenticity and argued, for example, that commoditisation does not necessarily destroy meaning but may create new meanings in different contexts (Cohen 1988). Rather than explaining authenticity in terms of the purely objectivist quality of tourist sites and/or performances, Cohen (1988, p. 371) posited that it is ‘negotiable’ and ‘emergent’.

Cohen (1988) has discussed how all expressions of culture are potentially ‘staged’ or invented to the extent that they are continually created and recreated through processes of practice and performance.⁹² Similarly, Bruner’s (1994, p. 397) postmodern approach argued for transcending dichotomies of ‘original/copy and authentic/inauthentic’ to understand culture in terms of continual invention and reinvention (Bruner ed. 1984). Handler and Saxton (1988, pp. 242-243) have discussed ‘the privileged reality of individual experience’ as being in touch with the ‘real world and with their real selves’. Others such as Selwyn (1996) have focused on

⁹² Regarding the so-called ‘inauthentic’ tourist stage and similarities to broader cultural remaking, see also: Urry (2002, p. 9); Rojek and Urry (eds. 1997).

‘tourist myths’, exploring constructivist ways that tourism relies on fantasies about people and places.

Wang (1999) developed a typology of authenticity in tourism that has proven influential, particularly given his emphasis on personal experience and feelings. Wang outlined fundamental differences between ‘objectivist’, ‘constructivist’ (or ‘symbolic’), and ‘existential’ forms of authenticity. For Wang (1999, p. 351), the objectivist type is oriented around a ‘museum-linked’ view of the authenticity of ‘originals’. This is determined by a tourist’s recognition of this fact, meaning that there is an ‘absolute and objective criterion used to measure authenticity’ (Wang 1999, p. 351). Next, according to Wang (1999, p. 352), constructivist authenticity broadly falls within the ‘object-related’ category but refers to the subjective and symbolic result of social construction, rather than being purely objective. From this perspective, Wang (1999, p. 351) argued that ‘things appear authentic not because they are inherently authentic, but because they are constructed as such, in terms of points of view, beliefs, perspectives, or powers’. Lastly, existential authenticity emphasises the primacy of personal and intersubjective feelings and experiences that are activated through the ‘liminal process’ of tourist activities. Wang (1999, pp. 351-352) explained that during these liminal experiences people feel freer and more authentically themselves than in everyday life; ‘not because they find the toured objects are authentic but simply because they are engaging in non-ordinary activities, free from the constraints of the daily’. The examination of Javier’s medicine retreat in chapter three, described it as a liminal event rendered meaningful through the individual and collective aspects of the ritual experience. Given the ‘non-ordinary’ (Wang 1999) activities of dieting a master plant and attending ayahuasca ceremonies, the retreat was arguably most meaningful in terms of existential authenticity. Yet, as argued below, these different types of authenticity can be identified as mutually inclusive within a given context.

Wang (1999, p. 359) identified existential authenticity when the ‘spectacle’ of the ‘toured object’ is turned into a ‘tourist activity’. Whether or not such an event is contrived or ‘inauthentic’ in MacCannell’s terms, it may nevertheless generate a sense of existential authenticity due to its ‘creative and cathartic nature’ (Wang 1999, p. 359). Following Berger (1973), Wang (1999, p. 360) described existential authenticity as a way of responding to the ambivalence of modernity and the ‘disintegration of sincerity’. In this sense, the toured object is converted into ‘an aid’ in the search for the ideal ‘authentic self’ which is seen as a resistance to the ‘dominant rational order of mainstream institutions in modernity’ (Wang 1999, p. 361).

Wang (1999, pp. 361-363) identified two dimensions of existential authenticity: ‘intra-personal’, as relating to ‘the body’ and ‘self-making/self-identity’, and inter-personal’, denoting a perceived ‘authenticity of the Other’ and regarding tourist interrelationality, themes that will be returned to in the analysis sections later in this chapter. These two aspects of existential authenticity can be similarly identified in the medicine retreat. Personal intentions were oriented around ‘intra-personal’ ‘self-making’ (Wang 1999) in terms of healing, transforming the self, and a willingness to change. Ritual *communitas* was identified as the ‘inter-personal’ (Wang 1999) locus of a unique social bond that was equally viewed as important. Javier, on the other hand, was argued to employ strategies for facilitating trust and creating a conducive environment for participants to have an authentic (existential) experience, as it could be considered here. As will be explored below, Diane and Diego are also strategic in how they present themselves and appeal to spiritual tourists.

Wang’s definition of existential authenticity has proven influential in subsequent scholarship, however, his typology has also come under some scrutiny. For example, Reisinger and Steiner (2006, p. 80) have identified a lack of consensual agreement regarding object authenticity, arguing that perhaps it no longer has a place in tourism research. Employing a post-humanist approach, they suggested that people are ‘merely partners with what *is* rather than masters of all they survey’ and therefore distinctions between authentic and inauthentic objects are irrelevant.⁹³ Furthermore, they regarded the need to rationally fix ‘things’ into definitional and conceptual frameworks as an act of ‘ontological violence’, suggesting instead, that attention would be best directed at tourists’ experiences, rather than the ‘systematic study of the genuineness of those experiences’ (Reisinger & Steiner 2006, p. 81). Their argument makes a compelling case for the primacy of existential authenticity. Yet, as demonstrated in the accounts presented in this chapter, and as Belhassen and Caton (2006, p. 853) have rightly pointed out, object authenticity is in fact ‘alive and well’ in the minds of tourists and hosts alike, and as such it continues to be relevant.

This brings us to the application of multiple types of authenticity. Wang (1999, p. 352) has argued that existential authenticity ‘can have nothing to do with the authenticity of toured objects’. More recently, however, it has been suggested that the ‘subjectivist shift’ that it

⁹³ Reisinger and Steiner (2006, p. 78) applied a post-humanist approach in terms of Heideggerian phenomenology regarding an appreciation of what appears; ‘if Heidegger used a term like authenticity to apply to things, whatever appeared would be authentic’.

represents requires some rethinking regarding ‘ideological and spatial dimensions’ (Belhassen, Caton & Stewart 2008, p. 668). Despite the benefits of focusing on lived experiences, Belhassen, Caton and Stewart (2008, p. 668) argued that a subjectivist lens can be problematic as it obscures the ‘influence of real physical places, with shared, collectively authored meanings’. They regard Wang’s dichotomy between object and subject problematic, as it conceals the dialogue between ‘toured sites/objects and social discourses’, and ‘experiences of existential authenticity’ (Belhassen, Caton & Stewart 2008, p. 674). In discussing pilgrimage for example, they pointed out how a pilgrim’s sense of existential authenticity is dependent upon settings as well as on broader ‘theocultural ideologies’ which contribute to the construction of meaning and value they perceive (Belhassen, Caton & Stewart 2008, p. 674). To address these issues, they suggested the term *theoplacity* to encompass the generative nexus between ‘belief, place, action and self’, considering it to be an ‘integrative tool’ towards understanding the dialogical ways that authenticity is produced and experienced in pilgrimage settings (Belhassen, Caton & Stewart 2008, p. 685).

A dialogical view of authenticity is useful for understanding how the individual spiritual quest of ayahuasca pilgrims, intersects with unique contested aspects of their presence in Sacred Valley; as relating to heritage, tradition, and concomitant notions of identity and culture. As a ‘pilgrimage setting’ (Belhassen, Caton & Stewart 2008), Pisac encompasses divergent notions of authenticity and meaning, particularly evident across ethnic and class lines, as examined in chapter two regarding historical contestations of place. In Pisac, foreigners tend to construct meaning on their own individualistic terms. This is usually derived from their personal experiences within the place itself, and often within the context of the various forms of spiritual tourism. As the final chapter will examine, however, these constructions of meaning and existentially authentic experiences often exist in stark contrast to the daily realities of local people, resulting in certain tensions that foreigners are critically reflective about.

With such considerations in mind, and aiming to bridge the subjectivist and objectivist divide, Knudsen and Waade (2010, p. 1) have described ‘performative authenticity’ as a ‘transitional and transformative process’ existing between the phenomenological and social constructivist positions. The notion of performative authenticity has been discussed by Rickly-Boyd (2013) who has identified the connection between existential authenticity and place. Citing Zhu (2012), Rickly-Boyd (2013, p. 681) argued that authenticity is embodied through an ‘interaction between individual agency and the external world’, where meaning is made in the

process of ‘doing tourism’. In this sense ‘lived experience’ is central to ‘performative perspectives of both place and authenticity’ (Rickly-Boyd 2013, p. 681).

The analysis of personal narratives in this chapter will build on a spectrum of authenticity that derives from the concepts and arguments presented above. The diverse yet dynamically interrelated types of authenticity that are harnessed in Diane and Diego’s narratives below, are illustrative of ways that individuals appeal to multiple and intersecting instantiations of authenticity in unique and personal ways. Having said this, it will also be shown that while these appeals are distinct to Diane and Diego as individuals, and as relating to their respective entrepreneurial roles, they also exemplify beliefs, desires, experiences, and perceptions of place that are common to many other participants discussed in this thesis. On these terms, Diane and Diego’s narratives of authenticity are emblematic of the ayahuasca pilgrim’s journey. For analytical clarity, the following analyses will predominantly draw from Wang’s distinction between the objectivist, constructivist (symbolic), and existential instantiations of authenticity. In contrast to Wang’s analysis, however, and keeping in mind the latter critiques and conceptual developments above, it is argued here that the objectivist/subjectivist binary is best understood on dialogical terms, revealed as an important narrative component in ‘performing authenticity’ and legitimating emplacement identifiable within Diane and Diego’s respective narratives.

5.3 Authenticity in personal narrative

This section presents the personal narratives of Diane Dunn and Diego Palma, who have been important and influential figures in the emergence of mystical tourism and ayahuasca tourism in Pisac. Firstly, each narrative is presented through ethnographic description based on in-depth fieldwork interviews conducted in Pisac. These are followed by interpretive analyses that identify their narrative appeals to the multiple instantiations of authenticity elucidated above. Their unique personal histories are illustrative of wider trends in spiritual tourism regarding the search for the authentic self that is discovered through the various ‘adventures’ that their individual journey entails. Their narrative appeals to authenticity are reflective of personal meaning-making and exemplify a strong sense of sincerity regarding what they do and why they do it. At the same time, these narrative appeals are insightful for understanding how they

legitimate their emplacement as healers/entrepreneurs within their often-contested fields of spiritual tourism.

5.3.1 Diane Dunn and mystical tourism in Pisac

Originally from Cincinnati, USA, Diane lived in New York for many years. Initially she had sought out a career as an actress and theatrical producer. After a change in direction, however, she went on to graduate from a theological seminary. Diane relocated to Johannesburg, South Africa, where she worked for seven years as an outreach minister helping homeless and unemployed people at a community program. In 1998, while still living in Johannesburg, she attended a talk by Alberto Villoldo, an anthropologist and psychologist who has become well-known in New Age and neoshamanic movements for his teachings, writings, and workshops that commonly focus on shamanic traditions of Peru. As Diane explained during an interview that we conducted at her home in Pisac, when Villoldo talked about the shamans who ‘worked with energy’ she began to have an ‘incredible feeling’.

By the intermission, Diane had already decided; ‘I’ve got to go there. I’ve got to meet these people!’. After speaking with Villoldo, she found out he was organising an event in the Sacred Valley later in the year, ‘a gathering of healers and shamans’ from different traditions, as she explained. As the date of this event corresponded with a trip she was already planning to take back to the USA, Diane decided she would attend. She believed that the ‘timing of it all came together in an exceptional way’. Prior to the event in the Sacred Valley, Diane also booked a three-day ‘jungle’ tour in nearby Puerto Maldonado.

Once in Cusco, Diane met with her tour group, and to her surprise, she discovered there was an ayahuasca ceremony included in the itinerary. As Diane explained, around that time she had been reading about ayahuasca in one of Villoldo’s books, and recalled thinking to herself, ‘wow, I could never ever do that!’. Although initially taken aback by the prospect, she decided ‘it must be for a reason’ and determined to attend the ceremony. Part of her ‘intention’ for the ceremony was to look at where she was going next in her life, as she felt her time in Johannesburg was coming to an end and it was ‘time to do something else’. During the ayahuasca ceremony, Diane said she received a ‘message’ that if she wanted to, she would meet someone at the gathering she was about to attend. If she said, ‘yes’ and wanted to meet

this person, everything in her life would change. The message further stated; ‘you don’t have to find him, he’ll find you’. By the last day of the conference Diane had still not met anyone. This changed when she attended an ‘Andean meditation’ session held by someone she described as an ‘ordinary looking Peruvian guy’ from Arequipa, who was an ‘amazing master, healer, and seer person’, as she said. His name was Regis. Diane explained that upon meeting each other they quickly developed a ‘very strong connection’. Regis would go on to become Diane’s ‘first teacher’.

The following year Diane invited Regis and another ‘master’ that she met at the conference to teach a workshop in Johannesburg. During this event, Diane received her first ‘level of initiation’ within the Andean tradition. The night before leaving, Regis shared with Diane a ‘vision’ he had had of a ‘spiritual centre’ in the Sacred Valley where ‘people from all over the world and of all different religions and faiths would gather together’. Diane explained that although it was unclear at the time, she somehow felt ‘part of this vision’. Diane believed that what has transpired in Pisac in the ensuing years, has reflected Regis’ vision. She saw both herself and Diego as contributing to its ‘manifestation’.

Diane moved to Peru in the early 2000s, initially living in Cusco for two years before moving to Pisac. She described visiting Pisac several times and always ‘loved the energy there’. One night before visiting Pisac for the weekend, she had a dream where an ‘Inca guide’ was leading her up a mountain. As they ascended, the guide stopped. He then gave her ‘something’ and said to her, ‘now you have the keys to the portal’. The following day Diane took a taxi to the top of ‘the ruins’ in Pisac. Later, as she was walking down the mountain, she came across a ‘heart shaped stone’ like one she had found in Ollantaytambo a few years earlier but had since lost. Upon finding the stone, she was reminded of her dream the night before, at which point she realised that she was on the ‘exact same mountain’ she had dreamt of. This experience proved pivotal, as it led her to believe that Pisac was ‘the place’ she should be, and so she started looking around for land to purchase. Shortly afterwards, she bought a small plot of farmland, which she would later add to. At that point, however, her only intention was to build a house.

Diane said she was the second foreigner living in Pisac, and the first living just out of town where Paz y Luz is now located. She explained how ‘the locals’ thought it was ‘terribly strange’ that she was building such a big house, being a single woman with no family. Some would ask her if she was ‘the one building the big hotel by the river’ and she would have to explain that

it was her house. In a turn of events that she describes below, what started as her home did in fact become a hotel and eventually Paz y Luz:

I only ended up building a hotel because I ran out of money and I had some spare rooms. So, I started to rent them and the woman from the Lonely Planet guidebook showed up, because in those days that was the only, you know... there wasn't websites and things like that. I was doing workshops with my teachers and we needed a place, so I had bought this second lot [of land], you know this one [points], but I had used up all my money building the house, so I was thinking of asking my parents to borrow some money to build these extra rooms first and that's when the Lonely Planet woman showed up. And the only way to get in the guidebook was for a writer to come and see your place. They hadn't updated Peru in six years, and it was right at that moment that she came. She loved my house, and there was only my house here then. She said I'm so lucky I found you and I'm definitely going to put you in the book. So, then I started building the rooms, and she wrote that it was a spiritual place run by a North American who does mystical tourism, because that was what I was trying to do in those days, but it wasn't happening. So that's who started coming here. And then we started doing workshops here.

Her inclusion into Lonely Planet arguably facilitated a burst of spiritual tourism in Pisac, as both her home and her work within mystical tourism became a focal point for foreigners. This influx of people saw an increase in interest in the workshops she was holding, yet Diane also pointed out that the growth in spiritual tourism in Pisac was not limited to Andean mysticism.

As mentioned earlier, Diane considered Diego to be an important figure in what had transpired in Pisac. She said that he became one of her first neighbours, and between them, more foreigners began arriving:

The ones that came for me were more interested in the Andean spiritual traditions and getting initiated into that, and Diego was doing exclusively ayahuasca. And people would come, and then they would come back, and then they would come back again.

Diane noted that numerous people who stayed with her at Paz y Luz would eventually move to Pisac, including Javier who visited several times.

The development of Paz y Luz as a 'centre', however, took a few more years. In 2005, Diane built a 'conference room' where they held their first 'spiritual gathering', an event which she felt aligned with Regis' vision mentioned earlier, as it brought together people from 'all over

the world'. The following year Paz y Luz healing centre officially opened, which corresponded with the publication of Diane's first book, *Cusco: The Gateway to Inner Wisdom* (2006), which she said attracted more people. Around that time, she began teaching on her own, including the nine rites of the *Munay-ki* that she explained had been recently developed by Alberto Villoldo. Paz y Luz hosted a wide range of spiritual events, exemplifying the New Age spiritual eclecticism that greatly characterises spiritual tourism in Pisac. Often these events were organised by Paz y Luz, while on the other hand, healers or practitioners could utilise spaces like the conference room for their own events.⁹⁴

5.3.2 Interpretation and Analysis

Wang (1999, p. 350) pointed out that the concept of authenticity retains its relevance in areas of ethnic, historical, or cultural tourism, 'which involve representations of the Other or the past'. Situated within the sphere of mystical tourism, Diane's personal narrative is a salient example of this point. Diane makes multiple appeals to constructivist, objectivist, and existential authenticity, in doing so, produces a compelling and sincere account of her journey towards becoming a practitioner within mystical tourism in Pisac. Five main themes in Diane's narrative are analysed below: Regis' vision; the Inca dream; Villoldo's talk; the ayahuasca ceremony; and meeting Regis. Findings here reveal that while Diane makes multiple and intersecting appeals different types of authenticity, it is the objectivist type that is most central in her narrative. More specifically, objectivist appeals to notions of the 'authentic Other' prove to be a compelling feature within her narrative arc and are central in how Diane legitimates her emplacement as an entrepreneur and teacher of Andean spiritual traditions.

Diane's interpretation of Regis' vision is primarily an appeal to constructivist authenticity. Yet as Wang has pointed out, her appeal to this type is nevertheless oriented around the authentic (objectivist) figure of Regis in several ways. Wang (1999, p. 352) identified constructivist authenticity when tourists project 'imagery, expectations, preferences, beliefs, powers' onto a toured object. Diane described Regis as an 'amazing master, healer and seer', interpreted here as representing authentic Otherness, akin to the shamans and healers that she had initially felt

⁹⁴ As an example, an event at Paz y Luz in 2017 was described as: a 21 day 'experiential retreat'. On their website at the time it listed the following as inclusive: Four elements workshop; Andean energy healing; transformative breathwork; family constellations; non-violent communication; soul retrieval; reconnective healing; spa and body work; yoga; dance; sound healing; art therapy; hiking; meditation and journaling (Paz y Luz 2017).

compelled to ‘go and meet’ during Villoldo’s talk. Here, Diane’s narrative revolves around a sequence of meaningful moments centred on the figure of Regis: Firstly, the (existentially authentic) ayahuasca ceremony/‘message’ prophesied meeting someone; secondly, the actualisation of then meeting Regis, the embodiment of the authentic Other (in objectivist terms); and lastly, hearing about Regis’ vision and believing (in constructivist terms) that she was somehow part of it.

The second example of Diane’s appeals to constructivist authenticity is her dream of the ‘Inca guide’. We can consider the dream itself to represent an (existentially) authentic experience for Diane, yet it is her interpretation of it that renders it meaningful in her life. In objectivist terms, the Inca guide is a symbol of the culturally authentic Other and an embodiment of Inca heritage in Pisac. Being given the ‘keys to the portal’, as Diane put it, is arguably a source of personal authentication for her and can equally be considered as a metaphor of legitimation. On these terms, her future activities in Pisac appear to be sanctioned through an endorsement from the Inca guide. Yet, the significance of the dream was not fully realised until the following day when she was hiking and noticed she was on the same mountain, which prompted her to begin looking for land to buy. In this example, receiving the keys from the Inca guide, the symbolic representation of the authentic Other (in objectivist terms) is interpreted (in constructivist terms) as a form of legitimation of her emplacement in Pisac, which is further qualified through her ‘activity-based’ (Wang 1999) (existentially authentic) hiking experience in which it corresponded to.

Diane’s appeals to existential authenticity are demonstrative of ways that her personal narrative endears her to spiritual seekers and respective clients with whom she has much in common. Existential authenticity refers to a state of being, or becoming, rather than the objective quality of a thing (Rickly-Boyd 2013). In consideration of tourism contexts, Wang (1999, p. 352) described it as a path of discovery facilitated by the ‘non-ordinary activities’ that tourism offers, leading to the realisation, experience, or enactment of a true sense of self. Diane’s narrative is an example of the existential authenticity trope of ‘being true to oneself’ (Wang 1999, p. 358). One example, although not an outright touristic experience per se, is Villoldo’s talk that arguably facilitates an ‘existential state of Being’ (Wang 1999, p. 359). During the event, Diane described having an ‘incredible feeling’ and said that she ‘started vibrating’ when Villoldo was discussing ‘shamans and healers’. Her embodied response exemplifies Wang’s (1999, p. 362) reference to the intra-personal qualities of existential authenticity that he associated with ‘the

body' and the source of the 'authentic self'. As pointed out earlier, intra-personal authenticity is about 'self-making'. Wang argued (1999, p. 363) that if individuals cannot find their authentic selves in everyday life, they are likely to turn to tourism and its adventures to achieve such goals. Diane's (existential) response to Villoldo's representations of the shamans and healers (objectivist/authentic Others) proved to be a catalyst for her personal 'adventure' to Peru that followed, giving her narrative a meaningful and self-authenticating premise.

As mentioned, a central theme in Diane's narrative was the ayahuasca ceremony she attended in Puerto Maldonado. This pivotal event is an example of Diane's appeal to existential authenticity. More specifically, it exemplifies the intra-personal qualities of this type, given the 'non-ordinary' (Wang 1999, p. 363) dimensions it entails. The ayahuasca ceremony was the locus of the 'message' which was later validated in her narrative when she met Regis, as mentioned. The ayahuasca ceremony proved to be an important (existential) experience from which her story – and the future events that she described, revolve around.

Through the actualisation of meeting Regis, however, Diane's appeal to existential authenticity turns towards the 'inter-personal'. Wang (1999, p. 364) discussed the inter-personal in terms of 'family ties' or 'communitas', but also pointed out that tourists search for the authentic Other and 'for the authenticity of, and between, themselves'. These distinct inter-personal categories appear to blur regarding Diane and Regis' relationship over time. What began as an objectified projection of the authentic Other as analysed earlier, further developed into some form of interpersonal mutuality between teacher and student later on.

As can be seen through these analytical examples, Diane makes multiple appeals to diverse forms of authenticity which often overlap and intersect throughout her narrative. Regis' vision, the Inca dream, Villoldo's talk, the ayahuasca ceremony, and the actualisation of meeting Regis as prophesised, all comprise key moments in her personal story. Each exemplify complex ways Diane identified, interpreted, and experienced meaningful and authentic moments, and in turn, formed them as part of a compelling and sincere personal narrative. As illustrated above, Villoldo's talk was oriented around representations of Otherness, centred on objectivist authenticity, and based upon notions of heritage and identity at the core of cultural tourism in Peru, as examined in chapter two. Diane's response to these representations is meaningful in existential terms, given her embodied reaction at the time, revealing intra-personal authenticity in her narrative account. Alternatively, while the ayahuasca ceremony was the primarily locus

of existential self/identity making and liminal experience, it was given meaning within her narrative in constructivist ways. In other words, the significance of the ceremony unfolded through a sequence of events and activities that were further interpreted by Diane and thus given meaning on her own terms, such as meeting Regis and later hearing about his vision. Likewise, the Inca dream was imbued with significance vis-à-vis the authentic 'Inca guide' and receiving the 'keys'. While the dream appeals to objectified notions of the authentic Other, its symbolic meaning is substantiated by Diane in constructivist terms, based on her own interpretations and beliefs that arose out of the very experiential context of dreaming, and as relating to what transpired when hiking on the mountain the following day. These key narrative moments can be seen to legitimate Diane's emplacement as an Andean teacher and entrepreneur within mystical tourism on multiple levels, as seen here through her appeals to objectivist and constructivist authenticities that are woven into her existential and authentic-self journey.

5.3.3 Diego Palma and ayahuasca tourism in Pisac

Diego is from Lima, Peru. Before he began holding ceremonies in Pisac he was a computer programmer working for an IT company. In an interview I conducted with him at his home at *La Pacha* outside of Pisac in 2016, he began by discussing his personal journey, describing how his earlier life in Lima had followed 'the regular path'; going to university, getting a job, earning a salary, and 'acquiring things and trying to be happy'. Diego described himself at that time as a 'workaholic' who was 'full of dissatisfaction inside' feeling like he did not fit or belong. He explained that his self-identity was entirely based on his profession as a computer programmer. Diego said he had a fear of losing his job at that time, which he later realised was equated with a fear of losing his 'identity'. Although he was 'successful from the point of view of Western city life' as he put it, he was deeply unhappy. Diego described his marriage at the time as a 'nightmare', explaining how he and his wife would blame each other for their unhappiness. He reflected on the dynamics of his marriage as 'dysfunctional role playing' similar to what he witnessed during his childhood. During this time, Diego felt a lot of anger and frustration and questioned the meaning of his life. He recalled thinking, 'this is it! This is it! It cannot possibly be!'. Diego said he could not 'see a light anywhere', and then he 'met ayahuasca'.

Diego first learnt of ayahuasca in the late 1990s when he overheard two men having a conversation about it. He said they talked about it as a ‘dangerous thing from the jungle that you drink, but it makes a shift in your life and will completely change your way of seeing reality’. He explained that he was attracted to this idea, as his life was ‘sucking’ at the time. After doing some research, he found a ‘facilitator’ in Lima; a sound engineer who had a studio in the city where he held ceremonies. Diego said that the sound studio was good because it blocked out the noise from the city outside. Notably, these ceremonies were eclectic, an example of neoshamanic practices that have been identified in urban environments elsewhere in South America.⁹⁵ The facilitator sang *icaros*, but Diego explained there was a mix of different kinds of ‘medicine songs’ that he described as ‘songs that lead to the heart’. There were numerous instruments, such as guitars, tablas, and sitars. Diego said the ceremonies had an Eastern influence, what he referred to as ‘the whole Buddhism thing’, for example, the chanting of ‘mantras’. As a guitarist himself, Diego noticed that over time his relationship with music began to change; ‘as creativity and things were starting to flow’. When he picked up his guitar, he felt ‘another connection with music’. These early experiences would prove to be important later, when Diego began to form his own neoshamanic ceremonial style. He also stated that during these formative ceremonies, he ‘fell in love with the medicine’.

From the first ceremony, Diego felt he was being ‘healed’ and ‘transformed’. He described what ayahuasca showed him as a ‘revelation’; ‘a view of reality from a much wider perspective, not the narrow-minded thing’ he was used to seeing. He discussed his healing experience with ayahuasca in terms of ‘childhood, family, and traumas’:

The “I’m not good enough” thing and the low self-esteem thing I was growing up with when I was a kid. And everything was there, you know, rooted in my subconscious mind, creating my reality, so it was really amazing.

Diego explained how his experiences with ayahuasca helped reassure him that his dissatisfaction with ‘living in an insane world’, as he described it, was ‘not wrong’. This was a moment when he began to trust what *he* felt was ‘right’.

Diego continued to attend ceremonies every month with the sound engineer, eventually convincing him to invite more people. Soon they began holding ceremonies every fortnight,

⁹⁵ For an example discussion see: *Yagé-Related Neo-Shamanism in Colombian Urban Environments* (Fernández 2014).

with Diego becoming the facilitator's 'right-hand man' as he explained. Diego would go on to attend ceremonies regularly for three years. He described how gradually he began to consider the idea of 'sharing the medicine' himself. In the beginning, however, he said that he was 'very selfish' and did not care about what else was going on in the ceremony. He described himself as 'a mess' at the time, and experienced lots of 'crying and purging', barely able to help himself, let alone anyone else. Over time, however, he said things began to change. He started to develop what he referred to as 'a sense of gratitude' as he began to look back and see how much his life had changed. This realisation motivated him to want to help others. After some time, he decided to go to 'the jungle' to see the 'medicine in its source' as he put it.

Diego travelled to Iquitos and Pucallpa and spent a good deal of time in Tarapoto. He said that he would travel to small towns and ask; 'who is the shaman?'. Often, there were numerous, and Diego said he would 'drink with each one'. He came across one shaman called Don Lucho, with whom he attended many ceremonies; learning about the plants, *dietas* and *icaros*, what he described as 'the whole shamanic thing'. Diego explained that each shaman would tell him different things, such as 'oh, you have damage, I can heal you'. Others would say, 'I can give you some power'. Searching from shaman to shaman eventually led Diego to the following realisation:

I was looking for Don Juan, you know, the books. So yes, I was looking for Don Juan. Really looking for Don Juan and I didn't find him. "Any Don Juan there?" Only the medicine. So, when that certainty came, that Don Juan was in the medicine only and not in people, then I understood, do it your own way, just do it from your heart, but do it your own way and trust yourself.⁹⁶

As Diego was talking, he pointed to his ceremonial ayahuasca cup sitting on his windowsill, then read aloud the following words that were inscribed on it: 'Think for yourself what is true'. He went on to elaborate:

There it is. You can encapsulate the whole thing in that for yourself. Your own thing for yourself. It is a direct experience. Nobody is going to tell you the truth, untellable, you cannot tell it to anyone.

⁹⁶ Referring to the controversial books written by Carlos Castaneda, such as *The Teachings of Don Juan* (1968). Don Juan being a *Yaqui* shaman from Mexico, Castaneda purportedly spent time with. The actuality of his ethnographic accounts has been questioned and brought into disrepute as far as having social scientific validity, however, they remain popular books for the lay public.

Soon after, Diego returned to Lima and began to consider how he would like to work with ayahuasca.

Discussing his approach for working with ayahuasca, Diego described himself as a ‘collector’, gathering knowledge for what he considered to be a ‘good way of doing it’: ‘I see this way and I like it. I just make the mix of ingredients’. Although Diego learnt about the jungle traditions, he acknowledged that there was a significant difference between his worldview and that of the shamans he had visited:

Because, as I told you, I went to the jungle and I saw the whole paraphernalia about the darts and the *malleros* and the *curanderos* and the whole thing, but I have a very rational mind, I came from being a programmer.⁹⁷

While Diego exemplified a ‘pick and mix’ approach often associated with New Age and neoshamanic practitioners, perhaps surprisingly, he did not see himself as ‘spiritual’:

Ayahuasca chose me, no! I’m radically sceptical, radically sceptical. I believe in science, okay! That’s my approach. People think I am very spiritual, but I don’t believe I am spiritual, I’m a spiritual shopper.

Diego explained that he did not believe in ‘tradition’ as he felt it was commonly perceived, what he referred to as ‘walking backwards’. He went on: ‘Tradition is a path, for me, that is formed for the guys that follow without question, spirituality; “this is sacred, don’t question”. No, I question everything’. Exemplifying his ‘rational’ mind set, he described ayahuasca as a ‘deprogramming tool’:

It’s not about adding more. It’s not about becoming nothing. It’s not about your last initiation, it’s not about becoming a shaman or whatever, it has nothing to do with that. That’s an ego trip that you are going to find enlightenment or something like that. So, this is actually a beautiful tool for a deconstruction of all the beliefs that we have been fed since childhood; systems, society, blindly following them, everything. The only way is questioning, becoming sceptical, radical, not following, not becoming “spiritual”. No, it’s not going to help you, you have to chop down everything that’s not real. So, the only thing that interests me is the truth. And you cannot grasp the truth, but you can grasp what is not true. It’s a peeling process, like an onion. You peel all these

⁹⁷ *Malero*, relates to *mal* (bad/evil) or similarly *brujo/a* or *brujeria*, evil or bad intentions and practices or witchcraft; *curandero*, healer, shaman, *vegetalista*.

delusions. You peel all these limiting beliefs. It's endless. You start liking it in the end, and you peel faster.

Diego also tended to de-mystify his own ceremonial role. He described it as 'holding the space' for others to have their own experience in a way that they could 'feel comfortable' and 'explore themselves deeply' during a ceremony.

After leaving the jungle, Diego returned to Lima and continued working as a programmer and resumed attending ceremonies at the sound studio. He said that during that time he felt divided, like there were 'two Diegos':

Two parts of me. One fully connected to the medicine, working with the medicine and recognising that I don't want that life. The other, a fictional character that you project, with the studies and the work and the scene. And then one day it happened, and I decided, "no more".

He explained that he quit his job and ended his marriage, leaving his possessions to his wife, as he did not want to go through the 'nightmare' of a divorce settlement. With some money and his luggage, he went to Pisac.

Diego had been to Cusco and the Sacred Valley before. When he was around 17, he travelled there for a school trip. He recalled that he was 'going for the party', which he said was common for *Limeños* to do when visiting Cusco. He remembered 'falling in love' with Pisac and taking lots of photographs. He reflected on those emotions as being 'strange', as he 'wasn't in love with anything' at the time. He described going back to Pisac years later, as returning to the 'town that I loved'. At that point he said he became the 'third non-local person living there'. In the beginning, Diego put up ads in Cusco and started offering 'one-to-one' ceremonies; 'anyone who knocked on the door and asked me, "*ceremonias de ayahuasca?*", I'd say yes'. When I asked who was attending his ceremonies, he drew a distinction between 'tourists' who he saw as only interested in 'the ruins', and other 'gringos' or 'expats', the ones 'feeling the call' to drink ayahuasca.

In the beginning he rented a small house in Pisac, 'a hut' as he described it, 'without water and sewerage'. He referred to the time following as 'a manifestation', when 'magic started to happen'. Diego described what unfolded as a 'completely effortless flow' and considered it to be something beyond his understanding. Within the space of two years, he built his first property, *Melissa Wasi*, located next to Paz y Luz where he would live and hold ceremonies

for many years. During this time, he used his skills as a programmer to develop his own website, *Ayahuasca Wasi*. He said that during this time he would intermittently attend ayahuasca retreats in the jungle. In 2012, Diego purchased *La Pacha*, a property located along the *caraterra* between Pisac and San Salvador. On this land he built a new home and a large ayahuasca temple called *Maha Templo*. Diego's full-moon ayahuasca ceremonies at *La Pacha* became somewhat famous, as they were often attended by over one hundred people.⁹⁸

5.3.4 Interpretation and analysis

Diego's narrative is argued here as primarily appealing to existential authenticity. His experiences with ayahuasca are closely tied into ways that he authors his personal narrative on individualistic terms, as he discovers his own 'truth' and 'authentic self'. In contrast to Diane, whose narrative appeals directly related to images of an 'authentic' cultural Other, Diego, in part at least, appears to reject the authenticating figure of the jungle shaman, and indeed notions of tradition as a static and unquestioned 'path' as he put it. Having said this, these objectivist themes retain significance in his personal story and can be interpreted as contributing to the legitimization of his individualistic worldview, and similar to Diane, his emplacement within ayahuasca tourism.

Diego's was reflective about his past. This is evident from the beginning when he discussed his earlier life, vocation, relationships, emotional state, and what he identified as a general unhappiness and dissatisfaction with 'Western city living'. In discussing the existential condition of contemporary life, Wang (1999, p. 360) stated that the quest for the 'true' or 'authentic self' is relational to the 'ideal of authenticity' in society; 'formulated in response to the ambivalence of the existential conditions of modernity'. In this sense, Diego was critical of the 'regular path' he had followed, reflecting what Wang (1999, p. 361) described as 'inauthenticity stemming from the mainstream order'. Initially, his emotional response to this dissatisfaction was anger and frustration; an existential questioning of the meaning of his own life, as he exclaimed; 'this is it? It cannot be!'. At this point, he met ayahuasca. The discussion he overheard about it was suggestive of an existential alternative to the *status quo*. As he said, he was excited about the idea of it shifting his view of reality and completely changing his life,

⁹⁸ I first heard of Diego's full-moon ceremonies in Iquitos by a friend from Iceland, Biggi, who suggested I should go, 'just to experience it'. He described it as an 'ayahuasca concert'.

as it was ‘sucking’ at that time. He described his ensuing ceremonial experiences with ayahuasca as a ‘revelation’ that confirmed to him that he was ‘not wrong’ in feeling dissatisfied with ‘living in an insane world’.

Diego’s ceremonies represent an experiential locus where his authentic self could be discovered outside of the ‘dominant institutions’ (Wang 1999, p. 361) of society. Arguably, this theme renders his narrative as appealing to spiritual seekers, not least because it is a compelling story, but because it exemplifies themes that they themselves can relate to in many ways. Equally, Diego possessed a stark individualism. By relaying his experiences and realisations, he arrives at his own perception of ‘truth’, being an example of the notion of ‘self-making’ in existential authenticity. In this way, Diego’s narrative, while unique, reflects trends among ayahuasca pilgrims seeking either personal healing, change, or self-transformation in some way, as examined in chapters three and four regarding ayahuasca healing and integration.

The direct experiences with ayahuasca were central in Diego’s narrative, and illustrative of ways that he appeals to the intra-personal aspects of existential authenticity; bodily feelings, and self-making (Wang 1999). Although Diego’s formative ceremonies in Lima were not in a touristic setting, they nevertheless offered him a direct experience with the ‘non-ordinary’, removed from the ‘constraints of the daily’ (Wang 1999, p. 352). Yet, rather than a form of escape from reality, the ceremonies facilitated an opportunity for him to ‘heal’ and ‘transform’, addressing aspects of his past; ‘childhood, family, and traumas’ as he explained. In application of Wang’s (1999, p. 363) understanding of intra-personal authenticity, Diego’s ayahuasca ceremonies provided him with a liminal space to pursue ‘self-realisation’ and discover his authentic ‘new-self’. Everything else in his narrative, including other forms and expressions of authenticity, revolve around his appeal to existential authenticity as the locus of his ‘truth’.

A significant shift in Diego’s worldview came when he realised that the symbolic figure of (Castaneda’s) ‘Don Juan’ that he was searching for, did not exist. In the beginning, he was in search of the ‘original’ in objectivist terms. He described going to the jungle to seek out ‘the medicine in its source’, as he said. Although he drank ayahuasca with many shamans, he ultimately arrived at the realisation that ‘nobody else can tell you the truth’. In this example, we can see how Diego makes multiple appeals to authenticity, which overlap. His initial search for ‘Don Juan’ begins with the desire to seek out the exotic and authentic jungle shaman. The shaman embodies the authentic Other in objectivist terms. Yet his romanticised desire to find

‘Don Juan’ was equally formed out of images and expectations (Wang 1999, p. 355) in constructivist terms. It is through his ayahuasca ceremonies that he arrived at the realisation that truth is ‘untellable’, and must be directly experienced, as he put it. Here, existential authenticity overlaps with his constructivist appeals, as the ceremonies activate a shift in his beliefs, when he realised that ‘Don Juan is in the medicine’, not in a person. At this point in his narrative, the locus of authenticity shifts from the Other, to the self.

That Diego outright rejected the jungle shaman would likely be a reductionist and inaccurate interpretation. Perhaps more so, it is his rejection of his own exoticised ‘image’ and ‘expectation’ of the shaman that can be seen to represent a shift from constructivist to existential authenticity. After all, he later describes how he returns intermittently to attend retreats in the jungle. Similar views are reflected in other chapters, for example, the way that long-term ayahuasca drinkers like John and Rob in chapter four, believed that ayahuasca teaches people how to heal themselves. Both discuss their views in terms of their personal experiences, however, John also explained that when participants lay the responsibility for healing with the shaman, it often proved to be problematic.

Wang (1999, p. 355) argued that ‘origins or traditions are themselves invented and constructed in terms of the contexts of where one is and in terms of the needs of the present’. Diego was reflexive about his own ‘rational’ and ‘sceptical’ worldview that he explained influenced how he worked with ayahuasca. As he described, he could not relate to the jungle ‘paraphernalia’ of the ‘*malleros*’ and ‘darts’. Alternatively, he constructed ayahuasca in terms that made sense to him, describing it as a ‘deprogramming tool’ and a process of ‘deconstruction’ for ‘chopping down what is not real’. Yet, although the temptation may be to view this as a complete departure from jungle traditions, again, it would likely be an oversimplification. Instead, we see how Diego omits or disengages with certain cultural aspects of ayahuasca use he cannot relate to and instead constructs meaning in relation to his authentic self as his point of knowing what is ‘true’ or not. As will be discussed further below, Diego’s approach is illustrative of self-validation and individualism within the diasporic practices of ayahuasca neoshamanism.

As they are woven into Diego’s personal narrative, appeals to authenticity can be seen as a consciously creative process oriented around the discovery of an authentic self. In this sense, Diego constructs his own versions and evaluative modes of authenticity; object, existential and constructivist, as part of the process of producing a coherent and personally meaningful identity

narrative. As an exemplar of neoshamanic practices, Diego's emphasis on individualism can be seen as a celebration of his own sense of personal freedom, agency, and authenticity.

Diego's appeals to authenticity provide a compelling narrative that, like Diane, also serves to legitimate his emplacement as an entrepreneur and 'facilitator' within ayahuasca tourism in Pisac. His narrative interweaves sincere and personal themes that described his searching and subsequent discovery of his authentic self. Diego's ensuing realisations reveal the significance of his existential experiences with ayahuasca that inform and shape his worldview, and indeed how he constructs meaning and arrives at his own 'truth' for serving ayahuasca as he does.

5.4 Cultural appropriation, hybridised practices, and the entrepreneurial ecosystem

As we have seen through the ethnographic focus on the life-stories above, Diane and Diego's involvement in their respective fields of spiritual tourism in Pisac are rendered meaningful through their appeals to various instantiations of authenticity, in sincere, and at times, deeply personal ways. These narrative appeals to diverse yet intersecting formations of authenticity go so far as to validate their involvement, while equally endearing them to other spiritual seekers and potential clients. The following section outlines several important critiques regarding their involvement in their specific fields. Drawing on the critical work of Michael Hill (2005) and Macarena Gómez-Barris (2012), the following discussion begins by addressing scholarly critiques that have been levelled at Diane's workshops, regarding their hybridised quality, lack of narrative explanation, and concerns regarding cultural appropriation, asymmetrical exchange, and mystical objectification. Following this, Diego's narrative emphasis on the authentic self is assessed regarding patterns of cultural appropriation and exchange in ayahuasca neoshamanism. His eclectic approach as a 'spiritual shopper' and focus on individualism are considered here within the context of diasporic practices that involve the 'expansion' and 'reinvention' of ayahuasca in diverse global contexts.

Michael Hill, whose ethnographic research in Cusco was discussed in chapter two, has been critical of both foreign and mestizo proponents of New Age Andean spirituality. As well pointing out how New Age Andean religion has been standardised to 'fit commodified modes of religious consumption' (Hill 2005, p. 265), Hill (2005, p. 233) also argued that proponents engage in 'essentialised representations of *Quechua* peoples and traditions even as they then

insert this pure and “purified” Andean tradition into the bricolage of New Age cosmology’. In addressing what he referred to as the ‘hybridity and hybridisation’ of mystical tourism, Hill identified how ‘cultural politics’ has come to shape the ‘*Quechua*/mestizo/gringo tripartite ethnic structure’ of New Age Andean spirituality. As well as conducting research in Cusco, Hill (2005, p. 240) also reported attending a workshop with Diane Dunn and her teacher Regis in Atlanta, Georgia, USA in 2002, acting as he said, as an anthropologist, translator, and initiate.⁹⁹ Hill (2005, p. 258) was reflexive about his own assumptions and criticisms of the workshop, yet admitted finding it ‘absolutely absurd’ that foreign participants including himself were being ordained as ‘Andean priest apprentices’ after three days of ‘cursory instruction’. In this sense, Hill’s (2005, pp. 233-234) was not only concerned with how *Quechua* people and their traditions were being essentialised, but with ways that New Age practitioners tended to ‘de-ethnicise’ and ‘de-territorialise’ *Quechua* ‘religious practice’. Reflecting the propensity towards individualism in the narratives presented above, Hill (2005, p. 261) levelled criticism at how translations of Andean tradition have been made to fit into the New Age ‘ideology of individualism’ and notions of the ‘sacred self’. Indeed, the narratives in this chapter have provided detailed accounts of how such ‘translations’ may be justified from the perspectives of those who incorporate and articulate them in terms of personal authenticity and sincerity. Yet, Hill argued that such practices were questionable as they distorted and assimilated Indigenous spiritualities within ‘Western discourses and ritual formats’ (Hill 2005, p. 261).

Gómez-Barris (2012) conducted research in the Andes and provides a case study of a 2008 week-long workshop she attended along with foreign participants, held by Diane and two *Q’ero* shaman, Francisco and Juana. Gómez-Barris (2012, p. 68) questioned the ‘possibility of real cultural exchange under conditions of asymmetry’ in such events. While acknowledging the potential short-term benefits for ‘chosen representatives’ of the *Q’ero* community who may access ‘income’ by taking part in such workshops, she admitted being sceptical about any long-term benefits for wider Indigenous communities (Gómez-Barris 2012, p. 76).

In discussing Diane’s book *Cusco: The Gateway to Inner Wisdom* (2006), Gómez-Barris (2012, p. 73) was critical of her ‘hybridised version’ of *Q’ero* tradition and the way Diane ‘represents herself as a chosen subject for the work of healing’. Pointing out how her book is oriented

⁹⁹ Hill had met and interviewed Diane earlier in 2002 while she was still living in Cusco (Hill 2005, p. 237).

around her ‘individualised spiritual journey’, Gómez-Barris (2012, p. 73) was critical of how Diane also omitted any broader social and cultural understandings of the ‘local situation’, as she put it. Furthermore, she argued that Diane’s narrative excluded sufficient reflection of her own positionality, ‘foreshadowing the split between spirituality and politics’ that underlies much of her personal story in the Andes (Gómez-Barris 2012, p. 73). Gómez-Barris (2012, pp. 73-74) described Diane as ‘self-reflexive’ in person, pointing out how she included *Q’ero* practitioners in her workshops and events. Similar to Hill, however, she described Diane’s self-presentation as an ‘Andean priestess’ to be a ‘surreal form of cultural appropriation’ (Gómez-Barris 2012, p. 74). While recognising that such workshops may indeed be ‘authentic’ from the perspective of tourists and facilitate feelings of ‘spiritual connection’, she also argued that Andean translations ‘reproduce the colonial “wild man” as Other, this time within a global frame of New Age spirituality and tourism’ (Gómez-Barris 2012, p. 77).

Both scholars took issue with the lack of ‘substantive explanation’ (Hill 2005, p. 262) or ‘accompanying narrative’ (Gómez-Barris 2012, p. 75) in the *despacho* ceremony that was included in their respective workshops. Gómez-Barris’ (2012, p. 75) *despacho* was conducted by Francisco and Juana, which she went so far as to describe as an ‘ethnicised spectacle’, arguing that ‘the ceremony lent itself to mystical objectification rather than the meaningful and layered ritual that is essential to this native practice’. Having said this, both Hill and Gómez-Barris acknowledged that *Q’ero* leaders had chosen to share their traditions with outsiders in recent years. For example, Gómez-Barris (2012, p. 75) explained how Francisco conveyed to the workshop participants that *Q’ero* elders had decided to ‘pass down their teachings’ beyond the local community to ‘increase consciousness’ about ‘*Pachamama*’ given global and environmental ‘despair’. Despite this, Gómez-Barris questioned their involvement through an example she provided relating to Juana, who she said hardly spoke during the week-long workshop. She argued that ‘perhaps’ Juana’s silence could be read as a resistance to the ‘notion of interculturality’ and as such, it may be the ‘only proper answer in the face of New Age appropriations of Andean cultural memory’ (Gómez-Barris (2012, p. 77). Ultimately though, we do not find out what Juana thinks. If indeed this was the case, it would seem to add complexity to Francisco’s statement about *Q’ero* choosing to share their teachings with outsiders.¹⁰⁰

¹⁰⁰ It is worth noting that Gómez-Barris (2012, p. 74) did state that Juana only spoke *Quechua*, which could partially explain her ‘silence’.

While not seeking to sidestep the importance of both Hill and Gómez-Barris' critiques, workshops such as Diane's, and indeed as similarly exemplified in Javier's ayahuasca retreat, are nevertheless layered and complex. Despite being hybridised, for example, they may be rendered authentic in multiple ways from the perspectives of those who participate, and indeed, those who host them. Yet, as these critiques argue, questions of mystical objectification, hybridisation, and cultural appropriation, appear to be circumvented in favour of complex legitimating discourses by Western spiritual tourism entrepreneurs such as Diane. Her narrative appeals to authenticity reflect her personal investment and sincerity in legitimating her emplacement, but as the authors above point out, it does not disentangle her from the issues they identify regarding the asymmetrical trends in Andean New Age spirituality. Equally, however, it would be insightful to hear more from people such as Francisco and Juana given their involvement in such events.

Practitioners such as Diane and Diego have become entangled in the complex web of cultural exchange and appropriation that have shaped spiritual tourism and healing practices in Pisac, leading to critical questions about their motivations and involvement, as illustrated regarding the concerns of the scholars mentioned above. Diego's narrative exemplified a stark individualism towards legitimating his approach to working with ayahuasca. Although a founding figure in spiritual tourism in Pisac, his emplacement is reflective of diverse ayahuasca diaspora practices that have expanded outside of the Amazon in recent decades. As illustrated in chapter one, the 'expansion and reinvention' of ayahuasca shamanism has been significantly shaped by the ideas and expectations of New Age 'spiritual pilgrims' and through forms of 'interethnic exchange' (Labate, Cavnar & Barbira-Freedman 2014, p. 4). As Diego's narrative has illustrated, he was an active agent in the expansion of ayahuasca tourism in Pisac, which has grown concurrently with local forms such as mystical, spiritual, and cultural tourism oriented around Inca heritage sites.

As with mystical tourism, notions of intercultural exchange in ayahuasca shamanism have been criticised for their unequal aspects (Fotiou 2016, p. 158). In the ayahuasca hub of Iquitos, it has been noted how ayahuasca tourism often conceals the 'complexities and injustices' local Indigenous people experience, replacing such realities with a 'romanticised image' of Indigenous people (Fotiou 2016, p. 151). As seen in Diego's narrative, however, the expansion of ayahuasca shamanism can also be seen to present what Labate, Cavnar and Barbira-Freedman (2014, p. 8) have identified as a 'rich platform' for understanding the 'complexity

of interrelations' between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people, neoshamans and traditional healers, and outsiders and locals. Neoshamanic practitioners such as Diego have become integral agents in ayahuasca's 'reinvention' and 'expansion' outside of the Amazon, equally raising concerns about neocolonial inequalities, as will be discussed further below regarding the entrepreneurial ecosystem of ayahuasca tourism practices.

Reflecting the emphasis on individualism and personalisation discussed in chapters three and four, Diego's narrative reveals how he situated the authentic self as the ultimate source 'truth'. In picking and choosing the 'ingredients' for his practices, Diego's assessment of himself as a 'spiritual shopper' and 'collector', offers a personal account of how ayahuasca neoshamanism has occurred through a 'makeover of shamanic rituals' (Labate, Cavnar & Barbira-Freedman 2014, p. 4). The reinvention of ayahuasca shamanism has been noted to infer a more intensified use of ayahuasca aiming to meet the differing expectations of diverse participants where elements of 'traditional' ritual are recast into a new version and style (Labate, Cavnar & Barbira-Freedman 2014, p. 4). This was exemplified in the medicine retreat, where Javier framed participants' experiences on psychospiritual terms, argued as a way of maximising benefits in ways they could make sense out of. To put it another way, Dawson (2017, p. 19) has described ayahuasca diaspora as a process of both 'detraditionalisation' and 'retraditionalisation'. In similar ways to the critiques of Diane's workshops above, Dawson (2017, p. 19) argued that 'new ayahuasca traditions' occur through a hybridisation of beliefs and ritual appropriation from 'other religio-cultural worldviews', as well as through the emergence of 'new traditions' brought about through the 'creative imagination of diaspora practitioners'. The perspectives of both Javier and Diego are examples of this individualised and creative approach to neoshamanic practices. Diego's narrative offered insight into his logic of reinvention in terms of individualism and self-authentication. Yet he was equally influenced by his differing experiences with ayahuasca, beginning in the eclectic ceremonies in urban Lima, and later, when he sought out 'Don Juan' in the jungle. This journey led him to question a 'static' view of tradition, and as argued earlier, his search for the exotic and authentic Other which brought him full circle to the qualification of his authentic self.

Dawson (2017, p. 26) has offered some sociological thinking on the topic, arguing that ayahuasca diasporic practices can be situated within the context of 'the new middle-class'. Dawson (2017, p. 23) considered the dynamics of ayahuasca diaspora through binary notions of 'collective determination and individual choice', and argued that while the former is not

entirely eliminated, ‘the modern individual enjoys historically unrivalled degrees of self-determination and subjective expression’. Dawson (2017, p. 33) argued that the ‘contemporary religious landscape [is] indicative of modernity’s “deinstitutionalisation” of traditional modes of authority’.

Building on the work of Hervieu-Léger (2001), Dawson (2017, p. 26) identified ‘self-validation’ in ayahuasca diasporic practices, as ‘it is individuals themselves, in the subjective certitude of possessing truth, that the confirmation of the truth in faith is found’. This trope of self-validation was fervently embodied by Diego who saw the authentic self as the source of what is true or not, as was written on his ceremonial ayahuasca cup; ‘think for yourself what is true’. His emphasis on the authentic self and notions of truth exemplifies how neoshamanic practitioners appeal to, and reflect, broader ideologies of individualism embodied by ‘spiritual seekers’ in the contemporary world. Similarly, this aspect pertains to ‘mutual validation’ which relies upon the processes of ‘intersubjective interaction’ to affirm individual beliefs and practices with preoccupations being with the subjective spiritual search, personal meanings, and an expected understanding of personal differences (Dawson 2017, p. 34). On these terms, Diego’s ideology of self-validation can be understood as part of a legitimating strategy that equally endears him to others that he appears to encourage following their own discovery of personal truth, as illustrated on his ayahuasca cup. A similar interpersonal dynamic was identified in the ritual *communitas* of Javier’s medicine retreat, regarding a mutual respect for ‘personal autonomy’ and individual notions of truth within the collective context of the event.

While New Age individualism can be seen to foster multiple forms of authenticity, self-validation, and a sense of mutuality (as both a feeling and strategy) that serves spiritual tourists and ayahuasca neoshamans alike, it does not divorce them from their entanglement with inequalities that arise through ayahuasca diaspora. For example, Peluso (2017, p. 203) has assessed the impact of ayahuasca ‘business’ on local and Indigenous people whose very involvement in the expansion of ayahuasca shamanism has been integral. Peluso (2017, p. 205) described ‘ayahuasca entrepreneurship’ as entailing a ‘set of responses to the dynamics of increased ayahuasca tourism and the marketing strategies used’, making a clear distinction between ayahuasca as part of local economies, and as a form of entrepreneurship.

In pointing out how local people are systematically disadvantaged within such contexts, Peluso (2017, p. 215) described the ayahuasca entrepreneurial ecosystem as participating in a

‘historically ongoing economic neo-colonialisation of South America in ways that privilege non-local profits and benefits’. Despite the good intentions and sincerity of at least some of those involved, in many ways, Pisac is an example of an entrepreneurial ecosystem where ayahuasca neoshamanism is performed by foreign and non-local/non-Indigenous practitioners for a largely foreign market. In Pisac this is exacerbated by the way that the ayahuasca tourist bubble is greatly detached from local Andean people, who have little to do with it directly (or historically and culturally) and receive no real benefit from it. Peluso (2017, p. 216) has lamented that through ayahuasca’s expansion and reinvention, its appropriation and exploitation have increased and dominated what could otherwise be more ‘equitable and negotiated cultural transformations’. Instead, she argued that while ‘ayahuasca cosmo-capitalist endeavours’ present possibilities for sincere interconnectedness for some, they equally perpetuate an ‘already unequal set of relations’ (Peluso 2017, p. 216).

5.5 Conclusion

As key figures in mystical and ayahuasca tourism, Diane and Diego’s personal narratives have revealed how they appeal to multiple instantiations of authenticity, explored here through objectivist, constructivist, and existential types. This chapter has provided insight into how individuals such as Diane and Diego, who are directly involved as entrepreneurs and practitioners in mystical and ayahuasca tourism, generate personal narratives vis-à-vis the ‘spectrum of authenticity’, as it has been analysed here. Diane’s narrative revealed how she primarily relied on objectivist appeals to the authentic Other, as exemplified and embodied in the figures of Regis and the Inca guide that she dreamt of. Diego’s narrative was overtly personal and reflective, discussed in terms of his healing journey and how he came to serve ayahuasca in Pisac. In part at least, Diego rejected the authentic figure of the jungle shaman, instead locating notions of ‘truth’ in existential terms of the authentic self.

These diverse narratives include images of a romanticised authentic Other, identified as problematic in terms of Diane’s objectivist appeals that along with other types of authenticity, were seen to legitimate her appropriations of Indigenous traditions and her emplacement as a practitioner within the sphere of mystical tourism in Pisac. Conversely, Diego began by seeking out the authentic Other, yet later he critically and self-reflexively arrived at a rejection of the romanticised figure that ‘Don Juan’ originally symbolised to him.

Diane and Diego's personal histories serve to underscore their position as unique and pioneering 'originals' within their respective fields in Pisac. Equally, they are exemplars of broader trends amongst spiritual seekers and neoshamanic practitioners that have followed in their footsteps. As this chapter has shown, although sincere to themselves and indeed other spiritual seekers, their appeals to authenticity do not disentangle them from broader issues regarding power and representation, cultural appropriation, and the reinvention of tradition relevant to mystical and ayahuasca tourism. Critiques presented in this chapter, especially from Hill (2005) and Gómez-Barris (2012), have justifiably pointed out concerns about hybridised tradition, essentialism, asymmetrical exchange, and objectification regarding Diane's workshops and teachings within Andean mystical tourism. Equally, critiques of ayahuasca diaspora have identified self-validation and individualism as formative in the 'new traditions' (Dawson 2017) of hybridised ayahuasca neoshamanism practices, while perpetuating appropriation and neocolonial inequality through capitalist practices that often exclude local people from the 'ayahuasca entrepreneurial ecosystem' (Peluso 2017).

Diane and Diego's narratives have been analysed here in terms of how such individuals legitimate their emplacement as practitioners and entrepreneurs within their respective fields of spiritual tourism in Pisac. While demonstrating a high level of sincerity in each case, the critical issues identified above cannot be sidestepped. Perhaps future research with *Q'ero* elders and Andean practitioners could shed light on notions of cultural exchange from Indigenous perspectives, which would be insightful. For example, Hill (2005) and Gómez-Barris (2012) acknowledged *Q'ero* agency in choosing to share their teachings with 'outsiders', yet Gómez-Barris was sceptical about Francisco and Juana's involvement. On these terms, a more in-depth and accurate understanding of possible 'resistance' to 'interculturality' (Gómez-Barris 2012, p. 77) on one hand, or equitable cultural exchange on the other, could be further assessed. Equally, Diego's involvement within the ayahuasca entrepreneurial ecosystem (Peluso 2017), raises broader issues of how foreigner and non-local practitioners in Pisac exercise self-validation and individualism in creating diverse practices directed at foreign clients (Dawson 2017), often excluding locals while equally appropriating Indigenous traditions.

Pisac presents a unique example of ayahuasca diaspora as the emergence of neoshamanic practices have become part of, and have indeed shaped, the cultural milieu of New Age spiritual tourism there more broadly. Given the importance of ayahuasca in both Diane and Diego's narratives they can both be seen as ayahuasca pilgrims who have ultimately gone on to insert

themselves into their respective fields of spiritual tourism in Pisac. Considering critiques assessed here, such fields can be seen as examples of the contested features of ayahuasca pilgrimage and its cross-cultural implications. The following chapter examines contestation in terms of cultural differences and tensions that foreigners perceive in relation to the local community, revealing a broader sense of awareness that many have regarding their individual and collective presence within the wider Andean society.

Chapter 6: The Heterotopic “Gringo Community” in Pisac

6.1 Introduction

This chapter explores how foreigners in Pisac experience, negotiate, and reflect upon being ‘gringo’. This term is often associated with Euro-Americans and inscribed racially by what Fechter (2005, p. 87) has identified elsewhere as ‘whiteness’ in a ‘non-white environment’. As commonly used throughout Latin America, this vernacular identity category refers to foreigners, and more specifically, non-Latin Americans. It is a term not only used by local Peruvians, but as this chapter reveals, it is applied self-referentially by foreigners, especially when discussing what it means to be gringo.

As the ethnographic perspectives in this chapter will illustrate, gringos are critically reflective about perceived tensions and conflicts within their community, and more importantly, as existing between themselves and locals, seen as representing a chasm of differences and disconnection in many ways. As such, their narrative accounts reveal ways they navigate somewhere in-between the ‘utopic’ idealism of the ‘New Rishikesh’ counterculture, and the ‘dystopic’ social realities they contend with on a daily basis. Building on St John’s (1999) research at an alternative Australian festival, and Levy’s (2007) analysis of a community of ‘young expatriates’ in Guatemala, the gringo community is examined here as a heterotopia, a heterogenous, liminal, and contested counter-site existing somewhere in-between the ‘real’ and ‘unreal’ (Levy 2007).

Gringos here are shown to be reflective about social inequalities and cultural differences that they see as separating themselves and locals, as one participant poignantly states, ‘we live in two worlds’. As pointed out below, however, there are also assumptions, stereotypes, and essentialisms that can be identified in the way that some gringos perceive and talk about locals. At times, these discourses contain pervasive ‘orientalist’ (Said 2003) elements, especially in terms of how the local population and Indigenous cultural contexts are reified and essentialised in opposition to the Western and ‘worldly’ gringo. Concurrently, these dichotomising tendencies are situated alongside, and indeed frame, sentiments of ‘postcolonial guilt’ regarding their own inevitable contribution to the ‘fatal impact’ of their individual and collective presence. Engaging with literature on lifestyle migration, analyses in this chapter reveal how ‘gringos’ seek to legitimate their emplacement in Pisac through a discursive moral

economy, identified here as primarily focused on mitigating contestation rather than necessarily seeking social integration. This is due to the sense of difference and disconnection ‘gringos’ perceive between themselves and locals, as demonstrated in the themes of contestation examined throughout in this chapter.

This chapter explicitly employs the vernacular terms ‘gringos’ and ‘locals’ to evoke the sense of outsidership that marks being gringo in relational terms to the local ‘native’ community. As the ethnographic perspectives will reveal, while the ‘gringo community’ in Pisac is often discussed in casual conversation, its existence in conventional terms is rendered problematic by many gringos due to its transient nature, its existence in terms of ayahuasca tourism, and its lack of social integration with local communities. In this sense, this chapter offers in-depth insights and analysis of everyday life as experienced by ayahuasca pilgrims. Rather than reducing this aspect of the journey as simply romanticised, utopic, or marginal, analysis of the gringo community as a heterotopia reveals how it is ‘distinctly liminoidal’ (St John 1999), ambivalently situated somewhere in-between the utopic circulation of images, discourses, and practices of niche spiritual tourism that defines the distinct aspects of the gringo community, and the real and everyday context of Andean society.

6.2 The Heterotopic Gringo Community in Pisac

In his doctoral thesis, St John (1999) built on the work of Foucault (1987) and Hetherington (1997), and coupled with a revision of Turner’s liminal theory, explored the Australian communing gathering, ConFest, as an ‘alternative cultural heterotopia’.¹⁰¹ St John (1999, p. x) described ConFest as a ‘centre on the edge of Australian culture’ where authenticity is ‘performed and realised’.¹⁰² Following Altman’s (1980) notion of ‘non-mainstream social

¹⁰¹ In defining the heterotopia Foucault (1986, p. 23) explored notions of ‘the human site’ or ‘living space’ and was not only interested in the *differences* of sites, but the *relationality* of them, as ‘we live inside a set of relations’. Foucault identified two spaces; utopias and heterotopias. According to Foucault, utopias are relational to the ‘real space’ of society but are ‘sites with no real place’, while heterotopias on the other hand are places that do exist, ‘real places’ that he described as ‘counter-sites’ (Foucault 1986, p. 24). Following Foucault, Hetherington (1997, p. 8) defined the heterotopia in terms of ‘Otherness’ that is established through its relationality with other sites. Hetherington argued that the definition of heterotopias cannot be limited to transgression or marginality, arguing that instead they can be seen to create new forms of ‘social ordering’ (Hetherington 1997, p. 18). He suggested that any alterity or challenge to social structure will result in an ‘alternate form of social ordering’, for example, ‘freedom has its own modes of ordering, because it is a relational state defined against forms of unfreedom’ (Hetherington 1997, p. 34).

¹⁰² ConFest is a biannual Australian conference/festival that began in 1976 and is considered by many patrons to be a major celebratory event of ‘alternative culture’ (St John 1999, p. 1).

activity', St John (1999, p. 6) defined 'alternative culture' as a 'diverse network of discourses and practices oppositional to perceived deficiencies in the parent culture, which is the system of values, beliefs and practices hegemonic under modernity'. He argued that while the festival was inhabited by an 'alternative community' and characterised by a collective sense of 'counter-identity' there were not only harmonies within the site, but tensions. In other words, the site was marked by 'ambivalence'; 'homogeneity and heterogeneity, inclusivity and exclusivity, realising internal unity and discord' (St John 1999, p. 5). Although ConFest represented alternative utopian ideals, diversity and conflict were also notable. St John (1999, p. 24) observed that ConFest was a space of multiple meanings, and although the desire may have been to turn the nowhere of the imagination into 'a good place', that is, a 'utopia', it was inevitably somewhere 'in-between'.

St John identified four main characteristics of the alternative cultural heterotopia that are argued here to align with the gringo community in Pisac, as will be outlined below. Firstly, following Foucault, St John (1999, p. 24) described it as a 'counter-site'; a space of Otherness, a centre for 'alternative culture' and a site for 'expatriates and exiles', outsiderhood, marginality and authenticity. Secondly, while he described ConFest as an alternative cultural event (ACE) that belonged to a larger alternative cultural movement (ACM), there was no single unifying ideology that defined it, making it a heterogenous space (St John 1999, p. 24). Although it was idealised as marginal or alternative, it nevertheless encompassed 'alternative discourses and practices' that held various expectations for inhabitants (St John 1999, p. 24). Thirdly, due to these multiple meanings, the heterotopia was identified as a 'contested space', marked by uncertainty and dispute among inhabitants (St John 1999, p. 24). Lastly, while acknowledging the limitations of Turner's theory regarding notions of 'inclusivity' and *communitas*, St John (1999, p. 24) argued that ConFest was typified by 'liminal realms', and as such, it potentiated '(re)creating alternative identities and effecting alternative ordering'.

In many respects, St John's analysis of ConFest as a heterotopia parallels the cultural sphere of the gringo community in Pisac. The gringo community is a counter-site in two ways. Firstly, it holds idealistic possibilities for being a partially enacted utopia for 'expats and exiles' (St John 1999). As illustrated in the previous chapter, Pisac was described as the 'new Rishikesh' or an 'Andean Shangri-La' for spiritual seekers, where the authentic self could be discovered through an engagement with various 'traditional' and 'shamanic' practices. Secondly, the alternative culture of the gringo community was characteristically critical of core values and

aspects of ‘mainstream culture’, which many gringos had sought to remove themselves from, at least to some extent. Although a *Limeño*, Diego exemplified this shared ideology in the previous chapter when he discussed his dissatisfaction with ‘Western lifestyle’. Yet, while the gringo community was often idealised in terms of its perceived or imagined difference to mainstream culture, its emergence within Andean society generated complex forms of ‘social ordering’ (Hetherington 1997). While embodying a sense of alternative culture for some gringos, it proved to be much more complex than a utopian ‘bubble’. As will be illustrated regarding Levy’s (2007) work further below, the freedoms and sense of privilege that gringos ultimately enjoy, coexist with their awareness of the social inequalities that exist between themselves and locals, somewhere between an ‘imagined’ and ‘real’ backdrop. To varying extents, members of the gringo community may seek to live in an alternative counter-site, yet their very presence brings to the surface ‘dystopic’ social inequalities and disparities that exist across ethnic lines.

Secondly, the gringo community is heterogenous. Despite being perceived in terms of ‘alternative culture’ and shared beliefs and values, it is far from the homogenous ideal it may be seen to represent. Although the community is characteristically transient, it nevertheless encompasses different types of inhabitants; from tourists, transients, and expats. As the ethnographic perspectives in this chapter reveal, those who had resided there longer-term, were generally able to express a more nuanced and often critically evaluative view of the everyday social and political life in Pisac. These insightful perspectives commonly moved beyond the romanticism that often dominates tourists’ idyllic first impressions. In part, the gringo community is rendered visible given its obvious (ethnic) characteristic of outsidership in relation to the local population. Yet it is a community made up of people from multiple nationalities. Similarly, despite the sense of alternative or New Age ‘hippie’ culture that superficially distinguishes the gringo community, individuals clearly hold diffuse beliefs, desires, and interests. Diverse meanings and disparate points of view arise in relation to appropriate use of plant medicines such as ayahuasca, spiritual healing practices, and indeed what is considered suitable and respectful behaviour as ‘guests’.

Thirdly, given its diverse and heterogenous characteristics, it is equally noted for contestation. As will be explored in the ethnographic sections of this chapter, contestation existed within the gringo community, and between its members and the local population. Often, contestation did not result in overt conflict or confrontation between gringos, or across reified social divides

with locals. Between themselves, gringos commonly employed a moral economy, often being critical of inappropriate behaviour while espousing their personal self-awareness and critical evaluation regarding their own emplacement in relation to the local community. Concurrently, gringos were acutely reflective of the tensions, sense of resentment, and cultural differences they perceived between themselves and locals.

Foucault offers a fitting example to illustrate the implicit sense of tension arising out of being a guest in a heterotopic space. In describing guest bedrooms that were once common on farms across South America, Foucault (1986, p. 26) explained that a guest's entry into a 'heterotopic site' often hides 'curious exclusions', where 'access' is more of an illusion than reality. Foucault (1986, p. 26) detailed how travellers were permitted to sleep in these bedrooms but were in fact closed off from the rest of the house and excluded from the family quarters. He argued that 'visitors' were 'absolutely the guest in transit' and not really the 'invited guest', pointing out; 'we think we enter where we are, by the fact that we enter (we) are excluded' (Foucault 1986, p. 26). Although most gringos felt that locals were patient and mostly welcoming, there was equally a tense awareness of being outsiders and 'living in other peoples' lands', as one participant put it. As will be discussed later, this was often contended with in terms of a moral economy of behaviour but equally underlined by stark inequalities and cultural misunderstandings.¹⁰³

Lastly, St John identified 'liminal moments' at ConFest. He described ConFest as 'distinctly liminoidal' within which are 'liminal moments' and 'junctures' of 'authenticity' (St John 1999, p. 265). Following Hetherington's (1997, p. 31) view that alternative spaces or practices render some form of alternate ordering, St John applied liminal theory without reducing ConFest to a marginal event alone. A similar approach has been taken in this thesis regarding the scope of ayahuasca pilgrimage and its intersecting themes of liminal ritual events such as the medicine retreat, and aspects of everyday social life. The medicine retreat was described as greatly removed from everyday social world, yet the existence of such events and in such contexts cannot be completely inconsequential to it. Given that this chapter is focused on social life, liminal moments are largely excluded in the ethnographic discussions here, as indeed they have

¹⁰³ The view of gringos as the 'uninvited guest' is not to suggest that all locals are unwelcoming, but rather to emphasise the awareness gringos had of being outsiders and how and why their collective presence was perceived as creating tensions, misunderstandings, and resentment at times.

already been explored in detail in chapter three. They are nevertheless considered to be an important part of the heterotopic gringo community.

The idea of a heterotopic gringo community in Latin America has been described in Levy's (2007) research conducted within a community of 'young expatriates' living in Antigua Guatemala, Guatemala. Considered as neither 'mass tourists' or 'travellers', Levy (2007, p. 1) pointed out how 'expats' engaged in the 'practices and discourses' of both yet were distinct in their ability to create community and connections to place. Expats occupied a unique and sometimes contradictory position, negotiating multiple forms of 'difference and belonging' while managing 'certain kinds of selves against a backdrop of an imagined Guatemala' (Levy 2007, p. 1). Levy (2007, p. 1) asked the question whether the space that expats did this within was utopian; an unreal world in relation to the 'real' Guatemala?

Applying notions of Simmel's (1971) 'stranger', Levy (2007, p. 15) explored the 'special social position' expats held, one that conferred 'freedoms', 'privileges' and 'certain dangers'. Levy described the stranger/expat as occupying a position somewhere in-between that of the 'wanderer' and the 'native', to point out ways they were simultaneously near and far from both (Levy 2007, p. 104). Expats were seen as accruing some 'symbolic capital' given the relatively long time they spent there. While clearly not 'natives' themselves, they had developed some expertise regarding natives' lives, which Levy (2007, p. 105) pointed out reminds us of 'another stranger, the ethnographer'. As will be described in the ethnographic sections below, a similar trait is identified with gringos in Pisac, particularly those who had been there for extended periods of time.

Through a series of inquiries into what kind of world the 'community of strangers' was, Levy explored to what extent it was seen as 'utopic'. Levy (2007, p. 16) examined 'special' and 'magical' moments that punctuated expats' lives, as 'spaces of pleasure and escape' from the 'expat bubble'. Yet while utopian desires and nostalgia were identified in the expat world, they did not fully define it (Levy (2007, p. 111). Questions arose regarding the nature of expats desires, freedoms, and privileges, and whether their community was a space of hope, something unique, or a replication of colonial systems of power? (Levy 2007, p. 111). It was argued that the 'unreal' utopian world existed in relation to the often 'dystopic reality' of Guatemala. Levy (2007, p. 153) described the expat world as a heterotopia because of the way it alternated

between the ‘special’ and the ‘ordinary’, exemplifying its inverted relation to reality (Levy 2007, 153).

Levy’s notions of ‘magical’ moments are analogous to the liminal experiences of a medicine retreat or ayahuasca ceremony as described in chapter three. Such events were similarly seen to ‘punctuate’ (Levy 2007, p. 16) the everyday, but while ‘special’ and arguably romanticised in some cases, it would be problematic to categorise them in utopic terms of ‘pleasure and escape’. Such events also proved to be an ordeal, being authentic in existential terms, as Diego illustrated in the previous chapter. Mystical tourism equally embodied utopic imaginings, critiqued in the previous chapter for their hybridised formats, and mystical objectification that were detached from social realities of local people. Yet as this chapter will show, for gringos who spent any extended time in Pisac, ‘magical’ or ‘liminal’ moments existed within a much broader spectrum of social life and personal experience.

In Pisac, gringos were reflective about notions of community and developed an acute sense of gringo identity, not only in relation to each other, but more pertinently perhaps, with the wider Andean society and place in which they lived. As will be returned in the final discussion, the ethnic and racialised gringo identity category, whether constructed through the perceived gaze of the ‘Other’ or constituted by their own ‘cultural imaginaries’, has come to shape the community itself and affect notions of integration with locals (Hayes 2015a, p. 946). As the following ethnographic sections will illustrate, gringos ruminate on perceived contestation within their own community, and as existing between themselves and locals, the latter seen as representing a chasm of differences and disconnection in many ways. As such, their narrative accounts reveal ways they navigate somewhere between the utopic experiences and dystopic realities of everyday social life. Despite their awareness about these realities, however, they cannot entirely escape from these utopic features, even if indeed they wanted to. Their desires, liminal experiences, privilege, agency, and mobility cannot truly allow them to fully get to grips with the ‘real’, as they are ultimately outsiders looking in. Even their awareness of the inherent inequalities, feelings of distance to local people, sense of resentment, and cross-cultural misunderstandings, only reaffirm these differences, rather than remedy them or foster social integration as much as some of them would like.

6.3 Themes of contestation: Gringos and locals

“We live in two worlds”.

Chris, Pisac

The following sections explore key heterotopic themes that have been identified through an analysis of fieldwork interviews with members of the gringo community. This begins with an examination of the different ways that gringos perceive cultural differences and tensions between themselves and local inhabitants. Discussions of money, for example, reveals how gringos are critically reflective about social inequalities that they believe generate resentment and envy about the gringo lifestyle amongst some locals. A focus on language and communication identifies how a lack of Spanish proficiency among some gringos is seen to exacerbate cultural misunderstandings and disconnection with local people. Lastly, aspects of cultural difference are discussed, especially in relation to ways that gringos see locals as being overtly religious and conservative, examined through a discussion of discourses around ‘drugs’ and including perceived alcohol abuse in local communities. These themes illustrate how stark cultural differences are seen to cause tension and exacerbate cross-cultural misunderstandings. The caveat to these ethnographic perspectives is that we do not know what locals think on these issues, only what gringos think locals think. This of course tells us much more about gringos than we can possibly begin to understand about local people here.

6.3.1 Money, work, and inequality

Gringos were often reflective about the economic disparity that existed between themselves and locals. Having what appeared to be an endless reserve of money was one way that gringos believed they were seen by locals. Indeed, most understood that comparatively, they did have considerably more material wealth, which they felt provided them with more freedom and mobility. This inequality, both real and perceived, was seen to create a chasm between the communities. One gringo, for example, described foreigners in Pisac as ‘global travellers’ but had the impression that some locals had probably never been to Lima. For those living in

remote communities in the higher altitudes, he wondered if they had even been to Cusco, indicating the limited mobility he presumed they had by comparison. As will be revealed below, such views are an example of how some gringos tended to essentialise locals in oppositional terms to themselves. It also reveals how gringos possessed a self-awareness regarding their presence within Andean society.

Some gringos sensed resentment from locals, who they felt had come to rely on the ‘tourist dollar’ but were simultaneously envious of those who brought it. One gringo businessperson, Chris,¹⁰⁴ believed that some locals had misunderstandings about the gringo lifestyle. Below, he gives an example by describing an average day at Ulrike’s, a gringo restaurant in Pisac:

So, they look at us, we may have nice clothes, we have computers, we have iPhones, we sit in restaurants. I know some people who are in a particular restaurant in Pisac all day doing computer stuff or working reading tarot or making money. The girls working in that restaurant see these people and how they live, and they see that we just spend money, and they don’t know how we get it. They must think we have gold, or we just have an unlimited amount of income. Because most foreigners here don’t work and they rent houses that are extremely expensive in comparison to what these people pay, could be ten times more per month, and they eat out in restaurants and are doing computer work in that restaurant all day long.

Chris’ perspective reveals how gringos often perceived cross-cultural tensions and resentment in relation to freedom and money. Yet, his ideas about what ‘they see’ and ‘what they must think’ are suggestive of his own assumptions about locals.

Larissa, an American who had lived in Pisac several years, discussed how ‘unfair’ the situation must seem to locals, who she said often worked long days from a young age and earned very little money:

I think there’s some envy, quite a bit of envy. “Why do they get to do that?”, I don’t know! I mean, good question, why? We don’t work, apparently, you know, because people come here with some money and it’s hard to understand the difference in the value of sol and the dollar rate if you’ve never been somewhere else. Like wow! So here we come, and we have all this, and many don’t seem to have to work and probably they’re not so fond of that.

¹⁰⁴ Pseudonym used at participant’s request.

Larissa held the view that monetary inequalities not only resulted in some amount of envy from locals, but like Chris, felt there were misconceptions about gringos having money without seeming to work, which appeared to exacerbate tensions.

While some gringos arrived with savings and benefitted from the exchange rate and lower cost of living as Larissa mentioned, many did work. For example, Chris mentioned above how some gringos generate income through online work or by reading Tarot. There are also many gringos in Pisac who arrive with the intention of developing their vocation as healers, offering workshops, yoga retreats, meditation classes, massage, reiki, or as plant medicine practitioners. Some of these vocations were arguably less visible to many locals as they generally did not involve them, being practiced for and by gringos. As such, even those who were earning an income in Pisac may not have appeared to be working, especially given that in most cases such vocations were not tied to visible nine to five schedules within the broader social sphere of Pisac, such as working in a shop, café, or the market as many locals did. On the other hand, the sense of resentment arguably results from the disparity in income that such services generate in comparison. For example, a massage therapist may likely earn much more in an hour than a local person working in a café all day.

The influx of gringos in Pisac has seen the price of land and rent rise considerably in recent years. Chris believed that some gringos had negatively influenced the behaviour of locals by making them 'greedy'. He explained this was a case of locals 'catching on' to what gringos were doing, which he appeared to discuss in terms of the fatal impact gringos were having on locals. Below he tells the story of 'a gringa' who was renting a house from a local man:

I'll throw you some numbers. The house was renting for 1000 soles a month for five bedrooms. She started charging 1000 soles per room! She decked it out, she bought beds, she bought nice sheets, she bought towels, okay, she had an investment in the house, but it didn't last long because the owner found out what she was doing, and he kicked her out. He kicked her out of the contract because he wants to do that. He realised what you can do to foreigners. And so, this is the bad part of us being here.

Chris' view here reveals the sometimes-contradictory ways that gringos reflected upon themes of inequality and economic disparity, cross-culturally. As he stated earlier, and as reflected in Larissa's perspective above, most locals were understood to earn much less and were unable afford what gringos paid for things like rent. The situation Chris described above is revealing of how gringos found creative ways to generate income so they could stay in Pisac longer.

Possibly contravening local norms, Chris recognised the industriousness of the gringa who was seen to be making ‘an investment in the house’ with the purpose of generating income, yet somewhat hypocritically, he viewed it as a ‘bad’ thing when the owner discovered what she was doing and realised he could do that himself.

Although identifying cross-cultural inequality on one hand, Chris viewed the phenomenon of locals adopting capitalist practices towards generating income as representing some form of cultural demise. This example illustrates ways that gringos would identify inequality but simultaneously essentialise locals, seeing them as somehow only ‘authentic’ in oppositional terms to themselves, believing they would be better off not doing as they did, even if it meant they could earn more money. Yet, Chris’ view of the ‘bad’ implications also reflects wider frustrations gringos held about being overcharged for things on a daily basis. Although he lived in the area for several years and knew many locals well, Chris said he still got overcharged in the markets; ‘when I step back and look at it, I can understand why they want to do that, but I don’t like it at all’. This was a frustration shared by other long-term members of the gringo community.

Such examples reveal the often conflicting and contradictory ways that gringos navigate and reflect upon their presence. On these terms, gringos contend with inequality, and come to terms with the perceived implications that are seen to cause tension and create barriers to social integration. Money was viewed as central to perceived inequality and the resentments that accompanied the situation. Yet, these issues were seen to exist within a wider spectrum of cultural misunderstandings and differences, which are further explored below.

6.3.2 Language, communication, and culture

A lack of effective communication and Spanish speaking proficiency within the gringo community were seen by some to exacerbate the sense of disconnection with locals. Luz Maria, for example, believed that many gringos in Pisac had little intention of learning Spanish which she felt created a barrier between them and locals, and inhibited ‘integration’ between the communities. Similarly, Larissa felt there was a lack of effort on behalf of gringos, which she saw as evidence of their self-involved attitude. Importantly, she also acknowledged that for some at least, this was determined by the relatively short amount of time they stayed:

So, I've noticed that as far as the interaction of gringos and the local people, people don't come maybe for long enough to bother with the locals, and they are narcissistically engaged in their usual practice as if this were simply a sort of backdrop, which doesn't sit well with anyone.

Gringos acknowledged their language limitations in different ways. Dylan had only lived in Pisac a few months at the time and said he 'felt guilty' about his inability to communicate well with locals. On a daily basis, he said he tried to improve by practicing with locals in places like the *mercado* (food market). Sanne, by contrast, was a transient traveller who moved around frequently but had spent months at a time living in Pisac on several occasions. She said, 'I don't really speak Spanish, so that's one thing I can't do much with'. Although she admitted she was limited in her ability to communicate, she added that she tried to 'behave according to their customs' and be 'respectful and polite'.

Although gringos either struggled with the language barrier or recognised it as an impediment towards 'integrating' with locals, some pointed out that even with language proficiency there remained a sense of cultural difference that made doing so more complicated. Chris, for example, spoke Spanish fluently but admitted that there was a 'disconnect' with locals. While some felt more effort and connection was needed, he did not necessarily think it was something that needed to be changed:

There's not much crossover in Pisac, you know, and I will include myself. I mean, I have many Peruvian friends here and acquaintances that I speak to, but I don't hang out with them, I don't invite them to my house. They don't invite me, well, they have invited me to their house, but I don't go, I'm guilty also on some level. But I'm just not interested to go hang out and eat *cuy* and drink *chicha* and listen to music that I don't like, and you know.¹⁰⁵ There are people from my own town or my own country who I wouldn't go to their houses and eat their food and listen to their music and whatever, you know. I mean, that's the way it is.

Gringos often lamented the cultural divide, but as Chris' view reveals, it was also normalised and accepted by some. In part, this can be associated with how gringos saw locals as being very different to themselves. There were clearly many cultural, political, and economic differences by which locals and gringos lived and defined their identity and each other. Yet, the terms in

¹⁰⁵ *Cuy* is guinea pig. It is usually roasted on a spit and served as a full carcass. *chicha* is a traditional alcoholic Andean drink made from fermented *maize* (corn). A variation is *chicha morada*, a non-alcoholic version made from purple maize and sweetened with pineapple juice or sugar.

which this can be found in everyday discourses such as Chris', also instils an essentialised projection of the local Other. This appears to occur not only through a patronising form of orientalism – or exaggerated differences – that imagines the unworldly Other, but equally perhaps, as a way by which to define oneself (Said 2003, pp. 1-2). Chris described the locals' worldview as 'so small' and viewed their way of living as 'so compressed' in comparison to the ways that gringos travelled, manipulated technology, and had a general awareness of global events. This perceived cultural divide also extends to gringo perceptions of a 'very conservative' Peruvian society.

6.3.3 Conservativism, religion, and “drugs”

Members of the gringo community often described Andean society as being conservative and very religious. In part, this view underscores gringos' views of themselves in stark contrast to such conventions, as they identified with New Age counter-culture ideologies and alternative spiritualities. Although religious practices in the Andes are syncretic, Catholicism is prominent. Some gringos felt that the way religion permeated Andean society represented vast cultural differences between themselves and locals. Sean, for example, felt that many locals had a 'lot of fear of the unknown' when it came to understanding what gringos in Pisac were doing there. He believed that some locals had a very negative view of gringos that they passed onto their children, who he thought were 'being indoctrinated really strongly about how evil we are', as he said. Sean explained that some local friends had told him:

“Yeah, there's like, you know, some people in the town that think that you're all a bunch of Satan worshipers and are crazy and run around naked and have orgies and stuff”. Which is like basically if you made a picture of hell, that's like the Catholic version of hell.

Informed by what he had heard, Sean saw Catholicism as central in forming locals' fears and negative view of the gringo community. Yet gringos also felt that inappropriate behaviour and insensitivity to local customs and beliefs exacerbated tensions and widened the cultural divide. The use of illicit substances by some gringos were believed to deepen the resentment and fear locals had relating to the bad influence their behaviour was thought to be having on local youth.

The use and abuse of drugs and alcohol across the communities represented distinct cultural differences for some gringos. While it would be inaccurate to suggest that gringos in Pisac did

not drink alcohol, it was generally moderate and relatively uncommon.¹⁰⁶ Marijuana on the other hand was more accepted and commonly used by some gringos. Chris felt that locals were very disapproving of the use of marijuana yet also noted that some gringos lacked discretion in their use of it, which caused tension:

Marijuana is demonised, a serious bias against what they call hippies, and some people smoke ganga in the streets here, and these people see it and smell it and resent us for it, because they are afraid of the influence it's having on their kids. Their worldview is so small. They've never been to a country where people do that.

Like Sean, Chris felt that some locals had a negative view of 'hippies' who they associated with smoking marijuana. He also believed that locals were concerned about the influence on the children. Chris again tended to frame his view on essentialising terms, by reasoning that they had this belief because 'their worldview is so small'. Equally, however, gringos held their own biases about the consumption of alcohol by locals.

Gringos would sometimes talk about alcohol abuse in some of the local communities that they understood had resulted in issues of family violence, sexual abuse, and social and health problems.¹⁰⁷ While they viewed local communities as conservative, gringos were critical of how drinking alcohol was not only socially accepted, but as Chris said, 'the church condones drinking. Every festival they have here, people are drinking in front of the church'.¹⁰⁸ Larissa believed that locals were aware of the harmful effects of alcohol, but similarly pointed out how socially accepted drinking was. Below she draws some comparison between what she saw as locals' stigmatised view of marijuana, and the extant abuse of alcohol in their own communities:

It's just that marijuana is associated as it used to be, remember back in the 50s, let's say in the United States, like *reefer madness*. You know that tripping hippie kind of thing, that's kind of the view of it. So, they still have mostly that view. And alcoholism, although it's acknowledged that it is not a wonderful thing, and no one's proud if their husband's an alcoholic and they know it's a problem, still, it's more acceptable.

As these participant viewpoints show, the use of marijuana and alcohol represented stark cultural differences between gringos and locals in Pisac. On one hand they believed that local

¹⁰⁶ In contrast, Cusco had a bustling nightlife and tourists would often socialise at bars and nightclubs.

¹⁰⁷ For a recent discussion, see: *Control, Power, and Responsibility: A Qualitative Study of Local Perspectives on Problem Drinking in Peruvian Andean Highlands* (Yamaguchi, Lencucha & Brown 2021).

¹⁰⁸ For a detailed exploration of alcohol use in the Andes, see: *Drink, Power & Society in the Andes* (Jennings & Bowser 2008).

perceptions of marijuana use were founded in conservative values that stemmed from religion and unworldliness, on the other, gringos held their own biases about alcohol use, which arguably reflects their own misunderstandings and assumptions regarding the consumption of alcohol in the Andes.

Gringos' discourses on alcohol abuse in local communities were often oriented around a general sense of concern about the impact of such behaviour on women and children. Yet gringos' views here also reflected a sense of essentialism, as the abuse of alcohol was seen as an example of cultural demise, regarding ways that local communities had become 'disconnected' from their traditional ways of living. A similar point was made in chapter two regarding ways that mestizos in Cusco separated out the imagined Inca and contemporary Indigenous people, who were looked down upon as degenerative by some.

Given that ayahuasca did not have any recent historical use in Pisac, gringos felt there were misunderstandings and a great deal of fear about it, partly due to tales of misuse and other concerning behaviour associated with it. Horror stories occasionally circulated of gringos 'acting crazy' or 'weird' in public under the influence of plant medicines. Luz Maria described a situation where a friend of hers drank medicine with someone who she felt had ultimately lacked 'respect' and 'care'. Her friend wandered off from the ceremony and later 'ended up naked in the middle of the road with the police'. She added that most locals did not understand what gringos were doing in plant medicine ceremonies, especially when they heard about all the 'vomiting' and 'crying' and 'shouting'.

Javier expressed an understanding of Peru's colonial history, describing the demonisation of plant medicines by the church that he associated with the longstanding oppression of Indigenous peoples' beliefs through centuries of Christian missionisation. Discussing what had transpired in Pisac, however, Javier talked about the use of plant medicines by foreigners, and how he thought locals perceived what had transpired:

Many natives here believe that we are crazy to engage in this process and some of us indeed are. Some of them think we're crazy because of their own fears and judgments. Some of them think that we're crazy because we don't understand the power of this process. And so, there is an opening. There is a natural curiosity that arises in the locals about what we're doing here, but Pisac is not [only] a place to come and drink medicine,

even though plant medicines are a very important part of it, but it's a place of spiritual reconnection. Spiritual reconnection in ways that are very different from the locals.

Javier's view is illustrative of how gringos were reflective about their collective impact on the local community. While he identified some of the issues in relation to the 'fears and judgements' of the locals, he also recognised how misuse, brought about through a lack of understanding on behalf of gringos, exacerbated issues. His view of 'spiritual reconnection' being 'very different' from locals' correlates with the perspectives above, regarding the perceived sense of differences between the communities.

This section has illustrated how gringos reflect upon and contend with their collective emplacement in relation to 'locals', as they are often referred to. Concerns regarding economic inequality and work proved to be something gringos were consciously aware of. Yet equally, it also revealed assumptions some gringos had regarding what locals thought about them. At times, such views revealed a patronising form of orientalism, through which gringos exaggerated cultural difference and in turn constructed an image of themselves in contrast to the unworldly locals. The limited capacity that some gringos had to communicate in Spanish and thereby connect well with locals, reflected ways that the transience of the gringo community inhibited communication and the fostering of longer-term connections. While this was the case, participants such as Chris, who could speak fluently, identified cultural differences as one reason that there was a lack of social integration. These perceived differences were discussed regarding religion and a general view gringos held that Andean society, particularly outside of Cusco, was overtly conservative. This appeared more accentuated due to the self-image of the gringo community as alternative and counter cultural. Substance use and abuse presented an example of this perceived cultural chasm, with gringos believing that they were demonised because some smoked marijuana. They thought that locals resented this behaviour, particularly as they were concerned about the influence it was having on their children. Conversely, gringos were disapproving of drunkenness and alcohol abuse as perceived amongst the local community. While reflecting their own essentialising views of cultural demise amongst Indigenous communities, such perspectives equally reflected an awareness that some gringos had about the social impact of rising alcoholism of which they were generally concerned about.

6.4 Themes of contestation: Self-reflections of the gringo community

“It may be difficult for a foreigner who has never lived in a conservative Catholic society to know what’s cool and what’s not cool. It takes a little time. It takes first and foremost, just the awareness that we are guests”.

Javier

This section explores ways that gringos were reflective about their collective presence. As the previous section outlined, in many ways the gringo community was greatly separated from the everyday lives of locals. Yet, its members were often acutely aware of the impact that their presence and activities had upon the local population, and at times were critical of the behaviour of some fellow gringos, who they saw as inconsiderate and self-entitled. On these terms, the following section turns inwards, as gringos discuss the ‘gringo community’, and more broadly, issues and conflict arising from their use of ayahuasca and collective emplacement.

The first theme, ‘being guests’, explores how gringos reflect on appropriate and inappropriate behaviour, being critical of self-involved gringos who are insensitive and disrespectful toward local people. The next theme explores how gringos’ view *Limeños* living in Pisac, believing they too, occupying a similar position as ‘outsiders’. Gringos here discuss their perception that some *Limeños* hold discriminatory and negative attitudes towards locals. As examined in chapter two, gringos’ observations on this topic reflect historically contingent ethnic and class tensions between Indigenous and non-Indigenous populations in Peru. Next, gringos discuss issues of malpractice and misuse of ayahuasca, and what they see as questionable motives on behalf of some practitioners. As represented here, such observations are common amongst gringos who are often disconcerted by the presence of charlatans, or simply those who lack sufficient knowledge and experience to be offering the work they do. Such practices are noted for being dangerous and potentially harmful to participants but are also seen to exacerbate tensions with locals. An example was given in the previous section when Luz Maria discussed her friend who ended up naked in the street. As Javier mentioned earlier, these issues are seen to create an image that gringos do not understand ‘the process’ they are engaging, which he believed was exacerbated by fear and judgement that some locals might have about it. The final

theme analyses how gringos perceive notions of ‘community’ in Pisac. Perspectives here reflect a tendency amongst gringos, who believe that the community in Pisac lacks some conventional attributes, particularly due to the transient nature of its inhabitants, its formation in terms of ayahuasca tourism, and its lack of integration with local people.

6.4.1 Being guests

Some gringos were critical of what they saw as inappropriate or insensitive behaviour on behalf of other gringos, seen to create tensions and further the cultural divide with the local community. For example, Rob from Australia felt that many gringos did not seem to understand that ‘we are living in their backyard’ as he put it. Rob’s view below illustrates the disrespectful attitude some gringos were perceived to have, in turn, creating a negative image of gringos more broadly:

Many don’t respect the space here, gringos, just feels like the way they get around is indulgent. Sometimes people buckled on medicine during the day, disrespectful, coming through other people’s lands, in their face, and it’s disrespectful, a huge sense of entitlement the way we get around, is really quite sad.

Rob had the opinion that many gringos who stayed for relatively short periods of time, ultimately had little regard for local people. Conversely, he said that he and his friends were ‘passionate’ about building relationships with locals and tried to be conscious about how they behaved towards them:

So, for me personally, I would try to be more subtle, trying to get a feel for how they do receive us, and so far as a whole I feel that the locals are pretty patient, pretty tolerant.

Reflecting patterns identified in the literature on ‘expat’ communities and lifestyle migration that will be explored in the final discussion, Rob said he tried to make ‘subtle’ efforts on a daily basis to ‘integrate’ with local people as best he could.

Gringos dressing in an ‘inappropriate’ way was seen to emphasise cultural differences in Pisac. Some clothing was thought to be offensive to the ‘conservative’ locals. Below Larissa discussed how young foreign women wore revealing clothing around Pisac which caused tension:

Probably it's offensive the way, sad to say, some of the younger women dress. In Cusco you can do that, but not here. You can see how people dress, it's much more conservative. Yeah, and so no, they don't like that. It's kind of Catholic and conservative that way.

Chris identified the same issue. Again, his perspective assumes a very binary view; the image of 'strange' looking gringos compared to the conservative locals:

Some of whom look very, very strange to these people – clothes very strange, tattoos, young girls from the north dressing in what is to these women inappropriate, and jealousy occurring because of that.

Javier suggested that the gringo image Larissa and Chris allude to above was associated with that of 'hippies', which he thought held negative connotations for locals:

What I've heard is that the locals are most scared and judgmental of hippies, or whatever looks like a hippie, because they associate them with a lack of propriety, of tidiness, and you know, it doesn't look good to them because they're associated with drug and alcohol abuse, or drug dealing.

The perspectives here reveal how gringos reflected upon their collective and individual behaviour regarding how they acted as 'guests' while living in 'other peoples' lands', as Rob put it. On the other hand, these perspectives illustrate ways that gringos seek to distance themselves from negative behaviour and put in effort to integrate with locals or be respectful of local customs and norms that they see as broadly conservative in comparison to Western culture.

6.4.2 *Limeños*: The other "outsider"

There were many *Limeños* living in Cusco and the Sacred Valley. Some worked in tourism and hospitality, owning and running guesthouses, hotels, or restaurants, for example. Others, such as Luz Maria and Diego, worked in shamanic tourism. Some gringos viewed *Limeños* and other non-local Peruvians living in the area in similar terms to themselves, seeing them as 'outsiders' who did not integrate well with locals. The themes explored below, reveal ways that gringos perceived tensions and conflict between *Limeños* and locals, reflecting broader class and racial divides within the country. Some Peruvians acknowledged this themselves. For example, Pedro, originally from Arequipa, believed that in Peru there was a big 'disconnection' with Indigenous communities and admitted that he felt it was a 'very broken country' on these terms.

Having relocated to Calca in the Sacred Valley, Pedro said that he made efforts to connect with local people but also stated that, ‘in essence, I am a foreigner too’. He put this down to having a different (ethnic) appearance but felt there were wider differences having been raised in a ‘Westernised culture’ in Arequipa.

Stories circulated in Pisac about tensions between *Limeños* and locals. Some gringos felt that *Limeños* discriminated against local people. Larissa believed that while most gringos were interested in locals and appreciated them, ‘the middle-class in Peru tried to put themselves above these people with their dirty feet and sandals’. Chris felt that *Limeños* were seen as ‘outsiders’ by locals and believed that there was a ‘superiority complex with *Limeños* and an inferiority complex that the Cerranos here have, the mountain people’, as he put it. In his opinion, locals did not like people from Lima because they ‘snubbed these people and treated them in an inferior way’.

Like Chris, Sean believed that *Limeños* were ‘just like gringos’ because they did not participate well with locals in the area. Below, Sean describes one situation, illustrating the tensions between *Limeños* and locals which as he points out, was also seen to impact gringos:

I mean, that’s why this area doesn’t have fresh water. They have to pump it out of the wells which is not that great water but there’s water right there in *Rinconada*. But because one of these people went and spoke like hyper-class to the waterboard, like, “oh, I want my water,” and they said, “well, it’s gonna cost you 10,000 soles to buy into our system”, you know. And they had a big hissy fit and called them names. And then they said, “right, you never get water,” and so now there’s no way to get water, until somebody has gone and negotiated with the waterboard, which I foresee in some year being me, going there and talking to them and trying to find out what they want as an apology from these people, and try to work out how we can get some fresh water here, because it would be nice. But yeah, that’s a problem I think.

As seen from these perspectives, non-local Peruvians, and in particular *Limeños*, were seen to occupy a position as outsiders in similar ways to the gringo community. This was not only the view of gringos, but even by Peruvians themselves, such as Pedro. Other Peruvians such as Luz Maria had a more nuanced view. Luz Maria felt that she was positioned somewhere ‘in-between’ the local and gringo worlds and thought that her ability to communicate well with local people in Spanish also facilitated a better connection. These perceived disconnections were in part put down to cultural differences, but more so reflected wider issues of class and

ethnic discrimination that have been directed at Indigenous people historically in Peru. In all likelihood, the relationships between *Limeños* and locals in the Sacred Valley are much more diverse and complex than represented here, yet these perspectives do correspond with the ethnic tensions and inequalities discussed in chapter two.

6.4.3 The “dark side” of healing

During my research in Pisac, discussions about ayahuasca were never far away. While conversations were often oriented around personal healing themes as discussed in previous chapters, there was equally a lot of gossip, opinion, and disagreement, reflecting divergent views and the contested nature regarding the use of plant medicines. Chris, who had only drunk ayahuasca twice, said he had ‘heard thousands of stories’ over the years and believed there was a ‘dark side’ to ayahuasca tourism in Pisac. In his view, none of the ‘*ayahuasqueros*’ in Pisac were ‘qualified’ to support people who were arriving with ‘serious trauma’ and who needed ‘real healing’. Chris was particularly critical of Diego Palma who he repeatedly said had ‘built an empire’ through serving ayahuasca, with little benefit for locals. Chris’ opinions, however, are also an example of the often-divergent views that gringos had of shamans and healers.

One topic that raised concerns, related to the level of training, experience, and the capacity a shaman had to sufficiently prepare and support participants through the process of working with ayahuasca. As plant medicine shamanism was unregulated, part of what had emerged in Pisac was a trend of ‘wanna-be’ shamans, gringos serving ayahuasca with very little experience. Like Chris, Sanne felt there was a ‘shadow side’ to what had developed in Pisac. She believed there were two groups; one who were just ‘stupid’, having good intentions but no idea what they were doing; and the other, who purposely cheated participants and were ‘just doing it for the money’, as she explained further:

And you know, it is kind of a double-edged sword the freedom that people have here, because you can actually do that. You can just rent a place here. You can make a brochure, you make a website, and you offer a program and people will buy it. But there is no control whatsoever.

Sanne also observed that malpractice was not only present with ayahuasca but with other healing modalities and practices on offer in Pisac:

It's also with the quality of yoga, the quality of massage, the quality of healing, the quality of Reiki, there are some absolute frauds offering healing here. And they do nothing, they just wave a few feathers, and they charge you \$100.

Sean talked about how Pisac had become a place where different healers could go and develop their practices, however, the lack of regulation had resulted in an environment where it could be difficult for foreigners to discern whether a practitioner was legitimate or not. This is compounded by a trend amongst gringos in Peru, who drink ayahuasca a few times and want to become a shaman. As one friend in Iquitos joked about it; 'what does being a shaman and a DJ have in common? Everybody wants to be one'.

Luz Maria explained that there were many individuals in Pisac who called themselves 'medicine people', but who lacked the responsibility for 'working with peoples' lives and bodies'. She believed that the priority should always be the 'safety of the people' and that in some cases, people should not drink plant medicine. In her opinion, some practitioners were more interested in money and business than in the well-being of their participants:

I mean, your principles, your values. In that way you will share the experience with people, but for some people it's not like that. For some people, everybody must drink, it doesn't matter how they are, where they are at, what's going on with them. I've seen people getting really sick instead of really getting, you know, healthier, in their minds, in their bodies. If the person that is sharing these spaces and these experiences with no care, with no responsibility, and they don't know about this path at all because they are totally new into this, they think that's the way, and that's how it is.

Despite a difference of opinions gringos had about who was 'on the level' or not, Luz Maria's view here is illustrative of shared concerns about ayahuasca malpractice in Pisac. It illustrates how certain individuals were seen to engage in illegitimate or harmful practices having ulterior motives, such as prioritising profit, even if it meant that participants were leaving more confused or unwell than when they arrived, an outcome that was noted to be common. In this sense, while gringos sometimes idealised ayahuasca healing practices in terms of spiritual enlightenment or romanticised notions about 'tradition', long-term gringos identified wider issues that related to both individual well-being and social implications, as it also caused interpersonal conflict and was seen to create a negative image of the gringo community in the eyes of the locals.

A final example relates to issues of sexual abuse in ayahuasca ceremonies, something that is acknowledged as an ongoing and widespread problem in ayahuasca tourism and diasporic practices, with Western women often the victims. Reports of abuse commonly involve Peruvian shamans who have sexually assaulted or manipulated foreign women who were seeking healing. Incidents and rumours about questionable shamans are regularly reported in jungle regions such as Iquitos, however, assaults are said to occur in many contexts and are certainly not limited to the actions of Peruvian shamans, but by foreigners as well. In discussing this issue in Pisac, Sean said that one ‘big question’ that had arisen in recent years was, ‘who is a safe shaman to send a woman to?’. He explained that in the past he had worked for a shaman who had allegedly raped someone. Sean said when he found out he tried to expose him and was initially arrested for defamation, admitting that it was not good having a ‘full-blown shaman angry at you’. He felt that such behaviour was much less tolerated in the Sacred Valley than in other places and said that he and some others continued to ‘call out’ such people when they heard about it.¹⁰⁹

6.4.4 Reflections on the “gringo community”

Although gringos would make casual references to ‘the gringo community’ in conversation, when asked about it in more specific terms, they tended to question its existence as a tangible entity. While the New Age spiritual community was commonly understood to represent something unique regarding the shared interest lines of ayahuasca, Andean mysticism, and other healing modalities, in more conventional terms it was seen as deficient, particularly regarding its integration with local communities, as seen above. Drawing from fieldwork data, the gringo community can be described through a collective identity of being gringo, which partially extends out to other ‘outsiders’ such as *Limeños*, and particularly in relation to shared interests of New Age spirituality and plant medicines. Another important feature of the gringo community is transience, given the varied yet relatively short amount of time that gringos resided in Pisac. As will be discussed below, this feature of the gringo community in Pisac was seen to be unique, yet equally limiting, inhibiting inter-community integration. In heterotopic terms, the gringo community is marked by its collective sense of outsidership and ambivalence.

¹⁰⁹ For some literature on issues of ‘seduction’, ‘sexual assault’ or ‘sexual abuse’, see: Peluso (2014); Kavenská and Simonová (2015).

Sean had lived in Pisac for a few years and felt the gringo community was ‘still nascent’ and not very well connected. In part, he believed that this was due to it only being about ‘twelve years old’, as he said. Sean discussed the gringo community in heterogenous terms, describing it as comprised of small ‘core groups’ often organised around collective attendance to different ayahuasca ceremonies. Sean said many people in the community attended Diego’s ceremonies which was one of the reasons he went. He also observed that many gringos in Pisac ‘lived like hermits’ and liked to keep to themselves. Sean characterised lifestyle in the gringo community in oppositional terms to the places many of its members came from. He believed that life was ‘slower’, and ‘everything’ was ‘different’. He explained that Pisac tended to attract people who were ‘just not designed to deal with Western culture’.

Kerry, who had only lived in Pisac a few months at the time, similarly thought of the gringo community in terms of ‘common interests’ in plant medicines. Kerry was not sure if this was enough to consider it a community per se, or more so, a collective of ‘sub-tribes’, as she said. She compared Pisac to the ‘expat community’ she had been part of while living in Kathmandu for many years, which she said was similarly based on shared interests and a love for Nepal. Below Kerry reveals how notions of community were perceived through intimate and interpersonal interactions that arose out of shared interests and experiences:

It’s unique in that way, although certainly at the more intimate levels of it. Emotional exchange with individuals? I do find it unusual, unique in that way. Sub-communities perhaps, it is what you do that breaks down into sub-genres.

Kerry described how ceremonial experiences could facilitate powerful interpersonal connections, as similarly explored in the medicine retreat chapter regarding *communitas*, and the previous chapter regarding interpersonal types of existential authenticity. These interpersonal connections spill out from liminal or existential moments forming a unique feature of the gringo community regarding ways that shared interests and experiences create social bonds. Yet, as Kerry added, gringos tended to do this on ‘intimate levels’ within ‘sub-tribes’ rather than as members of a cohesive community.

The transient nature of the gringo community was viewed by some as inhibiting social integration with locals. Many were seen as simply not staying long enough to make deep connections and develop in-depth understandings about local people. For some, however, this feature was also seen as a unique and attractive aspect of living in Pisac. Amber from Colorado was living in the Sacred Valley for several months, and while some of her long-term friends

had told her that living in Pisac meant constantly saying goodbye to people, Amber felt there was a positive side to it too:

It's also like this fresh current of energy that's constantly circling and moving through and that can be really beautiful and stimulating. I mean, I feel incredibly fortunate to have met people from all around the world here.

After living in Pisac for a while, Amber moved further along the valley to the town of Calca, as she felt there would be more opportunities to connect with locals there. She admitted that despite the move, she still spent most of her time with her 'gringo friends'. Similar to Kerry, Amber felt that they understood her, and she could express herself well with them, particularly when talking about her plant medicine experiences.

Gringos who lived in other parts of the valley saw Pisac as a transient town oriented around plant medicine and tourism. For example, Michael Morris was a North American who owned a small organic farm in Calca where he also held Santo Daime ceremonies. Below Michael compares Pisac with Calca:

Well, first off here in Calca, I mean, it's really quite different than Pisac. This is mostly Indigenous here. There're eight gringos in Calca, that's it. We live here. We're not transients, Pisac is almost all transients, I mean, there are some permanent residents, but it's a small handful. And you could consider that a community.

In contrast to Calca, Michael believed there was no 'organic community' in Pisac, as he put it, but still felt there was some form of what he called 'the foreign medicine community'. He said that while he was still 'seen as a gringo' in Calca, there was more integration with locals which he said was essential, otherwise 'you're isolated'. This was particularly evident given that he said there were only eight gringos living there permanently. Michael said that in Calca he was not an outsider, but comparatively he thought that gringos in Pisac were always outsiders as there was no real connection to the local community. This was similarly the view of Pedro who felt there was 'no sense of community' in Pisac, only 'micro groups' that he saw as oriented around individual 'interest lines' relating to tourism. Pedro pointed out that whatever notion of a gringo community did exist, it was vastly different to local understandings of community.

Themes discussed in this section have revealed how gringos reflect upon their individual and collective presence. Notions of 'being guests', for example, illustrated how gringos identified inappropriate behaviour and how it impacted on their image and social integration with locals. The inclusion of *Limeños* into this section revealed how gringos and even some Peruvians

themselves perceived ethnic conflict and tension in terms of racial and discriminatory history, corresponding with earlier discussions about Cusco in chapter two. Perspectives on the misuse of ayahuasca and the existence of charlatan gringo shamans also elucidated concerns of a ‘dark side’ to the utopic imagery of healing and spirituality. Finally, perspectives on the gringo community revealed a more complex understanding of the collective dimensions of being gringo. Despite a sense of shared interests and experiences which were seen as a formative quality of gringo interpersonal connections around notions of healing, the gringo community in Pisac was seen as transient and lacking integration with locals, which rendered any notion of being seen as a conventional type of community problematic.

6.5 Moral economy, legitimation, and emplacement in the “gringo community”

Ethnographic perspectives in this chapter have been explored through themes of contestation. Argued to be a heterotopia, the gringo community is in part experienced as an ‘expat bubble’ being perceived separately and not integrating well with the local community. As the perspectives have revealed, long-term gringos reflect upon a perceived sense of difference and disconnection with locals, possessing an awareness of inherent structural inequalities, conflicts, tensions, and cross-cultural misunderstandings that they contend with personally on a daily basis as members of the gringo community. This final discussion explicates these ideas by engaging with scholarship on lifestyle migration to consider aspects of mobility, moral economy of behaviour, and for identifying ways gringos navigate and legitimate their ‘emplacement’ as outsiders in Pisac.

Recent literature on ‘lifestyle migration’ is useful for exploring historical, structural, and material conditions that influence and shape lifestyle choices for expatriates (Benson & Osbaldiston 2016, p. 408). Lifestyle migration scholarship often focuses on heterogeneous expatriate groups seeking to improve their lives through ‘geographical mobility’ (Bantam-Masum 2015). Croucher (2015, p. 161) argued that this relatively unstudied area of human mobility addresses growing trends, particularly regarding US and Canadian citizens moving to Central and South American countries in recent years. Studies in lifestyle migration aim to situate human movement within the politics of transnationalism, revealing structural inequalities that not only shape mobilities, but are inherent in host and guest relations. Gringos in Pisac exemplify the growing class of the ‘globally mobile’ who are ‘creating new lifestyle

enclaves with shared values and ideals due in part to their shared multiple belonging in transnational social spaces' (Hayes & Carlson 2017, p. 205). Shared belonging in Pisac, while problematised and contested, has been identified in this thesis through notions of counter-culture ideology and shared interests in plant medicine and New Age or 'alternative' spiritualities. As this chapter has shown, despite being replete with romanticism and nostalgia, the gringo community is not an entirely separate utopic bubble but is experienced, reflected upon, and negotiated in terms of daily social realities that its members contend with, particularly regarding their relationship to locals.

Earlier in the chapter, the gringo community was discussed as a counter-site in terms of a lifestyle oriented around alternative culture that was perceived by many of its members as representing an alternative to mainstream Western society. More broadly, commonalities across expat communities in Latin America reveal ways that gringos are motivated to relocate due to reasons such as the rising cost of living in their native country (Croucher 2015, p. 163), while also seeking to take advantage of things like climate and landscape (Hayes 2015b, p. 7). Yet, while the counter-site appears to present multiple opportunities and benefits, the lived realities of being gringo come face to face with structural inequalities as well as their own emergent sense of 'gringo' identity, revealing a more complex picture of social life than notions of utopian idealism encompass. Whether intentionally or not, expat communities often carve out a separate space for themselves, which inevitably segregates them from the host society (Cohen 1977, p. 77). On one hand then, gringo communities arguably create their own 'institutional system' which serves the personal, cultural, and social needs of their members (Cohen 1977, p. 77). Yet the very existence of the expat or 'environmental' bubble, exemplifies ways that gringo identity is understood through a 'racialised social order', effectually being a 'racialised identity' (Hayes 2015a, p. 943) upon which gringos contend with their own sense of outsidership and belonging on individualised and collective terms in relation to the host society.

The gringo community in Pisac encompasses a collective sense of shared interests, ideals, and identity as both outsiders and global travellers to varying extents. Yet lifestyle migrants are made up of diverse groups (Bantum-Masum 2015, p. 102) that cannot be limited to a 'single privileged class', particularly as mobility itself creates new classes (Bantum-Masum 2015, p. 114). This is evident when considering different types of mobilities such as hypermobility, marginal mobility, upward mobility, and global nomadism (Bantum-Masum 2015, pp. 103-

104). Lifestyle migration studies reveal different ways that migrants ‘circulate between transnational spaces’ (Bantum-Masum 2015, p. 102). For example, differentiations can be made between ‘hypermobile subjects’ and lifestyle migrants who live in relatively ‘sedentary’ ways (Bantum-Masum 2015, p. 102). Therefore, while the gringo community represents a collective of foreigners engaging in ‘international geographic mobility’ (Bantum-Masum 2015, p. 114) its heterogenous dimensions are greatly influenced by the different forms of mobilities individuals are engaged in. While Pisac had a small number of permanent ‘expats’ and indeed a great number of tourists who passed through, many transient gringos embodied hypermobility, a subcategory of lifestyle migration (Bantum-Masum 2015), yet equally seeking in some way to improve their lives through global mobility (Croucher 2015, p. 163).

Themes of contestation explored throughout the ethnographic perspectives in this chapter have revealed how gringos were aware of, and reflected upon, conflict and tension both within the gringo community and cross-culturally in relation to locals. These perspectives have illustrated ways that gringos identified and contended with inequalities and a sense of difference, particularly regarding their own positionality on a daily basis. Comparatively, Hayes and Carlson (2017, p. 205) have examined the ‘cosmopolitan ideals’ of lifestyle migrants in Cuenca, Ecuador, who engaged in a constant process of ideology and reflexivity. Like in Pisac, gringos in Cuenca contended with their own privilege and mobility in context to the local community. Despite their awareness of inequalities and a desire to help, the ‘structural position of North Americans in Cuenca thwarts much of the cosmopolitan intent of their disposition towards integration with relatively less privileged people in a relatively poorer nation state’ (Hayes & Carlson 2017, p. 206). In other words, while cosmopolitan claims gain importance for lifestyle migrant communities, they ultimately interact with structural forces relating to colonialism, inequalities, and a global division of labour, which limits possibilities (Hayes & Carlson 2017, p. 206). Equally in Pisac, structural forces superseded desires to integrate, perhaps to such an extent as to be normalised or at least accepted as being *the ways things are*. Along with other themes that contributed to the cultural divide as analysed in the ethnographic sections, arguably the notion of cross-cultural integration in Pisac was thought of by many gringos as too difficult a task, instead opting to try and mitigate contestation at the very least.

Given inherent structural inequalities, although the heterotopic gringo community often appeared to gringos as a separate world, it produced new forms of social ordering vis-à-vis its very existence. On an individual basis, lifestyle migrants to the Global South must come to

terms with structural inequalities ‘day-to-day with normative controversies that challenge the legitimacy of their emplacement on lower income communities’ (Hayes 2018, p.467). Hayes (2018, p. 467), for example, pointed out that ‘transnational encounters’ do not necessarily challenge ‘structurally inherited inequalities’, noting how migrants from Canada and the US rationalised and justified their emplacement drawing on ‘codes of migration’ and ‘cultural integration’ from their native countries.

In his research in Cuenca, Hayes (2018, p. 470) identified how inequality became a source of reflection for gringos regarding their own emplacement, resulting in a moral economy of behaviour. North Americans were seen to ‘elide their sense of impact on place’ by focusing on ethno-cultural differences which could be mitigated by ‘behaving as good guests in a foreign country’ (Hayes 2018, p. 472). Revealing ways that gringos contend with newfound upwards mobility, Hayes (2018, p. 473) argued that a ‘moral response’ may be indicative of ways ‘privileged migrants currently make sense of global inequalities and learn to become upper class in a lower income community’. This inferred having a ‘correct disposition’ regarding one’s emplacement and exercising important ‘moral boundaries’ (Hayes 2018, p. 473). Hayes (2018, p. 473) identified a moral economy in terms of a ‘culturisation of responsibility’ towards locals, being a strategy migrants used to address their own impacts. Similar strategies existed in Pisac given the ways that gringos identified appropriate and inappropriate behaviour amongst themselves. For Javier, discerning what this entailed began with, ‘just the awareness that we are guests’, as he put it. In a more general sense, gringos felt a personal responsibility towards either trying to integrate with locals, or at least, being respectful and mitigating the impact of their emplacement. Yet, as Hayes (2018, p. 473) importantly pointed out, despite this, there exists a ‘transferral of responsibility’ reflected in migrants’ cultural codes of inequality, as they did not tend to question their symbolic and material advantage, viewed as a strategy for justifying their ‘emplacement in communities where their economic advantages participate in the process of spatial appropriation and exclusion’ (Hayes 2018, p. 473). In Pisac, however, it was also evident that some gringos felt an unease about their presence and impact. Larissa was critical about wealth disparities between gringos and locals and the perceived ‘envy’ she thought existed. Although she felt there were some misunderstandings about gringos appearing to not work, she reflected on the sense of perceived unfairness, as she said: “‘Why do they get to do that?’ I don’t know! I mean, good question, why?’. While arguably construed upon cultural codes drawn from their native countries, an argument could also be made for identifying ways that living in Pisac itself, particularly over extended or permanent time

periods, continually informed and (re)shaped perspectives, especially given an individual's growing awareness regarding their own emplacement, changing status, and capital.

Hyper-aware of structural inequalities, gringos arguably enact a moral self-responsibility for either attempting to integrate, or more commonly, cultivating awareness and monitoring their collective and individual impact upon the host society. Like Hayes and Carlson's (2017, p. 189) findings, ethnographic perspectives in this chapter have shown ways that gringos often legitimate their emplacement through a moral economy, 'demarcating legitimate from illegitimate forms of transnational mobility'. Legitimate forms of transnationalism are perhaps less about justifying one's individual emplacement but rather separating out of oneself from other 'obnoxious gringos' (Hayes & Carlson 2017, p. 189). Rob expressed such sentiments in his criticism of the lack of respect and sense of self-entitlement some gringos had, which he thought was 'really quite sad'. Conversely, he pointed out that he and his friends tried to act respectfully and put in effort with locals. Larissa also noted ways gringos treated the place as a mere 'backdrop' and often did not put in effort to learn the language. On the other hand, she spoke Spanish and knew some *Quechua*, and was equally on friendly terms with locals.

6.6 Conclusion

This chapter has provided insight into a unique gringo community in Latin America, reflecting the individual perspectives and predicaments many of its members find themselves in. Through an examination of what has been described here as a heterotopic community, gringos have been shown to navigate and contend with being outsiders, caught somewhere in-between the 'utopic' and 'unreal', and the 'dystopic' and 'real', as Levy (2007) put it. On one hand, shared interests in plant medicines, Andean mysticism, and counterculture identity have formed an alternative community of 'transient' gringos, as reflected in Pisac being labelled the 'new Rishikesh' or 'Andean Shangri-La', as discussed in chapter five. Yet, far from the idealised utopic imagery that some may initially arrive with, the community itself was marked by contestation; divergent views, tension, conflict, and inequality. As discussed, this pertained to issues that gringos perceived regarding the misuse of ayahuasca, for example, but particularly with what was seen as inappropriate behaviour of fellow gringos who they saw as self-involved and disrespectful in their attitude towards locals. This revealed how gringos were critically reflective about their individual and collective emplacement. As outsiders, they were acutely aware of inequalities

and cultural differences that they perceived to impact social integration with locals and cause resentment. In some ways, these issues were put down to misunderstandings about what gringos were doing. Yet, perceived cultural differences between gringos and locals, the latter whom many viewed as overtly conservative and religious, reflected deeply felt ways that gringos and locals ultimately inhabited ‘two worlds’ to quote Chris.

Introducing literature on lifestyle migration has contextualised the gringo community in broader terms of ‘expat’ communities in Latin America. This discussion has illustrated ways that gringos legitimated their emplacement through a moral economy of discourse and behaviour. Given the themes of contestation explored in this chapter, it is arguably the case that the sense of cultural divide and differences appeared so great that the moral economy of behaviour was not only about legitimating one’s emplacement, but about mitigating conflict and tension, rather than seeking social integration or allaying structural inequalities which were seen as considerable. On these terms, gringos lamented inequalities yet found no answers to them. Their awareness of them only reaffirmed differences, rather than remedying them or fostering social integration as some would have liked.

Limeños attitudes towards locals were perceived as perpetuating the ethnic and class discriminations in wider Peruvian society, that gringos disapproved of and sought to distance themselves from. On the other hand, gringos also displayed their own prejudices in terms of perpetuating negative stereotypes concerning the cultural demise of Indigenous communities who abused alcohol, for example. Narratives such as Chris’ were pointed out as possessing a patronising orientalism, simultaneously essentialising the unworldly local in comparison to the self-image of the worldly gringo, who to some extent he saw as having a fatal impact. This type of discourse reflected the sometimes-contradictory ways that gringos would navigate their emplacement. Lastly, liminal events such as a medicine retreat were discussed as ‘special’ moments that punctuated the gringo world, identified with notions of the utopian aspects of the heterotopic community that predominantly excluded locals. Yet the awareness of social realities arising in context of the impact of one’s presence and concomitant activities, as well as contextual inequalities and perceived cultural differences regarding locals, were acute amongst many gringos who lived in Pisac for extended periods of time.

Conclusion

As this thesis has demonstrated, ayahuasca pilgrimage transcends the ‘sacred’ and ‘secular’ categories of travel, as tourists, transients, expats, and other ‘non-locals’ engage with diverse and sometimes conflicting experiences. These often-prolonged forms of travel, and the activities that motivate them, have seen Pisac transformed from an imagined peripheral place of spiritual and cultural Otherness, into a relatively small yet significantly globalised ‘centre’. The concept of ayahuasca pilgrimage has been employed to strategically analyse and gain in-depth understanding of the various facets of individual healing experiences that occur within neoshamanic formations of ritual practice and discourse, and yet more pertinently, within the context of everyday social life for participants living there. Through it, this thesis has sought to address the various implications of the individual and collective presence of ayahuasca pilgrims and spiritual tourism practices, particularly in relation to ‘locals’. Ultimately, the ‘gringo community’, and ayahuasca pilgrims more broadly, have been shown to inhabit an ambivalent position as outsiders marked by ‘contestation’, reflecting issues that many are critically aware of, yet find few solutions to.

Extending out to the Sacred Valley, Pisac embodies qualities of a unique contemporary pilgrimage place – a transnational convergence zone of diffuse travellers and native occupants, who engage with and construct diverse and often contrasting meanings regarding aspects of the place and what has transpired there. These include Indigenous heritage, traditional practices, spiritual tourism, and the formation of the ‘gringo community’. As well as being drawn to Pisac for healing experiences with ayahuasca, or to engage with Andean traditions that have been incorporated into mystical tourism practices, for example, many participants felt that the Sacred Valley was a special place. In chapter two, Javier referred to the surrounding environment as ‘powerful place, a place with a lot of medicine’. Employing various New Age terms, such as ‘vortex’ or ‘earth chakra’, some participants felt that the Sacred Valley was a ‘power spot’, a ‘mystical’ and high energy place. Kerry, for example, referred to it as a ‘*beyul*’, a term she said is used in the Himalayas to refer to ‘spiritually special’ or ‘multidimensional’ places.

This kind of deeply felt imagining of the Sacred Valley by spiritual seekers was similarly articulated by Lonely Planet’s description of Pisac as an ‘Andean Shangri-La’ in chapter five. Yet, as examined by scholars such as Hill (2005) and Levy (2007), these ‘utopic’ and often

romanticised idealisations, contrast and contend with the ‘dystopic’ realities that living in such places inevitably includes. As this thesis has shown, Pisac distinctly reflects, as ‘tourist sites’ often do, inherent inequalities that are not only contingent at the local level, as examined regarding contestation in the Andes in chapter two, but as exemplified in the stark disparities between foreigners ‘on the move’ and the majority of ‘locals’, who comparatively speaking have far less mobility. Pisac is an example of how tourist places are remade and reimagined to meet the desires, perhaps even demands, one might say, of those who visit there, but also how these diverse cohorts of people remake such places in doing so. This is a salient point given the emergence of the transient ‘gringo community’, and the way Pisac has become a centre for spiritual seekers, described by Javier as the ‘new Rishikesh’.

Formations of ayahuasca neoshamanism in Pisac have been described as occurring in a ritualised context, as examined in Javier’s medicine retreat. This was considered a liminal event in terms of ritual ordeal, being distinctly separated out, spatially, temporally, and indeed as relating to the non-ordinary elements that defined it. Javier’s discursive framing was shown to be oriented around personalisation and an emphasis on participants’ biographies, setting ceremonial intentions, and supporting them in making sense out of the often-otherworldly aspects of their ceremonial experiences. *Communitas* was viewed as a significant aspect of the collective experience of the retreat. It not only emerged organically through interpersonal interactions within this unique liminal space, but was part of Javier’s strategic discourse that framed the ritual events on non-hierarchical terms, towards mutuality, and in supporting broader healing experiences for participants. Described as encompassing a psychospiritual approach, Javier’s retreat was noted for engaging in an animistic worldview, discursively framing the ritual events in context of an animate landscape, and as engaging with agentic plant spirits through the process of dieting a master plant. These ontological features were also reflected in the ceremonies that participants attended, as discussed in the group integration meetings held the following morning.

Perceptions of ayahuasca healing have been shown to extend beyond the ritual sphere of a retreat or ceremony, understood by shamans and participants alike as an ongoing ‘process’ of ‘integration’ that continues afterwards in everyday life. On these terms, the liminal events ascribed to ayahuasca pilgrimage in this thesis cannot be seen as the sole locus of the healing experience. Instead, findings reveal how ayahuasca healing is understood as a ‘process’ that requires individual effort and responsibility towards enacting personal change, otherwise

discussed as, ‘doing the work’. Thus, ayahuasca pilgrims’ desires for otherworldly or non-ordinary experiences that have been critiqued as a form of ‘drug dilettantism’ (Dobkin de Rios 1994), cannot be simply reduced to touristic whim or a fleeting and romanticised form of escapism. While indeed such critiques remain relevant, equally taking seriously participants’ views that the ‘real work’ or ‘real ceremony’ begins afterwards, acknowledges how liminal ritual experiences have farther reaching implications for the lives of those who participate in them.

The emphasis given to individual responsibility by shamans and participants alike, has been examined through a consideration of what Wacquant (2009, p. 308) referred to as the neoliberal ‘cultural trope of individual responsibility’. Ayahuasca integration discourses and related strategies were shown to be oriented around self-empowerment and a personalised approach towards enacting change in small and everyday ways. These ideas correspond with similar findings of McClean (2005) and Broom (2009) regarding CAM and spiritual healing, yet equally, it was noted that there are potential pitfalls in oversimplifying spiritual healing on these terms. This pertains to shamans or participants involved potentially embodying neoliberal victim-blaming ideologies and tendencies towards disempowering discourse. Furthermore, structural forces may inhibit personal agency or reframe an individual’s empowered mind set once they return to regular social life, where they will likely engage in medical pluralistic health seeking practices and contend with broader social determinants of health. Given the emphasis on ayahuasca integration, which is ultimately seen as an ongoing process, and the most important part of working with plant medicines according to participants, healing does not occur in a ritual vacuum, and may present various challenges when participants return to social life.

Outside of the ritual events and discourses of personal healing and integration that are so central to the lives of ayahuasca pilgrims, this thesis has also examined the various implications of their collective and individual presence in Pisac. Adopting the view that pilgrimages cannot be limited to marginality or be reduced to assessing qualities of *communitas*, for example, the concept of ‘contestation’ has been applied as a starting point from which to describe and analyse perceived tensions, misunderstandings, and the sense of cultural differences that arise due to the growth of the gringo community, and as relating to spiritual tourism.

The personal narratives of Diane Dunn and Diego Palma offered insight into their unique roles within their respective fields of spiritual tourism, and equally demonstrated the often-uncomfortable implications of their positions as entrepreneurs and practitioners within such fields. Diane and Diego's narrative accounts were noted for their sincerity in articulating what they do and why they do it. They were also described as pioneering ayahuasca pilgrims in Pisac, with many others going on to follow in their footsteps. Analysis of their personal narratives revealed how they appealed to multiple instantiations of authenticity, explored through objectivist, constructivist, and existential types. Diane's narrative revealed how she primarily relied on objectivist appeals to the authentic Other, as discussed regarding Regis and the Inca guide, for example. Diego, on the other hand, was shown to reject his earlier seeking out of the authentic Other, as discussed in terms of 'Don Juan', and instead located his own 'truth' in existential terms of the authentic self. Despite their appeals to authenticity, and their sincere intentions, their emplacement as practitioners and entrepreneurs was seen to raise critical issues regarding cultural appropriation, essentialism, hybridised practices, and the ensuing creation of an entrepreneurial ecosystem (Peluso 2017) in Pisac, reflecting inequalities, and at times, the exclusion of locals. While authentic for those involved, such issues are reflective of the broader context of contestation in Pisac and extending to Cusco and the Sacred Valley, as similarly identified in places like Iquitos in the Peruvian Amazon. In Pisac, such practices reflect extant inequalities and tensions in terms of Indigenous heritage and identity, and more specifically as relating to traditional practices that form the basis for local cultural and spiritual tourism of which foreigners and non-locals are actively engaged in and benefit from.

The final chapter of this thesis explored themes of contestation, identified through discussions with members of the gringo community, and several non-local Peruvians. Described as a heterotopia, the gringo community in Pisac was shown to be 'distinctly liminoidal' (St John 1999) given its ambivalent position, situated somewhere in-between the 'utopic' elements of niche spiritual tourism practices, and what has been identified as the 'dystopic' realities of everyday life (Levy 2007). Although perceived as a counter-site of alternative ideology and at times interpersonal intimacy that arises out of shared interests in plant medicines and healing, for example, the gringo community was shown to be heterogenous and contested. Especially pertinent was the way that gringos contended with their own emplacement as outsiders in relation to 'locals'. Themes of contestation were explored in terms of tensions, inequalities,

and cultural differences that gringos perceived regarding evident social divisions between themselves and members of the local community.

Participants in this chapter were shown to be critically reflective about their individual and collective presence in Pisac, revealing a discursive moral economy that was particularly apparent when discussing other gringos and the negative implications of inappropriate and inconsiderate behaviour. Regarding the local community, gringos were acutely aware of perceived inequalities and a sense of cultural difference, which many saw as creating a chasm. Chris' view that gringos and locals lived in 'two worlds' summed up the sense of separation that many similarly contended with yet struggled to find solutions for. On these terms, gringos' moral economy was not only about legitimating their emplacement, but about mitigating contestation. Their awareness of inequalities and cross-cultural misunderstandings only seemed to reaffirm differences, rather than foster social integration. Some gringos displayed a discursive orientalism in how they made sense out of these perceived differences, equally making assumptions about locals while in turn seemingly defining themselves in contradistinction. As such, members of the gringo community, and as extending to non-locals (as several of them admitted) remained outsiders, living somewhere in-between the 'real' and 'unreal' in Pisac.

Ayahwasca pilgrimage can be seen to oscillate between what Turner referred to as 'structure' and 'antistructure', a journey inhabited by liminal ritual moments including *communitas* and extending to the contested social sphere outside of such events. On similar terms, Turner (1969, p. 97) referred to social life as a 'dialectical process that involves successive experiences of high and low, *communitas* and structure, homogeneity and differentiation, equality and inequality'. Yet as shown throughout this thesis, living in Pisac also elicited a sense of the 'distinctly liminoidal' (St John 1999), a kind of 'quasi-liminal' (Turner & Turner 1978, p. 253) experience. Ayahuasca pilgrimage is in part defined by the individual pursuit of personal healing with plant medicines, yet it is a journey brought about through the mechanisms of global travel and achieved through the infrastructure of tourism, with diffuse meanings and implications for those engaging in such experiences, including for those without such means to equally do so.

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