

Shaping the Sacred

Andean Shamanic Ritual, Mystical Tourism, *and* the Exploration of
Authenticity in Písaq, Peru

Gijs Cremers

Abstract:

The impossibility of establishing a rational and definite explanation of inexplicable sacred phenomena is something that has not discouraged both scholars and “accidental bystanders” from developing theories and explaining stories on their perception and interpretation of mysterious occurrences. This thesis mainly discusses the ways in which people authenticate their convictions by means of these phenomena within the framework of shamanic ritual and religious cosmology in Písaq, Peru. It describes and analyzes local religion, practiced ceremonies by both local and external actors and shows how people use seemingly incomprehensible religious-based phenomena to authenticate their belief-system. Furthermore it explores how the sacred changes under the weight of external influences such as esotericism and the mystical tourism industry, how both external and local actors engage in Písaq’s religious arena, and how all this helps to shape an authentic sacred.

Keywords:

Andes, Písaq, authenticity, commodification, mystical tourism, religious cosmology, ritual, shamanism

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Illustration front page:

Curandera practicing a mirada de coca.

All photos in thesis taken by author unless stated otherwise. ©2010

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Photo 1 Shaman cutting unusable parts from the San Pedro cactus

Table of Contents

Acknowledgements	4
Glossary & Acronyms	5
Maps	8
1. Introduction: Drifting into the Highlands	10
1.1 Introduction to study and research topics	11
1.2 Research Question & Methodology	17
1.3 Outline of the Thesis	19
2. Bienvenidos a Písaq: Introducing an Andean Town and Contextualizing the Sacred Valley	21
2.1 A Journey into the Sacred Heartland	23
2.2 Curanderos and Místicos	27
3. Where the Spirits Dwell: Cosmological Perspective and Practiced Religion	30
3.1 Introduction	30
3.2 Religious Cosmology	31
3.3 Andean Shamanism	36
3.4 Interacting with the Spirits: Shamanic Ritual	40
4. Besieging Authenticity: Mystical Tourism and the Merging of two Sacreds	50
4.1 Introduction	50
4.2 Towards a Spiritual Hotspot	51
4.3 Restructuring the Sacred	53
5. Shaping Authenticity: Local Perceptions and Constructions of the Sacred	64
5.1 Introduction	64
5.2 The Staging of Authenticity	65
5.3 Explaining the Inexplicable	69
5.4 Validating the Sacred	73
Conclusion	79
Bibliography	83
Appendices	88

Acknowledgements

I PULLED A small crumpled paper from my pocket. The notes and comments jotted down on it now faded. I stared at the blurred question marks and inaccurately written fieldnotes for a second and realized that I was near to completing a year that had so quickly past. A year I could never have completed without the help of so many people.

In order to understand the daily lives of Andean people in general and Piseños in particular, I drew on the amazing wisdom of the *familia* Sanchez Manotupa. I am especially grateful to them for welcoming me into their family. Also I want to thank Beatrice Simon, the person who introduced me to them in the first place and made me want to go to PISAQ even more.

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Glossary & Acronyms

Adobe:	Natural building material made from sand, clay, water, and fibrous or organic material (sticks, straw, and/or manure), which is shaped into bricks using frames and dried in the sun
Agua de Florida:	Cologne made from flower extract used in Peru by shamans and <i>curanderos</i> for ritual cleansing and clearing energies. Also used to clear negative or malevolent spirits, to encourage emotions, and to remove an excess of energy from a ceremonial place
Apu:	Spirits of the mountain
Artesanía:	Handicrafts created for domestic purposes and folk art
Avenida:	Avenue
Ayahuasca (brew):	Hallucinogenic brew made from two roots from the Amazon, <i>Banisteriopsis caapi</i> and <i>Psychotria viridis</i> , which contain psychoactive chemicals. The brew has been used by indigenous peoples in countries such as Brazil, Ecuador and Peru for medicinal, spiritual, and cultural purposes since pre-Columbian times
Aymara:	Ethno-linguistic group in the Andes and <i>Altiplano</i> regions in Peru, Bolivia, and Chile
Ayni:	Description of balance and exchange, reciprocal key aspects of Andean cosmology
Brujo/a:	Witch / someone who practices magic (ceremonies or rituals) with malevolent intention
Cerro:	Hill
Chacra:	Small plots of land used for agriculture
Chicha:	Fermented corn-beer
Choclo:	Ground corn
Chullo:	Typical Andean hat with earflaps, originally made from vicuña or alpaca wool and meant to protect its wearer from the harsh weather in the region
Coca:	Most sacred plant of the Andes. Generally used as offering and for divination to determine a person's destiny. The indigenous use of coca was, and is today, as a stimulating instrument for relieving hunger and fatigue. The leaves are important in a variety of rituals
Comunidad:	Small mountain community
Curandero/a:	Healing specialist/ shaman

Despacho:	Offering
Don/Doña:	Mr. / Mrs.
Extranjero:	Foreigner
Iqaro (Icaro):	Shamanic song used during Ayahuasca ceremonies. The song is meant to call in the spirits of ancestors, take away malevolent spirits and dark energies, and guide the ceremony and its participants in general
Kint'u (Quintu):	Offering of coca-leaves during <i>despacho</i> or prior to ceremony (hallucinogenic as well). Made out of three coca-leaves, it is a formal way of sharing coca, which is a sacred form of relating spiritually. The sharing of the <i>Kint'u</i> is mostly followed by summoning the Apus by whistling at the leaves in directions of important Apus (mountains)
Lliclla:	See <i>manta</i>
Machu:	Evil spirit (m) that dwells the region and searches for girls and young women to do harm or abuse
Maestro:	Shaman that possesses the knowledge to fulfill a successful Ayahuasca or San Pedro ceremony
Manta:	Colorful cloth or blanket, frequently used for ceremonial purpose
Mesa:	Bundle of offerings on a small cloth that can function as a portable <i>despacho</i> or as a table cover for doing a <i>mirada de coca</i> . Its contents embody the power of Apus, Pachamama, and the <i>curandero/a</i>
Mirada de Coca:	Coca-reading
Místico:	Mystical or esoteric tourist (m/f) that has established long-term residence in Písaq with the purpose of exploring his/her spirituality
Ofrenda:	Offering
Ojotas:	Sandals made out of old rubber car tires
Pachamama:	Mother Earth
Pago:	Offering to Pachamama or Apus; referred to as <i>-a la tierra</i> or <i>-a la Pachamama</i>
Piseño/a:	Inhabitant of Písaq
Poncho:	Large piece of clothing with an opening in the center for the head, designed to keep the body warm during cold and/or dry during rain
Plaza de Armas:	Main square
Qero:	Ritual drinking cup
Quechua:	Ethno-linguistic group in South-America. Spoken primarily in the Andean regions and, next to Spanish, official language in Peru

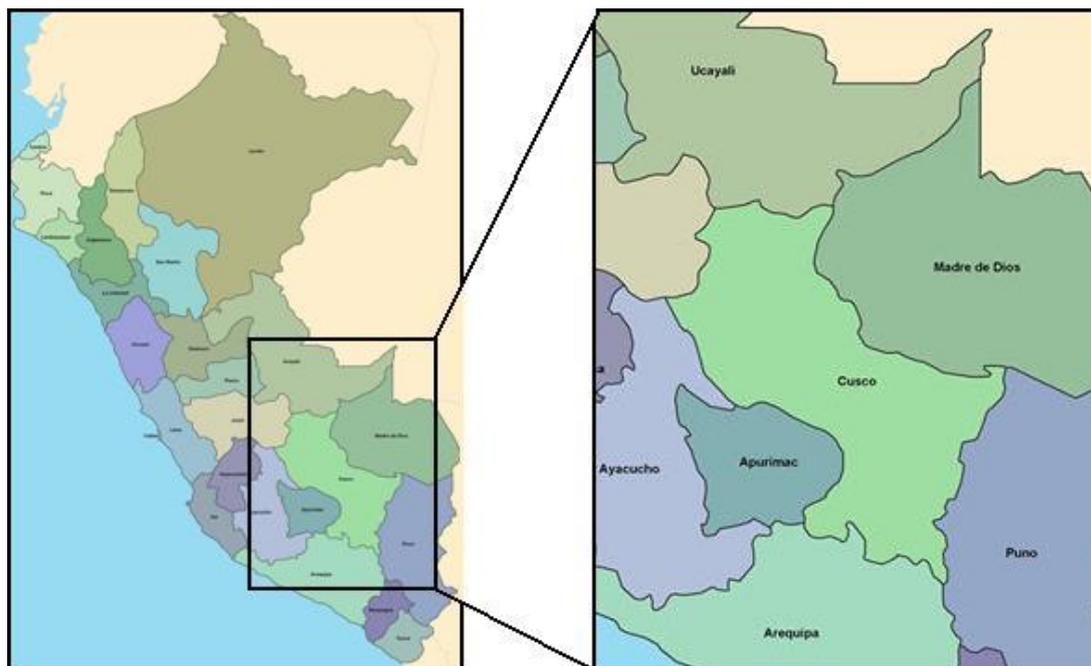
San Pedro (brew):	Cactus (<i>Trichocereus Pachanoi</i>) that contains hallucinogenic mescaline formerly used by healers on the northern coast of Peru to diagnose and cure illnesses. Nowadays also utilized in the Andean region in order to acquire altered states of consciousness
Saqsaywamán:	Ruins of walled Inca-fortress near Cuzco
Selva:	Jungle/Amazon basin
Traje típico:	Typical (Andean) clothing
Trilogía Andina:	Totem-animals important in Andean cosmology: Condor, Jaguar, and Snake
UNSAAC:	Universidad Nacional de San Antonio Abad del Cuzco
Valle Sagrado:	Sacred Valley (of the Incas)

Maps

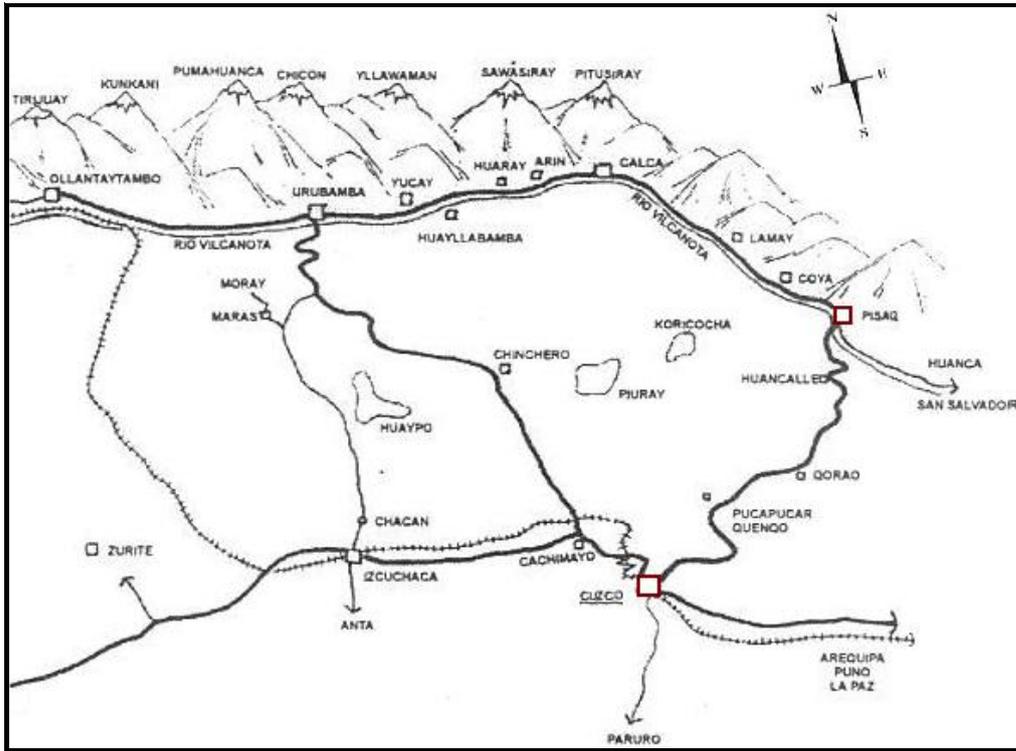
Map I | Location of Peru in Latin America | source: www.pickatrail.com



Map II | Districts of Peru and Amplified Image of the Cuzco-District
source: www.younglives.org.uk, amplification by author



Map III | Location of Pisaq in the Sacred Valley | source: www.cusco.net



Map IV | Pisaq from the Sky | source: Google Maps



1. Introduction

DRIFTING INTO THE HIGHLANDS

In tourist settings, [...] there is a series of special spaces designed to accommodate tourists and to support their belief in the authenticity of their experiences.

DEAN MACCANNELL, *Staged Authenticity: Arrangements of Social Space in Tourist Settings* [1973]

THE ROOM IN the temple was dark though illuminated by a dozen of candles that nearly resembled fireflies against a pitch-black sky. A small ray of light pierced through the closed curtains, illuminating nothing but the precise spot where it hit the crumbling wall. In a circle on the dirty, wooden floor were sitting three people, a Piseño, a tourist, and me; four including the performing shaman. The religious leader was in conversation with the Andean deities and, prior to commencing the ceremony, silently mumbling prayers. On the ground lay a small, woollen rag with a variety of ritual artifacts – coca leaves, *agua de florida*, a condor feather, and statuary – gathered on it to gratify the Apus and Pachamama for undertaking this particular ceremony. A small earthenware *qero*, which was standing on the colourful textile, contained a brew made from the San Pedro cactus, meant to make participants “leave” their bodily state of being and “journey” into an entangled sacred realm – a dream world in which contact with both Pachamama and the spirits is enhanced. In a dim corner of the room a dog was curled up against the wall, calm and silent; probably asleep. The shaman must have caught me glancing at the animal. “He senses the presence of the spirits” she said calmly, “Normally he is wild and noisy, now he is tamed by divine forces within the room!”¹

At this point I was not able to explain why exactly the dog was at ease at that specific moment; maybe it was tired, possibly even intimidated by

¹ Compilation of notes taken during ceremony, February 24, 2010

our group being there, perhaps it was in fact feeling a presence of spirits. The latter was certainly believed by the participants, so why not? The whole ceremony *did*, to a certain extent, trigger an almost uncanny feeling in the mind. The penetrating sound of an *iqaro* was playing while we all sat in silence, waiting for the bitter-tasting San Pedro to take over their soul. Altogether the situation made the promises of the ceremony seemingly come true. I was near being sure at the time that as long as you but believed in the efficacy of the ritual, the surroundings, the mumbling shaman, and the music would basically do the rest in summoning the Apus.

Throughout my fieldwork, wherein I have researched the way in which people shape their local religious convictions into a personalized authentic feeling, I have witnessed a variety of phenomena that would without doubt be described as “inexplicable” by outsiders – often unanticipated, small or large, occurrences that add to the authenticity of a particular situation from an insider’s point of view (e.g. Wang 1999; Van de Port 2005).

1.1 Introduction to study and research topics

What comes to the fore in this personal account of a ceremony that I witnessed in Písaq is the effect religion can have on the daily lives of such a vast amount of people. My own experience may not have been different from that of the other two participants, but how did *they* fill in the gaps in understanding that had occurred in *my* head? Interaction between outsiders to the ritual and people already familiar with the phenomenon caught my attention while being in Latin America before. In various settings I observed that religious experts recurrently transformed into what they thought tourists expected to be purely indigenous – the exotic Other. What is the relationship and what are the tensions that exist between mystical tourist groups and the local population in Písaq? And how do local actors in this context continue to value their beliefs as authentic? To answer these questions, that draw on encounters which occur frequently in Písaq and are also central in discussions about authenticity (e.g. Van de Port 2004; 2005), and to position and frame it into the theoretical debate, I have concentrated on concepts of religion, cosmovision, shamanism, and commodification. Drawing on Mattijs van de Port’s (2005) ideas and

findings on religion and authenticity, I implemented the concept of authentication with the intention of presenting a connection between related concepts and theories mentioned further on.

Van de Port (2004:10) notes that “people seem to be quite capable to convince themselves that they are in possession of authentic Selves and living authentic lives.” Tourists as well as local actors in Písaq are able to shape meaning about “authentic” phenomena and a variety of cultural processes. They are looking for a certain exotic or authentic that does not exist in the form they expect the authenticity to be shaped (Cohen 1988). Authentic cultural phenomena are not a definite reality, but rather a philosophical and negotiable concept that can be subject to individual shaping. People do not truly search for anything authentic, but look for something that they are able to label as an authentic experience (Cohen 1988). One of the most important concepts included in this thesis is authentication; a constructivist view on authenticity in which authenticity is “shaped” or “staged”. Pansters (2005:72) states that this constructivist view is largely based on “the outcome of particular historical circumstances, institutional arrangements, power relations, and discursive contexts.” hereby emphasizing on how something is *made* authentic rather than what *is* authentic.

The study of religion is difficult as religion *an sich* is not a concept that should be described as providing or not providing “truth”, it does however reveal a certain thought that is vivid within a society or group and helps to construct belief, culture, and social structure within. Due to the pluralistic nature of religion, it is a phenomenon that is very hard to describe and frame within one single definition. One of the most used standard definitions in anthropology is the one formulated by American anthropologist Clifford Geertz, who defines religion as:

(1) a system of symbols which acts to (2) establish powerful, pervasive, and long-lasting moods and motivations in men by (3) formulating conceptions of a general order of existence and (4) clothing these conceptions with such an aura of factuality that (5) the moods and motivations seem uniquely realistic (Geertz 2004 [1966]:4).

Important to note in this definition of religion is the importance of symbolism. Within the symbolist paradigm, the emphasis lies on how symbols and rituals act as metaphors for social life, rather than at what explanation of life religions seek (Bowie 2006:20). Religion exists of three basic elements; these are ideology, behaviour, and social organization (Crapo 2003:22). Religious belief can not only be depicted as something that people believe in, but as well as something that people practice in their daily lives (Crapo 2003:22). Therefore it encompasses elements that enforce the interdependency of believing and practicing, such as ceremonies (Crapo 2003:23).

In the Andes, local religion is often explained by means of religious cosmology. Being the cornerstone on which most ceremonies, and therefore entire ways of living, in the Andean region are based, religious cosmology has been a significant constituent to this thesis. Following the local belief in nature, an important part of the religious affiliation of the local indigenous population can be ascribed to “the landscape that surrounds them” (Abercrombie 1998:130). Hence key-aspects of Andean cosmology are balance and exchange, called *ayni*. These principles, still important for contemporary Andean populations, are needed to integrate and comfort the cosmos (Classen 1993:3; Pérez Galán 2008:248; Simon 2008:94), which is done by practicing a ceremony, or “nurturing” Pachamama and the Apus. Most ceremonies are conducted by religious specialists such as shamans or *curanderos*² – which literally means “healers”. This draws from the fact that *curanderos* used to be the main “doctors”, the healers of the village.

A shaman is often linked to a religious practitioner outside the industrialized West. Most scholars agree that shamanic practice is a technique to achieve a sacred yearning more than a form of religion (e.g. Stein & Stein 2005; Bowie 2006; Pratt 2007; Walsh 2007). In order to use shamanic technique, shamans should have certain characteristics. By and large three key features of shamanism can be recognized. First, shamans can voluntarily enter altered states of consciousness; second, in these states they may experience themselves “journeying” to other realms; and

² Also see section 3.3

third, they use these journeys for acquiring knowledge or power and for helping people in their community (Walsh 2007:15). With the growing interest in the topic – from academic as well as non-academic groups – shamanic practice enters the global sphere and becomes a phenomenon that is widely accepted and requested by tourists.

Putting all features together, shamanic practice in general can be seen as “a family of traditions whose practitioners focus on voluntarily entering altered states of consciousness in which they experience themselves or their spirit(s) interacting with other entities, often by travelling to other realms, in order to serve their community” (Walsh 2007:16). This definition leaves the conception of shamanism open for perception and contextual debate, and by labelling it a “family of traditions” it recognizes the possible differentiation between different cultures. Yet it demarcates the notion in such a way that it is possible to distinguish it from other religious traditions (Walsh 2007:6).

Curanderos and shamans can be found throughout the Andean region, but are recently subject to change by external phenomena such as esotericism³. Shamans and *curanderos* are generally characterized by their ability to heal, forecast the future, communicate with spirits, bewitch, and change communal or individual fate (Simon 2008:109). Because of their ability to interact with local deities, they are capable of manipulating events for the communal good. By practicing rituals, shamans give meaning to the deities and help authenticate the belief-system of participants of the ceremony.

Drawing on the imagination of tourists, the presence of mystical tours offering shamanic ritual is difficult to overlook in Cuzco and its neighboring *Valle Sagrado de los Incas*. I had gone to the field without the idea of using (esoteric) tourism as a great possible contributor to my research, once I got there I noticed the vast influence this group had on my specific topic. A thing that caught my attention in particular while travelling through the region in 2009 (and again during my fieldwork in 2010), was the availability of esoteric tours leaving for “indigenous villages” and offering the

³ Which in this case refers to esoteric (or mystical) tourism.

experience of participating in, for instance, a “real” indigenous ceremony (Arellano 2007). In pursuit of the exotic Indian, the “noble savage”, a vast majority of tourists and outsiders pursue a strongly distorted expectation about the complex lives of contemporary Andean people in which the daily reality of communities might be overlooked and the lived experience of the Andean population may be romanticized (Weismantel 1991). To meet up to the expectations of the Other, local ritual is frequently converted into a staged “reality” that is possible to lose its sacredness and rather fulfill an economic purpose (e.g. Weismantel 1991; Simon 2008).

Nowadays, many tourists in Peru are looking at this particular “reality” through a mystified esoteric scope. However, important, it is not the only contributor to initiate change in faith. Locals, for instance, believe that the power of deities and shamans is changing under influence of growing syncretism and evangelism. Since the evangelical church “forbids” to practice rituals and believe in local gods. Outsiders on their hand mainly consider tourism and globalization as one of the foremost reasons for corrosion of the “authentic” sacred.⁴ However most locals do believe in the ceremonies, they practice them more in a backstage setting rather than on the frontstage, as most of the outsiders do (Simon 2008:117-118). Ever since mystical tourism entered the public sphere shamans have had to deal with a transforming audience and a great variety of participants. Other than practicing a ceremony for local actors, they now have to address people that are not initially familiar with a symbolic and religious arena of local religious practices (e.g. Van de Port 2005; Hill 2008; Simon 2008). A natural Andean connection between the cosmos and humans is frequently remodeled into “certainties” that are recognizable for external participants and consequently the shaman has to comprehend how to make modifications modeled to the understanding of the Other.

Adding to that, I had assumed that the expectation of mystical tourists may lead to the loss of service and the rise of commodity (e.g. Cohen 1988; Shepherd 2002). Commodification, the process of a service, a ritual, or an event becoming a product of value, is an important ongoing process,

⁴ Interview with Marcos, March 20, 2010; Conversation with Marie, April 26, 2010

greatly influenced by the (re)shaping of the local sacred. It contributes to the actuality in which Písaq's spiritual arena is not purely providing services, but as well "articles of trade"; a space wherein not only spiritual, but also financial empowerment can be secured.^{5,6} While *místicos* do raise renewed attention toward religious and cultural practices, their curiosity is often triggered by the desire to participate in a "mark" rather than by genuine original interest in local traditions or beliefs (Shepherd 2002). This roughly results in a situation in which cultural objects or phenomena represent an entirely "expected other", no longer framed within a specific context (Shepherd 2002).

And although both highly symbolized ceremonies, such as Ayahuasca and San Pedro, and more discrete rituals like coca-readings and *pagos a la tierra* (also referred to as *pagos a la Pachamama*), that are being conducted in and around Písaq, can be perceived as indefinable or "beyond words"⁷ to observers – and indeed *are* quite appealing, I do not want to provide an illustration alone about what exactly comprises these seemingly intangible practices. Next to that I will centre attention to how local traditions and rites are portrayed or understood as being factual or real; what techniques are being utilized to make or identify a ritual as "authentic" as possible. Do changes in personal appearance take place? And how do outsiders – tourists for instance – perceive this? Accordingly I have been studying the way in which participants of ceremonies validate the "realness" or "authenticity" of the ritual for themselves and how they embed it in their daily lives – in their personal belief system. Drawing on my own curiosity and academic literature, authentication of rituals therefore made up an important part of my fieldwork and will consequently be a vital part of this thesis. The phenomenon should be considered a fluid one; ever since the enormous expansion in tourism, both foreigners and Peruvian tourists have been overflowing the Sacred Valley. Repeatedly distorting and sharpening the edges of representation, drawn within its specific contextual and

⁵ Interview with Julieta, February 22, 2010

⁶ In order to protect the confidentiality of informants, all of their names used in this thesis have been changed by the author unless stated otherwise.

⁷ Conversation with esoteric tourist Rachel, March 8, 2010

historical confines, has constructed the boundaries of local religion and ritual; new meanings and sacred authorities are a result of continuous re-establishing and reinventing of the sacred.

1.2 Research Question & Methodology

I have conducted fieldwork in the village of Písaq, located in the Peruvian Andes. This village was chosen as it became clear from other research in Peru (Simon 2008) that religious practices play important roles in authentication within the local sphere. At decisive moments, people make sacrifices, participate in ceremonies, read coca-leaves, and consult both shamans and traditional *curanderos*. Peru is divided in 25 administrative regions and one province, Lima. With over 29 million inhabitants (71% living in an urban area) Peru is among the 40 largest countries worldwide. Spanish and Quechua are the two official Peruvian languages. The latter constitutes along with Aymara, which is spoken near the Bolivian border-area, to the major ethno-linguistic groups. Next to that and several small-scale groups exist throughout the country.⁸ Písaq is situated in the Sacred Valley at an altitude of 2,975 meters. The town has approximately 2,500 to 3,000 inhabitants in the town itself and roughly 9,000 when surrounding areas are included in the calculation. Since the approval of a new national act on spatial planning in 2002, Peru has been divided in 25 regions, which are on their turn divided in provinces and districts.⁹ Písaq belongs to the region and province of Cuzco and to the district of Calca. The main source of income of the Písaños is tourism (Simon 2008:2-3). The town can be reached by a one-hour bus drive from Cuzco or a more expensive trip by minivan, which takes about forty-five minutes.

During my fieldwork, which has been conducted in 15 weeks between February and May 2010, I have focused on the following central research question: “How to explain and describe transforming shamanic rituals in relation to perceptions of authentication and commodification?” Following

⁸ Derived from: <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/pe.html> (June 15, 2010)

⁹ Derived from: <http://www.statoids.com/upe.html> (June 3, 2010)

this question I have studied related fields of tension such as the impact of mystical tourism on people's religious convictions and realities.

To answer the question I have used theories that are already briefly explained, in order to gather data I have conducted an in-depth research in Písaq, making use of qualitative research methods. Most important methods have been different kinds of interviews (informal, semi-structured, and structured), conversations, and participant observation. According to DeWalt and DeWalt (2002:40) participation is used as a method to gain trust and acquire a position in which it is more likely to obtain valid information. Next to that I upheld a field-diary and I have jotted down notes in my notebook nearly every day. I have made a distinction between structured interviews on the one side and informal interviews and conversations on the other. The first interview-method I have used only following the initial (explorative) phase of my research, after having myself introduced in a more profound way; the second throughout my entire period of fieldwork. These have been rather useful in gaining in-depth information and to deepen relevant information. In the last part of my research, I have increased the use of Participant Observation and also I have gathered life-histories.

After spending more time in Písaq I started using the method of photo-elicitation. Being convinced that this could add to my findings, I carefully asked three informants from whom I knew would understand the assignment, would reflect on it, and were able to handle a camera. By that time I already constructed a good relationship with them, which proved to be important in asking a question that could have been rather difficult. Once, an informant told me that the camera is rather a complicated instrument to use during a ceremony as it can absorb the spirits and energies from a room. She was able to shoot some photos after all. Sociologist Sarah Pink argues in her book *Doing Visual Anthropology* (2007:21) that images or imaging is an intrinsic part of almost everything; it is interwoven in everyday life. She states that visual representations are connected to our "personal identities, narratives, lifestyles, cultures and societies", as well as to definitions such as "history, space and truth." The use of a photograph can add to the value of textual analysis as it brings

forth another dimension. As Harper (2002:13) points out: “The difference between interviews using images and text, and interviews using words alone lies in the ways we respond to these two forms of symbolic representation.” He explains this by means of a rather complex psychological concept, which states that “images evoke deeper elements of human consciousness than do words; exchanges based on words alone utilize less of the brain’s capacity than do exchanges in which the brain is processing images as well as words” (Harper 2002:13).

This is the reason that photo-elicitation might invoke other reactions than a basic interview. Photographs taken by the researcher can invoke discussion on taken-for-granted issues that concern the research community (Clark-Ibáñez 2004). Next to that, I had to be careful in choosing what subject I framed in a picture, as it was easy to capture a, for my research, irrelevant situation or object (Clark-Ibáñez 2004). The main value of photo-elicitation is that it demonstrates the intrinsic quality of the image. It plunges images into a research program and it “demonstrates the usefulness of images ranging from fine-arts quality documentary to family snapshot” (Harper 2002:15). Making use of photo-elicitation, I had to decentre myself from the authority of a picture taken by me. In practice this included both taking pictures of ceremonies and analyzing these with participants in interviews, and letting participants take photographs of aspects they find interesting and analyze these afterwards.

1.3 Outline of the Thesis

This thesis is structured in such a way that important umbrella theories and concepts will first be delineated and interwoven with empirical data. This thesis holds four main chapters which are subdivided in different paragraphs. Chapter 2 delineates background information and explains the context in which this thesis is written and in which it should be read. As this chapter poses the general context in which the entire research has been conducted, I find it important to portray the situation of Písaq today within this frame; how it has become a touristic, spiritual centre and to address consequences.

In the third chapter, I will focus mainly on an important aspect: local religion. One of the more important notions here is religious cosmology; a concept that is not open and visible, but has an extremely important function within the context of my research as cosmology is often exerted to authenticate sacred phenomena. I will provide general academic thoughts on cosmology and later continue with shamanism and religious ritual. As cosmology forms a fundamental base for practicing ceremonies and general shamanic practice, I will combine this with further data and theory. As Simon (2008) notes, ceremonies are not only practiced on the communal backstage, but are also “created” especially for tourists. Cosmology is important as it influences and contributes to the meaning that is given by different actors. The way in which the incomprehensibility of some aspects of local religious cosmology is used to *de facto* authenticating personal convictions is further delineated in chapters 4 and 5.

The final chapters of this thesis, *Besieging Authenticity* and *Shaping Authenticity*, therefore merge foregoing aspects of the sacred life in Písaq and evaluate the shaping of authenticity by both external and local. The first focuses on the influence external actors have on the local sacred and what meaning is given by both the local and external population of Písaq. The latter explores the ways in which local actors manage to maintain a sense of authenticity in their belief-system. These chapters propose that the rise of esoteric tourism, and the community as a popular residence for *místicos*, has contributed to mystifications and sometimes even uncertainties in the spiritual present-day lives of Písaq’s inhabitants; that early services have been commodified; that a vast amount of Písaqueños nonetheless refuses to let their convictions erode under the influence of the so abundant external actors. I will demonstrate how both local actors and mystics perceive their spirituality and how they authenticate it for themselves; all is written in the context of rapid demographic and cultural changes that are taking place at the moment.

2. Bienvenidos a Písaq

CONTEXTUALIZING AN ANDEAN TOWN AND INTRODUCING THE SACRED VALLEY

“Why would you go to Písaq, amigo? It is beautiful over there, surely, but real shamans have disappeared. Nothing is real in that town. The people are nice, but only if you pay! Well, it is your choice...”¹⁰

THE PIERCING SOUND of honking taxi’s only steadily faded away as the overcrowded bus slowly made its way out of the sprawling outskirts of Cuzco, once in a while spewing thick black smoke from its rusty pipe. Winding through narrow, potholed streets bordered by small adobe houses and shacks built on the hills that surrounded the city, the sea of red-tiled roofs increasingly gave way to green fields, Inca ruins, motorcycles and mules piled with produce, and children toying around in meadows. As the bus made its way, laboring downslope and entering the famous Sacred Valley, the smell of eucalyptus coming from the many trees alongside the road, entered through open windows, struggling with the scent of petrol and worn out breaks. A transistor radio in the front softly and recurrently tossed *cumbias* into the damp air. Further descending into the valley, the vehicle passed small towns with names like C’orao, Rayanniyoc, and Huancalle and an occasional pair of grazing alpacas, merely enforcing the common image of a typical Andean landscape. Down in the valley the sight was filled with flowers in different colors, towering trees on both sides of the road, a small but rapid waterway bordering it, and tiny settlements with people carrying seemingly impossible heaps of fresh cut maize on their backs; giving it all an enchanted feeling.

Only a few moments later the damage done by massive torrential rains and mudslides, that had been terrorizing the area for weeks, appears in the

¹⁰ Conversation with Alberto, February 13, 2010

scenery. A few weeks before, pouring rain had gone on for three days straight – day and night; unusual, even in the wet season. In some places the paved road had been taken over by mud, fallen from the steep mountains that are flanking the road. Houses in tiny villages had been ravaged. In total, the rains had left more than 10,000 inhabitants of the Valley displaced and in retreat.¹¹ I was contemplating the words of the *curandero* I had talked with only two days earlier. He most seriously tried to convince me about the fact that the natural disaster was caused by the number of fake shamans, jealousy, and lack of respect for nature. How many people in the region would be having the same ideas and did this affect the conviction of authenticity of the local sacred?

As I was looking out the window on the opposite side of the bus, my glimpse locked with that of a man in the seat next to me, wearing a ragged broad-brimmed brown fedora, a *Barcelona* football shirt, khakis, and worn off black sandals. He had been speaking Quechua thus far, but nevertheless unhesitatingly and with great accuracy provided me in Spanish with the answer to a never outspoken question: *son 13 minutos más, amigo!* – thirteen minutes more.

The man's estimate was right; and after exactly thirteen minutes and altogether one hour of stomach twisting turns, the battered vehicle entered the village, blurring its track with a dusty cloud. Normally it would pass the bridge, spanning the Río Urubamba¹², that connects Cuzco with the Sacred Valley, but this time the busses were brought to a stop ahead of the crossing. Due to the rains, the river had risen meters, had made the concrete and iron bridge collapse, and had swallowed at least five houses along the banks of the village. Over the normally used entrance to the town, at the end of the overpass, ironically dangled a tarnished plate: *Bienvenidos a Písaq* – welcome to Písaq.

¹¹ Used references: *Diario del Cuzco* & *Diario El Sol del Cuzco*, 5 and 6 march 2010

¹² As a headwater of the Amazon the Río Urubamba rises in the High Andes near Puno, sometimes called Río Wilcamayu or, more generally, Río Vilcanota, depending on geographical location and personal favor.

2.1 A Journey into the Sacred Heartland

The highland region of Peru surrounding the city of Cuzco, the former Incan economic, political, and cultural capital, consists of several small and medium sized villages. Most of the population living in these villages belong to the widely spread ethno linguistic group of Quechuas – a classification that is a mere inheritance of colonial times, when authorities tried to categorize the vast linguistic and cultural diversity (García 2005:28). Several processes can be pointed out that have led to the continuation or reinforcement of indigenous religious communities in the Peruvian highlands. During his political campaign, former president Alejandro Toledo emphasized his indigenous Quechua background. This was clearly observable when he held a figurative inauguration on top of the Inca ruins of Machu Picchu in the presence of a Quechua religious leader who practiced a ceremony. Despite of the importance of indigenous culture and history, the weight of this inauguration implies that the country still struggles with a variety of ambivalent views on the indigenous population. It was predominantly the indigenous population that has been the victim of social marginalization and political exclusion due to colonial and post-colonial policy (Silverman 2002). The inauguration of Toledo marks the Peruvian start of a new era in Latin America in which indigenous rights and cultures – and with that religious customs – are to be more respected.

When people arrive in Písaq, coming from Cuzco, they will descend into the Apurímac Valley, a relatively narrow gorge with steep tributaries and little good agricultural land (Farrington 1992). Mostly, they will enter the town by crossing the orange, iron made bridge. On the town's side of the river they will come across the longest street of the village, the Avenida Amazonas, which is packed with carts selling foods and beverages and *mototaxi's* willing to get you everywhere for one *nuevo sol*.¹³ Especially on Tuesdays, Thursdays, and Sundays, when masses of tourists arrive for the famous indigenous artisan market, supposedly the biggest in the Andean region. The town has been constructed in the 16th century by Spanish conquistadors under the lead of Viceroy Toledo and borders the, now

¹³ At time of writing, one Nuevo Sol is worth more or less 0.25 Euro's.

ruined, former Inca fortress of Písaq, a gem of Inca architecture, which strategically lies on the top of a mountain bordering the Apurímac valley. Having religious, military, agricultural, and political structures, many locals believe that the ruins have had an important function within the south of the Incan Empire; some value them to be more important than main tourist-attraction Machu Picchu (Farrington 1992)¹⁴. The hillsides around the ruins stretch from the peaks of the mountain ridge into the valley are lined with Incan agricultural terraces, some of which are still in use today.

Písaq is named after the Pi'saqa, a local species of partridge. The ruins are supposedly shaped after this bird, but according to many locals, it is fashioned to the silhouette of the mighty Andean Condor (Simon 2008).¹⁵ When people continue into Avenida Bolognesi, the "shopping street" of Písaq, leading to the Plaza de Armas (or Plaza Constitución) they will encounter a variety of small diners, ritual shops, fruit vendors, a pastry shop, and two small supermarkets. After three blocks the cobblestone street leads directly into the Plaza. The most recognizable feature of the square is a big Pisonay tree, which casts shade over a great part of the Plaza. Underneath is placed a bronze statue of Bernardo Tambohuacso, an 18th century independence-hero (Simon 2008). Aligning the square, various restaurants with balconies offer most tourists a meal and at times even an "esoteric experience".

Esotericism and the search for deepened spirituality is a booming business in Písaq. As described before, many tourists venture to the town in search of something "authentic", an experience significantly different from the one of other "regular" tourists. Offering the "real thing", tourist agencies often have connections with restaurants and bars in and around Avenida Bolognesi and the Plaza de Armas. An example illustrates how esoteric tour agencies promote themselves to interested tourists:

This is a trip that's about making deep connection – with the [Apus] and Pachamama, with the living spirit of this land and with one another... and within ourselves. You aren't going to come home with the same pictures

¹⁴ Conversation with Luis, March 26, 2010

¹⁵ Interview with Ernesto, April 6, 2010

everyone else has. You will return with a heart full of connections, and a new vision, informed by the energies you'll experience.¹⁶

Inside the bars and restaurants, walls are packed with flyers of such tours; brochures are carefully lined up on tables next to the doors or on other strategic locations. And not only do these alliances between tour agencies and individuals in Písaq affect personal relationships, financial situations, and power relations; they are also thought to have influence on sacred domains, for the good or for the worse.

The transformations esoteric tourism might invoke, have led to an equally important as horrifying moment during my fieldwork when a natural disaster hit Písaq. Already before I arrived in the region, various torrential rains had been ravaging the area, destroying the Písaq Bridge. After a month, another period of unusual hard rains initiated the biggest disaster for Písaq and neighboring villages so far. Writers and anthropologists have already noticed that a great deal of the *Andinos* believes that the Pachamama and the Apus are sending warning signals toward the Andean population. "The climate is changing, respect for the spirits is changing"¹⁷ is a common heard expression. Píseños often share a common concern that mainly esoteric tourism and its implications (commodification) in the region has led to a general disrespect to Pachamama and the mountain deities and to a general desacralization of the religious arena.¹⁸ Popular writers as well remind us of possible side effects esotericism may have for cultural development in the Andes (Cumes and Lizárraga Valencia 1995). People are encouraged to search for spiritual development and extraordinary energies in Peru, however, people consider insolence towards the earth and divine forces to have led to "warnings" from Pachamama, such as torrential rains and earthquakes (Simon 2008). This problem is also expressed by shamans in the Sacred Valley. They argue that, as a result of commodification and

¹⁶ *Stepping into Freedom* tour agency. Derived from: <http://www.steppinintofreedom.com>, (May, 2010)

¹⁷ Interview with Doña Julia, March 30, 2010; Conversation with Ernesto, April 30, 2010

¹⁸ Interview with Doña Julia, March 30, 2010

globalization, people have lost their faith in natural divinity and are being punished for it.¹⁹

Even though signs of cultural “arrogance” are in retrospect linked to natural disasters such as the ones that struck Písaq in January and March 2010, most important to note is that it seems to refer to the connection between (new) cultural patterns and the fluid construct that is the Sacred. Consequently the happening, or preceding events, should be contextualized within the larger shared meaning it has, the way it functions in community. It is, in a way, a method of authenticating such natural phenomena, as horrible as they are, by comprehending the incomprehensible and framing them within the contemporary situation and local religious cosmology.



Photo 2 Avenida Amazonas



Photo 3 Písaq and the *Valle Sagrado*

¹⁹ Conversation with Ernesto, April 30, 2010; Conversation with Ángel, February 10, 2010

2.2 Curanderos and Místicos

For most people from outside the area, foreigners as well as a lot of *Limeños*²⁰, the population of the Andean region is often thought of as “culturally backwards”. Sometimes they are simply pronounced “dumb”, in other occasions it refers to a seemingly “unchanged historical situation” in which people live.²¹ Andean people are seen as predecessors of the famous Inca-culture, which once stretched for thousands of miles from Ecuador, south through the Andes, to the north of Argentina. And although some indeed see themselves as descendants of the once mighty Incas, their culture has changed radically over time. Spanish conquest, colonialism, civil war, and poverty are but a few of the destructive forces that have declined the once powerful indigenous cultures of Peru. Yet cultural elasticity should not be underestimated as a vast part of the contemporary indigenous population of Peru has adapted to the rapidly modernizing turbulence in which the country has been plunged. A great deal of cultural and religious behaviour, seen as an heir of “ancient times” has remained in an altered and more modern state.

When I first arrived in Písaq, I initially had the intention of observing “authentic” ceremonies and interviewing solely local actors on how they perceived ceremonies and how they authentication these for themselves. After just a few days I already noticed that, next to well-visited market days, tourists or foreigners were dwelling the streets of the community in “unusual” amounts. The town had over the years apparently emerged as one of the great spiritual centers around Cuzco and had a considerable appeal for mystical tourism. Being such an important and visible group within the village, both *místicos* and locals continuously thought that I had come there for the same reason – to become a *maestro*, to learn about myself while practicing ceremonies with hallucinogenic plants, or to just intensify my spirituality. In a town of this size, it can be complicated not to be marked instantly; as a result many people thought that I myself was a so-called *místico*, only emphasizing the tensions that exist between locals and mystics. Some locals, who were to be my research-population,

²⁰ Inhabitants of Lima Metropolitana, Peru’s capital.

²¹ Conversation with Edy, February 18, 2010

consequently became distant, wondering what exactly my intention was, sometimes afraid I might “steal” their energy or anger the Apus. After I met a local *curandero* a few days later, she was able to help me steadily getting introduced in a way I first intended.

Marginalization, exclusion, isolation, and poverty (Ahmed et al. 2007:56) have resulted into a situation in which the “ancient ways” of practicing religion and healing ceremonies have not totally vanished. It is the tension between this knowledge and the impact of commodification and tourism, a way of creating livelihood and upholding own cultural expressions, that connects the local past to today’s processes of practicing “authentic” rituals and authentication. Throughout this process, Písaq’s population has been subject of demographic change. Though I was not able to find an official account of these transforming characteristics of populace, it is something that is vividly discussed among the villagers. Many of my informants told me that the core of the Píseños has shifted from “purely *Andinos*” to a mixture of Andeans, Peruvians from other regions, and foreigners, most of whom are from North America and Europe. As a result my research has focused on both “local” actors and “outsiders” – Shamans, *curanderos*, and participants of ceremonies. I have made a distinction between esoteric tourists and esoteric settlers, the first being people that came with a travel-agency, the latter people that resided in Písaq and intended to stay for a longer period of time in order to develop their spirituality, become a *maestro*, or to “journey” between different realms.

Local actors are born in Písaq or in the *comunidades* in the mountains around the village. Having witnessed the rapid change the village has gone through, some of them find it hard to “get along with modernization”²² Due to processes of globalization mystical tourism is now plentiful in the village. In contrast to expectations most (mystical) tourists have, the majority of the Píseños is not dressed in a way that represents the glorious Inca past, or in the way people have read about in the comic book “Tintin and the

²² Interview with Ernesto, April 6, 2010

Prisoners of the Sun".²³ Shamans seldom wear the famous colorful *traje típico*, and are rather dressed in a skirt or basic jeans. Both esoteric tourists and esoteric settlers mostly come from outside Peru. Often attracted by novels that read about spiritual and energetic places in Peru, they plan a trip to the Sacred Valley. Most of them adapt to their own expectation of local indigenous life, wearing *ojotas*, *ponchos*, *llicllas* and/or *sombreros*, drinking *chicha*, and chewing coca. Yet all groups act and interact in the same local sphere. All are searching to improve their spirituality or to appease the Apus and Pachamama – the cosmological perspective might be the foremost important thing in giving meaning and authenticating religious activity – the one thing that separates them might be their personal motivation. In the next chapter important religious elements that lead towards an understanding on how the sacred is shaped exactly in Písaq will be delineated.

²³ Conversation with Edy, February 18, 2010; Conversation with Percival Wilkins, February 24, 2010; Interview with Ernesto, April 6, 2010

3. Where the Spirits Dwell

COSMOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVE AND PRACTICED RELIGION

Any given person, (whether they be man, tree, or rock) does not belong to a given form of presencing, but rather may belong to any of these when it may be so convenient, without losing their own personality. In this way, each one of these forms nurtures the other two, and is nurtured by them in turn. This is so because the Andean World is not a world of things, of objects, of institutions, of cause and effect relationships, but rather we are in the presence of a world of renderings, recreations, renovations.

TIRSO GONZALES ET AL., *Nurturing the Seed in the Peruvian Andes* [1998]

3.1 Introduction

HISTORICALLY, SHAMANIC RITUALS have been practiced frequently throughout the Sacred Valley of the Incas. This has not changed much over time and as a result participants of the ceremonies derive from all kinds of socio-economical and cultural layers of society.²⁴ Social descent or wealth seems not to influence the choice in religion per se. Where groups of tourist are often lumped together through Cuzco-based travel agencies that offer mystic or esoteric tours, locals practice or participate in ceremonies with other Piseños or alone with the shaman. Mystics sometimes form a different class. They can both participate in ceremonies with friends that might as well be local, or engage in tour-based rituals. In any case, for all different actors the most important reason for practicing a “real” ceremony is, almost unanimously, based on the tensions between nature and culture, or as Doña Maria explains: “[...] there is a constant interaction between

²⁴ Conversations with Luis and Manuel, February 26, 2010; Conversation with Don Donato, March 30, 2010

men and nature, situating both in a position of interdependency.”²⁵ The Apus and Pachamama are in most cases of major importance for the daily life belief-system, although people might present different perceptions of this intertwining of nature and culture (Simon 2008; Healey 2006).

Local cosmology therefore constitutes for a great deal to the meaning local as well as external actors give to particular events which additionally helps in the process of authentication of these same phenomena. Next to that it is part of the attraction the village has on esotericism; it includes an element of exoticism – of the “inexplicable” –, that mystical tourists so often come to seek in the Sacred Valley. Simon (2008) already mentioned the idea that mystical tourists frequently understand the value of “ancient” traditions and are attracted to the “authenticity” these cultural creations generate. As, Nicole, an esoteric tourist told me:

The town and the people are so real. People look so nice with their hats, but it is also the way they interact with you. Everybody is friendly, they are real, as if they are not used to this amount of tourists that are visiting [...]. I especially like how Indians are so respectful and adore these spirits. [...] I feel like one of them!²⁶

This chapter will explore the sacred arena of the Peruvian Andes in which different actors – both local and external – in Písaq move around and by which these people shape their lived experience. First I will in a few words present general conceptions of cosmology, being an important aspect of the local religious arena of the region and then, with the focus on information derived from empirical data, explain more about religious cosmology, shamanism, and ceremonies in Písaq.

3.2 Religious Cosmology

3.2.1 | Placing the Sacred in the academic debate

The notion of cosmology derives from ancient Greek, meaning “study of the universe”. In most cases it refers to rational or scientific perceptions of the

²⁵ Conversations with Doña María, April 22, 2010 and April 30, 2010

²⁶ Conversation with esoteric tourist Nicole, March 8, 2010

universe as it is observed in the experienced “present” (Kragh 2007). The cosmological belief-system – a worldview that integrates the structure of surroundings and of time into a unified whole –, today still is of great value for indigenous populations in Andean villages (Simon 2008:94). An important part of the religious affiliation of the local population can be ascribed to “the landscape that surrounds them” (Abercrombie 1998:130). The religious worldview, a cosmological belief-system in this case, consists of a general understanding about nature, the inexplicability of the supernatural and its intrinsic and mutual relation to humans (Crapo 2003). The function of cosmology within a religion entails primarily the common beliefs about the natural environment and operating-principles of the cosmos (Crapo 2003). Crapo further draws on the thought that cosmology includes the ideas that explain how effectiveness of a ceremony or ritual can be accomplished in the worldly realm and how deities and spirits can be influenced by human beings and vice versa (Crapo, 2003).

Both my interviewees and anthropologists frequently use the terms “cosmology” and “cosmovision”. Although both terms overlap and are often interchangeable, a small difference, important to fully understand Andean thought as well as this paragraph, should be pointed out. In general cosmology encompasses the main understanding of the cosmos, while cosmovision derives from an overarching, holistic vision of the world and surrounding nature that directly impacts daily lives (Healey 2006).

The purpose of the cosmos has regularly been described as the “ordering principle of culture” (Roepstorff et al. 2003:22). According to this principle, cosmology should be divided into two different kinds of interrelated and complementing arenas: that of nature (cosmos) and that of human beings (culture). In Písaq, or in indigenous communities worldwide, we should add one more important feature: local deities that enliven non-living objects (Allen 2005).²⁷ The living world hereby presents itself in three different forms (nature, culture, deities) that are based on essential interrelatedness. These groups form a kinship that is based on mutual respect and dignity. The groups do not exist separately: they depend upon

²⁷ Interview with Doña Julia, March 30, 2010

and take care of one another. This reciprocal practice is also known as *ayni*.²⁸ Through the covenantal relationship between humans and a divine cosmic force, balance is maintained in cyclic cosmic recreation, agricultural rejuvenation, and procreation (Carlsen and Prechtel 1997).

Humans, nature, and divine forces thus have an interdependent relationship of wholeness and inclusiveness in which one can hardly (keep to) exist without one another (Grillo 1990:58; Rocha 1990:68). Gossen (1986:5) further notes that negotiation between worldly and cosmic realms is “key [to] intellectual, political, and religious activity, for with successful mediation come power, wisdom, and even personal health and community survival.” *Ayni*, based on balance and exchange, is still important for contemporary Andean populations, and needed to integrate and comfort the cosmos (Classen 1993: 3; Pérez Galán 2008: 248; Simon 2008: 94).

Many elements of local cosmology exist for a vast quantity of time. As Doña Julia, an average Piseña who strongly believes in the influence of the mountain deities, stresses: “The cosmological belief derives from the Incas, they believed that humans and nature have a relationship based on interdependence and exchange. Today, people believe that as well.”²⁹ The surrounding landscape, such as mountains but also local fauna, seizes an essential position within the collective cosmology in Písaq. Moreover Andean cosmology is solidly related to the natural surroundings and/or farming; for instance in and around the *chacras* where *choclo* and other crops are cultivated. A Quechuan farmer describes the intrinsic relationship with nature:

[Our] customs differentiate us from other realities and cultures. Our custom is born from nature, from the soil, from the mountains, from the rivers [...], and from the Pachamama. [It] is part of nature and lives harmoniously with each one of the components in a reciprocal and equitable relationshi [*síc*] (Gonzales et al. 1998).

²⁸ Interview with Doña Julieta, February 22, 2010; Interview with dr. Manuel Leon Atahualpa, March 25, 2010

²⁹ Interview with Doña Julia, March 30, 2010

Simon (2008) explains that a significant part of all natural landscape can be contributed to the Apus and Pachamama; the foremost premises for practicing or participating in a ceremony. The Pacha (earth) is seen as a living body that provides in key living conditions such as food, water, and fertile grounds³⁰; therefore the earth itself has to be “nurtured” by use of offerings (Gonzales et al. 1998). Accordingly ritual is vital in order to recreate, remember, and pass on a collective memory; significant in the process of the collective making, transforming, and recreating of local history (Simon 2008; Abercrombie 1998).

3.2.2 | Cosmovision and the Daily Life

The origins of contemporary Quechua believe lies, according to Classen (1993) in the creation myth of the Incas. Virachocha is the creator of Incan civilization and has moulded men out of the stone around Lake Titicaca (e.g. Classen 1998; Urton 1999). Stone has since been seen as living and sacred and has claimed a vital part of Andean cosmology, consequently the Apus are considered stone ancestors that simply lay on the earths surface (Simon 2008). The Apus are the mountains spirits and correspondingly the magical places where ancestors reside and deities dwell.³¹ Pachamama is a living being that feeds all life and has to be nurtured by human beings (Simon 2008; Bolin 1998; Gonzales et al. 1998). Legends and myths based on contemporary cosmovision are used to understand certain aspects of life; they are implemented into the belief-system of the local populace and used as a mechanism of authenticating daily life phenomena.³²

Cosmovision also entails a personal view upon the world. Dr. Manuel León Atahualpa, former anthropologist of UNSAAC, explains the situation in Písaq and draws on external elements that possibly change the very nature of local cosmology:

In Písaq everybody makes up his or her own cosmology. It may differentiate from person to person or from one area to another. In fact the cosmology

³⁰ Interview with dr. Manuel León Atahualpa, March 25, 2010

³¹ Interview with dr. Manuel León Atahualpa, March 25, 2010; Conversation with Ernesto, April 30, 2010

³² Fieldnotes; Interview with dr. Manuel León Atahualpa, March 25, 2010

has been changing and is still changing all the time, one definition cannot be given summoned within a few words as it is, as I said, maneuvered in diverse directions by numerous external factors. It lacks authenticity. There is still some foundation that people use to base their visions upon, yet this is very small, you could call it “ancient”. In Písaq, all of it is very much influenced by tourism and, consequently, money.³³

Because Píseños believe that the Apus have originated from their ancestors – and possessed similar personality – in various situations the majority describes the mountain deities by means of human characteristics, which can be both good and evil. Also, Apus are used for communicating moralities and values in the communities (Simon 2008:94,107-108). Písaq is surrounded by four “good” Apus (Apu Ñusta, Apu Intihuatana, Apu Linli, and Apu Pucara Pantillichla) and one with malevolent intention (Apu Ventamayoc). Ernesto, a Píseño in his thirties, describes the effect Apus may have on the local population:

It is because of the evil Apu that the village of Taray [a small neighbouring community] got destroyed. The spirit has been a bad man in his days and continues to haunt people today. [...] We have the luck that Písaq is surrounded by four good Apus; this is why so little happens to us, compared to other villages. [...] Apus used to be persons, they now dwell the mountains and take care of us. They guide us through our lives and therefore they need *despachos*. You know that when the Apu approves of your *despacho*, all problems will be resolved.³⁴

This is just one example of how seemingly ineffable phenomena are linked to cosmological legends or myths and how these influence the daily life of the Andean people. Another example of this derives from a conversation with Marcos, who, like other locals, authenticates nightmares or the birth of deformed babies with the myth of *El Machu*: The story goes that in the Andean area one spirit, or more, dwells. These are the ghosts of people that have died hundreds of years ago. With their appearance of an old man

³³ Interview with dr. Manuel León Atahualpa, March 25, 2010

³⁴ Conversation with Ernesto, April 30, 2010

with a leathery face, they wander around the small and bigger villages in the region looking for women and girls; sometimes they even dare appear in *Cuzqueñian* houses. When a man is not at home, the *Machu* will enter the room where the girl is sleeping, trying to violate her without noticing. Once a girl is being violated by the *Machu* and she becomes pregnant with him, the child that is given birth to will be born with the face of a very old person, complete with wrinkles and a gristly look.³⁵

Consequently, cosmivision is one of the most important characteristics of how the sacred is embedded in Andean daily life. Ceremonies are often related to key-moments in the participants' life. Collective cosmic harmony is shaped and reinforced through dedication to ceremonies that address to Pachamama and the Apus. In the case of people's personal existence, a balance between aspects of the cosmic energies and realms and the Self must be preserved (Edmonson 1993). Within this process, shamans or *curanderos* are used as an intermediary between the cosmos and humans; being able to be in "contact" with the Apus and Pachamama they connect the factual and the untouchable world.

3.3 Andean Shamanism

The house of Ángel, a two-story building whose adobe stones are covered by a layer of white paint, looking scrofulous with age and wear, is located in a narrow street stretching one block from the *Plaza de Armas*. A big timber door hides the uneven archway that leads to the inside of his shadowy ceremonial shop. Inside the small room, every wall contains rough, wooden shelves from floor to ceiling. On the shelves are placed a selection of idols, ritual cups, jewelry, and a great variety of other artifacts. Ángel asks me to follow him into his ceremonial room in the back of the building. Through a small wooden doorway I enter a little room. In the left an altar, in the middle of the floor are placed a few cochins on which he asks me to take a seat. Then he sits in front of me and starts talking about the wisdom of the shaman which apparently is mediated through his client. He tells me that change in life (being everything around us) is possible and

³⁵ Interview with Marcos, March 19, 2010; Conversation with Alejandra, April 4, 2010

necessary as long as one wants it. Only if I am happy I can move on and not stand still. During his ceremony and reading he says he cannot make a good transcendental mediation due to me being so “closed”, yet his eyes seem to slowly wander away from this earthly realm.

After ten minutes he stands up and walks to his altar, picks up three big condor feathers and yet again sits down in front of me. He wants to read me. In order to do so I have to ignore his presence and just let the things he is saying get through to me. He starts waving the feather rapidly in front of his face and stares at me with big eyes. He tells me to look into his eyes as he continued his reading. After a few seconds he stops and tells me that I am blocked and grim, I definitely need a healing. He repeats the same procedure a few times and ends with telling me that I need to be happy in order to enter the world of shamans. I need to be initiated into the local shamanic world to sort out good and evil powers.³⁶ The way the shaman acted left me perplexed, transforming from a generally nice man into a “wild” and strange figure waving condor feathers and recurrently seeming to “leave” his earthly body. Shamans are frequently seen as ambivalent persons, respected for their healing powers and simultaneously feared for their malevolent magic (Walsh 2007: 19); but what exactly comprises the characterization and practices of a shaman?

Recently, shamanism has left its slumbering state of being, awaking the world and triggering imagination in the modern West (Johnson 2003). After long being demonized by the Church, after attempts to be analyzed by psychiatrists, and after being temporarily “diminished” by the academic world, shamanism is now more vivid than ever (Walsh 2007: 4). More disciplines (such as psychology and medicine studies) have entered the sacred sphere and along with academic interest, popular demand for shamanic practice in the modern West has risen as well (e.g. Johnson 2003; Znamenski 2004; Bowie 2006; Walsh 2007). The difficulty of describing shamanism is delineated by Roberte Hamayon (2001) in her book *The concept of Shamanism: Uses and Abuses*. In it she stresses that “for

³⁶ Fieldnotes, February 10, 2010

more than a century the question of what shamanism really is in the final analysis has hindered all attempts to define it.”

In Písaq, the ambiguous perception of a shaman mainly derives from the fact that most people are wary of trusting a religious specialist. Since the rise of mystical tourism, a great amount of so-called “fake” shamans has entered Písaq’s public sphere. Píseños employ different strategies to confirm whether a *curandero* is real or not, most of these are related to personal experience. Another thing is that people question a shaman about his or her path of education towards the position of religious specialist. Being able to perform shamanic practice is mostly preceded by a long-lasting process of learning. Doña Julieta, a vendor of ritual artifacts, shaman, and owner of a shamanic shop, tells me that this process can “take one week, but in that occasion it is probably a tourist attraction and therefore fake. Learning shamans should endure the procedure for at least one year or as long as they are “learning”, which *can* be a lifetime.”³⁷ However, it seems that one should not attempt to cripple the notion of shamanism with just one definition, it would be rather impossible due to the immense variety of cultural settings and contexts in which shamanism occurs. Nevertheless, so as to order this thesis, I find it useful to present some vital characteristics of shamanic practice.

Shamans in Písaq are strongly interrelated with so-called *curanderos*. *Curanderos* have been present in Andean societies since pre-Columbian times and have since continued to occupy an important position as doctor or “analyst” within society. *Curanderos* are still widely represented in the community, although supernatural practices are diminishing since Písaq has been exposed to processes of modernization. Ernesto explains:

The *curanderos* take up an important part in local society. Their position mainly derives from earlier times when the town was not modern. They do not have explicit political roles, but their advice is always appreciated and important. *Curanderos* are much respected because long time ago, *they* were the doctors in Písaq. The *curanderos* healed everybody, and more often than not they achieved in doing so! Therefore they are very important

³⁷ Conversation with Doña Julieta, March 20, 2010

people. Especially for the elderly, they grew up without the doctors; the youngest generations still have respect, but not as much. It all is changing a bit.³⁸

Curanderos can be found throughout the Andean region and are characterized by their ability to heal, forecast the future, bewitch or change the fate of individuals (Simon 2008:109). Consequently much of shamanic practice revolves around *curanderismo*. An example of the healing practices of local *curanderos* is given by Ernesto:

When my little daughter of three was about five months old, she cried every day. All the day she had stomach-aches and they just would not stop. Then we took her to a befriended *curandera* to ask what was wrong with her and what we possibly could do. She concluded that she could help us get rid of the pains. She held a ceremony especially for my daughter. She opened an egg and smeared the egg yolk over her. After that we made a *pago a la tierra* so it would not happen again. That very same night, she was cleared of all the pain! She stopped crying and she has never had any stomach aches since!³⁹

Because of the similarities, for example the function as (community) healer and involvement in controlled trances it is now fairly accepted to refer to Peruvian *curanderos* as shamans (Joralemon & Sharon 1993:4). One important aspect of their power is that they are capable of changing or influencing natural phenomena. Because they can interact with the local deities, they are able to manipulate events for communal well-being. By practicing rituals, they thus give meaning to both the deities and the daily life of participants of the ceremony. Violeta, a Piseña that has lived in PISAQ all of her life, illustrates the working method and importance of an "authentic" *curandero*:

³⁸ Interview with Ernesto, April 4, 2010

³⁹ Interview with Ernesto, April 4, 2010

Once I went to Arequipa for work, I had an accident. It was very bad, we hit another car and ours rolled over in the fields along the road a couple of times. When I got back to Písaq, I was very scared of everything around me. I could not sleep well and when I *did* manage to get some sleep, I had nightmares about my misfortune. So I went to a *curandero*. He gave me a consult on what to do. Two days later we went to have a *despacho* to heal my mind and clean my soul from the evil spirits that had gotten into it. We went into the mountains, to an important Apu, to burn the *despacho*. Then I had to sleep with a *moñeca* shaped bread and eat it the next day. After that I was feeling better, I could sleep again without having any nightmares. I am never going to be afraid again!⁴⁰

Most shamans in Písaq are expected to be able to transfer into altered states of consciousness, contacting and summoning deities, and always utilize their powers to achieve something for their client – although the latter is subject to local debate as “fake” shamans recently have become a significant actor within the community. Doña Julieta explains the outstanding abilities the shaman must possess: “The *curandero* has to be able to travel within two distinct worlds. Next to that, he should have the power to “hover” in between and not get lost or scared. This all is necessary to fully comprehend the intrinsic being of a shaman and to connect this power to natural surroundings such as the Apus and Pachamama.”⁴¹

3.4 Interacting with the Spirits: Shamanic Ritual

Cosmology and cosmovision are strongly interrelated with the practiced ceremonies, and even the mystics and non-local shamans have adopted parts of Andean cosmology in their practices. Balance and exchange (*ayni*), are considered significant elements of Andean Cosmology. These main beliefs are still today vital for Andean populations and are needed to calm the cosmos (Classen 1993:3; Pérez Galán 2008:248; Simon 2008:94). This often seems to be the starting point of practicing a ritual. The cosmos takes up an important position within local religion and beliefs, and is based

⁴⁰ Conversation with Violeta, April 13, 2010

⁴¹ Interview with Doña Julieta, February 22, 2010

on an innate correlation between humans and divine forces like the Apus and Pachamama. The goal of most ceremonies consequently is mediation between earthly and spiritual realms. Reconstruction or continuation of the community-based aspects, or personal activity like survival or good fortune are key-aspects.⁴² The relation with nature is therefore based on an equal reciprocal system, where both uphold each other by successful negotiation. Ceremonies are a way of enforcing common harmony.

A ritual can generally be described as a patterned, returning chain of events, such as, starting off every day by showering, eating breakfast, reading the daily paper, and going off to work at 8.30 sharp. The term *ritual* here is used to describe a repetitive sequence of acts (Stein & Stein 2005:80). Eric Rothenbuhler (1998:27) describes a ritual as a “voluntary performance of appropriately patterned behaviour to symbolically effect or participate in the serious life.” The “serious life” had already been described by Durkheim and covers those things in life that are considered more significant, more morally waged, and more obligatory than other within a certain context (Rothenbuhler 1998:27). If such a recurring sequence is applied in a religious setting, and engages in the use of religious symbols, such as prayers, *ofrendas*, and reading of consecrated texts, it becomes a religious ritual (Stein & Stein 2005:80). Religious ritual is one of the key concepts I have used in order to understand and describe ritual patterns and behaviour in Písaq.

In general ritual is often used as an umbrella term that entails several distinct categories. Here I will not focus on any single one of them as they are not all of the same use for this thesis. One category that is of importance to get a notion of the function of rituals, are ideological rituals (Stein & Stein 2005:88). Stein and Stein (2005:88-89) note that ideological rituals are rituals that “[serve] to maintain the normal functioning of a group.” They classify a certain system of proper behaviour; define the difference between good and evil, moral and immoral and, doing so, articulate the community’s worldview. In Písaq, the *curandero* generally is the person who practices all of the rituals and thus is the one that

⁴² Interview with Maria, February 18, 2010

generates the ritual function.⁴³ In different kinds of ceremonies, the practitioner takes upon a different role. He is the one people come to when they need aid, or when a community is going through difficult times.⁴⁴ In this context the practitioner adds to rituals that can support a community in times of change (Stein & Stein 2005:88).

Most of the locals relate the ceremonies to things to come in the future and adapt them to that, while external actors (such as esoteric tourists and mystics) build their life around the ceremonies. Where locals for example desire good fortune in the future by practicing a *pago a la tierra*, mystics and tourists relate things that have already happened (dreams, visions, illness) to ceremonies and contact with the spirits and try to authenticate phenomena in daily life by linking it to their renewed spirituality.

3.4.1 | Between Two Worlds: Coca and Hallucinogens

“San Pedrito

San Pedrito

Dame un buen viaje”

– Initiation song of San Pedro ceremony

Within the sacred arena of Písaq, two different kinds of ceremonial traditions can be distinguished. Whereas coca-related ceremonies have been practiced for many centuries, the usage of hallucinogens in ceremonies has been introduced recently by external actors and is nowadays recurrently perceived as authentic to the region by outsiders.⁴⁵ The two most important hallucinogenic ceremonies are dedicated to Ayahuasca and San Pedro and are more often practiced by non-local esoteric tourists or mystics. San Pedro derives from the Northern coastal area and is a cactus; Ayahuasca is a brew made from roots and vines and derives from the Amazon basin.

Esoteric tourists and *místicos* mostly participate in Ayahuasca or San Pedro rituals, searching for a more spiritual side of themselves. Most argue

⁴³ Interview with Maria, February 18, 2010

⁴⁴ Interview with Doña Julieta, February 22, 2010; Interview with Pancho, march 19, 2010

⁴⁵ Conversation with Maria, march 9, 2010; Interview with Pancho, March 19, 2010

that they want to get to know how and what they are – to learn about themselves.⁴⁶ The “journeys” of a San Pedro ritual can take up to seven hours or more; those of an Ayahuasca-ceremony even longer. Pancho, a shaman, told me that “the brews made from both plants have the ability to open emotional memories and help a person to find his true self.”⁴⁷ During the trips the participant is supposed to get visions and contact with the spirits. Generally the purpose is to get more in touch with the spiritual self. Ayahuasca visions are frequently painted or sketched on a piece of paper or linen during the ceremony. Together with the performing shamans, people then analyze their vision and try to relate it to occurrences in their daily lives.⁴⁸ The images cover walls of restaurants and shops owned by mystics and have symbolic significance within the esoteric community; they are supposed to characterize a person and sometimes denote the progress one has made since the beginning of the “learning-process.”⁴⁹

- *Opening invocations*
- *Spraying of the mesa and participants with agua de florida*
- *Offering to [...] mountains*
- *“Raising” or nasal imbibing of tobacco (defence)*
- *“Throwing away” of negative influences*
- *Drinking of San Pedro brew*
- *Darkness/Silence*
- *“Raising” of tobacco, cleansing*
- *“Throwing away” of negative influences*
- *Divination/diagnosis*
- *“Raising” of tobacco (luck)*
- *Spraying of the mesa*
- *Spraying and/or drinking of chicha (Polia 1988a: 128)*

Box 1 Ritual sequence during San Pedro ceremony

⁴⁶ Interview with Pancho, March 19, 2010

⁴⁷ Interview with Pancho, March 19, 2010

⁴⁸ Conversation with Mercedes, April 8, 2010

⁴⁹ Conversation with Marie, April 26, 2010

Polia (1988a) points out that variation in ceremonies among different shamans is great within the Andean region, but as well he provides a wide-ranging sketch of how most San Pedro ceremonies are practiced (see box 1). All of the ceremonies I have witnessed followed the same general course of action that is meant to make a participant feel the authenticity of the ceremony as much as possible. Practicing a ceremony especially for mystical tourists and –settlers, designated shamans tend to dress up and historicize the set of symbols that is used. While practicing the ceremonies for themselves, only “pure” and “essential” symbols, actions, and artifacts are used.⁵⁰ Adjusting to the understanding and longing of the Other and aiming for an authentic ceremony, however can also have implications as tourists may not expect the magnitude of a ceremony in the first place.

Many informants, mainly local actors, have pointed out the possible dangers of Ayahuasca. Next to stories of tourists being robbed while in trance, physical risks have been mentioned as well. Although San Pedro and Ayahuasca are strong hallucinogens, they are not likely to be overdosed and do not contain toxics. Moreover potential danger of usage has psychological grounds (Lewis 2008). The inexplicable experience of being in contact with mountain spirits can lead to anxiety, panic, and fear attacks.⁵¹ As Percival recalls his first experience with Ayahuasca:

It was like an astonishing and brutal clash of thoughts within my own head. I had strange thoughts about myself that I couldn't get rid of. I think that through an authentic Ayahuasca-ceremony, the mountain spirits reveal one's true self, which can be positive or extremely negative.⁵²

Whereas the initial target is to, with help of the spirits, deconstruct negative characteristics of the soul and replace these with positive ones, the distorting of personal emotional boundaries is not to be taken lightly. The majority of my interviewees have highlighted the fact that in hallucinogenic ceremony, a lot of the shamans must take responsibility for

⁵⁰ Fieldnotes, April 4, 2010; Interview with Ernesto, April 6, 2010

⁵¹ Interview with Pancho, March 19, 2010; Conversation with Don Donato, March 30, 2010

⁵² Conversation with Percival Wilkins, February 24, 2010

their participants. They need to make sure that they do not get physically injured and they mediate with the spirits and the Pachamama to certify that they “agree” with the ceremony. Pancho tells me about his role during an Ayahuasca-ceremony.

I always need to take care of my clients, if they have taken the Ayahuasca, there is nothing I can do for them. It is up to themselves to have a secure journey with the spirits. [...] If someone does not really believe in the contact he or she can have with the spirits, it is wise not to take the Ayahuasca. I cannot get somebody out of the trance and it can take up to a day if you have bad luck. The spirits punish you in that case.⁵³

While both San Pedro and Ayahuasca ceremonies have been practiced many hundreds of years, both Piseños and external actors have no religious precedent within their cultural patterns and sometimes do not know how to react on inexplicable phenomena. Yet shamans have commonly changed the symbolic sequence of a ceremony in such a way that it is understandable for a tourist’s perception.⁵⁴

Coca-related ceremonies derive from the Andean region and non-tourist ceremonies are generally less symbolized than San Pedro and Ayahuasca. Nearly all of my interviewees have, at one point in their lives, visited a *curandero* in order to do a *mirada de coca* or burned a *despacho* while doing a *pago a la tierra*. Most Piseños have frequently experienced what they considered as the authenticity of a *pago*; as such they value the usefulness and realness of this “ancient” way of practicing a ceremony as vital to their cultural religious maintenance.⁵⁵ Some do not believe in the realness of hallucinogenic ceremonies. Ernesto characterizes the situation as follows:

Here in Písaq the ceremonies have always been performed using coca. That’s what people used to do during Incan time and that’s what they still do. They make a *pago* with coca leaves and take it up into the mountains,

⁵³ Interview with Pancho, March 19, 2010

⁵⁴ Conversation with Don Donato, March 30, 2010; Interview with Ernesto, April 4, 2010

⁵⁵ Interview with dr. Manuel León Atahualpa, March 25, 2010

up to a holy *cerro*. They ask for permission of the Apus and the Pachamama while spilling a little *chicha* on the ground. Then they burn the *despacho*, they actually ask the Apus and the Pachamama for luck. For example for (school)work, for a marriage, for a safe journey, that sort of things. Also it is possible to burn *cosas* that have or have had a bad influence in your life. After they have been burned, the bad things won't come back for a while.⁵⁶

Practically all coca-readings and *ofrendas* are preceded by a *Kint'u* in which the Apus and Pachamama are summoned and requested to gratify the ceremony (Pratt 2007:382-383). Previous to the burning of a *despacho* the *curandero* has to make an analysis of a person's situation, this is called a *mirada de coca*.⁵⁷ The opening rite in most coca-readings encompasses a summoning of the Apus and a diagnosis of the client. The leaves are, in pairs of three, used for divination to determine a person's situation. They are held to the mouth and by whistling at them, the *curandero* summons the Apus. Then by recurrently lifting up the leaves from a *manta*, and letting these fall back in a different position, the *curandero* studies and evaluates the position, color, shape, and scattering in which the leaves have fallen down and is consequently able to read someone's past, present, and/or future in it.⁵⁸ By means of a *mirada de coca*, the shaman is able to compose a *despacho*.⁵⁹ The content of a *despacho* is always different and personalized; most elements include coca leaves, a variety of local seeds, sweets, and *choclo*.⁶⁰ Next to that, the color of, for example the seeds, is of great importance for the outcome of the offering (Simon 2008:115). A *curandero* who does not know about *despacho*-symbolism is not likely to

⁵⁶ Interview with Ernesto, April 4, 2010

⁵⁷ Fieldnotes March-April 2010

⁵⁸ Fieldnotes April 24, 2010; Interview with Ernesto, April 4, 2010; Conversation with Violeta, April 13, 2010; Conversation with Doña Maria, April 22, 2010; Conversation with Doña Julia, May 2, 2010

⁵⁹ Conversation with Doña Maria, April 22, 2010; Interview with Víctor, April 25, 2010; Conversation with Doña Julia, May 2, 2010

⁶⁰ Fieldnotes April 22, 2010 & April 28, 2010; Conversation with Doña Maria, April 22, 2010

achieve full recognition of the Apus and Pachamama, and is therefore judged as unauthentic.⁶¹

Originally *despachos* are burned in the mountains for agricultural reason; in order to nurture Pachamama and request a good harvest.⁶² Nowadays, new themes, strongly related with the rise of tourism, are practiced more often. People for example ask Pachamama and the Apus for good artisan-sales (Simon 2008:115). The introduction of “new” ceremonies as well has lead to an entire change in Písaq’s sacred arena. How do these various actors from outside a community influence the nature and meaning of the authenticity of shamanic ritual and how does this influence the community? And what are the implications of esoteric tourism for the sense of authenticity and convictions of one’s belief-system in the daily lives of both external and local actors?

⁶¹ Interview with Ernesto, April 6, 2010

⁶² Interview with Ernesto, April 6, 2010



Photo 4 Curandera offering *chicha* to Pachamama



Photo 5 Coca leaves during *mirada de coca*



Photo 6 Preparing a *despacho* / *pago a la tierra*

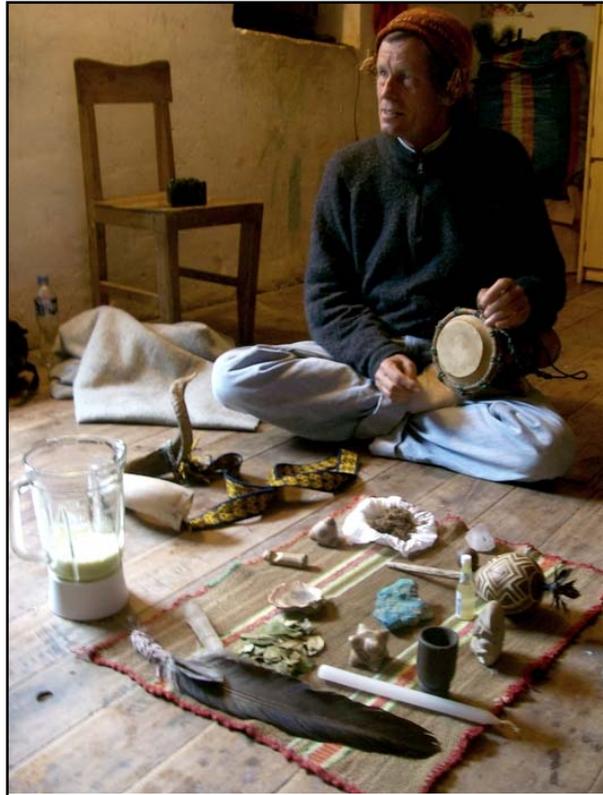


Photo 7 *Manta* with ceremonial artifacts and San Pedro brew (in blender)



Photo 8 Cleansing ritual with *agua de florida*

4. Besieging Authenticity

MYSTICAL TOURISM AND THE MERGING OF TWO SACREDS

The whole of mankind becomes an imaginary museum: where shall we go this weekend – visit the Angkor ruins or take a stroll in Tivoli of Copenhagen?

PAUL RICOEUR, *History and Truth* [1992]

4.1 Introduction

EARLIER IN THIS thesis I posed some questions on the shaping of authenticity in ceremonies. With the rise of mystical or exotic tourism, for instance, people might act toward what is expected of them as the Other (Simon 2008:194). “The majority of new shamanism is deceit” says Lucía, a local *curandera*. “Most of the [shamans] suddenly wear colorful clothing and hats, thinking that they can impress the tourists like that. I will tell you something: it works; those *extranjeros* appear to like what they see.”⁶³ Lucía is only one of an amount of people in Písaq that feels this way about esoteric tourists. Next to that there is a vast group, mainly non-local actors, that co-exists with the outsiders.

In reality, there are very few – if any – phenomena that can be identified as fundamentally authentic. The last couple of decades, the quest for authenticity, mainly in the modern West, has become an important point of discussion. As the observing or experiencing of an “authentic” exotic happening has become a fashion in tourism, the promoting of authenticity has become a significant part of tourist institutions worldwide (MacCannell 1973; Chhabra et al. 2003). But where it is fairly obvious to see the pure elements of Andean civilization that tourists are looking for, it is much trickier to find elements of authenticity that are generally valued by the various actors that dwell the Píseñan streets. This chapter explores the impact esoteric tourism and –settling has on the religious and spiritual arena of Písaq – as described in the pervious chapter – and how this influences

⁶³ Interview with Lucía, March 21, 2010

processes of commodification and authentication. The change over years will be delineated and connected with the religious and spiritual situation today.

4.2 Towards a Spiritual Hotspot

Over the last couple of decades, tourism in the Sacred Valley has grown rapidly. Especially the combination of the near ending of the civil war and the easy accessibility of the city of Cuzco by air in the late 1980's, early 1990's has contributed to a new growth. Already in the early 20th century, people have been attracted by the discovery of "the lost city of the Incas"⁶⁴ by North American archaeologist Hiram Bingham in 1911 (Van den Berghe & Flores Ochoa 1999:8). Ever since, Machu Picchu and the Sacred Valley have become an "obligatory" destination for all people visiting the country. At an altitude of 3400 meters in the High Andes, Cuzco is one of the highest big cities in the world, combined with the spellbinding and excellent archaeological sites in the area, it is as striking as it is a mysterious attraction. Along with tours to Machu Picchu, travel agencies offer tours through the sacred valley; first stop: Pisaq.

Let me briefly illustrate the Pisaq situation by presenting a fragment from my field diary written down in an early stage of my fieldwork: "The village is crowded with some sort of pilgrims; mystical tourists seeking for a spiritual twist in their lives. A middle-aged English speaking man, fully dressed in local typical clothing – including *chullo*, *ojotas*, and *sombrero*, offered me an Ayahuasca ritual. Too expensive in my opinion [...]. The esoteric tourists that I took notice of seem to be everywhere, clearly visible in nearly any part of the village."⁶⁵

Esotericism and alternative healing have recently become more popular among Western cultures due to their assumed impenetrable (or "inexplicable") characteristics (Bowie 2006:195). The supernatural in, for instance, a *curandero's* healing or shamanic ceremony cannot be explained through the scope of Western science and thus appeals to the Western

⁶⁴ For extended reading, see: Hiram Bingham, *The Lost City of the Incas: The Story of Machu Picchu and its Builders* [1948]

⁶⁵ Fieldnotes, February 16, 2010

public – that searches for “ancient wisdom” – as a mysterious element of the exotic, or indigenous Other (Bowie 2006:195-196). People expect the experience to be different from what they are used to and as a result shape a relevance of it as being dependant on the cultural context (Bowie 2006:196). Many tourists in Peru alike are looking for this mystifying esoteric gaze. In the south central Highlands, the city of Cuzco and its neighboring Sacred Valley have become “power spots” and influential “magnetic centers of spiritual energy” (Hill 2007:433). The region is accompanied by only few places in the world – which include Stonehenge, Easter Island, and the Giza Plateau (Hill 2007; Arellano 2007) – and, mainly Western, pilgrimage is embraced widely by the local tourist industry. Marketing the magical grasp of Andean scenery, of irresistible and astonishing Inca fortresses, and of ineffable shamanic ceremonies, tourists that are looking for an “authentic indigenous Andean spiritual experience” are served well (Hill 2007:433).

What can be noticed in Písaq, is that a combination of the “ancient” sacred is combined with influences imported from other regions in Peru or elsewhere in the Americas – some even derive from religions in Africa or Asia. People come to the region to find the “real sacred”⁶⁶, to enhance their factual living with “fictional” certainties, which is often initially related to archaeological Inca sites. A Cuzco-based tourist agency, for instance, offers “a real religious and spiritual experience in the Sacred Valley in which several energetic sites will be visited. [...] this includes the ruins of Písaq and a visit to one of the most respected shamans of the town.”⁶⁷ An informant tells me that this is often the first way people get in contact with the “spiritual way of living”. Then, some decide to stay and “learn” how to practice rites and how to mediate between celestial realms and the earthly world.⁶⁸

An example of the association between contemporary ritual and the power of nature is provided by Douglas Sharon:

⁶⁶ Interview with Marcos, March 20, 2010

⁶⁷ Flyer Esoteric Tour Agency, Cuzco

⁶⁸ Interview with Lucía, March 21, 2010; Interview with Francisca, April 8, 2010

Today the lakes above [...] are the destination of pilgrims who come seeking a ritual bath and night healing session performed by local *curanderos*. They are also sites of shamanic initiation. For northern healers the preferred day for bathing in the lakes is June 24th, the day of St. John the Baptist. Besides its obvious association with baptism in the Jordan River, the date is related to pre-Hispanic solstice ceremonies [associated with abundant harvests and female ancestors] [...], sierra lakes are “reservoirs of regenerative forces” as well as ‘a door that communicates with the supernatural and acts as a meeting place between the two worlds (Sharon 2000:12-13).

Following this statement and contemporary Quechua beliefs, the nature, entangled within a complex cosmivision, is of great importance for the attraction of mystical tourism and – settling. *Místicos* often say they search for places where strong energies are present.⁶⁹

4.3 Restructuring the Sacred

4.3.1 | Mystical Tourism

Shamanism has thus recently become more popular among Western cultures due to its assumed impenetrable (or “inexplicable”) characteristics. Reasons for the immense growth in Písaq mostly differ individually. Yet generally a few processes that have most likely contributed to Písaq as an esoteric center can be pointed out. Among these are: Western interest in cultural values, a surplus of wealth in the West, or plain curiosity and restlessness (Simon 2008).

In the years before mystical tourism entered the local arena, “regular” tourism was abundant, but people were not settling in the village with the purpose of enriching their spiritual life. A mystic shaman explains to me his view on the noticeable availability of esoteric tours in the region:

All people that are coming to Peru, all tourists, they are not searching for a fun travel or cultural things. After a time they notice that they are here for spiritual reasons. The people who leave the country without having had the

⁶⁹ Interview with Marcos, March 20, 2010; Interview with Julieta, February 22, 2010

enlightenment are not pure; they are hiding their real selves from the spirits. [...] trust me, I know a lot about these things, you have to try it to become a healthy person and I am not lying when I say that *everybody* here in Peru has this purpose, even if they themselves did not know before.⁷⁰

The obvious response for longing for “authentic” religious experience by mystical tourists comes from a number of esoteric tour-offices in Cuzco, which are offering a great variety of tours in and around the city. The contemporary sacred is often linked to the Inca past. An example from Cuzqueñian tour-office ‘Apu Tour Mystical Travel’ serves as an illustration of this historicizing *Incanismo*:

Apu Tour Mystical Travel makes mystical tours throughout Peru [and] Bolivia: the coast, jungle, and highlands, with projects and tours that bring the past to life and with it, the faith, legends and beliefs of the Incas, together with those of the Peruvian people today.⁷¹

And:

The Inca civilization left a conglomerate of places and buildings whose structures reveal a profound knowledge of astronomy as well as an astonishing development in mathematics.. Our 7-day program includes the cities of Lima and Cuzco. It will allow us to clean and purify the Aura, meditate and travel to sacred places, which are of archaeological importance but at the same time serve to ask for health, money or love.⁷²

As a result tourists more often search for an “authentic” – historically speaking – ritual, practiced by a shaman in traditional clothing and often situated in a place where the energy is supposed to be strong. These places are frequently found in or near sites with historical importance that also have the appearance of an “ancient”, mystifying location, near to Inca ruins for example. As Ernesto recalls: “When I was a guard at Saqsaywamán

⁷⁰ Interview with Marcos, March 20, 2010

⁷¹ Derived from: <http://www.mystictoursperu.com/mystic-tours-peru/esoteric-mystical-tourism-spiritual-circuit.php>, (June 8, 2010)

⁷² Derived from: <http://www.mystictoursperu.com/spiritual-peru/Cuzco.php>, (June 8, 2010)

some guides took their group and shaman there because it looks good. [...] one time it was not even a shaman, just a musician with ceremonial drums.”⁷³

A number of authors (e.g. Bloom 1991; Hetherington 2000) have associated esoteric – or mystical – tourists with the “New Age-movement” of the 1960’s. Characteristics of this movement include “mediation, shamanic activities, wilderness events, spiritual therapy, and forms of positive thinking”. These key-notions have practical and theoretical been related to the movement (Heelas 1996). Although the two movements might seem hard to compare due to different contextual confines, all of the characteristics of New Agers can be aligned with esoteric tourism in Písaq. From the mystical point of view, culture, nature, and spiritualism are all combined in faith; academic discourse on Andean and Inca culture are often considered as superficial and seen as “too marketable” or “too scientific”⁷⁴ (Heelas 1996).

Mystics in Písaq can be characterized by their radical points of view towards regular (esoteric) tourists or locals. Most of them believe that people who have never tried a spiritual cleansing with Ayahuasca or San Pedro are unable to live their life without psychological uncertainties. Jack, a high-ranking mystic with the status of *Ayahuasca-maestro* comes up to me on the Avenida Amazonas, smoking a wood-cut pipe and wearing a white robe and a colored bandana around his head; a thick black and grey beard covers his face. He stresses that “it is important to try the medicine once in your life, or you won’t be able to understand the core of Peruvian life and Andean history.” Then while walking away he again warns me that I need to hear the “voice of the medicine”⁷⁵; to be personally elevated and cleansed; to get in contact with the spirits.”⁷⁶

Besides the group of mystics and esoteric tourists that seem to dominate spiritual life in Písaq, a vast group of Píseños believes that it is

⁷³ Interview with Ernesto, April 6, 2010

⁷⁴ Interview with Marcos, March 20, 2010; Interview with dr. Manuel León Atahualpa, March 25, 2010

⁷⁵ Mystics often refer to Ayahuasca and San Pedro as “medicine” referring to both the medicinal spiritual powers the brews are supposed to have and the way in which they are personally cleansed by evil influences.

⁷⁶ Fieldnotes, April 4, 2010

this particular change in local society and spirituality that has caused negative effects on contemporary daily life. Juanita tells me that:

Once [a mystic] came in my shop, he brought along a lot of negative energy [...]. All of them think they can be a *curandero* but they cannot always. They have to work hard for it, but most of them do not want to work, they rather provide people with false suggestions and ceremonies.⁷⁷

Simulation seems to be portrayed here, and the anxiety about fake shamans is extensive within the community. Repeatedly informants expressed to me their concerns about the many impostors, self-proclaimed *curanderos*, and work within Písaq's spiritual arena. The difficulty of "real" and "fake" and concerns for its sociocultural implications is widespread among Píseños; the majority emphasizes the negative consequences fake shamans have for the town.

4.3.2 | Between Real and Fake

Most shamans within the community of Písaq are people of high standing, although within the community a difference between "real" and "fake" shamans is frequently made. The latter has the same self-ascribed status as the former and takes up the same role, yet has economic goals and does, according to Píseños, not serve the community or people as a "real" shaman. During my stay in Cuzco in the first days of my fieldwork, I encountered a shaman who thought the fake shamans in Písaq were the one and only reason the bridge collapsed earlier. He told me that "they aren't real shamans. Today almost everybody can call himself a shaman."⁷⁸ He emphasizes that the collapsing of the bridge near Písaq is a punishment by Pachamama for "charlatanism"; corrupted, lying, and fake shamans.

The majority of the *curanderos* in Písaq highlight that there is a vast growth in "fake" and money-yearning religious specialists throughout the region. A lot of people do not know how to prepare a ritual, have not had any proper education of becoming a shaman, or simply ask a baffling

⁷⁷ Conversation with Juanita, April 13, 2010

⁷⁸ Conversation with Ángel, February 10, 2010

amount of money for a certain ceremony. As such, the position of the shaman in Písaq has become more ambiguous or doubtful in recent years; not everyone can be trusted in their profession. Of course, the shamans I have spoken with stress that they are nothing like that. Most of them say they have actually taken “lessons” to acquire the position. They emphasize that they are people that have a strong connection with the mountain spirits, and with Pachamama. One shaman told me that there is no visible way to know if you are a full-fledged *maestro*, at a certain moment you recognize that your contact with the spirits is different, more profound. Then you know that people have accepted you as a shaman as well.⁷⁹

One can obtain the position of a shaman in various ways. Almost all of my interviewees, locals as well as *místicos*, say that it is something that comes to you. You are selected to be a shaman. Most of the times these clarifications come to you in a dream. Every shaman practicing these Andean rituals has a *maestro* as well. These are often totem-animals (most of the times formed by the *Trilogía Andina*: condor, jaguar, and snake) that represent ancestral spirits and possess a significant position within local cosmology.⁸⁰ In order to become a *maestro/a* in Ayahuasca, the shaman will have to learn in the jungle, following a “diet” that can take up to a year, or even more. The process of becoming a *maestro/a* in Ayahuasca happens through certain rites of passage by which an apprentice becomes a master (Van Gennep 2004 [1960]).

The term *rite de passage* is often related to rituals that are connected to a “change of status in the lives of individuals and groups” (Bowie 2006:147). Rituals are assumed to have a function at all times, whether of personal or communal importance, that are most of the times related to change or stabilization. Rites of passage are connected to these stages of change and are structured in three phases. The first phase is called *separation*, and is characterized by parting from a previous stage into a new one; the second phase concerns *transition*. This phase marks the actual change of status, where an individual has not entered the next stage yet, and is still circling “in between;” the third phase is *incorporation*. By the

⁷⁹ Conversation with Don Donato, March 30, 2010

⁸⁰ Interview with Violeta, May 8, 2010

time of this phase, the individual has re-entered the public sphere in a transformed state of being; the change of status is complete (Van Gennep 2004 [1960]:11; Stein and Stein 2005:90-91; Bowie 2006:149). In the first stage, a person has to leave his home town to go to the Amazon jungle and learn from a maestro. During the transition stage, the student has to maintain a “diet” which often encompasses living from the nature, learning to be guided by the spirits, and controlling the Self. The incorporation stage involves returning to the village and resuming work as a “qualified” shaman.



Photo 9 *Trilogía Andina* statuary | by: Doña Julieta

Recently outsiders and foreigners have entered the sacred sphere and have become maestros and shamans. They are able to have the same powers, as long as they study hard for it.⁸¹ Some informants stress that most foreigners that are interested come here to learn. For them, in order to be an *Ayahuasca-maestro*, it is also needed to go on a diet in the jungle accompanied by a teacher-shaman and complete the three stages of passage.⁸² Yet few Piseños believe, as Edy delineates below, that all shamans have followed each *rite de passage*:

⁸¹ Interview with Doña Julieta, February 22, 2010; Conversation with Juanita, April 13, 2010

⁸² Interview Juan, February 11, 2010; Interview with Doña Julieta, February 22, 2010

[...] a lot of shamans here are fake. They did not really learn how to be a *maestro curandero*; they did not follow the diet all shamans have to take. It can take up to a year or more to learn how to be a shaman. I think some people here have not ever seen the jungle.⁸³

New approaches among *curanderos* include conducting ceremonies for financial reasons, however shamans (*verdaderos*) that actually still have spiritual intentions continue to work in the area.⁸⁴ Due to a rapidly changing society and a vast growth in exterior influences, the function of the shaman itself is in the line of fire. Credibility, integrity, and “authenticity” have become uncertain concepts as a large group of Piseños is becoming more aware of possible changes their community, including the sacred, is undergoing.

Most Piseños note that spiritual key-factors of the modernizing town are not only directly related to their cosmovision, but as well to the economical influence the esoteric tourism has on the community. “Our belief will continue to exist” Lucía says, “We will always devote our ways of living to the Apus and Pachamama [...]. Christianity has not been able to change all of that thus far [...], but the *extranjeros* change our religion from the inside, because of the tourists everything has to cost money.”⁸⁵ Most of the feelings people have are related to either the “realness” of the shaman or to their (self-ascribed) status and role within society.

Doña Julieta tells me that the business that revolves around mystical tourism has recently increased. “Not only fake shamanism exists, but also people ask fake high prices for ritual artifacts that are replicas. It is not fair, because they *do* present all of them as if they were real.”⁸⁶ Lucía who has a rather pessimistic view on “new” shamanism, stresses that:

They have come here to our village and they take our jobs. We are the real *curanderos* of the community. Yet, the tour-guides take all tourists to these

⁸³ Conversation with Edy, February 18, 2010

⁸⁴ Conversation with Edy, February 18, 2010

⁸⁵ Interview with Lucía, March 21, 2010

⁸⁶ Interview with Doña Julieta, February 22, 2010

would-be shamans who have ties with the organizations. *They* are the ones who collect the money now, not us.⁸⁷

Some of my informants even state that “real” *curanderos* have left Písaq long ago, leaving the sacred in the town in a disorganized state as new influences are increasingly engaging in monetary arenas.

4.3.3 | Commodification

Commodification of the sacred is an extensive topic of conversation in Písaq. Almost all Píseños have an idea, whether positive or negative, about it. Most of the times related to the rise of tourism in the last ten to fifteen years; all shamans demand their own prices for a ceremony. Locals as well pay for a *pago a la tierra*. The prices vary from 20 *soles* for locals, to 100 dollars⁸⁸ or more for tourists. In general Píseños generally pay less than a foreigner for an identical ceremony.

The process of a service, a ritual, or an event becoming a product of value has increased over the years (Shepherd 2002). Formerly a lot of ceremonies were conducted via a system of *intercambio* – where someone would exchange clothes for a ceremony. The same happened with food or livestock. As Doña Julieta explains: “when more (esoteric) tourists arrived here, local actors started to see the opportunities and began to ask money.”⁸⁹ This is when fake shamans entered the sacred sphere. “They copied behaviour instead of learning it for themselves. Often they do not have permission from the Apus and Pachamama or they simply do not know how to practice a ceremony.”⁹⁰ Today, it is hard to find a religious practitioner that practices ceremonies for free or in exchange of something non-monetary. The ceremony is predominantly “sold” to the participant by the shamans themselves; agreements in payment are made in advance. In some cases, ceremonies are offered and advertised throughout the village by tour-operators. This applies in particular for mystics and tourist ceremonies.

⁸⁷ Interview with Lucía, March 21, 2010

⁸⁸ Practically all prices for tourists are in US Dollars.

⁸⁹ Conversation with Doña Julieta, March 22, 2010

⁹⁰ Conversation with Doña Julieta, March 22, 2010

Commodification creates an indefinite feeling among the majority of my local informants. Most important is, again, the influence of esoteric tourism, mainly the tourist guides have a great influence. Most “local” rituals are paid directly to the practitioner where most tourist rituals or ceremonies are arranged by an operator and mostly paid through an intermediary. The network most tourist guides have with certain shamans and ritual shop-owners, has a vast impact on the line of work and on the community in general. As Francisca, a ritual shop owner and artisan, tells me:

[Because of the commodification] there is a lot of jealousy going on in the village. I will give you an example: my friend owns a ritual shop, but next door is another shop whose owner sells more or less the same products. One time a customer bought something in my friends shop and then went to the other to buy something else. The owner of the other shop told the customer that the artifact he had just acquired was a fake. This is really ridiculous, they know each other, but then he wants to have all for himself! It is jealousy. Most of the tourists go directly to the stores that lay around the Plaza. The tourist guides have ties with the owners of these shops. They pay commission to the guide for anything a tourist buys in the store. Sometimes more than 10%! Therefore the shops that are not on the Plaza sell less. Not just the rituals shops, but all! It is like a Mafia! Also I now pay way more for a *pago* than I did before. That too is because of the tourist guides; luckily I have found myself a real and trustworthy *curandero*.⁹¹

Ever since the expanse of tourism – for about 10-15 years – ceremonies have more become a commodity for the participant. Esoteric tourism has been expanding the same way and, according to some Piseños, added to the way locals and other practitioners have commodified their ceremonies. Before the rise of tourism, shamanic ceremonies more applied to the “older” definition, in which is stated that the aim of a shaman was, among others, to help the people of the village and to serve the community. This is still valid, but is shaped differently and does not account for all shamans.⁹²

⁹¹ Interview with Francisca, April 8, 2010

⁹² Interview with dr. Manuel Leon Atahualpa, March 25, 2010

Pointing at a photo of the VISA, Maestro, and MasterCard signs on the door of a shaman store, Violeta tells me that shamans have shifted their attention to tourism rather than the local population. "I don't know anybody who owns one of these cards. [...] all of it is pure business nowadays."⁹³ Most of my local informants told me that esoteric tourism leads to a desacralization of local cosmology and ceremony.⁹⁴ Artifacts that were never before associated with the sacred are introduced by outsiders and sold as authentic for high prices in stores around the *Plaza*; moreover some of these are adopted by mystics and esoteric tourists in ceremonies.

The presentation of all actors has changed the general vista of the town, Ayahuasca and San Pedro ceremonies have been added to the catalogue of the local primary belief-system, and practically all proactive actors in Písaq have been liable for the commodification of the sacred. But what are the implications of these processes for the belief of the local population?

Because of the religious synthesis; the merging of esotericism and the appearance of "fake" and "real" shamans, it seems that Píseños are merely enforcing their local convictions. One "fake" shaman only establishes the authenticity of a "real" one; natural disaster proves the anger of nature; and *curanderos* that overprice their business are exchanged for "trustworthy" replacements. The next chapter will explore how locals use lived experiences and authenticate their belief-system in order to support a feeling of authenticity.

⁹³ Interview with Violeta, May 8, 2010

⁹⁴ Conversation with Doña Julieta, March 22, 2010; Conversation with Don Donato, March 30, 2010; Interview with Francisca, April 8, 2010; Interview with Violeta, may 8, 2010



Photo 10 Credit card signs on the door | by: Violeta



Photos 11 & 12 "New" and "old" artifacts | by: Violeta & Marie

5. Shaping Authenticity

LOCAL PERCEPTIONS AND CONSTRUCTIONS OF THE SACRED

5.1 Introduction

COSMOLOGY, SHAMANISM, AND “ancient” religions are sometimes difficult to describe and comprehend from an outsider’s point of view. After years of being subject to change generated by external actors, however, Piseños still often manage to uphold their cultural and religious traditions – whether in rapidly transforming or gradually altering conditions. But how do people in the community preserve or shape phenomena with an authentic feeling? How do people situate their lived experience within the confines of an authentic feeling? An interviewee told me that natural and strange events contributed to the genuineness of her belief: how else was it possible that “some people are struck by floods and earthquakes and others are not?” or that “*curanderos* seem to know every single facet of my life while reading coca-leaves?”⁹⁵ Now imagine being told personal information about your life by a complete stranger, would this enforce your belief in his or her “realness” as a shaman? Would this perhaps set of a “divine spark” in your personal belief-system (Lindholm 2002:337)?

Is it possible that the esoteric and mystic layer of Písaq, that shows many presented occurrences and spiritual arrangements, is merely an outer surface covering depth; thereby revealing the frontstage and concealing the area underneath with its different perceptions and backstage presentations? In the previous chapter we have seen that external actors, like esoteric tourists and mystics, interfere and actively engage in Písaq’s sacred arena. Outsiders’ views on authenticity are often drawing attention to the search of more “touchable” or visible elements within a culture; it is the difficulty to find a sense of authenticity produced by the Self in order to keep one’s convictions exists. This chapter will mainly focus on that part of authentication that people use, from an emic point of view, to uphold their

⁹⁵ Interview with Doña Julia, March 30, 2010

lived experience and belief in a process of change initiated by external actors.

The interdependency of, and mediation with the cosmos form the basic foundation for the authentication of ceremonies and inexplicable phenomena. This interconnection however can be divided up into different stages of presentation, which are on their turn open for different analysis of authenticity by different actors and within different contextual boundaries. Later on I will focus more on the influence external actors may have on the sacred and how different elements influence the perception of authenticity. In the next paragraph I will outline different stages of presentation in which *Piseños* move around and that are as well utilized to authenticate and explain “strange” phenomena. It opens the doors to the ineffable that is establishing the thoughts, occupying the minds, and opening the pathways of explanation by local actors within the complex sacred arena of *Pisac*.

5.2 The Staging of Authenticity

A difference between the local front- and backstage (Goffman 1959) is something that is hardly observable when walking through the village. Yet, when speaking with *Piseños*, it becomes clear that front- and backstage are aspects of the arrangement of daily life within the community. The presentation on front- and backstage appears not to be something personal alone, but as well rather something that emerges throughout the village in roughly the same way. As Luis talks about the changes that have occurred in the appearance of ceremonies:

Before [*Pisac* was as touristy as it is today] people knew about each other who was practicing what ceremony. Nobody explicitly told one another, but the village is so small. [...] Also we did not have to take into account things like clothing or performance. You would just wear the same shirt and give your *chicha* to *Pachamama*. Now it has changed, a lot of things from the coast and the *selva* and from outside Peru as well are influencing our ceremonies.⁹⁶

⁹⁶ Conversation with Luis, March 26, 2010

Indeed obvious changes have occurred in the way people experience the sacred, not everyone thinks these changes have an intrinsic negative outcome for the community. As Mercedes stresses:

Some things have got to change. Look at the world; everything is changing as it always has been. We have doctors now but that does not mean that our *curanderos* have lost their power, on the contrary, they have regained authority among the people that truly believe in their capabilities.⁹⁷

Both front- and backstage ceremonies function separate as well as together; they constitute to prolongation of local cosmovision and are subject of constant transformation. Some people prefer to have their ceremonies conducted by backstage shamans, others like the new powers that are influencing and rewriting the sacred.

Important to note in this paragraph are the different stages of the front and back regions. It draws a clear line between ceremonies that are practiced for local participants and the ones that are performed for outsiders or mystics. MacCannell (1973:598) pointed out six different stages of front- and backstage, using Goffman's (1959) main theory that social interaction can possibly be related a staged nature. Some stage may be used to interpret front- and backstage activities for a local audience: "*Stage 1*: Goffman's front region; the kind of social space tourists attempt to overcome, or to get behind; *Stage 2*: a touristic front region that has been decorated to appear, in some of its particulars, like a back region: a seafood restaurant with a fish net hanging on the wall; [...] functionally, this stage is entirely a front region, and it always has been, but it is cosmetically decorated with reminders of back-region activities [...]; *Stage 3*: a front region that is totally organized to look like a back region [...]. This is a problematical stage because the better the simulation, the more difficult it is to distinguish it from stage 4; *Stage 4*: a back region that is open to outsiders [...]. It is the open characteristic that distinguishes these especially touristic settings (stages 3 and 4) from other back regions, access to most non-touristic back regions is somewhat restricted; *Stage 5*:

⁹⁷ Interview with Mercedes, April 8, 2010

a back region that may be cleaned up or altered a bit because tourists are permitted an occasional glimpse in [...]; *Stage 6*: Goffman's back region; the kind of social space that motivates touristic consciousness" (MacCannell 1973:598).

These stages presented by Goffman should not be seen as a static ensemble; Piseños travel around between and act in practically all stages. The last stage (6) is pretty well preserved for locals only, however mystics try to increase their access to this as well.⁹⁸ While esoteric tourists mostly circle around stages 2, 3, and 4, mystics often have the idea of having escaped stage 3 and of being part of at least stage 4 and, more often, stage 5.⁹⁹ Within this theory, there seems to be the impossibility of everyone non-local to enter into stage 6 as it would automatically transform into a lower one, giving the sixth stage an "imaginary" status only. On Pisaq's front, Goffman's first stages, the mystics and esoteric tourists are thus clearly visible, as well as tour-guides and shamans that serve them. The back (mostly stage 5 and 6) of Pisaq is terrain of the local population that is actually born in the region. The local's experience with shamanism can be characterized as ambivalent; however most agree that it functions as a central part of the daily life in Pisaq.

Drawing more on the imagination of the researcher and the reader, it is hard – or impossible – to picture authentic phenomena as they are often generated directly by the Self. One of the foremost important notions I have been studying in order to present local perceptions is the concept of authentication; generally ascribed to a situation in which techniques are used to prove or show something to be true, genuine, valid or "authentic" (Chhabra et al. 2003). Most of the locals and shamans in Pisaq relate the authenticity of a ceremony by means of their cosmovision; the Apus, Pachamama, and noteworthy natural happenings. This comes to the fore during a ceremony I pointed out before in which the practitioner of the ritual declared that a dog felt the presence of spirits at a certain moment because it was calm and silent for once.¹⁰⁰ The behaviour of the animal in this case

⁹⁸ Interview with Víctor, April 25, 2010

⁹⁹ Interview with Víctor, April 25, 2010

¹⁰⁰ Derived from notes taken during ceremony, February 24, 2010

establishes the presence of spirits and consequently authenticates the effectiveness of the ceremony. In this way, Piseños validate for themselves the realness of a ritual. Prior to any ceremony, the Apus and Pachamama have to be satisfied, and permission has to be requested in order to conduct this particular ritual. And although it is seldom that permission for rituals is not granted, the Apus will on occasion give signs of their displeasure. An example is given by Ernesto:

Sometimes when you go to burn a *despacho* up in the mountains, it will not burn. It will smoulder a bit, but nothing more. This is a sign of the Apus that they are not content with the offering. It is better to be careful and not upset them.¹⁰¹

Studying spirituality in order to frame the extraordinary, the mysterious, and inexplicable within the boundaries of religion permits to observe and contextualize religious behaviour worldwide and therefore offers the opportunity to study phenomena such as shamanism, ritual, and “the things beyond understanding” (Lehmann and Myers 1997: 3).

As we take a look at Van de Ports (2004) statement that individuals are virtually competent to persuade themselves of their “authentic Selves and authentic lives”, it becomes clear that people are perfectly able to explore and search for an authentic experience rather than merely accepting a taken-for-granted situation. Lindholm stresses in the same way that:

[...] the human desire for the experience of the divine spark does not vanish simply because that experience becomes difficult to achieve. Instead, it is more likely that the quest for a felt authentic grounding becomes increasingly pressing as certainty is eroded and the boundaries of the real lose their taken-for-granted validity (Lindholm 2002:336-337).

A significant cultural mechanism of authenticating (the religious and rational made-up of) the Self, as a result entails the way in which people come to identify themselves and their cosmovision with the contemporary local

¹⁰¹ Conversation with Ernesto, April 30, 2010

sacred. In the following paragraph the way in which people validate their lived experience, their own convictions - how the sacred is shaped from an emic perspective – will be explored.

5.3 Explaining the Inexplicable

In order to explain the authentic in lived experience, Piseños often relate visions or dreams to personal occurrences. Take Manuel for example, an average member of the community you could say: an agricultural worker and street vendor, certainly not an extravagant or radical believer in Andean cosmology:

I have been having strange dreams lately; they kept me awake all night. [...] it is because of new energies that started flowing, it is like a new era for me. [...] You understand I have had this before, I know these dreams will come true, I have witnessed it. They always come true. The Apus are giving me a sign that something will change in my life.¹⁰²

After a couple of days I met Manuel again, he told me a story about how he had met a tourist girl in Cuzco, he had danced with her and the event had “changed his life completely”, after all, he said: “what comes to you in a dream later always appears to be true.”

Throughout my fieldwork, a variety of informants has persistently tried to convince me about the reality of these kinds of seemingly unearthly phenomena. Stories about failing harvests, about accidents and headaches; almost all of them are related to some kind of mysterious cause. During an interview, Doña Julieta for example explains how people get sick without even being in a bad physical condition:

People often get sick because bad spirits dwell the streets. When they are not fully cleansed or protected against them, the spirits will catch you or go into you [...]. You always have to be protected against the evil spirits

¹⁰² Conversation with Manuel, February 26, 2010

because it is easy to get ill otherwise. They can see and feel when you are not protected!¹⁰³

And although most of them were not completely able to persuade me with their stories – “I can see that you do not believe my entire story, it does not matter *amigo, no te preocupes*”¹⁰⁴ – they *were* able to completely convince themselves and other Piseños, mystics, and esoteric tourists about the authenticity of puzzling occurrences and personal narratives. Stories like the one above are told by people with all kinds of backgrounds, both local and external actors to fill the gaps in their understanding; to “put inexplicability at the service of authenticating belief” (Van de Port 2005:164).

In order to explain and describe the spiritual world in Písaq, the division between locals, esoteric tourists and mystics is imperative. Local actors for instance, pose different reasons for participation in a *mirada de coca* or for burning a *despacho*. But generally all involves recreating, renewing, or prolonging of a certain state of being, which, as we have seen, can encompass a period without any misfortune or for example a ceremony for a good harvest.¹⁰⁵ Interestingly some of the local actors relate the growth of mystical tourism to the Maya-prophecy of 2012. They say that more people (often foreigners) are searching for contact with the spiritual world or want to be cleansed as the year of 2012 closes in – apparently the alleged doomsday prophecy attracts people to the “Inca-world” as well. This is just one situation in which an inexplicable event – the prophecy – triggers people to search for real spirituality and ceremonial healing.¹⁰⁶ Few esoteric tourists come to Písaq for specifically that reason, yet most of them believe the prophecy and relate it to ancient as well as contemporary Andean culture and spirituality.¹⁰⁷

In general, most of the people that participate in ceremonies consider them an important part of their lives. In the case of hallucinogenic ceremonies people refer the most to what they have learned about

¹⁰³ Interview with Doña Julieta, February 22, 2010

¹⁰⁴ Interview with Doña Julieta, February 22, 2010

¹⁰⁵ Derived from: Interview with Doña María, April 30, 2010

¹⁰⁶ Conversation with Don Donato, march 30, 2010

¹⁰⁷ Conversation with Don Donato, march 30, 2010

themselves and how great it is to become spiritually enlightened. Even for people that did not particularly come to the region to involve themselves actively in the local sacred, the ceremonies can at times invoke a both inexplicable and mysterious feeling, triggering the conviction of having witnessed something authentic. An example is a Canadian photographer whom I spoke with just before and after he participated in a ceremony. Before, he was reluctant toward believing the shamans claim of spirits that were about to dwell the room. Five hours later, he changed his point of view:

It was amazing, really strong energy and I felt it right in my head. I felt lighter, I felt enlightened. As if I was a little out of myself, yet looking down on myself. [...] I cannot describe the feeling; it is like I was out of this world, literally. I think I might have felt contact with the Apus, with Pachamama; they were there...¹⁰⁸

Another anecdote centers on the prediction of a *curandero* during a coca-reading. Violeta remembers a visit to her favorite *curandero*:

She once saw in the coca-leaves that my sister, who did not have a job at the moment, would get a job in a place far away. She also told her that she would meet a new man in her life. We had a *despacho* for her because a new man and a good job are important things in life. A few months later, she did find a job in a place some four hours from here, [...] far! Now she is with someone else.¹⁰⁹

For most locals, ceremonies also contain an element of survival; both direct and indirect. Some believe that nurturing Pachamama and the Apus is the only way to remain “authentic”, to prolong the continued existence of their culture.¹¹⁰ The latter is stronger assumed among mystics, esoteric tourists, and locals practicing hallucinogenic rituals; the former aspect of personal survival has been practiced since a long time. Yet due to tourism

¹⁰⁸ Conversation with Percival Wilkins, February 24, 2010

¹⁰⁹ Conversation with Violeta, February 18, 2010

¹¹⁰ Derived from: Interview with Doña Julieta, March 16, 2010

and rapid change of local society some (somewhat radical) local informants believe that the spirituality is now the only way to protect their culture from “unhealthy influences from abroad.”¹¹¹ Ceremonies, such as *pagos a la tierra*, have more personal or communal – in the sense of “taming” nature – meaning. They are based on the (near) future of the participant and ask for good fortune in most cases. As such, the ceremonies in some cases serve more than just a personal cause.¹¹²

Pagos also serve communal interest as the Apus and the Pachamama are asked for good weather conditions. A shaman told me that the vast amount of “fake” shamans and commodification have, among other things, led to the natural disasters that have ravaged the region and the community. One thing I have heard from many Piseños is that one simply cannot tell nature what to do by practicing the ceremonies. First, the Apus and Pachamama have to authorize the particular ceremony; second, the practitioner has to be a “real” shaman in order to achieve his goal; and third, the Apus and Pachamama cannot be controlled, asking is one thing, having actual result is a second. A shaman told me that “the Pachamama is like a dog, you can ask it to sit down, but for it to actually do so is a complete other thing.”¹¹³ During the hallucinogenic ceremonies most participants experience that they have contact with another world, with the mountain spirits. Also they get visions of *who* they are and how to live their lives. They want to learn who and what they are and they seem to be able to do so.

In order for people to create for themselves an authentic image of what they believe in, whatever it may be, they need to imply mechanism to blur the clear-cut difference between “true” and “false” and between “authentic” and “fake”. In the following paragraph I will focus on personal techniques people make use of while shaping their individual religious reality.

¹¹¹ Conversation with Hugo, February 26, 2010

¹¹² Derived from: Conversation with Violeta February 19, 2010 & Interview with Doña Julia March 30, 2010

¹¹³ Interview with Marcos, March 20, 2010

5.4 Validating the Sacred

Both cosmology and ceremonies are subject to inherent spontaneous and mystifying occurrences and are thus used to explain the inexplicable. Important to note here is the appearance of seemingly unimportant experiences, unexpected and adding to the authenticity of a phenomenon, people use as a mechanism of authentication; “visions, dreams and revelations are another mode in which the inexplicable helps to convince people of the authenticity of their particular convictions” (Van de Port 2005). I can first briefly exemplify this by use of a personal case.

One day I went to a *curandera* in order to do a *mirada de coca*. After a bumpy ride by motorcycle of half an hour, me and a friend were welcomed by a charming woman, wearing a green sweater and jeans – not the thing one would generally expect from a *curandera*. I sat down in a small chamber, the puma-skin and some species of snake hanging on the wall, wooden shelves on the walls filled with all kinds of religious artifacts. We all greeted one another, ate some *choclo* and after a few minutes of polite conversation the *curandera* started the coca-reading ceremony. The thing that stunned me were the revelations the coca leaves brought to the fore; she could tell me exactly what countries I had visited the year before, she could tell me my father had an aching in his back that week – something I myself did not even know at the moment. All rather small and maybe predictable things you would say, but I had never met the woman before and it would be impossible for her to know most of the previous. Of course, when my friend warned me that the things a *curandero* sees in the leaves always have happened or are going to happen I greeted him with scepticism, but how would I explain this? It did encourage me to look for an explanation – to either validate or abolish the situation.¹¹⁴

Such illustrative cases bring to mind that as phenomena like these can be mysterious and revealing for a Western eye, it is surely imaginable that they might be put in service to authenticate occurrences from a local perspective. Wang’s (1999) conception of existential authenticity in which he stresses that authenticity “is not a matter of black and white, which

¹¹⁴ Fieldnotes, April 22, 2010

means that which is judged as inauthentic by experts, intellectuals, or elite may be experienced as authentic and real from an emic perspective". Keeping this in mind, let me now illustrate the way people authenticate their convictions by two exemplary occasions of people who blurred and integrated the distinction between what they have actually witnessed and what they believe deriving out of their cosmovision. The following being a prime example of the "kind of social space that motivates [mystical] touristic consciousness" (Goffman 1959) as it establishes the authenticity of local shamanism.

5.4.1 | The Condor

Raúl, a Piseño in his early-twenties, tourism-student in Cuzco, and self-declared authority in Andean way of living, came up to me as I was sipping from a *mate de coca* in a bar outside the, rather small, tourist area of Písaq. I had seemingly fascinated him for not caring about the hygiene of the bars and restaurants around the Plaza de Armas. I have known Raúl almost my entire stay in Písaq, and unless we developed some kind of friendship and chitchatted about ceremonies and Apus every now and then, he seemed all but excited about my specific research topic. Sometimes I tried starting a discussion with him about his experiences with *pagos a la tierra* and coca-reading – for all I knew he, as a believer in Andean cosmology and "ancient certainties", had them practiced frequently. And all the times we had talked about it, he seemed fed up and had changed the conversation in something more light, like his larger-than-life stories on how he conquered the hearts of blonde, foreign girls every weekend.

One day he came up to me on the street and invited me for a cup of coffee in his favorite bar. He started telling a story on how a shaman apparently predicted various vague phenomena that were about to happen in his life: "I already knew [the *curandero*] for a long time. He had told me that something important was going to happen [...], I do not know how he knew exactly, but he knew somehow [...]. This something, he said, will cause me either good or bad luck [...]." He had some elements of his future predicted by a *curandero* in Písaq, asking whether he would be lucky in romancing a certain girl he liked at the time. The *curandero* told him that he

was to await a clear sign from the Apus and from Pachamama. A few days later I met Raúl again on the streets, he was filled with enthusiasm when he saw me. A day earlier he went hiking in the mountains surrounding the village when he had spotted, or so he thought, a giant condor in the far distance. A clear sign of good luck for him as the condor, as part of the *Trilogía Andina*, occupies a key part of both ancient and contemporary local cosmology.

We went in a bar and sat down. He picked up his bag from the ground and started searching for something in it. A few seconds later he threw a sketch on the table, looking at me with great expectation in his gloomy eyes. Apparently he had once made a drawing of the condor that “hides in the mountains” of the Pisaq ruins – with a sharp eye and a clear example the shape of a condor spreading its wings can be distinguished from the rock and Inca-terraces. “The strange thing is...” he said “...that I had the drawing in my pack to show the condor to someone, and now I see one for real!” The fact that condors are quite rare in the area and that the bird might as well have been an eagle or a vulture of some kind did not seem to matter for his belief in the “impossible” occurrence.¹¹⁵

Following Van de Port’s (2005) argumentation, this kind of events – coming across something out of the ordinary, something incomprehensible at that precise moment – confirms the assumption that individual convictions can be authentic. The sign Raúl sees in his drawing and the condor – and the symbol the animal represents for him – gives him the proof the *curandero* he went to see and the ceremony that was practiced for him was indeed authentic and factual; a proof of the legitimacy of experiencing the “divine spark”. It gives him a reason to go beyond the boundaries of earthly spheres and construct his religion. Another example of “finding” facts that substantiate particular phenomena and rites is given by Shuaro.

¹¹⁵ Conversation with Raúl, April 21, 2010 & April 25, 2010

5.4.2 | Black Magic

Shuaro was born in Písaq and has, not including a ten-year break, lived there all his life. One day I helped him gathering peaches on his *chacra*, the bleach rays of sunlight burning through the leaves of the fruit trees. We took his bike and drove over rough mountain trails to reach the garden. A few hours later, he asked me if I was afraid of witchcraft or black magic. I told him no, and later asked him if he had ever seen a *brujo* perform black magic. He stopped his work, carefully putting down the basket filled with orange-yellow fruits in the field. He came closer and with a wide grin on his face he started telling a story.

“Of course I believe in black magic” he told me “I have seen dozens of examples, tons of people being injured and harmed by *brujos*! Here in Písaq, there are some as well, although you do not often see them on the streets. Sometimes you do not even know who is a *brujo* or *bruja* and then they suddenly put a spell on someone. Mostly they utilize black magic to do people harm or give them bad luck, sometimes even worse! Some people, when they are jealous, they hire a *brujo* to do a dreadful thing to someone else.” “Does this happen a lot?” I asked, “Not as much as before, but yet it still takes place.” Then his eyes narrowed, looking right at me he frowned and said: “It once happened to my mother, you know. She had a small disagreement with someone from above [on the mountain] and he apparently hired a *brujo* to make my mother feel bad every time she had to go up [in the mountains]. She had to go up there every week to sell her *choclo*. She did not know what to do, so then she asked our friend, a *curandera*, for advice. She told her that she was indeed bewitched; malevolent spirits had gotten to her.” His eyes widened now. “After the conversation she gave my mother a coca-reading and prepared a *despacho* right after. That same evening we went into the mountains to ask the Apus to disappear the spell. It helped. When she went up the mountain where these people lived, she did not feel bad at all! After the healing, it had all stopped, but we were very lucky.”¹¹⁶ Later, Shuaro’s mother told me the very same story, with equal conviction and the similar affiliation. Both the

¹¹⁶ Conversation and Interview with Shuaro, March 6, 2010 & March 28, 2010

stories of Raúl and Shuaro build on the idea that the empty space of incomprehensibility can be filled up by techniques that are initiated by personal views and thoughts.

The general idea about these kinds of anecdotes appears to be that there is “no arguing with something that is beyond comprehension” (Van de Port 2005:167). The worldview of most shamans and participants in Písaq revolves around their cosmological belief-system; a way to comprehend occurrences which for countless people would seem inexplicable. Píseños generally seek to explain these phenomena by means of revealing narratives. Doing so they place “inexplicability at the service of authenticating belief”; one might notice this whether unraveling Violeta’s, Raúl’s, and Shuaro’s story, or while reading for instance Alejandra’s anecdote in chapter two. By and large, the “unbelievable” or “inexplicable” in all of these stories helps to encourage people of using techniques and mechanisms of authentication in order to gain faith in their personal (and communal) certainties. In this way participants and believers ceremonies validate the “realness” or “authenticity” of the occurrence for themselves and directly they embed it in their daily lives – in their personal belief.

Bowie (2005:145) notes that ritual performance is not scripted, but is “a mode of action taken by real and familiar people”. She adds that, opposed to theatre, participation in a ritual may be “acting”, which does not automatically imply that they are “just pretending.” It is a religious practice performed by real people and is given genuine significance by both participants and practitioners. Whether the ritual is categorized as “authentic” or “staged” depends on the audience, the practitioner, the setting or context, and on the function of the ceremony (Bowie 2005:145). In other words: the different stages presented by Goffman are a very useful tool to map certain patterns, but do not shape one predetermined taken-for-granted dimension.

To create a more complete and applicable idea of the sacred front- and back arena of Písaq, it should be entangled with the perception of both practitioners and participants of shamanic rites as well as non-active Píseños and external actors. Many locals seem to be able to point out a difference between “real” and “fake” shamans more than esoteric tourists

and mystics. Mystical tourism and –settling has not converted entirely to the “Andean way of living” and introduced a new canon of ceremonies generally perceived as authentic to the region, however Piseños still manage to shape for themselves their own sacred – which does not always harmonize with the “new” tradition and is often based on their cosmovision – that fits within their belief-system and personal convictions.

Conclusions

ANTHROPOLOGICAL VIEWS UPON authenticity are often exclusively related to the way people manifest or perceive a sense of realness towards or from the other (e.g. MacCannell 1973; Olsen 2002). However in this thesis the different stages of presentation (Goffman 1959) in which people interact and move are linked to the way in which people authenticate sacred phenomena for themselves and how they perceive the realness of other actors that dwell in the same religious arena. In order to study authentication of sacred phenomena and influences that have been introduced from outside, such as commodification, I have used the following central research question: “How to explain and describe transforming shamanic rituals in relation to perceptions of authentication and commodification?” Using this question this thesis provided an insight in how processes of globalization (mystical tourism, commodification) are part of the construction that is the sacred world of Písaq, and how both local and external actors have found their way in convincing themselves that they “capable to convince themselves that they are living authentic lives” (Van de Port 2004:10).

First of all it is important to analyze how I have approached authenticity within this context, whereas the term is a rather multifaceted and broad constructivist concept. Within this thesis I mainly drew on the notion of authentication, the view on authenticity in which it is “shaped” or “staged” (Wang 1999). Calling attention to how something is *made* authentic instead of that what *is* generally alleged to be authentic. Commodification, the process of a service, a ritual, or an event becoming a product of value, regularly contributes to a corrosion of authenticity as an authentic ritual becomes more than a service and is therefore attractive for “fake” shamanic activity.

By means of dividing the sacred up into several different elements – religious cosmology, Andean shamanism, and ritual – the third chapter forms an important part that leads towards a general understanding on how the sacred is shaped exactly in Písaq. The importance of religious

cosmology in practicing a ritual is clarified as soon as one understands that the belief-system of a person revolves around this particular cosmovision. Culture and nature are as such strongly interdependent and balance and exchange, *Ayni*, can be referred to as key-aspects of Andean cosmology. By practicing a ritual, one contributes to the nurturing of nature and hereby to personal or communal continuance (Gonzales et al. 1998). As a result, shamanism or *curanderismo* in Písaq compose for a great part the significance of the daily lives of local as well as non-local actors within this field of tension.

Next to the perception of authenticity and notion of religious cosmology, a second essential contributor that adds to the understanding how the sacred in Písaq is being shaped is the abundant presence of mystical tourism in the area, which contributes for a vital part to the construction of contemporary sacred life within the town. As shamanic ceremonies have become an experience people wish to “live” instead of just witness, it has, with its inexplicable nature, added to the growth of mystical tourism that started almost two decades ago (e.g. Johnson 2003; Znamenski 2004; Bowie 2006; Walsh 2007). Due to the presence of mystical tourism, Písaños often refer to a desacralization of *curanderismo*. An older definition of shamanism, in which is stated that the aim of a shaman should be, among others, to help the people of the village and to serve the community, is hollowed as both “real” and “fake” shamans engage in an economically interesting mystical tourism industry. Moreover, the introduction of non-local ceremonies such as those with Ayahuasca and San Pedro have changed the general view of sacred authenticity; as the above-mentioned are now widely accepted as being authentic to the region.

Místicos do not just contribute to a transformation in the way people perceive authentic rituals in Písaq, they also try to comprehend and be part of the entire sacred arena of the village, which, using Goffman’s (1959) different stages of presentation, seems problematical as some stages appear impossible to breach and are preserved for one’s imagination only. Ayahuasca and San Pedro-ceremonies do not originally derive from the Andean region, but have been introduced and are now as well perceived as authentic to the town by outsiders and *místicos*. At first sight mystical

tourists seems to blend in with the local population, however it has contributed to more changes than just religious synthesis. They are of great influence, for example, in the transformation of shamanic ritual from a service to a commodity. As Doña Julieta explains: “Not only fake shamanism exists, but also people ask fake high prices for ritual artifacts that are replicas. It is not fair, because they *do* present all of them as if they were real.” Monetary interest has drawn all kinds of “charlatans” to the town and some now even state that an authentic ritual can not be found in Písaq.

The newly constructed sacred, in which both locals and *místicos* form a great part, calls on strong imagination of both local and non-local actors in order to preserve a personal sense of authenticity, and to authenticate personal religious convictions, mainly contributed to the Apus and Pachamama. Whereas most *místicos* validate their convictions after they are told to seek for mysterious aspects, most of the Píseños do so by outing to use seemingly inexplicable events as a validation of their experience or of a *mirada de coca*. As such, both local and external actors try to fill the gaps in their understanding; to “put inexplicability at the service of authenticating belief” (Van de Port 2005:164).

So *how to* explain transforming shamanic rituals within the context of authenticity and commodification? As we have seen, shamanic ceremony or *curanderismo*, are greatly influenced by globalization processes such as mass tourism. As it is easy nowadays for people to search for a “new” spiritual self outside the modern West. The experience of an “authentic” exotic happening as such has become a fashion in tourism worldwide – and is still growing in the Sacred Valley – and the promoting of authenticity has become a noteworthy strategy of tourist organizations (MacCannell 1973; Chhabra et al. 2003). As mystical tours and esoteric settlers entered Písaq’s sacred arena, the very nature of a ritual transformed into a more economical phenomenon where local spirituality is not purely providing services, but as well “articles of trade”.

Questions that have emerged from this study include the difficulty of providing a sketch from the tourist’s point of view. As this research has focused mainly on the tensions between local actors and *místicos*, it would

be interesting to research participants of esoteric tours on their perceptions of an “authentic” shamanic ritual, based on their preliminary knowledge of the topic. How would they, for instance, interpret an authentic ritual; why would they participate in such a tour; what are they looking for; and how do they for themselves validate their convictions?

Using these questions one is likely able to develop a general impression of the sacred world in Písaq, and, adding to that, to analyze significant fields of tension within the community. To understand how that one particular uncanny feeling, triggered by the piercing sound of an *iqaro* or by a striking resemblance with a *curandero*'s prediction, can be used in order to validate one's belief-system. The exploration of authenticity from an emic point of view opens up a complex world of personal accounts and visions and brings to the fore a more comprehensible basis for understanding the inexplicability behind shamanic ritual in Písaq.

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Appendices

Appendix 1 | Informants that have contributed to this thesis

Alejandra:	Woman from Písaq.
Ángel:	A shaman from Cuzco who has been working in Písaq before has now opened a shamanic center in the city.
Don Donato:	Shaman in Písaq, but born in the Amazon. One of the people who introduced Ayahuasca in the town.
Edy:	Tourist from Lima who is very interested in local religious cosmology.
Ernesto:	Piseño who believes in the power of the Apus and Pachamama.
Jack:	American quite radical <i>místico</i> and shaman in Písaq.
Juan:	A shaman from Cuzco as well. Juan works in the same shamanic center as Ángel and is specialized in both <i>miradas de coca</i> and Ayahuasca ceremonies.
Juanita:	Ritual shop owner in Písaq.
Doña Julia:	An average Piseña who strongly believes in the power of the Apus and frequently participates in coca related ceremonies.
Doña Julieta:	Ritual artifact vendor and shaman in Písaq. Doña Julieta is one the local <i>curanderas</i> who focuses as well on San Pedro and Ayahuasca.
Lucía:	<i>Curandera</i> in Písaq.
Luis:	Luis is a shaman in Písaq. He is quite controversial within the community and most Piseños do not seem to know whether he is “real” or “fake”. Probably because of the fact that his store is located near the Plaza and he charges high prices for ceremonies and artifacts.
Manuel:	Ritual artifact vendor in Písaq.
Dr. Manuel León Atahualpa:	Former anthropologist at UNSAAC now living in Písaq.

Marcos:	A respected <i>místico</i> and shaman in Písaq, want to open his own temple in order to accommodate esoteric tourists.
Doña María:	<i>Curandera</i> in Písaq.
Marie:	<i>Místico</i> and learning to be an Ayahuasca-shaman.
Mercedes:	Ritual shop owner in Písaq.
Nicole:	Esoteric tourist.
Pancho:	Shaman Písaq.
Percival Wilkins:	Canadian tourist/photographer highly interested in local ceremonies.
Rachel:	Esoteric tourist.
Raúl:	Piseño, student of tourism in Cuzco. Self-declared expert of Andean culture.
Shuaro:	Born in Písaq and believes in the power of the Apus and Pachamama.
Víctor:	<i>Curandero</i> in Písaq.
Violeta:	Piseña who is a bit of a skeptic towards mystical tourism and believes in the power of the Apus and Pachamama.

Appendix 2 | Photo-elicitation form

Translated from Spanish:

Assignment for Doña Julieta & Marie

- Take about five pictures of people that are important within you belief; five pictures of important ceremonial artifacts; five pictures of things that you think are important within the *cosmovisión Andina*; and five pictures of moments that are important for you during a ceremony.

Assignment for Violeta

- Take about five pictures of thing you think are good about mystical tourism in Písaq; five pictures of things that you think are bad about mystical tourism in Písaq; and five pictures of thing that are important within the *cosmovisión Andina*.

- This camera now belongs to you.

- I will pick up the camera when you are done taking the pictures. I think a week should be enough time but let me know if you need more time.

- After the photos are developed, I will bring you the photos.

- We will take some time to talk about the photos you took.

- Call me with any questions: [phone number]

- This is a free project— it will not cost you anything.

[Based on Clark-Ibáñez 2004]