



Working with the Root:
The Facilitation of Healing and Activism
In the Peruvian Amazon

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Master thesis

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Cover Photo: Nicholas Ringstad; Shipibo Tela

Abstract:

Over the last decades, there has been a surge of interest in Amerindian plant medicines, administered by indigenous healers in sporadic groups across the world - especially ayahuasca. Parallel to this interest, energy and agricultural industries operating in Peru are expanding and challenging the self-determination of indigenous societies that still reside in the Amazonian rainforest. These two phenomena exist alongside each other, classifying indigenous societies within contrasting terms - as healers or obstacles to development. Facing foreign interest in either their knowledge systems or ancestral lands, these indigenous societies are operating in a situation where parts of the globalized world have recognized their medicines, knowledge and/or homelands as a resource for their own ends.

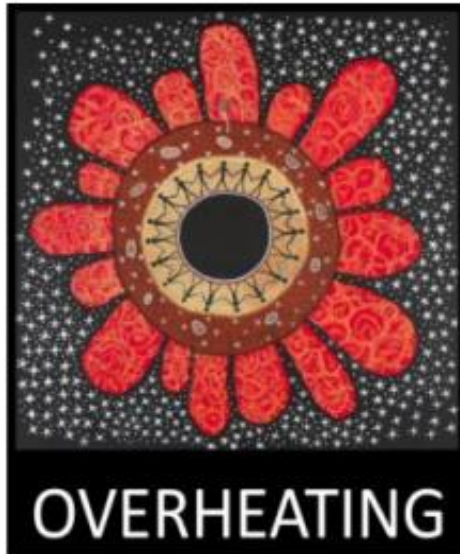
Under the topic of environmental preservation and indigenous rights, this thesis discusses the founding of two organisations as a response to the increasing engagement between the Shipibo and the effects of the global trends introduced above. The Shipibo are an indigenous society from the Loreto and Ucayali region of the Peruvian Amazon who have received attention for their use of ayahuasca while facing challenges related to the deforestation of their homelands in Pucallpa. The two organisations consist of both Shipibo and international workers or volunteers who work in different ways towards the same goal: to maintain the Shipibos' self-determination and right to recreate their culture as they face a growing world.

A central topic in this thesis concerns how these two organisations facilitate the motivations and experiences of foreigners interested in consuming and learning about ayahuasca or in supporting the Shipibo in their fight for self-determination. A discussion on the foreigners' motivation to travel to Peru will be brought into relation to how the two organisations are able to facilitate them. Through this facilitation, a *communitas* is produced as the foreigners' journeys to Peru reflects the ritual stages of rites of passage and liminality. Why are there so many westerners/northerners travelling to Peru and other Latin American countries with a desire to engage with plant medicines or environmental and social activism?

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Trevor Nickolls: Warmun Mandala (c) Trevor Nickolls/BONO

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Chapter One: Introduction

Fieldwork and Informants

During my fieldwork in the spring semester of 2016, I met with foreigners who had all been motivated to travel to an organization in the cities of Iquitos or Pucallpa. I stayed in Iquitos from the 8th of January until the 22nd of February and for a few more days on my way back to Norway in the beginning of June. The foreigners I met in Iquitos were seeking knowledge and treatment through the Shipibos' use of ayahuasca [a psychedelic plant brew] and plant medicines through an organization that works to facilitate this interest. A non-Peruvian and a Shipibo *onanya*, or *ayahuasquero/a* (a healer [*curandero/a*] who uses *ayahuasca* in their practice) started the organization together with the intention to create a comfortable learning and healing space for those seeking ayahuasca. I will refer to the centre I stayed with in Iquitos as the Ayahuasca Centre (AC) and those engaging with their practices as ayahuasca pilgrims (AP) from here on.

I stayed in Pucallpa from the 22nd of February until the 4th of June. The foreigners I met were volunteers engaging in environmental and social activism, referred to as environmental activists (EA), through a grassroots NGO, referred to as the Shipibo Organization (SO). The organization consists of a property where Shipibos, locals, and international workers and volunteers fill different positions to work on various projects organized by the SO in coordination with Shipibo communities and other indigenous rights groups. The SO's projects reflect the needs of Shipibo communities that are facing various challenges related to discrimination, the lacking recognition of their human rights and expanding palm oil industries in the region, amongst other trends related to the spreading use of ayahuasca. While there, I was able to gain insight into the volunteers' motivations and how the SO facilitates their desire to support their work.

This introductory chapter organises the two groups of foreigners I interviewed, summarizes relevant topics, introduces the conceptual framework, and summarizes my methodological approach. I will be introducing and discussing my informants and the organizations I stayed with anonymously in respect to their privacy and the sensitive nature of their work. Certain details pertaining to the operations of the two organisations will be left out for anonymization purposes since these details may reveal their identities. Descriptions of the SO's projects will be left out as they clearly identify the organisation, and considering how some of the SO's collaborators have received threats for their work, it is essential to be discreet in drawing

attention to them. As an anonymization method, I have given informants the names of the different plants I learned about while in Peru.

Chapter two discusses the context surrounding ayahuasca, with comments from my informants and observations made during my fieldwork. An in depth discussion on ayahuasca and its related topics will minimize digressions later on, informing the reader of relevant factors that arise in the empirical discussion.

Chapter three focuses on my time at the AC and I lay out an empirical narrative which I discuss in relation to Victor Turners theories of rites of passage and liminality.

Chapter four focuses on my time at the SO and the empirical narrative is discussed in relation to Victor Turner's theories on *communitas*. This discussion opens up for an analysis of how the EAs travelling the SO experience liminality.

Chapter five is the concluding chapter where a short multi-sited analysis relates the central argument concerning rites of passage to culture preservation. A short section dedicated to further research questions is found prior to the closing remarks.

Two trends

The two categories of foreigners that I interviewed align with two separate trends: The APs' motivations are a part of a growing trend related to the fact that interest in ayahuasca is spreading to parts of the world where it is not historically situated (de Mori, 2014, pp. 6-7). The EAs' motivations can be affiliated with the general trend related to environmental awareness and preservation. Since these two groups of foreigners have different motivations for travelling to Peru, I find it necessary to categorize them separately in order to analyse their similarities and differences. In order to do this, the two categories of foreigners will be described separately in their own chapters. This description will open up for a discussion on how the APs and EAs are engaging with a rite of passage while taking part in a *communitas*. The focus of this thesis concerns the journey of foreigners to and from Peru as a rite of passage.

For the EAs, it is of growing frustration that the Amazonian rainforest is threatened by expanding industries whose activities are legitimated through Peru's adoption of neoliberal economic policies. Despite economic growth and stability, unemployment is common and investment in critical infrastructure is lacking (Doleac, 2015). Neoliberalism propagates the idea of individuals being responsible for their own economic success and that it is up to them to

utilize their resources rationally in order to make an income (Goldstein, 2011, p. 30). This idea has been introduced to Peru at both the national and local scale, where individuals are expected to be the source of their own success (Torres, 2004, p. 216).

These policies have led to international trade agreements that have given foreign industries access to not only oil, gas, and minerals, but also arable land for cacao and palm oil cultivation. Praise and criticism surround these agreements - they have raised the standard of living in Peru, and some point out that it has come at a cost. Supporters of these trade agreements argue for the expansion of industries in order to fuel the newfound state of development and modernity while others point out how it is the globalized corporations that profit and not the marginalized population (Langman, 2003).

A symptom of this development can be observed in the context that the SO operates within, which regards an expanding palm oil plantation in Pucallpa as a threat to the self-determination of a Shipibo community in its vicinities. Despite Peru's indigenous rights laws being committed to the ILO convention 169, one may hear stories of masked men scaring Shipibo families out of their homes at night for their land or individuals receiving death threats after revealing environmental destruction and illegal land procurement by corporations (FPP, 2017). At times, it ends up in the media, where some voices state that such stories are fictional and is the result of activists and organizations manipulating indigenous communities into giving fake testimonies.

Within this context of neoliberalism and economic growth, the global interest in ayahuasca has produced an industry in itself. Here, centres offering ayahuasca and plant medicines to foreigners have become common. Iquitos has become a hub for this interest and it is not difficult to find someone offering jungle trips with the possibility of drinking ayahuasca or centres solely dedicated to the use of it (de Mori, 2014, p. 160). In some literature, this trend has been described as drug tourism, which is defined as persons seeking recreational use of drugs in a country where it is legal or decriminalized with the possible intention to smuggle. Evgenia Fotiuo describes how this term does not fit the context of APs since their varying motives are complex and that the effects of ayahuasca are not necessarily enjoyable, which recreational use implies (de Mori, 2014, p. 159). My data confirms this, as my informants described a desire to heal and/or learn from the Shipibos' use of plant medicines in order to develop or transform their state of being through the consumption of ayahuasca and plant medicines.

Conceptual Framework

In this thesis, I will first argue that the APs visiting the AC are engaging in a self-perpetuated rite of passage based on a desire to transform or develop their state of being in order to heal and/or learn under the guidance of an onanya and facilitators working for the AC. This is illustrated through the three stages of rite of passage in the terms of Victor Turner:

"The first phase (of separation) comprises symbolic behaviour signifying the detachment of the individual or group either from an earlier fixed point in the social structure, from a set of cultural conditions (a "state"), or from both. During the intervening "liminal" period, the characteristics of the ritual subject (the "passenger") are ambiguous; he passes through a cultural realm that has few or none of the attributes of the past or coming state. In the third phase (reaggregation or reincorporation), the passage is consummated (Turner, 1969, pp. 94-95)."

We may see that the first stage concerns the APs leaving their home country and putting their normal lives on pause. The second stage is spent at the AC, and the third is when they leave and return to their normal lives. A discussion on the liminal phase and the *communitas* it forms will illustrate how a rite of passage occurs as the APs engage in ritual practices that catalyse their transformation process. A look at how a meritocracy related to accumulated experience effects the social dynamics in the liminal phase will illustrate how egalitarian values exist alongside hidden hierarchies.

Secondly, I will argue that the journey of the EAs also resemble a rite of passage while their motivations for travelling to the SO recreates an intentionally formed *communitas*. I discuss how the organisational structure of the SO forms a *communitas* that facilitates these motivations while producing an egalitarian arena for interaction where various events and projects direct the courses of action. A short analysis of how a meritocracy related to accumulated experience effects the social dynamics at the SO will also help illustrate how hidden hierarchies exist within an egalitarian *communitas*. These descriptions will open up for an understanding of how the EAs' experience at the SO resembles liminality.

Lastly, I follow a multi-sited approach for a comparative analysis to illustrate some common underpinnings related to the generated output of the two organisations, which is culture preservation. A few short summaries on topics related to culture preservation concludes the thesis.

Method

In the project description I handed in earlier in my degree, I wrote that I would be utilizing methods for data production that would allow me to step into others' life-worlds through participation and not solely observation. I planned to have interviews with as many as possible, acknowledging that my lacking Spanish skills would keep me back. Never mind the false sense of security I got after refreshing my Spanish skills online. What I could not foresee, was the degree to which I was going to be in contact with the Shipibo. When I arrived in Peru, I realised that my location and the language barrier would keep me at a certain distance from them. With time, this barrier led me to divert my focus to what I had the most access to - which were the foreigners, the organisations and the work that they were doing. While I did have some interviews with Shipibo with the help of translators, the bulk of my data relates to the foreigners and the work done by the organisations.

During my stay at the organisations, I used Tim Ingold's theory of *dwelling* and its related concepts of *taskscape* and *landscape* as a method to engage with the surrounding world. Ingold describes dwelling as having a perspective "founded on the premise that the forms humans build, whether in the imagination or on the ground, arise within the currents of their involved activity, in the specific relational contexts of their practical engagement with their surroundings (Ingold, 2011, p. 10)." This engagement occurs within the landscape, which Ingold describes as something that is not separate from the activities of life but that in which everything occurs, or *becomes*, in; that it is a generative relational field, or *meshwork*, of phenomena bringing each other into being. This idea rests on the perception of *movement* and its creation of interactivity between beings whose existence and journey in the landscape creates lines that meet with others and create relations.

"Rather there is a trail of movement or growth. Every such trail [line] discloses a relation. But the relation is not *between* one thing and another – between the organisms 'here' and the environment 'there'. It is rather a trail *along* which life is lived. Neither beginning here and ending there, nor vice versa, the trail winds through or amidst like the root of a plant or a stream between its banks. Each such trail is but one strand in a tissue of trails that together comprise the texture of the lifeworld. This texture is what I mean when I speak of organisms being constituted within a relational field. It is a field not of interconnected points but of interwoven lines; not a network but a *meshwork* (Ingold, 2011, pp. 69-70)."

This meshwork illustrates the intrinsic relations between all beings who interact in the cosmos and how these relations constitute and form each other. To understand this relational field of interactivity, Ingold's dwelling perspective does not acknowledge the nature/culture divide as useful when one seeks to engage the meshwork as a participant rather than as a spectator, which he argues the *emic* and *etic* division conveys (Ingold, 1993, p. 154). This perspective is founded on an *animistic* idea where:

"the dynamic, transformative potential of the entire field of relations within which beings of all kinds, more or less person-like or think-like, continually and reciprocally bring one another into existence. The animacy of the lifeworld, in short, is not the result of an infusion of spirit into substance, or of agency into materiality, but is rather ontologically prior to their differentiation (Ingold, 2011, p. 68)."

This idea erases the culturally constructed boundaries between inner and outer life and illustrates how they are related through the meshwork since the outer world acts as the field of which the inner world is a part and acting within.

In disregarding the landscape as a separate and set fixture and backdrop for human activity and rather acknowledging its own movement and process of transformation through time, Ingold places the landscape as a being *in itself*, which human activity relates with. Instead of the landscape being a backdrop for human activity inscribed with cultural meaning from human perception, it is incorporated through the taskscape, or activities, that unfold through interactivity. This means that meaning is not inscribed prior to a relation, but is incorporated by means of the relation. Thus, the landscape is formed through dwelling, meaning that it is formed through the movements of beings who act with it.

This notion that beings bring each other into *becoming* rests on the presupposition of temporality not being a chronological structure of events - as humans have constructed it-but as the *movement* of beings in relation to each other. In this movement, beings act in accordance to their position in the landscape and to each other, ultimately forming the taskscape, which is intrinsically related to the landscape.

"Whilst both the landscape and the taskscape presuppose the presence of an agent who watches and listens, the taskscape must be populated with beings who are themselves agents, and who reciprocally 'act back' in the process of their own dwelling. In other words, the taskscape exists not just as activity but as interactivity (Ingold, 1993, p. 163)."

The concept of taskscape opens up the possibility to engage with the Shipibos' practices and the work of the two organisations I study here. Engaging with the taskscape at the organisations would not only lead me to learn more about the Shipibos, but also understand the work the foreigners are engaging in by taking part in their projects where possible. I have chosen to use Ingold's dwelling perspective as a method during my fieldwork because of the animistic cosmology of the Shipibo. In order to try to understand the Shipibos' worldview, I thought it best to adhere to a perception that unfolds my preconceived categories and notions of reality in an attempt to see things as they are and not as how I want or suppose them to be. For the Shipibo, the cosmos is inhabited with spirits one may engage with, and other Amerindian worldviews ascribe spirits to mountains, which the northern school of thought defines as in-animate objects. In order to get a grasp of the perception that the in-animate has spiritual agency, adhering to Ingold's perspective of beings bringing each other into being through interactivity seemed like the best course. This perception could also be applied in my observation of the APs and EAs.

"Indeed once we think of the world in this way, as a total movement of becoming which builds itself into the forms we see, and in which each form takes shape in continuous relation to those around it, then the distinction between the animate and the inanimate seems to dissolve. The world itself takes on the character of an organism, and the movements of animals – including those of human beings - are parts or aspects of its life-process. This means that in dwelling in the world, we do not act *upon* it, or do things *to* it; rather we move along *with* it. Our actions do not transform the world, they are part and parcel of the world's transforming itself. And that is just another way of saying that they belong to time (Ingold, 1993, p. 164)."

To get a grasp of what Ingold is talking about, as he is so philosophically inclined, I find it useful to bring in his descriptions of tools and their relationship to work, or the taskscape.

"No object considered purely in and for itself, in terms of its intrinsic attributes alone, can be a tool. To describe a thing as a tool is to place it in *relation* to other things within a field of activity in which it can exert a certain effect. [...] It follows that for an object to count as a tool it must be endowed with a story, which the practitioner should know and understand in order to recognise it as such and use it appropriately. Considered as tools, things *are* their stories. We are of course more accustomed to think of tools as having certain functions. My point, however, is that the functions of things are not attributes but narratives (Ingold, 2011, p. 56)."

A thing, or being, becomes a tool once it is active in a field of relations with other beings where it is being utilized in the activity of *becoming*. It is in this *becoming* where the story is formed, illustrating how the tool, or being, plays a role in inter-activity and producing a *result* of that activity. Ayahuasca has been described as a tool with different functions, which illustrates that it is up to the practitioner to use it, or to invoke its story, in order for them to bring its function to effect - ultimately leading to the completion of a task, be it learning, healing, or gaining insights. Therefore, engaging with ayahuasca involves a relationship with its story of being used to serve different functions, meaning that engaging with it as a taskscape also entails engaging with the landscape it exists within. It is this relationship between tools and the environment they exist within that motivated me to engage with ayahuasca: it was potentially not only a doorway into understanding Shipibo culture, but also their perception of relationships between beings in the Amazon. "Thus any task, itself a movement, unfolds within the 'network of movements' in which the existence of every living being, animal or human, is suspended (Ingold, 2011, p. 60)."

This method allowed me to experience what the other foreigners were going through instead of me having to interpret their descriptions of the taskscape related to ayahuasca. The degree of shared experience is varying, as I could not copy all of the work being done - ascribed as it was to certain roles within the organisations that demand defined qualifications. An example of such a qualified role would be the facilitator role at the AC or volunteer coordinator at the SO. However, being a part of a daily workflow through a taskscape gave me insights into how my informants also experienced this flow in the landscape. In sum, applying this method during my fieldwork allowed me to step into the shared experiences being had by my informants - as a participant and not solely as a spectator. The variation in work between the AC and the SO is substantial, but since they both engage with the Shipibo and seek to respect their self-determination in their homelands, they relate to each other in that they are working for environmental conservation and culture preservation.

Position

At the AC, I was a visitor alongside the other foreigners seeking to learn about plant medicines. This allowed me to experience the course about Shipibo culture at the AC as a participant while producing data through observations and interviews. Through direct experience and consumption of plant medicines, I was not only able to heal personal ailments but also gain a better understanding of how this may occur for others. This form of healing is very encompassing since it involves psychology, ontology, and varied medical practices that exist alongside themes related to inter-dimensional spirits and the other worlds they inhabit. This thesis does not have enough space to discuss these topics and their related stories of transformations in depth. I have therefore decided to focus on how the AC's facilitation of APs resembles the ritual stages of rite of passage that opens up for liminal experiences.

To get a grasp of this, I engaged with the taskscape of working with the plant medicines as prescribed by the onanyas and facilitators as the other participants did. Engaging with this taskscape was a doorway into the landscape, which opened up a new realm of interaction within and outside my body. I followed the protocol for a *dieta* to experience for myself the task of finding the root cause of my ailments with plant medicines as my guides. A *dieta* is a method, or a ritual, for learning or healing from plants over a set period and I will be describing this practice in more detail in the next chapter. What we may note from my time at the AC is how I gained insight into the production and administering of plant medicines, how one engages with the effects of these medicines, and how this form of healing demands the person's full engagement, as it is not a passive form of treatment. Some of my informants describe this fulltime engagement with plant medicines as a form of work where the plants are the tools and I have come to understand this description more from my own experiences, which I see as an added strength to my analysis.

What we may see from my interviews and observations from my time at the AC is how some of my informants are seeking alternative medical practices after exhausting their possibilities in their home countries without success. This common denominator brings their stories together at the AC, where some of my informants found healing while others are still on their way. Some of the others had found their way to the AC from a life of discontent and a lacking affiliation to their surrounding cultural norms. A thirst for something different has led many of my informants to Peru, and their common denominator relates to a fracture with their socially ascribed norms and a desire to connect with nature and others who seek the same. A disillusionment from the

status quo that seeks to uphold medical, political and economic structures has driven some to create new lives for themselves after gaining insights from ayahuasca. A few had found their way to the AC from a long-standing interest in ayahuasca and was referred there by friends. Nearly all of my informants, including those from the SO, described a frustration with some of the norms of the western world and the superficial materialism on which it survives.

I was wary of the potential for ethical breaches related to my engaging with persons who are dealing with sensitive health issues at the AC. What I could not foresee, was how demanding this time would be for both the APs and myself, and I realised that I could not be as inquisitive as I would normally be. This restricted me from being able to observe many of the interactions at the AC and I see it as a weakness in my data since I was not able to write these down as they happened, leading me to write from memory and potentially misquoting what was said. This weakness has strengthened my decision to focus on the dieta as a rite of passage and not so much on the encounters between my informants, as I do not want to misrepresent their actions and voices. I was also concerned about whether my informants were going to trust my intentions, but my fears were proven false as the APs desired to have an interview towards the end of our stay at the AC.

Out of respect for my informants' dieta process, their private ailments, and the lacking data related to the details of their journeys, I have decided to not describe their direct and private experiences with ayahuasca as it is outside of my grasp. Describing the effects of medicines (and especially ayahuasca) is not an easy task and many of my informants did not paint a clear picture of their experiences as they were still making sense of them, meaning that I would have to piece together different parts of our interviews in order to write out a description of their experience. Piecing together these fractured descriptions would involve my personal interpretation to such a degree that I would project my own understanding into my informants' experiences. This would be problematic as the description would not be truthful and therefore misrepresent the phenomenon in an analytical context.

The empirical discussion of my time at the AC will therefore involve a narrative of the work at the AC to understand what my informants engaged with. I will end with a few summarising stories from their intentions and experiences from their dieta experience. The reason I have decided to describe the dieta process is because it is a topic that arises during my time at the SO and how it fits into the work they do. Having an in depth discussion on what the dieta entails will give the reader a greater understanding of the empirical discussion about the SO.

At the SO, I was a neophyte anthropologist filling a research position with no direct responsibilities related to the organisation's work. As such, I was free to engage as I deemed fit for my thesis. I was hoping to do more fieldwork in Shipibo communities through the SO, but out of respect for the sensitive nature of their relationship to these communities, I decided not to push the envelope after I became aware of this precariousness. The community has become wary of who they welcome after facing years of challenges, and I did not want to create a misunderstanding by seeming to represent the SO with my faulty Spanish and unknown direction of my thesis. I therefore decided to give the property of the SO my full attention and took part in the activities there.

While there, I for the most part helped with work at the property together with Maca, a foreigner in the SO who is responsible for maintenance and making sure that household routines and chores are being carried out. By supporting his work, I gained insight into how the SO functions while experiencing how the work spaces and home spaces exist alongside each other. Taking part in workshops and meetings led me to see that egalitarian values exist alongside a meritocracy and to see how this affected the development of ideas and projects. I observed the others go about their daily routines while making note of the formal and informal sharing of information that occurred. I also conducted interviews with everyone to learn about their experiences at the SO.

Through engaging with the work that was accessible to me, I was able to step into the taskscape of the SO, leading me to experience some of their work. This taskscape is a part of the landscape, and the work that I had access to concerned the maintenance or improvement of the SO property as the local climate had adverse effects on it. The taskscape which I was *not* able to attend to is associated to the projects of the SO, since they were related to certain positions and the work concerning the needs of Shipibo communities. This taskscape related to the needs of the Shipibo and how their self-determination in Pucallpa is affected by deforestation.

Background and Reflexivity

I came to know of the Shipibo and ayahuasca many years ago when I learned that some friends were using it for therapeutic effects. The Shipibos' use of ayahuasca has been of growing interest to me as research on the therapeutic effects of psychedelic substances has resurged over the last decades. I also have a deep personal appreciation for the natural world and hope to see that greater efforts are taken to preserve the global environment. Learning about deforestation in the world's rainforests has caused me pain for years and I have an obvious bias related to the actions of industries that are not owning up to their responsibility for their contamination and transformation of nature. Recognizing plants as potential medicines and acknowledging that the Amazon is home to an array of biodiversity, I find it tragic that we are potentially destroying the ability to discover them because of deforestation. Coupled with the acknowledgement that indigenous societies, like the Shipibo, have a vast array of knowledge of medicinal plants, I see it as imperative to support their self-determination in the Amazon so that they can continue their practices while maintaining their relationship to the rainforest, potentially strengthening conservation efforts since they can be the caretakers of the rainforest.

Chapter Two: The Shipibo

Reports state that the first contact with the Shipibo occurred when other local populations arrived in the Ucayali area with missionaries and explorers in the 14th and 15th century. At first, there was a violent rejection of the outsiders and rebellions against their establishments. The Shipibo, alongside other local groups, carried out attacks on the missions established by the Jesuit and Franciscan missionaries, who were also fighting for power over the local groups. In 1680, the Jesuit missionaries successfully established a mission with the Shipibo, which led to the spread of sickness (Pedersen, 2016).

Towards the end of the 19th century, the Shipibo had regular contact with Andean groups and the mestizo populations. The Shipibos were also labourers during the rubber boom and ended up working for the barons of the industry when it was over. The first protestant missionaries entered the Shipibo territory in 1930, which in turn led to the establishment of bi-lingual schools, intended to translate the bible into local languages. This establishment, fewer economic restrictions and access to medical services eventually led the Shipibos to grow demographically, and their society now consists of at least 30,000 people (Pedersen, 2016).

The slow and steady process of urbanization has led many Shipibo to live their lives in the cities or travel to find work instead of living in their forest communities. The new lifestyles has brought with it a greater need for stable income and the introduction of city and global trends has led some Shipibo to embrace the metropolitan norms. I remember seeing a young Shipibo visit the SO one day and I thought that he could blend in in New York because of his jeans, t-shirt, Nikes, white earphone in one ear and cap with an unbent visor and sticker still on it. The Shipibo have faced discrimination for their traditional clothing, amongst other prejudices, and I only saw a few wear their traditional *cushma*, see figure 1. The Shipibo women usually wear a *tela*, see cover photo, as a skirt, which is a rectangular piece of cloth embroidered with patterns representing elements from their cosmology, and is a more common piece of clothing than the *cushma*.



Figure 1: Cushma Photo: Nicholas Ringstad

These patterns are on buildings and in plazas scattered around Pucallpa, but not so much in Iquitos. Internationally, the designs have become associated with ayahuasca and some online stores sell telas with a disclaimer stating that they do not seek to exploit the Shipibo through their sales and make sure the artists earn a respectable wage. While in Pucallpa, I learned of a man collaborating with the SO with the intent to give the Shipibo legal rights to their designs. I heard a rumour that the Shipibo have forgotten the meaning of the designs and that they replicate them from practice in order to have telas to sell at markets. While buying a tela at the AC, I learned that the patterns project the songs learned from plant spirits, called *bewá* in Shipibo and *icaros* in mestizo, which the Shipibo sing during ayahuasca ceremonies and other times, such as when working with plant medicines.

"A key element in this magical dialogue with the energy that permeates creation and is embedded in the Shipibo designs is the work with ayahuasca by the Shipibo shamans or Muraya. In the deep ayahuasca trance, the ayahuasca reveals to the shaman the luminous geometric patterns of energy. These filaments drift towards the mouth of the shaman, where they metamorphose into a chant, or icaro. The icaros is a conduit for the patterns of creation,

which then permeate the body of the shaman's patient, bringing harmony in the form of the form of the geometric patterns that rebalance the patient's body. It may take a few sessions to complete this, and when completed, the geometric designs are embedded in the person's body. This internal patterning is deemed to be permanent and will protect the person's spirit (Charing, 2016)."

The Shipibos' cosmology views the cosmos as consisting of four spaces, or dimensions: the world of waters, Jene Nete; the world in which we live, Non Nete; the yellow world, Panshi Nete; and the world of wonders, Jakon Nete. Jene Nete holds another life, with cities, villages, cultures, and beings living together. The mightiest being in this space is Ronin, a large boa who sang all of existence into being and whose skin and insides are another source of the patterns the Shipibo depict in their artwork. The "rules of life" dictate the world we live in. The Muraya, a powerful onanya who is able to travel to the different spaces in the cosmos, establishes these rules. In these travels, the Muraya converses and has relationships with beings in the different spaces, and brings back knowledge from them. This knowledge is shared with the others and used to establish rules that they live by.

The Shipibo believe that once they die, they have to reflect on their life and ask themselves if they have been good or bad. When a Shipibo dies, their soul goes to Tanshineté, which is also known as the world of sin, by flowing with the waters down the Ucayali River. At the end, one turns around to see if they have accumulated a lot of sin, and if this is so, they will not travel on to the realm of the dead. Therefore, in Tanshineté, one may be evaluated and cleansed until the person is pure. Eventually one reaches Acumupta, which is a wonderful place with no disease or death.

Dieta and Icaros

An onanya is a Shipibo healer. They may also be called an ayahuasquero/a, which means that they are a healer that uses ayahuasca in their practice. They may also be called a curandero/a, which means healer. While at the AC, we learned that the onanyas learn their knowledge from plants by doing a dieta, or samá in Shipibo. To get a grasp of this, we were told during the lectures at the AC that one may think of the process as going into a contractual relationship with someone, in this case between human and plant. To establish this contract in order to start a dieta, the onanya follows a specific diet, abstains from sexual activity, and goes into near to complete isolation to create the prerequisites for communication with the plant from whom s/he seeks to learn and/or heal. The plant may reveal itself to the onanya through dreams or visions

induced after drinking ayahuasca and is a sign that the plant is willing to enter into a dialogue. Then, more details such as other food restrictions, the length of the dieta and following specific requirements reflecting a certain plant's unique criteria is decided and agreed upon. Experienced healers, neophyte apprentices, and patients abide by this process in varying degrees of strictness based on their individual circumstances and the plants criteria for communion.

“In some cases the spirits themselves appear to the neophyte and prescribe the duration and character of the diet. A minimum duration of six months is generally recognized as necessary, but it may be prolonged to several years. (...) The diet can be broken after a certain period of time – for instance after six months – and reassumed later. In fact, learning from the plants, once a person has been initiated, is an open process which can be reinitiated at will. From time to time *vegetalistas* renew their energies and expand their knowledge by following the diet during shorter periods. (...) The length of the diet determines the knowledge and power of a shaman. During this time the novitiate gets to know different plants which will be symbolically incorporated in his body, giving him such properties as strength to resist heavy rain, wind and floods (Luna, 1986, p. 52).”

In Amazonia, this method is generally referred to as *vegetalismo*, and is practiced in some Mestizo communities, who are called *vegetalistas*. “A *vegetalista* [...] is the person who has acquired his knowledge from a plant, and who normally uses this plant in his diagnosis and sometimes also in healing his patients (Luna, 1986, p. 32).” From this method, the neophyte learns through an apprenticeship period with a healer but also through their relationships with plant spirits through dietas. During a dieta, an *onanya* learns songs, the *icaros*, and medicinal recipes from plant teachers. The longer one is in dieta for, the more knowledge one learns from the plant and the more power one gains. The trained *ayahuasquero* may spend many years in isolation in the Amazon while learning from the plants, potentially forming them into a *Muraya*, which is a healer who excels in this work.

Some plants are seen as masters and one gains knowledge and strength from them to heal patients and teach apprentices. The patterns of the plant spirits fuse with one's own and becomes an ally. This alliance is consecrated through the terms set at the beginning of the dieta and if they are broken, the individual may face dire or fatal consequences, depending on the plant one is in contract with. At the end of a dieta, the *onanya* sings an *Arkana*, which is an *icaro*, to seal the dieta in the body. Once it is over, a post-dieta starts where fewer restrictions are in place for a few days, weeks or a few months, depending on the details of the contract. Once complete, the *onanya* will have renewed energy and knowledge to continue doing the work at hand.

One may learn from all plants through this process, but it is advised to be careful when choosing since it is a time consuming endeavour that demands dedication and a strong engagement with the process. Alongside that, one needs to be aware of what a plant may teach since some show you how to heal or harm others, and some teach both. During a dieta, the plant tests the person in a variety of ways to check their character. This is one of the ways the person learns not only about oneself but of the properties of the plant. I learned that if a plant wants to teach you how to harm others, then it would entice you by appealing to desires and slowly draw you away from your true intentions and alter them into desiring to harvest power from others or do harm. If this happens, then the plant has mastered the person. Brujos, or sorcerers, are those who seek to harvest power and do harm, but that does not necessarily mean that the plants enticed them to do so. Jealousy and power struggles are common and inter-dimensional battles between onanyas illustrate the other uses of plant knowledge.

An aspect of this method is how one can go into a dieta without the intention of becoming a healer. One can do it for treatment under the guidance of an experienced healer for other vocations.

“A second observation is that learning from the plants does not imply that the person will become a healer. It seems to me that what has moved some *vegetalistas* to follow the prescriptions associated with the ingestions of plant-teachers was more a philosophical quest – the desire to learn, to understand – than a humanitarian vocation. Learning how to heal is part of the knowledge acquired during initiation, not the primary goal. (...) The *vegetalistas* learn directly from spirits. The function of the senior shaman, when present, is to protect the novice during his apprenticeship from evil spirits and sorcerers, and to instruct him about the diet and prescriptions to be observed. However, the spirits of the plants are those who teach him the magic melodies and the use of medicinal plants (Luna, 1986, p. 51).”

What we may see from this is how individuals may enter into a dieta for different reasons. One may need to heal and be prescribed a type of course by the healer and plant spirit or an onanya may seek more knowledge, power, or healing from a plant. Either way, a person goes into a relationship with a plant to learn about its properties and abilities through a contract. If this is done, the plant and person work together.

When I asked an onanya about their practices, she pointed out how different plants have different requirements and that some are more lenient than others. For example, *ayahuma* has a narrow and strict path that one cannot diverge from. If one does this one may lose their mind or die. A dieta is therefore a lifelong dedication and becoming a healer is a virtue. A mark of

authenticity relates to this lifelong dedication where extended dietas are required if one is to be able to truthfully claim that they are a healer.

It must be noted the dieta is not equal to the ayahuasca diet that is followed prior to drinking ayahuasca. The ayahuasca diet is intended to make sure that those drinking ayahuasca do not eat foods that may be contraindicative with its chemistry while the dieta is a prolonged engagement with plant teachers who demand a certain protocol to be followed in order to be engaged.

Ayahuasca

There are as many stories that describe how the recipe for ayahuasca was discovered as there are groups using them. Some stories are similar and others are unique, but amongst all of them, we find that the ayahuasca vine, *banisteriopsis caapi*, is the main ingredient used to make the brew. Some groups use only the vine while others add one or more plants for various effects. The most commonly used additive contains dimethyltryptamine (DMT), which is a powerful psychedelic molecule that is found in a wide array of plants all over the world and is classified as a schedule one drug. In Peru, one of the most common plants containing DMT is *psychotria viridis*, known as chacruna. The Shipibo use this combination of two plants boiled in water when they brew ayahuasca.

DMT is inactive if one ingests it orally, but this is not the case when it is combined with the vine, which contains monoamine oxidase inhibitors (MAOI). "It is now a widely accepted hypothesis that following ayahuasca ingestion, MAO inhibition brought about by harmine [found in the vine], [...] prevents the enzymatic degradation of DMT, allowing its absorption (Riba, 2003)." The chemistry behind the effect of ayahuasca is worth noting as advanced, so one may wonder how such a specific combination of plants and molecules was discovered amongst the plethora of possibilities one has to choose from in the Amazon. Some say the recipe was discovered by chance while the stories paint another picture.

The various stories reflect the various groups that use ayahuasca and the knowledge they have of their past and it illustrates the variety of cultural narratives that surround ayahuasca. This makes it difficult to lean on any one story that represents the discovery and spread of ayahuasca since there are a few that proclaim the original discovery of it. This precariousness has led me to describe what I heard while in Peru, where I was told that long ago, a Shipibo healer was doing a *dieta* of *mapacho* (*nicotiana rustica*), a type of tobacco that grows in the Amazon, and through it received the recipe to make ayahuasca, reinforcing the story that the

Shipibos learn from plants. Mapacho is a master plant teacher and has a central role in many Amazonian societies. One may find *tobaqueros* who rely on the use of mapacho in their healing practices. Amongst the Shipibo, it serves as a multi-use tool both within and outside of ayahuasca ceremonies alongside plant perfumes, where *ague de florida* is the most widely used. They are intended to clear one's space of unwanted spirits or energies that are obstructing the person's process of healing or learning. Other applications, like inducing vomiting and freshening up after doing so, and sealing or protecting one's private space are common during ayahuasca ceremonies. To use them, one has to do a *soplada*, which entails setting your intention and desired result to the tool by singing softly to it with a hushed tone. It may sound like, "Tsssh, tsshui." Different *icaros* are sung for different effects, like bringing oneself "higher" or "lower" during an ayahuasca ceremony.

"[...]the induced experiences have effects upon personality in: entering into a personal relationship with a reality established in a mythical time; developing relationships with an animal spiritual realm which is the source of power and self identification; the dissolution or death of the ego and its resurrection and transformation; and social rituals to enhance social identity formation, group integration and cohesion, and to reaffirm cultural values and beliefs (White, 2016, p. 2)."

The traditional use of ayahuasca fits into indigenous societies as a tool for various goals. Its use falls into the category of shamanism, meaning that a person is able to invoke and traverse a transcendental altered state of consciousness that serves as a method to communicate with spirits from another realm as a means to serve an end. As pointed out by the facilitators at the AC, shamanism is a way of survival and does not have roots as a practice intended to reach enlightenment, which many people today perceive it do be.

"Ayahuasca was first used by indigenous Amazonian peoples within a shamanic complex that included both individual and group therapeutic functions, particularly in the areas of hunting magic, warfare, and collective rituals associated with social reproduction. Though little is yet known on the origins and spread of Ayahuasca in pre-Hispanic contexts, its use in colonial missions and frontier posts of the upper Amazon was reported in historical sources before accounts of its wider dissemination in the Amazonian lowlands at the turn of the twentieth century as a result of the social, ethnic, and economic upheavals associated with the Rubber Boom (de Mori, 2014, p. 3)."

If we are to compare the traditional function of ayahuasca with its current use, we may see that its efficacy in healing common afflictions is a primary interest to many. When reading

online forums, many of the questions asked by those who are newly interested in ayahuasca involves health and interests in stories where people have fully healed from their medical afflictions. One may also see how a curiosity in the shamanic practices and contact with the spirit world sometimes comes second to or accompanies the element of health if it is not in the individual's primary interest. We may say that a reoccurring primary interest of northerners seeking ayahuasca and other plant medicines concerns health. For many, the engagement with ayahuasca as a medicine has led them to find not only good health but also spiritual value and meaning.

My informants describe the effects of ayahuasca as life changing and earth shattering while expressing gratitude for the renewed perspective the experience may induce. A rediscovered or strengthened appreciation of the intricacies and interconnectedness of nature and one's personal and communal relationship to it are seen in many descriptions and have potentially catalysed a renewed interest in the medicinal properties of plants in groups who have previously not engaged with such practices. Some of my informants see this interest as being a part of the larger trend concerning increased environmental awareness and the preservation of nature. Some see the teachings of the plants as potential remedies against attitudes that are destructive to not only the self but also the environment. The establishment of grass-root NGOs, like the SO, who focus on the need for further action to be taken in order to preserve the health of global ecosystems and the self-determination of indigenous cultures who still reside in primary rainforests may illustrate an example of this mentality.

Many forum posts online and some of my informants describe a need to follow a calling that has been kindling within or describe a feeling of discontent and a desire to go to the rainforest to reconnect to nature and themselves. There is a broad spectrum of motivations, but this interaction has had an effect. "As a result of their impetuous acculturation, the shamanic activity of the Shipibo/Conibo Indians was robbed of the bulk of its public function and reduced to therapeutic sessions in which ayahuasca serves as a diagnostic and inspirative vehicle (Luna, 1986, p. 32)." Even though the quote is referring to the acculturation between Amerindian and mestizo culture, we can now say that this has continued within a broader arena where Amerindian healing practices are receiving worldwide attention.

Traditional Ecological Knowledge

If we are to consider the system of knowledge that the Shipibos dispense in their plant medicine practices, we may see how it falls under the term traditional ecological knowledge (TEK), which is a subset to indigenous knowledge (IK), according to Deborah McGregor (McGregor, 2004, p. 393). She defines IK as knowledge of the environment that is not a product or a commodity, but as a process with the greater forces of creation. She goes on to say that "It is not appropriate to limit or constrain IK by defining it, as it should and cannot be removed from the people or the land in which it is based. IK is also the process of learning this knowledge and the personal development that occurs along with the process (McGregor, 2004, p. 393)." In other words, through engaging with one's immediate environment, a process of learning about it occurs, and the body of knowledge that is produced is utilized to act within it. This way of knowing is related to what is called TEK and Deborah cites Marth Johnson's definition of it as:

"[...] a body of knowledge built up by a group of people through generations of living in close contact with nature. It includes a system of classification, a set of empirical observations about the local environment, and a system of self-management that governs resource use. [...] With its roots firmly in the past, traditional ecological knowledge is both cumulative and dynamic, building upon the experience of earlier generations and adapting to new technological and socioeconomic changes of the present (McGregor, 2004, p. 393)."

The Shipibos use of a dieta to heal and/or learn reflects a method of learning from one's environment where the accumulated knowledge a healer acquires is passed on to an apprentice, who in turn passes it on to the next apprentice in line. This generational transfer of knowledge and its recent adaptation to non-indigenous use of plant medicines illustrates how the Shipibo's knowledge system is evolving. The AC, who seeks to co-evolve with Shipibos' practices in their meeting with other medical practices, has noted this evolution while acknowledging the need to preserve certain methods concerning how to learn from plants. Through acknowledging that the Shipibos' knowledge of plants is the result of their intimate relationship to the Amazon rainforest, we may say that their system of knowledge can be classified as TEK.

The Interested Others

Ayahuasca is a part of an expanding engagement that brings Amerindian history into nation-states with neoliberal economic policies where persons across the world have learned of shamanic practices as a potential remedy for their afflictions or desires and are able to pay for such services. Ayahuasca's reputation in western culture grew after the 1963 publication of *Yagé Letters*, where Allen Ginsberg and William S. Burroughs share their experiences with the brew with each other through letters, inspiring some to seek it for its mystical experiences. Their stories would later inspire the two brothers Terence and Denice McKenna to pursue it, whose experiences and ventures into other psychedelics became well known in western culture, inspiring many more to seek forbidden psychoactive plants (Keen, 2013).

The varied use of ayahuasca by not only Amerindian cultures but groups of persons originating from various continents has produced methods of administration that reflect both ayahuasca's Amazonian origin and its adaptation to non-indigenous lifestyles. This phenomenon is impossible to generalize since the eclectic melding of persons and plants has led to the meeting between cultures with various understandings of plants to interpret the experience ayahuasca and other plant medicines induce. Descriptions of ayahuasca experiences vary from hellish to heavenly alongside a disclaimer that most people do not regret drinking it while some may potentially "lose their marbles". Despite the risks, travellers come from across the world to Latin America in search of someone who may heal or teach them with Amazonian plants and knowledge systems. The meeting between this globalizing interest and a local practice within the framework of a neoliberal economy has produced debated results that face both praise and criticism since it has opened up for the commodification of ayahuasca.

The seekers of ayahuasca have grown in numbers over the years, and Marlene Dobkin de Rios, a Peruvian anthropologist who has researched this growing interest since the 1960s, describes this increasing engagement with criticism.

"Most recently and as a harbinger for the future, ayahuasca has landed on North American shores. Its use has been found allowed by the U.S. Supreme Court when taken within the religious framework of the new Brazilian religion União do Vegetal (UDV) [...]. While legitimate use of ayahuasca as a sacrament is permitted in new religions like the UDV, and others in Brazil, there is also a disturbing development in Europe, the United States, and Canada – we call this phenomenon "drug tourism". It has been around for more than 40 years and has been getting worse each year. Westerners take tours throughout areas of the

Amazon and experience "borrowed mysticism". The drink ayahuasca is given to them by new, often false shamans – so called "technicians of ecstasy" – charlatans who are on the lookout to profit from altering their clients' consciousness (Marlene Dobkin de Rios, 2008, p. 2)."

A topic in this growing engagement concerns persons who are untrained in Amerindian knowledge systems that are making financial profits administering ayahuasca and other plant medicines to persons who are potentially misinformed about which practitioners they should seek for their interest and the effects of the brew. The commodification of ayahuasca has therefore made it possible for entrepreneurs to approach people who are willing to pay large amounts of money for their services. This commodification has also given Amerindian communities a possibility to earn an income through the recreation and evolvement of their culture, potentially strengthening their self-determination through increased liquidity. Instead of being reliant on finding work in cities, the Shipibo, for example, can preserve their relationship with the rainforest and their knowledge of it by maintaining their presence there and recreating their culture on their own terms. Although, those who do dispense the knowledge to administer ayahuasca have a more secure income than those that do not, which may potentially increase the wage gap between group members and therefore alter power dynamics in small-scale communities. Marosa, a facilitator at the AC, told me that the Don, the onanya at the AC, is the poorest rich man she knows since much of his earnings from the AC goes to his extended family who is not as fortunate as him.

A reputed healer is quoted in de Rios's book in reference to the increased interest in ayahuasca.

"[...] drug tourists come to Peru to try to resolve personal problems in a form of self-encounter. They try to liberate themselves from their problems or the psychological traumas that they suffer. By seeking a true spiritual path, many expect to cure a variety of physical illness. Arrévalo says that many of the people suffer from depression or else are enslaved by their work. Others are materialistic and have neglected the spiritual part of themselves. [...] He argues that the tourist should know something about the person he has entrusted himself to in the drug session and should determine whether that person is truly knowledgeable. The client should verify the reputation of the individual practitioner with whom he deals. [...] Arrévalo said that in the past, the curandero was a person of high social status within the community's hierarchy, with only one or two found in any community; this has changed dramatically and they have multiplied, not because of increased interest or a search for

knowledge, but rather simply as a way to make money (Marlene Dobkin de Rios, 2008, p. 46)."

Cultural appropriation is another topic in this discussion and some say that Amerindian knowledge systems and practices are for Amerindian cultures. In response to this topic, Piripiri, a facilitator at the AC, said, *"If a person wants to share their knowledge and culture with others who want to learn about it, it is in their full right to do so. This is the perspective of my teacher, so he teaches those who want to learn. Most of the young Shipibos are more interested in mobile phones and city trends and few seek to become onanyas. Teaching foreigners is therefore a way to ensure that the Shipibo's knowledge of plant medicines lives on. If the spread of ayahuasca is a natural wave, it will have pros and cons, but it's an evolutionary trend and it's not going to stop."*

Despite ayahuasca's illegality in nearly every country in the world, except in some certain Latin American countries like Peru, you may see events for ceremonies in many of those countries posted online. Forums describing people's experiences and suggestions for renowned centres or healers bring those interested in not only Ayahuasca but also other psychedelics together on the internet. The intention behind the website www.ayaadvisors.org is to provide those interested in ayahuasca a means to traverse the maze of potential places to visit while knowing that others have been there and felt safe and respected, which many claim is essential if one is to heal through ayahuasca. The creation of the website may be a reaction towards the trend described by de Rios in the quote above. This may have positive results concerning the filtration of untrained practitioners from the gaze of those who are newly interested in these practices, but it also places the criteria for discernment within a discourse that reflects the expectations of foreigners.

Seeing is believing

A peculiar phenomenon that I heard of that is difficult to verify concerns the addition of *toé*, whose binomial name is *brugmansia suaveolens*, to ayahuasca. Some people associate it with *brujeria*, sorcery, and others as a precarious plant to use for certain goals, such as finding out who a thief is or to enhance one's strength and senses for hunting expeditions. I learned that if one is to do a dieta or work with *toé*, then one must be wary of its powerful effects. I heard that if taken by itself, the person gains supernatural strength while potentially going into a type of delirium, so several people may have to be ready to make sure the consumer does not hurt themselves or others. When added to ayahuasca, the experience is reported to involve intense

psychedelic visions that amounts to a form of chaos that one may lose oneself within. During a plant lecture at the AC, we heard a story of a ceremony where *toé* was in the ayahuasca and the participants ended up screaming during their experience, so we were advised to always ask those administering the ayahuasca of what is in their brew.

Amargo has a hypothesis that the addition of *toé* is a response to foreigners not having the visionary experiences they expect to have when drinking ayahuasca for the first time, which is what many seekers of ayahuasca are after even though they might have to sit through several ceremonies before they begin to have visions. He sees the otherworldly stories of meeting and seeing spirits as feeding a spiritual void in the west and that people are hungry for such experiences. Some charlatans have seen this hunger and have therefore modified the brew to fit the expectations of the foreigner, meaning that they are ensuring that the foreigner has the breakthrough experience they are paying for but by potentially putting them at increased risk. This hunger and desire to see visions may be attributed to how "Westerners' fixation on the centrality of visions in the use of psychedelics is related to a deep-rooted Western sensory valorization of sight over the other senses (de Mori, 2014, p. 185)." Amargo goes on to say that this does not mean that one cannot add *toé* to ayahuasca, but if one does so, then they really need to know what they are doing and what world they are going into. During my last days in Iquitos, I saw a woman walking around in a type of delirium. It did not seem like she knew where she was or where she was going. When I spoke to a waiter at a café, he said that she had most likely consumed *toé*.

Uncertainties

Consuming ayahuasca does not come without risks. Despite there being research illustrating how it may be therapeutic for persons suffering from mental ailments like PTSD, stress, depression, and anxiety (Domínguez-Clavé, 2016), there are also reports of acute psychological casualties after consuming ayahuasca (dos Santos, 2011) This illustrates the need to screen persons engaging with ayahuasca to see if they have any mental ailments that ayahuasca may exasperate. The need to screen persons for medications that are contraindicative with the chemistry of ayahuasca illustrates how there are risks for persons who are already engaged with a treatment process for their ailments. A google search of "ayahuasca negative effects" leads you to anecdotal testimonies where persons describe how their symptoms have gotten worse after consuming the brew.

Another risk for persons seeking ayahuasca concerns the lacking verification of practitioners. There is no authority that is able to establish authentic from inauthentic use and there is no overview of who is practicing, so for those who are unaware of the effects of ayahuasca might end up with a practitioner who does not screen them for medical conditions or medications. Even those one could classify as authentic might not have knowledge of the various medications a visitor is taking and their potential contraindicative effects with ayahuasca. Marosa told me that steroid based medicines are a danger and told me of one person who used an asthma inhaler before a ceremony and suffered from unwanted effects up to 24 hours later.

This lacking verification has allowed untrained practitioners to operate alongside those who are trained, or have undergone long dietas and have the ability to care for those engaging with plant medicines and ayahuasca. These untrained practitioners are described by Marlene Dobkin de Rios as, "untrained, uneducated, and hungry to make money! They mix and match numerous plants without any concern for their toxic properties and cause distress and illness to many of their clients (Marlene Dobkin de Rios, 2008, p. 76)."

The Shaman is not a Guru

A reoccurring theme those working at the AC encounters relates to the preconceived notions many visitors have concerning who the Shipibo are and what they do. Many are shocked and in disbelief when they hear of the Shipibos' violent history and their previous use of female circumcision, which challenges their idea of them being a forest people harbouring a peace and purity from nature. Some of the APs left the lecture where this history was told. One of my informants described Peru as the new India since so many of the visitors are seeking a spiritual practice that builds upon their perception of nature as representing something pure since it is not built by humanity, and since the Shipibo have such an intimate relationship with nature, they too must be as pure. These preconceived notions therefore paint the shaman in nature has a key to the divine, a guru of sorts that guides you to enlightenment. What this picture fails to acknowledge is that shamanism is not a practice developed to reach enlightenment but a form of survival that deals with the underworld, meaning that they are going in "the other direction". The shaman is not a guru but a person who has learned to survive in collaboration with forces outside of human society, either benevolent or malevolent.

These stories and expectations have led me to reflect on Arjun Appadurai's ideas of *-scapes*, and their illustration of how the individual may find themselves within globalized scales of interaction that reduces the effect of geographical separation and catalyses their meeting with the unmet other. *Ethno-*, *media-*, *techno-*, *finance-*, and *ideoscapes* mediate separate but interacting flows of activity between local and global arenas and scales.

"Mediascapes refer both to the distribution of the electronic capabilities to produce and disseminate information [...], which are now available to a growing number of private and public interests throughout the world, and to the images of the world created by these media. [...] What is most important about these mediascapes is that they provide large and complex repertoires of images, narratives, and ethnoscapings [the landscape of persons who constitute the shifting world in which we live] to viewers throughout the world, in which the world of commodities and the world of news and politics are profoundly mixed. [...] The lines between the realistic and the fictional landscapes they see are blurred, so that the farther away these audiences are from the direct experiences of metropolitan life, the more likely they are to construct imagined worlds that are chimerical, aesthetic, even fantastic objects, particularly if assessed by the criteria of some other perspective, some other imagined world (Appadurai, 2008, p. 52)."

These *-scapes* construct the person's *imagined world*, which Appadurai defines as "the multiple worlds that are constituted by the historically situated imagination of person and groups spread around the world (Appadurai, 2008, p. 51)." If we are to consider how information about ayahuasca has travelled through different types of *scapes*, then we need to be aware of how this information is translated during its journey from its source to the end receiver in their imagined world. Vincent Crapanzano discusses this translation of events in relation to the challenges producing a text that is representative of culture, and says, "They [events: the source of information] are sacrificed to their rhetorical function in a literary discourse that is far removed from the indigenous discourse of their occurrence (Crapanzano, 1986, p. 69)." This translation of events leads the end receiver to hear a representation of certain events, in this case the otherworldly stories of ayahuasca, which potentially paints a fragmented picture of ayahuasca that does not include the Shipibo perspective and the vast array of plants they use for learning and healing.

Piripiri and Marosa confirm this perception and express that dealing with the foreigners' preconceived notion of ayahuasca and the Shipibo is at times a major part of their work. Some perceive ayahuasca as a magical silver bullet that heals anything and fail to recognize that

despite ayahuasca's potential to heal a wide array of afflictions, it is up to the consumer to work with ayahuasca alongside the numbing array of plants that may be used for different treatments or goals. It is not a passive experience but one that engages the person on every level of their being. This assumption, coupled with the perspective of the shaman as a guru, leads the facilitators to not only having to meet the basic needs of visitors, but also having to understand their assumptions so that they can engage with the work as prescribed by the onanya and not through the a field of interpretation that is based on half-truths. Therefore, the facilitators act as bridges between paradigms, translating and organizing the relationships between plant, healer, and patient/neophyte. As I was told, the onanyas are not gurus; they are people with unique survival methods that we have categorized as shamanistic.

"The task of the guru, [...], is to instruct, clarify, and educate in his relation with his audience, so that his disciples learn from him, in a personal, and enduring relationship. [...] The guru's task is done once he has successfully transmitted his message (Barth, 1990, p. 643)." The task of the onanya is to facilitate the persons meeting with the plants, so the guru in the context of this thesis may actually be the plant spirit, not the person, as the Shipibo say that the plants are teachers. Challenging cultural assumptions such as this is an enduring part of the facilitators work but is described as being important since it leads the facilitators to go into new avenues of thought in order for them to translate tangible concepts from Shipibo cosmology to the imagined world of the visitor. This task is made possible since the facilitators are usually from the same paradigm of thought that the visitors are from, meaning that they have knowledge of the social codes and ontologies that may have affected the visitors' point of view.

An additional illustration of different knowledge paradigms concerns the dynamics between genders in Shipibo society. I was told that Shipibo men and women who are not in an intimate relationship barely touch when convening, even when the parties have known each other for a long time. I heard from Marosa that at times, a female visitor may become ecstatic and happy from their transformative experiences and hug a male onanya out of joy and gratefulness. Some males may experience this as flirting, leading them to think that the visitor is interested in them. This has led to misunderstandings and the occurrence of sexual misconduct from the male's side. The organising of ayahuasca retreats solely for women may be seen as a response to the potential sexual predation with male healers that has been reported in several instances.

Chapter Summary

In this chapter, I have introduced the Shipibo and their use of ayahuasca in relation to its evolution from a local tool to a globally commoditized artefact. Ayahuasca's trajectory from Amazonia is riddled with controversy as it traverses different definitions depending on where its story travels and who is administering the brew. This controversy will be discussed further in chapter five in relation to the oncoming empirical and theoretical discussion. What we may bring with us from this chapter is the discussion on the dieta as it will clarify how the APs are engaging in a rite of passage with a distinct liminal phase. In the next chapter, an empirical discussion on ayahuasca's evolution at a centre in Iquitos will illustrate not only its use by APs but also how it is now used alongside other practices that have been introduced as complimentary supplements to the process of engaging with plant medicines. This evolution is described as being a part of the cultural preservation steps the AC have taken in order to not only strengthen the practices of the Shipibo but also acknowledge that the use of plant medicines is a knowledge system in development that can be strengthened with the adoption of other practices. The next chapter will also point out a change in Shipibo society concerning the decreasing numbers of indigenous youth who are apprenticing as healers and how an Onanya perceives his teaching and healing of APs as a way to pass on and preserve the knowledge he dispenses.

Chapter Three: The Ayahuasca Centre

In this chapter, I illustrate how the AC facilitates the arrival and welcoming of foreigners to Peru. In Iquitos, the arrival of the APs marks their separation phase of a rite of passage, as they are no longer in their normal place of living, separated from their normal structures. Their arrival at the AC outside of Iquitos marks the beginning of the liminal phase where the onanyas and facilitators act as ritual leaders, guiding the individuals and the group so that the APs may engage effectively with the dieta process. During this liminal phase, the APs regularly structured lives are undone as they enter into an egalitarian relationship with each other and where each individual is encouraged to be aware of the subtle language of plants in order for them to engage in a meshwork of relationships with plant spirits. In this experience, the regular boundaries and structures of normal life are transcended through the consumption of ayahuasca, where the APs may experience the self as a part of a grander cosmic order through a point of view that is produced from the effects of ayahuasca. In this point of view, the APs may have the experience of engaging with autonomous sentient beings who seem interested in them. When discussing these experiences with my informants, they describe how being in awe and gratitude as a result of these experiences has resulted in perceiving the cosmos with greater humility - something which they seek to bring back into their regular lives.

It is at this point of return where aggregation occurs, or the post-dieta. This period involves the integration of the dieta into normal life and is described as important, seeing as triggers from their regular lives may revive past states of being which in turn can reverse the APs' transformations. In order for the APs to fully re-adapt to their normal lives, they are advised to adhere to post-dieta requirements and to nurture self-care.

These APs and their rite of passage may reflect western modernity's inclination towards individualisation and the tendency to develop or improve oneself (Labate, 2017, p. 23). Andrew Dawson relates the "sovereign self of the modern paradigm" to a "religious worldview in which the individual has the right, if not the duty, to pursue his absolute self-realization through any available means and at any possible opportunity (Dawson, 2011, pp. 310-311)." In this pursuit of self-realisation and perfection, the engagement with ayahuasca serves as a tool for the APs to undergo self-analysis. In this process, the APs find themselves in an egalitarian *communitas* where ritual leaders act as sources of knowledge, having already undergone the process the APs are engaging in.

"The *egalitarian* aspect of this exemplary characteristic is similarly grounded in a mixture of esteem for given authorities and commitment to procedural efficacy. Frequently regarded as steeped in the traditional wisdom of ayahuasca traditions, respective ritual authorities are venerated as tried and tested sources of the practical knowledge necessary to self-realization. [...] In the same vein, and as long as they can be climbed, corporate hierarchies are tolerated as structured indicators of individual spiritual maturity which, likewise, serve as way-markers for the aspirational self. [...] Even in cases of ascribed status, the authority borne by leadership is commonly perceived as something achieved by virtue of long-standing engagement with ayahuasca. Serving to guide by example rather than to dictate, leadership exists to show the way along which all ritual practitioners, by virtue of their sacral nature, have the innate ability to travel when the practical knowledge made available through ayahuasca is learned and employed appropriately. Ultimately, then, the authority of leadership resides not so much in its exceptionality as something beyond the ordinary, but rather in its exemplification of what every self can become (Dawson, 2011, p. 30)."

The ritual leaders at the AC are a part of a meritocracy affiliated with their "long-standing engagement with ayahuasca" that gains agency over social dynamics as the APs consult them for information during their dieta process. The APs are not forced to abide by the suggestions they receive and are told that they may engage with the process as they like - with the freedom leave at any time if they wish. This leads the meritocracy to gain agency only if the APs take the suggestions of the ritual leaders to heart. Through leading by example, the ritual leaders apply their knowledge in their meeting with the APs whenever they think it is necessary. They will tend to encourage the APs to engage with the plants in order to be successful, since they have been successful by doing so. By having been through the process already, the ritual leaders find themselves in a hierarchy that is affiliated with their potential to guide APs to their intended goal. The facilitators also find themselves as neophytes to the onanyas and are a link in the relationships between the plants, onanyas, and APs. They ultimately serve as an example to the APs of what they can achieve if they continue to engage with the dieta and ayahuasca.

Iquitos

I was not worried about where to go while walking out of the airport in Iquitos, as I met Piripiri just outside of the arrivals section. His position entails a wide, and at times unusual, array of responsibilities, one of which is to welcome visitors at the airport to make sure their arrival is hassle free. Stemming from a teenage wish to facilitate experiences for others, Piripiri

started to work at the AC as a facilitator after attending a course there several years earlier. Supporting his interest in meditation, consciousness, and the effects of psychedelics, Piripiri studied psychology in the U.S. prior to travelling to Peru and gained insight into serving others. He and his colleagues use their knowledge in unison to further develop the course provided at the AC - which I was about to take part in.

After getting settled at my hotel, I caught up with the other new arrivals at the Dawn of the Amazon Café that afternoon and met a smiling group from the western world. Chit-chat about the food on the menu, diet restrictions to be aware of prior to drinking ayahuasca, previous experiences with psychedelics, life at home and expectations for the course melded together as we got to know each other. Prior to our arrival in Peru, we had each received information by email about how to prepare for a dieta by abstaining from certain foods and activities, which include aged cheese or meats, overripe fruit, oil, salt, sugar, some other foods, and sex. More importantly, we went through a screening process to see if we were on any types of medication that can be contraindicative with the MAOIs in ayahuasca, which can be lead to serotonin syndrome or death. Some of us were already adhering to the diet while others were enjoying their last bit of salt and spices. We had also received recordings of Icaros songs with the lyrics so we could practice singing the songs before arriving at the AC.

After an ayahuasca-friendly lunch, some of us agreed to meet up for dinner. In the meantime, I took the opportunity to wander around the neighbourhood and absorb the atmosphere. I could see that Iquitos had been a colonial town: 19th century European architecture and maintained churches stand next to square concrete buildings with advertisements for Inka Cola. The city is only connected by road to a few surrounding towns, so imported goods arrive through either airplanes or boats, leading to slightly higher prices compared to other cities in Peru. Alongside small-scale artisanship and agriculture, the city's economy relies on extractive industries, fishing, and tourism. Despite the various forms of income available through these sectors, there are not enough jobs for everyone and thus poverty rates are high and unemployment a normality (Knoema, 2017).

When walking past a shop offering jungle tours, the receptionist shouted, "*Ayahuasca!*" as I looked in. Further down the sidewalk, a man was seeking to make eye contact and approached me once he was successful. He opened a binder with pictures and explained in English, with an accent that I would call "gringo lingo" that somehow reminded me of a California surfer, that he works for a centre offering ayahuasca just a short boat ride away. I thanked him no and kept

walking. I was surprised to see how eager people were to offer ayahuasca and it made me curious about their motivation. It seemed that even a foreigner who was entirely ignorant of ayahuasca would be sure to encounter it while in Iquitos:receiving around a dozen street solicitations like this during my stay made it quite obvious that the town sees a fair share of a tourists and that the commodification of ayahuasca is normalized.

The AC Founders and Facilitators

The next day was uneventful as we were preparing to leave for the centre the oncoming day. At times, I could hear an echo spreading in the hallways from the other participants practicing the icaros songs. We met one of the founders of the AC, Ipomoea, and we had a meeting at the hotel with the facilitators and the other participants. We received a bottle of electrolytes (to stem the effects of not consuming salt) along with some mapacho and proceeded to have a discussion about what to expect from the oncoming weeks and to give answers to our remaining questions.

Ipomoea has lived in Peru for many years after leaving his home country and its defined "ideal lifestyle" of owning a house and working in a successful career while married. Despite living exactly this lifestyle, he was escaping into alcohol and drug-abuse, which nearly killed him. After a peculiar set of events, Ipomoea found himself living in basic conditions with an onanya in Iquitos over 10 years ago. He had taken steps to reroute his life by seeking treatment for his ailments in Iquitos after a friend invited him. He was able to heal from his ailments and realised that he wanted to learn more about the onanya's practices.

Ipomoea spent many years with the onanya, learned from watching him work. He sees himself as lucky that he did not feel exploited for he did not feel pressured to pay for his education, even though payment was an aspect of the relationship. While learning, he lived under very basic circumstances in the onanya's house and now reflects back on a time without any expectations or close acquaintances. At this time, the interest in ayahuasca was not as vast, and so Ipomoea would meet people coming by the house for a ceremony. Ipomoea reflects on this experience of meeting and dealing with visitors interested in ayahuasca as an impetus to establish the AC since he had already been through the challenges of learning from an onanya and had a starting point for how he could make the visitors' journey productive and comfortable. This realisation, coupled with the acknowledgement that one needs an income to survive in our world, was a catalyst for Ipomoea's work and he has since found fulfilment through it. Ipomoea

has the administrative responsibilities for the AC, which offers retreats at several locations, while the Don and facilitators stand for supervision and guidance during the course.

When Ipomoea first met the Don, he realised that he was learning more from him than the other onanya. Ipomoea compares the difference between the two by using Jimi Hendrix as an example. He says, *"If you sit and watch Jimi play for six weeks then you will learn something, but compare that to Jimi teaching you one on one for six weeks and you may see the difference."* The Don's reason for sharing his knowledge is so that people can not only learn and heal from the plants, but so that they can use this knowledge without his supervision and continue the practice of engaging with the plants. Ipomoea told me he has met others who have spent years under the guidance of an onanya but have learned less than what one learns during a course at the AC. Ipomoea and the Don founded the AC with the goal of ensuring that those travelling to Iquitos do not end up in a relationship where they spend years in the jungle learning something that could take a few weeks and cost less money.

In a later interview, I asked the Don if the Shipibo youth have lost interest in their traditions and he answered the following. *"Yes, some have, not all. Many are carrying the customs of the mestizos and are killing our customs. When someone finishes high school or graduates from university, they are already in the city and do not want to move. This worries us."*

The course at the AC reflects the Don's motivation to share his knowledge of plant medicines as a way to make sure that it is not lost with him and rather used by as many as possible in order for them to heal themselves and others. Many of the younger Shipibos are unwilling to undergo long dietas, so the tradition of passing on knowledge from healer to neophyte is less common in Shipibo society. This means that the APs have the potential to carry and recreate Shipibo culture outside of its local creation, potentially strengthening its recreation while at the same time opening up to the hybrid forms of ayahuasca use which we see across the world today. Shifting the cultural transfer from within Shipibo society to other cultures challenges the potential for it to be recreated locally as the APs leave for their home countries. Although, the fact that the Don can continue with his practices also strengthens its recreation for as long as he can maintain his position as a teacher and a healer. Prior to working at the AC, the Don was living in poverty and whereas he now lives comfortably. The evolution of urbanisation has led many Shipibo to adapt to city lifestyles, so the Don's resolve is based on an acknowledgement that Shipibo society has altered and he needs to do something about it and maintain the knowledge they carry.

"The number of apprentices to authentic shamans is fast diminishing. The reason is that the apprentice has to submit to a rigorous diet for a long period of time. Societal changes also effect this phenomenon. Young people want to live in cities and some go to the capital, Lima, to study. To become a healer, there are rules that have to be followed, and many young people are not disciplined enough to do so. Many Shipibo youth do not want to stay in their indigenous communities and to farm, fish, and hunt. The city is alluring to them. Many give up their cultural roots to fit into a mestizo identity. [...] Poverty is widespread in the city of Pucallpa, and the Shipibo, too, are mired in poverty." (Marlene Dobkin de Rios, 2008, p. 46)."

As so many of the foreigners coming to Peru are interested in the Shipibo healing practices, the Don sees this trend as an opportunity to ensure that his knowledge lives on in others who wish to learn. He believes that if someone is interested in his knowledge, that someone should be allowed to learn. The intention of the course is to both teach and heal the participants so that they can use the knowledge and newfound state of wellbeing to live healthily.

The course is set up in such a way that a participant undergoes a dieta under the supervision of onanyas while also receiving treatment with plant medicines for any medical ailments. During this period, lectures and workshops are held as a supplement to the healing and learning process. These are held during the day and are intended to widen the framework of tools the participants can use during the course and afterwards. Next to treatment with plant medicines, ayahuasca ceremonies are held about every second or third day during the course. There is a break half-way through the course, when the participants can travel to Iquitos for a few days if they wish.

Ipomoea introduced Marosa, one of the facilitators we had met during our lunch the previous day, as one of the newer members to their team. Marosa had come to the AC in search of better health and rediscovered her ability to speak publicly through her dieta, alongside finding balance in other aspects of her life. She works with Piripiri at the AC and each of them bring their own unique knowledge to the course. She had attended a course and decided to work at the AC as a facilitator after she was, "*... able to step into adulthood. I realised the work is so profound and could not think of anything better to do than helping people through the healing process.*"

The facilitators' role is to make sure that the participants have someone who is available to accommodate any needs that should arise during their stay. In this case, the participants are taking part in a course for those who are not only interested in working with ayahuasca but also in understanding more about Shipibo culture, rituals and the methods the healers use to administer plant medicines. Therefore, the facilitators' responsibility entails a broad scope of

work, such as culture translation, holding lectures, preparing medicines, caring for and guiding the participants while navigating their meeting with the Shipibos' world. These responsibilities demand the facilitators' attention at all times of day during the course. They are also ready to support anyone who might have a challenging time during ayahuasca ceremonies. During our stay at the AC, a rest-day was introduced on Sundays and the facilitators and participants welcomed it warmly.

Review

The function of the AC is to welcome APs in such a way that they are able to engage fully with a dieta without the need to adhere to the chores of regular life. This allows the APs to focus their energy on their process and the content taught at the AC during the course. This similar state between the APs forms an egalitarian collective where they are equals in their engagement with the dieta. The facilitators and Onanya act as ritual leaders where their previously accumulated experience with dieta forms a type of meritocracy, where merit is associated with the ability to undergo a dieta successfully. As I shall illustrate, this meritocracy acted as an informal hierarchy that had some agency since the APs were reliant on the facilitators and onanyas for information pertaining to their process. For the most part, this information sharing occurred during lectures where reoccurring topics were discussed and questions could be asked openly. There were times where individuals would ask for insights privately, but I did not inquire about these consultations.

The Ayahuasca Centre

Everyone met in the hotel lobby as it was the day of departure, and a sense of eagerness and optimism was apparent. We put our luggage in a charter bus and prepared for an hour's drive to the centre. A few participants were listening to music or staring out the window while most of the others were involved in a discussion about a recent murder at another ayahuasca centre, which led Albahaca to realise that he had been there previously. He described a harrowing experience there that left him traumatised and uncertain of what he was involved in. He suspected that the centre used *toé* in their ayahuasca and that the owners illustrated little attention to its healing properties but rather had more interest in the psychedelic realm. The importance of trust while drinking ayahuasca and knowing what is in it was brought to attention and we eventually broke off into more inconsequential conversations.

The scenery outside the bus went from the standard urban buildings to a mix of half-finished concrete houses and provisional wooden constructions for a variety of small-scale businesses like restaurants, mechanics, or lumber sale. The rainforest was getting thicker and human settlements were becoming scarce. Hotels with seemingly strategically placed swimming pools so one can easily see them from the road appears to be a popular attraction. Signs along the road for various ayahuasca centres situated further in the jungle seemed surreal to me, as it dawned on me that I was seeing what I had read about for so long: the evolution of ayahuasca from a local tool to a globalized artefact.

The thick rainforest reaching for the sky around the road reminded me of an ocean wave billowing on a shoreline. The air-conditioning in the bus felt like a luxury as we drove past road-maintenance workers wearing thick high-visibility clothing in the unrelenting sun. We eventually stopped on the pavement next to a mud road where several men were waiting for us. They had a moto-taxi that we put most of our luggage onto and helped us carry the rest. The walk into the ayahuasca centres takes about 30 minutes and is home to a few Shipibo living in houses made from wood harvested in the area. A clearing in the forest by the road shows how they fell a portion of it in order to build the necessary infrastructure for the centre. Plantains are spreading in the clearings and was on our menu every now and then. The road is wide enough for a car to drive on but the mud is thick and sticky for the majority of the way, so planks are placed across some of the trickiest spots to ease the path a little.

Entering the centre's grounds, some small wooden homes, a cafeteria, and a circular building with a cone shaped roof greet you at first. A group of small children said "hola" while we walked further in to find our luggage. The facilitators pointed out that there are solar panels that power led lights in our rooms and a telephone in the cafeteria, since there is poor cell phone reception, while a generator can charge electronic devices if needed. The water in the showers, sinks, and toilets is undrinkable since it is sourced from a nearby still-water reservoir while a generator powers a pump that fills a large water tank when needed. Personnel working for the centre are responsible for preparing meals for the participants while bananas, limes, oats, tea, and water are readily available in the cafeteria.

The circular building is called a *maloca* and its cone shaped thatch roof is characteristic of the Shipibo. The thatching are palm leaves stripped in half at the stem and placed in layers on a wooden structure starting at the bottom, which makes it rainproof and solid. The maloca serves several functions at the AC. During the day, you can relax there on the mattresses placed on the

floor alongside 2/3 of the inside wall or take part in one of the many lectures held by either the onanyas, facilitators, or a even course participant - if they feel inclined to share something.

In the evening, the maloca hosts ayahuasca ceremonies that begin after sunset around seven or eight P.M. Buckets and toilet paper are placed at the foot of every mattress in expectance of the oncoming vomiting. Two toilets with sinks are located at the opposite end of the maloca from where the participants are sitting. In the middle, with their own mattresses and buckets, the onanyas and facilitators face the participants with their mapacho and agua de florida within arm's reach. Two walkways on opposite ends of the maloca lead to the sleeping quarters for the participants, who each have their own room bundled in with mosquito netting connected to a hallway with hammocks. The rooms are simple with a bed, nightstand, and a cupboard. Showers and toilets are at the end of the sleeping quarters.



Inside of a Maloca Photo: Nicholas Ringstad

Further in, one sees several huts, some intended for participants and others for the facilitators and Shipibos working at the centre. A smaller second maloca stands ready in case there is a need to hold separate ceremonies, for instance if there are more than the usual amount of participants and visitors at the centre. A thatched roof frames a campfire used to brew ayahuasca and have vapour baths, which can best be described as a type of sauna where you inhale the steam from plants in boiled water while covered by a small tent-like construction.

In sum, the centre looks like a little village but it is not self-sufficient. Food, drinking water, and other supplies are transported in regularly with a moto taxi from a nearby town. Some medicines are bought in Iquitos or other cities since some are rare or do not grow near the centre. I did not learn where these other plants were grown or harvested. Some of the most common plants used for medicines grow on the property and are harvested when needed. The centre lacks access to effective garbage disposal, so some of the trash is burned on site. Plastic waste is sometimes used to light fires for brewing ayahuasca, which is usually filled into plastic soda bottles. I was surprised to see trash lying around at the centre and I realised that I had carried the assumption that if one lives in nature then one obviously recognizes that non-biodegradable trash does not fit in and should be taken out of nature. A black smoky spot with half-burned garbage by one of the huts left me feeling a little sad.

I brought this up in a later discussion with Ipomoea and he pointed out how those in the west have lived in a society where environmental awareness has been a growing value and attitude for several decades while it has not taken any similar form in Amazonia. He compares it to the assumption that westerners have that gender equality has also reached Amazonia, which it has not as many Shipibo women have their work defined for them by their husbands. Some are forbidden to work outside of the homestead despite their ability to do so.

The AC Community

At a later day during the course, I heard some chainsaws roaring in the forest. I asked Piripiri if there was time for me to look at what was going on before taking part in any planned events and he said yes. I followed the sound of the chainsaws along the main road and eventually found two young men further in the forest. The heat and humidity must have made it a heavy affair, and I was surprised to see how they stood on slippery logs wearing shoes without any sort of strong grip. The logs were huge and the blades on the saws were about 90cm long. From my own experiences with tree felling, I could see that this was a precarious situation.

They cut the logs into long planks in the same area, which are then carried by hand into the centre. While we were at the centre, we could see some new huts and a water tower being constructed. An area close by to the centre is used to dry the wood before using it to build. An informant pointed out how this small-scale use of timber reflects a form of procurement that is focused on taking what is needed and nothing more, an attitude also used when hunting and making medicines. It seemed like a steady affair, alongside other maintenance work. During the morning, we would occasionally wake up to lawn mowers cutting grass outside our windows, which was not always pleasant after a long ceremony night.

We, the participants, had the luxury of not having to do our own laundry and prepare food during our stay. This was done by some of the AC employees, and at times they also prepared food for the maintenance workers. From what I observed, some of the employees had certain defined roles while others fit in where it was needed. The sharing of responsibilities and workload made it possible for the AC infrastructure to function while the Don and his coworkers could focus on the participants with the facilitators. This organisation illustrated how the centre is constructed so as to conform to the needs of visitors.

From one perspective, the AC does function as a secluded little village in the forest that welcomes anybody who desires to engage with their services. This changes once one considers how one may discover the village on the internet through the AC's webpages. This greatly expands the borders of the village from a local arena to the globalized world. This is made possible by the administrative work done by Ipomoea, who spends time refining the webpage in order for those interested in ayahuasca to get a grasp of what the AC does. The webpage may therefore be seen as the "welcome gate" for visitors, who begin their journey to the AC before leaving the comforts of their home.

When I asked Ipomoea about the organisational structure of the AC, he pointed out how a hierarchical structure has been put in place out of formal necessity but that he does not establish the final word for what is allowed at the AC. He experiences his colleagues' enquiries concerning any changes in their work to come out of courtesy rather than truly seeking approval from him. Piripiri and Marosa both state that they feel free to introduce what they know into the course without having to inform Ipomoea of every related detail. Marosa also pointed out that the work at the AC would not be possible without the administration work done by Ipomoea as he maintains the website so that the Don and his co-workers can focus on the APs.

Entering Liminality

In the late afternoon, we had a meeting to prepare us for the coming weeks, for which we each received a bag with a notebook, pens, more mapacho, agua de florida, a type of tiger balm made from plants, an mp3 player with recorded icaros songs, a binder with information, and a cushma one may wear during ceremonies. The binder had a short text telling the story of the onanya who would have the primary responsibility for the course - in this case the Don. There were also lyrics for icaros songs that we could learn now that we had their tunes available through the mp3 player. Recipes for plant medicines, meditation techniques, and information that may be useful during the course could be found in the back of the binder we each received.

We were told what to expect from the ceremony structure and how to proceed. At first, the Don would advise us to do a *soplada* of oneself with mapacho and agua de florida. This entails the hushed singing of icaros to these tools before one blows smoke over oneself and sprays the perfume on oneself using your mouth. The Don would then open the bottle of ayahuasca before saying a prayer for protection and guidance. He then does a *soplada* with the breath only into the bottle to the ayahuasca before using mapacho smoke. He then closes the bottle with the smoke inside and mixes it with the ayahuasca. A *soplada* of the drinking cup follows before filling it with ayahuasca. He then shines his flashlight on one participant as a sign to come forward to drink. A prayer for the participant is followed by a *soplada* with the breath focusing on the ayahuasca. A last *soplada* with mapacho smoke on the filled cup is done before handing it to the participant. The participant can then spend some time preparing to drink in the way they feel is right. Participants are sometimes encouraged to reflect on their intention for the ceremony, which may at times establish the trajectory for the participant's experience during ceremony. Although, one never knows what is in store when drinking ayahuasca and so some participants pay their respects and ask ayahuasca to give them what they need. A *soplada* is done for each cup for every participant that comes to drink.

Once each participant has drunk, the facilitators and ayahuasqueros drink. The onanyas may do a last *soplada* on themselves with mapacho and agua de florida before sitting in silence until the effects of the ayahuasca become apparent. At this point, the onanya begins to sing icaros in the same hushed tone as when doing a *soplada*. At this point, it is described as knocking on the door to the spirit world, asking politely if we may convene. The hushed singing transforms into icaros songs that are sung for the remainder of the ceremony, which may last anywhere from about four hours to however long the onanya holds the space, which may be until twilight.

During this time, the onanya acts as an orchestra conductor, directing the spirits to where they are needed while becoming one with them as the songs find their way into the participants.

Since we were attending a course to learn about the Shipibos' practices, we would each have the opportunity to sing any practiced icaros songs or other songs towards the end of the ceremonies. We would also be preparing to hold our own ceremony in the second half of the course with the guidance of the onanyas and facilitators. There was a ceremony planned for our first night at the centre where the Don would have a chance to diagnose us so that a treatment plan could be set up. A few days later, each of us were going to have a consultation with the Don and facilitators in order to chart any ailments one wishes to address during the course.

A Ceremony

Night had settled and the participants were trickling into the maloca to find a mattress for the night. A few candles were lit in the middle of the maloca and a hint of palo santo, a wood incense, lingered in the air. Once everyone had found their spot, the Don entered. Some of the participants were still placing their tools for the ceremony within arm's reach while the Don settled in. I had a tormenting headache that had grown dramatically as the day progressed and I was unsure of how this would play out in ceremony. The headache had transmuted into a discomfort in my body that had grown to such a degree that I ended up vomiting before the ceremony began. The Don noted this and said that I was already in ceremony and that I should not drink that night. I took his advice to heart and acknowledged the opportunity to have my first introduction to such a space without having to drink.

Once everyone had been served, the candles were blown out. We sat in darkness and silence while listening to the sounds of the rainforest. I began to doze off just before the Don began to knock on the spirits' door. "Tsshh tsshh tsshwui tssh tssh tsshwue..." This continued for a few minutes before the Don sang:

Mato jowe ayonban je. Mato jowe ayonban je.

Raro raro shamakin. Raro raro shamakin.

Mato ikinyonbano je. Mato ikinyonbano je.

Nomabora bekanke. Nomabora bekanke.

Mato betan raroi je. Mato betan raroi je.

Mato ikinyonbano. Mato ikinyonbano. Mato ikinyonbano.

The song translates into the following:

Welcome to the ceremony. I am pleased and all is well. Spirits now I call to heal you. Men and women all will heal. I am pleased to be with you here. In my visions, I'm with you.

The song is repeated up to four times before flowing into other songs. This is continued for hours, so the stamina and focus of the onanya during this time is staggering to consider once one tries to learn these songs and sing them while under the effects of ayahuasca. As the Don went into other songs, I could hear my neighbour Albahaca on the mattress next to me begin to groan and someone else in the room scrambling for their bucket. A few had lit mapacho, in either a pipe or cigarette, and I could see their faint outlines from the glowing embers. I could barely see in the maloca, but I did notice that some participants were lying down while others were sitting up or leaning against the wall. "Huuuhgrrruuhlll!" The vomiting had begun, and one after the other the participants purged. I had fallen asleep for a little while from pain and exhaustion and woke up towards the end of the ceremony. The singing stopped and Piripiri said that the ceremony was over. Albahaca lit his flashlight, looked into his bucket of vomit and said, "What the fuck did I puke out?" Guayusa came over in interest and they both had a laugh at the joy and wonder of purging inexplicable slime.

Vomitivo and Dieta

The next morning, Marosa was strolling through the hallway in the dormitory while half-singing, "Wakey wakey, vomitivo time." A vomitivo involves one consuming a plant that then sits in the stomach for a few minutes before one starts to drink copious amounts of lukewarm water. You have to drink water until you start vomiting and you are supposed to continue until you have expelled most if not all of the plant. Depending on the plant consumed, if one does not expel all of the matter, then one can experience other undesirable effects. Pinon blanco, a type of nut that would taste great in a salad, causes a feeling of elation if expelled completely during a vomitivo, but causes flu symptoms if digested.

I left my room and found the other participants sitting by a thatched roof where a large basin of water, some smaller empty basins and glasses that were filled about 1/3 full with a red, thick and frothy liquid stood ready. Piripiri was smiling and began to describe what to expect once all of the participants had arrived. The red liquid is called sangre de grado and is commonly used to treat cuts as its sticky texture acts as a type of glue that seals the wound while also disinfecting

it. I tried it several times while in Peru and it works like a charm. As a vomitivo, it acts as a type of scrub for the stomach lining.

Piripiri was joining us participants in the vomitivo as he felt the need for a cleanse after staying in Iquitos for a while. We drank our dose and waited a slight minute or two before slowly chugging water. It was fine at first, but once I felt as stuffed as after Christmas dinner it became a more uncomfortable affair. We were advised to not stick our fingers down our throat to induce the vomit but rather learn to let the body go into a natural gag reflex - easier said than done. We kept drinking and, sure enough, one after the other, we started to spew. There was no nausea during the experience so it was not off putting in that sense, but the pressure from the gag reflex did make me dizzy at times. I looked at some of the others and we could not help but smile and laugh at the absurdity of the situation. We continued to vomit, which eventually went from a pinkish hue to clear.

In the afternoon we had our first vapour bath. As described earlier, this entails the boiling of plants in a large metal pot that is lifted off a fire and placed on the ground in front of you. Then, a small tent like construction is placed as a cover over the person and pot, keeping the steam within the tent and creating the effect of a sauna. We were told to breathe in the vapour for as long as possible, to relax, and to envision that you were growing an inner garden. Once finished, a *soplada* of the whole body with *mapacho* smoke marks the bath's end.

As nightfall came, we set out to see the tree we were going into *dieta* with. It was not far from the AC so we could walk there easily. One of the Shipibo working at the AC brought a rifle, a slight reminder that the surrounding jungle is wild. Once we arrived at the tree, we sang an *icaros* together around it before heading back to the AC. The dark jungle looked like an impenetrable wall while seeming oddly inviting. Croaks, tweets, beeps, flaps and cracks filtered through the wall, giving a sense of how deep the chasm behind it is.

The lights from the cafeteria invited us in and we each received a small glass of tree brew. We were told to do a *soplada* to the brew before drinking it, which would signify the beginning of our fast and our *dieta*. It tasted of water and wood, and was not difficult to swallow. We talked a little bit about our day around the coffee table before eventually heading to bed early. The next morning we were to do the same thing: Do a *soplada* of the tree brew, drink it and fast. The fasting was beginning to take its toll and several of us were feeling the need to feed our habit of eating breakfast. We were advised to practice *icaros* and relax as we waited for our consultations with the Don.

Each of us went one by one to the Don, Piripiri, and Marosa who were sitting by a table in the maloca. I spoke about my ailments and the Don set up a protocol for me to follow. Alongside personal prescriptions, the group as a whole was also going to be following similar treatments at certain points. This would involve vomitivos with different plants at strategic points during the course. Little did we know that some of these vomitivos and plant medicines are extremely uncomfortable and that the treatments would demand everything I had. Once everyone had their consultation, we again relaxed in preparation for that night's ceremony.

Spirits, Plants, and Lectures

I woke to the ringing of a bell in the cafeteria, a sign that breakfast was ready. Rice, mashed peas, eggs, tomatoes, and some lime was on the menu. The absence of salt and spices left it a little bland, but our hunger from fasting had left us disinterested in such luxuries. We tucked into our food and as our blood sugar levels rose, so did the tempo of our discussions. Piripiri came in and said that we would be learning how to make a medicine we all would be drinking in the mornings over the coming weeks. We were also to have another vapour bath. We had some free time before the day's events, so I went for a short walk with some of the others along the main road. We stepped off the road to look at another tree related to the one we were dieting. The mosquitos found us quickly so we strolled back to make the medicine and have our vapour baths.

The sun was about to set while I was enjoying a chat with some of the other participants in the cafeteria. The Don walked in with haste to the telephone and we noticed a sense of worry from him. We found out that two of the other participants had decided to go for a walk earlier in the day on a trail that led into thick forest. From what I understood, they had only told another participant of their intentions and not those working at the centre, who would have advised against it without a guide. Their return was long overdue and nightfall was just around the corner, so the need for a search party was urgent. The Don said that the evening's ceremony was cancelled.

One of the participants began to speak of a forest spirit that may have led the two in the forest astray. This spirit is known for tricking people away from trails or taking the form of someone you know so that you will approach it without hesitation. If you walk towards the spirit you become lost forever. The advice one receives in order to discern the spirit is to look at its feet to see if one foot is bigger than the other. If this is so, you tell the spirit to leave you alone.

An uneasiness settled in the cafeteria, and as the trees went from green to black, a sinister feeling arose in me. We started to worry for our companions and we realised that a day that had been very peaceful could veer off into crisis. All we could do was sit, wait, and hope. I felt powerless and knew that I had nothing to offer the situation. We were fully reliant on the Shipibos' knowledge of how to navigate the surrounding forest.

After a while, the search party returned with the people they had been looking for. The two participants told of how they had started their walk with the intent to see more of the forest and that they would just turn around on the trail when they felt that they had walked far enough. When they had decided to turn around, nothing looked familiar. The trail was different and they did not know which way was back. They had not seen the trickster spirit, but for some it was a clear sign that it had been playing with the two.

One of the participants who had gotten lost was a bit shaken by the experience. The ceremony was back on and he decided not to partake that evening. The rest of us got ready for another ceremony. It went as planned and once again we purged. At the end of the ceremony, we had a sharing circle for those who wished to stay in the maloca a little while longer. Some of the participants were tired and said goodnight. I pulled my mattress closer to the middle by the facilitators with the others who wanted to stay. A few candles were lit in the middle of the maloca and I used one of the flames to light a piece of palo santo. We sat in a circle and, one by one, we shared our experiences as the soothing aroma of the burning wood spread among us. Some summarized their evening in relation to their intention and if they felt a sense of accomplishment or development in their process. New insights gave a few a renewed sense of optimism in regards to understanding the dieta process. Journeys into inner and outer spaces inhabited by curious autonomous beings had left some in awe and astonishment. One participant had met God and was swimming in gratefulness. Albahaca suggested that we eat some pond. We all laughed as he was referring to the leftover fish soup, which consisted of fish steeped in water with a few vegetables.

When we stepped into the cafeteria the next morning, we learned that some of us would be taking machinga, which is a medicine that pushes out pain from the body and help restore damage. It tasted of sour milk. We had a lecture a few hours later where we would learn more about the icaros and what they involve. The Don told us how the songs are learned from the plants and that it takes all of your concentration to grasp them. Doing so will lead you to direct experience with the spirits, which he wanted us to reach. He could not do that for us, we

ourselves had to do that work. As we listened, the effects of the machinga started to take hold. A sturdy, heavy pain sat in my sternum. It grew with every heartbeat and I lost my concentration. This effect lasted for three days and the others who had taken it were also struggling with its effects.

Once the machinga had loosened its grip, we continued as planned. Vapour baths, vomitivos, plant concoctions and lectures became a part of our rhythm alongside ayahuasca ceremonies. One of the lectures focused on interpreting one's ayahuasca experiences. It was specifically focused on how the mind is predisposed to find meaning where there might not be any and how it may race to find it in extraordinary mystical experiences. We were advised to let time create understanding instead of constructing one that feels good. This also entailed an awareness of what one shares after these experiences, as they are personal in nature. I felt that the lecture was somewhat aimed at the sharing circle we had earlier and how some may have been quick to share details of personal healing or grand insights and otherworldly encounters. This did not mean that we should not share our experiences but that we should acknowledge that the experiences are personal and once one puts the words onto it, it may alter its effects.

We also spoke about encountering interested spirits that may make themselves known during our dieta. In such encounters, we were advised to say the following, *"If you are medicine then enter my body through the portal of my heart and teach me. If you are not medicine then keep going, I do not want to have anything to do with you."* We learned that this was a code that spirits adhered to and would therefore protect us from malevolent spirits entering our being.

The other lectures we had involved practices and information that acts as a supplement to the dieta process so that the participants can engage with it effectively. Meditation techniques where one envisions a being that represents the shadows of your consciousness seemed helpful for some, while learning more about chakras and their role in consciousness helped others. Lessons on the importance of self-love triggered a few who became emotional from this insight. Discussions on different states of consciousness and fear led me to realise how my thoughts were sometimes driven by deeper subconscious assumptions. A later lecture where we sang each other's names, gazed into each other's eyes, held each other's hands, and gave each other compliments led some to shed some tears of joy over the love they felt from the others.

Some of the lectures were aimed at teaching the APs more about Shipibo culture, language, and practices related to the interpretation and production of plant medicines. This space allowed the APs to ask questions related to their dieta process and how they should go forward.

Doubting the dieta process was described as leading to an ineffective process as this would restrict the remedies of the plants. We were encouraged to master the effects of the plants as they could also master you. We were told of how the onanya scans a patient to see patterns in the body that illustrate sickness or blocks. Shipibo medical practices use symptoms as signs of a deeper issue that is the cause of a patient's ailments. This deeper issue is usually referred to as the "mother root" of the ailment and through treating and working with the root cause, related symptoms will also be healed. Finding the root is up to both the onanya and the patient, illustrating how these practices engage the patient in their healing process. Through the dieta, the patient listens to the effects of the plant medicines in order to find the root cause, and through working together, the plant and patient become allies. During the dieta, the plant carves pathways in your being and in its journey one may be tested in a variety of ways, which is viewed as being a part of the healing and learning process as the plant is guiding you to aspects of your being that need attention or resolve. These pathways, or patterns, represent the plant, who at the end of the dieta becomes a part of the person.

We stayed on the dieta path and continued to delve deeper into the process. Some days were easier than others, depending on the medicine prescribed. I was prescribed chiricsanango for my nerves and was to take it 12 times. The onset felt like a rush of air in the system that left me in a floaty, feathery state of optimism. This veered off into a plunge of emotional turmoil and hot-cold sweats. Murure also took chiricsanango and was walking around with a heavy blanket despite the humidity and high temperature in the rainforest.

During the optimistic onset, I usually found myself helping with the vapour baths and doing sopladas for those who had just finished a round in the tent. I was copying what the Shipibo were doing and saw some of the children helping with this work at times too. It led me to learn more about the hands on methods related to the facilitation of the effects of these medical practices. I learned that the Don's father prepared some of the medicines in the early morning while fasting in order for there to be minimal energetic contamination of the medicines produced. We would also start a day by brewing ayahuasca. We picked leaves off the chacruna bush and scraped off fungus on the ayahuasca vines with machetes before smashing them with a mallet. We then placed the leaves and vines in layers in a large pot with water. The pot would cook for several days until the characteristic thick brew was produced.

What I came to realise from these tasks was the nature of knowledge transfer in plant medicine practices. A major part of it involves the harvesting and preparation of various brews

and extracts with certain effects, depending on the need that is apparent. A part of the knowledge that is transferred between persons relates to how one prepares such brews and how to facilitate its effects. Once a consumer experiences the effects, they go into a different form of knowledge transfer, where the plant's biochemistry speaks to the person, who has to listen to their altering physiology. Thinking back on our discussion on the guru, this is where I perceive the plant to become one. Through its unique character, the plant assumes a position within the consumer, creating a point of view, perspective, or state of being that stands in contrast with waking consciousness, potentially leading the person to rearrange their preordained mental structures into something new and therefore learning from the experience.

I cannot delve further into knowledge production and transfer here, since this thesis does not have space for it, but this may give some insight into the agency of plants in Amazonia. Piripiri described an example of the above when he told me how he has learned from the Don. Piripiri would ask the Don if certain plant preparations would have certain effects, and the Don would say that he could find out for himself. This encouragement reflects how Piripiri can copy certain hands on methods to prepare a brew, but it is up to himself to traverse and understand its effects in order to learn.

Piripiri and Marosa had the main responsibility in administering the other plant medicines that were prescribed. One of these was sachamango, whose seeds are juiced and then poured into one's nostrils. We sat on our mattresses in the maloca when we received it and one by one the effects took obvious hold. Coughing, harking, and lots of phlegm was produced as the juice is intended to clear one's respiratory system. Piripiri and Marosa went around and helped those who were struggling with the effects. At first, it felt like my oesophagus was glued shut and I could not breathe for a distressing minute before my lungs opened up, thanks to the help of Piripiri and his prior knowledge of its potential effects.

The support of the facilitators was an undeniable necessity for the APs during the course. The facilitators' prior experience and knowledge of the effects of the plant medicines administered made it possible to support the APs during this process. A vomitivo of catahua was only prescribed to a few and Albahaca had decided he needed to do it several times in order to beat his ailment. Catahua has been used as a toxin to kill fish and is renowned for being a strong and potentially dangerous medicine. During one of Albahaca's sessions with it, the other APs and I could hear screams of sheer pain from the maloca. He was writhing around and in despair of the effects. I could see Marosa stand close by to support him and when I walked passed a little later

I could hear her remind Albahaca to keep drinking water. If he did not, then the catahua would remain concentrated in his system and amplify the effects. Once he had purged everything a few hours later, Albahaca rested on his mattress in the maloca. The rest of us gave him space to recover.

Holding a Ceremony

During the second half of the course, the APs had the chance to hold a ceremony with the supervision of the Don and facilitators. It would entail the copying of the ritual structure described earlier and the singing of any icaros they had learned during their stay. This was a first time experience for most of the APs while some have held ceremonies before. From my observations, these experiences seemed like the peak example of the APs liminality as the course had built up to it. Through the course and the consumption of plant medicines and participation in lectures, the APs had operated in a space where they were encouraged to establish communication with plants through the guidance of ritual leaders. The adherence to their suggestions in this ritual space illustrates their role as neophytes. "And the essence of the complete obedience of the neophytes is to submit to the elders but only in so far as they are in charge, so to speak, of *the common good* and represent in their persons the total community (Turner, 1996, p. 515)."

Even though the APs are not forced to submit, they do adhere to a meritocracy in order for them to achieve the transformative results they have set, which implicitly acknowledges that they themselves do not have the experience or knowledge to undergo a dieta without the supervision of a ritual leader. They are equals in their adherence to the ritual leaders and in doing so create an egalitarian community where they are all in the same boat so to say, which Tuner describes as, "The liminal group is a community or comity of comrades and not a structure of hierarchically arrayed positions (Turner, 1996, p. 515)." As described, in this space the sharing of insights from ayahuasca and the various effects of the consumed plant medicines led the APs to be a part of a *communitas*.

"Essentially, *communitas* is a relationship between concrete, historical, idiosyncratic individuals. These individuals are not segmentalized into roles and statuses but confront one another in the manner of Martin Buber's "I and Thouh." Along with this direct immediate and total confrontation of human identities, there tends to go a model of society as a homogenous, unstructured *communitas*, whose boundaries are ideally coterminous with those of the human species (Turner, 1969, pp. 132-133)."

Within the ritual setting at the AC, the APs are taught how to engage with plants in order to learn and/or heal, ultimately meaning that they are undergoing a process of transformation through the dieta alongside others. An important aspect of the dieta is to withhold from sexual activity and thoughts and it illustrates the de-structured aspect of liminality. The avoidance of certain foods also illustrates this as they are unstructured from the normal lifestyles. This sacrifice is necessary for the dieta, or ritual, to be successful and illustrates how it is an inter-structural phase. "They [neophytes] are symbolically either sexless or ambisexual, and may be regarded as a kind of human *prima materia* – as undifferentiated raw material. [...] Since sex distinctions are important components of structural status, in a structureless realm they do not apply (Turner, 1996, pp. 513-514)."

As Turner points out, liminality is not defined as being structurally contradictory but that it is essentially being unstructured "and often the people themselves see this in terms of bringing neophytes into close connection with deity or with superhuman power, with what is, in fact, often regarded as *unbounded*, the *infinite*, the *limitless* (Turner, 1996, p. 513)." The ritual leaders at the AC operate in a manner so the neophytes themselves can come into contact with the spirits. This usually occurs during ayahuasca ceremonies where the unboundedness of the neophyte is catalysed further as they potentially engage with a dimension of existence where they might experience telepathy with spirits, ultimately erasing preconceived boundaries between the self and other. Coming back to the dieta state from such experiences places the neophyte back alongside the others who might have had similar experiences, which may be generally described as transcending the self through ego-dissolution. This coming back from transcendental experiences reinforces the formed *communitas* as each AP had their own transformative experience that was both private and shared.

Based on the transcendental experiences of ayahuasca during the dieta, I have come to suppose it as a type of meta-liminality as the self is further unstructured from the self to go through mystical experiences where the sense of self is brought into relation with a greater frame of reference. It is in this frame of reference, or dimension, where the AP may engage in relationships with spirits in realms that have been described as real places that the spirits inhabit. This observation is nothing more than a hypothesis from my analysis, but I think it helps illustrate the different boundaries that are traversed during a dieta.

A Temporary Community

A topic in one of the lectures focused on the awareness of the creation of a unique spirit between people when they assemble. We were already aware of the positive nature of our temporary community as we had come to know each other intimately in only a short while since we were not only sharing living quarters but deep states of vulnerability, healing, and transformation. We had shared our motivations that had led us to Peru as we became entwined with these stories and reflected on our own. A sense of respect and acknowledgment was in the air while we gave each other space to work with the dieta process.

Despite the positive nature of our temporary community, the stepping on each other's toes is somewhat inevitable when spending such long amounts of time isolated in the jungle with nowhere to go. One participant who was very eager in the beginning of the course began to show signs of homesickness and some disagreement with what was said during a few of the lectures. Monologues related to how he missed normal food, his home and how he wanted to go back did not float well with some of the others who were trying to stay in the present. Murure, who was good at stepping on toes, ended up saying, "Why don't you just go home then?" This was not received well and created some friction. Guayusa pointed out that the sharp comments might be because Murure was in dieta with the catahua tree, which has sharp thorns on its bark. The reason I say that Murure was good at stepping on toes relates to how he seemed to trigger some of the others with ease. I did not experience his comments to me as ill intended but actually being spot on and perceptive. It was as if he could see through your baggage and say what you were afraid to say to yourself. I took it with humour, but not everyone else did.

As time progressed, we became more comfortable with the course and each other as we had gotten to know what it entails and shared odd experiences like vomitivos and other medicines. The participants would either be relaxing in their rooms or hammocks, practicing icaros, going for walks on the main road, reading books, listening to music, journal writing, yoga, talking, or preparing for the next planned course event. The introduction of a few new visitors that were not on the course led to some new topics of discussion as our community grew. We spent a sufficient amount of time talking to each other, which is not ideal during a dieta since you are supposed to be in isolation. Therefore, the facilitators introduced a day of silence so that we could be more focused on what was going on inside our bodies. This worked for a few hours, but questions concerning when to take medicines and what to prepare for burst this attempt and we were talking again later that afternoon.

Our discussions began to focus on the subtle and intricate effects of the medicines we were taking. Reoccurring experiences related to "peeling off the layers of an onion" referred to how some were going deeper into their psyche and letting go of previous states of being. The paradox of intention was also in focus as there was varying results with it. Some people had their intention met while others had put it aside as the ayahuasca had taken them for other rides that did not seem related to their focus. It was only after a while that their intention was followed and their questions were answered in unforeseen ways. This brought up how ayahuasca knows your body better than yourself and knows where to start your healing process. Your intention might be focused on the end result of your healing or questions asked while ayahuasca may take you to the start of that process, sometimes leaving you confused. We were able to give each other tips on how to let go of expectations, mind chatter, and how to deal with the nausea.

The dialogues we had as a community seemed to clarify some uncertainties that were in the air and helped individuals to engage further with the process. The facilitators were always on hand to answer our questions, and reoccurring topics were brought up in plenum. This sharing of insights, experiences, and knowledge met the participants motivations for coming to the AC, which helped fulfil their desires to heal and/or learn. The effect of a positively tuned community helped establish a sense of affiliation and that we were in the process together. Encouragement and feedback on the ceremonies we each held during the second half of the course inspired those wary of singing the icaros in front of others to challenge their comfort zone. It was beautiful to experience others stepping out of this zone to discover that making oneself vulnerable does not necessarily lead to negative consequences but positive experiences.

Our last ceremony involved the onanyas sitting in front of each of us and singing an arkana to seal the dieta in our body. We ended the dieta with a glass of cane sugar alcohol and our last breakfast was French toast with peanut butter and jelly, which was extremely rich after a long time with basic food. We were informed of our post-dieta, which was for the most part the same for everybody with no red meat for a week and no pork for the rest of our lives, except for wild boar. A few had to adhere to other restrictions for a longer time since they had done a dieta with another plant as well.

We spent a few days together in Iquitos before we each headed on our ways back into our planned lives. It was a sad affair as we had grown close to each other during the course and despite the joy of having completed it, the spirit of our temporary community would disappear with us. We now faced a time of integrating our healing and insights while reintegrating to our

normal lives. I was heading to Pucallpa and had only a few ideas of what would meet me, so my normal life was still up in the air.

Summarising Stories from Informants

The following stories are intended to clarify how the dieta is a transformational process through the descriptions and stories of my informants. Based on the previous discussions, they can be understood further by affiliating it to how the motivations of the APs are processed through a rite of passage.

Curare

Curare describes her childhood as positive but she started to feel depressed as a teenager. She has never felt like she belongs in her home country and moved to find a new life, which she found but she was still struggling with depression. It led to a life of anti-depressants, alcohol, and drugs in order to numb herself. She is a hard worker and wanted to fulfil her parents expectations since they have been supportive of her decisions. She had a successful career which she was recognized for, but she had no job satisfaction,

Curare had visited Peru a few times in relation to a project she was working on there. She had heard of the reputation of ayahuasca as a medicine but it did not “resonate” with her at the time, until she met a man who advised that she should take part in a ceremony. She was beginning to feel that she was a “victim of the modern lifestyle” and her job was perpetuating it. *“The way I lived my life was very harmful for me. I was empty, burned out. I lost touch with myself and everybody around me. I was disconnected, separated, lonely, depressed, and sick.”*

She says her life changed after her first ceremony. *“I unplugged from the matrix and looked at myself and my life from a totally new perspective.”* She changed jobs, friends, and put more attention towards the project in Peru. Since then, she has for the most part been in Peru and working with ayahuasca and plant medicines. *“I have dedicated 10 months to this new path. I feel more connected now than before. More in connection to everything else. To myself, other people, to nature, animals, children, in a much deeper sense. To source, God, whatever it is called.”*

Guayusa

Guayusa had been receiving pharmaceutical medications for painful afflictions for many years but was not getting any better. He used cannabis, but not as a pain reliever but as a tool for reflection and says that through his self-examination he has been able to come to terms with his sickness. Believing that healing comes from within, Guayusa works with plant medicines and sound healing for not only himself but for others in his home country and sometimes holds ayahuasca ceremonies. After his first ayahuasca ceremony, he realised that its use could lead him to gain a better understanding of himself, so his intention for drinking ayahuasca was to gain more insight into his affliction so he could remedy it.

Guayusa's work with plant medicines led him to find a sense of purpose during an ibogaine ritual guided by the Bwiti of Gabon. He says, "*Grief came up, episodes of intense and tearful moments, moments of connection to spirit and earth. Beautiful realizations that we are here on earth for a purpose. I feel that in drumming, playing music, teaching, I find my purpose.*"

Guayusa organizes sound healing workshops for friends at home and in order to gain a deeper understanding of how sound and music can heal, he decided to join the course at the AC so he could learn more about the icaros sung by the Shipibo. His work with plants and sound has led him to a point where he is considering furthering his engagement with shamanism, so his time at the AC is also intended to gain insight into his next step.

Cumala

Cumala has always felt in touch with nature and felt that there is a universe to be discovered inside the body. Her teenage years were tough, where medication, depression, and suicidal thoughts were combined with other substances. Seeing and feeling the world became too much for her, and when she closed herself from the world she felt nothing. A friend of hers suggested that she try ayahuasca after having spent years on medication for headaches with little improvement.

Cumala believed that ayahuasca could harm her and did not trust the brew and was worried that her underlying condition could cause problems while under the effects. The month after her first ceremony led to new experiences that let her see ayahuasca with a new perspective. For example, a day after she took part in a ceremony, when the effects have usually subsided, she saw geometric forms and began purging foam. With time she realised the potential ayahuasca has to help her and decided to keep working with it to develop herself.

Her intention for taking part in the course at the AC was to heal the mind and body. She carried many questions and hopes that she would heal from her afflictions, which she described in relation to treatment as, *"Healing is different than treatment. Treatment does not end and keeps going with same variables. Healing leads to closure."* She was trying to not have any expectations before coming to Peru but her hope for healing was central, which made it difficult.

Her first ceremonies at the AC did not lead to anything and she was very disappointed. She only experienced a few visions and some sensations, but nothing of the healing sort. She realised that she may not be healed or reach her goal and needed to accept and trust the effect of the medicine. *"By accepting it, I was allowing myself to be in the ceremony and be in it with whatever she (ayahuasca) has to offer, even if it is nothing. When I did it, bang, I started to see. My visions were all about healing the body. For the first three weeks, only body. I was forcing to heal the mind, but the plants and visions were only with the body."*

When she was forcing answers, her visions disappeared and the plants said it was not the time. *"My mind was telling me to find myself. When we want to know something, we calculate every part of it. I was asking, 'What profession makes me happy? What is your next step when you arrive home?' Eventually, all of my questions were answered at the right time. Last ceremony, change came all at once. The feeling I had was not step by step, but that I was always in the same step but then suddenly I jumped to another step. In one day, I was different. I opened my eyes and felt completely and totally different. This also happened when I accepted that I may not change as much as I wanted to."*

Cumala reflects on the importance of belonging before she drank ayahuasca and how her answers found at the AC has helped her. She has always had an intimate relationship to nature and talked to the plants as a child when her grandfather was sick. She feels that the Shipibo see what she sees and feels that she belongs in Peru. Cumala decided to stay after the course ended in order to continue working with ayahuasca at the AC and now holds ceremonies.

Albahaca

Albahaca had a traumatic childhood that left him discouraged and self-medicating with drugs as he strived to find his place in the world. He also ended up fighting an ailment that brought him another load of struggles. He viewed drugs as a form of escapism. He says, *"Escaping the mundane, escaping the grim perceived reality we find ourselves in."* When I asked him why one would escape reality, he answers, *"Routine eats away at your soul. Mechanistic living is*

disharmonious and psychedelics specifically show you something else. I took acid (LSD) in my late teens and saw that it was all bullshit and that there is something fundamentally wrong with the way we live. It sent me into a deep depression, insomnia for a long time, because I didn't get the world. I think psychedelics played a significant part in showing me, along with cannabis, that I didn't really want to be a part of the world as it was, the norm."

12 years after taking psychedelics, Albahaca found himself in India in a spiritual setting where a circle of people were going to take LSD with an intention. Albahaca's intention was to have fun, which he had. This was where he first saw how intention could affect one's experience. Through his travels and talks with friends, he started to get insights into how psychedelics, and ayahuasca, may be used medicinally. After both beautiful and harrowing experiences with ayahuasca, he decided that he wanted to continue working with it in hopes that he could be cured.

When I asked about his intention that led him to the AC, he answered the following.

"To become a man. It's like a rite of passage for me. Our culture is missing that. Somewhere along the lines, we've adulterated and almost eradicated the rite of passage of young men. We've lost the rite of passage in our culture and it's being lost everywhere now. It's very important because young men, boys, have to go through some kind of challenging process, some kind of ordeal, and the intention of it is for them to break free of their childhood traumas. To let go of all the things that happen to them as a child that then continue to echo into adulthood, if they're not dealt with. Indigenous cultures realised that men needed this or they turned into monsters if it wasn't addressed. It began to toxify their psyche and they would act out on that and it would effect their children, and their children's children and so on. So somehow, we've recognized that a long time ago and seem to have forgotten it. I recognized it in myself, that I needed that, that I never got that, that I wanted that, and it's not just coming here, it's a process for me and it's harder now since I've accumulated so much baggage. So, I'm in a rite of passage period in my life, trying to become a man, trying to become what I deem to be an adult. To let go of all that childish animosity and get back to being childlike."

I asked him how his experience on the course has been, he answered, *"I have a feeling, and I've been told that I may have beaten my ailment. Even if it haven't eradicated it from my body, I've beaten it regardless. I win. It's no longer a problem to me. It's a long story and it's taught me a lot. It's not going to define me anymore. When I came to this place I decided to be open and honest about my ailment, and this has been the most profound healing for me, to be open and honest about who I am and my story and that has taught me a tremendous amount. The most profound healing I've found is honesty. That honesty has changed my life. I've changed*

fundamentally as a person because of it. Practicing honesty has opened me up in ways that I couldn't possibly have imagined. For the first time in my life I feel loved by the people around me. I feel that people get me and appreciate me and understand me. And, because I'm honest with myself, it's easy to be honest with others, and when you do that, it opens them. When you're straight up with somebody and tell them something about yourself, they open up and they share, there's a flow. I've never ever felt so myself in all my life. I've never felt so alive. Life has never felt as juicy as now because of the truth."

Abuta

Abuta has carried grand questions concerning his place in life and its meaning. He has never been religious but always thought that there must be something more to life. After heavy bouts of depression and use of medication, he found himself in an undesirable work situation in a mining company in his home country. He describes a hard time trying to justify to himself why he kept working there and goes on to say that he needs money and plans to spend it in such a way that it helps those who need it. A dream to start a business, school, or volunteer in Latin America is in his sights, but he needs to keep earning money from work where he does not find fulfilment. He describes a macho workspace with little room for intellectual discourse and racist tendencies, which he did not want to be engaged with. A lacking feeling of connection and direction in life fuelled his depression further.

He came to learn about ayahuasca from his travels in Latin America and researched it more with time. He eventually met one of the other AC participants and they talked about planning a trip to Peru. Seeking to find answers on consciousness and the meaning of life, the two found their way to the AC together. They were not interested in taking part in a few ceremonies, but to delve far into the Shipibos' practices for an extended amount of time, so the AC was a perfect fit. After arriving, he was surprised and optimistic when he realised the wide array of plants that was prescribed to help treat some ailments. He has since realised that plant medicines may help him in his home and that he is inspired to look into it when he goes back.

He and his travelling companion were the two who had gotten lost in the forest during the course. He says that he has watched many documentaries about *"idiots getting lost in the forest"* and never thought that he could be one of those and added, *"It was extremely humbling."*

Chapter Conclusion

In this chapter I have described the course that the APs engage with in such a manner to maintain their anonymity while illustrating how the facilitators and the Don act as ritual leaders for them. Describing the course in such a way is intended to illustrate how the AC works with a form of culture preservation while healing those who learn about Shipibo culture. What we may draw out of this illustration is how engaging with ayahuasca in a dieta represents the ritual phases of rite of passage and how the APs desire to evolve, or transform, occurs through its liminal phase.

If we are to think back on my description of Tim Ingold's taskscape, and how it is through the inter-activity of beings that results are born, we may see how the plants administered at the AC acts as these beings, or tools, in order for the consumer, the AP, to further their *becoming*, or transformation. It is through the consumption of the landscape, the beings, plants, that resides in it, that the APs are able to *restructure* themselves to a more desirable state of being. In this consumption, the tool becomes a part of the body and speaks from within, which is where the APs' work lays. This relationship between inner and outer worlds brings in the topic of embodied knowledge and how it is through experience that one may learn.

Sarah Pink discusses this topic, and refers to it as helping to resolve the dichotomy of the mind/body divide. Victor Tuner refers to this divide when describing the differences between 'mere experience' and experience': "the continuous flow of events that we passively accept"; and "a defined and reflected on event that has a beginning and an end (Pink, 2015, p. 26)." Pink points out how

"An important implication of the literature that emerged on this topic was to deconstruct the notion of a mind/body divide, to understand the body not simply as a source of experience and activity that would be rationalised and/or controlled by the mind, but itself as a source of knowledge and subsequently agency. [...] The idea of embodiment as a *process* that is integral to the relationship between humans and their environments (Pink, 2015, pp. 26-27)."

If we are to think back on the discussion on IK and TEK, we may see how the knowledge produced in indigenous societies, like the Shipibo, is based on a continual bodily experience in inter-activity with their landscape. This knowledge is passed on to the younger generation, or in the context of this thesis, to the APs, who continues to refine it through their experiences. Therefore, the knowledge put into practice during a dieta is the accumulated *bodily* wisdom of

an Onanya who shows the way for neophytes so that they can learn it as well through their own bodies. This knowledge is gained through engaging with a taskscape that regards plants as tools and that learning from their effects is a type of work.

Chapter Summary

The next chapter will build upon this chapter's discussion on rites of passage and liminality by illustrating how it reoccurs with another group of foreigners in a different context. A discussion on the intention behind the SO's organisational structure will illustrate how it forms a *communitas*. A focus on how the formed *communitas* facilitates the motivations of the foreigners will illustrate how it effects interactivity and establishes a state of liminality. What we may bring with us from this chapter is the transformational effect of being unstructured from one's previous structures in regular life. This restructuring also occurs for the EAs as they adapt to an organisation whose way of working stands in contrast to their previous experiences.

Chapter Four: The Shipibo Organisation

In this chapter, I illustrate how the SO's organisational structure forms a *communitas* where EAs cooperate in order to complete projects organised in collaboration with Shipibo communities. To illustrate this, I argue that the EAs are engaging in a self-perpetuated rite of passage in order to *experience* a type of work that appeals to their desire to support indigenous groups and the preservation of the Amazon rainforest. Their experience at the SO is characterized by uncertainty as they are *restructured* from their regular hierarchies in the normal lives and are introduced to a position in an egalitarian *communitas*. The volunteers' position is affiliated to a project where a person's credentials and accumulated experience give rise to a meritocracy - rendering them a ritual leader in their own right alongside other ritual leaders. This position stands in contrast to their position in their normal lives and illustrates a liminal experience, as their time at the SO is one that demands an orientation with an organisational structure that is intended to foster creativity in their work. In doing so, the EAs are both neophytes and leaders as they learn from each other while drawing on their previous experiences in order to be successful in their newfound responsibilities and in supporting the others. As I have already discussed liminality and *communitas* in the previous chapter, the discussion in this chapter will not go into as much depth. Rather I will point out how the EAs' *experience* at the SO can be understood as liminality. A review of how the formed *communitas* at the SO produces liminality will therefore further depict this argument.

Pucallpa

My arrival in Pucallpa was similar to arriving in Iquitos as the volunteer coordinator, Lupuna, from the SO met me at the airport. Once again, I did not need to figure out where to go in the city and could focus on getting to know my new acquaintance. Lupuna had found her way to the SO after wanting to engage with environmental work. With a history in creative arts and theatre and a completed bachelor's degree with her master's degree being on hold, she decided to join the SO at a time when the organisation was going through some major changes. With her Spanish not being optimal on arrival and a massive workload falling on a few people, she found herself in a steep learning curve in order to become acquainted with the SO.

We got into a mototaxi and started to talk about my time in Iquitos and I reflected on the work done at the AC on the way to the SO. After describing the plants that I had learned about

we realised that I had been with the same family of onanyas that the SO work with in Pucallpa. I was excited to hear this and that there was a workshop and an ayahuasca ceremony planned a few days after my arrival. The workshop would last two days and the volunteers were asked to stay on the property for the duration.

I acquainted myself with my room and the house before I went to the market. While there, some of the others had begun making dinner and Maca asked if I wanted some once I returned. After a day of travelling and adapting to a new house and rhythm, such an invitation felt like warm socks on cold feet. I helped out where I could during preparations and felt welcomed around the dinner table. Chitchat about projects and people's backgrounds flowed as more volunteers came back to the house after a day of work. I greeted the new faces and grew eager as I began to realise the multinational make-up of volunteers and their motivations to work for the SO. We eventually sat on the veranda after cleaning up and I ended the evening talking about music with Woashimo, one of the founders of the SO.

The next day was spent preparing for the workshop and ceremony. I joined some of the others at the market and helped carry some of the food back to the house. We had enough stock such that now we didn't need to leave the property for a couple of days. A few of us would be responsible for preparing the food while the rest would take part in some planned events. Some of the other volunteers had also arrived just recently, so we spent some time talking about our backgrounds, what we were capable of contributing, how we envisioned our time at the SO, and what the organisation meant to them. We broke off into groups to discuss the various projects at the SO and whether we perceived any problematic areas in them. Afterwards, we discussed this in the group. We ended with a sensory workshop where we were blindfolded and asked to name an object that was placed in our hands or a smell that was wafted under our noses. We had a small bite to eat before we started to prepare for the ceremony.

We gathered in the main house after sunset, moved furniture out of the way, and brought in mattresses, buckets, and toilet paper. This was the very first ayahuasca ceremony for a few of the volunteers and they were nervous of what was to come. The onanya came to the house and we each found a spot on a mattress. The onanya followed many of the same steps as the onanyas at the AC did, but instead of sitting in one place and singing to everyone during the ceremony, she would sit in front of each participant and sing to them one by one. At the end, she lay down on her mattress, fell asleep instantly, and snored while the rest of us started to chat. A few took the opportunity to sing a song and Bii, one of the founders of the SO, told a story of a king who

had a tough lesson in learning from his mistakes. Sitting by candle light while listening to him speak was a captivating experience. We eventually started to feel tired and headed off to our rooms for the night.

The next morning was slow, with everyone trickling in to the main house as they woke up. We started reminiscing over the ceremony and our experiences. Some of the first time drinkers were surprised about how they could traverse into different states of being and also about the friendly feel of the experience. Heliconia had felt like a monkey with long, wonky arms and I remembered seeing her flailing them in the air at a certain point. The sharing of insights and odd experiences led to some laughs and inquisitive discussions on plant medicines and the nature of being. Even though I had arrived only a few days earlier, it felt like I had been a part of the group for months. This was an interesting insight that is shared by my informants and reflects a conscious intention from the SO's founders.

I asked Bii about this in an interview and he said, *"One of the things that really helps us with this [challenges related to work] is our relationship with ayahuasca. Because I feel like in some way, and it is very subtle, it gives us a frame of reference that is over and beyond any individual, a shared frame of reference. So, one of the things we have done is integrate ayahuasca ceremonies with staff meetings. I think those have been incredibly helpful. Again many levels, as a shared experience, as a way for people to connect to one another more deeply, as a way of continuing to work and get deeper insights and clarifications about organizational issues. I feel like that's been a huge help to us and also in terms of our work here with the Shipibo. Some people argue that ayahuasca is at the heart of Shipibo culture, so if we are an organisation that is working with Shipibo, the more our organisational structure reflects their reality, the better. We always invite our Shipibo workers to participate in the ayahuasca ceremonies and that has also been fantastic to kind of create bonds and links with all the people who work here."*

The use of ayahuasca at the SO to gain insights and clarifications about organisational issues run parallel with the traditional use of ayahuasca, where it was also used to gain insight into communal issues at hand. To finish off the workshop/retreat, we had another meeting where we talked about our experiences and if we felt inclined to take part in any specific projects other than those ascribed to our positions in the organisation. Some - myself included - felt inspired to take part in mending the garden at the property, as the majority of their work involved sitting in front of a computer. A few volunteers would also be leaving soon, which would involve a shift of the workload, leading some to take on new responsibilities.

Dieta and Ayahuasca

The EAs travelling to the SO are not only motivated to support their work in relation to environmental and culture preservation but also in furthering their own expertise in an arena that encourages personal development - not only professionally but also in relation to the use of ayahuasca. The use of ayahuasca is not openly communicated on the SO's webpages and its use cannot be the main motivation of the EAs travelling to the SO. It is extended as an open invitation to those who arrive as a way to gain an understanding of Shipibo practices and insights into organisational issues. The ability to take breaks from the work at the SO by going into a dieta is also encouraged, as it is valued as a self-care method that can strengthen the individual's health and self-understanding. This would in turn lead the EA to come back to the SO with a renewed vitality in their work. Bii and Woashimo had the ability of being in a dieta while continuing their work at the SO, although this did come with challenges for them as the diet restrictions and regular ayahuasca ceremonies led to the intermingling of different types of work and spaces. Maca had done a dieta during his stay at the SO and Lupuna planned one before she left. The possibility to share experiences that relates to the "frame of reference" that Bii describes plays a substantial role in forming a community at the SO.

The SO's Roots

While sitting on the veranda one day, I could not help overhearing a discussion concerning the financial issues the SO faces. Bii said, "Money makes people tense," and I was wondering what that could mean. I would later learn that the SO had previously received funding from an ayahuasca centre (**not** the AC discussed in this thesis) that had taken part in establishing the SO. The centre is where Bii first met Woashimo and Capirona, and after some discussion with the centre's chief executive, the impetus to found an NGO began. Bii told me in a later interview that after his first visit to the centre, he could not shake the perception that something was being lost in the Shipibo culture. This realisation was a part of the desire to give something back to the Shipibo through an NGO that seeks to listen to their self-proclaimed needs.

In order to make the NGO a reality, the centre would invest some of its earnings into the NGO while the chief executive of the centre would manage the work with a hierarchical, top-down approach. This relationship lasted a few years until the executive disagreed in the others' desire to start permaculture projects. This disagreement eventually led to the dissolving of the

relationship between the centre and SO, which entailed that the funding would also stop. This left the SO in a predicament. How were they going to continue without stable funding? An answer to this was to establish a grant writing position, meaning that one person would focus on writing grants full-time, hopefully leading to some kind of income. They would also make the SO a "true Shipibo organisation", meaning that the organisation would employ Shipibos in key positions relating to the formal requirements of an NGO. The organisation would also have a "flat" structure, implying that there would be no person on top that would have the last word, but rather that decisions were to be taken together so that everyone would get to voice their opinion. Grant applications are only submitted to organisations whose criteria for support do not demand any changes or additions to the SO's structure and activity.

Volunteers and the Organisational Structure of the SO

One day, I was taking part in a small meeting with some of the others from the SO and two new volunteers, Uvilla and Verbena, who had recently arrived. They had communicated an eagerness to take part in the collective living at the SO and to contribute in different projects. They were also planning to take part in ayahuasca ceremonies while being in dieta during their stay. Their initial plan was to stay for several months, but this had dwindled down to one month. While the SO wishes that volunteers stay for at least three months so that they have time to be introduced to the local lifestyle, the organisation, their projects, and the structure of their work, they nevertheless agreed to welcome the volunteers as they had already planned to collaborate on the permaculture project at the SO. In their home country, Uvilla and Verbena work with permaculture and other communal projects directed towards keeping nature and suburban areas tidy and they sought to build on this experience at the SO while engaging with plant medicines.

During the meeting, we discussed a shift in responsibilities in the house, as there was a change in volunteers. Some were leaving and new people had arrived, so a redistribution of house chores and project oversight was due. Halfway through the meeting, Uvilla and Verbena opened their laptop and started to discuss their projects back home with each other. I could see some of the others become confused as this digression did not build on anything that was brought up during the meeting. Uvilla and Verbena kept discussing their work with each other while Woashimo kept the meeting going. In our prior meetings, the volunteers had kept their awareness with the topics brought up, so it was irregular to experience two of the volunteers break off into their own discussion. It seemed like some of the others did not enjoy this fracture

from the communal dialogue as they glanced over to Uvilla and Verbena when their voices competed with Woashimo's.

The aspect of communal living is central to the SO's success as volunteers in the organisation live and work on the same property. Relying on the autonomy of volunteers, each position has certain responsibilities that play into the success of the whole organisation. As such, it is important that volunteers are able to engage themselves in their work. For example, the volunteer coordinator position came with the responsibility of reading applications and holding skype interviews with potential volunteers while also introducing them to the lifestyle at the SO when they arrive. This is an important part of the SO since it relies on a steady flow of volunteers who are motivated and able to engage with the work ascribed to their positions in the organisation. The organisation has a flat structure, meaning that the volunteers are not assigned work by a boss but are expected to recognize the relevant tasks related to their position and to collaborate with others both within and outside the organisation. This structure and form of work has been described by many of my informants as having "a steep learning curve" and being difficult to adapt to, as they are not used to "being their own boss".

When I asked Bii about the reason for having such a structure and if it reflects any personal values, he responded with the following: *"Yeah, I have thought quite a lot about that. When I worked in organizations, my whole interest was making organizations more democratic and more participative and including voices that were often marginalized. I mean for a number of reasons. One is that, I think actually that makes organisations more effective, and secondly, I guess I have quite a core value of participation and partnership. So to me, a fundamental value of the SO is partnership with Shipibo, allies, communities, individuals, and a sense of partnership within the organization, which is why working in a non-hierarchical way is an important aspect of our work, because I feel like there is an internal partnership between people who work here. I also feel like it means that when people come to work here, either as volunteers or as occupying some of our key roles, there is a real sense that they are autonomous, that they can take initiatives, and that they do not have to answer to one person. I have seen that be very motivating and creative for people who come here to work with us. There have been a number of instances where we face difficult decisions as an organization and I have been very happy that we have taken those decisions together. All the work in organisational development literature suggests this: if people make decisions together, first of all, you get better decisions because you get more views represented, and secondly you get more commitment because people are a part of making those decisions. What I think the challenge is*

of a collective is that you do not have one person as a chief executive, who typically occupies the overseeing role. It requires everybody to do that. It requires everybody to step up, not just to step up and do their role but to see how their role fits into the whole and to also have that overview. I think it is more demanding to do that."

When I asked Woashimo if the way the SO is organized reflects any personal values, he answered the following: *"Yeah, I believe that when we work, we put our full intention into having our work reflect us as human beings and who we are and, I guess, where our moral compass is set, what we view as just. Ultimately what we see as good in this world. In terms of working, the concept let your work be your play is important. A big part of the work is sharing the leadership. It's sharing it with our project partners. Getting them involved in the planning and execution of the work, instead of having a top down structure pumping out projects and passing it off to others with hired leaders from other organisations. We value true relationships with our work and that's what makes our work possible and makes it last."* In another comment, he added that he has a problem with authority and prefers to be his own boss.

The motivations of the EAs travelling to the SO are a mix of wanting to support indigenous groups, engaging in environmental preservation, and furthering one's own expertise. For instance, Pichirina wanted to learn more about the natural world after completing a bachelor degree in biology. After a friend told him about the SO, he realised that it would be a suitable place for him to further his expertise. He was wary of organisations that incorporate western ideals into their projects and once he recognized how the SO acts upon the needs of the Shipibo, he decided to apply for a position. Maca sees his time at the SO as a possibility for growth and connection through community. The values of the SO resonates with his childhood experiences and perceptions of the importance of taking care of nature. Heliconia has had a dream of visiting Latin America. After seeing an advertisement for the SO at her university, she applied for a position as she wanted to not only gain work experience but also wished to support an organisation working to further a cause she respects. She also especially liked how the SO works in a partnership with the Shipibo. Pijuayo wanted to see more of the world and applied for volunteer work through her school to both gain experience and fulfil a childhood dream of visiting the Amazonian rainforest. Capinuri applied for a position after a friend had forwarded him an e-mail from the SO. He had recognized how the values and projects of the SO appealed to him and wanted to return to Peru on a long-term basis in order to engage with the work to support the Shipibo and the rainforest.

Forming a Communitas

The motivation to construct a flat organisational structure can be affiliated with what Victor Turner calls an *ideological communitas*, "which is a label one can apply to a variety of utopian models of societies based on existential communitas (Turner, 1969, p. 132)." An *existential* or *spontaneous communitas* is "approximately what the hippies today call "a happening" and William Blake might have called "the winged moment as it flies" or, later, "mutual forgiveness of each vice (Turner, 1969, p. 132)." If we are to think of the SOs founders meeting in Iquitos as the spark for the organisation's creation, we may say it occurred as a spontaneous communitas that evolved into an ideological communitas once the relationship with the centre was dissolved and the decision to construct a flat organisational structure was concluded. With time, the SO has evolved to also involve a normative communitas:

"where, under the influence of time, the need to mobilize and organize resources, and the necessity for social control among the members of the group in pursuance of these goals, the existential communitas is organized into a perduring social system (Turner, 1969, p. 132)."

Now the SO's organizing principle constitutes both a normative and an ideological communitas, where the ideological aspect relates to the flat structure that allows autonomy and personal creativity, while the normative aspect relates to the formal requirements of pooling resources in order for the work at the SO to be successful. With this as the foundation, those working at the SO are encouraged to be autonomous in their work and in collaborating with each other and other organisations.

An important aspect for the success of the SO's work concerns communication and the challenges related to keeping each other up to date with developments inside and outside of the organisation and the property it works from. There would be planned formal meetings where certain topics would to be discussed. Here, your opinion could be voiced in concern for certain developments or challenges. These formal meetings existed alongside informal spontaneous meetings where people would exchange information while passing each other in the kitchen or on the veranda, ultimately leading to some being left out of the loop as they were engaging in projects outside of the property. This led to some decisions being changed on the fly and leaving those who were not informed to learn of those changes later.

When I asked Bii about this, he answered: *"It can be frustrating, because there is an ambiguity and I know sometimes people feel frustrated because we seem to make one decision and then we talk to more people and then we change that decision. And this is also something that comes out in the organisational literature around creating consensus, it takes longer. One of the advantages of traditional hierarchical organisation is that the person at the top can make the decision and it is quick, it is done. So, I think those are some of the disadvantages; the ambiguity, the frustration. If people are unfamiliar with that way of working, the orientation process is a lot longer because there is not an obvious clear structure. So therefore, we need to attract people who are comfortable working with that, that's people who can be self-motivating and self-determining, because anyone looking for a more traditional relationship in which they are going to be told what to do is not going to find that."*

This orientation with the flat organisational structure seems to *restructure* the volunteers from previous roles into a new one, illustrating a type of liminality. If we are to think back on the ritual stages of rites of passage, the volunteers travelling to the SO has a similar journey as those travelling to the AC in Iquitos. The volunteers at the SO leave their home countries and their affixed position in it (the separation phase), are orientated to the SO (the liminal phase), before they leave again for their home countries and are aggregated back into their normal lives with an experience from the SO that they can integrate in their lives. By engaging with the formed *communitas* at the SO, the EA becomes a ritual leader over their own projects since the organisational structure of the SO demands that everybody "steps up" and takes an overseeing role alongside the others.

Experience as Liminality

The EAs' motivation to travel to Peru places them in a self-perpetuated rite of passage while their experiences at the SO illustrates a type of liminality. Before discussing this claim though, let us first define experience in the words of Arpad Szokolczai, who argues how experience can be understood as liminality: "an 'experience' means that once previous certainties are removed and one enters a delicate, uncertain, malleable state; something might happen to one that alters the very core of one's being (Szokolczai, 2009, p. 148)." This definition illustrates how experience alters the person through the uncertainty of events yet to come. What must be noted from the EAs' experience is that they are not undergoing a ritual per se, but are engaging in a

self-perpetuated rite of passage in order to develop or transform themselves through an experience where they themselves become ritual leaders alongside other EAs, thanks to the formed *communitas* at the SO. Going through such a liminal phase allows them to become able to contribute effectively to the SO's work.

The EAs' experience entails the transformation where their position in a hierarchy in their home countries is exchanged for a position that fits alongside others in a flat organisational structure where everyone is given room to potentially direct the next course of action for the group. My reason for describing the EAs' experience at the SO as a liminal phase is that it illustrates a *transition between states* that has been described as involving "a steep learning curve", standing in contrast to their other experiences - be it from school, work, or other volunteer work. This ambiguity fits into the SO as a whole, as it is in a constant process of alteration based on transpiring events within and outside the organisation. This ambiguity and contrast to the EAs' lives outside of the SO is liminal as "he [the ritual subject] passes through a cultural realm that has few or none of the attributes of the past or coming state (Turner, 1969, p. 94)."

I discussed this uncertainty of coming events with Bii and he brought up the topic of chaos theory to describe his perception of how the organisation survives. *"Living systems are, well it's interesting, in some ways they are hierarchically organized and also they are self-organizing, so I see the SO as being self-organizing system, a network. The basic unit of life is a network, not a hierarchy, it's a network and that's at every level, at a kind of atomic, molecular, organismic, social, planetary, universal level. It's this concept that comes out of chaos theory, fractal; similarity at every level. The work that has come out of complexity is that living systems learn and evolve at the edge of chaos. Which is an interesting area which is paradoxical, and it's a combination of both order and chaos. And so, living systems, in order to evolve, are always managing this kind of dynamic because the risk is if you fall too much into being warded, you become too rigid, therefore inflexible and unresponsive, but on the other hand you can fall into chaos, or disintegration. Also, work within ecosystems tends to show that one of the properties of an ecosystem is that the whole system evolves, in a way pushes each individual species to the edge of chaos. You have these phenomena at an ecosystem level and at a species level. One of the people I used to work with, used to say, "this whole process of evolution is a mixture of competition and collaboration." Darwinian theories of evolution have tended to emphasize competition, but there is a lot of research coming out now about which ecosystems and species*

actually collaborate, as well as compete. This edge of chaos is where a system is more creative, so to me, one of the advantages of this way of working is that it liberates people's creativity. I feel very pleased; I think we are a very creative organisation. I see people come here and do amazingly creative work."

With the SO working at "the edge of chaos" through an egalitarian organisational structure that allows each voice an equal share of the decision making, each person becomes a ritual leader alongside other leaders in its formed *communitas*. At the same time, they are neophytes learning and employing their creativity as they come across new challenges. With this foundation for interactivity at the SO, it became obvious to me that there were still hierarchies at play - related to meritocracies that each person carried in relation to their position. An implicit acknowledgement that prior experience with a subject equates the acquisition of the knowledge necessary to complete a task became noticeable as the EAs consulted each other when facing uncertainties in their work.

This was most obvious with Bii and Woashimo, who I would see in meetings and discussions at the property at any time of day. Since they had spent the most time at the SO, discussing topics with them seemed the obvious choice. However this was not a one-way street: They would also consult others before making any decisions in their work and have at times asked for my own opinion. This was also pointed out by Capinuri, who would often be consulted by Bii.

Capinuri describes working at the SO as it something that *"appeals to my own way of being because, I think by inclination, I enjoy my autonomy as a person and I enjoy being able to follow my intuitions and working out ways through things. I'm still just trying to work it out because the other huge difference is that our living space is continuous with the work space. I don't know if you can really talk about two distinct spaces really, they pretty much interpenetrate one another in terms of the way that we manage time and gather work. That's very much the case, and I suppose, at the moment I'm still just at the stage of, to a certain extent, of unlearning the work habits that I had previously. I would say that the significant difference here is that this is what I dedicate myself to all the time. Here I really feel the freedom to take things on and move things ahead. Similarly, the fact that Bii and others will come to me and consult with me on areas of their work or other matters that affect us all in one way or the other is an interesting process. You realise that parts of the organisation can become a bit sealed off and totally opaque when you function in a kind of command and obedience structure, and doing things in a non-*

hierarchical way allows for a much better flow of information. It's something you definitely have to work at but I think it opens the door to collective solutions which otherwise wouldn't come up because people simply aren't aware that there is an issue, that there is a problem that needs to be fixed. What marks the SO out is that we've actually instituted structures that allow those exchanges to take place. We create spaces where proposals and solutions can arise."

My argument that working at the SO illustrates liminality lays in the perception of the EAs *experience* of their time at the SO as one that challenges their previous ways of working and cooperating with others. As Capinuri says, he has to *unlearn* certain ways of working in order to adapt to how the SO functions, illustrating the un-structuring of a previous state in order to be *transformed* and so brought into a new state that aligns with structures formed by the other ritual leaders - which he himself becomes after filling a position. Liminality can be useful to describe such transitory experiences as it points out that being in transition, or in a learning process, is a state of *becoming* and is essentially fraught with insecurity as the person is not in a stable state.

Arpad Szokolczai uses initiation into adulthood as an example when he discusses experience as a rite of passage in the terms of Victor Turner. Arpad argues that an experience in itself has the ability to alter one's state and that a rite of passage is a structured experience as initiation that "does not simply "happen", "naturally", but has a specific structure, which the rite of passage puts in motion and thus reveals (Szokolczai, 2009, p. 147)." We may therefore see how the EAs working at the SO goes through a type of initiation in their adaption to the organisation's way of working that is made possible by others who have gone through it previously.

As the saying goes, they are *betwixt and between*, meaning that they are finding their way forward *between* states through the guidance of a ritual leader while also guiding others. For the EAs', this *in between* is the time at the SO. In combination with Bii's perception of chaos theory fitting into how the SO works, they always finds itself on the edge of uncertainty, constantly liminal as they restructure their resources in accordance with unforeseen challenges in order to survive as an organisation. In addition, if we are to think back on the discussion in chapter three on the APs' experience with ayahuasca as an example of liminality, then we may also recognize how the EAs are further unbounded from their regular structures once they decide to take part in a ceremony with the others in the SO.

Review

So far in this chapter, I have introduced the relevant factors that dictate the social dynamics at the SO by both describing its organisational structure and the motivation behind its formation. In

doing so, I have also illustrated how the EAs' experience of engaging with the SO reflects the stages of rites of passage despite the event not being consciously formed as a ritual. It *becomes* a ritual, however, as the SO is always welcoming newcomers who need to be introduced to how the SO functions. This introduction is made possible as newcomers become ritual leaders and adapt to the inner workings of the organisation, rendering them capable of welcoming the next group of newcomers, ultimately forming a relay effect between the EAs as they pass on their experience and expertise to the newcomers, or neophytes.

In the next section, an empirical discussion illustrates how the EAs act as ritual leaders, acting autonomously while consulting and informing each other out of need for coordination. This is first done by illustrating how it occurs within the organisation, before discussing how the EAs experiences outside of the SO also affect their course of action.

Daily Rhythm

It was around eight o'clock in the morning when I woke up and could hear some hustle and bustle in the workshop sharing a wall with my room. On my way to the main house, I could see Maca rummaging through a mountain of tools, materials, and other things one usually has stored, or forgotten, in a workshop. I greeted him with a good morning and suggested that I could help to clean out the workshop so he wouldn't have to spend so much time trying to find what he needed. He pointed out that at some point he would organize a *minga*, which refers to a day where everyone in the house is involved with some form of cleaning or tidying up the facilities and property. The challenge with a *minga* is that everyone in the house is ideally supposed to take part, and having everyone at the house at the same time is not always a regular affair and needs some foresight. I told him I could help him with whatever he was doing after I had eaten some breakfast.

I got to the enclosed veranda and saw Bii with some of the other volunteers discussing their work while planning what needed to be done on a whiteboard. I didn't want to bother them, so I stepped into the kitchen to find some of the others preparing breakfast. A sudden knock on the main gate outside led me to go see who it was. A man with a mototaxi filled with jugs of water stood waiting. I helped him carry some in and brought the empty ones from inside the house outside. One of the others paid him from the collective moneybox.

I made some coffee and porridge with our fresh water and asked what the others were planning for the day. A few had some responsibilities to take care of at the house while some others were planning to travel out to one of the communities that the SO sought to support. It was a difficult affair since other NGOs had already tried to help the community but failed, so there was some uncertainty from the community side. I asked if there was any possibility if I could join them, but since the relationship was still in development they thought it best that only a few representatives go. I recognized the need to be careful and strategic in this meeting between the SO and community, and I began to realise my ambiguous position at the SO.

I was taken in to fill the SO's research position, which means that I could use the SO as my base for my fieldwork. I paid a monthly sum for my room and basic needs and was free to do as I pleased. As the focus of my fieldwork aligns with the work of the SO, I was warmly welcomed and free to engage with the others in the organization. This is where I began to recognize the effect of the SO's flat structure and autonomous roles. I too had a role, but not directly related to any of the projects. I could support where possible, but I was in no way integrated in the workflow in the way others were. I was free to observe or take part but I was not taking on the same responsibility as the others, except the house chores.

We finished our breakfast and I went to find Maca. He was busy with some maintenance work in the main house and I offered to help. Some floorboards in one of the bathrooms were rotten and needed replacing. The floorboards also reached into the office space where some of the others were busy on their computers, so we would have to be in the same space in order to do our work. The wood was surprisingly hard, so when the circular saw cut into it, a loud and sharp screeching sound filled the office alongside a storm of sawdust. We were not able to finish that day but Maca was pleased to have some extra hands on deck, despite my being a beginner when it comes to power tools and woodwork. We decided to stop for the day and made some dinner. Some of the others were already preparing enough food for everyone, so we ended up having a communal dinner. After the meal, Maca and I helped clean up.

I helped Maca with several different projects while at the SO and began to see how the combination of autonomy, a flat organisational structure, and the melding together of the work and home space motivated his work ethic. Having sole responsibility for the maintenance of both the property and maintaining an oversight over house needs like toilet paper, keys, IT infrastructure, and sawdust for the composting toilets, amongst other chores, Maca's workload was constant and he always had something to do. Coupled with his personal work ethic which

asserted that he should never be idle, he found himself tired towards the end of my stay, as he was always pushing himself to be effective. With no time to clock out or boss to tell him that his work was finished for the day, he had the tendency to always see what was unfinished and not take enough breaks and enjoy that which had been completed.

Pijuayo, and Heliconia and several others described the difficulty in taking breaks when it came to finishing a workload for the day. They would relax and make dinner while others would keep working, which would make them think that perhaps they too *should* keep working. There is no shortage of work to do at the SO and the aspect of autonomy allowed individuals to engage with their work however they prefer. When I learned this, it seemed like the SO was a type of panopticon where everyone would see what responsibilities the others were taking and therefore felt the need to be doing no less. It became clear that there was a challenge in terms of how a person's work ethic and social obligations may override their other needs related to the "rest and digest" state. With some of the EAs communicating their lack of experience with "being their own boss", the potential for burning out became apparent when they had to maintain their own balance between work and play.

An example of this dynamic between individual responsibility and the needs of the SO as a whole may be seen during the kitchen restoration that I helped Maca with. At some point, we had discussed how the kitchen counter was in need of some care, since some cockroaches had made their home there, and how the sink was not optimal for the house needs, but the SO lacked the funds to fix it up. I proposed that I could donate some money so the SO could buy a sink and a new faucet as I too had experienced that the kitchen was not meeting the demands of the house. After procuring the necessary tools and materials, we started a several day long project that left the kitchen off limits in a time where Capinuri and Lupuna were working intensely on a short film about a Shipibo community. Maca and I had established that once we started to hurt ourselves during our work, like dropping a hammer on a toe, we would stop for the day as we took it as a sign that we had exhausted our focus. This meant that the others who had also been working throughout the day did not have a optimally functioning kitchen while we relaxed, so there was some mild frustration concerning our inability to finish quickly although it was understandable since it was a major undertaking. We had set up tubs to use for washing up, but it seemed to me that the extra time needed to wash dishes in them, alongside other kitchen chores, disturbed the autonomous flows of the others who were used to the kitchen as it was. Finishing the kitchen restored this autonomous flow.

Maintaining house functionality was Maca's responsibility and at times he organised meetings to inform the others of the various responsibilities that needed attention. One such meeting was unsuccessful as nobody showed up. He had sent an e-mail to the others a few days ahead, but it did not seem like anybody had read it. As the day progressed, some of the volunteers came back to the house and we asked them if they knew about the meeting, and they said it was the first they had heard of it. Some had been so focused on their work that they had not checked their e-mail. This was another example of how autonomy can be challenging for the SO, as communication was not always successful when each volunteer maintained their workflow to such a degree that they would lose contact with the other flows in the organisation. These flows are spontaneous, as described by Capinuri, as a colleague outside of the SO might suddenly call and ask to meet or collaborate on a project. These unforeseen interactions made it difficult to plan for certain events, as some collaborators outside of the SO could suddenly be unreachable, which meant that planned events turned out to be unsuccessful.

During my time at the SO, a friend of mine, Coca, that I hadn't seen for 13 years contacted me and said he was in Ecuador and wondered if we could meet up. I asked the others at the SO if he could visit and they were all for it. Coca arrived during the minga that was planned, where everyone in the house would take on a responsibility to clean or tidy up anything and everything on the property. Coca and I took on the messy workshop and it was motivating to see how his open attitude of support fit right in to the SO. The value of autonomy led us to take responsibility for the messy workshop with some consultations from the others after we asked them how they would prefer to have it organised. After seeing Coca's instant integration into the SO and the others working to clean the property, it seemed like the aspect of autonomy and collaboration gave rise to a type of hive-mind where each person was aware of their role in the common effort. This collaboration symbolizes the SO as a whole as it illustrates how once individuals have a grasp at the work at hand, they are able to take responsibility for it along with others who do the same. In such circumstances, the brunt of responsibility does not fall on one person who delegates responsibility according to their personal judgement, but on the group as a whole.

Review

The collaboration and sharing of responsibility at the SO reflects the organisation as a system. Each person, or node if you will, needs an awareness of how their actions play into the whole system in order for it to survive. When the organisation as a whole meets a challenge, each node is affected as they align with the others to address the challenge. I have used the

house chores and the minga by way of illustration, as I cannot describe the other projects at the SO in full detail due to anonymization purposes.

Either way, I was not able to observe every intimate collaboration between the EAs working on these projects inside and outside of the SO. As they occurred in settings outside of my reach, a deep-rooted analysis of these dynamics is not possible. Still, the description of maintenance work existing alongside office work and the difficulties related to organising a meeting can be viewed as symbolic for the intermingling of spaces at the SO and how autonomous roles affect each other.

So far, I have discussed how the formed *comunitas* at the SO effects social dynamics, and how the EAs experience of it reflects the ritual stages of rites of passage. This has been done through an empirical description of how the EAs coexist within the SO in order for it to function. Now I shall discuss how the engagement with events outside of the SO affects both these inner dynamics and how the EAs reach an agreement for the next course of action.

Encounter at a palm oil plantation

Capinuri and Renaco called a house meeting after spending a few days at a Shipibo community facing illegal deforestation by a nearby palm oil plantation. They told of how they met community members, government officials and some police officers before they walked over to survey the plantation, which had received a *stop work* order based on their illegitimate actions. The group was going to assess if the plantation had continued their operations despite having received a *stop work* order by government officials. When they arrived at the plantation, they met a group of workers at the plantation who were carrying machetes and sticks. The workers approached Capinuri and the others when they arrived, and after the government official was able to conclude that the plantation was in fact breaching its order, they left - only to be followed by the workers. This led them to have to leave the area with the help of the police. Capinuri said that a man asked for his name but he did not give it to him. The man was also documenting the scene and said he was a reporter, but Capinuri suspected he worked for the plantation.

The SO had recently released a film documenting the actions of the plantation, and the meeting now being held at the SO was intended to voice concerns relating to the dangers of calling out the plantation's actions through the voices of the Shipibo community who were facing its expansion. Everyone was made aware of the potential backlash that could ensue as it

is well documented that environmental protectors in Peru may face dire consequences for their discoveries of unlawful environmental destruction. It was decided to keep things low key on the SO's Facebook page and website in order to minimize attention, while also dealing down on other activities that created outside attention.

The SO had been robbed twice during my stay and one of the robberies was suspicious: the only stolen goods were equipment being used in the production of a film that depicts the challenges of a Shipibo community meeting with an expanding palm oil plantation near their homes. An awareness that the work at the SO was not going unnoticed reaffirmed the acknowledgment that they were challenging agents who might be willing wide array of tactics. During this time, local journalists held an interview session with a well-known activist at the SO. The interview was later broadcasted while a local newspaper published a counter-article that stated that the activist and his companions were unwanted in Pucallpa and that they were manipulating indigenous communities to support their cause. This reaffirmed the picture of threatening agents being involved in the same arena that the EAs are engaged in, strengthening the resolve that the SO should remain discreet while continuing their work.

Chapter Conclusion

This chapter has highlighted how the formed *communitas* at the SO opens up for a liminal experience for the EAs and how their journey to the SO reflects the ritual stages of rites of passage. The EAs' time at the SO is characterized by a state of uncertainty and the restructuring of positions from a hierarchy to a flat organisational structure as they work together to support Shipibo communities. Through this state of uncertainty, or on the edge of chaos, they are capable of completing projects that act as a buffer between Shipibo communities and developments in the palm oil industry. Other projects, not named for anonymization purposes, reflect the other challenges Shipibo communities face, like the introduction of foreign terminology that waters down the Shipibo language. In sum, the projects at the SO are intended to preserve elements from the Shipibo culture while also contributing tools and information that renders them more capable to act in self-determination in their meeting with a growing world.

If we are to think back on the discussion on Tim Ingold's meshwork of interactivity between beings, we may see how there is an engagement in between the EAs' positions and their affiliated responsibilities and work. This taskscape exists both within and outside of the SO and is affected by the transpiring events both within and outside the organisation. They are also engaging with ayahuasca, which is considered an important activity for the SO. In doing so, they

create a social dynamic that brings ayahuasca into the organisation as a being with a role in forming the next course of action for the organisation. Ayahuasca is therefore given an agency to resolve both personal and organisational issues. What we may take with us from this chapter is how the intention of the SO's founders materializes through an organisational structure that facilitates the desire to support indigenous groups and the Amazon while encouraging and catalysing personal growth.

Chapter Five: Conclusion

This concluding chapter summarizes the central argument through a multi-sited analysis focusing on the topic of culture preservation. A short conclusion is found prior to a section dedicated to further research questions. Some closing remarks concludes the thesis.

Multi-sited Analysis

As I did fieldwork in two organisations working with culture preservation through different means, I find that a short multi-sited analysis of the empirical discussion may shed some insight on my discoveries. I have found George E. Marcus's thoughts on multi-sited fieldwork to be useful as he builds on Appadurai's theories of -scapes, which I have previously discussed in relation to how the stories of ayahuasca have travelled from its local heritage to global interests. We may understand how the reputation of the SO has spread through these ethno- and technoscapes as the EAs had learned of the organisation either through their relationships or by coming across it online, which was also the case for the APs. With information about the organisations being available on the internet, persons in other countries who are either seeking ayahuasca or to support indigenous groups in the Amazon can learn of their work in such a way that they can plan an extended trip to Peru. In doing so, the organisations may appeal to the foreigners' desires or not, potentially leading them to make a decision to travel to Peru or not. I have argued that by travelling to Peru, the foreigners are acting on a desire which they deem the organisations as able to fulfil and are therefore engaging with a self-perpetuated rite of passage.

Marcus points out how there are a variety of ways of doing multi-sited research by following different topics, like conflicts, people, things, and metaphors. Since I have discussed Ingold's ideas of following beings along their lived lines while these beings bring each other into becoming through inter-activity, I have found that the following quote from Marcus can bring together the various threads I have opened up in this thesis.

"Multi-sited research is designed around chains, paths, threads, conjunctions, or juxtapositions of locations in which the ethnographer establishes some form of literal, physical presence, with an explicit, posited logic of association or connection among sites that in fact defines the argument of the ethnography (Marcus, 1998, p. 90)."

Since culture preservation is a topic for both the AC and SO, I have found it interesting to discover how they both appeal to persons who are inclined to protect and support environmental

preservation. Both organisations develop and strengthen the self through plant medicines, while the SO is able to scale up self-development in such a manner that it fits into the organisational output, namely culture preservation projects. The AC's output is self-development with culture preservation as its foundation, as it strengthens the Shipibos' self-determination while making it possible for them to continue their culture practices on their own terms. Coupled with the possibility that the APs are able to recreate the knowledge they have learned at the AC, culture preservation is also taking place through non-Shipibos. Therefore, we may see how culture preservation is maintained at different sites through different organisational outputs and effects.

With the AC's intention being both to heal and teach so that those they welcome may leave as healthier and stronger persons (who are potentially more inclined to see plants as medicines), can we say that a small-scale form of environmental and cultural protection is being catalysed through the individual? The SO's intention being to preserve Shipibo culture through engaging EAs, can we say that they have scaled up environmental protection and social activism from the individual to the organisation as a whole?

Conclusion

This thesis has focused on the journeys of APs and EAs from their home countries and back as a way to illustrate the greater context in which they are acting. By following their stories as a rite of passage, I have shown how a journey from one's home is in essence a liminal experience that can be transformative. By going through a restructuring of states, the person may find themselves with a transformed perspective of the self and their surrounding world, illustrating how the process is a form of calibration to both social and natural structures. Through engaging with the taskscapes found at the two organisations, the APs and EAs were able to fulfil their desires through a transformational process facilitated by the organisations.

Further Research

Indigenous Knowledge as an Extractive Resource

With ayahuasca considered a commodity and the IK of the Shipibo being of interest to non-indigenous groups across the world, we may conclude that the facilitation of its use has formed an industry of its own over the last decades. When discussing this with Bii, he communicated an ambivalence around the growing amount of foreign apprentices in ayahuasca centres, as he was unsure of its further effects on Shipibo society. With the IK the Shipibos utilize functioning as a system of knowledge in an industry, the fear that this knowledge can be extracted from its local environment and copied by practitioners motivated to earn money is apparent and has also been discussed in other literature.

"The Shipibo are more concerned with the economic threat apprentices may pose by carrying away Shipibo-based knowledge and earning a lot of money on their own. This leads to a difficult paradox, because Shipibo people may try to find "their own rinko [foreigner apprentice]" in order to obtain economic favors in return for providing information or access to a chamán. At the same time, Shipibo people often try not to give too much, because they fear that it could be 'taken away' (de Mori, 2014, p. 220)."

With this uncertainty, we may say that the Shipibo keep trade secrets in order to maintain an authority over their practices.

I was able to discuss this topic further with Ipomoea and the facilitators at the AC, as they are examples of this development and agree that there is a frustration surrounding the desire to earn money off ayahuasca. Over the years, Ipomoea has noted a change in the discourse related to the marketing of centres and says that centres communicating that "they do something better than other centres" does not reflect the spirit of the powers at play in the plant medicine world. He and the facilitators also commented that following the true dieta path where one follows the protocol of the plants for a long duration of time is not a lucrative step towards earning money. They say that dedicating yourself to a dieta is such a demanding investment that doing so for the sake of earning money does not seem well considered.

A central challenge related to the spread of ayahuasca concerns persons who are facilitating it without first having undergone a long dieta, or who may be untrained in its facilitation. There are also reports of entrepreneurs who have started organisations and centres with the sole

intention of making money. These organisations are suspected of training ayahuasca practitioners through a few ceremonies before they are said to be ready to hold ceremonies for others. This development removes ayahuasca from its roots and places the criteria for its evolution in the hands of persons who potentially have economic agendas. Can we say that this development is related to the neoliberal attitude that is so common in the world today?

Identity Destabilised

With deforestation and urbanisation enveloping Shipibo society, I have noted how there is a potential for Shipibo identity to be destabilised as their ability to recreate their culture in their homelands are challenged. Some Shipibo communities face land-titling issues as their territories are given away to palm oil plantations who fence in their ancestral lands. This remarking of their territory restricts them from their past and the rainforest, as they are unable to engage with it as they have always done. Julie Cruikshank discusses in *Do Glacier's Listen: Local Knowledge, Colonial Encounters, & Social Imagination* how UNESCO World Heritage site establishes boundaries that separates humans from the environment their culture has resided in for millennia.

"The awkwardly named "Kluane/Wrangell-Saint Elias/Glacier Bay/Tatshenshini-Alsek" World Heritage site, the first to cross an international boundary, has been allocated to the "natural" category, to the concern of local First Nations. Breaking the bond between people and place along arbitrary lines that separate cultural heritage from natural environment marks a decisive rift. [...] Ironically, a location that has gathered much of its power as a place where boundaries were always being negotiated (between trading partners, between summer and winter worlds, between glaciers and humans) has now become festooned with international, provincial, territorial, and state borders rather than stories. [...] A crucial problem for those separated by boundaries, then, is how to pass on knowledge about places to young people who never experienced immersion in that place (Cruikshank, 2005, pp. 251-254)."

The boundaries formed by palm oil plantations remove the Shipibo from their past while altering their way of life to such a degree that procuring their goods from the rainforest has become a challenge. Such challenging boundaries are also formed through urbanization, where some of the Shipibo youth have lost interest in the forest life after adapting to city lifestyles and comforts. This does not mean that all of the Shipibo youth have renounced their heritage for metropolitan lifestyles, as a strengthening of their culture (alongside cultures of other indigenous

groups) is also taking place - as in Pucallpa. I attended a few cultural events in plazas while there and could see a mix of Amerindian stories in children's books or anime comics. Murals on walls surrounding the plazas and paintings inspired by local cosmologies illustrate the other worlds that exist alongside the plight of economic growth and its proposed comforts.

I asked a Shipibo onanya how she perceives the changes that development are bringing and she asserted she does not have any qualms against it. Although, she perceives unimpeded expansion of industries and deforestation as a problem as it has altered the way Shipibo survive in their lands. She said that 10 years ago, banana yields started to decrease and contamination of rivers has led to smaller fish populations. It is not as easy to earn an income from small-scale farms and some Shipibo have had to leave their home communities to find work elsewhere. Another Shipibo I spoke with said that he was considering working at an illegal mine in order to minimize the environmental impact it has while earning a better wage than in the city. What agency do indigenous groups have in countries who view their homelands as profitable resources and not as a cultural heritage?

Overheating

The topics discussed in this thesis may also be understood within the scope of Thomas Hylland Eriksen's research project named *Overheating: An Anthropology of Accelerated Change*, which focuses on the topics of economics, climate, and identity as "problem areas" in a globalising world.

"Overheating consists of a series of unintended, and interrelated, consequences triggered by global neoliberal deregulation, technological developments rendering communication instantaneous and transportation inexpensive, increased energy consumption and a consumerist ethos animating the desires of a growing world population (Eriksen, 2016, p. 3)."

With neoliberal agendas opening up the rainforest for extraction of resources and exploitation of arable land while encouraging the individual entrepreneur to take responsibility for their income, there can be no doubt that the desire for economic growth in Peru is affecting not only the marginalized population - like the Shipibo - but also exasperating environmental destruction. With the "consumerist ethos" stepping into ayahuasca facilitation, technologies that allow the marketing of centres and practitioners across the world, and with effective transportation

providing the possibility to travel to these centres, we may observe that Amerindian practices have traversed their local source and become global.

The EAs and APs at the SO and AC may also illustrate elements of "cooling down" in an Overheated world as they strive to disengage from the norms and patterns that they deem destructive to the natural world and to trust in society at large. A motivation to change their personal trajectories while supporting causes that seek to set a new course for humanity illustrates a form of disillusionment with the status quo in their "normal lives" at home. Despite these motivations, the EAs and APs might find themselves in a "double bind", which can be summarized "by saying that it is an experience of being punished precisely for being right in one's own view of the context (Bateson, 1972, p. 241)." The EAs and APs communicate a desire to dampen environmental degradation, but in flying to Peru to fulfil their needs and desires, they are committing a potential "sin" in the environmental protection trend. A two way street of wanting to protect nature while relying on technologies that fuel environmental changes epitomizes the times we live in.

Closing Comments

The Amazon rainforest and its inhabitants have faced foreign interest for centuries. Over the last decades, this interest has been funnelled into a global scale of development where energy industries have gained an unprecedented amount of power through neoliberal policies. In this development, the voices of the Amazon's inhabitants have been suppressed in the name of economic stability. With the facilitation of ayahuasca now being an industry and a majority of research on it being done through northern schools of thought, there is a need for a heightened awareness that the voices of the Amazon's inhabitants may also be silenced in this recent development. In order to understand the healing and learning efficacy of ayahuasca and the plants, it is essential to show openness and respect for the cultural paradigms that discovered this environmental science. Working with the root cause of a development may lead us to gain a greater understanding of the symptoms that arise from it through time.

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