

# **When Culture is for Sale: Tourism and Indigenous Identity in the Andean and Amazonian Regions of Peru**

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## **Abstract**

This thesis, titled “When Culture is for Sale: Tourism and Indigenous Identity in the Andean and Amazonian Regions of Peru,” examines the effects of tourism on indigenous communities in Peru. I explore this issue in the context of the Andean and Amazonian regions of Peru examining Machu Picchu Sanctuary, Cuzco, and Iquitos. In particular, I address UNESCO heritage designation in the Andean region, and the performance of indigeneity and ayahuasca tourism in the Amazonian region. Throughout this work, I compare the ways that indigenous cultures interact with tourism, and tourism interacts with indigenous culture.

I use the advertisements of Marca Peru and their depiction of indigenous culture as a framework for understanding indigenous tourism in Peru. While there are certain trends that connect different forms of indigenous tourism throughout Peru, I elaborate the distinctions in indigenous tourism in these areas focusing on the different levels of regulation of tourism and the participation of indigenous communities. I also examine the varying levels of autonomy that indigenous communities hold over their participation, paying close attention to the reproduction and representation of indigenous cultures within the tourism industry. Throughout this work, I address the issues of cultural commodification, cultural appropriation, and the romanticization of indigenous culture.

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## **Introduction**

My idea for this thesis topic took root during my junior year while taking a class titled “Critical Approaches to Spanish Literature” in Buenos Aires, Argentina, when our professor assigned a travel chronicle about the indigenous village Quebrada de Humahuaca in Northwestern Argentina. From that assignment, I learned that ever since gaining UNESCO heritage status, the village has not been permitted to change or modernize in any way. One particular statement by Martín Capparós, the author of the chronicle, was striking to me: “Tourism is curious: in order for the tourists to keep coming the villages have to be maintained in this state, they can’t develop in any manner. Thus, tourists bring money, but this money is destined to mummify the village” (Capparós 378).<sup>i</sup> This quotation has remained in the forefront of my mind throughout my thesis-writing process because I believe it eloquently explains one of the main issues that arises from indigenous tourism—the gap between the lifestyle and culture that tourists expect to see, and the lifestyle and culture that indigenous communities actually live.

About a month after reading this chronicle, I travelled to Cuzco and Machu Picchu on spring break. It was an incredible experience, but I spent a significant amount of the trip feeling uncomfortable. The first source of discomfort for me was the obvious level of poverty among the indigenous community, in contrast to the wealth of the tourists. I frequently saw tourists haggling with Quechua-speaking women with babies strapped to their backs for a lower price on a hand-made souvenir that was already outrageously cheap. My second source of discomfort was the imagery used to represent Inca culture. Machu Picchu Pueblo is filled with Inca-themed restaurants and shops which essentialize the culture through images of headdress-wearing Incas next to depictions of Inti, the Inca sun god. I actually felt like I was visiting an Inca-themed amusement park. The crowning moment for me happened during the train ride back from Machu Picchu, when the two attendants were required to dress up in “traditional Inca festival costumes”

and dance back and forth through the train as tourists laughed and took photos. My own discomfort with myself as a tourist led me to explore the ways in which indigenous communities are affected by tourism with the aim of encouraging responsible tourism and increasing my own awareness of the impact I have had on the communities I have visited.

While I decided to focus on Peru due to the scope of indigenous tourism there, this topic is relevant on a global scale. This thesis addresses the interactions that take place between tourism and indigenous culture in Peru, with a particular focus on cultural commodification, performance, and indigenous autonomy. I examine how identity is exploited, building on the historical devaluing of indigenous cultures, which has evolved into a tourism-based form of commercialization. This issue is not as simple as to say that indigenous populations are being exploited, and that this exploitation is a continuation of colonial times. There are very complex social processes underway through which indigenous populations are exploited and marginalized, but also maintain autonomy over their communities.

### Methodology

The research for this thesis was performed through the analysis of both primary and secondary sources, as well as research undertaken or conducted during my travels. At times, the line was blurred in my own positioning as a tourist versus a researcher. I traveled to Cuzco and Machu Picchu in April 2015, before I knew I would be writing this thesis. Thus, my observations from this trip were largely from the point of view of a tourist, although I have returned to examine these observations through an analytical framework. In January 2016, I travelled to Iquitos Peru on a research trip. During this trip I was very much positioned as a researcher; all of my activities were directed at research, but I still participated in these activities as any other tourist would—visiting an indigenous village with a tour group, going on guided tours of markets and

museums, and immersing myself in the local tourism scene. My observations from these trips, as well as photographs and conversations with both tourists and locals, played a major role in shaping my understanding of the effects of tourism on indigenous communities in Peru.

### Important Terms

Throughout this thesis I use the term “indigenous” to describe any person whose heritage is native to the Americas, but with awareness that this is not a term that all people who fit into this group accept; the term has been imposed on populations by colonizers, but it does not reflect any accepted unity within the group. I use the term indigenous to imply that a person’s heritage is native to the Americas, but it will not refer to any one culture or set of beliefs. In the course of my research I have studied many different indigenous groups within Peru who will be differentiated accordingly in this thesis.

I use the term “heritage” to mean any historical process, idea, tradition or belief which forms an important part of the identity of a group. I discuss many different and intersecting forms of heritage on a scale from international to community heritage. I use the term “cultural tourism” to indicate tourism which is driven by tourists’ desire to interact with a foreign culture, and “indigenous tourism” to indicate tourism which is driven by tourists’ desire to interact with indigenous culture. “Heritage tourism” indicates tourism which is driven by the tourists’ desire to visit a UNESCO heritage site. I use the terms “cultural tourism” and “indigenous tourism” interchangeably throughout this thesis because the tourism niches I address are characterized by interaction with indigenous culture, but “heritage tourism” is only applicable to Chapter One of this thesis.

The terms “value/valuing” and “devaluing” are used to express the processes of both the inclusion and marginalization of indigenous cultures throughout history. “Value/valuing”

indicates an understanding of the complexities, and history of, indigenous cultures. “Devaluing” refers to the over-simplification, exploitation, or exclusion of indigenous cultures. These terms will not take on a monetary/economic meaning within my work. For example, I will at times refer to the process of the commodification of indigenous identity as a “devaluing” of that identity. I am referring to the process of exploiting that identity, rather than the commercial process of giving it a monetary value. “Commodification” is another term which I use extensively to indicate a process by which something that generally cannot be “owned,” or has such intrinsic value to a society or group of people that it cannot be bought or sold, is transformed into a product that can be purchased.

### Theoretical Framework

Throughout this work I refer to David Lowenthal’s work “The Past is a Foreign Country” in which he argues that Western culture, and I say white Western culture, has a very complex relationship with the past. Western cultures, he asserts, crave the past because they view it as a simpler and more “colorful” time. This theory very easily translates to tourism, as one way that Lowenthal explains one can visit the past is through tourism. Elaborating on Lowenthal’s theory I argue that indigenous communities are viewed as relics of the past—tiny enclaves of society that have never modernized or developed. While this is an entirely unfair evaluation of indigenous communities, it is unfortunately an ideology which dominated the indigenous tourism industry in Peru.

The first chapter of this thesis addresses the advertising campaigns of Marca Perú, an outlet of Peru’s Commission for Tourism and Exportations that advertises tourism through both national and international advertising campaigns. The repercussions of the campaign’s focus on



highlighting luxury travel, as well as their use of overly-simplified images of indigenous cultures, truly reflects the reality of indigenous tourism in Peru.

Chapter two elaborates on the effect that UNESCO Heritage status has on the indigenous inhabitants of Machu Picchu Sanctuary and Cusco. UNESCO's ideology is central to this chapter, and I use the work of Geoffrey Belcher's "Values in World Heritage Sites," which offers an overview of the requirements to gain UNESCO heritage status. Belcher also makes a deep critique of UNESCO, arguing that their assertion that heritage sites are universally valuable to all of humanity removes autonomy from the communities that these sites belong to.

Chapters three and four dissect two different elements of tourism in the Peruvian Amazon: organized visits to indigenous villages and the consumption of the hallucinogenic drug Ayahuasca. In chapter three I discuss Peter Berger's work "'Sincerity' and 'Authenticity'" in which he elaborates the theory of Lionel Trillings. Berger and Lionel examine the importance of sincerity and authenticity in Western society, arguing that as society has developed, the idea of the individual has come into increasing tension with modern society. Opposition between society and self drives individuals to seek authenticity outside of the restrictions of their own society. According to this work, sincerity comes from the fulfillment of predetermined social roles, and authenticity comes from what individuals find outside of these roles.

Another theory which I apply to my analysis of indigenous tourism in the Amazonian region of Peru is Erik Cohen's theory of the "quest for authenticity." Cohen asserts that both tourists as well as academics who study the tourism industry, are overly concerned with ideas of authenticity. He argues that tourism studies thus far have relied too much on assumptions about the relationship between tourists, the tourism industry, and authenticity.

## Race and Indigeneity in Peru and Latin America

Social Anthropologist Peter Wade discusses the perception of indigenous people in colonial Latin America in his book “Race and Ethnicity in Latin America.” He describes the two prominent representations of indigenous people as a binary, between “noble or ignorant savages.” Indigenous populations were seen as culturally, but not necessarily racially, inferior. Although “Indian” was an institutionalized identity which the government used to label people who lived an indigenous lifestyle, Wade explains that this identity was flexible in the sense that indigenous people could alter their institutional identity by integrating into Spanish American culture. The Spanish colonial government converted the word “indigenous” into an institutionalized identity used as a political label for Native South Americans who lived together in villages surviving off of sustenance farming, spoke their native languages rather than Spanish, and participated in cultural traditions different from those of the Spanish colonizers. This label was used to determine various policies and laws about rights to land, marriage, and social and legal status (Wade 28). The institutionalization of “indigenous” as an inferior culture laid the foundation for societies that devalue indigenous identity by promoting integration into a more modern and westernized lifestyle. Although colonial governments believed that indigenous populations were culturally inferior, *mestizaje*, or the intermixing of the indigenous people with those of Spanish descent, quickly served to undermine a strict racial hierarchy. Wade writes, “The main meaning of this term (*mestizaje*) is sexual mixture, but implied is the spatial mixture of peoples and the interchange of cultural elements, resulting in mixed and new cultural forms (Wade 28). From the early stages of colonialism, the Spanish government established a racial hierarchy that was flexible for indigenous people, while still being oppressive. Indigenous populations throughout South America have suffered a history of cultural discrimination and

racism based on a political structure that labeled them as inferior and attempted to force them into altering their traditions and lifestyles.

### The *Indigenismo* Movement

In the 1920s a political movement known as “*indigenismo*” began to take root in Peru. This movement was part of the Aprista political party headed by Víctor Raúl Haya de la Torre. As a student in Cuzco starting in 1917, Haya began to develop his political ideology which was founded in a rejection of United States interventionism, agrarian reform, and universal human rights with a particular focus on the oppression of indigenous communities. From 1923 to 1931, Haya was exiled from Peru for his outward speech against Augusto Leguía’s government. Haya spent the majority of those years in Mexico City, and it was during that time that he founded the Aprista (APRA) party (Davies 626-631). In 1923 he wrote:

I can’t recall the Indian of Peru without saying a word of protest and accusation. Those who have seen our Andean solitudes will have seen those great masses of sad, ragged, and melancholy *campesinos* who carry the burdens of four hundred years of slavery on their shoulders (Davies 628).

Then, in 1925 he wrote:

I am sure that in Peru no one will be able to achieve rehabilitation, renovation, or justice without fundamentally facing the economic problem of our Indian, the great base of our exploited class, who is the worker, the soldier, the producer, and the backbone of the nation. Because of that I consider the Indian problem of Peru basic and believe that our revolutionary action ought to orient itself toward it with seriousness and energy (Davies 628).

Although his language is both anachronistic and paternalistic, Torres’ thinking represents a shift in political ideology in Peru. During this time, the struggle and oppression of indigenous communities since colonialism began to take a more central role in Peruvian political discourse. In 1931, Haya ran for president, but was beaten. He never became president of Peru,

but he maintained his role as the leader of the Aprista party which remains popular today<sup>ii</sup> (Davies 634-645). I have outlined a very brief history of the founding of the Aprista party; while the details of the party's extended history in Peru are far too complex for this introduction to cover, what I aimed to show is the formation of a framework for a shift in the ideology of indigenous inclusion in Peru. Peter Wade discusses how in colonial Latin America indigenous communities were encouraged to adapt Spanish colonial culture and language, but the Aprista movement was the beginning of a shift away from assimilationist rhetoric and policies. This political party marks the beginning of a stage of "revaluing" indigenous identity. This thesis will address the specific results of this revaluing of indigenous culture through the lens of tourism.

### The Struggle for Land Ownership

From 1968 to 1975, General Juan Velasco governed Peru under a military government. In 1969, he began an agrarian reform that instituted government run agricultural camps rather than redistributing land to indigenous peasants. This reform incited great social tensions and violence. The impacts of the reform continue to be seen today in the rural Andean indigenous communities' struggle for land ownership. As part of this reform in the 1970s, Peasant Community Laws were instituted to help protect residents of the newly formed autonomous agrarian communities. In order to be protected under these laws, peasants had to officially register as *campesino* (peasant) versus indigenous (Minority Rights).<sup>iii</sup> In chapter two I will examine political and identity issues which remain in the Andean region today as a result of this legislation and relocation of Andean indigenous peasants.

The years of 1980 to 2000 were extremely volatile in Peru. A communist insurgency group known as the Shining Path waged a guerilla war against the Peruvian government. Poor rural communities that were often ethnically indigenous were caught in the crossfire between the

Shining Path and the Peruvian Government. Both the government and the Shining Path abducted and murdered rural peasants believed to have ties to the other group. Although there is no final number, the Peruvian Truth and Reconciliation Committee estimates at least 61,000 people were murdered or disappeared during these twenty years. Of the 61,000 people who were murdered and disappeared, 75% were Quechua speakers indicating indigenous Andean ethnicity. 68% of those who were killed and disappeared did not have a secondary education. The atrocities committed against indigenous communities during these years remain a tainted and painful part of Peruvian national memory—especially for poor and indigenous communities in the region of Ayacucho (Minority Rights).

Today, indigenous communities are a powerful political force across Peru. In the 1970s, Amazonian indigenous communities began forming political federations to protest against oil company invasions and mistreatment of their lands, and to demand land titles from the government (Minority Rights). Although indigenous political groups in the Amazon have had success in negotiating with the government, interactions have been marked by violence. In 2009, dozens (some estimations go up to 40) of indigenous protesters were killed by police when a protest over oil and mining projects in the Bagua region escalated.<sup>iv</sup> In March 2016, a group of activists from the Wampis community of the Mayuriaga region of the Peruvian Amazon seized a grounded military helicopter and took eight government officials captive. About a month earlier a PetroPeru pipeline in the region had cracked spilling a thousand barrels of oil across Mayuriaga. The government did not include the Wampis on a list of communities that were affected by the spill and would receive state aid.<sup>v</sup> Although these are just two examples of indigenous political activity in Peru, they serve to demonstrate both the political activism of indigenous communities and the continued violence, exclusion and oppression that they face. All

across Peru, indigenous communities are actively protesting the government's treatment and neglect.

### Socioeconomic and Political Placement of Indigenous Communities in Peru

In 2007, the Peruvian government conducted the very first census of indigenous communities. This is the first time that the government acknowledged the diversity of indigenous ethnic groups in Peru, instead of lumping them all under one category. The census distinguishes 60 indigenous ethnic groups within Peru and presents information from 51 of these groups. Census information was not recorded for nine of these ethnic groups because they are either uncontacted communities from which the Peruvian government could not gather data, or ethnic groups that have dispersed and merged with other communities. These 51 ethnic groups live in 1,786 communities throughout eleven regions of Peru and speak thirteen different languages. The census also notes that an indigenous person can belong to more than one ethnic group due to the prominence of intermarriage between groups. Only 5.5% of indigenous households have access to public water service, 86.2% do not have electricity, and 36.6% do not have any type of hygienic service (either out-house or toilet). Access to education and health services are two of the greatest challenges for the indigenous communities of Peru. Only 28.7% of indigenous people Peru-wide reach secondary school (high-school equivalent), and this percentage falls dramatically in the Amazon region. The percentage also drops in correlation with the size of the community, with small rural communities tending to have the lowest number of inhabitants reaching secondary school. Finally, 46.5% of the indigenous population does not have any form of health insurance (Peru). While indigenous communities have made great political and socioeconomic strides, poverty and access to public services remains a significant challenge. The table below shows the number of indigenous people in each of the eleven regions of Peru.

**CUADRO N° 1.2**  
**POBLACIÓN TOTAL EN LAS COMUNIDADES INDÍGENAS, POR SEXO,**  
**SEGÚN DEPARTAMENTO**

Departamento	Total	Sexo		
		Total	Hombres	Mujeres
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>332 975</b>	<b>100,0</b>	<b>52,2</b>	<b>47,8</b>
AMAZONAS	52 153	100,0	50,0	50,0
AYACUCHO	231	100,0	54,5	45,5
CAJAMARCA	988	100,0	49,8	50,2
CUSCO	15 230	100,0	51,2	48,8
HUÁNUCO	2 594	100,0	53,6	46,4
JUNÍN	73 637	100,0	52,7	47,3
LORETO	105 900	100,0	52,7	47,3
MADRE DE DIOS	4 005	100,0	54,5	45,5
PASCO	16 414	100,0	52,6	47,4
SAN MARTÍN	21 416	100,0	52,4	47,6
UCAYALI	40 407	100,0	52,4	47,6

Fuente: INEI - Censos Nacionales 2007: XI de Población y VI de Vivienda  
Fuente: INEI - II Censo de Comunidades Indígenas de la Amazonía Peruana 2007

Figure 1: “Population Total in the Indigenous Communities, by Sex and Department”

Source: [https://www.inei.gob.pe/media/MenuRecursivo/publicaciones\\_digitales/Est/Lib0789/Libro.pdf](https://www.inei.gob.pe/media/MenuRecursivo/publicaciones_digitales/Est/Lib0789/Libro.pdf)

In the past eighty years there has been a noticeable shift in the placement of indigenous communities in Peru. In chapter one, I explore how Marca Peru’s advertising campaigns indicate that indigenous culture and heritage are now seen as a source of national pride and identity, but has the placement of indigenous communities in Peruvian society actually improved? While indigenous communities have extraordinary political power and are able to maintain an impressive level of autonomy over their cultures, I will argue throughout this work that as seen through the tourism industry, the reemergence of a collective national identity based in indigenous culture frequently serves to oppress and restrict indigenous communities.

While indigenous culture is now granted inclusion in the national identity, it is done so with extreme restrictions. Presently, instead of being told that they must integrate into Spanish colonial culture, indigenous Peruvians are encouraged to maintain traditional cultural practices, dress and language for the purpose of entertaining tourists. Communities that choose to adopt

more modern and westernized customs are robbed of recognition of their indigenous heritage and excluded from inclusion in the tourism industry. Tourism has also imposed itself on many communities that do not wish to participate in it, often exasperating social and economic issues as we will see in the case of the Machu Picchu *campesinos*. Tourism has the ability to be a powerful tool for cross-cultural interactions that bring people from across the world into valuable conversations with one another, but it also raises important questions about the power dynamics that are implied when tourists come into contact with communities that have historically been marginalized and oppressed. This thesis will address the complex nuances of these interactions and their implications for indigenous communities in the Andean and Amazonian regions of Peru



## **Chapter One: Marca Perú- The Role of Indigeneity in Global Peruvian Identity**

In 2009, Peru's Commission for Tourism and Exportations took on a new project; they decided to brand their country. The goal of the brand was to promote tourism, investment and exports. The brand's logo started as the name of the country, "Peru," in red script, but in 2011 the logo changed to the name of the country in white script over a red background. The head of the "P" is swirled into multiple loops, a design that can frequently be found in traditional Inca motifs. The brand's slogan is "Whatever you need is now in Peru" (The Peru Brand). In this chapter I will analyze the advertising campaigns of Marca Perú, paying particular attention to how the campaigns attempt to construct a narrative of national identity. Although Marca Perú has released many ads, I will focus on three specific campaigns that gained the most international attention: the 2011 International Launch Campaign, the 2012 Empire of Hidden Treasures Campaign, and the 2015 #MásPeruanoQue Campaign. All three of these campaigns have received international recognition.



Figure 2: Original Logo

Source: [www.marcaperu.com](http://www.marcaperu.com)



Figure 3: New Logo

Source: [www.marcaperu.com](http://www.marcaperu.com)

## Marca Perú- Branding a Nation

In his essay “Nation-brands of the Twenty-First Century,” Simon Anholt introduced the term “nation-brand” to mean the characteristics that consumers associate with different nations (Anholt 396). He describes the idea of “provenance as a brand attribute” which means that consumers associate different nations with certain products, so companies will work with national heritage to strengthen their brands (Anholt 396-397). According to the Marca Perú website mission statement, the Peruvian government did not think that Peru’s “brand” was working to bring in tourists or promote investment in the country, and thus Marca Perú was born—an international campaign to create positive associations with Peru (Prom Perú). According to Anholt, successful nation-brands for developing countries should be “richly embedded in global culture and history” as related to the global marketplace (Anholt 404). Anholt argues that in order for a developing nation-brand to be successful, the country must distinguish itself internationally to compete for the same group of consumers. One way to do this is by bridging the gap between the local and the global for consumers. This means that the nation brand should emphasize the role that their culture and history play in the global marketplace now (Anholt 404). Throughout this chapter, we will see how Marca Perú emphasizes local culture within a global framework to market Peru to international tourists. While “brand” is a term that is usually applied to marketing, I argue that in the case of Marca Perú, the “nation-brand” is analogous with national identity. The project unabashedly markets Peru and its image both internationally and nationally. Through the Marca Perú program, Peru has attempted to construct a coherent and appealing national identity (for both foreigners and Peruvians). While many themes will appear in their advertisements, images of indigeneity are consistently present.

The idea of branding a country poses many complex questions. National identity is often considered sacred because it is so closely tied to the culture, language, religion and values of a country. National identity is also a contested ideal, rather than a reality, which most commonly reflects only a chosen minority of the country it is supposed to represent. Through the analysis of the PromPerú advertisements created for the Marca Perú campaign we will see that the national identity they sell reproduces simplified identities, specifically indigenous identities, in order to commodify them for tourist consumption. The simplification of indigenous identities in Marca Perú's marketing materials is seen through their repeated use of images of smiling indigenous people wearing traditional clothing. In their advertisements, indigenous people only serve an aesthetic purpose—they are there to be viewed, but they do not participate in the plot. According to Helaine Silverman, an Anthropologist at the University of Illinois, the trend of commodifying culture and identity can be seen around the world and reflects a “global culture supermarket” where culture is no longer shaped by people, but by the state and the market (Silverman 132). By branding their country, the Peruvian government is telling the world that their culture is for sale—they are literally marketing their people, their cultures, and their people's identities for global consumption through tourism. This raises important questions about the autonomy of culture and representations. Whose culture is being sold?

The Marca Perú website explains the concept of a country brand in the following way: “Countries compete with each other to attract tourists and investors and to increase the demand for their products and services. And a key competitive advantage for achieving both of those is a strong, positive country brand, particularly when you want the target audience to remember your country.” It continues, “Everyone's experience of Peru adds something to our reputation, and it is important that these experiences are gratifying and unique” (What is a Country Brand). Peru has

created a brand and a business model for their country. These descriptions make it clear that the brand is not about Peruvians—it is about the international market and how foreigners perceive the country. One of the most interesting aspects of this campaign is that it does not try to hide its intentions; the campaign states that they are branding Peru in their mission statement and their name, “Marca Perú,” translates to “Peru Brand.” This technique helps to highlight the innovation of the campaign, and the progressive and creative qualities of the country. Marca Perú seeks to engage directly with Peruvians to represent the diversity in the country even while developing a cohesive story of national identity (Silverman 141). Despite this admirable goal, two out of three of Marca Perú’s three most popular advertising campaigns (International Launch Campaign and Empire of Hidden Treasures) rely on essentialized identities of Peruvians that romanticize Inca culture and indigeneity. According to Silverman, Marca Perú’s International Launch Campaign video went viral on the internet the day it was released (Silverman 139). The Empire of Hidden Treasures campaign reached 245 million people through internet and television advertising, and had 200,000 YouTube views in the first week alone (Peru, Empire of Hidden Treasures). Finally, the #MásPeruanoQue series of advertisements have each reached well over a million views on YouTube, with the #MásPeruanoQue El Ají de Gallina reaching over two million views.

#### International Launch Campaign

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sTUi3JTURys>

The launch of the Marca Perú campaign was accompanied by the release of their first advertisement. The advertisement relies on narrative and strong emotions to present Peru as a desirable tourist destination. It begins with an image of an attractive middle aged man sitting in a dreary futuristic office. His secretary walks in and he grumbles,

“What part of I’m busy don’t you understand?”

“Excuse me”, the secretary responds, “An urgent package has arrived.”

“Urgent? Who is it from?” replies the man who is becoming increasingly annoyed.

“You from twenty years ago” she says then walks out (Marca Perú).

The man takes the package and unwraps the simple brown paper wrapping. Inside is an intricately carved wooden box containing a flash drive. He lays the drive on top of his futuristic desk and casts a video onto the wall. A younger version of himself appears on the screen standing above Machu Picchu, with scruffy hair, a beard and an ear piercing. The man’s expression immediately changes from one of annoyance to joy, and a big smile spreads across his face. His younger video version says “As I know you, or rather as I know myself, we may have forgotten a few things that we learned during this summer. So I’ve decided to record this video to remind you of them” (Marca Perú). The young man in the video now takes his future self on a two-minute journey through his time in Peru. The prominent themes are adventure and friendship. He rides on the back of a motorcycle through the dirt roads of a colorful villages, then pushes aside branches as he hikes through the forest. “Remember the time when we were travelers, not tourists?” he asks his future self as a Peru Rail train drives by. “When we were drawn by curiosity not by a book, when we didn’t need to make plans to have a good night” the voice over continues as the young man is depicted sitting in a crowded cafeteria surrounded by Peruvians with dark skin and clothes that indicate a low economic class. “You remember” he asserts, as he rocks in a hammock under the sun, then sits outside his tent in the midst of a desert. “If you’re happy turn this video off” the young man says while his future self remains glued to the screen, “ahh I see you’re still there!” He places headphones over the ears of a smiling indigenous man wearing a brightly patterned hat and playing guitar, and throws corn in his mouth while surrounded by indigenous women in traditional rural peasant clothing at a market. He plays soccer with young children and sits with an indigenous father and son wearing traditional Andean indigenous clothing as they perform a ritual. The music

emphasizes emotion as he describes his journey and all the lessons learned. “Wherever you are in twenty years’ time, or rather wherever we are, remember when we came to Peru,” he concludes. The man looks at the screen with an expression of peace and joy then calls his wife and says “Darling, have you ever been to Peru?” The commercial ends with the Marca Perú logo and their catchphrase “Whatever you need is now in Peru” (Marca Perú).

What is most striking about this video is the way that it constructs Peruvian national identity through the eyes of a foreigner. The young man is not just a tourist he is a “traveler” who is *living* Peru and learning from it. The video uses images of indigeneity to construct a Peruvian national identity for international consumers. The Peruvians pictured are all dark skinned, and the majority wear traditional clothing, while the travelers pictured are all white westerners. Although the advertisement constructs an image of Peruvian identity, the video is not about Peru, it is about how foreigners can expect to experience it. The man in the video is also shown participating in a variety of activities that would not be included in the typical tourist experience—he plays soccer with local children, shares music with an indigenous man, and laughs with women at the market. All of this aims to transform Peru into a unique tourist destination where travelers will have the opportunity to interact in meaningful ways with the local population. Although the advertisement does show a diversity of geography, it fails to show this same diversity in the Peruvian people. Images of smiling indigenous people are used throughout as a representation of authentic Peruvian culture, but this constructs a one-sided interpretation of what is actually a very diverse culture and people.

## Empire of Hidden Treasures

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XzMFpRp5pYo>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7yKBwsN5ZlQ>

In 2012, Marca Perú released a two-part advertisement which went viral. The videos take the form of movie trailers which tell the story of the foundation of the Inca Empire (Silverman 144). This first video (English version) on YouTube has 170,288 views, the second part (English version) has well over a million. In 2012, the advertisements released in the United Kingdom, Chile, Canada, USA, Brazil, France, Germany, Spain and Italy. In 2013 it was released in Korea, China, Japan, Australia and Mexico (Peru, Empire of Hidden Treasures). Both videos start with a green screen and the announcement: “The following trailer has been approved for every traveler around the world by PromPerú” (Peru Empire of Hidden Treasures).<sup>vi</sup> Again, the campaign uses the word “traveler” instead of “tourist”. This is a very conscious choice which reflects the identity they are building for the country—one based on adventure, authenticity, and cross-cultural engagement. People who travel to Peru are not typical “tourists” visiting the same tired old tourist sites; they are adventurous travelers exploring and experiencing a distinct culture.

“Empire of Hidden Treasures- the Beginning” tells a historically inaccurate and cinematic tale of the foundation of the Inca Empire. The video relies on tropes of indigenous spirituality and magic more than history, referring to the foundation of the Inca Empire as a “magical legend.” The advertisement finishes by flashing through the faces of ancient “Incans” looking directly into the camera. Only one of the “Incans” in this video is female. The limited presence of females in this video reflects Marca Perú’s use of gender throughout their advertising. Campaigns focusing on adventure travel use male characters, such as the “International Launch Campaign.” “Empire of Hidden Treasures- the Beginning” focuses on the

drama of the evolution of the Inca Empire, replicating an action film, and thus it focuses on Incan men giving the impression that Incan women did not play an important role in this history. The voice-over states, “Peru, Empire of Hidden Treasures, 5,000 years of history still alive” and finishes with the campaign’s slogan “Don’t watch the movie. Live it for real” (Peru Empire of Hidden Treasures- The beginning). This video was much less popular than its “The Legacy” sequel, and later versions which combined the two videos cut most of its content. The difference in popularity between the two videos, according to Silverman, is likely due to the historical knowledge which is necessary to understand “Empire of Hidden Treasures- the Beginning,” even if it is inaccurate (Silverman 144). The difference in popularity between the two videos is striking. Like many other advertisements created by PromPerú and Marca Perú, the video reduces the identity of the nation to fictionalized images of the Inca Empire.

“Empire of Hidden Treasures- the Legacy” received much more attention. It begins in the same way as the “Beginning,” but this video tells the story of modern Peru through the lens of Inca influence. It begins with a cloudy aerial shot of Machu Picchu and the voice-over, “An ancestral culture chosen by gods to harbor one of the greatest civilizations in the history of mankind will come back to life on your next vacation.” Suddenly the camera zooms out of Machu Picchu and focuses on a white woman, clothed in a long white bathrobe, drinking coffee as she looks out the window of her hotel room over Machu Picchu. “Enjoy the highest level of comfort” the video states while showing images of luxury hotels, pools and spas. This advertisement, which promotes comfort and luxury, rather than adventure, highlights female travelers and couples. One wealthy tourist after another appears (all white except one Asian couple) enjoying “exquisite cuisine,” “comfortable transportation,” and “a breathtaking landscape filled with magic and fantasy.”



As in the previous two advertisements, the only Peruvians shown in this video are dressed in traditional indigenous Andean or Amazonian clothing. Adventure and authentic culture (i.e. indigenous culture) are again central themes, but this video emphasizes luxury above all else. “Travelers” can have all the adventure they crave, without giving up the comfort of their first-world lifestyle—interact with indigenous culture by day, and sleep in a four-star hotel by night. This advertisement suggests that the “legacy of the Incas” is luxury travel. The video finishes with the same slogan “Don’t watch the movie. Live it for real” (Peru Empire of Hidden Treasures- the Legacy). Once again, the Marca Perú campaign has used a combination of relics of ancient Inca civilization such as Machu Picchu, and modern indigenous Peruvians wearing traditional clothing, to create a narrative of national identity for international consumption.

Through these advertisements it is clear that Marca Perú is using the modern indigenous population to convince consumers that Inca culture is still alive. The first video promotes the history of the Inca Empire; the second video promotes the Inca Empire’s “legacy” as it relates to tourism. The legacy of the Inca’s in the second video is shown through modern indigenous people performing dances in traditional costumes, as well as the preserved art and architecture of the Inca Empires, such as Machu Picchu. The rest of the video is dominated by images of white tourists enjoying the luxury activities that Peru has to offer. While comfort and luxury is the focus of the video, the repeated appearance of indigenous people shows prospective tourists that indigenous culture will never be far away while they enjoy a luxury vacation in Peru, but why is indigenous culture so central to Marca Perú’s advertisements?

Historian David Lowenthal argues that western society always lived with a nostalgia for past times which reflects our relationship with the future: “The airy and insubstantial future may never arrive; man or nature may destroy humanity; time as we know it may end. By contrast, the

past is tangible and secure; people think of it as fixed, unalterable, indelibly recorded” (Lowenthal 4). Both of the “International Launch,” and the “Empire of Hidden Treasures” campaigns clearly target an affluent white audience. This is no coincidence—white society, and especially white males, is the demographic that feels nostalgia for the past most strongly. While it is impossible to argue why individual travelers are drawn to trips that allow them “travel back in time,” we can theorize that as socio-economic and racial dynamics continue to change in western society, it is the white demographic that will feel the most threatened by these changes. As the world becomes increasingly inclusive, the racial and gender dynamics that have positioned white men as the most important members of society for hundreds of years are being overturned, creating anxiety for some members of this demographic. The Marca Perú advertisements provide a fantasy of restored colonialism and white privilege dynamics.

Indigenous tourism is a way for Westerners who are nostalgic for the past to feel as if they are travelling back in time, but the culture that indigenous tourism sells is carefully constructed to appeal to tourists’ desires. As western culture and values continue to spread, tourists seek a travel experience that will put them in touch with an “authentic” culture. In the tourism industry, Indigenous communities are seen as relics of the past—indigenous Andeans are treated as fossilized Incans, rather than modern people, in order to fulfill tourists’ desire to relive the past. Inca relics such as Machu Picchu and other archeological sites are viewed as “authentic,” but indigenous Andeans dressed in westernized clothing and participating in modern society like all other humans, do not fit into tourists’ vision of Inca culture. Marca Perú’s advertisements rely on images of indigenous communities performing a version of indigenous culture that provides tourists with the feeling that they have left the modern world—indigenous Andeans are depicted wearing festival clothing and participating in traditional activities such as

weaving. I use the word “performing” to indicate that tourism encourages indigenous communities to embrace a more traditional identity, while their contemporary characteristics are ignored. Marca Perú advertisements depict performances of indigeneity, not contemporary indigenous culture, in order to market the “past” to tourists. These depictions fuel westerners’ romanticized fantasy about a colonial past. It is worth noting the irony in the fact that the Inca past that the tourism industry sells to westerners existed long before colonialism.

#MásPeruanoQue<sup>vii</sup>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1keQy7ruFWc>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iifTojDTXOc>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZDyphfgSSMg>

The most recent advertisement campaign of Marca Perú was launched in April 2013. Unlike both the “International Release” and “Empire of Hidden Treasures” campaigns, #MásPeruanoQue is aimed at domestic tourism (Peru Tourism). This reflects Marca Perú’s goal to build national pride around a cohesive narrative of Peruvian identity (Silverman 146). Unlike the previous advertisements we have looked at, the #MásPeruanoQue ads avoid outright depictions of indigenous culture, and work much more closely with cultural diversity. This campaign is a series of three ads, each of which tells the story of a foreigner who has embraced Peruvian culture. The purpose of this, according to a representative of the brand, is to “connect every Peruvian with our country and rekindle the pride in our culture, gastronomy, step horse and music” (Peru Tourism). This quotation provides the first clue to a shift in Marca Perú’s message about national identity in their national versus international campaigns. The insistence on cultural diversity, and foreign approval and adoption of Peruvian customs present a message of pluralism, rather than pride in Inca heritage.

The first ad, “#MásPeruanoQue El Ají de Gallina,” tells the story of a Puerto Rican man in Washington DC who sells Peruvian food from his food truck. Gastronomy is an attraction that the previous videos have all used to draw tourists, and now this ad seeks to show Peruvians how their food culture is valuable in the international market. The ad deals directly with diversity—the man is Puerto Rican, but living in the United States. He discusses the ethnic, racial and cultural diversity of DC inhabitants who he shares Peruvian food with. This video represents the cross-cultural interactions which Marca Perú seeks promote, while also creating a sense of national pride for Peruvians. The end of the video shows different English-speaking Americans trying Peruvian food from the truck and commenting on their experience. The voice-over tells Peruvians, “Peru is a big brand, and we are all invited to be ambassadors” (#MásPeruanoQue El Ají de Gallina). Although the video focuses on food, there is one detail which connects Peruvian culture back to Andean indigenous culture—the shoulders and cuffs of the chef’s coat are decorated with brightly colored fabric in the style of an indigenous weaving. This serves to remind Peruvians of indigenous heritage, and also to authenticate the culture by subtly referencing indigeneity. The stark white chef coat with the bright accents contrasts with the red food truck that looks like a fire engine—it is probable that this coat was given to the chef to use in the video because it works with the narrative of Peruvian identity that Marca Perú is constructing.

The next two videos work in the same way as the first—one shows a Panamanian woman who loves Peruvian Step Horses, the other a French man living in New York who plays “*chicha*” music—the Peruvian genre of cumbia. Instead of relying on reproduced images of “Inca heritage” and “contemporary indigeneity,” this national campaign constructs Peruvian identity in a wholly different way. The campaign draws out lesser-known aspects of Peruvian culture (these

would probably never be used in an international campaign) to encourage nationalism. There are still subtle hints at indigenous culture in both the Step Horse and food truck videos. In the food truck video, the chef's jacket has a traditional indigenous weaving design. In the Step Horse video, there is one scene where Peruvians wearing Spanish Colonial traditional clothing perform a folk dance with the Step Horse. The man riding the horse wears a poncho. Ponchos have two associations in Peru—indigenous culture and farming/rural clothing. The woman dancing wears a long white dress with lace layers which is not indigenous, but was a style brought to Peru and other Latin American countries from Spain. Both the dancers are darker skinned suggesting that they could be indigenous, or partially indigenous. This video references indigenous culture, but a more Spanish colonial version of indigenous culture, not “Inca” culture. In both videos these subtle references to indigenous and Spanish colonial traditions suggest a more complex mixing of cultures than the earlier campaigns which rely almost solely on Inca culture. References to indigenous culture are present, but they are not central to the ads in the same way. Marca Perú's choice to differentiate their national campaign from their international campaign shows that they understand the narrative of Peruvian identity that they are selling to tourists would not be relatable for Peruvians. The advertisements show Peruvians that their culture is unique and has global recognition. They seem to be saying, if foreigners are proud of Peru, then why aren't you?

### Conclusions

Silverman writes:

A country's touristic self-promotion is the most direct, obvious window into its dominant national narrative of identity...an unchanging aspect of PromPerú's advertising is that it conveys Peruvian dominant ideology: the past is alive in the present; cultural heritage provides contemporary Peru with continuity and meaning; history lives on in the Peruvian people; and indigenous people are happy peasants working the land and performing ceremonies as they have for centuries (Silverman 146).

The Marca Perú brand works on several levels. Internationally it promotes tourism by using the ideologies that Silverman describes. The international advertisements rely on the romanticization of Inca history and images of smiling and traditionally dressed indigenous people. According to these ads, modern Peru is a continuation of Inca heritage. “Travelers” are invited to journey back in time, while also assured that their time travel will be comfortable and luxurious. Marca Perú’s national ad campaign constructs a different national identity than their international campaigns. There is no mention of the Incan’s or indigenous culture in these ads—they are strikingly contemporary and global. Meant to build Peruvian nationalism, this campaign highlights foreigners who have embraced Peruvian culture. Although not perfect, the #MásPeruanoQue campaign provides a fresher and more complex narrative of national identity by emphasizing the mixing of Spanish colonial and indigenous cultures. By highlighting lesser-known components of Peruvian culture, the #MásPeruanoQue campaign avoids the stereotypes and oversimplifications that the International Release and Empire of Hidden Treasures campaigns rely on necessarily for the domestic market. Interestingly, Silverman notes that Marca Perú has been incredibly successful domestically. Many companies have petitioned to use the Marca Perú logo on products, and it has become a trend for Peruvians to wear clothing with the logo (Silverman 142). Given the success of the national campaign, it would be positive to see some of these same tactics used in the international campaign as well. Instead, the international advertisements rely on stereotypes of indigenous culture juxtaposed with images of white people enjoying luxury travel. The national and international brands which Marca Perú has created are notably different in tone and the way they deal with identity—while the international campaign completely ignores any identity beyond an essentialized traditional indigenous identity (and mostly Andean indigenous identity), the national campaign at least attempts to address diversity of identity as it

relates to Peruvian culture. Marca Perú has never referred to ayahuasca in any of their marketing campaigns (either national or international).

Through the process of branding Peru, or constructing its national identity both domestically and internationally, we see the intersection of heritage, culture and identity with the global marketplace. While the Marca Perú campaign has been very successful in promoting Peru as a tourist destination, it has thus far relied heavily on essentialized images of indigeneity to construct a national identity that does not reflect the racial and cultural diversity of Peru as a nation. Advertisers should be more conscientious of how they commodify culture and avoid overly simplified reductions of national identity. Throughout the next three chapters, we will see how the simplification of indigenous identity in the Peruvian tourism industry plays out on a local scale.

## **Chapter Two: Heritage Tourism and Andean Indigenous Communities: Machu Picchu and Cuzco**

In the spring of 2015, I boarded a Peru Rail train travelling from Aguas Calientes to Ollantaytambo. The train was packed with tourists like myself, still excited from their visit to one of the most renowned archeological sites in the world—Machu Picchu. Having waited until the last minute to purchase our tickets, we had no choice but to take the slightly more expensive train. “Don’t worry girls,” the ticket vendor explained, “the extra money is worth the special show!” As we loaded onto the train with its plush seats, decorative walls with large images of the mountains, and big tables, I noticed a different crowd boarding the back of the train. Local women, some carrying large shopping bags filled with food, others with babies strapped to their back, were all boarding cars in the back of the train with plain wood benches for seats.



Figure 4: Peru Rail Train; photo by Anushua Choudhry

The short two-hour journey began with an attractive young man and woman offering the passengers beverages and snacks. Included on the menu was Inca Kola (a Peruvian soda) and “traditional cookies.” Once the food had been served, the young man dressed up in a festival costume and danced back and forth through the car to Inca festival music as a recording



explained the “traditional” dance. The outfit was dingy, and looked like it had been made in a factory. It bore no resemblance to the beautifully handcrafted festival costumes I had seen elsewhere in Peru. The yellow polyester fabric was fading, and the mask had tangled synthetic hair sprouting out of it. As the passengers in the train all clapped along and giggled, a few even getting up to dance, I attempted to work through my feelings about the performance. “*What am I watching?*” I asked myself. On the one hand, the dancer *appeared* to be enjoying himself. On the other hand, there was something very unsettling about this performance. The implied power dynamics of a Peruvian man performing such a highly choreographed representation of his culture for a train full of wealthy tourists left a bad taste in my mouth. After viewing the Marca Perú advertisements discussed in chapter one, this train ride takes on even greater meaning. The luxury train filled with wealthy tourists watching a Peruvian man perform a dance in traditional Inca costume complements Marca Perú’s “Empire of Hidden Treasures: The Legacy” advertisement in which tourists are depicted enjoying luxury travel while they view indigenous culture. Similar to Marca Perú’s advertisement that depicts smiling indigenous faces who never speak, the two attendants on the train never spoke (unless they were offering drinks to riders). In fact, a recording in English told the story of Inca traditions to travelers; the attendants were simply props used to accompany the recording.

The dancing soon ended and a new show began. The attendants took turns modeling “authentic Peruvian llama wool sweaters and coats” ranging from \$100-\$300 in price. As they walked up and down the aisle they stopped so tourists could admire them and feel the fabric. At the end of the show, they announced that all the items that passengers had seen modeled could be purchased onboard the train. The show left me with a sinking feeling of discomfort and guilt. As I watched the Peru Rail employees walk up and down the aisle wearing sweaters that they could

likely never afford to purchase themselves, I found myself thinking that what was really for sale was *their culture*, not the sweaters.

Both the attendants were very attractive young people with distinctive indigenous features—a fact I imagine was no coincidence. I wondered how they felt serving as models for this simplified version of their culture that was being sold to tourists in the form of festival dances and sweaters. Eventually, I brushed aside my feelings of discomfort and tried to enjoy the ride. Tourism was bringing countless jobs to the economy, right? It seemed to me that the locals were in control of the entire Machu Picchu enterprise. It wasn't until later that I would find out that Peru Rail is owned by Orient Express, a global luxury travel corporation, and that the majority of the money being made at Machu Picchu is by foreign corporations, not locals (Maxwell 177). Tourists travel to Machu Picchu to celebrate Inca culture, but are modern indigenous people included in this heritage? In this chapter I will address the impact of the United Nations Educational, Scientific Cultural Organization (“UNESCO”) heritage status on indigenous communities in Machu Picchu and Cuzco Peru, and discuss the ways in which indigenous peoples are, and are not, permitted inclusion in the narrative of Inca heritage.

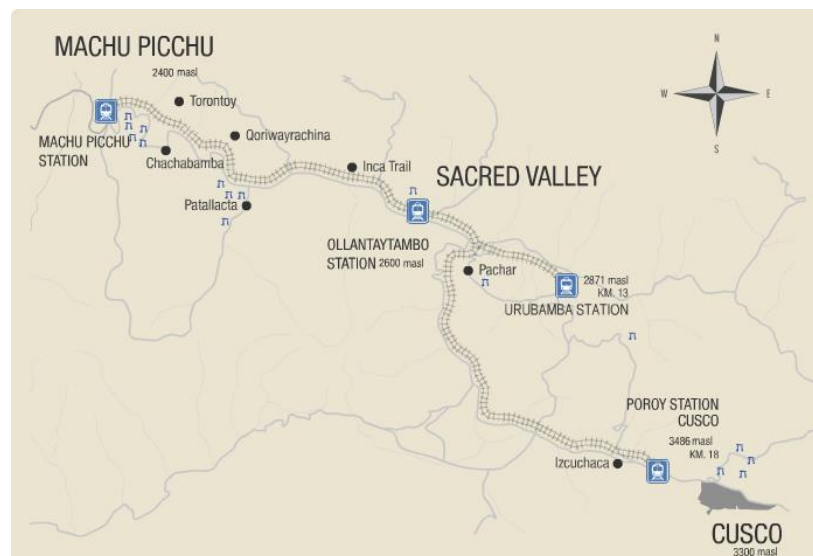


Figure 5: Map showing the Peru Rail train route

Source: [www.machupicchu.org](http://www.machupicchu.org)

### What is UNESCO heritage?

In “Values in World Heritage Sites,” Geoffrey Belcher explains that the UNESCO convention concerning the protection of world culture and heritage was founded in 1972, twenty-two years after the flooding of the Aswan Dam in Egypt, which created world-wide concern for the protection of historical sites (Belcher 181). Today, in order to be admitted into the World Heritage Committee, a list of ten criteria have been made. Each site must fulfill at least one. The criteria are:

(i) To represent a masterpiece of human creative genius. (ii) To exhibit an important interchange of human values. (iii) To bear a unique or at least exceptional testimony to a cultural tradition. (iv) To be an outstanding example of a type of building. (v) To be an outstanding example of traditional human settlement. (vi) To be directly or tangibly associated with events or living traditions. (vii) To contain superlative natural phenomena. (viii) To be outstanding examples representing major stages of Earth’s history. (ix) To be outstanding examples representing significant on-going ecological and biological processes. (x) To contain the most important and significant natural habitats (Belcher 181).

The committee presents a wide variety of criteria for admission; heritage sites can be either historically, naturally, or culturally valuable. Besides fulfilling one of the above criteria, all admissions must also include a “statement of outstanding universal value” (Belcher 187). “Outstanding universal value” indicates that heritage sites, despite often being culturally, religiously and geographically specific, are important to humanity as a whole, and thus they need to be preserved. This premise is rooted in an appreciation for the foundation and development of human society. Heritage sites do not belong to any one community, country or culture, but rather to all of humanity. Belcher writes, “Outstanding universal value means cultural and/or natural significance which is so exceptional as to transcend national boundaries and to be of common importance for present and future generations of all humanity” (Belcher 187). Although the concept of “outstanding universal value” indicates that indigenous cultures are valued, it also compromises the autonomy of indigenous populations over their identity by claiming that the

culture is “universally” important and belongs to all of us. This is evident in the language that UNESCO uses to describe heritage. Their website states, “What makes the concept of World Heritage exceptional is its universal application. World Heritage sites belong to all the peoples of the world, irrespective of the territory on which they are located” (World Heritage). UNESCO claims that heritage belongs to humanity, not any particular community. This lays the groundwork for taking control of heritage from indigenous populations by asserting that they, UNESCO, “owns” heritage and has a duty to protect it for the rest of the world. This relationship is eerily similar to the paternal ideology used during colonialism under which Europeans were seen to be acting as the “parents” of indigenous groups who were considered naïve children, incapable of running their own societies. An example that shows the continuation of this ideology can be seen in the advertisements of Chapter One. Both of the Marca Perú international campaigns that I analyzed depict smiling indigenous people who never speak; this representation is infantilizing because it presents indigenous Peruvians as simple happy people, rather than complex integrated members of society.

#### Heritage & the Past- Romanticizing History

Heritage reflects a believed relationship between modernity and the past—it is seen as a force in shaping the present. Each year more sites are granted UNESCO heritage status. As criteria for acceptance become looser, regulation of the sites becomes stricter. UNESCO’s reach is travelling across the globe as they admit more and more heritage sites. The question begs to be asked, why is the idea of heritage so valued in Western society? In “The Past is a Foreign Country,” David Lowenthal elaborates the very complex relationship that humans have with the past. He argues that we have always lived with a nostalgia for past times which reflects our relationship with the future: “The airy and insubstantial future may never arrive; man or nature may destroy humanity;

time as we know it may end. By contrast, the past is tangible and secure; people think of it as fixed, unalterable, indelibly recorded” (Lowenthal 4). The future is frightening to us because it seems insecure, but the past is stable and unchanging. We can look back on the past with comfort knowing that it is inalterable—the past has already been made, while the future is uncertain. With each year, the international marketplace grows, and the spread of corporations and Western and/or American culture has triggered a fear that local culture is a thing of the past. The seeming mad race to preserve “heritage sites” is a reflection of a fear that we are losing culture, and transforming into a monochromatic world of blue jeans, McDonalds and iPhones. UNESCO heritage not only preserves the past; it also reasserts its value in a global landscape.

There are many ways that people attempt to “visit” the past. Lowenthal cites films, novels, TV shows, theme parks, tours, festivals and museums. Tourism provides one way for people to experience the past, whether through visiting ancient monuments and structures, or participating in more staged performances of history. Lowenthal writes, “In recent years nostalgic dreams have become almost habitual, if not epidemic” (Lowenthal 4). The tourism industry in Peru has benefited greatly from this mass nostalgia for the past as tourists flock to experience “traditional” cultures and catch a glimpse of the remnants of the great Inca Empire. The past that the tourist industry sells is an imaginary past—one that is carefully constructed to present tourists with a romanticized narrative of history which soothes their anxieties about the present. At the center of the romanticization of the past is indigenous culture; indigenous people are seen as the last truly authentic cultures of the world, clinging to traditional practices and resisting modernization. The trope of exotic indigenous culture is recycled time and time again in the tourist industry.

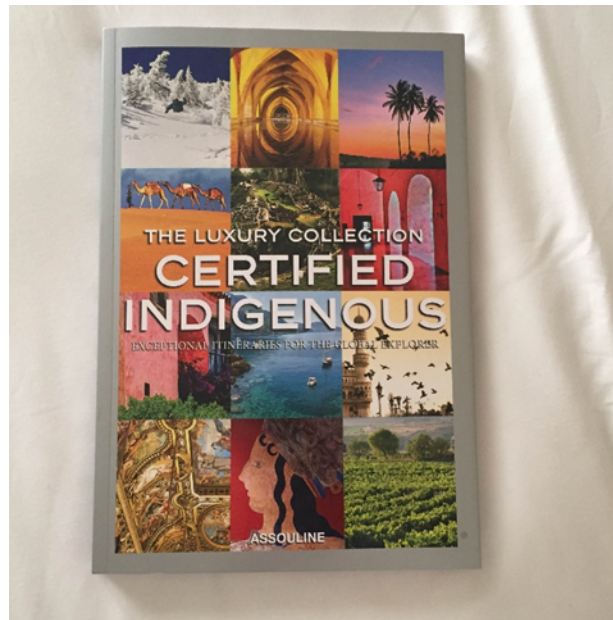


Figure 6: Fairfax advertising catalogue

The image above depicts an advertising book that I found in a hotel room at The Fairfax in Washington, DC. This book contained pictures and descriptions of each Fairfax hotel around the world. With locations on each continent, the company made an obvious effort to differentiate between destinations with descriptions of rich local cultures. Despite the title “Certified Indigenous,” the book never discusses any indigenous culture. The title may seem misleading, but it demonstrates the connection that is made between indigeneity and authenticity. The hotel sells unique local experiences, and by stating that these cultures are not only indigenous, but “certified indigenous,” they are telling their customers that a stay in one of their hotels will bring them in contact with a new and exotic culture.

As the Fairfax advertising book demonstrates, indigenous culture is often treated as the door to authenticity and the past. Lowenthal explains that the present is seen as bleak and “undistinguished,” but the past shines as rich “landscapes that we never knew, but we wish we had” (Lowenthal 13). Visiting an indigenous community is like stepping back in time—tourists travel to see an ancient culture, not modern people. This poses many challenges for indigenous

populations who are caught in the tourist industry. In order to remain appealing to tourists, they cannot modernize; communities are compelled to reenact lifestyles that exclude them from any development outside of tourism. According to Lowenthal, “Retrospective nostalgia coexist with impatient modernism” (Lowenthal 35). Indigenous people are caught between these two worlds: they are never quite traditional enough to fit into the romanticized past, and never modern enough to be fully accepted into the present. As a result, indigenous communities live in limbo, forced to choose between reenacting the past and giving up their traditions all together. Indigenous cultures are just as modern as any other. They have undergone the same processes of development as the rest of humanity, but the tourist industry often renders them ornaments of the past who are never granted full inclusion in the present.

#### UNESCO Heritage- Machu Picchu

Machu Picchu Sanctuary was granted UNESCO heritage status in 1983, 72 years after its rediscovery in 1911. This was part of a massive government program aimed at reviving the Cuzco area by reclaiming Inca heritage and sponsoring tourism in the region. The Unit of Historic Sanctuary of Machu Picchu (“UGM”) was established in 1999 to carry out the site’s “Master Plan.” The UGM consists of representatives of the Ministries of Culture, Environment and Foreign Trade and Tourism, the Cuzco regional government, and local Machu Picchu officials (Historic Sanctuary). Outside of the UGM there are two main state agencies responsible for the preservation of the Sanctuary: the Instituto Nacional de Cultura (“INC”) and the Instituto de Recursos Naturales (“INRENA”). These institutions were put in place by the government to protect the integrity of the Sanctuary, but unfortunately, they treat the rural indigenous population as a threat to this goal (Maxwell 183).

The regulation of Machu Picchu demonstrates how UNESCO status often favors a narrative of heritage which excludes modern indigenous populations. This exasperates economic marginalization, and deprives indigenous communities of their cultural heritage and identity. The UNESCO website describes the Historic Sanctuary of Machu Picchu in the following way:

Embedded within a dramatic landscape at the meeting point between the Peruvian Andes and the Amazon Basin, the Historic Sanctuary of Machu Picchu is among the greatest artistic, architectural and land use achievements anywhere and the most significant tangible legacy of the Inca civilization (Historic Sanctuary).

The website explains that the Sanctuary was accepted under criterion i, iii, vii, and ix.<sup>viii</sup> Descriptions of the application of the criteria to Machu Picchu all emphasize the great Inca Civilization, as well as the biodiversity and natural beauty of the area (Historic Sanctuary). It is important to note that although the relationship between the Inca Empire and the land is emphasized, there is no mention of the modern indigenous population that lives within the sanctuary. The tendency to romanticize ancient indigenous peoples, while excluding modern ones from celebrations of heritage, is expressed through UNESCO's treatment of indigenous inhabitants of the Sanctuary. This tension is one that many scholars have analyzed through the framework of UNESCO heritage site regulations.

Anthropologists Annelou Ypeij and Keely Maxwell explain that the Sanctuary is protected under "natural heritage" and "cultural heritage," but not under "cultural landscape." They problematize this distinction because, "By separating natural from cultural heritage and by not recognizing Machu Picchu as a cultural landscape (a heritage category that celebrates the ways that people shape their environment), UNESCO discourse excludes *campesinos*<sup>ix</sup> within the Sanctuary from belonging to either Machu Picchu's natural heritage or its cultural heritage" (Maxwell and Ypeij 183). The *campesinos* who the authors refer to are the approximately 250 families who live within the boundary of the Sanctuary. These families are not recognized as



contributing to the heritage of the site and pose complicated questions in legislation surrounding its preservation (Maxwell and Ypeij 183).

The growing popularity of Machu Picchu and the Inca Trail with international tourists provided rural *campesinos* living in the Machu Picchu Sanctuary with new economic opportunities. Women set up food stands along the trail to sell soda, snacks, and goods such as batteries and sunscreen to hikers, men found work as porters who carry hikers' luggage, and families set up campsites near their homes where hikers stayed for free but purchased meals. These newfound economic growth opportunities gave *campesino* families an economic mobility that was previously unavailable to them. Many families were able to save enough money to send their children to school in nearby cities and build houses for them to live in while they studied (Maxwell and Ypeij 191-192). Starting in 1999, these opportunities were drastically limited by increasing regulation of the Inca Trail. Due to UNESCO concern over the preservation of the natural integrity of the Sanctuary, a limitation was put in place of 500 hikers a day (including tourists, guides, and porters). It was also mandated that all hikers must travel with a registered guide. This drastically decreased opportunities for men to serve as porters and women as cooks since tourist agencies came equipped with their own employees to cook and carry luggage (Maxwell and Ypeij 191-192).

In 2004, under increasing pressure from UNESCO, a new Master Plan was put in place to address environmental threats to the Sanctuary. The plan described an "uncontrolled growth of *campesino* villages" within the Sanctuary and attributed many environment problems to this growth. New restrictions were put in place, not on tourism, but on *campesino* families. Cattle and farming sites were restricted, electricity and additional construction on homes were banned, and a 1999 bid to provide *campesino* families with outhouses was blocked. Sanctuary managers have

gone as far as to suggest that *campesino* women should be banned from selling soda and candy which contributes to “eroding” the image of traditional culture that tourists come to see (Maxwell and Ypeij 187). Time after time UNESCO, INC, and IRENA have named *campesino* families as a threat to the Sanctuary’s natural resources. Although efforts to restrict tourism are made, blame is placed on *campesinos* who are seen as a menace, as opposed to tourists who are seen as attributing to the Sanctuary’s success and well-being. Maxwell and Ypeij claim that these restrictions show that tourists are seen as “internal” and directly supporting the site’s heritage, whereas *campesinos* are seen as “external” and a threat to heritage (Maxwell and Ypeij 187). These legislations are aimed at preserving tourism, and expelling *campesino* families. As a result of the increasing difficulty of life in the Sanctuary, and the blocks on modernization and economic improvement, many *campesino* children are forced to migrate to cities leaving only the eldest child to inherit a family’s property (Maxwell and Ypeij 187). Although legislation has not directly stated the migration of *campesino* families as a goal, it certainly creates the circumstances for migration leading us to question who Machu Picchu Sanctuary is being preserved for.

#### Machu Picchu Sanctuary- Romanticizing the Past, Condemning the Present

To fully understand the meaning of the Machu Picchu Sanctuary regulations, we must examine the status of indigenous *campesinos* through the eyes of the institutions that regulate them. The policies of the World Bank, which is currently funding a large project in the Sanctuary, illuminate the complicated placement of *campesino* families (Maxwell and Ypeij 190). This project, which is part of the new Master Plan for Machu Picchu Sanctuary, sites the following objectives:

1. “Environmental protection and urban and infrastructure rehabilitation.”
2. “Tourism capacity building and infrastructure development.”
3. “Local and economic development” (Morella).

Although “local and economic development” sounds promising, this development is on the World Bank’s terms with the objective of preserving the Machu Picchu Sanctuary site and tourism, not its indigenous inhabitants. Maxwell and Ypeij write that, “The World Bank...does not exclude resettlement as a possibility. The project plan concludes that the people living in the area cannot be considered indigenous. The World Bank project will offer 40 families economic alternatives within the tourism sector, such as cleaning and gardening work. If the families do not accept this offer, they will be resettled” (Maxwell and Ypeij 190). *Campesino* families are being given an ultimatum: either work with the plan of international organizations for the preservation of their heritage, or be expelled from it. Denying *campesino* families their indigenous identity provides an excuse for their resettlement. A speech on the World Bank’s Machu Picchu project claims the following:

Why should the Bank invest in cultural heritage? An obvious justification comes from the public nature of cultural goods. The general interest in this sort of public goods, many of which even qualify as “global public goods,” urges for governments’ intervention, international aid and cooperation in order to tap the market failures (Morella).

Based on the context of this speech (providing funding for UNESCO sites to expand their tourism industries while preserving natural resources), we can assume that by “market failures” Morella means that the potential market for tourism in these locations is not fully tapped. This statement gets to the core of the issue. The international organizations that are stepping in to regulate Machu Picchu Sanctuary treat its heritage, the heritage of the indigenous community, as a “public good” that can, and should, be controlled by outside powers. The World Bank has effectively removed cultural autonomy from indigenous communities and commodified their culture. Because nobody can own a “public good,” the World Bank has laid out a justification for the regulation of indigenous communities, if it can be argued that this legislation protects heritage and addresses a

“market failure.” The unsettling assumption being made by the World Bank is that indigenous communities cannot be trusted to effectively preserve their heritage for the consumption of others. Heritage is treated as a valuable commodity and a “market” which should be tapped to its full capacity. International organizations such as UNESCO and the World Bank which seek to preserve heritage are acting within a colonial power structure as they, the colonizers, regulate the colonized. With power dynamics mirroring colonialism, indigenous communities are being told how, and if, they can be included in their own heritage.

Further complicating the situation of *campesino* families, their status as indigenous is disputed. Because they do not wear indigenous clothing, have no titles to their land and are not officially registered as indigenous villages, their indigeneity is questioned (Maxwell and Ypeij 189). Here we return to Lowenthal’s theory on the past to address why distancing *campesino* families from Inca culture is an effective method for their exclusion from Machu Picchu’s heritage. Lowenthal theorizes that western society romanticizes the past as a simpler and more culturally rich time because we feel that the present is inadequate. Human culture, he argues, is caught between nostalgia for the past and anxiety for the future: “retrospective nostalgia coexists with impatient modernism” (Lowenthal 35). Indigenous populations are rarely treated as modern subjects who have evolved with time just as the rest of us have. Instead, they are caught between two over-simplified interpretations of their culture: they are either seen as too traditional and threatening modernity, or too modernized and threatening heritage.

Machu Picchu tourism is built on the romanticization of Inca culture, but the exclusion of indigenous *campesinos* from this culture is founded on a denial of their indigeneity. Despite being Quechua speakers, *campesinos* are not accepted as indigenous (Maxwell and Ypeij 189). Drawing on a rhetoric of impurity, UNESCO criticizes *campesino* farming tactics which are “Spanish

colonial” and not “Inca” as harmful to the land. Maxwell and Ypeij write that, “Management institutions consider it their mission to restore Inca environmental harmony that supposedly existed before the Spanish conquest. The fact that by doing so, 450 years of history are being erased is accepted without much discussion” (Maxwell and Ypeij 188). Romanticizing Inca use of the land, while problematizing *campesino* use of it, draws out an important tension in the discussion of indigenous heritage. While the memory of ancient Inca civilization is cherished, modern Inca descendants are never quite indigenous enough to be included in this heritage. They are seen as a threat to both the romanticized Inca heritage, and the modern post-colonial landscape. *Campesinos* are excluded from Inca heritage because their existence reflects Spanish colonial and modern global influences that do not embody pure Inca culture.

Ironically, none of us have experienced the past that we are asking Andean indigenous people to perform, thus this performance reflects only our imagination of the past rather than any true “heritage.” No population ever goes untouched by the passage of time, and expecting indigenous people to be the same as they were 500+ years ago is illogical—its places indigenous people in the role of actors performing a culture we yearn to see, but will never be able to because it lives in the past. *Campesino* presence and claim to indigeneity is seen as a threat to the essentialized images of Inca culture which Machu Picchu cultural tourism sells. Because they do not perform Inca indigeneity like the dancers on the Peru Rail train did, their connection to this culture is denied in a culturally violent process that displaces them from both their modern and historical role in national heritage. Once again we can draw a connection between the advertisements of Marca Perú and localized tourism practices. What may seem like harmless representations of indigenous culture to attract tourists, is an ideology that shapes the regulation of tourism and has huge impacts on the lives of indigenous individuals. *Campesino* families are

the causalities of Marca Perú's representation of Inca culture. As regulatory industries attempt to construct a tourism experience that fits into Marca Perú's representation, *campesinos* lose control of their own heritage and are pushed out of their land.

### Campesino Political Activism

Despite discrimination against them, *campesinos* are actively fighting for legal titles to their land. Anthropologist Pellegrino Luciano discusses the political activism of *campesinos* living within the sanctuary in her report on the topic. Luciano writes that reducing *campesino* activism to solely economic motives “risks constructing a dichotomy that frames inhabitants of protected areas as either ‘needy’ or ‘greedy,’ and fails to recognize that protected areas can form different kinds of political spaces for locals” (Luciano 35). The author describes that the land now known as the Machu Picchu Sanctuary was originally controlled by four large haciendas, or family estates: San Antonio de Torontoy, Quente, Santa Rita de Q'ente, and Mandorpampa. Modern *campesinos* are the families, and descendants of, the peasants who worked as tenant farmers for these haciendas. In 1968, the second Peruvian Land Reform took place, and these haciendas were broken down, and the land was redistributed.<sup>x</sup> During the land redistribution process, land was taken from the haciendas and distributed to 55 *campesino* families who then had to repay loans to the agrarian bank, but “residents were left with little land security and legal leverage,” and only a select few families received property titles to their land (Luciano 36). Despite these challenges, *campesinos* are legal residents and have voting rights. Since the foundation of Machu Picchu Sanctuary, *campesino* politics have been characterized by two main concerns: defense of farming techniques, and obtaining legal titles to land (Luciano 36).

In 2011, Peru passed a law that was widely considered to be setting a new standard for indigenous politics in Latin America. This law, popularly referred to as the “Indigenous

Consultation Law,”<sup>xi</sup> states that the government must consult indigenous communities about development of their land. The law made Peru the first country to implement the International Labour Organization Convention 169 (“ILO 169”) in their legislation (Sanborn and Paredes). ILO 169 calls for legislation which addresses: “non-discrimination, special measures, recognition of the cultural and other specificities of indigenous and tribal peoples, consultation and participation, and right to decide priorities for development” (Convention No. 169). The convention does not seek to define “indigenous,” but rather represents all people who self-identify as “indigenous” or “native.” Peru is one of twenty countries who have ratified the convention, and the first country to put it into action (Convention No. 169).

Unfortunately, the *campesinos* who inhabit Machu Picchu Sanctuary are not likely to benefit from this law. This is because the *campesinos* are not officially defined as “indigenous.” According to Alana Tummino writing for “Americas Quarterly,” “In Peru, determining who has the right to be consulted under ILO 169 has become one of the government’s most controversial challenges” (Tummino). To address this challenge, the Peruvian government has created a “Database of Indigenous or Native Peoples.” A new census was developed that would help define indigeneity through language, “living on communal lands recognized by state agencies,” and self-identification (Tummino). One challenge that the Peruvian government faces is that due to processes of social integration and localization, many people who should fall under the protection of ILO 169 do not identify with the term “indigenous” or “native.” A large portion of Peru’s indigenous population prefers to identify with local, regional and tribal affiliations (Tummino). This is a message to the Peruvian government to restructure the way they think about indigeneity—Peru’s indigenous population does not feel the same sense of unity that the government seeks to place upon them.

As we have already seen, *campesinos* are not legally considered indigenous. In a separate work, Keely Maxwell writes that the Agrarian Reform distinguished between the terms “*campesino*” and “indigenous.” During the reform, these families were officially and legally registered as “*campesinos*,” instead of “indigenous.” Further complicating the question of *campesino* indigeneity is the fact that many families were recruited from other regions to work for the *haciendas*. Thus, even if the families are ethnically indigenous, many are not actually native to the sanctuary land. *Campesinos* have contested this distinction, and claim that their families have inhabited this land since the time of the Incas. There are currently several court cases playing out with the former *hacienda* families who claim that land ownership should revert to them since agrarian reform has been nullified. The process of land-ownership transfer has been unclear throughout the last sixty years. The INC and Irena (the organizations responsible for the protection of the land), *campesino* families, and *hacienda* families all argue why *they* are the rightful owners of Sanctuary land (Maxwell 16-19). Only one fact in this process is clear, it is the *campesino* families who have suffered the most, whose voices have been silenced, and whose rights to land have been ignored.

In the debate of *campesino* “indigeneity” neither the Peruvian government, nor the institutions which regulate Machu Picchu Sanctuary have ever asked the *campesino* families how *they identify*. Despite all of these challenges, *campesino* families have continued to fight for their rights—forcing local politicians to consider their land ownership rights, refusing resettlement, and asserting their unique regional identity and culture. With a history of discrimination from *haciendas*, the Peruvian government, and now UNESCO, INC and Irena, it is a testament to the *campesino* families’ political and social strength that they remain on Machu Picchu Sanctuary lands today.



## UNESCO Heritage and Economic Inequality- Cuzco

Cuzco, the capital city of the Inca Empire, is also a UNESCO heritage site. The UNESCO website description of Cuzco emphasizes Inca influence stating:

Situated in the Peruvian Andes, Cuzco developed, under the Inca ruler Pachacutec, into a complex urban centre with distinct religious and administrative functions. It was surrounded by clearly delineated areas for agricultural, artisan and industrial production. When the Spaniards conquered it in the 16th century, they preserved the basic structure but built Baroque churches and palaces over the ruins of the Inca city (City of Cuzco).

By “preserving the basic structure” UNESCO means that the “special organization” was maintained as well as ancient stone structures (City of Cuzco). Nonetheless, like Machu Picchu, Cuzco has become a symbol of national pride which is linked to a reclamation of Inca heritage. Cuzco was granted UNESCO heritage status in 1983 under criterion iii for bearing “a unique testimony of the Inca civilization,” and criterion iv for bearing “a unique testimony to the urban and architectural achievements of important political, economic and cultural settlements during the pre-Columbian era in South America. It is a representative and exceptional example of the confluence of two distinct cultures; Inca and Hispanic, which through the centuries produced an outstanding cultural syncretism and configured a unique urban structure and architectural form” (City of Cuzco). The article notes that, “new tourism development is threatening the preservation and functional capacity of ancient buildings, which in some cases are altered or replaced by new buildings for tourism and trade, relocating the original dwellers to the periphery” (City of Cuzco). Keeping this in mind, we will again return to the question, who are UNESCO heritage sites being preserved for?

In “Dishing up the City: Tourism and Street Vendors in Cuzco,” Griet Steel problematizes the tourism industry in Cuzco. The city, she describes, was indeed the thriving Inca capital from 1200-1532 CE; its sophistication is reflected in the impressive architecture we see today. After the

fall of the Inca Empire, economic importance shifted to the colonial capital of Lima, and the reputation of Cuzco began to fade (Steel 162-163). It wasn't until the 1920s when the “*indigenismo*” movement<sup>xiii</sup> took off that Cuzco regained an honored place in the national narrative of heritage. Once known for economic disparity, crime and violence, Cuzco was rebranded with the invention of “Cuzco Day.” Steel writes, “They reinvented the city by creating Cuzco Day, a day on which they could express their pride in being *Cusqueños*. The central act during the inauguration of the first Cuzco Day on 24 June 1944 was the celebration of Inti Raymi, the Incaic solstice ritual” (Steel 163). The process of reclaiming Inca heritage in Peru has been a complicated one. Although pride for Inca culture is central to the modern identity of the region, the movement is driven by what Steel describes as “neo-Indianists” who “presented themselves as morally and racially superior *Cusqueños*—people or gente decente<sup>xiii</sup>, in which a fusion of autochthonous and Hispanic elements had taken place”(Steel 163). Although Inca culture has been central to this movement as is evident in the reenacting of Inca rituals on Cuzco Day, Steel explains that the modern indigenous population is viewed as “backward” and a “threat” to the identity of the city—a hybrid modern people with the best elements of Inca and Spanish culture (Steel 163-164).

The most striking aspect of the city today is the drastic difference between the tourist-oriented city center, and the rest of the city. The city center is packed with tourist shops, restaurants, hotels, hostels and clubs. The streets are filled with tourists, many wearing backpacking gear, either preparing for their trip to Machu Picchu or having just returned. The center is pristinely clean and bright. Although the buildings all date back to colonial times, they are well-kept and restored. The sidewalks are clean and the roads are well-paved; trees are perfectly pruned and the grass is bright green. Walking around the city center and its surrounding area gives the impression of a well-ordered and secure city. The restaurants all have menus in multiple

languages, and servers wear crisp white shirts and black ties. Shops are filled with indigenous themed souvenirs such as brightly colored woven scarves and bracelets. The only hint of poverty comes from women dressed in traditional Andean clothing, and carrying small children on their backs, asking tourists to pay them for a photo. Tourists rarely leave the center since they have access to everything they need there. The Inca ruins, museums, and impressive churches are all located in this part of the city as well. Most tourists likely only see the rest of the city from taxis as they travel to the airport and train station. The reality of Cuzco is very different from what tourists experience. Steel describes Cuzco as a city with extreme poverty and inequality, and economic development that remains below the national average (Steel 170). The city center contrasts with the outskirts of the city where streets are unpaved and there are no sidewalks for walking on. Here fruits, vegetables and meat are sold off sheets of plastic on the street, and most buildings are under constant construction. In the outskirts, there is the energy and hustle of local life which has been so meticulously cleaned from the city center.



Figure 7: Cuzco city outskirts; photo by author



Figure 8: Cuzco city center; photo by author

Despite the large numbers of tourists who visit the city, Steel asserts that only 22% of the “economically active population works in the tourist industry” (Steel 171). Since the tourist industry is largely controlled by international corporations, the main opening for entrepreneurial *Cusqueños* in the tourist market is through street vending. Street vendors sell souvenirs such as bracelets, post-cards and llama wool products, or food and drinks. These vendors can be seen around the city center working out of small carts or carrying their goods on their back and spreading them on the ground across large blankets. Unfortunately, street vendors are seen as dirty and a nuisance—policy-makers feel that they threaten the image of the city. Steel directly relates the city’s disdain for street vendors to UNESCO status writing, “Especially in the cities that are on UNESCO’s World Heritage List, street vendors are being expelled from the protected historical center because they are considered a potential threat to the images of these centers” (Steel 172). The fact that these UNESCO cities have an image that needs to be curated, and that the local population is seen as a threat to this image, clearly shows the process of reshaping the identity of a place and culture that is occurring through the tourism industry. UNESCO is not preserving

heritage sites for the locals, but for the global tourist market. The idea that heritage sites do not belong to the people who descend from them is evident in the rhetoric of the international organizations and governments who regulate them. As Elvira Morella, an employee of the World Bank states, heritage sites are “global public goods” (Morella).

As part of their mission to create a romanticized image of Cuzco for travelers, the city has declared several times that the presence of street vendors is a threat to tourists and the overall success of the industry. The Master Plan for the Historical Center of Cuzco released by the Peruvian government in 2000 states, “The invasion of street vendors, causing congestion, immobility, public disorder, noise and pollution from solid waste disposal makes the condition of these arteries a truly critical one” (Steel 172-173). Why are street vendors a threat to tourism? For one, they take away business from the national corporations who have opened chain restaurants and shops in the area, but more importantly they threaten the romanticized image of the city. This is where we can make a connection between *Cusqueños* and *campesinos*—both groups of people are only granted inclusion in the UNESCO heritage sites they inhabit if they perform Andean indigeneity for tourists. Otherwise, both *Cusqueños* and *campesinos* threaten the image of Inca heritage that these two UNESCO sites have built a tourism industry around. Cuzco has been branded as a thriving city where the romantic Inca culture mixes with Spanish colonial culture—a city that is both modern and ancient at the same time. Street vendors threaten this image by revealing the poverty and inequality that exists within the city. Tellingly, the only street vendors which the government of Cuzco has deemed acceptable are those that dress in traditional Incan clothing (Steel 175). In order to be included in the “prosperity” that tourism is supposed to bring to the region, low-income *Cusqueños* are made to perform Inca indigeneity; this way they contribute to the romantic image of Inca heritage, rather than depicting modern impoverished

people trying to make money. Once again, we can think back to the Marca Perú advertisements of Chapter One. The video that features a Puerto Rican man in DC selling Peruvian food from a food truck now takes on new meaning. The difference in the portrayal of this man, and the treatment of the street vendors in Cuzco, highlights the power dynamics that cultural tourism brings out. While the DC man is celebrated for sharing Peruvian culture through his street vending, indigenous *Cusqueño* street vendors are treated as a threat to the identity of the city.

### Indigeneity and UNESCO Heritage: Whose heritage is being preserved?

A November 2015 New York Times Article titled, “Can a Trip Ever be ‘Authentic’?” asks exactly that question. The author determines that no, there is no such thing as an “authentic” trip because “The ‘reality’ that we crave, in short, is itself a fantasy” (Iyer). UNESCO heritage sites aren’t preserving Inca heritage; they are preserving a romanticized version of it. This heritage is not being preserved for Inca descendants, but for a global tourist market. Although Andean indigenous populations of Peru are modern subjects, who like all of us demonstrate a unique fusion of their past traditions and global influence, they are treated as fossilized Incans who will pollute their culture by embracing modernity. Indigenous people cannot avoid modernity any more than the rest of us. Through colonization, globalization and modernization, their cultures have changed—there is no denying that. But unlike the rest of us, the modernization of indigenous people is criticized and used to deprive them of their heritage and identity. Andean indigenous Peruvians don’t look like Incans in the sense that they are modernized individuals like the rest of us, but their culture reflects this heritage even while adapting to modernity. UNESCO heritage status preserves a romanticized indigenous heritage for tourists, but shifts authority from indigenous communities into the hands of international organizations and government.

### Chapter Three: Authenticity & Performance: Tourism & Indigenous Communities in the Peruvian Amazon



Figure 9: Map showing Peruvian Amazon region

Source: [www.machupicchu-trave.com](http://www.machupicchu-trave.com)

Tourism in the Peruvian Amazonian forest is a rapidly growing industry. According to locals that I spoke with on a recent visit<sup>xiv</sup>, each year more tourists arrive in this region of Peru, and the majority of them come in contact with indigenous communities through organized tours. There are some who argue that tourism provides an important source of income for these communities, and others who argue that it commodifies indigenous culture and threatens the future of indigenous cultures and traditions. Adventurous tourists travel off the beaten path to Iquitos, the Peruvian capital of the Amazon. From Iquitos they venture down the Amazon river on tours that range from one day to a full week. These tours offer activities such as birdwatching, fishing, and visits to indigenous villages. To take advantage of the economic opportunities that

tourism provides, four indigenous communities of the Yagua, Boras and Witoto ethnic groups have entered the tourism market, entertaining tourists with traditional dances and costumes, and selling them handicrafts. In this chapter, I will analyze the role that Amazonian indigenous communities play in cultural tourism in the Peruvian Amazon region, with a particular focus on authenticity and commodification, demonstrating that while commodification and performance do occur, they do not always lead to a degradation, or devaluation, of culture.

### Indigenous Tourism & Authenticity

Tourism studies repeatedly returns to the issue of authenticity—and for good reason. Cultural and indigenous tourism is often driven by what Erik Cohen, a sociologist at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, describes as the “quest for authenticity.” It’s not only tourists who get caught up on the idea of authenticity, Cohen argues, but researches and intellectuals as well. He claims that there are three assumptions that tourism studies rely on: “tourism leads to commoditization,” “commoditization destroys authenticity,” and “staged authenticity thwarts tourists’ desire for authentic experiences” (Cohen 372). These three assumptions have driven intellectual thought about tourism, and particularly cultural and indigenous tourism. “Tourism leads to commoditization” means that tourism leads to certain parts of local life being transformed into a business, as a price tag is placed on important parts of culture. The critical issue with “commoditization,” Cohen argues, is that it “allegedly changes the meaning of cultural products and of human relations, making them eventually meaningless” (Cohen 372). The “commoditization destroys authenticity” assumption means that as culture is commodified, authenticity is replaced by performance, or “staged” culture. Finally, the statement that “staged authenticity thwarts tourists desire for authentic experience” implies that tourists are fooled by performances, and leave feeling satisfied with having viewed an “authentic” culture (Cohen



372). These three assumptions show a cycle of devaluation of culture that starts with tourists' desire for authenticity. Although there is truth to this process, it over-simplifies the complex interactions that both tourists and locals have with culture, authenticity and the tourism industry. Cohen writes: "It follows from these assumptions that commoditization, engendered by tourism, allegedly destroys not only the meaning of cultural products for the locals but, paradoxically, also for the tourists. It thus emerges that, the more tourism flourishes, the more it allegedly becomes a colossal deception" (Cohen 373). He continues, arguing that these assumptions are "far-fetched and hard to accept" because they oversimplify the complex interactions that occur between tourists, locals, the tourism industry and local culture. Stating that tourism inevitably leads to the destruction of culture for both locals and tourists is a dangerous assumption that fails to acknowledge the diverse ways in which tourism interacts with culture.

Why, one might ask, has authenticity become such an important aspect of cultural tourism? In "'Sincerity' and 'Authenticity' in Modern Society" Peter L. Berger elaborates on the 1972 text "Sincerity and Authenticity" of Lionel Trillings which describes the preoccupation of the "Western world" with authenticity. He explains that authenticity has risen in value, as sincerity has fallen: "The idea of authenticity emerges from the disintegration of sincerity...In other words, while sincerity presupposes a symmetrical relation between self and society, authenticity implies a fundamental opposition between them" (Berger 82). As Western society has developed, a tension has increasingly grown between individuals and modern society. This opposition between "self and society" drives individuals to seek authenticity outside of what they see as the defining lines of "society"—often the economically developed Western world. Berger continues, "Sincerity is discovered within social roles, authenticity behind and beneath them" (Berger 82). Given this relationship with society, it makes sense why those craving

“authenticity” would seek to travel to communities that they see as being cut off from modernity. Cohen echoes Berger writing that “Authenticity is an eminently modern value whose emergence is closely related to the impact of modernity upon the unity of social existence...The alienated modern tourist hence looks for the pristine, the primitive, the natural, that which is as yet untouched by modernity” (Cohen 373). Increasingly, indigenous tourism has become a way for westerners to reconnect with “authenticity.”

Tourism agencies in the Amazon seek to fulfill the modern “quest for authenticity” by connecting tourists with indigenous cultures. The popular tour company “Dawn on the Amazon”<sup>xv</sup> describes their organized visits to Yagua and Boras communities (two indigenous ethnic groups who live spread out in different communities) on their website:

Two tribes of real Indians live in villages short, interesting boat rides from Iquitos. The Yaguas and Boras provide an opportunity for you to watch how natives have lived in the jungle for hundreds of years. The Boras perform traditional dances, the Yagua give lessons in shooting the blow gun. Both tribes sell handicrafts made from jungle extracted products.(About the Upper Amazon River)<sup>xvi</sup>

Important words to note from the above description are “real” and “traditional,” as well as the phrase “for hundreds of years.” The website continues warning tourists, “Due to the distance, difficulty and danger of approaching a tribe of uncontacted or rarely contacted indigenous natives, most visitors will appreciate helping the local Yagua and Boras tribes preserve their cultural heritage on the edge of civilization” (About the Upper Amazon River). The company makes every effort to emphasize the Yagua and Boras communities “authenticity,” or their distance from modern society, by describing them as people who live with the same traditions as their ancestors. Nonetheless, the company still has to warn tourists that these are not “uncontacted” communities, and that visiting such communities would be impossible. In this way they set the tourists up for the performance they will witness once they arrive in the village.

## Indigenous Performance in the Amazon

Performance is an important aspect of indigenous tourism in the Peruvian Amazon. Community members perform dances for visitors, don traditional clothing, paint their faces and speak only their native language. On a hot Friday in January, 2016 I set off with the tour company “Wimba Tours” to visit a Yagua community 60 miles from Iquitos by boat. Upon arrival in the village we were greeted by the chief, an older man with dark wrinkled skin wearing a skirt made of grasses and a large necklace made from dyed seeds. He also wore a headpiece with bright blue and red feathers. He spoke to us and our guide in Yagua, and ushered us into a large round structure made from wooden poles and covered in dried grasses. We sat on benches while our guide explained Yagua customs to us. The Yaguas, he said, continued to live in the forest and carry out the traditions of their ancestors. He insisted that they spoke little Spanish, and maintained customs such as weaving roofs for their homes out of grasses, hunting with poison darts shot out from the jungle. He explained that the structure we were sitting in is a ceremonial hut, and is very important to Yagua culture—it is the gathering place of the community, and also where they perform dances and ceremonies. The structure was large and circular, with a dirt floor, and very little light or heat penetrated through the walls.

Thinking back on this memory in the context of Berger’s assertions provides a new framework for understanding my own thought process. As a tourist, I was desperately hoping that this visit would have some level of authenticity. Already, I was attempting to piece together clues that would reveal to me whether or not this visit would be a performance. But unlike Berger’s assertion that authenticity is found outside of the lines of developed society, I as a tourist was looking to see how this indigenous community would fit into the lines of society. Knowing that the majority of indigenous Andean communities are highly modernized and

developed, I looked for clues of this modernization as a mark of authenticity. For me, the insistence that the tribe maintained all of their traditional practices was the first clue that what I was seeing was a performance, rather than a visit with a modern indigenous community.

After our tour guide finished his short speech, the chief walked around and painted our faces as an official welcome. This was when my discomfort began. I had no desire to have my face painted. To me, it felt like making a spectacle of culture, but saying no felt equally uncomfortable so I smiled and pretended to enjoy myself. After our faces were painted, another man, also dressed in a grass skirt, entered and began to play a drum. The chief called to the other villagers gathered outside, and they came in to dance. The chief took my hand and pulled me up to dance. I was hesitant, at first resisting him. I didn't want to participate in this dance. It felt uncomfortable to me because it was so obviously being done for the sake of us tourists. Another man came for the other woman in our group, and a bare-chested young woman wearing a piece of red cotton material wrapped around her as a skirt, came for the man in our group. Some children joined our dance as we skipped circles around the hut in rhythm to the drums, and the Yaguas all chanted a song in their native language.

The Peruvian couple in my tourist group seemed to feel just as awkward as I did. They smiled stiffly and laughed occasionally. As we all danced round and round in a circle I couldn't shake my discomfort. The dance felt so staged—it didn't seem like anybody was enjoying themselves. The children were dancing halfheartedly, and I found myself wondering how many times a day they were made to dance with wide-eyed tourists. I was embarrassed for myself and for the Yaguas—embarrassed that we were all participating in something that none of us seemed to believe. Although the other two tourists in my group did not articulate their discomfort, their body language told me they were feeling the same way. A dance that is supposedly a sacred part

of Yagua tradition, was being turned into a spectacle for us to participate in. We danced for what seemed like a long time, but was probably only five minutes. When we finished the Yaguas clapped and we were invited outside to try and hit a target with a blow dart. Each of us was given two chances, and the villagers stood around and cheered when we hit the target. This activity felt less uncomfortable to me, and I actually enjoyed my chance at shooting the target. At this point a man in our group asked for a group picture, and we heard the Chief speak Spanish for the first time saying, “*luego*,” or “later.”



Figure 10: Performing a “traditional” dance with the Yagua Chief; photo by author

We were then invited to purchase handicrafts. There was a long structure held up with tree poles and a thin roof made from grasses under which the Yaguas displayed their goods. The booths were organized by family, and our guide warned us that it would be considered very rude to buy from only one person. On display were goods such as necklaces made from seeds and fish scales, and purses woven from dyed grasses. Shirtless children all wearing red cotton shorts and skirts (made from the same material as the women’s skirts) followed us around offering bracelets and necklaces. Their mothers beckoned to us by holding up necklaces and pointing at the various

crafts they had for sale. There was an awkward tension in the air—I the white tourist was observing these peoples’ artisanal work, deciding where to spend my money as they all subtly fought for my business. It was clear that I was expected to purchase souvenirs, and I should have, because the selling of these souvenirs is an important part of the community’s economy, but the setup created an environment where it felt like the community members were made to beg tourists to make purchases. I felt angry knowing that the tour company was putting the community in position by not paying them sufficiently—the community was forced to rely on the purchases of the tourists to make the whole performance worthwhile economically.

Cohen critiques the assumption that as tourism flourishes it becomes a “colossal deception.” From my own experience visiting the Yagua village, I agree with Cohen’s critique of this simplified analysis of cultural tourism. I went through a range of personal emotions during my visit: awkwardness, anger, discomfort. Despite these negative feelings, as well as my understanding that what I was viewing was a performance not an authentic portrayal of Yagua culture, I still enjoyed my visit and felt that I learned from it. In the end, authenticity was not the most important factor in my visit. What upset me, more than the obvious performance on indigenous culture, was the unequal power dynamics that the visit brought up. These power dynamics had nothing to do with authenticity, but were a result of the lack of regulation of tourism in the area. Berger’s analysis of the western quest for authenticity is compelling, but it does not represent my experience as a tourist; his analysis falls short in that he fails to treat tourists as individuals who have different experiences and expectations. Cohen, in contrast, distinguishes between different tourists reflecting his understanding that tourists do not form one cohesive demographic. I will address Cohen’s classification of tourists later in this chapter.

After, purchasing artisanal goods from each family, we gathered for a picture. After the picture, the children flocked around us asking for “*una propina*,” or “a tip.” When I started passing out *soles* and pieces of gum, the mothers quickly joined the crowd of children, pushing through them to collect their own tips. This last interaction was the most uncomfortable of all. Both the community members and myself knew that our economic situations were vastly different. I would not have been capable of travelling to visit them if I did not have money. My knowledge that the tour company was not paying the community a fair wage increased my feeling of discomfort. Because of the community was not being paid well, I felt that that the responsibility was being put on the tourists to pay the community. By giving tourists the responsibility of deciding how much the community should be paid, the tour company created an unstable power dynamic between us. The whole visit felt like a reenactment of colonialism as I felt obliged to put a price tag on somebody’s culture.



Figure 11: Trying out a poison blow gun, the traditional Yagua hunting weapon; photo by author





Figure 12: Group photo of the Yagua community and our tour group; photo by author

Throughout our visit, there were many hints that this was a performance of culture for our benefit. There were no houses to be seen, and it was apparent that this was where the village entertained tourists, but not where they lived. I wondered about the reasoning for keeping these places separate. As a result of this separation, I have no idea what conditions they live in, or how the Yaguas from this community dress when they are not entertaining tourists. The fact that the community lived out of sight of the tourists was my first clue that I was witnessing a performance. I also noted my guide's insistence that the Yaguas spoke no Spanish, then their willingness and ease at speaking Spanish when they were communicating about a sale. All of this lead me to feel we were witnessing a show, rather than visiting a local community. But does performance have to be negative? This is a complex question that I seek to address throughout the rest of this chapter.



## Historical Exploitation: A Framework for Understanding Modern Tourism

Palma Ingles, an anthropologist who spent several years working as a tour guide among indigenous villages in the Amazon argues that every indigenous community differs in how, and if, they choose to participate in tourism. Even within ethnic groups, there are some communities that choose to participate in tourism, and some that choose not to. The Yagua community that I visited chose to move closer to the city of Iquitos so that they could become involved in tourism, but there are other Yagua communities that live days down the Amazon river and never have contact with tourists. Although indigenous communities in the Amazon have historically, and continue to be, exploited (by the rubber industry in the colonial era, and oil and timber companies today), it is important to acknowledge the autonomy that they maintain over their cultures and traditions. This does not negate the trauma that colonialism has caused and continues to cause indigenous communities in the Peruvian Amazon. Ingles writes, “For more than 400 years of recorded Amazonian history, contact with outsiders has most often been a losing proposition for indigenous peoples, resulting in loss of habitat, loss of culture, altered lifestyles, enslavement, disease, and even death. Today, some indigenous communities continue to discourage outsiders, while others seek ways to actively participate in the tourism enterprise” (Ingles 144). Although there is not space in this chapter for an in-depth historical analysis of the exploitation of Amazonian indigenous communities, a brief explanation of historical power dynamics will help us better understand the modern political, social and economic placement of these communities.

According to Ingrid Fernandez, a historian at Florida Gulf Coast University, the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries brought English, American, and Dutch companies to the Amazon in search of rubber for automobile products. These companies were invited and encouraged by the

Peruvian government who hoped to expand their economy while also bringing “civilization” to the Amazon. Amazonian indigenous people were used as labor by these companies. Indigenous people were often kidnapped or coerced into labor. The rubber companies set impossible work standards, using violations of standards (for example not producing enough rubber on a given day) as an excuse to withhold pay, and brutally punishing those who tried to escape. The result was the death of thousands of Amazonian natives. A system of “debt peonage” was used; each week the rubber companies would take money from the workers to cover the food and shelter, almost always claiming that they had not produced enough rubber to cover all their expenses. Thus, the workers dug themselves into debt with the rubber companies, who never paid them a wage, but insisted that they had to keep working to pay off their debts. The Peruvian government and local officials turned a blind eye, as the prominent belief at the time was that indigenous peoples were a threat to the modernization and economic success of Peru as a nation (Fernandez).

Presently, logging and oil companies threaten indigenous communities—intruding on their lands and causing deforestation and dangerous oil spills. The ongoing debate in this issue surrounds indigenous autonomy over land. Indigenous communities are often not consulted by the government before logging companies are sent to harvest their land. The colonial model for exploitation continues to threaten indigenous communities today, and tourism companies are very much a part of this threat. Despite this oppression, it is important to note that in the end, indigenous communities are the ones who decide if, and how, they will participate in tourism. It is important to keep this autonomy, as well as historical and modern patterns of exploitation, in mind when analyzing indigenous performance for tourism in the Amazon.

### Indigenous Tourism: Economic Development or Exploitation?

Ingles explains that there are four indigenous communities within the Peruvian Amazon who have chosen to participate in tourism: the Boras, Witoto and Yagua who all live about 90 miles east of the city of Iquitos, and another community of Yagua 50 miles east of Iquitos (Ingles 144). The first indigenous community to participate in tourism in the Peruvian Amazon was the Witoto community. In 1973 a company called Amazon Tours and Cruises began bringing tourists to visit a Witoto community and observe traditional dances. Tourism in the area has continued to grow since then, and more and more communities have decided to participate in tourism (Ingles 147-149). The extra income that tourism provides these communities is invaluable. Ingles explains that alternative opportunities for income in the area that used to exist, are steadily decreasing. Amazonians used to harvest natural rubber and hunt and sell wild animals on the black market, but there is no longer demand for natural rubber and increased regulations have decreased the market for exotic pets and animal skins. Most families living in the Amazon forest are subsistence farmers who sell their excess crops in Iquitos. They struggle to make enough money for necessities such as clothing, school supplies, and sanitary products (Ingles 145).

As a result of economic struggle, many indigenous communities have decided to participate in tourism. They agree to perform the role of the “primitive native” in exchange for the additional income that tourism provides (Ingles 145). Ingles writes that many communities are willing to “play the role of the unchanged primitive native...in order to offer something primitive or exotic to the tourists, indigenous peoples will agree to don traditional dress, perform dances and sell locally made handicrafts” (Ingles 145). The performance that these communities put on is quite far from their reality. A tour guide at the Indigenous Cultures Museum in the city of Iquitos, whose mother is a Bora and lived a portion of his life in a Bora village, explained that

the Bora Chief wears blue jeans and sunglasses every time he comes to Iquitos to buy provisions for his tribe. This guide explained that members of indigenous communities frequently travel to and from the city. Most wear Western clothing unless they are entertaining tourists, they learn to speak Spanish in school, and they have electricity for several hours a day. What tourists see is a fantasy constructed for their consumption—the majority of indigenous communities in the Amazon live their day-to-day lives similarly to the rest of Peruvians. Ingles explains, “Tourists who come to this region for an Amazon “adventure” still hope that their tour will bring them in touch with the wilds of the rainforest, including the “natives” living as if frozen in time like a photograph from a 1920s National Geographic” (Ingles 145). Tour companies and indigenous communities are aware of this fantasy, and they are all too willing to humor it—for a price.

Ingles explains that the companies that bring tourists to villages as part of organized trips to the Amazon forest pay the communities per tourist. This money is then split between community members who participate in dances and demonstrations for the tourists (Ingles 149). Additionally, community members sell handicrafts and ask tourists for tips. When I visited the Yagua community closest to Iquitos, my tour guide explained that the tour company pays 15 soles per tourists, or about \$4.00, for a one-hour visit. Ingles interviewed indigenous families for her paper and reported that the majority of families said tourism was very important to their income (Ingles 149). I also had the opportunity to speak with a Yagua woman in the village I visited. This woman, although reluctant to speak Spanish at first (both because her Spanish was limited and also, I believe, to maintain the performance), explained to me that during the busy season she makes about 100 soles a week selling necklaces and other crafts to tourists (approximately \$35.00). The very small wage paid to the community by the tourist company explains why the community needs to ask for tips. By not paying the community a fair wage for

their performance, tourist companies are creating a situation in which communities must ask tourists for additional money. This creates a dynamic that gives tourists the power to decide the monetary value of a culture. The money that the tourist company pays the community is not enough, and it is up to tourists to make up this difference. Additionally, as many tourists are not aware of the fact that these communities are relying on their tips and purchases to make a reasonable income, they do not offer tips to the community. As a result, the community is put in the position of asking the tourists for money. While my tour guide did encourage us to buy at least one souvenir, he did not ask us to tip, leaving that responsibility to the community members.

Despite the clear economic inequality that shapes interactions between indigenous Amazonians and tourists, Ingles asserts that indigenous communities will cease to participate in tourism, or alter their participation, when they are not making sufficient money to justify the time spent on tourism. A Yagua community, Palmare II, still receives visits from tourists who buy handicrafts, but they no longer perform for tourists. As a community, they decided that they had too many other tasks to perform each day (like fishing and farming), to spend their time performing dances for tourists (Ingles 154). Ingles describes another community who was able to negotiate with a tour company to pay for them to build a new ceremonial lodge in which they would entertain tourists. The Chief, and other senior members of this community who Ingles interviewed, all spoke of a fear that their traditions were being lost. Younger generations were not learning their culture's traditional dances and ceremonies. Performing for tourists became a way of preserving their cultural heritage for future generations, while also bringing extra money into the community. The Chief of this village described tourism performances as a way for the

community to embrace their “cultural identity” (Ingles 157). Ingles asserts that this is the best form of cultural tourism—one that benefits communities both culturally and economically.

Indigenous communities are changing rapidly with the world, and many have been left in desperate economic situations. Ingles argues that change has already reached these communities, and tourism can help them deal with this change (Ingles 146). While I agree with Ingles’ assertion that tourism can be the best economic opportunity for many indigenous communities in the Amazon, it is absolutely not the role of outsiders to decide if, and how, communities should participate in tourism. While I have noted the ways that tour companies are exploiting indigenous Amazonian communities, these communities have maintained a clear level of autonomy. Communities decide if they want to participate in tourism, and to what level they will participate. Notably, communities such as the Yagua village that I visited, choose to keep tourists separate from their village, constructing a special area to entertain tourists, miles away from where the community lives. Electing to separate their work with the tourism industry from their private lives indicates the level of autonomy that the community exercises over their participation. Many communities choose to participate in tourism, but they do it on their own terms.

### Understanding Tourist Motivations

Up until this point I have addressed the motivations of indigenous communities for participating in tourism, but it is also important to understand how tourists view these performances and what their motivations are for visiting indigenous communities. As I watched the dance put on for my entertainment during my visit to the Yagua community, I wondered, do tourists really believe these performances? A middle-aged Peruvian man in my tour group commented that the Yaguas most certainly speak Spanish better than they let on. He laughed about the performance saying it

was clearly an “act,” but stated that he and his wife still enjoyed the visit. He explained that for him, it was fun to “look back in time,” but that you had to suspend your disbelief during the visit. He also commented that he felt bad that this community may not have any other way to make money, so he felt obligated to buy their crafts and tip them well. Overall, he seemed to consume this performance with a sense of humor—it was entertaining, but not something to be taken seriously. He was well aware that what he was seeing was a show put on by the community for his sake, but he still enjoyed the experience. Again, we can return to Cohen’s tourism theory to understand why “authentic” is a judgement made by individual tourists as they decide what is worth their money.

Cohen explains that the application of “authenticity” to tourism is problematic because it assumes that tourists are not aware that what they are consuming is staged, and that all tourists are in search of one shared, yet elusive, characteristic (Cohen 375). A 26-year-old German backpacker in the city of Iquitos expressed excitement at the prospect of visiting a Boras community, although he knew that they would be “acting” for tourists. He still believed the visit would provide him the opportunity to learn about how indigenous communities in the Amazon live. The problem with authenticity, Cohen explains, is that it is a socially constructed ideal, and thus it is negotiable (Cohen 375). There is no one definition of what a tourist believes an authentic Peruvian indigenous community should look like. Furthermore, as the two tourists I spoke to demonstrate, not all tourists are in search of authenticity. Many are content with a performance of culture, and are aware that what they are seeing has been tailored for them.

Cohen describes four different types of tourists: “existential tourists” who “embrace the other as their active center,” “experiential tourists” who “experience culture vicariously,” “recreational tourists” who “tend to approach the cultural products encountered on their trip with

a playful attitude of make-believe,” and “diversionary tourists” seeking “diversion and total oblivion on their trip” (Cohen 377). Existential tourists will be the most concerned with authenticity. These are tourists who will actively avoid “touristy” sites, and seek to insert themselves in local life. Experiential tourists value authenticity, but will still be willing to participate in some orchestrated tourist activities. Recreational tourists may hope for authenticity, but they are most concerned with enjoying themselves. These are the vacationers who sign up for tourist activities and laugh knowing that what they have seen is a show. Finally, diversionary tourists have no concern for authenticity (Cohen 378). Because tourists travel for different reasons, it makes sense that they will have different measures for authenticity. According to Cohen, each tourist has their own “differential symbols of authenticity” which clue them in to whether an experience is authentic, or not (Cohen 378).

When I visited the Yagua village, I noticed that the villagers’ homes were nowhere to be seen. I was also struck by the fact that the community members hesitated to show they speak Spanish. These were the “differential symbols of authenticity” that showed me that I was visiting a tourist site, not an authentic Yagua village. Despite this understanding, I was still able to enjoy the experience and left feeling like I had learned about Yagua culture. Other tourists may have been frustrated with this experience, or chosen not to visit the village all together. Overall, most tourists understand that what they are witnessing is a performance. Tourism becomes a business because an unspoken deal occurs between tourists and indigenous communities. The communities agree to act out the tourist’s preconceived ideas of indigeneity, and the tourists agree to suspend their disbelief and consume this show.



## Moving Towards Ethical Tourism: The Need for Regulation

In her essay, Ingles poses the question of whether or not indigenous people should dress in traditional costumes and “sell themselves as the ‘other’ or the ‘primitive’ to capture some of the tourists’ dollars?” (Ingles 147). In my opinion, this is the wrong question to ask. Indigenous communities are already making a business out of performing for tourists. As Ingles shows, this business can be both economically and culturally beneficial for them. A better question to ask would be, how could we ensure that these communities are not being exploited by tourism companies? This concern is very real; organizations such as Amnesty International have expressed concern that indigenous communities are being exploited by tourism. Although indigenous communities in the Amazon *choose* whether or not to participate in tourism, this does not stop them from being *exploited* by tourist companies. Gabriela Coronado, an anthropologist at Western Sydney University, argues that tourist agencies gain far more from indigenous tourism than indigenous communities do. She writes, “This marginalized position of Indigenous groups in the area of tourism is no different to their position in other social spaces in these countries. The political and economic history, shaped by colonization and neo - colonial forces, has marginalized the Indigenous peoples in various aspects of their social life” (Coronado 12). While in Chapter Two I discussed Peru’s ratification of ILO 169, popularly known as the “Indigenous Peoples Consultation Law,” that is meant to protect indigenous communities from being taken advantage of by corporations and other external agents, many argue that Peru is doing little to protect their indigenous populations from exploitation.

When I visited a Yagua community with Wimba Tours, I paid 320 *soles* for a five-hour day trip. Of that amount, only 15 *soles* went to the community that we visited for over an hour. According to my tour guide, the community is paid “under the table.” There is nobody to

mediate negotiations between indigenous communities and tour companies. Although Peruvian Amazonian communities have been known to stop seeing tourists while in negotiations with tour companies, my guide worried that they were often so desperate for the additional income that they would not be able to hold out long in negotiations. Coronado explains, “The culture and identities of these people are reduced to a commodity to be bought and sold. In a context in which these Indigenous peoples have been politically marginalized and socially disadvantaged, tourism through governmental or private organizations has continuously excluded their agency” (Coronado 12). Performance of traditional dances and rituals can be economically beneficial for indigenous communities. It can also be a method of preserving culture and embracing identity, but regulations must be put in place to protect communities from exploitation and ensure that they are being paid fairly for their work—performing for tourists.

The Peruvian state does not regulate these interactions because the tour companies pay communities out of pocket per visit. Because there is no contract between them, nobody steps in to ensure that communities are being protected. This is standard practice in Iquitos where a majority of tourists’ activities are provided by locals who have run their own small businesses. Many tour companies operate informally, running their entire business in cash, without a website or a storefront. During my time in Iquitos I met several people who make their entire living giving private or small group tours to tourists that hostel owners connect them with. These informal tour guides make binders they fill with photos and hand written recommendations from tourists to attract tourists, and they negotiate with locals to cover all the costs of an activity (transportation, admission, food, etc.). There are of course many exceptions to this, notably with the larger companies that own their own lodges in the forest, but unregulated tours given by locals who negotiate payments individually with indigenous villages, museums, activity centers

etc. are not at all uncommon. The tourism market is obviously economically beneficial for many Amazonian locals, but indigenous communities are often exploited in these unregulated negotiations. The only way to ensure the protection of Amazonian indigenous communities as they participate in tourism is for the Peruvian government to regulate tourism in the area. Unfortunately, regulation poses the risk of institutionalized marginalization as we saw in the case of Cuzco and Machu Picchu Sanctuary in chapter two, but there is not other way to guarantee that indigenous communities are paid a fair wage for their work.

### Indigenous Tourism: Cultural Commodification or Preservation?

We have seen that tourism can be economically beneficial for indigenous communities; it can also help preserve cultural traditions, but does tourism negatively impact culture? Coronado argues that post-colonial theory falls short in explaining the tourism dilemma because it only offers an explanation of tourism as a “colonialization of the mind.” She asserts that this overly simplifies the issue given the political, cultural and economic intricacies of tourism. She uses “cultural control,” or, “the system according to which the capacity of social decision over cultural elements is exercised” to analyze the interaction between tourism and indigenous communities (Coronado 14). Through the framework of “cultural control” we can understand how indigenous communities “have successfully engaged with the market demands, selling their Orientalized<sup>xvii</sup> cultures and still continuing to be shaped by the culture they regard as their own” (Coronado 14).

This complex interaction which Coronado is describing involves many different processes such as the preservation of existing traditions, the reclamation of ancient traditions, and the adoption of new traditions. For example, many indigenous communities in the Peruvian Amazon will wear traditional clothing for tourists (revival of ancient traditions), they will teach

their children traditional ceremonies and dances which may have fallen out of the culture (preservation of existing traditions), and they will simplify the dances they perform so tourists can easily participate (adoption of new traditions). According to Coronado, this outside influence on indigenous culture is a form of colonial control over the culture, as tourists and tourist companies have more influence than indigenous communities. Tourism forces this control because its main demand is paradoxical—asking for both authenticity as well as a culture that is attractive to tourists (Coronado 14). While I do not disagree with Coronado, I feel that she fails to adequately acknowledge the level of autonomy that indigenous Amazonian communities maintain over their cultures. Throughout this chapter, we have seen that communities decide in what ways, and if, they will participate in tourism. While it may seem paradoxical, it is possible for autonomy and exploitation to exist side-by-side.

When analyzing the “recolonization” process that occurs when indigenous culture is commodified for tourist consumption, it is useful to understand Beatrice Simon’s distinction between “frontstage” and “backstage” in tourism. In her essay, “Sacamefotos and Tejedoras: Frontstage Performance and Backstage Meaning in a Peruvian Context” Simon explains the trend of indigenous people, who would normally wear western style clothing, to dress in traditional costumes and take photos with tourists. Although her essay focuses on Andean indigenous communities, the theory can be applied to Amazonian communities as well. She describes tourism as a “stage” where social settings can be seen as a theater for people to play out different roles. In tourism, presentations are based on “cultural norms and values and expectations of audience.” The frontstage is the performance that the tourists see, the backstage is the social, economic, political and historical factors which give meaning to the performance. This distinction can be broken down to the difference in the performance for tourist and actual

lives of the performers (Simon 118-119). In the context of Amazonian indigenous communities, there are many layers of performance to analyze. The first, and simplest, is the difference in how indigenous communities appear to tourists, and how they live when tourists are not present. When one visits an indigenous village in the Peruvian Amazon, they can expect to find the villagers dressed in traditional clothing—this is the frontstage. The majority of communities who live this close to Iquitos wear clothing made out of synthetic materials, not traditional clothing—this is the backstage.

It is important to keep the “frontstage, backstage” theory in mind when speaking about indigenous tourism and commodification. While from the frontstage perspective it may appear that many indigenous communities are stepping up to participate in tourism voluntarily, Ingles explains the desperate economic situation of many indigenous families. The slowing opportunities for other activities to supplement income such as natural rubber and hunting indicate that the backstage of indigenous tourism in the Amazon is more complex than it appears. The fact that indigenous communities did not begin participating in tourism until these other opportunities were no longer available, indicates that if they had other economic options they may choose not to participate in tourism. Although indigenous communities in the Amazon are actively participating in the commodification of their cultures, their socioeconomic situation suggests that they have been pushed into tourism because of lack of opportunity and economic development. Tourism in the Peruvian Amazon has stepped in to fill an economic void—the problem is that indigenous communities are not given other economic opportunities, and thus they are open to exploitation by companies which do not pay them fairly for their services.

## Chapter Four: Ayahuasca Tourism and Indigenous Spirituality



Figure 13: Map of ayahuasca region.

Source: [www.ayahuasca.com](http://www.ayahuasca.com)

While many tourists travel to the Peruvian Amazon to come in contact with indigenous communities and see the many plants and animals that are specific to the Amazon forest, there is also a growing market for ayahuasca tourism in the region. Ayahuasca is a hallucinatory brew made from several forest vines which has traditionally been used by Amazonian indigenous communities for both healing and spiritual purposes. In the last ten years, ayahuasca has emerged as a symbol of indigenous spiritualism and connection to nature, tranquility, and self-discovery. Tourists looking to travel off the beaten path, journey to the Amazon to experience ayahuasca. In recent years, ayahuasca has also begun to spread to Western countries where “shamans” administer the drug to groups of people. The image above shows the regions of South America where ayahuasca is traditionally consumed. The red border marks the area where ayahuasca tradition is the strongest among indigenous communities, and also where the majority of tourism takes place. The pink border marks the area where ayahuasca is still prominent, but less widespread. Finally, the blue markings show areas where ayahuasca has spread in post-colonial times (Sacahambi).

While ayahuasca is traditionally consumed by indigenous communities in Peru, Brazil, Ecuador and Colombia (and a very small part of Bolivia), this chapter will only address ayahuasca tourism in Peru. As the market for ayahuasca grows, traditional practice is threatened. Expatriots<sup>xviii</sup> are moving to Iquitos in growing numbers to train as shamans, shifting the tourism away from indigenous shamans. As ayahuasca tourism grows, issues of cultural commodification and cultural appropriation are emerging, which threaten the autonomy and control of Amazonian indigenous communities over their spiritual practices.

### Ayahuasca and Tourism

Many tourists travel to the Amazon to experience a native lifestyle, hoping to get closer to nature and away from developed society. Advertised as “eco tours,” tourism companies offer a wide range of activities such as jungle hikes, bird watching, fishing, visits with jungle communities, and ayahuasca sessions with indigenous or non-indigenous shamans. Ayahuasca tourism, which is often sold as part of an eco-tour, is becoming increasingly popular according to locals who have watched the industry grow. Ayahuasca is a hallucinogen that comes from a jungle vine called *Banisteriopsis Caapi*, found in tropical regions of South America. This vine is mixed with varying other ingredients depending on the Shaman administering it. Indigenous communities in Peru, Brazil, Ecuador and Colombia have been preparing a tea out of ayahuasca for both medicinal and spiritual purposes for thousands of years (Highpine). The first record of ayahuasca comes from Jesuit missionaries, who were highly influential in the Amazonian regions of South America, in the 1700s. The first Western scientist to study ayahuasca, Richard Spruce an English botanist of the 1800s, noted that indigenous communities covering a vast territory of the Amazon (communities who would never come in contact with one another), were all preparing and using ayahuasca similarly. The vine which ayahuasca comes from has a great spiritual importance in

many indigenous Amazonian cultures—and is also used as an amulet and decoration in spiritual places (Highpine). A visit to the “Jungle Pharmacy,” a street of the large outdoor Belen market in Iquitos which sells traditional medicines and spiritual goods, reveals that ayahuasca is still used for good luck. Many of the good luck amulets sold on this street contain small pieces of ayahuasca vine inside of them. Interestingly, ayahuasca tourism is almost always advertised as ecotourism, not drug tourism. After talking to travelers who had come to the Amazon to experience ayahuasca, as well as local tourist guides, I believe this is because ayahuasca is considered to be a healing spiritual experience, not simply a drug induced “trip”<sup>xix</sup> in Latin America; it is only in Western cultures that Ayahuasca has been classified as a drug. Selling ayahuasca tourism as ecotourism, versus drug tourism, validates its connection to nature. Ayahuasca tourism is neither scandalized, nor hidden in the region. Walking around the city one can find posters advertising ayahuasca retreats, and there are two ayahuasca themed tourist businesses (a café and a gift shop). Ayahuasca is presented by the tourist industry as a natural healing substance which comes from the forest, for this reason ayahuasca rituals are often included as part of an “eco-tour” where participants will connect with nature.

### Indigenous Traditions and Drug Culture

During my week in Iquitos, I spoke with fifteen tourists, ten of whom had experienced, or intended to experience ayahuasca. I met each of these tourists at the Flying Dog hostel where I stayed. This was not a youth hostel, and the average age range of travelers staying there was 25 to 40. The majority of the tourists I met had quit their jobs and were travelling in South America for a significant amount of time (8 months or more), others were young adults taking a gap year before going to graduate school, and, in addition, there were a few vacationers. Besides three Peruvians (two vacationers, one on a work trip), all the travelers at the hostel during the time of my stay were



white and from North America or Europe. Only five of the fifteen travelers I met were women, and only one of these five women intended to consume ayahuasca. Ayahuasca tourism, from what I observed, is largely dominated by men. Three women separately told me that although they were interested in trying ayahuasca, they were too intimidated to attend a ritual, explaining that they would feel too vulnerable. Besides being a largely male environment, the hostel also had a strong “party” vibe. At all hours of the day groups of men could be found sitting in the open air hostel center smoking joints, drinking beer, and watching the hostel’s TV or playing on the foosball table. The hostel staff, two middle-aged men, befriended all the male travelers and drank and smoked along with them.

Although it’s not uncommon for extensive drinking and drug use to occur in a hostel environment, this hostel had a particularly strong party vibe—the drinking and smoking never seemed to stop, and it was clear that the majority of travelers were there for that reason. Additionally, Iquitos is a very small city with limited night life so travelers tended to stick to the hostel bar. My observations about ayahuasca tourism come from my interactions with the travelers staying at this hostel. Although I will use my conversations with them to explore ayahuasca tourism, it should be noted that I only came into contact with one type of tourist (backpackers), and I am in no way making a generalization about all tourists who take ayahuasca. In addition to the travelers at the hostel, I spoke with several locals about ayahuasca and tourism. My conversations with locals were generally with tour guides or moto taxi drivers.

One Peruvian woman I spoke with said that she had watched tourism in Iquitos boom over the past ten years, largely, she believed because of ayahuasca. This woman frequently speaks with tourists in local bars, and she reported that the majority of them were coming to the region for ayahuasca. In fact, Westerners have long been intrigued by the medicinal plants which are used in

indigenous spiritualism. The book, “The Teachings of Don Juan: A Yaqui Way of Knowledge,” a dissertation written by anthropology student Carlos Castaneda in the 1960’s, documents Castaneda’s experience apprenticing for an indigenous healer name don Juan in Mexico. The yaqui are an indigenous group of Mexico who are known for their use of peyote, a cactus with hallucinogenic effects when consumed. In the introduction to his book, Castaneda writes, “At first I saw don Juan simply as a rather peculiar man who knew a great deal about peyote and who spoke Spanish remarkably well. But the people with whom he lived believed that he had some “secret knowledge,” that he was a “brujo”<sup>xx</sup> (Castaneda 2). Castaneda describes the plants that don Juan specialized in:

Don Juan used, separately and on different occasions, three hallucinogenic plants: peyote (*Lophophora williamsii*), Jimson weed (*Datura inoxia* syn. *D. meteloides*), and a mushroom (possibly *Psilocybe Mexicana*). Since before their contact with Europeans, American Indians have known the hallucinogenic properties of these three plants. Because of their properties, the plants have been widely employed for pleasure, for curing, for witchcraft, and for attaining a state of ecstasy (Castaneda 7).

This work can be seen as fitting in with, or even contributing to, the developing obsession with hallucinogenic drugs, and their connection to indigenous cultures, by Westerners and particularly North Americans during the 1960s. During the same period as Castaneda was serving as an apprentice for don Juan, Harvard psychologist Timothy Leary was advocating for the use of LSD and other hallucinogenic drugs. Like many other researchers, Leary emphasized the use of these substances in indigenous cultures. After being dismissed from Harvard for his work with psychedelic drugs, Leary opened a commune in Mexico where he continued his research (Wurtzburg).

Throughout his book, Castaneda continues to elaborate an in-depth discussion of the spiritual revelations he had while under the tutelage of don Juan. Although he deals deeply with the use of hallucinogenic plants, his work is just as much about a different way of life and thinking.

The book can be seen as a meeting of two contradictory ways of thinking—while Castaneda is always seeking a “rational” explanation for what happens to his mind and body when he consumes various hallucinogenic substances, don Juan finds Castaneda’s insistent questioning frustrating and useless. Don Juan consistently expresses the belief that the answer to Castaneda’s questions are obvious and right in front of him. In one example don Juan administers an unnamed “smoke” to Castaneda which is supposed to remove his spirit from his body so that he can gain clarity of mind. After the experience Castaneda questions don Juan asking him:

“But you saw me as I am now, didn’t you?” (Castaneda)

“No! You were NOT as you are now!” (don Juan)

“True! I admit that. But I had my body, didn’t I, although I couldn’t feel it?” (Castaneda)

“No! Goddammit~ You did not have a body like the body you have today!” (don Juan)

“What happened to my body then?” (Castaneda)

“I thought you understood. The smoke took your body.” (don Juan)

“But where did it go?” (Castaneda)

“How in the hell do you expect me to know that?” (don Juan) (Castaneda 102).

The tension between Castaneda and don Juan is obvious. Finally, Castaneda admits that he stops seeking a “rational explanation” and begins to accept the experience as something unexplainable. This is part of what he learns from don Juan—to stop asking. At the end of the book Castaneda sums up his learning as follows:

From the point of view of personal stage of learning, I could deduce that up to the time when I withdrew from the apprenticeship don Juan’s teachings had fostered the adoption of two units of the conceptual order: (1) the idea that there was a separate realm of reality, another world, which I have called the “reality of special consensus”; (2) the idea that the reality of special consensus, or that other world, was as utilizable as the world of everyday life (Castaneda 178).

The “other world” which Castaneda discusses is only reachable through hallucinogenic plants. During the 1960s prominent researchers like himself and Timothy Leary began advocating for the use of psychedelic drugs, backing up their research with indigenous knowledge of plants and spirituality. This era marks the beginning of Western interaction with indigenous spirituality.

In the 2000s, drug tourism largely went dormant, but in the past ten years ayahuasca in particular has reappeared in Western society. Beth Conklin describes the “shifting middle ground” as the new connection between indigenous and Western societies based on Westerners’ stereotypical assumptions about indigenous lifestyle and relationship to the land. From Conklin’s theory, it would not be a jump to say that for some tourists, ayahuasca is the middle ground and entry point to indigenous culture. Many of the tourists I interviewed expressed admiration for the Amazonian indigenous lifestyle, spirituality and relationship with the land. One 26-year-old German man described his time spent with a Shipibo shaman as an “eye opening experience.” He claimed that he had “never felt so connected” with his own body and spirit. A common thread among Western travelers is the belief that indigenous communities hold knowledge about the meaning of life which allows them to be at peace with themselves and their environment. Time and time again this knowledge was linked to a distance from capitalism and materialism. The belief that indigenous communities are somehow above, or cut off from capitalism, links to the romanticizing discussed in chapter two. It also reflects a continuing paternalist relationship that westerners have with indigenous people, often both looking down on them and idolizing them for their innocence and distance from modernity.

### Ayahuasca and Spiritualism

In June 2014 *The New York Times* published an article called “Ayahuasca: A Strong Cup of Tea” which described a group of 20 to 30 year olds in Bushwick, Brooklyn who paid \$150 each to participate in an ayahuasca ritual with a Colombian shaman. According to the author the participants hoped that the experience “would open them to personal insights through optic and auditory hallucinations” (Morris). The writer who attended this ayahuasca ritual in Brooklyn describes the scene: “Once they drank and had settled into their spots, they waited in the darkness

with just one candle flickering. The shaman played traditional stringed and wind instruments while chanting ritualistic melodies, some sweet, some guttural” (Morris). The “traditional stringed and wind instruments while chanting ritualistic melodies” are noteworthy because they emphasize the link to indigenous culture. The spread of ayahuasca to Western cities emphasizes the process of commodification which it is undergoing—this process is intricately tied to Western ideas about spiritualism and indigenous cultures.

One could say that indigenous is “trending” in society right now. Tribal patterns have become a fashion staple, and indigenous artisanal crafts are exported and sold at exorbitant prices. There has also been a marked rise in spiritualism in western societies. Millennials are less religious than generations before them, and have turned towards spiritualism as an alternative to religious institutions. Raymond Lee, a Sociologist and Anthropologist, describes the revitalization of spiritualism. He writes:

The late-modernity paradigm proposes a highly fluid situation in which the twin processes of globalization and individualization impact on the self by elevating its autonomy in both the social and religious realms. Together with secularization, these processes have allegedly freed the notion of the sacred from the control of ecclesiastical orders and provided the self with a subjective determinism for revitalizing the nexus between spiritual experience and realization (Lee 83).

According to Lee, spiritualism is a personal search for the meaning of self, life, and death. Globalization and the growth of individualism have opened the door for spiritualism in Western cultures (Lee 85). As Lee notes, there has been a shift in many Western countries away from the church and towards a more personal religious journey. The spread of ayahuasca is part of this rise in western spiritualism. The New York Times reports that celebrities Lindsay Lohan and Penn Badgley have “spoken positively of ayahuasca’s powers” (Morris). In the paper “Ayahuasca Beyond the Amazon the Benefits and Risks of a Spreading Tradition” Stephen Trichter explains the spread of ayahuasca: “...the hallucinogenic plant brew ayahuasca, used in sacred healing

rituals in indigenous Amazonian cultures for centuries has found more recent use in a wide variety of modern spiritual contexts and communities. Its reputation for connecting those who participate in these ceremonies to the spirit world has stimulated the interest of those seeking connection with what they perceive to be the ‘divine’” (Trichter 131). Trichter emphasizes that many see ayahuasca as a spiritual experience, not a drug, quoting one person who claims they were an atheist before experiencing ayahuasca, but afterwards they became very spiritual and religious.

The word “ayahuasca” comes from the Quecha language and means “vine of the spirit.” Traditionally, Amazonian communities have used ayahuasca both as a healing substance, and to communicate with plants and animals (Trichter 132). In Peru it is mainly Shipibo communities that practice ayahuasca healing (less so Yaguas, Boras and Witotos). Generally, each community has one Shaman who is responsible for the spiritual and physical health of the community, as well as their harmony with their environment. Although most community members will experience ayahuasca at some point, in most cases only the shaman consumes ayahuasca using his visions to heal and protect the community.<sup>xxi</sup> This represents the first shift in ayahuasca tourism from traditional ayahuasca healing. In most cases tourists are the ones who consume ayahuasca, under the guidance of a shaman, but in traditional practice the shaman would be the one to consume ayahuasca and then advise those he was healing based on his visions.

Trichter discusses the many complications of ayahuasca’s introduction to the west. He writes:

In a time of postmodern and New Age hodgepodge spirituality in which Westerners often reject their Judeo-Christian past, and end up picking and choosing from different religious and mystical traditions to create an idiosyncratic spirituality, it is of great importance that the implications of introducing such a powerful shamanic tool into the West are examined (Trichter 138).

It is troubling that Tritcher spends the majority of his paper focusing on “implications” for the spiritual and mental health of westerners, not the indigenous communities who traditionally practice ayahuasca healing. However, he does note the commodification of a traditional culture, as well as its misrepresentation as two implications for indigenous communities. One local I spoke with, a young woman of indigenous Peruvian and Brazilian descent, expressed concerns that tourism was eroding traditional ayahuasca culture. She stated that she often saw tourists come back from ayahuasca retreats traumatized and almost crazy. She explained that shamans are beginning to see only dollar signs when it comes to tourists, and thus they are administering ayahuasca to people who are not mentally strong enough to handle the experience. She also expressed a concern that Shipibo shamans were allowing tourism to corrupt their relationship with ayahuasca.

Lee notes that along with the rise of spiritualism has come the commodification of the spiritual, “As the self seemingly becomes its own master in charting the routes to the sacred, it is also simultaneously exposed to market forces that are reshaping the consumptive trends in spiritual practice and realisation” (Lee 83). Ayahuasca, which was once a sacred part of Amazonian indigenous healing and spirituality, can now be purchased around the world. It is not only the commodification of the plant, but also of indigenous tradition and spiritual practice. The ayahuasca ceremony in Bushwick, Brooklyn, written about by *The New York Times*, emphasizes this idea. Participants of this ceremony did not only pay for ayahuasca, but also for the shaman who “played traditional stringed and wind instruments while chanting ritualistic melodies, some sweet, some guttural.” These New Yorkers aren’t buying ayahuasca, they are buying indigenous spiritualism—or at least a commodified performance of it. Tritcher explains that ayahuasca ceremonies in the Amazon usually cost up to \$200, and in the United States they cost up to \$500. Tourism, and the spread of ayahuasca to western countries, is leading to the commodification of what was once a

sacred tradition. Ayahuasca is being reduced to essentialized performances of indigeneity and spirituality which Westerners consume to fulfill their fetish for spirituality.

Further complicating the issue of commodification, as ayahuasca grows in popularity many Europeans and North Americans have relocated to the Amazon to train as shamans and administer ayahuasca to tourists. The presence of outsiders making money from a traditional indigenous practice is concerning because it is a clear form of cultural appropriation—tourists who go to expat shamans may never come in contact with the indigenous communities in the Amazon who practice Ayahuasca healing. This clearly takes cultural and spiritual autonomy out of the hands of indigenous communities. One Czech woman I met was planning a trip into the jungle for a private ayahuasca retreat. She hired a Czech expat who was living in Iquitos, and who had trained as a Shaman, to take her on the retreat. When I asked her if she had considered attending an ayahuasca retreat run by a Shipibo shaman, she said that she had, but it was “easier” to go with the Czech woman who she trusted more. She also preferred to speak her native language during the ceremony.

### Drug Tourism or Spiritualism?

The commodification of ayahuasca complicates the “middle ground” between tourists and indigenous communities. Clearly, tourists are consuming ayahuasca in a very different way than indigenous communities traditionally consume it. The influx of expats performing ayahuasca rituals raises concerns about the corruption of a spiritual practice, and the removal of autonomy from indigenous communities. Noting the many differences between traditional ayahuasca practice and ayahuasca tourism, a tension arises over the status of ayahuasca and tourism. Are tourists interacting with and experiencing indigenous spirituality, or is this simply drug tourism? In a report which elaborates the tension between ayahuasca tourism as drug consumption or spiritualism,



tourism and marketing scholars Girish Prayag, Paolo Mura, Michael Hall and Julien Fontaine write:

Depending on positionality and self-identification of tourism roles, ayahuasca is usually portrayed as a spiritual experience that leads to great self-understanding or a form of drug tourism. With few exceptions, previous studies on drug tourism fail to acknowledge that ‘drug related tourist experiences might involve a quest for profound and meaningful experiences.’ Hence, ayahuasca tourism occupies a fluid interspace capable of providing a spiritual, healing, recreational or drug experience, or potentially none of these (Prayag 175).

While speaking with tourists who travelled to the Peruvian Amazon to consume ayahuasca, I found that there was often a contradiction between their articulated motivations, and the way they chose to experience ayahuasca. For example, the Czech woman who decided to have another Czech expat administer her ayahuasca told me that her motives for consuming the plant were to clarify her relationship with herself, gain tranquility, and experience a spiritual “secret” that indigenous communities have known for thousands of years. Although she likely did not need to hire an indigenous shaman to fulfill her first two motives, I found it interesting that she had no issue with a foreigner teaching her about this spiritual “secret” of indigenous cultures.

In the last chapter I discussed Erik Cohen’s theory of the four different types of tourists: “existential tourists,” “experiential tourists,” “recreational tourists,” and “diversionary tourists.” I would classify the tourists I met who came to the Peruvian Amazon for the purpose of consuming ayahuasca as “experiential tourists” who Cohen describes as experiencing culture “vicariously.” These tourists are very much aware that ayahuasca is an indigenous Amazonian tradition. Ayahuasca’s link to indigeneity validates it as a spiritual substance rather than a drug in the eyes of tourists, but the majority of the tourists I met did not feel that they needed to experience ayahuasca with an indigenous shaman. The tourists I encountered could be described as a type of bohemians—they were clearly interested in both drugs and spirituality, privileged enough to be able to afford to spend many months travelling South America, and also interested in “travelling

off the beaten path.” Iquitos is still not a well-known destination for westerners, and several of the travelers I met prided themselves on visiting a city that most of their friends and relatives had never heard of. This group was actively looking for a unique experience, but were satisfied to have this experience with expat shamans or at organized tourist retreats.

All of the tourists I spoke to had very self-serving motives for consuming ayahuasca—they believed this would be a spiritual experience that would change their lives. Because connecting with indigenous cultures was not their prime motivation, the majority of the tourists I spoke with had no problem with going to foreigners for their ayahuasca experience if they thought it would be more beneficial for them. Only two Peruvian men travelling together told me that they specifically chose an indigenous shaman because they thought the experience would be more beneficial and “pure.” Others told me they had no preference between an expatriate or an indigenous shaman, as long as English was spoken and the price was right. In my experience, tourists were largely unaware of their role in cultural appropriation and commodification. The majority of tourists I met were on a spiritual journey, and they remained unconcerned with this journey’s effect on indigenous cultures. As a result, many directly supported the process of cultural appropriation that is occurring in the Amazon by attending rituals performed by expats. None of the tourists I spoke with saw any problem with the presence of expats in the Amazon. As more and more non-indigenous shamans perform ayahuasca rituals for money, both cultural and economic autonomy is being removed from indigenous communities. As they lose control over the market for ayahuasca tourism, they also lose valuable economic opportunity. While the growing number of Western shamans living in Iquitos is troubling, it is important to note that there are still many indigenous shamans who perform rituals for tourists.

Ayahuasca has the potential to be a “middle-ground” between tourists and indigenous communities because it can bring them together in a shared cultural experience. Unfortunately, the market is currently overrun with expats and non-indigenous shamans who perform ayahuasca rituals in environments that tourists are more comfortable with. Given the motive of attaining personal spiritual benefits, the majority of tourists do not feel it is necessary to seek out an indigenous shaman. The tourists I spoke to all acknowledged that ayahuasca is a part of Amazonian indigenous spiritualism, and this connection to indigeneity validated the experience for them, but very few felt that having an indigenous shaman would be important to their experience. What could be a genuine cross-cultural interaction, is becoming cultural appropriation, as expats take over the ayahuasca market. Ayahuasca’s connection to indigenous culture validates its spiritual use, but does not drive tourists to engage with indigenous communities. In June 2008, the Peruvian government formally declared the “traditional knowledge and use of ayahuasca” to be an expression of “immaterial cultural heritage of the nation” (Estrategia). While the Peruvian government has formally recognized ayahuasca practice as cultural heritage, it is interesting to note that it does not appear in any of Marca Perú’s campaigns. This suggests that ayahuasca is not an aspect of Peruvian culture that they want to promote.

## **Conclusion**

This thesis has addressed the interactions which take place between indigenous communities and the tourism industry in Peru. I have explored questions of how indigenous identity is commercialized through tourism and the role that indigenous communities, tourists, government, and outside agencies play in this commercialization. Authenticity and cultural commodification are two significant issues which affect the different regions of Peru discussed in this thesis. The relationship between authenticity, cultural commodification, and tourism is intertwined with tourists' expectations of indigenous communities, and indigenous communities' placement in the modern world in very complex ways. While indigenous communities, like all other communities, have changed and developed with time, the tourist industry tends to treat them as ancient people who are frozen in the past. This treatment is directly related to tourists' desire for authenticity. In cultural tourism, an authentic culture is one that remains untouched by modern global capitalism. Ironically, while the tourism industry today forces many indigenous communities to act as if global capitalism has not reached them, the ancestors of these same communities were brutally forced into the global market by colonialism; tourism itself is an outgrowth of global capitalism. The majority of tourists who visit indigenous communities, are the descendants of the perpetrators of colonialism, unconsciously reenacting colonial power structures through expectations of modern indigenous communities. While it would be overly simple to state that cultural tourism is merely a continuation of colonialism, the shadow of colonialism is clearly visible in the interactions of modern tourism.

My research revealed that cultural commodification functions very differently in the Amazonian and Andean regions of Peru. While tourists still expect to have their ideas about indigenous culture fulfilled through visits to indigenous communities, tourism in the Amazonian

region is not as widespread, giving local communities more control. Because tourism in this region of Peru is still relatively underdeveloped, it is not strictly regulated by either the Peruvian government or any other outside organizations. The tourist market in the Amazon is run by private tourism companies who negotiate directly with indigenous communities. Tourists travel to this region to explore the Amazon forest, and visiting an indigenous village is often part of this exploration. While indigenous communities are still obliged to perform traditional indigenous culture for tourists, they maintain autonomy over these performances. In Cuzco indigenous people are often removed from the touristy city center if they attempt to sell food or souvenirs without dressing in traditional costumes; in Machu Picchu Sanctuary *campesinos* are forbidden from having outhouses or electricity for fear of disturbing the tourists' illusion of visiting an ancient culture. By contrast, in the surrounding areas of Iquitos, indigenous communities hold complete autonomy over their performance of indigeneity. Some communities perform dances and sell crafts, other communities choose not to perform dances. The community I visited entertained tourists far away from their village, so we had no idea of the community's living situation.

In the Peruvian Amazon, indigenous communities are paid for their performance of traditional indigeneity. In the Andean region, indigenous people who do not perform indigeneity to the tastes of tourists are removed from tourist areas, or in the case of *campesinos*, they are removed from their land which has become the territory of tourism. Amazonian indigenous communities decide the boundaries of tourism (both geographically and in their participation); Andean indigenous communities are being taken over by tourism and actively pushed out of their own culture and land. The difference in the process of cultural commodification in the Peruvian Andean and Amazonian regions can be attributed to the difference in regulation. Both Cuzco and

Machu Picchu sanctuary are UNESCO world heritage sites. The word “heritage” complicates indigenous autonomy over culture because UNESCO defines heritage as global public property. This means that indigenous communities can be seen as a threat to their own heritage if they in any way compromise UNESCO’s institutionalized version of their heritage.

Ayahwasca tourism adds another layer of complexity to the analysis of cultural commodification and tourism. Before travelling to Iquitos Peru, I was unaware of the existence of ayahuasca tourism—ayahuasca tourism was not in my initial plan for this thesis. While also highlighting questions of cultural commodification and authenticity, ayahuasca tourism in particular brings up the issue of cultural appropriation. Through the work of Carlos Castaneda, I have shown that North Americans have connected drugs to indigenous spiritualism since the 1960’s. This trend can be seen in ayahuasca tourism—the drug’s connection to indigenous culture validates ayahuasca use as a spiritual experience rather than simply a hallucinogenic drug induced “trip.” Tourists’ use of ayahuasca, other than their placement in the Amazonian forest at the time consumption, bears very little resemblance to traditional indigenous use of the substance. Amazonian indigenous communities generally have a shaman who consumes ayahuasca and uses his/her visions to heal and guide the community. While most community members will at some time experience ayahuasca, the most common use is with the assistance of a trained shaman. Tourists, unlike indigenous communities, consume ayahuasca in the presence of a shaman, who guides them through the experience. As the market for ayahuasca tourism grows, Westerners and non-indigenous Peruvians have been moving to Iquitos to train as shamans, and more and more tourists are choosing these non-indigenous shamans to guide them in their ayahuasca experience. While indigenous shamans are still very popular, they no longer hold a monopoly on the ayahuasca tourism market. Even with non-indigenous shamans,

indigenous tradition is still highlighted in ayahuasca ceremonies. Ayahuasca is also being imported into Western countries where it is consumed in group ceremonies. As the ayahuasca market grows, ayahuasca consumption becomes more and more divorced from its traditional indigenous roots, and is now a clear example of cultural appropriation. For this to happen, the state will have to intervene in ayahuasca tourism and regulate who can administer ayahuasca.

Whether in Machu Picchu, Cuzco, Iquitos or an indigenous village in the Amazon forest, I have found that “authenticity” is central to the way that the tourism industry in Peru markets indigeneity. Tourism creates a demand for authenticity, and because the authentic cultures that tourists are searching for no longer exist, at least not in the way tourists imagine them, communities are forced to perform this culture. Through performance, cultural commodification occurs. Tourists pay for the performance of indigeneity, and the act of purchasing places a monetary value on the culture. The use of authenticity in marketing tourism in Peru is evident in the advertising campaigns of Marca Perú, the government-funded agency that relies heavily on images of smiling indigenous people dressed in traditional clothing in their promotional advertisements. Indigenous communities are not given voices in any of their advertisements; instead tourists and their satisfaction are the focus. The Marca Perú campaigns show the degree to which stereotypes about indigenous culture are institutionalized in Peru’s tourism market, but they also suggest that this essentialized version of indigeneity is not accepted nationally, but is a tactic used internationally. In contrast, Marca Perú’s national campaign, #MásPeruanoQue, steers clear of essentialized images indigenous culture and instead focuses on lesser-known aspects of Peruvian cultural (representing a fusion of both traditional and Spanish colonial) within a global framework. While this campaign does raise questions about the need for international affirmation

of Peruvian culture, it suggests that Peruvians are aware that their national identity is much more complex than the international Marca Perú campaigns suggest.

While this thesis has highlighted many of the negative aspects of cultural tourism in Peru, I do not wish to imply that tourism is entirely negative. Tourism can provide important economic development opportunities for local communities, and it has the potential to incite powerful cross-cultural interactions. According to a report done by the World Travel & Tourism Council, Travel and Tourism made up 9.7% of Peru's GDP in 2014, and is expected to rise by 4.5 percent in 2015, and by another 6.1 percent by 2025 (Travel & Tourism). Tourism also provided 1,247,000 jobs in 2014, and this number only accounts for regulated jobs (Travel & Tourism). Tourism obviously makes up a large and growing portion of Peru's economy, and it is important to acknowledge the many economic benefits that tourism provides. One question that has arisen throughout my research is how to ensure the protection of indigenous communities who wish to participate in the tourism market? While I cannot provide an absolute answer to this question, the autonomy of indigenous communities over their own participation seems to be a vital factor in promoting responsible cultural tourism. Indigenous communities should be the ones who decide the boundaries of tourism. Regulations must also be in place to protect indigenous people from being exploited by tourists and tourism companies. Equally important as acknowledging the economic benefits of tourism is the fact that these issues are not unique to Peru. Cultural tourism is a global industry that affects indigenous communities all over the world. I chose to focus my research on Peru because of my interest in Latin America and my personal travel experiences, but the study of interactions between tourists and indigenous communities needs to extend far beyond Peru



## Notes

<sup>i</sup> “El turismo es curioso: para que los turistas quieren seguir viniendo hay que mantener el pueblo en este estado, no se lo puede desarrollar de ninguna manera. Entonces los turistas traen plata pero esa plata se destina a embalsamar el pueblo.”

<sup>ii</sup> He was elected in 1962, but the military took control before his presidency could begin.

<sup>iii</sup> Minority Rights Group is an international organization that supports indigenous communities “as they strive to maintain their rights—to the land they live on, the languages they speak, to equal opportunities in education and employment, and to full participation in public life.”

<sup>iv</sup> See citation for “Peruvian Police Accused of Massacring Indigenous Protesters in Amazon Jungle”.

<sup>v</sup> See citation for “Peruvian Tribe Takes Government Officials Hostage over Oil Spill”.

<sup>vi</sup> See citation for both “Peru Empire of Hidden Treasures- the Beginning” and “Peru Empire of Hidden Treasures- the Legacy”

<sup>vii</sup> #MorePeruvianThan

<sup>viii</sup> (i) “To represent a masterpiece of human creative genius”. (iii) “To bear a unique or at least exceptional testimony to a cultural tradition”. (vii) “To contain superlative natural phenomena”. (ix) “To be outstanding examples representing significant on-going ecological and biological processes”.

<sup>ix</sup> Rural peasants

<sup>x</sup> This history is elaborated in the introduction.

<sup>xi</sup> *Ley del derecho a la consulta previa a los pueblos indígenas u originarios*

<sup>xii</sup> See chapter one

<sup>xiii</sup> Respectable/decent people

<sup>xiv</sup> I visited Iquitos, Peru from January 14<sup>th</sup> to 19<sup>th</sup> of 2016.

<sup>xv</sup> “Dawn on the Amazon” is owned by an American expat. There are several tourist companies in Iquitos that are owned by American or European expats. The majority of the companies are run by Peruvians who are local to the area, but do not identify with any indigenous ethnic group. According to a recent college graduate I met who came to Iquitos from an indigenous community to study, tourism studies is currently one of the most popular academic areas of study in Iquitos. Although he did not know of any tourism companies run by indigenous people (nor did I find any), he said that many young men came from indigenous communities in the forest to work in the tourism sector in Iquitos. The tour companies like to hire men from villages in the forest because their familiarity with the forest, and their ability to usually speak at least one indigenous language, makes them very good guides for tourists.

<sup>xvii</sup> Coronado references Said’s “Orientalism” in her work. The adjective “Orientalized” here is a reference to the process of “othering” which she draws from his work. Although Said’s work is about the perception of Asian cultures in the West, Coronada argues that it can be applied to indigenous communities as well.

<sup>xviii</sup> One who lives outside one’s native country

<sup>xix</sup> Using trip to refer to the state of being on a hallucinogenic drug

<sup>xx</sup> The Spanish word “brujo” translated to English as a “male witch”, but in many Latin American cultures brujo, or bruja for a woman, has the connotation of a spiritual healer, or medicine man/woman. Castaneda acknowledges this difference providing many different translations of the word.

<sup>xxi</sup> Information obtained from conversation with tour guide.

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